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Delivering IT PMO Value: Understanding Stakeholder Perceptions & Expectations

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ABSTRACT

IT Project Management Offices (IT PMOs) are important to the IT project management landscape. Despite being set up to ensure IT project success, many IT PMOs struggle to survive, partly as a result of tensions and challenges. One prevailing tension that IT PMO managers face is the struggle to justify their IT PMO value. Prior research has uncovered a key factor behind this tension – the fact that these IT PMOs play multiple roles and have to meet the competing demands and expectations of stakeholders. This study examines the functions of the IT PMO and its core values with a visual framework and demonstrates its effectiveness in helping the IT PMO team understand its stakeholders' perceptions and expectations. With this shared understanding, the IT PMO team is empowered to develop strategies to better service stakeholders, and therefore be perceived as delivering value.

Keywords

Project Management, IT Project Management Office, Stakeholder Perceptions and Expectations, IT PMO Value.

INTRODUCTION

Organisations are under constant pressure to innovate, especially so in today's volatile landscape which is argued to have driven the need for IT-enabled business transformation projects (Sauer, Gemino and Reich, 2007). Because these projects have grown in "strategic and operational importance", much is expected of them (Sauer and Reich, 2009:185). Moreover, many organisations must now simultaneously juggle the management of multiple, interrelated projects at the same time. These IT projects must therefore be managed effectively in order to have a better chance of success (Aubry, Hobbs, Thuillier, 2009; Dai and Wells, 2004; Singh, Kail and Kasi, 2009). Hence the extensive interest in the potential of the IT Project Management Office (IT PMO)¹ (Computer Economics, 2011). By providing a focused environment for the formal training and development of organisation-wide project capabilities such as project management methodologies and processes, project governance processes, project quality assurance, training, project knowledge management, and the like (Andersen, Henriksen and Aarseth, 2007), the IT PMO offers the potential to achieve good organisational outcomes and ensure the delivery of business value from these substantial investments.

Unfortunately, a majority of IT PMOs do not survive beyond two years (Hobbs and Aubry, 2007), likely due to the fact that the IT PMO concept is itself beset with tensions and challenges (McKay, Marshall, Arumugam and Grainger, 2013). One prevalent tension that IT PMO managers face is the value of their IT PMO is often questioned (ESI International, 2013; Hobbs and Aubry, 2007; McKay et al., 2013) despite the IT PMO being established with the aim of ensuring the success of IT projects. Hence the considerable interest amongst academic researchers investigating the value of the IT PMO (Aubry et al., 2009; Hobbs and Aubry, 2010; Pellegrinelli and Garagna, 2009; Thomas and Mullaly, 2007). In their book, Hobbs and Aubry (2010) suggested that the IT PMO performs multiple roles and is closely linked with multiple entities across the organisation. This implies that the perceived value of the IT PMO team is dependent on its stakeholders with potentially diverse values and preferences, and representing the various entities within the organisation.

¹ When we are specifically referring to IT PMOs, we specify 'IT PMO'. Where we are broadly describing aspects of PMOs in general, we use the term 'PMO'.

We believe that this is the key to understanding the tension that IT PMO leaders face in justifying the value of the IT PMO. Despite acknowledging the importance of these stakeholders' expectations, there is little empirical research on what is believed to be the key to perceived value of the IT PMO: the stakeholders' expectations and perceptions of the core values and functions of the IT PMO. This is further supported by the fact that practitioners also believe that the key for IT PMOs in creating and proving their business value is by aligning with the organisation's core values and to be perceived [by key stakeholders] as effectively executing its core functions (Hayes, 2011). This study examines the functions of the IT PMO (Hobbs and Aubry, 2007; Hobbs and Aubry, 2010) and its core values (Quinn and Rohrbaugh, 1981) using the concepts of perceptions, expectations, and satisfaction (Boulding, Kalra, Staelin and Zeithaml, 1993; Kettinger and Lee, 1997; Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1985; Spreng and Mackoy, 1996).

Hence, the purpose of this study is to aid members of the IT PMO team understand what their stakeholders expect of them by using a visual framework to illustrate these stakeholders' perceptions and expectations of the IT PMO. With this shared understanding, the IT PMO team would be empowered to develop strategies to better service their key stakeholders, and therefore be perceived as delivering value. This paper is structured as follows: in the following section, we provide a review of concept of the IT PMO and the study of perceptions and expectations in the academic literature. This is followed by a description of our research methodology and design. We then conclude with a discussion about the results of our findings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

IT PMO Functions, Values and Tensions

The positive growth of IT PMOs in organisations worldwide (Computer Economics, 2011) could be argued to result from the need for better management of IT projects (Aubry, Muller, Hobbs and Blomquist, 2010; Dai and Wells, 2004; Desouza and Evaristo, 2006). This is especially so with the increasing numbers and complexity of such projects, programs and portfolios, as well as the unacceptably high rates of project failures (Singh et al., 2009). Despite the fact that they are set up to ensure the success of IT projects, it is ironic that the future of IT PMOs seems to be somewhat uncertain. Many IT PMOs do not survive beyond two years (Hobbs and Aubry, 2007), possibly as a result of the tensions and challenges that plague these IT PMOs (McKay et al., 2013). For example, some IT PMO leaders face the tension of whether project ownership and responsibilities should be with the IT PMO or remain with business unit managers (Pellegrinelli and Garagna, 2009). For leaders of newly-setup IT PMOs, budget and resources may be channelled away from business units to fund these IT PMOs, potentially resulting in tensions created by this power shift (McKay et al., 2013). Other IT PMO leaders experience tensions which are conflicting, such as the choice they have to make between emphasising standardisation or being flexible and responsive to business demands (Hurt and Thomas, 2009; Pellegrinelli and Garagna, 2009); or between centralising or de-centralising management capabilities throughout the organisation (Curlee, 2008).

One very pressing issue that IT PMO leaders face that empirical studies have uncovered is their struggle to deliver value to their organisations (Hobbs and Aubry, 2007; McKay et al., 2013). Some IT PMOs are being valued by their organisations, while others struggle to demonstrate value, with yet others being disbanded altogether (Hobbs and Aubry, 2007). This is a fact confirmed with recent global surveys on PMOs reporting that more than 50 percent of the total number of respondents claiming that the value of their PMO has been questioned (ESI International 2011, 2012, 2013). A recent empirical study also revealed that although IT PMO teams may be performing the exact PMO functions they were setup to do, the leaders [of these IT PMOs] still struggle to justify their value to the rest of the business (McKay et al., 2013). While the value of the IT PMO to individual projects can be measured with traditional project management metrics such as 'on time' and 'within budget' for example, it is more problematic to determine the actual value delivered by the IT PMO, as aggregating value delivered from individual projects may not necessarily be indicative of the overall value delivered.

A PMO is defined as "an organisational body or entity assigned various responsibilities related to the centralised and coordinated management of those projects under its domain. The responsibilities of the PMO can range from providing project management support functions to actually being responsible for the direct management of a project" (PMI, 2008:89). Using this as a broad guideline, Hobbs and Aubry (2007, 2010) conducted an empirical study and identified 27 different roles and functions of the IT PMO, categorised into five main groups: (1) monitoring, controlling, and reporting project performance; (2) developing project management competencies and methodologies, and promoting project management; (3) multi-project management, including prioritising,

coordinating and resource allocation; (4) strategic management and planning; and (5) organisational learning, including post-implementation reviews, project audits, and managing lessons-learned databases. While these 27 functions are considered to be important to most IT PMOs, they need not all be adopted by every IT PMO (Hobbs and Aubry, 2010).

Cameron and Quinn (2011) argue that the core values (or guiding principles) of an organisation [in this case the IT PMO] is the key to its sustainability. The competing values framework (Quinn and Rohrbaugh, 1981, 1983) offers a representation of the [competing] values they have aggregated from the organisational literature: (1) human relations (HR), concerning employee well-being; (2) open systems (OS), being flexible and adapting to the changing environment; (3) rational goal (RG), emphasising productivity and efficiency; and (4) internal process (IP), focusing on organisation and structure. This research uses the competing values framework in the study because it offers the ability to chart and compare the conflicting perceptions and expectations of the IT PMO. In addition, this framework has also been applied in the study of paradoxes and pluralism (Aubry et al., 2011; Cameron, 1986; Quinn, 1988), making it fitting for this study.

Practitioners believe that the alignment of the IT PMO with the organisation, and the perceived effective execution of its roles and functions are crucial to the IT PMO being perceived as creating and delivering value to its organisation (Hayes, 2011). Hence, we explore issues around alignment as well as the values and functions of the IT PMO in this study to understand the perceived value delivery of the IT PMO.

Stakeholder Perceptions and Expectations

Most IT PMOs have a diverse range of stakeholders, defined here as “individuals or groups who will be impacted by, or can influence the success or failure of an organisation’s activities” (Walker, Bourne and Rowlinson, 2008:73). One contributing factor to the difficulty that IT PMO leaders face in demonstrating the business value derived from the IT PMO stems from the diversity of perceptions and expectations of the various stakeholders in the organisation have in terms of the core values and the roles and functions of the IT PMO. The perceptions and expectations of the IT PMO team members might not necessarily be aligned with these stakeholders (Hobbs and Aubry, 2010). Since the role of the IT PMO requires the IT PMO team to interact with its stakeholders within the organisation, it is therefore essential for the IT PMO team to effectively manage its relationships with these stakeholders. While these stakeholders could have a direct and significant influence over the organisation’s projects and the IT PMO, they may have different cultures and values to that of the IT PMO itself (Hobbs and Aubry, 2010). Therefore, delivering services to the satisfaction of a broad range of stakeholders with differing needs and expectations is indeed challenging for the IT PMO team.

In the academic literature, the concept of satisfaction is seen to result from the comparison between the expectations of the recipients of a service and their perceptions of the actual service delivered (Oliver, 1980; Parasuraman et al., 1985; Pitt, Watson and Kavan, 1997; Spreng and Mackoy, 1996; Tesch, Miller, Jiang and Klein, 2005). In this context, ‘expectations’ convey “the desires and wants” of the recipients of a service (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988:17), while ‘perceptions’ refers to what recipients perceive about the service actually delivered. Satisfaction essentially is the “discrepancy between what the individual expects and what he/she perceives he/she is getting” (Tesch et al., 2005:346), where the key factor of satisfaction is “meeting customers’ desires” (Spreng and Mackoy, 1996:211). In other words, if the stakeholder’s perceptions of service delivery of the IT PMO is congruent with his or her expectations, the IT PMO may then be perceived [by that stakeholder] as satisfying his/her requirements, and thus as delivering value. Hence, in order to be perceived as delivering value, the IT PMO team needs to first develop a shared understanding of the perceptions and expectations of the stakeholder. Shared understanding refers to mutual knowledge, mutual beliefs, and mutual assumptions (Clark and Brennan, 1991; Mulder, Swaak and Kessels, 2002) that exist between more than one party. Only then would the IT PMO team be in a better position to articulate strategies and actions to address any incongruence in these perceptions and expectations.

This study aims to aid the IT PMO team in understanding the implications of expectations and perceptions of the values and functions of the IT PMO, empowering members to better service their stakeholders. ‘Expectations’ as operationalised in this study refer to what participants desire of the IT PMO (or what participants expect that the IT PMO should be doing), while ‘perceptions’ refer to what participants think the IT PMO is currently doing. Therefore, the research question to achieve the objective of this study is:

How can the IT PMO team be effectively assisted in developing a shared understanding and feel empowered to better manage their stakeholders' expectations and perceptions?

To achieve this objective, a framework based on Quinn and Rohrbaugh's (1981, 1983) competing values framework and Hobbs and Aubry's (2007, 2010) PMO functions was used to elicit perceptions and expectations from stakeholders and to graphically display them for discussion amongst IT PMO team members.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

In order to build knowledge while "grounded in reality" (Van de Ven, 2007:5), we have employed action research in this study where the researcher is actively involved in the investigation in a real-world situation with the aim to both improve it and to build knowledge (Checkland and Holwell, 1998) – in this case about the value delivery of the IT PMO. The nature of action research and its contributions to both practical problem-solving of real-world concerns and knowledge creation makes it an attractive proposition for conducting Information Systems (IS) research (Avison, Lau, Myers and Nielsen, 1999; Baskerville and Wood-Harper, 1996; Mathiassen, Chiasson and Geronprez, 2012; McKay and Marshall, 2001). In keeping with the 'pragmatic philosophy' of action research (Baskerville and Myers, 2004), we will be adopting a mix of methods, choosing and combining the appropriate methods of data collection – qualitative and quantitative, to study the various perceptions and expectations of the PMO team and its stakeholders. This decision has been informed by the growing acknowledgement of the value of 'mixed-method' research by academic researchers (Creswell, 2010; Greene and Hall, 2010; Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2010a, 2010b).

The organisation with the IT PMO that we investigated in this study is a Government statutory authority with more than 2,500 employees; and we use the pseudonym GOV1. The formation of the IT PMO had been regarded as an important initiative amongst the senior executives. However, there seemed to be the concerns as to whether or not the IT PMO had delivered the expected benefits to GOV1. Despite the fact that the IT PMO had been in operation for about five years, it was still relatively immature in terms of its internal processes and organisation. As the organisation was considering the restructure of the IT PMO, this research was regarded as timely and hence was endorsed by the senior management. The objectives of this study were seen to be beneficial to the organisation as they reorganised their IT PMO functions. With the assistance of the IT PMO leader, we identified participants from the IT PMO team as well as key stakeholders who represented the major business units that had been closely engaged with the IT PMO working on major IT projects. A total of ten participants were involved: five senior members of the IT PMO, and five senior-level business unit managers.

The first part of data collection in our study (see Table 1) involved the administration of a questionnaire² to gather participants' perceptions of what the IT PMO is currently doing/emphasising, as well as their expectations of what the IT PMO should be doing. As this study aims to investigate participants' perceptions and expectations of the IT PMO's core values as well as its roles and functions, there were two sets of questions in the questionnaire: questions on core values, based on the competing values framework (Quinn and Rohrbaugh, 1983); and questions about the roles and functions, based on an established list of PMO functions (Hobbs and Aubry, 2007, 2010). In Section 1 of the questionnaire, each participant separately scored his/her perceptions first (what core values that the IT PMO is currently emphasising) and then their expectations (what core values that the IT PMO should be emphasising) based on a Likert rating scale from 1 (very low emphasis) to 5 (very high emphasis). Data from all participants was then individually plotted on spatial diagrams (see Appendix 3), and the area bounded by all participants shaded. We established the list of core values of the IT PMO (see Appendix 1) based on Quinn and Rohrbaugh's (1983) competing values framework, which is itself an aggregation of all the organisational effectiveness models in the literature. They are: (1) emphasis on flexibility and adaptability, (2) being consultative and inclusive of people from other business units, (3) resourcefulness in the acquisition of resources, (4) focus on being productive and efficient, (5) emphasis on planning and goal-setting, (6) focus on meeting set goals and objectives, (7) emphasis on stability and control, (8) emphasis on standardised processes and procedures, (9) emphasis on communication and information management, (10) team cohesion and staff morale amongst project teams, (11) emphasis on managing human resources within the project teams, and (12) focus on the development of human resources (i.e. training, mentoring) within the project teams. Also based on a Likert rating scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

² Although interviews with participants were also conducted as part of the study, the discussion in this paper is based on the data from the questionnaire alone.

agree), the data of each participant's scores of perceptions of the functions that the IT PMO is currently performing and expectations (of the functions that are considered important for the IT PMO to perform) in Section 2 of the questionnaire were individually plotted on spatial diagrams (see Appendix 4), and the area bounded by responses from all participants shaded. The roles and functions of the IT PMO (see Appendix 2) were developed for this study based on Hobbs and Aubry's (2007, 2010) empirically-established list of PMO functions.

	Data Collection Method	Participants
Part 1 of Study (May 2013 – Jul 2013)	<u>PMO Questionnaire</u> Administration of a Likert-scale questionnaire comprising the following two sections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 1: questions eliciting participants perceptions and expectations of the core PMO values that the IT PMO is currently, and should be emphasising Section 2: questions eliciting participants' perceptions and expectations of the PMO functions that the IT PMO is currently, and should be performing. 	Senior Business & Management Team (5 members); Senior IT PMO Team (5 members)
Part 2 of Study (Jul 2013 – Sep 2013)	<u>Workshop 1</u> (Jul 2013) Presentation of findings from PMO Questionnaire data by Research team, and facilitation of discussion and articulation of strategies amongst IT PMO team members to better engage stakeholders, followed by administration of a feedback questionnaire.	Senior IT PMO Team (5 members)
	<u>Workshop 2</u> (Sep 2013) Presentation by IT PMO team of its initial efforts in articulating strategies to improve perceptions of value delivery amongst key stakeholders.	Senior IT PMO Team (4 members)

Table 1. Data Collection Summary

The data from the questionnaire was then used to graphically plot profile diagrams and then analysed to study the perceptions and expectations of the IT PMO team as well as its stakeholders. We adopted the visual representation of Quinn and Rohrbaugh's (1983) competing values framework as it is described as "visually and cognitively comprehensive" (Thompson, 1993:102) and it gives people a better sense of data, making it easier to perceive relationships, make comparisons, and identify patterns (Cameron, Quinn, DeGraff and Thakor, 2006). Data is therefore illustrated as a profile on the model, giving rise to a more implicit interpretation to help IT PMO teams develop shared understanding, and therefore be better equipped to develop strategies to manage their stakeholders' perceptions and expectations.

For the second part of our study, the findings based on the questionnaire data were presented in a workshop session (Workshop 1) with five senior members of the IT PMO team to facilitate in the articulation of strategies amongst the workshop participants to better engage their stakeholders. After the workshop session, all participants completed a short feedback questionnaire with eight Likert-scale questions and an open-ended comments section to elicit their perceptions of the effectiveness of the workshop, framework and diagrams, and the overall engagement process. At the request of the IT PMO team from GOV1, a second workshop session (Workshop 2) was conducted six weeks later where the IT PMO team shared the progress the IT PMO had made.

RESULTS

At the first workshop session (Workshop 1) with the IT PMO team, we presented the data from the questionnaire, employing a visual representation that enabled us to graphically present both the current state of the stakeholders' and the IT PMO team's perceptions and expectations of the IT PMO. This was apparently helpful in guiding discussion where members of the IT PMO team attempted to make sense of the differences in perceptions both within their own team and in the stakeholders' perspectives. This provided the opportunity for the IT PMO team to work towards a shared understanding of some of the key issues they faced in gaining recognition for their contribution to the organisation (for example, setting the IT PMO's vision, goals and objectives, which were previously not in place as there had been a recent restructure of the IT PMO. The information on the perceptions and expectations of the core values of the IT PMO was helpful in this respect.)

Core Values that the IT PMO should be Emphasising

Information from the diagrams (see Appendix 3) are summarised and presented in Table 2, comparing between the stakeholders' and IT PMO team members' perceptions and expectations of the core values of the IT PMO. From the first column in Table 2, we can see that the five core values that stakeholders want the IT PMO to emphasise are: (1) productivity and efficiency, (2) planning and setting goals and objectives, (3) meeting goals and objectives, (4) effective communications and information management, and (5) development of human resources, such as training, within project teams. The last column in Table 2 also highlights the four core values that the IT PMO team considers important to focus on. Here, it is apparent that although there are two core values (communications and information management, and development of human resources) that both the IT PMO team and its stakeholders agree is important, the IT PMO team needs to also focus on productivity and efficiency, planning, setting, and meeting its goals and objectives. On the other hand, the other two core values that the IT PMO team considers important – flexibility and adaptability, and standardised processes and procedures – are not really considered important by all its stakeholders. The table (see Table 2) and diagrams (in Appendix 3) help demonstrate a clear gap between the values that the IT PMO team members currently think they are emphasising/should emphasise, and what their key stakeholders really want of them.

This information provides an important insight for the IT PMO team – helping the team better understand its stakeholders. It essentially highlights what is critical to its key stakeholders, gives the IT PMO team an idea of where it needs to be, and shows the team where the IT PMO is on- and off-track. The IT PMO team must therefore develop strategies towards achieving an alignment in both key stakeholders' and the IT PMO team's sets of expectations in order that the IT PMO is considered by its stakeholders as delivering value.

Stakeholder Expectations (core values stakeholders want the IT PMO to emphasise)	Stakeholder Perceptions (core values stakeholders perceive the IT PMO is/is not emphasising)	IT PMO Perceptions (core values the team perceives the IT PMO is/is not emphasising)	IT PMO Expectations (core values the team wants the IT PMO to emphasise)
Emphasis on productivity & efficiency		Team members think the IT PMO is somewhat emphasising productivity & efficiency	
Emphasis on planning & setting of goals & objectives			
Emphasis on meeting set goals & objectives			
Emphasis on effective communications & information management			Emphasis on effective communications & information management
Emphasis on the development of human resources (i.e. training) within project teams	Stakeholders do not think the IT PMO is emphasising the development of human resources		Emphasis on the development of human resources (i.e. training) within project teams
			Emphasis on flexibility & adaptability
			Emphasis on standardised processes & procedures

Table 2. Stakeholder & IT PMO Team Perceptions & Expectations of the Core Values of the IT PMO

An interesting finding that was revealed from the diagrams in this study (see Appendix 3, Figure A3a) was the lack of alignment amongst the IT PMO team members themselves in their perceptions of the core values being emphasised in the IT PMO. The findings caused considerable interest and discussion amongst the members of the IT PMO during the workshop as it drew their attention to the state of misalignment the IT PMO team was in. This clearly demonstrates the need for the IT PMO team to change its strategy and its values being emphasised as a team. The IT PMO leader felt that that this study was conducted at an apposite time [in light of the restructure the IT PMO team was experiencing], and the findings have motivated the IT PMO team to develop strategies to redefine the goals and objectives of the IT PMO.

IT PMO Functions that are Important to Stakeholders

Information from the diagrams (see Appendix 4) is summarised and presented in Table 3, comparing between stakeholders' and IT PMO team members' perceptions and expectations of the roles and functions of the IT PMO.

Stakeholder Expectations (PMO functions the stakeholders deem important for IT PMO to do)	Stakeholder Perceptions (PMO functions the stakeholders perceive the IT PMO is/is not doing)	IT PMO Perceptions (PMO functions the team members perceive the IT PMO is/is not doing)	IT PMO Expectations (PMO functions the team members deem important for the IT PMO to do)
Regularly track & monitor all IT projects	Stakeholders think the IT PMO is regularly tracking & monitoring all IT projects		Regularly track & monitor all IT projects
Enforce project governance for all IT projects	Stakeholders <u>do not think</u> the IT PMO is enforcing the project governance for all IT projects	Team members think the IT PMO is enforcing the project governance for all IT projects	Enforce project governance for all IT projects
Prescribe standardised IT project management methodologies for the organisation			Prescribe standardised IT project management methodologies for the organisation
Promote the adoption of standardised IT project management methodologies	Stakeholders <u>do not think</u> the IT PMO is promoting the adoption of standard ITPM methodologies		Promote the adoption of standardised IT project management methodologies
Develop performance measures for IT project managers			Develop performance measures for IT project managers
Promote soft skills (i.e. communications, interpersonal, etc.) amongst project team members			
Provide project management tools for IT project managers and IT project teams			Provide project management tools for IT project managers and IT project teams
Participate (i.e. sharing expertise, experience) in the development of business case for IT projects			
Track & ensure that IT projects are aligned with business strategy	Stakeholders <u>do not think</u> the IT PMO is tracking and ensuring this		Track & ensure that IT projects are aligned with business strategy
Track & ensure the delivery of expected benefits from IT projects	Stakeholders <u>do not think</u> the IT PMO is tracking and ensuring this		
Keep up with current business trends			Keep up with current business trends
Implement & manage a 'lessons-learned' knowledge base			Implement & manage a 'lessons-learned' knowledge base
Ensure 'lessons-learned' are effectively communicated to subsequent IT projects			Ensure 'lessons-learned' are effectively communicated to subsequent IT projects
Conduct & document post-project reviews			Conduct & document post-project reviews

Table 3. Stakeholder & IT PMO Team Perceptions & Expectations of the Roles & Functions of the IT PMO

In this case, there were a total of 14 roles and functions that the stakeholders deemed important that the IT PMO team should perform (see Table 3). The IT PMO team, on the other hand, considered 24 PMO functions as

important for the IT PMO to do; out of which only eleven were in alignment with the stakeholders. Again, this information is important for the IT PMO team, highlighting the functions considered critical by key stakeholders and helping equip members develop strategies towards achieving an alignment in expectations.

Another useful set of data for the IT PMO team is the information on the perceptions of the IT PMO (see columns 2 & 3 in Table 3). It provides the actionable areas for the IT PMO team to focus on in order to be perceived as delivering value by these key stakeholders. For example, for the function to 'enforce project governance for all IT projects', both key stakeholders and the IT PMO team agree is important for the IT PMO to do this. However, whilst the IT PMO team members think that the IT PMO is enforcing governance of all IT projects, the key stakeholders think otherwise. Here, the diagrams (see Appendix 4) together with Table 3 have made visible this issue for the IT PMO team to diagnose and address thereafter.

The findings about the stakeholders' perceptions and expectations have highlighted the differing and competing views the stakeholders have of the IT PMO, confirming the need for the IT PMO team members to develop effective strategies, for example establishing an effective communications strategy, to better engage their stakeholders. The summary tables (see Tables 2 & 3), together with the four spatial diagrams (see Appendices 3 & 4) offer a wealth of information for the IT PMO team to better understand its stakeholders' perceptions and expectations – potentially beyond what has been discussed. However, in keeping with the scope of this study, we have limited our discussion to the above results.

DISCUSSION

Based on the points of view of the workshop participants [senior IT PMO team members] as a measure of IS effectiveness (Seddon, Staples, Patnayakuni and Bowtell, 1999) as well as our own reflections of this action research study, the visual framework is considered effective in graphically representing the perceptions and expectations of stakeholders and helping the IT PMO gain an insight of what their stakeholders were thinking. With this awareness and understanding, members of the IT PMO team were empowered to think about strategies to address the differences/gaps in these perceptions and expectations and hence help them work towards being perceived by their key stakeholders as delivering value. It is important to note that these spatial diagrams offer the audience, in this case, the IT PMO team members, the visibility of what the stakeholders want relative to their own perceptions and expectations. With this visibility, they can then recognise whether or not, and what they have to change.

The first workshop session (Workshop 1) was ostensibly beneficial for the IT PMO team, as we observed very enthusiastic participation amongst all the participants, both during the presentation of findings as well as in the discussions. It was useful in that it facilitated a shared understanding of the perceptions and expectations of key stakeholders amongst the participants. As it was presented in a non-threatening manner with all data anonymised, we did not detect any sign of defensiveness amongst the participants. Instead, the presentation of the findings and the facilitation of discussion got all IT PMO team members heavily engaged in constructive discussion despite the fact that some findings showed a disagreement or misalignment amongst IT PMO team members. The insights helped guide team members discuss and resolve some of the disagreements or lack of alignment within their own team. They had recognised that they were too busy managing IT projects but were not attending to their own processes, as to why they exist, and how they were communicating to others in the organisations what they were doing or have accomplished. In their feedback, all IT PMO team members involved agreed that the overall study was effective in highlighting their stakeholders' perceptions and expectations. The visual diagrams and the summary tables used in the workshop were very helpful and clear in communicating the findings and provided the visibility for IT PMO team to compare and act accordingly. All team members felt that the IT PMO was better equipped to engage their stakeholders as a result of the workshop. All team members of the IT PMO were satisfied with the outcomes of the workshop, and the IT PMO leader affirmed this with his/her comments that the study offered "extremely valuable insight for the group".

At the second workshop session (Workshop 2), the senior IT PMO team members from GOV1 presented their first efforts in articulating their vision. They presented their strategies on (1) defining the operating model of the IT PMO; (2) clarifying the role of the IT PMO (in what it does, how it is done, and how it is operated as a whole); and (3) communicating key aspects of (1) and (2) to key stakeholders as well as the rest of the business in order to build credibility and recognition that it is striving to deliver value to its stakeholders. Although their work is still ongoing, the IT PMO team seemed to much clearer in its own objectives and purpose after the workshop sessions.

CONCLUSION

This study is an initial trial of the visual framework to investigate the core values and functions of the IT PMO using the concepts of perceptions, expectations and satisfaction. We believe we have effectively answered the research question by demonstrating the effectiveness of the overall engagement process including the questionnaire and visual representations, as well as the workshop sessions in helping facilitate the development of shared understanding amongst the IT PMO team members. In addition, through the work presented by the IT PMO team in Workshop 2, we have evidence that they [the IT PMO team members] have been empowered to start thinking of strategies aimed at improving perceptions of value delivery amongst their key stakeholders.

In summary, this study has shown this instrument to be useful in empowering the IT PMO team to recognise whether or not it has to change, and to go about making these changes; and therefore be able to demonstrate its organisational value.

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APPENDIX 1

Core values the PMO is perceived/expected to emphasise		Four quadrants in Quinn & Rohrbaugh's (1983) Competing Values Framework	
1	Flexibility and adaptability	Open Systems: concerned with keeping up with the changing external environment, therefore underscoring the importance of flexibility, readiness, innovation and growth.	
2	Consultative and inclusive of people from other business units		
3	Resourcefulness in acquiring resources		
4	Productivity and efficiency	Rational Goal: concerned with the organisation maintaining competitiveness, hence giving emphasis to goal-setting, efficiency, and productivity.	
5	Planning and goal-setting		
6	Meeting its set goals and objectives		
7	Stability and control	Internal Process: concerned with organising and structuring the organisation, therefore underscoring the importance of process stability, communications, and information management.	
8	Standardised processes and procedures		
9	Communication and information management		
10	Team cohesion and staff morale amongst project teams	Human Relations: represents an organisation's concern for its employees, therefore emphasising human resource development, group cohesiveness and morale.	
11	Management of human resources within the project teams		
12	Development of human resources (i.e. training, mentoring) within the project teams		

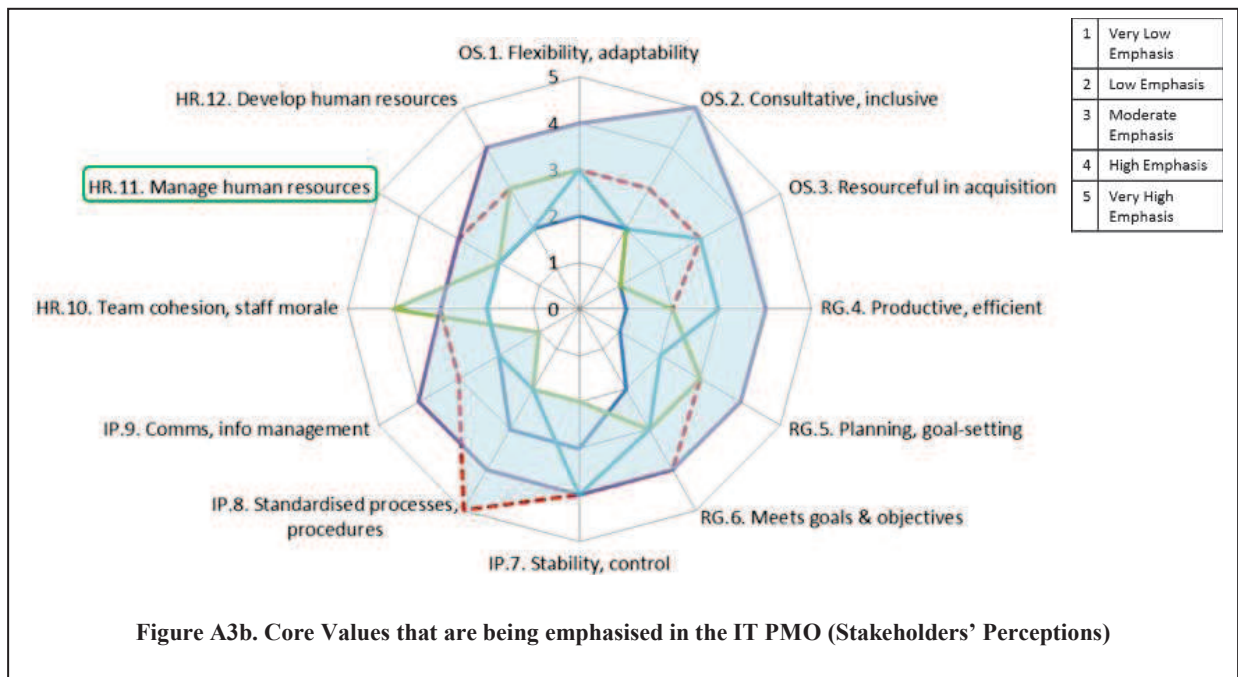
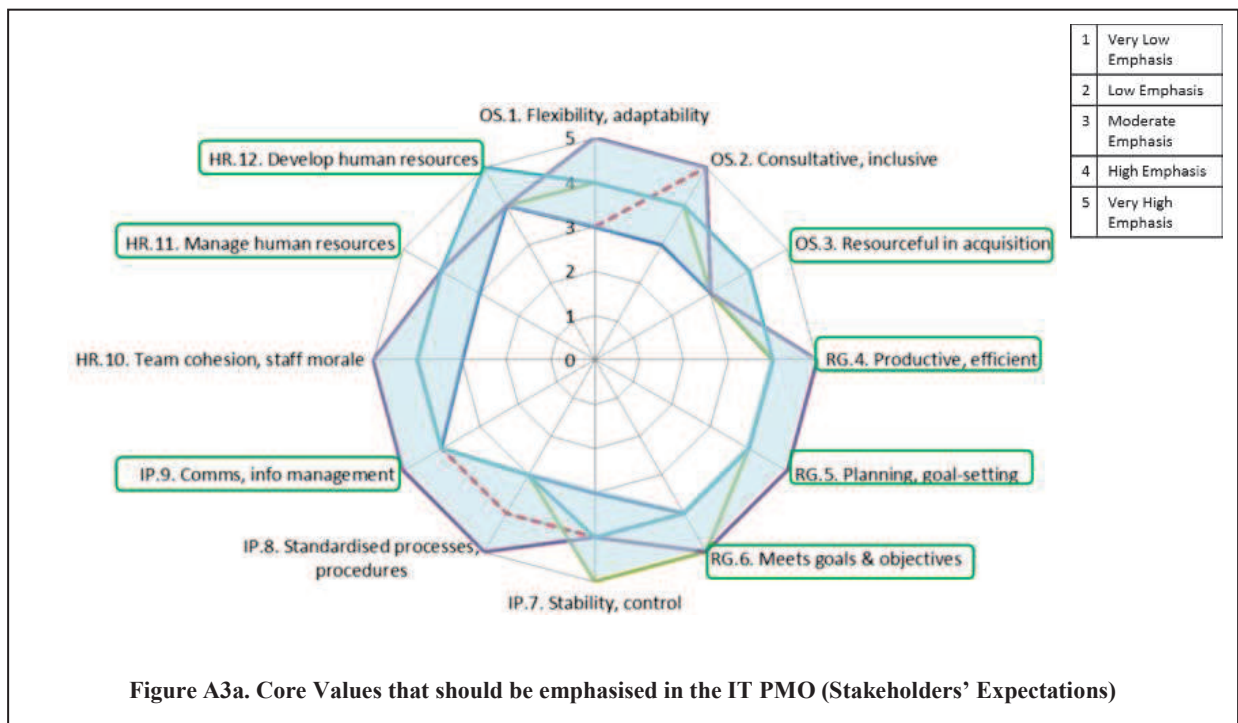
Table A1. Core Values of the IT PMO

APPENDIX 2

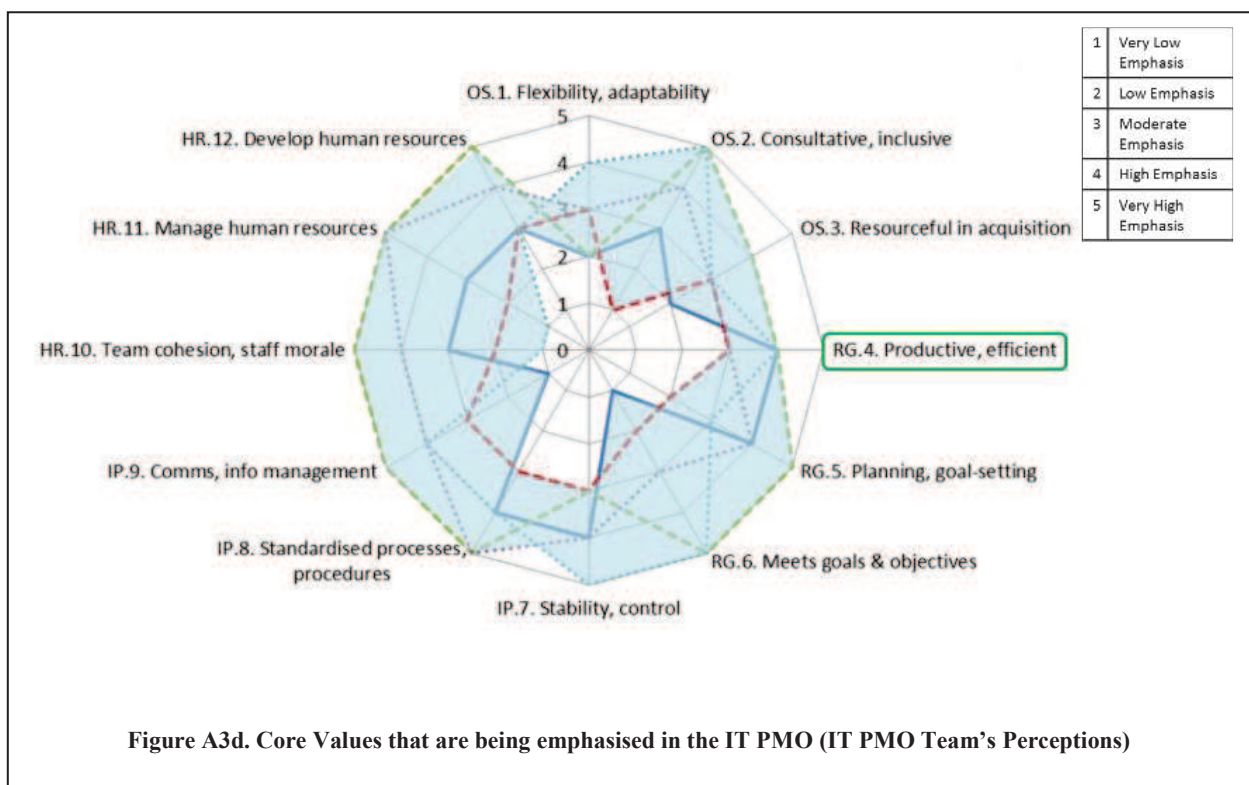
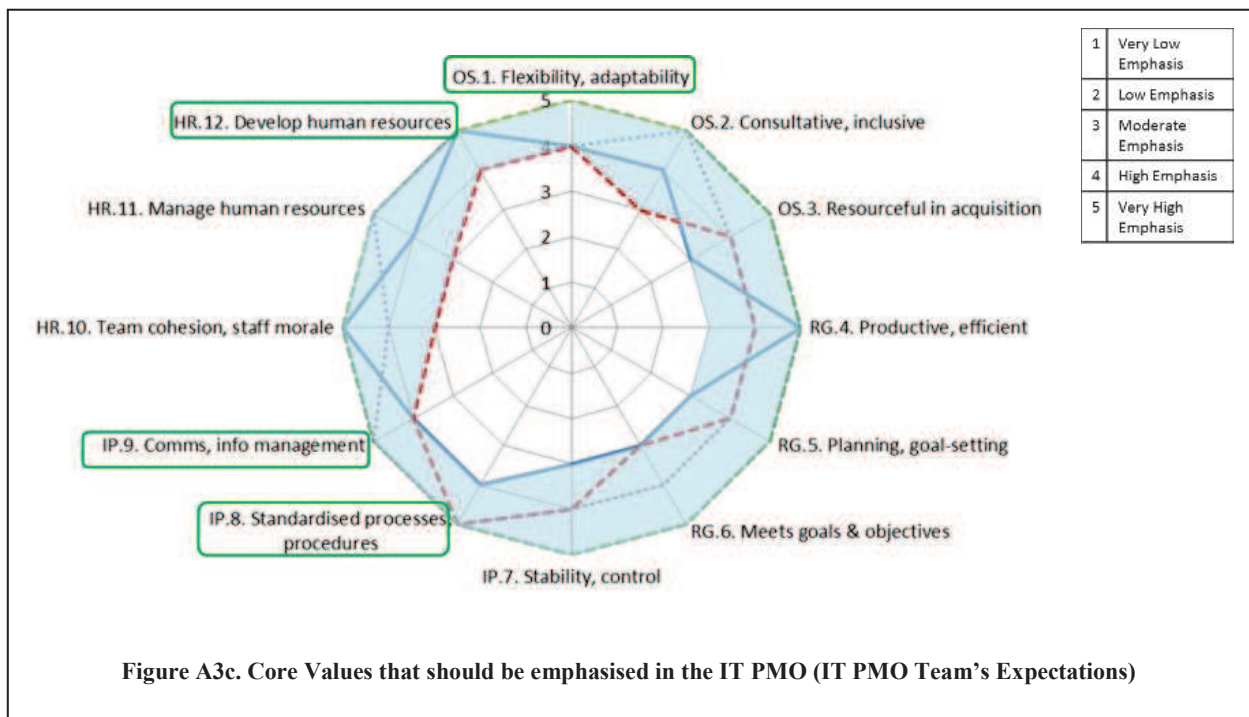
PMO functions		Five main groups of PMO functions Hobbs & Aubry (2007, 2010)
1	Report status of IT projects, IT programs (groups of IT projects), or IT portfolios (groups of IT programs) to senior management	Monitoring, controlling, and reporting project performance
2	Regularly track/monitor all IT projects	
3	Regularly track/monitor only selected IT projects	
4	Use appropriate computer-based tools to monitor IT projects	
5	Directly manage all IT projects	
6	Directly manage only selected IT projects	
7	Enforce project governance for all IT projects	
8	Enforce project governance for only selected IT projects	
9	Prescribe standardised IT project management methodologies for the organisation	Developing project management competencies and methodologies, and promoting project management
10	Enforce the implementation of standardised IT project management methodologies	
11	Promote the adoption of standardised IT project management methodologies	
12	Provide project management training for IT project managers	
13	Provide training for all staff involved with IT projects in the organisation	
14	Develop performance measures for IT project managers	
15	Measure performance of IT project managers	
16	Define project management competency requirements for IT project managers	
17	Employ only IT project managers with required project management competencies	
18	Promote soft skills (i.e. communications, interpersonal, etc.) amongst project team members	
19	Provide mentoring and project management advice for IT project managers	
20	Provide project management tools for IT project managers and IT project teams	
21	Participate in employment activities (i.e. recruit, select, evaluate, etc.) of IT project managers	
22	Participate in the selection and prioritisation of all IT projects	Multi-project management, including prioritizing, coordinating and resource allocation
23	Participate in the selection and prioritisation of only selected IT projects	
24	Participate (i.e. sharing expertise, experience, etc.) in the development of business case for IT projects	
25	Manage one or more IT programs (groups of IT projects) and/or IT portfolios (groups of IT programs)	
26	Manage the allocation of resources (i.e. staff, assets, etc.) across IT projects	
27	Have the power to terminate any IT project	Strategic management and planning
28	Track and ensure that IT projects are aligned with business strategy	
29	Track and ensure the delivery of expected benefits from IT projects	
30	Keep up with current information and communications technology trends	
31	Keep up with current business trends	
32	Demonstrate to senior management that it delivers business value	Organizational learning, including post-implementation reviews, project audits, and managing lessons-learned databases
33	Implement and manage a 'lessons-learned' knowledge base	
34	Ensure 'lessons-learned' are effectively communicated to subsequent IT projects	
35	Conduct and document post-project reviews	
36	Archive project documentation	

Table A2. Roles & Functions of the IT PMO

APPENDIX 3



APPENDIX 3



APPENDIX 4

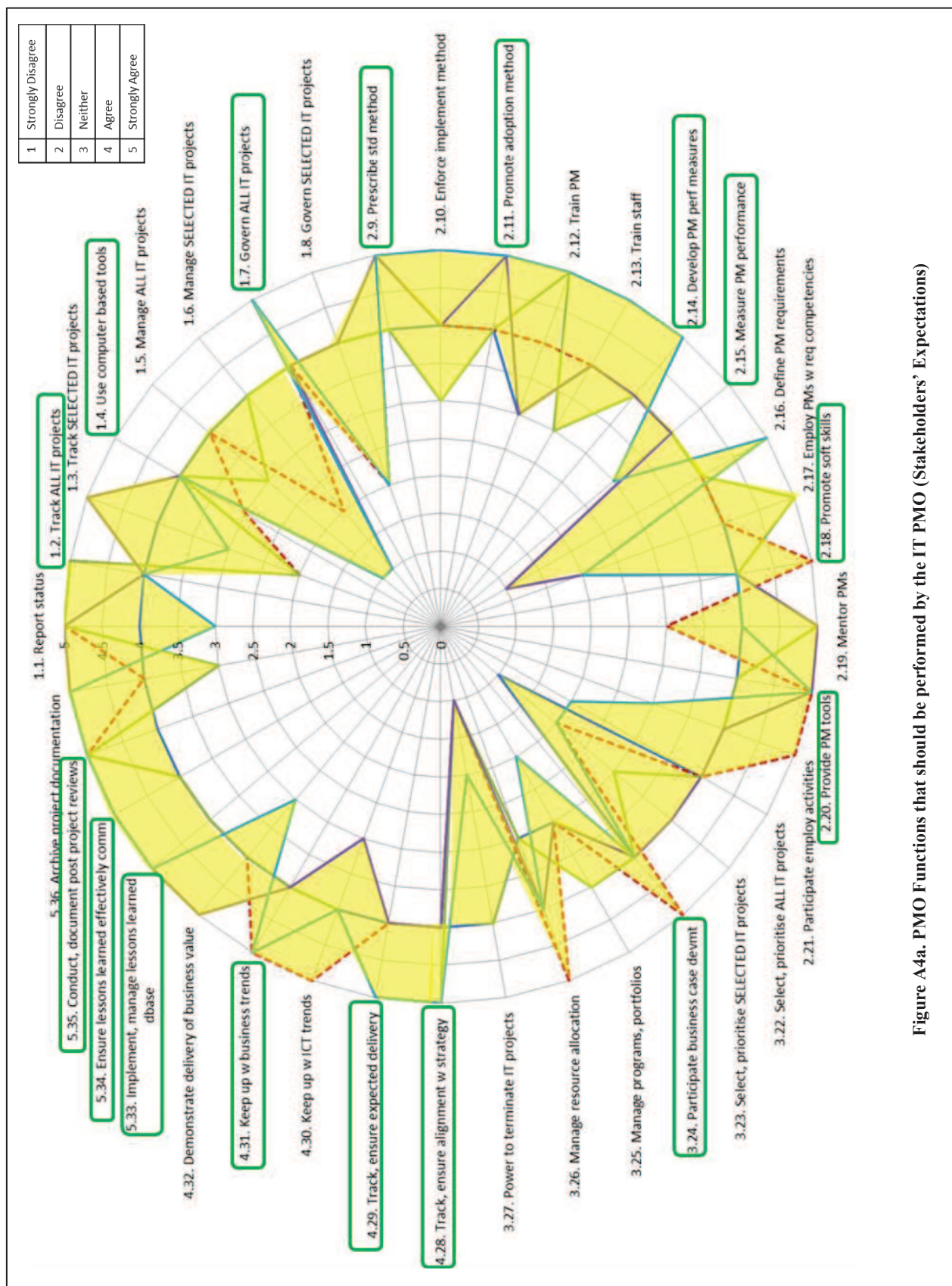


Figure A4a. PMO Functions that should be performed by the IT PMO (Stakeholders' Expectations)

APPENDIX 4

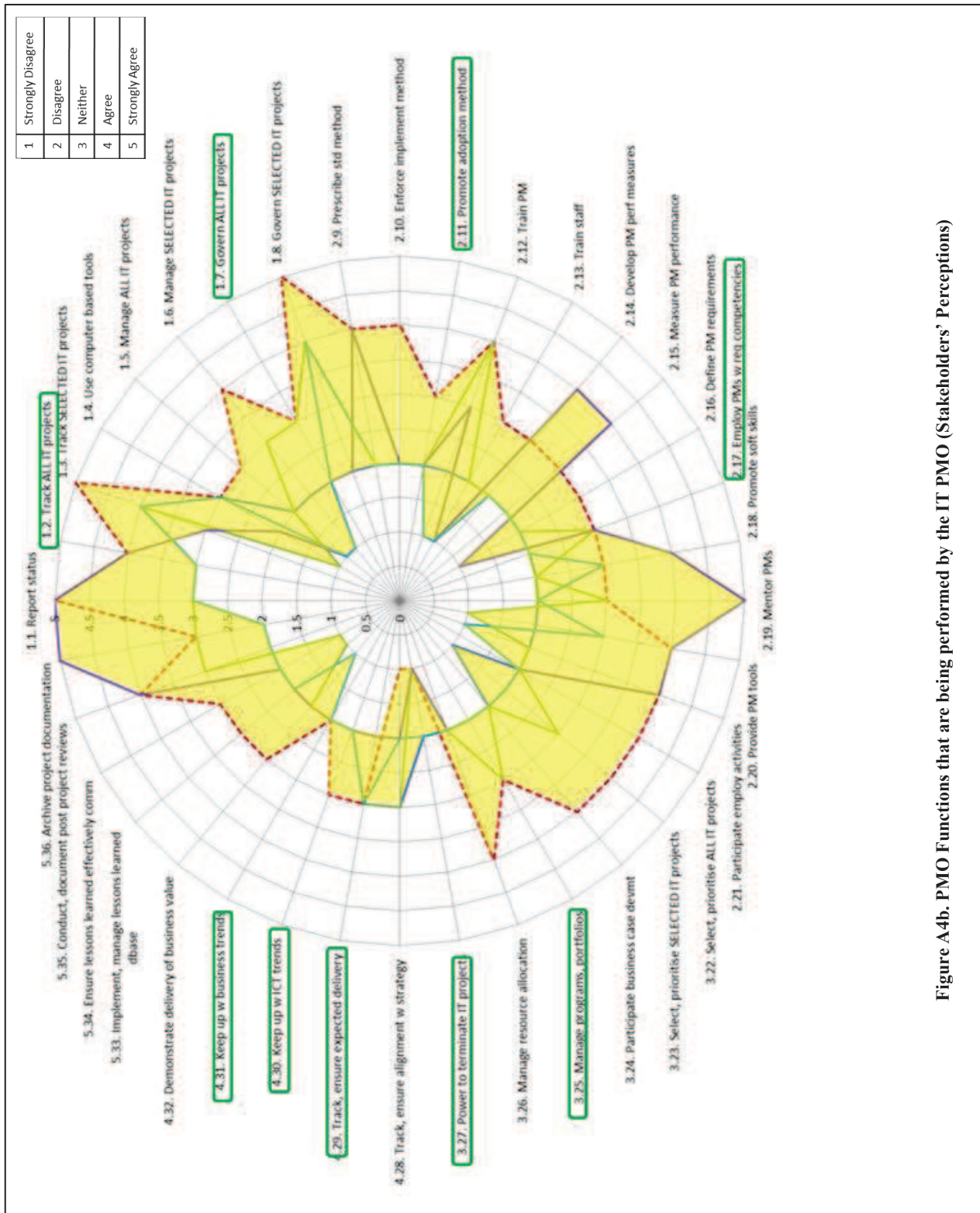


Figure A4b. PMO Functions that are being performed by the IT PMO (Stakeholders' Perceptions)

APPENDIX 4

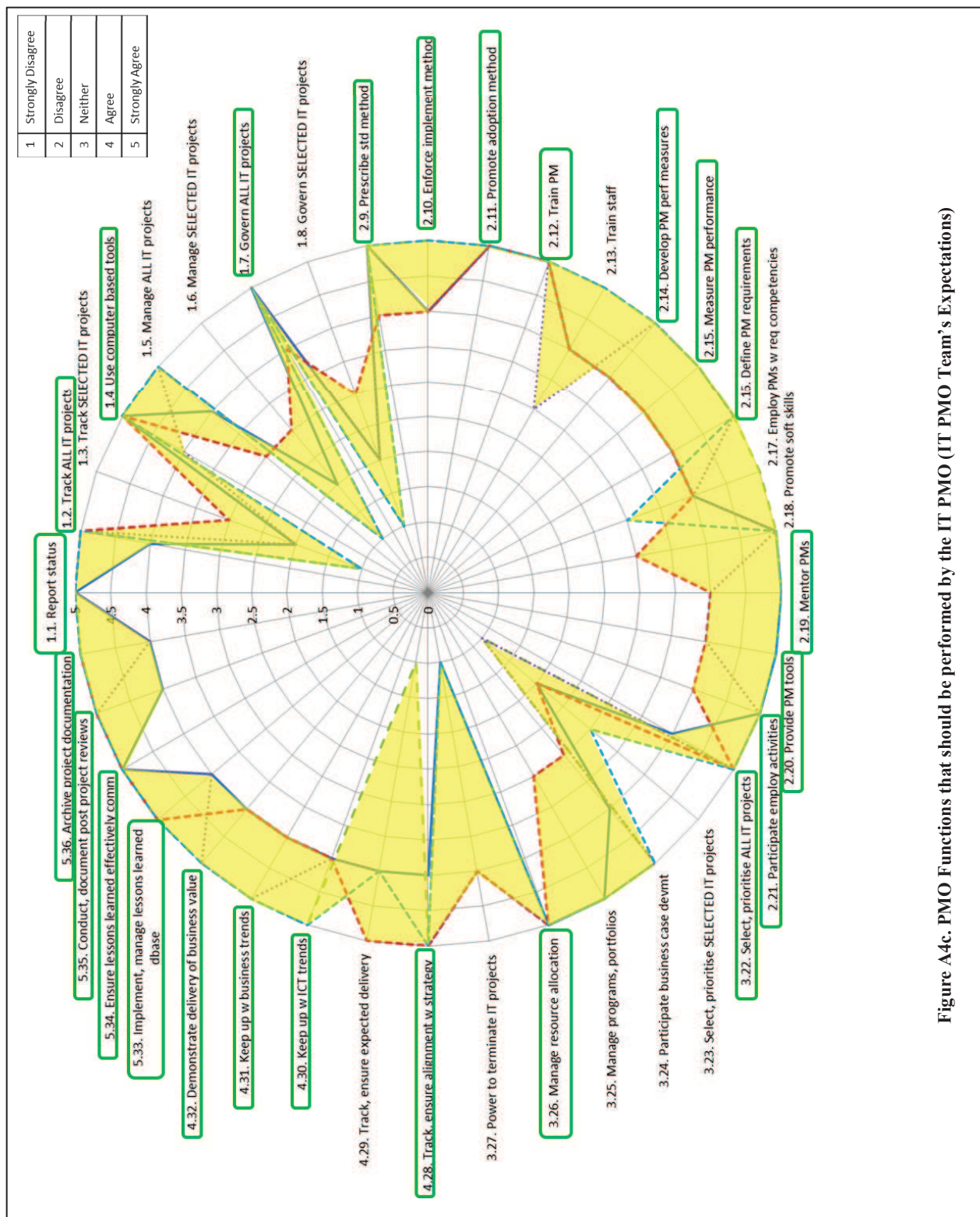


Figure A4c. PMO Functions that should be performed by the IT PMO (IT PMO Team's Expectations)

APPENDIX 4

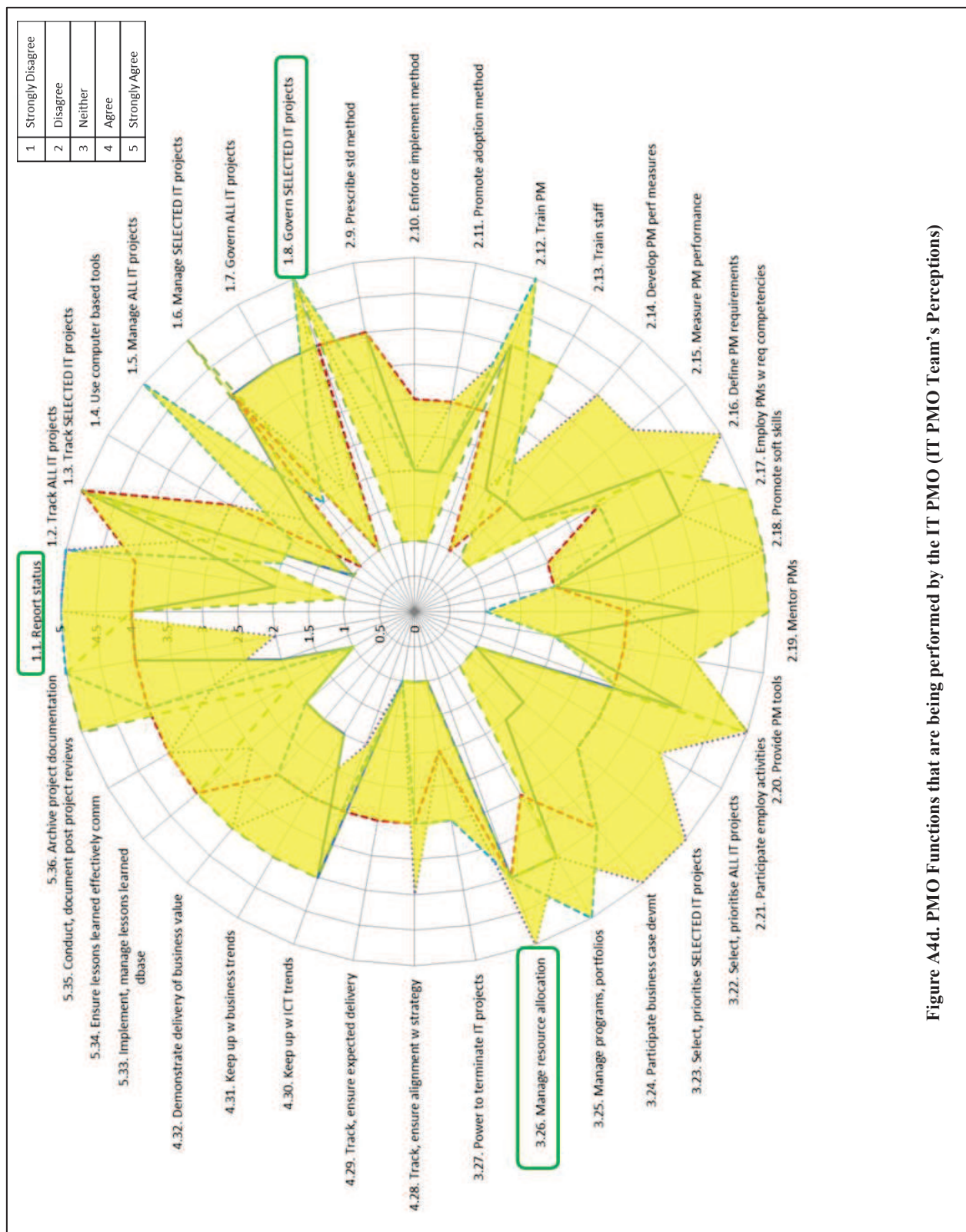


Figure A4d. PMO Functions that are being performed by the IT PMO Team's Perceptions)