

Workplace innovation in Vietnam

Nga Hoang Thanh Dang (2018) *Workplace innovation and new product development in Vietnamese manufacturing small and medium-sized enterprises*. Melbourne: RMIT University.

Review by Frank Pot

Workplace innovation is globally recognised as important for policy and for research, but mainly in the so-called Western world. Recently however a dissertation was published about workplace innovation in Vietnam. The new Doctor of Philosophy, Ms Nga Hoang Thanh Dang, lives in Vietnam and went to Australia for her PhD research. RMIT University (the former Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology) has hubs in Barcelona and Hanoi. The concept of workplace innovation had been developed at the university since the beginning of this century by Professor Adela McMurray who defines it as: “a psychological construct that is contextual and a process of idea generation created by an individual or team within the workplace and is fostered through an innovative climate.” In 2003 she presented the ‘workplace innovation scale (WIS)’ with four dimensions:

- Organisational innovation (five items)
- Innovation climate (six items)
- Individual innovation (eight items)
- Team innovation (five items).

This scale has since been used in quite a number of research projects including in Vietnam and Thailand (Muenjohn, N. and McMurray, A., 2016). Construct validation was checked as well (Wipulanusat, W., Panuwatwanich, K. & Stewart, R.A., 2017)

Nga Dang reflects on the many definitions of workplace innovation in Europe, and specifically that of EUWIN, but decided to stick to the definition and measurement of her supervisor, Adela McMurray.

European Workplace Innovation Network (EUWIN)

EUWIN was established by the European Commission in 2013 and is now entirely supported by contributions from an international network of partners co-ordinated by HIVA (University of Leuven). EUWIN also functions as a network partner for the H2020 *Beyond4.0* project.

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Abstract

(Dang, 2018)

“Workplace innovation (WI) and new product development (NPD) is essential for organisations to ensure their market positioning. Vietnam is at the starting point of innovation. The purpose of this thesis is to gain a better understanding of senior management practices in NPD projects in the Vietnamese manufacturing industry and the status of the NPD process, strategic planning, resource allocation and success measure in Vietnamese manufacturing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); identify NPD success factors in Vietnamese manufacturing SMEs at the project level; investigate the relationship between WI, NPD capability, strategic planning and performance in Vietnamese manufacturing SMEs at the project level; and determine the moderating effect of two groups (manager and employee) on the relationship between WI, NPD capability and NPD strategic planning on NPD performance in Vietnamese manufacturing SMEs. A total of 795 questionnaires were sent to manufacturing SMEs in Hanoi, with a response rate of 42.77% yielding 340 usable responses. Using IBM SPSS AMOS (v.25) software (hereafter AMOS) to test the research model of the relationship between WI, NPD capability, NPD strategic planning and NPD performance, the findings confirmed the simultaneous relationship between WI, NPD capability, NPD strategic planning and NPD performance in Vietnamese manufacturing SMEs at the project level. This thesis makes a significant contribution to the field of WI and NPD research from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Theoretically, this thesis contributes to the existing literature in the field of WI and NPD in organisations by 1) integrating the framework of contingency theory, the dynamic capability view and resource-based view theory in the study of the relationship between WI, NPD capability, NPD strategic planning and NPD performance; 2) developing a validated conceptual framework for examining the relationship between WI, NPD capability, NPD strategic planning and NPD performance in Vietnamese manufacturing SMEs; 3) observing a difference of perspective on the relationship between employee and managers, with the thesis findings confirming for the first time the simultaneous relationship between WI, NPD capability, NPD strategic planning and NPD performance, thereby expanding the contingency theory (Miller and Friesen, 1983) to a new environment–capability–strategic planning–performance paradigm; and 4) recognition of moderating effect of manager and employee on WI and NPD capability. Practically, the findings enhance current understanding of senior management practices in NPD projects and NPD success factors within Vietnamese manufacturing SMEs and discuss for the first time NPD process, strategic planning, resource allocation and success measures in Vietnamese manufacturing SMEs. These results are hugely beneficial, for manufacturing SMEs in Vietnam in particular and for other industries and countries in general, in assisting successful NPD.”

For researchers in Western countries it is very interesting to read how the concept of workplace innovation can be used in other environments, such as the Vietnamese, as well. In quite a number of research projects there is a relation between workplace innovation and new product development *capability*. Rather new in this dissertation is the relation with new product development *performance*. This could be used as an example to include in future research.

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Nga is 'Economics Lecturer and Researcher' at Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics in Hanoi. In the meantime, Nga is in contact with EUWIN and Workplace Innovation Europe and she is very eager to exchange research and ideas.

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Adela McMurray and her colleagues Chamindika Weerakoon and Nuttawuth Muenjohn (Eds.) are preparing 'The Palgrave Handbook of Workplace Innovation across Developed and Developing Countries', which will be published in 2020.

References

Muenjohn, N. and McMurray, A., (2016). The impact of leadership on workplace innovation in Thai and Vietnamese SMES. *The Journal of Developing Areas*, vol. 50, no. 5, pp. 479-486).

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Wipulanusat, W., Panuwatwanich, K. & and Stewart, R.A. (2017). Workplace innovation: exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis for construct validation. *Management and Production Engineering Review*, 8(2), 57-68).