

# An exploratory study to comprehend balanced project leadership and how temporary (horizontal) leaders are identified

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a MSc in Management

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## **Abstract**

The identification of temporary (horizontal) leaders is a difficult proposition for project managers. In the absence of knowledge or lack of skill, project managers tend to identify and empower reliable team members to temporarily lead aspects or phases of a project (Müller, et al., 2017B; Redick, et al., 2014). An appointment to a temporary leadership position on a project is often the first formal step into a project management role (Cox, Pearce & Perry, 2003).

Prior to the Balanced Project Leadership Framework (Müller, et al., 2017A) and the Chinese study of Müller, et al., (2017B), research was lacking for demonstrating the benefits of using temporary (horizontal) leaders on complex projects. The concept of balanced project leadership is still in its infancy with diminutive evidence to ratify it as a reliable method of project leadership. Using the second event (identification) of the Balanced Project Leadership Framework, Müller, et al., (2017B) created three themes demonstrating how horizontal leaders are identified. Additional to the author conducting similar research, the fourth event (governance) of the Balanced Project Leadership Framework will also be examined based on the recommendation by Müller, et al., (2017A) to further develop the framework.

Based on first order responses and second order construct findings (Miles, et al., 2014), the researcher presents a new holistic framework, illustrating how horizontal leaders can be identified, governed and lead projects to success. The findings will demonstrate how organisations can save on cost by implementing appropriate organisational structures, internal human recourse capabilities and a culture that is hospitable to projects and change. The author also considers the new framework favourable for both academics and future project leaders to use as a guide for understanding the expectations and requirements for being a successful project leader.

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## **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

### **1.1. The State of Research on Balanced Project Leadership**

According to Müller, Zhu, Sun, Wang, & Yu., (2017B) research relating to leadership within the field of project management commenced around the turn of the millennium. Research from Smith (1999) found that projects often fail based on a lack of project leadership rather than a lack of project management. Similarly, Shore (2005) argued that further research is required in order to understand what works and what does not work when it comes to project leadership.

For over two decades, scholars have examined and produced frameworks for determining characteristics for becoming a successful project leader (Clarke, 2012; Toor & Ofori, 2008). Throughout this short period of time, project leadership has been identified as critical for accomplishing project management success (Baroudi & Rapp, 2016; Enninga & Van der Lugt, 2016; Allen, Carpenter, Dydak & Harkins, 2016; Ssegawa 2015; Larson & Gray, 2014; Bopanna & Gupta, 2009; Toor & Ofori, 2008).

According to Müller, et al., (2017B) global leadership trends appear to be shifting more responsibility and authority down the hierarchy ladder. Democratic leadership (Cervani, Lindgren & Packendorff, 2007) led to the formation of new concepts such as shared, balanced and distributed leadership. Prior to 2017, research was seldom conducted for how both leaders and followers interfaced or how followers could be selected for potential temporary leading positions on complex projects.

In 2017 an appropriate framework to further develop the concept of balanced project leadership was created (Müller, Sankaraer, Drouin, Vaagaasar, Bekker & Jain., 2017A). The framework used empirical data to identify five events in a cyclical relationship for how activities transition between a vertical and a horizontal leader. In the absence of knowledge or lack of skill, a project leader known as a vertical leader, empowers reliable team members known as horizontal leaders to act as temporary project leaders. Both types of leadership are social processes for driving a project forward, where the former influences the team and project stakeholders; the latter influences the vertical leader, the rest of the team and stakeholders.

## **1.2. Over-all Aim of this Study**

The second event (identification) of the Balanced Project Leadership framework was used by Müller, et al., (2017B) in China to investigate how potential horizontal project leaders are identified. The research findings established three themes, the context, criteria and process for the identification of horizontal leaders. The qualitative study concluded by encouraging academics to further investigate how to identify horizontal leaders in other nations. According to Fisher (2011) a study in western countries has the possibility to produce varying results in comparison to eastern countries.

Supplementary to the author using a similar ontological approach as Müller, et al., (2017B), the author will firstly clarify the required leadership style of potential horizontal leaders based on previous studies identifying its importance to project leadership (Zhang, Cao & Wang., 2017; Yang, Huang & Wu., 2011; Turner, Müller & Dulewicz., 2009; Turner & Müller., 2006; Dulewicz & Higgs, 2005; Keegan & Den Hartog, 2004). The author believes that this is a vital piece of information that is not elucidated in the original study by Müller, et al., (2017B).

Accompanying the second event of the Balanced Project Leadership framework (Müller, et al., 2017A), the author has also integrated the fourth event (governance) to assess how vertical leaders govern multiple stakeholders as well as horizontal leaders. Based on the findings of the literature review, several opinions to governance exist (Yang, Haung & Wu, 2013; Shane, Strong & Gransberg, 2011; Baroudi & Rapp, 2006).

## **1.3. Research Rationale and Justification**

The research of Müller, et al., (2017A) and Müller, et al., (2017B) failed to conclude as to whether a balanced project leadership approach can achieve project success. Many studies have categorised what project success is (Barnwell, Nedrick, Rudolph, Sesay & Wellem., 2014; Geoghegan & Dulewicz, 2008; Cleland & Gareis, 2006) but unfortunately, none have provided information from a balanced project leadership perspective. By integrating data from Ireland and China, the author will assess whether identifying horizontal leaders can assist with achieving project success.

**(OBI)** The context, criteria & process for the identification of horizontal leaders on projects



(OB2) the style of leadership in balanced project environments

(OB3) How do project leaders govern large projects with multiple stakeholders and horizontal leaders?

(OB4) Does the identification of horizontal leaders contribute to project success?

#### **1.4. Overview and Structure of the Research Report**

The author has compiled data from semi structured interviews using initial coding to reduce unsuitable data (Miles, Huberman & Saldana., 2014). Relevant data has been simplified and abstracted using the Mystery Construction Technique (Alvesson & Karreman, 2007). By demonstrating the value of identifying temporary (horizontal) leaders on projects, the research findings are anticipated to contribute with improving appreciation and acceptance for balanced project leadership.

### **Chapter 2 - Literature Review**

“Project Leadership does not take place in a vacuum, but in an environment where project leaders interact with many facets” (Ssegawa, 2015, p. 10). Pertinent literature has been gathered to coincide with the objectives of this study. The author has synthesized both theoretical and empirical research based on recommendations that researchers should observe the situation, tasks, and how leaders execute project delivery (Tyseen, Wald & Spieth, 2014; Cervani, Lindgren & Packendorff, 2007).

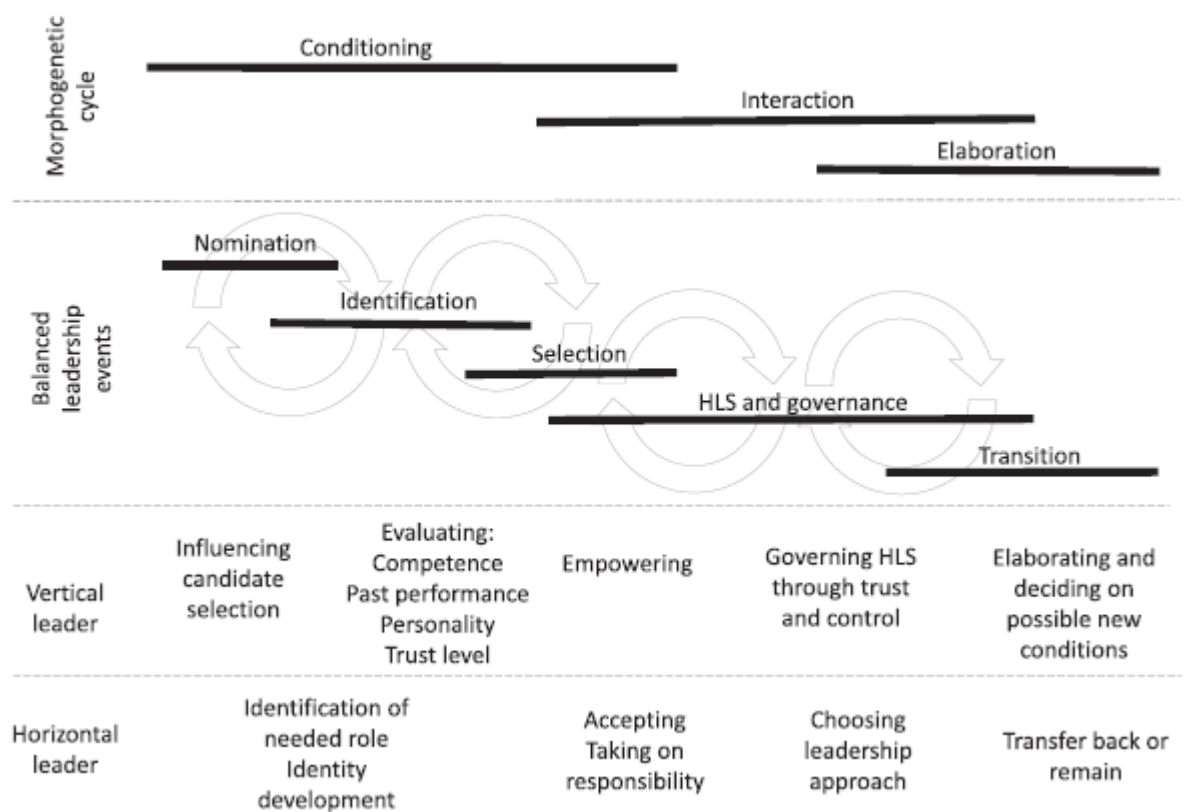
#### **2.1. The identification of horizontal leaders on projects**

The field of project management is currently transforming and recent research by Konstantinou (2015) has emphasized the importance of team and social involvement when achieving project success. Similarly, Meng & Boyd (2017) place relationship management as the next generation of project leadership research. This statement appears to be accurate as research by Davis & Walker (2009) demonstrated the value of relationship management. Team involvement is crucial (Ahern, Leavy & Byrne, 2014), especially at the beginning of innovative projects, where processes are often nonlinear, causing many projects to hit dead ends forcing teams to rethink strategy (Garud, Gehman & Kumaraswamy, 2011).

In the absence of knowledge or lack of skill, a project leader will identify and empower a reliable team member to govern and lead a team or function of a project to success

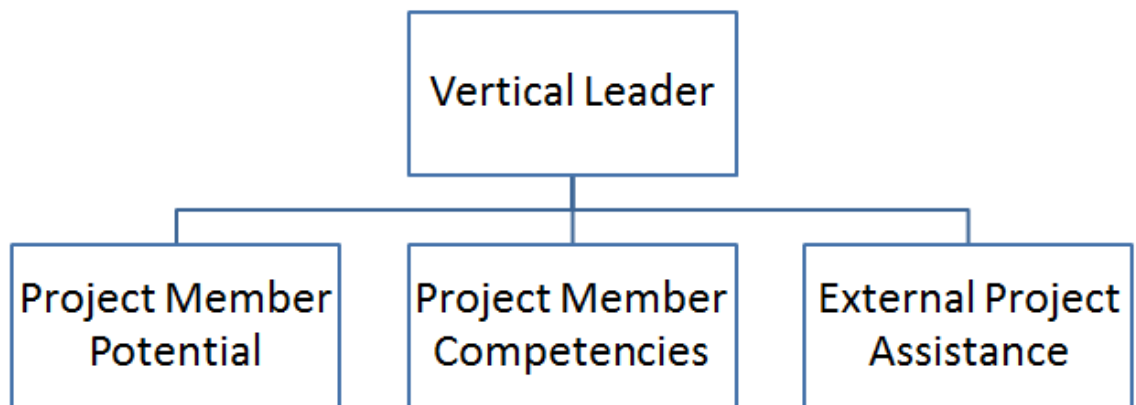
(Müller, et al., 2017B; Redick, Reyna, Schaffer & Toomey, 2014). Various participants are required from the wider organisation and perhaps even external stakeholders are required to cluster multifaceted opinions (Laufer, Hoffman, Russell & Cameron, 2015).

Empirical research conducted by Müller, et al., (2017A) developed a five-cycle framework, characterising how project (vertical) leaders identify and transition tasks to temporary (horizontal) leaders. The framework is based on the Realist Social Theory and its morphogenetic cycle (Archer, 1995).



(Müller, R. et al., 2017A. A theory framework for balancing vertical and horizontal leadership in projects)

Firstly, a vertical leader must nominate a particular employee or stakeholder to join the project. According to Müller, Nikolova, Sankarm, Zhu, Xu, Vaagaasar & Drouin., (2016) a vertical leader has three options for identifying potential creditable horizontal leaders based on shared cognitive understanding to co-lead or act as temporary leaders of a project.



(Müller, R. et al., 2016. *Leading projects by balancing vertical and horizontal leadership international case studies*)

Once a horizontal leader has been selected they are required to provide frequent updates to the vertical leader who is responsible for steering the project (Zwikael & Smyrk, 2015). Using the second event of the balanced project leadership framework, Müller, et al., (2017B) illustrated how horizontal leaders in China are identified. The research revealed the context; criteria and process for how vertical leaders identify horizontal leaders.

<b>Context</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> order	<b>Structure</b>		<b>Agency</b>
	1 <sup>st</sup> order	Project scale, culture & policies, role vacancy		Project manager's style and role understanding in leading human resources
<b>Criteria</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> order	<b>Professionalism</b>	<b>Personality</b>	<b>Attitude</b>
	1 <sup>st</sup> order	Professional skills	Emotional and social skills	Intention to be promoted
		Teamwork skills Experience	Leadership traits Person-situation fit	Job attitude
<b>Process</b>	Level	<b>Project manager</b>		<b>Team member</b>
	Steps	Preliminary evaluation Development Assessment		Preliminary evaluation Competition Development Guidance and encouragement

(Müller, R. et al., 2017B. *The identification of temporary horizontal leaders in projects: The case of China*)

### **2.1.1. The Context**

The context for identifying horizontal leaders is due to two concepts, namely structure and agency. Firstly, structure which is broken into three elements based on organisation project scale, policies & culture and role vacancy. The identification of potential future leaders is perceived as being easier when organisations have procedures in place for developing employees (Müller, et al., 2017B). The second concept is agency which depicts how horizontal leaders should execute the project based on their style, ability to influence and encouragement shown for project team members (Northhouse, 2007).

### **2.1.2. The Criteria**

Many studies have identified the relevance of intellectual criteria (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2005), problem solving competencies (Rees, Turner, & Tampoe, 1996) and personal criteria (Anderson, Grude, & Haug, 1987) for identifying successful projects managers. According to Müller, et al., (2017B) the criteria for identifying horizontal leaders are professionalism, personality and attitude of the potential temporary leader.

The competency school of leadership figures highly in literature pertaining to project leadership (Mazur & Pisarski, 2015; Pemsel & Müller, 2012; Meng, 2012). A popular model called the 'Leadership Development Questionnaire' (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2005) is highly recognised for its scientific accuracy, with many authors strongly agreeing that leader's competencies are a fundamental aspect for determining if a project will be successful (Müller & Turner, 2010; Geoghegan & Dulewicz, 2008).

Empirical quantitative research illustrated that project leaders must balance their own behaviours, traits and skills in combination with the situation, context, group/teams and external stakeholders (Ssegawa, 2015; Pandya, 2014; Müller & Turner, 2010; Strang, 2007). Based on theoretical research, effective project leaders should be facilitators, interpersonal, intrapersonal and self –aware for developing a culture that is built on shared values for project success (Allen, et al., 2016; Redick, et al., 2014).

Studies of project management focusing on the importance of cost, time, stakeholders and scope management is consistent throughout project leadership literature (Mazur & Pisarski, 2015; Ahsan, Ho & Khan, 2013; Pemsel & Müller, 2012; Meng, 2012). However, literature and research pertaining to project leadership is consistently looking to establish other competencies relevant to project success. Empirical research

from Müller & Turner (2010) investigated project leader's competencies by profiling them under four headings. The findings illustrated that project leaders must create a personal philosophy for implementing the necessary skills relevant to the situation (Redick, et al., 2014).

Based on the findings of Geoghegan & Dulewicz (2008) competencies required for being a successful project manager are not dissimilar to that of project leadership competencies. However, they note that literature fails to make connections with competencies and overall project success. Qualitative analysis of technical project leaders acknowledged that it is no longer adequate to solely have technical capabilities (Pandya, 2014; Kaminsky, 2012). Rather, an understanding of softer human and behavioural skills is paramount in modern projects (Preston, Moon, Simon, Allen & Kossi, 2015; Strang, 2007; Bouley, 2006).

It is clear that a project leader must be diverse and have 'schizophrenic' qualities to lead complex projects (Enninga & Van der Lugt, 2016). Similarly, Wysocki (2007) suggests that project managers should also create environments which enable project team members to think 'outside the box'. In order to do this, it is considered practical that project leaders have strong communication, motivational skills and an ability to keep a holistic view of the project (Earnhardt, Richardson & Marion, 2015; Bopanna & Gupta, 2009). An investigation of the telecommunication sector by Fisher (2011) somewhat agrees with the schizophrenic analogy, suggesting that project leaders must be diverse to organisation culture, resolving conflict, influencing team members and being aware of others. Furthermore, qualitative research conducted by Lundy & Morin (2013) identified that the correct use of a project leaders skills, behaviours and attitude can alleviate resistance to change.

According to Müller, et al., (2017B) a team member's willingness to become a project leader is more important than excelling at competencies relevant to being a project leader. The process of identifying horizontal leaders is a process which resembles a 'generative dance' (Cook & Brown, 1999) between a project leader and project member to establish if a project team member wants to be promoted. According to the findings of Müller, et al., (2017B) if a team member is promoted rather than developed, they could be overwhelmed.

### **2.1.3. The Process**

The theory of balanced project leadership highlighted by Müller, et al., (2017A) continues the concept of shared leadership on projects by Cervani, et al., (2007). They identified that from time to time, project leaders will need to share leadership with a capable trusted team member who has the necessary skills to deliver a critical piece of a project. The earliest research found by the author resembling a balanced project leadership process was the Heifetz (1994) Adaptive Leadership framework.

Heifetz noted that people naturally look to authority figures to provide leadership. However, the argument was that when people solely look for authority figures it obscures the fact that often people in non authority positions can also provide leadership. Further analysis by Heifetz (1995) identified that people often fail to spot leadership when exercised by people without authority. If vertical leaders need to rely on horizontal leaders during projects, they will have to provide them with authority so they are respected and considered leaders by subordinates.

The remaining sections of the literature review will consider leadership style, governance and interpreting if using a balanced project leadership approach can deliver project success.

## **2.2. Preferred Leadership Style**

The balanced project leadership framework (Müller, et al., 2017A) or the Chinese study by Müller, et al., (2017B) is not descriptive for suggesting an appropriate style of horizontal leaders on projects. Literature within this theme tends to vary on what style is applicable for orchestrating a project. The style of leadership appears to be dependent on the size and complexity of a project. Small projects tend to indicate leaders having a transactional leadership style, rewarding followers for meeting targets (Keegan & Den Hartog, 2004). Larger projects tend to show leaders having a transformational leadership style, paying attention to followers, setting challenging deliverables and showing respect (Turner & Müller, 2006). Recent research, however, suggests that project leaders favour a style that best suits their personality (Müller & Turner, 2010; Dulewicz & Higgs, 2005).

According to Dulewicz and Higgs (2005) leadership styles and approaches to leadership has been researched and studied more than any other aspect of human behaviour. The author believes that current literature is based on the research of Bass

(1985) which is still relevant. Styles from general schools of leadership appear to have been modified and applied by authors to project situations or domains, situational (Strang, 2007) Transformational (Iqbal, Long, Fei & Bukhari, 2015) and emotional intelligence (Zhang, et al., 2017). According to Toor & Arain, (2012) the implementation or style of leadership chosen is not necessarily the most fundamental aspect of delivering a project. Similarly, according to Müller & Turner (2010) regardless of the project leader's style, it is important for project leaders to remain optimistic rather than pessimistic to overcome certain problems along the project phases. Project leader's choice of style can be traced to characteristics of a person's personality. However, due to projects being complex with many barriers, Meredith & Mantel (2012) recommend that all project members should be equipped with the relevant skills so the responsibility of the leader is minimised.

A transactional style of leadership is preferred on low complexity projects where the leader can focus on exchanges with subordinates to address their needs (Müller & Turner, 2010; Turner, et al., 2009; Dulewicz & Higgs, 2005). Transformational leadership is seen more on complex projects where the project leader will arouse awareness and interest for the project (Gardner & Stough, 2002). According to Arnold & Loughlin (2013) transformational leaders stimulate subordinates to challenge themselves by emphasising collaboration through empowerment.

The benefits of a transformational style was quantified by Bass and Avolio (1995) using their multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ). It was proven that a transformational style had a greater impact on organisational change. The findings resonate with recent empirical findings across multiple industries. In the construction industry, Yang, et al., (2013) found transformational leadership improved communication and collaboration. In the IT sector, Iqbal, et al., (2015) found transformational leaders require the full support of senior management.

Another essential project leadership characteristic is emotional intelligence (Rezvani, Chang, Wiewiora, Ashkanasy, Jordan & Zolin, 2016). Based on empirical analysis, project sponsors should appoint leaders that exhibit high levels of emotional intelligence (Zhang, et al., 2017). High emotional intelligence is significant in project leadership as it can have a positive effect on team communication and conflict (Zhang & Fan, 2013). Research conducted by Butler & Chinowsky (2006) using the Bar-On-

EQ-I test suggested, that a strong relationship between emotional quotient and transformational leadership exists (34% variance).

The school of emotional intelligence comprises of seven styles (Preston, et al., 2015) which suggests that a successful leader understands their own personality and the traits of distinct team members (Müller, et al., 2017A). Project leaders use their own behaviours and traits according to the situation using both managerial traits and leadership traits concurrently (Strang, 2007).

The concept of personality competencies being predictors for leadership success was formed by Goleman (1997). The work of Goleman was continued by Dulewicz and Higgs in their early work on emotional intelligence (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2000a; Dulewicz & Higgs, 2000b). Five years later Dulewicz and Higgs discovered that their work appeared in leadership literature with many academics using emotional intelligence to depict leadership competencies (Kets de Vries & Florent-Tracy, 2002; Gill, 2002; Zaccaro, Rittman, & Marks, 2001). As a result, they developed the most prominent and used questionnaire in leadership research, The Leadership Dimensions Questionnaire (LDQ) (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2005).

### **2.3. Governance on large projects**

By using the fourth event (governance) of the Müller, et al., (2017A) framework, the author will assess how vertical leaders govern multiple stakeholders as well as horizontal leaders. Based on the findings of the literature review, several opinions to governance exist (Yang, et al., 2013; Shane, et al., 2011; Baroudi & Rapp, 2016).

According to Cervani, et al., (2007) collaboration between two or more people has become a topic of interest for many organisations who recognise the benefits it can have on project leadership. Prior to 2007, shared leadership was also considered by Reicher, Haslam, & Hopkins., (2005). If both vertical and horizontal project leaders are to execute and govern multifaceted projects, collaboration and communication with diverse stakeholders internal and external is essential through means of partnerships (Yang, et al., 2011). Building relationships with project stakeholders is considered fundamental due to the reliance on all appropriate stakeholders during the design and implementation phase of a project (Müller & Turner, 2010).



If project leaders are to achieve project governance, they must pay considerable attention to communication and trust as they are considered prerequisites for collaboration (Meng & Boyd, 2017; Keli, Lee & Deng, 2013). Quantitative research in the IT sector suggests stakeholders favoured this approach based on the concept of knowledge collaboration used by the project leader (Braun, Avital & Martz, 2012).

According to Barnwell, Nedrick, Rudolph, Sesay & Wellen., (2014) communication takes up more time on projects than any other aspect. However, empirical research conducted by Lawrence (2015) found that stakeholders were less inclined to communicate with the wider organisation. A lack of communication to the wider organisation could be considered a risk to projects as it has the ability to send the wrong signals to the wider organisation (Mazur & Pisarski, 2015; Meng, 2012).

Recent research suggests that there is considerable purpose for project teams to incorporate all stakeholders on one project team (Zhang, et al., 2017; Bygballe, Swärd & Vaagaasar, 2016). However, projects with high numbers of stakeholders can have its disadvantages as activities become less structured and harder to manage (Lenfle & Loch, 2010), cause disruptions (Garud, et al., 2011) and unexpected events to occur (Laufer, et al., 2015). However, on the contrary, a quantitative study by Green (2003) concluded that cognitive complexities positively impact project leaders who integrate information.

Businesses over the last decade have become more complex requiring fast delivery of projects (Barnwell , et al., 2014). Therefore, a culture must be developed within the wider organisation for acceptance of projects (Charles & Dawson, 2011).

#### **2.4. Project Success**

The research in China by Müller, et al., (2017B) is the first piece of research to investigate the identification of horizontal leaders using the Balanced Project Leadership Framework as a guide. The author has hypothesised by means of observation that participants of this study operate within a balanced project leadership environment. By combining the partial work of Müller, et al., (2017A), the themes of Müller, et al., (2017B) and the findings of this study, the author will be investigating if a balanced project leadership approach can achieve project success.

According to Smith (1999) project managers must go above and beyond the management of project details and add value through leadership and adequate advice for subordinates. Shore (2005) recognised that project management literature identifies the importance of project leadership but not in as much depth as required. From an IT perspective, Kendra and Taplin (2004) found that project success is not guaranteed by following project management methodologies. Instead, they identified six competencies for project managers to follow with the most important being leadership.

According to Geoghegan & Dulewicz (2008) project success is frequently discussed but rarely agreed upon. Research into project success can be traced back to Pinto and Slevin's (1988) cited in Geoghegan & Dulewicz (2008). They found that projects require consistent communication, problem solving, administration, human and influencing skills. The research of Pinto and Slevin was built on by Turner (1999) who developed the 'Seven Forces Model' to demonstrate the relationship between project member's and managers. The relevance of Turners work and model was the inclusion and recognition of leadership as part of project strategy and essential for achieving project success (Shore, 2005).

Research in the field of project success has evolved over time. Originally, project success was determined by the iron triangle (Cserhádi & Szabó, 2014). However, as research developed and investigated other factors, authors focused on several causes for project success such as achieving the support of stakeholders for projects (Higgs & Rowland, 2011), impact of cognitive complexity (Green, 2003), the satisfaction of stakeholders (Papke-Shields, Beise & Quan, 2010), task-orientated approaches (Preston, et al., 2015), relationship – oriented (Müller & Turner, 2010), organisational culture (Pardo del Val & Fuentes, 2003) and communication and co-operation (Jugdev & Müller, 2005).

In recent research, however, quantitative analysis conducted by Cserhádi & Szabó (2014) determined that relationship attributes of project leaders are fundamental in comparison to other factors for achieving project success. Earlier qualitative research by Fisher (2011) states similar in the sense that people skills of project leaders are the essential ingredient if projects are to succeed.

The research of Cooke-Davies (2001) identified project success factors. However, Jugdev and Müller (2005) produced four conditions of rebuttal, believed necessary and precise for delivering a successful project. Using the Leadership Dimension Questionnaire, Geoghegan & Dulewicz (2008) identified positive correlations between leadership traits and overall project success. It was found that participants who rated highly for 'solves problems' were more likely to develop and empower their colleagues. The research of Geoghegan & Dulewicz (2008), contributes to and is consistent with the concept of a balanced leadership approach.

During projects a leader will be faced with many barriers which could impact the overall success of the project (Barnwell, et al., 2014). Barriers will hinder teams. According to Cleland & Gareis (2006) the most common hindrances to project success are stakeholders, time and lack of leadership.

## **2.5. Conclusion**

The literature review highlights the many facets which contribute to the field of project leadership. However, not all general leadership theories can be adapted to project settings (Müller, et al., 2017B). A qualitative study in the USA concluded that project managers would welcome new approaches and styles to project leadership (Kaminsky, 2012).

The author has selected both theoretical and empirical literature most pertinent to the objectives of this study. The author, based on recommendations from Müller, et al., (2017A) and Müller, et al., (2017B) has explored the second event of the Balanced Project Leadership Framework, examining the context, criteria and process for identifying horizontal leaders. Additionally, the researcher explored the fourth event (governance) of the Balanced Project Leadership Framework to assess how vertical leaders govern multiple stakeholders as well as horizontal leaders. Based on the findings of the literature review, several opinions to governance exist (Yang, et al., 2013; Shane, et al., 2011; Baroudi & Rapp, 2016). The author believes that information pertaining to the governance theme needs to be reflected in balanced project leadership research if project managers, organisations or academics are to utilise this approach for future endeavours.

Although Müller, et al., (2017B) identified the importance of leadership style within their research, there was no clear evidence suggesting what style or orientation was

preferred. Based on the findings of the literature review, several opinions and approaches to leading projects exists (Zhang, et al., 2017; Yang, et al., 2013; Yang, et al., 2011; Turner, et al., 2009; Turner & Müller, 2006; Dulewicz & Higgs, 2005; Keegan & Den Hartog, 2004). Therefore, the author has investigated noteworthy leadership literature in an attempt to identify the preferred leadership style of horizontal leaders.

The study of Müller, et al., (2017B) is inconclusive as to whether a balanced project leadership approach can achieve project success. Many studies have categorised what project success is (Barnwell , et al., 2014; Geoghegan & Dulewicz, 2008; Cleland & Gareis, 2006) but none have provided information from a balanced project leadership perspective. By combining the second and fourth event of the Müller, et al.,(2017A) Balanced Project Leadership Framework the author believes that sufficient strengths and weaknesses for the identification of horizontal leaders can be further investigated.

### **Chapter 3 - Research Question**

The research is expected to contribute to the phenomena of project leadership by providing scholars or project member's further information as to how they can foster their career as a vertical or horizontal leader. Although the second event of the framework has been examined in China, a study in Europe has not been conducted. According to Fisher (2011) a similar study in the western countries has the possibility to produce varying results to that conducted in the eastern countries. If the dynamics behind the shifting of leadership between project manager and team members can be researched further, it is hypothesized that leadership on projects can become more efficient, contribute to quality decision making, and enhance the development of future project managers.

The lack of research pertaining to this concept of project leadership is an incentive for the author to investigate how balanced project leadership is a critical concept of modern project leadership. Due to the alarmingly high unsuccessful rate of projects (The Standish Group, 2014); the author would like to contribute to project leadership literature by conducting empirical qualitative analysis of project leaders in an Irish organisation. Existing and new themes for the identification, governance and projects success have been linked to the four objectives for this study.

(OB1) The context, criteria & process for the identification of horizontal leaders on projects

(OB2) The style of leadership in balanced project environments

(OB3) How do project leaders govern large projects with multiple stakeholders and horizontal leaders?

(OB4) Does the identification of horizontal leaders contribute to project success?

Upon completion of this research, the author will provide (a) information for the context, criteria and process for identifying horizontal leaders (b) clarity regarding the preferred style or orientation of a horizontal leader (c) how vertical leaders govern multiple stakeholders as well as horizontal leaders and (d) if identifying horizontal leaders can lead to project success

## **Chapter 4 - Research Methodology**

### **4.1. Introduction**

In order to understand the social environment, the researcher will be conducting an exploratory study to comprehend balanced project leadership and horizontal leadership. Data will be compiled from semi-structured interviews using initial coding to reduce unsuitable data (Miles, et al., 2014). Relevant data has been simplified and abstracted using the Mystery Construction Technique (Alvesson & Karreman, 2007).

### **4.2. Research Approach**

When elaborating on a theory such as the Balanced Project Leadership Framework, it was important that the author conceptualised and implemented empirical research using the predetermined themes of Müller, et al., (2017B) for further developing the authors own theoretical insights (Fisher & Aguinis, 2017). The author achieved this by following a deduction process, hypothesising inter-dependencies and correlations between existing theory and the researchers own observations (Bryman & Bell, 2012). A limitation with the theory of deduction according to Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2012) is that the theory allows for a cause-effect link to manifest without interpreting the way of humans and their social world.

Similar to the approach of Müller, et al., (2017B) the author has selected an ontological research design process (Saunders, et al., 2012). The author is aware that findings from an Irish perspective will not necessarily represent potential findings in other nations. For this reason, the author has selected to use ontological critical realism (Easton , 2010; Vincent & Wapshott, 2010) based on the recommendation from Müller, et al., (2017B), suggesting that it is a good fit for case study research.

In order for the researcher to conceptualise and perpetuate further research of the phenomena, an interpretivist approach was selected to investigate perceptions of project leadership in an Irish organisation (Antwi & Hanza, 2015). An interpretivist rather than a positivist approach was considered based on similar studies following the same procedure (Müller, et al., 2017A; Zhang, et al., 2017; Ssegawa, 2015; Pandya, 2014; Müller & Turner, 2010). However, according to Anderson, (2013) a limitation with an interpretivist approach is the ease at which the direction of the research can be unfocused based on large volumes of information being gathered from interviews or observations.

The concept for the identification of horizontal leaders in China resonated with the authors personal observations. However, aspects of the theory in the below areas were deficient;

1. The orientation or style of a horizontal leader
2. How a vertical leader governs multiple stakeholders and horizontal leaders
3. Clarity on whether identifying horizontal leaders can lead to project success

The author used the original three themes of the Chinese study but also collected extra material to establish possible styles of leaders, governance of stakeholders and horizontal leaders and whether identifying horizontal leaders leads to success. By using the advice of Fisher & Aguinis (2017) and elaborating on the original study by Müller, et al., (2017B) the researcher has selected two of the seven possible ways in which new theory can influence existing theory. The first approach was ‘construct specification’ which states, “a theory elaboration approach in which a theoretical construct is specified or refined to more accurately reflect the realities and insights that emerge empirically” (Fisher & Aguinis, 2017, p. 9). The author used this approach to assist with;

**(OB1)** The context, criteria & process for the identification of horizontal leaders on projects

**(OB2)** The style of leadership in balanced project environments

The second approach was ‘structuring’ which essentially meant restructuring the existing theory and using it in a new light to obtain a new theoretical standpoint. Based on personal observations, general project leadership literature and findings of this research, the structuring approach contributed to the development of the following themes

**(OB3)** How do project leaders govern large projects with multiple stakeholders and horizontal leaders?

**(OB4)** Does the identification of horizontal leaders contribute to project success?

### **4.3. Sampling and Sampling Procedures**

The author will be using convenience sampling to draw information from specific project teams of the chosen Irish organisation. The author believes that by selecting the most relevant team, participants who have led projects can be identified and provide significant information. Convenience sampling has been predominantly used in previous project leadership research (Konstantinou, 2015; Gardner & Stough, 2002). By working in the organisation used for this study the author was able to select credible interviewees. Convenience sampling rather than a broader sampling method is considered sufficient based on a single company being used for the study. The author believes that by using this method, primary data relating to the identification of horizontal leaders can be investigated.

The recent research of Müller, et al., (2017B) assisted with the authors thought process for selecting this method. Criteria for selecting interviewees in the identification of horizontal leaders in China was;

1. Project experience (1-3 years)
2. Historical evidence of successfully leading projects
3. Specific project managers/leaders rather than just leaders or managers

The author has also added two additional criteria to assist with investigating **(OB3)** & **(OB4)**;

4. Project leaders who are responsible for a number of internal and external stakeholders
5. A reputation for delivering or working on successful projects

Based on the Müller, et al., (2017B) findings, the author was able to identify the difference between a vertical and a horizontal leader. This allowed the author to select both types of leaders during the interview phase of research. In order for the author to take advantage of a convenience sampling approach, permission needed to be granted from the author's employer. Firstly the author had to answer a questionnaire (*See Appendices 10.1*). Upon completion, the author then submitted the questionnaire along with the dissertation proposal for Senior Management to review.

The Senior Management Team accepted, suggesting that the author should engage with project leaders in the business and to compile a list of the staff participating. As part of the agreement, no staff names/roles were permitted to be documented. Upon completion of this research, the organisation has reserved the right to review and approve the document. The author also extended this facility to interviewees if they wished to examine transcripts or the finalised document.

In total, 15 people were sent an invite via email to participate in the study (*See Appendices 10.2*). Of the 15 invites sent, 12 responded and accepted. It took one week for all 12 candidates to accept. The author identified the 15 candidates based on observations from working on a large project for the past 18 months. All 12 candidates were previously or are still responsible and accountable for leading a piece of the overall project. In order to adhere to the ethical consideration agreements between the author and employer, participants were classified by either vertical (VL) or horizontal (HL) leaders. In total, 6 vertical and 6 horizontal leaders were interviewed. Vertical leaders were identified as project managers while horizontal leaders were identified as managers or leaders who interfaced or were responsible for leading an aspect or workstream of a project.



Sent invites	Accept/Declined	Date	Location	Project experience	Prior Knowledge of the BPL	Have you worked on a project with multiple leads
VL1	Accepted	Wednesday 4th July	Employer Offices	0-5 Years	No	Yes
VL2	Accepted	Friday 6th July	Employer Offices	10-20 Years	No	Yes
VL3	Accepted	Friday 6th July	Employer Offices	10-20 Years	No	Yes
VL4	Accepted	Tuesday 17th July	Employer Offices	5-10 Years	No	Yes
VL5	Accepted	Thursday 18th July	Employer Offices	5-10 Years	No	Yes
VL6	Accepted	Wednesday 11th July	Employer Offices	0-5 Years	No	Yes
HL3	Accepted	Friday 13th July	Employer Offices	0-5 Years	No	Yes
HL4	Accepted	Thursday 12th July	Employer Offices	5-10 Years	No	Yes
HL5	Accepted	Tuesday 10th July	Employer Offices	5-10 Years	No	Yes
HL6	Accepted	Tuesday 10th July	Employer Offices	10-20 Years	No	Yes
HL7	Accepted	Tuesday 17th July	Employer Offices	10-20 Years	No	Yes
HL8	Accepted	Tuesday 17th July	Employer Offices	5-10 Years	No	Yes
VL7	Declined to Participate					
VL8	Declined to Participate					
HL1	Declined to Participate					

#### 4.4. Instrumentation

The author has chosen to conduct qualitative analysis based on it being the predominant choice for researchers in the field of project leadership (Pandya, 2014; Lundy & Morin, 2013; Kaminsky, 2012; Fisher, 2011). However, quantitative research is represented throughout project leadership too (Ssegawa, 2015; Pandya, 2014; Müller & Turner, 2010; Strang, 2007). Qualitative research is favoured over quantitative research in leadership studies as it is useful for revealing and exploring many different dimensions of a research paper (Antwi & Hanza, 2015).

The author conducted a pilot study on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2018 with a colleague who was not part of this research. The pilot study identified that the author was using words which would not resonate with interviewees. The author made several adjustments to exclude the word horizontal leader as to not confuse interviewees. Instead, more familiar words were used which reflected terminology in the author's organisation. Words such as workstream, stakeholders and team lead were used. The author asked a total of 9 questions in the pilot. Post pilot this was reduced to 8 with question 5 & 6 becoming just a single question (*See Appendices 10.3*).

Each interview was based on case study protocol documented by Yin, (2009) instructing researchers to develop interview questions, templates and interviewee roles at the beginning of the study. Interviews were scheduled for private meeting rooms in the chosen organisation. All interviewees provided their consent for the interview to be recorded on an audio device. The duration of interviews ranged from 25 minutes to 35 minutes. The 8 questions were split into 4 blocks, (a) general information, (b) characteristics of balanced project leadership, (c) governance (d) information relating to whether identifying horizontal leaders can lead to project success. The author was aware of the possibility that participants could provide generic, standard or politically precise statements and therefore, filtered questions so easy generic responses could be avoided (Bhaskar, 2016; Alvesson & Karreman, 2007).

After each interview the researcher immediately downloaded the recording to a personal laptop with each recording protected with a unique password which was only known by the author. Further precautions were taken once a recording had downloaded to the laptop. All short hand notes were disposed of. The author was keen to avoid the use of short hand notes but was fearful of the audio recording device failing during an interview. The author recognises that the use of an audio recording device was a risk but fortunately encountered no recording issues.

The author did not need to follow up any interviews for subsequent or additional information. All audio recordings were of the highest quality. All material obtained from the interview process .i.e. data displays, recordings etc. will be disposed of once the author has submitted the dissertation to the National College of Ireland by no later than the 29<sup>th</sup> of August 2018.

Each interviewee was asked the same 8 questions as outlined in Appendix 10.3 *Interview Questions*. Each question was related to an objective as per the table.

Question 1	Objective 1	
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Question 2		The context, criteria & process for the identification of horizontal leaders on projects
Question 8		
Question 3	Objective 2	The style of leadership in balanced project environments (task or relationship oriented leadership style)
Question 4	Objective 3	How do project leaders govern large projects with multiple stakeholders?
Question 5		
Question 6	Objective 4	Does a balanced leadership approach achieve project success?
Question 7		

During interviews, the author was able to explore and develop on information by prompting interviewees. According to Folkman-Curasi (2001) prompting questions during interviews permits the researcher to alter the direction of the interview to coincide with the flow of discussion. This was the basis for why a semi-structured approach was chosen. According to Saunders, et al., (2012) researchers who use a semi-structured style of interview will probably veer from their original questioning and possibly create unforeseen themes during the data analysis phase.

By synthesising literature pertaining to the wider field of project leadership, the author could predetermine four objectives. Each objective has therefore been designed to ensure that it correlates with at least one chapter within the literature review. Objective 1 (***OBI***) is directly derived from the themes of Müller, et al., (2017B).

<b>Context</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> order	<b>Structure</b> Project scale, culture & policies, role vacancy		<b>Agency</b> Project manager's style and role understanding in leading human resources
	1 <sup>st</sup> order			
<b>Criteria</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> order	<b>Professionalism</b> Professional skills	<b>Personality</b> Emotional and social skills	<b>Attitude</b> Intention to be promoted
	1 <sup>st</sup> order	Teamwork skills Experience	Leadership traits Person-situation fit	Job attitude
<b>Process</b>	Level	<b>Project manager</b> Preliminary evaluation		<b>Team member</b> Preliminary evaluation
	Steps	Development Assessment		Competition Development Guidance and encouragement

(Müller, R. et al., 2017B. The identification of temporary horizontal leaders in projects: The case of China)

Objective 2 (**OB2**) also used the original themes of Müller, et al., (2017B) but only focused on the Context, 2<sup>nd</sup> order, 'Agency' theme. The author believes that no particular style of leadership was addressed and was left unsure as to what style of leadership was required for becoming a horizontal leader on a project. The author felt that this would be key information for potential future project leaders operating in a balanced project leadership environment based on numerous previous studies in this area studies (Zhang, et al., 2017; Yang, et al., 2013; Yang, et al., 2011; Turner, et al., 2009; Turner & Müller, 2006; Dulewicz & Higgs, 2005; Keegan & Den Hartog, 2004).

Objectives 3 & 4 were designed by the author using the same rationale for why (**OB2**) was created. (**OB3**) was created based on a lack of information relating to how project leaders govern stakeholders and horizontal leaders in balanced project leadership environments (Yang, et al., 2011; Shane, et al., 2011; Baroudi & Rapp, 2016). (**OB4**) was created to investigate if identifying horizontal leaders can achieve project success based on several opinions existing in this area of project leadership (Barnwell, et al., 2014; Geoghegan & Dulewicz, 2008; Cleland & Gareis, 2006).

In summary, the author's additional objectives to the original study in China are an attempt to extend, integrate or elaborate on the process for identifying horizontal leaders.

		Original Framework		
(OB1)	Context	Structure		Agency (OB2)
	Criteria	Professionality	Personality	Attitude
	Process	Project Manager		Team Member
		Additions to the Framework		
(OB3)	Governance	Engagement		Support
(OB4)	Success	Positive Factors		Negative Factors

The author was aware of the potential to be biased during the interview process. Bias is also increased due to the author being an employee of the organisation. In order to reduce bias, the author took control measures as per the recommendation of Turner III (2010).

The author found the Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) book useful for understanding the disadvantages of a qualitative approach. If researchers allow bias into their study, interviewees could be directed to predetermined or desired results. Therefore, the semi-structured approach as identified by Saunders, et al. (2012) was pivotal for allowing participants to lead the interviews, rather than the author dictating a predetermined agenda.

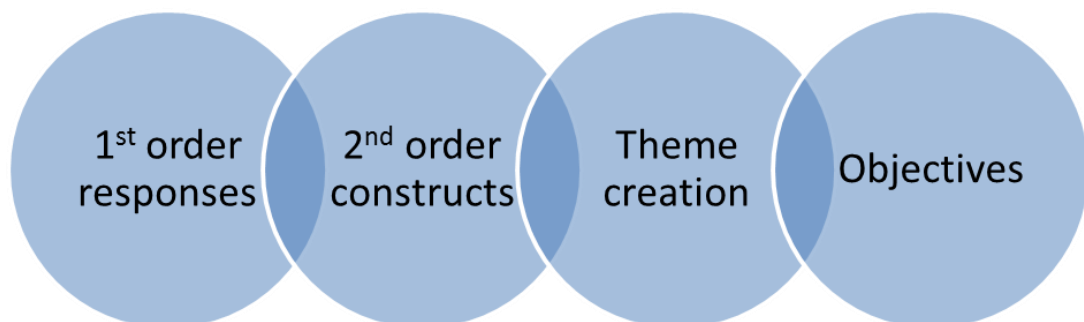
#### 4.5. Data Analysis

Analysis of the data was compiled onto a data display using the Miles, et al., (2014) initial coding approach in conjunction with a second-cycle of coding for the identification of patterns. Each participant was either a vertical (VL) or horizontal leader (HL) and was put on the 'y' axis with themes placed on the 'x' axis.

Interview protocol/theme sheet										
Context (OB1)		Criteria (OB1)			Process (OB1)		Governance (OB3)		Success (OB4)	
Structure	Agency (OB2)	Professionality	Personality	Attitude	Project Manager & Team Memeber	Engagement	Support	Positive Factors	Negative Factors	
VL1	1 <sup>st</sup> order raw data collected from interviews									
VL2										
VL3										
VL4										
VL5										
VL6										
HL3										
HL4										
HL5										
HL6										
HL7										
HL8										

Analysis of the raw data gathered during the interview process was categorised as first order responses. Each first order response was then grouped into appropriate second order constructs for model building (Müller, et al., 2017B). The second order constructs namely, structure, agency, professionalism, personality, attitude, project manager & team member were all identified by Müller, et al., (2017B).

As per **OB3** and **OB4** of this study, the author added two themes, meaning four additional second order constructs were created. Under the theme governance, engagement and support were selected as well as positive and negative under the success theme. The author as per the instructions of Miles, et al., (2014) grouped first order responses into second order constructs to populate themes so objectives for this study could be unravelled.



As per the instructions of Miles, et al., (2014) and the research of Müller, et al., (2017A) and Müller, et al., (2017B) the author excluded unsuitable data by selecting, simplifying and abstracting prominent information. The author was aware of the potential for vague answers during the interview process. In order to combat this, two methods were used. Firstly, the author asked follow up questions or repeated the interviewee responses. By repeating responses, the author could pin point key words or try and use a singular word to sum up the response. Lastly, by comparing the recordings and the data display table, the author was able to identify reoccurring patterns.

Following the advice of Alvesson & Kärreman (2007) the author used a two-step process called the Mystery Construction Technique to ensure that the additional themes created by the author reflected and aligned with the original themes. The technique is less known in comparison to more grounded options but has previously been used in other project management studies (Jacobsson & Lundin, 2011).

The first step of the process was for the author to reflect on the data collected to distinguish if the information gathered was socially constructed. The technique essentially provides a solution by using double reflective reasoning of a phenomena which is not adequately explained through existing theory. The second step is to further reflect on the first step again in order to provide possible solutions for the gap in research or lack of information in current theories.

By reflecting twice, the Mystery Construction technique is distinguished from other qualitative methods, which usually suggest only one level of reflection, such as, grounded techniques. The author felt that using a grounded technique was not coherent with the objectives of this study. The existing theory of Müller, et al., (2017B) is quite satisfactory and a grounded method to develop a new theory (Glaser & Strauss, 2012) was not required.

Content analysis was also explored as an option and was nearly considered as the preferred option until further inspection of the existing framework. According to Lichtmann, (2013), content analysis methods are used by researchers who select a framework and then apply it to a phenomena. However, this method does not allow for researchers to extend or elaborate a framework. The original research by Müller, et al., (2017A) recommended that academics should continue to investigate the

framework and build upon it. Therefore a content analysis approach was discarded in favour for of an approach which was open to development of new themes.

The Mystery Construction method is an abductive approach which uses existing frameworks, such as the balanced project leadership framework and attempts to reconstruct the original thoughts of the interviewee. This abductive approach is a combinaion of the following;

1. Application of existing theories
2. Analysis of colleted material
3. Researcher's own experience

When combined, researchers develop a creative understanding of the phenomena under investigation. By following this approach the author identified project leaders experiences through interviews and then compared them to the theory of Müller, et al., (2017A), the themes from the Chinese study by Müller, et al., (2017B) and the researchers own experiences. By using this method the author was able to integrate additional themes into the original research encompassing objectives 2, 3 & 4. An approach like this was used previously for critical realism studies by (Smith & Elger, 2014; Vincent & Wapshott, 2010; Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009).

#### **4.6. Ethical Considerations**

Prior to the commencement of this section the author firstly identified and attempted to alleviate potential ethical apprehensions. When the researcher approached his employer for permission to interview both vertical and horizontal leaders, many stipulations had to be agreed upon. The organisation in question wished to further understand the study with regards to any potential benefits or drawbacks on the company. They requested that the author fill in a questionnaire.

Once the questionnaire was complete, along with a copy of the authors' proposal, the organisation agreed to facilitate this research and to approach project leaders within the business. From the outset, the author ensured that the ethical considerations and integrity of the organisation was adhered to. Confidentiality was at the heart of this research. The author purposely chose to research a topic which did not require the use of the organisations name, employee names, organisation data or other private and confidential details. Extra precaution was taken to also use the terms horizontal and



vertical to identify project employees working on Irish projects. Readers of the dissertation will not know what company was used, what company the interviewees belong too, or the positions of employees who will be interviewed. Furthermore, all personal questions relating to a participants gender or age were non-compulsory to avoid both the risk of identification but also deemed irrelevant for this particular piece of research.

The research was solely for the purpose of interviewing experienced and knowledgeable experts in the field of project management. Through daily observation of project situations and how project leadership is utilized, it was logical for the author to research a concept in the field of project management.

Another major consideration for the author was the use of human participants and to ensure that transparency, confidentiality, voluntarism and safety was adhered to (Biggam, 2011). The likelihood of the researcher violating any of these considerations is non-existent, but nevertheless, the researcher included transparency and voluntarism information before each interview explaining the research purpose, the expected time of the interview and interviewees right to stop or withdraw from the interview at any stage.

## **Chapter 5 - Findings**

The following section will illustrate the findings from data gathered during interviews. In total, 6 vertical and 6 horizontal leaders participated in the study. Each vertical leader was identified as (VL) and each horizontal leader was identified as (HL)

Vertical Leaders	Horizontal Leaders
VL1	HL3
VL2	HL4
VL3	HL5
VL4	HL6
VL5	HL7
VL6	HL8

The average experience of participants working on projects was 5-10 years. None of the participants had previously heard of the Balanced Project Leadership Framework. However, all worked on projects with multiple leaders. In the following section, the

author will synthesize first order responses and demonstrate how findings are pertinent to second order constructs for building themes (Miles, et al., 2014).

### **5.1. Context**

The context for identifying horizontal leaders is due to two concepts, namely structure and agency. Firstly, structure refers to first order responses relating to project size, role vacancy and organisation culture. It was perceived by the findings of Müller, et al., (2017B) that larger projects mean a greater workload, increasing the chances of delegation to horizontal leaders. Research of the Irish organisation identified an awareness of this by designing matrix organisational structures to simplify activities. HL5 stated, “Project workstreams within the company are horizontal. BAU experts are identified from a matrix structure and asked to assist with leading out a particular part of a project”.

From an Irish perspective, role vacancy is monitored by the demands or needs of the business. In the event that the business requires project leaders, it will look at the supply within the business. VL6 states ‘in this organisation we build (grow internal talent), buy (hire external support), borrow (as per the organisations matrix structure) or use robots to automate a process of the project. The organisation, however, would be strongly of the opinion that we should be building internal employees to become more project savvy”. VL3 described a process for assigning project leaders to an area which they had the most technical expertise or experience. “Vacant positions are often assigned to staff who are best suited based on their attributes or experience”.

In order to sustain the organisations matrix structure or process for role vacancy, a culture which promotes shared values, employee development and talent management is essential for fostering the identification of horizontal leaders (Allen , et al., 2016). 3 of the 6 horizontal participants identified a culture which develops employees to be crucial for nurturing future project team leaders. Participants HL5 & HL7 described working in a culture that let employees express themselves, and encouraged projects. HL8 discussed an environment or culture which try’s to develop employees by measuring performance annually, “The organisation carries out personal development through performance management. If employee objectives are achieved they will receive a high score and thus be considered talented in their field of work”.

According to Charles & Dawson (2011) a culture must be developed within the wider organisation for acceptance of projects. Participant HL6 stated, “The organisation has a designated change area and I have found that to be beneficial compared to other organisations who I have worked with”. Participant HL3 stated, “Change in the organisation is the norm. 40% of my time as a senior manager revolves around transformational projects”.

Vertical leaders were more inclined to suggest that culture was not a pivotal part for identifying future project leaders. VL1 stated, “In my experience, I don’t think I’ve seen a formal system of development in place. A lot of developing is informal and a lot of the time it is more on the job learning”. VL2 acknowledged the importance of an organisation culture with regards technical training for employee development ,however, “Organisations need to be more proactive when it comes to succession planning and giving people who have an appetite for projects exposure” According to Pardo del Val & Fuentes (2003) organisation culture is a prerequisite in achieving project success. VL4 stated, “Yes, the organisation is very good at change projects; however, we are not as good at embedding the change once it’s been put in place. There is a culture of doing the project and then walking away and we don’t ever really go back to do lessons learned or benefit realization”.

The research by Müller, et al., (2017B) in China found the leadership style or agency construct of a project leader to be a key variable for enabling horizontal leaders. 7 of the 12 participants identified that a relationship orientation was considered the most practical for leading transformational projects. According to Rezvani, et al., (2016) emotional intelligence is a fundamental skill that should be utilised by project leaders. HL7 stated, “Being relationship orientated requires self knowledge, self awareness and emotional intelligence to handle yourself and able to recognise it in others”.

Based on empirical analysis, project sponsors should appoint leaders that exhibit high levels of emotional intelligence to make efficient use of emotional support during complex integrated project deliveries (Zhang, et al., 2017). According to Arnold & Loughlin (2013) transformational leaders stimulate subordinates to challenge themselves. Participant VL5 stated “While focused on getting things done, I’d like to think that I do it by building relationships. If you have good trusted people working

on projects, they're not going to not want to perform, however, you need to give them direction, but how they get it done is up to them".

3 of the 6 vertical participants had similar beliefs to the findings of Strang, (2007) & Bouley (2006) suggesting that a project leader must be both relationship and task focused. VL2 stated, "It's good to have a mix, because every project has deadlines, meaning you must be focused on the task too".

## **5.2. Criteria**

The criteria for identifying horizontal leaders are split into three constructs, professionalism, personality and attitude (Müller, et al., 2017B). Professional skills, teamwork and age in the Chinese study were considered obvious prerequisites for being identified as a potential project leader. In Ireland, 3 of the 6 vertical participants mentioned technical experience such as problem solving (Charles & Dawson, 2011; Rees, et al., 1996), cost, time, stakeholders and scope (Mazur & Pisarski, 2015; Ahsan, et al., 2013; Pemsel & Müller, 2012; Meng, 2012) rather than age as critical factors for identifying future project leaders. VL1 stated "The first requirement for hiring a project leader is to ensure that candidates are an expert in their discipline and have adequate technical knowledge". VL2 stated "A number of project leaders who I have hired demonstrated an ability to problem solve through difficult times of projects, whether it be cost, time, or stakeholders. Projects are messy, without prior experience, an unexperienced project leader will not be able to identify how important a problem may be".

Qualitative analysis of technical project leaders acknowledged that it is no longer adequate to solely have technical capabilities (Pandya, 2014; Kaminsky, 2012). Horizontal leaders were more inclined to agree with this as 4 of the 6 horizontal leaders suggested that people management was a critical factor. According to Wysocki (2007) project managers should also create environments which enable project team members to think 'outside the box'. HL3 stated, "As a manager of a team on a current project, I encourage my staff to take opportunities and to follow their instinct when faced with problematic situations. I trust and empower my staff to be creative and to find the best solutions". In order to do this, it is considered practical that project leaders have strong communication, motivational skills and an ability to keep a holistic view of the whole project (Earnhardt, et al., 2015; Bopanna & Gupta, 2009).

The 7 participants who classified themselves as being relationship orientated demonstrated the importance of being strong communicators to stakeholders and motivators for their team members. HL4 stated “Projects can be incredibly frustrating especially when dealing with stakeholders. I sometimes find myself requiring motivation or providing support to my staff during difficult situations”.

According to Müller, et al., (2017B) personality of a project leader requires emotional and social capabilities to manage their own behaviours accordingly. The author noted many first order responses from participants. According to Redick, et al., (2014) project leaders must create a personal philosophy for implementing the necessary skills relevant to the situation. The author’s findings resemble the conclusion from the Earnhardt, et al., (2015) research suggesting, project leaders must be diverse and have ‘schizophrenic’ qualities. The author has summarised the findings in a graph to demonstrate inconsistencies with the data gathered.

Criteria	
Personality	
<u>VL1</u>	Practical
<u>VL2</u>	Personal
<u>VL3</u>	Proactive
<u>VL4</u>	Approachable
<u>VL5</u>	Authentic
<u>VL6</u>	Self Awareness
<u>VL7</u>	Authority
<u>HL1</u>	Helpful
<u>HL2</u>	Deadline driven
<u>HL3</u>	Facilitator
<u>HL4</u>	Collaborative
<u>HL5</u>	High-level overview
<u>HL6</u>	Communicator
<u>HL7</u>	Motivator
<u>HL8</u>	Goal driven

The last construct for the criteria of identifying horizontal leaders is attitude. The theme demonstrates the intentions of a potential project leaders interests for promotion and willingness to become a leader (Müller, et al., 2017B). VL6 stated “Organisations need to factor in what people want. Managers cannot assume that people will be great leaders. Organisations need to get better at what is deemed as success and what is

deemed as development. Sometimes people feel that the only way they can develop is to get promoted. However, there is nothing wrong with lateral moves. Moving laterally throughout my career has been key to my development as I have gained knowledge and experience in a number of areas of the business”.

Vertical and horizontal leaders had different opinions when it came to attitude for potential promotion to a temporary project leadership role. 4 of the 6 vertical leaders expressed that a team member should take their opportunities when given a chance to demonstrate leadership. VL2 stated, “look to be involved in as much as you can. Take the opportunity to lead out”. The majority of horizontal leaders believed that showing initiative was a critical factor in them becoming a successful project leader. HL8 stated, “Project managers hate problems without solutions. In order to get noticed, I would suggest always being on the look out for solutions to problems before they escalate. The more you do this, the more you will be trusted and given empowerment”.

### **5.3. Process**

Similar to project managers from the Müller, et al., (2017B) research, Irish vertical leaders are inclined to select somebody based on their professionalism, experience, knowledge or skill. A fundamental element of the process for identifying horizontal leaders was development. According to Müller, et al., (2017B) project managers actively develop candidates by taking time to help candidates with necessary skills. However, in Ireland, participants outweighed those who believed that learning and development was part of the process for identification. 7 of the 12 interviewees described situations of receiving no development training but rather ‘learnt on the job’. VL6 stated, “Yes I received training and went on numerous courses, but nothing can train you for the reality of a project. Each day is different, different stakeholders, different activities, all requiring skills and knowledge. I firmly believe that I learnt 70% from simply being on a project rather than in a classroom”.

Horizontal leaders were more of the opinion that personal characteristics such as ambition (HL7), enthusiasm (HL6), self motivation (HL8) and confidence (HL5) were more significant than relying on a project manager to provide guidance, encouragement or development. The research identified that only those formally promoted to managerial positions receive training. Two of the six horizontal leaders interviewed suggested that managerial training should be extended to lower levels of

employees who express an interest in becoming future project managers. HL3 mentioned, “Yes, I have received training and development from the organisation as I am now a manager on a project. I think learning and development should be provided to those employees who express an interest in becoming future managers either on projects or not”.

According to Heifetz (1994) Adaptive Leadership framework, people often fail to spot leadership when exercised by people without authority. Within the Irish organisation, vertical leaders acknowledged the importance of authority by empowering their horizontal leaders to act on their behalf to either lead an aspect of a project (Geoghegan & Dulewicz, 2008), govern on their behalf (Meng & Boyd, 2017) or collaborate with diverse stakeholders (Zhang, et al., 2017). According to VL1, “When I assign trusted members of my team to act on my behalf, I do so by empowering them to make decisions and trust them to successfully govern their team”.

#### **5.4. Governance**

If project leaders are to achieve project governance, they must engage and communicate with stakeholders as they are considered prerequisites for collaboration on projects (Meng & Boyd, 2017; Keli, Lee & Deng, 2013). 11 of the 12 interviewees agree and identified why stakeholders are key to project success

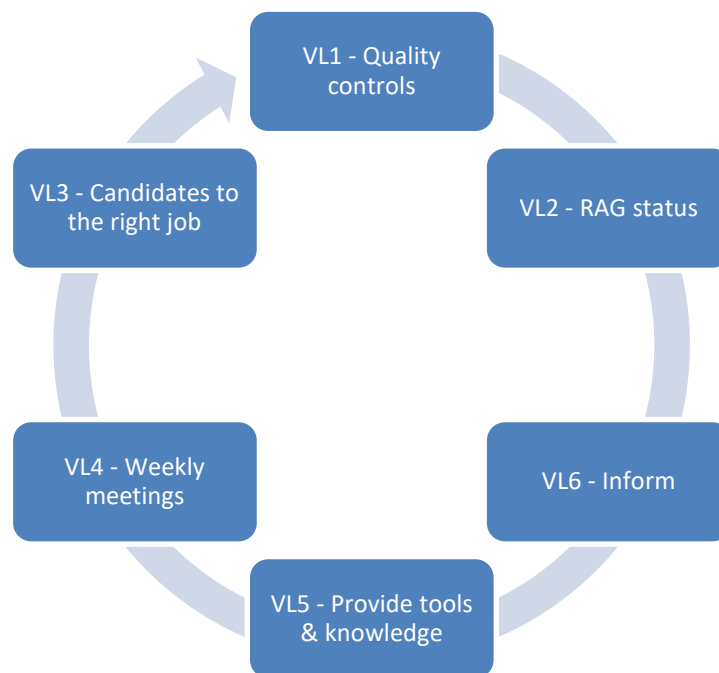
1. VL2 – “Include impacted stakeholders to mitigate against risk during the output phase of a project”
2. VL3 – “Understand the needs of each stakeholder as each most probably be different”
3. HL3 – “Encourage influential stakeholders to participate in every way they can”
4. HL6 – “There is a huge reliance on stakeholders as they are the custodians of a project”

According to Barnwell , et al., (2014) communication takes up more time on projects than any other aspect. A lack of communication to the wider organisation could be considered a risk to projects (Mazur & Pisarski, 2015; Meng, 2012). HL1 stated, “Communication is the heart and soul of a project. It is imperative in order to establish stakeholder buy in. When on large transformational projects with numerous stakeholders it can be incredibly difficult to keep communication consistent”. HL3

shared similar sentiments “While it is probably cliché, I always ensure I set out a communication plan from the outset in parallel to a stakeholder management plan. Even when I spend weeks managing and forecasting communications to relevant stakeholders, issues always seem to arise. A simple communication or stakeholder plan is simply too important to exclude when it comes to project planning”.

Recent research suggests that there is considerable purpose for project teams to incorporate all stakeholders onto one project team (Zhang, et al., 2017; Bygballe, Swärd & Vaagaasar, 2016). However, projects with high numbers of stakeholders can have its disadvantages as activities become less structured and harder to manage (Lenfle & Loch, 2010), cause disruptions (Garud, Gehman & Kumaraswamy, 2011) and unexpected events to occur (Laufer, Hoffman, Russell & Cameron, 2015). According to VL5, “This organisation is very good at embedding stakeholders into the project. Particularly on the larger projects were workstreams are often led by people from BAU, who are most knowledgeable and experienced to deliver”.

According to Müller, et al., (2017A) a variety of different approaches exist for supporting horizontal leaders with multiple project activities. In Ireland, vertical leaders use a number of tools to manage objectives against results.





Horizontal leaders predominately agreed with their vertical leaders with respect to having controls (HL3), reports (HL8), meetings (HL6) and adequate tools (HL7) to govern on behalf of their leaders. According to Cervani, et al., (2007) a project leader from time to time will need to share leadership with a capable trusted team member who has the necessary skills to deliver a critical piece of the project. HL4 and HL5, detested the concept of micro management and found it to be a barrier to governing. HL5 stated “while its nice to have the support of your manager or leader, there is a fine line that is sometimes crossed which leads to micro management which I believe is a barrier to my personal development”. HL4 stated, “Micro management is the worst! I feel that it is a serious lack of trust when my manager cannot let go of minor things and let me do things my way”.

### **5.5. Project Success**

Of the 6 vertical leaders, 4 identified hiring specific temporary leaders to manage the communication and expectations of stakeholders (Higgs & Rowland, 2011). VL1 stated, “Due to the importance of stakeholders on this project, a number of leaders have been brought onto the project to solely manage the people aspect of stakeholders and comms”. VL2 stated “ Working on such a large programme, cross functional collaboration is integral. Staff from BAU are expected to come onto projects such as this and lead and inform their department of project progression”.

Horizontal leaders, when asked the same question identified the importance of identifying internal staff to act as leaders. It was perceived that the more time internal staff spent on projects, the less inclined the organisation would be to use external 3<sup>rd</sup> parties to deliver projects in the future. HL3 stated, “Staff development internally is increased based on exposure to project environments”. HL6 felt that the more change undertaken by internal staff the more the organsiation would open up to change.

According to Green (2003) project success should develop cognitive competencies of project staff. This view was shared by HL7, “ When I was chosen to lead an aspect of a previous project, I was very nervous and unsure if I could do it. I had no previous project management experience. Upon completing my deliverables, my opinions of change and projects transformed. I felt a huge sense of achievment and more competent to lead an aspect of, or a full project in the future”.

During projects a leader will be faced with many barriers which could impact the overall success of the project (Barnwell , et al., 2014). According to Cleland & Gareis (2006) the most common hindrances to project success are stakeholders, time and lack of leadership. While benefits of using a balanced project leadership approach can be useful for both vertical and horizontal leaders, they both still suggested that issues such as external stakeholder buy in and BAU desire for change as barriers to project success. VL2 stated, “Regardless of the approach to leading a project, management of external stakeholders is always the most difficult aspect. When a different organisation to ours does not share the same goals or value of the project objectives, it is incredibly difficult to get them to engage”. 2 of the 6 horizontal leaders identified difficulties within the organisation. HL5 “Sometimes BAU are too busy with their own agendas that they have little time to engage in project activities. As a leader of a workstream, this can be difficult to explain to your manager as project progression is delayed and out of your control”.

Both a vertical and a horizontal leader identified weaknesses pertinent to a balanced project leadership approach. Firstly, VL5 stated “While the organisation is open to supporting change and projects, it can be extremely difficult getting the right people. In my experience, BAU departments or functions are reluctant to share their best assests in fear that they won’t come back”. HL8 “on large projects like this, you don’t always get recognition for what you achieved. With so many leaders, it is usually the senior ones who take the credit”.

## **5.6. Holistic Balanced Project Leadership Framework**

The findings of this research have been placed into a data display with first order responses being grouped under second order constructs which contributed to predetermined and additional themes. The author suggests that this data display should be used as a new holistic framework, demonstrating how horizontal leaders can be identified and governed.

The framework can also be used to illustrate how a balanced project leadership approach can lead projects to success based on both positive and negative findings. By utilising this approach, vertical leaders can remain strategically focused while delegating stand alone activities to trusted horizontal leaders. By identifying horizontal leaders from an internal talent pool, not only is staff capability and

confidence strengthened, but also, opportunities for organisations exist to save on cost by not relying on expensive 3<sup>rd</sup> party organisations to deliver projects on their behalf.

How Temporary Leaders are Identified and Govern Projects to Success											
Objectives	OB1 & OB2					OB3		OB4			
Themes	Context		Criteria			Process		Governance		Success	
2nd Order Constructs	Structure	Agency	Professionality	Personality	Attitude	Project Manger	Team Member	Engagement	Support	Positive	Negative
1st Order Responses	Matrix Org Structure	Relationship Orientation	Technical Experience	Emotional & Social Capabilities	Personal Willingness to lead	On the Job Learning	Personal Characteristics	Prioritise stakeholders	Trust	Specific temporary leaders to manage stakeholders	Getting the right people
	Build, Buy, Borrow or Bot	High Emotional Intelligence	Problem Solving Mentality	Personal Philosophy	Take opportunities	Assign authority	Early training and development	Communication to the wider organisation	Manage objectives against results	Cross functional collaboration	Recognition for achievements
	Performance Mgmt.	Trusted Employees	People Management		Initiative			Comms & Stakeholder plans	No micro management	Less reliance on external 3rd parties	
	Designated Change Team	Conscious of Deadlines	Strong Comms Skills					Incorporate all stakeholders to one project team		Organisation openness to change	
	Employee Project Exposure										

## Chapter 6 - Discussion

The study discovered the context, criteria, process and governance for identifying potential horizontal leaders. Using empirical evidence, the author endeavoured to further develop the research of Müller, et al., (2017A) and Müller, et al., (2017B). The first order responses captured from an Irish perspective permitted the author to interpret the data through a slightly different theoretical lens. The findings of the study were integrated into the graph of the original findings of Müller, et al., (2017B). The author believes that academics can now view the concept of balanced project leadership from a high level overview which summarises the partial work of Müller, et al., (2017A), the themes of Müller, et al., (2017B) and the findings of this study.

### 6.1. (OB1)

#### The context, criteria & process for the identification of horizontal leaders on projects

The three themes were predetermined by Müller, et al., (2017B) based on them being considered fundamental elements to constitute social behaviour of humans (Konstantinou, 2015). Without a matrix organisation structure accompanied by a designated change department, it is incomprehensible to see how change or projects would be possible. By using the build, buy, borrow or robot method, the organisation ensures that they have options to build horizontal leaders, outsource 3<sup>rd</sup> party contractors, borrow from other departments or use a piece of technology.

By assessing employee performance annually, high scoring employees can be identified and placed into a talent pool for further development or opportunities to participate on projects as experts. The findings from the Irish study were definitive in comparison to the study of Müller, et al., (2017B). Based on the culture of the organisation, many opportunities both informal and formal exist for employees to be identified as potential horizontal leaders.

It was evident from the research that a strong organisational culture can only get potential horizontal leaders to a certain point. Vertical leaders in the Irish organisation were of the opinion that potential project leaders could only be selected on the foundation that they had prior technical experience. To complicate things further, horizontal leaders suggested experience from a people management perspective was imperative if a horizontal leader was to be considered.

The diverse professionalism requirements of potential horizontal leaders was replicated in the findings of suitable personality traits. None of the 12 participants could harmonize a common key characteristic for identifying horizontal leaders. As the author could not determine a common response, findings of both Redick, et al. (2014) and Earnhardt, et al., (2015) resonate with a balanced project leadership approach.

The findings of Müller, et al., (2017B) found that potential candidates must have a personal willingness to lead a project. Certain participants of the study were keen to downplay the importance of promotion. Lateral moves across an organisational structure were considered beneficial to enhance knowledge, capability and experience. A strategy to follow these instructions is deemed beneficial by the author based on the complex expectations or requirements of a project leader role.

The standout difference between the research of Müller, et al., (2017B) and the findings of this research was the process for identifying horizontal leaders. In China, vertical leaders were more inclined to assist with the development of potential candidates by investing time to demonstrate or educate horizontal leaders. From an Irish perspective, vertical leaders assume that horizontal leaders are capable based on having certain training or education. Rather than developing their project members, vertical leaders tend to put their trust in the organisation's learning and development department to educate the workforce. The fact that vertical leaders trust their organisation to train and develop horizontal leaders is another example of the strong

culture installed in the chosen organisation. Irish vertical leaders prefer to delegate authority rather than instill education on horizontal leaders (Heifetz, 1994).

## **6.2. (OB2)**

### *The style of leadership in balanced project environments*

The second construct of the context theme is agency. This depicts how vertical leaders execute the project based on their style, ability to influence and encouragement shown for project team members (Northhouse, 2007). Although Müller, et al., (2017B) identified the importance of leadership style within their research, there was no clear evidence suggesting what style or orientation was preferred.

Seven participants suggested that a relationship approach was favoured rather than a task approach. The findings correlate with the opinion of Meng & Boyd (2017), who placed relationship management as the next generation of project leadership research. The author has interpreted this approach most useful to project leadership based on the importance of understanding and communicating with stakeholders (Braun, et al., 2012). The findings reflect the sample used for this study. All participants referenced and spoke of large projects illustrating a transformational leadership style that paid attention to followers, setting challenging deliverables and showing respect to fellow project members (Turner & Müller, 2006).

Project leaders choice of style is traced to characteristics of the person's personality. However, due to projects being complex with many barriers, Meredith & Mantel (2012) recommend that all project members should be equipped with the relevant skills so the responsibility of the leader is minimised. This was evident by 4 of the 6 vertical leaders who suggested that a mix orientation of relationship and task was preferred.

Interestingly, certain participants who suggested that technical experience was the favoured professionalism trait also suggested the importance of emotional intelligence. While this may contradict their views, the research of Geoghegan & Dulewicz (2008) using the Leadership Dimension Questionnaire demonstrated that a strong relationship exists for leaders with both emotional intelligence and technical intellect.

In the absence of knowledge or lack of skill, a project leader known as a vertical leader, empowers reliable team members known as horizontal leaders (Müller, et al., 2017A).

The benefits of a balanced project leadership approach became apparent during this stage of analysis. A participant described their leadership style or orientation as being 80% task and 20% relationship. While admitting that it should be more balanced, they made reference to relying on other leaders to represent the project from a relationship stance so that they could remain strategically focused.

### **6.3. (OB3)**

#### *How do project leaders govern large projects with multiple stakeholders and horizontal leaders?*

The author has incorporated the fourth event (Governance) of the Balanced Project Leadership Framework (Müller, et al., 2017A) with the original findings of Müller, et al., (2017B). In order to achieve this objective, the author created two second order constructs from a number of first order responses. The author chose engagement and support as the most practical constructs to use.

Firstly, engagement was selected based on participants mentioning the importance of inclusion, understanding, encouragement and reliance on stakeholders. Early engagement was considered the most fundamental aspect when governing multiple stakeholders (Meng & Boyd, 2017). Project leaders determined communication as being the most challenging aspect of stakeholder management. A lack of communication both internally and externally was considered most problematic to project progression (Mazur & Pisarski, 2015; Barnwell , et al., 2014; Meng, 2012).

A balanced project leadership approach does not provide any mitigation when managing stakeholders. However, by following a matrix organisation structure, the organisation selects qualified stakeholders to become horizontal leaders by including them on the project team. Recent research (Zhang, et al., 2017; Bygballe, Swärd & Vaagaasar, 2016) found that incorporating stakeholders on one project team benefits project efficiency, capability and quicker decision making.

The author also suggests that organisations who use stakeholders as horizontal leaders can assist with communicating the message of the project to the wider organisation (Lawrence, 2015). By having a stakeholder or a ‘familiar face’ representing the department on the project, communication between both project and department is greatly improved (Mazur & Pisarski, 2015; Meng, 2012).

Lastly, support was chosen as the final second order construct of the governance theme. The author did not provide any previous literature review for this concept as it was hypothesized that each project leader would have their own method for project planning, design and implementation (Laufer, et al., 2015; Lenfle & Loch, 2010). The author recognises this to be a limitation within the research for studies conducted outside of Ireland where supportive project methods, tools and styles may differ. However, the author is confident of the results based on this being an Irish study rather than a global study.

Based on the findings of this study, there is a fine line between governance and micro management. Horizontal leaders resented the fact that they sometimes felt micro managed. They expressed a need for empowerment and trust so that they could make their own decisions. In situations where vertical leaders have delegated adequate trust; they ensure continuous communication with each of their horizontal leaders using a variety of supportive methods or tools.

#### **6.4. (OB4)**

*Does the identification of horizontal leaders contribute to project success?*

The author acknowledges that this objective is dissimilar to the investigative nature of OB1-3. However, by using two events of the Balanced Project Leadership Framework (Müller, et al., 2017A), the themes from the Chinese study (Müller, et al., 2017B) and the findings from this study, the author believes that enough data has been gathered to hypothesize the benefits and drawbacks to organisations identifying horizontal leaders for future projects.

Over the last two decades, authors have focused on several causes for project success (Preston, et al., 2015; Higgs & Rowland, 2011; Papke-Shields, et al., 2010; Müller & Turner, 2010). Studies assessing project success have thus far not been conducted from a balanced project leadership perspective. As to be expected, all 12 participants had no previous knowledge of a Balanced Project Leadership approach. However, based on the author's observations over the 18 months it was clear that they may have been using it without knowing. The author believes this for two reasons, (a) all project leaders had worked on a project with multiple leaders and (b) projects within the company are predominately categorised as large transformational, requiring input from several departments or functions nationally. Based on the size of projects it is

considered impossible for project leaders to control or lead every aspect. Therefore, there is a reliance on chosen trusted project staff or stakeholders to lead a workstream or area of a project. The author has interpreted this as a vertical leader selecting multiple horizontal leaders as per the findings of Müller, et al., (2017A) and Müller, et al., (2017B).

Originally, project success was determined by the iron triangle (Cserhádi & Szabó, 2014). For just over two decades, authors have searched for other classifications of project success (Preston, et al., 2015; Higgs & Rowland, 2011; Papke-Shields, et al., 2010; Müller & Turner, 2010). To date, no research has defined project success from a balanced project leadership perspective or the benefits of using horizontal leaders.

Quantitative analysis conducted by Cserhádi & Szabó, (2014) determined that relationship attributes of project leaders on large transformational projects to be critical for project success. From the findings of this research, 40% of the organisations projects are considered transformational. Participants of this study demonstrated that a relationship style was preferred based on the importance of emotional intelligence during complex integrated project deliveries (Zhang, et al., 2017). The major benefit of identifying horizontal leaders is the ability to utilise stronger relationship focused personnel to either support employee relations or engage with stakeholders. By utilising this approach, vertical leaders can remain strategically focused while delegating stand alone activities to trusted horizontal leaders.

Organisational structure also appears to be fundamental for a company wishing to utilise this approach. An organisation that is open to cross functional integration ensures that experts are accessible to project leaders and can easily be incorporated onto a company project or programme. Once on a project, experts are assigned horizontal leader positions based on their knowledge, experience and ability to communicate through formal and informal channels with internal and external stakeholders.

The findings of this research suggest that the organisation uses a formalised method of identifying defects in staff numbers. However, the company were more focused on building internal capabilities rather than buying, borrowing or using technology. By identifying horizontal leaders, employees gain valuable exposure to project environments, increasing the potential for them to one day, lead a project of their own.



By identifying horizontal leaders from an internal talent pool, not only is staff capability and confidence strengthened but also, opportunities for the organisations exist to save on cost.

According to Cleland & Gareis (2006) the most common hindrances to project success are stakeholders, time and lack of leadership. While a matrix organisation structure positively impacts a balanced project leadership approach for identifying horizontal leaders, project leaders expressed frustration with getting the right people onto projects. Just because a company is open to change and projects, it does not necessarily mean that the best candidates will temporarily join a project team. This appeared to be a fundamental and significant barrier for using a balanced project leadership approach.

Finally, demotivation was expressed by two horizontal leaders suggesting that vertical leaders took credit for their achievements. Acting on behalf of the vertical leader as a temporary leader is considered the first steps to becoming a project manager (Cox, et al., 2003). Unfortunately, once a horizontal leader has completed their obligations they return back to their respected department. In times when projects are still on-going, horizontal leader's achievements can be over shadowed, leaving them demotivated or struggling to adjust back to non project activity.

## **Chapter 7 - Conclusion**

The identification of temporary (horizontal) leaders is a difficult proposition for project managers. The concept of balanced project leadership is still in its infancy with few pieces of evidence to ratify it as a reliable method of project leadership. The original context, criteria and process themes by Müller, et al.,(2017B) produced varying responses from Irish participants. Before the research commenced, the author had anticipated that some differences would exist between an Irish and Chinese study (Fisher, 2011).

The findings of this research observed an organisation that had a practical and logical appreciation for projects. The development of talent and the matrix organisation structure within the business were perceived as being critical for identifying qualified horizontal leaders. If adequate talent is not available within the organisation they implement their contingency 'build, buy, borrow or bot' method.

Organisation culture was proven to be a prerequisite for identifying horizontal leaders. However, improvements could be made by providing more opportunities to employees who have an appetite for project exposure. Once a horizontal leader was identified, the preferred leadership orientation was relationship. High emotional intelligence capabilities such as knowledge and self awareness were considered critical for making efficient use of emotional support during complex integrated project deliveries.

Critical criteria for identifying future project horizontal leaders was both technical and people experience. Irish vertical leaders preferred to hire candidates based on their ability to problem solve through difficult times of projects. From the findings, the role of a horizontal leader can be quite difficult based on the diverse skills required to fulfil the role.

The author was intrigued to examine how vertical leaders governed multiple stakeholders as well as horizontal leaders. The author chose engagement and support as the most practical second order constructs from a number of first order responses (Miles, et al., 2014). The findings demonstrated the importance of including stakeholders as horizontal leaders on the project team. The findings of this study interpret that cross functional stakeholders should be embedded onto one project team, simplifying both internal and external communications. However, many stakeholders entrenched on the one team can be problematic, hard to manage and less structured. Therefore, vertical leaders require mechanisms of control. The findings of the research identified a variety of supportive methods or tools to ensure consistent communication with subordinates.

Based on the gathered data, the author concludes that the identification of horizontal leaders can contribute to project success. By utilising this approach, vertical leaders can remain strategically focused while delegating stand alone activities to trusted horizontal leaders. By identifying horizontal leaders from an internal talent pool, not only is staff capability and confidence strengthened, but also, opportunities for organisations exist to save on cost by not relying on expensive 3<sup>rd</sup> party organisations to deliver projects on their behalf.

The findings of this research, combined with the Chinese study of Müller, et al., (2017B) and the framework by Müller, et al., (2017A), should continue to be used by

academics to expand and investigate the many facets which contribute to balanced project leadership.

## **Chapter 8 - Recommendations for Future Research**

The findings from this study have demonstrated that identifying horizontal leaders on projects can contribute to project success. The author's findings provide academics with a new high level overview for successfully implementing a balanced project leadership approach. The author would recommend further study in the following areas based on the vast amount of opportunities to elaborate on the findings of this research.

1. Future studies could look to examine the remaining three events of the Müller, et al., (2017A) Balanced Project Leadership Framework. By incorporating the final three events, more constructs and themes could be identified to solidify the findings of this research and the Chinese study.
2. Organisation structure was an unforeseen prognosticator of the authors study. Based on the findings, it was deemed incomprehensible to see how identifying horizontal leaders would be possible. Future studies could be undertaken to examine the relationship between organisational structures and the process for identifying horizontal leaders on projects.
3. The author noted many first order responses from participants when assessing the attitude of potential horizontal leaders. The author's findings resemble the conclusion from the Earnhardt, et al., (2015) research suggesting, project leaders must be diverse and have 'schizophrenic' qualities. Future studies could look to solidify actual evidence for the most appropriate attitude of horizontal leaders. To date, qualitative analysis has proved unsuccessful. Perhaps future studies should use quantitative.
4. The author as part of this study incorporated two additional themes to the original findings of Müller, et al., (2017B). Future studies could elaborate on the findings and identify new constructs or themes more suited to a different country or a specific industry.

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## Chapter 10- Appendix

### 10.1. David Peavoy research request engagement for access to interview employees

1. University/Institute of Technology/Organisation/Company

National College of Ireland IFSC, Mayor Street, North Dock, Dublin 1, D01 Y300

2. Project Supervisor/Contact Name

Colette Darcy, Dean, School of Business

3. Funding body

No funding required

4. Consortium – Partners & Stakeholders

The research is my own and will have no input from other partners or stakeholders

5. Project title

An exploratory study to comprehend balanced project leadership and how temporary (horizontal leaders are identified).

6. Brief description of the project; clearly outline the purpose of this research

In 2017 prominent project leadership researchers created an appropriate framework for academics to use as a repository to further develop the concept of project leadership. To best illustrate how leadership differs from management and how leaders and followers interface, I will be using the Balanced project Leadership Framework as a repository. The framework is a guide for project leaders to identify temporary team leader positions on projects. By identifying credible temporary leaders, each team on a project can benefit from having a direct leader. A balanced project leadership approach essentially shares the responsibilities and deliverables of the overarching project leader with subordinates.

A balanced project leadership approach ensures that a project leader remains strategically focused while temporary leaders govern operational activities. The author will use qualitative analysis from Ireland to contribute to current research. According

to research, a study in western countries has the possibility to produce varying results to that conducted in eastern countries. Project managers in western nations have different expectations to project managers/leaders operating in eastern nations and visa-versa. Therefore, I see this as an opportunity to develop my knowledge in a practical subject, relevant to my current position in [REDACTED]

7. Specific challenge being addressed

Project leadership has traditionally been investigated from the view of an appointed project leader (vertical leader) and the view of a project team or member (horizontal leaders). Literature illustrating how the two types of leadership interface on projects or how horizontal leaders are selected is seldom published in material pertaining to project leadership. The limited peer reviewed articles associated with this approach have focused on the notion of balanced leadership. In 2015 and 2016 at conferences in Sydney and Paris, the concept of balanced project leadership was discussed for the first time. The conferences highlighted how communication and interactions between both vertical and horizontal leaders was imperative for the accomplishment of desired outcomes. Therefore my aim is to understand the particular processes that take place for balanced project leadership.

8. Project Objectives

(OB1) The context, criteria & process for the identification of horizontal leaders on projects

(OB2) The style of leadership in balanced project environments

(OB3) How do project leaders govern large projects with multiple stakeholders and horizontal leaders?

(OB4) Does the identification of horizontal leaders contribute to project success?

9. How [REDACTED] would facilitate this project (please provide comprehensive details of the Data/Samples requested or a list of interview questions/questionnaire)

I would require access to interview circa 5 project members (horizontal leaders) and circa 5 (vertical leaders). I am currently working on the [REDACTED] and it would be very much appreciated if I had permission to interview project/programme members



and management on either the [REDACTED] or throughout the business. If [REDACTED] sees this research as beneficial, I would also have no issues carrying out this study on a broader scale.

*10. Benefits to [REDACTED] through participating/facilitating in this project*

- Project leadership competency information to assist with future recruitment for projects or programmes
- Assess collaboration and communication between management and team members on projects and its effect on project success
- A framework which can be used for developing [REDACTED] employees to become future project/programme/general leaders
- Project Leadership style/approaches favourable for project success to enhance projects for the future
- Analysis on how project leaders in [REDACTED] ensure that all stakeholders participate collaboratively and communicate so risk can be prevented

*11. Where do you intend to disseminate the outputs of this R&D project?*

Once I have finished the dissertation I will hold a copy along with a printed version being submitted for correction and later stored on the National College Library Theses Institutional Repository (TRAP) <http://trap.ncirl.ie/>.

Confidentiality is at the heart of my research. I can confirm that my research does not require the use of the organisations name, employee names, organisation data or other private and confidential details. The study will use the terms horizontal and vertical to identify project employees working on Irish projects. Readers of the dissertation will not know what company was used, what company the interviewees belong too, or the positions of employees who I will be interviewing within the company. However, due to time constraints, my research will solely focus on just [REDACTED] and no other organisation will be used as part of research.

I can assure you that my research is solely for the purpose of interviewing experienced and knowledgeable subject matter experts in the field of project management. By using my current position on the [REDACTED] Programme I see this as a great opportunity to help me develop. Perhaps upon completion of this dissertation and my MSc in

Management I may have the opportunity to become a future leader of a project. This research will definitely contribute and help me, or any other [REDACTED] employee considering a future career on projects.

## **10.2. Invite to Participants**

Type of correspondence: Email

Sent to: Interview Participants

Sent by: David Peavoy

Date: 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2018

Hi,

I hope you're well.

As you may be aware I am currently enrolled in an MSc in Management in the National College of Ireland. Before I complete the course in August, I must submit a dissertation in the field of 'Management'. Based on my current position within the company, I decided to research the concept of project leadership. Over the last few months of research I came across a framework for demonstrating how leadership on projects (Typically large projects) is shared between capable project team members.

I have selected you based on your position on the [REDACTED]. When you're available next, it would be great if I could have 30 minutes of your time to ask you 10 brief questions. The Senior Management Team has agreed to allow me to conduct qualitative interview analysis and I will be kicking off interviews this week with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].

### **Synopsis of my research**

My dissertation will be from an exploratory stance, trying to comprehend how temporary project leaders are identified, using a 'Balanced Project Leadership Framework'. The idea for this study came from research in China, where it was found that by using a balanced project leadership approach, project success can be achieved.

Global project leadership trends appear to be shifting more responsibility and authority down the hierarchy ladder. Democratic leadership has led to the formation of new concepts such as shared, balanced and distributed leadership. The concept of balanced project leadership describes the transition of dynamics between a project/programme manager (vertical leader) and a team member (horizontal leader). Through observation, it was found that projects use both vertical and horizontal leadership.

A balanced project leadership approach ensures that a vertical project leader remains strategically focused while horizontal leaders govern operational activities. The study is quite new (2017) and has not yet been researched from a European perspective. With or without knowing, the [REDACTED] utilities a balanced project leadership approach. Evidently due to the scale of the [REDACTED], many specialised horizontal leaders exist. My research is to understand how these leaders are identified so future project leaders can gain insights into the type of leadership competencies, traits and styles required.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Confidentiality is at the heart of this research and personal information will not be used in this study. All information relating to the [REDACTED] programme/ BAU/any other project or programme in [REDACTED] will not be discussed or referred to. Each of the 8 questions is solely for the purpose of gaining insights into project leadership and will be based on your observations and experiences. Ideally I would like to audio record the interview so I can play it back when analysing the data. The recording will only be for me, and will be deleted upon completion of my dissertation. Irrespective if you agree or disagree to the recording, I am happy to share or provide you with a copy of the recording/transcripts and a copy of the finished submission.

If you would be willing, can you please confirm if you would be interested in participating so I can arrange a suitable half hour in your calendar?

Kind regards,

David

### **10.3. Interview Questions Pre & Post Pilot Study**

<b><u>Pre Pilot Interview Questions</u></b>	<b><u>Post Pilot Interview Questions</u></b>
i. Date of the interview -	i. Date of the interview -
ii. Venue -	ii. Venue -
iii. Is the participant a vertical or a horizontal project leader?	iii. Is the participant a vertical or a horizontal project leader?
iv. How much experience have you had working on projects?	iv. How much experience have you had working on projects?
A) 0-5 years	A) 0-5 years
B) 5-10years	B) 5-10years
C) 10-20 years	C) 10-20 years
v. Have you ever come across the balanced leadership Framework before?	v. Have you ever come across the balanced leadership Framework before?
vi. Have you or are you working on projects which have multiple leaders?	vi. Have you or are you working on projects which have multiple leaders?
<b><u>Question 1</u></b>	<b><u>Question 1</u></b>
According to the Balanced Leadership Framework, a project leader must remain strategically focused and influence stakeholders. By doing so, they usually assign or delegate operational activities to stand-out trusted project team members, known as horizontal leaders. From your experience, what competencies/characteristics are deemed essential for nominating or selecting potential horizontal leaders?	According to the Balanced Leadership Framework, a project manager/leader must remain strategically focused and influence stakeholders. By doing so, they usually assign or delegate operational activities to stand-out trusted project team leaders, known as horizontal leaders. From your experience, what competencies/characteristics are deemed essential for becoming a team lead with respect to a workstream of a project/programme?
<b><u>Question 2</u></b>	<b><u>Question 2</u></b>
The identification of potential future leaders is perceived as being easier for project leaders when organisations develop employees. According to research, an organisation culture which promotes or encourages employee development assists with the identification of future leaders. In your experience, how does a company's organisation culture benefit the development of potential future project leaders? Do you think that more could be done to promote the importance of projects within Irish organisations?	The identification of potential future team leaders is perceived as being easier for project leaders when organisations develop employees. According to research, an organisation culture which promotes or encourages employee development assists with the identification of future leaders. In your experience, how does a company's organisation culture benefit the development of potential future team leaders? Do you think that more could be done to promote the importance of projects within Irish organisations?
<b><u>Question 3</u></b>	<b><u>Question 3</u></b>

<p>Qualitative analysis of technical project leaders acknowledged that it is no longer adequate to solely have technical capabilities. An understanding of softer human and behavioural skills is paramount in modern projects. Would you class your leadership style as being task orientated or relationship orientated or does it matter what orientation a project leader is?</p>	<p>Qualitative analysis of technical project team leaders acknowledged that it is no longer adequate to solely have technical capabilities. An understanding of softer human and behavioural skills is paramount in modern projects. Would you class your leadership style as being task orientated or relationship orientated or does it matter what orientation a project leader is?</p>
<p><b><u>Question 4</u></b></p>	<p><b><u>Question 4</u></b></p>
<p>If project leaders are to execute complex projects, collaboration with diverse stakeholders is essential. Building relationships with all stakeholders is considered fundamental during each phase of a project/programme. Would you agree with this statement? Can you please elaborate on why this is/isn't fundamental?</p>	<p>If project team leaders are to execute complex project workstreams, collaboration with diverse stakeholders is essential. Building relationships with all stakeholders is considered fundamental during each phase of a project/programme. Would you agree with this statement? Can you please elaborate on why this is/isn't fundamental?</p>
<p><b><u>Question 5</u></b></p>	<p><b><u>Question 5</u></b></p>
<p>In order for a balanced project leadership framework to work, a project/programme manager must empower others to perform and deliver certain aspects of the project. Based on your experience, how do you empower or encourage your staff to lead an aspect of the project/programme?</p>	<p>In order for a balanced project leadership framework to work, a project/programme manager/lead must empower others to perform and deliver certain aspects of the project. From experience, knowledge or opinion, can you prescribe methods or advice for how team leaders can empower others on their workstreams or project/programme members?</p>
<p><b><u>Question 6</u></b></p>	<p><b><u>Question 6</u></b></p>
<p>Regardless of team size, research states that a project/programme will be made up of many teams. Each team requiring a horizontal/temporary leader to manage, lead, govern and report on performance. From experience, knowledge or opinion, can you prescribe methods or advice for how leaders should govern large projects with multiple teams or project/programme members?</p>	<p>Merged with question 5.</p>
<p><b><u>Question 7</u></b></p>	<p><b><u>Question 7</u></b></p>

<p>Research in the field of project success has evolved over time. Project success is typically scored on whether a project is completed on time, within cost &amp; in scope. At a more granular level, are their other factors or considerations which define project success for you?</p>	<p>Research in the field of project success has evolved over time. Project success is typically scored on whether a project is completed on time, within cost &amp; in scope. At a more granular level, are their other factors or considerations which define project success for you?</p>
<p><b><u>Question 8</u></b></p>	<p><b><u>Question 8</u></b></p>
<p>During projects a leader will be faced with many barriers which could impact the overall success of the project. Barriers will no doubt hinder teams. In your experience, can you please suggest the most common hindrances to project success?</p>	<p>During projects a team leader will be faced with many barriers which could impact the overall success of the project. Barriers will no doubt hinder teams. In your experience, can you please suggest the most common hindrances to project success?</p>
<p><b><u>Question 9</u></b></p>	<p><b><u>Question 9</u></b></p>
<p>Finally, in your opinion, what advice would you give project team members with aspirations of becoming leaders on projects/programmes in the future?</p>	<p>Finally, in your opinion, what advice would you give project team members with aspirations of becoming leaders on projects/programmes in the future?</p>