
Preface

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Biographical notes: Nikitas A. Assimakopoulos is a Professor in the Department of Informatics at the University of Piraeus, Greece. His research interests include systemic methodologies, systems approaches to management and informatics, and applied operations research techniques. He has lectured at Chelsea College, University of London, England, and at the Athens University of Economics and Business, Greece. He was a Consultant of the British Post Office and the Agricultural Bank of Greece. He holds the professional title FOR of the British Operational Research Society. He has published over 150 papers in refereed journals, 120 papers in conference proceedings and has participated in over 130 conferences with papers. He is an Associate Editor in five international journals and reviewer in 12 well-known journals which are associated with the four international societies where he serves as an active member. He is the founder and the Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Applied Systemic Studies (IJASS)* published by Inderscience Publishers. He has developed the design and control systemic methodology (DCSYM) and the STIMEVIS multi-systemic methodology. He is frequently invited to give talks at national and international conferences and research organisations. He is the founder and elected President of the Hellenic Society for Systemic Studies (HSSS) (<http://www.hsss.gr>). He is the founder and the Coordinator of the first international Post-Graduate Professional Program Certified Systemic Analyst Professional (CSAP) (<http://www.csap.gr/>) which is supported by the HSSS.

Theofanis Giotis has been managing projects in EMEA region since 1987. He is a Senior Project Manager, Instructor, Consultant, author, Trainer and entrepreneur. He is the CEO of ITEC-CONSULTING since 1988, CEO of 12PM Consulting since 2009 and President of PMI-GREECE since 2005. He is teaching information technology and project, programme and portfolio management at the postgraduate level in four universities in Greece.

Rich Karlgaard, Forbes editor, during the ‘The Forbes Leadership Networks Forum’ that took place at Palo Alto, California, 2/10/2008, noted: “...The practice of project management will be the activity that makes or breaks many global companies in this economic environment...”

So, as organisations continue to face tough challenges in this globalised and turbulent economic environment, the need for excellent applied project management systems becomes even more pronounced. Limited resources (5M – money, men, materials, machines and methods) will always drive organisations to be more innovative, more

productive and more agile. Without adequate project management systems in place, the risks to estimate, cost, schedule, and complete projects can become insurmountable. All projects must be professionally managed by using efficient project management systems that must be in place.

Questions raised include:

- How can I assess and improve the project management maturity of individual team members?
- Are technical skills more important than soft (human) skills in project teams?
- How to measure and how to improve the project management maturity of an organisation?
- What cost estimation and schedule estimation techniques are appropriate to use throughout the project life cycle?
- How can I avoid scope creep?
- Can I do simulation to my schedule plan?
- How can PERT help us increase estimations and reduce risks?
- How can I use quality as a competitive advantage tool?
- What is the appropriate method for change management?
- How can configuration management be handled in any project?
- What is an effective project management information system (PMIS)?
- What is an appropriate team collaboration system?
- How risk is associated with different procurement contracts?

The aim of this special issue in project management presents five papers in order to give multiple viewpoints to these questions from experts across scientific and geographic borders.

- Ateekh Ur Rehman, Yusuf Siraj Usmani and A.M.A. Al-Ahmari's paper presents a study to examine which operational factors have stronger impact for the enhancement of the project management performance in Saudi Arabian industrial organisations and also to investigate the correlation between the various operational and performance criteria. A descriptive and relational survey was attempted for empirical analysis. The results reveal that the deployment of project management performance evaluation model has positive and significant impact over project management performance. The case analysis shows that among all of the operational criteria the leadership has highest impact over the project management performance followed by project life cycle, the policies and strategies.
- The critical features for project stakeholder management are the focus of a paper by Hamid Aladpoosh, Awaluddin Mohamed Shaharoun and Muhamad Zamari b. Mat Saman. They discuss the need for a shift in stakeholder beliefs from that of qualitative management, to that of an alternative, systematic management that making goal-congruence relationship between project and

stakeholders. The paper presents a critical review of the existing literature, addresses stakeholder notion, and related issues within two different schools of thoughts. It proposes to advocate that the management of stakeholders should improve its position to a formal process, and plays a role that is more accountable and align with the project execution.

- Numerous surveys proved that people are the main cause of failure and challenges of the ICT projects. Project manager skills to handle humans are essential to success of those endeavours. Bogdan Lent and Malgorzata Pinkowska's paper discusses the soft skills needed in the ICT project management. The authors also investigate the awareness of soft skills understanding by project management practitioners and researchers. The analysis of 234 job advertisements for project managers published in Switzerland, Poland and Thailand, displayed significant deviation of demanded skills as compared with the evaluation of 29 journal publications and 46 books on project management. Mapping of recognised skills to the human factors processes of L-Timer® project management system and assessment of skills maturity in accordance to Blooms' taxonomy explains their complexity. Same time the relatively shallow insight of practitioners and researchers into soft skills awareness is exposed.
- A systemic approach to managing information and communication technology (ICT) projects is presented by Raed S.A. Murad and Robert Y. Cavana's paper. The authors discuss the application of Stafford Beer's viable system model (VSM) to managing ICT projects in Wellington, New Zealand. A modified VSM framework was tested by applying it to five different practical case studies of ICT projects, based on interviews with project or team managers. One case is outlined in detail, demonstrating the power of the framework in identifying project management weaknesses, and suggesting strategies for avoiding them. The study demonstrates that the framework is useful in understanding the challenges faced by the project environment and helpful in raising questions on the adaptability to match variations between the different stakeholders in the project.
- In closing, David Thyssen and Michael Gessler introduce the concept of project-oriented management as a promising, though ambitious approach for dealing with the inevitable contradictions and dilemmas' that arise in those organisations using both ways of organising at the same time. They present the findings of an empirical case study that revealed 178 obvious and hidden contradictions between temporary and permanent work inside a project-oriented company by using the repertory grid technique to uncover the personal constructs – individual images of reality – of line and project managers. Their quantitative and qualitative analysis shows that more than 70% of the contradictions may be explained by two distinctions:
 - a temporary versus permanent work
 - b management versus expert work.