Abstract

A perceived uniqueness of real estate (RE) projects has led to a view among RE practitioners that since no two RE projects are the same, they must all follow their own unique set of processes. Further, local exigencies often result in the very processes agreed at the beginning of every project being changed, thereby making projects unpredictable for delivery within time and budget, or to standards of quality expected. Maintaining the need to follow pre-defined standard processes in RE operations, this research establishes the efficacy of adopting process standardisation while executing RE operations.

In building the case for adopting process standardisation, the current research extends the paradigm shift from function to process unfolding in several industries and explores the potential of standardisation in this process-centric approach using generic process formulations and specific possibilities in the context of RE operations. The research integrally also considers how an operations regime in the RE sector based on processes and their standardisation could be helped by two impactful developments in information and communication technologies (ICTs): rising affordability of ICT devices, and ubiquity of high-bandwidth ICT networks. Further, the research provides justification for adopting a digitally-enabled approach based on process standardisation by relating it to key RE sector objectives, formulated from a sector competitiveness viewpoint.

The research methodology adopted initially focuses on two converging tracks with the first accessing relevant sector competitiveness literature to formulate RE sector objectives. Retaining the process standardisation perspective, the second track synthesises findings from existing literature on process standardisation with a qualitative interpretive analysis of semi-structured interviews with 30 Indian RE sector practitioners working at levels of consequence, to comprehensively identify a clutch of inhibiting (12) and enabling (14) variables that would matter from a standpoint of processes and their standardisation. With a nation-wide survey of adequate sample strength, the research then seeks stakeholder views on how the identified variables relate to each of the sector objectives formulated. A rigorous Principal Components Analysis is then deployed on survey responses to identify, for each of the RE sector objectives, possible combination of factors that would impact each RE sector objective. In the next step, another round of stakeholder consultation is used to select the most suitable set of factors for every RE objective as understood by a third set of stakeholders with long-standing hands-on experience in the Indian RE sector.
In the final phase of this research, activities to be executed on ground are proposed to realise ideas emerging from this work. This is accomplished by building an equivalence between RE sector, where standardised process-based operations are sought to be implemented in a whole-of-sector approach, to similar efforts in the public sector where, worldwide, whole-of-government initiatives from an operations perspective has acquired momentum and is being pursued by many national governments across the globe. Relating RE sector operations from a process standardisation perspective with the public sector leads to nine intervention directions for the RE sector. Drawing a link between RE sector operations and WoG initiatives in the public sector also leads to associating a relative importance with each of the intervention directions separately for each of the four RE sector objectives formulated, as well as for all the objectives considered together.

Four objectives including growth and profitability, predictability and quality of operations, availability and deployment of skilled human resources, and governance, are identified for the RE sector. The findings clearly show standardisation of processes and associated attributes as an influencing factor for all the sector objectives formulated. They also show that standardisation of attributes associated with processes and availability of digital infrastructure and utilities are key enablers for process standardisation efforts in the RE sector.

This work extends the earlier research to shift from a function to process orientation in RE and bridges research gaps in the formulation of objectives for RE sector and establishing a connection between the synergistic adoption of processes, their standardisation, and technology with RE sector objectives. The research work also proposes broad intervention directions for activities that must be executed on ground to realise ideas emerging from this work.