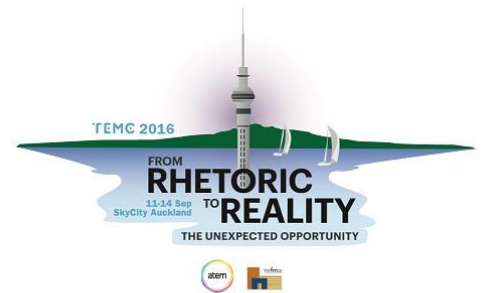


Concurrent Session A
Monday 12 September 2016
10.50am – 11.40am



Session 4

Can “Bottom Up” Innovation Strategies Improve Managerial Innovations in the University Sector?

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Anthony Arundel is a Professor of Innovation, and Director of the Australian Innovation Research Centre (AIRC) at the University of Tasmania and concurrently a Professorial Fellow at UNU-MERIT, a joint research institute of the United Nations University and the University of Maastricht in the Netherlands.. His research interests include the innovative activities of firms and public administrative agencies, including university administrations. He has been involved in the design and statistical analysis of several large-scale questionnaire surveys including the Community Innovation Survey (CIS) in Europe, several European Innobarometer surveys, the Canadian SIBS survey, the Australian Public Sector Innovation Indicators (APSII) survey, the Tasmanian Innovation Census and a recent survey of management and service innovations in Australian and New Zealand universities.

Universities in Australia and New Zealand face a stream of administrative and managerial challenges, ranging from the need for greater efficiency in the provision of services to meeting demands for new services. Innovation has been a common solution to meeting these challenges, but the innovation rhetoric is not matched by large-scale research on how innovation occurs in the university sector and the factors that lead to success or failure. In particular, we don't know if university managers use best-practice methods that draw on design thinking and methods to encourage 'bottom-up' 'collegial' innovation or if innovation is largely driven by a 'top down' process driven by restructuring. In response to the lack of data on these issues, the Australian Innovation Research Centre (AIRC) at the University of Tasmania, in collaboration with the LH Martin Institute of the University of Melbourne, conducted a large-scale questionnaire survey on management and service innovations at Australian and New Zealand universities. The survey was sent to approximately 1,500 senior managers in 15 functional areas, including human resources, student services, IT services and financial services. The survey closed at the end of March 2016, with completed questionnaires obtained from 563 managers. 91% of these managers reported one or more service or management innovations within their area of responsibility in the previous two years. Although this innovation rate is considerably higher than that reported by private businesses, it is very similar to the innovation rate found in surveys of Australian and European government organisations. 51% of managers also reported that their area of responsibility was undergoing restructuring. The analyses focus on the effect of restructuring and innovation support strategies on the positive outcomes of innovation. The support strategies include the use of different sources of ideas or information for innovation, the use of collaboration with groups both within and outside the university, the level of a supportive environment for innovation that encourages staff involvement, and the use of design-thinking principles in developing innovations. Negative outcomes (“abandoned or under-performing innovations”) are largely driven by a lack of resources (funding or time), with factors linked to organisational culture (lack of a supportive culture for innovation, resistance from academic or professional staff) of less importance.

