

IPMA Education and Training Series¹

International Project Management Conferences in Iran, 2005 – 2014: An Analytical Overview

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1. Introduction

Conferences and seminars provide a place for communication and exchange of findings and ideas between relevant stakeholders including scientists, academics and experts. They provide a platform for constructive dialogue on recent trends and innovative approaches among policy-makers, academic community, representatives of the private sector and potential donors.

The aim of this paper is to provide an analytical overview of ten years of International Project Management Conferences in Tehran (IPMC - www.iipmc.com, 2005-2014), which were organized by Areyana Industrial and Research group in association with the Iran Project Management Association (Iran PMA).

These annual conferences take place in Tehran with the participation of about 1500 interested individuals in project management from academic institutions, scientists, consultancy firms, research and professional associations, and contracting firms.

This paper attempts to answer three main questions:

- 1) By how much has the conference been successful in raising the real problems & issues of the projects?
- 2) What percentage of the conference's papers addressed new subjects in project management?
- 3) How many different industrial sectors have been covered by the conference?

By addressing these questions, it will be possible to evaluate the effectiveness of the conferences. Moreover, possible improvement approaches can be identified and proposed. Such findings could ultimately help the organizers of worldwide conferences and congresses such as the International Project Management Association (IPMA).

2. Research methodology

In order to conduct explorative analysis on the presented papers and materials in the conferences, a subjective classification and clustering on the material of the papers has been implemented, using factor analysis approach.

¹ This series of articles is by members of the IPMA Education and Training (E&T) Board or other IPMA leaders on the subject of project management education, training, careers and related topics. More information about the IPMA E&T can be found at <http://ipma.ch/education>.

In the first instance, the terms/phrases which were used in the key words and titles of papers were identified, extracted and categorized.

From the circa 700 extracted key words, the main subjects of the papers were classified into four groups:

- project start-up phase decisions,
- contract strategy,
- project management tools and techniques,
- HRM & organizational subjects

3. Findings

According to the IPMC (www.iipmc.com), during the last decade an average of 300 papers have been submitted for peer review annually with an average 10 per cent of the papers being accepted for oral presentation.

Furthermore, some 15 training workshops and 9 professional panels have taken place annually.

Considering the subjective classification of the papers, 15% of the terms/ phrase are classified as the Project Start-Up Phase Decisions subjects. These include subjects related to the project finance, portfolio management, strategic decision and feasibility study (Table-1).

From the author's point of view, due to the importance of the project start-up phase, decisions and its role on the project success, particularly in the developing countries, requires more concentration on these subjects. However, this matter has shown some increase during recent years.

The second cluster of the subjects refers to the contract strategy, which includes subjects like project delivery systems and D/B or EPC type contracts, which cover 12% of the issued papers. The data indicates that during recent years, the trend of the number of the papers towards such subjects has highly increased. However, it has not been at the level of its importance.

The third classification of the extracted terminology is in relation with project management–tools & techniques, including subjects like modelling approaches for project management, risk management, and time/cost and quality management techniques. This part covers 53% of the extracted terms and materials.

System approach, as a main attribute of advanced project management system, is most attractive for students and academic staff. For these reasons in 20% of the papers these key words are illustrated.

The fourth group of the papers are classified as the organizational and human resources aspects of projects. According to the gathered data, 20% of the papers are categorized in this group. In addition to the above classification, advanced subjects such as sustainability and Building Information Modelling (BIM) cover a minor part of the topics.

Table 1. Extracted Kew Words and Terminology - Presented Papers IPMC (2005-2014)
 (www.iipmc.com)

1. Project Start up Phase Decisions' Subjects – 80 papers =15%			
Subjects	No	Subjects	No
PPP /Project Finance / BOT & Partnership	31	Strategic Management in Projects	12
Portfolio Management	28	Feasibility Study	9
2. Contract Strategy ' Subjects - 65 papers = %12			
Contract Management	35	Project Delivery System	10
Design / Built - EPC Contract	20		
3. Project Management – Tools & Techniques' Subjects – 287 papers =53%			
Decision making Models	111	Changes / Delays	26
Risk Management	90	EVM	16
Time- Cost-Quality Management	40	Communication Management - PMIS	10
4. HRM - Organizational' Subjects - 109 papers =20%			
Resource Management	27	Knowledge Management	16
HRM + Team Work	25	PMO	12
Organizational Maturity Models	20	Performance Evaluation	9
Classification of Paper Based on Industrial Sectors - Total papers =151			
R & D / IT Projects / Engineering & Design Projects	36	Infrastructure Projects	15
Oil & Gas	29	Urban Projects	15
Power plant / Dam	23	High Way+ Transportation Projects	11
Buildings	22		

The presented papers have also been classified by the associated industrial sector. This includes a variety of businesses such as IT/R&D/Oil & Gas/ Power Plant/ Infrastructure and Building Industry. As a developing country with many infrastructure projects in a variety of disciplines, it is very important for such conferences to cover these types of projects.

4. Conclusion

In terms of the performance of the conferences in raising the projects' critical problems /issues, it seems that, in the early years, more conceptual subjects on the project management were introduced.

However, in the last five years more problem-oriented subjects like project finance, contract strategy, partnership, PPP, BOT have been presented.

With regard to the aim of the conference to introduce new concepts, trend analysis of the submitted and presented papers shows that, in the early years of the conference, most of the subjects have focused on the project management tools and techniques while in recent years the number of new subjects like Building Information Modelling (BIM), Sustainability, Lean Construction and Ethics in project management have been increased.

According to the author's experiences, despite the advantages of introducing new methods, more attention towards strategic subjects such as project delivery systems, project finance and so on seems to be necessary.

About the Author



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Ahad is also a member of Iran PMA Board of directors. He is the author and translator of 5 books and more than 70 papers on the project management, risk management and value engineering subjects. In addition to the academic activities, he has more than 15 years of experience in the different industrial sectors such as oil and gas, energy and road and transportation.

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