

تأثير اختلافات السوق على مراحل تنفيذ وتسليم مشاريع البناء الصغيرة
والمتوسطة: دراسة مقارنة بين وسط كوينزلاند و أبوظبي

إعداد الطالب/ جعفر عدنان بكور

243000343

إشراف/

د. الفصيل عبد الحميد

د. فايز جراد

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Midocean University
Faculty of Management
Master of Project Management



**The Influence of Market Differences on the Staging and
Delivery of Small and Medium-Sized Construction
Projects: A Comparative Study between Central
Queensland and Abu Dhabi**

Prepared by:
Jaafar Adnan Bakour
243000343

Supervised by:
Dr. Alfaisal Abdelhameed Mohamed
Dr. Fayez Ali Jrad

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Introduction:

The construction sector is one of the most important sectors globally. Over the course of decades, experts have developed project management methods and principles to track and enhance the projects' effectiveness and efficiency. With the increased demand of global project management to cope with the economic exchange and cultural diversity, there is always a need to study the similarities and variations of the markets between different regions. Such comparative studies can assist leaders and professionals in decision making as it provides a better understanding of construction trends. While there will always be a certain level of risk that can't be eliminated, comprehensive research will assist mitigating the risk for people who are interested in expanding their business or willing to educate themselves about the latest construction trends in other regions.

Both United Arab Emirates and the Australian construction markets have witnessed substantial growth over the past few years. UAE has proven that the impossible is achievable and the future is here, and Australia has a robust economy and promising migration target for construction experts. The construction development is driven by a high infrastructure and housing demand, making the construction sector a unique phenomenon that is worthy to observe and learn from.

None the less, there are noticeable differences between the two markets' structures and traits. The regular requirements, workforce composition, market conditions, and environmental expectations have complex layers of uniqueness developing both opportunities and challenges for engineers, managers, and organisations working across these regions.

As someone who has worked in both regions, it's important to emphasise that construction experts will encounter difficulties in transitioning between the two markets. The planning and delivery of projects differ significantly, making the survival in both markets by adopting the same approaches a large stretch and a step into the unknown.

Despite all the challenges and the importance of the matter, especially for new migrants, there is a deficiency in the academic studies addressing the issues and proposing suggested solutions. The little available guidance to distinguish the markets' variations in staging and delivery often makes it harder for people moving between Australia and UAE to adapt.

I put this research in the reader's hands to address this knowledge gap by identifying the key differences between construction projects in Central Queensland and Abu Dhabi. It's an endeavor to investigate how such variations may affect different stages of construction and try to provide a practical insight with a focus on supporting migrant engineers in adopting different markets approaches and fundamentals.

Problem Statement:

Projects have global characteristics, but there are significant differences exist between markets that affect how projects are planned, staged, and delivered. Engineers and construction managers working across different regions often face challenges in adjusting to these differences, which can lead to delays, inefficiencies, and increased project risks.

Particularly, the construction markets of Central Queensland, Australia, and Abu Dhabi, UAE, show clear differences in regulations, environmental expectations, labour availability, workforce structure, and economic conditions. However, there is a lack of research comparing how these market differences influence the staging and delivery.

As I have experienced myself, this knowledge gap creates challenges for construction professionals and companies operating in these regions. This research aims to investigate the key market differences between Central Queensland and Abu Dhabi and how they affect project staging and delivery. The study will also explore how construction professionals, particularly migrant engineers, can better adapt to these market conditions to improve project outcomes and reduce risks.

Research Importance and study objectives:

This study primarily is useful for engineers, construction managers, and everyone working in construction projects, especially those who are involved in small and medium sized project in both Queensland, Australia and Abu Dhabi, UAE. As I have gone through this experiments myself, I'm hoping this research will help new migrants to Australia to settle in more easily as it's often challenging to adapt and find their feet in a busy and tough market with substantial differences in a lot of stages and aspects of such projects. In the same way, it shall provide the beneficiaries in UAE with an understanding of what the Australia market looks like. Both parties can use this study to seek development, reduce mistakes and learn lessons.

Additionally, the research should provide policymakers with educated decisions about opportunities and challenges in expanding the market globally by pointing out the key differences in the two markets and how they interact with demands, projects' delivery and supply chains.

From a theoretical perspective, the research significance will fall in the following areas:

- 1- Contribution in the academic understanding of how the differences affect the staging and delivery of the construction projects.
- 2- Adding to the limited number of comparison studies in construction field between Central Queensland and Abu Dhabi.
- 3- Enriching project management theories in linking the markets and delivery efficiency.
- 4- Build a bridge of knowledge for the targeted group of the research.

From a practical point of view, I'm aiming for my study to:

- 1- Provide actionable insights for engineers and managers to adapt during the different stages of the projects.
- 2- Provide a better planning opportunity for people who are interested in doing business between Central Queensland and Abu Dhabi.
- 3- Support new migrants in their efforts to start a professional career, especially considering the difficulties of entering the market without local experience, something I have personally experienced.
- 4- Measure the tangible parameters using the project management theories to identify the areas of improvements in both markets.

5- Mitigating risk for the professionals aiming to start business exchange and seeking global expansion.

The main objective of the research is to summarise the professional experiences of construction specialists who have worked in both Central Queensland and Abu Dhabi, with the aim of facilitating a smoother transition for construction projects and professionals moving between these two regions.

Research Questions:

The main question of my study is how do market differences between central Queensland, Australia, and Abu Dhabi, UAE, influence the staging and delivery of small and medium sized construction projects? Within this question, there are a few sub-questions the study will answer:

- 1- What are the key market differences between the two areas when it comes to construction projects?
- 2- How do these differences impact the various stages of the project, especially execution phase?
- 3- What are the main challenges that engineers and managers face when moving in between the two regions?
- 4- How can construction professionals adapt and overcome these challenges.
- 5- How to mitigate the risk when approaching the other market from an investment perspective?
- 6- What are the lessons learnt from this comparison?
- 7- What causes of delays and failure to expect in both markets?
- 8- How can the community habits and trends affect the construction stages differently?
- 9- What role does the environment and sustainability play in both regions?
- 10- What are the opportunities and threats of either market?

Research Hypotheses

There are a few assumptions and hypotheses for my research explained below:

- 1- First Hypotheses:
The construction industry is significantly different in the UAE compared to the construction in Central Queensland.
- 2- Second Hypotheses:
While the main stages outline is generally the same in both countries, there are substantial differences in the way the stages are carried out in practice.
- 3- Third Hypotheses:
The Australian construction market is more affected by the fluctuations in global material pieces and interest rates compared to the UAE market.
- 4- Fourth Hypotheses:
The Major factors contributing to projects' cost and lead times differ significantly between the two regions.
- 5- Fifth Hypotheses:
Environmental requirements, standards and procedures are strictly enforced in Central Queensland compared to Abu Dhabi.
- 6- Sixth Hypotheses:
There are noticeable variations in gender and age distribution of the construction workforce between the two regions.
- 7- Seventh Hypotheses:
It is generally easier to enter the construction industry in Central Queensland compared to the UAE.
- 8- Eighth Hypotheses:
The construction sector plays a major role in driving other industries in both countries.
- 9- Ninth Hypotheses:
Migrant construction experts moving from UAE to Australia are capable handling the challenges of the Australian construction market.
- 10- Tenth Hypotheses:
The different weather conditions in both regions enforces different approaches.
- 11- Eleventh Hypotheses:
The size of the regions and their population density play a direct role in influencing variations trends.

Previous Studies:

- 1- Project Management Performance in the UAE Construction Industry. (American Society of Civil Engineers, 2014)

This study highlighted the gap between the adaptation of project management tools and monitoring the actual performance and outcomes. The authors concluded that adopting the traditional project management tools doesn't lead to an automatic improved performance. The actual main factor affecting the success is the effective implementation of the project management tools, it's how not what you implement.

Additionally, the research pointed out the importance of continuity in training to develop the skills and bridge the gap between the takeaways and the tools utilisation.

- 2- UAE Construction Market Intelligence Q1 (Laura Morgan, 2024).

This report shed light on the construction market trends and economics. By explaining how financial markets are affected by the supply chain distribution and labor shortages, the report explained how resilient the UAE construction sector is with not much fluctuation.

The key lesson learnt is adopting dynamic strategies, UAE was successful in absorbing any possible economic damage, not only that, but it's also how risk is anticipated and managed in the favor of the construction sector.

- 3- Queensland region Construction Supply and Demand Analysis 1995-2029. (National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR), 2019).

A detailed governmental report to analyse the construction supply and demand trends in Queensland. It provides an insight into the regional construction activities in the period of 1995-2019, and a forecast of how the trend would look like in the following decade.

The study showed the importance of effective planning in achieving long-term development objectives. It has also suggested how to eliminate or mitigate the risks associated with potential challenges in the Australian construction market based on data-driven approaches. Another fact discussed is the need for labor force support policies and legislation protecting expansion and retention.

Additionally, the research suggested that the development of regional infrastructure alongside the supply chain availability plays a significant role in construction projects delivery.

4- CSQ Industry Outlook 2024-2025 (CSQ, 2024)

This report examines the resilience of Queensland's construction industry and how it could fight the high interest rates and rising living costs. The report stipulates that innovation is a key factor in success and developing workforce methods is the shelter from economic instability. It has also showed that supporting growth in Queensland construction market can be achieved by strategic planning and proactive measures against the risks and uncertainties.

The report also highlights the fact that the construction sector is contributing significantly to the state's economy supported by statics and numeric proofs.

5- Barriers to Employment for Migrant Engineers (Engineers Australia, 2021).

An official research study carried out by Engineers Australia. The study dives into the employment challenges faced by the overseas-born engineers that have moved recently to work and live in Australia. Despite being 58% of the national engineering workforce, the migrant engineers suffer from higher unemployment rate when compared to their Australia-born peers.

The study suggests that there are a lot of reasons of this issue, including:

- a- Lack of local experience: employers tend to prioritise the local workforce over the newcomers.
- b- Skepticism of engineering credentials and recognition of overseas qualifications.
- c- Limited references and professional network: new migrants lack local connections that might assist their efforts in finding jobs.
- d- Communication and culture factor: New country, new culture means difficulties in blending in the local communications styles.

The study has concluded a few solutions of the case, including providing supportive programs for migrant engineers, employers' engagement by the government to explain the importance of assisting newcomers, and policy implications that can make the lives of migrants easier by finding their first job.

Conclusion from Previous Studies:

- 1- Adoption of project management tools alone is not sufficient to lead to successful delivery of construction projects.
- 2- Continuous training and development are essential to fill the gaps between the theories of management and actual project performance.
- 3- The UAE construction sector has shown resilience with dynamic strategies and proactive risk management.
- 4- The importance of effective planning is highlighted while studying construction trends in urban and rural areas of Queensland
- 5- Data-driven decisions are often the best decisions.
- 6- Innovation and developing workforce methods are vital for economic resilience in central Queensland.
- 7- High interest rates and rising living costs affect the construction industry of Central Queensland.
- 8- Migrant engineers coming to Australia are facing significant barriers to employment including local experience and culture shock.

Recommendations based on Previous Studies:

- 1- Managers must focus on practical implementations rather than adopting formal tools and standards.
- 2- Construction professionals in both regions should engage in continuous professional development to adapt to evolving market demands.
- 3- Dynamic and proactive risk management strategies should be applied to reduce the impact of market fluctuations.
- 4- Authorities and industry bodies in both regions should develop policies to support workforce development, with special attention to migrant workers.
- 5- In Queensland, strategies to support regional infrastructure development and strengthen supply chains are recommended to improve project delivery.
- 6- Supportive programs, networking opportunities, and recognition of overseas qualifications should be enhanced to ease the integration of migrant engineers into the Australian construction workforce.

Research Theoretical Framework:

This research is based on various theories and their concepts to explain the major market differences between Central Queensland and United Arab Emirates influencing the construction projects.

- 1- Project management Theories: Emphasising the traditional management tools and concepts:
 - 1.a. Planning of projects.
 - 1.b. Execution and monitoring projects.
 - 1.c. Resources and timeframes.
 - 1.d. Budgeting and costs.
- 2- Market Environment Theories: Exploring the market trends and conditions:
 - 2.a. Economic conditions.
 - 2.b. Labour markets and finance.
 - 2.c. Supply chain.
- 3- Human Resources and Adaptation Theories:
 - 3.a. Migration workforce.
 - 3.b. Work culture.
 - 3.c. Expectations and standards.
- 4- Finance And Laws Theories:
 - 4.a. Local regulations.
 - 4.b. Taxation.
 - 4.c. health and Safety.

By using the combination of such theoretical foundations, this research will provide a handy source for any entity or personnel interested in the Emirati and/or Australian construction pool especially when it comes to adaptations and utilisation of efforts, time, and money.

The above-mentioned theories and concept are used to validate my research conclusions and outcomes.

Research Methodology:

This research is based on mixed-method approaches. Using quantitative and qualitative data to explore the market variations and validating that against the previous research and published studies. By combining numeric and descriptive data, the study will enable interested researchers to build decisions about similar matters.

Applying comparative research methodology between the two regions can explain how the global markets work together or against each other in construction projects' delivery.

By using questionnaires, I could measure the experts' opinions and ideas to lead the reader to valuable numeric outcomes, especially that the survey will target people in both UAE and Australia.

My methodology focuses on practical applied research which connects dots between project management theories and real-world issues, coming up with a comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

This approach shall help in bridging the gaps between the global markets and will reinforce the understanding and expectations of construction workforce.

Research Tools:

While trying to achieve the objectives of this study, I'm using a set of analysis tools to ensure that my results are reliable and valid.

1- Survey Questionnaire:

A well-structured questionnaire developed and distributed to construction professionals working in Central Queensland and Abu Dhabi. This questionnaire will collect data in regards market differences, project management practices, cost, and different challenges that hinder the projects from an engineering and management perspective.

2- Professional interviews:

A semi-structured interview will be conducted with selective personnel who have worked and lived in both areas. This shall provide a deeper insight into the professional and personal experience that relates to these research problems. Such interviews can be relied on to reflect the findings of the study and validate the survey results.

3- Quantitative Data Analysis:

All the data collected from the survey questionnaires and interviews will be processed and analysed using quantitative methods. I will use statical tools such as frequency analysis, average, and comparative charts that can identify trends and differences between the two markets.

4- Geographic information Systems (GIS):

GIS tools can be used to present a visual representation of data and market distribution between central Queensland and Abu Dhabi. We can identify project locations or any other spatial factor where applicable.

5- Professional Social Media Platforms:

Public professional platforms such as LinkedIn can be utilised in observing the construction trends in both areas. Required qualifications and recruiters' expectations can be detected by surfing through such platforms to point out patterns of skills or challenges of the interested parties of the study.

Research Limitation:

This study has several limitations mentioned below:

1- Geographical Location:

The research is limited to the two regions only, Central Queensland in Australia and Abu Dhabi in United Arab Emirates. While there are a lot of similarities between Central Queensland and the rest of Australia from one side, and similarities between Abu Dhabi, the rest of UAE's Emirates, and the Arabian Gulf countries in general on the other side, I need to stipulate that this may affect the generalizability of the results to the other locations.

2- Project Size:

The study is concerned mainly in small and medium sized projects. Mega structures like national projects and substantial high value projects are excluded from the measurements of my study. Likewise with programs and portfolio over the course of long period of time.

3- Projects Field:

Construction, especially from Civil Engineering perspective. While there could be a lot of similar scenarios in other fields, the results of such study can't be precisely applicable for fields like Information Technology or Sales Logistics.

4- Researcher's Work Experience:

I have worked in Central Queensland for only two years, compared to ten years in Abu Dhabi. The difference in exposure might influence my interpretation of my observations. However, this factor might be reduced given the fact that I had a decent experience in Engineering and project management when I started working in Australia compared to my early years in construction after graduation.

5- Perspective of the participants:

This study reflects the perspective of engineers and managers generally; other perspectives such as directors and accountants are limited. Also, the study mainly focuses on the perspective of educated personnel, with less emphasis on the views of labour workforce, such as operators and labourers.

6- Rarity in Similar Studies:

There is a limited number of previous studies discussing the variations between the areas which made it harder for me to build directly on previous studies. In this case, I tried to connect the two worlds based on the professional experts' opinions and observations in the two countries.

7- Researcher bias:

While I spent every possible effort to maintain objectivity, my professional and personal background may present some bias in the proposed areas of study and the interpretation of the collected data.

8- Time Constraints:

This study is built to be presented as a graduation project for my master's degree in project management at Midocean University. Due to time limitations, the data collected could be enhanced in number of participants and over the course of a longer period.

Study Population and Sample:

For purpose of my study, the population consists of construction professionals who are working or have previously worked in small and medium sized construction projects in both Central Queensland, Australia and Abu Dhabi, UAE. The population also includes experienced professionals from other Australian and Arabic gulf regions. This includes engineers (not necessarily limited civil engineers), project managers, and other technicians involved in staging and delivering construction projects.

Due to the limitations in timeframes and difficulties in accessibility for large number of experts across two different continents, I will use a purposive sampling method to choose relevant experienced personnel. Priority will always be in favor of professionals that have worked in both regions and have direct experience with challenges of different markets.

That being said, like the anticipated majority of the audience of this study, most participants in the questionnaires are migrants' construction experts.

The sample will not distinguish different construction sectors or project portfolios. That means it will not matter whether a participant's background is in building construction, infrastructure, highways, or any other related field. The study aims to capture diverse perspectives and is not limited to Arabic-speaking participants. On the contrary, the study will intentionally include individuals from over twenty different nationalities and more than five native languages.

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