

INTERROGATING THE MERITS OF SITE MEETING: CASE OF CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS HANDLING IN EKITI STATE HIGHER INSTITUTIONS.

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Abstract

The paper addressed the merits of Site Meeting within the context of construction projects in the building industry using the higher institutions in Ekiti State, Nigeria as case studies. A structured questionnaire was used and administered to the Consultants and Contractors engaged by the Ekiti State Higher Institutions, Ninety three (93) questionnaires were distributed while only seventy four (74) Respondents filled the questionnaire and submitted and nineteen (19) of them refused to respond. The identified merits were ranked based on the responses of the respondents. The results indicated that 31.1% of the respondents held site meetings anytime an indication that many stakeholders in the building industry do not pay serious attention to site meeting. However, the overall mean score of the merits was 4.46, a score that indicated that the respondents can be deemed to agree with the merits of site meetings. The ranking showed that 'quality project delivery' was the most important merit of site meeting, closely followed by 'timely completion of projects' and 'resolution of difficult issues' while 'resolution of lump sum items and details provided' was the least in the ranking order. The study recommended that Funding Agencies and Heads of Institutions should demand for outcomes of site meeting on monthly bases. All consultants be it the engaged or in-house should always arrange/schedule/an request for site meetings on each of their projects and site meetings must be regular with specific day and time within the month. Contractors should be interested in site meetings because of its merits and should not be trying to evade site meetings. All stakeholders should ensure regular presence at site meetings and should ensure that site meetings are well conducted and meet the needs of the projects.

Keywords: Site, Meeting, Professionals, Building Industry, Minutes, Agenda, Consultants

1.0 Introduction

In all sector of live and world over greater percentage of people belief so much in dialogue to resolve issues, challenges, facilitate compromises, reach decisions and conclusions. Dialogue usually occurs through meeting or meetings. The question is what is the right definition of this important tool call Meeting? As define by [1] meeting is the process of coming together such as an assembly for a common purpose. From the foregoing it is important to emphases that a meeting is arranged to facilitate a common purpose by the coming together of all stakeholders in a matter of common concern, hence site meeting is arranged to discuss questions and problems arising from the project, interpretations of site and documents, arriving at decisions and solutions there by arriving at the full objectives of the projects on time, to budget and to quality.

In the building industry the quest for quality delivery of projects in terms of functionality, structural stability and within cost allocated is always been emphasis and more so in view of the incessant building collapse. Also, there are many stakeholders within the industry performing different roles and functions that are complex and tasking. These stakeholders include the client, the financiers, the skilled professionals (Architects, Quantity Surveyors, Services Engineers, Structural Engineers, Project Manager etc), the Contractor and the Sub-Contractors. These stakeholders' roles as diverse as they are must work harmoniously with each other, their works must flow, and the outputs must not conflict with each other. All the works must speak same language and concept. The outputs of each professional must adequately relate to each other and in conformity. To facilitate effective coordination of all the stakeholders in a building project, the need for meeting called Site Meeting, Construction Meeting or Project Meeting is truly imperative. Site meeting is an essential tool in making a successful building project; it is a fundamental ingredient- to achieving the client's objective. Site meeting is the forum where all concerns are met and resolved. Concerns that has to do with discrepancies not earlier noted in documents, conflicts, disputes, claims, changes, resolution of observations and instructions. It is important to also note that there are stages of work in the building industry, each of the stages has their own peculiarities and challenges that need to be attended to as these stages are reached.

Be as it may look adequate, many do not pay attention to the importance of site meeting and therefore lower the guard when it comes to the regularity and quality of site meetings and its effectiveness in ensuring satisfactory progress and successful completion of

work. It is the hope of this study to interrogate the merits of site meeting within the building industry in realizing a quality project that meets the yawning, aspirations of the client/financier.

2.0 Literature Review

Site meeting as a regular meeting that's held to try to keep an eye on progress, keep an eye on issues that crop up and make sure everyone is well informed as we go through the process [3]. Site meeting is having all parties there at the same time, being able to discuss the issues, run through them and hopefully come up with solutions that works very well [4]. Site Meetings are used as a means of reporting progress, enabling discussion of any problems or issues, and allowing the proposal of solutions. Such meetings provide a good opportunity for two-way discussions of any issues that have arisen or that are anticipated. Construction progress meetings are a specific sort of site meeting during which the contract administrator receives progress reports from the contractor and consultant team, cost reports from the cost consultant and other more specific information such as sub-contractor reports, progress photos, and provide a form of reporting system [5].

For managing a construction projects successfully Construction Site meetings are a crucial part. When regular meetings are held on the site all the different stakeholders engaged on a project can help in enhancing effective communication and create a better shared sense of similar purpose. Failures of projects are most times attributed to inadequacy in management, in which the direct key factor is lack of proper communication between the concerned parties. The major reason for arranging for a progress meeting is to evaluate the smooth running of the projects by keeping the completion date in view. Progress meeting should be very brief may be an hour or so and the prime objectives should be to everyone understanding [6].

Construction meetings serve many important purposes on a job site. Not only do these meetings allow parties to discuss and coordinate upcoming project activities, but they provide a forum in which the parties can discuss project changes and claims. Parties to a construction contract should be encouraged to hold regular construct meetings. Construction meetings facilitate discussions of issues that may affect project costs or schedule [7]. Regular project team meetings that are held all the way through design and construction documents phases, often continue through the construction phase. Held bi-weekly or as determined, depending on scope, size and complexity of the project. Site Meting can be held on site or at the consultant's or client's office. These meetings are used to review the project schedule, progress of the Work, progress claims and changes to the contract documents. This meeting may be held immediately following the construction progress meetings. It is suggested that separate meetings for these specific purposes be held, whether they are separate meetings on the same date, or on a separate date. Attended by the owner, consultant and representatives of the sub-consultants as needed, depending on the progress of construction. Chaired and recorded by the consultant [8].

Also, Site meetings are an important part of the successful management of construction projects. Regular site meetings between the different stakeholders on a project can help facilitate better communication and a shared sense of purpose making it more likely that the project is completed successfully. Project failures are often attributed to inadequate management, with a key factor being a lack of proper communication. Meetings should be regular and formerly scheduled, perhaps on a weekly or monthly basis depending on the parties involved, although the size and complexity of the project may necessitate discuss quality issues, assess mock-ups, and so on. Holding meetings on site enables the stakeholders to see progress for themselves rather than relying on a report for another party, and to look at problem areas, Meeting minutes should be prepared, with a requirement that any disagreement with the items recorded in the minutes is raised within a pre-defined period (perhaps one week). Progress meetings may also result in the preparation of a construction progress report for the client [5].

It has been submitted that just as with a contractor's safety meetings, everything that happens during construction meetings should be written down in a comprehensive manner that allows the all the parties to track the progress of their discussions continuously throughout the course of several construction meetings. It should be the practice of distributing these meeting minutes to all; the Owner, Architect, Project Administrator, and any subcontractors in attendance. A contractor can use construction meetings to confirm that other parties are aware it is mobilizing or demobilizing from the project or moving to a different area [7].

Meeting attendees are to review minutes of site meetings carefully and are to be prepared to answer any questions at the next site meeting. The meeting minutes reflect decisions and agreements made collectively at this meeting and shall be deemed an accurate record of the matters discussed and conclusions reached [9]. The primary reason for recording meeting minutes is their importance. Meeting minutes aren't intended to be throwaway notes. In fact, meeting minutes in construction should function as an accurate representation of the status of the project, parties and the project plan moving forward. Meeting minutes, like site diaries and other daily or weekly documentation form the backbone of construction reporting and record keeping. Construction meeting minutes are just one of the many important pieces of documentation which combine to foster effective construction project communication and collaboration. The secondary but sometimes more common reason for keeping meeting minutes is so that you don't forget important information from a meeting, or even the minor things that were said or done which combine to have a big impact on the outcome of the project [10].

Minutes are to record the activities and decision you make about prioritization and actioning tasks and can easily share important findings and takeaways with other parties on the project. Every agenda item should have some associated discussion points - and actions and due dates which you can work from in order to solve outstanding issues and improve project progress moving forward. Taking minutes of any meeting is probably sensible. The notes form a structure for the following meeting and make sure items that are discussed are not forgotten. So they are picked up and continually dealt with until such time as they are cleared. Minutes that

have been agreed on by all parties also forms a contractual record of agreement so in case of a dispute there is sufficient information about the parties' discussion [10].

An Owner, can make use of construction meetings to inform the parties about changes in design or parameter enabling all the parties more time to appreciate how the new changes will affect the project. The highest importance of construction meetings most times addresses specific issues or obstacles on a specific portion of the project – a conflict and an omission in the plans. These matters may need to be properly documented, however each of the items raised should be attended to during construction meetings, and this is to enable the tracking of progress and resolution among other reasons [7]. Construction meeting minutes provide the project team with the method of tracking and monitoring the progress of construction and minutes capture the discussions, the resolutions, the attendees at each the meeting, as well other issues that came up during the meeting [9].

Proper capturing of the proceedings of the meeting as reflected in the minutes will assist in avoiding dispute that leads to either arbitration or mediation, or litigation. Detailed minutes will also help in resolving issues without requesting the intervention of a third party. However if matters can be resolved and leads to a legal battle, then, documents such as meeting minutes can always be an evidence. Detailed meeting minutes are the best offensive defense when dispute between two or more parties arises. In these cases, a construction meeting agenda template might help you in preparing the minutes in a quick time [6].

These are few simple pointers or tips to conducting and preparing document of a successful site meeting:

- Ensure you have regular site meetings at regular specific times. Do not cancel already scheduled meetings for any just reason except on an emergency.
- Special meetings should be called up by written notice of meeting or memorandum. Verbal notice is generally not effective and acceptable and it should be discouraged unless the meeting has to occur within the next 30 or 45 minutes.
- Ensure meetings are started on time as schedule. When you are finished, break up the meeting and in clear terms indicate to all the attendees that the meeting is over.
- Prepare a well written agenda in advance of the meeting and follow through or stick to it. Provide and send the agenda to the attendees before the meeting and have the agenda available during the meeting to keep everyone focused on the lines agenda topics.
- Make sure that you or someone at the meeting is taking accurate notes of deliberations of the meeting [9].

Conducting an effective site meeting may be herculean, below is a generated site meeting agenda format that can be reworked or modified for conducting a successful and effective site meeting, they are as follows:

- 1) Pass around and sign in the attendance sheet to confirm attendees and take note any or other party not represented.
- 2) Review the previous meeting minutes for corrections and update status or accommodate responses to any pending issues.
- 3) Contractors should take note of their current total job staffing.
- 4) Discuss problems, material delivery or shortages, quality of job, site problems, shop drawing submission and approvals, construction conflicts etc.
- 5) Review progress schedule and reports. Identify and record causes of delay and possible remedies.
- 6) Discuss new business with each participant and give opportunity and time to speak or indicate no new business.
- 7) Discuss status of change orders and progress.
- 8) Contractor payment issues are discussed in general and payment approvals.
- 9) Coordination of supplied equipment are discussed in terms of quality and delivery.
- 10) Comments/Questions period.
- 11) Verify the time and place of the next meeting.
- 12) Adjourn to the job site or group meetings in order to review on-site or specific problems [11].

No doubt Site meeting helps to enforce quality standards such as developing a project quality control plan, assess workmanship during construction, increases communication in the construction team, assess the specification used and requires a competent construction manager. This management tool has often been employed to ensure that projects are successfully delivered based on the traditional indices of time, cost and quality. All issues, including disputes, conflicts and claims, pertaining to construction projects are discussed and often finalized at site meetings. If these issues are effectively resolved, it will not only ensure that projects are delivered to cost, time and quality but will enhance the general sustainability of the project [12].

3.0 Research Methodology

The research instrument used for data collection was a structural questionnaire purposely designs to elude response from each of the targeted respondents on apropos issues of the research variables. There were 20 questions in the questionnaire which formed the research variables. The questions (variables) were well specified and operationally defined. The variables were subjected to critical investigation in a field survey using Google Forms.

The respondents for this research were the institutions' in-house professionals, Consultants in the building industry who had been engaged in at least a building project within the subject areas, and contractors who had handled a project or more in the study areas. A total of 93 respondents were identified and questionnaire administered to the Respondents. The responses were harnessed through Google Forms using corresponding author's email from 13th May 2021 to 31st May 2021. 74 of the respondents submitted. The generated outcomes from the research variables constituted the data for this research work. The data collected generated the pie charts and were converted to tables while SPSS was used to rank the merits based on the responses from the respondent.

4.0 The Study Area

Ekiti State is in the Southwest region of Nigeria. Ekiti State was created on October 1st, 1996 when it was carved out of the Ondo State. Ekiti State is having 16 local governments. Ado-Ekiti is the state capital. Ekiti State total landed area is 5,887.89sqkm with a population 2,384,212. The latitude of Ekiti is between 40° 51' and 50° 451' and the longitude is between 70° 151' and 80° 51' [2]. In terms of higher institution Ekiti State has Federal, State and Private higher institutions both at University and Polytechnic levels. It also has a College of Education and Schools of Nursing. In summary there are four Universities: one Federal University, two state Universities and one private University, also, one Federal Polytechnic, one state college of Technology and one private Polytechnic. The College of Education is state government owned and had since be converted to a University. There is one Federal School of Nursing, one State School of Nursing and one State College of Health Technology.

Federal University Oye Ekiti was established in 2011 and it operates on two campuses, at Oye Ekiti which is the main campus and at Ikole- Ekiti. Ekiti State University Ado-Ekiti formally known as University of Ado-Ekiti was established in 1982 as a multi campus University but since remains as a single campus at Ado-Ekiti. Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology Ikere Ekiti was established in 2021 when the College of Education was upgraded to the university and currently using the campus of Ekiti State College of Education Ikere Ekiti which was established in 1977.

The Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti was established in 1982 while Ekiti State College of Technology Isan Ekiti was established in 2014. The Federal Medical Teaching Hospital School of Nursing Ido-Ekiti was established in 1998 while Ekiti State University Teaching Hospital School of Nursing Ado Ekiti was established in 1976. The Crown Polytechnic which is a privately owned was established in 2008 while the State College of Health Technology was established in 1997

Each of the institution from inception had been engaging in building and construction projects. In many of these projects, Consultants in the building industry such as Architects, Quantity Surveyors, Structural Engineers, Mechanical and Electrical Engineers were engaged to provide professional services. Also each of the institutions has in-house professionals in the building industry who are permanent staff; the in-house professionals also include Land Surveyors, Estate Surveyors and Builders. Both the in-house professionals and the engaged/commissioned professionals are saddled with the responsibility of managing the building projects being handled by the institutions commissioned Contractors. Table 1 presents the details of the higher institutions.

Table 1: Higher Institutions in Ekiti State

SN	NAME OF INSTITUTION	OWNERSHIP	YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT
1	Federal University Oye Ekiti	Federal Government	2011
2	Ekiti State University Ado-Ekiti	State Government	1982
3	Bamidele Olumilua University of Education Science and Technology Ikere-Ekiti	State Government	2021
4	Afe Babalola University Ao Ekiti	Private	2009
5	Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti	Federal Government	1982
6	College of Technology Isan-Ekiti	State Government	2014
7	College of Health Technology, Ijero Ekiti	State Government	1997
8	College of Education Ikere Ekiti	State Government	1997
9	Crown Polytechnic Odo;Ado-Ekiti	Private	2008
10	ederal Medical School of Nursing Ido-Ekiti	Federal Government	1976
11	Ekiti State Teaching Hospital School of Nursing Ado-Ekiti	State Government	2001

Source: Authors' Field Work 2021.

5.0 Research Findings and Discussions

Table 2 indicates the age of the respondents, the number of years already spent in the building industry by the respondents and the number of projects that the respondents had participated in. The Table shows that 76.6% of respondents were above 40years of age. 16.2% between 36-40years old, 8.1% between 31-33years old and 4.1% were 26-30years old. Also, the tables indicated that 20.3% had been in the building industry for a period of 5-10years, 12.2% had spent 11-15years, 21.6% for 16-20years, 16.2% for 21-25years, 14.9% for 26-30years and 14.9% for more than 30years. The Tables again indicated the number of projects the respondents had participated: 6.8% had participated between 1-5 projects, 9.4% on 16-20 projects, 6.8% for 21-25 projects, 6.8% for 26-30 projects, 37.8% worked above 30 projects

Table 3 shows the qualifications of the respondents and indicated that 10.8% have Ph.D., 36.5% M.Sc, 33.8% B.Sc. and 27% had HND.

Table 4 reflects the professions of the respondents and it shows that 36.5% were Architects, 16.2% were Builders, 14.9% were Civil Engineers, 18.9% were Quantity Surveyors, 8.1% Mechanical/Electrical Engineers and 10.8% Contractors.

Table 5 presents the frequency of holding site meetings on the project that the respondents participated and the table indicated that 59.5% had site meetings every month, 9.4% once in two months and 31.1% anytime.

Table 6 indicates the building project stakeholders' perceptions of the merits of site meeting. The Table shows that 67.6% strongly agreed that site meetings are important to timely completion of projects. 28.4% agreed, 2.7% disagree and 1.4% strongly disagree, 45.9% strongly agreed that site meetings enhance cost effectively on projects, 44.6% agreed, 6.8% disagreed and 2.7% were indifferent, 66.2% strongly agreed that with site meeting quality projects delivery are usually achieved, 32.4% agreed and 1.4% disagreed, 36.5% strongly agreed that site meetings help to save costs of projects, 45.9% agreed, 10.8% disagreed, 5.4% were indifferent and 1.4% strongly disagree, 74.3% strongly agree that difficult issues are resolved, thereby helping the contractor to deliver quality jobs while 25.7% agree, 51.4% agreed that contractors and sub-contractors/suppliers are properly managed while 44.6% strongly agreed, 2.7% were indifferent and 1.4% agreed, 52.7% strongly agreed that lump sum items are better resolved and details provided at site meetings while 40.5% agreed, 4.1% disagreed and 2.7% were indifferent, 45.9% agreed that site meetings enhances that all parties are concerned with timely completion to specification, 47.3% strongly agreed, 5.4% were indifferent and 1.4% disagreed, 66.2% strongly agreed that site meeting provide avenue for good relationship of all parties while 33.6% agreed, 67.6% strongly agreed that site meeting enhances effective project supervision, 28.4% agreed and 4.1% disagreed, 67.5% strongly agreed that minutes of site minutes is an effective tool to meaningful site meeting, 31.1% agreed and 1.4% disagreed, 50% strongly agreed that agenda helps to structure proceedings for site meeting and 50% agreed, 57.4% strongly agreed that notice of meeting assists meeting participation and effectiveness of attendances and 49.6% agreed.

Furthermore, in Table 6 it is noteworthy that all the merits have an overall mean score (OMS) of 4.46 for all the merits, as shown in Table 5, which indicates that the respondents strongly agree / agree with the merits of site meeting in building project. Most notable among the merits are the ones with the mean score (MS) values of 4.46 and above, noting here that the OMS value is 4.46. From this result, the respondents can be deemed to agree with most of the merits – site meeting is important to timely completion of projects, site meetings usually aid quality project delivery, difficulty issues are resolved at site meetings and site meetings enhance effective project supervision. Ranking the merits in order of importance indicates that 'quality project delivery' was the most important merit of site meeting, closely followed by 'timely completion of projects' and 'resolution of difficult issues' while 'resolution of lump sum items and details provided' was the least in the ranking order.

Table 2: Age, Years in the Building Industry and Number of Projects Done

S/ N		YEARS									
		1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	>30	31-35	36-40	>40
1	Age	0	0	0	0	0	3 (4.1)	0	6 (8.1)	12 (16.2)	53 (71.6)
2	How long in the building industry		15 (20.3)	9 (12.1)	16 (21.6)	12 (16.2)	11 (14.9)	11 (14.9)	0	0	0
3	How many projects have you participated in	5 (6.8)	7 (9.4)	16 (21.6)	8 (10.8)	5 (6.8)	5 (6.8)	28 (37.8)	0	0	0

Source: Authors' Field Work 2021.

Table 3: Qualification of Respondents

SN		HND		BSc		MSc		PhD	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
1	Qualification	20	27	25	33.8	27	36.5	8	10.8

Source: Authors' Field Work 2021.

Table 4: Profession of Respondents.

SN		Architects		Builders		Civil Engineers		Quantity Surveyors		Mechanical/ Electrical Engineers		Contractors	
	Profession	27	36.5	12	16.2	11	14.9	14	18.9	6	8.1	8	10.8

Source: Authors' Field Work 2021.

Table 5: Frequency of Site Meetings

SN		Every Month		Once in a Month		Anytime	
		No	%	No	%	No	%
1	How frequent is your Site Meeting	44	59.5	7	9.4	23	31.1

Source: Authors' Field Work 2021.

Table 6: Merits of Site Meeting

S/N	MERITS OF SITE MEETING	SA	A	D	SD	UD	MEAN	OMS	RANK
1	Site Meeting is important to timely completion of projects	50 (67.6)	21 (28.4)	2 (2.7)	1 (1.4)	0 (0.0)	4.62	4.46	2 nd
2	Site Meetings enhances cost efficiency on projects	34 (45.9)	33 (44.6)	5 (6.8)	0 (0.0)	2 (2.7)	4.36		8 th
3	Site Meetings usually aid quality project delivery	49 (66.2)	24 (32.4)	1 (1.4)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4.65		1 st
4	Site Meetings help to save cost	27 (36.5)	34 (45.9)	8 (10.8)	1 (1.4)	4 (5.4)	4.28		9 th
5	Difficulty issues are resolved at Site Meetings	55 (74.3)	19 (25.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4.58		3 rd
6	Contractors and Sub-contractors/suppliers are properly managed	33 (44.6)	38 (51.4)	1 (1.4)	0 (0.0)	2 (2.7)	4.41		7 th
7	Site Meetings help in resolving Lump Sum items and details provided	30 (40.5)	39 (52.7)	3 (4.1)	0 (0.0)	2 (2.7)	4.26		10 th
8	Site Meetings encouraged all parties to be concerned with timely completion of project to specification	35 (47.3)	34 (45.9)	1 (1.4)	0 (0.0)	4 (5.4)	4.54		5 th
9	Site Meetings provide avenue for good relationship	49 (66.2)	25 (33.8)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4.43		6 th
10	Site Meetings enhance effective project supervision	50 (67.6)	21 (28.4)	3 (4.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4.57		4 th

SA: Strongly Agree, A: Agree, D: Disagree, SD: Strongly Disagree, UD: Undecided

Source: Authors' Field Work 2021.

6.0 Recommendations

It is clear that all in the building industry agreed with the merits of Site Meeting hence the following recommendations:

- i. Funding Agencies and Heads of Institutions should demand for outcomes of Site meeting on monthly bases.
- ii. All consultants should always arrange and schedule for site meetings on each of their projects.
- iii. Site meetings must be regular with specific day and time within the month
- iv. Contractors should be interested in site meeting due to its merits not trying to evade site meetings.
- v. All stakeholders should ensure regular presence at site meetings
- vi. All stakeholders should ensure that site meetings are well conducted and meet the needs of the projects.

7.0 Conclusions

The research work has clearly identified the merits of site meeting, which include among others enhancement of quality of work, timely completion of project, difficult issues are resolved, and effective project supervision. It further shows that all stakeholders appreciated site meeting and the merits of its regularity and adequacy, though many for now do not schedule site meeting regularly. Hence all stakeholders such as clients, funding agencies, consultants, contractors and others in the building industry should ensure site meetings are held at specific time agreed upon and that the site meetings should be conducted for the greater benefits of the project.

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