

Organizational Innovativeness for Service Delivery in Water Utilities

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BBA, MBA, LLM

***This thesis submitted in fulfilment of requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (Building)***

September 2021

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby certify that the work embodied in the thesis is my own work, conducted under normal supervision. The thesis contains no material which has been accepted, or is being examined, for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University's Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968 and any approved embargo.



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DEDICATION

I am dedicating this achievement to the loving memory of my heavenly parents. My wife, Mridula and two children, Adrita and Adib have suffered a lot throughout this endeavour. I cannot bring the years back but will try for the best in future to make you all happy.

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ABSTRACT

The research was instigated by the “Organizational Resilience for Innovativeness in Service Delivery” project of the Hunter Water. The aim of the project was to assess the readiness of innovative capabilities of the water utilities in Australia. With this end, doctoral research was identified with title “Organizational Innovativeness for Service Delivery in Water Utilities”.

Primarily, the scope of research was limited to 3 water utilities in the New South Wales. Later, it was changed to nationwide study with the cooperation and support of the Hunter Water and the Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA).

It started with a simple and straightforward question: What factors should be taken into account in developing organizational innovativeness for service delivery? It was then followed several research objectives and the main theme was to determine the level of existence of relevant factors of service delivery innovativeness in Australian water utilities. that contribute to innovative service. In this way, the simple research got highly enriched.

Through a rigorous systematic literature review, 102 individual influencing factors of organizational innovativeness were identified and classified into 10 thematic groups, and these were culture, HRM functions, top management orientation, external environment, organizational proficiencies, leadership, knowledge management, market pressure and competition, technology adaptation and research and development.

Since the nature of the water utilities are different than other industries, the focus was shifted towards the service industry, which is the closest domain of water utilities. Considering this, 102 chosen factors were reduced to 81 individual influencing factors, under the same 10 thematic groups. Questions were raised whether all these 81 factors were relevant for Australian water utilities plus how to measure the level of existence of the

essential factors enabling innovativeness in the water utilities. The research thus adopted a combination of both qualitative and quantitative method in two phases.

In the first phase of the research, 3 focus group discussions were conducted where the innovation champions and managers from different water utilities across Australia have participated and they endorsed 14 influencing factors like teamwork, vision training & development, customers' requirements, to name but a few. In addition, they added 2 new factors in the list. Furthermore, the focus group members also finalized 5 measuring factors of organizational innovativeness in service delivery which include Frequency of Innovative Change, benefits of Innovative Change, Speed of Innovative Change, Experience of Innovative Change and Risks associated with Innovative Change.

In the second phase, comprehensive quantitative research was carried out to reach the research objectives in the form of survey questionnaire, which was newly developed resulting from the first phase of the research. The researcher received more than 500 responses, among them 465 responses were complete and usable. Based on the 465 responses, the quantitative analyses revealed only a few factors, i.e., Customers' Requirements, Regulators' Influence: change Teamwork exist at higher level (not completely). So, it is very clear that the water utilities in Australia are truly less innovative in their service delivery.

The story was interesting when the responses from the managers and non-managers were analysed separately. The managerial employees found that idea generation, customers' requirements, capital resources, industry relationships etc. in work improvements are negatively significant towards the innovation outcome. On the other hand, the non-managerial employees feel that teamwork and regulators' influence: in work change are negatively significant towards the innovation measures.

Vital and Immediate Further Extensive Research Required

Though the research objectives were fully achieved, and the research question was properly answered with adequate evidence, the researcher feels that this research has brought into light the problems in the organizational innovativeness for service delivery in the water utilities across Australia. Consequently, it will become vulnerable in meeting the demand because of climate change, high migrants and obviously lack of innovativeness in service delivery.

The authority must consider the findings from the doctoral research and concentrate on the further research to solve the problems for the better future of the nation.

Keywords: Innovation, Innovativeness, Organizational Innovativeness, Factors of Innovativeness, Service Delivery, Water Utilities.

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