

Trials of strength, paradoxes and competing networks in kaizen institutionalization

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper seeks to understand kaizen in practice as it travels through time and space in the organisational setting.

Design/methodology/approach – A qualitative case study was carried out at a multinational company using mainly interviews for the data collection that were analysed from an actor-network theory (ANT) perspective.

Findings – This paper finds that the company deals with a series of paradoxes while managing the kaizen process. Efficiency and quality paradoxes are the basis for starting kaizen projects. Furthermore, intrinsic, and extrinsic motivation, emerge in these processes, and paradoxes relate to how spontaneous ideas emerge in a deliberated context of cost-saving objectives. The supply chain finance team coordinates kaizen projects with the collaboration of plant managers, promoting the paradox of autonomy and control. In addition, as kaizen mobilises and enrolls the actors, some trials of strength emerge, showing actors who oppose the kaizen network and create competing networks that mutually exist in the firm.

Practical implications – This study presents valuable insights for professionals to successfully implement kaizen methodologies that take advantage of developing a network for problem-solving in organizations.

Originality/value – This study highlights the supply chain finance team's role in enrolling the actors within a network built by practitioners engaged in kaizen projects. Usually, engineers, quality, or



The authors acknowledge the critical comments from the anonymous reviewers that were more than helpful in publishing this paper.

Funding: This research was partially supported by Mackpesquisa — A Mackenzie Presbyterian University research fund.