

IFSAM 2010 Conference

Track proposal

Management innovation

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Objective

This track aims to generate advances in understanding and theorizing the processes of management innovation, namely by drawing on insights from the broader innovation literatures. We welcome empirical as well as theory-driven contributions.

Rationale

Large parts of academic and professional literatures are devoted to describing, explaining, criticizing new management ideas, models, techniques and tools. Historians have researched the origins of major management innovations (e.g. Chandler 1962, on the multidivisional or M-form) as well as their lasting effects (e.g. Waring, 1991 on the renewal of Taylorism after World War II). Several great management innovators have written in detail about their own history of invention, diffusion and implementation of new management ideas (e.g. Taylor, 1911; Fayol, 1916; Drucker, 1944; Sloan, 1956, Ohno, 1978). Others have tried to provide a chronology of management innovations. Thus, according to Hatchuel and Glise (2003) three main revolutions have shaped the development of management: (i) the Italian *compagnia* with its profit centers, accounts and collective ventures, (ii) the management of manufactures with their corporate bodies and technical departments, (iii) the foundation of the modern enterprise, through the legacy of Fayol and Taylor. Focusing on the latter, Barley and Kunda (1992) have suggested that the predominant management ideologies since the late 19th century have oscillated between rational and normative approaches, reflecting the macroeconomic context, which favored investment in technology during an upturn or a more extensive use of human resources during a downturn.

However, despite an abundant literature devoted to describing, analyzing and exploring the power and limits of different management models such as total quality management, management by objectives, operational research and despite a long research tradition about innovation in general –be it product, service or process–, the very concept of “management innovation” has yet to be fully explored. Some of the promising earlier approaches include Kimberly (1981), who analyzes the process of management innovation in health services, Midler (1986) or Abrahamson (1991), who analyze the fads and fashion side of management innovation. Among the innovators, Kaplan (1998) has described the process of innovative action research that led Norton and himself to develop and implement the balanced scorecard. More recently, Hamel (2006) points out the pioneering companies in the invention of what he considers as the main management innovations of the twentieth century and Birkinshaw, Hamel and Mol (2008) synthesize four perspectives –institutional, fashion, cultural, rational– and propose a general model of management innovation, explaining the role of internal and external change agents in five stages of the process: motivation, invention, implementation, theorization and labeling.

But, surprisingly, while the organizational dimension has been for long identified as a key performance factor (Liebenstein’s efficiency X), few research programs are centrally devoted to analyzing the very nature of management innovation and theorizing the design process of innovative management ideas, models and techniques. Thus, the academic literature on innovation focuses on new product or service development or on process innovation, but does not explicitly address management innovation. Similarly, the literature on design or creativity says close to nothing about the process of designing innovative management ideas, models and techniques.

Expected contributions

Within this context, we are inviting papers addressing, among others, the following issues and questions, empirically and/or conceptually:

- The processes of designing, expanding, diffusing, implementing management innovations;
- The major actors involved in management innovation both from inside and outside the innovative organizations;
- The nature and structure of management innovation: what is a management idea, model, technique, tool made of? Can generic components be identified?

- The applications of design theories to management innovation: what is the design process of management techniques? Are theories of design for products, services or processes applicable to management techniques?
- The variety of management innovations and the contingency factors –time, know how, situation, culture, etc.– that might explain the differences?
- How can the nature of management innovation be related to central questions like the validity and the legitimacy of management practices, in a critical perspective?
- How is the “management innovation” function present in the organizations? Does a “R&D in management” function make sense?
- What are the possible contributions of management research to management innovation?

Proposals should be submitted using the IFSAM submission system. Questions about the track can be addressed to Albert David (albert.david@m-lab.ens-cachan.fr) and/or Matthias Kipping (mkippping@schulich.yorku.ca)

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