Framing a theoretical and practice-based construct of direct and indirect influence for project managers enabling project success

By: Steve Jansen, August 2019,

You are requested to please participate as a project management practitioner expert to assist with the completion of this study. The study is part of my Ph.D with title: "Framing a theoretical and practice-based framework of direct and indirect influence for project managers enabling project success". The intention is that project managers should be able to use the theoretical and practice-based framework, using the International Competency Base - Revision 4 (ICB4) as reference for project activities, as an enabler to improve their chances of realising project success by practicing influence as a capability and behavioural competence. Your participation and contribution are valuable to the final outcome of this study.

The study entails a mixed method study, consisting of a qualitative and a quantitative phase. The qualitative phase has been concluded and the high-level results for this phase are discussed below.

Potential respondents, not interested in the qualitative results, can skip the qualitative discussion below and can proceed directly to the last section "<u>The way forward</u>" where background information is provided to add value to this study.

Abstract: Despite the considerable research that has been done on project success, the rate of project failure is still high, prompting a search for a new perspective to improve the success rate of projects globally. This study proposes an additional enabler for the project manager, namely, the capability and competence to influence others. Since the construct of influence has not been well defined for project managers, the elements of the construct of influence, based on the available literature, are presented in a theoretical framework which can be used by the project manager to improve project success. This will complement the project management body of knowledge and literature. The theoretical results of the study culminated in a multi-dimensional construct for influence consisting of enabling, core, peripheral and

integrative concepts which were further researched to establish a theoretical framework for the construct of influence.

Value of the study: The study was based on my experience of the impact of influence on situations beyond control, and by my desire to know more, spurred on by the lack of information I encountered on indirect influence in the literature. The study will contribute to the field of knowledge in the national and international domains of project management. Establishing an extended theoretical framework for influence in project management will be unique, and will therefore add value to the professional body of knowledge in project management, and to the literature. It will add value to expanding project management curricula and education internationally and locally. The theory defining the construct of influence will further equip the modern project manager with an additional enabler to manage situations where she or he would otherwise be left with no recourse in managing difficult and unpredicted events in an already complex environment. It will extend the domain of behavioral theory in the field of project management. If the elements of influence can be identified, characterized and structured by means of a literature review, and be tested in practice, this can serve to improve the success rate of projects.

High-level methodology: This study proposes an additional enabler for the project manager, namely the capability and competence to influence others. The process to realize this entailed:

- Identifying the most prominent success factors, to improve project success. The prominent success factors were identified as clearly defined goals and direction, competent project teams, clearly defined roles and responsibilities, communication and consultation with stakeholders and compliance with budget, time frame and performance criteria.
- Project management elements relevant to influence in the ICB4 of the International Project Management Association (IPMA), were identified and listed. Main project management elements identified entail requirements, objectives and benefits; time;

organization and information; quality; finance; resources; stakeholders; strategy; power and interest; culture and values; self-reflection and self-management; personal communication; and teamwork.

- The prominent success factors were mapped to the project management elements to provide the project manager with a guide on which success factors will be affected, when executing the identified project management elements.
- A systematic literature review was performed to identify the building blocks of influence a project manager can use when executing the identified project management elements to affect project success. The results culminated into (1) Enabling Concepts, memory, cognitive reasoning, intuition, conscious and unconscious, goals, beliefs, emotions, needs, values and norms. (2) Core Concepts, being persuasion, argument believability, leadership, communication, motivation, decision-making and moral decision-making. (3) Peripheral Concepts being, culture, personality, attitude and behavior and environmental context. (4) An Integrative Concept, being know one-self.
- The concepts were further studied to compile a unique theoretical framework for the concepts of influence. The framework identified variables and main characteristics for each concept of influence, which the project manager can use as an additional enabler to affect project success, when executing the identified elements in the ICB4. The researcher intended to establish such a framework, which currently does not exist in any of the main bodies of knowledge, including the ICB4, PM-BOK and the Prince II Training Manual.

Results: The high-level theoretical frame work constructed through the systematic literature review and after content validity, where experts in the fields of psychology, sociology and cognitive science, have given their inputs are presented in table 1 below.

Table 1: High-level Theoretical framework for influence

No	Concept category	Concepts of influence	Variables – Main characteristics related to each concept
1	**Enabling**	Memory	Information processing – Memory encodes, combines and decodes.

No	Concept category	Concepts of influence	Variables – Main characteristics related to each concept
2			Sources of knowledge – From perceptions, what other people say, introspection and remembering.
3			Judgement – For the conscious on beliefs and for the unconscious on heuristics and cues.
4			Cue effects – Internal/external cues can add or restrain retrieval.
5		Cognitive reasoning	Meta-cognitive process – Monitors and controls cognitive processes.
6			Meta-cognitive feelings – Provide feelings of knowing, confidence and error during retrieval.
7			Judgement – Through the old mind and the new mind.
8			Old mind (Type I systems) process – Hard-wired into the brain.
9			New mind (Type II systems) process – Mental simulations and can intervene with the old mind.
10		Intuition	Pattern recognition – Results of meta-cognition and feelings stored as mental representations.
11			Inference abilities – Has forward (prediction) and backward inference capabilities.
12			Evolution phases – Stimulus-response, schemas, accumulate information from different resources and construct mental representations.
13			Strata (Layers) – Basic, primitive and sophisticated layer.
14		Conscious and the unconscious	Neural maps for states of mind – Include bodily sensations and cognitions.
15			Learning process – Scan environment and then forming perceptions.
16			Learning process application – For survival, adaptation and maintenance of well-being.
17			Controlling ability – The unconscious guides the conscious and guide the way we pursue goals.
18		Goals	End-states – Goals are end-states.
19			Information processing – Carry information about whether, when, how and at what cost (value) need fulfilling goals can be achieved.
20			Mental changes – Actual outcomes updates mental representations for future use.
21			Composition – Consists of beliefs, emotions and intentions to act.
22			Selection – Goals are encoded and stored and used for future use, which play a strong role in goal selection.
23		Beliefs	Cognitive representation – Stored in memory as part of own experience and behavior of others.
24			Composition – Consist of the world and things in it.
25			Time effect – Over time simple beliefs consolidate into more generalized beliefs.
26		Emotions	Value assignment – Provide value attached to each goal.
27		Goals, beliefs and emotions	Relationship with personality – The core of personality.
28			Motivational value – Are deeply motivational.
29			Outcome processing – Select highest value of outcomes.
30		Needs	Needs hierarchy – Higher and lower order needs.
31			Balance – Goals are balanced with needs.
32			Cultural effects – Varies in emphasis in cultures.
33		Values and norms	Cognitive representation – of basic motivations, which are abstract goals.
34			Priorities – More attribution to values result in more motivation to act to attain the value.
35			Culture effects – Have different meanings in different cultures.
1	**Core**	Persuasion	Continuum - Central vs peripheral routes
2			Arguments – People are less persuaded by facts and more by subjective value.

No	Concept category	Concepts of influence	Variables – Main characteristics related to each concept
3			Scope – Only the beginning of an influence campaign.
4		Argument believability	Old mind (Type I systems) impact – Attitudes change temporarily.
5			New mind (Type II systems) impact – Attitudes are resistant to change, but change more permanently.
6			Time – Under time pressure, beliefs dominate.
7			Opinion effects – Arguments agreeing with our opinions are more easily accepted.
8		Leadership	Styles – Latest leadership styles.
9			Authentic style – Take generation attributes into account.
10			Situational leadership – Situation dependent.
11		Communication	Aids – Communication plan and lessons learned.
12			Noise – Definition of noise and determining the intensity of noise.
13		Motivation	Types – Intrinsic and extrinsic.
14			Relevance to emotions – A trigger to emotions.
15		Decision-making	Social value – Make choices that maximizes value.
16			Common value signal processing – Compiled from various regions of the brain.
17			Reinforcement learning – Process to arrive at a reward prediction signal and to take a decision.
18		Moral decision-making	Unconscious cycle – Reflexive in nature.
19			Conscious cycle – Reflection in nature.
1	**Peripheral**	Culture	Cognitive process – From mind to body.
2			Cognitive governance sub-systems – Influence the way in individuals view the world.
3			Ubuntu philosophy – Interrelatedness.
4		Personality	Traits – Inputs to personality.
5			Temperament – Influences needs.
6			Temperamental traits – Stable over life.
7			Non-temperamental traits – Can change and part of personality.
8		Attitude and behavior	Direct experience impact -Attitudes are held more strongly.
9			Personality traits impact – Self-monitoring (based on internal cues). It is difficult to change behavior if self-monitoring is high.
10			Attitudinal qualities impact – Difficult to change behavior if ambivalence (where negative and positive feelings exist simultaneously regarding a situation).
11			Situational variables impact – Strong incentives can affect behavior independent of attitude.
12			Change factors – Change through new information and dependent on personal involvement.
13		Environmental context	Unconscious model – An automatic process of judgement.
14			Conscious model – Conscious reflection on the environment.
1	**Integrative**	Knowing one-self	Cognitive view – Awareness of one-self through mental representations.
2			Behavioral view – Self-esteem and mental health.
3			Group identity – Dependent on the meaning the group identity has to the individual.

The way forward: The qualitative part of the study has now been explicated. In order to ensure a theoretical and practice-based study, the quantitative part of the study still has to be

concluded. The objective of the quantitative part of the study is to measure the relevance of the concepts in practice. Note that the relevance is tested and not the application thereof. As a spin-off, the non-application of these concepts in industry will identify a gap between the theory and practice, which can be used as focal points for practitioners, during the implementation of the taxonomy presented in table 1. There are a number of concepts, especially from the enabling concepts group that can not be measured. In such instances, the information will be retained as background theory. The theoretical framework in table 1, was used to compile a questionnaire that can be sent to experienced managers of complex projects and programs. For the purpose of this study the definition of complex projects and programs is:

- Many stakeholders.
- Multidisciplinary teams.
- Several overlapping phases.
- Different units in the organization providing resources.
- For programmes, more than one project manager involved in the programme.
- Medium to high risk

If you are interested in adding value to this study, please see the link below. Click on it and it will take you to the questionnaire to be completed. It should not take you more than 10 minutes to complete. Your contribution is important to the ever-growing field of project management, as we need more enablers to equip us to manage projects more successfully.

Link: http://download.apmsa.org.za/

Please copy and paste the link in your internet browser and click search. Click on “Final Questionnaires.docx” and open (allow if applicable). A word document will open. Enable editing, complete the questionnaire and send to info@alphaedua.co.za.

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