

MONITORING AND EVALUATION AS CATALYSTS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

A multitude of meaning is attached to the concept of development. But whether development is seen as social or economic, the convergence points reached by developmental scholars is that development is a process rather than an outcome, it involves a change from one state to the other, and thus carries a connotation of lasting change. It is in this context, that sustainability becomes important. This study therefore assessed how monitoring and evaluation of performance serve as catalysts to development projects in Nigeria. The research was guided by the Agency Theory which was pioneered by Stephen Ross in 1973 and formalized by Jensen and Meckling in 1976. The study relied extensively on secondary data and findings revealed that monitoring and evaluation are sine-qua-non to producing desirable and effective results in both planning and implementing development programmes/projects. Based on these findings, the study recommended, among others, that monitoring and evaluation should be an integral part of any development process and not as a contingent plan in development planning. In addition, sanctions should be meted out on evaluators and monitors of projects that produce fake evaluation reports; the issuance of fake certificates of completion of projects to contractors as was seen in the NDDC Project Audit of 2019 in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria, should be punished.

Keywords: Agency theory, Development projects, Evaluation, Monitoring, Performance

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ABSTRAIT

Une multitude de sens est attachée au concept de développement. Mais que le développement soit considéré comme social ou économique, les points de convergence atteints par les spécialistes du développement sont que le développement est un processus plutôt qu'un résultat, il implique un changement d'un état à l'autre, et porte donc une connotation de changement durable. C'est dans ce contexte que la durabilité devient importante. Cette étude a donc évalué comment le suivi et l'évaluation des performances servent de catalyseurs aux projets de développement au Nigeria. La recherche a été guidée par la théorie de l'agence qui a été lancée par Stephen Ross en 1973 et officialisée par Jensen et Meckling en 1976. L'étude s'est largement appuyée sur des données secondaires et les résultats ont révélé que le suivi et l'évaluation ont une condition sine-qua-non pour produire un produit souhaitable et efficace. se traduit à la fois par la planification et la mise

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enœuvre de programmes / projets de développement. Sur la base de ces résultats, l'étude a recommandé, entre autres, que le suivi et l'évaluation devraient faire partie intégrante de tout processus de développement et non comme un plan contingent dans la planification du développement. En outre, des sanctions devraient être infligées aux évaluateurs et aux contrôleurs des projets qui produisent de faux rapports d'évaluation; la délivrance de faux certificats d'achèvement de projets aux entrepreneurs, comme cela a été constaté dans l'audit de projet NDDC de 2019 dans la région du delta du Niger au Nigéria, devrait être punie.

Mots-clés: Théorie de l'agence, Projets de développement, Évaluation, Suivi, Performance

INTRODUCTION

Several projects that target development in the developing economy often end up poorly in meeting the desired objectives. The reasons varied, but many development scholars have pointed to poor monitoring and evaluation. Others include lack of experience by the contractors, corruption, limited financial and staff resources, gaps in technical knowledge with regard to defining performance indicators, retrieval, collection, preparation and interpretation of data and inefficient monitoring and evaluation practices (Burke, 1999; Kerzuer, 1997; Otieno 1999). As Omadeet al.(2015) rightly noted, many projects are faced with the constrain of complexities as a result of uncertainties of not meeting project deadlines which also rests on low quality and cost overruns that invariably lead to failure and abandonment of such projects. Ubani and Ononuju, 2013; Olalusi and Okunola, 2012) cited in Amade et al. (2016), contended that sustained failure and abandonment of projects by the public sector are continuously posing serious challenges to stakeholders.

The purpose of this study is to draw attention to the relevance of monitoring and evaluation on the implementation of projects across the geo-political zones in Nigeria. The study is organized in themes. Following this introduction is clarification on the concept of monitoring and evaluation. Thereafter, the agency theory that guides this study is presented; followed by the important of monitoring and evaluation, evaluation process and strategies, as well as reporting machinery.

Monitoring and Evaluation Defined

The activity of project monitoring and evaluation started around the 1980s when consultants were required to be part of project management (La londe, 1998). However, recent events show that it has metamorphosed from merely an activity to a strategy that must be obeyed if projects are to gain success (Cowell, 2009). Monitoring and evaluation has gained popularity in recent years in project management and is likely going to remain of greater strategic importance.

Ojukwu (2013) contended that monitoring is the continuous and periodic assessment of project implementation by stakeholders to ensure that activities are going on as planned. It is the delivery process which ensures that inputs through activities are the focus of monitoring while at the same time, analyzing both quality and quantity. Similarly, Imhabekhai (2009) observed that monitoring is a purposive attempt made by project executors to determine the level of progress attained in the project execution from the commencement to the ultimate completion. This entails observation and collection of data that facilitate evaluation as well as corrective measures where necessary. Daves (1982) defined monitoring as a process which involves keen observation periodically, the spate of progress of a project to evaluate strengths or weaknesses for the sole aim of taking corrective steps when desired to optimize the efficiency and effectiveness of the project. In other words, the process of monitoring involves data collection for the purpose of evaluating a

programme or project. Akinyemi (1997) considered monitoring as a process of observing the progress of different components of a given programme in order to identify the impediments, (if any) for proactive corrective measures.

Evaluation on the other hand, is the process of determining the merit, worth or value of something. Ojukwu (2013) further stated that evaluation show-cases your achievements and assists in ensuring better programme performance. Jones (1980) captured evaluation as a systematic attempt to provide data as the basis for programme planning and to assess by organized procedures towards previously established objectives. Badmus and Omoifo (1998) noted that evaluation is a process of delineating and providing useful information for guiding decision alternatives. For Falayajo (2004), evaluation involves the measurement of the level of achievement of the objectives set out before the commencement of a development programme or project. He further alluded to the fact that it involves a step by step or periodic review of the entire process with a view to remedying any observed lapses in the programme implementation; that would limit the efficiency and effectiveness of the project execution.

Agency Theory Explanation of Project Success

The agency theory was propounded by Stephen Ross in 1973, and later formalized and made popular by Jensen and Meckling in 1976. In the tenets of the theory, three propositions are put forward. First, the agents may have different preference from their principals, such as the willingness to work. Secondly, agents may have different incentives from the principal; and different stake in the outcome or may receive different rewards. Thirdly, agents may have information that is unavailable to the principal or vice versa. These types of divergences may give rise to problems relating to monitoring, incentives, coordination and strategies (Michael et al. 2005). The importance of evaluation and monitoring cannot be over-emphasized in the completion and implementation of projects and programmes. However, the processes of evaluation and monitoring might be scuttled by the agents due to divergent and conflicting interests of the principal or the agents as succinctly explained by the agency theory of the study.

Every project/programme has a projected date for completion with the principal, evaluation and monitoring processes going on simultaneously unhindered. However, the agents might not be willing to work to meet such deadline while the principal might not be disposed to meeting the deadline through poor release of funds to purchase inputs, diversion of funds for personal gains and the principal having a hidden agenda that might be political. Secondly, the whole process of evaluation and monitoring might be undermined through financial inducement by either the contractor or government officials. Thirdly, information is key to the success of any project or programme which might be deliberately withheld by either the principal or agents to delay the completion of the project which times lead to project failure or abandonment.

A Brief Description of Project Failure in the Niger Delta Region

The Niger Delta has the history of non-performing government institutions. The Federal Government has made many attempts to improve this region starting with the Niger Delta Development Board in 1950 which was funded with 15% revenue contribution from the Federal level. It was however replaced by OMPADEC in 1993 and was disbanded in 1999 for failure to achieve the projected goals. State and Local governments have also not been able to implement sustained solutions to the region's poverty level due to corruptions, poor governance and lack of accountability that is complicated by the incidence of government official's connivance with contractors by giving fake evaluation and monitoring reports. However, the NDDC was established in 2000 to replace OMPADEC. Its mandate includes infrastructural development of

the area and above all catalyzing and facilitating progress in the region. NDDC budget allocation in 2001 was N176 and N40 billion in 2002. All these institutions failed to execute projects and programme in the region because they flouted all the built-in mechanisms for accountability to beneficiaries.

In October 2004, NDDC awarded contracts for the construction of a block of six classrooms, toilets and offices to be sited in each of the public schools across River State. A Premium Times (2019) investigation revealed that several of such projects have been either abandoned or were not carried out at all. In 2019, President Muhammadu Buhari ordered a forensic audit of the activities of the Commission because its impact did not in any way match funds allocated to it since 2001. The Bundu project in River State is not up to lintel and was abandoned in 2009. In Port Harcourt, according to Premium Times, is another project abandoned which is now a dumpsite around Community Secondary School, Abuloma. The Community Primary School at AhiamakaraElekahia was similarly abandoned. Premium Times (2019) investigations revealed that school projects at Owhipa, Choba Primary School in ObioAkpo Local Government Area and the school at Alesa in Eleme Local Government Area which the NDDC tagged as “ongoing” were in fact not existing (https://allafrica.com/stories/2019102403_34.html)

In February, 2020, the Minister of Niger Delta Affairs, Senator Godswill Akpabio announced that the Federal Executive Council (FEC) has approved the completion of about 9,000 abandoned projects across the Niger Delta. In 2015, the NDDC started a three months twin certificate programme in December, 2015, running into billions of naira that was abandoned two months into the training; Fiber Optics/Telecoms and Oil Spill Management training for youths of the Niger Delta Region. This is 2019, it is yet to see the light of the day (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/niger-delta-development-comission>) etc.

The Importance of Monitoring and Evaluation of Development Projects

First, monitoring and evaluation are intended to produce better results in both planning and implementing development projects. The two processes provide the leverages for change agents to develop appropriate road maps that facilitate planning and implementation of projects. As rightly noted by the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC, 2006), evaluation encourages those involved in community development, whether as funders, policy formulators, change agents, volunteers to have clear insights as to their projections. Secondly, monitoring and evaluation also contribute immensely and positively to project performance apart from informing and promoting informed discussions of public policies by throwing light on investments.

Otieno (1999); Project Management Institute; (1996) and Van Der Wadt (1998), all contended that projects in the less developed countries failed due to several reasons, among these are lack of understanding of the need for monitoring and evaluation. For *Wikipedia.org/wiki/Monitoring and Evaluation* (2019), it is used to access the performance of projects, institutions and programmes set up by Governments, International Organizations and NGOs. In addition, its goal is to improve current and future management of outputs, outcomes and impact. Monitoring is a continuous assessment of programmes or projects based on early detailed information on the progress or delay of the ongoing assessed activities. An evaluation is an examination concerning the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact of activities in the light of specific objectives (United Nations Evaluation Group, 2013). IFAD (2002) identified the useful and practical guide to monitoring and evaluation with an overview of relevant concepts to managing the impact, adaptive management and learning approach. This is more of project based

and a departure from some recent guidelines for monitoring and evaluation which focus on sectorial management of the public sector.

Bravo-Ureta, et al (2011), Cavatassi, et al (2011); Kuzek,(2004); and IMF and OECD (2004), all stressed the relevance of monitoring and evaluation for the successful implementation of projects and programmes geared towards development. Similarly, Rogers (2009) considered how best to evaluate the impact of three different interventions. In addition, this school addressed the relevance of selecting appropriate methods in the design of impact evaluation. Winter et al (2011), takes a look at the growing demand within the development profession for more rigorous evaluation of development interventions as well as the consideration and implications for agricultural projects.

In a similar vein, Kamau (2015) and Muyuku (2015) examined the efficacy of monitoring and evaluation in achieving project success in Kenya and Community projects respectively. They asserted that the victory of project management is usually gauged by the project success. They further noted that project success is achieved as a result of various contributing factors and one of such factors leading to project success is monitoring and evaluation. UNICEP (2003), also identified monitoring and evaluation as integral and individually distinct parts of programme preparation and implementation.

Key Peculiarities of Monitoring and Monitoring Procedures

- Monitoring is continuous,
- Monitoring mechanisms should be in place before project commences,
- A level of monitoring is done by project staff while staff and their tasks are monitored by supervisors,
- Monitoring all aspects of the project should be done by the project managers,
- Other stakeholders charged with monitoring other level via field visits and comparing of notes from the routine reports from project managers,
- Monitoring compliance and progress of implementation guide/deadlines
- Quality of input monitoring,
- Documentation of information generated during monitoring,
- Apart from developing monitoring indicators before commencement of projects, such indicators must be assessable to all those involved in the monitoring.
- Monitoring should be carried out regularly via field visits, service delivery review, records/reports and employment of data filed/household investigations.
- Collection and report data information should be done through appropriate and relevant forms.
- Verification of collected data through other sources of data.
- Avoid proxy visits to the field (see Ojukwu 2013; Imhabekhai, 2009 & Obi, 2006).

EVALUATION PROCESS, STRATEGIES AND TOOLS

Evaluation entails particular processes that guarantee full coverage of the components in the project activities. It includes, pre-implementation, which involves the determination of target groups needs as well as the evaluation of context and inputs of the projects; evaluation of inputs and output. After implementation, the evaluation of inputs and final output, report writing, and follow up (Imhabekhai, 2009).

Several strategies and tools are employed in the evaluation process which includes the following: Interviews, Questionnaires, Focus Group Discussions, Assessment, Case reviews, Peer reviews, and Statistical analysis

Constraints to Effective Evaluation

Evaluation is not without constraints. They include, lack of proper planning, inadequate/improper developed evaluation indicators, absence of baseline data, poor analytical skills of data which invariably lead to faulty judgments and projections, and faulty insights of evaluation indicators.

Monitoring and Evaluation Agents of the Federal and State Governments.

Stakeholders in a project are desirous of ample availability of information/data to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of a project.

- i. The staffers of the Department of Planning, Research and Statistics (DPRS) in Ministries/Parastatals can facilitate and meet their monitoring needs of project implementation. It is incumbent on the Department of Planning, Research and Statistics to frequently make available to Ministries and organizations and the office of Economic Planning and Monitoring with appropriate and desired information about activities in their ministries. Informed decision is very crucial for the management of ministries/organizations and the State Planning Outfit (Office of Internally Generated Revenue, Economic Planning and Monitoring). So the importance of needed information to these bodies cannot be over-emphasized in the light of informed decisions and policy formulation.
- ii. The office of Internally Generated Revenue, Economic Planning and Monitoring as a matter of imperative should prepare reports on a regular note on programme performance as well as provide documentations on expenditure and expenditure variance to the Executive Council and to the Executive Governor to meet accountability requirements.
- iii. Each level in the project management must access information from the implementing agency to facilitate periodic reports.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, monitoring and evaluation provide the avenue for learning from the mistakes of the past, enhancing service delivery and quality improvement, allocation of resources through effective planning. It should be part and parcel of project design, implementation plan and completion to guarantee that projects are completed on schedule. In addition, it is worthy of note that several countries such as South Africa, Mexico and Canada have institutionalized monitoring and evaluation as a policy in governance with immense benefit.

As a matter of imperative, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) should be an integral part of any development process but rather sadly, often times, it is employed in development planning as a contingent drive. As no economy can grow without investment in infrastructural development, it behoves on government to understand that monitoring and evaluation is even more critical than planning in achievement of desired goals. In addition, the paper addressed the nexus between monitoring and evaluation. Presently, the National Planning Commission supervises the activities of monitoring and evaluation in Nigeria. The African Evaluation Association in partnership with the UNDP has signalled her interest in putting in place the National Voluntary Organization for professional evaluators. Nigeria should as a matter of urgency strengthen the existing monitoring

and evaluation policies and create an enabling free playing environment in addition to enhancing advocacy machinery in monitoring and evaluation of projects in the country.

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