

2-24-2010

# Investigating the roles, responsibilities and practices of managers in project portfolio management

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## Recommended Citation

Koh, Aileen, "Investigating the roles, responsibilities and practices of managers in project portfolio management" (2010). *Library Services and IT Services papers*. Paper 24.

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Asia Pacific Research Conference on Project Management  
Doctoral Consortium

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## Doctoral Consortium for Proposals

<p><b>Topic:</b> Your current thesis working title and the key questions your research seeks to investigate.</p>
<p><b>Topic:</b> Investigating The Roles, Responsibilities And Practices Of Managers In Project Portfolio Management.</p> <p><b>General Research Question:</b> Do the roles, responsibilities and practices of managers in project portfolio management vary with context?</p> <p>R1: Do project types and organizational complexity determine the use of project portfolio management in organizations in Australia?</p> <p>R2: Are there any differences in project portfolio manager’s roles and responsibilities in different industries in Australia?</p> <p>R3: Are there any differences in project portfolio governance in different industries in Australia?</p>
<p><b>Background:</b> A short bio statement of your past work and/or academic experience.</p> <p>Aileen Koh has worked in the area of Project, Program and Portfolio Management in Australia and across Asia Pacific (Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia). Aileen is currently the Project Portfolio Manager (Information Services) at Bond University and PHD Candidature with the School of Sustainable Development. Prior to arriving at Bond she worked as a Project Manager in Uniting Care Health (Brisbane).</p> <p>Her qualifications include a Bachelor of Science (Computer Science), Master of Project Management (MPM) specializing in Project Costing and Risk Management. Aileen has recently been Certified in P3O (APMG) Certified in the Governance of Enterprise IT (CGEIT) from ISACA, as well as Certified in P3O (Foundation) and ITIL (Foundation). She is a member of ISACA, PMI, AIPM, ITSMF and WIT and has published and presented in Information Technology and project management research conferences.</p> <p><b>Publications:</b> Lim, L., &amp; Koh, A. (2009). IT Portfolio Management in Higher Education, <i>Australian Institute of Project Management Conference 2009</i>. Adelaide, Australia. Paper presented at AIPM 2009 in October 2009.</p> <p>Lim, L., &amp; Koh, A. (2008). The acceleration of SOA adoption in Singapore: challenges and issues, <i>19th Australasian Conference on Information Systems</i>. Christchurch, New Zealand. Paper presented at ACIS 2008 in December 2008.</p>
<p><b>Stage of Research:</b> Please indicate your progress in your doctoral project. Please also indicate what support and/or assistance you are seeking from the consortium.</p>
<p>I started my doctoral program in January 2009 and completed two research subjects; Qualitative and Quantitative methodology. I started literature review in March 2009 to identify research topic, questions and methodology. Currently, I’m preparing for doctoral confirmation.</p> <p>The support that I’m seeking from the APRPM consortium are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• networks for researchers in the area of project, program and portfolio management;</li> <li>• support group to share idea and assist doctoral students;</li> <li>• special interest group for project, program and portfolio management</li> </ul>
<p><b>Argument?</b> State the argument, i.e. What is the argument (thesis, conclusion, knowledge claim) of the proposal? Explain how it is sufficiently novel? What is it arguing against?</p>

Project portfolio management refers to a set of processes and practices to manage a group of projects and programs to achieve strategic business objectives. Since organizations in Australia are increasingly using projects and program as a means to achieve their business objectives, it has created the need for portfolio management in order to manage the simultaneous projects on-going in an organization. Firms have to select and prioritize the *right projects* in addition to doing the *projects right* (Dinsmore & Cooke-Davies, 2006).

Portfolio management, however, is not uniform and need to be adapted to organizational situations according to particular business type, industries and environment complexity. The portfolio decision process encompasses or overlaps a number of decision processes with business, including periodic reviews of the total portfolio of all projects, making go/halts decisions on individual projects on an on-going basis and developing a new product strategy for the business, complete with strategic resource allocation decisions. Along with this the roles, responsibilities of managers in these organizations vary. Thus, the understanding of roles, responsibilities and practices of managers in project portfolio management is important as organizations operate projects or programs with limited resources and ambitious performance objectives to deliver unique products or services to their clients' specific requirements.

However, the research on roles, responsibilities and practices of managers in project portfolio management is limited. The majority of past research on portfolio management focuses on which project selection technique is most successful, how Return-On-Investment (ROI) decisions are made or which planning techniques and practices are appropriate (Cooper, Edgett & Kleinschmidt,2001;Killen, Hunt & Kleinschmidt,2008). The past research shows that high performing organizations apply portfolio management processes and tools to address the requirements stemming from the complexity of the organization's environment and the types of project executed (Bloomquist & Muller 2006).

Thus, this is the focus of this research; i.e. to investigate the practices for project portfolio management together with the associated roles and responsibilities of project portfolio manager in organizations in Australia. The aim of this research is to allow a better understanding of project portfolio manager's rationale for decision-making and their influences to ensure that the best projects are selected; that is, those that will achieve their strategic objectives in the shortest possible time, within the constraints of available skills and resources.

**Object Under Study?** Describe the object, thing or phenomenon under study. The object of the argument. Describe the scope.

The objective of this study is to empirically:

- Identify the theoretical gap in the area of roles, responsibilities and practices of managers in portfolio management;
- Investigate the association of project portfolio governance on roles, responsibilities and practices with project type, environmental complexity and project type;

The scope of the study is to evaluate the differences in roles, responsibilities and practices of managers in project portfolio management within organisations in Australia. The investigation will focus on organisations from different industries in Australia that practice project portfolio management to identify their differences with regards to roles, responsibilities and practices.

This research will adopt a multi-method approach to obtain the highest levels of generalizability and credibility of results (McGrath, 1982). This methodological approach is chosen for balancing the inherent flaws in reliability and validity of the measurement constructs of each of the individual methods (McGrath 1982, Remenyi, Williams, Money, & Swartz, 1998). A combination of several methods and triangulation of their results allows for more confidence in the research results (Jick, 1979). The execution of the research model will start with an exploratory qualitative study to develop a basic understanding of the roles and responsibilities under the governance structures. A quantitative study will be performed to confirm the findings and test the hypotheses.

**Viewpoint?** Describe the perspective (viewpoint) that the object is being studied from. What is the lens, theory, intellectual frame, concern, or worldview used on the object under study?

Project Portfolio Management involves governance structures adopted to minimize the overall costs in converting “input” to “output” through projects. When viewing projects as transactions, these costs are known as transaction costs, which are the sum of all costs for governing projects. Beside process and contract, there is the human part of the project which also needs to be governed. The project can be seen as an agency for managing uncertainty, change and resource utilization.

This research will adopt the Agency theory for alignment of parent and project organisation and Transaction Cost Economics (TCE) theory as the lens to interpret the balance required in organizational governance mechanism and to:

- provide a product’s “fitness for purpose” by lowering maladaptation cost
- lowering of the cost for the organization by economizing existing scales and resources

**Definitions and language?** Define all the key words with consideration of alternative interpretations

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Sources</b>
<b>Project Portfolio</b>	“A collections of projects and programs and other work that are grouped together to facilitate effective management of that work to meet strategic business objectives. The project or programs of the portfolio may not necessarily be interdependent or directly related.”	(Project Management Institute,2008b,p138)
<b>Project Portfolio Management</b>	“The centralised management of one or more portfolios, which include identifying, prioritizing, authorizing, managing and controlling projects, programs and other related work to achieve specific business objectives”.	(Project Management Institute,2008b,p138)
<b>Transaction Cost Economics (TCE)</b>	In economics and related disciplines, a <b>transaction cost</b> is a cost incurred in making an economic exchange. TCE focuses on the individual transaction which converts input to desired output.	(Williamson, 1979)
<b>Agency Theory</b>	Agency theory addresses the potential for conflict of interest that arises between shareholders and managers of a firm through the definition of a principal-agent relationship between these parties.	(Bergen et al., 1992)

**Motivation?** Explain the importance of the topic to academics, practitioners and the researchers themselves? What was the problem in need of research?

<p>Recent literature indicates the growing importance and broadening scope of portfolio management as a governance structure in program and portfolio management (Bloomquist &amp; Muller, 2007). With the investment that organizations place in portfolio management, there is empirical evidence that companies do not do well in relation to Project Portfolio management (Blichfeldt &amp; Eskerod, 2008).</p> <p>The motivation of this research is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gain a better understanding of the role, responsibilities and practices of managers in portfolio management in organizations in Australia. Who are the people involved and what is their status?</li> <li>• Investigate impact of key factors such as project type, environmental complexity and industries on the roles, responsibilities and practices of portfolio management.</li> <li>• Gain a better understanding of processes within project portfolio governance in different industries.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Supporting Evidence?</b> Provide evidence to support the argument (conclusion, thesis, knowledge claim), ensure it is convincing, novel, insightful. Will it stand up in court? Will the counter evidence be fully considered?</p>
<p>In the past research, Bloomquist &amp; Muller (2006) has showed evidence that program and portfolio management practices are determined by the complexity of the environment and project types. Further research has been suggested to focus solely on portfolio management roles, responsibilities and practices based on different geographical and industries. Killen, Hunt &amp; Kleinschmidt (2008) research has indicated project portfolio management practices for tangible product and service product based organizations are similar and suggested further research in service product industries as these industries are becoming more important to the economies of developed nations such as Australia.</p> <p>The aim of this research is to add to the body of evidence that enhances understanding of project portfolio management roles and responsibilities and the extent to which they might differ according to context.</p>
<p><b>Implications, so-what?</b> Describe the outcomes, recommendations, model you expect as a result of the research. How does the research aim to improved peoples' choices? What would be the consequences of accepting the argument/thesis?</p>
<p><b>Importance of research:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Academic contributions in Project Portfolio Management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Extend theory</li> <li>○ Fill Gaps in literature</li> <li>○ To gain In-depth knowledge</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Practical contributions in Project Portfolio Management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a model to guide practitioners</li> <li>• Contribution to body of knowledge for project management in Australia</li> <li>• Training &amp; Development</li> <li>• Recruitment</li> <li>• Provide guidance to organizations in understanding and enhancing project portfolio management practices.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Other comments</b></p>

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