

Business Process Management in Transition Economies: Current Research Landscape and Future Opportunities

Full Paper

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Abstract

Business Process Management (BPM) is an approach of improving organizational performance by managing and optimizing business processes. While BPM is extremely popular in mature economies, reports are scarce about its use in transition economies, which are countries in the process of moving from a centrally planned economic system to a market-driven system. To assess the current research landscape on BPM in transition economies, we conduct a systematic literature review and use the six core elements of BPM framework for the analysis of 29 papers. Our review confirms the early stage of research on BPM in transition economies; two factors, People and Culture, are hardly examined. Furthermore, we propose to extend the six core elements of BPM framework by adding two key factors: External Environment and Ownership of Organization. The resulting eight core elements of BPM framework provides a robust theoretical foundation while pointing to multiple avenues for future research.

Keywords

Business process management, literature review, six core elements of BPM framework, transition economy.

Introduction

There are three aims of this paper. The first aim is to identify the most dominant topics in research on Business Process Management (BPM) in transition economies. The second aim is to use the six core BPM framework as theoretical lenses to analyze the existing body of literature on this topic. The third aim is to identify the existing gaps and the most promising avenues for future research.

BPM is defined as improving the quality of products and services by systematic analyzing, optimizing, controlling and managing organizational business activities or processes (Elzinga et al. 1995). Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, the BPM approach has been widely used in the USA and Western Europe (Jeston and Nelis 2006). According to numerous reports, BPM initiatives continue to deliver tangible benefits to the organizations that embrace it (Bombardier 1992; Hinterhuber 1995).

BPM's rise to popularity coincides with the beginning of transformation of economic systems in many countries behind the "Iron Curtain." Also, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, many countries of the former Eastern Bloc started moving from a centrally planned economic system to a market-driven system (Roztock and Weistroffer 2008). These countries, which are still in the long-term process of changing from a centrally planned to a market economy, are defined as transition economies (Roztock and Weistroffer 2015). New market conditions in transition economies have caused enterprises to begin to apply management concepts that were proven in developed countries, such as BPM. Despite the fact that BPM emerged in the USA and Western Europe in the 1990s (Elzinga et al. 1995; Hinterhuber 1995), not

much is reported about BPM in transition countries. A brief survey of BPM publications in leading journals confirms that the main directions of development of BPM are driven by authors from developed, mature economies and are based on examples of companies from those countries.

Thus, the motivation for our research is to address this under-investigated topic and to examine the current state of knowledge of BPM in transition economies. Using a systematic literature review approach, we will undertake examination of previously published work on BPM in transition economies, and based on this we will verify current topics, trends, and opportunities for further research on BPM.

In our examination, we will use the Rosemann and de Bruin (2005) framework, which is a comprehensive BPM approach, taking into account six core elements that are critical to BPM's success: strategic alignment, governance, methods, information technology, people, and culture.

In essence, the main research questions are:

1. What are the dominant topics in published research on BPM in transition economies?
2. Is the six core elements of BPM framework relevant for research in transition economies?
3. What are the most evident gaps and the most promising avenues for future research?

The paper has been structured as follows: the theoretical background of the study is presented in the initial section, followed by the presentation of methodology and analytical model for our research. Results interpreted and discussed are found in the next section. The paper ends with limitations of the study and conclusions for future research.

Background

To study the current landscape of BPM research in transition economies, it is necessary to understand that a long history of communism still, more than 25 years after the beginning of the transition process, affects various aspects of life. It also affects opportunities for scientific research and its dissemination. By tracking the research papers on BPM, we observe that there are not many publications written by authors from transition economies and published in recognized journals. We could reasonably speculate that there are at least two reasons for this, both due to the specific conditions of transition countries from the former Eastern Bloc. Since innovations are imported rather than created in transition economies (Kowal and Roztocki 2013), the first reason is the delay in knowledge transfer and slow implementing of new management concepts, such as BPM. The second is a lack of requirements to publish in recognized English-language journals. Traditionally different research culture and evaluation systems of many universities that emphasize other kinds of research are still prevalent in many transition economies (Roztocki and Weistroffer 2011).

To achieve a better understanding of BPM issues that takes into account the specific conditions and characteristics of transition countries, we decided to focus our investigation on double and triple economies. The double and triple economies are characterized by an abrupt change of the centrally planned system, the parallel building of a new market economy, and the creation of a new class of entrepreneurs. Triple transition economies (e.g. Croatia, Russia, Slovakia) in addition experienced a radical redefinition of political entities and redefinition of borders (Roztocki and Weistroffer 2015).

In several published literature reviews on BPM, transition countries are virtually not mentioned (Houy et al. 2010; vom Brocke and Sinnl 2011). Indirect references to transition economies are in only one article, in which the authors discuss the study with respect to the region and countries indicating only one study of organizations from Croatia and Slovenia (Roeser and Kern 2015). Recognizing this research gap, we were motivated to carry out our research.

According to Rowe (2014), every researcher should look for literature review when starting a study. The necessary basis for the development of knowledge could be created by review of published literature. A systematic literature review enables systematization of the areas in which numerous studies have been conducted and finds the ones that require development. A systematic review of literature can describe and evaluate the past, taking into account the current scope of research (Webster and Watson 2002). Moreover, the study of literature on BPM in transition economies provides a basis for expanding future research in the field of BPM, taking into account business environment factors. Systematic literature

review requires a framework which can be used for systemizing research results in comparison to the previously conducted literature studies (Niehaves et al. 2014).

To discuss the issue of BPM, we used a framework that provides logical structure and decomposes BPM into six essential key factors as presented in Figure 1 (Rosemann and de Bruin 2005).

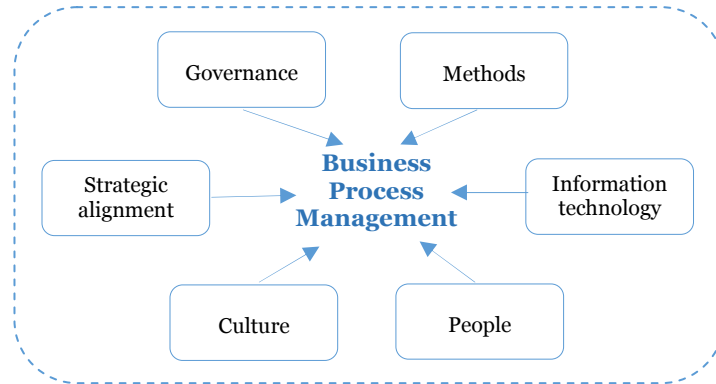


Figure 1. The Six Core Elements of BPM Framework
 adapted from Rosemann and de Bruin (2005)

The depicted six core elements of BPM framework contains blocks that are necessary to build BPM in an organization, i.e. strategic alignment, governance, methods, information technology, people, and culture. Those elements are common to BPM maturity models; therefore, this framework appears to be very useful as a theoretical lens to analyze the existing body of knowledge on BPM in transition economies. The characteristics of the six core elements of BPM at a glance are presented in Table 1.

BPM Core Elements	Characteristic
Strategic alignment	Use of BPM to support the implementation of organizational strategy
Governance	Establishing procedures for using of BPM in organization
Methods	Techniques and tools for management of business processes
Information technology	Use of IT of solutions related to BPM to support the modeling, analyzing, controlling and executing processes
People	Involvement of human capital in BPM
Culture	Social and psychological environment of an organization using BPM

Table 1. Characteristics of the Six Core Elements of BPM
 adapted from Rosemann and de Bruin (2005); Rosemann and vom Brocke (2015)

Methodology

To collect a sufficient number of papers for our literature review, we searched various library databases such as: ACM Digital Library, EbscoHost, Emerald, IEEE Xplore Digital Library, ProQuest, and ScienceDirect. In our literature search, we used key words such as Business Process Management and BPM. In our key word search, we also specified names of countries, which could be classified as double transition (for example, Bulgaria or Hungary) or triple transition economies (for example, Russia or Ukraine). The search was conducted in October 2015.

In line with previous research (Roztocki and Weistroffer 2015), we used the following three inclusion criteria: the paper must be published in a journal, be focused on BPM, and report on research results from countries classified as double or triple transition economies. The reason for establishing the first criterion was to assure that the paper sample would be more homogenous. The second criterion was to make sure that the term “Business Process Management” and/or the acronym “BPM” appears in the title, abstract and/or keywords. To assure compliance with the third criterion that the papers in our sample must focus on transition economies, we searched the full text for the location of data collection and the focus of research. Papers were only included in the final sample if they clearly stated that data collection took place

in a transition economy or the focus of the investigation was a transition economy. Overall, we were able to collect a sample of 29 journal papers from the years 2007 to 2015.

Analytical Framework

Analytical framework for our review was adopted from a study that investigated trends in IT research in transition economies (Roztocki et al. 2015; Roztocki and Weistroffer 2012). In essence, we reviewed and coded the papers in our sample by research focus, research approach and theoretical foundation. We also searched the paper in our sample for mentioned limitations of the research and authors' recommendations for future research.

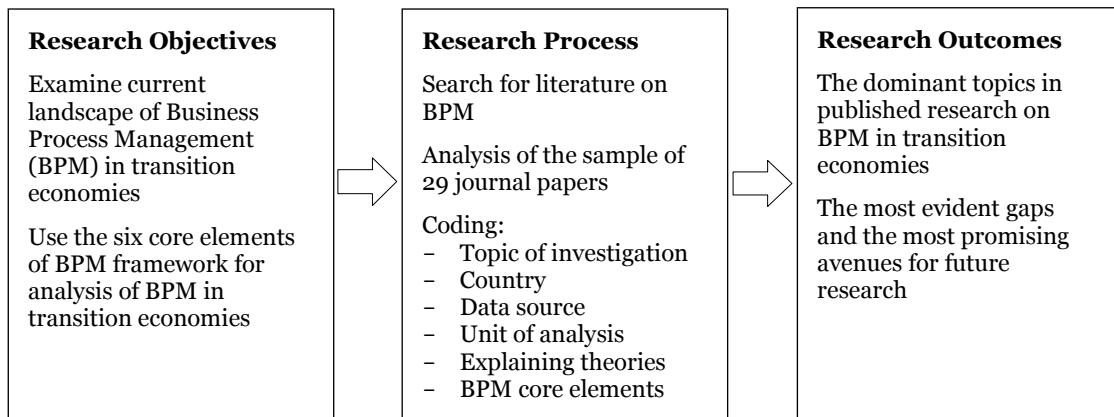


Figure 2. Analytical Framework: Research Objectives, Process and Outcomes

Research Process and Results

We began our examination of the 29 papers in our sample with the identification of the investigation topic and the country in which the particular research was conducted. In the next step of our examination, we coded the papers accordingly to data source and the unit of analysis. Table 2 lists all 29 papers categorized according to the topic of investigation, country, source of the data and the unit of analysis.

Paper	Topic of Investigation	Country	Data Source	Unit of Analysis
Bitkowska 2015	Knowledge management in context of BPM practices	Poland	Survey/ Interviews	Organisation
Brcar 2011	Role of outsourcing in Slovenian organizations	Slovenia	Survey	Organisation
Brudaru & Naftanaila 2009	BPM approach and critical success factors in process automation projects	Romania	Not specified	Organisation
Buh et al. 2015	Critical success factors in different stages of BPM adoption	Slovenia	Case study	Organisation
Dalíková & Doležalová 2012	Business sector differentiation of process management within SME in terms of process key-indicators	Czech Republic	Survey	Organisation
Daunoriene & Bagdoniene 2008	Determinants and barriers of BPMS implementation in organizations with ISO 9001 certificates	Lithuania	Case study	Organisation
Draghici et al. 2012	Idea and market acceptance of BPM training program	Romania	Survey	Project/ Organisation
Draghici et al. 2014	Innovation process and knowledge transfer in BPM training	Romania	Case study/ Project	Project/ Organisation

Hernaus et al. 2012	Strategic approach to BPM impacts organizational performance	Croatia	Survey	Organisation
Maríková et al. 2015	Impact of a legal form of enterprise and their business activity on BPM application	Czech Republic	Survey	Organisation
Mircea 2010	BPM and SOA integrated approach in agile process management	Romania	Case study	Organisation
Nikolova-Alexieva 2013	Process modeling in organizations – purposes, areas and techniques	Bulgaria	Survey	Organisation
Peronja 2015	Impact of business process changes on organizational performance	Croatia	Survey	Organisation
Rolínek et al. 2014	Indicators of the BPM implementation in SMEs	Czech Republic	Survey	Organisation
Ruževicius et al. 2012a	Impact of organizational culture on the success of BPM	Lithuania	Survey	Organisation
Ruževicius et al. 2012b	BPM lifecycle and maturity	Lithuania	Survey	Organisation
Salkic & Bošnjovic 2013	Process orientation and efficiency of operation in public administration	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Survey	Organisation
Skrinjar et al. 2008	Impact of process maturity levels on financial and non-financial performance in a transition economy	Slovenia, Croatia	Survey	Organisation
Skrinjar et al. 2010	Differentiation of BPO adoption in Croatian and Slovenian companies	Slovenia, Croatia	Survey	Organisation /Country
Stemberger et al. 2007	Methodology of Business Process Change for public sector	Slovenia	Case study	Organisation
Sujova et al. 2014	Current status of usage of BPM principles, methods and tools	Slovakia	Survey	Organisation
Skrinjar & Trkman 2013	Identification of critical success factors and critical BPM practices	Slovenia	Case study	Organisation
Trkman 2010	Identification of critical success factors in BPM projects	Slovenia	Case study	Organisation
Tucek 2009	Benefits and critical success factors of process management projects	Czech Republic	Survey	Organisation
Tucek et al. 2013	Level of the utilization of BPM	Czech Republic	Survey	Organisation
Tucková & Tucek 2010	Using ARIS Tool for process management and improvement	Czech Republic	Case study	Organisation
Vuksic et al. 2013	Influence of BPM and business intelligence systems on companies performance	Slovenia, Croatia	Interviews	Organisation
Vuksic et al. 2015	Role of process performance measurement in BPM adoption	Croatia	Survey	Organisation
Vuksic et al. 2010	Critical success factors in BPM projects in public sector	Slovenia, Croatia	Case study	Project/ Organisation

Table 2. List of Papers with Topic of Investigation, Country, Data Source and Unit of Analysis

As can be seen from Table 2, only nine countries are represented in our sample, and only one paper focuses on BPM in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is a country outside the European Union. The remaining eight countries are members of the European Union. In regard to theoretical foundation, only two papers were using explaining theories. The three theories that were used in the two papers are the contingency theory, dynamic capabilities and task-technology fit.

In the following step of investigation, we looked at which of the six core elements were used in each of the 29 papers. Table 3 depicts all 29 papers in our sample with corresponding core elements of BPM and shows each of the six core elements according to their usage in the sample.

Paper	The Six Core Elements of BPM					
	Strategic alignment	Governance	Methods	Information technology	People	Culture
Bitkowska 2015			✓			
Brcar 2011		✓	✓			
Brudaru & Naftanaila 2009			✓			
Buh et al. 2015			✓			
Dalíková & Doležalová 2012	✓		✓			
Daunoriene & Bagdoniene 2008			✓	✓		
Draghici et al. 2012					✓	
Draghici et al. 2014					✓	
Hernaus et al. 2012	✓	✓				
Maríková et al. 2015	✓	✓				
Mircea 2010			✓	✓		
Nikolova-Alexieva 2013			✓			
Peronja 2015		✓				
Rolínek et al. 2014	✓	✓				
Ruževicius et al. 2012a						✓
Ruževicius et al. 2012b	✓					
Salkic & Bošnjovic 2013	✓	✓				
Skrinjar et al. 2008	✓					
Skrinjar et al. 2010	✓	✓			✓	
Stemberger et al. 2007		✓	✓	✓		
Sujova et al. 2014		✓				
Skrinjar & Trkman 2013	✓	✓			✓	
Trkman 2010	✓			✓		
Tucek 2009		✓			✓	
Tucek et al. 2013	✓	✓	✓			
Tucková & Tucek 2010			✓	✓		
Vuksic et al. 2013	✓	✓		✓		
Vuksic et al. 2015	✓					✓
Vuksic et al. 2010		✓	✓	✓		
Count	13	14	12	7	5	2

Table 3. Six Core Elements of BPM

Discussion of the Research Outcomes

There are several important outcomes of our analysis of published research on BPM in transition economies. First, the geographical scope is highly limited. Only nine transition economies are covered in our sample. Only one paper, which focus on BPM in Bosnia and Herzegovina, involves a country outside the European Union. Research on BPM in transition economies that are not a part of the European Union is virtually non-existent. Second, the topics of analyzed papers concentrate on the implementation and

development of Business Process Management inside the organizations (12 papers), the research of critical success factors for this implementation (7 papers), the impact of BPM on organizational performance (5 papers), and the use of BPM in the context of other management concepts (5 papers). We do not observe comparative analysis on the level of the country or the organization between the transition economies and mature economies. Third, survey is the most used data source in our sample (18 papers). The authors have used very few in-depth analysis. The highest amount of research has been conducted on an organizational level, and only one study has been done on the country level. Fourth, only two papers (Skrinjar and Trkman (2013) and Trkman (2010)) are using theories. The referred three theories are the contingency theory, dynamic capabilities and task-technology fit. Both articles are published in the *International Journal of Information Management* which has an Impact Factor and is indexed in *Scopus* and *Web of Science* (Elsevier Science 2015; Thomson Reuters 2015).

In regard to the six core elements of BPM framework, proposed by Rosemann and de Bruin (2005) as theoretical lenses to analyze the existing body of literature on this topic, the most discussed core elements of BPM are: Governance (14), Strategic Alignment (13), and Methods (12). We can, therefore, conclude that managerial factors and methods for management of business processes are at the starting point of the process management lifecycle, which enables the construction of the process architecture. Information Technology related to BPM occurs 7 times. The least studied BPM elements in the considered framework are: People (5) and Culture (2). It seems that the greatest influence on these two elements could be a long history of communism in transition economies.

Moreover, during in our in-depth analysis of 29 papers we turned attention to additional specific factors not mentioned in the original six core elements of BPM framework, proposed by Rosemann and de Bruin (2005): namely External Environment and Ownership of the Organization. As seen from Table 4, there is wide consensus that external environment affects BPM, and almost half of the papers mention the external environment. Moreover, the ownership of organization is influential. Four papers in our sample discuss this issue in greater detail and, for example, point to the differences in the public and private sector. Also, BPM highly depends on whether or not the owner is local or a global investor.

Additional BPM Element	Count	Papers
External Environment	15	Bitkowska 2015; Brudaru & Naftanaila 2009; Dalíková & Doležalová 2012; Daunoriene & Bagdoniene 2008; Draghici et al. 2012; Draghici et al. 2014; Mircea 2010; Peronja 2015; Rolínek et al. 2014; Skrinjar et al. 2008; Skrinjar et al. 2010; Skrinjar & Trkman 2013; Trkman 2010; Tucek et al. 2013; Vuksic et al. 2010
Ownership of Organization	4	Bitkowska 2015; Skrinjar et al. 2008; Tucek 2009; Vuksic et al. 2015

Table 4. Additional BPM Elements

Results of the analysis of Table 4 call to expand the framework of six core elements of BPM (Rosemann and de Bruin 2005) by adding a 7th and 8th element: External Environment and Ownership of the Organization. Both additional elements form a Business Environment (Figure 3). In context of the extended eight core elements of BPM framework, we define the External Environment as conditions, entities, and factors surrounding an organization that influence its activities and choices.

An organization must adapt to these factors that are imposed by environment, as they determine the opportunities and risks of activity of an organization. The most important characteristics of the External Environment are the economic, cultural, social, legal, and infrastructural aspects. The Ownership of the Organization seems to also be crucial, and needs to be considered in various stages of the BPM implementation.

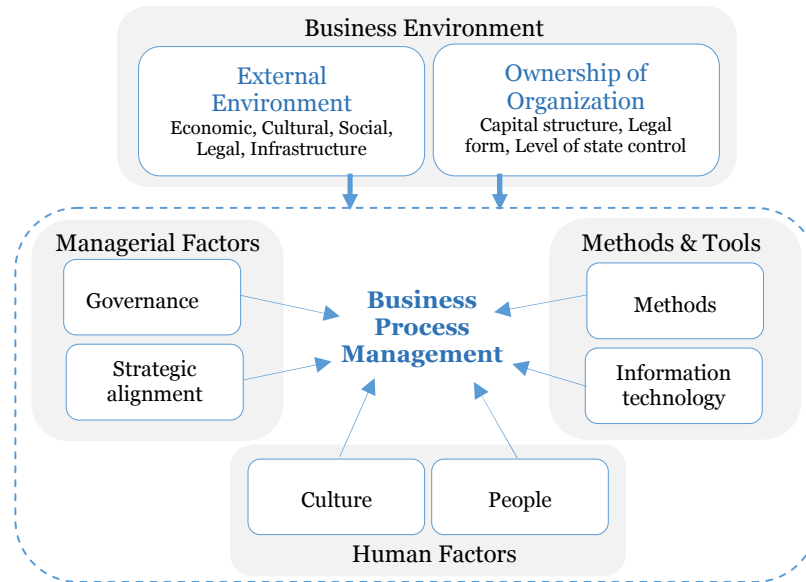


Figure 3. The Eight Core Elements of BPM Framework

Limitations and Future Research

The main limitations of our research are a relatively small number of papers and an unrepresentative set of countries. We reviewed merely 29 papers that covered only nine transition economies, mainly from the European Union. Most of the papers focus on BPM in triple transition economies. Thus, the study sample on one hand limits the generalizability of the results, but on the other hand determines the most promising directions of expanding research in the future. Evidently, one fertile research opportunity is to expand the scope of investigation to double transition economies and to transition economies that are not part of the European Union. Also, it is unquestionable that more cross-country and comparative research is needed to deepen the understanding of the topic.

As currently the research on BPM is dominated by studies conducted on organizational level, another opportunity for future research is an extension to other levels. For example, conducting research on the individual and country level would be highly promising. Whereas analysis at the individual level may concentrate on human factors (culture and people issues), those are the least explored in our sample. Such an analysis at the individual level may help devise human capital management procedures that are appropriate to environmental factors typical of transition economies (Kowal and Roztocki 2015).

Regarding the data collection methods, we can recommend that further research projects should use more diversified data sources besides surveys and case studies, e.g. actions research, secondary data, behavioral data, and structured interviews. By including both qualitative and quantitative data, the BPM research on transition economies could reach a broader perspective and better verify conclusions. Based on the conducted study, we also recognize the need to use theoretical foundation and develop new theories for BPM research. In our sample, only two papers are using explanatory theories.

Finally, the main outcome of our literature review is the proposed eight core elements of BPM framework. Thus, further research is needed to validate our framework that we constructed by adding two Business Environment factors: External Environment and Ownership of Organization. To this extent, in addition to advancing BPM research in transition economies, our proposed eight core elements of BPM framework may also benefit researchers in mature, developed countries. They could, for example, use our framework to compare BPM in the private and public sector to test whether or not Business Environment and organizational ownership are influential in their countries. In summary, we strongly believe that our literature review and the resulting eight core elements of BPM framework would contribute to the existing body of knowledge and the development of research not only in transition economies, but also in mature, developed countries.

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Appendix (List of 29 Papers in our Sample)

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