



THE SUCCESS FACTORS OF RELATIONSHIP BASED PROCUREMENT (RBP) IN MALAYSIA

F. M Raslim

Quantity Surveying Department, School of Housing, Building and Planning,
Universiti Sains Malaysia, Gelugor, Pulau Pinang

N.E Mustaffa

Quantity Surveying Department, Faculty of Built Environment,
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Skudai, Johor

ABSTRACT

It is pertinent to conduct a research on the relationship-based procurement system in the construction industry particularly in Malaysia. Through extensive literature review and content analysis, this research has managed to identify eight necessary success factors which consist of commitment, communication, trust, workshop and facilitator, competence, financial capability, experienced partners, and early implementation of partnering to accommodate and support relationship-based procurement implementation within the Malaysian construction industry. These findings were used as the basis to assist the players in the construction industry.

Keywords: Malaysia, Relationship-Based Procurement (RBP), success factors, construction industry.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The needs for culture change towards good long term relationships in order to avoid adversarial relationship in construction industry are widely mentioned (Bresnen and Marshall, 2000) [8]. One of the approaches, which have been demonstrated to harmonious relationship, is the concept of Relationship-Based Procurement (RBP). Different researchers use the terms relational contracting, relational contracts, relationship contracting and relationship contracts with the same meaning (Rahman and Kumaraswamy, 2005) [26].

2. RELATIONSHIP BASED PROCUREMENT (RBP)

RBP principle embraces various methods, such as partnering, joint venturing, alliancing, long term contracting and other collaborative working arrangements (Rahman and Kumaraswamy,

2005; Yeung *et al.*, 2007) [26,34] . Several studies highlighted the importance of using the RBP approach as an attempt to resolve problems of disintegration that lead to poor performance and lack of efficiency within the construction industry. Faisal (2010) [16], in his thesis, compares the RBP research since 2002-2008 as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Studies on Relationship-based Procurement in the construction industry (Adapted from Faisal, 2010, pp.20)

Author(s)	Study Background
Rahman and Kumaraswamy, (2002)	This paper studies the integration of Transaction Cost Economics (TCE) and RBP method. Authors investigated the team working among partners involve in partnering. The findings show that RBP may be effective in reducing the cost of TCE. It also fosters team working that may lead to joint risk management (JRM).
Clifton et al., (2004)	This study investigates the perception of 11 leading construction companies in Australia on RBP with regard to the current practices and preferences for project delivery methods. The findings suggest that the RBP has not been commonly used.
Rahman and Kumaraswamy (2004)	This study investigates the perceptions of the local and international respondents consisting of academics and practitioners on the success factors for a successful RBP implementation. The findings indicate that trust, relational and joint responsibility-related factors are important to ensure a successful RBP.
Kwawu and Hughes, (2005)	Review the RBP concepts in the process of developing a proposed research strategy on the reality of practices and processes of relational contracting based on traditional contracting as comparison.
Kumaraswamy et al. (2005a)	This paper indicates the results of questionnaire survey of 60 respondents in Singapore, focusing on 24 factors that facilitate RBP and 28 factors that impede RBP. This study found that most of the factors were significant and trust should be the essential factor in RBP implementation.
Kumaraswamy et al. (2005b)	Following a study by the same authors, this paper indicates the results of the second part of the questionnaire survey of 60 respondents in Singapore. However, this paper focuses on the perception of respondents on 28 factors that relates to integrated teambuilding and 31 factors deterring such integration in the project teams. The study found that most of the factors were important.
Rahman and Kumaraswamy, (2005)	This paper reports the results from a questionnaire survey on the perceptions of international respondents on 22 factors that relate to the selection of contractor, client, supplier, subcontractor for RBP collaborative working arrangements (CWAs) and 25 factors that essential for building RBP based CWAs. The results confirmed that trust and ethics related factors were the vital factors for CWA.
Sakal, (2005)	This paper establishes the success of Project Alliancing as an RBP method that has been commonly implemented in Australia's construction industry.
Matthews and Howell, (2005)	This paper demonstrates the success of Integrated Project Delivery (IPD) implementation in US construction industry. This case study applies the RBP concept.
Colledge, (2005)	This study demonstrates the contributions of the RBP approach to the development of the four pillars of the sustainable communities, i.e. competitiveness, citizenship, connectivity and creative citizens. The ability of RBP has also been recognised for creating the value beyond the project

Cheung and Rowlinson, (2005)	This study highlights the importance of culture change in project setting that involves all parties in the project. It stresses the relationship management conducted in Australia
Cheung et al., (2006)	This study investigates how relational are the existing construction contract by using questionnaires distributed to 80 respondent in Hong Kong. The respondents include the main contractor, nominated subcontractor, domestic subcontractor and direct labour in Hong Kong. Eight relational index has been measured which comprises of cooperation, organisational culture, risk, trust, good faith, flexibility, the use of alternative dispute resolution, and contract duration. The findings show that the main contract and the domestic subcontract types are more relational compared to the nominated subcontract and domestic labour.
Rowlinson et al., (2006)	This paper studies the critical factors that affect the success of alliance project. The finding shows that leadership has a strong influence on the alliance including commitment and action from the top management. Trust is also an essential factor in the project team. No dispute clause is impossible to materialise without positive approach to relationship management.
Rahman and Kumaraswamy, (2008)	This study examines the practicality of various strategies and factors to deliver right contractual and non-contractual incentives for building a RBP culture and educating effective teamwork in construction. The findings show that trust and trust-based operational and contractual arrangement can efficiently deliver the necessary incentives for applying RBP based working arrangement.

2.1. Success Factors of Relationship Based Procurement (RBP)

There have been plenty of studies conducted by researchers on success factors to accomplish construction excellence in various forms of RBP which include partnering, alliancing, PPP and JV. Table 2 particularly shows the literature review on RBP’s success factors that have been synthesised.

Table 2 Relationship-based Procurement (RBP) success factor

Author	Study Background	Success Factors
Black et al., (2000)	This paper studies the views of different types of organisation, consultants, contractors, and clients in relation to the success factors and benefits of partnering. Questionnaire survey was adopted in this research.	Trust; Communication; Commitment; Competence; A clear understanding of roles; Flexible attitude
Cheng et al., (2000)	Authors reviewed the literature related to partnering focusing the management area. Based on the review, a partnering framework has been developed to determine the critical success factors of partnering implementation in construction industry.	Communication; Conflict resolution; adequate resources; Management support; Trust; Commitment; Coordination; Workshop
Chan et al., (2004)	This paper identifies the critical success factors for partnering arrangements from the Hong Kong viewpoint. The factors were identified through a postal questionnaire to participants that has been involved in partnering project. The participant’s opinions were evaluated in order to identify the partnering success factors.	Communication ; Share resources among project participants; Clear definition of responsibilities; Trust; Commitment; Early implementation of partnering process

Vandenburg et al., (2004)	This paper investigates the success factors that required for strategic alliances, joint ventures, and mergers.	Trust; Communication; Commitment; Competence
Rowlinson and Cheung (2005)	This paper presents the results gathered from a survey that has been conducted with different types of organisations in relation to project alliancing. Success factors that influence the project success have been identified. Legal aspects concentrating on dispute resolution in alliancing are also emphasised.	Communication; Clear goal alignment between alliance parties; Commitment; Trust; Teamwork; Workshops; Facilitation
Bakri et al., (2009)	The aim of this paper is to discuss how KM, through its critical success factors (CSFs), could be used to improve integration in RC project settings. It is believed that RC, when integrated with KM, can successfully address the major problems of the industry and its clients. There are some common key issues shared between RC and KM.	Integrity; Understanding of roles and objectives; Commitment; Trust; Communication; Flexibility; Facilitation
M Peter and R Davis (2009)	Critical success factors in relationship development of alliance projects that improve performance were investigated in this paper.	Trust; Communications; Effective coordination; Commitment; Adequate resources; Creativity Goal Alignment
Manitshana (2012)	This paper demonstrates the benefit of contractor's joint venture. To obtain the results, questionnaires were distributed to 112 contractors in South Africa that have been involved in a joint venture project. The findings show that multiple factors lead to the success of joint ventures implementation.	Commitment; Mutual objectives; Continuous improvement; Communication; Trust; Workshop; Competence
Famakin et al., (2012)	Questionnaires were distributed to construction players who the Lagos State Development and Property Corporation.	Communication; Compatibility of objectives; mutual understanding among partners; Workshop
Jefferies et al., (2014)	This paper identifies critical success factors through literature review and case study of Australia Alliance project. The findings of the case study project were compared to the literature and any new critical success factors were identified.	Integrated alliance office; the staging of project and stretch targets; establishing project specific key performance indicators; facilitating on-going workshops.

2.2. Relationship-Based Procurement (RBP) Success Factors - Malaysia's Perspective

Numerous studies have been conducted worldwide to investigate RBP's success factors in construction industry. However, according to Toor and Ogunlana (2009) [31] since most of the worldwide studies were specific to their context, the implementation and implication are normally restricted to the countries and the working environment where these studies were conducted. For this reason, this section reviews the studies by local researchers regarding to RBP's success factors as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Relationship-based procurement (RBP) success factor in Malaysia

Author	Study Background	Success Factors
Mat Zain (2002)	This research studies the implementation of partnering in Malaysia construction industry. Through literature review and questionnaires, few success factors of partnering implementation in Malaysia have been identified.	Mutual objectives; Communication; Workshop and facilitation; Commitment; and Financial capability
Jusoff et al. (2008)	This paper investigates three case studies to look into the risk management process and partnering in relation to a successfulness of construction project. The findings identified the techniques of risk mitigation.	Experienced partners; Trust, Commitment; and Cooperation
Adnan (2008)	This research studies the risks that may occur during joint venture implementation in the Malaysian construction project by reviewing literature and distribution of questionnaire the author have identified the success factors of joint venture.	Agreement of the contract; partner selection; Early implementation of the process; and Experienced partner
CPMD PWD (2008)	This paper proposes a framework for the implementation of Partnering in Malaysia Public Work Department (PWD). The framework was prepared by Complex Project. Management Division (CPMD).	Commitment; Competence; Communication; Trust; Workshop and facilitation; Financial capability; Early implementation of the process; and Experienced partners
Sulaiman (2010)	In this research, the respondents were asked through surveys about their perceptions associated with the key elements that must exist in a project to enable partnering to success.	Commitment; Trust; Communication; Workshop and facilitation ; and Competence
Ali et al. (2010)	This research studies the partnering projects that have been implemented in Malaysia in relation to the projects performance. The satisfaction level of construction players has been investigated. To get the results, the research was conducted through an extensive literature view and questionnaire surveys.	Commitment; Communication; Mutual objectives; Workshop and facilitation ; and Experienced partner
Adnan et al. (2012)	Through a survey, this study successfully identified 7 factors of success and 8 factors of failure of Joint venture implementation. Questionnaires were distributed to 100 of indigenous Bumiputera Contractors Class 'A', which is registered with the Malaysian Construction Industry Development Board.	Agreement of contract terms; Commitment; Management control; Trust; Financial capability; Early implementation of the process; and Experienced partner
Adnan et al. (2012)	Researchers conducted a study to identify conflicts in partnering arrangement between contractors in Malaysia, and put forward suggestions in preventing conflict in partnering.	Commitment; Communication; Trust; Early implementation of the process; Creativity; and Workshop and facilitation
Yong and Mustafa (2012)	Through literature review and questionnaire survey, success factors of construction projects in Malaysia have been identified.	Financial capability; Competence; Cooperation in solving problems, Commitment; Communication; and Trust

Based on Table 3, eight of the success factors have been highlighted which are competence, commitment, communication, trust, financial credibility, experienced partners, early implementation of the process, and workshop and facilitator. The list is not exhaustive, but the eight success factors are of those that were repeatedly mentioned in earlier discussed research. As Rowlinson (2005) [27] recommended, cross-sectional study should choose factors that are well defined and studied because respondents will be able to respond without difficulty with well-known factors. Not surprisingly, success factor for relationship-based procurement research in Malaysia reveals a similar picture to what has been found in research from other countries. Nevertheless, there are still few success factors that are different from other countries such as financial capability and experienced partner. This is probably due to the fact that RBP in Malaysia is not commonly adopted, so it is critical to have partners with experience and financial capability to ensure the success of the project. The following section will briefly explain the highlighted success factors.

2.2.1. Commitment

Commitment is the readiness of the project members to do their part constantly to ensure project successfulness (Bresnen and Marshall, 2000) [8]. It is very important in order to achieve outstanding partnering performance as cited by a number of researchers (Chan et al., 2006; Tang et al. 2006) [9, 29]. Strong and full commitment must come from top management of each stakeholder and it is crucial to be sensed by the team. The leadership must be visible, supportive and on-going. As suggested by Dikmen et al. (2008) [15], top management's commitment is vital in generating and sustaining changes as a collaborative approach. Ng et al. (2002) [24] stated that partners in partnering should never consider implementing partnering except full commitment was obvious. Without the commitment, it is possible that the project will experience disputation and litigation. Meanwhile, in their research Chan et al. (2006) [9] revealed that commitment to win-win attitude is a critical factor that contributes to the success of partnering implementation.

2.2.2. Communication

Collaborative project requires effective communication and open communication between partners (Cheng et al., 2000) [11]. In research conducted by Black et al. (2000) [7], they found that communication is the top rated factor that will lead to partnering's success. Clearly, partners that are able to communicate effectively will contribute to assist exchange of ideas, and overcome problems (Cheng et al., 2000) [11]. Adnan and Morledge (2003)[2] observed that if there is no good communication between members, difficulties can happen as a consequence of the differences among them. Cheng and Li (2002) [10] established a conceptual model of construction partnering to see the similarities and differences between two types of partnering; project and strategic partnering and to identify the critical success factors to implement partnering. The findings show that communication is a critical factor that affects both types of partnering. The authors carry out two other studies and confirmed that the four critical success factors that affect the partnering practice are commitment, communication, effective coordination and trust (Cheng and Li, 2004) [11].

2.2.3. Trust

The established trust between the partnering's participants is one of the most essential factor that assist the partnering's implementation (Black et al., 2000; Wong and Cheung, 2005) [7,32]. Cheung et al. (2009) [12] investigate the behavioural aspect of the partners that involved in partnering and establish that trust is top rated success factor for partnering. It was recommended that to ensure the partnering success, the relationship between partnering participants must be based on trust (Laan, 2011) [20]. According to Wong et al. (2008) [32],

trust can be considered as glue that promotes cooperation between partners and important lubricants that assist to complete the project efficiently. In partnering, team members should trust that others are reliable in doing their responsibility and obligation. It is crucial to open the borders of the relationship since it can release stress and improve adaptableness, information flows, joint problem solving, and better results (Yeung, 2007) [34].

Trust is behavioural or attitude in nature. By creating trust, partners will establish confidence between them, which slowly influence them to come together, and finally allows partners to make their merged boundary more permeable (Yong and Mustaffa (2012) [35]. In addition, Xue *et al.* (2010) [33] conducted a research in relation to the success factors of an alliance project and the findings indicated that trust was ranked as the first success factors to ensure the collaborative project is successfully implemented. Tang *et al.* (2006) [29] recognised that partnering is a trust-based relationship which is essential to maximise profits in the project.

2.2.4. Financial Credibility

The result from the research conducted by Yong and Mustaffa (2012) [35] shows that financial capability is critical to ensure the success of a project is achieved. They stated that it is important to look for a partner with a positive cash flow and strong financial position. This is important in ensuring that your partner will be around for the long haul. Besides that, Jusoff *et al.* (2008) [19] stated that in the partners' selection, one should search for partners who are financially credible. Their case study which involved three projects shows that all of the projects had strong financial capabilities. It is important for the partners to be capable in financial aspect in order to reduce the project risk. It is mainly when relationship is the focus of the procurement method.

2.2.5. Experienced Partners

Yong and Mustaffa (2012) [35] acknowledged that experienced partner is crucial to strengthen the project operation. They agreed that insufficient experience of the partners can lead to project failure since there is no understanding of relationship-based concept. Sulaiman (2010) [28] work suggests that, one of the strategy for effective relationship-based project implementation is to strengthen human capital in PWD in terms of experience and number of experts in partnering concepts by sending a few selected people to be attached in overseas construction partnering project in Hong Kong, Australia, US or United Kingdom, which had successfully implement partnering concept in their project. These people will later be the experts for PWD's future partnering projects.

Adnan *et al.* (2012) [3] in their research, which is to identify conflicts in partnering arrangement between contractors in Malaysia, stated that knowledge and experience in partnering can reduce conflicts. In addition, Complex Project Management Division (CPMD) outline the characteristics of partners that are interested in joining partnering agreement to be experienced and possess technical expertise especially in partnering projects (CPMD, 2008) [14].

2.2.6. Early Implementation of the Process

To ensure the partnering process is beneficial, it is important to bring together the partners at the initial stage of partnering. This is during the design and feasibility stage. Chan *et al.* (2006) [9] highlighted in their study that the project will be more successful provided that the implementation of partnering process start at the earliest stage. They point out that partnering agreements and partners selection criteria should be established and taking place at the design stage of a construction project. Monitoring approaches include the assessment of partner's

performance and well-defined of individual roles and responsibilities in the project (Black *et al.*, 2000) [7]. The same authors conducted a study on partnering practices in Hong Kong and confirmed that early implementation of partnering process was one of the most critical success factors in order to achieve an excellence partnering performance among the construction organisation (Chan *et al.*, 2006) [9].

Adnan *et al.* (2012) [3] stated that it is important to start the process of partnering in early stage to gain more benefit of partnering, this is due to the partners taking time to tune in the partnering spirit (Chan *et al.*, 2006) [9]. Proper planning must be done before any execution of task start. CPMD recommended that it is important for the partnering process to begin as early in the project as possible especially during project initial stages (CPMD, 2008) [14]. This is to ensure that the fundamentals of partnering can be established and developed by the project team early.

2.2.7. Workshop and Facilitator

Anvuur and Mohan M. Kumaraswamy (2007) [6] stated that the initial partnering workshop and periodic workshop offer opportunities for partners to work together in a cooperative and non-threatening situation. Pettigrew and Tropp (2008) [25] indicated that when partners interact and mingle, it is the initial process to learn and understand each other's interest and concern; this will allow the partners to create mutual goals and approach for their project together. Adnan *et al.* (2012) [3] suggested that joining workshops is the best way to deliver each partner obligation and their scope of work in the project. CPMD (2008) [14] pointed that partnering workshop is important to ensure partnering team members understand the partnering process.

In addition, the choice of experienced facilitators would significantly affect the performance of partnering (Chan *et al.*, 2006) [9]. Therefore, choosing the right facilitator is essential to ensure the partnering success. The partners need to understand that training is needed before they agree to implement partnering since partnering is still at its infancy stage in Malaysia, so with the training it can assist the partnering process. Facilitators' involvement is crucial during the whole life of the partnering agreement (Latham, 1994) [21]. A qualified facilitator should be involved since the initial partnering workshop and supporting in nurturing comfort and confidence with respect to the effective implementation of the partnering process

2.2.8. Competence

Yong and Mustaffa (2012) [35] in their findings revealed that competencies are one of significant factors ensuring a project's success. Sulaiman (2010) [28] also mentioned that one of the strategies for effective implementation of partnering concept is to enhance competencies among PWD staff, contractors, sub-contractors, clients, supplier and other government agencies. Jusoff *et al.* (2008) [19] in their study likewise recognised partner's competencies in their study in highlighting that it is an essential factor of prospective partnership.

5. CONCLUSION

This chapter highlights the relationship-based procurement success factor in Malaysian construction project. It is important to highlight the success not only partners need to be aware with the identified legal issues but also to recognise the success factors required in order to ensure successful partnering's implementation in construction industry.

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