

Programmes and Projects

About this article

This article was written in April 2007 and was based on the 2005 version of the MSP™ manual and the 2005 version of the PRINCE2® manual. Apart from some terminology and minor details, this document is still actual and relevant,

Introduction

Many organisations introduced a structured approach to the management of projects, in many cases PRINCE2®. After some experience with this approach the realisation came that PRINCE2® is a useful approach to project management but also that the organisation goes through a lot of change and effort that can not properly managed as a project. This lead to the identification of programmes and lead to an interest in a structured approach to managing programmes.

This document describes some of the key features of programmes, related to projects to show the differences between them.

This document also highlights some aspects of the MSP™ approach. MSP™ stands for Managing Successful Programmes and is owned by the OGC, also owners of PRINCE2® and ITIL™. The MSP™ guide by the OGC provided a number of quotes for this document as well as an overview of the difference between programme and project. Quotes are printed in *Italic* and put between quotes.

Differences between programmes and projects

In appendix E of the MSP™ guide some typical differences are listed.

Managing projects	Managing programmes
An intense and focussed activity that is concerned with delivering predetermined outputs	A broadly spread activity concerned with delivering business change objectives and achieving outcomes, realising a wider set of benefits than the individual projects could



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Managing projects	Managing programmes
	realise in isolation.
Is best suited to closely bounded and scoped deliverables that can be relatively well defined	Suited to activities with complex and changing inter-relationships in a wider, more dynamic and uncertain environment.
Realises benefits following the end of the project, after implementation of the project's outputs.	<p>Realises benefits both during and after conclusion of the programme, having put in place mechanisms for measuring the improvements in business performance.</p> <p>Suited to managing benefits realisation and ensuring a smooth and risk-reduced transition into a new business operation.</p> <p>Able to maintain 'business as usual' in areas affected by the change whilst managing the transition into new operations.</p> <p>Usually continues until the organisation has achieved the required outcomes (a programme may of course be stopped if it is no longer valid).</p>

Definitions and terms

MSP™ describes a programme as *"a portfolio of projects and activities that are co-ordinated and managed as a unit such that they achieve outcomes and realise benefits"*.

Therefore Programme Management may be defined as *"the co-ordinated organisation, direction and implementation of a portfolio of projects and activities that together achieve outcomes and realise benefits that are of strategic importance"*.

PRINCE2® defines a project as: *"A management environment that is created for the purpose of delivering one or more business products according to a specified Business Case"*.

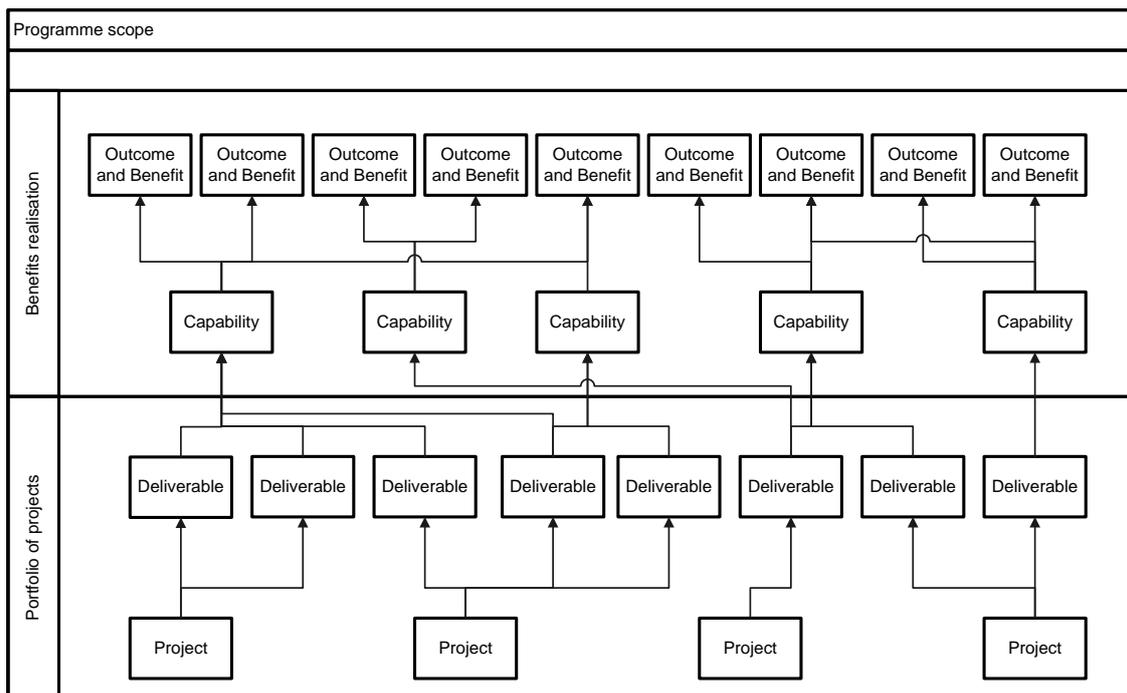
The MSP™ approach uses several terms. Here follows a short explanation of some of the key terms, taken from the MSP™ manual.

<i>Outcome</i>	<i>The resulting effects of change, normally affecting real world behaviour and/or circumstances</i>
<i>Capability:</i>	<i>A service, function or operation that enables the organisation to exploit opportunities.</i>
<i>Benefit</i>	<i>A measurable improvement resulting from an outcome.</i>

How do these terms relate and what is their context? The programme should be lead by a vision of the future. For this a certain status should be reached; the vision should be translated in a more or less specific blueprint of the planned achievements necessary to follow and enable the vision.

A next detail of this blueprint is to define the expected benefits which are measurable results from the outcomes from changes.

Changes can only be made if an organisation has the tools to create changes. This is where the projects come in. They create deliverables that, when handed over, create the capability for an organisation to create new outcomes and resulting benefits.



Realising and managing these different details will be necessary to plan from the vision down to the projects and the activities to turn the capabilities into outcomes.

The different details are also helpful to manage the projects and their outputs up to the benefits and the main driver: the programme's vision.

Organisation of a Programme

A well defined organisation with clear roles is essential for any organisation so also for programmes. Chapter 0 shows a graphical representation of the organisation suggested by MSP™ in relation to the PRINCE2® organisation.

On the operational side of the programme there are two key roles. The Programme Manager essentially manages the portfolio of projects and ensures they stay in line with the vision of the programme. On the other hand there is the role of the Business Change Managers (BCM). This role (that can be divided over several persons to reflect different business areas) is responsible for turning the deliverables of the projects and their resulting capabilities into outcomes and benefits. This indicates a difficult role that stands with one leg in the old, no longer desired reality and with another leg in the new, desired situation. The BCM are therefore responsible for managing down the old situation and for managing up the new situation. This requires strong communication and co-ordination with the Programme Manager to ensure the projects deliver the desired outputs.

Both Programme Manager and BCM need to have the authority to do whatever is needed. This authority is given by the person filling the role of Senior Responsibility Owner (SRO). This person "owns" the vision and the programme's business case on behalf of his / her peers that form the sponsoring group behind the programme. Because of the senior level of this group and the presence of one SRO, the sponsoring group can be a passive one, possibly creating a smaller group as a Programme Board to support the SRO more actively.

A Programme Office could be installed to support all levels. The duties of a Programme Office typically go a lot further than those of a Project Support Office according to PRINCE2®. The Programme Office would act as an "information hub"; e.g. tracking and reporting, providing the programme's information management, financial accounting, tracking risks and issues, possibly providing consultancy-style support to projects and maybe even playing an active role in the direction of some projects (Project Board).

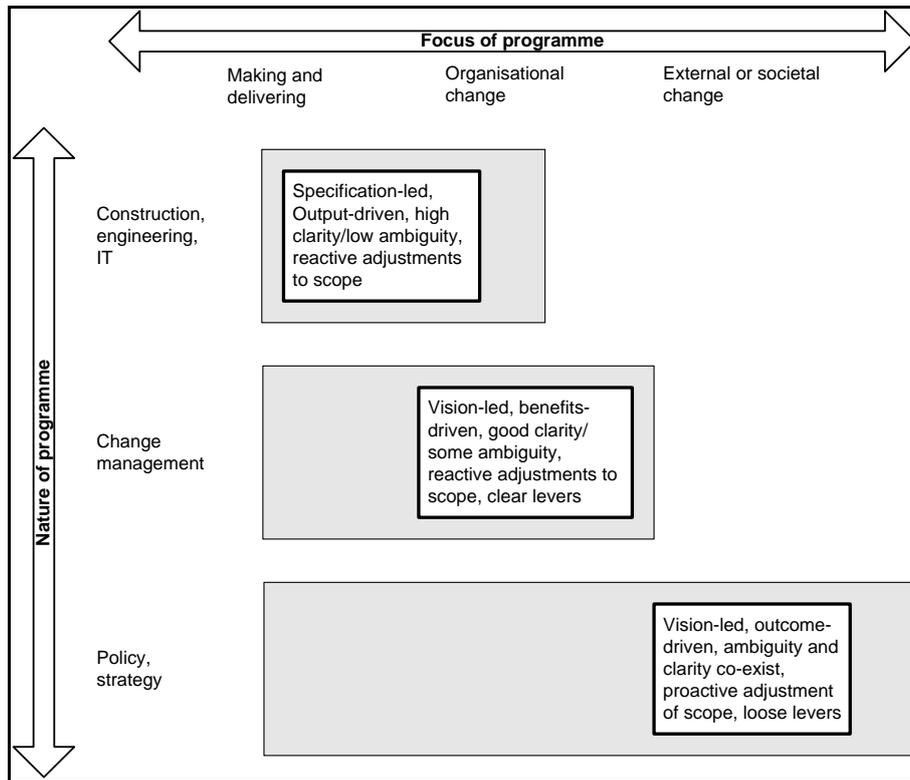
Types of change - programmes

Roughly three types of programmes can be distinguished.

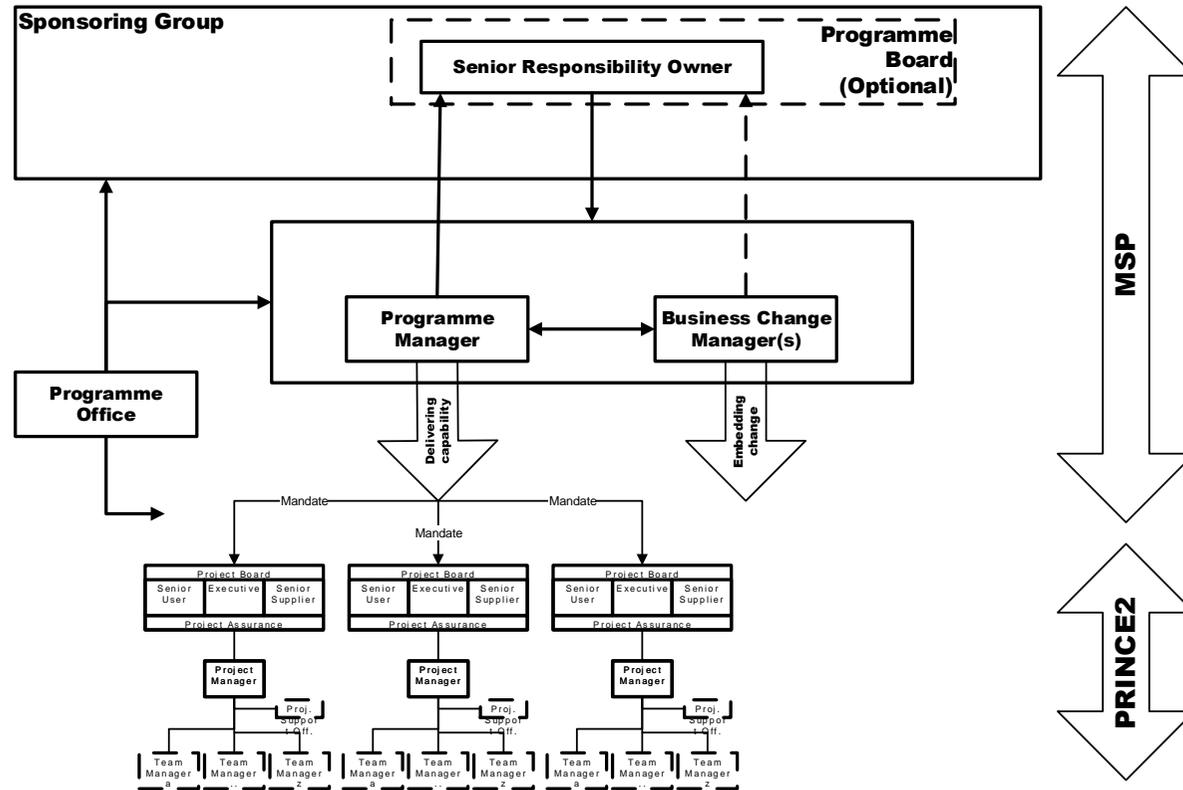
1. A programme that focuses on making and delivering. The emphasis lies here on portfolio management and the earlier described role of Business Change Manager is hardly or even not identifiable. This type of programme takes part in areas such as construction or IT. They are mainly specification-led and output-driven with a relatively high clarity and low ambiguity. Adjustments to the scope of the programme will be reactive. An example would be the delivery of a software release where several change requests could lead to several projects together in a portfolio delivering a release.
2. A more complex programme focuses on organisational change. There is a vision of the desired situation and the programme is driven by benefits. Usually these programmes have some ambiguity but there are still relatively clear goals with changes to scope usually made in a reactive way.

3. A fully vision (long term) led programme. The programme is driven by outcomes while there is a mix of ambiguity and clarity. There are loose levers and there will be proactive adjustments of the scope. There is (development of) a long term vision and during the early years of this the programme will be often changed to reflect new insights and ideas.

The following diagram, copied from the MSP™ guide, relates the three types of programmes in a graphical way.



MSP™ and PRINCE2® organisation models combined



MSP™ vs. PRINCE2® - differences in usage

The simplest view on MSP™ and PRINCE2® would be that where PRINCE2® is black and white, MSP™ would be grey. The PRINCE2® manual (450 pages) is a very comprehensive and detailed description of the management of a project. The MSP™ guide (160 pages) discusses a number of concepts and ideas about programme management and describes a not very detailed process model.

The roles within a PRINCE2® project are very well described while the roles according to MSP™ are generally described. As a result the PRINCE2® approach may come across as very prescriptive while the MSP™ approach is (vaguely) descriptive. This has a lot to do with the differences between projects and programmes as described above. These differences are also reflected by the staff that usually play a part in projects and programmes. In general the staff that is involved with managing a programme is of a more senior level than project (management) staff, possibly including those in the Project Board.

Project staff are usually result driven while programme staff is usually vision driven. A general risk is that the programme will never or too late become concrete, while a general risk for a project is that it will be too much quick-fix driven without an eye for the wider consequences.

In a number of organisation people will recognise the MSP™ organisation rather than the PRINCE2® organisation in their projects. Often in projects the complexity of the line-organisation is reflected in project organisations rather than the complexity of the job in hand. A result of the MSP™ organisation unjustifiably used in a project will be a steering committee that does not give any direction and stalls progress by endless and far too detailed discussions.

A PRINCE2® structure used in a programme will lead to a Project Board, and more specifically an Executive, that is powerless. The so-called project - again - will be hindered by stakeholders that were never identified and use power but have no responsibilities.

Whatever the change is, the PRINCE2® structure should be used first and when that does not work because of complexity the MSP™ structure are worth looking at. A key principle could be that PRINCE2® handles relatively simple Business Cases with a single owner where MSP™ manages complex Business Case with several partial owners.

The above is reflected in training. A PRINCE2® trainer can very well lead the training and discussions where a MSP™ trainer will only introduce subjects and can not do much without interaction from the delegates. A group of inexperienced, timid delegates is not a problem for a PRINCE2® course but will lead to a boring MSP™ course with dissatisfied delegates.

Qualifications

PRINCE2® results in two qualifications: Foundation (theoretically) and Practitioner (more or less practical).

MSP™ can result in three qualifications:

1. Foundation, similar to PRINCE2® Foundation.
2. Practitioner, similar level to PRINCE2® Practitioner.
3. Advanced Practitioner, on basis of a real case practical solutions are to be provided. This exam has a relatively high fail rate.

More information can be found on www.apmgroup.co.uk

As for the question of career path for project managers to go into programme managers: these two disciplines are not linked. In the role of programme manager a different attitude and temperament are required. There are known cases of successful programme managers that have never been project manager. There are even more cases of successful and experienced project managers that failed completely as programme manager. A programme manager should not be seen as a "super project manager".

The difference in focus and attitude should be explained by the overview of differences between projects and programmes on page 1.



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Op mijn Website zijn de volgende documenten over PRINCE2® en MSP™ te vinden:

- [PRINCE2 in een notendop; de essentie van PRINCE2 in slecht vijf pagina's](#)
- [PRINCE2 Principles; worden de principes wel toegepast? Wat veroorzaakt de ineffectiviteit van PINO?](#)
- [PRINCE2 en MSP in relatie tot elkaar en andere methodes en aanpakken, zoals ITIL, PMBoK en Agile methodes. Raakvlakken en vooral culturele verschillen.](#)
- [PRINCE2 \(niet\) voor leveranciers; waarom PRINCE2 niet voor leveranciers bedoeld is en hoe zij dit model misschien toch kunnen toepassen](#)
- [Hoe voer je een methode als PRINCE2 in? Overwegingen, valkuilen en praktijkvoorbeelden](#)
- [PRINCE2 Life Cycle; hoe de Business Case zich ontwikkelt gedurende een project](#)
- [PRINCE2 Procesmodel; wat is de process flow en wie is verantwoordelijk voor welke processen?](#)
- [PRINCE2 tijdens Stages; een overzicht van PRINCE2 processen die tijdens Stages gebruikt worden](#)
- [Special: SPEER - ERP/SAP programma bij Defensie](#)
- [Special: Commissie Elias, ICT Projecten en cultuur](#)

<http://www.viergever.info/nl/downloads.aspx>

On the topics of PRINCE2® and MSP™, the following documents are available on my Website.

- [PRINCE2 in a nutshell; the essence of PRINCE2 is only five pages](#)
- [PRINCE2 Principles; are the 7 principles applied? What causes the ineffectiveness of PINO?](#)
- [PRINCE2 \(not\) for suppliers; why PRINCE2 is not aimed at suppliers and how they can possibly use the model](#)
- [Programmes and Projects; how do projects and programmes relate and interface? What is MSP and how to use MSP in combination with PRINCE2.](#)
- [How to implement a method such as PRINCE2? Considerations, pitfalls and examples](#)
- [PRINCE2 Lifecycle; the product life span versus the project life cycle](#)
- [PRINCE2 Process Model; shows the process flow and who is responsible for what processes](#)
- [PRINCE2 during Stages; details of the PRINCE2 processes used during Management Stages](#)
- [Method Integration; can ICT development approaches such as RUP, SCRUM, Agile, etc, really be combined with PRINCE2 \(and MSP\)?](#)
- [PRINCE2 and SLA; how does PRINCE2 cope with service level agreements and with support \(ITIL\) after the project?](#)

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