Indonesian and Dutch perceptions of project management in a University transformation project

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Abstract

There is plenty of evidence that a global university transformation process, known as the corporatization of universities, is currently taking place. In this process known as project management (PM), aggregations of employees temporarily enacting on a common cause, has become an increasingly popular intervention instrument. National governments and funding agencies assume these PM methods to be culturally neutral and universally applicable. This paper explores how national and regional context influences perceptions of PM in the corporatization of four universities in Eastern Indonesia. The findings show that PM methods and techniques have been transferred but have also been translated in the Indonesian context of the four universities involved. Dutch and Indonesian project managers perceived project definition, competences, roles, start, focus, process and success differently. The implications of these findings to transformation processes in higher education (HE) are clear; it cannot be assumed that PM methods and techniques are culturally neutral and universal applicable. To collect data qualitative field research was executed in the period of January 2009 to March 2010.

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Introduction

Project management (PM) has increasingly become a preferred vehicle for national governments and funding agencies to manage changes in higher education (HE) (Folwer et al., 2012). PM has been promoted as a set of methods and techniques to direct and coordinate human and material resources in a project to achieve predetermined objectives of scope, cost, time, quality, and participant satisfaction (PMI Standards Committee, 1987). International agencies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), and the World Bank have used PM methods to manage the transformation of public universities worldwide (for example, Ibarra and Rondero, 2001; Scott, 1998). This transformation, known as the corporatization of universities, is a paradigmatic shift from independent research institutes to institutes of applied research (Berman, 1998; Parker, 2011; Shore and Wright, 2000; Slaughter and Leslie, 1997). In this corporatization process, the private sector philosophy of PM has been globally launched and implemented in both Western and non-Western universities to structure, guide and control academic activities (Folwer et al., 2012; Parker, 2011). In sum, one can speak of the 'projectification' of HE (Folwer et al., 2012).

In this process of projectification of HE PM becomes problematic as it assumes the position of a universal and politically neutral toolkit of methods and techniques appropriate for any type of activity in any sector, enabling the tight control of discontinuous work processes with particular potential for the control of expert labor (Hodgson, 2002: 804). Hodgson (2002) criticizes PM to be a top-down management instrument to control and discipline professionals. PM has also been criticized for its deterministic, instrumental perspective and for its focus on tools and prescription of practices (Packendorff, 1995). Most of the issued methods for planning and control are normative by nature assuming that good management of skills, tools and knowledge leads to good project results (Cicmil and Hodgson, 2006). Such a conception views projects to be situated in stable social environments in which work-related goals and activities are clear, political backing is stable, and internal conflicts do not exist. However, projects are subject to processes of social construction, in which participants construct a more or less stable working environment for themselves with greater or lesser cooperation between project partners (Van Marrewijk, 2005). In this article the authors challenge PM literature that proposes PM tools and techniques to be easily transferred from one context to the next as educational policies remain national policies *par excellence*, reflecting the specific circumstances, traditions, and cultures of individual countries (Currie and Newson, 1998; Lomnitz, 2000; Papadopoulos, 1994; Rees-Caldwell and Pinnington, 2013).

Following this introduction this article raises the question as to *how actors involved in the corporatization of higher education perceive project management in a cross-cultural setting*. To answer this question we studied the SIM4 (Strengthening Institutional Management at four universities in Eastern Indonesia) Project in Indonesia. The SIM4 Project has been selected for a number of reasons. Firstly, SIM4 was designed to empower university management in the process of corporatization. Secondly, this case reflects the tension between national control and the

gradual transition towards autonomous institutes. Finally, the case contains different national (Dutch and Indonesian) and regional cultures (Central and Eastern Indonesia) as the project is funded by the Dutch Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education (Dutch acronym: Nuffic) and its implementation is supported by the Centre for International Cooperation of the VU University Amsterdam (CIS-VU) and Universitas Indonesia, Jakarta (UI). The 4-year project started in April 2008, while data was collected in the period of January 2009 to March 2010. The implications of these findings for transformation processes in HE are clear; PM methods and techniques are not only transferred but also translated into a local HE context. The study has shown how a hybrid PM concept has been developed consisting of a global PM philosophy and local Indonesian management concepts and practices.

The article is structured as follows. Firstly, a theoretical framework will be developed to discuss concepts of globalization, corporatization and projectification in HE. Secondly, the methodological section discusses the ethnographic research methodology and the role of the researcher/informant in this case. Thirdly, the SIM4 case is introduced and the perceptions of both Indonesian and Dutch project participants of project definition, project competences, project roles, project start, project focus, process and project success are presented and discussed. Next, these findings are discussed in relation to the concepts of globalization, corporatization and project management. Finally, conclusions on the corporatization of HE are drawn.

Globalization, corporatization, and projectification of higher education

There is plenty of evidence that a global university transformation process is taking place (Ibarra and Rondero, 2001). Global institutions such as the World Bank, IMF, and OECD have had considerable influence in encouraging governments to move towards the globalization of HE (Currie and Newson, 1998; Lingard and Risvi, 1998; Scott, 1998). Although these institutions have different goals, the congruence of their policy positions on HE is noticeable (Lingard and Rizvi, 1998: 262). Currie and Newson (1998: 7) observe that the interactions among Vice Chancellors of the Common Wealth nations and among Ministers of Education in OECD countries have stimulated the rapid spreading of ideas on the university transformation from one continent to another. This globalization process is understood as the intensification of interconnections between organizations and institutions, accompanied by a tendency to standardize objectives and procedures in order to achieve generalized results (Currie and Newson, 1998; Lingard and Rizvi, 1998; Slaughter and Leslie, 1997).

In this globalization process institutions, such as the OECD, have urged national governments to change their policy on HE towards market liberalism, managerialism and corporatism (Lingard and Rizvi, 1998). This stimulated the corporatization of HE in which universal educational availability and opportunity, vocational employment oriented education, applied commercializable research and direct contribution to the growth of the national economy are demanded for (Parker, 2011: 448). With the corporatization new management ideologies of the 'entrepreneurial university' (Berman, 1998; Slaughter and Leslie, 1997), universities becoming part of state economic

growth (Parker, 2011). Management instruments such as auditing (Shore and Wright, 2000) and PM (Folwer et al., 2012) were introduced.

Especially, the managing of business through projects (Sharad, 1986) has become popular in the management of HE. PM methods and techniques have become the preferred vehicle of choice for controlling university activities (Folwer et al., 2012). The history and ideology of PM perfectly supports the process of corporatization in HE. Until the 1960s, PM mainly consisted of quantitative methods and an instrumental use of tools and was limited to the construction and aerospace industries (Stewart, 1965). Increasing market pressures and technological changes in the 1960s and 1970s forced companies to use PM as an innovative form of general management (Sharad, 1986). From the 1960s onwards, PM has penetrated into business organizations and has evolved from an engineering tool to a top-down management instrument to control and discipline professionals (Hodgson, 2002). Nowadays, PM is a dominant organizing principle and takes a wide operational role for overall management control (Lee-Kelley and Leong, 2003).

Global institutions in HE have introduced PM to execute their policies (e.g., UNESCO, 1998; World Bank report, 2000). These policies promote generalized interrelations that unify distinct and distant local organizational cultures, and such a process also causes a change in the daily life attitudes, actions, values and practices of local universities (Bunt-Kokhuis, 1992). It is now widely recognized that national cultures influence the success of (global) projects (Kendra and Taplin, 2004). Cultural differences are held responsible for the collapse of many projects and project-based alliances (Söderberg and Vaara, 2003; van Marrewijk, 2005). If partners are unable to cope with diverse management styles and cultures within the project, planning processes that can slow down and tensions are likely to emerge (Rees-Caldwell and Pinnington, 2013). According to Van Oudenhoven and Van der Zee (2002), similarities in national and corporate cultures are associated with successful cooperation, but dissimilarities are more critical to success. Zwikael et al. (2005) studied differences in PM styles between Japanese and Israeli cultures. Israeli project managers were more focused on a performing scope and temporal processes, while communication and cost management were frequently used by Japanese project managers. The researchers found that Japanese project managers used clear and measurable success indicators for each project, while the Israeli project objectives were very vague (Zwikael et al., 2005).

However, Jackson and Aycan (2006) made an appeal to cross-cultural researchers and managers to move away from cultural values research. These models, based upon bipolar dimensions, indicate the cultural 'distance' between nations (Morden, 1999). Cultural heterogeneity, local management concepts and cultural imperialism make cross-cultural management too complex to be explained by cultural value models (Jacob, 2005). People construct their social reality through their actions and, in turn, this social reality prescribes the behavior of the people. People always construct, deconstruct and reconstruct their reality from both old and new experiences. Through this process culture is reproduced. Strategic behavior of people can transform social reality because culture is constantly being reproduced.

Methodological reflections

Case introduction

This study explores the salient diverse cultural perceptions on PM of Dutch and Indonesian participants in the SIM4 Project. The four participating universities were Universitas Nusa Cendana, Timor (UNDANA), Universitas Cenderawasih, Papua (UNCEN), Universitas Pattimura, Ambon (UNPATTI) and Universitas Khairun, Molukus (UNKHAIR). These four public universities were supported by the SIM4 Project in their gradual transformation towards more autonomy. Each university has selected priority domains for further in-depth support coordinated and (in some cases) provided by the Centre for International Cooperation of the VU University Amsterdam (CIS-VU) and Universitas Indonesia (UI), Jakarta. These domains were Financial Management, Human Resource Management, Management Information Systems and Quality Assurance. The participating universities received assistance through various workshops, training sessions, side visits, investments etc. In addition, scholarships were provided for Masters Degrees and certificate courses.

Case study method

The topic of cultural perceptions calls for an in-depth research method sensitive to situation and context (Bate, 1997). Case study research is an excellent in-depth research method for studying a cultural phenomenon within its real-life context. A case connotes a delimited phenomenon observed at a single point of time or during some period of time. This method is a research strategy to describe, interpret and explain behavior, meaning and cultural products of persons involved in a generally limited field by direct data collection of researchers who are physically present (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2006).

Research roles

In the field research, which was conducted in the period of January 2009 to March 2010, the first author was both project manager of CIS-VU and researcher. This professional involvement helped to obtain a deep insight into the SIM4 Project. Such an insight into projects, teams, organization politics, and informal gatherings result in a thorough understanding of organizational processes (Van Marrewijk et al., 2010). However, the combined role of researcher/participant raises methodological issues as the researcher's self is not separable from the interpretations and events in the organization studied (Humphreys, 2005; Van Maanen, 1995). The first issue is the classical dilemma of 'overengagement' (Ellen, 1984: 88) in which the researcher takes the cultural values and norms of the host country as his or her basic assumptions and rejects his/her own culture. A strong identification with the interests of the people being studied and the protection of these interests can have an impact on the presentation of findings (Ellen, 1984: 138). As 'hanging out their dirty laundry' is generally not appreciated by organizations, self-censorship in many situations is needed by researchers in order to maintain access to the field of study or remain in contact with the work floor.

The second issue is the cultural bias of the informant/researcher when studying the field (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2006). For example, Orr's (1996: 7) work experience as a technician was helpful to enter the field and win the trust of the technicians but blinded him from the most obvious; he had a tendency to regard certain phenomena as insignificant while these were viewed as rather remarkable by outsiders. In the SIM4 study the close collaboration between the two authors, one being the female informant/researcher and the other a male academic outsider prevented both the overengagement and the cultural bias of this study. The assumptions, observations and experiences of the informant/researcher were challenged by the second author on a regular basis.

Data collection

To collect data two main approaches were chosen for: (1) participant observations, field notes and reflective journals and (2) semi-structured interviews. Participant and non-participant observations were used in the case. The aim of participant observation is to give an empathic understanding of the daily activities of the employees, to give the impression of having 'been there' (Czarniawska, 1998). In this way, daily activities of employees are understood within their social, historical, cultural, political and economic context (Bate, 1997). During the fieldwork, the informant/researcher was physically present in Indonesia during intermittent periods in which face-to-face meetings with project coordinators took place and informal contacts through lunches, dinners and parties were established. In the start-up phase of the SIM4 Project, top managers of the universities, all (assistant) project coordinators and the Dutch project manager gathered twice in several 3-day workshops to explore various aspects of PM and to agree upon project goals and objectives. During the project implementation the project manager and coordinators met at least twice a year at official reporting moments. Throughout the year the majority of communication and alignment took place through e-mail, text messages, phone contact and sometimes videoconferencing (through Skype or Yahoo messenger). Next to the scheduled PM meetings, the coordinators met more often by participating in joint project activities (such as a study visit to the Netherlands). The informant/researcher had weekly contact with project participants through mail, phone and text messages for a period of 15 months. Finally, the informant/researcher participated in a visit of the Indonesian project coordinators to the Netherlands. Consequently, social relations were established that revealed insights into PM practices and generated valuable information about cultural issues that would have been difficult for respondents to address in a formal interview. Throughout this time, field notes were made to keep track of the activities and surroundings. Emerson et al. (1995) defined field notes as accounts describing experiences and observations the researcher obtains while participating in an intense and involved manner.

Apart from the participant observation, semi-structured interviews were held. The semi-structured interviews had a framework of themes to be explored; 'metaphors to describe the project', 'experiences with PM' and 'observations about the PM'. Such interviews benefit the systematic collection of data without losing flexibility and spontaneity (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). New in-depth questions could be brought up during the interview on themes, which seemed to be relevant to the interviewee. As both

authors have extended experience in PM and because the informant/researcher had an abuse of many fieldnotes on her own perceptions of PM, we mainly focused our attention on the Indonesian participants in the SIM4 Project. Therefore, seven Indonesian (assistant) project coordinators were interviewed in English while one Dutch expert was interviewed in Dutch (see Table 1).

Data analysis

In the process of analysis, we identified and analyzed patterns of similarity and variation and recognized traces of contextual influences. This process of analysis is designed to strengthen claims made about actors' interpretations (Ybema and Byun, 2009). In an interpretive process we made final assertions by multiple readings and iterations of tentative assertions and data, focusing on the construction of cultural differences. Different perceptions on five aspects of PM were found:

Table 1: Overview respondents

Respondents	Gender	Institute	Age	Prior PM exp.	Formal function
Indonesian overall project coordinator	Male	Universitas Indonesia, Jakarta (Java)	48	10	IT Lecturer + in addition appointed as: – Secretary to the University – Executive Director for Indonesia Managing HE Project
Project coordinator	Male	Universitas Cendrawasih, Jayapura (Papua)	58	5–7	University Librarian + in addition appointed as: – Secretary of the University – Development Board
Project coordinator	Male	Universitas Nusa Cendana, Timor	47	5–7	Lecturer in Business Department + in addition appointed as: –Vice Dean for Academic Affairs of Faculty of Social Sciences
University coordinator	Male	Universitas Nusa Cendana, Timor	43	5–7	Lecturer Veterinary Sciences + in addition appointed as: – Head of Undana's International Relations Officer
Project coordinator	Male	Universitas Khairun	43	0–1	English language Lecturer
Project coordinator	Male	Universitas Pattimura, Ambon	50	7–9	Senior Lecturer
Assistant project coordinator	Female	Universitas Pattimura, Ambon	46	0–1	Lecturer + in addition appointed as: – Director of International Office
Project manager CIS-VU	Female	VU University Amsterdam	34	10	Advisor Institutional Management
Expert CIS-VU	Male	VU University Amsterdam	47	10	Senior Advisor Higher Education Management & Organisation

1. Concepts related to a 'project'
2. Project language
3. Competences of a project manager
4. Role of a project manager
5. Power

These topics will be discussed in separate sub-paragraphs below. But first we introduce the reader to the SIM4 project.

The context of the study

The Indonesian HE landscape is very complex, with 80 public and more than 2000 private universities situated in an archipelago with more than 17,000 islands stretching out over a region as large as the continental US (Beerkens, 2002). Until the *reformasi* in 1998, the Indonesian government had an absolute hold on tertiary education and even prescribed micro management topics in HE institutes (Idrus, 1999). In late 1990s, Indonesia made a strong economic recovery from the Asian financial crisis, which resulted in important reforms. HE has become a high priority for the Indonesian government to strengthen the economy (Idrus, 1999). A highly educated workforce and knowledge-based skilled human resources were needed to find solutions for various national challenges. Furthermore, the public requested for quality in education, as education is seen as the gateway to better jobs, promotions and, therefore, improved living status (Idrus, 1999). Hence, the Directorate General for Higher Education (DGHE) decided that the status of the HE Institutes (HEIs) had to change in order to improve the quality of their services.

The new Indonesian paradigm in managing HE advocates accreditation, accountability, self-evaluation, quality improvement and autonomy (Idrus, 1999). By advocating autonomous universities, the Indonesian Government strives to realize state universities that produce better-qualified graduates in a more efficient and transparent way and institutes that are able to manage their own organization and sources of income. Applying this new paradigm in state universities in Indonesia implies replacing a strictly centralist practices into a new practice of accountability, creativity, innovativeness and risk-taking (Idrus, 1999). These new practices are in contrast to a system in which universities were (and still are) seen as government service units, which have to comply with government regulations in financial management, personnel management, the appointment of rectors and other areas (Beerkens, 2002).

To support the transformation of four universities in Eastern Indonesia the Dutch donor organization Nuffic financed the SIM4 Project. Nuffic assigned UNDANA as the lead university and stipulated to assign a 'university coordinator'. The role of the university coordinator was to reach agreement on issues that concern the four equal beneficiaries (e.g., approval of joint project documents), to facilitate joint learning and to act as the contact person on behalf of the four institutes when it relates to joint issues. Each of the universities has appointed a project coordinator who was responsible for the implementation of activities within his university in close collaboration with the Dutch and Indonesian overall supervisors. It is not a common practice in CIS-VU projects to assign a local overall project coordinator,

but differences in language, culture and time made it necessary to include a project coordinator of UI. He assists the project manager of CIS-VU in the daily coordination, monitoring and implementation of the project. The CIS-VU project manager, the informant/researcher, was the overall project manager and bore full responsibility of the project.

Findings

The SIM4 Project context

Most vivid in the SIM4 Project context were authoritative directions from the central government in Jakarta. These directions had both direct and indirect effects on the project. For example, direct effects have been observed when the Indonesian government decided that the national exams in the secondary schools had to be supervised by university staff. Though project activities had been planned, project staff were no longer available due to the priority given to this government decision. In another example, the Indonesian government decided that all university lecturers needed to have a Master's degree. Although, the project coordinators all held a degree they had to take over teaching responsibilities of colleagues who were suddenly required to follow a degree program. These central decisions diminished the available time for project coordination.

Indirect effects could be observed in the attitude of university staff towards decentralized decision-making. Staff is used to Indonesian government funded projects, which are very regulated and restricted. As a consequence, the Indonesian coordinators felt required to ask the overall coordinators' approval and directions for various detailed steps in the project implementation.

> "They keep on asking us; are we allowed to do this and that. But what will be my answer? The challenge is to encourage them in innovative practices. That they can make their own decisions within the project boundaries" (interview with Indonesian overall coordinator).

Apart from the central domination, the spatial and cultural distinction between Central Java and Eastern Indonesia was dominant in the project context. The project frequently employed 'local' experts from Central Java, but the universities in Eastern Indonesia did not perceive these as being 'local'. They perceive themselves being more direct in communication and showing more emotions than people from Central Java. There was a sensitiveness of SIM4 Project coordinators towards Javanese people:

> "You're from the West so I can talk to you frankly and speak out what I mean. With Javanese people I'm a bit reluctant because you have to be careful not to insult them" (interview with Indonesian project coordinator).

The tension between central government and the eastern regions and the long history of political unrest in the Eastern region, especially in Ambon and Papua, has influenced the SIM4 Project. For example, in March 2009 the main building of

UNCEN (Papua) was destroyed, including the SIM4 Project office. This event caused a delay of weeks before the project could be restarted and for a long time communications were hampered.

PM experience

For two out of the seven Indonesian respondents involved in our case study, the SIM4 Project is their first experience with PM. One other already participated in projects as team members and four have previous experiences with the role of project coordinator. In contrast to the Dutch counterparts, none of the interviewed Indonesians received any formal training in PM. They all learned by doing and participating in externally funded projects (e.g., projects through the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Australian Aid and Directorate General of Higher Educations). This implies, as one of the interviewees remarked, that:

> "Our reference for Project Management is the externally funded projects and the 'project guidelines' for these" (interview with project coordinator).

All respondents stressed that PM is recognized as a specific profession in Indonesia. There is even an association of project managers, called *Asosiasi Ahli Manajemen Proyek Indonesia* (AAMPI). However, this recognition for PM only relates to non-university sectors. In public Indonesian universities the position of project manager does not exist because of its traditional focus on teaching and learning. In the SIM4 Project six Indonesians involved are positioned as 'lecturers' and one as a librarian but all are but assigned to conduct PM activities as an additional job. In contrast, the informant/researcher and Dutch adviser are specialized in managing externally funded projects with more than 10 years' experience. They gained their experience through a combination of preparation during study, learning by doing, learning from more experienced project managers and by following various courses on (aspects of) PM. Clearly, these different bodies of knowledge of and experience with PM have resulted in different perceptions on the concept of PM. In the next paragraphs our findings on five aspects of PM are presented.

Perceptions on concepts related to a 'project'

Though everybody in the SIM4 Project uses the term 'project', it became apparent that not all shared the same perceptions of the concept. The informant/researcher and Dutch adviser perceive a project as a set of methods and techniques appropriate for any type of activity with a clear beginning and end in any sector where a result needs to be accomplished within a certain time frame. The majority of Indonesian interviewees however, explained that common principles of PM (such as planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating) can be applied in universities but that the term 'project' is in fact only applied if national or international funding partners are involved. As such, the Nuffic funded SIM4 Project is perceived as a 'project'.

The perceptions of the Dutch informant/researcher and adviser varied with the Indonesian project coordinators when it came to (1) project start, (2) target group, (3)

approach and (4) its foreseen success. The first difference in perceptions was found on the topic of the 'start' of a project. In the view of the Dutch informant/researcher externally funded projects start as soon as the donor has granted a project. The initiation phase has by then already taken place, after which the (implementing and beneficiary) partners will jointly go through all the other phases of a regular project cycle: from definition, design, development, and implementation and to follow-up (evaluating and closing). If we follow this assumption the project started in April 2008, after which various joint activities took place with representatives of the four universities. However, while plans were made to start-up individual activities at each of the universities in October 2009, all four partners were relieved that the project would now 'really start'. As one of the interviewees explained:

> "The project is only 'alive' when we see something happening at the university" (interview with project coordinator).

The joint project activities, which were already running for a year, and the accomplishment of some project results were apparently not perceived as part of the project but, as a majority of the interviewees remarked, 'part of the planning or preparatory stage'.

The second difference observed was related to the target group of a project. The SIM4 project was originally envisioned by the donor and further developed by the implementing consortium as a joint project in which representatives of each institute could participate. This is in line with the definition of Hodgson and Cicmil (2006) who refer to a project as an aggregation of employees who temporarily work together. However, according to the Indonesian partners projects cannot focus at a small target group but need to involve the broader university community. Various reasons were provided for this:

> "The SIM4 Project is like a Dutch chocolate which everyone wants to taste. You can't keep it for yourself because everyone wants to have a part too" (interview with project coordinator).

> "Quite often projects only satisfy a certain number of people resulting in jealousy and disharmony. As a consequence, people started to have negative feelings about projects in general. Thus, projects should benefit the broader community" (interview with project coordinator).

Various discussions about this different perception on the 'target group' led to a change in the strategy from predominantly joint activities with representatives of each university towards activities at each university in which the broader university community could get involved.

The third difference was related to the project approach for implementing activities. Generally, the Indonesian universities experienced projects funded by the Indonesian DGHE and the Australian AusAid as top-down regulated, restricted and thoroughly dictated. In contrast, the SIM 4 Project was characterized by a bottom-up approach, which stimulated the project coordinators to make their own decisions, to initiate activities and to set up their own budgets within the project boundaries. To the Dutch

informant/researcher these aspects are basic features needed to manage a project. However, to the beneficiary universities this implied a transformation from 'being told and asking for approval' to 'telling themselves and making decisions'. That was not always easy but, as one of the interviewees remarked:

> 'Honestly, I prefer the bottom up approach. In this way the project is focusing upon the problems that happen at the institutions'. (Interview with project coordinator).

The fourth and last difference focused on the envisioned end result of the project. In this case there were not many differences among the partners. The main difference related to what is generally perceived as a successful project. In traditional PM literature projects are only regarded as successful if they accomplish the targeted objectives and results within the project boundaries of time, budget and scope (Cicmil and Hodgson, 2006). Although all project partners regarded this as the ultimate aim, they differed in the predictability of project results in the case of the SIM4 Project. Especially, the informant/researcher and Dutch adviser questioned whether traditional PM methods can be applied to their full extent in capacity building projects. Even though in the end the project result might deviate from the originally predicted results, all interviewees would still regard the project a success when it was perceived as such in the eyes of the beneficiary institutes. Or, as one of the interviewees said:

> "I will not be upset if some activities will come out differently as long as all people involved are satisfied with the personal benefits of the project, as well as the institutional benefits" (interview with project coordinator).

The various perceptions on the start of the project, the target group and the approach have been constraining factors in prosperous project implementation. According to the Dutch project manager, these constraining factors could only be addressed by discussing the assumptions behind certain opinions or behavior. These discussions revealed the source of the different assumptions, only after which new joint practices could be agreed upon such as the earlier indicated change in the project strategy.

Perceptions on the project language

The national language in Indonesia is 'Bahasa Indonesia' whereas the language applied for the project was English as stipulated by Nuffic as the donor organization. English is a foreign language to both the Dutch and Indonesian project employees. At the start of the project the most important criterion applied to select Indonesian staff members for the key positions was their capability to speak and write in the English language. This automatically excluded those with limited or no knowledge of English, such as certain top managers and members of the broader university community. However, because the four universities felt that the success of the projects was related to the participation of the university community, it was decided to first write documents in Bahasa Indonesia and then translate them into English and to mainly employ Indonesian consultants. Consequently, the monitoring of the project by the

Dutch informant/researcher became more challenging, as her knowledge of Bahasa Indonesia was very basic.

This gave strong advantages to those being fluent in both English and Bahasa Indonesia. During field trips discussions of 10 minutes were summarized in one or two sentences, only giving limited insight to the informant/research about the issue discussed. An example is given in the following conversation, which took place between the Dutch informant/researcher (A) and one of the project coordinators (B) during a field visit:

> B: Do you remember the presentation of the Dutch project supervisor 'a leader must come earlier and leave the office late'?
>
> A: Yes
>
> B: I was very glad that the Rector asked me 'what did he say?' It was a very good opportunity for me to say this to the Rector. I just choose the important one to translate.
>
> A: I thought you were translating everything?
>
> B: No, why?...I translate the ones that touch the heart.

The solution to hire a professional translator proved not to be a solution as PM and managerial topics appeared to have their own vocabulary, which was difficult to translate. For example, or the annual budget 'estimates' of expected costs needed to be set up. To the informant/researcher the concept of 'estimates' implied that these can be adjusted during project implementation. However, the Indonesian project coordinators tried to forecast every detail based on their assumption that 'estimates' cannot be changed.

Perceptions on competences of a project manager

The findings showed that Indonesian and Dutch respondents perceive competencies of project managers differently. Competencies are here defined as the 'total of knowledge, skills and behavior which are needed to perform tasks effectively and with success'. The SIM4 Project structure stipulate that a project coordinator should be able to initiate, coordinate, manage, administer, plan, budget, implement, monitor and evaluate project activities. In the view of the informant/researcher and the Dutch adviser, these responsibilities require competencies such as: result orientation, decidedness, liability, social and communicative skills and skills in planning and financial management. The Dutch adviser emphasized a specific addition:

> "As a project manager one has to find a proper balance between flexibility and discipline. On the one hand you have the obligation to justify the project and its results to the stakeholders which requires that you guarantee agreements made. On the other hand you have to be flexible enough to address the ever changing social reality in a project" (Interview with the Dutch adviser).

However, the Indonesian coordinators emphasized the different competencies required. Apart from mastering the English language and communicative skills four

other competences were regarded as key; 1) managing relationships, 2) collectivism, 3) position, and 4) commitment. Firstly, to acquire and maintain a 'relationship' is regarded as an important pre-requisite to be able to perform the job of a project manager.

"Well you see…in Indonesia…when you know people only for a short period, you don't want to be open right away. Once you develop a relationship you can communicate better" (Interview with project coordinator).

At the same time it was not possible for the interviewees to describe this competence clearly.

"Relationships are about trust. It is however difficult to express in words…it's a feeling" (interview with project coordinator).

The second competence is called 'collectivism' and refers to a participatory principle of managing a project. All Indonesian interviewees stressed that a project manager cannot put him or herself ahead of the project team because otherwise you will break down the team's work.

"As a project manager I'm successful when everybody is involved" (Interview with project coordinator).

"The project should continue the way we agree on. Not the way I want it, not the way they want it but the way we want it" (interview with Indonesian overall coordinator).

The third aspect is 'position' which refers to the ascribed position of a person within the university. This position provided project coordinators with the power to intervene and organize change capacity.

The last competency defined is the one of 'commitment'. It was referred to by all Indonesian coordinators and signifies the feeling of responsibility to support and contribute the best to the university. At one university 'commitment' was even regarded as the most important criterion to select staff to participate in the project team.

"People were also selected because of their 'commitment'. It regularly happens that someone who is in the team leaves because of another option. My opinion is that if I'm appointed to a task I have to commit to that" (interview with project coordinator).

Though specific attention was paid to 'religion, gender, age and nationality' during the interviews, these were not regarded as aspects of importance for the selection of project members. One interviewee provided a specific explanation for this:

"In some parts of Indonesia these could be sensitive issues in PM. In this project it's not the case, because we're dealing with a university environment which is more universal. Innovative ideas are more welcomed by academics" (interview with Indonesian overall coordinator).

Perceptions on the role of project manager

From a formal point of view the Dutch and Indonesian coordinators share the same view on the role of a coordinator, as the one who is responsible for either the overall implementation or the implementation in his university. To the informant/researcher a project manager is a specific profession with a high level of independency located in a matrix organization with project teams in charge of projects, independent of the hierarchical organization.

> "I'm responsible to manage the project implementation and to make all necessary decisions within the project boundaries. I do not have to consult with my manager unless things happen which exceed the scope of the project or can have an effect on other projects or aspects of CIS-VU" (field notes of informant/researcher).

The Indonesian coordinators regarded the role of project manager to be a more supporting than leading role with a low level of independency. According to Indonesian respondents the role of project manager does not exist in the university structure as the project managers are all lecturers and therefore have to obey formal hierarchical structures.

> "You can't be totally free to have your own ideas to run the project because you also have to consult high-level persons. We have some layers for decisions" (interview with project coordinator).

However, the Indonesian project manager from Java is employed by a business unit of UI which also works along the lines of a matrix project organization. As such, he is equal to the Dutch project manager, able to perform his responsibility with a high level of independency. The main differences thus seem to derive from the inexperience of Eastern Indonesian universities with the concept of project matrix organizations.

Perception on power

The final topic of different perceptions on PM is related to power. To the informant/ researcher and the Dutch advisor the project manager is in power in the execution of a project. The role of a project manager is not regarded as a formal position within the Indonesian universities. Thus, the power that someone has or lacks is related to his/ her hierarchical position in the university with three exceptions. The first exception is related to the international context of the SIM4 Project, which especially provides power to the persons who speak both English and Bahasa Indonesia. The second exception is the 'age' of a person due to which a person can earn 'respect' and thus becomes powerful.

> "X lacks power because he doesn't have a position and he doesn't have an old enough age [47] to earn respect" (interview with the university coordinator).

The third exception is the power granted to an outsider who is not part of the formal hierarchy. For example, power is provided to the informant/researcher by

the Indonesian counterparts who attached significance to the fact that she was an outsider.

> "You are labeled 'consultant' and you give the money so that is why they listen to you. Or…in other words 'it is not the song that counts but the singer'" (field notes on informal conversations between Dutch and Indonesian overall coordinators).

In summary, the findings of this study show that both Indonesian and Dutch project participants in the SIM4 Project perceived project definition, project competences, project roles, project start, project focus, process and project success differently (see Table 2).

Discussion

The Dutch project organizations (both Nuffic and CIS-VU) applied Western perceptions and practices of PM such as planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating in the SIM4 project with the Eastern Indonesian universities. The findings of the study show that Indonesian project coordinators do not perceive PM as a separate profession or as way of organizing institutional activities. Without the involvement of an external donor they would not have identified 'the coordination of activities to strengthen their institutional management' as a project. The project definition and the formal power relations between the Dutch donor and the four Indonesian universities made project participants to 'accept' the proposed PM methods and techniques. However,

Table 2: Different perceptions of Indonesian and Dutch participants in the SIM4 project

Cultural themes	Perceptions of Indonesians	Perceptions of Dutch
Project definition	When (inter)national funding partner is involved	Projects are aggregations of employees temporarily enacting on a common cause
Project start	Starts when the university community is involved	Starts immediately after the donor granted the project
Target group	Broad university community	Project members
Project approach	Top down regulated	Bottom up capacity building
Success of project	'Success' according to beneficiary institutions	Targeted objects in time, scope and budget in combination with 'success' according to beneficiary institutions
Project language	English excludes university community	Bahasa Indonesia excludes Dutch project manager
Competences PM	Able to manage relationships, organizing participation, strong position, commitment to project	Result oriented, decidedness, liability, social and communicative skills and skills in planning and financial management.
Role PM	Temporary position in addition to formal role as lecturer in a hierarchical organization	Specific profession with high level of independency in a matrix organization
Power	Power limited due to lack of formal position as project manager	Formal position with power

we learned how Indonesian and Dutch perceptions on the start of the project, target group, project approach, project success, and role of the project manager differed. These differences influenced the daily collaboration between the Dutch CIS-VU project organization and the Eastern Indonesian universities. The different focus on the target groups for example, resulted in a change from predominantly joint activities with representatives towards activities at each university in which the broader university community was involved. These findings have shown the difficulty to transfer the concept of PM to the context of the Indonesian institutions as a universal and politically neutral toolkit of methods and techniques appropriate for any type of activity in any sector.

The Dutch project organization emphasized competencies of result orientation, decidedness, liability, social and communicative skills and skills in planning and financial management. But these were very much Dutch perceptions of the needed competences in the process of corporatization. In reality the Indonesian partners applied a totally different set of competencies to select Indonesian project coordinators in the SIM4 Project.

The Dutch brought in a specific type of corporatization process; a participatory 'bottom up' process of change. Paradoxically, Dutch project staff perceived the top-down PM instrument and techniques to be a horizontal, cross-disciplinary and 'bottom up' approach. This approach was intended to empower project coordinators by giving them a strong role. This Dutch approach is opposed to the Indonesian process of corporatization, which has a top-down orientation. The Indonesian central government wants to strengthen the (local) economy with a well-educated workforce and knowledge-based skilled human resources. This top down approach is not situated in a stable social environment with stable political backing as the cultural and political tensions between the Javanese government and the Eastern Indonesian population has shown. Consequently, project success is depended of hierarchical positions of project coordinators and their ability to deal with power issues.

Conclusion

In this paper we challenged the assumption in PM literature that PM tools and techniques can be easily transferred from one context to the next as educational policies remain *par excellence* national policies, reflecting the specific circumstances, traditions, and cultures of individual countries (Currie and Newson, 1998; Lomnitz, 2000; Papadopoulos, 1994; Rees-Caldwell and Pinnington, 2013). To do so we studied the research question of how actors perceived PM in the SIM4 Transformation Project. The case study has shown the problematic position of PM as a cultural neutral toolkit of methods and techniques in the process of corporatization of HE institutions. The PM methods and techniques and related practices traveled from the Dutch donor and the Dutch project managers to the HE institutions in Eastern Indonesia. This traveling of management concepts in the global economy was also found by Czarniawska and Sevón (2005) and is connected to a global tendency to standardize objectives and procedures in order to achieve generalized results in HE (Currie and Newson, 1998; Lingard and Rizvi, 1998; Slaughter and Leslie, 1997). PM as a top-down management instrument with a strong focus on tools, planning, prescription, control and discipline

of professionals (Cicmil and Hodgson, 2006; Packendorff 1995) fits well in market liberalism, managerialism and corporatism (Lingard and Rizvi, 1998) and has become the preferred vehicle of choice for the corporatization of HE. These PM practices have possible far reaching implementation to state universities in Indonesia (Idrus, 1999), and the larger Asian region.

These new practices of manageralism, corporatization and projectification of HE are in contrast to a system in which universities are government service units (Beerkens, 2002). This will result in new questions of educational policies, which until now remain national policies (Currie and Newson, 1998; Lomnitz, 2000; Papadopoulos, 1994). To what extend can universities develop into 'entrepreneurial universities' (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997) that are independent of the Indonesian government? And to what extend will PM methods and instrument be used to control the teachers and the researchers at these corporate universities as indicated by Parker (2011) and Folwer et al. (2012)?

Whatever the implementations for Indonesian and Asian universities will be, in this paper we have seen that PM methods and techniques have not only been transferred but also have been translated to the Indonesian context. Different elements of PM have been grafted onto the management system of the Indonesian project coordinators resulting into a hybrid concept consisting of a global PM philosophy and local Indonesian management concepts and practices. This process of hybridization has been observed in other projects studied (Rees-Caldwell and Pinnington, 2013; Shimoni and Bergmann, 2006). We therefore criticize the universal application of PM methods and techniques and its cultural neutrality in the transformation of HE institutes. The implications of these findings to transformation processes in HE are clear; it cannot be assumed that PM methods and techniques are culturally neutral and universal applicable. Therefore, project managers should be able to apply their knowledge and skills in an intercultural environment in which, as a result of a social construction process, a unique cooperation will be created.

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