


LEADERSHIP AND INNOVATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A CHARACTERIZATION OF MANAGERIAL ACTIVITIES IN THE UNIVERSITY



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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Article history:</p> <p>Received 01 September 2023</p> <p>Accepted 14 December 2023</p>	<p>Purpose: The research focuses on identifying managerial practices in higher education and their connection to innovation in order to establish diagnostic and reflective elements regarding managerial activities in the university. Finally, it is crucial to interpret the results within the specific context and the value that managers bring to academic activities.</p>
<p>Keywords:</p> <p>Innovation; Innovation Management; Management Practice; Higher Education.</p>	<p>Theoretical Framework: There are not enough studies associated with managerial practice in higher education, let alone focused on innovation. The main references in managerial practice refer to Mintzberg. In terms of innovation management, various models and alternatives are presented in both the management and education domains.</p> <p>Design/Methodology/Approach: The research has a qualitative descriptive hermeneutic approach and used a non-probabilistic sample of 20 executives from 5 higher education institutions, who were provided with a self-administered questionnaire. Additionally, observation processes and dialogue with 6 executives were conducted to delve deeper into the obtained information and carry out a more detailed hermeneutic process.</p>
	<p>Findings: The managerial practice in higher education institutions is far from consistently incorporating innovation into their activities. The analyzed institutions show a low presence of innovation management methods, indicating that they do not have a clear development path. Among some of the needs prevailing in the studied organizations is the incorporation of innovation in the design of managerial positions and functions, as well as the ability to allocate specific periods of time to address innovation.</p> <p>Research, Practical & Social Implications: The research proposes elements to evaluate within the organization and projects elements to strengthen managerial activity in higher education, as well as to improve decision-making.</p> <p>Originality/Value: Research on managerial practice is not abundant, and even less so within the framework of higher education. Therefore, it is essential to replicate this type of work to understand the reality of organizations</p> <p>Doi: https://doi.org/10.26668/businessreview/2023.v8i12.3941</p>

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LIDERANÇA E INOVAÇÃO NO ENSINO SUPERIOR: UMA CARACTERIZAÇÃO DAS ATIVIDADES GERENCIAIS NA UNIVERSIDADE

RESUMO

Objetivo: A pesquisa concentra-se em identificar a prática de gestão no ensino superior e sua relação com a inovação, a fim de estabelecer elementos de diagnóstico e reflexão sobre a gestão na universidade. Finalmente, é fundamental interpretar os resultados a partir do contexto específico e do valor que os gestores agregam às atividades acadêmicas.

Referencial Teórico: Não existem estudos suficientes associados à prática gerencial no ensino superior, muito menos focados na inovação. As principais referências em prática gerencial remetem a Mintzberg. Em termos de gestão da inovação, são apresentados diversos modelos e alternativas nos domínios da gestão e da educação

Desenho/Metodologia/Abordagem: A pesquisa possui uma abordagem qualitativa descritiva hermenêutica e utilizou uma amostra não probabilística de 20 executivos de 5 instituições de ensino superior, aos quais foi fornecido um questionário autoadministrado. Além disso, foram realizados processos de observação e diálogo com 6 executivos para aprofundar nas informações obtidas e realizar um processo hermenêutico mais detalhado.

Resultados: A prática gerencial nas instituições de ensino superior está distante de incorporar de forma consistente a inovação em suas atividades. As instituições analisadas apresentam baixa presença de métodos de gestão da inovação, o que indica que não possuem um caminho claro de desenvolvimento. Entre algumas das necessidades preponderantes nas organizações estudadas está a incorporação da inovação no desenho de cargos e funções gerenciais, bem como a capacidade de alocar períodos específicos de tempo para lidar com a inovação.

Pesquisa, Implicações Práticas e Sociais: A pesquisa propõe elementos para avaliar dentro da organização e projetar elementos para fortalecer a atividade gerencial no ensino superior, bem como melhorar a tomada de decisões.

Originalidade/Valor: As pesquisas sobre prática gerencial não são abundantes e ainda menos dentro do contexto do ensino superior. Portanto, é fundamental replicar esse tipo de trabalho para compreender a realidade das organizações.

Palavras-chave: Inovação, Gestão da Inovação, Prática de Gestão, Ensino Superior.

DIRECCIÓN E INNOVACIÓN EN LA EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR: UNA CARACTERIZACIÓN DEL QUEHACER DIRECTIVO EN LA UNIVERSIDAD

RESUMEN

Propósito: la investigación se concentra en identificar la práctica directiva en la educación superior, así como su vinculación con la innovación para establecer elementos de diagnóstico y reflexión sobre el quehacer directivo en la universidad. Finalmente es fundamental interpretar los resultados a partir del contexto específico y el valor que aportan los directivos a las actividades en la academia.

Marco teórico: No existen suficientes estudios asociados a la práctica gerencial en la educación superior, mucho menos enfocados a la innovación. Las principales referencias en la práctica gerencial se refieren a Mintzberg. En cuanto a la gestión de la innovación, se presentan diversos modelos y alternativas tanto en el ámbito de la gestión como en el de la educación.

Metodología: La investigación tiene un enfoque cualitativo de carácter descriptivo hermenéutico, utilizó una muestra no probabilística por características comunes de 20 directivos de 5 instituciones de educación superior a quienes se les facilitó un formulario autoadministrado, también se realizaron procesos de observación y diálogo con 6 directivos para profundizar en la información obtenida y realizar un proceso hermenéutico más detallado.

Hallazgos: La práctica gerencial en las instituciones de educación superior está lejos de incorporar de manera consistente la innovación en sus actividades. Las instituciones analizadas muestran una baja presencia de métodos de gestión de la innovación, lo que indica que no tienen un camino claro de desarrollo. Entre algunas de las necesidades que prevalecen en las organizaciones estudiadas se encuentra la incorporación de la innovación en el diseño de cargos y funciones gerenciales, así como la capacidad de asignar períodos específicos de tiempo para abordar la innovación.

Implicaciones Investigativas, Prácticas y Sociales: La investigación propone elementos para evaluar dentro de la organización y proyectar elementos para fortalecer la actividad gerencial en la educación superior, así como para mejorar la toma de decisiones.

Originalidad/Valor: La investigación sobre la práctica gerencial no es abundante, y menos aún en el marco de la educación superior. Por lo tanto, es fundamental replicar este tipo de trabajo para entender la realidad de las organizaciones.

Palabras clave: Práctica Directiva, Innovación, Gestión de la Innovación, Educación Superior.

INTRODUCTION

“Today, it has become indifferent whether the faculty positions at a university are 'well' or 'poorly' filled; this can only be considered a 'quantitative' difference. The boundary of 'quality,' of essential suitability, lies elsewhere.” Heidegger (2015, p. 134)

One of the proposals expressed by Mintzberg, for example, in “Managers, Not MBAs,” challenges the difference between what managers are believed to do and what their daily reality is. These two indications, what is believed to induce what they should do, thus question what managers are believed to do, in reality asking what managers should do. This is where the ideal coincidence between duty and action is put to the test. Both aspects of management must be interpreted, or better yet, reinterpreted, in light of the current needs of contexts in terms of what should be, and, on the other hand, in terms of daily tasks and perceived needs from practice. In this inquiry, the intention is not only to contrast what managers are supposed to do with what they actually do but also, in the opposite direction, to contrast what managers are deemed to do with the business reality. These perspectives can only be resolved through a hermeneutical exercise of the economic panorama in an academic sense and business reality in a factual sense.

In line with the above, part of the foundation of the problem that motivates this research is framed within the recurring demands and requirements for innovation in the market system, governments, universities, and, in general, in the literature that has seen considerable growth that continues to this day on the subject. Just to provide an initial figure, when searching the Scopus database as of August 2022 for publications containing the term 'innovation,' 138,356 records were found for the period 2019-2023. This undoubtedly demonstrates the importance of this topic in the world and on the agendas of nations. However, validating how much this innovation is required in the life of companies is a concern that will be addressed throughout this research.

Thus, when reviewing the innovation landscape based on data and international references, one encounters a challenging scenario for developing countries like Colombia. According to the Global Innovation Index 2021 published by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Colombia ranks 67th out of 132 countries, 17th among low-middle-income countries, and 6th in the Latin American region, led by Chile, Mexico, and Costa Rica.

The significance of these figures primarily lies in the general considerations given to innovation, as highlighted by the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in 2022, which identifies innovation as a key issue in global affairs. Meanwhile, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) identifies innovation as “The key to

transformative recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean” (ECLAC, 2022). Innovation is thus presented as a determining factor in economic development and one of the keys to overcoming the current situation described as follows:

The decline in income levels, the closure of a significant number of companies, the increase in poverty levels and social vulnerability, greater exposure to the effects of climate change, and unequal access to certain essential goods and services have highlighted the urgency of strengthening the role of the State and public policies in all areas of development: economic, productive, social, environmental, and institutional. (CEPAL, 2022, p. 9)

The conditions described by CEPAL reflect, while also raising questions, the need to strengthen and incorporate favorable scenarios for promoting innovation. Given its multitude of impacts at both the corporate and social levels, however, the Latin American landscape is still far from having the desirable institutional and private conditions for engaging in innovation processes on a larger scale and scope. This places a dual perspective of approach in the discussion: innovation for businesses and social innovation.

Hence, the current organizational challenges, such as low competitiveness, business mortality, access to financial leverage (Tellez, et al., 2018), the tax landscape, among others, are evident at the organizational level. At the same time, at the social and economic level, there is a highly complex landscape characterized by growth slowdown, a constant and considerable increase in inflation, rising interest rates, and international market instability (CEPAL, 2022).

The described panorama is complemented by the state of one of the factors that, together with innovation, encompasses several organizational difficulties, namely, competitiveness, which is repeatedly researched and written about. This scenario can be initially described based on the Global Competitiveness Index, which, for its 2021 report, places Colombia 56th out of 64 countries.

Innovation is an alternative that contributes to both organizational needs and social development dynamics. Efforts must be directed toward creating the necessary conditions for innovation to be a central element on both national agendas and organizational agendas. To make these conditions materialize, it is necessary to have a national vision that considers possibilities as achievable and takes transformative actions in academic, organizational, and social spheres.

When examining the current conditions in Latin America, as suggested by CEPAL, one can understand the situation in three groups to consider between the analysis period of 2011 and 2019:

- i) Those that consistently increased R&D spending until more than doubling it, such as Cuba, El Salvador, and Peru;
- ii) Those with an undefined trajectory that recorded an advance of less than 20% during the period, such as Chile, Colombia, and Costa Rica;
- iii) Those that showed a tendency to decrease R&D spending, including Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico (2021, p. 11).

From these groups, it can be identified that Colombia falls into the category of countries without a well-defined trend, indicating that while it is not among the most committed countries in terms of R&D spending, it has not decreased its R&D spending either. Importantly, within this landscape, CEPAL highlights that in Latin America, most R&D spending comes from the state and is executed by academia, in contrast to developed countries where funding and execution come directly from companies, as seen in the example of China, where 80 percent is contributed by companies (CEPAL, 2021).

The scenario of execution and financing highlights a clear need for transformation in Latin American countries, especially as, when research and development are executed directly by companies, the transfer processes become more direct, efficient, and dynamic. As companies become involved in financing and execution processes, innovations will be more directly incorporated into organizational activities. This is directly related to another characteristic pointed out by CEPAL (2021) in terms of the types of research predominant in Latin America. In contrast to more developed countries where experimental research predominates, basic research is prevalent in the region.

The differences in terms of funding, execution, and types of research in the two scenarios reflect the incorporation of technological processes into business activities and leadership in terms of technological developments. How organizations are integrated into research and development processes is crucial to achieving the required strengthening in direct application to the economy and social activity. Innovation resulting from research processes has a direct impact on society when it is implemented in contexts of direct application. This makes it necessary for organizations to direct these processes according to their needs. This process involves the need to consider, “What path can Colombian companies take to manage innovation and managerial practice?” Although resolving this question requires identifying the practices related to managerial activities and innovation, it is necessary to start by clearly identifying what is happening.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Higher education has been an area that has generated countless concerns since its inception and is continually in the spotlight. There are broad perspectives of study that have developed around it. One of them is directly linked to the field of administration, commonly referred to as educational management (Mirabal, 2020), educational governance (Oplatka, 2019), educational administration (Peña Prado, 2020), which is usually identified in English as management education (Shaturaev and Bekimbetova, 2021). This particular context that links managerial work and the academic sphere requires attention and developments that contribute to maintaining this relationship without abandoning the academic aspect or neglecting the managerial one. The additional importance of this issue in contemporary society, given the constant concern for the quality of education, its necessity, and the emerging occupations that make higher education seem unnecessary. In addition to facing the rapid changes in the various environments in which different academic programs are immersed.

As is evident, higher education institutions face challenges of varying magnitudes, and the way they are managed in managerial terms is crucial for achieving specific and general objectives. Various responsibilities fall on higher education, undoubtedly one of the main ones being quality. To the extent that education is of quality, it is presumed that the progress of society is greater, without addressing a more profound debate about the purpose of education in the sense of the search for truth. Education should respond to a purpose that requires no justification, the disinterested truth (Molina Domingo and Letelier Larrondo, 2020), which could lead to glimpsing the sad rise of insignificance in contemporary life (Castoriadis, 1998).

The concept of quality has been ingrained in education since its inception, unlike the managerial field, where it gained considerable importance in the 20th century (Gutiérrez et al., 2017). However, due to the configurations that have emerged from modernity, the fields of management and education are inseparable. When it comes to higher education, the administrative aspect becomes much more specific and closely related to the industrial context.

Innovation in the Managerial Sphere

The topics central to this research have different origins but converge on a common point: organizations. In this regard, the parameters that bring innovation onto a company's radar can be directly traced back to the Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter, who, as a proponent of what are known as development theories, introduced his “theory of economic development,” which emerged in 1942. Schumpeter's proposal, framed within the pursuit of economic

development, includes one of the key concepts associated with this logic: creative destruction. To underpin his theory, the Austrian economist drew upon ideas from thinkers such as Marx, Walras, the German sociologist Max Weber, and his colleagues Karl Menger, Wieser, and his teacher Böhm-Bawerk (Suárez, 2004).

One of the fundamental pillars of his propositions is the notion of creative destruction, which can be understood as the essence of capitalism and its sustenance. In essence, the structural pillar of the capitalist system is creative destruction, which promotes the dynamism of capital and prevents its collapse (Schumpeter, 2017). “Creative destruction is a process through which new innovations continuously emerge, rendering existing technologies obsolete” (Aghion & Bunel, 2021, p. 15). Schumpeter indicates that the center of the generation of this phenomenon lies with the innovative entrepreneur, placing not only organizations but also individuals with particular conditions at the center of the economy. These individuals drive economic growth by disrupting the status quo.

Placing innovation and, consequently, the entrepreneur at the center of the capitalist system has led to various developments aimed at understanding what innovations are, what types of innovations exist, and how they can be achieved. Since Schumpeter drew attention to innovation, different perspectives on the possibilities it generates have emerged within this concept's framework. Some of the most recognized perspectives associated with various conceptions of innovation, which serve as references for project development, include those developed by the OECD & European Communities (2006), who establish four types of innovation based on the classification criterion of the object of innovation, namely: Product Innovation, Process Innovation, Marketing Innovation, and Organizational Innovation. On the other hand, EOI Esc. Organiz. Industrial (2010) classifies innovation based on the means through which innovation is achieved: Technological Innovations and Non-technological Innovations. Christensen (2003) categorizes innovation according to the degree of innovation, defining categories such as Radical Innovation, Disruptive or Breakthrough Innovation, Incremental Innovation, and Novelties for the Company.

Another classification is provided by Chesbrough (2003), who presents innovation based on its strategic focus, such as Closed Innovation and Open Innovation. Finally, as Abreu Quintero (2011) argues, Social Innovation is another type of innovation that appears on the scene. Among the most important references for the project, the approaches of Crossan & Apaydin (2010) and Gopalakrishnan & Damanpour (1997) are considered. They view innovation as both a process and a result. This notion can be summarized based on Robertson (1967), who states that

“innovation occurs via a process in which a new idea, behavior, or thing—qualitatively different from existing forms—is conceived and brought into reality” (p. 14).

The multiplicity of concepts is due to several reasons. Firstly, it's due to the current relevance of the concept and the multiple perspectives from which it has been approached, as well as its recent emergence as a central need for organizations. This has led to the need to manage innovation as a demand from the competitive market and in response to recommendations from organizations such as CEPAL, the World Bank, OECD, among others. Establishing guidelines and mechanisms to identify how organizations can direct and regulate innovation processes is relevant for survival and development.

Innovation in the Educational Sphere

In the field of education, the notion of innovation retains more specific characteristics in line with its concrete context. Some of the most recognized references in this field, which gained strong tradition in the mid-20th century, include Fullan (1977), Havelock & Huberman (1980), Clayton Christensen et al. (2008), Yong Zhao (2015), among others.

Fullan (2015), who made the concept of educational change central to his work, identified three periods to refer to the transformation needs of various education-related activities. On the other hand, the report by Havelock & Huberman in 1980 for the UNESCO International Office defines innovation as “a deliberate effort to achieve significant improvements in the system” (p. 46), placing the notion of the system at the center of the analysis and presenting innovation as a process.

House (1988) identified three perspectives of educational innovation: technological, political, and cultural. The first perspective is derived from the field of industry and technological development, which employs and applies technology. The second perspective involves a struggle between interests reflected in a dispute between the transformation of the status quo and the intention to align with the interests of the parties. Finally, the cultural perspective views innovation in terms of symbols, valuations, and common meanings that stimulate innovation development.

Other viewpoints describe innovation as an intentional process reflecting a prior planning process consisting of a theoretical and reflective framework that leads to a transformation in favor of achieving educational objectives (Salinas, 2008). According to García and Martija (2006), educational innovation is not primarily linked to creation but rather focuses on the perception of what has been created as new. This implies that something

previously created is considered novelty or the assimilation of novelty as an application of creation. This underscores an activity that places novelty outside the field of education, as novelty does not directly originate from the field.

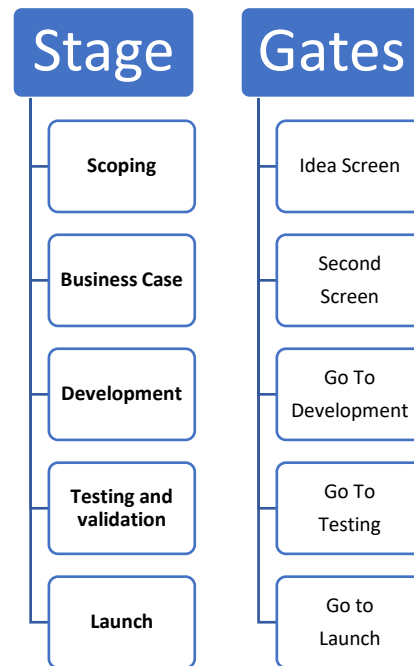
In summary, the diversity of perspectives on educational innovation offers a wide spectrum. It is not a new issue but rather a discourse with a significant history. Today, it is recognized as an alternative for considering and addressing educational problems, characterized by flexibility, adaptability to needs, and stakeholder groups (Palacios Núñez et al., 2021). The needs of the 21st century and its pace of development necessitate educational management that promotes organizational innovation processes, particularly within educational institutions. This transforms the challenges of competitiveness and survival into opportunities realized through innovations. Additionally, it considers inclusivity (Zhigue-Luna and Sanmartin-Ramón, 2019), reducing inequalities (Gómez et al., 2021), and addressing one of the most significant challenges of the 21st century: avoiding complete industrial instrumentalization and staying true to its primary purpose associated with quality and social commitment (Flores et al., 2022).

Innovation Management

As Velasco (2019) points out, given the multiplicity of definitions and elements of innovation, managing it poses a challenge. Innovation management is understood as the complex and sequential process of planning and coordinating activities that lead to the creation of value through innovation (Sánchez Ocampo and Leandro, 2019). This activity is surrounded by multiple factors that must be navigated and directed through continuous leadership. Some of the elements that are relevant when managing innovation include power relations (Pascual, 2019), knowledge management, financing capacity, and the relationship with the scientific sector (Erazo Álvarez, 2021). However, above all, it is essential to have a clear path to guide innovation, organize processes, and ensure necessary monitoring.

The alternatives for innovation management, routes, and models have diversified in the early 21st century. Among the most prominent models is the one proposed by McKinsey's Three Horizons, which defines innovation management along three lines: improving current processes and products, exploring opportunities emerging from the environment, and developing disruptive ideas for the long term (Blank, 2019). Another model is the Stage-Gate model, which includes a series of stages and control points called gates that facilitate transitions between stages. The general model comprises five stages and their corresponding gates, as shown in Figure 1.

Figura 1: Stages and gates by Cooper

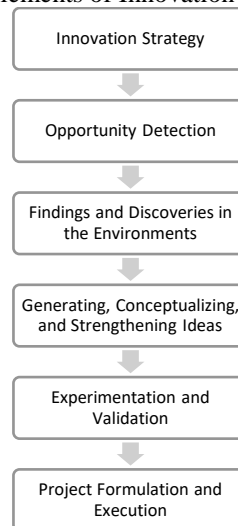


Source: Own elaboration based on Cooper (2008).

This model, despite its age of formulation, still remains relevant and holds considerable importance in the current situation (Tavares Quinhoes and Velez Lapão, 2023). Cooper's model provides a foundation that can be adjusted according to the needs of each organization, increasing or decreasing the stages and gates. The complexity of each business dynamic may require a particular adaptation of the stages and gates.

Finally, reference is made to a local alternative for innovation management. Figure 2 presents a pathway developed by Henao (2020) in accordance with the guidelines of the Colombian Confederation of Chambers of Commerce. The pathway begins with the consideration of innovation strategy and concludes with the formulation and execution of projects. These successive stages provide the management team with a foundation on which to focus their work.

Figure 2: Elements of Innovation Management

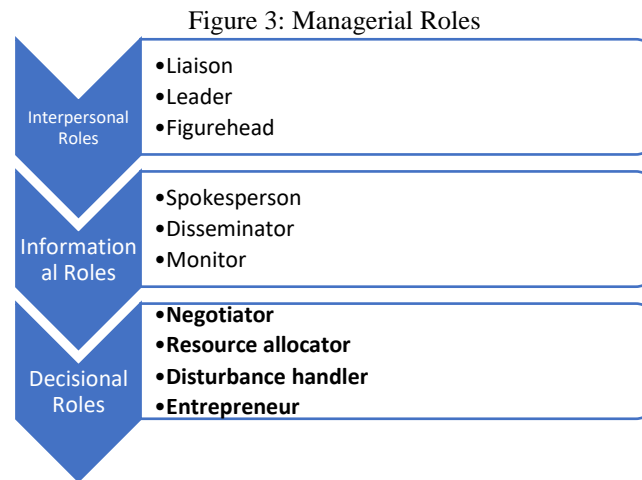


Source: Self-prepared in accordance with Henao (2020).

The different models, routes, and alternatives proposed in terms of innovation management are key tools to promote and guide the success of companies. Success lies in ensuring that these models are organized according to the needs and contexts of each reality.

Management Practice

Henry Mintzberg is the foremost author associated with the concept of management practice, although there were previous studies that focused on this concept, Mintzberg is the one who has given it the most visibility (Rüzgar & Kurt, 2013). Mintzberg (1973, 2010) considers the study of management practice to be essential for academia and management. In the same vein, Tengblad (2012) states, “The real work of managers has never been the focus of managerial research and education” (p. 4), so the parameters for the study of managerial practice will be guided by notions such as managerial practice dynamics, models of managerial practice, and effective managerial practice (Mintzberg, 2010). The Canadian professor identifies different managerial roles that allow us to understand how managers carry out their daily activities: interpersonal roles, informational roles, decisional roles (Mintzberg, 2010). These are further divided into more detailed roles grouped in Figure 3:



Source: Self-made as per Mintzberg (1973).

Mintzberg provides a description of each of the roles, outlining the actions associated with their practice, and this information was crucial in the development of data collection instruments.

MATERIALS AND METHODS OR METHODOLOGY

The research is framed within a qualitative approach, which, according to Hernández (2017), is grounded in itself. This means that, unlike the quantitative approach focused on previous research to consolidate theoretical positions through numerical accuracy and hypothesis verification, the qualitative approach recognizes the need to deepen the understanding of specific characteristics of a phenomenon by delving into the reality of individuals or specific groups of people in line with the complexity of the contexts. Consequently, the scope of the project is descriptive, as it will focus on characterizing managerial practices regarding innovation management in higher education executives.

As explained by Bernal (2006), the qualitative approach seeks to understand a social situation from its specific realities and properties. The study at hand, following Flick's (2015) guidance to address the reality “out there” by understanding, describing, and explaining social phenomena—in this case, it focuses on managerial practice in higher education institutions. In humanistic approaches, the process of interpreting phenomena plays a central role in subsequently transforming reality. Changes or proposals cannot be made without a characterization that allows for an understanding of the phenomenon in its main dimensions. Approaches that depart from positivism emphasize the flexibility of methods and the researcher's ability to delve into phenomena (Stake, 2010).

The selection of the executives was made through non-probabilistic sampling, based on predefined parameters (Bernal, 2006). The participants for the self-administered questionnaire were chosen based on their availability to participate in the study and the common characteristic of being executives in a higher education institution, which implied having more than 10 people under their responsibility and representing a unit within the institution. In all cases, participants agreed to be part of the study under the guarantee of anonymity and the non-disclosure of university names in the presentation of results. In total, 20 executives participated.

The questionnaire was structured into four sections: a first part for demographic characterization, a second part for identifying organizational structure, a third part on the characterization of managerial practice and its roles, and finally, a section on practices associated with innovation. Each of these sections was framed within the theoretical framework developed in the project and endorsed by disciplinary experts. This tool was designed to identify the state of managerial practice, its roles, and needs.

To achieve triangulation of information and gain insight into specific contexts, observation processes were carried out during the activities of 6 participants, including conversations during these activities. Observations were conducted for one week with each executive and repeated with 3 of them, coinciding with the enrollment period. The collected data were processed in two ways: self-administered questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics with frequencies, and a hermeneutic interpretation was conducted in the light of the managerial practice phenomenon, contrasted with observations and dialogues with the participants. In qualitative research, it is essential to delve into the reality of phenomena and establish the greatest possible depth to achieve a profound interpretation (Flick, 2015).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the development of the research, different results were obtained, in line with the application of the first instrument, an initial characterization was established regarding the activities of the participating managers of the study and their relationship with innovation. The first source of information provided a very interesting result regarding the managerial practice of the studied executives. At first, it is relevant to present the general composition of the study participants. Thus, out of the 20 executives who were administered the first research instrument, 35% are over 46 years old, 20% are between 41 and 45, another 20% belong to the group aged 36 to 40, 15% are between 26 and 30, and finally, 10% are between 30 and 35 years old.

Continuing with the characterization of the study participants, 85% of the participants have a master's degree, 10% have a doctorate, and 5% are doctoral candidates. 65% are women, and 35% are men. On the other hand, the study had the following participants by position: 9 academic program directors, 2 deans, 1 vice-rector, 2 directors of administrative areas, and 7 coordinators of academic units. It is important to mention at this point that, in the recruitment process for conducting the study, several executives from different programs and higher education institutions declined to participate. In the process, it is estimated that they may have felt some fear of the disclosure of the results or that they might be recognized for some reason; in other cases, institutions recommended that they not participate. This information ends up being relevant given the type of institutions and professionals expected to be involved.

Regarding the occupation of the workday, as expected, 40% of the participants spend more than 8 hours in their workday, 35% indicate that they have an 8-hour workday, and 25% indicate that they spend 10 hours in their workday. On average, this means that daily, roles with managerial responsibilities work more than 8 hours, which implies violations in terms of the time they have for leisure activities and the time dedicated to their families. This information was confirmed during the observation process; in this case, all the executives observed during their workdays lasted more than 8 hours. Of the 6 executives who were accompanied during their workdays, it was identified that 4 ended their workdays around 9 hours but mentioned that they had to finish pending tasks at home, which on average took an additional 1 to 2 hours. One of the program directors, due to having a child, had 8-hour workdays at her workplace, but she continued to work on her tasks at home and attend to her child's activities. Another executive, due to the distance from her workplace and transportation difficulties, had workdays that varied between 8 and 9 hours at the workplace; however, she also mentioned spending 1 or 2 additional hours at home on work-related tasks.

Regarding the disposition of their workday and their activities as executives, 75% of the participants spend between 1 and 2 hours on planning activities, 20% between 3 and 4 hours, and 5% more than 6 hours. This shows that the activities carried out by the executives do not consume the majority of their time in the strategic domain. In contrast, with respect to the time dedicated to operational activities such as responding to emails, making calls, handling payments, and tasks involving repetition, it was found that 9 of the participants indicated spending between 3 and 4 hours, 7 indicated spending more than 6 hours, and 4 between 5 and 6 hours. This demonstrates that the majority of a manager's day is occupied by repetitive operational tasks. This reality reflects the limited evolution of the activities that executives are

engaged in and the consistency between the educational processes in business schools and educational leadership programs in relation to organizational reality.

When comparing the activities with the observation and dialogue process during the workdays, the planning process turns out to be an activity that takes up much less time than initially identified. Additionally, it is recognized that planning is an exercise of short and almost immediate term. At the beginning of their workday, the executives attended to requests that had arrived via email during the time they were offline and dealt with pending tasks from the previous day. Among the observed executives, their activities were not related to planning activities or transformation strategies but were primarily focused on operational planning. The proactive nature of the activities of the observed executives was limited in their daily tasks.

However, it is essential to acknowledge that the observations made on 3 executives coincided with registration days for the start of the semester, which occupied most of the day with operational activities related to student services. Their work mainly involved addressing administrative matters related to corrections, adjustments, registration changes, and course enrollments. It was necessary to visit during the second week of classes to identify the usual activities of managerial practice. The difference was not radical, as two directors concentrated on responding to emails, while the third executive focused on working on a document for the creation of a new undergraduate program. A common parameter among the activities carried out by those observed was their reference to the volume of emails they had to address, and expressions of dissatisfaction regarding the number of meetings they had to attend, with comments such as, “only one of these meetings is productive.”

In line with the reality presented in the study, 20% of the participants frequently feel that their academic background is not necessary for performing their job duties, while another 20% consider that their education is unnecessary for their work all the time. This significant 40% of perceptions highlight a gap between educational profiles and managerial practice, raising concerns about the relevance of education in the managerial field and the risk that the managerial domain may be based on operational calculations that can be replaced by artificial intelligence.

In terms of decision-making, the responses generated provide a perspective that again calls for reflection on the role played by so-called executives in higher education, given their limited ability to bring about transformations. Study participants identify that their activities normally involve making significant decisions, distributed as follows: 40% frequently, 30% almost all the time, 20% all the time, and 10% almost never. However, when asked about the nature of the decisions made in their activities, 40% described the decisions they make as

tactical in nature, 25% as operational, 25% as strategic, and the remaining individuals defined them as all of the above.

In the same line regarding the need for additional authorization to implement decision-making, participants indicated the following:

- 35% mentioned that they almost never require authorization.
- Another 35% indicated that they frequently require authorization.
- 15% stated that they require authorization all the time.
- Another 15% mentioned that they require authorization almost all the time.

Regarding whether they consult decisions with their team, 65% indicated that they frequently consult with their team, and 20% indicated that they consult with their team almost all the time. This demonstrates that the majority consult with their team when making decisions. The control questions asked in each section show consistency in terms of the responses.

When contrasting this reality with the observation and dialogue during the analysis of workdays, it was identified that the executives did not make decisions that involved the direct use of resources, and they did not have sufficient autonomy to determine the direction of their units. It is interesting to note that during the dialogue, they were asked about what they did as executives in terms of decision-making, to which the 6 observed executives indicated that they did not have the autonomy to transform processes, reallocate resources, or achieve a specific transformation of their unit's direction. A clear expression was that, during the observation days, decisions focused on authorizing a change in class modality, granting permission for a teacher, authorizing the inclusion of students in certain processes, and similar matters. The decisions made during the observation were operational in nature.

In response to the question of whether they consider their activities could be better coordinated within the organizational structure, 40% responded frequently, 25% indicated almost all the time, 15% all the time, another 15% almost never, and only 5% responded that they never consider it. These perceptions raise questions about how well-designed the organizational structures are in terms of activity division and coordination. According to the study, it is imperative to review the organizational structure in the organizations and positions studied.

In the observation, elements were identified that reaffirm the need to review the design of the organizational structure that operates within the institution, based on the location of managerial positions and their respective distribution of functions, autonomy, and levels of operation of different units. In 3 of the observed executives, there was discomfort due to the intervention of various units in matters that were purely disciplinary or related to the specific

operation of the unit, indicating inconsistency both in academic and organizational terms. Expressions such as “everyone has an opinion, but few understand the process,” “when it comes to defining program design guidelines, various higher-level units interfere with no disciplinary knowledge,” “we have to wait for others to say because here, everyone contributes.” These expressions show a lack of design in terms of the scope and responsibilities of each unit. Upon further investigation of the issue, participants expressed dissatisfaction with how the institution's structure was organized, with participants expressing in various ways how the organization ended up hindering processes more than contributing. Two executives characterized this situation as one of “permanent reprocessing.”

Regarding the roles defined by Mintzberg to refer to management, the prevalence in responses shows two clear trends: In the interpersonal role, with 50% prevalence, activities associated with leadership were identified, such as being responsible for motivating employees, gathering them, training them, and activities related to goal orientation. Additionally, 40% identified their activities as being related to the liaison role, involving activities in work networks, creating and maintaining networks where they exchange information, gather data for the business unit, and play a crucial role in these networks. Concerning leadership-related activities, group and individual meetings were identified, and during the observed sessions, they focused more on motivation, providing guidance on commitments or new directives.

In terms of the decisional role, 50% of the participants indicated that they engage in entrepreneurial activities, defined as taking initiative, seeking opportunities for the organization, empowering and supervising groups in the development of new initiatives or activities. On the other hand, 20% associated their activities with those of disturbance handlers, taking corrective measures when the company faces critical or emerging problems. The remaining 30% were evenly divided between resource allocator activities and none of the above.

Once again, when contrasting with the observed participants, it was established that the organization of activities was primarily guided by limited space to develop initiatives, mainly focused on facilitating the daily work of each manager, with little scope in terms of the unit. One of the observed executives stated, “There's barely enough time to keep the operation afloat, the priority is to do the most practical work.”

Regarding the informative role, participants indicated the following:

- 55% identified with the role of monitor, which involves continuously seeking and receiving information with the purpose of projecting the organization and identifying threats and strengths.
- 20% identified with the role of disseminator, which includes activities such as communicating information to the organization that comes from external sources from their position as experts, putting acquired knowledge into practice.
- 25% did not identify with any activity in the informative role.

When delving into this aspect of the informative role, executives evidently handled considerable volumes of information; however, the source varied as it mostly did not come from the external environment but from within the organization and was disseminated, as one of the executives stated, “What we mainly do is extract the information sent to us.”

Identifying the highest concentration in the three main roles, it was found that:

- 55% of the participants associated their activities with information management, which included information movement and management.
- 30% were involved in activities that included making significant decisions for the organizational process, centering their activities in the informative and decisional roles, respectively.

On the other hand, according to the study participants, the managerial activity was rated in terms of the pace of work as fast-paced by 70% and as moderate by 30%. None of the participants considered their work to be calm. This provides insights into the need to review stress levels, mental health, and other work-related issues that may arise in this environment. In the same direction, when asked about the extent to which their work is interrupted:

- 50% indicated that their work is frequently interrupted.
- 30% mentioned that it is almost always interrupted.
- Only 15% stated that it is almost never interrupted.
- A mere 5% said that it is interrupted all the time.

When delving into this aspect during the observation process, it was estimated that, on average, executives are interrupted in their activities every 30 minutes for various reasons, including WhatsApp messages, phone calls, meeting requests, interactions with students, professors, and professionals from various areas. It's worth noting that one of the program directors mentioned that when he had a task that required a lot of concentration, he preferred to work in a different location than his usual workspace. As mentioned earlier, during the

enrollment period, three of the observed executives experienced almost constant interruptions because they dedicated their work almost exclusively to this process.

When delving into innovation in managerial practice, information was presented that requires further analysis due to some deviations in the control questions.

- 40% of the participants indicated that they engage in innovation activities frequently in their managerial roles.
- 35% reported that they do so very rarely.
- 25% mentioned that they rarely engage in innovation activities.

This suggests that a significant percentage of participants are involved in innovation activities. However, when asked about the frequency with which they focused on innovation-related activities in the weeks prior, the responses were as follows:

- 65% indicated it happened rarely.
- 30% responded frequently.
- Only 5% said it happened all the time.

When this information was contrasted with the observation of the activities of the 6 executives studied during their workdays, no activities associated with innovation were identified. Conversations with the participants revealed that innovation within the institution primarily revolved around research and that there was no established protocol or structured guidance for carrying out innovation-related activities. In one case, innovation activity involved providing support to a teacher related to a research project, guiding the implementation of protocols established for research area projects.

Regarding the question of whether they felt there was a lack of time for innovation in their organization, 90% identified this need. Specifically, 45% mentioned it was a constant need, and another 45% said it was frequent. Only 10% indicated that there was very rarely a need for time to innovate.

In contrast, when asked if innovation was a priority in the higher education institution, the responses varied:

- 45% said it was frequent.
- 30% mentioned it was very rarely.
- 15% stated it was constant.

One participant mentioned that it depended on the activity, while another indicated it was the goal but that the guidelines were not clear.

During the observation process, as mentioned earlier, the executives did not have time or criteria to engage in these activities.

Regarding the type of innovation the institution required:

- 40% of the participants leaned towards identifying that the educational organization primarily required process innovation.
- 30% selected “all of the above” to refer to innovation in product, process, organizational, and marketing.
- 10% and 15% mentioned that the institution needed marketing and organizational innovation, respectively.
- Only 5% identified the need for product innovation.

In summary, there is a significant emphasis on innovating in processes, which relates to the volatility and constant attention to various matters in the executives' workday. Managerial activities consume a significant portion of time in strictly operational activities, with serious limitations in terms of progressing strategically within their units.

Finally, regarding the capacity to innovate and lead innovation processes:

- 40% of the study participants felt capable of innovating.
- 45% felt capable of leading innovation processes.
- Only 25% in both cases felt incapable of innovating or leading innovation processes.
- Additionally, 35% felt capable all the time of developing innovations, and 30% felt capable all the time of leading innovation processes.

From these responses, it is presumed that the primary issue with the absence or lack of innovation is not a matter of training or the executives' confidence in their abilities but mainly an issue of organizing activities.

The interpretation of the study results provides clear guidance on developing innovation projects in higher education institutions. As evidenced in the study, innovation is still in the process of being incorporated as a practice in the field of higher education management. Therefore, in line with Orozco Inca (2020), higher education, in addition to being guided by external policies and regulatory mandates, must ensure quality from within. However, achieving this quality in the provision of education services requires the incorporation of clear management models that contribute to the process of transformation and innovation dynamics.

The relevance of Henry Mintzberg's (1991, 2001, 2007) stance on the need to interpret and understand managerial practice remains as pertinent as ever, both for general management

programs and those with an emphasis on educational management. Training does not seem to align with organizational reality. Therefore, there must be a focus on management that addresses the reality (Gómez-Osorio, 2022) and ensures coherence between training and reality, as well as the establishment of management pathways aligned with the needs. It has been reiterated many times that transformation is not possible without an understanding of reality.

The turbulent reality of managerial practice can lead in many directions, but to incorporate innovation, there must be a clear path that involves defining specific times for innovation within the organization. As long as executives do not have time to manage innovation, institutions will not have the necessary elements for innovation. Contemporary organizations require leadership in innovation (Leal-Soto et al., 2016).

It is necessary to ensure a scenario where there is a deep alignment between innovation and strategy, with executives playing a fundamental role (González and Martínez, 2017). Innovation in the identified institutions is not strategically or operationally integrated into the activities associated with the roles fulfilled by the executives. This ultimately reveals a lack of coherence between organizational structure, strategy, and innovation.

CONCLUSION

It is essential to further develop work on managerial practice, with an emphasis on topics such as innovation. Understanding managerial activity within organizations is important to establish lines of organizational intervention, training, and support for various stakeholders. There is not enough research on managerial roles and their implications, which means that there is insufficient relevant information about the reality and assumptions regarding what executives do.

Managerial activity in higher education institutions is predominantly focused on emergent tasks and includes a high percentage of activities that do not require the academic profiles or experience of those in these positions, an issue that is perceived by executives to a considerable extent.

A crucial factor in establishing innovation processes in institutions is ensuring the availability of time for executives to guide activities, form teams, and support the process. In this regard, incorporating innovation into job profiles and designs can help clarify the path of managerial work in the innovative realm.

Higher education requires a perspective on leadership that contributes to achieving mission objectives, especially in the field of process innovation, in line with the demands identified in the study regarding innovation in processes. It is clear that there are two

perspectives on innovation in education: one related to management and the other to educational aspects. The former is much less addressed than the latter.

It is crucial that innovation is not considered an element separate from the daily activities of institutional executives. Innovation must be integrated into the regular practice of executives to overcome temporal barriers to its implementation.

Educational innovation has primarily focused on incorporating technological trends to operationalize academic spaces but has made little progress in the development of management and administration in educational institutions. This represents a challenge not only for leadership but also for academic programs that educate individuals in educational institution management.

Finally, it is necessary to develop innovation management models suitable for the context of higher education, with the point of connection being the activities of executives who have the means and knowledge to lead the processes. Specific management models are required to provide a roadmap for institutions to truly engage with innovation.

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