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CONFERENCE REPORT

Report from the 2017 IPMA Research Conference on project success

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Project success is one of the most researched topics in project management. Many studies tried to find out the ingredients for project success, the so-called success factors and how to measure success, by the help of the so-called success indicators. One question is if these definitions and understandings of success are still valid for the 21st century. Therefore the theme of the 2017 IPMA Research Conference was: “Projects, Management and Success - do we need a wider understanding?”

About the IPMA Research Conference

The IPMA Research Conference was founded in 2013 and as a Think Tank it aims to bring researchers, experts, scholars and practitioners in project management together who share a common passion for their discipline. During the conference, they discuss and exchange research ideas and achievements on the topic of projects and its management. The distinctive feature of this small in size conference is the intense dialogue between practitioners and academics which can neither be found at scientific or professional conferences. The annual International Conference aims to bring together experts from all countries worldwide to increase the mutual understanding of the global challenges of project managers in various environments and industries. The special spirit of the IPMA Research Conferences can be particularly felt in the World Café sessions where the participants can gain new insight perspectives for today’s challenges in project management.

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5th IPMA Research Conference 2017

The theme of the 2017 IPMA Research Conference was “Projects, Management and Success – do we need a wider understanding?” Project management has continuously developed in the last decades like no other management discipline. But although the requirements towards project managers further developed, the definition of success in projects and in project management has remained stable during this time.

Project Management distinguishes between project success (measured against the overall objectives of the project, and a high level of satisfaction concerning the project outcome among the key stakeholders) and project management success (measured against the measures of performance as scope, time and budget). However, success has different meanings to the people as it is linked to culture and values. Success is perceived differently by different stakeholders, and in different areas: the macroeconomic meaning of success differs from the micro-economic, success in sociology is perceived differently than in psychology or sport, and an individual perceives success differently than a group, an organization or a whole society.

The 2017 IPMA Research Conference took place on Nov 2 - 4 2017 in Incheon, Korea. It gave the 60 participants from 13 countries from five continents the opportunity to exchange their understanding of successful projects and their management.

The festive official opening ceremony in the morning of day 1 covered several congratulatory and keynote speeches from the local hosts including Dr. Han Seung-soo, the Former Prime Minister of Korea and UN’s Special Envoy for Disaster Risk Reduction, from Mr. Kyung-seo Park, President of the Korean Red Cross, and Mr. Kyoung-Soo Kim, Member of the National Assembly of Korea as well as from the IPMA president Mr. Reinhard Wagner and the chairman of IPMA Korea, Mr. Won-dong Cho. They highlighted in their speeches the meaning of projects and their professional management for the rise and success of societies like South Korea.

One challenge in the organization of this conference was to bring together the interests of the national Korean-speaking and the international English-speaking participants. The organizers solved this by offering a program that was split in the afternoon into three different streams to fit both needs. One stream was dedicated to the Korean participants, where the speeches from the international keynote speakers got simultaneously translated into Korean and two further streams that were based on the paper presentations that were selected in the ‘call for paper’ process. These presentations built the basis for the two parallel research streams.

The first two parallel streams covered the topics “Project success and Ethics & Philosophy,” and “Project success and Sustainability.” The second afternoon streams were about the topics “Project success and culture” and “Project success and value.” These twelve papers are included in this special PMRP edition of the Research Conference.

The evening of day one was dedicated to the IPMA Research Awards. IPMA awards every year excellent research in the three following categories: young researcher, researcher, and lifetime achievement award. In 2017 the winners in the three categories were: for the IPMA Young Researcher Award the winner is Ms. Maude Brunet, for the IPMA Research Award the winner is Lavagnon Ika and for the IPMA Research Achievement Award the winner is Jeff K. Pinto. The winners gave presentations on their research studies and encouraged the audience to join in the field of project management research. A further highlight of the award evening was to honour Rodney Turner for his role as chief editor of the International Journal of Project Management and for bringing Project Management research in the last 30 years

to today's academic recognized high ranked level. The award ceremony was concluded by performances by various Korean artists.

Day 2 started with five keynote speeches from Beverly Pasian, Reinhard Wagner, Carl Marnewick, Won-dong Cho and Jesus Martinez, all looking at the different facets of project success from different angles: from the benefits' perspective, the journal editor's perspective, from agile project management's perspective and from the individual perspective, starting a reflection process at every participant. The morning ended with an interview with Rodney Turner on his own definition and reflection on project success. The afternoon started with two parallel creativity sessions, and one was a Six Thinking Hats workshop facilitated by Haukur Jonasson and one a Design Thinking workshop facilitated by myself. Both workshops dealt with the definition and understanding of project success and gave the participants new insights about the various ways of looking at success from the various stakeholders, a better understanding of the different attitudes towards success, but also about the shades of success. The findings in the workshops were summarized in the final World Café session. In five rounds the following five topics were discussed:

- How can we integrate sustainability into the current definition of project success?
- What are the further new aspects that project success should include?
- What can governmental institutions do to enhance project success?
- What are new research questions regarding project success?
- What is the legacy of this conference?

The second conference day was concluded by the common, unambiguous summary of all participants that the current definition of project success is not sufficient anymore given the new constraints as complexity or the need for sustainability in today's time. However, it is not possible to come up with a proposal for a new definition yet.

The third day of the IPMA Research Conference traditionally consists of an excursion to local project sites that cover the theme of the conference and some sightseeing. The success theme fits the famous Incheon Bridge where the participants learned from the charismatic CEO and project manager Dr. Soo-hong Kim about the challenges of planning and constructing a spanning cable-stayed bridge. Incheon Bridge is the five longest of its type in the world, reducing the travel time between Songdo and Incheon International Airport by one hour. The overall length of the bridge is 22 km. In 2015 the Incheon Bridge project won the IPMA Project Excellence award, and the participants had the opportunity to understand the ingredients of this example project success. In the afternoon the participants visited Seoul and the Gyeongbokgung Palace, the antic quarter of Bukchon and the art district Insadong. The evening ended with a typical Korean barbeque dinner.

The participants again enjoyed the special character of this unique research conference with its possibilities to get to know international project managers, to see local projects and to experience how project management is applied in the various parts of the world. This combination made the 2017 IPMA Research Conference again a memorable event for all participants. Project success and the local application of the conference theme gave the participants the chance to see Incheon Bridge and its project manager Dr. Kim that will remain a landmark for the conference participants when thinking about project success in the future.

The IPMA Research Conference Coordinator thanks all authors and keynote speakers for contributing to the success of the 2017 IPMA Research Conference, the conference stream facilitators for their professional moderation of the research streams, the Korean hosting

delegation of their warm hospitality, the IPMA Research Coordinator Helgi Thor Ingason for his continuous support, Beverly Pasion for publishing the final papers in the new PMRP journal and finally IPMA for making this unique conference possible.

Berlin, February 2018

Yvonne Schoper

Note: This report has been adapted from the author's blog post that was published at blog.ipma.world.

About the Author



Dr. Yvonne Schoper is Professor for International Project Management at HTW University of Applied Sciences Berlin. Dr. Schoper holds a BSc in Engineering Management, an MSc International Business and a Ph.D. in Industrial Engineering. She worked as a project manager for BMW where she was responsible for several international automotive development projects in USA and in Germany. Since 2009 she is associate Professor for Project Management at the Tongji University in Shanghai (China).

Her research interests are intercultural project management, future trends in project management, women in project management and the further development of the profession of project managers.

From 2012-2015 she was Executive Board member of GPM Germany where she was responsible for research. Since 2015 she is the delegate of Germany at IPMA's Council of Delegates. Since 2016 she is member of the Presidential Advisory Board of GPM.