Innovation Management: Conceptualization for Practice &Research

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Present article endeavors to develop a conceptual framework of innovation management capability in which the outcomes of earlier research that appeared scanty have been synthesized. The proposed conceptualization is a multi-component construct which offers a broader framework of innovation management in organizations. The framework presented here will enable managers to focus on developing their innovation management capability (IMC) and help future researchers to design better their research projects on the theme of IMC. It is expected that organizations which consciously and systematically invest in analyzing the dimensions of managing innovation and enhancing their capability in such a matter have the likelihood of achieving the goal of innovation.

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Introduction

In order to win over their competitors, organizations require increasing innovation management competence at the level of entire organization and the employees across the cadres. "The stronger the innovation capability possessed by an organization, the more effective will be their innovation performance" (Lawson & Samson, 2001:389). Innovativeness, in fact, is a characteristic feature in organizations that is manifested over time. Globalization of world's economies and the resultant hyper-intensive competition in markets demand widespread innovations and managements of the organizations have no option than to set their contextual environment under which their employees demonstrate their innovative talent to their best. Managing innovations in an organization not only requires the identification of employees having tendency to engage in creative and innovative behavior but also an understanding of how the organizational context influences their behavior contributing to the hassle free adoption and implementation of innovation in the organizational setting. This is a challenge for research and practice requir-

ing insights into the dynamic interplay between individuals and managements of organizations. This study reviews the results of extant research based on which it proposes a fresh conceptualization of innovation management capability.

Methodology

This article is based on a qualitative review of extant research concerning the adoption / implementation of innovation and the factors that influence the management of such processes. The review integrates the outcomes of a wide array of previous research studies. This is followed by presentation of implications of the proposed conceptualization for formulation of innovation management strategies and research designs for further research. We began with the search of research articles published during 1994 – 2013 through multiple data bases like Sage, JSTOR, EBSCOhost and Google Search. The key words used for the purpose were: creativity and innovation, innovation, innovation management, innovation strategy, creative and innovative behavior and organizational innovation. 145 journal articles were identified and in-depth study of the same was done. Online resources searched through 'Google Search' were also utilized.

Creativity & Innovative Behavior

Innovation should be embedded as a part of organizational culture and organizational people should be encouraged to contribute to generate novel ideas directly or indirectly as well as to involve in the process of adoption / implementation of such pool of novel ideas (innovation) to some or greater extent. While facing the challenge of implementation of innovation, organizations are dependent on the tacit and explicit knowledge, creative abilities, and engagement of the employees in such a process. Creativity means generating and nurturing fresh and useful ideas in response to perceived need for the purpose of problem solving and such a process is the beginning of innovation which is necessary but not enough for innovation success. "Creativity without innovation does not produce results and innovation without effective management does not produce marketable products, processes or services" (Beattie, 1999: 2). Resource acquisition and extra-organizational support are also necessary for innovation to be successful. Creativity is the core element in innovation. However, "creativity is not sufficient for achieving the goal of innovation; initiative is a necessary condition for creativity to affect innovation" (Miron, Erez & Naveh 2004: 194). "Creativity is the ability to produce work that is both novel (i.e., original, unexpected) and appropriate (i.e., useful, adaptive) concerning task constraints" (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999: 3), "Creativity and innovation differ in the required degree of idea novelty and social interaction; creativity is truly novel, whereas innovation can be based on ideas that are adopted from previous experience or different organi-

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zations" (Rank, Pace & Frese, 2004:520). Thus, "Creativity and innovation are inextricably linked" (Jain, 2014).

Innovation Championing

"Champions of innovation are generally referred to individuals who emerge to take creative ideas (which they may or may not have generated) and bring them to life; they make a decisive contribution to the innovation process by actively and enthusiastically promoting the innovation, building support, overcoming resistance, and ensuring that innovation is implemented" (Howell & Higgins, 1990 :42). The champions adopt the project as their own and show personal commitment to it; they contribute to the project by generating support from other people in the firm; and they advocate the project beyond job requirements in a distinctive manner (Markham, 1998:491). "Promoters of innovation actively & intensively supporting and advancing the innovation and they push it on until the final innovation decision is made, overcoming barriers along the way" (Witte, 1977 : 53); and "they enthusiastically pursue new product ideas, evolve ideas into innovations and eventually bring them to market" (Frost & Egri, 1991 cited in Mansfeld et al., 2010: 1130). Innovation champions identify, recognize, and encourage people to come forward with their novel and applied ideas, make sure that idea generators receive timely recognition and support and they also foster an atmosphere in which "asking questions and exploring problems" are welcomed. Innovation champions also serve as role models to the organizational people to provide inspiration, support for their ideas, and the facilitation required to excel.

"Champions of innovation question the status quo, voice contrary views, and push enterprise leaders to think and do things differently" (Howell, 2005: 115). Team work is more important in influencing overall ability of the organization to innovate (e.g., Muthusamy, Wheeler & Simmon, 2005; Noke & Radnor, 2004; Read, 2000). "Putting people together (Forming teams) is almost always more productive than having people work by themselves" (Whetten & Cameron, 2011: 205). "Being together" is equally significant. "Co-location affects people physically, mentally, and emotionally; trust & confidence between people are enhanced when all the human senses are involved" (Rosenfeld, 2008: 16). The champions make use of a variety of influence techniques such as selling, rationality, enthusiasm, and making personal appeals to other individuals for their assistance (Markham, 1998: 491). In a recent study, Mansfeld, Hozle and Gemunden (2010: 1142) found that innovation champions are characterized by a need for autonomy and an intrinsic form of motivation and they show significantly higher level of altruism than others. "Innovation champions are willing to take risks and confront the organization's resistance and political pressures to realize their objectives. Idea champion, sponsor or mentor, orchestrator or facilitator, and rule-breaker – all these roles present in the matter of innovations in organizations particularly such roles are crucial for enabling others" (Whetten & Cameron,

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2011: 207) or empowering others to be innovative. It is to be explained here that idea champion comes up with creative problem solutions whereas sponsors or mentors (innovation champion or innovation promoter) facilitate the idea championing and management of resources. Howell (2005:111) discovered that "innovation champions provide enthusiastic support for creative ideas by sheltering new ideas from premature evaluation, advocating new ideas, and recognizing the production of new ideas; and more effective innovation champions engage in scouting activities as well as in scanning their environment for ideas and information in order to identify promising opportunities". Innovation champions pro-actively manage and maintain a free flow of information exchange among team members and the stakeholders. They actively attempt to influence the attitude of senior & top executives toward the initiation and implementation of innovation in an effective manner. They develop a coalition of all concerned in order to ensure effective implementation of innovation. They inspire the internal public by sharing their vision regarding the potential for innovation. The findings of the study of Howell & Shea (2001:15) suggest that "in scanning the environment for new ideas, the most effective source of information is the champion's personal network of people inside and outside the organization. The findings of another study of the same authors (2006:180) indicate that champion behavior is positively related to team potency and to external communication activities. "Putting people apart ("providing autonomy & discretion for other people to pursue their own ideas") is often necessary to foster innovation and creativity" (Whetten & Cameron, 2011: 205).

"Innovation champions live for the innovation" (Mansfeld et al., 2010: 1142). "Extremely high self-confidence, persistence, energy, and risk-taking are the hall mark personality characteristics of champions" (Howell & Higgins, 1990:41). The study of Nam & Tatum (1997, p. 267) indicates that "the champions who held positions of authority as well as power beyond authority are additional key factors for successful innovations. "Champions engage in scouting activities and the two personal characteristics distinguished champions who are actively engaged in scouting activities: breadth of interest and flexible role orientation" (Howell, 2005: 111). "The champions are supposed to know how to use the company's informal system of relationships" (Schon, 1963:.85). Kumar & Uzkurt (2010:10) found "positive relationship between self-efficacy and innovativeness of the professionals; they found that individuals with higher self-efficacy exhibited higher level of innovative behavior". Innovation champions require intrinsic motivation to

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strengthen the process of innovation. Khandwalla (1988:360) suggested that "the range of social and intellectual skills needed to be a successful agent of innovation include proclivity for social / organizational innovation; environmental & political sensitivity; challenge facing & stress tolerance; problem-solving skills; resource & support mobilization; task accomplishment drive; win drive; confidence; and inter-personal sensitivity". Howell (2005:114) discovered that "more effective champions have a deep understanding of both the strategic and relational contexts of their organization that enabled them to effectively package their ideas and customize their promotional attempts and they have an internal orientation, expressing confidence in their ability to influence persuasively people's attitudes".

Chakrabarty (1974: 61) revealed that "successful product champion should have the qualities of technical competence, knowledge of the company and market, innovation drive & aggressiveness, and political astuteness". Innovation champions need a wide variety of competencies which include capability to articulate an innovative vision, persuasion abilities even to convince skeptical people (e.g., Burgelman, 1984), knowledge of the trade (e.g., Pearson, 2002), aggressiveness (e.g., Beatty & Gordon, 1991), superiors' support for bootlegging practices (e.g., Augsdorfer, 1994; Meyerson, 2001), informal relationship & networking and informal communication with people inside the organization, emotional intelligence to inspire idea champions, tendency to invest personal (e.g., time and energy) and social capital (friendship relations with co-workers) etc. The innovation champions should be capable enough to influence the application of resource acquisition strategies. Finally, innovation champions need to have passion for promoting a process that enables idea generators to transform their novel ideas into business opportunities and place such opportunities in appropriate locations for ongoing streams of business development.

Role of innovation champion is itself a creative one. Contextual factors that divert the employees' attention from the key performance areas negatively affect creativity. But, "when individuals are free to focus on task activities, they are more likely to be creative" (Shalley, 1995: 484). These observations lead us to believe that innovation champions need to be intrinsically motivated in their role. Precisely, an innovation champion primarily demands inner directed motivation in innovation management championing (IMC). "One's enthusiasm for the innovation is reflected by one's strong intrinsic motivation, which can't be created externally but rather through the internally felt excitement on working on the innovation" (Mansfeld et al., 2010: 1142). Personal initiative more often becomes crucial for the development of IMC capabilities. Personal initiative focuses on self-starting, pro-active and persistent behavior as well as demonstrating perseverance while overcoming obstacles that come in the way.

In nutshell: (i) Innovation champions, who have intrinsic motivation, consider-

able degree of autonomy, tendency of taking personal initiative, focus on exploratory learning, positive attitude of empowering organizational people, high level of altruism, supportive relationship with organizational people, social network and coalition of supporters, and also ability to promote sharing creative ideas among team members, are in better position to promote innovation in organization.(ii) Empowering others (e.g., idea champions) by the innovation champions enhances creativity, initiative, and resourcefulness of the organizational people and increases their motivation and commitment to innovation endeavors.

Absorptive Capacity

When innovation is on the agenda, an organization's capacity to absorb knowledge becomes very critical. "The ability to exploit external knowledge is a critical component of innovative capabilities; prior related knowledge confers an ability to recognize the value of new information, assimilate it and apply it to commercial ends which collectively constitute what we call firm's absorptive capacity ……..outside sources of knowledge are often critical to the innovation process, whatever the organizational level at which the innovating unit is defined" (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990, :128).

Tacit knowledge shared in social network of cross-section individuals is another significant factor that facilitates growth of absorptive capacity of an organization as it is the only way to share practical experience among cross-section experts and management practitioners.

By making tacit knowledge explicit, it can be shared by others and becomes the basis of new knowledge.

Unlike the explicit knowledge, tacit knowledge can't be codified in formal or systematic language; it exists and further develops through the cognitive process in the individual minds; and tacit knowledge, as compared to explicit knowledge, is shared more among the people in organizations. "Since tacit knowledge is highly personal, socialization mostly happens in joint activities including both informal and semi-formal learning where knowledge is increased with the help of observation, imitation, and practices" (El-Sayed & Cheng, 2004 : 268). By making tacit knowledge explicit, it can be shared by others and becomes the basis of new knowledge (Jain, 2014:52). "Knowledge creation activities deal with knowledge that is more tacit, systematic and complex, while knowledge utilization deals with knowledge that is more explicit, autonomous and simple" (El-Sayed & Cheng, 2004: 268). In the Minnesota Innovation survey results reported by Van de Ven, Angle & Poole (1989) innovation effectiveness was found to be related to communication frequency both within the innovation teams and outside the teams. Pundt, Martins and Nerdinger (2010:186) revealed that "reciprocal exchange (in terms of voice behavior and communicating ideas) between an organization and its employees as described in organization support theory is relevant for explaining employees' innovative behavior and thus can help organizations to

tap the employees' innovative potency". Damanpour & Schneider (2006:231) found that "the impact of managers' attitude toward innovation is considerably stronger than both environmental and managers' demographic characteristics, and is nearly as strong as that of organizational factors; managers' attitudes toward competition and entrepreneurship positively affect all phases of innovation adoption". However, they need to gain support from their subordinates by maintaining the quality of supportive relationships, encouraging team members to share ideas and resources, and consulting with team members while making decisions (e.g., Bass & Avolio, 1994; Yukl, Gordon & Taber, 2002).

To sum up: (i) Both tacit and explicit knowledge as existing among organizational people have significant association with organization's capacity to innovate. (ii) Organization's absorptive capacity has significant correlation with the innovation success in an organization. (iii) Organization's support in the matter of facilitating knowledge sharing among organizational people has positive impact on the innovation adoption and implementation.

Creating Climate for Team Working

Extant research (e.g., Hurley, 1995; Panuwatwanich, Stewart & Mohamed, 2008) indicates that team climate in organization generally contributes to the outcomes of innovation. Forbes Insights (2011: 19) conducted an international survey of 321 executives of large global enterprises based on which it was reported that "a diverse and inclusive workforce is necessary to drive innovation, foster creativity, and guide business strategies; multiple voices lead to new ideas, new services, and new products and encourage out-of-the-box thinking; as long as organizations keep diversity and inclusion efforts at the top of their priority list, it will position them to be ahead in competition and to differentiate themselves from their competitors by attracting top talent and capturing new clients" .

"Creative performance is increased when diversity is allowed, when people with dissimilar frames of reference can exchange ideas, and when the organization can effectively integrate creative personalities into the organizational main stream" (Kanter, 1983 cited in McLean, 2005: 237). Mutual trust among team members contributes significantly in developing team spirit and in enhancing the level of team performance. "Mutual trust influences both employee support for change and the probability of successful change, which influences the degree to which creativity and innovations are stimulated and promoted" (Martins & Martins, 2002: 58). "A high degree of innovation can be achieved if the organizational culture created by management promotes a high degree of trust" (Martins, 2000: 229). By creating an atmosphere that empowers employees, organizations may promote the team climate for innovation.

In brief: (i) Team working climate, and an environment of mutual trust among people significantly contribute to promote

innovation in organization. (ii) Diverse set of expertise, experiences, perspectives, and backgrounds of organizational people promotes a favorable climate for innovations. (iii) Mutual trust and supportive relationship among team members, reciprocal exchange in terms of voice behavior and knowledge / ideas sharing / resource sharing among team members, intra-team and inter-team communication effectiveness – all these predict successful adoption and implementation of innovation.

HRM Practices

The innovation of a firm depends on the imagination, creativity, intrinsic motivation, commitment, and intellectual capability of the employees and hence their involvement and wholehearted support is needed for adoption and implementation of innovation strategies. Organizations, therefore, require a set of HRM policies and their effective implementation as regards identifying, recruiting, selecting, developing, motivating, evaluating, recognizing, rewarding, promoting, and retaining the talented people that is consistent with their innovation goals, policies and strategies. "HRM practices like training, induction, team working, appraisal and exploratory learning focus - all were found predictors of Innovation" (Shipton, West, Dawson, Birdi & Patterson, 2006: 3). "High action orientation positively predicts innovation implementation" (Rank, Spector & Carsten, 2004 cited in Rank, Pace & Frese, 2004: 520). Previous research studies (e.g., Axtell et al., 2000; Searle & Ball, 2003) indicate that innovation is not confined to talent & creativity of individuals / idea champions per se but to the novel application of ideas by groups through their team work within the organization's context. For sustaining the match with such requirements, HRM's role is very critical. In their study of 173 Spanish firms, Jimenez –Jimenez and Sanz Valle (2008:1216) provided evidence of a positive relationship between HRM and innovation. Lau and Ngo (2004: 685) suggest that "an HR system which emphasizes extensive training, performance based reward, and team development is necessary to create an organizational culture that is conducive to product innovation".

The innovation of a firm depends on the imagination, creativity, intrinsic motivation, commitment, and intellectual capability of the employees.

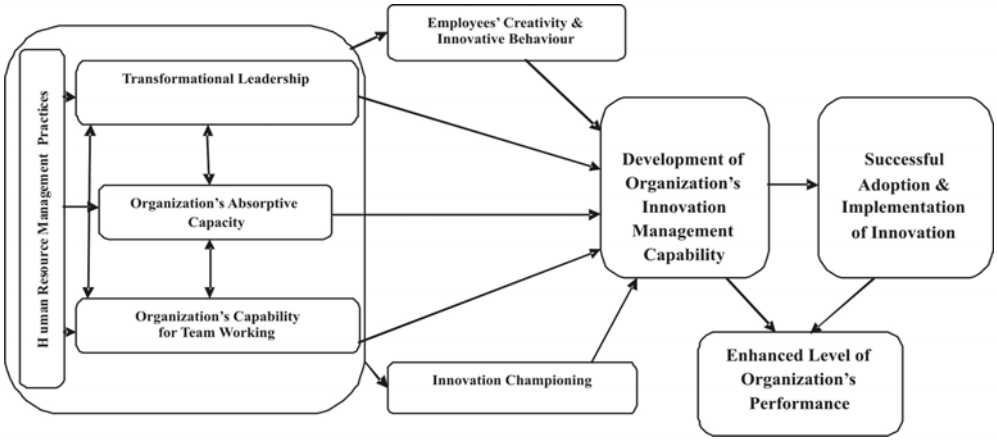
In nutshell: (i) Effective HRM practices predict effective implementation of innovation; (ii) innovation effectiveness is positively related to the extent to which the organization is able to recruit and retain talented & creative personalities having diverse background into the organizational mainstream; and (iii) ongoing system of employee training and performance based rewards has positive impact on effective implementation of innovations in an organization.

A Conceptual Framework

On the basis of analysis of the outcomes of the review of earlier research as presented in the foregoing paragraphs,

a conceptual framework of innovation management capability has been sketched as in Fig. 1. Accordingly, the six sets of capabilities, viz., "(a) employees' creativity & innovative behavior; (b) innovation championing; (c) organi- zation's absorptive capacity; (d) transformational leadership; (e) organization's capability for team working; and (f) HRM practices" appear as significant predictors of innovation management which in turn influence adoption and implementation of innovation. The hypothesized propositions with regard to the conceptual framework of innovation management capability, as presented at the end of various sections in this paper, may be used as reference points for future research.

Fig. 1 Conceptual Framework of Innovation Management Capability



Implications for Research & Practice

The conceptual framework presented in this article is a multi-component construct which offers a broader & comprehensive conceptualization of innovation management and innovation enabling behavior in organizations. It focuses on antecedents to successful adoption & implementation of innovation in an organizational setting. Such an attempt facilitates better understanding of the complex relationship between various variables and innovation management. Although the hypothesized propositions, as presented at the end of various sections in this paper, provide some directions to practicing managers, they also pose a number of issues for the new generation of the researchers.

"Innovation driven capabilities of a firm make it more agile and responsive to change via an integrated and flexible system and that focus on the deliberate managerial actions, processes, procedures and practices that are done in the firm to develop specific innovation-facilitating competencies" (Siguaw, Simpson & Enz, 2006: 563). Innovation oriented organizations recognize that innovations are long term investment and therefore they make investment of adequate resources, emphasize on organizational commitment of the employees, and "they

are supportive to human resources who champion new ideas" (Siguaw et al., 2006: 564). "Organizational innovation is a social phenomenon that not only requires many people to generate and implement ideas, but also requires that those individuals interact, work together and build on one another's perspective, thinking and creativity" (Smith & Hall, 2012: 36). In a survey of innovation practices of more than 550 large companies, Loewe & Dominiquini (2006: 25) "identified short-term focus, lack of resources, leadership's unrealistic expectations of pay-off, unstructured incentives to reward innovation, lack of systematic innovation process, and belief regarding inherent risk in innovation as the key obstacles to innovation". Above mentioned barriers can be overcome if the appropriate strategies based on the proposed framework are evolved and practiced to push the innovations. The innovation management capability framework may be instrumental in such an exercise. Innovation management process is context specific, though there appear some common determinants as general guidelines for successful innovation management that cross-section / cross-cultural organizations may consider. Organization's management needs to take care of all these determinants, but how much significance is to be attached to a specific factor or a set of factors will be weighted according to the context of the organization and its unique contingency features. It is expected that organizations that consciously and systematically invest in analyzing the various aspects of innovation management, as presented in the proposed framework, have a likelihood of achieving sustainable innovation outcomes. Management of an organization is expected to act as breeders (not as blockers) of idea champions and innovation champions with diverse backgrounds and for the purpose they are expected to find innovative ways to attract and retain such champions. They also need to create an atmosphere in which such champions are flourished and their championing is embedded in the fabric of the organization. They also need to put widespread efforts toward frequently honoring the champions in public. They must continue to ensure that all organizational people have the required skills and motivation to support for innovation in the organization. A strategy for ongoing systematic training for breeding potential champions should be practiced without any disruption. The typical themes for organizing regular management development programs for empowering potential champions may include creativity enhancement techniques, innovation orientation, transformational leadership, mutual trust development and social support mechanisms, team working for innovation, intrinsic motivation development, altruism leadership style, participative management, resource sharing & their optimum utilization, entrepreneurial leadership style, 'risk taking propensity' development for high achievers, emerging HRD issues for innovation success, novel strategies for innovation capability

Management of an organization is expected to act as breeders (not as blockers) of idea champions and innovation champions.

development, influencing strategies for innovation, continuous improvement for innovation excellence, knowledge management for innovation, creativity & personal initiative for innovation, voice behavior for innovation, pro-active and persistent behavior for innovation etc. A carefully designed performance appraisal system may exert powerful influence on people's understanding of innovation goals and their significance and their learning orientation. "Implementing contingent pay in conjunction with practices designed to promote exploratory learning appears to be a constructive strategy for promoting innovation" (Shipton et al., 2006: 21). For more sustainable innovation, the development and involvement of whole workforce of wide diversity is imperative. Reciprocal exchange between organization and employees can help much to develop innovation potential of an organization.

Innovation management is reliant on many interlinked factors including the context of specific culture / industry or organization. Therefore, contextual studies, if taken up, may reveal a unique mix of different determinants of innovation. The review of earlier research indicates that in the past only a few researchers paid their attention to study the effect of innovation management factors on organization's performance indicators and hence this theme requires an urgency of in-depth research. Case studies of specific innovations carried out by different organizations across the cultures may provide richer textual description of the various variables of innovation management capability. It appears that insufficient efforts have been put up so far as regards the study of barriers to innovation and reasons for failure in getting innovation success. Only a handful studies have been conducted so far to establish relationship of innovation management with knowledge management, social capital management, resource acquisition and utilization management, human resource management, IT management, and technology management. In future, these themes need to be researched at least to be initiated by the way of taking up of minor or micro level research projects followed by longitudinal research studies. Crossan and Apaydin (2010: 25) appropriately remarked that "Understanding how innovation capability delivers innovation outcomes and ultimately firm performance is paramount to managing firm innovation and a possible way to advance this research is to test the connection between identified innovation determinants, innovation outcomes, and firm performance".

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