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Exploring the readiness of private sector organizations in the
UAE to implement and benefit from Project Portfolio
Management (PPM)

دراسة مدى جاهزية مؤسسات القطاع الخاص في دولة الإمارات العربية
المتحدة لتطبيق والإستفادة من إدارة محفظة المشاريع

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DEDICATION

First I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my loved family members.

Without their patience and encouragement it would have remained a dream. Second, to my parents who dreamed to see this real.

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I would like first to sincerely thank God for helping me and giving me patience to complete this dissertation. Also, I would also like to express my thanks to my supervisor Dr. Pual who provided me endless support, cooperation and guidance all the way till completion. Also, I am so thankful to all my family members for their continuous support and patience.

ABSTRACT

Organizations use projects to implement their strategies and to create services and products for their customers. Also, many organizations initiate projects to adopt to the market changes and meet customer demands in order to be more competitive in their market. A Multi projects environment is more difficult to manage than having only one project to handle. Project Portfolio Management (PPM) can play an important part in this regard.

تقوم الشركات بتنفيذ استراتيجياتها من خلال المشاريع، كما تقوم بإطلاق المشاريع من أجل ابتكار خدمات ومنتجات لتلبية احتياجات عملائها وذلك لمواجهة تغيرات السوق ومن أجل أن تكون أكثر تنافسية في الأسواق التي تعمل بها. إدارة هذه المشاريع المتعددة تخلق تحدياً لهذه الشركات وهنا يأتي دور إدارة محفظة المشاريع للمساعدة في مواجهة هذا التحدي.

The purpose of this study is to identify the success factors to be considered before implementing PPM in organizations and to explore the readiness of UAE private organizations with respect to these success factors. In order to achieve this, a literature review was conducted including studies and researches concerning PPM implementation. In addition several interviews were done with project stakeholders including project managers, project sponsors and business heads from various management levels in five different private organizations in Dubai using open ended questions.

هدف هذه الدراسة هو التعرف على عوامل النجاح التي يجب أن تؤخذ في الاعتبار قبل تطبيق إدارة محفظة المشاريع في المؤسسات كما تهدف الدراسة أيضاً إلى التعرف على مدى جاهزية مؤسسات القطاع الخاص في الدولة بالنسبة لهذه العوامل. وللوصول إلى هذه الأهداف، قام الباحث بالإطلاع وقراءة العديد من الدراسات والأوراق العلمية المتعلقة بتطبيق إدارة محفظة المشاريع في المؤسسات. كما تم إجراء عدة مقابلات مع المعنيين بإدارة المشاريع. المقابلات شملت مدراء مشاريع ورؤساء أقسام وبعض أعضاء الإدارة العليا في خمس مؤسسات مختلفة في دبي.

The findings show that most of the organizations are not ready yet for PPM implementation with respect to the success factors. The findings showed that most of the organizations do not have a full inventory of all their projects running which can open a door for duplicate projects. Further, the findings indicated that not all organizations have their projects mapped to the organization strategy, so projects may get initiated without direct relation to the strategy. Also, it was clear from the findings that not all organizations have in place one point of control to manage all the organization's projects e.g. a Project Management Office. Furthermore, it was clear from the findings that not all organizations have a standard procedure for projects selection. The procedure might exist in the organization, but it varies from one department to another. Besides, it was found that organizations in the UAE have some of the PPM functions in place such as project selection, resources allocation and reallocation, projects prioritization and reprioritization but none of them track the project benefits after delivery.

تبين من نتائج الدراسة أن كثير من المؤسسات لا تتوفر فيها مقومات النجاح لتطبيق وإستفادة من إدارة محفظة المشاريع ، حيث أظهرت النتائج أن معظم المؤسسات ليس لها إحصاءات كاملة لجميع مشاريعها التي هي قيد التنفيذ مما يمكن فتح الباب أمام المشاريع المكررة. أيضا أظهرت الدراسة أن ليس كل المؤسسات تربط مشاريعها باستراتيجية المؤسسة بحيث تطلق هذه المؤسسات مشاريع ليس لها علاقة مباشرة مع استراتيجية الشركة. وأشارت النتائج الى أن ليس جميع المؤسسات في الدولة لديها إدارة أو جهة واحدة فقط مسؤولة عن إدارة جميع المشاريع في الشركة مثل مكتب إدارة المشاريع (PMO : Project Management Office) ، وأيضا بينت النتائج أن بعض الشركات ليس لديها طريقة موحدة لإدارة المشاريع على مستوى الشركة بحيث أن هذه الطريقة إن وجدت فهي تختلف من قسم إلى آخر ومن إدارة إلى أخرى. بالإضافة الى ما سبق ، فإن نتائج البحث أظهرت أن بعض مهام إدارة محفظة المشاريع مطبقة في الشركات مثل إختيار المشاريع ، توفير الموارد للمشاريع المعتمدة بالإضافة إلى تحديد الأولويات بالنسبة للمشاريع المطلوب تطبيقها قبل مشاريع أخرى وتغيير هذه الأولويات بناء على حدوث أي تغيير على استراتيجية الشركات أو حسب تغيرات السوق ، لكن لم يوجد لدى أي من المؤسسات المشمولة في الدراسة أي إجراء لمراجعة النتائج والأهداف المتوقعة من المشروع بعد تنفيذه .

كذلك أفادت الدراسة مقومات نجاح إضافية والتي لم يتم التطرق إليها في الأوراق العلمية والدراسات السابقة ذات الصلة والتي تم قراءتها كجزء من هذا البحث. هذه المقومات من شأنها أن تزيد فرص النجاح عند تطبيق إدارة محفظة المشاريع في المؤسسات. جزء من هذه العوامل له علاقة بالثقافة المؤسسية مثل تعزيز ثقافة المسئولية والمحاسبة بالإضافة إلى تشجيع ثقافة تطبيق أفضل الممارسات في كفاءة العمل والإجراءات المتبعة لتأدية المهام المطلوبة. أيضا أفادت النتائج بضرورة إعطاء أهمية كبرى للإجراءات المتبعة في اختيار المشاريع ومراجعة النتائج والأهداف المتوقعة من المشروع بعد تنفيذه .

Also, the findings revealed extra success factors which were not identified from the literature that can help towards successful PPM implementation. The findings showed several factors related to culture which can have a positive impact on PPM implementation. These factors include enforcing a culture of accountability and ownership, promoting a culture of consolidation and adopting best practices and promoting culture of process efficiency. Moreover, the findings showed the importance to consider rigorous project selection and post review of the project benefits after the product or project launch.

أوصت الدراسة بمجموعة من التي من شأنها أن تزيد فرص نجاح عند تطبيق إدارة محفظة المشاريع في المؤسسات في الدولة. هذه التوصيات تشمل ضرورة ربط مشاريع المؤسسة مع إستراتيجية الشركة ، تعزيز معرفة الموظفين باستراتيجية المؤسسة عن طريق توصيل فكرة استراتيجية الشركة من مستوى الإدارة العليا إلى المستوى الأقل من المدراء وحتى الموظفين ، تطبيق فكرة مكتب إدارة المشاريع (PMO : Project Management Office) لتكون الجهة المركزية المسؤولة عن إدارة جميع المشاريع في الشركة ، وتعزيز وتقوية الإجراءات الخاصة بتقييم واختيار المشاريع الجديدة ، مثل تعزيز ثقافة المسئولية والمحاسبة بين المدراء وتشجيع ثقافة تطبيق أفضل الممارسات في تعزيز كفاءة العمل إضافة إلى مراجعة نتائج وأهداف المشروع المتوقعة بعد تسليم المشروع .

The study came up with several recommendations for the organizations in the UAE for a successful PPM implementation. This includes mapping projects to the organization strategy, cascading the strategy to the lower level managers and employees, deploying the concept of Project Management Office(PMO) as one point of control for all organization projects, enforcing rigorous project selection and evaluation process , enforcing culture of

accountability and ownership among managers, promoting culture of process efficiency in the organization and post review of project benefits after the project delivery.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research (which is inspired by my assignment for the module “PM1501- Program and Portfolio Management”) is to identify the benefits of Project Portfolio Management (PPM) in organizations, explore the readiness of the organizations in the UAE, especially in Dubai, to benefit and implement PPM. The research will focus on the success factors to be considered before implementing PPM in the organization. This will entail collecting data on the current practices used by a sample of organisations in the UAE in managing a multi project environment. In addition, the link with the business strategy will be explored as a candidate success factor.

In order to achieve the above, first a literature review will be conducted. This will help to finalise the methodology for data collection. Finally, after analyzing and discussing the findings, conclusions and recommendations will be proposed. It is expected that the research will help fill the gaps identified based on the literature review, empirical data from research interviews and discussing outcomes.

1.1. Background

Organizations operate in a dynamic environment for which they might need to change their strategies from time to time to stay competitive in the market. Organizations might spend significant amount of money to consultant firms for creating their business strategies but these strategies cannot bring value to the organization if they are not implemented. Many organizations

use projects as a mean to implement their strategies in such a changing environment (Winter et al. 2006). According to Englund and Graham (1999), companies may use projects to create new services or products for their clients and for continuous improvements in the organization. In addition, Aubry et al. (2007) pointed out that firms may start projects to cope with the market changes and adapt to these changes quickly. Having multi project environment creates more complex environment which is more difficult in management than having only one project to handle. Therefore, the approach followed to manage and control these projects can play a significant part in this regard. Project Portfolio Management (PPM) can play an important role in this. Further, Project Portfolio Management (PPM) is a method that has developed to help organizations to link their projects to the organization strategy (Thiry and Deguire 2007).

There are several incentives to carry out this research. One is that PPM helps organizations to align their projects with their intended strategic objectives and UAE firms can benefit from PPM to take their performance levels to higher levels. But organizations may not be able to implement PPM successfully and benefit from PPM implementation without taking into consideration several success factors in order to increase the probability of success of such implementations and benefit from it to the maximum possible. This research will investigate these success factors that are considered necessary, as identified during the literature, before implementing PPM in organizations and explore the readiness of UAE private sector organizations with respect to these success factors. In addition , this study would help to uncover the practices used by national organizations in UAE in managing multi projects environment from the perspective of aligning projects with the strategy of the organization and then to identify areas for improvement. The preliminary reading in the literature showed that the research in this area with respect to UAE is limited. And in responding to the research demand in

this area, conducting this study will contribute to the knowledge that practitioners can use to improve the efficiency of project portfolio management in their companies.

1.2. Research question

What is the degree of readiness of the private sector organizations in the UAE to benefit and implement Project Portfolio Management (PPM) practices?

1.4 Research sub-questions

1. What are the benefits of implementing Project Portfolio Management (PPM) in organizations?
2. What are the success factors considered necessary for effective implementation of PPM in organizations?
3. What is the role of projects in implementing strategy in the private sector organizations in the UAE?

1.5 Research Objectives

1- Determining from literature review the values added and benefits attainable by organizations when deploying PPM and success factors to be considered for the readiness of organizations before PPM implementation.

2. Investigating the role of projects in the UAE private organizations in strategy implementation.
3. Exploring the readiness of private sector organizations in the UAE (which will be subject to the study) in terms of success factors, identified in the literature review, that are considered necessary before implementing PPM.
4. Identify where gap exist and make suggestions for future developments and improvements.

1.6 Significance of the study

By carrying out this research, it should be possible to identify benefits UAE organizations can obtain from implementing PPM. Also, it is expected that the research will show that organizations in the UAE have project management processes in place, but linking their projects to the organization strategy is not being practiced by many organizations. In addition, it is expected that management in these organizations might know about the benefits of PPM but may not be aware about the success factors to be considered ready for PPM implementation. Further, it is expected that this research would help to identify success factors that are perceived important by practitioners but may not be identified earlier in previous studies or researches.

1.7 Thesis structure

Chapter I –Introduction

This chapter provides the reader with an introduction and brief background about the research topic. Also, it states the research question, research objectives and the significance of conducting this research.

Chapter II- Literature Review

Literature review chapter provides the reader with an understanding of the related literature topics that help to develop the conceptual framework which is the base for this research. The main literature topics of the related literature are as follows:

- Introduction.
- Change in Thinking.
 - o Focus on creating value for business and linking projects to the strategy.
 - o Management by Projects.
- Benefits / value of Project Portfolio Management (PPM) for organizations.
- Project Portfolio Management implementing Success Factors.
- Summary.

Chapter III- Research Methods

This chapter talks mainly about the research methodology used to collect the required data for this study. It starts with an introduction about the importance of research methodology in helping

researchers in gathering the data required for their research. Then, it provides a brief description for several research methodologies and whether they can be used for this study in order to reach the most appropriate research methodology for this research. Finally, it talks about a pilot interview which was conducted prior to the actual interviews , the outcome of the pilot interview and the lessons that can be learned.

Chapter IV- Findings & Discussion

This chapter presents the data that was collected from several interviews which were conducted. Also, it shows what the outcomes the researcher reached to after discussing and analysing the findings. Further, the same chapter shows some figures which are related to the findings.

Chapter V- Conclusion & Recommendation

This chapter presents the reader with the research outcomes, recommendations to be considered in addition to future research opportunities. Also, it discusses the limitations encountered during this study.

Thus, this chapter provides the reader with an introduction to the research topic besides the research questions and the research objectives. Also, it talks about the significance of the study and finally it demonstrates the research structure in order to provide guidance for the reader and prepare him for what would be expected from the research. The following chapter presents the literature review done by the researcher for this study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter demonstrates a review of the related literature pertaining to project portfolio management(PPM) implementation, the relation between projects and strategy implementation, benefits of PPM in helping organizations to achieve their strategic goals and then success factors that can help to increase the success level of PPM implementation in organizations. Such demonstration is required in order to get a clear understanding on these concepts before presenting the conceptual framework which the research is based on.

Further, the chapter is structured based on the concepts pertaining to the research subject that demonstrates what previous scholars and researchers wrote about the same topic. This approach is taken in order to make it easier to realize the relation between PPM and strategy implementation. Finally, the chapter ends with a summary of what was presented in the literature review.

2.1. Introduction:

Projects can be used by organizations to implement their strategies, create new services and products and to start continuous improvement initiatives across various departments in the

organization in order to be more competitive and grow in the markets they operate in (Englund & Graham 1999; Winter et al. 2006). Hence projects can have significant role in strategy implementation. In the same sense, Cleland (1999, cited in Dietrich & Lehtonen 2005) suggested that projects can be considered as building blocks when designing the organization's future strategies. Further, according to Aubry et al. (2007), project management can have a significant role in implementing the organization strategy.

As many organizations use projects as a mean to implement their strategies and achieve their strategic objectives, this can lead to create a multi project environment which is considered more difficult to manage and control than handling the one with few or even one project only. Therefore, the way in which these projects will be managed and controlled can play a significant part for organizations in attaining their business strategies. Here comes the role Project Portfolio Management (PPM) which can help organizations in implementing their strategies.

The following sections will demonstrate a brief on the concept of PPM, change in the way of thinking that organizations might need to take into account when looking into projects from strategic perspective, benefits that can be gained by organizations when implementing project portfolio management process and the success factors to be considered before implementing PPM in organizations.

2.2. Change in Thinking Approach

Running multiple projects in an organization concurrently can bring several challenges to the management including management of the available resources, managing the interrelation

between these projects and managing how they contribute towards achieving the organization strategy (Márquez 2008). The same author pointed out that considering projects independently just consumes resources of the organization. To overcome these difficulties, the author suggested to deal with all projects as one collection. Dealing with projects individually can lead to run these projects without having a clear direction towards the strategy of the organization.

As a response, the importance of projects from the perspective of strategy implementation attracted many researchers to conduct studies and researches in this regard. Grundy (1998) showed in his study the importance of looking in to the organization projects as a whole and not in isolation. Also, the same author indicated in the same study the idea of strategy oriented thinking when looking into projects so that the conventional view on projects has to change in a way that the focus to be more on achieving the organization strategy rather than dealing with projects in individual basis.

Similarly, it is evident from other more recent researches that several organizations started to comprehend that managing projects in isolation do not help them for the strategy implementation. Rather, the focus changed for managing multiple projects concurrently, dealing with the projects as one entire unit and linking projects to the organization strategy in addition to perceiving projects from organizational context (Jeffery & Leliveld 2004; Brien & Ryan 2005; Dietrich & Lehtonen 2005; Aubry et al. 2007; Winter 2008; Madic et al. 2011).

Thus, organizations have to change their approach when dealing with projects. They need to view their projects as a one entity and to look at them from strategic perspective. Further, Levine (2005) pointed out that realizing the projects on the enterprise level shows the importance of integrating these projects and consolidating them in one common place for monitoring and

evaluation. Also, he suggested to change the approach from project level objectives to the organizational level objectives.

Likewise, the same author pointed out that a multi project management concept has emerged to be project portfolio management. The following table shows the difference between the project portfolio management and multi project management.

Table-1: Comparison between PPM and Multi projects management (Márquez 2008)

	Portfolio Management	Management of Multiple Projects
Purpose	Selection and prioritisation of projects	Allocation of resources
Focus	Strategic	Tactical
Planning	Medium/Long term	Short term
Responsibility	Management	Those in charge of projects and resources

Table-1 shows that multi

projects management focuses on specific objectives on the project level itself while project portfolio management focuses on the organizational level objectives. Further, the responsibility of the PPM is the organization management whereas for the multi projects management it is related with the project team. Also, PPM is concerned with the long term objectives. On the other hand, multi project management is concerned with medium and short term objectives.

In this regard, Levine (2005) highlighted an important point to be considered by organizations managements that projects should deliver not only short term benefits but long term benefits as well when selecting the project portfolio. This is important so that the portfolio can represent the maximum value for the organization. As per Levine, “Projects must not only provide for current contributions to the firm’s health but must help to position the firm for future success” (Levine 2005, p.23). Therefore it is highly important to look into projects from value and strategy perspectives and do not consider project success just to meet the three main pillars

e.g. time, cost , quality or specifications. Rather, the organization overall benefits should be taken in to consideration.

2.3. Focus on creating value for business and linking projects to the strategy

As shown earlier, organizations have to change the way they look to project success. They need not to recognize this success by just considering time, cost and quality only, but also to consider projects as a tool which can be used to add value for the business (Peppard 2003; Jeffery & Leliveld 2004; Aubry et al. 2007). Therefore, the goal of project management is not only to meet the above mentioned criteria but also to focus on creating maximum value for the organization. Likewise, Cooke-Davies (2004, cited in Aubrey et al. 2007) distinguished between project management success through meeting the three triangles e.g. cost, time and quality and project success by creating value for the organization.

In the same context, a survey conducted by Winter and Szczepanek (2008) revealed that there is increasing need to view projects from strategic approach and focus on the value and benefits of the organization rather than just to meet cost, time and quality for the projects. Also, same authors emphasized the importance of integrating projects with the organization strategy. Similarly, Norman (2001, cited in Winter 2008) proposed the concept of viewing projects as value creation process.

In the same sense, Winter and Szczepanek (2008) proposed the concept of value creation process through projects. They suggested that there are two domains in this process. The first domain is related to the actual project delivery or product delivery and the second domain is

related to the actual benefit and value created for the organization out of the project. Thus, it can be seen that project success is related closely with the actual benefits it provides for the organization. Hence, focusing on the value is highly important for the firms. Furthermore, the literature shows the importance of being more value oriented in terms of project portfolio where the focus is not on the capital asset or the product created by the project but on implementing the strategy, enhancing organization performance and creating value for the stakeholders (Winter & Szczepanek 2008; Dietrich & Lehtonen 2005).

Thus, it can be observed from the literature that the meaning of project success is changed from just concentrating on meeting scope, schedule and cost constraints of the projects to delivering values and linking these projects to the organizational strategic objectives.

2.4. *Management by Projects*

Projects management becomes more important especially in organizations for which their strategic business objectives depend on the outcome of the ongoing projects. Hence, these organizations consider projects on the corporate level as mean to implement their strategies. Also, literature shows new concepts started to evolve in organizations such as managing organizations by projects, project management office, organizational project management, corporate view of project management and project-oriented organizations where organization is seen as a group of projects that should deliver business objectives and achieve the organization strategy (Aubry et al. 2007; Thiry & Deguire 2007).

Hence, organizations can be seen to be more projects oriented in order to achieve their strategic goals and therefore it can be realized the importance to standardize the way these

projects are managed as a collection. According to Levine (2005), it is observed that managements in organizations started to realize the importance of projects role in the profitability, and this put high interest to deploy a sort of standardization for the way these projects to be selected and managed.

Thus, strategy implementation leads to have a multi project environment which increases the complexity level in terms of managing these projects as a whole to achieve organizational strategic objectives. Here comes the contribution of Project Portfolio Management (PPM) to help in this regard by providing several benefits for organizations including managing the projects as a whole and link them to the organization strategy.

2.5. Project Portfolio Management: The Organizational Concept

Usually organizations can have several projects to undertake in order to adopt to market changes, meet their customer needs and to accomplish their strategic goals. Having such portfolio of projects can put organizations in a challenge that not all projects that are required by business can be undertaken using the same scarce resources including people and fund. Hence Project Portfolio Management (PPM) comes in to picture to help organizations in this regard.

PMI (2006) has defined PPM as a central management process to manage project portfolios in organizations in order to achieve the strategic objectives. Further, this process can play main role in identifying projects that to be initiated, deciding on the priority of the ongoing projects, managing projects and then monitoring their performance. Thus, PMI perceives PPM mainly as a process to manage a multi project environment in the firm in order to achieve the organization strategy. Moreover, several researchers perceive PPM from process and strategy perspectives. In lieu with this, Rad & Lenin (2008) suggest that PPM helps organizations to set a

process for identifying projects to be selected for execution, prioritizing projects and deciding on projects to be killed.

Thus, PPM process helps organizations to identify the projects that to be selected for execution taking into account the organization strategy, monitor the performance of these projects, decide on the priority of the projects, take decisions to stop or kill a project if required and finally review on the realized benefits of the projects which get delivered. While some organizations can have a single portfolio of projects, Rad & Lenin (2008) suggest that there can be several portfolios in the company which can be for each specific business function. Thought this might be viable from the point of view of the authors, field experience shows that many organizations have one project portfolio which is overviewed by the organization management.

In the same sense, Levine (2005) suggests that PPM is a management process that contributes to help in maximizing the value of the projects for the organization. This process can be mainly subdivided into stages. The first stage is related to projects selection and prioritization. And the second one is related to the projects management within the portfolio (Levine 2005).

Similarly, several researchers consider PPM as a process to be implemented in organizations to ensure that projects which get executed contribute to the welfare of the enterprise. According to Márquez (2008), PPM can be considered as a process for which projects selection, evaluation, monitoring and then reviewing the status of those projects to ensure that the projects undertaken are in line with the organization strategy. Also, Cooper et al.(2000) emphasized that PPM helps organizations in setting priorities for the ongoing projects and take decisions to accelerate or kill certain projects which do not comply with the company's new challenges. Further, the same authors maintained that PPM main goals include the following:

- Increasing the value of the project portfolio.
- Ensuring the portfolio contains the right balanced mix of projects in terms of short and long term strategic objectives.
- Ascertain that the projects are aligned with the strategy.
- Ensuring that the selected projects for execution match the firm's capability in terms of resources available.

Likewise, Hunt & Killen (2008) clarified that PPM plays an important role related to resource allocation to the projects comprising the project portfolio. They emphasized on the importance to have continuous evaluation on the resource allocation which is one of the significant parts of PPM. Also, the same authors asserted that PPM is an ongoing process which should continue as far as projects are there especially for monitoring, prioritization and resource allocation and reallocation which sometimes is required to accelerate certain projects. Thus, allocating enough resources for the projects to be executed is one of the objectives of PPM process which was highlighted by several researchers (Cooper et al. 2000; Hunt & Killen (2008)).

Further, resource allocation is so important for organizations because these resources are scarce and every organization tries to run the show with less resources. Cooper et al.(2000) emphasized that PPM main goal is about allocating resources to the right projects. Also, he pointed out that PPM is concerned with how business invests their resources in projects. Thus, organizations have to be selective in terms of the projects they plan to invest resources in.

While many authors perceive PPM from resource allocation perspective, Levine (2005) suggested that PPM can help to link the business operations part of the organizations with the projects management part and this can help to make projects aligned with the strategies and the

organization available resources. Further, the same author clarified that the projects side in organizations is represented by the Project Management Office (PMO) and the operations side is represented by the business units in the organizations such as product development, sales and marketing. Moreover, there is one part which can be important for any organization that is the “strategic and tactical planning function” (Levine 2005, pp.55) and it is represented by “PPM governance council” (Levine 2005, pp.54).

Also, the author indicated that PPM can provide the executive management in the firm a broad overview on the enterprise projects leading to better projects governance. The justification for this might be that organizations might have several projects to be executed to attain their strategic business goals and having PPM process in place would help to monitor, control and govern these projects in order to maximize the value for these organizations.

Thus, as indicated earlier, literature shows several definitions for PPM. However, It is noticed that there is a common theme between these definitions. They present that PPM is related to the following areas that can be considered important for every organization running projects:

- Evaluation and selection of projects.
- Monitoring of the ongoing projects.
- Resources allocation and reallocations for the projects.
- Prioritization and reprioritization of the projects based on the market changes or customer needs.
- Taking decisions on accelerating, holding or killing projects.
- Maximizing the value of the project portfolio.
- Achieving the strategic objectives of the organization.

In inline with what mentioned above, the researcher suggests that PPM can be perceived as a system where several components work together in order to achieve a common goal which is maximizing value for the organization and helping it in achieving its strategic objectives. Hence, PPM system, like any other system, can have three main parts e.g. input, process and output that are shown in the following figure:

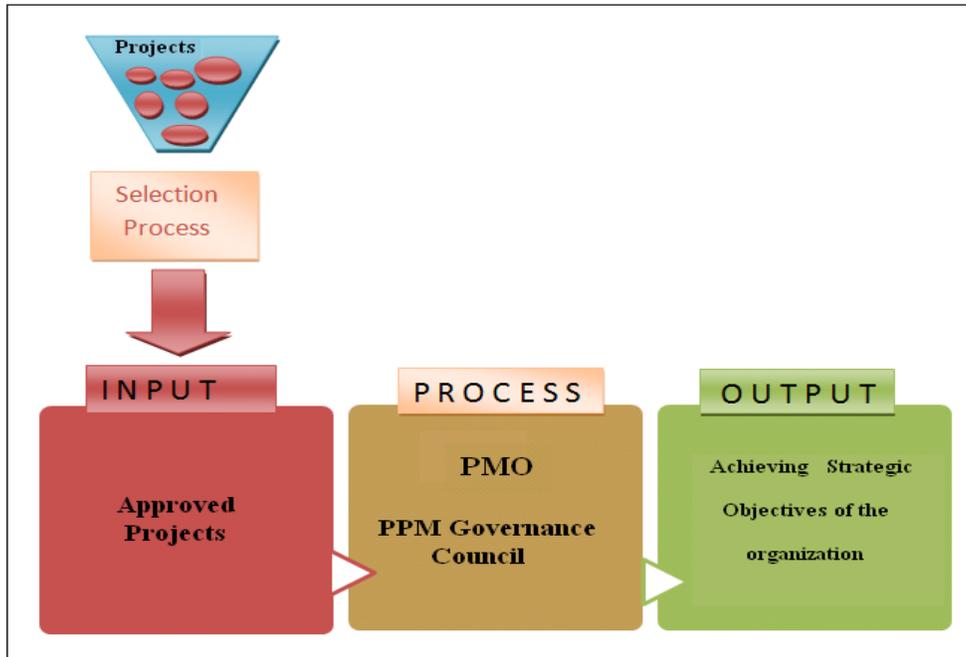


Figure - PPM

1:
System - Main parts (developed by the researcher)

Figure-1 shows that the Input part comprises the approved projects after going through evaluation and applying the management strategic oriented selection criteria. The process part consists of PMO to manage those approved projects and PPM governance council to overview the performance of the ongoing projects and take necessary decisions in terms of reprioritization, accelerating, stopping projects, allocating and reallocating resources. The output part would be delivering projects that help the organization to achieve its strategic objectives.

2.6. Benefits / value of Project Portfolio Management (PPM)

Filippov et al. (2011) pointed out the importance of PPM in organizations and he emphasized that in the absence of PPM, organizations might face issues in managing a multi project environment. PPM can provide several benefits for organizations as shown in the coming sections.

2.6.1. Strategic focus

As per Aubrey et al. (2007), they emphasized the importance of linking projects to the organizational strategy and they suggested that PPM is to be a function within the organization structure. In addition, they proposed that project portfolio to have interface with the corporate strategy. Moreover, creating strategic direction for projects can promote a culture of common vision among the employees involved in projects (Márquez 2008).

Projects portfolio management helps organizations in better alignment of projects efforts with the organization strategy and in efficient use of the available resources to achieve business objectives (Thiry & Deguire 2007). Also, managing projects in the organization through project portfolio contributes to create focus on creating value for the business (Peppard 2003; Swanepoel 2008). Further, project portfolio management helps organizations in selecting projects which are best aligned with corporate strategy and also it can play an important role in maximizing the value from the projects which will improve the performance of the organization (Jeffery & Leliveld 2004; Dietrich & Lehtonen 2005; Swanepoel 2008).

As per Dietrich and Lehtonen (2005), success of projects is concerned with how they helped in achieving the organization strategy; as for many organizations projects are considered as means for implementing the target strategic objectives. According to Dietrich and Lehtonen (2005), the role of projects has changed from just delivering the intended product or successful closure of the project to an important role in strategy implementation. Their study showed that management of group of projects should be included in the strategy process of the organization in order to have successful implementation of the organization strategy.

When projects are not linked to the corporate strategy, top management might not be aware of the whole scope of the ongoing projects and this can result in people work on many projects without a clear direction and perhaps most of them might not be needed. Therefore, project portfolio management helps organizations to avoid being in such position by linking projects to the organizational strategic objectives (Srivannaboon & Milosevic 2006). Further, PPM can be considered as a strategic approach for managing a multi project environment (Filippov et al. 2011). Moreover, the same authors pointed out that implementing PPM in organizations with low number of projects is not advised as it might increase the organizational project management complexity.

Literature shows it is highly important to have a system approach towards projects. This means that they work in coordinated manner to achieve, the common goal, the organization strategy (Srivannaboon and Milosevic 2006). Therefore, it is required to create a strategic direction and joint vision for projects in order to implement the set strategy. Project portfolio enables organizations to create a process for selecting and prioritizing projects. Establishing a

process leads to get it improved and optimized over time and let other people learn from it (Srivannaboon and Milosevic 2006).

In addition, project portfolio helps organizations to select the right projects which are aligned with the business strategy. Misalignment with the business strategy can lead to lose market opportunities (Srivannaboon & Milosevic 2006). In the same sense, Filippovl et al. (2011) pointed out that the organization might lose business opportunities in the market if the project strategy is not aligned with the organization business strategy.

One of the main objectives of project portfolio is to help organizations implement their competitive strategy such as being fast-to the–market, producing high quality and low cost products (Srivannaboon & Milosevic 2006). Further, due to PPM “strategic orientation” (Sanchez et al. 2008, p.97) , the researcher is in the opinion that PPM can help to promote “strategic orientation” culture in the firm as it helps in aligning projects to the organization strategy.

2.6.2. Better manageability and control

Organizations which use projects to achieve their business goals may find it not easy to prioritize their multiple projects and use the available resources in most efficient way. Here comes Project Portfolio management to help in this regard (Thiry & Deguire 2007).

As per Ditrich and Lehtonen (2005) , Projects Portfolio Management helps organizations to have better manageability and control over the projects which are part of the project portfolio. Also, it helps to ensure the linkage between the projects and the organization strategy. In addition, project portfolio helps in better alignment between projects spending and business objectives (Jeffery & Leliveld 2004). Further, project portfolio plays a significant role to monitor and control projects performance (Thiry & Deguire 2007).

2.6.3. Creating synergy

Project portfolio helps to create synergy between projects by managing the relationships between projects where performance of the project portfolio as one entity is higher than the sum of each project performance (Aubry et al. 2007). According to Rad & Lenin (2008), in project portfolio projects are centrally monitored and tracked and this helps to identify synergy between projects which can lead to recognize similarities between these projects (Márquez 2008). Subsequently this can makes it easier to avoid having duplicate projects. In the same sense, the literature shows that group of projects managed in coordinated way provides benefits and control that will not be available if these projects are managed individually (PMBOK 2004, Cited in Aubry et al. 2007).

2.6.4. Other benefits

Studies show that PPM can provide several other benefits for organizations. Rad & Lenin (2008) pointed out that PPM would help organizations in assessing all projects centrally so that only high value projects would be accepted and this assists these organizations to avoid unnecessary costs and make them more flexible for the market changes (Madic et al. 2011).

Also, performance deficiencies can be easily identified between those projects and then taking corrective actions accordingly (Rad & Lenin 2008).

Further, PPM can play a significant role for organizations to reduce the complexity in a multi project management environment and improve the usage of organization resources (Filippovl et al. 2011). Also, the same authors pointed out that getting better visibility on the status of the on-going projects, increasing the alignment with the organization strategy in addition to tumbling complexity level of the projects can be the main drivers for companies to adopt PPM. Moreover, PPM can help to have stronger relationships between the projects and enhance the communication and coordination between projects teams and organization management (Lipper & Lipper 2008).

Thus, Project Portfolio Management can provide several benefits and added values to the organization in its journey of strategy implementation. Hence, it is viable to look in to the success factors that to be considered before implementing Project Portfolio Management process in organizations.

2.7. PPM implementation Success Factors

Many organizations consider projects to be basic building blocks for implementing their strategies (Srivannaboon & Milosevic 2006). Companies have to be competitive in order to survive in their market. To achieve this, they create innovative business strategies and implement them through projects. Hence, project portfolio is considered to be an important process to link those projects with the business strategy (Srivannaboon & Milosevic 2006). As per Winter et al.

(2006), their study showed evident indication for increasing focus by organisations on the business value and linking projects to business strategy instead of just looking for product delivery when concluding projects.

Though the efficiency of a single project management has a significance role on the outcomes of the project portfolio management (Martinsuo & Lehtonen, 2007), there are several factors to be considered necessary for a successful PPM implementation in organizations. These factors are demonstrated in the following sections.

2.7.1. Employee and management support:

Promoting PPM concept in the organization is considered necessary in order to get the buy in from both employees and top management. Understanding the benefits that PPM can provide plays an important role to get employees support at time of the implementation. As per Mors and Drost (2010), organizations should ensure that employees understand that PPM will be helpful to them in their daily jobs. Also, it is highly important for the management to show to their employees the benefits of PPM and how it would help to resolve their day to day issue they might face (Mors & Drost 2010).

Further, “firms can for instance demonstrate how project portfolio management can solve some of the issues that employees experience in their daily project-related work“ (Mors et al. 2010, p. 123). In addition, the authors emphasized the importance of the awareness and support across the organization for more effective deployment of Project Portfolio Management. PPM implementation requires support from all organization employees specially from top management executives as PPM requires changes in the way the organization runs its business (Filippovl et al. 2011). Moreover, It is highly important for all management levels to

communicate the value that will be brought by PPM in the organization (PMI 2006; Mors & Drost 2010). Involvement of the top management may help to resolve politic issues that can affect the success of PPM implementation (Swanepoel 2008). Further, management team involvement is required to have view on the projects which are part of the portfolio and to ensure their support for the required resources and priority changes (Márquez 2008).

In lieu with this, Patanakul & Milosevic (2009) maintained that management support requires asking for appropriate number of projects which the concerned projects managers can handle, provide enough resources for projects and specify goals and priority for the projects to be undertaken. According to Levine (2005), management involvement helps to provide direction and leadership to the PPM in the organization. Thus management should ensure that employees understand that PPM will be helpful to them.

2.7.2. Linking projects to the organization strategy

As per (Madic et al. 2011), the project portfolio should be strategically fit. It should not be only aligned with the organization strategy but also it must be part of the organization strategy implementation process itself. Similarly, Cooper et al. (2000) maintain that aligning projects to the organization strategy entitles to consider strategy when allocating funds for projects, business areas and markets. Further, organization strategy is developed based on the mission and vision of the firm. And to implement this strategy, it requires to have “high level operations planning and management” (PMI 2006, p. 6) in addition to “portfolio planning and management” (PMI 2006, p. 6). Therefore, projects in the organization should be linked with its business strategy.

According to Lycett et al. (2004, cited in Reyck et al. 2005) and Márquez (2008), organizations must have a strategy and it should be cascaded down to all departments in the organization.

Existence of the organizational strategic planning, including clear organization mission with related strategic and business tactics, plays vital role when it comes to PPM implementation (Yelin 2005; Petrovic 2003, cited in Madic et al. 2011). Establishing strategic goals and objectives besides aligning projects to the strategic objectives of the organization are considered necessary for PPM implementation (PMI, 2006). In the same sense, Márquez (2008) pointed out that projects selection should be done with the relation to the strategy, and every project should help towards achieving the organization strategy.

Linking projects to the organization strategy might require to consider short term and long term projects. According to Márquez (2008), organization strategy can help to have balance between short term and long term projects. Same was pointed out by Cooper et al.(2000). Further , he pointed out that strategy can help to guide in assigning resources between different type of projects including short term , long term , low risk , high risk , new products and product enhancement projects.

2.7.3. Organization structure and culture:

Organization structure and culture are two important factors to be considered before implementing PPM in organizations. Petrovic (2003, cited in Madic et al. 2011) suggested project or matrix organization structure for more effective PPM implementation. Similarly, Levine (2005, cited in Madic et al. 2011) indicated the need to have Project Management Office (PMO) or council in addition to matrix or project organization structure. Also, culture is another

component that can be considered important for PPM implementation. According to PMI (2006), promoting PPM culture in the organization includes considering projects as key tools for strategy implementation.

In addition, Filippovl et al.(2011) highlighted that the organizations that plan to implement PPM should know what they would achieve out of PPM and why they need to implement such practice . Also, they have to consider that PPM requires changes in the way projects will be managed. Therefore, it is very important to promote in the organization a culture that can accept change specially when such change can help to enhance the employees performance and help them in their day to day work. The organization has to realize the importance and need for PPM and align its processes and tools to make it successful. Absence of such support from the organization management and employees is considered as a challenge for PPM success (PMI, 2006).

Further, creating awareness among employees about PPM benefits is an important factor for successful PPM implementation (Mors & Drost 2010). The researcher is in the opinion that top management in organizations might need to lead promoting such awareness among employees and make them buy in PPM concept by demonstrating its benefits to them. In the same sense, Madic et al. (2011) pointed out that PPM implementation can be one of the stages of organization strategy implementing. This would not only help in integrating PPM process in other organization processes, but also would contribute to spread the importance of PPM among employees. Effective support and communicating the value of PPM throughout the organisation by the management can have positive impact on the PPM implementation (PMI, 2006).

2.7.4. Inventory of all ongoing projects and their statuses:

Having full data about the projects in the organization can be helpful to know the current status of the ongoing projects. According to Mors & Drost (2010), there must be adequate database of the ongoing projects and their statuses. Levin (2005, cited in Madic et al. 2011) suggested implementing project management software to manage the projects information in the organization. This would not only provide better visibility to the management on the status of the current projects but also would help to better manage these projects and related resources. Also, having view on all projects in the organization would not only help in better resolution of the issues related to these projects, but also can lead to better decisions that help in meeting the business objectives and maximizing portfolio value for the firm (Lipper & Lipper 2008).

Moreover, keeping database of all ongoing projects makes the basis for the PPM (Haukka 2009). Further, the same author argues that Project Management Office (PMO) is to be established before PPM implementation. PMO can provide a centralized view on all projects in hand and collect, evaluate and disseminate projects information to all related stakeholders in a standard format (Reyck et al. 2005). As per Levine (2005), it is preferred to have project management function in the organization centralized and this would help towards better “standardization and consistency” (Levine 2005, p. 29).

Further, Levine (2005) maintains that PMO has responsibility of monitoring projects achievements with respect to the agreed criteria and reporting to the “Governance Council” (Levine 2005, p. 55) on the status of the projects and issues that might affect the target benefits and deliverables. Levine (2005) further pointed out that generating inventory of all projects in

the enterprise can reveal several deficiencies to the management including those projects which are not supposed to be approved and those which are failing and not delivering the promised benefits.

Further, PMO helps to get solid information about projects in progress which can help to take appropriate decisions in terms of kill, hold a project or even reprioritize it. Cooper et al.(2000) indicated that lack of information on the projects may lead to difficulties for the management to take decisions to stop or put a project on hold. Also, PMO can help to provide adequate information on the projects and this can help in better decision making by management in projects prioritization. Also, PMO can be considered as the central point to manage all projects in the organization. As per Aubrey et al. (2007), he stated that PMO can help to link between the organization strategy and the projects. Moreover, Haukka (2009) maintains that establishing PMO in the organization with adequate resources and standard project management and reporting process would help to get better results from PPM implementation.

2.7.5. Promoting Project Portfolio culture:

Promoting project portfolio culture is an important factor that to be looked at for PPM implementation. Promoting PPM culture in the organization can help to affect people attitude to consider projects from strategic point of view (Madic et al. 2011). Such culture makes employees to like adopting best organizational practices (Lipper & Lipper 2008). Hence, this might entitle to have strong change process in place in order to implement the related changes in the organization more easily.

According to Filippovl et al. (2011), implementing PPM in an organization require changes in the way the organization manages its business (Filippovl et al. 2011). Moreover, the organization that wants to implement PPM should know the business requirements for PPM and make people and processes to be committed for its successful implementation (PMI 2006). Further, Swanepoel (2008) pointed out the importance of PPM culture in the organization that it would help to let stakeholders willingly contribute in the implementation and buy in the concept.

Haukka (2009) pointed out that PPM implementation might require changes in the management culture and this would not be achieved without changing the evaluation and reward system in the organization. Also, the same author maintains that promoting project culture in all levels of the organization would help to make people consider success in their related projects.

2.7.6. Uniform processes and procedures:

Existence of processes and procedures in various functional areas in the organization can help in PPM implementation. Absence of such processes and procedures may negatively impact the implementation of portfolio management (PMI 2006; Andren 2008). Further, promoting standardization for projects management in the organization would help towards better monitoring and control of the projects undertaken by the organization and subsequently this will increase the success level of these projects (Filippovl et al. 2011). Moreover, it would be highly important to use common project model and practice for the organization's projects (Haukka 2009).

Moreover, management of organizations have to consider that existing process would help towards fast decision making. According to Mors & Drost (2010), process that makes

decision making fast in organizations is one of success factors for PPM implementations. Also, change management process can be an important process to exist. Swanepoel (2008) pointed out the importance of change management process existence for a successful PPM implementation. Change management process can help to ensure that any change would go through a process of review, evaluate and then get authorized by a committee comprising of group of management members. This can help to ensure that only authorized changes in projects will go through.

In addition, project selection process can play an important role for a successful PPM implementation. Lack of process for project selection can result in too many projects without enough resources (Cooper et al. 2000). The same authors also emphasized that lack of resources can be one part of the issue; the other side of the issue is allocating resources inappropriately. Too many projects may result negative impact on other projects in the organization and the resources assigned to these projects may not spend enough time on them (Cooper et al. 2000) and this can affect the quality of the deliverables.

Further, according to Patanakul and Milosevic (2009), organizations have to employ a standard and thorough projects selection process. Also, the same author suggested that projects are to be selected based on size, available schedule, financial and technical feasibility. In the same sense, Levine (2005) suggested that establishing a governance body in the organization with clear roles and responsibilities and knowledge of the firm strategic objectives and tactics to achieve them would be an extra step towards better selection process in the organization.

In Addition, process for project prioritization is another important item to consider for PPM implementation. As per Swanepoel (2008), establishing project prioritization process can

help the stakeholders to concentrate on projects that are within the organization capabilities in terms of resources, technology, time and risk. Further, the same author maintained that having this in place will help to make the available human resources to focus more on group of projects which are prioritised by the organization management without being over loaded resulting in most contribution to the organization goals.

2.8. Summary

Organizations establish new strategies or change their existing ones in order to be more competitive in their markets and more responsive to the market changes and customer needs. Such new or changed strategies can not provide value to the organizations if they are not implemented. Therefore, organizations start multiple initiative projects to achieve their strategic objectives which will help them to accomplish their strategies. Literature shows that many organizations started to realize that managing projects individually do not help them much in terms of strategy implementation. Instead, the focus changed towards dealing with these projects as one whole entity and linking them to the organization strategy. Thus, it is observed that there is a change in thinking from looking in to projects on individual basis into viewing these projects as one entity and to look at them from strategic perspective. This can lead to have a multi project environment in organizations.

Managing a multi project environment is more difficult to manage than managing one project only for which Project Portfolio Management (PPM) can play an important role in this regard. Literature shows the importance of PPM in organizations by helping them avail several benefits including alignment with the corporate strategy, better manageability and control of the

projects and creating synergy between these projects. However, before implementing PPM in an organization, there are few factors that are to be considered in order to increase the probability of the implementation success. These success factors include employee and management support, aligning projects with the strategic objectives, promoting organization structure and culture that supports PPM, inventory of all ongoing projects and their statuses, existence of standard processes and procedures for project management and project selection.

2.9. Theoretical Framework:

Organizations use projects to implement their business strategies. This leads to have a multi project environment which is more difficult to manage than managing only one project. Project Portfolio Management (PPM) can help in managing multi project environment as shown from the literature. Hence, it can be deduced that Project Portfolio Management (PPM) helps in achieving organizations strategies. Therefore, it can make sense to explore the success factors that can increase the probability of implementation success of Project Portfolio Management (PPM). Figure-2 shows a conceptual framework, developed from the literature, which can help to understanding the relationship between PPM and strategy implementation and which can establish a starting point for this research.

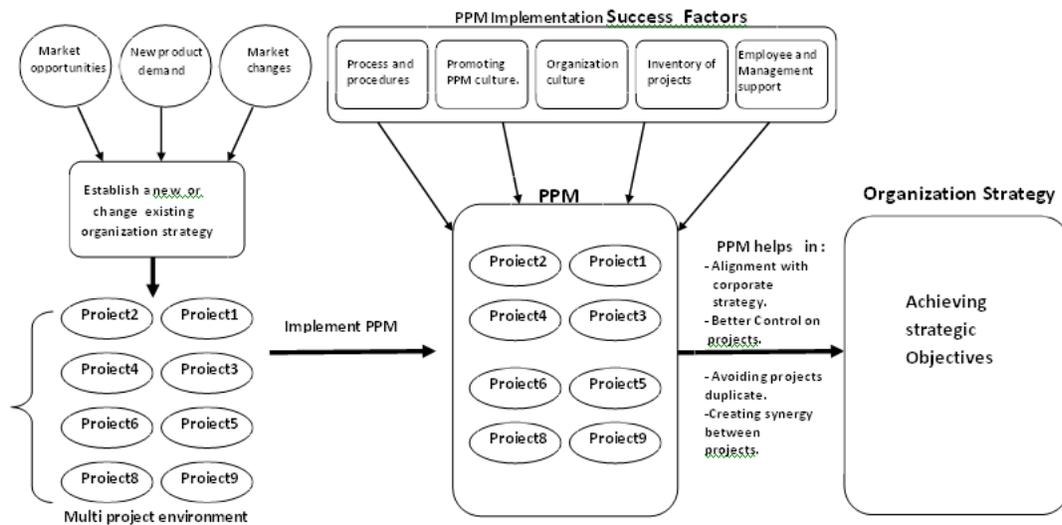


Figure -2 : Conceptual Framework - Successful implementation of PPM helps in achieving organization strategy (source : created by the researcher)

The figure shows that organizations might start projects as a response for market opportunities, to meet customer demands and develop new products. This can lead to a multi projects environment. Such environment needs better control and management which can be provided by implementing PPM. And in order to increase the success level of this implementation, there are several factors to consider including promoting PPM culture in the organization, establishing standard processes and procedures for all related project management activities, inventory of all projects in the organization and management and employees support. Having these factors in place would contribute to the success of PPM implementation resulting in better control on projects and alignment with the enterprise strategy in addition to avoiding duplicate projects. All these can help towards achieve the organization strategic objectives.

2.10. Hypothesis:

The research examines several hypotheses as follows:

1. Private sector organizations in the UAE have project management processes in place.
2. Not all these organizations have a process in place to get broad view of the running projects.
3. Linking all projects to the organization strategy is not practiced in all UAE organizations.
4. Projects in Private sector organizations in the UAE may not be aligned fully with the business strategy.
5. UAE Organizations in the private sector may have already in place some of the PPM main functions.
6. Private sector organizations in the UAE may not have all success factors of PPM implementation in place.

The following chapter presents the research methodology used for this research.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter demonstrates how the data for this researched was collected, analyzed in order to find the answers for the research questions. It begins with an overview of various research methodologies usually researchers use for their research and then the most appropriate one for this study. Also, it provides a brief on research design and data gathering tools applied for this study. Finally, the chapter ends with a summary on what was presented.

3.1 Introduction

Methodology plays an important role to collect the required data for any research. This research will go through several stages in order to answer the research questions. The first stage would be to do a literature review on Project Portfolio Management (PPM) concept and its importance in achieving strategic objectives of organizations. In the second stage, a literature review will be conducted to identify the success factors that to be available in the organization before PPM implementation in order to benefit from such deployment for achieving the organization strategic objectives which in turn would help to increase value perceived by the stakeholders.

In the third stage, unstructured face-to-face discussions, semi-structured interviews and interviews over the phone will be used to collect the needed data for this research. The purpose of the data collection exercise would be to identify the role of projects in strategy implementation in the targeted organizations in addition to assessing the readiness of these organizations in terms of the success factors to be considered for effective implementation of PPM.

In order to be able to answer the research questions, data is to be collected for further analysis. This can be achieved by selecting the appropriate research methodology. One of the most important points to consider when selecting a methodology is whether it will help to find answers for the research questions and meet the research objectives (Suanders et al. 2007). There are several research methodologies from which researchers might use for their research:

- Experiment
- Questionnaire
- Observation
- Case study
- Interview

This is followed by further explanation and assessment of each of the above mentioned methodologies for this research.

3.2 Experiment

Experiment is linked much, as indicated by its name, with natural sciences and engineering discipline. However, it is used in social science research mainly in psychology (Saunders et al. 2007). Experiment helps researchers to study the causal relationships between variables. And this is not the case for this study.

In experiments which usually take place in lab, researchers make a change in one or more of independent variables to find the impact on a dependent variable (Jennings 2005). As per Saunders et al.(2007), Experiment methodology helps to answer “how” and “why” questions and one of the techniques used in this methodology is to divide the sample in to two groups: experiment group and control group and then compare the results from both groups as a part of ensuring data analysis. Thus, experiments mainly study how few variables can have impact on other variables which is not the case for the subject being studied for the research in hand. This study is about exploring the readiness of private sector organizations in the UAE in terms of the success factors to be considered before PPM implementation, hence experiment as a research methodology is not used to collect data for this research.

3.3 Questionnaire based Survey

Questionnaires can be implemented using mail, face-to-face interview, telephone and electronic questionnaires through e-mails (Jennings 2005). Also, questionnaires can be more effective if the researcher needs to collect data based on standard questions that every one can understand and respond to from large number of people (Altinay & Paraskevas 2008). For the case in hand, probe questions might be required depending on the situation and participants' responses and this may not be achieved if questionnaire as a research methodology is used to collect the data required for this research.

Further, questionnaire data collection technique can enable researchers to collect different data types such as opinions, behaviours and attributes. Saunders et al. (2007) stated that questionnaire can help researchers to get data about participants' opinions related to their feelings about a particular subject. Also, researchers can ask them through the questionnaire about their attitudes or behaviours in certain situations or scenarios. This research does not require to collect data about behaviours, feelings or opinions from the participants. In practice and from previous assignments which were done earlier by the researcher, it was found that using questionnaire is not effective to gather data which depends on the participants' experiences and daily practice which is required for. As per Jennings (2005), there are several types of questionnaire as follows:

- **Mail questionnaires:** are questionnaires that are delivered to particular group of people through postal service.

- **Telephone questionnaire:** Are structured interviews conducted over the phone and the interviewer records the responds to closed-ended questions.
- **E-questionnaires:** Are questionnaires which are electronically managed where participants can use e-mails and web sites to responds to the questionnaire questions.

Questionnaire as indicated by several authors (Jennings 2005; Altinay & Paraskevas 2008) can help to collect various data types such as opinions, behaviours and attributes in addition to feelings about certain subjects which are not applicable for this research. As mentioned earlier that this research requires data based on the experiences and daily practices of the participants and therefore , questionnaire is not perceived as an appropriate tool to collect the required data for this study.

3.4 Observation

Observations can be conducted either in labs, simulated environments or in the field (real business settings environment). Lab-based observations are more controllable than those conducted in the field (Jennings 2007). There are two types of data the researcher can have:

- **Static data** which does not change during the course of observation such as number of people working in a particular department and their seating pattern.

- **Action Data** which can change during the course of observation such as number of requests a Help Desk is getting on daily basis or number of telephone calls a call centre agent receives in a day.

The research in hand would not use a lab or a simulated environment to collect the required data for the research as the needed data for this research depends on the experience of the participants practicing tasks related to project management and associated decision takings. Such data might not be possible to collect using observation as a research methodology.

As per Altinay and Paraskevas (2008), observation can help researchers to collect data by being part of the environment being studied, observing what people do and how they interact with each other and listening to their conversations and questions. And this is not applicable to this research as pointed out earlier. Also, observation can help to collect data related to people behaviours and reasons behind particular attitudes. For instance, observation can be used to help understand the purchase behaviour of European tourist group during Dubai visit tour.

Thus, using observation as a data collection methodology would not help for this research because it is mainly concerned with collecting data related to people behaviour and attitudes and reasons behind those behaviours or attitudes which is not applicable for the study in hand.

3.5 Case Studies

This methodology enables researchers to study a particular business case or phenomenon in one or group of organizations. Researchers can use several other methodologies to collect the required data such as observation, interviews, questionnaire and document analysis.

In practice and from assignments which were done earlier, case study as a research methodology can be effective in collecting data which is based on job experience. However, case study might consume a lot of the researcher's time besides other difficulties of getting hold of people and set appointments with them specially management level personnel. As per Jennings (2005), case study technique possesses challenges that require resource allocation and difficulty in controlling all variables. On other hand, it helps researchers to gather rich and in depth data from the field as it uses multiple different methods to collect detailed data from real life. Saunders et al.(2007) highlight the ability of case study research methodology to help researchers to get answers for 'why' , 'how' and 'what' questions. Hence, case study is frequently used in explanatory and exploratory researches.

Although, case study can be used for exploratory researches as indicated earlier which can apply to this research as well, but due to time limitation, case study is not used to collect the data required for this research.

3.6 Interview

Interview is one of the data collection techniques that researchers use to collect data for their researches and it can be the most appropriated to collect the needed data for the research in hand. It involves face-to-face contact with the interviewee, asking him series of questions, listening and recording the responses related to the research topic (Altinay & Paraskevas 2008).

In practice, it was found very effective to collect rich data based on experience and job knowledge which can apply to this research. As per Altinay and Paraskevas (2008), this technique enables researchers to get access to rich data of experiences, knowledge and situations

related to the research topic. During the interview, the informant might provide explanations to certain events or behaviors which happened previously in the organization and this can be useful to open doors for new research areas. Also, using interview as a data collection method can help to gather more reliable data related to the research objectives and research questions (Saunders et al. 2007) specially when the interview is done with experts and executives from the industry.

According to Jennings (2005), interview can be formal or informal. Formal interviews are arranged for purpose such as conducting an interview with the head of Projects and Development Department in an organization to discuss how projects are aligned with the corporate strategy, and this type of interviews can apply to the research in hand as participants may include projects related personnel such as a head of projects. Informal interviews take opportunities to question people on a topic of interest such as to discuss customer service problems in a bank or to discuss opinions of group of an organization employees on recent management decision pertaining to increasing number of working hours for example.

Further, the same author classifies interviews into the following types:

- **Semi structured interview:** where the order of the questions or discussions during the conversation depends on the responses of the interviewee. This type of interview can apply to collect the needed data for this study where the questions might not be the same in all the interviews. The questions can change depending on the interviewee's responses. As per Saunders et al. (2007), in semi-structured interview, the researcher can have a list of questions to be answered and these questions can change from one interview to another. The reason for this as pointed by the same authors can be that the questions can depend on the flow of the conversation and the answers provided by the interviewee.

- **Structured interview:** where the conversation takes place based on a predefined set of questions.
- **Unstructured Interview:** similar to the real world conversation but with a purpose. It can be time consuming and the amount of data generated can be challenging for the researcher for further analysis.

3.6.1 Difficulties and challenges

Although interviews can provide rich source for empirical data from the field, in practice and based on previous assignments there are various challenges to be considered. Firstly, sometimes it is not easy to get an appointment from the interviewee due to several reasons including interviewee's busy schedule with job related meetings and other organizational commitments. Also, the targeted informants might not feel it is feasible to spend time with students providing information for their research. Further, the participant may feel uncomfortable to provide information due to confidentiality issue as he might get concerned about sensitive data that can get exposed to others.

3.6.2 Preparation for the interview

As per Altinay and Paraskevas (2008), there are three stages to go through before conducting the actual interview:

- **First:** Relevant literature to be reviewed in order to be able to develop questions that would help to meet the research aims and objectives
- **Second:** To pilot these questions with one or two persons.

- **Finally:** Contacting the targeted interviewees to secure appointments with them. The last stage might be time and energy consuming as sometimes it would not be easy to get hold of the targeted participants.

Previous experience shows the importance to do preparation before conducting the actual interviews specially conducting a pilot interview. Such preparation can help the researcher to identify if the interview questions can be understood fully and without any confusion by the interviewees or they need to be modified. Also, the pilot interview can give indication on the expected length of the interview and if it requires to be shortened especially when conducting the interview with an executive or a top management member.

Further, Altinay and Paraskevas (2008) recommend to prepare a guide before conducting the interviews. This guide can include a list of questions, issues and topics to be covered during the interview sessions. It can include open questions (usually start with 'what', 'why' or 'how'), closed questions (answers are fixed such as 'yes' or 'no'), prompts and probes to let the informant elaborate on particular

Interview guide (semi-structured questions)
<p>Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview and contributing to my research study. All information will be strictly confidential. This interview will be divided in five sections, under the following headings: Background, Product, New Product Development, New Product Development Process, New Product Development in your organization.</p> <p>A. Background</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How long have you worked for this organization? 2. How long in this current post? 3. Could you describe the organizational structure and tell me where your position is within this structure? 4. What are the main responsibilities of your current post? <p>B. Product</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. How would you describe the typical product in the cruise industry? (up to the manager to decide what a typical product is, but focus on significant products) 6. What is the main product in the cruise industry? (supporting product – service as a part of product – tangible – intangible product) <p>C. New product development</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. What would you describe as a new product in the cruise industry? Can you give examples? (focus on significant products, not on new knives, etc.) 8. What was the last new product your company developed? (most significant – Impact on organization – competition) <p>D. New product development process</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. What influences the decision to develop a new product in this organization? (Internally – externally – market research, etc.) 10. Who are the key decision-makers in this organization regarding which new product to develop? (which people were involved in the decision – new product development team, marketing – different functional areas, top management) <p>E. New product development case study</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Can you explain to me the process for launching a new product – from the initial decision to develop a new product to its actual launch? (You might like to explain the process of developing and launching the new product you referred to earlier) (special new product development team – what is the influence of XY department in the process – chain of command – time frame – budget allocated – incentives for people involved in the new product development – mission statement for the new product development team – internal e.g. HRM/external e.g. customer-related factors were considered – measure for success – difference of the process to other companies – strategic planning – cost/benefits of a new product. <p>Thank you for your valuable time and contributions. (Source: Ciraulo, 2002)</p>

(Table-2 : Interview guide, adopted from Altinay and Paraskevas 2008, p.115)

topics or issues (Altinay & Paraskevas 2008). Table-2 shows an example of a semi structured interview guide. The interview is part of a research to explore a new product development process in marine industry. The interview questions were divided into five sections as shown below (Altinay & Paraskevas 2008):

- **Background :** related questions used to provide introduction about the study and set the conversation context .
- **Product related:** questions asked to get general idea about products in the cruise industry.
- **New Product development :** questions used for understanding the opinion of the informant on the new product.
- **New Product development process:** questions related to understanding factors that yield to start product development and people involved in this process.
- **New Product development case study:** questions related to understanding the new product development in the organization under study.

From previous practices, it was found that probe questions can be very effective in encouraging the interviewee to provide more details on a particular response if it was not clear to the interviewer or when he feels that the interviewee's reply is not adequate. Altinay and Paraskevas (2008) indicated the importance of a probe question to encourage interviewees to provide more information on their answers when they feel that still there is more which can be provided by the interviewee. A probe questions can be an open question but with a specific focus. Table-3 demonstrates a few examples on probe questions.

Probing in an interview
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The basic probe</i>: the interviewer repeats a question to get the interviewee back on track; this technique is frequently used when the interviewee is going off tangent. • <i>The explanatory probe</i>: this is used to achieve clearer understanding by completing the incomplete statements of the respondent; the interviewer asks questions such as 'Can you give an example?' or 'Can you explain that?' • <i>The focused probe</i>: this is used to reach particular details of a topic – for example, 'What type of ... did you use?' • <i>The silent probe</i>: here, the interviewer maintains silence and waits for the interviewee to break it; this technique is generally used when the interviewee is taking lot of time to respond or is hesitant. • <i>Drawing out</i>: this is used when the interviewee has stopped responding; the interviewer restates or rephrases the last question or topic (e.g. 'So, the question was ... What else can you tell me about that?'), which helps the interviewee to start talking again. • <i>Giving ideas or suggestions</i>: here, the interviewer makes suggestions or ideas for the interviewee to think about – for example, 'Have you thought about ...?' • <i>Mirroring or reflecting</i>: here, the interviewer repeats what the interviewee has just said but in different words; this helps the interviewee to think about what he or she has just said. <p>(Source: Adapted from Easterby-Smith <i>et al.</i>, 1991.)</p>

(Table-3: Probing in interview, adopted from Altinay & Paraskevas 2008, p.108)

In practice, it was found from the previous

assignments done by the researcher, that adhering to the interviewee's agreed timing and duration and using simple word questions, that should not leave any chance for ambiguity, can be necessary to consider during the interview, specially when conducting the interview with a top management member. As per Altinay and Paaskevas (2008), the following points are to be considered when developing interview questions :

- It is also advisable not to use long questions. Several smaller questions can be asked instead.
- Not to use so theoretical complicated words. This is because they might confuse the interviewee and make it difficult to understand the question. Thus, it is always better to use simple terms that can be understood easily by the informants.
- Adhering to the interview timing and agreed duration as the informant might have other tasks to be completed specially when the interview is conducted during working hours.

- Asking the informant whether he wants to add more points may encourage him to talk about areas which were not covered during the interview.

Further, the same authors pointed out that piloting the interview with colleagues can help researchers to be more confident about the questions developed and can help to make the questions wording more effective or refining some questions to make them more research focus.

As shown in the previous sections, the interview is found the most appropriate Research Methodology (RM) to be used for this research and in the same time case study as another research methodology would be also helpful. The reason for not using the later here is because of the time limitation. Also, it was indicated by the researcher the importance to conduct a pilot interview before starting the actual interviews. Therefore, after preparing the interview questions, a pilot interview was conducted as shown in the next section.

3.7 Pilot interview

For the purpose of making the developed interview questions more effective to help in collecting the needed data for the research, a pilot semi-structured interview was conducted with the head of projects in one of the banks in Dubai. This international bank regional office is based in Dubai and offers various banking services specially to the corporate sector. It has many projects every year serving different departments in the bank. The interview was conducted face to face with the head of projects in this bank. The interview was a sort of informal interview to discuss views on projects management in his bank and it was taken opportunity to use some the

interview questions developed for this research. This interview mainly focused on the following topics:

- Main responsibilities of his department with respect to projects.
- How the projects are managed in his organization.
- The alignment between projects and the organization strategy.
- Existence of Project Management Office and its role of being the central point for projects management in the organization.
- If he is aware of PPM concept e.g. Project Portfolio Management and whether it is used in the organization.

3.7.1 Outcomes

The outcomes of this pilot interview were positive and helped later on to refine the interview questions and make them more research focus. There were several challenges encountered during the pilot interview which can be considered as opportunities for improvements for the actual interview. Also, the findings from the pilot interview revealed the following:

1. The term Project Portfolio Management (PPM) may be interpreted in different contexts depending on the organization which the interviewee works for and his job responsibilities. For example, when PPM term is mentioned to a banker, his thinking goes directly to investment portfolio. Also, a retail banking person may interpret the term 'portfolio' as product portfolio. Hence, this entails to explain the term 'portfolio' in the context of project management to each interviewee. Moreover, it may sometimes require to probe the interviewee with a question to ensure his understanding of the

mentioned term as explained. This might not be achievable in case of using questionnaire to collect the needed data for this research. Therefore, it would be more helpful to conduct an interview with the participants rather than sending them questionnaires because the participants may misinterpret some terms as indicated earlier which might affect the consistency of the data collection outcomes. Thus, interview is considered to be more suitable research methodology to collect the required data for this research.

2. The importance of adhering to the time agreed with the interviewee specially when the participant is part of the executive management in his organization. Such person would have a busy schedule. So attending the meeting on time and adhering to the meeting duration would be highly important. Also, this would help to gain his support if a second meeting is required to clarify unclear points or for asking further information on particular questions which were discussed earlier. One of the things to consider is to focus on the main questions or ideas that to be discussed with him first then the interviewer can go to the less important questions if time allows.
3. The participant was sometimes getting concerned about the confidentiality of the information provided. And to avoid this, he was given assurance of the anonymity of the interview and that no names would be shown in the dissertation report including the organization name. Such assurance may help to give him confidence to provide detailed information and speak freely.

4. Using complicated academic terms when conducting an interview with an industry based or a field based employee may let him get confused or may not understand some questions properly, and this can lead to inappropriate responses. To avoid this, the researcher recommends using simple and precise questions during the interview.
5. Using long questions or questions which have more than one part might lead to make the interviewee less focused and might let him answer the questions partially, and this can affect negatively on the data collected from the interview. To overcome this issue, it is better to use short questions and break up the long question into multiple short ones.
6. Starting the interview with the questions directly without introducing the interviewer with the research topic and the purpose of the interview might have a negative impact on the interview outcomes. The interviewee would not be aware of the main objective of the questions and may not adequately respond to the interview questions. Also, he might need to clarify some questions frequently which can extend the interview time and make it more boring for the participant. In this case, the researcher may not be able to ask all his planned questions. To avoid this, it is recommended to set the context at the beginning of the interview session by introducing the interviewer with the research topic and the purpose of the interview. Further, this can prepare his mind and make him more focused and prepared to answer the questions.

Thus, pilot interview can be very helpful for the researcher. It prepares him for the actual interview. Further, the researcher can refine his questions and make them more focused based on

the findings reached to during the pilot interview. In addition, it can reveal several points that to be considered when the actual interview is conducted as indicated earlier. Table-4 summarizes the issues that might be experienced during the interview and how to avoid them in addition to points to be taken in account for the actual interview:

Table-4 : Challenges that might be experienced during the interview		
No	Issue	How to avoid it ?
1	Some terms which are used in the questions are not clear and may create ambiguity or might be misinterpreted by the interviewee.	Set the context of the research topic at the beginning of the interview session and explain the terms that might create ambiguity or get misinterpreted. Example, PPM.
2	Time allotted for the interview might not be adequate to cover all questions specially when the interviewee is an executive management member.	focus on the main questions or ideas to discuss with him first then the interviewer can go to the less important questions if time allows.
3	The participant might get concerned about the confidentiality of the information provided.	To provide the interviewee with assurance of the anonymity of the interview and that no names would be shown in the dissertation report including the organization name.
4	Using complicated academic terms might let the interviewer get confused or may not understand some questions properly which can lead to get inappropriate responses and not related to the question raised.	To use simple and precise questions for the interview.
5	Using long questions or questions which have more than one part might lead to make the interviewee less focused and may let him answer the questions partially.	It is better to use short questions and break up the long question in to multiple short ones.
6	Starting the interview with the questions directly without introducing the interviewer with the research topic and the purpose of the interview. This can let him provide inadequate responses to the questions. Also, he might need to clarify some questions asked frequently.	It is recommended to set the context at the beginning by introducing the interviewer with the research topic and the purpose of the interview. This can prepare his mind and make him more focused and prepared to answer the questions.

Table-4: Challenges that might be experienced during the interview

3.8 Summary

As indicated earlier and from the pilot interview outcomes, it is shown that using interview to collect data for this research would be more effective than using questionnaire as a data collection method. In face-to-face interview, the researcher can clarify any ambiguous term or the term which may be misunderstood by the participant. The same was pointed out in the pilot interview which was mentioned earlier when the participant understood the term “portfolio” as an investment portfolio or product portfolio which was not in line with the interview context.

The interviews for this research will be conducted by face-to-face and sometimes by telephone depending on the availability of the interviewees and their free schedules. Using interview as a data collection method can help to gather more reliable data related to the research objectives and research questions (Saunders et al.2007) specially when the interview is done with experts and executives from industry. Targeted interviewees for this research might include executives, project managers, program sponsors and portfolio managers in three to five private organizations in Dubai with focusing on banking sector.

In the following chapter, the analysis and discussions of the findings will be presented upon collecting the data from several interviews.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Describing the data (interview info)

Taking in to account the nature of this study that requires to collect data based on the experience of people who get involved in project management and related decision making process in their organizations and considering the time constraint to finish this study, data about the readiness of the UAE private sector organizations to benefit and implement Project Portfolio Management (PPM) was collected through interviews conducted with various types of organizations in Dubai.

To collect the required data for this research, several face-to-face and over telephone discussions and interviews were conducted using open ended questions in addition to a few close-ended ones. None of the interviews were recorded due to confidentiality reasons as per interviewees' requests specially for bank employees. Therefore all names including the organizations names are kept anonymous. Eight interviews were done and on average every interview took 30-45 minutes depending on the availability schedule of the interviewee.

The interviews and discussions were done with employees from five different organizations. These organizations are all located in Dubai but vary in terms of the industry they work in. Also, they differ in number of employees ranging from medium to large size organizations. Further, they provide

their services to customers inside and outside UAE. The projects handled by these organizations include projects done for the organization its self and the those for their customers. Table-5 shows the industry every organization works in and services offered to their customers:

Table-5 : Organizations involved in the study			
Organization	Operation	Size	Industry
Organization -1	Local	Large (> 2000 employees)	Financial Services and Banking
Organization -2	Local/Regional	medium (> 500 employees)	Information Technology solutions
Organization -3	Local/International	Large (> 6000 employees)	Information Technology solutions
Organization -4	Local/Regional	(70 -100 employees)	Information Technology solutions
Organization -5	Local/International	Large (> 4000 employees)	Marine and logistic services

Table-5: Organizations involved in the study

The interviews and discussions were done with people involved in project management in their organizations and associated decision making process pertaining to these projects. This included project

sponsors, project managers, projects leaders, heads of business departments and executive managers. In addition, the management level of the interviewees varied from low to middle and executive management levels. This can help towards getting inputs from various management levels which can in turn enrich the research outcomes. Table-6 shows the management level of the interviewees:

Table-6 : Management level of the participants	
Interviewee Management Level	Numbers
Project Sponsors	2
Project Managers	3
Business Heads	2
Executive Managers	1

Table-6:

Management level of the participants

The interviewees were briefed about the research aim, the concept of the Project Portfolio Management (PPM) in organizations and its importance in strategy implementation.

Further, the participants were informed about the research aim and the purpose of the interview that it would help to collect data related to assessing the readiness of private sector organizations in the UAE to benefit and implement Project Portfolio Management process. Also, it was discussed with the

interviewees about the project management in their organizations, issues they face with respect to managing projects and the way to improve.

The interview questions (refer to Appendix-A) were designed to focus primarily on the following areas which are related to research objectives stated earlier:

- Role of projects in the organization with respect to strategy implementation.

- Linking projects to the organization strategy.

- To explore if any of the PPM functions are done in the organization, for which the interviewee works for, in terms of projects selection, allocating resources, monitoring and reprioritizing projects, tracking and then managing the realized benefits of the delivered projects.

- Exploring the readiness of the organization in terms of the success factors, as identified from the literature, that to be considered before PPM implementation.

- To explore if these organizations (involved in the study) need to have PPM.

- Any further suggestions that would improve the outcomes of the project portfolio management in organizations.

4.2 Findings

The interviews were conducted with eight persons from different management levels including project managers, project sponsors, a project leader, business heads and an executive manager. The majority of the interviews were done with project managers. 37% of the interviewees were project managers and 50% of them were project sponsors and business heads. On the other hand, only one interview was done with an executive manager. In fact, it was difficult to get appointment with top management members due to their busy schedule.

From the interviews outcomes, it was evident that there were issues related to aligning projects with the organization strategy and the criteria used for project selection. In addition, the data collected revealed lack of post-project reviews to verify if a delivered project provided the promised benefits which were proposed to secure management approval. The findings of the interviews are as follows:

4.2.1 Relating projects to the strategy implementation

The interview findings show that not all organizations, which were involved in the data collection, have all their projects related to the strategy implementation. For example, organizations 2, and 4 relate their projects to the organization strategy and consider customer needs and market changes also, whereas for organization-1 strategy is not considered all the time when initiating projects. Instead, projects are initiated mainly based on the departments' needs and market demands. In this regard, a

senior manager in organization-1 stated that “We start projects based on our departments’ requirements and we make sure that these projects fulfil our customers’ demands as well”.

On the other hand, organization-3 and organization-5 ensure that projects serve towards strategy implementation and they should be linked to the strategic objectives. “The projects Department in our organization receives all change/project requests in our organization and they make sure that these projects are aligned with the strategy else the project would not be approved” stated by a project manager when he was asked if the projects are related to the strategy in his organization. Figure-3 shows that two of the companies which were involved in this study have their projects with full relation to the organization strategy whereas the rest of the companies have their projects with partial relation with the organization strategy.

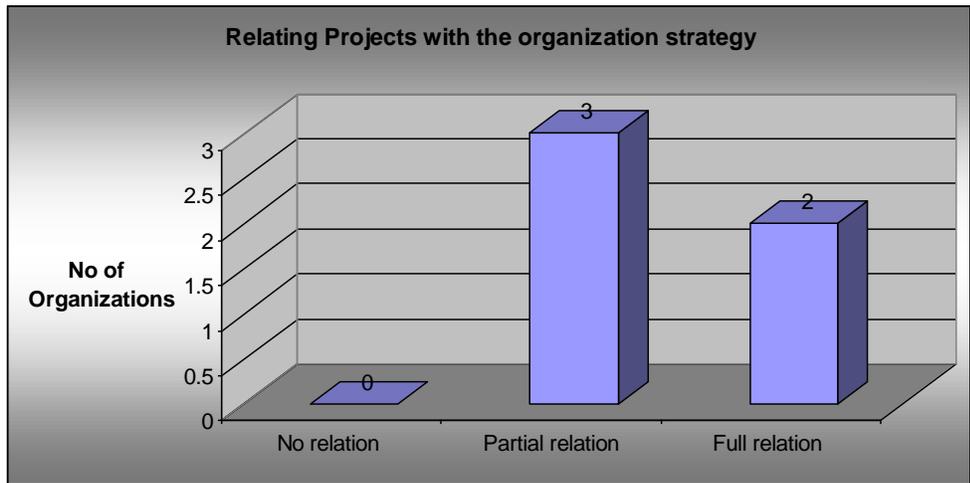


Figure -3: Relating projects to the organization strategy

Thus, from the interview findings it can be noted that relating all projects to the strategy does not exist in all private sector organizations in the UAE and this supports hypothesis-3 “Linking all projects to the organization strategy is not practiced in all UAE organizations” true.

4.2.2 To explore if any of the following PPM tasks is practiced in the organization (which the interviewee works for):

- Project selection.
- Resource allocation /reallocation.
- Projects prioritization/reprioritization.
- Monitoring projects performance.
- Tracking benefits post project delivery.

It is evident from the interviews that all the organizations which participated in this study do have some of the PPM functions in place, in particular project selection process which is used to evaluate and select projects. The findings show that all these organizations do have project selection process in order to select and then initiate the most suitable projects for the organization. However, the selection part is done mainly based on the financial factor. The findings show that 67% of the interviewees reported that projects get selected mainly based on the cost/benefit analysis and 11% of the interviewees reported that main selection criteria for projects is the alignment with the organization strategy.

For organizations 1,2,3 and 4 , the interviews findings show clearly that these organizations do not have a standard criteria scheme applied on all proposed projects to select the most suitable ones for the organization, but the projects which match mainly the financial criteria pass the evaluation and then get approved for execution. In contrast, the interview with the project manager in organization-5 showed that this organization selects projects based on several factors; one of them is the financial factor as all projects are evaluated against a standard selection scheme. One of the main factors, besides the financial factor, is that the selected project should be aligned with the strategic objectives of the organization. The project manager of organization-5 stated that “Only the projects which are aligned with the strategy will get the committee approval else it will be rejected”.

Further, it was clear from the findings that all organizations do monitor their ongoing projects by reviewing reports on the projects status or conducting regular project steering committee meetings focusing mainly on the scope, time and cost of the projects. In addition the findings showed that these organizations reallocate resources in order to speed up certain projects and may reprioritize a project depending on the market changes.

Table-7 summarizes the findings related to practising PPM functions in the organizations involved in the research. It is evident that none of the organizations do monitoring the benefits to be perceived after delivering the project. One of the reasons might be that accountability and ownership culture are not enforced by the top management in these organizations so that the team who proposes a project is not hold responsible if the project does not deliver the promised benefits. The top

management in these organizations has to make sure that each project has an owner e.g. sponsor who carries the ultimate responsibility for the project success (Haukka 2009).

Main PPM functions in Place				
Organizations	Project Selection (cost/benefit, Strategic, market demand)	Resource allocation/reallocation	Project prioritization/Reprioritization	Monitoring Benefits
Organization-1	✓	✓	✓	
Organization-2	✓	✓	✓	
Organization-3	✓	✓	✓	
Organization-4	✓	✓	✓	
Organization-5	✓	✓	✓	

Table-7 : Main PPM functions already in place in participated organizations

Thus, the interview findings and discussions with the interviewees showed that though organizations in private sector in the UAE have already some of PPM functions exist and in practice, they may or may not know that these functions are part of PPM process. This supports hypothesis-5 “Organizations in private sector may have already in place some of the PPM main functions” true.

4.2.3 The readiness of the organization in terms of the success factors as identified from the literature:

This section presents the findings revealed from the data collected and pertaining to the readiness of the organizations in the UAE in terms of the success factors, as identified from the literature review, for PPM implementation.

4.2.3.1 Employee and management support PPM implementation in the organization

The findings from the interview sessions revealed that all of them support the implementation of Project Portfolio Management (PPM). The interviewees with different management levels showed their interest to have such process specially the top management members. A project manager from organization-1 said that “such function can help us to align all our projects to the organization strategy”. Also, A senior manager in organization-1 stated that “We do support having such thing in our organization and it would help management to monitor all projects in progress”.

Further, an executive manager from the same organization said “Project Portfolio Management can give us better visibility on the running projects and provide us one focal point to handle all projects in the organization”. Also, the discussions with the interviewees from other organizations revealed that implementing such process in their organizations would help to have better control on the projects being approved and on the resources allocated to run these projects in addition to helping management to have better visibility on the active projects and monitor their performance more closely. A Project

Manager in Organization-4 stated that “ Implementing Project Portfolio Management in our organization can help to better manage our projects from the financial part as the top management would be aware of what is going on and whether these projects are proving the promised benefits or not”.

Thus the findings revealed that management and employees, in the organizations who were part of this study, do support the implementation of Project Portfolio Management process in their companies.

4.2.3.2 Projects alignment with the organization strategy

It was clear from the discussions with the interviewees that not all organizations participated in this study have all their projects aligned with the strategy. For organizations 1, 4, the interviewees pointed out that all projects not necessary to be aligned with the strategy of the organization. Some projects can be initiated upon departments’ requests. A project manager in organization-1 stated that “The strategy is not cascaded down to the employees and I am not sure if all projects are aligned with the corporate strategy”. A senior manager in the same organization stated “Projects are started based on the organization needs and market changes“ indicating that all initiated projects may not be aligned with the strategy.

Further, the findings show that not all projects are aligned with the strategy in organization-2 also. Discussions with the interviewees showed that projects are initiated based on customer needs and

market changes but there is no direct alignment with the strategy implementation. Hence, some projects in these organizations are aligned with the strategy and some of them are not. Thus these organizations have partial projects alignment with the strategy.

In Contrast, for organizations 3 and 5, the interviews findings revealed that all their projects are to be aligned with the organization strategy and every project is mapped to a strategic objective. A project manager working for organization-5 stated during the interview that “The Projects Department in our organization receives all change and project requests in our organization and they make sure that projects are aligned with the strategy else the project would not be approved” which confirms that their projects get filtered to ensure that all approved projects server towards strategy implementation.

The interview outcomes show that all organizations have a level of alignment between projects and the strategy. It was evident during the interviews that only two of the organizations involved in this study have direct alignment between their projects and the organization strategy, whereas the rest of the organizations have partial alignment between projects and the strategy.

Thus, the findings show that private sector organizations in the UAE have partial alignment between their projects and the organization strategy. Such alignment exists but might not be for all projects. This supports hypothesis-4 “Projects in Private sector organizations in the UAE may not be aligned fully with the business strategy” true.

4.2.3.3 Inventory of all projects running in the organization:

The discussions with the interviews showed that not all organization managements have full inventory of all projects running in their organizations. It was pointed out that management in some organizations do not follow up on small projects. Only projects with high value budget are monitored closely by management. The findings show that 67% of the interviewees reported that the top management in their organizations do not have full idea about all projects running in their organizations.

This means that not all organizations have full inventory of the running projects. For organizations 1 and 4, the interviewees indicated that the top management in their organizations do not have a clear idea on all projects which take place in their organizations. A senior manager in organization-1 stated that “ Not all projects are proposed to us in the Approval Committee” and when he was asked about the reason, he said that “ Only projects with budget of more than \$100k are sent to the Approval Committee for approval”. On the other hand, for organizations 2, 3 and 5, the discussions with interviewees revealed that these organizations have a system in place so that all projects are monitored by their management. A project manager in organization-5 stated that

“Every project big or small must go to the Demand Management Section for evaluation and when approved, the Projects Management Section takes care of following it up and puts it under monitoring”.

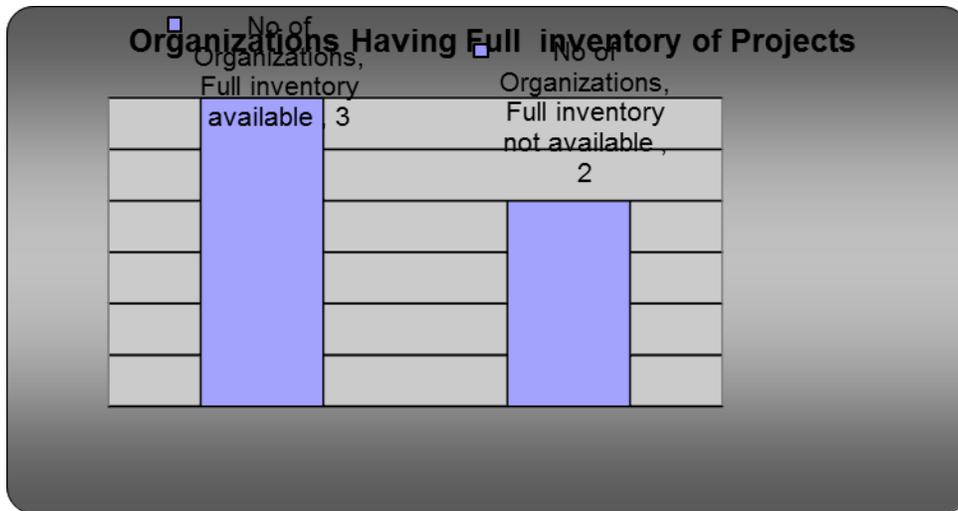


Figure- 4: Organizations having full inventory of their projects

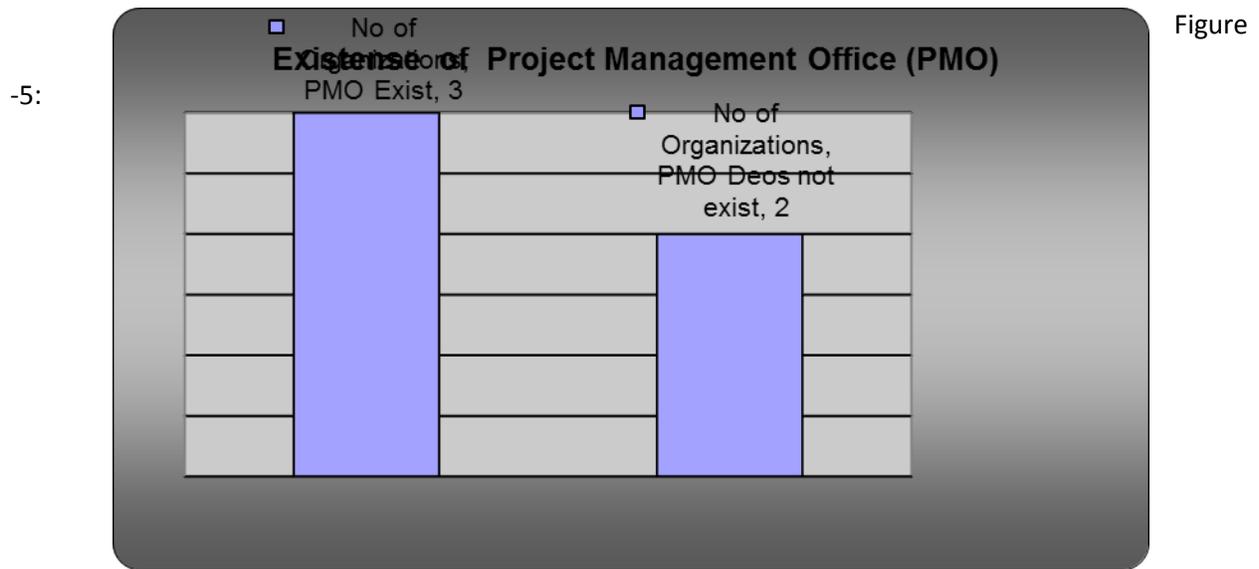
Figure-4 shows that three organizations out of five, which were part of this study, have full inventory of all projects running. Thus, the findings show that not all private sector organizations in the UAE have full inventory of all their projects.

4.2.3.4 PMO existence

The findings from the interviews showed that 3 organizations (Organizations 2, 3 and 5) have one unit to control and monitor all running projects. The name of this unit changes from one organization to another. The findings showed that some organizations call it Project Management Office (PMO). Others name it Projects Department or Centre of Excellence. But the idea here is that there is

one section in these organizations that handles all projects in order to have better control and visibility on their status.

In contrast, the interviewees working for organizations 1 and 3 pointed out that there is no such function in their organizations. A project manager in organization-1 said that “More than one department in our organization are having their own project management team to handle their projects”. Figure -5 shows that 2 out of 5 organizations have no project management office as one point of control for all projects.



Existence of Project Management Office (PMO)

Therefore, it is clear from the findings that one point of control to manage all projects does not exist in all private sector organizations in the UAE and this indicates that the management in these firms may not be aware fully of the actual performance status of the ongoing projects.

4.2.3.5 Existence of the procedures and processes for project management including project selection

All the interviewees reported that their organizations do have process in place for all functional and support departments in their companies. Also, they have standard process for project management to be followed by the project managers to manage their assigned projects. This supports the hypothesis-1 “Private sector organizations in Dubai have project management processes in place” true. However, it was evident from the discussions, and as shown in table-8 below, that not all the organizations involved in this research have a standard process for project selection.

Table-8 : Existence of a standard Process for PM and Project Selection			
Organizations	Standard Project Management Process	Standard Project Selection Process	Remarks
Organization-1	✓	☒	Selection is done based on Financial factor
Organization-2	✓	☒	Selection is done based on Financial factor
Organization-3	✓	☒	Selection is done based on Financial factor
Organization-4	✓	☒	Selection is done based on Financial factor
Organization-5	✓	✓	-

Table-8 : Existence of a standard Process for PM and Project Selection

Further, the interview findings show that most of these organizations have different procedures followed internally by their management when it comes to project selection. Organizations 1, 2, 3 and 4 have no standard process internally for project selection. Every department in these organizations selects its own projects based on a criteria put the department itself to justify a project and most of the projects are mainly selected based on the financial factor. On the other hand, it was clear from the findings that organization-5 has a standard project selection procedure followed for every proposed project. The projects in this organization are selected based on several factors, one of them is the financial factor, including alignment with the strategy, coping with market changes and meeting customers demands. The interviewed project manager in organization-5 stated that

“We do have a standard procedure to be followed when proposing any project, a standard form to be filled up which will be discussed in a committee to decide on the project approval”.

Thus, as shown from the findings, that not all private sector organizations in the UAE have a standard procedure for project selection. A procedure might exist in the organization but vary from one department to another depending on the way pursued by this department to justify a new project.

4.2.4 To explore if the organization needs to have PPM

The discussions with the interviewees showed that there is a need for Project Portfolio Management (PPM) in their organizations as shown in table-9 below which summarizes the findings related to this point. The findings from the discussion with a senior manager in organization-1 revealed

that there can be sometimes “duplicate” projects going on for some departments and he stated that “We might have a situation that two different departments are doing two projects for the same purpose which means that we can have duplicate projects“. When he was asked about the reason for this, he reported that “Not all projects are coming to the Approval Committee for approval. Only projects with budget of greater than \$100k are sent to the committee for evaluation, other projects can be approved on the department management level”.

Table-9: Need to have PPM

Organization	Possibility of having Duplicate Projects	Possibility of having Not necessary projects	Projects Not aligned with the organization strategy	One unit to monitor running projects	Evaluate promised project benefits after delivery
Organization-1	✓	✓	✓	☒	☒
Organization-2	☒	✓	✓	✓	☒
Organization-3	✓	☒	☒	✓	☒
Organization-4	✓	✓	✓	☒	☒
Organization-5	☒	☒	☒	✓	☒

Table-9: Organizations need to have PPM

In the same regard, the findings with the interviewees from organizations 2 and 4 showed that they do have few projects which are not necessary and they are not aligned with the strategic

objectives. They indicated that these projects might get approved because of the weight of the related department management in the organization who requested for these projects. This can point out that these organizations might not have a standard process for project selection enforced by the top management.

The above mentioned finding is aligned with the previous mentioned ones about existence of standard project selection process in the organizations involved in this research. Head of projects department in organization-2 stated that “Sometimes some projects get approved because of the weight of the person who requested for this project” when he was asked if there are any unnecessary projects in his organization. Further, the findings showed that there is no central unit or department in the organization to have a view on all projects running in the organization including identifying the projects which have resource constraints or those which are not aligned with the current organization strategic objectives.

On the other hand, the project manager in organization-5 pointed out that all proposed projects get evaluated by one department in the organization and hence there will be less chance to have duplicate projects or projects which are not linked to the strategy of the organization. However, he reported that “We do not have a process to evaluate the benefits of the projects after delivery to verify if the project delivered the promised benefits or not”. Hence, though organization-5 has already a process in place for monitoring their ongoing projects on the corporate level, there is no process for perceiving the benefits of the project after delivery.

Thus, the findings, and as indicated in table-9, show that there is a possibility in some private sector organizations in the UAE to have “duplicate’ or not aligned projects with the organization strategy. Besides, none of the organizations that participated in this study has a process in place to

evaluate the promised benefits of the projects after delivery. Further, not all organizations have full view on the running projects and their performance statuses and this makes the hypothesis-2 “Not all these Organizations have a process in place to get broad view of the running projects” hold true.

4.3 Summary of the findings

This section presents a summary of the findings found during the discussions and interviews with the participants.

4.3.1 Readiness of private sector organizations in UAE in terms of success factors to be available for PPM implementation

The findings from the interviews and discussions with the participants show that not all organizations involved in this study have in place the success factors for PPM implementation as identified from the literature. Table-10 below shows that all organizations support to have PPM in place and they use a standard process for project management. On the other hand, the findings show that few organizations have Project Management Office (PMO) in place which can help to have inventory of all running projects. Further, table-10 shows that not all organizations have a standard process for project selection or have their projects fully aligned with the strategy of the organization.

Thus , it is evident that not all private sector organizations in the UAE are ready in terms of the success factors for PPM implementation and this makes the hypothesis-6 “Private sector organizations in the UAE may not have all success factors for PPM implementation in place” hold true.

Table-10: Readiness of private sector organizations in UAE in terms of success factors to be available for PPM implementation

Organization	Management Support	Full projects Alignment with the organization strategy	PMO existence	standard process for Project Management	standard process for Project Selection	Remarks : Ready ? Yes/No
Organization-1	✓	☒	☒	✓	☒	No
Organization-2	✓	☒	✓	✓	☒	No
Organization-3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	No
Organization-4	✓	☒	☒	✓	☒	No
Organization-5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yes

Table-10: Readiness of private sector organizations in UAE in terms of success

Moreover, the interviews findings revealed additional success factors to be considered for PPM implementation which were not encountered during the literature review. These factors are discussed further in the next section.

4.4 Discussion

With reference to the theoretical findings developed from the literature review and the empirical findings drawn from the conducted interviewees, this chapter considers the following key outcomes for discussion:

4.4.1 Aligning projects with the strategy of the organization:

The literature shows that strategy alignment is an important factor for PPM implementation success. Aubrey et al. (2007) emphasized the importance of linking projects to organizational strategy and they suggested to be a function within the organization structure. Further, the project portfolio should be strategically fit and it should not be only aligned with the organization strategy but also it

must be part of the organization strategy implementation process itself (Madic et al. 2011; PMI 2006). The absence of such linkage might have its negative implications on the value that related projects should bring to the organization.

The researcher is in the opinion that when projects are not linked to the corporate strategy, top management might not be aware of the whole scope of the running projects and this can result in that people may work on many projects without a clear direction and perhaps many of these projects might not be needed even. Also, the organization might lose business opportunities in the market if the project strategy is not aligned with the organization business strategy (Srivannaboon & Milosevic 2006; Filippov et al. 2010).

On the other hand, the empirical findings show that not all firms involved in this study align all their projects to the organization strategy. Few organizations (organizations 1 and 4) initiate projects based on departments' needs and market changes. Some other organizations (Organization-2) start projects based on customer needs without direct relation to the strategy for all projects. The situation was completely different with organization-3 which has strategy alignment criteria as a part of the project selection evaluation process. Further, the absence of the relation between the projects and the strategy in those organizations can be because of several reasons.

First reason, which is concerned with the top management, can be that the top management executives do not enforce such relation for the objectives set by the lower department managers which can lead to approving projects without verifying if those projects are aligned with the strategy or not. The second reason is concerned with the employees. The organization strategy is not communicated from top management to the low level employees. Consequently, projects can be initiated by department managers or suggested by other employees without having a clear picture of the strategy

which is needed to get a direction on what objectives to be achieved. The same was pointed out by one of the interviewees when he was asked if the projects in his organizations are related to the strategy.

Thus, aligning projects with the strategy of the organization is an important factor for PPM implementation. Reasons for absence of such relation can be due to not enforcing projects-strategy relation by the department managers and not cascading this strategy to the lower management staff.

4.4.2 Other PPM implementation success factors which were identified from the findings and were not encountered in the literature

The findings from the interviews and discussions with the participants revealed extra success factors to be considered for PPM implementation though they were not identified in the literature review. These factors are as follows:

4.4.2.1 Enforcing a culture of accountability and ownership among managers

Organization management has to enforce accountability culture among lower level managers so they be aware that the sponsor or the manager who proposes a project will be responsible for the benefits that to be delivered by that project. It should be known that the concerned people will be hold responsible if the project does not deliver the benefits as promised and justified to get management approval at first place.

A senior manager in the organization-1 stated that “Accountability is important. Managers should be responsible for the projects they propose and get approved”. The same was emphasized by head of projects in organization-3 who dictated “Managers should know that they will be responsible for their projects. Accountability culture would help to have the right projects” indicating the importance of accountability when selecting projects to be kicked off. This is inline with what the head of projects in

organization-1 pointed out. He asserted the importance of enforcing the culture of responsibility among managers too. He said “Managers should be accountable for the projects they propose, they should know that some one will question them after delivering the project”.

4.4.2.2 Promoting a culture of consolidation

Top management has to have a broad view on the projects running in the organization. Also, it is needed to look to these projects as a whole and not individually. The head of the business projects in organization -1 emphasized the importance of projects consolidation. He stated that

“Management has to look to projects from high level through one unit in the company. This job can be done by the PMO in the organization.

Also, enforcing consolidation and best practices culture will help towards having better results from the projects”.

Similarly, a project manager in organization-1 pointed out the importance of project management centralization in the organization.

Moreover, looking into all projects by one unit in the company can help the management to have better visibility on the running projects and to have the projects managed in a better coordinated manner. Grundy (1998) showed in his study the importance of looking into projects in organizations as a whole. Also, the same author indicated in the same study the notion of strategic thinking when dealing with projects where the traditional view on projects has to change to be more focused on strategy delivery rather than looking into projects individually. Further, the same concept was supported by several other authors indicating the importance to view projects in organization as one large entity (Aubry et al. 2007; Winter 2008). Similarly, it is evident from other more recent

researches that many organizations started to realize that managing projects individually do not help them much in terms of strategy implementation. Instead, the focus is to change towards managing several projects simultaneously, dealing with these projects as one whole entity and linking them to the organization strategy (Dietrich & Lehtonen 2005; Aubry et al. 2007; Winter 2008; Jeffery & Leliveld 2004). Further, looking at projects as a whole can help to have better control on these projects which get initiated from various departments in the organization.

Also, consolidation can help towards avoiding to have duplicate projects as pointed out by one of the executive managers during one of the interviews. In the same vein, Literature shows it is highly important to have a system approach towards projects. This means that they work in a coordinated manner to achieve a common goal which is the organization strategy in this case (Srivannaboon & Milosevic 2006).

4.4.2.3 Promoting a culture of process efficiency in the organization

Interview findings show that managers in the organization should realize that not every business enhancement requires an Information Technology (IT) system for it and make it as a project. This can lead to have unnecessary projects and maybe duplicate projects if there is no projects consolidation process in place in the organization.

As indicated by a senior manager in organization-1 that “Sometimes you need just to enhance your process to get better results without need to initiate a new project for implementing an IT system”. This is inline with what was raised by the head of IT Projects in organization-1 who said “it can happen that buying a system will not enhance the work for a department. Maybe the department just needs to change the related business process in order to reduce the cost for example or to enhance the service”. The organization’s departments can look at optimizing current processes in order to get better results and they might not need to start a new IT project for that purpose. Having this in place can lead to

maximize the value for the organization and the value of the project portfolio (in case the organization has PPM in place) and help to avoid having unnecessary projects which consume organization resources.

4.4.2.4 Rigorous project selection and evaluation process

The interview findings showed that several organizations depend on the financial factor only when selecting a project without looking into other factors such as the alignment with the strategy. Further, it was noticed from the discussions with the interviewees that even the financial figures shown in the project proposals might not be verified for their feasibility. This can raise questions about the viability of the decisions taken to approve these projects. Therefore, this was pointed out by several interviewees when they were asked to mention other success factors that can be considered for successful PPM implementation.

The responses from the interviews showed the importance of project selection process in selecting and then executing the right projects. A project manager from organization-1 mentioned “It is necessary to consider empowering project selection process” indicating the importance of selecting process to select the most suitable projects for the organization. In the same sense, the Head of Projects in the same company stated “It is required to establish a thorough evaluation and selection process for projects” emphasizing on the critical role of project selection process to maximize the value of the project portfolio. Moreover, the Head of Project Management Office in organization-3 mentioned “Selection criteria is to be enhanced and evaluation process is to be thorough” in order to select high value projects for the firm.

Thus, organizations management have to empower and enhance the selection and evaluation process of the proposed projects in order to choose the best value projects for the organizations.

Therefore, a thorough project selection process can help organizations to initiate only projects which can provide maximum value for the organization and get selected as per the selection criteria set by the management. Further, this would in turn help towards maximizing the value of the project portfolio.

4.4.2.5 Post review of project benefits after project delivery:

The discussions with the interviewees revealed that none of the organizations, involved in this study, has a process for post review of the promised benefits after the project delivery. For example, the Head of Projects in Organization-3 replied “No, not done. It is better to have it in order to hold people accountable “ when he was asked “Are the benefits of the projects get evaluated after launching the project to identify if we have really got the revenue we expected ?” indicating that such process is not in place for his organization. In the same sense, the Head of Business Unit in Organization-1 stated that “No, there is no mechanism in our company to check if the projects are really providing the benefits as proposed earlier “. Further, several interviewees brought up the matter of reviewing benefits after project delivery when they were asked about other factors that can help to get better outcomes from their project portfolios.

Further, the responses from more than one interviewee indicated the importance of reviewing project benefits post project launch as one of the factors to be considered for PPM implementation. The Head of Projects in Organization-3 stated that “Monitoring post project outcomes and benefits in addition to enforcing accountability culture are two factors to be taken in to account”, when he was asked about further success factors to consider for successful PPM implementation, suggesting both post project review and enforcing accountability culture as two factors which can maximize the projects value for the organization and also they can be considered necessary for successful PPM deployment. In the same vein, the Head of IT projects in organizations-1 replied “Benefits of the projects are to be evaluated after launching the project and responsible person is to be hold accountable if things go

wrong” emphasizing the significant role of reviewing the project outcomes, comparing the same with the promised benefits and putting people who proposed that project accountable for the delivered results.

The researcher is in the opinion that one of the reasons for not having such culture common in organizations might be that accountability and ownership culture are not enforced by the top management in these organizations so that the team who proposed a project should know that the team will be responsible and accountable for the project outcomes. Also, another reason can be that the proposed benefits sometimes get exaggerated and not evaluated accurately during the project selection. These two points can be opportunity for future research by exploring further how these two points are practiced in organizations in the UAE.

Thus, reviewing the outcomes of the projects and comparing them with the promised benefits and then hold the responsible team accountable if the results are not as per what was mentioned in the initial project proposal would help towards selecting the most suitable projects for the organization. Consequently this would have a positive impact on the PPM implementation in the organization. In addition, Post project review can help to promote the culture of having a thorough study before proposing any project for management approval, because the sponsor or the concerned business manager will be aware that he or she will be accountable and responsible if the project does not deliver the benefits claimed in the proposal. Further, the same is related with the accountability culture which was mentioned earlier.

In Addition to the above, several future research opportunities were identified during the interviews and discussions with the participants which are demonstrated in the next chapter.

The next chapter provides the conclusion and recommendations of this study.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The purpose of this research is to determine values added and benefits attainable by organizations when deploying PPM, identify success factors to be considered before PPM implementation, investigate the role of projects in strategy implementation in the UAE organizations, explore the readiness of private sector organizations in the UAE in terms of the success factors that to be considered before PPM deployment and identify where gap exists and make suggestions for future developments and improvements.

With respect to the values and benefits that PPM can contribute to organizations, several factors were identified from the literature review including aligning projects to the strategy of the organization which can provide guidance to the various business departments and functions in the firm when proposing their projects. Also, PPM can help organizations for better management and control over projects in addition to creating synergy between the projects since those projects will be centrally monitored and this can further help to identify relationship between them and enhance communication between the projects team and management. Moreover, several success

factors for PPM implementation were identified from the literature including management and employment support, linking projects to the organization strategy, organization structure and culture, inventory of all ongoing projects, promoting project portfolio culture and uniform processes and procedures specially the ones related to projects management. This contributes to achieving objective # 1 (refer to 2.6 and 2.7 for elaboration).

Further, data for the research was collected using interviews as a research methodology. Consequently, several semi-structured interviews were conducted using open ended questions and few close-ended questions with project stakeholders who are involved in project management and related decision making process from five private organizations in the UAE. The stakeholders were from different management levels including project managers, project sponsors and heads of functional departments such as head of business unit, head of projects and an executive management member.

The interviews and face to face discussions with the participants showed that not all organizations link all their projects to the organization strategy, so some projects get initiated by various business units without direct relation to the strategy which can be important to provide a direction to those projects towards strategy implementation (refer to section 4.4.1). This contributes to achieving objective #2.

In addition, the findings revealed that organizations in the UAE have some of the PPM functions in place such as projects selection, resources allocation and reallocation, projects prioritization and reprioritization but none of them track the benefits after project delivery (refer to 4.2.2 & 4.4.2.5).

Further, with regard to the readiness of the private sector organizations in the UAE in terms of the success factors to be considered before PPM implementation, the findings showed that many organizations are not ready yet for such implementation with respect to the success factors which were identified from the literature (refer to 4.2.3 & 4.3.1). This contributes to achieving objective # 3. These factors are not in place in many organizations.

Firstly, it was found from the findings that the management and the employees in these organization do support to implement PPM in their organizations due to the benefits that such initiative can provide. Secondly, the findings revealed that linking projects to the organization strategy does not take place for all projects. Thirdly, most of the organizations do not have full inventory of all projects running in the organization which can open a door for duplicate projects. Fourthly, it was clear from the interviews outcomes that not all private sector organizations in the UAE have in place a central point of control, which can be Project Management Office, to manage and monitor all the organization projects. This can make the management in these organizations not aware fully of the actual status of their ongoing projects. Finally, it was clear from the findings that not all organizations have a standard procedure for project selection taking in to account that such procedure might exist in the organization, but it varies from one department to another depending on the way this department pursues to justify new projects to obtain management approval. Moreover, the findings showed the need to implement PPM process in the UAE organizations considering that not all of them are ready in terms of the success factors that to be available to increase the success level of PPM implementation (refer to 4.2.4).

The following section presents additional PPM implementation success factors that were not encountered in the literature review.

5.2 Additional PPM success factors

The findings revealed extra success factors which were not identified from the literature and can help towards successful PPM implementation and this contributes to achieving objective # 4 (refer to 4.4.2). The factors include the following:

5.2.1 Culture

Findings showed several factors related to culture which can have a significant role for helping organizations in having a successful PPM implementation. These factors include the following:

- Enforcing **culture of accountability and ownership** among managers in order to be aware that they will be accountable for the projects they propose and get approved by management.
- Promoting culture of consolidation which can help to look into projects as a whole and not in isolation. Moreover, it can help to have better control on the projects which get initiated from various departments in the organization. Further, this can help to avoid duplicate projects.
- Promoting culture of process efficiency in the organization. This can play a significant role in avoiding unnecessary projects.

5.2.2 Rigorous project selection and post project delivery review

Findings revealed the importance of projects selection and post project

delivery review for PPM implementation success. These factors include the

following:

- Enforcing a rigorous project evaluation/selection process which can help organizations to initiate only projects which can maximize the value for the organization and as per the selection criteria decided by the management.
- Post review of project benefits after the delivery. This can encourage enforcing a thorough study before proposing any project for management approval.

5.2.3 Communicating organization strategy to the employees

Cascading organization strategy to the employees and lower managers can play an important part in directing the projects initiated by organization various departments towards achieving the strategic objectives of the organization. Organization strategy can help to guide employees in their tasks, ideas and projects they propose.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the following actions are recommended to consider before PPM implementation in the private sector organizations in the UAE:

- **Linking projects to the strategy of the organization:**
Organizations in the UAE have to map their projects with the strategic objectives of the organization in order to help towards achieving the target strategy. This mapping is considered

an important factor for PPM implementation and it can help to make the top management in these organizations aware of the whole scope of the running projects, besides it can provide direction to the projects initiated. Further, such alignment can help to avoid projects which do not serve achieving the organization strategy.

- **Cascading organization strategy to the employees and lower managers:** This is related to the previous point. It can help to promote the alignment between projects and the strategy. Also, it can help to guide efforts and objectives of the organization various departments towards strategy implementation.

- **Deploying the concept of Project Management Office as one point of control for all projects in the organization.**

Project Management office (PMO) can be the one point of control for all projects in the organization. PMO can help to avoid having duplicate projects and to provide better visibility on the status of the running projects to the management. Also, it can provide better control on allocating and reallocating the required resources for the projects.

- **Enforcing a rigorous project selection/Evaluation process :**

This would encourage to have projects get selected based on several factors and not based on the financial factor only. Further, enforcing such process can help to select projects which can deliver the best value for the organization and this consequently will help to maximize the value

of the project portfolio in the organization and help to increase the success level of PPM implementation.

- **Enforcing culture of accountability and ownership among managers:** This can be helpful for PPM implementation so that people who are responsible for their projects would know that they will be accountable and questionable for the outcomes of the projects they propose.

- **Promoting a culture of consolidation among managers and departments heads :**
This can help the organization management to have a better visibility on the projects running in the company and to look in to projects as a whole and not in isolation. In addition, consolidation can play a significant role in avoiding duplicate projects as all projects would be viewed by one focal point.

- **Promoting culture of process efficiency in the organization :**
This can help to avoid initiating unnecessary projects that can consume the organization scarce resources which can be used for other more important projects. Having this in place can help to maximize the projects value for the firm.

- **Post review of the project benefits after project delivery :**

Implementing this process can help to promote the culture of conducting intensive study before proposing any project for management approval among project sponsors and departments heads. Further, it can help to promote the culture of accountability among managers.

5.4. Future research opportunities

The following findings were revealed during the interviews and discussions with the participants. These findings can be considered as future research opportunities:

- No measures are taken to align projects with the strategy of the organization. The same was pointed out by more than one interviewee. The discussions with the interviewees did not show that these organizations have a standard process or measures to ensure that the selected projects are strategically aligned. This can exist in many organizations in the UAE and the researcher in the opinion to explore the best practices used to measure projects alignment with the strategy as one of the factor to be considered when selecting a project. And also it can be one of the project status items to be monitored by the organization management.

- Claiming project alignment with the strategy during the project evaluation should not be based on the judgement of the project sponsor or the department manager who requests for management approval, but it should be based on a standard process and a systematic approach to ensure such alignment.

Further, it is recommended to verify this by a third party in the organization which can be the PMO in this case, a separate Project Portfolio Management department or the Internal Audit team.

- With relation to promoting the culture of process efficiency, it was noted during the discussions that some organizations sometimes buy a system and then use just 10-15% of its features and functionalities. This can be considered as waste of resources. The researcher is in the opinion to include in the project approval criteria to check if the needed system can be developed internally before deciding to procure a system from outside which can help to avoid incurring unnecessary costs. This can be considered as opportunity for future research to explore the best practices for projects selection criteria in order to avoid unnecessary cost and approve only the best value projects for the organization.

- Thinking approach:

It was noticed during the interviews that people in the UAE organizations specially the management still looking into projects in isolation. This way of thinking should change in a way to adopt holistic and system view of the projects running in the organization. Literature shows it is highly important to have a system approach towards projects. This means that they work in a coordinated manner to achieve the common goal which is the organization strategy (Srivannaboon & Milosevic 2006). The researcher suggests this as a future research opportunity to explore if such approach exists in the UAE organizations and explore its effect on the project selection process and projects alignment with the strategy.

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