

Call for papers

Research Day

« Rethinking HRM, Change, and Technology: an empirical and polyphonic approach »

LENTIC, HEC Liège, University of Liège (Belgium) – September 13, 2024

Today, more than ever, the organizations in which we evolve are marked by successive crises, persistent uncertainties and multiple innovations. A profusion of normative discourse prescribes "miracle solutions" to the problems faced by today's managers. In this context, management research plays a crucial role in understanding these challenges and analysing the solutions deployed to meet them. However, research could not progress without the ongoing investment of a whole community of researchers who dedicate their work to the analysis of organizational phenomena, working under the guidance of enlightened colleagues.

FOUR INTERRELATED RESEARCH THEMES

The aim of this research day is to highlight Professor François Pichault's contributions to the analysis of contemporary management phenomena. The research day is structured around three key topics (change management, HRM and technological innovation) and one key method (action research) to which François Pichault has made significant contributions during his academic career, in a variety of contexts (private, public, non-market, national and international). These four themes will be the subject of four separate working sessions, introduced by keynote speakers who will also lead discussions on the contributions selected for each workshop.

1. A POLYPHONIC APPROACH TO CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Change management is a recurring and fundamental theme in contemporary management science and management training. The polyphonic approach to change (Pichault et al., 2021) aims to propose analytical categories for describing, explaining, evaluating, anticipating and managing change. It offers an integrated model known as the "five forces" model, which focuses on the definition of strategic objectives (planning approach), actors and the strategic alliances they forge with each other (political approach), the weight of history and previous decisions (incremental approach), contextual elements (contingent approach) and the construction of meaning (interpretativist approach) (Pichault et al., 2021). In so doing, the polyphonic approach to change pays particular attention to the diversity of actors involved in change processes, their rationality and their intentionality. This model has led to a renewed approach to change management in organizations, enabling, among other things, a better understanding of change assessment mechanisms

(Rossignol et al., 2014), a deciphering of current "managerial fashions" such as the "New Ways of Working" (Jemine et al., 2021) and the liberated enterprise (Fox & Pichault, 2017), and a finer analysis of the mechanisms of adherence and resistance to change (Boiteau & Baret, 2017). The research day aims to foster discussion on the following topics:

- Change management in companies, and the theoretical models and analytical frameworks to study it;
- The contributions of a polyphonic, processual and political approach to change processes in management;
- Contemporary empirical studies inspired, directly or indirectly, by the principles of polyphonic change management, and/or by planning, political, incremental, contingent or interpretativist approaches to change.

2. TOWARDS A TYPOLOGY OF HRM MODELS

Mintzberg's work on organizational structure has been a classic in organizational management for several decades. Among other things, it deciphers the constituent parameters of organizations and the contingency factors by which these parameters vary in concert, leading to a typology of structural configurations found in the field (Mintzberg, 1979). This work, however, does not directly shed light on the impact of organizational structure on HRM practices. However, it appears that the diversity of HRM practices can also be deciphered through a contextualist prism, enabling us to appreciate the coherence between organizational configurations and HRM models (Pichault & Schoenaers, 2003). A typology structured around five HRM models - arbitrary, codifying, individualizing, conventionalist, and value-based (Pichault & Nizet, 2013) - thus enables us to better analyze and understand contemporary HRM challenges, such as the formalization of HR practices (Adla & Gallego-Roquelaure, 2021), the modernization of HRM (Emery, 2019) and public management (Pichault, 2007), or talent management (Pichault & Naedoenen, 2022). In this context, we welcome contributions around the following themes:

- Studies inspired by contingent, configurational or contextualist approaches to human resource management or its practices, or reflections on these approaches;
- Research on the link between organizational structure and human resource management practices;
- Research which, more broadly, examines contemporary or "post-Covid" HRM issues (modernization, shortage, crisis of meaning, well-being, etc.)

3. TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS IN ORGANIZATIONS AND BEYOND

In a context where technological innovation is omnipresent, the temptation to get bogged down in deterministic, often simplistic, prescriptive or predictive approaches is sometimes strong. It is important to remember - perhaps more than ever - the crucial importance of the interplay of actors and power relations in technological innovation projects (Pichault, 1995), particularly in relation to the strategic, organizational and human issues that digitization inevitably raises. Studying technological change in all its complexity, paying attention to its processuality and materiality, and to the strategies of the actors involved, implies accepting the inevitability of the tensions and conflicts that accompany and shape it (Pichault et al., 2021).

Contemporary technological innovations are also enabling the emergence and development of new hybrid forms of organization and management (Halford, 2005). They are transforming the labor market, redefining the contours of forms of employment and fostering, in particular, the emergence of the "gig economy" and platform work (Pichault & McKeown, 2019). They also generate challenges for social dialogue (Xhaufclair et al., 2017). The research day will extend these reflections around the following themes:

- Change and technological innovation in organizations, explored from the angle of their social and/or managerial complexity;
- Studies examining the links between technology, organization, change and HRM policy;
- Studies looking more closely at the transformations brought by new technologies, such as those affecting the labor and employment market, or the dynamics of adopting new technological tools.

4. ACTION RESEARCH AS A MEANS OF STUDYING MANAGEMENT ISSUES

In a world where it is increasingly expected that research should be conducted with impact and produce "actionable" knowledge, there are grounds for questioning the relationship between researchers and their field, and the ways in which qualitative research is carried out. This fourth and final theme invites us to consider the contributions, but also the limits, of action research as a means of studying organizations. By "action research" we mean a research method centred on intervention in companies, where the researcher capitalizes on the involvement of members of an organization in a field problem to collect and analyse data (Eden & Huxham, 1996). Research then becomes intervention-based, and is part of a partnership logic in which the researcher becomes an entrepreneur of innovation within the organization (Pichault et al., 2008; Xhaufclair & Pichault, 2011). Intervention in companies enables us to penetrate unknown research terrains and access rich empirical data; but they also raise the question of the instrumentation of the researcher by the actors in the field, as well as the legitimacy of their positioning (Pichault, 2006; Pichault et al., 2008). In so doing, multiple questions emerge around the researcher's societal responsibility, his relationship with field actors, and his anchorage in the field realities he studies. The research day will focus on action research as a methodology in management science, through the following themes:

- Methodological, reflexive and critical contributions on action research, intervention research and the place of intervention in the lives of researchers;
- Empirical studies carried out within organizations and anchored in action-research or intervention-research mechanisms;
- Reflections on the contemporary challenges and stakes of action research in the study of emerging or new phenomena.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION - COMMUNICATION PROPOSALS

This research day will be held on **Friday, September 13, 2024 at HEC Liège, the School of Management of the University of Liège**. It will be structured around keynote speakers and parallel sessions open to the scientific community.

If you are interested in sharing your work during these parallel sessions, we warmly invite you to send us a communication proposal. This should be in the form of a one- to three-page abstract, which 1) summarizes the proposal (research question, theoretical foundations, methodological approach, initial research results); and 2) explains the link between the proposal and one or more of the four themes of the study day presented above.

Proposals must be sent by June 5, 2024 at the latest to lentic@uliege.be.

The official languages of the research day will be French and English, and communication proposals can be submitted either in French or in English.

Although the day aims to highlight the work of Professor François Pichault, presentations are not required to be anchored in the aforementioned work. Complementary and alternative, reflexive and/or critical perspectives are warmly encouraged. Proposals for contributions from young researchers and doctoral students are more than welcome, as we set out to fostering networking and the sharing of knowledge in a constructive and friendly climate.

CALENDAR

- Submissions: June 5, 2024 (by email to lentic@uliege.be)
- Feedback from reviewers: June 25, 2024
- Research day: September 13, 2024

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional information on this research day will be posted regularly on the event's website: www.lentic.be, under "journée d'étude 2024".

For questions or further information, you can also contact Professors Grégory Jemine (gjemine@uliege.be) and Olivier Lisein (o.lisein@uliege.be).

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

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