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**Conceptualizing The Impact of Tensions On Training Transfer: The Case Of Training
For Business Process Improvement**

Conference Track: Track 7: Human Resource Management

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Abstract

Annually millions of dollars are spent on formal and informal training activities across the globe. However, the return on investment of these training activities is in question. Training should be transferred if it is to yield a return on investment. Training transfer generally refers to the use of trained knowledge and skills back on the job (Burke and Hutchins, 2007). The manner in which any training is transferred in situations of conflict or tension, especially those in situations of paradoxes such as change and stability is yet to be explored. A paradox is a contradictory yet interrelated elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time (Smith & Lewis, 2011). This paper presents a conceptualization of training transfer that occurs in situations of paradoxes such as change and stability. Our research employs a multi-phased approach in developing the conceptual model which was both empirically and theoretically grounded for more uncharted domains of research. Our results 1) inform training transfer theory on the importance of understanding the impact of paradoxical tensions on training transfer; 2) offer a framework to study training transfer in situations of paradoxical tensions that emanate from contentious change and; 3) informs future research on multi-phased and hybrid approaches to conceptualizations.

Keywords

Routine, Change, Stability, Training transfer, Paradox, Business Process Improvement, Conceptualization

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1. Introduction

Organizational training has been recognized as a strategic force in the effort to raise competitiveness (Nikandrou et al., 2009). Spending on corporate training has grown to over \$70.6 billion in the U.S. and \$130 billion in the world (Association of Talent Development, 2015). Investment on corporate training is nowhere close to reducing anytime soon. This is being fuelled by the emphasis placed on training by both researchers and practitioners. However, the return on investment of training remains an issue (zu Knyphausen-Aufseß et al., 2009). There is an increasing concern in organisations that the investment made in training should be justified in terms of improved organisational performance, such as higher productivity, profit, safety, reduced error, and enhanced market share (Suleiman et al., 2015).

Training is considered to be useless if it cannot be translated to performance (Yamnill and McLean, 2001). This is known as the transfer of training. Ensuring the transfer of training is critical to improve organizational performance (Olsen, 1998). Therefore it is important to understand how to support the transfer of training in organizations. Barnett and Ceci (2002) are of the view that the history of training transfer research goes back more than 100 years, with researchers debating the nature, contexts, and prevalence of training transfer. However, there is common belief in the training field that only a small amount of what is taught in a training program is actually transferred to the job (Ford et al., 2011).

Dramatic technological and cultural changes continue to blur traditional boundaries – occupational, institutional and national – and complicate the social milieu (Lewis & Kelemen, 2002). Organizations are rife with tensions – flexibility vs control, explorations vs

exploitation, autocracy vs democracy, social vs financial, global vs local (Lewis & Smith, 2014). Pluralism and paradox are inherent features of contemporary life (Lewis & Kelemen, 2002). We suggest in this paper that these can have an impact on the transfer of training. However, there is limited research on training transfer that has been studied in relation to situations of organisational paradoxes and the tensions that emanate from them.

A paradox is a contradictory yet interrelated elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time (Smith & Lewis, 2011). This definition, as per Smith and Lewis (2011) highlights two components of paradox; 1) underlying tensions and 2) responses that embrace tensions simultaneously. Lewis and Smith (2014) elaborates these components as two underlying assumptions regarding the nature of organizational tensions and the creation of paradoxes; 1) tensions appear inherent and ubiquitous in organizational life, arising from the interplay among complex, dynamic and ambiguous systems; and 2) the construction of paradox emanates from actors' responses to tensions. The central concepts of paradox as per Lewis and Smith (2014) includes the, 1) focal paradox (eg: change and stability), 2) actor's responses which can be defensive (cognitive, behavioural or institutional resistances that seek to temporarily avoid or reduce the negative affect of tensions) or strategic (which are management strategies that seek to engage competing forces) and; 3) ideal outcomes which are outcomes of peak performance and sustainability. We propose that these paradoxes, the tensions and actor responses can pose challenges and impact effective training transfer.

In this paper, we explore the impact of paradoxical tensions on training transfer. The core guiding research questions of our paper are; 1) how do organizational paradoxical tensions impact training transfer? and 2) how do different actors' responses to paradoxical tensions impact training transfer? The objectives of this paper are to; 1) demonstrate the multi-phased approach that was adopted in deriving a conceptualization of the impact of paradoxical

tensions on training transfer; and thereby to, 2) explore how paradoxical tensions affect training transfer, and 3) to propose a study to achieve the aforementioned objectives.

We use the case of training for Business Process Improvement¹ (BPI) to illustrate this phenomena of training transfer in situations of paradoxical tensions (the reason for taking BPIs as the context is discussed in section 2.2). The initial review of training transfer and the practitioner interviews with 12 Business Process Management² (BPM) professionals helped further our understanding of the phenomena. Based on this we developed a conceptual framework on training transfer in situations of paradoxical tensions using the theoretical lenses of routine and paradox.

Three central contributions are provided in this paper. We contribute on a theoretical front by using the paradox and routine lens to examine the issues of training transfer. This extends the use of the theories of paradox and routine to training transfer in a BPI context. We further explain the multi-phased approach that we took in conceptualizing this phenomenon, contributing towards the diverse approaches that can be taken in conceptualizing relatively unexplored areas. We also contribute substantively to an understanding of the disciplines of training transfer and BPI training. Acting upon this allows organizations and individuals alike to understand the impact that paradoxical tensions pose on training transfer and how it affects the effectiveness of organizational initiatives.

We proceed as follows. The next section presents a discussion of the training transfer literature and the exploratory study conducted for the development of the conceptual

¹ BPI is a systematic approach to help an organization optimize its underlying processes to achieve more efficient results (Harrington, 1991). While Business Process Management (BPM) offers processes in a broader context to each and engages in organization wide process thinking rather than in isolation, BPI is improvements to processes in isolation, which is merely a part of BPM.

² BPM is an integrated system for managing business performance by managing end-to-end business processes (Rosemann and vom Brocke, 2015).

framework. The section that follows presents the conceptual framework and a discussion and interpretation of it. This is followed by the implications of the model and the conclusion.

2. Exploratory and Theoretical Background

The conceptualization presented in this paper is derived from a mix of theory and empirical validation. The literature on training transfer (discussed in section 2.1) revealed the main research gap – the need to study training transfer in instances of paradoxical tensions. An initial exploration was then conducted within the practise (discussed in section 2.2) to validate this identified research gap.

2.1. Training transfer

It is important that there is accountability for every dollar spent in organizations and the cost of training is not exempt. Yet for training to be effective, a transfer of knowledge and new behaviours should take place. As a consequence it is important to understand how to support the transfer of training within organizations. For each US Dollar a company invests in training, 28–90 % are lost because of limited training transfer (Curry and Caplan, 1996) which indicates that training transfer as a growing area of intensive inquiry (Segers and Gegenfurtner, 2013).

Transfer was originally defined as the extent to which learning of a response in one task or situation, influences the response in another task or situation (Blume et al., 2010). According to Burke and Hutchins (2007), training transfer generally refers to the use of trained knowledge and skills back on the job. Baldwin and Ford (1988) emphasise the need for the learned behaviour to be generalized to the real job context and maintained over a period of time on the job. Ford and Weissbein (1997) identify transfer to be a complex, gradually emerging process taking place before, during and after training. It can also be understood as the change produced in an employee's behaviour due to training activities they attend in a

workplace context (Gruber 2013; Segers and Gegenfurtner 2013; Volet 2013). Transfer of training is rarely easy to achieve because changing job techniques or procedures is usually more difficult than perpetuating existing ways of doing things (Tziner et al., 1991). Also, a study led by the American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) demonstrated that, though, most organizations recorded trainees' responses to training programs, just 10% of the organizations researched whether training prompted changes in employment conduct (Suleiman et al., 2015).

The separate body of literature around training transfer is justified on the ground that the applied setting (workplace rather than learning context) and target groups for this research (researchers and practitioners interested in organizational behaviour and management, human resource development and workplace training rather than researchers and practitioners interested in school or university learning and instruction) are quite distinct (Volet, 2013). Much of the extant body of training transfer scholarship has coalesced around understanding the impact of trainee (personality, motivation, self-efficacy, ability), training design (content, sequence, learning principles) and work environment characteristics such as organizational support, and usage opportunities (Rangel et al., 2015). Researchers have studied the individual elements of the training inputs, training outputs, and the conditions of transfer in isolation in most cases. This can be seen when analysing the review papers on training transfer.

Table 1: Summary of literature reviews of the training transfer literature

Review paper	Identified factors on training transfer research
Baldwin and Ford (1988)	Training inputs (trainee characteristics, training design, work environment), training outputs, and conditions of transfer
Ford and Weissbein (1997)	Training inputs, training outputs, conditions of transfer
Cheng and Ho (2001)	Nine independent factors categorised under individual factors, motivational factors, environmental factors
Burke and Hutchins (2007)	Learner characteristics, intervention design, work environment
Cheng and Hampson (2008)	Training outcomes, Individual characteristics, job/career variables, situational variables, motivation to transfer, transfer behaviour
zu Knyphausen-Aufseß et al. (2009)	36 sub-transfer variables categorized into a training input taxonomy to arrive at 13 categories
Blume et al. (2010)	A meta-analysis of 89 empirical studies that explore the impact of predictive factors of training transfer of trainee characteristics, work environment and training interventions

Direction for future work in the area of training transfer have been emphasised by several researchers. The dynamic nature of the transfer process (Kim, 2004) and the complex of factors and processes that work together to facilitate or inhibit training transfer (Bates, 2003) are two such areas. As per Baldwin and Ford (1988), the limited number and the fragmented nature of the studies examining transfer are disturbing. Their review reveals that the samples, tasks, designs, and criteria used limit our ability to understand the transfer process. A more eclectic orientation toward transfer by focusing on a number of other literature to examine transfer from a broader, more dynamic and interactive perspective is therefore advocated by

them. Volet (2013) recommends future research to focus on obtaining more direct measures of the outcome of transfer in research from an economic perspective, exploring what actually transfers, when, how and under what conditions, and not only whether transfer occurs. The literature on training transfer clearly pointed towards the dearth of studies that examine training transfer in instances of paradoxical tensions.

Based on the above gaps, in order to 1) better understand the transfer of training within real organizational contexts and 2) identify the issues around training transfer, we conducted an exploratory study. This was done in order to verify that organizational tensions did have an impact on the transfer of training. The details of the study which helped in the conceptualization are discussed in the section that follows.

2.2. Exploratory Study³

A total of 12 interviews were conducted with BPM professionals in Australia. BPM was chosen as a context for this because, 1) almost 80% of organizations around the world have implemented at least one BPI initiative (Towers and Schurter, 2005); 2) trainings are done for these BPI initiatives; and 3) the reported failure rate of BPI's are greater than 50% (Melo et al., 2010); 4) limited research done on training for BPM⁴ and 5) the existence of resistance during BPI training initiatives (Thennakoon, Bandara and French, 2016) . This sort of involvement of different stakeholders such as practitioners at the problem formulation stage of a research is advocated by Van de Ven (2007), Creswell (2012) and Rosemann and Vessey (2008). The overarching question within the exploratory study was “What are the issues and challenges faced in the implementation of BPM/BPI training?”

³ Thennakoon, D., Bandara, W., & French, E (2016). The Challenges in Business Process Improvement Training Transfer: An Exploration of Empirical evidence from Australia. 30th ANZAM Conference, Brisbane, Australia.

⁴ Thennakoon, D., Bandara, W., French, E., & Mathiesen, P. (in press). What do we know about Business Process Management Training? Current status of related research and a way forward. *Business Process Management Journal*.

The selection of participants were based on the technique of convenience sampling involving the selection of the most accessible respondents. However, though convenience sampling was used, care was taken to ensure that the chosen participants were industry representatives from organizations which have implemented at least one BPM initiative and have conducted at least one BPM training programme for its employees. The respondents included, 1) BPM/BPI trainers (internal to the organization), and 2) employees at the top, middle or operational levels of an organization who have been involved in BPM training-related decision making. Approximately 30 individuals from the Queensland Chapter of BPM Roundtable (a community of practice group of BPM professionals) were contacted for potential participation for this exploratory study. They were all BPM professionals involved in BPM training or training decision making. Any shortfall from the number of participants expected for this study was sourced through the technique of snowball sampling (Suri, 2011), where information was sought from the respondents about details of other “information-rich cases” (in this case, individuals who have done BPM training or have been engaged in BPM training decision making) in the field.

The participants represented both from the public and private sectors and different industries. Such diversity in the organizations gave us a broader understanding of the differences that contextual factors of the organizations can potentially pose of the issues of BPM/BPI training and thereby greater ability to generalize. The respondents were selected based on availability for discussion where they were in a position to spend at least 40-60 minutes in an interview with the researcher.

The core findings of the exploratory study were; 1) Training transfer was a salient issue in training provided for BPI implementation; 2) the existence of tensions of change-stability between groups of stakeholders in a BPI training transfer environment and 4) the use of

varied responses of controlling, coordination, coercion, organizational politics, collaboration and communication by the stakeholders in addressing these tensions in a BPI environment.

The tensions of change and stability were seen through the behaviours of the different stakeholders as per the interview data. The business line employees demonstrate resistive behaviours as they tend to prefer stability in their job roles over the change that the BPI initiatives bring about. Issues on training transfer due to resistive behaviours that lead to tensions were mentioned 307 times by the 12 interviewees (see Figure 2). On the other hand, The BPM professionals or the champions of these BPI initiatives advocate change. Therefore, 1) training transfer and specifically training transfer in instances of a change-stability paradox; 2) the involvement of various stakeholders in training transfer and 3) their responses to tensions within BPI training transfer, were identified as key emerging themes within a BPI training environment which posed implications on the transfer of training. These areas were identified as ones that needed further exploration. The results of this exploratory study enabled a more precise conceptualization of training transfer in situations of paradoxical tensions.

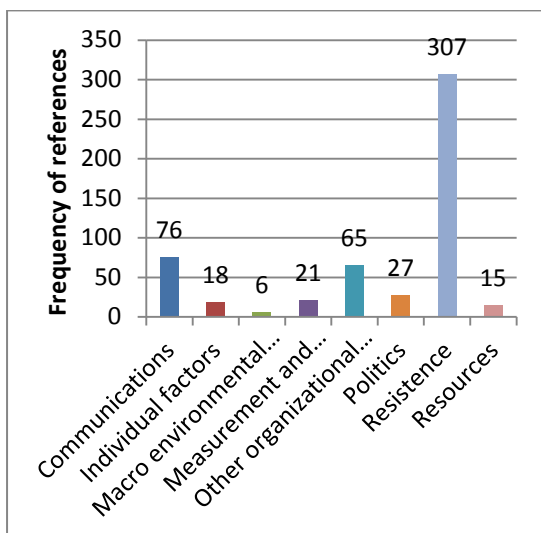


Figure 1: Frequency of the issues being mentioned

3. Conceptual Model

The conceptual model was developed as a result of the insights that were obtained from the interviews with the 12 BPM professionals and also the literature on training transfer. Based on this initial understanding, the theories of routine and paradox were used as theoretical lenses.

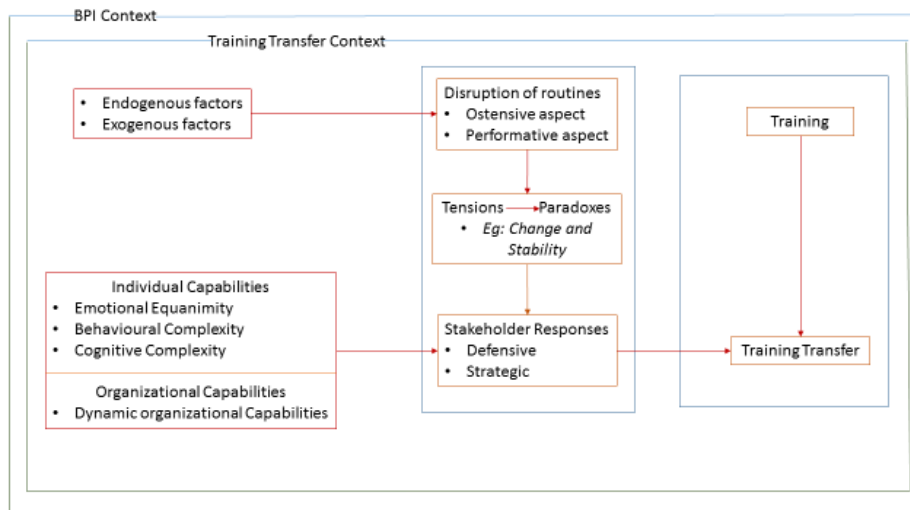


Figure 2: The Conceptual Model

3.1. The disruption of routines

Organizational routines are a central feature of human organizations (Feldman and Pentland, 2003). It is a repetitive, recognizable pattern of interdependent actions, involving multiple actors (Feldman and Pentland, 2003). Feldman and Pentland (2003) distinguishes between the ostensive and the performative aspects of a routine. According to them the ostensive aspect of a routine embodies what we typically think of as the structure whereas the performative aspect embodies the specific actions, by specific people, at specific times and places that bring the routine to life. The ostensive aspect of a routine is aligned with managerial interests (dominance), while the performative aspect is aligned with the interests of labor (resistance) which has been a primary source of power for non-managerial employees (Crozier, 2009). While recognized as an essential aspect of organized work,

organizational routines are also a well-known source of inertia (Hannan and Freeman, 1984), inflexibility (Gersick and Hackman, 1990), and mindlessness (Ashforth and Fried, 1988).

Routines are conceptualized as sources of stability and are seen as the antithesis of flexibility and change, locking organizations into inflexible, unchanging patterns of action (Feldman and Pentland, 2003). Routines can change in the forms of adaptation (Cyert and March, 1963), mutation (Nelson and Winter, 2009) among many others. This change in routines may be a result of either endogenous factors or exogenous factors. Similarly in the case of this study, a BPI initiative might be triggered due to a/an endogenous or a/an exogenous factor/s. This in turn brings about change and disrupts existing routines – both the ostensive and the performative aspects, within the process.

Individuals wish to reduce uncertainty and maintain a stable self-concept propelled by consistency in their actions (Leana and Barry, 2000). However, with disruptions to routines, they lose the sense of stability and this fuels uncertainty. This inhibits their ability to manage relationships at work in a predictable and stable manner. When routines are disrupted, the rationality in organizations no longer prevails and it creates tensions among stakeholders within the organizations.

3.2. *Tensions*

Tensions are ubiquitous in organizational life (Cooren et al., 2013). They are the clash of ideas or principles or actions and the discomfort that may arise as a result (Stohl and Cheney, 2001). Organizational tensions manifest themselves in lack of fit between the organization and its environment, incompatible work arrangements, misalignment between organizational components, dysfunctional conflict, cognitive dissonance, negative emotions, and psychological distress (Wong-Mingji and Millette, 2002). It is the constant fluctuating balance of simultaneous pressures from new developments and existing practices and traditions (Wong-Mingji and Millette, 2002). When new ideas challenge existing norms in an

organization, organizational tensions erupt (Wong-Mingji and Millette, 2002). As organizational environments become more complex and turbulent, and as diverse institutional forms merge and emerge, organizations and their members are pulled or are purposefully moving in different, often competing directions (Trethewey and Ashcraft, 2004). Thus, extant research suggests that tensions are facts of organizational life that need to be accepted because they can never be completely controlled or resolved. When different principles, values, interests, (aspects of) ideologies, norms, or experiences, of interactants contradict or clash with each other, they experience what are commonly referred to as “tensions.” (Cooren et al., 2013).

Relatively little empirical work explores how actual organization members experience the variety of organizational tensions and even scarcer are studies that address organizational tension through an applied lens (Trethewey and Ashcraft, 2004). Employees can react to contradiction in various ways, and that their framing techniques of workplace tensions can have various personal and organizational effects (Tracy, 2004). How tensions emerge and are dealt with by organizational members in their work activities are key issues of debate in our field (Cooren et al., 2013). The question of how to live with tension—not merely how to eliminate it—a subject of applied inquiry (Trethewey and Ashcraft, 2004).

3.3. Paradoxes of change and stability

Continuous change may be fuelled by the need for adaptability, cost containment, and impatient capital markets (Leana and Barry, 2000). However, at the same time that organizations and individuals are perusing change, there are numerous individual, organizational and societal forces promoting stability in work and employment relations due to forces such as institutionalism and efforts to reduce transaction costs (Leana and Barry, 2000). In contemporary organizations, members face the need to balance stability and change amid an ever-more complex environment (Kreiner et al., 2015). Some level of tension

between stability and change is an inevitable part of organizational life (Leana and Barry, 2000). The tension between preferences for stability and change at the level of the organizational member is embedded within a large number of social, and occupational constructs that govern one's experience at work such as individual differences, work related social cognition and workplace relationships (Leana & Barry, 2000). Thus, stability and change are both necessary for organizations to function effectively. This creates a paradoxical situation within organizations.

In any given organization, some will interpret a change as welcome and positive, generating readiness, while others will interpret it as threatening and negative, generating resistance (Raelin and Raelin, 2006). Changes involved in realigning parts of an organization often encounter friction which is inertia or resistance to change (Wong-Mingji and Millette, 2002).

The exploratory study unearthed inherent tensions that are created in the introduction and implementation of a BPI initiative. This is a tension of change and stability which the study sees as a paradoxical situation in a BPI implementation environment. These tensions arise between two groups; normally the group which champions the BPI initiative (those who support change) and the group which will be impacted by the implementation of the BPI initiative in a direct manner (normally the employees within the business line in which the BPI will be implemented and the employees which prefer stability over change). One group will favour change while the other group will favour stability. This is in line with the work of Wong-Mingji and Millette (2002), where they point out that there is an interesting contrast as in how top management is considered as a source of inertia while resistance is attributed to lower management or non-managerial organizational members and top management rarely being discussed in terms of being resistant to change. The employees within these two groups can represent employees at different organizational levels of top management, middle management or operational levels. People are often provided with training to cope with

changes which bring about tensions. The tensions among these employees may also have an impact on to training and the transfer of the training; which is the phenomena of this study.

Therefore based on the above we propose that,

Proposition 1: Tensions of change and stability that exist in a training transfer environment impacts training transfer

3.4. Responses to Paradox

The responses to paradoxes created within organizations vary among different stakeholders. Lewis and Smith (2014) sees actors' responses as either defensive (cognitive, behavioural or institutional resistances that seek to temporarily avoid or reduce the negative affect of tensions) or strategic (are management strategies that seek to engage competing forces).

Proposition 2: The responses to tensions within a training transfer environment impact training transfer

According to Freudian psychology, paradoxical tensions endanger the ego, producing anxiety that naturally raises actors' defences (Schneider, 1990). In attempting to reduce the frustrations and discomfort in tensions, actors' defensive behaviours initially produce positive effects but eventually foster opposite, unintended consequences that intensify the underlying tension (Lewis, 2000 p. 763). She sees the defensive responses as negative dynamics of paradox. Actors' more typical and often first reactions are defensive, clinging to past understandings to avoid recognizing their cognitive and social foibles (Harris, 1996). These defences can take the form of splitting, projection, repression, regression, reaction formation, and ambivalence which can operate at individual, group and organizational levels (Lewis, 2000). Employee behaviors associated with emotional ambivalence include fanatical commitment, frustration and derogatory humor, and escapist behaviors including denial and evasion (Pratt and Doucet, 2000), and extreme indecision or paralysis (Tracy, 2004). It can be

assumed that these defensive responses to paradoxical tensions impact the degree to which stakeholders transfer the training provided.

Therefore, we propose,

Proposition 3: *Defensive responses to paradoxes may result in negative training transfer*

Table 2: Definitions for defensive responses

Defence	Definition
Splitting	Further polarizing contradictions
Projection	Transfer of conflicting attributes to a scapegoat or repository of bad feelings
Repression/ Denial	Blocking if awareness of tenuous experiences or memories
Regression	Resorting to understandings or actions that have provided security in the past
Reaction formation	Excessively manifesting the feeling or practice opposite to the threatening one
Ambivalence	Compromise of conflicting emotions within “luke warm” reactions that lose the vitality of extremes

Source: Smith and Berg (1987)

A number of employees manage contradictions without these accompanying problematic reactions (Stohl and Cheney, 2001), illustrating flexibility, negotiation and thoughtful discretion (Tracy, 2004). Strategic responses are the positive potential of paradox which entails exploring rather than suppressing tensions and requires local actors learn to cope with the tensions (Lewis, 2000). Four strategic responses to paradox are advocated by Poole and Van de Ven (1989) as 1) acceptance, which is keeping tensions separate and appreciating their differences 2) spatial separation which is the allocation of opposing forces across different organizational units, 3) temporal separation, which is choosing one pole of tension at one point in time and then switching; and 4) synthesis, which is seeking a view that accommodates the opposing poles. On the other hand, Lewis (2000) identifies the strategic

responses as the positive potential of paradox. She says that it entails exploring rather than suppressing tensions and requires local actors learn to cope with the tensions. Lewis (2000) identifies three means of managing paradox as acceptance, confrontation and transcendence.

We therefore propose that,

Proposition 4 – *Responding strategically to paradoxical tensions can lead to positive training transfer*

Table 3: Different strategic responses to paradox

Responses to paradox	Author
Acceptance (Learning to live with the paradox)	Schneider (1990) Clegg et al. (2002) Lewis (2000)
Confrontation (Discuss tensions to socially construct a more accommodating understanding or practice)	Smith and Berg (1987)
Transcendence (Capacity to think paradoxically. Requires second order thinking which entails critically examining entrenched assumptions to construct a more accommodating perception of opposites. Involves critical self and social reflection)	Watzlawick et al. (1978)
Acceptance, spatial separation, temporal separation, synthesis	Poole and Van de Ven (1989)
Play through rather than confront	Murnighan and Conlon (1991)
Reframing the relationship between polarized elements	Bartunek (1988)
Clarifying mixed messages that invoke contradiction	Argyris (1988)
Metacommunicating about tensions to identify both/and possibilities	Seo et al. (2004)
Vacillation (temporal, target, or topic vacillation—switching between opposing organizational norms depending on the time, person being worked with, or the topic/context)	Tracy (2004)
Source splitting (officers divided organizational tensions among themselves, each attending to varying	Tracy (2004)

expectations)	
Simultaneous attention to multiple goals	Tracy (2004)
Attending to multiple organizational expectations	Tracy (2004)

These defensive and strategic responses will result in either “vicious” or “virtuous” cycles respectively which will have an impact on the transfer of training. Deriving from past research Smith and Lewis (2011) emphasise that vicious cycles can create distrust, defensiveness, miss alternative perspectives or promote unethical behaviours. On the other hand they elaborate on virtuous cycles pointing to the fact that it invites creativity and innovation. However, in order to respond and manage the paradox in a strategic manner leading to virtuous cycles, organizational actors require; cognitive and behavioural complexity; emotional equanimity; and dynamic organizational capabilities (Smith and Lewis, 2011). Cognitive complexity refers to the ability to recognize and accept the interrelated relationships of underlying tensions (Smith and Lewis, 2011). Dennison, Hooijbergh, & Quinn (1995) defines behavioural complexity to be a facility to adopt competing behaviours which enables the acceptance of paradoxical tensions. As per Huy (1999), emotional equanimity is an emotional calm and evenness which reduces anxiety and fear spurred by inconsistencies. Dynamic capabilities provide collective tools to enable organizational leaders to respond to environmental shifts and, in doing so, enable members to be more open and accepting of the dynamic environment of paradoxical tensions (Smith and Lewis, 2011). In a training transfer context, we assume that the extent of emotional equanimity, behavioural complexity, cognitive complexity at an individual level, and dynamic organizational capabilities have an impact on the ability to strategically respond to organizational tensions. This in turn has an impact on the degree to which stakeholders transfer training in situations of paradoxical tensions.

We therefore propose the following,

Proposition 5 – *Higher levels of emotional equanimity will enable stakeholders to respond strategically and thereby achieve positive training transfer in situations of paradoxical tensions*

Proposition 6 – *Behavioural complexity will enable stakeholders to respond strategically and thereby achieve positive training transfer situations of paradoxical tensions*

Proposition 7 – *Cognitive complexity will enable stakeholders to respond strategically and thereby achieve positive training transfer situations of paradoxical tensions*

Proposition 7 – *Dynamic organizational capabilities will enable stakeholders to respond strategically and thereby achieve positive training transfer situations of paradoxical tensions*

As discussed in the previous sections the disruption of routines, leads to change in existing processes and leads to the creation of tensions, especially those of change and stability as the empirical data of the exploratory study suggests. Organizations also provide training interventions to enable organizational members ready for the change. However, little is known as to how tensions of change and stability impact the transfer of these training initiatives. The conceptual model and the propositions discussed, suggests that the employment of different responses (either strategic or defensive) by the stakeholders of training within an environment of paradoxical tensions has implications on the transfer of training.

Training transfer and BPI related factors

The nature of the responses to a paradox of change and stability will be influenced by both BPI initiative related factors (in using a context of BPIs to study the phenomena) and training transfer related factors. Possible BPI initiative related factors could be 1) the scale of the BPI initiative, 2) type of the BPI training, 3) the nature of the BPI initiative (whether radical or incremental). Training transfer related factors that would have an impact on the different responses would be 1) learner characteristics such as learner readiness, motivation to learn,

motivation to transfer, performance self-efficacy, training retention, 2) training design and delivery, 3) work environment influences such as peer support and supervisor support, 4) the type of skills trained for (open or closed), and 5) the nature of supervision. The incorporation of these factors into the concept model was informed by the literature reviews done on BPM training⁵ and training transfer (discussed in detail in Section 2.1). We believe that these contextual factors may have an impact on the manner in which different stakeholders respond to the paradoxical tensions within training transfer.

5. Discussion, Limitations and Implications

While we found the existence of tensions in training transfer environments, it attested to the importance of the conceptualization that we have presented in this paper. It also suggests the importance of studying training transfer through a paradox lens. Lewis (2000) says that in some research on organizational paradox, all three components of paradox (tensions, reinforcing cycles, and management) are examined, while others focus primarily on one of the components. This conceptual model tries to encompass all three components of paradox, by identifying the tensions that can arise in training transfer related to BPIs, the reinforcing cycles that occur with the tensions and by exploring how the stakeholders manage the responses. We try to look at how the components of a paradox impact the transfer of training. Once this conceptual model is tested empirically, it will provide an initial understanding of how training transfer happens in situations of tensions. These insights will assist organizations to better plan the transfer of training. Any potential new findings from testing the conceptual model will also help further the knowledge on training transfer and paradox research, extending this initially proposed conceptual model.

⁵ Thennakoon, D., Bandara, W., French, E., & Mathiesen, P. (2016). What do we know about Business Process Management Training? Current status of related research and a way forward. Manuscript submitted for publication.

We suggest that the developed model be tested in a multiple case study (Yin, 2013) strategy taking a qualitative approach. The research sites and cases will need to be purposively selected to help in answering the research questions and meeting the objectives. The criteria for case selection should be;

- The organizations should have implemented at least one BPI initiative. That is the BPI initiative should be up and running and should be in the stage of post implementation.
- The organization should have conducted at least one training for a BPI initiative (targeting at the employees of the process) – The study should have the ability to map the training to the BPI initiative, that is the ability to say that a particular training was conducted to facilitate a particular BPI initiative)
- At least three months must have elapsed after the training done for the BPI initiative (Cheng and Ho, 2001) - this is to ensure that there has been enough time for the training transfer to take place.
- Tensions (eg: of change-stability) should be evident in the BPI initiatives that have taken place in the case sites.

It is ideal for the research to use in-depth interviews for data collection from purposively selected respondents. The criteria for the selection of respondents should be;

- Trainers (both external and internal to the case site) who were involved in the training of employees for the BPI initiative
- Trainees who underwent training for the BPI initiative (will include employees in both groups of those who support change and those who resist change)
- Training decision makers for the BPI initiative (they maybe top/middle level managers who championed the BPI initiative, change managers who were involved in the BPI initiative etc.)

- Any other employees who had a stake in the BPI training transfer relevant to the BPI initiative (eg: supervisors, business line managers)

The questions that will be used for the development of the interview guides can be informed and derived from the literature on training transfer and the theories of paradox and routine. Organizational documents and records relevant to BPI training can also be used as a data source allowing triangulation of data. Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and document analysis (Bowen, 2009) techniques can be used for analysing the data using the NVivo software for tool support where necessary.

The limitations of this conceptualization is that the relevance of other theories such as the practice theory have not been looked into. The authors plan to check the necessity of incorporating these theoretical lenses based on the data collected at the data analysis. Further, the exploratory study and its findings which assisted the development of the conceptual model has issues with respondent triangulation as only BPM/BPI training decision makers and trainers were interviewed for data collection, where interesting insights could have been obtained from the perspective of BPI trainees and employees within the business lines, which might have had an impact on the conceptualization.

6. Conclusion

In this article, we have presented a conceptualization of training transfer in situations where paradoxes exist. We have used the case of BPIs for illustrating this. Drawing on the insights of a wide variety of literature on training transfer, paradox and routine, we have attempted to fill part of the gap in our understanding of training transfer. While our study provides unique theoretical and actionable contributions, we still regard this conceptualization as nascent and hope that we will be able to refine and further develop it with empirical data collection and analysis. We have provided some pieces to the puzzle of training transfer in situations of paradoxical tensions, but the puzzle is far from solved.

8. References

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