

An overview of P3M Certifications from PMI and APMG

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This article gives an overview of multiple credentials available from PMI and the AXELOS/APMG in the Project, Program and Portfolio (P3M) space. We do not advocate certifications are an end in itself - but are helpful in knowledge acquisition, service differentiation and in robust client delivery for training and consulting.

Project Management

Project Management Professional (PMP®) Certification from PMI is immensely popular in PM Community – especially in North American/ AsiaPac regions. As of March 31, 2014, there were about 600,000 PMP credential holders globally. Most of the PMPs come from the countries of USA, Canada, China, India and Japan. The question naturally arises from PMPs – who are seeking out further career advancement / to earn PDUs etc – what next after PMP?

It has been noted that PMP Certification has been quite useful for the professionals who would like to move into managerial cadre from technical ranks in various organizations, apart from enhancing their credibility and client confidence.

Many countries in Europe (especially UK, Holland, Germany and the Nordic countries), Australia/ South Africa etc follow the alternative project management framework called PRINCE2® (which is derived from - PProjects In a Controlled Environment - ver 2) .This framework is covered in the reference manual ‘Managing Successful Projects with PRINCE2’ (2009 edition). It may also be noted that large international organizations like UN, World Bank, NATO, DFID etc also use PRINCE2 framework for managing their projects.

The development of PMBOK and PRINCE2 across the years has many parallels. In the UK/ Europe, the focus of PRINCE2 development was on how to improve the chance of successful delivery of individual projects, whereas the focus of PMBOK guide from USA has been to develop the Body of Knowledge for the PM community.

Industry comparisons have noted a high level of compatibility between these two methodologies, each supplementing the other. At a high level, PRINCE2 is seen to be offering a business case driven approach whereas PMBOK focuses on Customer requirements driven approach for project management.

PMBOK Guide is an overview of the Book of Knowledge, generically applicable to projects in various verticals. It has been clearly stated in the Guide that it is the responsibility of the Project

Manager to adapt the guide as applicable to specific projects. On the other hand, PRINCE2 is a highly structured PM methodology, with well-defined processes and strong project control features.

The general consensus is that adoption of PRINCE2 is likely to enhance the implementation of the PMBOK standards by providing greater depth and structure to the projects. On the other hand, adoption of the PMBOK framework to a PRINCE2 based organization will help to identify the additional areas which need to be addressed in order to give projects the best chance of success, mainly relating to the soft skills/risk Management/ procurement management etc., which are not directly covered in PRINCE2.

There are some specific strengths of PRINCE2 – like guidance to the Project Manager on Starting the Project, Change control Management, Configuration Management, breakdown of Project Plan into Stage and Team Plans, creation of a Product Breakdown structure, role definitions of the project team etc.

In an overall perspective, PMBOK guide is seen to offer a descriptive/ exhaustive list of processes, from which the Project Manager has to decide and tailor the applicability for specific projects, whereas PRINCE2 is seen to offer a more ‘prescriptive’ way for managing the projects.

It has been noted that many professionals who are familiar with one framework, seek to understand the other to have greater appreciation and enhance their global reach. Adoption of the either framework also depends on customer preferences and geography where the project is being executed. Since PRINCE2 certification does not officially ask for prior PM experience, some practitioners tend to go for PRINCE2 qualification first – followed by PMP.

PRINCE2 is now a registered trademark of AXELOS Limited, which is a joint venture between the Cabinet Office, UK and the company Capita. APMG is one of the Examination Institutes (EIs) affiliated with AXELOS, alongwith others like Quint, EXIN etc. The number of PRINCE2 certified professionals is not officially known, but is estimated to be more than half a million.

The typical PRINCE2 workshop runs for five days – the first three days cover the Foundation course and include the Foundation examination, which is a closed book exam, which tests the knowledge and comprehension of concepts. The next two days of the workshop cover the application and analysis of the PRINCE2 framework for a running project case study. The workshop culminates with the Practitioner exam – on the fifth day, which is a closed book examination (with the PRINCE2 manual being the only permitted reference). Many of the PMI REPs offer PRINCE2 course with provision of PDUs, so that it becomes an additional ‘selling point’.

Program Management

Programs consist of interrelated projects and related operations undertaken to achieve outcomes and benefits linked to strategic objectives of the organization. In a way, program management related certifications are applicable for senior project managers /Program managers and address their query on ‘What next after PMP?’

There are two major program management certifications – Program Management Professional (PgMP®) from PMI and Managing Successful Programmes (MSP®) from AXELOS. The comments noted for PMP/PRINCE2 on their application across various geographies are applicable for these certifications as well.

PgMP examination application requires the candidates to possess atleast 6000 hours of project management AND 6000 hours of program management experience. Recently (from Jan 2014 or so), the examination pattern has been changed to make it as a two-step process – consisting of an application review and the objective examination, from the earlier three step process. The fees for the examination have also been reduced to 800 USD (from the earlier 1500 USD) for PMI members. Since this change, the number of candidates taking the PgMP examination has significantly gone up. The REPs have also accordingly stepped up their training courses for PgMP.

Usually PgMP preparatory workshop runs for three days. Earlier standards for the Program Management from PMI were not that robust. But the current (Third) edition of the Program Management standard from PMI is more structured and the PgMP examination also includes questions covered from areas outside the standard – including the topics from the corresponding role delineation study. Currently there are about 1200 PgMPs globally, with USA, Canada, India and China contributing to most of the PgMPs.

MSP® examination is based on the manual, ‘Managing Successful Programmes- 2011 edition’. The workshop for this also runs for five days as in PRINCE2 course – with first three days devoted to the foundation examination syllabus and the subsequent two days focusing on the Practitioner exam- with discussions of case studies etc.

One critical difference which has been noted is concerning the maturity of the two frameworks. MSP manual offers more guidance on robust programme management – covering concepts like programme vision, blueprint, programme organization structure, programme business case preparation and updation, programme planning and control, benefits management, transition management and linkage to strategy – as compared to the PMI standard. Thus MSP manual is seen to be providing more useful guidance for program management in practical situations.

Portfolio Management

Portfolios represent collection of projects and/or programs and operations which are grouped together to achieve strategic business objectives. In this way, portfolios are closest to implementation of the strategy in an organization. Since portfolio management addresses top management, the target audience for the certifications is also quite limited, targeting decision makers in many organizations.

PMI have recently rolled out the certification – Portfolio Management Professional (PfMP) to address the requirements of professionals managing or concerned with portfolio management. The PfMP credential recognizes advanced experience, skill and performance necessary to manage and align a portfolio of projects and programs to realize the organizational strategy and objectives. The requirements of PfMP certification (for those holding graduate degree) include:

- Minimum four years (6,000 hours) of unique non-overlapping professional portfolio management experience
- Minimum eight years (96 Months) of professional business experience.

The PfMp credential process, as in PgMp consists of the application review by the panel and clearing of a multiple-choice examination. The exam fee for this has been fixed as USD 800 for the PMI members. The pilot batch results of the PfMp have since been announced and about 100 candidates cleared it globally – with USA, Canada and India having a major representation.

As compared to PfMP, AXELOS have got a framework for portfolio management and the corresponding certification examination known as Management of Portfolios (MoP®). As in other cases, the MoP framework offers more robust guidance for portfolio management – covering portfolio definition, balancing and implementation and evaluating implementation effectiveness in achieving the strategic objectives of the organization. MoP workshop also runs for five days – covering the foundation and practitioner syllabus as in PRINCE2 and MSP.

Other allied frameworks and standards/Certifications

Risk Management

The Risk Management Professional (PMI-RMP) certification is applicable for the professionals primarily managing risks from a change initiative perspective. This certification from PMI recognizes unique expertise and competency in assessing and identifying project risks, mitigating threats and capitalizing on opportunities. It is based on the PMI practice standard for project risk management and the corresponding role delineation study. Taking of this examination requires at least 3,000 hours of project risk management experience and 30 hours of project risk management education (for delegates holding graduate degree qualifications). There are about 2700 PMI-RMP credential holders globally.

As compared to this, the Management of Risk (M_o_R®) standard from AXELOS covers risks from multiple perspectives – including:

- Strategic level (portfolio) risks
- Program level risks
- Project level risks
- Operational risks

The course/ examination pattern for M_o_R follows similar pattern as MSP/ MoP etc.

Agile Management

PMI have introduced PMI-ACP® (Agile Certified Professional) – which seems to be catching up quickly. As of March 31 2014 – there were about 5300 PMI-ACPs globally. This Certification is especially popular in the IT Community, with current focus on rapid application development and release, in dynamic scope change scenarios – as in mobile applications development.

AXELOS have got a similar certification AgilePM – which is more aligned to Dynamic Systems Development Method (DSDM)- which is generic across projects (whereas SCRUM is more applicable for IT projects). AgilePM is more aligned with PRINCE2 and hence easier to follow even in non-IT project environment.

Portfolio, Program and Project Offices (P3O)

P3O framework from AXELOS addresses how to set-up and implement the support systems to effectively implement portfolios, programmes and projects. This is another robust framework – which goes in-depth on the route-map for setting and operationalising the PMOs. The framework has got a corresponding certification (P3O® Certification) – including the foundation and practitioner examinations. This is especially useful for practitioners and organizations interested in understanding the value proposition of PMO, how to set-up and implement PMOs, how do they interact with portfolio/ program and project managers etc.

PMI are yet to come up with a model or a corresponding certification for this.

Change Management

Change management involves understanding how organizations manage change while implementing change initiatives (including portfolios, programs and projects, enterprise transformation programs etc.). It has been noted that whereas many of the organizations are good in core skills concerning planning and execution of change initiatives, they face difficulties while implementing change due to resistance and non-acceptance from concerned stakeholders.

Change Management framework addresses the following themes:

- Individual approaches and attitudes to improve effectiveness during change
- How to guide teams through their development including effective team working during change
- The nature and dynamics of achieving change in organizations
- The competencies and skillsets of a Change agent
- Approaches and tools which can facilitate change management

APMG have a robust framework and an associated accreditation for Change Management – which can be positioned to organizations implementing change initiatives.

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