

Project Management in Moroccan SMEs and large companies : Standards versus New version

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Abstract—Project management is an economical factor impacting all types of enterprises including the SMEs.

SMEs are very important component of the international economy. Statistics over the world show that the SMEs are predominant in the global market, representing more than 90% of all the companies in a set of countries.

This paper has the aim of identifying the project management practices used in Moroccan SMEs in comparison with the large companies.

The study is based on interviews with experts: project managers, managers, directors, and consultants. They were asked questions measuring the project management knowledge level, the extent of using project management standards and the idea of a new version of project management method. Eighteen Moroccan companies from a range of industries and sizes were consulted.

Keywords— Morocco, Project Management, SME, Standards, New Version.

I. INTRODUCTION

According to the Moroccan Ministry for Migration, more than 95% of Moroccan companies are SMEs” Small to Medium-sized enterprises “[1]. According to a study realized by of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in Morocco in 2009:

- Over 90% of all industrial companies are SMEs;
- SMEs contributes more than 40% to the turnover of the industrial sector; and,
- SMEs employ more than 50% of the workforce [2].

These statistics prove the importance of SMEs. Operating within a rapidly changing environment, SMEs continuously look for ways to survive, grow, and be competitive [3]. Searching or creating projects is one such way. Turner and Al (2009) demonstrated that SMEs spend about the third of their turnover on projects [4].

This study has the objective of answering to the following questions:

- What is project management level for Moroccan employees in large and Small to Medium-Sized Enterprises?
- To what extent standards are used in Moroccan companies?
- What are the characteristics of the required version of project management for SMEs?

This paper will be organized in this way:

- 1-We start with definition(s) of Moroccan SME.
- 2-Then we describe the methodology we applied.
- 3-Finally we present the findings of the study.

II. SMES IN MOROCCO

A. Definition

Until July 2002, there was no official definition of SMEs in Morocco. The first Moroccan law for SME is named the 53-00. It defines the SME as a Moroccan company respecting the conditions:

- To have permanent employee numbers not exceeding 200 persons
- To have achieved over the last two years, a turnover of less than 75 million Moroccan dirhams [5]

The director of SMEs committee has confirmed the same definition [6].

B. Methodology

The paper is part of a larger study where we used a methodical approach based on five main steps:

1. Literature review to gain an understanding of projects and project management in SMEs in Morocco and the world.
2. Making a comparison between the SMEs and the large Moroccan companies concerning project and project management
3. Making a survey focused on SMEs
4. Making a proposal of a project management version adapted to Moroccan SMEs
5. Validation of the proposal

In this step, we interviewed people from SMEs and large companies. Different sizes and industries were included.

We asked them information about

- Their professional and academic background
- The company and the department they are working
- Project management knowledge: training and certification
- Project management standards

Finally, we discussed if they need a « lite version » of project management [7].

III. INTERVIEWED PEOPLE

In order to guarantee a certain level of information quality, selected people to be interviewed had to respect some criteria:

- They have worked in projects at least ones during their career as (project team members, project managers, executives or directors)
- They have at least a diploma of engineer to guarantee they have a minimal project management knowledge
- They are from different level of management
- They are from different levels of seniority

The Table I present a summery of interviewed people

TABLE I
INTERVIEWED PEOPLE

Member level	Experience duration	Project management Experience duration	Management level
Team Member	2	2	Software engineer
Project manager	5	2	Quality project manager
Project manager	10	2	Scrum Master
Project manager	10	2	Project manager
Project manager	10	2	Chief executive
Project manager	13	3	Organization manager
Project manager	10	5	Quality manager
Project Director	10	6	Expansion manager
Consultant	8	8	Consultant
Project Director	13	8	Chief executive
Project manager	9	8	Project manager
Project manager	9	9	Expert
Project Director	15	10	Manager
Project manager	13	11	Senior project manager
Project Director	21	12	Chief executive
Project Director	15	14	Chief executive
Project manager	14	14	Logistic manager
Project Director	15	15	Chief executive

The majority of interviewed people are project managers or project directors. All of them affirm to be in the same time project team members in other projects.

- The second remark is that project management experience is generally shorter than the whole experience, which mean that the employees need to serve as a technical employee before having the position of a project manager and that it is rarely possible to start as a project manager.

IV. SAMPLE COMPANIES

The interview was a list of questions about many aspects of project and project management. The first parts concerned the interviewed persons. The second touched the companies' information.

The Table II - presents surveyed companies.

TABLE II
SURVEYED COMPANIES

Enterprise name	Activity area	Turnover (million MAD Moroccan Dirham)*	Number of employees	Enterprise type	Interviewed Entity
CD	Agri-food	9000	7000	Large	QHSE
IC	Telecom	7000	1100	Large	IP Stream
WA	Assurances	6000	300	Large	Information system
MC	Telecom	5500	1160	Large	Special Infrastructure projects
MC	Telecom	5500	1160	Large	Information system
MC	Telecom	5500	1000	Large	Data and voice services
LF	Construction materials	5000	1000	Large	Supply Chain
DET	Retail industry	450	450	Large	Expansion
SM	Audio-visual	300	800	Large	The whole Enterprise
OT	SI consulting	200	20	SME	The whole Enterprise
ICM	Network Installer	170	120	SME	The whole Enterprise
TE	Industrial air conditioning and cooling systems	30	20	SME	The whole Enterprise
DF	Finance	22	20	SME	The whole Enterprise
SES	Aerospace	5	150	SME	The whole Enterprise
VC	Recruitment, Training, Project Coaching	3.5	1	SME	The whole Enterprise
MCC	Training and consulting	3	7	SME	The whole Enterprise
CS	IT	1.5	10	SME	The whole

	services				Enterprise
SM	Informatics services	1	2	SME	The whole Enterprise

The choice of including the large companies in the survey was done because:

-There is a big relation of interaction between large and small companies in the Moroccan market

-The majority of the Moroccan officials in Moroccan companies work first in large firms before creating their own start up.

-To speak about differences in project management between large firms and SMEs suppose that we have information about the two types of enterprises.

Nota Bene

To get maximum benefit of the large companies information and to be closer to the SMEs context, we used an approach of « entity » instead of the whole enterprise. We tried to assess the project management the interest of people and companies of the project management

V. PROJECT MANAGEMENT KNOWLEDGE

To assess that aspect, we asked about three parameters:

- Project management training
- Project management certification
- Project management components

A. Training

Before speaking about the practical knowledge, we asked people about the theoretical knowledge. The question was about the training provided by the company or done individually. The common answer was the low level of training. It means that neither Moroccan employees neither their companies consider the project management training as a priority. There were two exceptions: Two subsidiaries of international groups. They have continual training in project management. The analysis of the findings shows three levels:

-People with no training.

-People with general training as a first discovery of the discipline. The known training is "PMI training"

-The third level concerns people with high level training. There were two persons. One of them is a Phd and founder of a company of training and consulting (with PMP, TOGAF" The Open Group Architecture Framework", and Agile training). The second is an IT consultant with a great knowledge on agile methods.

B. Certification

The second level we asked about is having certification. As we know that certification and credential are proof of an individual's qualification or competence in project management. Among people who have training a minority was certified. There was a special case of an SI consultant who thinks that having certification does not have a value in the market.

The second remark that we have is that the PMP "Project Management Professional "[8] is the well-known certification

in Morocco. Almost the majority of the interviewed know its certification and training. Followed by Agile methods as a new trend. ITIL” Information Technology Infrastructure Library“ is considered more as a set of best-practice publications for IT service management [9].

C. Portfolio, Program and Project

In this part, we asked people if they know the meaning of the three words: Portfolio, Program and Project. Most of the answers were positive. The question was a test of level. We expect that every one has his own definition of the three concepts that is why we had a positive answer for the whole population.

D. Summery

-Project management training as a tool to have a good project management knowledge is not a common shared idea neither for people nor for companies in Morocco.

-Even if the number of certification holders is growing day-by-day, Moroccan project managers disagree with its importance.

VI. STANDARDS VERSUS NEW VERSION OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT

A. The Use of Standards

As waited, the majority does not have a project management standard to follow. Two companies use a combination of standards. Just three companies confirmed to have an internal process. All of them are subsidiaries of international groups; they have the process of the mother company.

To explain that situation, we asked people about the factors impacting the use of standards.

The Table V sums up these factors.

TABLE III
FACTORS IMPACTING THE USE OF STANDARDS

	Technical factors	Cultural factors	Economic factors	Political factors
Large companies	-Great level of abstraction -Unknown standards -Inadequate academic qualifications	-Difference of cultures -Top management does not care and sees only the result -The "standard" is not a common idea in Morocco	-High cost of training -Different economic levels -Insufficient funding -Expensive models	Not suitable political environment
SME	Very Complicated -Too Heavy (A lot of details) -It Does not determine how to be used -Undefined tools -Staff with low level of knowledge	-Absence of team spirit -The overlap between what is personal and professional -Presence of the emotional dimension - The language used in the project management world is not adapted to the Moroccan context -Absence of the concept of time management -Dominance of inadequate culture	-Costly implementation -Expensive training -Requires Qualified resources -Lack of budget - Underdeveloped country: The SMEs priority is to survive	Unable to absorb change: the dictatorship Corruption

To sum up that all the companies proclaim that complexity of the well-known standards, the expensive costs of the training and licensing, and the differences between cultures. The new is that the large companies claim having the same problems. It is mainly due to the differences between developed and underdeveloped countries.

B. The New Version of Project Management

The logical consequence of having problems with existed standards is looking for a new version. The main characteristics of this version were that it has to be:

-Simpler, flexible, more adapted « to company size, dedicated for small teams »

-Well documented and suitable for all levels of SMEs employees

-It has to take into account the companies constraints “the workload, resources, competences... “

1) *Content of the New Version*: The difference depending on the size of the companies become clearer. The large companies proclaim they need all the elements of project management. The new thing they add is that it has to be presented in a simple way. The SMEs are more selective. The common elements between all the companies were: the time, the cost management, monitoring and the tools to implement the methodology.

2) *Summary*: The new version has to be simpler and adapted. Its content has to be more restricted to the essential requirements of the SMEs: the time, the cost management, monitoring and tools.

VII. LIMITATIONS

All During the interviews we met two types of limitations:

-Limitations dictated by the nature of the SMEs and their characteristics such as the absence of data throughout the enterprise's life cycle.

-Limitations decided by the person interviewed. We had difficulties to convince SME owners to speak about the enterprise turnover. We also met people who refuse to give us information because of data confidentiality

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

-Moroccan companies think that project management training is not an important way to have a good level in project management.

-Even though the number of certifications is growing day by day, certification is not perceived as an important format of having project management knowledge

-All the companies proclaim the complexity of the well known standards, the expensive costs of the training and licensing, and the differences between cultures.

- They affirm they need a new version simpler and adapted. Its contents has to be more restricted to the essential requirements of the SMEs: the time, the cost management, monitoring and tools..

IX. IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE STEPS

The next work to do is to concentrate on the SMEs as the main agent of the study:

-To confirm the findings discussed below for a large number of SMEs

-To combine the obtained results with the new methodologies as agile methods and lean start-up

- To make a proposal of a first draft of the adapted version

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