

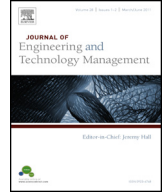


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Innovation management processes, their internal organizational elements and contextual factors: An investigation in Brazil



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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to analyze the relationships between internal organizational elements and the influence of contextual factors related to innovation management and its challenges. Four companies that have relevant product development activities in Brazil are studied. This topic was chosen due to the lack of empirical studies that analyze the reality of innovation practices in developing countries. Main results indicate the high interdependence between organizational context and consistency of innovation processes and the influence of organizational structures on how initiatives flow through innovation processes. Among the contributions for existing research and practice, two potential patterns of behaviour guided by two of the main challenges concerning innovation in the literature and in the case studies were identified: managing uncertainty and cross-functional orchestration.

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Introduction

The growing importance of innovation for competitiveness is widely known both in the academic and business worlds. Various authors have emphasized the need for organizations to innovate in order

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to achieve long-term success in their markets or even to re-invent them. The determinants of organization growth have shifted nowadays from raw materials to potential intangible assets: knowledge and innovation capability. Lack of innovation has been regarded in the literature as an obstacle to corporate growth (Yang, 2012).

Despite the immense attention paid to innovation in the literature over the last 10 years, there is a lack of studies investigating the challenges faced by companies to increase their innovative capacity (Galia and Legros, 2004; Segarra-Blasco et al., 2008). In the few studies on this approach, various aspects of the internal process of innovation management have been overlooked regarding factors that induce or moderate the intensity of these obstacles (Hansen and Birkinshaw, 2007). However, in recent years there has been significant progress in organizational theory focusing on innovation and consequently integrated innovation management models have come to the forefront (Tidd et al., 2008).

It is clear that variables external to an organization, such as the context of sectors and the national innovation system in which it is situated, influence challenges concerning innovation. However, it is argued in this study that the internal dimension of an organization cannot be ignored. Taking this into account, this paper proposes an intra-organizational perspective in order to understand the challenge of innovating as a management challenge, without ignoring the influence of moderating variables present in this phenomenon.

The literature related to innovation management is divided into several units of possible analysis to empirically examine the topic. Research on the topic comprises the organization as a unit of analysis (Perez-Freije and Enkel, 2007), innovation projects (Thamhain, 2003) or each of the specific practices of innovation management.

Brazilian companies are traditionally considered unlikely to innovate, often experiencing difficulties in managing technology. In the 1970s, industrialization policies focused on substituting imports stimulating transfer from external sources. On an empirical level, there is a lack of information and studies on the innovative practices of Brazilian companies. This gap is being gradually minimized by sector or regional analyses or case studies, which enable us to understand the behaviour of companies in greater depth.

With the already established recognition of innovation for competitiveness, there are various aspects – academic, sectorial, governmental – mobilized to advance the innovative potential of the Brazilian industry. This research aims to contribute to a greater academic understanding of the current stage and the challenges faced by innovative organizations, seeking to answer the following research question:

How is the orientation for product innovation in Brazilian companies in relation to their internal processes and organizational context?

Bearing that in mind, this article investigates the progress of adopting innovation management practices and the challenges faced by companies in Brazil to increase their innovative performance. Initially, theoretical systematization is carried out and an integrated model for innovation management is proposed. This model will serve as a guideline to analyze innovation systems of the investigated companies. After carrying out an individual analysis of each case, a comparative evaluation is made, from which most of the contributions are taken.

The role of technological capabilities and the organizational learning perspective in developing countries

Before discussing the interpretation of the innovation process models that are focused primarily on corporate behaviour, it is necessary to consider the economic context in which it is inserted.

Since the 1980s, many authors (Bell, 1984; Bell and Pavitt, 1993; Katz, 1984) have analyzed the peculiarities of the industrialization process in intermediate economies and the consequences on the intensity and speed of acquisition of technological capabilities. Significant technology transfer from industrialized countries to developing countries marked the 1970s, particularly in Latin America and Asia, by know-how and setting up multinational companies. These methods were widely criticized for being unable to break the technological dependence of economies that were intended.

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