

Employee Driven Innovation in Team (EDIT) – Innovative Potential, Dialogue, and Dissensus

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The article deals with employee driven innovation in regular teams from a critical, pragmatic action research perspective, referring to theories on innovation, dialogue, workplace learning, and organizational communication. It is based on an action research project “Innovation and involvement through strengthening dialogue in team based organizations” funded by the Danish Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation. 18 teams from one public and two private organizations participated in the project. The article defines the concept of employee driven innovation (EDI) in relation to theories on innovation, workplace learning and action research, and presents EDI as a fairly new field of research. EDI is conceptualized as a participatory endeavour differing from a mainstream understanding of innovation as surplus value for the organization. The article focuses on incremental, organizational process innovations co-created across conflicting workplace interests in and between teams.

The article argues that it is meaningful to assert that every employee has an innovative potential, no matter of what educational background or sector and that sometimes, this innovative potential might be facilitated through Dialogic Helicopter Team Meetings (DHTM) with a dissensus approach.

During the action research process, it became important to organize a special kind of DHTMs as a supplement to ordinary team action meetings close to day-to-day operations, but separated in time and space. They focus on how to improve existing organizational routines and work practice in order to produce value for the organization, better work flow, and improved work life quality. These meetings are discussed in relation to similar organizational constructs within Scandinavian action research.