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Management model for Successful Business Processes: the Case of Transition Countries

Dušan Gošnik

Senior Lecturer, M.Sc., University of Primorska, Faculty of Management,
Cankarjeva 5, 6101 Koper, Slovenia, dušan.gosnik@fm-kp.si

Ivan Beker

Associate Professor, Ph.D., University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Technical Sciences,
Trg Dositeja Obradovića 6, 21000 Novi Sad, Serbia, beker@uns.ac.rs

Jana Suklan

Teaching Assistant, School of Advanced Social Studies, Gregorčičeva 19
5000 Nova Gorica, Slovenia, e-mail: jana.suklan@gmail.com

Klemen Kavčič

Associate Professor, Ph.D., University of Primorska, Faculty of Management,
Cankarjeva 5, 6101 Koper, Slovenia, klemen.kavcic@fm-kp.si

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Abstract

The paper presents the results of empirical research about the effect of management activities such as planning, organising, leading and controlling on the success of business processes' improvement performance. We report the results of a survey conducted in various types of organisations in transition economies. Results show us important differences about how certain management activities affect the success of business processes' improvement implementation. The findings are useful for business practice in general and for managers in countries having a similar history, social system background and transition economy (e.g. Serbia, Slovenia, etc.) as they will understand better the key influences and the role of management activities in business processes improvement initiatives and implementation.

Key words: Management, business process, transition countries.

1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between managing business processes and their effect on company performance and success has been studied in many researches so far [1-11]. It has been recognised that Business Process Management (BPM) plays a central role in creating a sustainable competitive advantage. Empirical research suggests a positive correlation between process management and business success [5,7,12]. BPM is defined for the purpose of the paper as all efforts in an organisation to analyse and continually improve fundamental activities, such as manufacturing, marketing, communications and other major elements of a company's operations[13]. A business process is a complete, dynamically coordinated set of activities or logically related tasks that must be performed to deliver value to customers or to fulfil other strategic goals [1,4]. BPM requires coordinating and integrating the cross-functional and interdisciplinary activities of highly motivated employees to deliver value to customers

[1,4]. The root of BPM lies in the concept of Business Process Reengineering (BPR), introduced in the 1990s by Hammer [2] and Davenport [14], which advocated a new approach to the management of business processes for producing radical improvements in performance. This has led to the replacement of the functional hierarchical perspective of organising business with the principle of planning, organising, leading and controlling the business as a set of value-adding processes. Successful BPM implementation requires fundamental organisational change in terms of organisational structure, culture and management process [15].

Management process is a process of planning, organising, leading and controlling business activities with the goal to achieve business efficiency and success by delivering value for the customers.

Literature review show us that many researchers focus on the critical success factors at BPM implementation [20,21,22,23] but none of the studies focus on the effect

of management process and its effect on the BPM. In the literature review we have noticed a research gap on the field of BPM planning, organizing, leading and controlling at Business Processes Improvement (BPI) initiatives.

This topic hasn't been presented in any study so far. The purpose of this study is to determine which of four management activities, such as planning, organising, leading and controlling, have the biggest impact on the success of Business Processes' Improvement implementation.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Products and services are the output of any company. They are the result of internal business processes which are performed in the company. Business process is "a collection of activities that takes one or more kinds of input and creates an output that is of value to the customer" [15]. Competitive products/services on the market are therefore related with internal business processes. If processes within the company will be highly efficient and innovative and managed in a proper way, then the results of these processes, products and services will be more competitive on the market. In the company we need not only good product but also good Business Process Management (BPM) knowledge and skills. Many researches reveal the relationship between BPM and customer satisfaction [11]. On the other hand, there is a lack of studies of how the general management process (planning, organising, leading and controlling continuous improvement initiatives) affects the success rate of BPM initiative in the companies. This study is interesting because studying the effect of management process on Business Process Improvements ensures us the ability to compare Business Process Improvement practices on a general level of management independent of the type of company, product or market, and gives us the possibility to focus on management improvements in the implementation of Business Process Improvement practices and use of the concepts such as Total Quality Management, Business Process Reengineering, Business Process Redesign (BPR), and Business Process Improvement.

The paper is organised as follows: Presentation of the theoretical background with the focus on BPM and four basic management activities, hypothesis development and research methodology are presented, results about Business Process Improvement success rate and the effect of business process planning, organising, leading and control on BPM performance in the company are presented and, finally, the Discussion follows at the end. BPM does not only deal with analysing, designing, developing and executing business activities, but also with considering the interaction between these processes, controlling, analysing and optimizing them, as pointed out by Kohlbacher [16] and Macedo de Moraes et al. [17]. So, BPM requires from us to focus on business process planning first, and planning is just one of four basic management activities.

According to Vom Brocke et al. [8] suggested ten principles of good BPM such as:

- (1) context-awareness: BPM should fit to the organizational context; It should not follow a cookbook approach
- (2) continuity: BPM should be a permanent practice; It should not be a one-off project
- (3) enablement: BPM should develop capabilities; It should not be limited to firefighting
- (4) holism: BPM should be inclusive in scope; It should not have an isolated focus
- (5) institutionalization: BPM should be embedded in the organizational structure; It should not be an ad-hoc responsibility
- (6) involvement: BPM should integrate all stakeholder groups; It should not neglect employee participation
- (7) joint understanding: BPM should create shared meaning; It should not be the language of experts
- (8) purpose: BPM should contribute to strategic value creation; It should not be done for the sake of doing it
- (9) simplicity: BPM should be economical; It should not be over-engineered
- (10) technology appropriation: BPM should make opportune use of technology; It should not consider technology management as an afterthought.

The principles solidify the state-of-the-art knowledge in BPM and, thus, may serve as a reference for further development of the field. Considering these principles BPM can provide a solid set of capabilities essential to mastering contemporary and future challenges [8].

2.1 Management Model Description for Successful Business Process Performance

Today BPM is, without doubt, a core task of organisational design [18, 25]. It is described as "a way of life for organisations" [26] as it has become a key element of both strategic and operational management [18, 22]. BPM aims at both the development of innovative solutions to complex business problems and the creation of new opportunities for competitive differentiation [27]. Some authors, like Mumford [28] or Bruss & Roos [29], have suggested that management of organisational change is the largest task in reengineering. Researchers have identified various factors influencing the successful implementation of business process change. Furthermore, it has been identified that factors like organisational structure and inter-departmental interaction [30], culture [31] and organisational politics [32] play a critical role in successful implementation as they help to manage relationships by promoting trust, openness and resolving conflicts [15].

2.1.1 Planning, organising, leading and controlling as a part of BPM

Planning is the process of development about activities required to achieve a desired goal. Business process change needs to be carefully planned and managed [51]. Harmon [50] defines four sub-processes of the planning: (1) identify, prioritize and aggregate

requirement for process improvement, (2) identify, assess and assign resources, (3) balance resources and requirements and (4) establishment of the operational plans. These suppresses may vary slightly depending on the core process they are supporting[50].

Although the Critical Success Factors (CSFs) of BPM, defined as a few things that must function well to assure success [19], may provide relevant ideas for practitioners, most CSF studies conclude by presenting a list of general factors (e.g. top management support, communication, appropriate culture, appointment of process owners and end-user training [20,21,22,23] but provide little further practical guidance [23]. In the literature there is a lack of studies which study the role of planning on the business process improvement (BPI) initiatives.

Organizing is a process of structuring, integrating and co-ordinating of activities in order to attain objectives. Changes to the organizational structure and associated roles and responsibilities go hand-in-hand with significant changes in process [51]. BPM involves a thorough analysis of the organization and often a change in an organizational structure [1]. Today BPM is a core task of organisational design [25,18] and is described as "a way of life for organisations" [26] as it has become a key element of both strategic and operational management [22,47]. BPM aims at both the development of innovative solutions to complex business problems and the creation of new opportunities for competitive differentiation [48]. BPM aims to improve and manage organisational processes in order to provide maximum value to the customer [49]. Some authors, like Mumford [32] and Bruss and Roos [29], have suggested that management of organisational change is the largest task in reengineering. Researchers have identified various factors influencing the successful implementation of business process change. Furthermore, it has been identified that factors like organisational structure and inter- departmental interaction [30], culture [31] and organisational politics [36], play a critical role in successful implementation as they help to manage relationships by promoting trust, openness and resolving conflicts [15].

However, the business process change management does not provide any guidance on how these various organisational elements are to be incorporated with the stages of workflow design to indicate the sequence of organisational change during business process redesign. This failure to consider the linkages between hard and soft factors has been attributed as the main reason for BPM failures [41]. Thus, there exists a distinct knowledge gap in how to integrate the technical perspective of process redesign with the human and strategic perspective of managing organisational change [15]. Measures must be related directly to the strategies of the organisation and should be selected on the basis of the strategic goals of the organisation [33]. Leading is about setting direction and ensuring that direction is followed. One such factor in BPM is also the commitment of leadership in providing a clear vision of the future [2,35]. Similarly, empowering employees has

been found to be an effective factor for BPM success as it promotes self-management and collaborative teamwork [28]. Appropriate communication structure, interpersonal relationships, motivation, stimulation and values as part of organizational culture positively affect business in enterprises [36]. Communication is considered crucial to successful Business Process Implementation [37] as it breaks the barrier between those in charge of the change initiatives and those being impacted by them. Strategic visioning is necessary to link business processes with potential customers and anticipate future processes [38] as well as to motivate organisational actors [15,39].

Control of an undertaking consists of seeing that everything is being carried out in accordance with the plan which has been adopted, the orders which have been given, and the principles which have been laid down. Its object is to point out mistakes in order that they may be rectified and prevented from recurring[52]. According to Trkman [24] BPM is still implemented predominantly with an internal focus which ignores enterprise strategic intent and customer value creation [45,46]. Most of the academic literature and industry effort is focused on modelling and improving the internal organisational processes, pursuing commonly identified success factors such as top management support, project management, balanced communication and sufficient (end-user) training [41]. These factors are situated mostly in the internal domain of the organisation and focus on the BPM (system) implementation to facilitate measurement and control. BPM can also help to control the execution of a strategic programme, permitting improved correspondence between organisational strategy and the company's business processes [24]. For such, it is important to validate strategic direction, determine the relationship between stakeholders, develop process architecture, align process governance, prioritize processes for change considering all stakeholders, align capacities with people, technology, installations and, finally, establish a transformation portfolio [40]. At this point BPM requires from us to focus on proper business process measurement and control and thus related activities which will support successful BPM implementation.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Slovenia and Serbia are both former socialist transition countries and economies. The institutional phase of the socio-political transition has been concluded, but the socio-economic transition has not been completed yet. Numerous collaborations appeared during the time of Yugoslavia providing domestic supplies based on trade in goods with foreign partners. Some foreign partners expressed huge interest in trading on the Yugoslav market. Slovenia and Serbia are the most representative ex-Yugoslav transition countries and have many similarities; strong production (Mechanical Engineering, Automotive, Electro) and service sectors. Production companies in both countries are related strongly with the European Automotive industry,

cooperation between both economies is very intense, many Slovenian and Serbian companies have already adopted BPI tools such as [42]: Six Sigma, Lean and its combinations, but later than many other western economies, and business cooperation between the countries is increasing.

Companies included in this research which have experience in the field of BPI and have already implemented some of the BPI tools such as Six sigma, Lean, Lean six sigma, Project management and similar, are also the most relevant for this study. They are also interested in BPM/BPI development in the field of BPI. An on-line survey was sent to all members. The respondents constitute our sample.

Our target population included 200 manufacturing and service organisations from Slovenia and target population 500 manufacturing and service organisations in Serbia. Population in Serbia were companies which have implemented ISO 9001 standard. Database of Economic chamber of Serbia was used. Population in Slovenia were companies which have been implemented ISO 9001, Six sigma and Lean methodologies. Database of companies included in Slovenian Society for Operational excellence was used. A covering letter and invitation to participate in the anonymous study and a link to the web survey was then sent via e-mail to companies. A total of 206 usable questionnaires were returned in total, resulting in a response rate of 57.5 percent in Slovenia (115 fulfilled questionnaires), while the success rate in Serbia was 17.6 percent (58 fulfilled questionnaires). The SPSS programme was used for data analysis and results' presentation. We gathered data using a closed question survey, using a web survey application. Anonymous empirical research was limited to top and middle Managers, Process Analysts, and Operational Excellence Managers in Slovenia and Serbia. The population of companies included in this research in Slovenia were members of the Operational Excellence Society.

In this research we have used the same questionnaire which was used in previous research in Serbia [43,44]. The questionnaire included 28 questions divided into several sections: In the first section there are general questions about the company and respondents, the second section are questions about process maturity and the third section of questions refers to Business Process Improvement practices and evaluation of the success rate of Business Process Improvement (BPI) initiatives in the companies. Research was conducted from September to November 2014 in service and production companies in Slovenia and Serbia. Based on systematic literature overview on the field of management, processes we have noticed a research gap on the field of BMP planning, organizing, leading and controlling at Business Processes Improvement (BPI) initiatives. This topics hasn't been presented in any study so far. Based on the literature review in the first chapter we have developed four testable hypotheses:

H1: Planning as a management activity has a positive and statistically significant effect on the business process success.

H2: Organising as a management activity has a positive and statistically significant effect on the business process success.

H3: Leading as a management activity has a positive and statistically significant effect on the business process success.

H4: Control as a management activity has a positive and statistically significant effect on the business process success.

To analyse the data we applied multivariate statistical methods, such as correspondence analysis and multiple regression analysis in order to test our four hypotheses. Our main research question was on the main managerial activities such as planning, organising, leading and controlling.

4. RESULTS

In Slovenia among all respondents, 5,2 % were general managers, 2,6 % were executive officers, 30,4 % were business function/department managers, 3,5 % were business analyst, 7,0 % were process analyst, 3,5 % were consultants, 13,0 % were researchers, while 34,8% of respondents stated that their position was something else. A majority of the companies included in the research in Slovenia were large companies (36,5%) with more than 250 employees, 30,4 % were middle sized companies with 50 to 250 employees and 33,0 % were small sized companies with less than 50 employees. A majority of companies were service oriented 18,7%, 33,0% were manufacturing companies, while 18,3% were operating both in service and manufacturing industry. In Serbia 9,9 % of respondents were general managers, 8,8% were executive officers, 22,0% were business function/department managers, 13,2 % were business analyst, 14,3 % were process analyst, 12,1 % were consultants, 8,8 % were researchers, while 11,0% of respondents stated that their position was something else. A majority of the companies included in Serbia were large companies (43,7 %) with more than 250 employees, 18,7 % were middle sized companies with 50 to 250 employees and 34,1 % were small sized companies with less than 50 employees. A majority of companies were service oriented 59,3 %, 19,8 % were manufacturing companies, while 20,9 % were operating both in service and manufacturing industry. Most companies were domestically owned (65,9 %), about one third of them have foreign owners (24,2 %), and with the rest (9,9 %) the ownership is shared between domestic and foreign owners.

With the help of correspondence analysis we overcame the handicap of having predominantly categorical variables in our dataset. Furthermore, using correspondence analysis we could benefit from a graphical technique providing a solution to our mapping problem and analyse multiple categorical variables simultaneously.

We start our calculations from Table 1, which represent a Frequency Table, but could be treated as

Contingency Table. The calculations that follow are based on this Table, from where the expected row and column Profiles are calculated for each cell, as well as the chi-squared value (chi square=29,4, p=0,000) and other summary statistics.

To compute a new variable we took into account 11 items dealing with planning of the process. To each statement there were two possibilities; to tick or not to tick the answer. Next we counted all the ticks in order to get a scale variable. We have included the following aspects for BPM planning: planning of productivity, time, costs, satisfaction of customers, business risks and thus related items which support good BPM planning and similar.

To compute a new variable we took into account 13 items dealing with organizing of the process. To each statement there were four possible answers, from where we focused only on the ticks of the first answer. Next we counted all the ticks in order to get a scale variable. We have included the following aspects for support to organize BPM activities: development of the

process/modelling, efficiency of the process, managing processes, training support, use of reference models, process improvement orientation, the use of different tools which support BPM initiatives, etc.

To compute a new variable we took into account 2 questions dealing with leading the process. Next the average of three possible answers (never, seldom, always) from both questions was calculated. We have included the following aspects for support to lead BPM activities: management skills for BPM implementation and data use at directing BPM improvement process.

To compute a new variable we took into account 6 questions dealing with every aspect of controlling process. Next the average of three possible answers (never, seldom, always) from all questions was calculated. We have included the following aspects to control BPM activities: level of process formalization, measuring of the main processes in the organization, supplier involvement, and automation of the activities, competences for control, deviations and corrective actions.

Table 1. Correspondence analysis of the association of current statuses of Business Process Initiatives with the self-assessed success rate of the companies

The current situation BPI / BPM	The performance of BPI / BPM			
	Unsuccessful (Number of companies)	Average (Number of companies)	Successful (Number of companies)	Active Margin (Number of companies)
No interest in change	7	18	18	43
Interest in change	15	23	2	40
BPM everyday practice	5	20	24	49
BMP at the peak	6	32	20	58
BMP in decline	3	9	4	16
Active Margin	36	102	68	206

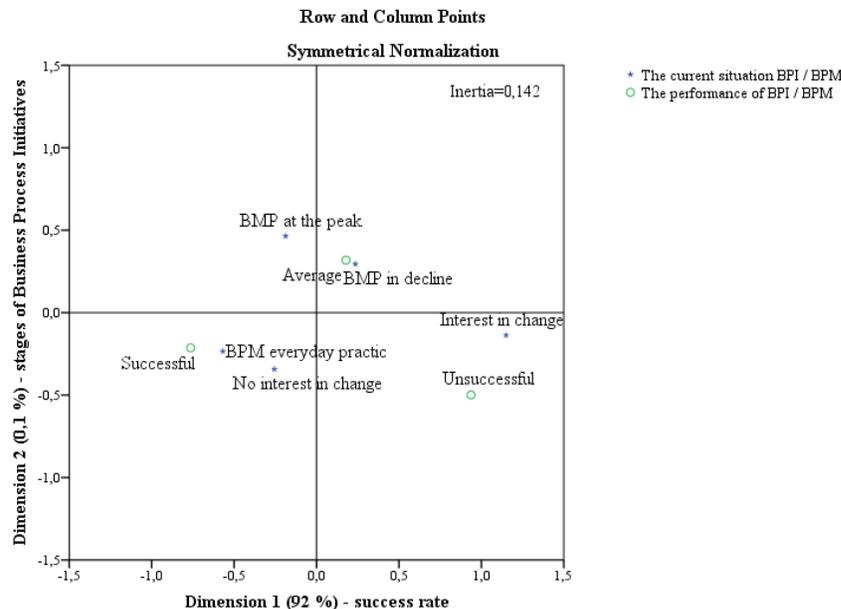


Figure 1. Correspondence analysis of the current statuses of Business Process Initiatives in association with the self-assessed success rate of companies

Table 2. Regression coefficient of four hypotheses. The b-values, or unstandardized regression coefficient, tell us about the relationship between the performance of BPM and each predictor

$R^2=0,317$	b	SE B	beta	p-value
Constant	0,853	0,287		0,003
Planning	0,025	0,028	0,053	0,371
Organising	0,024	0,020	0,086	0,226
Leading	0,548	0,113	0,352	0,000
Controlling	0,433	0,158	0,217	0,007

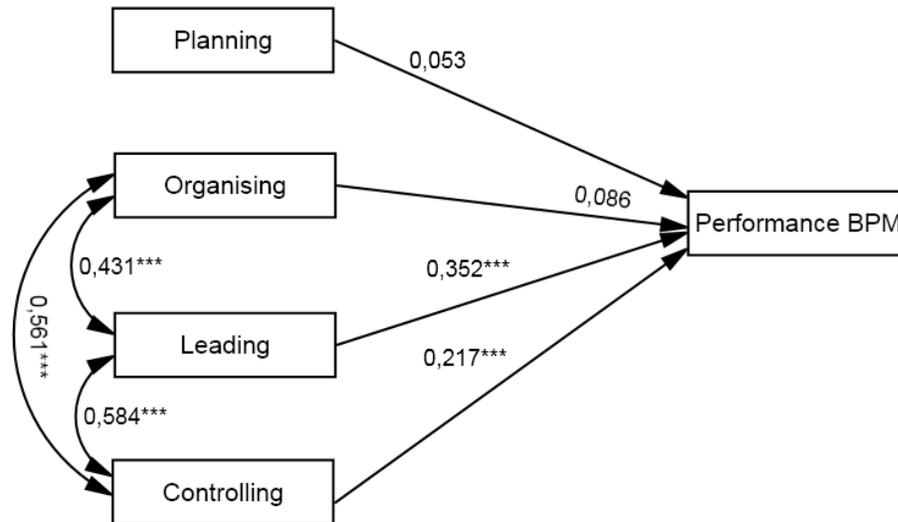


Figure 2. Regression model testing of four underlying hypotheses.
Legend: one sided arrow regression analysis both sided arrow correlation analysis

The base of correspondence analysis is to compare row profiles, meaning counts in a row divided by the total count for that row. From the comparison we can then get the information how different the rows are from each other and from an 'average' profile. By graphic representation we could spot similarities or differences between Profiles relative to their distance from each other. The Display is centred on the 'average profile' or centroid of the rows. The Chi-square metric provides a test for homogeneity between the pair of rows [45].

From Figure 1 we can see which attributes differentiate the various performance stages according to BPI/BMP from the 'average' and from each other. The graph retains 92.1 % of the variation, meaning the quality of the analysis is good and also, all the interrelationships in the data are evident. As expected, companies that perceive themselves as successful or unsuccessful explain most of the variation in the matrix (92 %). The axes are uncorrelated. "BMP at the peak" vs. "No interest in change" is the major contributor to the second axis, although its relevance is low (0.1 %). From the study we can see that companies that use BPM as their everyday practice perceive themselves as successful, although the same is true for the companies

that have no interest in change as long as they are satisfied with their performance. On the other, right side of Figure 2, we can spot that companies that are self-perceived as unsuccessful have interest in change dealing with the implementation of BPM in their daily practice. Companies where BPM is at the peak, similarly to the companies where BPM is in decline, perceive themselves as average in performance.

The chi-square metric divided by the number of entries in the Table give as the inertia of the data, which is a measure of the total variation about the centroid. In order to test our hypothesis we applied the multiple regression procedure with enter method in order to explain the effect of planning, organising, leading and controlling of Business Process Improvements on the self-perceived performance of the company.

The Durbin-Watson test statistic, which tests the assumption of independent errors, should be close to 2 (and between 1 and 3, D-W=1,926) meaning that the errors are independent. The statistically significant ANOVA also tells us whether the model is a significant fit of the data overall ($F(4,199)= 24,578, p=0,000$). R^2 provides a proportion of variance explained by the model.

In our model all the values are positive, meaning that there is a positive relationship between the predictor and the outcome. The B-values tell us to what degree each predictor affects the outcome if the effects of all other predictors are held constant. The confidence intervals of the unstandardized beta values are boundaries constructed such that in 95% of samples these boundaries contain the population value of b [46]. From the Regression Coefficient Table we can construct a visual representation of the data (see Figure 2). According to the standardized beta values we can tell that leading and controlling are the most important and statistically significant activities of management affecting the performance of BPM.

H1: Planning as a management activity does not affect business process success, meaning that we cannot conclude that planning of Business Process Improvement as a managerial activity affects process performance. We need to reject the first hypothesis.

H2: Organising of business process does not affect business process success, meaning that we cannot conclude that organising of Business Process Improvement as a managerial activity affects process performance. We also need to reject the second hypothesis.

H3: Leading of business process improvement has a positive and statistically significant effect on the business process success, meaning that we can conclude that leading of Business Process Improvement as a managerial activity affects process performance. We can confirm the third hypothesis.

H4: Control of Business Process Improvement has a positive and statistically significant effect on the business process success, meaning that we can conclude that control of Business Process Improvement as a managerial activity affects process performance. We can also confirm the fourth hypothesis.

Business Process Management can help in the execution of a strategic programme by enabling a better match between the organisational strategy and a company's business processes[9]. This paper also presented an answer as to which managerial activity affects the most successful business process improvement in the companies in Slovenia and Serbia. The research results show that the higher effects on BPM performance are detected to be BPM leading and control. Planning as a management activity does not affect business process success, meaning that we cannot conclude that planning of Business Process Improvement as a managerial activity affects process performance. We need to reject the first hypothesis. Organising as a management activity does not affect business process success, meaning that we cannot conclude that organising of Business Process Improvement as a managerial activity affects process performance. We need to reject the second hypothesis. Leading as a management activity does affect business

process success, meaning that we can conclude that leading of Business Process Improvement as a managerial activity affects process performance. We can confirm the third hypothesis. Control as a management activity does affect business process success, meaning that we can conclude that control of Business Process Improvement as a managerial activity affects process performance. We can also confirm the fourth hypothesis. Results can be explained from a transition country background perspective. Both countries are transition countries and economies.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Many findings and considerations arise from this research. This paper has outlined the role of management activities in Business Process Improvement implementation. Several different aspects and management activities were analysed: planning, organising, leading and control. Companies should improve the success rate of implementation of Business Process Improvements by using proper managerial processes, which include planning, organising, leading and control. Missed planning of process improvement can lead to disconnection between strategic orientation and operational business process management actions. A lack of organisational skills and infrastructure support can lead to poor Business Process Implementation, too. Poor customer orientation, or not customer focused leading in implementation of process improvement, can result in low success of the initiatives. Also, poor control mechanisms at process improvement implementation, a lack of measurement and a poor relationship with the long-term strategic policy of the company can lead to a lower success rate of the company.

According to Trkman [9] companies should not believe mistakenly that the adoption of business process management alone will bring any contribution to either to their operational or strategic goals. Even the best business process programme (following the recommendations in this and other similar papers), cannot offer answers to the question of the proper focus of an organisation. During the last two decades management paradigms in both countries have also been subjected to transition. As a result, different organisations in Slovenia and in Serbia are facing similar challenges, such as increased pressure from customers and competitors to deliver high quality products at low cost in the shortest period of time, increasing demand for high quality products and services, etc.

The need for highly capable business processes have forced Slovenian and Serbian organisations to use different BPI tools such as Project Management, Six Sigma, Lean and their combinations. To do that effectively, companies in both countries were focused primarily to set proper process indicators and measurements to achieve fast implementation of process improvements. Measures must be related directly to the strategies of the organisation and should be selected on the basis of the strategic goals of the organisation[33]. Defining clear process performance indicators direct us further on into strong process

control activities and strong focus on defining high requirements to build highly capable processes. Also, BPI initiatives and projects are focused at the beginning much more on quick wins and fast implementation of pilot project results, which all demonstrate the power of BPI initiatives. Planning and organising on the other hand are needed to relate strategic and operational long term plans in the organisation.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings are useful for business practice in general and for Managers in transition economies, as they will understand better the key influences and the role of management activities in Business Processes Improvement initiatives and implementation. The paper has some limitations. The theoretical framework of this research is on the general level of four management activities and does not consider the specific characteristics of the industry. Any generalizations derived from the findings are thus limited to the countries having a similar history, social system background and transition economy as Slovenia and Serbia (e.g. Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland, etc.) The authors of this research believe that a bigger sample could affect the results of this research. Further research in this field could be a comparison study with similar and other economies in this field, as well as specific analysis of certain economy, industry and management activity in detail or comparison studies in time.

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Model upravljanja za uspešne poslovne procese: slučaj zemalja u tranziciji

Dušan Gošnik, Ivan Beker, Jana Suklan, Klemen Kavčič

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Rezime

U ovom radu predstavljani su rezultati empirijskog istraživanja o efektu aktivnosti menadžmenta, kao što su planiranje, organizacija, vođenje i kontrola unapređenja efikasnosti poslovnih procesa. Predstavljani su i rezultati ankete koja je sprovedena u različitim tipovima organizacija u tranzicionim privredama. Rezultati pokazuju bitne razlike kod određenih aktivnosti menadžmenta i načina kojima ove aktivnosti utiču na uspešnost poboljšanja poslovnih procesa. Zaključci su korisni za poslovnu praksu uopšte i za rukovodiocima u zemljama koje imaju sličnu istoriju, u osnovi slične društvene sisteme i tranzicionu privredu (npr. Srbija, Slovenija itd.), pošto će im to omogućiti da bolje razumeju ključne uticaje i ulogu aktivnosti menadžmenta u inicijativama i sprovođenju unapređenja poslovnih procesa.

Ključne reči: *menadžment, poslovni proces, tranzicijske zemlje*