

PMF VIEWPOINT ARTICLE

Project Management Research – Trends & Directions

By Professor Christophe N. Bredillet, PhD.

Editor's note: This article is based on Professor Bredillet's response to five questions posed by the managing editor of PM World Today on the topic of project management (PM) research. Professor Bredillet took time out of his busy schedule at ESC Lille to provide the following comments on this important subject.

PMF: What are some trends in project management research that you have noticed in your programs and conferences in the last two years?

Bredillet: *According to the last research conferences I have attended I can summarize the trends as:*

1 - Theory of PM (including integration of complexity science, and social science). In short it is about moving away from/or beyond linear thinking and positivist approach to a more "constructivist" approach (co construction of the reality, adaptation, contextualisation). The traditional economics models are not working anymore as the underlying assumptions have changed; this includes understanding the underlying theoretical assumptions and cultural environment of standards development.

2 - The link of strategy/mission implementation/value creation, portfolio/programme mgt, project management, and operations.

3 - Governance and Finance: especially in the area of Major Projects and Capital Investment. This include Funding structures (beyond PPP/PFI, real options...), Governance approaches, Quality Assurance reviews at Front-End.

4 - Performance & Risk Management in relation with Contract Management.

5 - I could add Maturity models, but this can be related to some above topics

PMF: What areas of PM research have been of most interest to your graduate students?

Bredillet: *At Masters level mainly standards & best practices, maturity models and performance management, some cost engineering and project economics issues (by the way any topic related directly to being employed in project mgt jobs!).*

At MBA level, mainly Governance issues and Project Finance, along with Risk Management & Performance Management, the link strategy, programme, project, operations.

At PhD levels: see above in "trends": all the topics; and to a large extent, applications to address specific business issues in specific contexts and environments (Industries, Countries, Types of Projects/Programmes...).

PMF: Are there any subject areas where you would like to see additional project management related research?

Bredillet: *The role of improvisation in project/programme management along with the role of structures (standards, types/categories of projects...). Improvisation is becoming a "blog" topic within the Management & Organization Science area.*

PMF: Is there currently enough PM related research underway, or is additional emphasis needed in this area?

Bredillet: *We need, I think, more research looking at having PM recognized as an Academic Discipline. That's why theoretical foundations and epistemological research are very important. Most of the management and organization sciences are based on an "operations" management perspective and fail to address complexity, uncertainty, ambiguity... Project Management (at large including programme mgt/portfolio mgt) is much more appropriate in this regard, as far as we define what is its very nature and deep structure!*

PMF: Why is PM research important, and to whom?

Bredillet: *PM research is important in " main areas:*

- *People, as it is a way to incorporate learning and action, and enables them to address complex, uncertain, ambiguous world and situations,*

and to help them to become "entrepreneur" managing not only businesses, but also their own life.

- *Economics, as through projects, it is possible to better manage scarce resources and innovate, to have better governing systems (transparency, responsive decision making) leading to sustainable development and wealth creation and sharing.*
- *Science & Research: as we need to understand how to answer to our New World and build a New Reality (see above People and Economics).*



Professor Christophe N. Bredillet, PhD



Professor Christophe N. Bredillet, PhD in Project Management, MBA, Dr.Sc., MSc Eng ECS Lille, Certificated Program Director IPMA Level A, CMP, CCE, has 18 years of experience in project and program management with several industries (banking, sporting goods and IT). For the past 10 years, he has been the program director of the MS, MBA and Doctorate in Project & Program Management at ISGI-Groupe ESC Lille. He is a Steering Committee member of the Global Project Management Forum, of the Global Working Group Standards for IPMA and of the international non-aligned "think tank" group named OLCI.

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