Do project managers have different perspectives on project management?

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Abstract

Do all project managers have the same perspective on project management? This paper argues that project management may be seen from different perspectives. The task perspective means that the project manager focuses on delivering on time, within budget and with specified quality. The organizational perspective implies that the project manager's focus is to support value creation in the receiving organization. The conducted survey reveals that different perspectives prevail among project managers. The implications are of importance. Every project has to decide at the outset which project management perspective shall rule the work of the project.
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Keywords: Project manager; Task perspective; Organizational perspective; Different perspectives

1. Introduction

Do all project managers see project management in the same way? In this paper, we will investigate whether all project managers have the same perspective on project management. We will discuss the consequences of different perspectives.

By discussing project managers' perspectives on project management, we have experienced that some people misunderstand our objective. We therefore want to clarify what we are not going to discuss. We know by reading about different project management schools that researchers are focusing on different aspects of project management. Söderlund (2002, 2011) introduced the notion of seven different schools of project management. It was later extended to nine schools by Anbari, Bredillet, and Turner, see Bredillet (2007) and subsequent issues. The different schools illustrate that researchers are addressing different aspects of project management and proposing adequate approaches and methods to deal with the accompanying problems. This paper is not about how researchers see the challenges of project work. It is not about the different schools of project management.

We know that different types of projects should be approached differently. Shenhar and Dvir (2007) have empirically shown that projects are managed, planned, organized, and controlled in different ways. Or as Shenhar eloquently phrases it: "One size does not fit all projects" (Shenhar, 2001). Finnish researchers (Artto et al., 2008) have theoretically shown that the autonomy of the project (how independent the project is of the base organization and stakeholders) affects its strategy, and consequently the way it approaches its work. This paper will not discuss if different types of projects should be approached in different ways.

Our intention is to find out if project managers have different perspectives on project management and see their challenges differently. And if our study shows that this is the case, we have to discuss what a specific project should do to clarify the perspective of the actual project manager.

2. Perspectives

We will argue that professionals within the field may see project management from different angles—or perspectives, in our terminology. By "perspective", we mean a certain approach to, or perception of, reality. That means we acknowledge that there is more than one way to see the world. We accept that

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reality depends on "who you ask", or, as others put it, reality is a social construction (Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Hacking, 1999). Reality, or knowledge of reality, is structured (or constructed) by the spectator. Each spectator is affected by his or her (social) context. We speak of "social" here in the wider sense, including childhood, training, and experience. A spectator's perspective is not necessarily a clearly defined and static entity. It is generally flexible and sensitive to circumstances.

No one perspective is best. We all see reality in our own way. It depends on our particular background—that is, our knowledge and experience. Our background affects what we see and what something means to us. One person may see things, which remain invisible to somebody else because their perceptions are guided by different knowledge and experience. What we focus on is governed by experience and what, given that starting point, we find important. If we acknowledge that project managers might regard their duties differently depending on their background and earlier experiences, we should investigate if different perspectives prevail and what the consequences are.

It has also been shown that perspectives change over time. They are affected by published works, but especially by best practices (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005). Project management is a rather new discipline, and it would be surprising if project managers look at their task the same way as they did years ago. This is one more reason to investigate the perspectives of project managers on project management.

3. Research on different perspectives

We know from other disciplines that professionals may look at their assignments differently. In their well-known paper, Klein and Meckling (1958) presented two different perspectives on how to conduct product development. They distinguished between Mr. Optimizer and Mr. Skeptic. Mr. Optimizer analyzes and compares all alternatives and decides which one to go for at the outset and implements it immediately. Mr. Skeptic recognizes that the path to the goal is uncertain. Rather than relying on up-front plans and formal processes, he relies on intuitive judgment and trial-and-error experiences. The original goal for the product might even be changed when new information becomes available. These perspectives are also in general of relevance for project management.

As early as 1983, in the second issue of the *International Journal of Project Management*, a Danish researcher argued for alternatives to conventional project management thinking. He said: "In the same way that we do not all accept the same lifestyle, we cannot all be suited to the same form of project management" (Lichtenberg, 1983, p.101). He believed that alternatives to traditional and rational thinking were needed. His article is still relevant.

The idea of different perspectives on project management was also presented in the early 1990s by Packendorff (1995). He writes about the common assumption (the project as a tool for achieving higher-level ends) and the alternative assumption (the project as a temporary organization—an aggregate of individuals

temporarily enacting a common cause). Two perspectives were also presented by Jugdev et al. (2001). They distinguish between the Old Economy (old truths about project management) and the New Economy (new insights about project management).

The UK-based research network Rethinking Project Management proposed a new perspective on project management, which suggests that project work has to take into account project complexity, social processes, value creation, adopt a broader conceptualization, and encourage practitioner development (Winter et al., 2006a, 2006b). As part of this research, four different perspectives on business projects were presented: projects as value creation, organizational change, intervention, and service delivery (Winter et al., 2006a, 2006b). As a follow-up of this research, Winter and Szczepanek (2009) presented seven pragmatic images for making sense of the complex realities of projects. They see projects as social, political, intervention, value creation, development, temporary, and change processes.

We also have to point to "Making Projects Critical", which is the title of a series of international workshops intended to provide a forum for research from a wide range of critical perspectives relating to all aspects of projects. The intention of the workshops has been to highlight the theoretical and methodological limitations of traditional conceptions of projects and project management. In particular, they have drawn upon wider intellectual resources than the instrumental rationality, quantitative and positivist methodologies, which have been used traditionally to understand, implement, and control organizational projects, see for instance Cicmil and Hodgson (2006); Hodgson and Cicmil (2006).

In a recent paper Svejvig and Andersen (2015) present several different perspectives on project management. They base their literature search on six different categories: contextualization (expanding the project concept to encompass elements such as environment and organizational strategy), social and political aspects, rethinking practice (alternative methods), complexity and uncertainty, the actuality of projects (how projects are actually carried out), and broader conceptualization.

The earlier work on perspectives within other disciplines (exemplified by product development) and within project management might be seen as a justification for further studies of the perspectives of project managers.

4. Two perspectives

The literature on perspectives on project management has not focused specifically on how project managers see their task. We make this as our research question: Do project managers have different perspectives on project management?

Project managers are not a uniform group. However, we choose as our initial approach not to distinguish between different categories of project managers.

Even if we agree that project managers may have different perspectives on project management, this is not so easy to decide, since perspective is a rather broad concept.

Since this is, as we said, an initial study, we choose a rather simple approach. Our studies of the above previous research on perspectives showed that one aspect was seen to be vital in

determining one's perspective — namely, how one sees the role of the project. The project can be seen as a way of making a unique product (main focus is on delivering on time, within budget and with specified quality), but it can also be looked upon as a temporary organization in close interaction with a permanent organization (main focus will be on supporting the value creation of the receiving organization). We take the project managers' interpretation of the role of the project as our starting-point when we survey their perspectives on project management.

We also take it one-step further. An understanding of the role of project would also imply a certain view of how different functions of project management (planning, organizing, controlling, and leadership) should be carried out. We do not restrict our study to the comprehension of the role of project, but we look at how one sees the consequences for how to manage the project.

We limit our study to two different perspectives: the task and organizational perspectives. These perspectives are based on Andersen (2008). (When presenting the two perspectives we refer to many well-known approaches to project work like Work Breakdown Structure, Network planning, Risk analysis, etc. We are not giving any literature references to these, because they are approaches dealt with in most textbooks of project management, and it is not meaningful to refer to a specific source.)

Andersen (2014a) argued that project managers may have different perspectives on the challenges facing them. Some of these arguments are repeated here. What is new is that we provide empirical evidence of the existence of different perspectives.

5. The task perspective

Projects have traditionally been regarded as ways of carrying out a defined non-repetitive task. The definition of a project from the Project Management Institute (PMI) reflects the task perspective. Project is defined by PMBOK® in the following way: "A project is a temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result" (PMI, 2014). It is a typical task perspective definition. Delivering the defined product is the most important aspect.

Let us quickly look at how the project manager may see the different functions of project management according to the task perspective (we later do the same for the organizational perspective).

The objectives of the project are to be determined at the start of the project, expressed by the project triangle (also called the triple constraints). It shows time (the completion date), cost (the budget of the project), and quality (the specifications of what shall be delivered). Consequently, detailed planning has to be conducted at the start of the project. The task is broken down into smaller pieces (WBS = Work Breakdown Structure) and put together into a comprehensive network plan. The plan is minimizing the time it takes to finalize the project by securing that subtasks are worked on in parallel when possible. The project should deliver as quickly as possible. Different kinds of experts are recruited, and the project organization is set up.

Responsibilities for the different subtasks are handed out to members of the organization. Leadership is often of a transactional nature (Bass, 1985). The project manager oversees that everybody is carrying out his or her task and encourages performance by rewards and punishments. The project manager will arrange for the project to carry out risk analysis to reveal threats to successful project execution. On the basis of the analysis, the project leadership takes steps to guard the project against different threats. Likewise, stakeholder analysis is advocated. It will make known which stakeholders represent threats to the project and who will support smooth execution of the project.

The task perspective shows that the task of the project is in focus. The task is defined at the start of the project. The project is ideally detached from the rest of the world. The project manager and his/her expert team are supposed to concentrate on carrying out the task. Threats to its execution have been identified and taken care of. The detailed plan is made and all participants are faithful to the plan. Reporting is done continually. If deviations (from time, cost, or quality) are discovered, actions are taken to correct them. Detailed control will secure that objectives are reached as planned. The unique result is delivered, most probably at the end of the project, also implying the termination of the project.

6. The organizational perspective

The organizational perspective is an attempt to understand the alternative to traditional project management thinking. This perspective's project definition could be: "A project is a temporary organization, established by its base organization to carry out an assignment on its behalf" (Andersen, 2008). The idea of the project as a temporary organization was introduced by Lundin and Söderholm (1995) and Packendorff (1995). This perspective has also been called the Scandinavian School of Project Management. It has lately been further discussed by Kenis et al. (2009).

From an organizational perspective, project management concerns basically the relationship between the permanent and temporary organization. The temporary organization performs an assignment, which it gets from the permanent organization. Inherent in the organizational perspective is an understanding of the project's most important purpose, to facilitate another organization's progress. This is the basic denominator by which everything else is judged.

During the project's lifetime, the project and all involved parties/organizations must work closely together. This is the essence of the organizational perspective. The project should deliver when it suits the base organization best. This is called entrainment (the synchronization of the processes of the project and base organization) (Ancona and Chong, 1996). Just because an organization is temporary does not mean that it cannot be extended or shortened. If extending the project gives the base organization a better product, then extending it is the way to go. Conversely, if the project finishes sooner than expected or its task becomes impossible, it should be shut down earlier.

The main purpose of the project, according to the organizational perspective, is value creation in the base organization. This will require changes to the base organization, and it is up to the project to come up with deliverables that generate the basis for changes. It is not easy to change an organization. The process requires close cooperation between the base organization and the project organization. It will usually require many composite deliveries spread out over the full lifetime of the project; there is often a need for an evolutionary development consisting of many different deliverables over time. The objectives of the project cannot usually be specified as part of the project's assignment. We know the purpose (the mission) of the project — the main reason for having the project — but the specific deliverables have to be further discussed and clarified as the project proceeds.

Time and costs are not objectives, but should be seen as delimitations or framework conditions for the project. If splendid opportunities arise, the completion date can be postponed and the budget exceeded. This means that it is impossible to make a complete plan at the outset of the project. Feedbacks and interactions from the people of the base organization and learning along the road will affect what the project should do. But this does not mean that planning should be abandoned. The project must make an overall (global) plan at the start, and then several detailed plans as the work proceeds and more knowledge is acquired. The overall plan is the stable foundation for the detailed plans. An organization has to be set up with people with expert knowledge on the subject matter of change, but also with profound knowledge of the base organization. The division of responsibilities between the base organization and the project has to be drawn up. This does not exclude close cooperation on most matters.

Instead of risk analysis the project does uncertainty analysis, where it looks for both opportunities and threats. The analysis is both proactive and defensive. The discussions include both investigating if changes in strategies and operations of the base organization would provide new opportunities and looking at which measures will protect project initiatives from unwanted interferences. Traditional stakeholder analysis is conducted, but extended to include studies on opportunities to create temporary and permanent coalitions with partners external to the base organization. The stakeholders' attitudes to the project are improved as they see the cooperation not only as a temporary matter, but as a permanent business opportunity.

Control is not restricted to seeing if plans are followed. It is also important to get a holistic view of progress: is the project really achieving what it was set up to do? When there is close contact between the base organization and the project, the need for control may dwindle as the two parties develop common values and attitudes. Leadership should be visionary, motivating, and stimulating for the team members; the transformational leadership style (Bass, 1985) is advocated. Instead of looking at the project as a closed entity, this perspective sees the project as an open organization in tight contact and cooperation with the base organization and its environment.

7. The differences between the two perspectives

We have presented a sketch of two perspectives. Table 1 points to the differences between the task and organizational perspectives. It shows that the two different perspectives lead to different ways of viewing the functions of project management.

We are going to use this conceptualization to do an empirical study of the perspectives of project managers.

8. Survey on the project management perspectives of project managers

We want to learn how project managers look at project management. A survey was conducted asking people who were familiar with a certain project about the perspectives of the project manager of that particular project. The survey was based on a sample of convenience. Participants on a Norwegian part-time Master program of project management were asked to select a project manager who they knew very well (because they were working closely with him/her or able to observe the person concerned from outside) and describe his/her perspectives on project management. The participants of the Master program are people from private industry and government and from small and large organizations, so the project managers they know should be a cross-section of project managers. Since all respondents were quite experienced with management in

Table 1
The differences between task and organizational perspectives.

	Task perspective	Organizational perspective
The main focus	Execute the defined task	Value creation: Create a desirable development in another organization
The concept of project success	Keep to the project triangle (time, cost, and quality)	Accomplish the mission by adequate deliverables
The nature of the objectives	Fixed, determined at the start	Moving targets
The number of deliveries	Revolutionary delivery: One large delivery at the end of the project	Evolutionary development: Many small deliveries throughout the project
The type of planning	WBS, network plans. Done at start, activity-oriented	Global plan (milestone plan) at start, later detailed plans. Rolling-wave planning, milestone-oriented
The philosophy of delivery	Delivery as quickly as possible	Entrainment: Deliveries when they fit the receiving organization's processes
The kind of organization	Action-oriented	Action- and political-oriented
The leadership style	Transactional leadership	Transformational leadership
The type of control	Controlling time, cost, quality, and Earned Value Analysis	Socialization, embracing a holistic view on value creation

general and project management in particular (part of the entry conditions of the Master program), we believe that their responses have an acceptable quality. All together 180 persons filled in the questionnaire.

The respondents were asked to characterize the perspectives of the project manager along a scale with the characteristics of the task and organizational perspective using semantic differential scales. The semantic differential is one of the most widely recommended techniques to measure the perception of concepts, opinions and attitudes (Verhagen et al., 2015). Whereas an alternative such as Likert-scaling demands from respondents to indicate the extent to which they disagree or agree with declarative statements, the semantic differential makes use of a set of bipolar scales.

The results of the survey are shown as Table 2.

The Cronbach's alpha for the ten items representing the two perspectives is 0.806, suggesting that the items have relatively high internal consistency (a reliability coefficient of .70 or higher is considered "acceptable" in most social science research situations). Some of the items are strongly correlated.

Table 2 shows that project managers look at their tasks differently. Different perspectives prevail. We see that the extreme values are well represented on all elements.

The respondents say that 43% of the project managers perceive their main objective as executing a given task (scoring 1 or 2), while 25% (scoring 6 or 7) have their main focus on creating a desirable development in the receiving organization. Additionally, 28% of the project managers see project success as keeping to the project triangle, but 32% look at project success as achieving the purpose of the project even if it does not keep to the project triangle.

It is interesting to note that Norwegian project managers as a policy prefer a close cooperation with the project owner throughout the project (42% scoring 6 or 7). This view has been strongly argued for in the Norwegian project community, and

has obviously had an impact on project managers (Andersen, 2012).

We see that many feel that they try to combine the two perspectives. We interpret the choices of compromising perspectives as the project manager has not taken a very clear stand, or has not made his/her view clear on the specific aspect.

Some of the aspects of the described perspectives are either/or, but even here we find that the extreme points are not the only answers. We would say that the delivery is either revolutionary (one big delivery at the end of the project) or evolutionary (several deliveries throughout the project). We see that 40% of the project managers go for the revolutionary approach (scoring 1 or 2), while 34% prefer evolutionary deliveries (scoring 6 or 7). The results show that about 27% (because of rounding off in the table the results add up to 101%) go for something in between.

Based on Table 2, we should conclude that project managers see their assignments differently.

We would like to further investigate which aspects of a preferred perspective tend to be linked together. Factor analysis was conducted. It is used to identify a smaller number of factors that explain most of the variance that is observed in the larger number of manifest variables. The results are shown as Table 3.

The factor analysis identifies two components. We call them Leadership philosophy and Success concept. The results mean that each perspective could be divided into these two components.

The Leadership philosophy component tells us that if you have the task perspective you tend to see the project as a given task, are attracted by transactional leadership, want the control to focus on the project triangle, plan everything at start and deliver as quickly as possible. The organizational approach has the opposite approach to leadership.

The Success concept shows that the task perspective is focusing on the execution of the project, has a fixed target, one large delivery, and minimal involvement of the project owner

Table 2
The project management perspectives of project managers. Percentages of number of responses for each alternative. Own survey. $N = 180$.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
The main task of the project is to execute the defined task	21	22	12	8	12	12	13	The main task of the project is to create a desirable development in the organization receiving the deliverables of the project
Project success means that the project keeps to the project triangle (time, cost, and quality)	15	13	15	8	17	24	8	Project success means that the project accomplishes its mission even if it does not keep to budget and schedule
The objectives of the project should be determined at the start of the project and stay fixed throughout the project	13	18	18	8	18	18	7	The objectives of the project should be moving targets (possible to change)
The project should go for a revolutionary delivery (one big delivery at the end of the project)	21	19	6	12	9	18	16	The project should go for evolutionary development (several deliveries throughout the project)
The detailed project plan should be made at the start of the project	7	14	13	5	18	30	15	A global overall plan should be made at the start of the project, while detailed plans are made throughout the project
The project should deliver its deliverables as quickly as possible	16	19	7	16	8	21	12	The project should deliver its deliverables when they fit the receiving organization's processes
The project should keep strictly to the given task (be action-oriented)	20	20	13	13	20	9	4	The project should be also be politically oriented (try to impact decisions)
The leadership style should focus on telling employees what they should do and control if they do it	14	27	13	25	8	11	3	The leadership style should focus on visions, charisma, motivating, intellectual stimulation, and consideration
The project manager's most important job is to control time, cost, and quality	18	27	19	19	5	9	1	The project manager's most important job is to embrace a holistic view of the project
The project owner should involve him/herself at a minimum (only if problems appear)	6	14	9	14	15	29	13	The project owner should cooperate closely with the project manager throughout the project

Table 3
Rotated component matrix of the project management perspectives of project managers.
Extraction method: principal component analysis. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization. Rotation converged in 3 iterations. Suppressed values below .4. KMO (Kaiser Mayer Olkin test for sampling adequacy): .845. Significance: .000. Variance explained: 48.093%.

	Component	
	Leadership philosophy	Success concept
Political role of project: given task or political role	.783	
Leadership style: transactional or transformational	.705	
Type of control: project triangle or holistic	.672	
Type of planning: at start or throughout	.599	
Philosophy of delivery: quickly or when it fits	.551	
Project success: project triangle or mission achievement		.771
Main focus: execution or value creation		.769
Number of deliveries: revolutionary or evolutionary		.535
Role of project owner: minimal involvement or close cooperation		.534
Nature of objectives: fixed or moving targets		.467

and sees keeping to the project triangle as success. The organizational perspective on the other hand focuses on value creation and sees mission achievement as success, goes for an evolutionary development with several deliverables, has close cooperation with the project owner and is open for changing the deliverables to suit the receiving organization.

The factor analysis reveals the two main challenges for the project manager: how should project leadership be conducted and what should be the success criteria of the project. The leadership issue means that the role of the project manager (especially his/her relationship to the project owner) has to be clarified (Andersen, 2012). The success issue means that the success criteria must be determined. We know that the apprehensions of what is project success have changed dramatically over the years (Jugdev and Müller, 2005) and are still a topic of discussion (Davis, 2014).

9. The main challenge: creating a common project management perspective

We will claim that differences in project management perspective are more fundamental than just treating different project types differently. Different project types may require different tools and techniques, but differences in perspectives mean different ways of understanding and interpreting the working situation, which have to be discussed before deciding on tools and techniques. We adopt a certain perspective to help us explain and understand. But according to social constructivism, a perspective also means that we adjust reality in line with this perspective. In a new situation, we use our perspective to tell us how to act. We start acting in a particular way or pattern and build institutions and put groups together in conformity with our preferred perspective. Perspectives not only help explain things, they create impressions as well. In a sense, a perspective is self-fulfilling because we see what we want to see, and we create the reality that fits our own perceptions.

When we have a perspective, we are going to use it normatively. The job of the perspective is not only to explain and understand (its descriptive function), but to help us decide how to act (its normative function). The starting point of project work should be to determine which perspective should dominate the project work. The lesson from the survey should be that the project manager has to discuss with the project owner and the project participants at the start what their perspective on project management is and decide what should be the dominating project management perspective of the actual project.

We know that start-up meetings are an important part of project work (Halman and Burger, 2002). Discussion on which perspectives should guide the project work should be a vital topic during the start-up meeting. As shown by Halman and Burger (2002), it is not unusual that the project owner and the project manager have different views on what should be in focus in the start-up meeting. They have to talk together before the meeting and agree on the agenda, and we will argue that they should make the work of clarifying the project management perspective an important part of the meeting.

It should be checked if all participants support the same view (for instance, using the survey questionnaire).We cannot take for granted that all people involved in the project have the same perspective. As recently pointed out by Kreiner (2014), some projects are characterized as a failure because they do not keep to time and budget when they actually deliberately use more resources to obtain better value for the receiving organization. People are using their task perspective to characterize projects as failures when the projects are actually driven by the organizational perspective and accordingly are a success.

It might not be seen as only negative if people arrive at the start-up meeting with different project management perspectives. The differences may trigger good discussions and also end up in compromises (we saw from the survey that the views are dominated not only with the clear-cut perspectives). Söderlund (2011) emphasizes that an awareness of different perspectives would stimulate cross-fertilization and enhance a pluralistic understanding of projects and project management, and at the same time frame more accurately the problems of contemporary projects. His advice is given primarily to other researchers, but is equally important for project managers.

Gustavsson and Hallin (2014) present perspectives on projects, distinguishing between hard and soft projects. They say: "… this dichotomy seems to be upheld by the research community while practitioners show a more holistic perspective to project management" (p. 568). We take this as a sign that it is beneficial to have a discussion on perspectives at the start of the project.

Even if the project management perspective is discussed at the start-up meeting, this kind of discussion should also be revisited later during the project period. The perspective could be evolving during the project life cycle. Perhaps there might even be radical changes in the shared perspective during the project. It is acknowledged that people shift their perspectives when they move from early front-end where the "future is invented" to the execution part of the project (Morris, 2013). This might also be the case for the project managers, even if we

would argue that it is of great importance that the project manager has the organizational perspective even in the execution phase.

The selection of methods should follow as the consequence of the chosen perspective. Different perspectives must be handled by different theories and methods. It is impossible to do planning, organizing, and controlling for the project dominated by the organizational perspective the same way as for the project that stays loyal to the task perspective.

10. Further challenges: different methodological approaches

The different perspectives need different methodological approaches. This is similar to what Shenhar (2001) concluded when he studied different types of projects; he showed empirically that different types of projects were executed in different ways. The challenge for the field of project management is to come up with an approach to project management, which takes into consideration different perspectives and proposes which methods should be used by the different perspectives. This paper is not going to present in any detail how different project management perspectives should be approached. It would be overambitious. We will just point to some important matters.

The task perspective has its focus on executing a defined task. The goal is to complete the project as quickly as possible, with as low costs as possible, and with the prescribed quality. It is an action-oriented approach, where the objectives are accepted at the outset. The relationship to the base organization or the project owner is not an issue when the project has started. All controversies are in principle settled when the mandate is handed to the project. The project's focus will be on the work itself and not on the relationships to the outside. The best solutions within this perspective would be found by using methods based on optimization, rationality, and self-interest. Optimization is vital because the project manager is looking for the best way to reach the objectives: rationality because the project manager values efficiency, predictability, calculability, and control (Ritzer, 2008); self-interest because the project manager has gotten an assignment and knows he/she will be evaluated on whether the project achieves the required results. Accordingly, WBS (Work Breakdown Structure) and network planning (PERT, CPM) are important methods for task perspective. Phase-oriented models, like the Waterfall model, are welcomed, because project work is seen as a sequential process, preferably with no needs for iterations. These tools are not surprisingly the traditional methods of project management.

The organizational perspective has its focus on the relationship between the project and its base organization. It is focusing on relationships between the different actors in project work. The organizational perspective is preoccupied with fulfilling the mission (the purpose) of the project and laying the basis for value creation in the receiving organization. Projects are value creation processes (Winter and Szczepanek, 2008). The project work needs methods to define the mission of the project and understand how different stakeholders can contribute to value creation. Mission Breakdown Structure (MBS) (Andersen, 2014b) is more important for the organizational perspective than WBS. An evolutionary development is necessary to bring about the needed changes in the receiving organization. A phase-oriented model is not adequate; planning and deliveries will happen throughout the project. All plans cannot be made at the start of the project. An overall plan (milestone plan) (Andersen et al., 2009) should be made at the start, supplemented with detailed plans as the project is moving forward.

Some methods might be applicable independent of perspectives, but the project management perspective might determine what is emphasized. Stakeholder analysis should be conducted as part of project work. Having the organizational perspective, one will be strongly interested in which ways some stakeholders can contribute to value creation after the termination of the project, which is not an important consideration when having the task perspective. When doing uncertainty analysis — also an important part of project work — the project team with the task perspective might be more focused on threats, while the organization perspective team gives more attention to opportunities.

11. Further studies

Our empirical study looked at project managers and their perspectives. It would be of great interest to conduct a study on project teams and see whether the team members have different perspectives. It would also be interesting to follow the team throughout the project to see if the team members are homogenous in their views or if their perspectives are changing and which factors are affecting their views. We would believe that teams which have frequent socialization activities would tend to become more homogenous. Since we are claiming that different perspectives would benefit from the use of different methods or focus on different aspects of the results, it would be interesting to see if this can be substantiated. The project discipline would develop in constructive ways if it could give more clear recommendations on which methods to be used dependent on the applied perspective of the project team.

Table 2 showed that project managers see their assignments differently. It has not been part of this paper to investigate the reasons for the differences. Our aim has been to see if different project management perspectives prevail, and if so, discuss the consequences. However, it would of course be very interesting to learn what may affect project managers' perspectives on project management. Their perspectives are probably strongly affected by their education and training, national and corporate culture, and practical experiences. Factors as industry and type of project may also affect their views. More studies would be of interest.

Conflict of interest

There are no actual or potential conflicts of interest.

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