ENHANCING FEATURES OF EARLY STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN EXPRESSWAY PROJECTS

Har Baharuddin, Suzanne Wilkinson and Seosamh Costello

Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, The University of Auckland, New Zealand

SYNOPSIS

The stakeholders’ commitment, interest and power should be fully assessed to identify the key problems in the stakeholder management process. It is believed that effective engagement at an early stage could bring together viewpoints and identify potential concerns and interests from the point of inception. Early stakeholder engagement aims to minimize risks and expose opportunities available by ensuring the issues within the project can be identified earlier. This research will provide knowledge and guidelines for the project manager, stakeholder manager and the project personnel on the importance of engaging stakeholder from the beginning of project planning. The research gap identified study the veracious engagement methods that suitable for infrastructure through IAP2 spectrum focusing on infrastructure projects. This research aims to provide guidance to the process of stakeholder engagement during the planning stage of the project. A case study of the New Zealand expressway was studied. The data for this research was collected through semi-structured interviews and were analysed using NVivo10. Findings show that the features of the engagement can be categories to the transactional, transitional and transformational engagement. This study explores the features of early stakeholder engagement which will provide a theoretical contribution to increasing understanding about the influence of internal and external stakeholders has on a construction project.

KEYWORDS: stakeholder engagement, early engagement, stakeholder, infrastructure project, IAP2

INTRODUCTION

Neglecting to engage key stakeholders early on is one of the common points of failure in projects. This is due to the fact that different project stakeholders have differing goals and priorities, and it is, therefore, unlikely that all stakeholder expectations could be met. The purpose of this study is to enhance the features of engagement of stakeholder at the early stage that could be valued in the context of infrastructure project. This research applied a qualitative research approach and utilized the case study methodology. The data for this research was collected and currently collected through semi-structured interviews.

Early Stakeholder Engagement

Project stakeholders are groups or individuals who have stake in, or expectation of, the project’s performance including clients, project managers, designers, subcontractors, suppliers, funding bodies, users and the community at large who has power and effected by
the development directly and indirectly (Gibson, 2000; Newcombe, 2003; El-Gohary et al., 2006). Studies show that the early involvement of stakeholders could identify potential problems early-on and providing input throughout the construction phase. Also as an effective ways of developing trust among parties (Ozorhon, 2012). Hence, minimising problems in the project such as reworks, disputes, poor communication and conflicts. Early stage of stakeholder involvement ideally identified during the investigation stage, inception, until project commence.

**The IAP2 Spectrum**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inform</th>
<th>Consult</th>
<th>Involve</th>
<th>Collaborate</th>
<th>Empower</th>
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<td>To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions</td>
<td>To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions</td>
<td>To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered</td>
<td>To partner with the public in each of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.</td>
<td>To place final decision-making in the hands of the public</td>
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![Figure 1: IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum](Source: IAP2 website www.iap2.org)

The IAP2 Spectrum (Figure 1) of public participation portrays the intensity of public participation and impact towards projects. The five levels of engagement used by IAP2 are; inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empowerment, representing a continuum of ‘increasing levels of public impact or influence’. The spectrum introduced has a flexible range of approaches and tools depending on the goals, timeframes, and resources available and the interest of the other parties. Stakeholders may also need to be engaged in different ways depending on the issues that have been identified.

**RESEARCH METHODS**

A case study of New Zealand Northern corridor expressway involving semi-structured interviews with internal and external stakeholders was undertaken. The focus of interview was to elicit feedback from the stakeholders on the process of stakeholder engagement that has been undertaken during the early construction project. Participants were asked to express both their views and experiences relating to the engagement process as experienced by them and their group, whether they were in support or opposed to the scheme, and how the project affected them. The data analysis procedure involved converting raw narrative data (interview notes, audiotapes) into partially processed data (transcripts) which were then coded (with the aid of NVivo10 software).
PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

The IAP2 has been provided as a good foundation for the early stakeholder engagement. Using IAP2 spectrum as the benchmark, it is recommended that inform, consult and involve are the three levels that are used to classify groups of stakeholders in construction and could be the focus during early stakeholder engagement. Figure 2 shows the findings anticipated from the case study.

RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of this research is in the potential for improvement in the engagement process through stakeholder involvement at the early stage of the project. Engaging in the right way at the right time should be emphasised in any project, due to the reduction of conflicts from community and public involvement, especially on infrastructure projects. This study outlines a theoretical and general model of the process of analysing stakeholder’s satisfaction and impacts towards the project success.

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REFERENCES


