Towards a holistic assessment of employees’ acceptance of innovative workplace designs

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• Increasing adoption of Activity Based Working (ABW) office as an innovation
• Lack of holistic evaluation method to evaluate employees’ acceptance ABW
• Large-scale employees’ satisfaction surveys do not sufficiently explain why employees may be struggling to accept ABW
• This study presents a holistic model for evaluating employees’ ABW acceptance that draws on the innovation adoption, technology acceptance and existing ABW literature.
• First stage of research in which the model is developed from a review of the literature.
What are innovative workplaces?

- **Innovation** as “an idea, practice or object that is perceived as new by an individual or another unit of adoption” Rogers (2003, p. 12)

- **Activity Based Working (ABW)**
  - 1) Unassigned (non-territorial) individual workspaces; and
  - 2) A variety of workspaces designed to support a new way of working where employees switch workplaces based on their activity (switching behaviour)

- ABW is a technological innovation to organisations that are introducing the ABW to their employees

- Organisations are increasingly choosing ABW as the real estate intervention to achieve their Corporate Real Estate (CRE) strategies because it addresses most of the nine value-adding CRE strategies.
9 value-adding CRE strategies

1) Increase productivity;
2) Reduce and control occupancy costs;
3) Increase customer and employee satisfaction;
4) Increase asset value;
5) Increase flexibility;
6) Increase innovation;
7) Support image and culture;
8) Increase sustainability; and
9) Risk control

Why ABW?

Real Estate Drivers
- Cost savings
- Higher space efficiency
- Flexibility

Human Capital drivers
- Attraction and retention of talent
- Higher productivity
- Superior communication and collaboration
How are ABWs performing?

Increase in organisational flexibility was the only CRE strategy which outperformed the organisation’s expectations (Baalen, Heck, Muelen, & Oosterhout, 2011) in (Appel-Meulenbroek, Oldman, & Susante, 2016).

Mixed outcomes about employee productivity: (Appel-Meulenbroek et al., 2016; Candido, Zhang, Kim, Dear, & Thomas, 2016) (Voordt, 2004a)

Issues with past office concepts are still present (Brunia et al., 2016; Kim, Candido, Thomas, & de Dear, 2016).

Struggling to accept switching behaviour (Kim et al., 2016; Mosselman et al., 2009; Tagliaro & Ciaramella, 2016a, 2016b); (Kim et al., 2016; Voordt, 2004b); (Brunia & Hartjes-Gosselink, 2009; Tagliaro & Ciaramella, 2016b).

Mixed outcomes on employee satisfaction in regards to employee interaction and support for collaboration:
(Appel-Meulenbroek et al., 2016; Been et al., 2015; Candido et al., 2016) (Ekstrand, 2016) (Kim et al., 2016).

The strategy to improve the corporate image seems to be achieved (Appel-Meulenbroek et al., 2016).
Existing methods to evaluate ABW

• Large scale post-occupancy evaluation questionnaires assess employees’ agreement with subjective statements or satisfaction level.
• Surveys does not normally capture the ‘why’ and the behavioural responses – other methods are required.
• Key issue: NOT THE METHODS but what they’re capturing.
• Existing measures attempt to provide proxies of employees’ acceptance. They do not specifically evaluate employees’ acceptance of the ABW features and policies. They are not holistic – employee’s affective, cognitive and behavioural responses.
• Why is it important?
• Employees’ acceptance of the ABW is critical. They are the end-users that the ABW is designed for and their acceptance of the workplace affects the achievement of both CRE and organisational strategies.
• Research Question:
  • How can employees’ acceptance of innovative workplace be evaluated?

• Method:
  • In-depth literature review and development of theoretical framework
Background theories: Employee Acceptance model

- **Diffusion of innovation:**
  Success = the accumulated number of adopters over time
  BUT ABW diffusion is two-fold. Organisational adoption of ABW does NOT equate to employees’ adoption/acceptance

- **Technology acceptance model:**
  realising potential benefits of new technological innovations is relies on users’ acceptance (Davis, 1985). Acceptance is determined by: **cognitive, affective** and **behavioural** responses
Intended and unintended reactions to innovation are equally important but unintended reactions tend to get neglected (or are thought to be bad).

Intended reactions: The anticipated employee reactions that align with and facilitate achieving the organisation’s intended outcome and yield the potential benefits expected from the innovation.

Unintended reactions: reactions that may not align with the intended organisational outcomes which are not just negative but may also be positive.
• **Affect** is the ‘emotional interpretation of perception, information or knowledge’. (Sailer & Penn (2010, p. 8)

• Workplace relocations may cause employees to experience different affective responses such as denial, anger, bargaining and acceptance.

• In the ABW literature, affective responses are rarely captured except in the joined affective and cognitive response captured by post-occupancy evaluations’ ‘employee satisfaction’.

• Proposed methods
  1. Forms of self-report
Employee Acceptance model – Cognitive responses

- **Cognition** is the mental process of generating information or knowledge (Sailer, 2014).
- Cognition is not solely based on incoming information but also dependent on the individual’s existing knowledge, memory, motivation, visual and spatial processing and attention.
- 3 proposed and existing cognitive measures:
  1. Knowledge of ABW: because employees’ behavioural responses are limited by their knowledge on how to use the innovation.
  2. Perceived support for each activity conducted within the ABW.
  3. Commitment to use.
- The inclusion of open-ended and less structured questions enable researchers to capture unintended cognitive reactions.
Employee Acceptance model – Behavioural responses

• **Behaviour** “… how individuals overtly act in the presence of others; actions that are observable and measurable, including verbal expression”. Includes action or inaction.

• Proposed behavioural measures:
  1. Extent of use observations and self-reports:
  2. Territorial behavioural observations and residual markers
ABW innovation acceptance model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ABW innovation acceptance</th>
<th>Acceptance Level 1: Limited or Non-Use</th>
<th>Acceptance Level 2: Compliant Use</th>
<th>Acceptance Level 3: Sporadic and inadequate Use</th>
<th>Acceptance Level 4: Adequate Use</th>
<th>Acceptance Level 5: Committed and Creative Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affective Responses</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of ABW</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived support from the ABW</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment of use</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Moderate-High</td>
<td>More than compliant but less than committed use.</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extent of Use</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate-High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territorial Behaviour</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Low-moderate</td>
<td>Non-existent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Source: Author adapted from (Klein & Sorra, 1996)

2 possible models that provide ‘levels of innovation use’:
1) Hall & Hord’s (2015) from the education innovation field was too different
2) Klein and Sorra’s (1996) model was a multi-level unit of analysis including both organisational or collective-employee level and employee level indicators; unlike the employee acceptance model that is only for individual employee level indicators.
Next steps – operationalizing the model

• Proposed methods to test the model

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Field work Phase</th>
<th>Affective outcomes</th>
<th>Cognitive outcomes</th>
<th>Behavioural outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group Interviews</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Method 4: Interview with Janitor and janitor’s photo-record</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method 5: Non-participant observation</td>
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Qualitative data

- Thematic Content Analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001)
- Nvivo

Quantitative data

- Simple statistical analysis (eg. Mean, median, mode, percentages)
Thank you!
Any questions?

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