

Full Length Research Paper

Influence of different components of organizational support for project management on success of the project realization in institutes of public health

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The aim of this article is to present the importance of a project performance's education, training and motivation and project organization structure in non-profit organizations and to establish its influence on a successful project realization. For this purpose we designed a questionnaire. The sample includes 180 respondents working in all Slovene institutes of public health at the secondary level. The descriptive statistic and regression model was used to test research aims. The results show that the independent variables in the regression model explained 75.2% of the dependent variable variation indicating a successful project realization. The levels of education and training and motivating of project performers statistically significant influence the success of project realization. Project organization structure and organizational climate do not influence a successful project implementation in institutes of public health at the secondary level. The identified characteristics of a supportive environment and their influence on a successful project realization in institutes of public health generate theoretical and practical results. The outcomes of the research will be useful for the designers of work process innovations in terms of a supportive environment for project management.

Key words: Management, project management, public health, research, regression analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Project, as a method of work process implementation (Schonberger and Knood, 1997; Gaither and Frazier, 2001; Heizer and Render, 2008), is a key factor influencing an organization's survival, as well as creating and maintaining its competitive advantage on the market in the contemporary society. By using the results of projects, organizations develop new processes, goods and services better, cheaper and faster (Flynn et al., 1997; Antončič and Prodan, 2008; Bavec, 2009). Projects are also important in terms of satisfying buyers' demand, and improving productivity and effectiveness. Projects' successful implementation increases a company's competitive advantage in local, regional and global markets

(Forsberg et al., 2000; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2000; Alpan et al., 2010).

To implement a project, the participants aim all their values (Eskerod and Riis, 2009), knowledge and skills at achieving their desired goals, that is, goods and services (Block and Frame, 1998). A project is successful when the participants' interests or anticipated benefits are satisfied (Winsted, 2000; Soudain et al., 2009). The most common causes of project failure, for example in the area of information technology, are: poor project planning, poor financial management and insufficient involvement and support of top managers participating in the project (Whittaker, 1999; Haried and Ramamurthy, 2009). The consequences of failed projects were studied also by Pinto and Mantel (1990). They established that there were several factors influencing project success and identified the internal (organizational) and external

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(environmental) factors of project success. The basic finding of their research is that the major problem is to define project success (or failure), which should be accomplished by an evaluator. The following factors are considered to be the basic factors influencing project success (failure): cost, time and quality (Cash and Fox, 1992; Belassi and Tukel, 1996; Zeithaml, 1988), or as identified by other authors, systematic biases and culture (Kendra and Taplin, 2004; Shore, 2008). Over the last 60 years of the research, these components (cost, time and quality) of project success have appeared to be inextricably linked with measuring the success of project management (Atkinson, 1999). However, Lewis (1998) claims that the key factor is cost, which is a function of performance, time and scope. The relationship of these four variables is given by the following expression: $C = f(P, T, S)$. In practice, however, we never know that precise relationship. We have to estimate times and costs.

The approach to project management in organizations should be systemic. Benefits (and requirements) in projects result from organizational strategy; the relation between the project strategy and business strategy is of crucial importance (Morris, 2003; Cooke-Davies et al., 2009). The systemic approach includes internal and external factors which mutually influence a successful project implementation. This approach contains the following components: for example organizational structure, and organizational strategies, understanding the influence of top managers, awareness about the importance of motivation for project success, developing a key team for the project process, organization for project management, developing information communication system for project management, and developing a plan for project manager selection (Graham and Englund, 2004). Given appropriate management support, such project teams are capable of attaining remarkable performance (Johns, 1999).

Any introduction of a project organization brings a new dimension to the existing organizational structure. Organizing project represents a conscious matter of designing organizational structure for the purpose to achieve the project objectives and scope. Turner (1993) divided the existing forms of organization of projects to: functional, matrix and pure project organization. Introducing pure project organization, in the form of time-bound teams, should be an ideal way of further development of organization structures for the management of projects. The key problem of our research has emerged from the researchers' most common findings (Parasuraman et al., 1985; Tansing, 1990; Teas, 1993; Lin et al., 2001) asserting that the traditional management models as well as management project models, as methods of work process implementation, do not meet the needs of modern society in the public sector. These and other previously mentioned studies support the current reforms in health care service as well as new approaches to change management (Hesselbein and Johnston, 2002;

Pivka and Mulej, 2004; Bukovec and Markič, 2008; Kavčič and Tavčar, 2008; Meško et al., 2010) from the process view (Kettinger and Grover, 1995; Burns and Scapens, 2000).

In their research project "The development of health care system management", the researchers Keber et al. (2003) establish that the greatest problems in the area of public health in Slovenia involve business culture, organization, work process, the lack of management knowledge and the relation between business and medicine as a discipline. The introduction of changes is difficult and slow as the area of public health care is not interdisciplinary oriented and not open enough to other disciplines (Pich et al., 2002). Consequently, leading people is more autocratic and bureaucratic and less consultative or participative.

It has been proved, on the basis of the existing and analyzed models of a supportive organizational environment in the area of project management in profit and non-profit organizations that these models serve only as very general guidelines and refer only to separate components of a supportive organizational environment. The correlation between the separate components of a supportive organizational environment (for example, project culture, organization, education and training, motivation, information communication support, planning, monitoring etc.) and, for instance, added value, efficiency, economics, marketability, life quality, sustainable development, has not been verified in any of the past research conducted in Slovenia. The review of the available research results has shown that there is a lack of holistic approach to the planning of a supportive organizational environment in manufacturing and service activities as well as in profit and non-profit organizations.

Beside these/the above mentioned studies and many other general studies about project management in public health service (for example research in journals, such as *International Journal of Managing Projects in Business*, *International Journal of Project Management*, *International Journal of Project Organization and Management* and *Project Management Review*), there has been minimal study of a supportive organizational environment in project management in public health service. Study aims to develop and test the model of a supportive organizational environment in project management in institutes of public health at the secondary level. The results of our research could be beneficial for change makers and project contractors in institutes of public health and other organizations.

Theory and aim of the study

Nowadays, knowledge and skills represent a basic value and means for achieving a sustainable competitiveness in an organization (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Nikolić and Sokolović, 2007; Biloslavo, 2008; Celinšek and

Markič, 2008), which could be generated in the learning organization (Morgan, 1986; Senge, 1990).

Gadeken (1997) proves that technical knowledge is not the most important feature in a successful project manager. An essential criterion in choosing a project manager is his personal characteristics, among which the most significant are: enthusiasm, creativity, visionariness, systematics and systematology.

Gido and Clements (1999) claim that project managers should possess strong leadership skills, skills in developing people, excellent communication skills, stress management skills, as well as problem solving and time management knowledge. Such knowledge and skills can be inborn or acquired by training.

The basis for project performers' training is set by internationally comparable standards (PMBOK, 2008) which describe the methods of acquiring new professional knowledge and skills in the area of project management. Education and training of project performers has been considered as the most efficient way to diffusion of innovation (Rogers, 1995), for instance, by establishing an internal project advisory team (Ashmos and Nathan, 2002) or by a further development of education system (Drucker, 1999). Hershey and Blanchard (1988) promote continuous education and training which should include the novelties in the area of project management adjusted to the achievements in practice. Gadeken (1997) proposes that project performers' education and training should also contain the knowledge of organizational operations, general management and informatics.

The decision-makers should consider the access to the newest project management software and professional literature in libraries as a possibility to access new knowledge and skills which are the basis for any kind of professional work (White and Fortune, 2002). When establishing information communication technology in project management, which is nowadays one of the key factors for an organization's success, a special attention should be paid to planning, business orientation, and the involvement and support of top management (Whittaker, 1999). Porter (1997) and Drucker (1999) suggest that the new ways of performing work (for example, distance learning, working from home, etc.) should be taken into consideration when planning, implementing and controlling the process of acquiring new knowledge and skills.

Chandler (1962) described organizational structure as the design of organization through which the enterprise is administrated. However, this design defined formally and informally, has two aspects. The first aspect includes lines of authority and communication between different administrative offices and officials, while the second aspect includes information and data transmitted through these lines of authority and communication. In Organizations where horizontal leadership is a prevailing practice, the productivity and effectiveness are increased, which

results in an improved performance. For the most part, these organizations are more successful than vertically managed organizations (Kerzner, 2004).

Project work has proved to be the most effective working method in an organization for performing new and complex tasks. Designing or changing organizational structure in this respect is indispensable for a project success (Johns, 1999; Parker and Bradley, 2000; Heldman, 2002; Kerzner, 2004).

New organizational structures can help organizations in innovating work processes, products or services (Ballantine, 1999). The results of the research and case studies (conducted in almost 30,000 organizations in Europe, the United States of America, Canada and Japan) show the influence of new organizational structures on an organization's success. The most highly developed organizational structure is a pure project organization. Such organization is used in the studied organizations, above all to implement large and complex projects.

In business dealings, there are only few organizations where the project organization structure is used as a primary organizational structure. Turner (1993) divides the existing organizational structures into: functional, coordination matrix, balanced matrix, matrix and pure project organization. Pure project organization is not easy to attain, however, it can be effectively used in organizations where conducting projects is a standard method of operation.

Gido and Clements (1999) define a team as a project organization represented by a group of individuals whose functioning is interrelated in order to achieve a common goal. Certain researchers (Salas et al., 1999) indicate that there is no evidence on work improvement by team formation. However, most organizational theories argue (Wisner and Feist, 2001) that a team is an efficient mechanism intended to bind organizational goals. Furthermore, famous business journals and other literature often assert that introducing teamwork represents a value for an organization. The influence of teamwork on productivity, quality and employee satisfaction was examined in numerous studies. However, their results do not provide a clear picture of the influence of teamwork on productivity, quality and employee satisfaction (Wisner and Feist, 2001).

For the effective implementation of projects in institutes of public health, Keber et al. (2003) proposed education of management at different levels of organization with a new knowledge about project management. Among the expected effects, they mentioned that, it also strengthen the investment capacity of public health institutions. For investment in public health organization Slovenia dedicates more than half of the budget funds and therefore a good project management implementation in institutes of public health is needed.

The researchers of the Slovenian public health system (Keber et al., 2003) have established that in the area of

planning, monitoring and evaluating projects, there is lack of proper human resources to implement projects systematically in systemically. The reasons for such a situation originate from the fact that employees do not consider participation in projects as a challenge/responsibility or, in other words, they are not particularly motivated for participating in projects. Therefore, essential motivational factors in introducing project work in institutes of public health at the secondary level are typically non-financial.

Workers' perceptions of working conditions in project management are affected by two important factors: motivation and stress (Gällstedt, 2003). An example of a convenient method for motivating the project manager and participants in employees participating in the team is mentioned by Graham and Englund (2004), from which is evident that approximately 7% of total project value should be allocated to project participants' motivation. Likewise, the project manager should have a direct discretionary right to allocate a certain amount of financial or non-financial (certificates, awards, commendations) support to an individual in a project team.

According to Florida (2004), motivating project managers and participants is essential for a more successful implementation of project work. The project manager's behaviour and conduct influence assuring and maintaining high motivation of project groups' members and thus contribute to a successful project implementation. The project manager should have influence on the motivation process at all stages of the project. In the initial phase, the project manager caters for a suitable choice and updating of project groups. Furthermore, in the process of implementation, he should monitor work and provide feedback on performance to project participants. Finally, at the project completion, he should cater for recognition of effective and successfully completed project work (Gällstedt, 2003).

Situational leadership is a widely spread concept (Hershey and Blanchard, 1988). It is based on two personal features, the first one being the person's ability – having more or less knowledge and abilities as well as managing certain skills. The second one is willingness or enthusiasm.

Gadeken (1997) identified six motivational competencies that are essential for project managers: sense of ownership and mission, political awareness, relationship development, strategic influence, interpersonal assessment (identification of special interests, participants' motives, action orientation, strengths and weaknesses), and immediate responsiveness to problems.

On the basis of this discussion of the theory, the following leads to the following aim of the study: the aim of the present study is to present a project performer's education, training, motivation and success of the project realization in institutes of public health and to establish the influence of first three components on success of the project realization in institutes of public health. For the

success project realization we used following indicators:

1. Project in the institution are normally completed within the set deadlines,
2. Spending budget for the project is consistent with the intended funds for this project,
3. Investors are satisfied with the results achieved in the project,
4. The results of the project bring an added value to the institution and
5. Project achieved the objectives set.

METHODOLOGY

The study was designed as quantitative research based on data generated by the questionnaire (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). To analyze the acquired data we applied the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The research was conducted by descriptive statistics and regression analysis. In the first stage of the data analysis, a demonstration of the basic sample structure characteristics (for example, mean value, standard deviation and the portion of the studied population) was presented. By means of factor analysis we investigated which variables were interrelated and how they explained and created the following factors: education and training of project performers, project organization and organizational climate, motivating project performers, a successful project realization, and project performers' perceptions. By means of a regression analysis, we analyzed which indicators among several independent variables influenced the dependent variable (successful project realization).

The population in our study sample was known in advance. We acquired information on the total number of employees from the official internet sites of all the nine institutes of public health in Slovenia. The data was then compared with the statistical information on the number of employees in the institutes of public health at the secondary level. We ascertained that the data matched and was a suitable basis for further research. We contacted the responsible person of the institutes of public health by phone and acquired an oral permission to administer the questionnaire at their institute. The person in charge also provided us with the information about the size of the target population among their employees who had participated in planning, implementation and supervision of the projects. Thus our questionnaires were sent to the population of 180 employees participating in planning, realization and supervision of the projects. Anonymity of the respondents was ensured as the questionnaires were not signed. Considering the fact that the topic was interesting and useful for the respondents and did not concern their personal integrity, we justifiably expected sincere answers.

The data and information were obtained by means of the questionnaire which included the respondents' opinions and comprehension. The questionnaire's design was based on the research purpose, goals, current literature and the results of the up-to-date research as well as on scientific methods applied and listed in the previous research. The questionnaire is a combination of closed questions and a Likert scale (1 – not true at all, ..., 5 – completely true) with the additional option of selecting the answers "I don't know and I can't tell". We supplemented content related questions with the basic socio-demographic information about the respondents. In the first part of the questionnaire, we examined the statements related to the education and training in the field of project management in the last five years. In the second part of the questionnaire, we examined the statements related to work organization structures. In the third part, we examined the statements related to material and non-material motivation in project work,

and in the fourth part, we examined the statements related to the project realization in the institute.

The questionnaire was tested on the population of 15 respondents at their resident institute of public health. We tested the respondents' comprehension of the questions and instructions for completing the questionnaire, their motivation to participate in the questionnaire, the appropriateness of time allocated for completing the questionnaire, etc. By taking into account such information, we eliminated all possible negative effects that could influence further research.

The empirical research was conducted over a three-month period (May to July) in the year 2008. The questionnaires and side letters indicating the aim of the questionnaire were sent to the addresses of 180 employees participating in project work with a self-addressed pre-paid envelope enclosed. We received 83 validly completed questionnaires, which were all analysed. The response rate was 46.1%, which we estimated suitable for further research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study involved employees in nine Slovene institutes of public health. The sample was mostly represented by the institutes of public health in Celje, Koper and Nova Gorica. Indeed the survey involved 14 employees (16.9% of the sample) from these three institutions.

The sample included 15 males (18.1% of the sample) and 68 females (81.9% of the sample). Employees in institutions, who participated in the survey, are on average 43 years old and are on average employed for 14 years. Most employees who participated in the study, namely 27.7% have obtained a university degree, followed by employees with specialization (18.1%), employees with higher professional school (16.9%) and employees with a Master of Science (14.5%).

Employees in Slovene institutes of public health participated in the 4.23 projects on average. In the last five years, at least one project was led by 39 employees, representing 47% of the sample. The most commonly implemented projects in institutions of public health are projects from the field of R&D, education and training, followed by area of investment in equipment and building, developing and introducing new services, quality, information and communication.

Regarding the component of training and education in the area of project management in the institutes of public health over the last five years, we discovered that the respondents agreed to the greatest extent with the statement that "they support the cooperation between their institute and external institutions in common projects (average 4.7 out of total 5.0). A large extent of agreement was noted also for the statement that "they regularly participate in tenders for projects – local, regional, state and European (average 3.96). Such high average values may be understandable as health care is an activity that can relate to almost all of the cooperating institutions. Regular participation in different tenders for projects may be understood as an opportunity for additional fund raising outside budget funds (increasingly established practice) or as an opportunity for personal growth and the

development of employees in these institutions. The lowest degree of agreement was noted for the statement "the institute has a well-stocked library with professional literature in project management" (average 2.39) and "there is access to the newest project management software" (for example, Artemis, Harvard Project Manager, MS, Primavera, etc.) (average 2.60). We had expected that the respondents would agree to a lower extent with the last two statements, since only two institutes had access to the library with professional literature. Most funds for professional literature are allocated to the principal activity which is health care. Due to the lack of funds for professional literature in project management, it is clear that it is even more difficult to provide up-to-date software. The researchers in other companies and organizations (cf. Johns, 1999; Graham and Englund, 2004) dealing with professional literature supply and the use of up-to-date software in project management have come to similar conclusions.

Among the statements by which we measured project organization structure and suitable organizational climate in institutes of public health, the respondents agreed to the greatest extent with the statement "most decisions at lower organizational levels concerning a particular project have to be confirmed by top management". This is not surprising, as any kind of management process reconstruction normally begins with the consent of top management. The same average value (average 3.52) is obtained also for the statement "the organizational structure is extremely hierarchical". The respondents agreed to the smallest extent with the statement "the employees working on the project are separated from other employees by function and programme" (average 2.0). On the basis of this statement, we can conclude that there are no special organizational structures formed for the work on the project (for example project office or project organization structure); the employees perform work on the project as part of their regular work. This totally corresponds to the examined organizational structures in all of the nine institutes of public health in Slovenia which are in general hierarchical or functional. Project organizational structures cannot be traced. The other findings are generally in line with those reported by Ballantine (1999) and Crawford and Helm (2009).

In terms of component referring to motivating project performers, the respondents agreed to the greatest extent with the statement "we are encouraged to participate in tenders in our own institute" (average 3.59). This corresponds to the findings about the institute's management support to project work and also corresponds to acquiring additional (non-budgetary) material resources. In the institutes of public health, "the employees are encouraged and supported to present their achievements to the public" (average 3.34). We assume that the respondents consider encouragement and support as providing infrastructure (for example, premises, equipment, staff, etc.) rather than providing

Table 1. Sample structure regarding institute of public health.

Institute of public health city	Numerus (n)	Percent
Celje	14	16.9
Koper	14	16.9
Kranj	10	12.0
Ljubljana	3	3.6
Maribor	10	12.0
Murska Sobota	10	12.0
Nova Gorica	14	16.9
Novo Mesto	6	7.2
Ravne na Koroškem	2	2.4
Total	83	100.0

material or non-material motivation. The lowest degree of agreement is noted for the statement "the employees who win a project are properly rewarded by the institute (average 1.83). We believe that in the institutes with no special organization for project work, they do not ascertain the level of employee's commitment in the projects and consequently the reward system is not adequate. As a result of combining work on the project and regular work, the project participants do not decide about their work schedule on their own. Project work is considered additional work which is not particularly remunerated. Consequently, this may result from poor project organization and organizational climate, and poor motivation of project performers in the institutes of public health at the secondary level. The findings presented here concur reasonably well with the original findings (Zhai, 2008; Žurga, 2009; Mengel et al., 2009).

According to the information obtained from the respondents in our research (measuring the level of project realization or implementation in the institutes of public health at the secondary level), the projects conducted in the institutes are brought to the end successfully. That means that project in the institution are normally completed within the set deadlines (average 4.11), spending budget for the project is consistent with the intended funds for this project (average 3.69), investors are satisfied with the results achieved in the project (average 4.02), the results of the project bring an added value to the institution (average 3.64) and project achieved the objectives set (average 4.2). The aim of the study was also examined by means of the basic regression model. The independent variables in the regression model are thus 'education and training of project performers', 'project organization structure and organizational climate' and 'motivating project performers'; the dependent variable in the regression model is 'successful project realization'.

The regression model proved appropriate and it closely corresponded to the data. The independent variables in the regression model explained 75.2% of the dependent variable variation. The Table 1 shows that the computed F statistic is 39.42, with an observed significance level of

less than 0.001. Thus, the hypothesis that there is no linear relationship between the predictor and dependent variable is rejected.

The Table 2 shows the standardized beta coefficient between the predictor variable and the dependent variables. The beta coefficient is shown to be positive and statistically significant at the 0.001 level. From Table 3, we can see that the level of education and training of project performers in project management and the degree of motivating them have a statistically significant influence on a successful project realization. Project organization structure and project-oriented organizational climate have no influence on a successful project realization in the institutes of public health. The respondents may not had recognized the difference between the existing (functional) and planned (project) organization, because they had not experienced it at their institute yet.

Conclusion

We proposed a maturity evaluation of the project management in the institutes of public health, described by Harpham and Hinley (2003) and Kerzner (2004), which includes defining the projects and programmes, project management, programme management, advising and supervising of projects and programmes, project portfolio coordination (range), networking between projects, people management and organizational structure (Gareis, 2003).

Establishing suitable organization for project management in the institutes of public health at the secondary level in Slovenia will influence only the formal methods of operating, therefore, it shall be necessary to cater for implementation of informal methods of operating (for example organizational culture – climate) in the future. A typical organizational climate that supports achieving the project goals in the institutes of public health at the secondary level should include above all: open communication and the flow of information, flexibility in dealing with people, initiative and taking risks, responsibility

Table 2. Description of the basic regression model.

R	R^2	R^2_{pop}	SE values	F-statistics	Level of significance
0.867	0.752	0.733	0.328	39.418	0.000

SE, standard error; F, F test statistic of the ratio.

Table 3. The basic regression model.

Independent variable	Non-standard coefficients		Standard coefficients	t-statistics	Level of significance
	B	SE	Beta		
Training of project performers	0.468	0.308	0.422	2.560	0.026*
Project organization and organizational climate	0.120	0.166	0.127	0.721	0.475
Motivating project performers	0.377	0.231	0.384	2.127	0.041*

Dependent variable: successful project realization. $p < .005$; SE, standard error.

for work results, ability and willingness to take decisions, giving priority to projects, loyalty to the project and cooperation between project participants, which is to a certain extent in line with the former research in project management (Packendorff, 1995; McDermott and Stock, 1999; Kendra and Taplin, 2004).

The results of this research can be generalised and useful for the creators or for those responsible for planning of a supportive environment for project management in the institutes of public health at the secondary level. The proposed guidelines for an improving supportive organizational environment (education and training and motivation of employees) for project management in the institutes of public health will be of assistance to policy and strategy makers and will contribute to the generation of new knowledge leading organizations towards more successful goal achieving.

In further research, it would be meaningful to study the possibility of spreading/applying this analysis on a supportive organizational environment which includes also other components and relations, for example: the development of key team, selection and development processes for project managers, planned and implemented information communication systems for project management, the significance of projects in strategies and eventually the design of a learning organization. It would be useful to determine the correlation between the remaining components of organizational environment and successful project implementation, and identify the prominent influence of a particular component.

Central issues in future research should be obtaining the contractors/investors/users' opinions in evaluating a successful project implementation. There is namely a dilemma concerning the respondents' understanding of the term general organization (functional / line organization) in comparison to project organization. Our finding that project organization does not influence a successful

project implementation is not in line with those from previous studies; therefore, this question should be additionally researched.

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