

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT JOURNAL

Special Issue: Call for papers

HRM and innovation: A multi-level perspective

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Innovation is critical to organizational survival especially against a backdrop of change and uncertainty; accordingly a wide and diverse literature has attempted to tease out its antecedents (Baer, 2013; Li et al., 2013; Nonaka, 1994; Smith et al., 2005). Despite some insightful studies (e.g. Zhou et al., 2013), HRM has had a somewhat muted voice. This is surprising, since knowledge creation (a first step for innovation) is at heart a voluntary human endeavour, depending for its realisation on the capabilities and motivations of individuals and groups (Guthrie, 2012). It could be argued that HRM's lack of prominence in the innovation space is starting to be addressed by those outside of this domain. Scholars interested in the role of knowledge as a source of competitive advantage, for example, are increasingly preoccupied with individuals and micro-systems (e.g. Foss, 2010), while sociologists have started to draw on the Ability-Motivation- Opportunity framework by way of explaining how and why knowledge is created, shared and implemented within organizations (Powell & Snellman, 2004). Sensitive to the opportunity for influence in this critical area, the Special Issue positions HRM centre stage.

Responding to this call, HR scholars face intellectual as well as methodological challenges. Regarding the latter, it has been argued that taking account of the *levels* involved –bottom up as well as the top down- is a necessary first step (Gupta et al., 2007; Shipton et al., 2012). With respect to the former, theoretical framing issues permeate levels of analysis. At the level of the individual, insights from social exchange theory (Eisenberger et al., 1990) implicitly posit that HRM promotes the discretionary behaviours that are conducive to innovation (Hayton, 2003). Questions remain, however, on the precise role of key individuals (e.g. leaders and corporate entrepreneurs) and their skill and competency needs against a backdrop of innovation and change. Given Amabile's (1999) componential theory of creativity, how do domain-specific skills (inculcating task proficiency) and creativity-enhancing capabilities (reflecting an individual's ability to contemplate and enact new ideas) play out in a work setting? In considering these questions, theories of informal learning such as the expansive/ restrictive framework (Fuller & Unwin, 2004) may present valuable insights, as well as notions of occupational identity/ adaptability (Brown, 2013).

At the level of the organization, it has been argued that HR has the potential to build trust, co-operation and collective codes and language (Collins & Smith, 2006). Recent insights show that at least for incremental innovation, collective motivation rather than collective capability has the stronger effect (Zhao & Chadwick, 2013); therefore, we encourage any Special Issue contributions that unravel the contingencies involved. Whether there are specific HRM practices that elicit innovation is not yet clear. Exploratory learning- conceptualised as a set of practices that expose individuals to new and different experiences and perspectives – has been shown to be significantly and positively associated with higher innovation (Shipton et al., 2006) - yet more work is needed on the boundary conditions and implications for the design and implementation of wider HRM systems. Those experiencing exploratory learning may (or may not) neglect the operational aspects of their role. In this regard, interesting work is emerging on HRM and ambidexterity (Patel et al. 2012; Swart, 2012).

Submission Procedure

The deadline for submissions is 30th December 2014. Papers to be considered for this special issue should be submitted online via <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/hrmj>. Thereafter please select ‘Special Issue Paper’ as the Manuscript Type and enter ‘**HRM and innovation: A multi-level perspective**’ as the special issue title. Please direct questions about the submission process, or any administrative matter, to the editorial office: hrmj@nuigalway.ie. Queries related to the focus of papers or other queries related to the call for papers should be directed to the guest editors.

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