Business process management capabilities in local governments: A multi-method study

Bjoern Niehaves a,b, Ralf Plattfaut a,b,*, Joerg Becker a

a European Research Center for Information Systems, University of Muenster, Leonardo-Campus 3, 48149 Münster, Germany
b Hertie School of Governance, Friedrichstraße 180, 10117 Berlin, Germany

1. Introduction

Business Process Management (BPM) is an established approach to managing and improving organizational processes in both the private and public sectors. The improvement of business processes is currently the top priority for CIOs around the world (Gartner Inc., 2010). BPM is a means of improving business processes, thus improving efficiency and effectiveness, and ultimately gaining and sustaining competitive advantage (Broadbent, Weill, & St. Clair, 1999; McKinsey, 2008). The concept has its roots in Total Quality Management (TQM) and Business Process Reengineering (BPR). As such, it is a well established approach, combining both incremental and radical measures of process change. Notably, BPM is not only applied in the private sector: It is a key concept in e-government and public sector reform (Becker, Algermissen, & Niehaves, 2006; Kubicek, Millard, & Westholm, 2005; Niehaves, Plattfaut, & Becker, 2012; Scholl, 2004; Scholl, Fidel, Liu, Paulsmeyer, & Unsworth, 2007; Stemberger & Jaklic, 2007; Weerakkody, Jansen, & Dwivedi, 2011). It appears to have established as common sense that public sector organizations need to reevaluate their business processes: cost-cutting, especially in times of the financial crisis, citizen and service quality-orientation, electronic government (Becker et al., 2006), transformational government (Irani, Elliman, & Jackson, 2007), and other reform concepts have called for a program of business process change in public organizations (Scholl, 2004). Most recently, for the case of European governments, the European Union (EU) Service Directive (the so-called Bolkestein Directive) requires the establishment of a single point of contact for all administrative services and provides yet another major impulse for BPM initiatives (Weber & Sure, 2009).

Developing BPM capabilities constitutes a key challenge for organizations. BPM being an established concept, contemporary research in the field revolves around the development of organizational BPM capabilities (Fishcer, 2004; Rosemann & De Bruin, 2005; Rosemann, De Bruin, & Power, 2006; Zwicker, Fettke, & Loos, 2010). Several models exist for assessing and guiding the development of BPM capabilities, a comprehensive picture of BPM capabilities in the public sector is however still missing in the extant literature. We seek to address this research gap by means of a multi-method approach that involves an intertwined quantitative survey (n = 357) and an in-depth qualitative case study (12 interviews). Our research objectives are a) to provide a comprehensive picture of public sector BPM capabilities as well as related problems and b) to discuss normative models, especially maturity models that claim to be of help when it comes to further BPM capability development.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. In the next section, we discuss the concept of BPM capabilities and review prevalent BPM capability assessment and development models. We then set out the methodology and the results of a quantitative survey on BPM capabilities in local governments. Based on our survey data, we identify a representative case organization that bears the potential to reveal typical BPM capability issues in local governments. The methodology and the findings of the in-depth case analysis are...
BPM can be regarded as a management approach for achieving both revolutionary and evolutionary improvements in business processes. BPM has its roots in TQM and BPR, and combines the merits of both traditions (Hung, 2006; Zairi & Sinclair, 1995). Hence, it is a holistic approach to managing organizations (Armistead & Machin, 1998). However, the term BPM is not used unambiguously. As the focus of BPM projects can range between purely organizational and purely technical (Rosenmann et al., 2006), some authors understand BPM in a narrow sense as the tools needed to model and execute processes (Smart, Maddern, & Maull, 2009). In contrast, we understand BPM in a broader sense extending this narrow view: it covers other areas as culture, governance, or strategic alignment, too. From a theoretical perspective BPM can be understood as a collection of dynamic capabilities to adapt existing business processes and create new ones to achieve a fit with the organizational environment (Niehaves, Plattfaut, & Sarker, 2011; Niehaves & Plattfaut, 2010; Trkman, 2010; see also Klievink & Janssen (2009) for a discussion of dynamic capabilities in the public sector). Dynamic capabilities are the organization’s ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure operational capabilities (here: processes) for the purpose achieving a fit with the market environment (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997).

The main focus of contemporary BPM research has shifted from BPM as a concept to that of developmental models for BPM in organizations. Today, BPM is no longer new, it rather builds upon more than 20 years of scientific research (e.g., Davenport & Short, 1990; Hammer, 1990). Thus, the academic community now has a fair understanding of the concept BPM. Hence, new streams of research have emerged. A major issue at present is how organizations can and should develop their BPM capabilities. Here, literature provides a prolific discussion of capability assessment and development models in the private (De Bruin & Rosemann, 2007; Rosemann et al., 2006) and in the public sector (Zwicker et al., 2010; see Table 1 for an overview).

As to our best knowledge, extant BPM capability models fall into the class of maturity models which represent a specific class of BPM development models and have been adopted widely. In BPM specifically, literature offers five distinct maturity models (see again able 1). The basic concepts underlying all models are very similar and originate from the Capability Maturity Model (CMM; see Paulk, Curtis, Chrisissis, & Weber, 1993). The common elements of extant BPM capability (maturity) models include:

i. Building Blocks: All models have a number of stages (four or five), through which an organization proceeds to the most beneficial BPM. These stages are intended to quantify and summarize the evaluation, so as to be consistent and comparable (Rosenmann et al., 2006). In order to assess the status quo and give directions for future development, the models specify several capability areas, factors, action fields, or levers of change. These concepts represent “important components of BPM and allow a separate evaluation” (Rosenmann et al., 2006, p. 5).

ii. Theory Background: The theoretical foundation of existing BPM maturity models is arguably rather weak (see Klievink & Janssen, 2009). Most models are very practitioner-oriented and seldom refer to any body of theoretical knowledge. The BPM Maturity Model of Rosenmann et al. (2006) refers to previous studies on BPM and the Public Administration BPM Maturity Model by Zwicker et al. (2010) builds upon Rosenmann et al.’s work. However, neither model uses specific theories in terms of causal explanations or testable propositions. This perception is in line with such previous studies as Becker, Niehaves, Pöppelbuß, and Simons (2010, p. 6), who argue that maturity models in general “seldom refer to theories or theoretical statements of relationships”.

iii. Imperative for Development: All models propose developing BPM capabilities until the highest level is achieved, following a prescribed (sequential) developmental path. As such, maturity models are prescriptive in nature (Rosenmann et al., 2006). This is a direct consequence of defining the last stage as the most beneficial one. Maturity models prescribe organizations to a) reach the highest level possible and b) achieve this by proceeding along a specific path. Any divergence from this prescribed path should be corrected first, before the journey to high maturity can be pursued further (Fisher, 2004). As a result, maturity models prescribe conceptual convergence toward an “ideal” state. This perception is closely related to convergence theory (Meyer, Boli-Bennett, & Chase-Dunn, 1975).

iv. Sector Focus: The original area of application and focus of the majority of capability assessment models is the private sector. For instance, Rosenmann et al. (2006, p. 7) explicitly claim validity of their model for the private sector only. Subsequent work of Zwicker et al. (2010) has adapted Rosenmann et al.’s BPMMM and created a model for public sector BPM. The authors applied it to assess BPM capabilities relating to the specific issues of the 48-h-service-promise (Zwicker et al., 2010). Overall, the original application area of the models is the private sector or a very limited area of public sector BPM.

Against this background, we can identify several shortcomings in prevalent public sector BPM capability research. First, no holistic BPM capability assessment research has been undertaken in the public sector yet. Zwicker et al. (2010) focus on the specific aspect of
دریافت فوری متن کامل مقاله

امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات