

Developing A Public Value Framework for Infrastructure Projects in Ghana

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Abstract

Empirical evidence has shown the significance of public value implementation to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Hence, assessing public value in infrastructure projects has become popular in recent years. However, the assessment of public value is a long way from being translated into practice due to the lack of a framework for the implementation of public value infrastructure projects. Therefore, this study aimed at developing a public value implementation framework for infrastructure projects in Ghana. The study adopted a mixed research method using data from 82 survey questionnaires and 9 interview responses. The findings of the study showed an adequate awareness of public value by the practitioners but a scanty understanding of its implementation. Additionally, they acknowledge some critical challenges that could hinder the implementation of public value including political interferences, conflicting stakeholder perceptions of value, resistance to change and poor stakeholder engagement. Based on the theoretical and empirical findings of the study, an implementation framework for public value in infrastructure projects was developed and subsequently validated to assess the adequacy of the framework in terms of its overall content and completeness. This framework will guide practitioners in ensuring the implementation of public value in infrastructure projects. With the lack of an implementation framework, the outcome of this study provides a solid basis for ensuring public value implementation in infrastructure projects.

Keywords: Public value, Infrastructure projects, Ghana.



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Introduction

The United Nations general assembly (Leaders from 193 countries of the world) adopted seventeen (17) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved by the year 2030 (United Nation-UN, 2015). These goals comprise of several economic, environmental, and social concerns; hence a lot of work is required to realize the agenda in the rest of the coming years (Moratis and Melissen, 2019; Globescan, 2017). Empirical evidence has shown the significance of public value implementation to the realization of the SDGs. For instance, in Van Gestel et al. (2023), study, they acknowledged public value as a strategy for the achievement of SDGs. Additionally, Sami et al. (2021), noted that, public organizations in the quest to achieve public value drive towards the achievement of SDGs. Consequently, research on Public Value in the public sector has greatly increased providing a distinct pathway from new public management (NPM) paradigm (Bryson et al., 2014; O'Flynn, 2007). According to Moore (2003), public value can be described as principles that guide the operations of public organizations to create value for citizens through the delivery of quality public services. The Public Value approach is a new post- competitive paradigm that signals a shift from the primary focus on results and efficiency towards the achievement of a broader governmental goal of public value creation. The objective of public value is to offer public managers a simple instrument to articulate the goals of their organization. This theory shifts the focus of public sector management from within the organizational boundaries to society; from how to better produce public services to how to deliver public services that better satisfy those who will consume them (Panagiotopoulos et al., 2019). Therefore, public value has a strong association with what people believe in and value or consider valuable (Khanifah and Nurmandi, 2019). Consequently, public managers in addition to the achievement of performance targets, must create and maintain trust and respond to the collective preferences of the citizens as well as clients. The public sector is typically the largest purchaser of infrastructure projects, however, due to the socio-political responsibility of public organizations, they have a special role in ensuring the realization of all public values (Kuitert et al., 2020). Public organizations are expected to contribute to social innovation, safety, protection of weaker population and built environment to create public value. However, the achievement of public value is a challenge that public managers and administrators face. Therefore, there is the need for a framework that will guide the implementation of public value in infrastructure projects. Studies on public value have mostly focused on its assessment (see Kuitert et al., 2020; Bryson et al., 2014; Cordella and Bonina 2012). The assessment of public value is a long way from being translated into practice due to the lack of a framework for the implementation of public value infrastructure projects. Hence this study aims at developing a framework to facilitate the creation of public value in public infrastructure projects in Ghana.



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Literature Review

This section focuses on the review of pertinent literature on public value and infrastructure projects and existing public value framework. This led to the development of a conceptual framework for study.

Public value and infrastructure projects

With construction projects in the public sector, the client's organization is primarily the steering agent for the public value creation (Farrel, 2016). However, the collaborative nature required for value creation challenges public construction clients to create a balance between the different kinds of competing values while honoring the structures of authority and regime values within which they operate (Bao et al., 2013). In European countries, public value creation manifests itself within their Procurement Principles. In addition to these principles, product values such as sustainability, cultural heritage, quality of the public space, and performance values, effectivity and efficiency are also essential in the context of performing and completing construction related tasks (de Graaf and Paanakker 2015). Using mere principles poses a challenge as the government cannot determine on its own what public values represent. Public value is a reflection of what is expected by society of facilities and government (Bruiju and Dicke, 2006). In this context it is crucial to identify how public values can be achieved at different phases of the construction lifecycle. According to Hughes et al. (2006), the ability to safeguard public values in construction projects depends on decisions made in the initial phases as there is the upmost flexibility at that stage. Within this phase, decisions are made on suitability and whether public values are safe in private hands. Public value principles demand there is an understanding of the vision and goals for the initiation of the project as well as an effective engagement of stakeholders (Treasury, 2019). It is expected that different value conflicts will arise during different phases of public service delivery and that trade-offs between performance values, procedural values, and product-related values in the construction context, will need to be made (De Graaf and Paanakker 2014). Clients will be called to account for the process as well as the outcome, and for individual incidents as well as aggregate patterns observed at each step along the way to public value creation (Moore 2000). It is important for the project team to also forecast resource requirements and acquire approval and legitimacy from the public by involving them in the planning and implementation process. Hence, the relationship between the client, users and the contractor are crucial for the effective achievement of public value for infrastructure projects.

Existing Public value frameworks

The concept of public value is perceived a new way of managing the public administration of institutions, However, Guarini (2014) indicated that, developing managerial tools faced with public value paradigm is still at its infancy and thus, there is the need to examine an elaborated approach towards public value measurement. There are existing frameworks on



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public value summarized in **Table 1**. All these frameworks provide an ex-post approach to public value management. It is crucial to develop a proactive framework that seeks to focus on the implementation phase rather than diagnostics.

Table 1: Existing public value frameworks

Framework	Description
Generic public value framework	The public value concept can be attributed to Mark H. Moore's publication "Creating Public Value: Strategic Management in Governance" published in 1995 (Moore, 1995). According to Moore (1995), public managers must consider three issues simultaneously when expected to deliver value to citizens. These are: (1) Legitimacy and support from an authorization environment, (2) Operational capabilities of the managed agenda, and (3) Public value rooted in a task environment. This is popularly known as the triangle of public value. Legitimacy and support seek to provide a guarantee of development using public funds while operational capabilities allow the provision of certain services and goods through the limited resources that institutions have at their disposal. A public value strategy that is widely supported but without operational capacity, or with capacity and support but without a clear mission, will not produce public value. The three dimensions are interdependent, hence a failure in one area will undermine the creation of public value (O'Flynn, 2021).
Competing values framework (CVF)	The Competing Values Framework (CVF) was created by Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983) and it combined the dimension of scope of control and the orientation of direction. The scope of control describes a rational model and organizational structure emphasizing stability and flexibility. The second dimension is associated with the shift of organizational focus from people within the organization to the entire organization. This leads to the creation of four management models known as control, compete, create, and collaborate. Each model describes the culture, leadership, effectiveness, and value drivers for the management. The CVF may be used in the assessment of performance and Talbot (2006) opined that it is possible to combine an appropriate set of measures for assessing them. Talbot (2006) combined these four competing values with the public value concept and developed a five dimensioned approach of assessing public value.
Public value scorecard	The Public value scorecard originated from the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) management tool. The authors of the BSC acknowledged the weakness of the model and proposed a modification of the model for non-governmental organizations (Kaplan and Norton, 2001). This modification was since the traditional BSC model was not appropriate for non-profit organizations. Moore (2003) made modifications to the model by adding the concept of strategic triangle of public value. This was aimed at developing a structure that shows how input is converted into value. The authors stressed the fact that value is not only created within an organization, but it stretches beyond the boundaries of the organization.



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Performance management system	This system was proposed by Spano (2009) based on a business management perspective where public value created by a single organization can be measured through the achievement of the organization's desired outcomes and impacts Based on this approach, the general notion of Public Management System is executed as the basis for Public Value measurement (Bracci et al., 2014). This is based on four dimensions including intangible economic value, tangible economic value, social value, and public value. These four dimensions of the model must be connected to the planning and control instruments of the public organization through Key Performance Indicators creating an operational alignment (Bracci et al., 2014). In order to measure value, four dimensions are examined to which a normalized scale is applied for the evaluation of sacrifices and benefits. Metrics are related to the main dimensions. The Performance Management System plays an integrating role between creating and measuring public value.
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Source: Author's construct, (2023)

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework shown in **Figure 1** was adapted from the generic public value framework by Moore (1995). Moore (1995), opined that, in other to achieve public value, legitimacy and support from an authorization environment, operational capabilities of the managed agenda and public value rooted in a task environment must be considered simultaneously and kept in balance by public managers. However, inferring from Principal Agent Theory (PAT), it is also crucial to consider the interactions between principals and agents in the creation of public value. The conceptual framework depicts that ensuring public value in public infrastructure projects must encompass (2) pillars, legitimacy and support and operational capabilities. Legitimacy and support seek to provide a guarantee of development using public funds whiles operational capabilities allow the provision of certain services and goods through the limited resources that institutions have at their disposal. Public value focuses on what is most wanted by the citizen, and it depends on their perception. Thus, the implementation of public values must satisfy all these parameters. This is fully achievable when there is a complete comprehension of the issues that arise because of principles and agents associated with the task.



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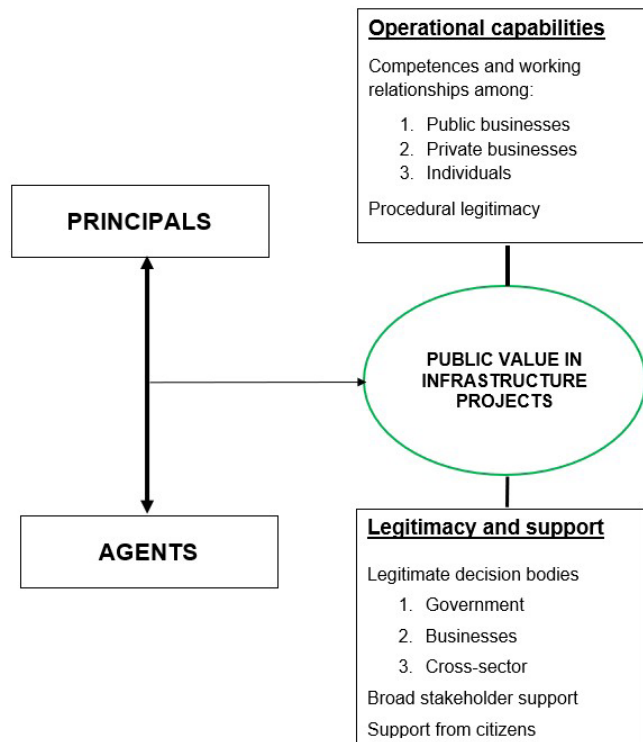


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Source: Author's construct, (2023)

Methodology

The study sought to develop a framework to facilitate the creation of public value in public infrastructure projects in Ghana. In achieving this aim, it was crucial to seek the perception of expert procurement professionals on public value practices in infrastructure development and the challenges that may present themselves in public value creation. Quantitative data was collected on the public value practices while qualitative data was collected on the public value creation challenges. With the quantitative data, 82 valid responses were used out of 260 distributed and for the qualitative data, 9 interviewees were purposively selected based on their experience. Thus, an interviewee must be a Works procurement professional with more than five (5) years of experience. For the quantitative data, the respondents depicted a satisfactory educational level as 53.70% had postgraduate qualification, 36.60% indicated bachelor's degree and 9.80% indicated diploma qualifications. In terms of experiences, 52.13% had above 5 years of experience and 47.60% had 5 years and below. With the qualitative data, 77.78% of the respondents had postgraduate qualifications and 22.22% had bachelor's qualification. In terms of experience, all the respondents indicated have above 5 years of experience. The quantitative data was analyzed with one-sample t-test while the qualitative data employed the use of content analysis. Using one-sample t-test at



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a 95% confidence level, one-tailed, a test value (μ_0) of 3.50 was set. This test value ensures that only practices with at least a moderate level of use are deemed significant. Hence, the following hypothesis were made:

Ho: $\mu_0 = \mu_1$; Mean values are not statistical different from test value

H1: $\mu_0 \neq \mu_1$; Mean values are statistical different from test value.

At one tailed, rejecting the null hypothesis implies that the mean value is significantly higher than the test-value hence the respondents significantly used the public value practice.

The public value framework development involved the review of relevant theories and inference from the discussed results to aid in the determination of appropriate parameters for the framework. Subsequently, the developed framework was validated. In other to ensure internal and external validation, individuals who were involved in the initial interview process and new participants were used.

Results

The results on the level of use of public value practices are shown in **Table 2**. The inferences made from the results are as follows:

1. None of the statements had p-values < 0.05 hence we fail to reject the null hypothesis (Ho) and conclude that all the mean values are not statistically different from the test value.
2. Some of the statements had negative t-values depicting that, the statistical difference was negative values. Thus, some statements had mean values less than 3.50.
3. The responses indicated that public value practices are not adequately implemented in the public sector.
4. All the standard deviations were greater than 1.00 depicting variations among the responses.
5. The public value practice that had the highest level of use was "Implementation of cost control practices" [t-value = 1.818] followed by "Implementation and monitoring the achievement of project goals" [t-value = 1.583].

Table 2: Level of use of public value practices in infrastructure projects

Statements	SD	T-value	P-value
Understanding the vision and goals that warranted the project initiation	1.238	0.535	0.594
Ascertaining the extent required for the achievement of the project goal	1.354	(1.794)	0.077
Implementation and monitoring the achievement of project goals	1.395	1.583	0.117



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Development of processes for managing resources	1.421	(0.700)	0.486
Forecasting resource requirement	1.256	0.704	0.484
Project objectives benchmarking	1.392	(0.872)	0.386
Implementation of cost control practices	1.397	1.818	0.073
Acquiring approval and legitimacy from the public and taxpayers	1.476	(2.544)	0.013
Involvement of client and users in project planning and implementation	1.441	0.306	0.760
Development of project team capacity to manage delivery	1.340	0.742	0.461
Effective stakeholder management	1.533	(0.288)	0.774

Source: Author's construct, (2023)

The purposively selected experts were interviewed on the potential challenges that may hinder the creation of public value. Some excerpts on the responses from the interviews conducted on the challenges are as follows:

"In the quest to implement public value, the major challenge is getting what exactly value is from the various and key stakeholders. Their perception of value may conflict on interfere with other stakeholders' perception of value."

"In my opinion, stakeholder consultation has always been inadequate as the project scope is determined at the high level governed by politicians and leaders of civil society organizations."

"Measuring the impact of public initiatives can be challenging as it is often difficult to quantify the value created for the public. This can make it difficult to evaluate the success of initiatives and make informed decisions about resource allocation."

General inferences from the results showed that, the challenges to the creation of public value included political interferences, conflicting stakeholder perceptions on value, resistance to change and poor stakeholder engagement.



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Discussion

The results showed that public value practices are not adequately implemented in the public sector. This could be attributed to the lack of awareness of knowledge in the application of the concept. Public values reflect the beliefs of a society in terms of what is important in the production of certain products or services and the responsibility of the government (De Bruijn and Dicke, 2006). For a value to be called public, there must be a collective benefit. Hence Van Der Wal et al. (2008), indicated that public values focus on meeting shared expectations. Public value reflects what is expected by society of facilities and government (Bruijn and Dicke, 2006). In this context it is crucial to identify how public values can be achieved at different phases of the construction lifecycle. With the lack of implementation within the public sector, it was important to further explore the challenges that hinder its implementation and develop a framework to facilitate public value implementation.

With regards to the results on the challenges to public value creation the emanating factors were political interferences, conflicting stakeholder perceptions on value, resistance to change and poor stakeholder engagement. After a contract is awarded, the client must shift its focus to managing the contract. At this phase resources must be deployed towards monitoring to oversee the implementation of the contract. It is expected that different value conflicts will arise during different phases of public service delivery and that trade-offs between performance values, procedural values, and product-related values in the construction context, will need to be made (De Graaf and Paanakker 2014). This was a critical challenge identified by the interviewees pertaining to crucial issues stakeholder value conflicts. Additionally, Bruijn and Dicke, (2006), indicated that public value reflects what is expected by society of facilities and government. Hence, the government alone cannot determine on its own what public values represent. However, in many situations, project scope decisions are taken by the government officials. This interference hinders the achievement of public value.

The public value framework

The developed framework was based on the conceptual framework as the creation of public value in public infrastructure projects must focus on legitimacy and support, operational capabilities, and the task environment. Hence each step within the process falls within a category within the public value triangle. The validated framework is shown in Figure 2 and Table 3 provides a vivid description its implementation.



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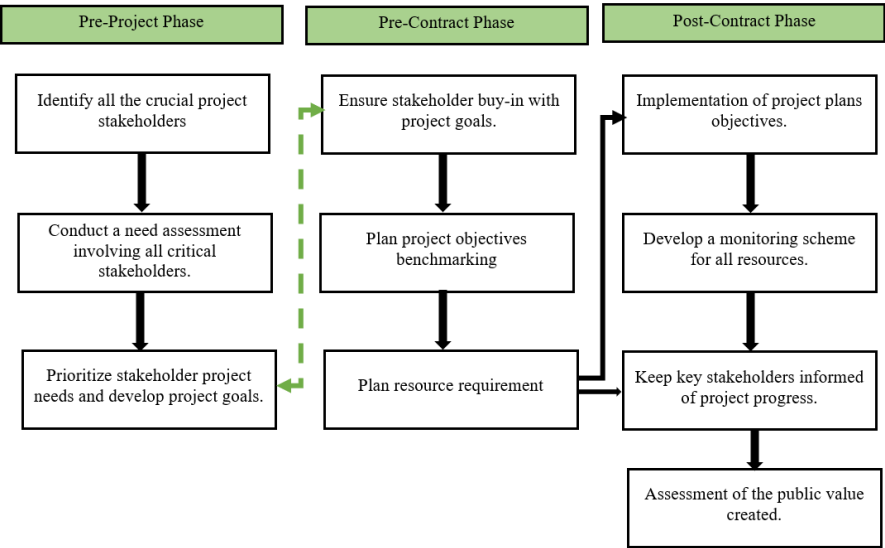


Figure 2: Validated public value framework.

Source: Author’s construct, (2023)

Table 3: Description of the validated framework

Public value tri- angle category	Description
Task environment	Identify all crucial stakeholders. The identification of crucial stakeholders falls under the task environment theme as the criticality of the stakeholder depends on the nature of the project and the community within which it is been executed. The identification of stakeholders is a first crucial step for public sector projects as it facilitates the overall process of stakeholder engagement. The identification process can be done for each project or as a one-off process and the outcome subsequently adopted for specific projects. The assessment of the criticality of the stakeholders can be facilitated with the power interest matrix which classifies stakeholders in relation to the power they hold and their level of interest in the project (Newcombe, 2003).
Task environment	Conduct a need assessment involving all critical stakeholders. Needs assessment involves the investigation of the situation of a community to determine, prioritize and satisfy their project needs. This is done to ensure that the scarce resources are put to good use. Needs assessment was also categorized under the task environment theme as the process will only be comprehensive if critical stakeholders within the community are involved. Needs assessment is a pre-project activity that helps to identify the projects requirement of the community and decide on the one that is more critical.



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<i>Legitimacy and support</i>	<i>Prioritize stakeholder project needs and develop project goals.</i> <i>The aim of prioritizing project needs is to ensure that only the most critical project for the community is implemented. Thus, scarce resources can be put to good use. After a decision is made on the most critical project for the community, the project team must develop goals that must be met by the selected project. The goals are crucial to the development of an appropriate scope for the project. An effective prioritization of project goals will facilitate an effective development of project goals as the overall vision for the area will be captured through the process. Additionally, prioritizing stakeholder needs leads to an increase of the legitimacy and support from the stakeholders.</i>
<i>Legitimacy and support</i>	<i>Ensure stakeholder buy-in with project goals.</i> <i>In as much as the stakeholders are involved in the process of prioritization, it is important to leverage the legitimacy and support by ensuring that, the goals that are developed for the project are understood and accepted by the stakeholders. This may be an iterative process as a total stakeholder buy-in on the project goals is very critical. This is also the first step in public value implementation in the pre-contract phase. The vision and goals of the project must be well understood by the stakeholders in order to ensure their unequivocal support.</i>
<i>Operational capabilities</i>	<i>Plan project objectives benchmarking</i> <i>The developed goals provide the foundation for planning the objectives that need to be achieved by the project. The objectives may include benchmarks on scope, budget, schedule among others. Benchmarking the project objectives also gives an indication of the required capabilities to effectively execute the project. Hence it forms part of the operational capabilities theme which allow the provision of certain services and goods through the limited resources that institutions have at their disposal.</i>
<i>Operational capabilities</i>	<i>Implementation of project plans</i> <i>Project implementation is typically the responsibility of external firms deemed capable of meeting the goals and benchmarked objectives of the project. The public institution's role are mostly limited to the monitoring of the implementation process to ensure the goals and benchmarked objectives are met.</i>
<i>Operational capabilities</i>	<i>Develop a monitoring scheme for all resources.</i> <i>This is crucial step to ensuring public value as it ensures all activities are implemented as planned. Monitoring must be done with a pre-developed scheme which seeks to keep an eye on all the benchmarked objectives and progress to its achievement.</i>
<i>Legitimacy and support</i>	<i>Keep key stakeholders informed of project progress.</i> <i>Throughout the entire implementation process, the public institution must monitor the project progress in-terms of the objectives. Additionally, it is highly crucial to keep information flow between stakeholders to continually keep their support. The legitimacy and support of stakeholders is crucial to public value, hence throughout the entire project, crucial stakeholders must be kept informed on the project progress.</i>



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Task environment	Assessment of the public value created.
	After the entire process, it is crucial to assess if public value has been successfully created. This can be done using any of the public value assessment frameworks. For instance, the public value scorecard.

Conclusion

Public value is regarded as a potential concept to the achievement of the SDGs. Hence, there is a growing significance of achieving public value in infrastructure development. With the lack of a typical guideline for facilitating the creation of public value in infrastructure project the study sought to develop a public value framework for Ghanaian infrastructure projects. The study showed that public value practices are not adequately implemented in the public sector, cementing the need for a framework to aid in public value creation. However, the study took note of challenges that hinder the implementation of public value practices to include political interferences, conflicting stakeholder perceptions on value, resistance to change and poor stakeholder engagement. These outcomes facilitated the development of the public value framework. The framework was validated as a means of assessing the adequacy of the framework in terms of its overall content and completeness.

The study contributed to knowledge by highlighting the challenges that limit public value creation in infrastructure projects. Prior to this, studies on public value creation challenges were lacking. Further to this, the study developed a framework for public value in infrastructure projects. This is regarded as a significant contribution to knowledge as none exists for infrastructure development. This framework can be readily adopted in practice by public project professionals to facilitate the implementation of public value in infrastructure projects. This study showed the wide acceptance of public value leading to the realization of SDGs. However, empirical evidence to support this assertion is lacking. This creates an avenue for researchers to investigate the extent to which public value leads to the achievement of the SDGs.

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