Transformational Leadership Laboratory: The Project's Success Factors

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Abstract

This study investigated success factors of transformational projects managed by Indonesian public leadership education and training participants. Previous reports on project success factors mostly were of project management natures and paid very little attention to the process of educating and training of prospective public project managers. All of participants were alumni of public leadership programs in Indonesia, who involved voluntarily in the current qualitative study. An open-ended questionnaire was set up for one on one interviews in gathering data, and the NVivo 10 was used both in managing and analyzing them. The iterative inductions of this research revealed that project's innovation, team performances, risk management, resources controlling, and schedule monitoring were the top five success factors in managing public transformational projects in education and training settings.

Key words: Leadership Education and Training, Transformational Projects, Project Success Factors

Introduction

Since 2015, the administrative regulatory body of the Indonesian public servants has mandated to include transformational projects in the curriculum of public leadership education and training courses. The inclusion of mandatory transformational projects serves at least two objectives. The first one is as a mean to boost Indonesian bureaucracy performances, and the second is as a leadership laboratory for the courses' takers (Suprapti, 2015). It is believed that this policy has impacted positively in serving these intentions. Within three years, hundreds of successful and exemplary transformational projects have been presented in various public exposes, exhibitions, and seminars, which suggested that these projects were suspected by a number of government's publicities as one of many contributing factors to the increasing satisfactory portion in recent satisfaction surveys on government administration across Indonesia (Muslihin, 2016; Sumanti, Sinurat, Syahputra, Afrian, & Febrianto, 2017).

However, very little attentions were paid to the factors that exist and may help the participants of leadership courses in managing their successful transformational projects. Relevant literatures suggested that a number of factors were found in various successful projects. Most of them reported that the success factors existed in construction, IT, humanitarian, and other sectors. Whereas, those which were in the field of education and training of project managers, especially in public sector can be found rarely. Therefore, this study aimed to fill this narrow gap by investigating inductively the success factors of managing public transformational projects in education and training environment.

Project's Success Factors

Kerzner (2001) put forward that project's cost, time, and quality are the golden criteria in determining project's outputs and outcomes. A successful project should be completed within the proposed quality, agreed time and also approved budget. It is advocated that in most of successful projects, regardless their natures, there were a set of factors that contribute directly to their management efforts in resulting targeted outputs and outcomes. In the field of project management, these factors are widely known as project's success factors (Cooke-Davies, 2002).

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A number of researchers believed that various resources should be available timely for a successful project. Experts, project's professionals, skillful technicians, and laborers are some of essential human resources that should exist to design, plan, manage other resources, which fall into finance, facilities, and equipment categories (Isik, Arditi, Dikmen, & Birgonul, 2010; Plant & Willcocks, 2007). In addition, among these human capitals were expected to have clarity in communication, shared roles and responsibilities, and also high level of commitment in order to reach targeted project's outputs and outcomes (Adnan, Bachik, Supardi & Marhani, 2012; Aristo, 2017).

Beside availability of resources and effective project's team, comprehensive planning and risk assessment were also reported as the project's success factors. A detailed project planning, which encompassed by clear goals will result in clarity of project' scope, expected results, and activities in the endeavor to achieve project success (Buddas, 2014; Ika, Diallo & Thuillier, 2012). When the project's development would not progress according to the plan, then sufficient risks' identifications, mitigations, and contingency plans will serve their roles to secure the project success (Hyvari, 2006; Munang & Faisal, 2016). Management of project's time, quality, cost, resources, planning, and risks were the project's success factors reported in general scopes. While, project's success factors that specific to public transformational projects in an educational environment can be found very rarely.

Purpose of Study

The afore mentioned project's success factors were captured from various industries such as construction, infrastructure, health care, humanitarian, and IT. It remained unidentified whether these factors were also existed in public transformational projects. This study aims to investigate the manifestations of success factors involved in the mandatory Indonesian public transformational projects that were managed by leadership education and training participants.

Method

Design of the Study

Detailed data regarding the existences of project's critical success factors in a unique educational setting were explored appropriately by using qualitative research method, which could preserve its adjacent information richness. An open-ended questionnaire was prepared beforehand as a guideline for one on one interviews. This questionnaire enabled the researcher to seek clarifications from research participants and allowed the research participants to extend their responses. This type of qualitative tool was suggested by Gillham (2000), Arthur and Nazroo (2003), and Seidman (2006) in generating in-depth information.

Participant of the Study

In this study, the participants were stakeholders of public transformational projects that were deemed to be successful in recent public seminars, exposes, or exhibitions. The interviews were started with their project leaders, who were participants of public leadership education and training courses. The next interviewees were recruited based on the recommendations from projects' leaders, who were the immediate stakeholders of related transformational projects. This strategy of participants' recruitment is widely known as discriminative snow-ball sampling. This sampling method is categorized as an exponential non-probabilistic approach, where the preceding interview participant was asked to introduce the researcher to the best prospective interviewee as the succeeding participant, and so on (Robson, 2011; Yin, 2011). In addition, stratification of the participants was also applied in order to capture various sub-groups of the interviewees that facilitated analytical comparisons (Creswell, 2002). These sampling and data collection methods enabled this study to isolate the recruited interviewees only to those who were the immediate stakeholders of the targeted successful projects.

Data Collection and Analysis

At the end of the data gathering, 17 projects' stakeholders were consented voluntarily in this study. The interviews and data analyzes were concluded when the last 5 interviews with the recommended new

interviewees were resulted in almost no new information regarding the projects' success factors and their emerged patterns. The researcher believed that at this stage, the point of saturation was reached as suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1985) in Dooley (2002) and Eisenhardt (1989), that collection of some more data were insignificantly increase the information, and were not affect significantly the regularity that has emerged.

The interviews began with asking general ideas regarding what factors that may involve in the leadership education and training participants' successful projects, then pursued their confirmations by asking specifically in what ways these factors were manifested in their projects to the same group of participants, and then their statements were cross-confirmed to other related projects' stakeholders. In these manners, the reliability and validity of this study were maintained, as suggested by Robson (2011). The processes of organizing and mapping of data were done repeatedly following interviews and preceding the next sessions by codding them regularly as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1984), before promoting the transformational projects' success factors in this study. In total, there were 38 interview sessions that generated relatively complex data. The QSR NVivo 10 was used in organizing and analyzing them. In this study, for clearer final patterns, the themes or categories were each supported by at least 3 sub-categories, and each of these were supported by at least 4 references.

Result

All of the participants of this study were stakeholders of 4 exemplary public transformational projects. They were projects' leaders, owners, team members, and end-users, who gave their consents and interviewed one at a time at least twice. The first interviewee in each project was the projects' leader, who then recommended other stakeholders to be the next prospectus participants in this study. However, at the early stage of the interview, only projects' leaders, team members, and owners that understood completely what was being asked for. Whereas, the end-users of the projects were mostly need explanations on the terms of project's success factors. Two transformational projects were related to IT and development of user-friendly public service applications (P2 and P4), one project was a public health-care infrastructure development (P1), and another was in public organization reform (P3). The research participants, their qualifications, roles, and recruitments were reported in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Participants

Project Codes	Projects' Areas		Key Roles and Qualifications	Recommended by/ recruited at:
P1	Public health-care infrastructure	P1L	Project *team leader*: civil engineer;	Public seminar
		P1O	Project *owner*: medical doctor; head of bureau;	P1L
		P1T	Project *team member*: civil engineer; utility designer;	P1T' office
		P1U	Project *end-user*: nursing degree; nurse;	P1T
P2	Building automation application	P2L	Project *team leader*: electrical engineer;	Public exhibition
		P2O	Project *owner*: law enforcer; head of department;	P2L
		P2T	Project *team member*: IT engineer;	P2L
		P2U	Project *end-user*: law enforcer; staff ;	P2O
P3	Organizational reform	P3L	Project *team leader*: postgraduate in public admin.;	Public exhibition
		P3O	Project *owner*: postgraduate in sociology; head of bureau	P3L
		P3T	Project *team member*: Law Legal Master; staff;	P3L
		P3U	Project *end-user*: staff;	P3U'office
P4	Public registry services' user friendly application	P4L	Project *team leader*: postgraduate in communication;	Public seminar
		P4O	Project *owner*: head of public relation;	P4L
		P4T	Project *team member*: IT engineer;	P4L
		P4Ta	Project *team member*: IT specialist;	P4L
		P4U	Project *end-user*: house-wife;	P4' booth

The iterative induction processes of gathered data had undergone coding-recoding, and reducing inaudible data before establishing patterns that has resulted in 5 major themes namely project's innovation, team performances, risk management, resources controlling, and schedule monitoring. All of the afore mentioned themes were emerged gradually approximately during the second-half of the interview stage, and continued to flourished until this report was written. Thus, the afore mentioned themes are the success factors of transformational projects in the Indonesian leadership education and training courses setting.

Project's Innovation

As can be seen from Table 2, the greatest portion of transcribed interviews was on project's innovation. This theme emerged and supported by 8 sub-categories, which were clearly stated by 14 interview participants. They asserted that innovations were the key success in their transformational projects. Both end-users of the IT projects explained that the developed applications were "*user friendly*" and stated that the projects enabled them to access public services they needed from home, so that they can "*save (their) money*". This major theme was also confirmed by project's team members, who stated repeatedly that the developed "*new system*" and "*new idea*" in their projects were "*creative solutions*" and "*cost-effective*" especially for the end-users. On his reply P4T said that: "*We offer solution for the commoners, the idea was new in the field and this new system was not only cheap (or) affordable, but also cost-effective for them*". However, interestingly the several owners and leaders of the IT projects stated that although their projects were innovative, the developed applications were merely, as suggested by P2O as "*adoptions of new method of providing basic public services*". While in the health-care infrastructure and organization reform projects, innovation was the major node that emerged convincingly only later in the confirmatory interviews. A number of participants emphasized that their endeavors served as "*new models*" to the succeeded similar projects and were deemed innovative, as stated by P3L: "*I am happy to participate in this innovation exhibition, my innovation is copied by some, and now (there) will be more following and adopting it, this is a new model of managing changes in public service*".

Table 1. Emerged Theme: Project's innovation

	Category & Sub-categories	References	Sources	Participants
⬕	project's innovation	53	14	P1L, P1T, P1U, P2L, P2O, P2T, P3L, P3O, P3T, P4L, P4O, P4T, P4U, P4Ta
⬕	new idea	41	11	P1L, P1O, P1T, P1U, P2L, P2O, P2T, P2U, P3L, P3O, P3T, P4L, P4T, P4U
⬕	new way	38	11	P1L, P1O, P1T, P2L, P2O, P2T, P2U, P3L, P3O, P3T, P4L, P4O, P4T, P4Ta
⬕	new model	33	9	P1L, P1O, P1T, P2T, P2U, P3L, P3U, P4U, P4Ta
⬕	new system	31	8	P1L, P1O, P1T, P2T, P2U, P3L, P3U, P4U
⬕	cost-effectiveness	22	8	P2L, P2O, P1T, P2T, P2U, P3U, P4U, P4Ta
⬕	adoption of new methods	21	7	P1L, P1O, P1T, P2O, P2U, P3U, P4O
⬕	creative solutions	14	7	P1L, P1O, P1T, P2T, P2U, P3T, P4T
⬕	user friendly	11	6	P1U, P2T, P2U, P3U, P4T, P4U

Project's Team Performances

Team performances was unrecognizable by almost all of projects' end-users. Nevertheless, all of projects' internal stakeholders highlighted the "*team performances*" when being asked about the contributing factors of their successful projects. Then, in the confirmatory stages they reinforced this major node, and emphasized the existence of 5 other sub-categories, which were "*collaboration, coordination, communication, team work* and *team effectiveness*".

Table 2. Emerged Theme: Project's team effectiveness

	Category & Sub-categories	References	Sources	Participants
⊕	project's team performances	42	11	P1T, P2L, P2O, P2T, P3L, P3O, P3T, P4L, P4O, P4T, P4Ta
⊕	collaboration	33	11	P1L, P1O, P1T, P2L, P2O, P2T, P3L, P3O, P3T, P4L, P4T
⊕	coordination	30	10	P1L, P1O, P1T, P2L, P2T, P3L, P3T, P4L, P4O, P4T
⊕	communication	16	6	P1L, P1O, P1T, P2T, P3L, P4L
⊕	teamwork	21	7	P1L, P1O, P2L, P2T, P3L, P3U, P4L
⊕	team effectiveness	8	3	P1L, P2T, P4Ta

Project's Risk Management

Similar to the project's team performance, the end-users of most projects were not familiar with current theme, but P2U, an end-user of the IT project was the only who described "*risk mitigation*" as "*assuming or accepting the unwanted to happen*". While P1O, the project's owner of health-care infrastructure offered an interesting way in managing risks. He said: "*I encouraged my team to ask stupid questions. Many bad things could happen to our project, and I want them to list the unthinkable. This way, they can register the risks, make a complete assessment and mitigation, then get prepared for bad things and develop some contingency plans*". When P1O's opinion was cross-checked with other participants, they perceived similarly and confirmed that proper risk management is one of important contributors to their projects' success, as stated by one of them, P2T: "*first we register all possible risks, then we assess them all, we need to mitigate before we can construct some contingencies, these are how we manage the risk*".

Table 3. Emerged Theme: Project's risk management

	Category & Sub-categories	References	Sources	Participants
◍	project's risk management	39	10	P1O, P2L, P2O, P2T, P3L, P3O, P3T, P4L, P4O, P4T
◍	risk mitigation	34	11	P1L, P1T, P2L, P2O, P2T, P3L, P3O, P3T, P4L, P4T, P2U
◍	contingency plans	21	11	P1L, P1O, P1T, P2L, P2T, P3L, P3O, P3T, P4L, P4O, P4Ta
◍	risk assessment	14	4	P1L, P1T, P2T, P4Ta
◍	risk register	7	2	P1T, P2T

Project's Resources Controlling

Most of Participants suggested that projects' resources were the direct inputs to their transformational projects. Controlling the availability of resources were the most challenging task for projects' leaders and team members. All of projects' leaders and team members of IT projects and health-care infrastructures complained about their suppliers, who were mostly late in delivering the needed materials and equipment as stated by P1L: "*I had difficulties when controlling my suppliers, they promised me to come with agreed materials within agreed due dates, and none of them had made it, especially the heavy equipment supplier, he breached the contract*". Projects' team members of the IT projects were not only disappointed about the postponed arrivals of the server components, but also frustrated by the quality of the delivered materials. On this issue, P4T stated: "*the components came so late, the quality was bad, we have to choose this supplier because of our (project's) financial constraint, we cannot control such imported things like these*". Interestingly, most of interviewees did not mention human resources related terms when talked about project team effectiveness, they believed that "*clear responsibilities*" and "*clear roles*" were parts of "*project controlling*".

Table 4. Emerged Theme: Project's resources controlling

	Category & Sub-categories	References	Sources	Participants
⊕	project's controlling	32	10	P1L, P1T, P2L, P2O, P2T, P3O, P3T, P4O, P4T, P4Ta
⊕	materials supply	27	6	P1L, P1T, P2L, P2T, P4L, P4T
⊕	clear responsibilities	20	7	P1T, P2L, P2O, P2T, P3L, P3T, P4T
⊕	finance	18	5	P1L, P1O, P2T, P3L, P4Ta
⊕	equipment	17	6	P1L, P1O, P1T, P2T, P2O, P3L,
⊕	clear roles	14	7	P2L, P2O, P1T, P2L, P2T, P3L, P4T

Project's Schedule Monitoring

Similar to the previous theme, the projects' end-users were unfamiliar with the concept of project's schedule monitoring, and none of them mentioned this theme. None of the investigated transformational projects were completed early, 3 of them were on the schedule and the health care infrastructure project was finished a little late. Both the leader and team member of the latter project confessed that they failed to recognize the importance to calculate "*leads and lags*" and also slightly unconcerned about the "*sequence of activities*" of

their project. In confirmatory interview, P1L professed: "*I wanted to deliver my project as soon as possible, I should aware that it was impossible, some project's activities were crucial and I jumbled them, I missed to add some periods for leads and lags as well*". Almost all of project leaders used the "*milestones*" to monitor their projects' progress, as stated by P1L: "*We set some activities, the majors, were set as our milestones. They are the markers, check points in my project. We were monitoring the schedule by using them, they were trackable easily*". While, the projects' team members of the IT developments assured that the low-grade quality of some supplied materials was almost creating serious lateness, as described by P2T: "*We rejected some server components, these cheap imported materials were unacceptable. This delayed our progress a bit, but we had to accept other sub-standard components since they were still compatible with our server architecture, we thought that we need to minimize variances, it's an important part to keep staying within schedule*".

Table 5. Emerged Theme: Project's schedule monitoring

	Category & Sub-categories	References	Sources	Participants
⊗	project's schedule monitoring	21	5	P1L, P1T, P2L, P3T, P4Ta
⊗	milestones	16	5	P1L, P2L, P2T, P3L, P3T
⊗	sequence of activities	10	5	P1L, P2T, P2T, P3T, P4T
⊗	minimize variances	7	3	P1L, P2T, P3T
⊗	leads and lags	4	2	P1L, P1T

Discussion and Conclusion

The iterative inductions of the current study found 5 themes that were supported by 26 sub-categories. These themes were the top 5 critical success factors of public transformational projects in leadership educational environment, which were projects' innovation, team performance, risk management, resources controlling, and schedule monitoring. Most of the findings of the current study were also found in previous reports with regard to project's success factors. The emerged theme of risk management and its components were similar to those of reported by Hyvari (2006), and also Munang and Faisal (2016) that risk management was an extremely important aspect to be managed properly in each stages of the projects. Other finding similarities can also be observed on the project's success factor regarding resource controlling as reported by Isik et al. (2010), and Plant and Willcocks (2007), which stated that the avalability of needed resources was vital for projects' success. Several partial differences were noticed between the findings of this study and previous researches on the success factor of team effectiveness. On this factor, Adnan et al. (2012) and Aristo (2017) reported that commitment of project's team members was one of project's success factors, which none can be found in the current study, especially under the theme of project's team performances. This shows a limitation of this study, since recruiting interviewees was extremely difficult, therefore in each projects, a specific role was only represented by one consented participant. When comparing the theme of project's schedule monitoring, this study emerged a number of specific sub-themes, which were milestones, sequences of activities, variance, and also leads and lugs, rather than the general terms that were mentioned previously by Buddas (2014) and Ika et al. (2012) such as clear goals, clarity of project' scope, expected results, and activities.

However, one of the main findings and the educational setting of this study were the differentiations of the current study. Innovation, the main emerged theme of this qualitative research, was very rare can be found in the project management related literatures. In this study, among the top 5 projects' critical success factors discovered, innovation was supported by 8 sub-categories or sub-themes that was way-surpassed the others. This main finding was not mentioned in the previously reviewed literatures such as by Adnan et al. (2012), Cooke-Davies (2002), and also by Plant and Willcocks (2007). In addition, few research reports were discussed different kinds of innovation, which were project' procurement innovation (Barahona & Elizondo, 2012; Lu et al., 2013), evaluation of construction innovation (Murphy et al., 2011), and contractor selection innovation (Holt, 2010). The public leadership education and training environment that used transformation projects as its leadership laboratory was also a unique setting to this study compared to previous studies by Khoo (2017) on knowledge transformation in transdisciplinary leadership, Ashleigh et al., (2012) on project management blended education learning themes, and ElSafty et al. (2012) on education of construction health and safety.

This study aimed to investigate inductively the success factors existed in the mandatory Indonesian public transformational projects in the public leadership education and training environment. Five themes have emerged as the results of iterative textual analyzes that involved internal and external projects' stakeholders, which were innovation, team performance, risk management, control of resources, and schedule monitoring. The interviewed external stakeholders i.e. end-users, were mostly unfamiliar with the concept of project's success factors that reduced the speed of the fieldwork research in order to explain the concept to them at the

beginning of the interviews, since most of them had neither educated nor involved in such projects'environments. Nevertheless, they confirmed and echoed that the project's innovation was the prominent success factor among others. The existences and important roles of innovation in the investigated exemplary projects were also sustained by projects' internal stakeholders. Innovation was the main finding of the current study, which is a project's success factor that unique to the setting of Indonesian public transformational projects in leadership education and training.

Recommendations

This study focused on discovering success factors in the mandatory public transformational projects that served as a method to assess Indonesian leadership education and training participants. The discovered factors were unique to the transformation public projects in leadership education and training environment, that were deemed to be the most successful among others from 2016 to 2018, and exhibited in public exposes and seminars. However, these unique settings put at least two limitations to the current study. The first limitation is regarding the research setting that was controlled in the area of leadership education, which was confronted by the very limited numbers of interviewees. The second limitation was related to the applied research method, that although it revealed 5 top success factors with in-depth and rich supporting information on their sub-categories, the results might not be generalized further. Therefore, the succeeding researches may choose to discover other projects' success factors that unique to some other similar education settings, such as project management or business management courses. Quantitative approaches may also suitable to survey and measure the existences and effects of the concluded factors to projects' success in different settings or wider boundaries.

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