

APRIL 1, 2023



Skills and Innovation for Adult Social Care

PROMOTING INNOVATION LEADERSHIP IN CARE: DIGITAL LEARNING PROGRAMME

MODULE 1, PART 1: DEVELOPING A SHARED VIEW OF INNOVATION

LAPIS RESEARCH PROJECT
LEARNING FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE PRACTICE INNOVATIONS AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT
Project no: 2020-1-UK01-KA202-078960

Developing a shared view of innovation

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Learning outcomes

By the end of the module learners will be able to:

- Define Innovation along with the different innovation types
- Identify the importance of stakeholders' engagement in developing a shared view of innovation
- Identify possible innovation opportunities and how to prioritize them
- Use a common language for innovation and have a shared vision

Defining Innovation

What is innovation?

Some people believe that innovation is a synonym for creativity, but this is a common misconception. Creativity means coming up with a new idea for a new product, a new way to implement something or a new technique. On the other hand, innovation is to take this new idea and make use of it to create value for customers and stakeholders. Any innovation derives from a new idea whether it is an improved product version, a new service, an updated methodology to run an operation, or a whole new business model. As you can see, these two terms go together without being the same.

Another common misconception is what comes into your mind when you think of innovation. Most people will imagine a flashy new gadget or a technological advancement, but the truth is that there is much more in innovation extending far more beyond technology and products that you will find in a store. Innovative solutions are not only used in technology but also in business, social and other sectors. They can also be as simple as a small operational change or as complex as altering an entire system at its core. The meaning behind every innovation is not always to be extravagant or a huge discovery but instead, to solve problems.

By now, it should be clear that there is no shared view of innovation while at the same time, it is widely known that for every successful business, improved customer satisfaction,

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reduced operational costs and higher quality of services innovation is key. This is also one of the main reasons that having a shared view of innovation is crucial not only in business but also in sectors such as the adult social care sector.

Definition of Innovation

There are many different definitions for innovation emerging since 1967 when Knight (1967, p. 478) gave the definition of innovation as *“the adoption of a change which is new to an organization and to the relevant environment”*. All the different definitions have in common a differentiation in the use of the word *“new”*. Many scholars using the word *“new”* mean new to the adopting organization while others might mean that innovation is objectively new to the respective environment. Other differences exist in the extent of the innovation, where some might refer to innovations that drastically change something when fully implemented with others being satisfied with a certain degree of alteration.

Taking into consideration the respective environment and sector, definitions might be adjusted. However, a generally accepted definition can be that innovation is a process by which a domain, a product, or a service is renewed and brought up to date by applying new processes, introducing new techniques, or establishing successful ideas to create new value. It is important to highlight that the creation of value is a defining characteristic of innovation.

Some of the most famous innovation applications are:

- ✓ Products and product performance
 - Development of a new product
 - Improvement of an existing product’s performance
- ✓ Technology
 - New technologies such as the Internet, mobile phones, etc.

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- ✓ Business Models
 - Innovation in business models
 - New channels, technologies and markets leading to added customer value
 - Digital ecosystems
- ✓ Organization
 - Improved resource and assets' management
- ✓ Processes
 - Improved efficiency and effectiveness of existing methodologies
 - New processes involving production, customer interaction and delivery
- ✓ Marketing
 - Methods to hold customers' attention such as new concepts and improved communication channels
- ✓ Networking
 - Connecting different groups of individuals and stakeholders
- ✓ Customer Engagement
 - Increased customer engagement
 - Improved retention rates

Finally, innovation generally proceeds through three stages: design, testing and scaling:

- a) Design
 - ✓ This is the stage for ideas and solutions to come up carefully designing a “prototype” that will be able to attract investors and/or early adopters
- b) Testing
 - ✓ This is where the different “prototypes” or solutions will be tested to finalize and adjust the solution based on the needs. This is the stage where changes can be made before it gets too complicated.
- c) Scaling
 - ✓ Once design and testing are over, the innovative solution is ready to scale up which means to develop a plan on how the product, service or solution in general will be available to larger number of people, organizations and stakeholders.

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Innovation Examples

A detailed example would be fashion companies that traditionally needed about 12 months from initial design to the sale of their products in stores. The long development time resulted in large inventories. Fashion companies were not able to react to market changes quickly and needed to offer discounts in order to sell their products. These challenges forced some fashion companies to identify a new business opportunity. The new idea was to co-develop innovative products, including clothes and production machines. End customers were offered the possibility to develop their own clothes design and production companies were asked to develop machines that were able to produce smaller quantities of clothes in a profitable way. The development of the new machines was necessary to ensure that end customers could receive their new design within a short time period. Co-creating this innovation offered all involved parties the possibility to reduce their risk and one of the key benefits was increased satisfaction for all stakeholders.

Some of the following innovation examples derive from humanity's greatest achievements or the most impactful commercial products meeting consumers' needs. For example:

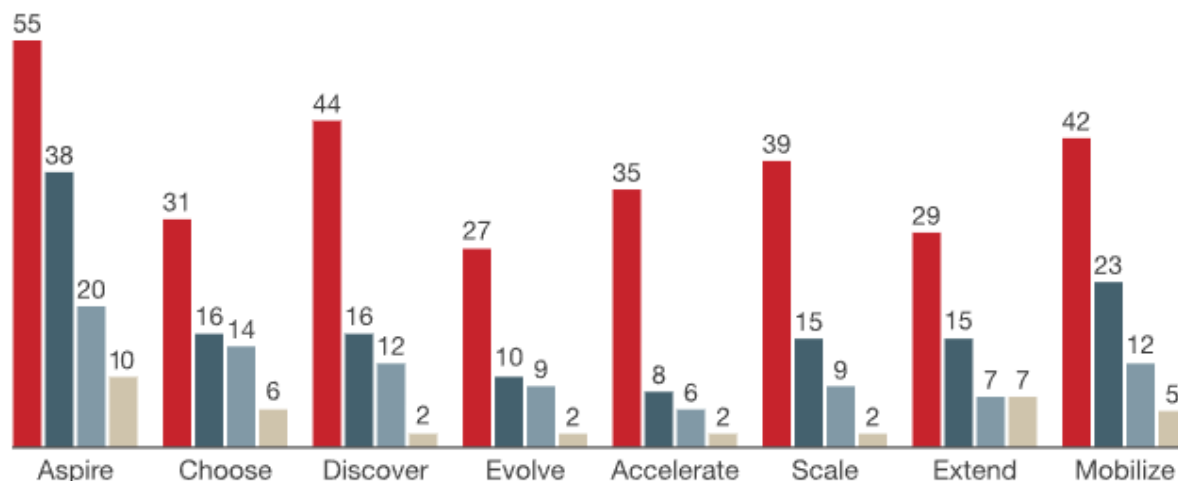
- ✓ Landing on the moon
- ✓ Oat milk or other plant-based milk
- ✓ Drones
- ✓ Virtual Reality
- ✓ Fast fashion business model
- ✓ Pollution Vacuum buildings
- ✓ Solar panels
- ✓ Pencils that become trees after you plant them
- ✓ ChatGPT

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What innovation leaders say they do right

% of respondents by performance quartile¹

■ Top quartile ■ 2nd ■ 3rd ■ 4th



The survey tested for 27 innovation practices spread across eight essentials

¹N = 623. Performance defined as a weighted index of measures for organic growth (% of growth from new products or services developed in-house) and innovation performance (% of sales from new products and self-assessment of innovation performance). Respondents who answered "yes to some degree," "no," or "don't know/not applicable" are not shown.

Source: McKinsey survey of 2,500 global executives, Nov 2012

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Testing for innovation

| Do you really innovate? | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Aspire | Do you regard innovation-led growth as critical, and do you have cascaded targets that reflect this? |
| Choose | Do you invest in a coherent, time- and risk-balanced portfolio of initiatives with sufficient resources to win? |
| Discover | Do you have differentiated business, market, and technology insights that translate into winning value propositions? |
| Evolve | Do you create new business models that provide defensible and scalable profit sources? |
| Accelerate | Do you beat the competition by developing and launching innovations quickly and effectively? |
| Scale | Do you launch innovations at the right scale in the relevant markets and segments? |
| Extend | Do you win by creating and capitalizing on external networks? |
| Mobilize | Are your people motivated, rewarded, and organized to innovate repeatedly? |

Source: McKinsey analysis

Quiz: Check your understanding

Q1: The term innovation refers to state-of-the-art gadgets and products.

True

False

Q2: The definition for innovation is always adjusted based on the respective environment.

True

False

Q3: Improving how to engage with customers is not an effective innovation solution.

True

False

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Q4: Which of the following is a famous innovation application?

- a) Business Model
- b) Marketing
- c) Networking
- d) All of the above

Breakdown of answers

Q1: False, innovation refers to several different types of innovation solutions regardless of their nature.

Q2: True

Q3: False, improving the customers/employee engagement is one of the most famous fields of innovation application.

Q4: D) all of the above

Importance of stakeholders' engagement

In every organisation, most of the projects or tasks involve multiple different stakeholders each one with their own perspective and their own impact on the project's progression. Regarding innovation applications, the stakeholders might not be the ones to lead this initiative taken by the organization, but their feedback is of vital importance to ensure that value is being created through the innovation practices.

It is common to detect premature failures on innovation projects due to key stakeholders having a passive role throughout the implementation by not identifying, consulting, or involving them early enough. As a result, there is a misunderstanding on the goals of the innovation and the expected impact it will have on a certain project. Innovation leaders should identify, consult, and engage stakeholders early in the process because they will support, influence or even terminate a project based on the team's beliefs and goals.

Key stakeholders can enrich the process with information and insight that can help the innovation practice move forward in several different ways. For example, if a stakeholder in

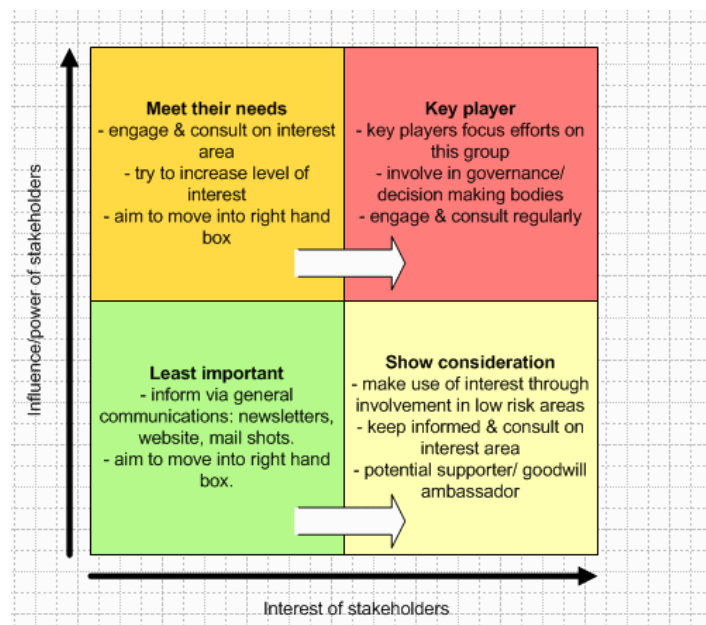
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another business unit has previously developed an innovative solution similar to the one being developed, they can assist in revealing risk areas, avoiding having duplicate work done or offer their knowledge to accelerate the project's pace. In addition, by involving different stakeholders, the project can take advantage of the benefits from different ideas, more sets of eyes, additional support and increased credibility for the developed innovation practice.

How to identify and engage with stakeholders

Identifying and engaging with stakeholders might sound like an easy task, however it is not always clear who needs to be involved or who will be impacted by the innovation itself. This means that creating a detailed plan on who to engage before you even start the implementation process is crucial.

In order to do this, you can think about the problem your innovation is aiming to solve and of course identify all the potential members or units that might be involved. Using this information, you can develop your own stakeholder map (See below; Power versus interest grid adapted from Eden and Ackermann, 1998: 121-5, 344-6) and a personalized plan to educate or inform the individuals / organizations on that list about what you are trying to achieve. Most methodologies regarding stakeholder mapping generally divide the stakeholders in four categories that can be visualized in a four-square grid.



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This visualization image shows who is going to have a significant influence for your innovation, who is going to be supportive and who has the impact to end your project. While planning you will also need to map out the ideal timing on which you are going to involve these stakeholders and how much attention you want to focus on each individual or organisation. By engaging in co-creation activities, all stakeholders bring specific capabilities and open new possibilities to innovate. Stakeholders can develop capabilities which otherwise would be expensive or take a long time to develop while developing highly innovative products and services at reasonable cost.

All in all, it sums up to power, influence and whether the stakeholders are interested in the problems you are aiming to solve with your innovation. Developing innovations is often associated with a high potential of development failure or inappropriateness of the product or service to the end users. Highlighting that co-creating innovations reduces the risks for all involved stakeholders might increase the motivation to participate in such projects.

Activity: Identifying Innovative Practices

Complete the table below with any innovative practices that you have experienced or heard of, be as specific as possible and provide examples where you can. Once you have created your list, reflect on the benefits and challenges associated with these innovative practices, and consider how they might be implemented more widely. Finally, consider how you might apply this knowledge in your own work.

| Innovative practices (with examples): | Benefits and challenges associated with practice: | How might this be implemented more widely? | How might you apply this in your work? |
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Activity: Reflection

Reflecting on the potential impact of innovative practices, think critically about the benefits and challenges of these practices, and consider how they might be implemented more widely to improve a sector. Please write an answer to each of the questions below:

- How might the innovative practices that we discussed in this module impact different fields of interest? What benefits might they experience, and what challenges might they face?
- What challenges might arise in implementing these innovative practices more widely? How might these challenges be addressed?
- What role can innovation leaders and key stakeholders play in promoting and implementing innovative practices in adult social care?
- How might innovative practices evolve in the future?

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Identifying and prioritizing innovation opportunities

Spotting new opportunities is an important part of innovation. Becoming anticipatory means looking at trends to determine how they are shaping your organization or field of interest both internally and externally. When used correctly, this innovation strategy can be effective in helping you identify new ideas that live outside the boundaries of conventional thinking. The key to innovation success is to systematically explore multiple angles and insight sources to identify the most likely developments within a specific context: what is, what's to come and what's happening around you.

Behind every great innovation is someone who spotted a great opportunity. But that doesn't mean that all innovation originates from a flash of sudden inspiration; this just makes a good story to be published. What truly is the common ground between every inspiring innovator is the ability to see an opportunity where others don't, to connect the dots between what is now, what's coming and what is currently happening around them. This surely does not mean that creativity is not needed to inspire a great innovation, creativity and imagination are the two foundations where your ideas will be based on. So how can you identify the best innovative solutions? How should you start?

1. Empty space can get quickly crowded

Many innovators are encouraged to spend their time and resources looking to fill an “empty space” in a field meaning to cover a need or develop a product that does not exist yet. This sounds like a great approach but there is a major problem with it: they are easy to discover! And if you can easily discover this empty space then it is certain that other people will do it as easily. Taking advantage of this “empty space” is certainly meaningful but most of the time it will not be unique enough to stand out on its own.

2. Identify blind spots

Differentiating from the empty spaces, blind spots are these tensions, aspirations and workarounds that, if left unresolved, will become weak points to your solution. As a result, they offer even greater potential to grow than most empty spaces because the

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problem and the solution are likely to scale up. Even though it is very difficult to identify these blind spots a successful innovation leader ought to experiment with new tools, techniques, methodologies and types of learning to bring more opportunities for innovation while also filtering, synthesizing and unlocking connections using valuable insight from stakeholders.

3. Aim to the future

Most importantly, great innovation leaders share an ability to look beyond today. To also see what **could be achieved** not only what is achieved. Without the ability to explore future possibilities and opportunities, innovation gets frozen and locked defined by today's behaviors, trends, attitudes, product categories and of course, culture. In order to have meaningful innovation you need to keep an open mind that takes those givens and transforms them to envisage something better, something new.

Why should you prioritize innovation?

When innovation occurs, positive impact is inevitable. Organizations often focus on initiatives and strategies that lead to innovation, such as strengthening leadership skills and promoting diversity of thought. But it's only when innovation is approached as a goal rather than a perk or side-effect that organizations can tap into their full creative potential and fulfill on ambitious mission statements that make big improvements to "the status quo." And when it comes to business, who doesn't want to do it "better" and be more competitive than others?

Innovative solutions provide answers to some crucial questions such as:

- How can we keep up with our competition?
- How can we engage, attract and retain employees?
- How can we provide the best products or services?
- How can we use technology to improve our operation and processes?
- How can we find our way out of a crisis?
- How can we promote company sustainability and longevity?

So why should organizations prioritize innovations? The tangible results include:

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✓ **More engagement**

Talented people want the opportunity to step off the hamster wheel and dive into their own creative potential. This can only be done through innovative practices.

When leaders or managers communicate innovation as a goal or intention, employees tend to focus on their strengths to make improvements and create better ways of doing things.

✓ **More growth**

The most important question on innovation is: “Why do we do what we do?”. The answer is most of the time to improve a product or services finding better ways to serve others whether it is customers, beneficiaries, or society in general. Naturally, any kind of improvement leads to growth; in the example of sales, better products and services lead to more sales. Innovation has the power to promote growth both in profit and recruiting efforts by meeting employee and client needs as they arise, and it’s important for leaders to recognize when the old way of doing things isn’t keeping up with demand. The ability to adapt to these evolving needs is a key factor in company longevity, and prioritizing innovation is the best way to keep up. So it is not only about profit but also in customer satisfaction and quality of provided services or products.

✓ **More purpose**

Innovation requires creativity, breaking through bias, and bringing “the whole person” to the table. It requires abandoning the status quo and the “just get it done and go home” way of thinking about work. It requires an understanding of the big picture and the “why” behind what we do. Innovation requires us to consider the footprints we’re making and what we’re leaving in our wake.

Ask yourself: “What is my organization’s purpose? How can new improvements and new ways of operating better fulfill this purpose?”

Organizations that fail to prioritize innovation will eventually fall behind other organizations that **DO** prioritize it. If innovation is not a priority in your organization, have a conversation to involve other team members and make it a collective goal!



Quiz: Check your understanding

Q1: Innovative practices in organizations should be:

- a) Mandatory
- b) A priority
- c) An employee's choice
- d) None of the above

Q2: Which of the following is NOT a good way to identify your stakeholders:

- a) A detailed plan
- b) A stakeholder's map
- c) A co-creating session
- d) None of the above

Q3: Having innovation as a priority depends solely on the field of interest (e.g., Social sciences, Business, etc.)

- a) True
- b) False

Q4: Why should an organization prioritize innovation?

- a) Employee satisfaction
- b) Lower turnover rates
- c) More profit
- d) Increased competitiveness
- e) All of the above

Breakdown of answers:

Q1: b, innovative practices cannot be mandatory or forced by any means but should be a priority for all the reasons that were mentioned during this module

Q2: d, none of the above. All of the mentioned ways are great ways to identify possible stakeholders and also evaluate their interest in your innovative solutions

Q3: False, innovation should be a priority regardless of sector or field of interest.

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Q4: d, having innovative practices on your organization will empower your employees and will result in higher retain rates, will increase the company's profit while also remaining competitive in the market.

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