Chapter 1: Orientation

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1.1 BACKGROUND

Project management can be defined broadly as:

“… the application of knowledge, skills, tools and techniques to a broad range of activities in order to meet the requirements of a particular project. Project management is based on of five processes – initiating, planning, executing, controlling and closing – as well as nine knowledge areas. These nine areas centre on management expertise in project integration, project scope, project time, project cost, project quality, project human resources, project communications, project risk management and project procurement …” (PMBOK 2000:6).

Most organisations do not have the proper systematic programmes for selecting and training project managers in their organisations who perform more work based on project management principles. Many project managers who do not have the skills and the competency to manage projects have to learn the hard way and in the process organisations lose huge sums of money, as well as market opportunities, due to delays resulting in penalties. Surprisingly enough, these organisations repeat the mistakes of appointing incompetent project managers again and again.

This research identifies the project management as a profession and discusses how projects and project managers are used in business success,
the challenges faced by project managers as well as the consequences of appointing an accidental project manager.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM DEFINITION

Project management is often referred to as an “accidental” profession. Organisations in the new era wishing to accomplish their strategic goals and objectives must complete their projects successfully with limited resources, within a specified time frame and with the desired quality, within budget and to the satisfaction of the customer. Professional project management and the professional project manager play an important role in achieving organisational project goals.

Understanding and applying good project management techniques, along with a solid understanding of general management skills, are career builders for all aspiring project managers (Heldman 2002:8).

The problem that this study investigates is that project management is regarded as an accidental profession. This problem can be broken down into the following manifestations:

1.2.1 Problem 1: Project management is sometime referred to as an accidental profession

Projects and project management are the wave of the future in today’s competitive global marketplace. Customers demand more and better products
and faster service delivery. As a result, organisations need individuals and teams with solid project management knowledge and skills to meet the demands of customers.

**1.2.2 Problem 2: The role of projects and project managers in business success are not understood**

Increasingly organisations are project-based, meaning that the work they do is split into programmes of related projects designed to achieve the organisation's strategy and add value. Good management of these projects is essential if the organisation want to succeed.

**1.2.3 Problem 3: The challenges for project managers are less known**

The temporary nature of the project poses some challenges to project managers in successfully managing the projects. The challenges project managers face and some ways to deal with them must be investigated.

**1.2.4 Problem 4: The appointment of an accidental project manager lead to project failure**

The selection of the project manager is one of the most important decisions of the project. Project managers need certain skills and qualities to be effective in managing projects. These skills and qualities need to be investigated.
1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study will have as its main objective the investigation of project management as a profession and the project manager as a professional person. This covers issues such as the investigation of the role of projects and project managers in business success, the identification of the challenges faced by project managers and the investigation of the consequences of appointing an accidental project manager as a sure path to project failure.

1.3.1 Objective 1: To investigate project management as a profession

In order to understand the benefit of utilising project management in accomplishing organisational goals, it is necessary to understand the important role that professional project management plays in business success. Chapter 2 provides a report on a study of current literature on the project management approach, project management as a profession and the project manager as a professional person.

1.3.2 Objective 2: To investigate the role of projects and project managers in business success

A literature study on project management was conducted to establish the role of projects and project managers in business success. Chapter 3 contains the results of the literature study.
1.3.3 **Objective 3: To identify the challenges for project managers**

A study was done on current literature to determine the challenges that project managers should expect during the life cycle of the project. Chapter 4 reports on this study and includes the integration of projects and strategy by project portfolio management.

1.3.4 **Objective 4: To investigate the consequences of appointing an accidental project manager**

The selection of a project manager is one of the most important elements in project success. As a result it is important to understand the selection criteria for project managers. A study was done to determine the nature and consequences of appointing an accidental project manager. Chapter 5 reports on this study and supplies a number of guidelines to achieve project management professionalism.

Although project management is quite a complex subject on its own, the focus of the study will be on the project management and project manager’s professionalism.

The conclusions of the study are presented in Chapter 6.

**1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In order to answer the research problems and to achieve the stated research objectives of this short dissertation, the following methodology was followed.
An extended literature study was undertaken on each of the stated objectives. The literature study serves to document current viewpoints and principles on the stated research subjects.

From the literature study the benefits are determined of utilising professional project management principles in accomplishing business goals and the factors are determined that are associated with the selection of an accidental project manager as the cause of project failure.

1.5 CLOSURE

Project management is an important and powerful tool to deal with the ever increasing technically complex products and services in today’s global business. But the pool of professional project managers does not always meet the expanded use of project management techniques. The study indicates the project managers as a pillar in project success and some challenges to be considered by the project managers in business success were discussed.

The appointment of an accidental project manager is one of the causes of project failure. The study provides correct selection criteria for appointing project managers and guidelines for project management professionalism. The study shows that professional project management provide immeasurable benefit to organisations utilising it.

The following chapter focuses on the project management approach, project management as a profession and the project manager as a professional person.