

Managing Inter-Organizational Innovation Project: Systematic Review of Literature

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Abstract : Inter-organizational collaboration is a growing phenomenon in both research and practice. The partnership between organizations enables firms to leverage external resources, experiences, and technology that lie with other firms. This collaborative practice is a source of improved business model performance, technological advancement, and increased competitive advantage for firms. However, the competitive intents, and even diverse institutional logics of firms, make inter-firm innovation-based partnership even more complex, and its governance more challenging. The purpose of this paper is to present a systematic review of research linking the inter-organizational relationship of firms with their innovation practice and specify the different project management issues and gaps addressed in previous research. To do this, we employed a systematic review of the literature on inter-organizational innovation using two complementary scholarly databases - ScienceDirect and Web of Science (WoS). Article scoping relies on the combination of keywords based on similar terms used in the literature: (1) inter-organizational relationship, (2) business network, (3) inter-firm project, and (4) innovation network. These searches were conducted in the title, abstract, and keywords of conceptual and empirical research papers done in English. Our search covers between 2010 to 2019. We applied several exclusion criteria including Papers published outside the years under the review, papers in a language other than English, papers neither listed in WoS nor ScienceDirect and papers that are not sharply related to the inter-organizational innovation-based partnership were removed. After all relevant search criteria were applied, a final list of 84 papers constitutes the data for this review. Our review revealed an increasing evolution of inter-organizational relationship research during the period under the review. The descriptive analysis of papers according to Journal outlets finds that International Journal of Project Management (IJPM), Journal of Industrial Marketing, Journal of Business Research (JBR), etc. are the leading journal outlets for research in the inter-organizational innovation project. The review also finds that Qualitative methods and quantitative approaches respectively are the leading research methods adopted by scholars in the field. However, literature review and conceptual papers constitute the least in the field. During the content analysis of the selected papers, we read the content of each paper and found that the selected papers try to address one of the three phenomena in inter-organizational innovation research: (1) project antecedents; (2) project management and (3) project performance outcomes. We found that these categories are not mutually exclusive, but rather interdependent. This categorization also helped us to organize the fragmented literature in the field. While a significant percentage of the literature discussed project management issues, we found fewer extant literature on project antecedents and performance. As a result of this, we organized the future research agenda addressed in several papers by linking them with the under-researched themes in the field, thus providing great potential to advance future research agenda especially, in the under-researched themes in the field. Finally, our paper reveals that research on inter-organizational innovation project is generally fragmented which hinders a better understanding of the field. Thus, this paper contributes to the understanding of the field by organizing and discussing the extant literature to advance the theory and application of inter-organizational relationship.

Keywords : inter-organizational relationship, inter-firm collaboration, innovation projects, project management, systematic review

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