Why Take PMP Rather than Prince2 in Project Management in Saudi Arabia?

Umar Altahtooh

Abstract—Many government ministries and private organizations in Saudi Arabia are starting to require project management certifications for their managers. Both the Project Management Professional (PMP) and the Projects IN Controlled Environments (PRINCE2) certifications are an industry-recognized qualification for project managers. Today, the Project Management Institute (PMI) has more than 300 chapters in over 80 countries, while AXELOS is a joint venture company between the UK Cabinet Office and Capita Plc. This paper shows why the marketplace in Saudi Arabia is demanding PMP rather than PRINCE2. The aim of this study is to contribute to such literature by understanding the dominance of PMP in project management in Saudi Arabia.

Keywords—PMBOK, PMP, PRINCE2, Project Management, Saudi Arabia.

I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, Project Management (PM) certification is an indication to confirm the fundamental knowledge, competencies and skills needed to succeed in projects and achieve organizational goals. PMBOK (Project Management Body of Knowledge) and PRINCE2 are widely used as two different approaches to project management. The rights of PMBOK are owned by the Project Management Institute (PMI) while the rights of PRINCE2 are owned by AXELOS. Many organizations and firms in the world use them (PMBOK and PRINCE2) to support project delivery on schedule and on budget. Both are approaches for managing all types and sizes of projects by focusing on hard skills such as processes, techniques and procedures. The Project Management Institute (PMI) and AXELOS define their approaches as project management best practices. In general, choosing the proper certification of project management can be confusing for project managers since there are different professional certificates.

This paper provides an overview of PMBOK and PRINCE2 and outlines the similarities and differences between both approaches as discussed in the following sections. Finally, it presents an argument as to why PMP is more dominant than PRINCE2 in Saudi Arabia.

II. THE LITERATURE REVIEW

A. The PMBOK Guide

A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge, “PMBOK Guide”, was published by the Project Management Institute (PMI) in 1996 to describe best practices in project management. The aim of PMBOK is to guide project managers to achieve the project objectives.

The PMBOK Guide (2016) defines project management as 49 processes, in five process groups, as follows:

- Initiating process group: all activities that occur at the beginning to define a new project or a new project phase. It has two processes:
  1. Develop project charter
  2. Identify stakeholders

- Planning process group: all activities to define the scope and objectives of a project. It has 24 processes:
  1. Develop project management plan
  2. Plan scope management
  3. Collect requirements
  4. Define scope
  5. Create WBS
  6. Plan schedule management
  7. Define activities
  8. Sequence activities
  9. Estimate activity durations
  10. Develop schedule
  11. Plan cost management
  12. Estimate costs
  13. Determine budget
  14. Plan quality management
  15. Plan resource management
  16. Estimate activity resources
  17. Plan communications management
  18. Plan risk management
  19. Identify risks
  20. Perform qualitative risk analysis
  21. Perform quantitative risk analysis
  22. Plan risk responses
  23. Plan procurement management
  24. Plan stakeholder engagement

- Executing process group: all activities to complete the work defined in plans to meet all objectives. It has 10 processes:
  1. Direct and manage project work
  2. Manage project knowledge
  3. Manage quality
  4. Acquire resource
PRINCE2 (2009) defines project management as seven principles and seven themes in seven processes as follows:

- Starting up a project: all activities to ensure that resource requirements are understood and committed.
- Directing a project: all activities to define the responsibilities of the project board and to provide a way of authorizing the project with a project manager.
- Initiating a project: all activities to establish solid grounds for the project and to enable an organization to understand the work needed.
- Controlling a stage: all activities to take corrective actions and to ensure every stage is still within tolerance.
- Managing product delivery: all activities to produce the deliverable products by following the standards established for the project.
- Managing a stage boundary: all activities to approve next stage plans by providing necessary information to the project board by the project manager.
- Closing a project: all activities to ensure all elements of the project closure phase have been done.

To use the PRINCE2 method, all seven principles must be followed. PRINCE2 is constructed on the following seven principles:

1. Continued business justification
2. Learn from experience
3. Defined roles and responsibilities
4. Manage by stages
5. Manage by exception
6. Focus on products
7. Tailor to suit the project environment

According to the Office of Government Commerce-OGC (2009), PRINCE2 emphasizes the delivery of products rather than executing activities. This methodology is accredited by APM Group. The PRINCE2 certification is based on Managing Successful Projects with PRINCE2 as a textbook resource.

C. Why PMP Certification?

Over the last three decades in Saudi Arabia, the value of project management certification has increased significantly, and then, certified project managers are in high demand by organizations in almost all industry sectors such as industrial, commercial, education and technical. According to PMI (2018), 72% of PMO managers think that PM certification is very relevant for a project manager career. Here are six important factors of why project management certification can enhance a project manager career:

- Getting a common language in project management.
- Having unique internationally recognized project management qualifications.
- Meeting employer demand for project managers.
• Formalizing project management professional knowledge and experience.
• Validating project management skills.
• Increasing earning potential as project managers.

D. PMBOK vs PRINCE2

First of all, PMBOK and PRINCE2 are not opponents; they are well-matched and complementary. According to Wideman (2002), PMBOK and PRINCE2 have different purposes. PRINCE2 processes are consistent with PMBOK; however, PRINCE2 does not cover all the knowledge areas specified in the PMBOK Guide. PRINCE2 is a method while PMBOK is a standard or guide. However, there are differences between PMBOK and PRINCE2.

PRINCE2 uses the term ‘Stage’, while it is entitled ‘Phase’ in the PMBOK Guide. Regarding the internal quality review of processes, the term ‘Project Assurance’ is used in PRINCE2, whereas ‘Quality Assurance’ is employed in the PMBOK Guide. In terms of scope, PRINCE2 uses the term product breakdown structure (PBS), while it is called work breakdown structure (WBS) in the PMBOK Guide. Wideman (2002) mentioned the differences between PMBOK and PRINCE2 according to:

- Management levels and responsibilities
- Authority documentation
- Special project management roles
- Document description outlines
- Planning and scheduling

Furthermore, Matos and Lopes (2013) cited the differences between PMBOK and PRINCE2 according to:

- Definition of project
- Commonalities between both methodologies
- Characterization of both methodologies
- Process vs. product orientation
- Project manager
- Processes in both methodologies

E. PMP and PRINCE2 Exams

There is a set of prerequisites required before attending a training course or taking the PMP exam as follows:

- Secondary degree OR a four-year degree.
- 7,500 hours leading and directing projects OR 4,500 hours leading and directing projects.
- 35 hours of project management education.

The PMP exam consists of 200 multiple choice questions that test knowledge in the five groups of project management processes as follows in Table 1.

Regarding time, the duration of the PMP exam is 4 hours. The cost of the PMP exam is $555 for a non-PMI member while it is $405 for a PMI member. Although the PMI does not disclose its marks today, 61% is the last published passing score for the PMP exam in 2013.

![Table 1: PMP Questions Ratio](image)

The PRINCE2 qualification structure has two key exam levels, Foundation and Practitioner. The PRINCE2 Foundation exam does not state prerequisites; however, it recommends experience in project management. Passing the PRINCE2 Foundation exam is a prerequisite to the Practitioner exam.

The PRINCE2 Foundation exam consists of 75 multiple choice questions for one hour (5 questions will be not marked). The PRINCE2 Practitioner exam consists of 68 multiple choice questions for 2.5 hours. The passing score for the PRINCE2 Foundation exam is at least 33 marks out of 60 while for the PRINCE2 Practitioner exam it is at least 38 marks out of 68. The cost of the two PRINCE2 qualifications varies according to the Accredited Training Organization (ATO).

F. Dominance of PMP in Saudi Arabia

Regarding different industrial sectors, the importance of PMP has shown in the literature review and the empirical research. Human resources are a real asset and organizations improve the project team value through PMP training. Thus, this certification can increase work proficiency. To minimize failure of a project, organizations prefer PMP-certified professionals in Saudi Arabia. Although receiving a PMP certification is expensive and time-consuming, it has considerable value in Saudi’s competitive job market. According to Alfaadel et al. (2014), a survey has provided an overview of success and failure of IT projects in Saudi Arabia. The previous study shows that only 18% of respondents are PMP certified while 82% of respondents are not PMP certified.

PMP is dominant and more popular than PRINCE2 in the Middle East countries such as Saudi Arabia due to the following reasons:

- Most organizations are focusing on the impact of organizational climate on the PMBOK Guide as a common language.
- Most organizations are hiring project managers who are looking for PMP certification rather than PRINCE2.
- PMI has a nationwide network including a PMI Saudi Arabia chapter to share knowledge and volunteer opportunities.
- PMI has achieved ISO/IEC 17024 recognition for training programs of PMP certification.
- Project managers with a PMP qualification earn 15–20% more on average than those without the certification. According to PMI’s Salary Survey 10th edition (2017), the median salary decreases from SAR 262,000 per year for a project manager who has a PMP certification to SAR 216,000 per year for a project manager who does not have a
PMP certification.
- As a stereotype in typical Saudi organizations, PMP is useful for almost all types of projects while PRINCE2 is useful for the IT industry.
- The Saudi education system is similar to the American system of higher education.

III. CONCLUSION

According to the literature, the certifications of PMP and PRINCE2 are still worth it to modern professionals in the project management field because they are well-known over the market. This paper aimed to identify why the marketplace is demanding PMP rather than PRINCE2 in Saudi Arabia.

Although PMP certification is difficult, time-consuming and expensive, it is still valuable for project managers and project practitioners. It adds credibility and validity to its professional holders. Thus, PMP is the most common certification for both the employees and employers.

To the researcher’s knowledge, no previous study has been carried out on understanding the dominance of PMP in project management in Saudi Arabia. By providing a comprehensive view of the dominance of PMP, one theoretical contribution of this paper is to enrich the certification of PMP literature.

REFERENCES


Umar Altahtooh is an associate professor at Taibah University, Madinah, Saudi Arabia. He holds a PhD in Project Management from The University of Manchester, as well as an MBA degree from Missouri State University. His Bachelor's Degree is in Management Information Systems from King Fahd University of Petroleum and Mineral. Altahtooh holds PMP® certification from PMI and his research interest and expertise are in the area of Project Management, PMO, Risk Management, and Time Error in Project Management.