

The Role of Formal Routines in Organizational Innovation¹

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to explore managers' attitudes towards the role of formal routines in organizational innovation in SEE region. Thirty (30) in-depth semi-structured interviews have been conducted with variety of managers working in fifteen (15) different organizations. In addition, routines in this research are directly connected with overall organizations activities that have a powerful role in organizing and controlling the entire working process. In these managers' attitude routines seem to underpin stability that in the last instance is related comprehensively with flexibility that does create the core for innovation through developing an inclusive channel of internal communication. Furthermore, this process is closely linked with employees' autonomy in acting inside organizations, which insofar though, can be drawn that even autonomy in itself paradoxically is a routine that provides flexibility, which does create the necessary room for flourishing innovation in redesigning and reshaping routines as best templates in the working environment. Hence, in this particular research routines in SEE region seem to be another important source of prompting innovation through providing and creating the basic internal stability and security in executing employees job.

Introduction

Organizational routines have become an important topic in understanding and sustaining the whole organizations operation activities that triggers organizations toward investing further in embracing, adapting and integrating routines as cornerstone of providing stability and reducing uncertainty (Feldman and Rafaeli, 2002). The current statement of knowledge presents the importance and relevance of this topic from organizations point of view, because the entire working environment is organized, coordinated and shaped by a set of rules and procedures that are transformed in routines that have a tremendous impact in the organizational workflow (Akgün et al., 2007). In addition, it is important to emphasize that routines from time to time from many authors are defined differently dependent from the role, impact, awareness, consciences and commitment that scholars have dedicated to this important topic (Ashforth and Fried, 1988; Gersick and Hackman, 1990; Weiss and Ilgen, 1986). Insofar, organizational routines from different authors are perceived as collective actions within the organizational workflow that apparently comprise knowledge (Becker et al., 2005) that facilitates employees job, likewise routines from other authors are defined as conducive source of organizational memory that preserves the existing employees knowledge (Hansen and Vogel, 2011). In this respect, the broad definition about routines and its impact upon organizational workflow is perceived to comprise some important factors that determines the theoretical part of organizational routines like: repetitive form of actions (Feldman and Pentland, 2003; Becker, 2004) knowledge repository (Becker, 2005) path triggers and dependence (Bresnen et al., 2005), and recurrence, which is the way that routines separates from other activities inside organizations (Haleblian et al., 2006).

The role of formal routines in organizational theory has growing attention in the last decade. Nowadays, routines are conceived to be an important topic in creating the basic preconditions for a smooth and comprehensive working environment. Understanding this topic properly it does provide organizations with the opportunity to set new mechanisms to deal with such a crucial challenge that can harm the internal working process. Moreover, organizations internal complexity and the current volatile environment it does make this topic indispensable in organizing and coordinating the entire organizational internal operation activities (Hannan and Freeman, 1983). In addition, organizational routines as an ongoing process it does affect organizational operation activities and in this context most probably affect employees in executing their job (Feldman, 2000; Feldman and Rafaeli, 2002), which is the core of reaching organizational, setting

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goals. Hence, organizational routines from theoretical perspective do create the basis for employees to be able to execute their job properly through creating the necessity security and stability that helps to alleviate the internal complexity of the current modern job interactions (Kim et al., 2011). Thus, routines as an organizational concept needs to be further explored and understood in relation to the current dynamic business environments, especially nowadays that the latter can cause an extensive impact on organizations' workflow and therefore innovation.

Nevertheless, this study attempts to address in more specific terms the role of formal routines in organizational innovation. In this regard, the particular study is organized in four sections. The first one explores the current literature on routines and its impact upon innovation. The second one analyses the scope of this study and the way that the research dissertation was conducted. The third section analyses the findings while the last one, discussion and conclusion of the findings as well as emphasizes the research limitations.

Routines and Innovation

Nowadays, business environment does prompt organizations to initiate change continually in order to maintain their stability in the market as well as to increase competitive advantage. An important part of this change which makes organizations more competitive in the market and apparently provides a better future in terms of maintaining their success by default are innovation as an imperative asset of each organizations to deal with various challenges that businesses face so far (Hauser et al., 2006). In this regard, improving the market share, it does increase organizations productivity as well as efficiency which is associated with enriching performance, increasing competitive advantage, discovering and providing accessibility to new market needs by adding more value to the existing products (Howard-Grenwille, 2005) or coming up with new products (Massini et al., 2002), reducing unemployment and growing the economy by spreading wealth among the community are only some of the benefits that organizations are seeking for and are able to see from adapting and undertaking innovation (Gurkov, 2013).

But, in order to have a better view how formal routines impact innovation a starting point will be the explanation that was offered by Feldman and Rafaeli (2002) who in their research have defined routines as a detail set of actions that organizations follow ordinarily with the purpose of creating the preconditions for a smooth process of workflow. We have provided different definition related to routines, but this definition implies the role of routines in innovation. In order to have a smooth process of innovation inside the organizations it is worthy to have some set of actions that employees are urged to follow, because this will increase the opportunity for employees to exploit their creativity in producing new conducive ideas, which in most cases are the raw material of innovation (Howard-Grenwille, 2005; Marshal et al., 2010; Massini et al., 2002).

The term innovation is still not clear among scholars, when it does come what innovation means and includes. In this respect, for some authors innovation can be defined as providing something new, which can be an idea, or an approach or a subject, which derives from exploiting creativity that most of the time have been unseen before and which in real circumstances can provide organizations competitive advantage (Søren, et al., 2010). It was stated in Greve (2003) research that globalization and international competition and likewise turbulences that occur nowadays in this volatile environment does make innovation an indispensable source of competitive advantage as well as augment organizations long-standing performance (Gurkov, 2013). In the mean time, considering innovation as a main trigger of creating competitive advantage is well known in the innovation theory (Damanpour and Aravind, 2011; Damanpour and Schneider, 2006; Damanpour and Wischnevsky, 2006; Hauser et al., 2006; Yeh-Yun Li and Chen, 2007).

Going deeper the literature due to routines and their impact upon innovation, various opinions can be found, if routines harm or are a productive source of innovation. A number of authors in their research have emphasized the fact that routines are accountable for driving organizations to undertake innovation, because in most cases routines appear through changes that occur in existing norms and procedures. Moreover, they claim that innovation could not be accomplished properly without setting the appropriate routines that will allow organizations to observe its implication in entire operation activities (Edmondson et al., 2001; Howard-Grenwille, 2005; Massini et al., 2002). This argument was mentioned by Pavitt (2002) as well, he accentuates the fact that managers are in charge of observing routines within organizations and,

they should be looking for the impact of setting routines in the whole organizations operation activities, if there is sufficient evidence that routines harm and inhibit organizations activities encompassing innovation, further actions are required to be done in order to change the intrinsic policies.

Continuing this argument Marshal et al. (2010) had a robust prospect in comparison with Pavitt (2002) they mention that organizations must pay close attention on innovation routines, and moreover it is required to set some new routines for creating a decent environment for triggering innovation. Moreover, the same author argues that by setting new routines in most cases they should be followed by employees in their ordinary tasks because this will give employees a broad sense of security that most certainly increases the likelihood for prompting innovation through improving creativity within organizations. But, on the other hand, authors like Runde et al. (2008) they express their doubts that innovation will be prompted by urging organizations to set additional rules and routines. They argue that setting formal rules inside the internal working environment that employees should follow which means reducing flexibility and, in this context certainly would be the source of reducing creativity as well as it drops down the possibility for new innovations. Likewise, in this regard Hoeve and Nieuwenhuis (2006) and Oriikowski (2000) point out that in most cases organizational rules and routines are the main sources of inertia and as a result of that we see blocking stages due to generating new conducive innovation ideas. In addition, Gurkov (2013) emphasizes the importance of innovation in organizations, especially nowadays that customers' needs evaluate quickly as a result of technology and globalization process that mainly pushes organizations to change their philosophy towards adaptability, flexibility and innovation.

Dynamic Capabilities and Innovation

Regarding organizational change and innovation, literature provided sufficient arguments that dynamic capabilities have a significant impact in overcoming challenges that businesses face. Zollo and Winter (2002) define dynamic capabilities as source of creating persistence in organizations scope of operation activities via organized repetitive actions. Also, other authors explicitly emphasize the role and the impact of dynamic capabilities in organizations persistence because they appear to help organizations to boost their ability to shape, incorporate as well as reconfigure internal and external skills in order to be able to adjust with environments request for innovation (Teece et al., 1997). Therefore, most of the time dynamic capabilities are used to exemplify practically what organizations can do with their bunch of rules, routines and with their current capital to prompt organizations to innovate (Alves et al., 2011). In the mean time, other authors expand this argument by accentuating the fact that the concept of dynamic capabilities creates basically the necessary scope of knowledge that enriches organizations commitment in exploring the market needs for new technological products or services innovation through the process of repetitive actions that enhances the likelihood for acquiring new conducive skills necessary for reallocating organizational resources (Harreld et al., 2007). In addition, this sequential connection between dynamic capabilities and innovation is considered to provide sufficient arguments for augmenting the role of routines in building organizations capacity as knowledge repository in creating the necessary conditions for prompting innovation (Zollo and Winter, 2002). Hence, a number of authors underline the point that through dynamic capabilities organizations reach competitive advantage in the market, which basically is the necessary condition that ultimately increases the opportunity for organizations to initiate new innovation in this hypercompetitive business environment (Ambrosini and Bowman, 2009; Barreto, 2010; Eisengardt and Martin, 2000).

Furthermore, beyond the fact that competitive advantage derives from dynamic capabilities, another important issue that needs to pay close heed is organizational culture. Thus, building dynamic capabilities for organizations means that they have to put up organizational culture as well as developing their strategic capabilities as an outstanding guarantee for future success (Drmevich and Kriauciunas, 2011). So, this argument indicates that organizations should build a strong internal culture to be able to enrich the effects of dynamic capabilities in building competitive advantage. Therefore, the argument presented above gives an indication that dynamic capabilities are a strong connection with innovation, because by developing dynamic capabilities organizations are agile to this volatile environment, also they possess the ability to adapt quickly changes that occurring in nowadays business environment, likewise are able to spot opportunities and threats and, sustain their position amid competition in the market place via investing and strengthening their strategic tangible and intangible assets (Butler and Murphy, 2011; Kim et al., 2008). Hence, organizational routines as well as dynamic capabilities are useful sources in creating the basis for a smooth internal process of triggering innovation that simultaneously comprises organizational culture and

organizations strategic capabilities, which are considered to be the bulk of promoting innovation (Charterina and Landeta, 2013).

Leadership and Organizational Innovation

Another important issue that is closely related to routines and innovation in scholars' point of view is leadership. Current changes in the business environment that are occurring nowadays often are considered as source of fear from employees point of view, and practicing routines help employees to overcome such critical situations. Thus, some authors like Kirkhug (2010) mentions that leaders with their charisma are responsible to guide workers on the way of triggering innovation that should happen within the organizations. This is acceptable because leaders lead their employees with charisma and creativity, in order to spread their vision and to make people believe in their future changes related to routines that they want to set by promoting and empowering employees, which ultimately does mean prompting them to think out of the box (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Moreover, other authors expand this argument as well, by accentuating the fact that leaders with their authority and charisma most likely initiate inclusive collaboration among team members in order to create a decent workplace for employees, which ostensible will have extraordinary outcomes in terms of reinforcing their authority (Schaubreck et al., 2007). Therefore, the most comprehensive argument about leadership and innovation came from Bass (1997) that defined leadership as one of the indispensable factor of organizational innovation that leaders with their charisma enrich the ability and impact upon defining vividly organizational vision, strategies, culture and triggering organizational innovation.

Furthermore, charismatic leaders from their leading style are used to provide autonomy for their employees in the workplace, which domake employees to expresses their views that ultimately are the critical point for innovation. In this respect, Bass and Riggio (2006) mention that charismatic leaders are accountable for having a bright vision when it does come to stimulate and encourage employees to come up with another approach that will be conducive in doing things differently inside the organizations with particular focus on innovation. Likewise, charismatic leaders in vast majority of the time are supposed to enhance employees' motivation and creativity, because in most cases they exchange knowledge with their employees due to innovation in order to have a better internal interaction among other members through a vivid guidance regarding to a smooth process of innovation (Eisenbeiß and Boerner, 2010).

In this regard, different authors mentioned that, as part of the charismatic leadership though is the ability to participate in vastly promoting the creativity and innovation in variety of organizations scope of activities that comprises a comprehensive structure of employees that constructively take part in developing the internal innovation process (Cho and Pucik, 2005; Elkins & Keller, 2003). Insofar, though, in the innovation process, authors explicitly link employees' creativity with developing and boosting intrinsic motivation as a useful source that improves the internal atmosphere among employees as well as it is valuable for enriching employees' perception towards understanding the importance of internal collaboration in scaling up creativity (Morales et al., 2012). This argument was uphold also by other authors though (Kim et al., 2011), by emphasizing the fact that the initiatives for close collaboration within employees determines leaders authority within organizations, likewise pursuing new manner of interaction with employees' means new ways of exchanging knowledge as well as sharing learning experiences, which is an indispensable feature of triggering innovation.

Rational of the Study

The role of routines within organizations operation activities has been mentioned extensively in the literature from variety of scholars, by emphasizing vividly the fact that routines are an important source of triggering innovation through a comprehensive managers control that are in charge (Pavitt, 2002). So, many scholars explain the logic of establishing routines within organizations with the necessity of providing the core basement for properly exploiting employees' job. Therefore, the role of routines in triggering organizational innovation is considered to be critical from scholar's point of view. Insofar, the relation between routines and innovation it does seem to capture an important attention from the theoretical perspective. The conclusion that can be drawn from the literature in this constellation is purely related more with researchers theoretical perspective seeing routines as useful source of triggering innovation. The

literature still remains to focus on some issues that so far back up the current view that formal routines are related closely to organizational innovation. And the matter of the fact is that so far still there is a big gap with respect to routines and organizations internal environment that has an extraordinary effect upon innovation.

Therefore, what seems to be less vivid in the literature so far and ostensibly this particular research endeavors to cover is the fact whether routines can create a rigid working environment with respect to innovation that prevents employees to exploit their creativity in triggering innovation. How this aspect is linked with flexible working environment in order to create a smooth and decent place for proceeding innovation? Is there any other aspect that managers need to cope within the working environment as an upshot of routines? Hence, these are some of the issues that this study attempts to shed light on this issue by investigating and analyzing managers' response on the process of routines impact on organizational innovation.

Methodology

It is claimed by authors like Creswell (2003) that pursuing a qualitative approach is the most appropriate method for observation study. Likewise, it was mentioned by the same author that observation through qualitative approach means, "that not much has been written about the topic or the population being studied, and the researcher seeks to listen to participants and build an understanding based on their ideas" (p. 30). Moreover, the literature does claim that qualitative methodology is the appropriate approach for observing participants' perceptions as well as experiences through using different approaches that promote interactivity (Creswell and Clark, 2007; Franenkel and Wallen 1990; Thomas et al., 2005). In addition, the qualitative research is well known among different researchers as a necessary approach that provides comprehensive data with respect to the particular phenomenon that will be observed (Gilmore and Carson, 1996). Therefore, the main argument that can be considered important in this issue is the fact that the present research study aimed to observe an important field that not so much is known and written with respect to routines in South Eastern Europe region. In particular, the role of formal routines in organizational innovation does seem to be less accentuated as well as developed in this region, which does mean that this study by embracing an exploratory mode and a powerful qualitative approach had the opportunity to gain in depth understanding of this particular topic (Blakçori et al., 2014).

Therefore, the methodology that has been used in order to reach the research query questions and apparently research objectives has been focused on gathering primarily qualitative data from medium and large organization managers. So, due to reaching our research query questions the particular research was carried out with different medium and large size organizations in South Eastern Europe.

In this regard, in order to observe this particular phenomenon in-depth semi structured interviewed have been conducted with different managers that currently are working in private medium and large organizations. Thus, different authors mention that through this research method, the researcher will be able to have more qualitative and deep information related to the problem that is being investigated (Johns and Lee-Ross, 1998) and certainly provides accurate and efficient information, and the most important they reduce the ambiguity amid interviewer as well as interviewee (Palmerino, 1999). In addition, through embracing this research method this research study endeavored to investigate in-depth managers' consciousness and attitudes towards the role of formal routines in organizational innovation. The pragmatic prospect to carry out this research with managers and not with employees was purely based on the argument that managers and particularly those in middle level of the hierarchical structure are the key people of knowing in depth the importance of routines within organizations operation activities (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; Psychogios et al., 2009).

In general, thirty (30) interviews were conducted with different managers that currently are working in fifteen (15) different medium and large size organizations in SEE region. Thus, the demographic characteristics of respondents differed across age, education, and years of work experience.

It is important to mention that all the interviews have taken place between one period of 3 months, precisely from May and July of 2013. This process was carried out based on classifying and selecting the organizations that mainly fulfilled our abovementioned criteria. Then, the selected organizations were contacted in order to appoint two managers that express the willingness to participate in this research as

interviewees. So, subsequently the selected managers have been contacted in order to obtain their permission and approval for contributing in the interviews. Likewise, the researcher in collaboration with interviewer arranged the details of the interviews. In order to preserve the ethical part of the investigation, the researcher throughout the communication process accentuated the significance of this research through describing the aim of the research study and ensuring confidentiality of provided information (Seidman, 1998) that ensures and respects the ethical part of the research study (Malhotra and Peterson, 2001). It is important to mention that all interviews took place at managers working offices. In this respect, it is also worthy to be underlined that although the interviews were basically carried out on a free, relaxed as well as open discussion, the researcher used a semi-structure questionnaire as a guidance that accelerate the attempts and most likely assures that all vital issues have been covered.

The semi-structured questioner is build based on the research objectives, which helped us to achieve our setting objectives. The semi-structured questionnaire comprised some aspects like 1) Personal information about managers, 2) General questions related to routines, 3) General questions on innovation 4) The role of formal routines in innovation, 5) The impact of routines in employees working environment. The entire semi-structured interview was designed based on the research objectives and literature review presented above that triggered us towards shedding light due to the routines impact upon organizational innovation. Therefore, open and free interviews were carried out who every interviewee had the chance to share his/her thoughts and concepts that created the opportunity for researcher to develop a number of issues due to the objectives of this research study. The main purpose of this method is that through face-to-face interviews we are closer to managers and have more accurate information related to the research questions (Hirose, 2012). Face to face interview apparently helped us to have more inclusive data regarding to the impact of routines in organizational stability and change and moreover provided to the researcher a better prospect due to the current role of routines in medium and large size of organizational stability and change. Moreover, every interview lasted roughly 60-80 minutes. The interviews have been taped recorded after we received the confirmation of the interviewees. Also, during the whole discussion the researcher has taken written notes. Furthermore, after the interviews were finished the researcher proceeded with the next step that included transcribing the entire discussion as well as coding the data that enabled the analysis. Furthermore, data collected were subjected to the process of content analyses. Thus, the importance of content analyses is well known as an accurate technique that does create the likelihood to reproduce the valid way of interpretation from the current data to their existing structure (Krippendorff, 1980).

The sample of organizations as well as managers that were included in this research mainly was selected based on purposive technique of non-probability sampling (Gregoire et al., 2001; Teddlie and Yu, 2007). Thus, Teddlei and Yu (2007) do mention that purposive sampling technique has been suggested to nonprobability sampling or in the other way purposeful or qualitative sampling. Therefore, purposive sampling it would be exploited in qualitative research, which in turn would be defined as useful process of opting groups of people, likewise individuals as well as institutions due to particular objectives related with research questions (Teddlie and Yu, 2007). In addition, Maxwell (2008, p. 235) stresses out "particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices". Therefore, specific criteria were set for selecting organizations as well as managers to be selected for this research. So, organizational criteria that has been set and apparently used were 1) The size of organizations, 2) The years of operation, 3) The industry that these organizations operate in. The pragmatic prospect was to observe a broad sample of organizations that comprise both medium and large organizations size, with apparently a traditional culture and procedures of workflow and finally, organizations that covered three most important industries like, manufacturing, services and retails.

In this respect, the range of managers that were selected followed some setting specific criteria like (1) The position of managers in their organizations, (2) Their work experiences, (3) The involvement process in relation to managing employees in the workplace. Therefore, the sample of managers as well as the diversity amid these managers in holding positions within organizations did create the opportunity for the researcher to obtain a complete understanding due to the management approach towards the phenomenon under investigation.

Findings

The main purpose of the findings chapter is to present the findings that derive from our research with different managers in variety of organizations in SEE region. From the 30 participants in our research 7 of them were females and 23 males. Almost all of them hold middle positions in the organizations hierarchy. The average years of experience of interviewed managers is 10.5, which should be considered as satisfactory given that they do have valuable experience in their professionals fields that is significant for the purposes of this study. Likewise, the level of education was quite high; almost all of them hold university degrees, while the majority of them hold a master degree, in variety of fields like economics, finance, management and computer science.

The majority of interviewers that participated in this research did seem to accept the fact that there is a strong connection between formal routines and innovations in SEE region. Meanwhile, this connection it does appear to provide enough room for creating the pre-conditions that are required for undertaking innovation:

"... The relation between routines and innovation it is strong enough, because depending on the case, routines might boost or back down innovation, therefore innovation can take place as long as routines are on the ground that allows organizations to have better control upon operation activities (Sales manager)".

"... In my opinion there is a close and strong relationship among routines and innovation. Whatever new things occurring within the organizations it is a merit of innovation (incremental or radical) that most likely change the routines either that refers to the technology (Quality manager)".

From these interviewers, two things can be elicited that should be emphasized. The first is that routines are perceived from managers' as source of boosting the likelihood for occurring new innovation and in the other hand in the worst-case scenario they can back down innovation as well. The second argument that the above interviewers indicate is the fact that routines provide a wide range of organizational control that creates the pre-conditions for innovation. In this constellation other interviewers have mentioned such a strong connection as well:

"... I think the relationship between routines and innovation in most cases are positive, because I think routines in the workplace make employees to work and manage properly their job by mastering their tasks that need to be done, likewise this means that you will have an open mind due to the job, which in most cases increases the opportunity to exploit creativity (Production manager)".

"... I tend to believe that routines are the unbreakable source of innovation. Innovation has something more to deal with getting new ideas to the company that could transform the old routines in the best templates of performing tasks (Marketing manager)".

This positive relation between formal routines and innovation from managers' view is related with employees' skills and abilities to be able to cope with internal tasks that need to be redesigned or renovated which in the last instance unfold the concept of job specialization that is acquired and does derive from this relationship. This message it does seem to be emphasized in several interviewers with regard to this argument:

"... Paradoxically nobody seem to understand the fact that people who have worked for years in one job they have better opportunities to propose new ideas, to initiate new approaches, to adapt new philosophy with regard to marketing innovation. This can be done, because it is entirely connected with the job specialization that is vastly supposed to be adapted by people that derives from explicitly routines (Marketing manager)".

"... In my view routines help employees to have better knowledge about the things that should be innovated in a particular sector. This notion can be supported by the argument that every employee will be mature enough to understand the steps that should be undertaken in order to eliminate the hurdles within the workplace (Operation manager)".

Meanwhile, the majority of managers' underline that this process between routines and innovations in order to be functional and well introduced it does require appropriate and flexible working environment in order to create a smooth and decent place for proceeding innovation. Moreover, this has been aligned entirely with the space inside the workplace that does create the opportunity for employees to exploit their knowledge through practicing their daily job.

"... I think routines and innovations they have a lot of things in common, because innovation in my point of view needs to have a flexible work environment that employees have room to use their creativity. But, in the other hand, routines ensures the stability and flexibility of workflow, which is the cornerstone of triggering innovation (Operation Manager)".

"... Routines provide flexibility and plenty of room for experimenting, which is related to innovation as well. So, I can say that routines can drive innovation if the right conditions are put in place (HR manager)".

Therefore, the argument exemplified by above interviewers basically comprises two important factors like: stability and flexibility who undoubtedly do appear to be the crux of routines that do have an indispensable impact in creating the proper environment when it does come to prompt innovation in SEE region.

Routines Impact Upon Innovation

From above presented evidence it can be noticed that in SEE region the majority of managers do evaluate tremendously the relation among routines and innovations. In this regard the majority of managers stay in favor of routines as useful source that triggers innovation:

"... Certainly, in my thoughts routines help innovation. I believe that as long as we will set routines to guide our working process, routines appears to help innovation because employees will exercise their job better and they will be able to initiate ideas when it comes to some possible problems that requires swiftly respond (Finance manager)".

"... Routines as an ongoing adjustment to certain rules and procedures can help out innovation since the notion upon the improvement of quality and the reduction of production cost remains invariably active (IT manager)".

Insofar, the first argument that was suggested from managers' point of view it is related with employees' autonomy in the workplace that contributes to have more flexibility for exploiting their creativity which ultimately does mean enhancing the likelihood for innovation. This does appear to be the message conveyed by certain managers':

"... Yes, routines can help innovation. In our organization routines are based on providing the freedom for our employees in order to adjust with the working environment conditions that basically makes them to be empowered with full autonomy, so routines can foster employees to innovate in the internal processes on how we conduct business (Project manager)".

"... Yes they (routines) can trigger innovation if enough autonomy is provided to employees, because this will allow employees freely to experiment rather stick to the ordinary restricted boundaries (Engineering manager)".

From the very last interviewer it does indicate managers' attitude towards freedom/autonomy in shaping innovation in the workplace rather than setting boundaries that will create a rigid environment that employees may feel not comfortable.

"... Routines can create a warm and friendly working environment where innovation can happen from providing the needed room for exploiting employees' bright and wide horizon of knowledge. Routines are the enablers of innovation (Quality manager)".

The second provided reason related to this issue raises the importance of routines in establishing security inside the workplace that ensures smooth process of flourishing ideas through internal communication channels that creates better opportunities for innovations. Sharing information with other members of the staff in managers' rational way of thinking does produce positive outcomes due to innovation:

"... Innovation is an outcome that derives by a routine procedure. I think routines help us to understand the need and significance for an innovative idea in operation activities. These ideas could be shared with other members of the staff, which will help us to improve or change the routine of implementing a certain procedure (Operation manager)".

Moreover, routines do appear to create enough room not only for new innovation with regard to products or services, but likewise for coming up with new ideas in order to renovate the rules and procedures that are obsolete inside the workflow. This notion is strongly supported by managers that vividly emphasize the importance of renovating some routines that may create a rigid atmosphere amid the working environment:

"... I think routines can help innovation not only in brainstorming new ideas for expanding the scope of our business with new worthy products, but also routines are conducive in enhancing the conscience due to evaluating and innovating the existing rules and procedures that are in place that requires to be up-to-dated with the best foreign practices (Production manager)".

"... Routines are vital activities of every business organization and, if an organization wants to innovate in its operations then it has to incorporate innovation in routines as well (Customer manager)".

The logic of this profound analysis presented from these interviewers is related with the internal security that occurs inside the workplace from rules and procedures. Because setting a bunch of rules and procedures in the workplace it is considered to have significant impact in managers' consciences by vastly enriching their analytical and motor skills:

"... Innovation can be achieved through routines as long as people follow a set of procedures, everyday routines create the basic for innovations, though expertise in a particular field continuously can improve our capabilities as well as expand our knowledge due to creating something new (Finance manager)".

The third argument in this discussion is linked to the nowadays volatile markets and globalizations process that has spread its roots almost everywhere, where routines are conceived from several interviewers point of view as imperative source in creating the core for innovation throughout the difficult economic situations:

"... In this uncertain and changing environment as we live in this region, innovation can improve organizations value by following a set of rules and procedures. The fluctuations and oscillation for instance in economic environment for businesses means that you have to be innovative in order to stay in the market (IT manager)".

"... In nowadays challenges that we face, most of the companies have to innovate and adapt to different market circumstances. Even companies like "Apple" has been driven to adapt to the market needs with variety of products that required innovative ideas in penetrating new markets (Marketing manager)".

Discussion

The notion that “everything that is beneficial should be embraced accordingly is completely true”. The logic behind such an expression in fact justifies even some of the things that in the first glance somehow have been defined for a long time as a “taboo” and most likely the likelihood to occur was almost impossible. Nevertheless, routines in this research by itself are considered to be an indispensable source of triggering innovation from managers’ broad perspective. Defined as repetitive action that organize and control the entire working environment (Feldman, 2000) it does drive these managers to perceive routines as formal guidance for such a critical process that produces extraordinary outcomes. The logic behind such a view is related entirely with managers’ attitude towards conceiving routines as vital source in creating the necessary room for new innovation. This argument derives based on managers’ experiences and long lasting observation within organizations operation activities. Therefore, this notion is entirely supported from theoretical perspective, because managers that are in charge for organizing and controlling the working environment they are supposed to evaluate the overall impact of routines that are in place, whether they are conducive in adding value to organizations workflow or in the other hand they harm the entire workflow (Pavitt, 2002).

Therefore, these managers do seem to understand the impact of innovation in organizations consistency, especially nowadays that the business environment in this region does seem to face different problems and a lot of hurdles that organizations sometimes barely survive. Therefore, these managers are convinced that in SEE region, routines are observed as alpha and omega in creating the preconditions for a comprehensive process of innovation that will have certainly inclusive consequences in ensuring the overall organizations stability in this cutthroat market that often faces with economic fluctuations, and in the meantime enriches the likelihood for reaching a compelling competitive advantage (Damanpour and Schneider, 2006; Damanpour and Aravind, 2011; Yeh-Yun Li and Chen, 2007).

Continuing this argument, these managers underline the fact that in order to have a smooth process of innovations it is crucial to create “stability” and “flexibility” within the working environment that basically employees will be able to exploit their knowledge properly, and the most important it does boost the opportunity for exploiting their comprehensive knowledge in tackling some of the impediments that organizations face in daily business. Moreover, defining routines as knowledge repository (Becker et al., 2005) presumably from managers’ attitude routines seem to underpin stability that in the last instance is related comprehensively with flexibility that creates the core for innovation. A robust explanation for such a conviction may be that through stability these managers anticipate that employees attain a better scope of knowledge that certainly makes them eligible to exercise their creativity through the room that ostensibly is created within organizations that most of the time derives from a conscience establishing routines. In this regard, this argument unfold another concept “job specialization” that managers do seem to realize that is important in this process, because it has got terrific impact when it does come to attain a broad scope of knowledge due to a particular job that significantly raises the opportunity for new breakthroughs. Hence, job specialization in managers mindsets is an addition argument that most likely is the consequence of setting routines that vastly enhances employees skills and abilities when it does come to master the techniques that need to be adapted in order to come up with new robust ideas that can be transformed in conducive innovation.

Nevertheless, the phenomenon of innovation from these managers it is much wider and comprehensive rather than focusing only in products and services. Beyond the fact that this is something that we do expect to occur within organizations and in real circumstances it is an irrevocable process that maintains organizations competitive advantage, in the other hand it should take in consideration designing and redesigning the existing routines that are in place as well. Renovating routines is something that it is worthy doing that presumably derives as an upshot of job specialization; this fact clearly was noticed to capture managers’ heed. The benefits of job specialization regarding innovating routines are comprehensive, because it does provide sufficient information to employees about the current rules and procedures that are in place though tackling day in day out with such practices it does prompt them to generate new conducive ideas that it will reshape the entire working process by updating the obsolete routines.

Indeed, renovating routines, putting in place the best templates to guide the working process is linked with another vital factor that is necessary in shaping the whole process of innovation, which is “autonomy” from managers’ perspective. These managers conceive autonomy within the workplace to provide better

opportunities for employees in creating the space for sharing their ideas with other members of the staff, to initiate a comprehensive debate that every person should have the chance to express their views and to contribute in adding value to the new-presented ideas. In this regard, autonomy certainly is related with flexibility that employees need to have within organizations that will not constrain their freedom of action from setting explicit boundaries that urges employees to follow, which indeed can make employees reluctant in expressing their ideas due to innovation with respect to routines that should be altered in the working environment. Moreover, it is important to underline the fact that this is a robust argument that managers in SEE region they do seem to understand that in this region it is necessary to shift the conventional way of organizing and controlling internal operation activities, with a new particular focus in opting new modern approaches that provides plenty of room for their employees to have the autonomy that they need to push their ideas forward that most probably will be transformed in new innovation, regardless whether those ideas will be in products or services, or in the best scenario to figure out ways of reshaping routines in the workplace.

In this point, our research support the view that routines in SEE region are another conducive form of triggering innovation, that basically creates the required preconditions by providing stability and security within the organizations as a consequence of repetitive actions (Marshall et al., 2010) that helps employees to increase their skills extensively with respect to their job, which ultimately is associated with job specialization. Hence, routines in our research by default do seem to organize a better channel of communication between managers and employees in one hand, and in the flip side certainly amid employees, by developing the internal scope of cooperation through embracing the autonomy that has been vastly emphasized by these managers as imperative source in covering the innovation issue.

Conclusion

In this particular research it is argued extensively that the likelihood for occurring innovation is highly dependent on some repetitive pattern of actions that can create stability within organizations operation activities (Feldman 2000; Ocasio, 1997) that provides employees with necessary security, which is indispensable in executing their job. Therefore, investigating the role of formal routines in triggering innovation is worthy doing, because it does give us sufficient room to understand the characteristics that nowadays organizations need to pay close heed in order to increase their awareness about the steps that need to be undertaken for a smooth process of increasing organizational innovation results (Cyert and March, 1963; March and Simon, 1958; Nelson and Winter, 1982; Thompson, 1967). In this respect, routines are directly connected with overall organizations activities in managers' mindset that most of the times have a powerful role in organizing and controlling the entire working process that certainly creates the preconditions for innovation. Thus, in this research routines in SEE region seem to be another important source of prompting innovation. This is the main conclusion that can be drawn from this research uphold by managers that routines are a powerful source of triggering innovation in SEE region through providing the basic internal stability and security in executing employees job that is associated with the willingness to reshape and redesign routines as best templates that facilitates the whole working environment. Furthermore, this process is closely linked with employees' autonomy in acting inside the organizations, which can be drawn that even autonomy in itself paradoxically is a routine that provides flexibility within organizations, which in the last instance allows more space for flourishing ideas. In addition, in this research managers do appear to grasp a logical view when it does come to routines by embracing the fact that routines create the preconditions for innovation as necessity that increases the opportunity for organizations to initiate new innovation in this hypercompetitive business environment (Ambrosini and Bowman, 2009; Barreto, 2010; Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000). Furthermore, this topic currently has become one of the most attractive topics for research that produces important evidence regarding organizations problems, challenges and difficulties that most likely are faced as an upshot of routines within the entire operation activities. Being able to understand this topic properly it does provide organizations with the opportunity to set new mechanisms to deal with such a crucial problem like routines that can harm the internal working process.

Limitation and further research

Although, this study has clear and sound results, more research is always beneficial towards understanding the phenomenon of "The Role of Formal Routines in Organizational Innovation". The main limitation that

this research did face is related with the lack of flexibility when it does come to collect the data by using another approach. This type of research phenomenon most likely does require a profound qualitative approach in order to understand the gist of the problem under investigation. Therefore, this research left room for further investigation in the way of working with focus groups in order to have a better prospect about this issue as well as focusing mainly in proceeding interviews with managers of different organizations in a specific industry which certainly will provide better opportunity to comparing and contrasting their approaches with respect to formal routines in organizational innovation. Also, a comparative analysis among specific organizations can provide more rich evidence. Hence, more robust qualitative methods of investigation like observations can shed light on these areas that are difficult to be explored through other means.

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