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Managing soft change projects in the public sector

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Abstract

Public sector organisations worldwide are under pressure to increase efficiency while delivering improved and integrated services. Governments are promoting adoption of project-based management and use of formal project management methodologies developed in the context of essentially hard projects in industries where goals and methods are well defined. Problems in applying hard project management practice to the business of government and, in particular, to soft projects such as organisational change, challenge current project management standards and practices. Some writers and researchers have turned to soft systems thinking for enlightenment. They have identified possible links between project management practice and Soft Systems Methodology (SSM). However, examples of reported practical application have been few and limited in scope. This paper reports on the outcome of a team of practitioner-researchers' attempts to link SSM and project management practice, in several public sector agencies in Australia.



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Keywords

Strategic management; Systems approach; Hard and soft projects; Collaborative research; Experiential learning

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