Standardization of procurement: National or international?

Abstract/Summary

The ISO has issued a Draft International Standard on construction procurement and the British Standards Institute is drafting a standard based upon this for use in the UK. Three questions arise from these observations. First, what kind of consultation processes would be adequate to ensure that such a standard meets the requirements of an industry as diverse as construction? Second, why would an international standard be inappropriate for use in a country like the UK? Third, what sort of issues should such a standard seek to cover? There are strong precedents for process standards, such as quality assurance, design management and workmanship on building sites. So the idea of a standard on procurement is not unusual. Moreover, there are many differences in tendering and procurement practice that are wasteful and even collusive or illegal. These issues are explored with a view to offering insights and suggestions for guidance based on the experiences in the UK. The research method is first-hand observation of the drafting committee who are dealing with the British Standard. As an example to test and inform the standardization concept, six different standard guidance documents on tendering procedures are compared. This reveals a significant degree of diversity, and based on this, nine stages for implementing a tendering procedure are derived.

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