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FROM PROCEDURAL FRAGMENTATION TO GLOBAL HARMONISATION: QUALITY MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR STANDARDISING PROJECT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ACROSS MULTI-REGIONAL OPERATIONS

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Abstract

This study examines procedural fragmentation within a multi-regional engineering and consultancy environment and explores how project-management procedures can be harmonised without eliminating necessary regional flexibility. A structured review of 206 procedures, forms, and templates across six operating brands and four regions was undertaken, with the reviewed procedures aligned with ISO 9001:2026 and the PMBOK® Guide, Eighth Edition. The review identified multiple versions of procedures, duplicate templates and registers, gaps in supporting work instructions, variations in governance structures, misalignment with Delegation of Authority frameworks, differences in digital platforms, and inconsistent adoption. These findings indicate a gap between formal procedural standardisation and consistent execution. Based on the findings and discussion, the study develops a conceptual harmonisation framework comprising five interconnected elements: global core procedures, controlled regional adaptation, digital integration, governance and ownership, and continuous improvement. The study contributes a practical quality-management approach for organisations seeking greater consistency, usability, governance, and continuous improvement across geographically dispersed project operations.

1. Introduction

Global organisations are increasingly running with geographically distributed business units, regional offices, running brands, project teams, etc. This allows organisations to be sensitive to the local markets and regulatory landscape but also can lead to differences in interpretation and implementation of common organisational processes (Wurm & Mendling, 2020; Agmon & Kordova, 2025). In a project-based setting, this is

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even more critical as project activities are typically coordinated across functions, locations, governance levels and delivery teams. The most recent research on project management principles has emphasised the common principles and frameworks that are found in all project-management standards and contexts, as well as the context-specific adaptations required in a project-management context (Blampied et al., 2023).

Standardisation of a process offers one way of controlling this variation. In general, business process standardisation is about consistency in the processes within the organisation and the ability to provide effective services and to be efficient in the business processes (Goel et al., 2023). But standardisation does not imply uniformity of execution of activities everywhere. Much of the current state-of-the-art advice on project management is about adapting to the organisation and project. The PMBOK® Guide, for instance, acknowledges the need to customise project-management methods yet includes a set of principles and performance domains as a foundation for project delivery (PMI, 2026).

This is a distinction between standardisation and adaptation which is especially applicable to multinational and multi-regional organisations. Too much variation in the procedures can result in duplicate documentation, the same task being performed by different individuals, varied reporting methods, and challenges in comparison and control of projects from different sites. Meanwhile, a “one size fits all” approach to the global process may not make room for the legitimate variations in regulatory, operational, or market needs (Liu et al., 2023). This means that the challenge for the organisation is not only to reduce variation, but also to differentiate between 'local adaptation' and 'fragmented procedures'. This is in line with the overall quality-management process approach, which stresses systematic management of interrelated processes, and the way the processes are implemented within the specific contexts of organisations (ISO, 2026).

One of the valuable views to tackle this challenge is that of quality management. The process approach, documented information, defined responsibilities, performance evaluation, and continual improvement are key elements of ISO 9001. The important aspect of ISO 9001 is that it is not about how organisations should work, it is a structured way of working within which organisations set up, control, assess and improve their processes (ISO, 2015). Procedures, work instructions, process descriptions, forms and records are also examples of information that can facilitate the effective operation of a quality-management system (ISO, 2017). Therefore, documented procedures are an important foundation, but the effectiveness of a management system also comes with understanding, governing, adopting and applying the procedures in practice.

Things are more complicated if project-management procedures evolve on a region or operating-entity basis (Lodinya, 2026). Over time, different variants of similar procedures may develop, duplicate templates may be created and used, different digital tools may be used, and adoption may vary (vom Brocke et al., 2021). This can lead to disintegration, which may result in disconnection between the formal management system and the project's actual implementation. This gap is important from a governance point of view as it defines the decision-making mechanisms, authority, control and compliance of the projects to organisational goals (ISO, 2017). Digital integration may also impact this relationship, as disjointed project information and systems can create challenges in terms of coordination and governance, especially in complex project contexts (Liu et al., 2023).

The present study aims to solve the problem in the light of a multi-regional engineering and consultancy environment. The organisation studied had worked out project-management procedures in several entities and in different working situations. A structured review across six operating brands, in four regions AMECA (Africa, Middle East and Central Asia), AEUK (Americas and United Kingdom), Asia (India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and China), and ANZ (Australia and New Zealand), of 206 procedures, forms and templates

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revealed variations in procedures, supporting work instructions, governance arrangements, digital platforms, and alignment to Delegation of Authority (DoA) frameworks. The review revealed that the region's procedure had been created referencing ISO 9001:2026 and the PMBOK® Guide, but that the common underlying structure had not necessarily resulted in a consistent interpretation and application throughout the organisation.

This observation leads to a main issue discussed in this paper, namely, formal procedural standardisation does not imply standardisation of project execution. Even if there is approved documentation that may set a shared reference point, the differences in supporting controls, governance, digital systems, awareness and practical adoption can persist and have an impact on fragmentation. The original organisational review thus determined that procedure harmonisation was a real necessity for greater consistency without corresponding increases in complexity.

In this article, therefore, the issue of procedural fragmentation is explored and a feasible framework for harmonisation of multi-regional project operations is developed. Instead of an absolute uniformity, the framework aims to set a global baseline for procedures and controlled regionally adapted procedures. It brings together five interwoven components: centralizing key global procedures, allowing for regional adaptation that can be controlled, incorporating digital platforms, enhancing governance and ownership, and continuous improvement.

The article has two related contributions. First, it illustrates that in spite of the existence of recognised international quality and project-management systems, procedural fragmentation may remain. Secondly, it maps the organisational review to a concrete harmonisation process, bridging the gap between documentation and governance, between documentation and digital integration, adoption and continuous improvement. The overall direction of the argument is that differences should not be eliminated as part of effective harmonisation but rather should be Harmonisation is no longer just a documentation activity, but a tool that can support a geographically distributed organisation to build greater consistency and project governance.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Process Standardisation and Organisational Consistency

Standardisation of processes is now a valuable tool for organisations to try and minimise all the non-value-added variation and introduce more consistency into the way things are performed (Davenport, 2005). In their systematic review of business process standardisation, Goel et al. (2023) define standardisation as a process that aims to establish uniformity and consistency in business processes and to facilitate service quality, efficiency, transparency and interorganisational coordination. They also differentiate between standardisation and other similar concepts, including process compliance, process integration and process harmonisation. Interestingly, they see process harmonisation as a part of the standardisation process and not as being synonymous (Agmon & Kordova, 2025).

This is especially important when it comes to multi-regional organisations. In contrast to harmonisation, standardisation sets the common basis process, while harmonisation deals with adapting the variants of this common basis process. In reality, organisations don't start with totally homogeneous processes (Münstermann et al., 2010). The procedures may vary between regions or business units that have grown up over time due to organisational history, operational needs, regulatory settings and/or local management (Lodinya, 2026). Thus, to be successful, a standardisation program should involve identifying the existing variations and deciding which are needed and which are duplications or inconsistencies and can be avoided. Goel et al. (2023) also mention different stages of documenting process variations and aligning them with an accepted master process as significant steps of business process standardisation.

This is a real concern for project-based organisations with regard to coordination and

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governance. If the same type of project activity is managed in a different manner, template, approval process or reporting requirements, staff may be confused as to which procedure to follow (Wurm & Mendling, 2020). Standardisation can thus offer a common organisational starting point and harmonisation can minimise any unnecessary inter-regional differences. Standardisation should not be understood, however, to mean that each detail of the process needs to be the same. The goal rather is to establish enough consistency to facilitate control in the organisation and still maintain legitimate contextual differences.

2.2 Harmonisation Versus Uncontrolled Variation

Harmonisation is especially pertinent if an organisation is present in more than one geographical and/or organisational context. There are significant differences in the existing literature between the concepts of harmonisation and complete unification: harmonisation aims to harmonise process variants with a common standard but recognises the fact that some variation may still be suitable (Wuttke et al., 2025). Process harmonisation is explicitly seen as part of the standardisation of variants of processes under a larger standardisation umbrella as suggested by Goel et al. (2023).

This view is important to note as it forms a fundamental understanding of how to differentiate between controlled adaptation and procedural fragmentation. However, local adaptation can be useful if it is based on real differences in legal and/or regulatory requirements, customer expectations, operating conditions and/or organisational structure (Wurm & Mendling, 2020). But there can be problems with variation when there is no clear governance, ownership or justification for different versions. In this scenario, the organisation can actually have multiple instances of the same process running, without knowing or understanding that there is a difference (Münstermann et al., 2010).

This is particularly relevant in the context of global projects. The minimum requirements, responsibilities, controls and expected outputs can be defined in a global procedure, which can then be adapted at the regional level with selected items as necessary. This way, it prevents uncontrolled changes and over-centralisation (Liu et al., 2023). Recent literature on project management also acknowledges tailoring as a crucial aspect of project management, which can be done by adapting a generic approach to the nature and needs of specific environments instead of mechanical application (Rodrigues et al., 2023).

2.3 Quality Management and the Process Approach

The quality-management way of thinking further emphasizes that processes are considered to be interrelated organisational activities and not just a set of documents (Wuttke et al., 2025). With ISO 9001, the importance of the process approach, documented information, leadership, risk-based thinking, performance evaluation and continual improvement is highlighted. The ISO (2015) process-approach guidance also details how organisations can utilise the Plan – Do – Check – Act cycle to continuously plan, implement, monitor, evaluate and improve processes. This is designed to aid in the consistent attainment of administrative goals and accountability (ISO, 2026).

From this point of view, procedures have no value per se but only because they are controlled documents. These are useful as long as they help to achieve consistent processes and desired organisational outcomes (Aalst et al., 2016). While it is important to have a formal reference point in the form of documentation, it is also important to understand responsibilities, implement processes, evaluate performance and incorporate improvements as part of effective quality management (ISO, 2026). This difference is important to the current study as a result of the variation in the organisational review despite the procedures created with reference to recognised quality and project-management frameworks. A quality-oriented organisation has to link procedures to the implementation, governance, monitoring and improvement. Inconsistent practices can remain in a formally standardised

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system where these elements are not connected (Goel et al., 2023).

2.4 Project Management, Tailoring, and Governance

Another key project management take on the standardisation/flexibility dichotomy is provided by project management. The PMBOK® Guide (8th ed.) focuses on principles, performance domains and tailoring, which means that project-management strategies should be tailored to the nature and environment of a project (PMI, 2026). Blampied et al. (2023), looking at the use of PMBOK 8, also characterise tailoring as a way of adapting project-management techniques to the conditions of the organisations and project, while ensuring "the proper management structure".

With tailoring, though, there have to be limits. Without a shared governance process, procedures may be customized in each region or project team over time and end up as fragmentation (Musawir et al., 2020; Alkhatib et al., 2026). This establishes a vital link between the concepts of standardisation, tailoring and governance. “Standardisation gives the baseline while tailoring allows for legitimate adaptation in context and governance processes the approval, control, communication and review of adaptations” (Rodrigues et al., 2023).

This relationship is relevant especially for Delegation of Authority (DoA) arrangements. Project procedures might be used to define activities and responsibilities and DoA frameworks to identify who has authority to make decisions at various levels of the organisation (PMI, 2026). A procedure can explicitly state an activity, but not be clear on who is responsible for approving it, if these two systems are not in sync (Too& Weaver, 2014). One of the areas that needs to be addressed across operating brands found in the organisational review of the present study is such alignment with the DoA framework.

2.5 Digital Integration and Procedure Adoption

Digital platforms are also becoming the new reality for documenting, communicating, reporting, approvals and information management on contemporary projects. Therefore, procedural harmonisation is not possible without the systems that implement procedures (Goel et al., 2023). In cases where multiple areas have their own platforms or duplicate electronic documentation, staff can have varying processes even if the written processes are the same (Liu et al., 2023).

The organisational review revealed that there were various digital platforms, as well as several processes, some duplicate templates and varying degrees of uptake. This means that harmonisation is not necessarily just a documentation process (Agmon & Kardova, 2025; Aalts, 2016). It will also need to take into account the location where procedures are accessed, information flow between organisational units, and whether work experience a similar digital experience when performing the same types of project activities (vom Brocke et al., 2021).

Meanwhile, adoption is a function of usability and understanding of the organisation. The current case suggests that one of the factors that can lead to inconsistent adoption is lack of awareness and that the more complex the procedures, the lower the adoption rate (PMI, 2026). However, less complex processes can help increase compliance. This aligns with the overall quality management approach to having well-defined processes, responsibilities, monitoring and continuous improvement (ISO, 2026).

2.6 Synthesis and Research Gap

Literature highlights the significance of process standardisation for consistency within the organisations and the importance of harmonisation, process integration and contextual adaptation (Goel et al., 2023). The principles of quality management are also focused on the consistency of processes, documented information, the monitoring of processes, and continual improvement (ISO, 2026, 2015). However, in project management, tailoring is acknowledged as a need in order to respond to project-specific situations (PMI, 2021; Blampied et al., 2023). Process coordination and governance are further complemented by a technological aspect through digital integration (Liu et al., 2023).

Yet there is less literature providing pragmatic advice on how organisations can combine all of the

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above elements into one approach to operational harmonisation. It becomes especially pertinent in multi-regional organisations, where procedural fragmentation, not only in terms of a formal document such as the Work Instruction, but also in terms of governance, delegated authority to work, digital platforms and actual uptake of the Work Instruction, may be the case. The present study aims to fill this gap in practice by an organisational review of project-management procedures in a number of operating brands and across regions.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The approach to the study was a qualitative organisational case study and document review to explore issues of procedural fragmentation and harmonisation in a multi-regional engineering and consultancy environment. The approach chosen was because there was a need to understand differences in the existing project-management procedures, forms, templates, work instructions, governance arrangements and supporting controls, not to statistically test relationships among predefined variables.

It was a focus on the existing documentation of the organisation's project management processes throughout its territories and business. A specific focus was on identifying duplication, procedural variation, requirements for implementation and any gaps in governance and inconsistencies between formal documentation and the practical requirements for project execution.

3.2 Scope of the Review

206 procedures, forms and templates were reviewed, spread over six operating brands and four geographical regions. The regions included AMECA (Africa, Middle East and Central Asia), AEUK (Americas and United Kingdom), Asia (India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and China) and ANZ (Australia and New Zealand).

The documentation that was reviewed covered project-management processes and supporting documentation from the various parts of the organisation. The review thus focussed on procedures as well as supporting documents necessary for the operational implementation of the procedures.

3.3 Assessment Criteria

The documentation reviewed was analysed in terms of three key aspects.

Procedural consistency was first considered and multiple versions of similar procedures, duplicated templates or registers, and different documented requirements for the processes between operating entities were identified.

Secondly, the level of governance alignment was assessed by the degree to which the procedures represent the appropriate governance structure at the regional level and the alignment of the procedures with the Delegation of Authority (DoA) agreements between operating brands.

Finally, implementation and usability were assessed by the existence of supporting work instructions, differences between the digital platforms, and evidence of inconsistent implementation. The dimensions were especially relevant as the review found gaps in areas of supporting work instructions, regional governance structures, and DoA alignment even with a common foundational structure.

3.4 Standards and Reference Frameworks

The procedures of the regions reviewed had been created based on ISO 9001:2026 and the PMBOK® Guide - Eighth Edition. The main quality-management and project-management standards that served as reference points for the evaluation of procedural consistency and alignment were these frameworks.

ISO 9001 was especially pertinent to the review as it is process-based and emphasises consistency, documented information, responsibilities within the organisation, performance assessment and continual improvement. The PMBOK® Guide was used to establish a project-management reference framework with respect to which the need to consider the procedural requirements and to tailor these requirements to the context could be considered.

3.5 Analytical Approach

The review involved a systematic comparison of available procedural materials which led to an

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understanding of duplication, variation, omission and misalignment. Regional and brand-by-brand differences in the procedures and supporting documents were looked at to identify either true regional needs or procedural variations as unnecessary.

Key harmonisation requirements were then identified, based on the analysis. These requirements were combined into 5 interrelated areas: Global core procedures, Controlled regional adaptation, Digital integration, Governance and ownership, Continuous improvement.

The framework that emerged thus has attempted to link the observed fragmentation issues with concrete means of attaining more consistency with sufficient regional flexibility.

3.6 Ethical and Confidentiality Considerations

Given its organisationally oriented nature, the report of findings will be based on process-level observations and not confidential project, employee, client or commercially sensitive information. The analysis is conducted at an aggregated organisational level to ensure that there is appropriate confidentiality.

4. Findings

During the project-management documentation review, it was observed that there was a fragmentation of the procedures across the multi-regional activities of the organization. This assessment included 206 procedures, forms and templates across 6 operating brands and 4 regions (AMECA, AEUK, Asia and ANZ). The regional procedures had been designed based on ISO 9001:2026 and the PMBOK® Guide, but the review showed that there was not necessarily complete consistency in the interpretation, implementation or supporting controls due to having a common foundation.

4.1 Multiple Versions and Procedural Duplication

One of the key findings was having a variety of similar project-management procedures in the operating environment. Also, duplicate templates and registers were identified through the review. These variations suggested that there was no one clear and consistent procedural structure for supporting the same kind of project activity. Rather, there were variations and supplementary resources within institutions and localities.

The resulting duplication added an extra level of complexity to project teams, as there were overlaps or alternate materials in the documented process environment. The procedures were not a single project-management system but more the 'fossilised' result of how things had evolved over time across the various organisational units. So the review concluded that a major aspect of the fragmentation issue is 'procedural duplication '.

4.2 Gaps in Supporting Work Instructions

The review also found areas that needed to be improved to support work instructions. Core procedures were in place that described the requirements for PM, but supporting instructions were not always developed or consistent between regions and operating brands.

This is significant as procedures may not be enough to consistently direct the execution. If supporting instructions are not consistent or are incomplete, there may be varying interpretations of the identical high-level requirement by staff. The variation can result even if the organisation has a common procedural framework formally in place. The results thus suggest a difference between having a procedure documented and having enough operational guidance to support the consistent application of a procedure.

4.3 Variation in Regional Governance Structures

Another area of fragmentation was that of regional governance structures. The review found variations in the governance arrangements in the operating environment, which indicated that a similar governance structure was not always in place for the required procedures.

This particular aspect is significant in the context of project-management procedures because the successful implementation of any project must be clearly understood in terms of responsibilities, authority and supervision. If there is a variation in the governance arrangements and no apparent organisational basis for the variation, then the same procedural requirement may be applied in a different way from region to region. The results therefore suggest that it is not possible to

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distinguish between procedural harmonisation and governance of the procedures for their implementation.

4.4 Alignment with Delegation of Authority

The review also identified gaps in the alignment between project-management procedures and Delegation of Authority (DoA) frameworks across operating brands. This indicates that procedural requirements and organisational decision-making arrangements were not always fully integrated.

The finding is significant because a procedure may establish what needs to be done while the DoA framework establishes who is authorised to make or approve particular decisions. Where these elements are not adequately aligned, procedural compliance can become less straightforward and responsibilities may be interpreted differently between organisational units. The review therefore identified DoA alignment as an important requirement for a harmonised project-management system.

4.5 Differences in Digital Platforms and Adoption

The other identified fragmentation was the differences in digital platforms. Various platforms were in use throughout the operating environment and there were different levels of use of established procedures. This resulted in the formal process not aligning with the actual process.

Results indicate that procedural consistency cannot be done only by documentation if there is a great discrepancy in the systems employees use to access, apply and manage project information. Digital variation can exacerbate procedural variation by providing different team working environments for teams who undertake similar activities.

Adoption was also mentioned in the review as being important. The experience of implementation showed that the absence of awareness was one of the reasons for non-consistency and complex procedures may affect adoption. In contrast, simplicity was found to be correlated with better compliance. As shown by these observations, usability and accessibility of procedures are important factors to take into account to achieve practical harmonisation.

4.6 The Documentation Execution Gap

Overall, the results show a larger gap between standardisation and standardisation in practice. There was a shared foundation for the organisation and the regional processes were based on established quality management and project-management frameworks. However, there were still variations in the procedures, work directions, governance systems, DoA alignment, digital platforms and adoption.

The results thus suggest that fragmentation of the procedures was not merely a result of a lack of standards. Instead, fragmentation continued to exist, both in terms of differences of interpretation, differences in how it was implemented, differences in supporting controls and differences in organisational arrangements. This is a significant difference; an organisation could have a procedure that it has formally accepted but this doesn't mean that this is being consistently applied.

4.7 Overall Finding

The general conclusion of the review is that the harmonisation is more than just the aggregation of documents in common formats. Fragmentation was identified to cross the boundaries of procedures, supporting work instructions, governance systems, authority systems, as well as digital platforms and adoption. Therefore, the achievement of greater consistency requires these to be thought of as components of a linked management system.

The review thus calls for a harmonisation by the use of a common baseline of procedure at global level and controlled regional adaptations. This is meant to minimize any "unnecessary variation" while preserving any valid differences among regions. The rollout experience has also shown that harmonisation needs to be as practical and lean as possible, as a high level of procedural complexity can lead to lack of usability and poor adoption.

In general, the results provide the foundation for the harmonisation framework which was developed in this study. The framework directly addresses the identified gaps and ties in global procedures with controlled regional adaptation, digital integration, governance/ownership and

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continuous improvement. These are then discussed in light of the literature in the discussion.

5. Discussion

The results show that procedural fragmentation in multi-regional project settings is not just a result of low numbers of procedures or low formal standards. Instead, fragmentation can continue within organisations with existing procedures that are working with reference to some recognised quality and project-management frameworks. Review of 206 procedures, forms and templates in the current case has resulted in differences in the versions of procedures, supporting work instructions, governance structure, Delegation of Authority arrangements, digital platforms, and adoption. The obvious conclusion is thus that the standardisation at the level of documentation does not necessarily imply standardisation at the execution level.

5.1 From Standardisation to Harmonisation

The discovery of several versions of the procedure and multiple templates, corroborates the general literature on business process standardisation. Goel et al. (2023) define business process standardisation as an organisational practice that aims to standardise the underlying processes, and demonstrate that the standardisation process is multi-staged, with the development of a common document being only part of it.

This study builds on the previous findings and takes them to a multi-regional project-management setting. The problem that was found was not the lack of procedures, but rather the variations that had evolved with the different procedures in operating entities. This indicates that standardisation programmes become less effective when they aim to just create or approve documents without systematically dealing with existing variants.

Harmonisation is thus a more suitable organisational response than just consolidation of documents. The vision is not to make all regional procedures the same, but to set a foundation and decide on which variations are warranted by local conditions. This is significant in that, while there is legitimate regional variation, this may be necessary, but if there is duplication or inconsistent interpretation, it is avoidable fragmentation.

5.2 Standardisation and Controlled Regional Adaptation

The findings also endorse the importance of the differentiation between controlled adaptation and uncontrolled variation. The organisation is spread over geographically and operationally diverse regions, and not a completely uniform procedure is always suitable (Wuttke et al., 2025). Tailoring is also acknowledged as a proper project management process that can facilitate the adaptation of approaches to the situation of the organisations and the projects. The PMBOK® Guide's tailoring approach explicitly takes into account organisational needs when tailoring project approaches, as well as governance, quality assurance, compliance with policies and continuous improvement.

Recent studies of PMBOK 8 also support that tailoring can be applied to fit the project-management practice in a particular organisational context instead of applying the methodology without tailoring (Rodrigues et al., 2023).

This is in accord with the separation between a global procedural baseline and controlled regional adaptation in this present study. The issue is not the adaptation of procedures by the regional teams; rather, the issue is adaptation without defined criteria, ownership, governance and alignment with the core of the organisation. Harmonisation, therefore, should provide limits for the flexibility of the regions. In this way, the organisation can maintain the required responsiveness at a local level whilst minimising the amount of procedural divergence.

5.3 Documentation Is Necessary but Not Sufficient

One of the key results is the difference between what is written and what is done. This result is aligned with the process approach in ISO 9001, where documented information is just one part of the whole quality-management system that also covers, among other responsibilities, process control, performance estimation and continuous improvement (Wuttke et al., 2025).

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The message is that it is not procedural documentation that proves consistent execution, but rather it is an enabler of consistent execution. While procedures were designed based on ISO 9001:2026 and PMBOK® Guide 8th Edition, there were some differences in supporting controls, governance, implementation, and adoption. This does not mean that document-level conformity assures the elimination of operational variation.

This confirms, from the quality-management point of view, the need to look at the way that processes work in practice. The process-approach guidance provided by ISO focuses on the monitoring, evaluation and improvement of processes and the embedding of effective solutions in everyday practice. Thus, the harmonisation of procedures should not stop at document approval and should also cover the implementation, monitoring and understanding by the users and periodic review.

5.4 Governance and Delegation of Authority as Enablers of Harmonisation

The lack of alignment identified between regional governance and Delegation of Authority shows that procedural harmonisation is not possible without organisational governance. While a procedure may outline the process that needs to be followed, there must be clarity on responsibility, approval authority, escalation and oversight (Lodinya, 2026).

This finding is aligned with the project-management tailoring advice by PMI, which suggests governance, quality assurance, policy compliance and organisational requirements as factors to be considered when developing an appropriate project approach. So, tailoring should not be done through unrestricted local modification, but rather within the framework of a governance structure.

Thus, procedures and DoA arrangements are an important control mechanism for the organisation studied in this research. If the procedural needs and decision-making lines are congruent, then employees have a better view of what needs to be done and who has the authority to make the appropriate decision. Harmonisation therefore means not only harmonising process descriptions, but also harmonising governance mechanisms which support the processes.

5.5 Digital Integration and Consistent Adoption

The use of multiple digital platforms is a further procedural fragmentation. Even if the two areas practice the same conceptually similar procedures, using different platforms, templates, or information flows can result in different experiences of the operation. Digital fragmentation can thus be seen as reproducing procedural differences despite the formal documentation being harmonised (Alkhatib et al., 2026).

It is a finding that further emphasizes the importance of procedural harmonisation as well as digital integration as a single matter and not merely a technological challenge. Employees who have similar access to the documents, templates, workflows and information are more likely to use a common procedure consistently.

This is at the same time, the implementation experience has shown that technology is not the solution to fragmentation. The study identified that when the procedures were not simple, compliance was less likely, and that a lack of awareness led to inconsistencies and a lack of compliance. Therefore, it is important that the digital integration is accompanied by clear communication and accessible procedures, guidance and user-oriented design.

5.6 Simplicity, Usability, and Adoption

The results on complexity and awareness give a valuable real-life perspective to the harmonisation debate. Standardisation may also lead to further bureaucracy as organizations may react to each of the identified variations by creating more procedures, controls, or approvals (Alkhatib et al., 2026). This can jeopardize the original goal because of a lack of understanding of and an inability to follow processes.

The current results rather point towards a slim harmonisation strategy. The goal should not be to add to the amount of controlled documentation, but to eliminate as much duplication as possible and make the key documentation requirements clearer. This is in line with the quality management focus on effective processes and continual

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improvement, in which organisations should review the performance of processes and enhance the systems based on evidence.

The inference is that the "quality" of the procedure should be determined not just by the completeness or legal formality, but also by "usability". Technically thorough, but hard to interpret for the employees, may not yield consistent execution. As a result, simplicity becomes a critical enabler to adoption.

5.7 Toward an Integrated Harmonisation Approach

The data indicate that the concept of procedural harmonisation can be seen as a comprehensive organisational process and not as an operation of document management. The evidence reveals five elements that reinforce each other: first, the creation of global core procedures; second, allowing for controlled regional adaptation; third, incorporating digital platforms; fourth, enhanced governance and ownership; and fifth, the integration of continuous improvement (Agmon & Kardova, 2025). These are directly in line with the harmonisation approach that was identified in the original organisational review.

The five elements should not be considered as stand-alone interventions. A common baseline for a global core procedure but regional adaptations are needed where appropriate contextual differences exist. Digital integration helps with uniform access and execution, and governance and ownership help to ensure that someone is accountable for keeping the system going. Continuous improvement then becomes the way in which lessons learnt from implementation can be used in the next iterations.

This holistic approach also justifies the fact that the harmonisation of procedures should be considered not as a single consolidation but as a continuous process. Project environments, regulations, and technologies evolve over time and so do organisational requirements. There is a need for a harmonised system to be periodically reviewed to see if existing procedures are still relevant, usable and aligned.

5.8 Proposed Contribution of the Study

The main contribution of this study is the creation of a practical path towards harmonisation of operational processes, departing from formal procedural standardisation, in a multi-regional project environment. The significance of business process standardisation is already proven, and the role of contextual tailoring in project management is also acknowledged (Goel et al., 2023; Rodrigues et al., 2023). In the present study, these principles are synthesized within a context of organisational quality-management and illustrate how procedural fragmentation can exist across regions, on the foundation of a common standards base.

The framework thus calls for a middle ground between two extremes: untamed regional diversity on the one hand, and global uniformity on the other. It is based on the concept that consistency should be used as a default and differences should be managed and documented. This is especially relevant to organisations with projects spread out across different geographical areas and brands where a single consistent approach might not be required for all the projects, but the absence of a consistent process may make governance and consistency more difficult.

In conclusion, the findings and discussion point to the need to link documentation to people, governance, technology, and continuous improvement as part of the successful harmonisation process. The aim of harmonisation is therefore not to eliminate all regional differences, but to make sure that differences are deliberate, open, manageable and compatible with existing quality and project-management goals of the organisation. This is in-line with the original study conclusion that harmonisation is all about creating systems that are understandable, usable, trustworthy and continually improvable by people.

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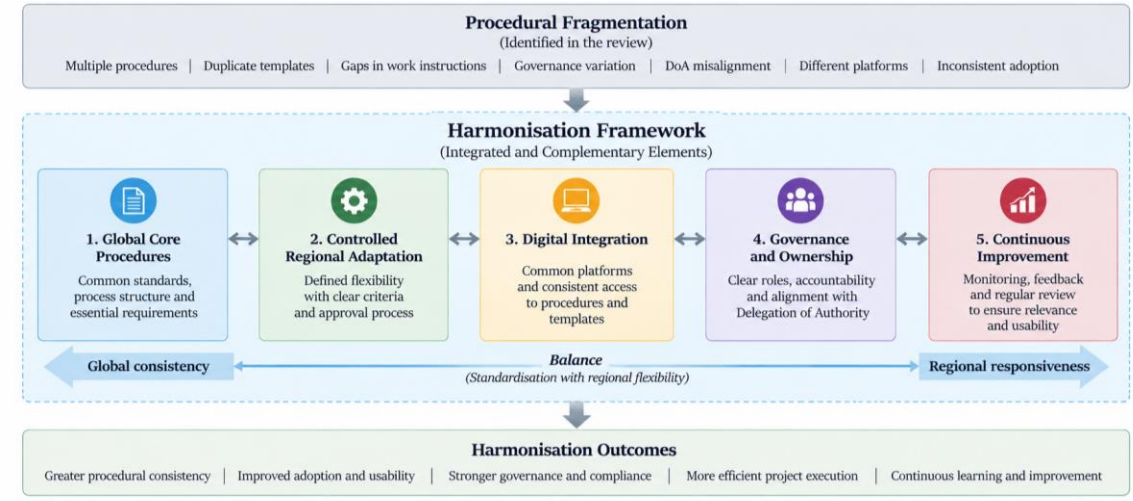


Figure 1. Conceptual Harmonisation Framework for Project Management Procedures Across Multi-Regional Operations

6. Implications

The research has a number of implications for organisations that have to deal with projects in multiple regions. First, procedure harmonisation should not stop at the consolidation of the documents. Organisations need to have a common baseline procedure internationally, but with clearly defined adaptations at a regional level where there is a local need. This will decrease unneeded duplication while still allowing for acceptable flexibility at the regional level. Secondly, there is a need for the integration of Governance and Delegation of Authority with the procedures used in projects. Having clear ownership, approval responsibilities and accountability can help to ensure more consistent implementation across operating brands.

Thirdly, in addition to procedural standardisation, digital integration and usability should be taken into account. Making procedures, templates, and supporting information available to everyone can minimize variation in implementation, and simpler procedures can make it easier to get adopted. Awareness, complexity and usability were specifically reported as factors to consider for implementation experience in the present study.

Harmonisation should finally be considered as an ongoing quality management process and not a single harmonisation approach. Through periodic review, any duplication and shifts in regional needs can be detected, and additional opportunities for improvement can be found.

7. Limitations and Future Research

This study is a structured review of 206 procedures, forms and templates of six operating brands, in four regions of a multi-regional engineering and consultancy organisation. Thus, the results are only valid in the context of the organisation under study and cannot be transferred to all other industries or organisations.

Another constraint is that the evidence of reviews that was available is mostly of a documentary and organisational nature. The study doesn't numerically assess the link between harmonisation and project-performance outcomes. A potential subject for future research would thus be the proposed framework in more than just one organisation or industry and to see if there is a correlation between harmonisation and procedural adoption, governance, procedural efficiency, and project execution through surveys, interviews, or quantitative performance indicators.

8. Conclusion

In this study, the procedural fragmentation in a multi-regional project-management environment was explored and found to include variation in procedures, templates, supporting work instructions, Delegation of Authority alignment,

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digital platforms, and adoption. This review shows that simply standardising documentation does not ensure standardisation of execution.

Accordingly, harmonisation is suggested as a compromise approach to include global core procedures, controlled regional adaptation, digital integration, governance and ownership and continuous improvement. The goal is to not negate regional differences that are legitimate but to make sure that they are deliberate, managed and integrated.

On the whole, a good harmonisation links processes, people, governance, and technology in a system that is effectively used and continually improved, in a variety of operating contexts.

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