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## Introduction

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### Steen Høyrup\*

Aarhus University (Denmark),  
Danish School of Education,  
Tuborgvej 164, DK – 2400 Copenhagen NV, Denmark  
Email: shp@dpu.dk  
\*Corresponding author

### Renaud Redien-Collot

Institut Friedland,  
27 avenue de Friedland, 75382 Paris Cedex 08, France  
Email: rrediencollot@institut-friedland.org

### Ann-Charlotte Teglborg

ESCP Europe,  
3 Rue Armand Moisant, 75015 Paris, France  
Email: ateglborg@escpeurope.eu

**Biographical notes:** Steen Høyrup is Associate Professor in Education, Emeritus from 2015 at Danish School of Education, Aarhus University, Denmark. His research focus is employee-driven innovation in a learning perspective and workplace learning in terms of adaptive- and innovative learning in organisational settings. He is an early and active member of the European Employee Driven Innovation and Work Place Learning Research Network (EDI-Europe) created by University of Aarhus (Denmark).

Renaud Redien-Collot is a specialist in entrepreneurship and has both a French and US educational background. He has a PhD from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Columbia University as well as a Habilitation in Management from Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne in the Laboratoire REGARDS (EA 6292). His research interests include innovation, the incubation process, entrepreneurship education and the renewal of SMEs' business models in the EU. Prior to joining Institut Friedland, he was the Director of International Affairs at Novancia, a business school of the CCI Paris Ile-de-France in Paris.

Ann-Charlotte Teglborg's research interests focus on the transformation of the workplace in innovation driven economies and the development of alternative approaches to traditional R&D innovation over the course of the last few decades. She is an early and active member of the European Employee Driven Innovation and Work Place Learning Research Network (EDI-Europe) created by University of Aarhus (Denmark). She is also an active administrator of the French professional association, 'Innovacteurs', dedicated to employee driven innovation in the French public and private sectors.

## 1 Introduction

The purpose of the present journal is to present new research-based knowledge in an emergent field of international – and interdisciplinary research called *employee-driven innovation* (EDI) – a research that extend our knowledge of how to explore, exploit and further cultivate new innovative potentials among employees and firms. The articles present evidence of the nature, preconditions, management and outcomes of EDI.

EDI focuses on the innovative potential of ordinary employees involved in daily work activity and not just those working in R&D, expert or senior management positions.

Coined by Høyrup (2012, p.8), EDI is defined as “the generation and the implementation of new ideas, products, and processes-including the everyday remaking of jobs and organisational practices, originating from interaction of employees, who are not assigned to this task”. All kinds of innovations are the concern of EDI as long as they break with existing routines and practices, and are beneficial for employees and management in the workplace.

The employees’ creative skills are embedded in learning processes occurring during the daily work activities. EDI can also be conceptualised as a learning process defined as the process (and the related products) by which individuals expand their capacity (knowledge, skills, competence, etc.) through action, experience and social interaction (Høyrup, 2010). These learning processes linked to EDI are very close to doing, using and interacting mode (DUI-mode) (Jensen et al., 2007). In that way, EDI and DUI learning are the two faces of the same phenomenon (Høyrup, 2012).

The research presented reveals that EDI is an umbrella concept that includes a broad range of very different processes:

- Processes that may be characterised as informal, not intentional, not planned. Management and employees do not pay attention to the processes.
- Processes carried out by employees ‘behind the scene’. The processes are – at least in a period of time – hidden and not visible for management.
- Processes are initiated by employees and supported and coordinated by management.
- Processes are initiated by management that involves employees in the innovation processes, that is: management pave the way for participation of employees in the innovation processes.

## 2 In sum this special issue points at two major directions

First, the examination of the comprehensive employees’ reception and enactment of EDI that can complete the identification of the key mechanisms that characterise the success and effectiveness of EDI. We need to know what are the managerial dimensions that have an impact on employees’ motivation to conceive, formulate, and eventually develop innovative proposal in the context of EDI. In the context of the employees’ reception and enactment of EDI, we encompass several dimensions, such as employees’ perception, appreciation and representation of managers’ initiatives in the context of EDI.

Second, the exploration of the articulation of EDI with other approaches of innovation and the role of employees’ in the intertwining of several layers of dynamics of

innovation. Studies on EDI examine how approaches based on EDI stimulate several types of changes in employees' behaviours that are more or less conducive of innovation that may target the processes of production and reveal themselves either incremental or radical or that that may challenge the strategical design of the firms. At the same time, these studies are only focused on the deployment of innovation through EDI. Research should contextualise the role of EDI.

EDI is a vast process that helps to reconsider employees' roles, that is, their inter-individual interactions within their organisation and their external interactions with the market and the different sources of innovation. What are the conditions of implementations of EDI so that it cannot become another iron cage as R&D, quality management and so on? If EDI helps employees to develop an organisational consciousness that strives for innovation, how can we describe and define this reflectiveness? Can we identify the conditions of possibility of this self-reflectiveness? Other methods of innovation help them, for example, to develop an organisational consciousness that strives for marketability of new ideas. Organisation encourages the proliferation of employees' new types of consciousness... How do employees articulate their professional consciousness (as accountant or technicians, for example), their 'innovative' consciousness and their marketing consciousness and maybe many other organisational forms of consciousness?

### 3 Sequence of articles

Although all articles include the following perspectives: employee behaviour and initiatives, conditions and context of innovation and management of innovation, – the single articles may differ in terms of how dominating these perspectives are present in the research and theoretical approach applied. Articles are below placed in a sequence referring to these perspectives although each article could be placed in two or three different category, and at the same time we find continuity between the chosen categories.

In the first articles presented *employee initiative*, – *behaviour*, – *learning and – perception* are underlined. In the next group of articles *conditions for innovation processes and implementation of innovations* are highlighted. How to foster innovative behaviour and EDI? What are the driving sources? The *management perspective* is present in all articles, but this perspective is dominating in the next group of articles.

### 4 Employee initiative, behaviour and perception. Personal and interpersonal processes in EDI

In 'Employee-driven innovation into practice: managing the tension between organisation and innovation', Carine Deslée and Aubépine Dahan empirically examine three cases of EDI to assess the tension it creates in a large bureaucratic organisation and discusses the nature and potential of such tensions. Thus, the phenomena of tensions in organisations become a cornerstone in conceptualising innovation processes. EDI is apprehended as inspired by everyday practice, which comes in the form of a situated, informal type of knowledge individuals widely and casually rely on to perform their daily tasks and

professional duties. In a practice perspective knowledge creation is seen as an important part of innovation processes and it is underlined that practice not only reproduces existing knowledge but also creates new knowledge at all levels of the organisation. EDI creates new knowledge in the firm.

In 'Organising routines and spaces for employee-driven innovation in global work arrangements', Maja Marie Lotz shows how a group of employees in a multinational corporation learnt and innovated to develop a global training system that supported the company's overall standardisation process. The article stresses how three interrelated routines (an organisational form of global communities of practice, a 'cookbook' representing a set of guidelines to ensure a common approach to the sharing of best practices, and a set of governance procedures to support continual improvements) trigger moments of recursive learning and EDI. Namely, these routines allow employees to work towards a common purpose; to identify, document and share knowledge about the problems and solutions encountered in their work and finally to improve their work practices.

In 'Similar structures, different interpretations: perceived possibilities for employee-driven innovation in two teams within an industrial organisation' Tea Lempiälä, Sari Yli-Kauhaluoma and Jaana Näsänen enlighten, how two teams within a similar structural setting perceive their ability to engage in EDI in a highly differing manner. Based on the concepts of EDI and the idea championing, the article enlighten how employees can be supported to grow into champions – and thus perceive opportunities, rather than limitations – in industrial organisations.

In 'Co-design in the prison service: a learning perspective on employee-driven innovation', Marie Aakjær stresses how co-design approaches and the adoption of a user perspective can be used as a means to facilitate employees' learning and innovation in public service innovation. An exploratory case study in a prison shows that including user perspectives can create strange perspectives on familiar routines. Namely, a current prisoner suggests to rely a co-design workshop dedicated to the way of receiving a new prisoner on the image of an informative and accommodating guided tour on a Greek island. The metaphor prompts critical reflection and fosters a transformative learning dynamics of employees resulting in innovative practices.

## **5 Conditions of EDI. How to support and foster innovative processes?**

In 'What drives different employee types of innovative behaviour? Development and test of an integrative model of employee driven innovation in German firms', Veronika Kurz, Stefan Hüsiger and Michael Dowling analyse the innovative behaviour of ordinary employees compared to other kinds of employees from whom highly innovative behaviours are expected. The authors develop and test an integrative model of EDI consisting of different intra-organisational drivers. The research shows that the most important factor for influencing innovative behaviour is an appropriate job design that stresses autonomy and innovativeness as job requirements. In addition, the personal factors of openness to new experiences and role breadth self-efficacy seem to be essential. Additionally, it was shown that innovative behaviour of ordinary employees is not significantly different from other groups of employees who are expected to focus on innovation activities.

In 'Key mechanisms for employee-driven innovation in governmental client organisations', Henrik Sorensen, Lene Faber Ussing, Søren Wandahl and Randi M. Christensen identify specific mechanisms that are key to implement in an innovation process model for conducting EDI in a governmental client organisation. The primary mechanisms identified were the mechanisms of organisational trust, innovation safety, organisational practices, cultural settings, and the recognition and rewards structure that to motivate employees. The authors recommend that the decision-making procedures should be transparent especially to the idea-owner and the employees involved, and the implementation and putting into practice should be fast progressed phases in the innovation process.

In 'Fostering employee innovative behaviour through receipt of helping and voice behaviours from co-workers: the mediating roles of knowledge transfer and knowledge creation', Shih Yung Chou and Brandon Walker-Price enlighten the impact of an employee's receipt of helping and voice behaviours exhibited by co-workers on the employee's innovative behaviour. The article develops a conceptual model describing how receipt of helping behaviour and voice behaviour fosters employee innovative behaviour through formal, informal, and incidental learning. Additionally, the authors theoretically explore the mediating roles of knowledge transfer and knowledge creation. The model offers crucial managerial insights into fostering employee innovative behaviour through effective organisational learning and knowledge management practices that encourage interpersonal helping and constructive criticism.

In 'Conditions of implementation of employee-driven innovation', Søren Voxted presents an action research project aimed at training and involving shop-floor employees in EDI. The theoretical approach applied in the article is the existing research on transfer in innovation, and the transfer of learning, knowledge and technology. The research identifies five factors that have been crucial to the transfer process from employees' ideas to new solutions in production:

- 1 The need for a clear vision for EDI s in organisations.
- 2 EDI needs management support.
- 3 There is a need for formal organisation in implementation of the employees' ideas.
- 4 There is a need for a facilitator for writing and documentation in the dissemination of EDI.
- 5 Organisations need to accept unequal participation among employee's in EDI.

## **6 The management perspective in EDI**

In 'Employee-driven innovation and reverse supply chain management', Alena Klapalová states that reverse flows, which emerge and move within supply chains, represent a significant source of inspiration and ideas for innovations. The research addresses two questions:

- 1 What is the position of employees in contrast to the other innovation-driving entities in firms as the initial idea carrier for potential innovation stemming from dealing with reverse flows?

- 2 Which management characteristics distinguish firms with their 'ordinary' employees participating in the innovation processes from the perspective of reverse supply chain management?

The findings show both the positive position of employees in driving the innovation effort and some issues which require further research.

In 'Bottom-linked innovation: collaboration between middle managers and employees', Catharina Juul Kristensen apprehends EDI as a strategy for the development of sustainable organisations in the public and private sector. The author coins the term 'bottom-linked innovation' and explores the collaboration between middle managers and employees in innovation processes.

In 'Do it yourself – a lean startup toolbox for employee-driven green product innovation', Anke Buhl addresses green product innovation (GPI) that has become a key strategic issue for companies that aim at improving their environmental and economic performance. The concept of EDI recognises an underutilised potential of employees who are not formally assigned to innovation tasks. The article draws on the lean startup (LS) approach which applies lean thinking to entrepreneurship and innovation processes. The article develops a process framework and toolbox which employees can use to validate and refine their GPI ideas before presenting them to management.

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