


## Management Innovations as Material-Discursive Practices

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### Abstract:

This paper explores management innovations through the lens of sociomateriality, drawing on (Orlikowski & Scott, 2014) material-discursive approach. Based on a single case study of Cevital's Corporate University, the research employs a qualitative methodology based on the material-discursive analysis of organizational practices. The findings highlight the emergence of certain materializations (lexical shifts, managerial attitudes, relational styles) that reconfigured managerial discourse, while the absence or suspension of others (infrastructures, workforce expansion, and growth targets) constrained the performative scope of organizational transformation. The study emphasizes the analytical potential of the material-discursive perspective for understanding management innovations and calls for further research on corporate universities as sites of Material-Discursive Practices shaping organizational change.

**Keywords:** Management innovations; Sociomateriality; Material-Discursive Practices; Organizational change; Corporate University.

**JEL Classification :** L20; M10; M12; O30.

## **Introduction**

This paper seeks to support the material turn<sup>1</sup>. In doing so, we reiterate the invitation of scholars such as (Orlikowski & Scott, 2014) and (Hardy & Thomas, 2015) to explicitly account for materiality in discourse studies. To this end, we draw upon the material-discursive approach proposed by (Orlikowski & Scott, 2014).

(Orlikowski & Scott, 2014, p. 1) Ground their approach in the notions of materialization and performativity derived from (Barad, 2003) (Barad, 2007) agential realism theory. Their aim is to analyze the relationship between discourse and materiality in organizational phenomena. This approach mobilizes a single-case study designed to explore discursive materializations as well as performative changes related to Human Resource Development practices, particularly those concerning management and leadership development implemented within a Corporate University (CU) in a large private Algerian group. The originality of our work lies on several levels, as it addresses the phenomena of management innovation and organizational change through the lens of sociomateriality, and more specifically, through that of material-discursive practices grounded in Barad's theory of agential realism. Another distinctive aspect of our research is the examination of these phenomena within the context of an Algerian company.

### **1- Methodology**

The central question addressed in this paper, is how the Material-Discursive Practices of human resource development, and more specifically those related to management and leadership development, transform development practices carried out within the framework of a Corporate University, and with what consequent outcomes?

After presenting the research methodology, we will devote a second section to the literature review, which covers the theoretical and philosophical frameworks underpinning the approaches and concepts mobilized in this study. We will address, respectively, the theoretical and philosophical foundations of sociomateriality, those related to management innovations, and finally a brief discussion of "managerial discourses" and "organizational spaces," which will serve as analytical lenses in this paper.

The research approach, adopted in this study is qualitative and exploratory, with an epistemological positioning situated at the intersection

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<sup>1</sup> (Simpson, 2009, p. 133) Explains that a turn in theory—using the cognitive turn and the linguistic turn as examples—is often employed to signify a movement of thought toward a new ontological and epistemological domain (Chia & MacKay, 2007). She further notes that Kuhn (1975) referred to this type of movement as a paradigm shift.

of different constructivist-oriented paradigms (Allard-Poesi & Perret, 2014). It thus lies at the crossroads of epistemological paradigms such as interpretivism, postmodernism, engineering constructivism, and pragmatism.

The research design adopted in our field study consists of a single-case study. Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews conducted with *key informants* connected to the CU. In total, around twenty semi-structured interviews were conducted, each lasting between 30 and 90 minutes. The criteria guiding the selection of interviewees included their roles within the organization, their involvement in the innovation process, and their availability. The main stages of interview analysis followed the following sequence: transcription, inductive coding, thematic categorization, and triangulation with documentary data collected for this purpose. In addition, we relied on a corpus of documents gathered between 2014 and 2016. These documents included, among others, internal group reviews, and three case studies<sup>2</sup>, a biography devoted to the founder of the Cevital Group, excerpts from the founding documents of the CU, brochures, and other documentary resources and publications concerning both the Group and the CU.

The analytical approach applied to the collected data is the material-discursive analysis proposed by (Orlikowski & Scott, 2014), which we employ in conjunction with two analytical frameworks: that of “managerial discourses” (Barley & Kunda, 1992); (Saussois, 2012); and that of “organizational spaces” following Lefebvre’s triptych of space (conceived, perceived, and lived) (Minchella, 2015).

## **2- Theoretical framework**

The theoretical and philosophical foundations presented in this study are, respectively, those of sociomateriality and management innovations. Finally, we conclude with a presentation of scholarly works dedicated to

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<sup>2</sup> We also made use of three case studies conducted by Taïeb Hafsi and Mouloud Khelif. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my gratitude to both authors, who kindly and generously granted me permission to draw upon these valuable resources. They are particularly valuable as they address significant aspects of the Cevital Group and coincide with a critical period (2013 and 2015) in the context of the Cevital Corporate University (CCU) project. The three case studies are presented as follows:

- a. Groupe Cévital (A) : À la poursuite des opportunités de croissance (Juin 2015) ;
- b. Groupe Cévital - Gestion stratégique (B) : Maîtriser la croissance, C’est Vital! (Juillet 2013) ;
- c. CEVITAL (C) : Les Enjeux de Gouvernance et de Préparation de la Relève (Juillet 2013) ;

“managerial discourses” and “organizational spaces” which will serve as analytical frameworks in the case study mobilized here.

By conceptualizing management innovations as material-discursive practices, on the one hand, and by considering these innovations as a form of organizational change understood through a dynamic and emergent ontology (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002), we will examine Human Resource Development practices—particularly those related to management and leadership development—within Cevital’s Corporate University. These are regarded here as a management innovation, itself conceptualized as a material-discursive practice, with all the implications this entails for our study. Furthermore, by adopting a comparative approach with previous development practices, we will seek to highlight the differences in materializations conveyed by the new and former development practices explored in our field study, as well as their performative consequences at various levels of the organization and even within its broader environment.

## **2-1- The theoretical foundations of sociomateriality**

In this section, we address issues related to the renewed interest in materiality. We then present the theoretical and philosophical elements underpinning sociomateriality. Finally, we conclude with a presentation of the material-discursive analytical approach proposed by (Orlikowski & Scott, 2014), which enables us to analyze management innovations as material-discursive practices. This approach builds on the notions of materialization and performativity, as developed within the framework of agential realism by (Barad, 2007).

### **2-1-1- The renewal of interest in materiality**

Sociomateriality emerges as an “umbrella” concept encompassing a range of approaches. Among the theories commonly cited in connection with sociomateriality (Davies & Riach, 2018, p. 134), we find Latour and Callon’s Actor-Network Theory (ANT) (Latour, 2005); Quantum theory and agential realism in the work of (Barad, 2007); James Jerome Gibson’s (1977) Affordance Theory; Pickering’s (1993, 1995) mangle of practice within the sociology of science; Practice theory; performativity; and others. Its origins lie in the observation formulated by (Orlikowski W. J., 2007) and further developed by (Orlikowski & Scott, 2008)—an observation subsequently shared by other scholars (Berard, 2013); (De Vaujany & Mitev, 2015)—of a paradox between the omnipresence of materiality in everyday life and its near absence in management and organization studies. This is further reinforced by (Orlikowski & Scott, 2008), critical analysis, which underscores the inadequacies in the limited body of work that has addressed materiality.

### **2-1-2- Theoretical and philosophical foundations of sociomateriality**

Sociomateriality, or sometimes socio-materiality (with a hyphen), corresponds in fact to an umbrella term encompassing diverse theories that either stem from or critically engage with a set of theoretical and philosophical turns that have emerged since the 1960s. Among these, one can cite the “linguistic turn,” the “performative turn,” the “discursive turn,” the “ontological turn,” and the “practice turn,” among others (Davies & Riach, 2018, p. 133).

Sociomateriality is notably characterized by its relational ontology as well as its posthumanist (anti-anthropocentric) and performative stance. Another distinctive element of sociomateriality lies in its conceptualization of organizational change through a dynamic and emergent ontology (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). Finally, a further characteristic of sociomateriality is its emphasis on material-discursive practices, which we will address in the following section.

### **2-1-3- Material-Discursive Practices**

The material-discursive analytical approach, proposed by (Orlikowski & Scott, 2014) follows from the work of (Hardy & Thomas, 2015). The latter, treat practices as a particular aspect of materiality, a position contested by (Orlikowski & Scott, 2014), who regard practices as ontological—that is, constitutive of reality. Drawing on Barad’s theory of agential realism, they argue that all practices are always and everywhere material-discursive.

In their paper devoted to material-discursive practices, (Orlikowski & Scott, 2014, p. 3) rely on (Barad, 2007) conception of materiality developed within the framework of her theory of agential realism. According to (Barad, 2007), materiality should not be understood as a distinct, stable, or passive entity, but rather as a dynamic and ever-becoming process. She defines it, not as a “thing” but as a “doing,” thereby emphasizing that matter emerges through processes of materialization, which contingently produce effects of stability, boundaries, or apparent forms.

From this perspective, (Orlikowski & Scott, 2014) advocate moving beyond the opposition or hierarchy between the material and the discursive, proposing instead to consider practices as indissolubly constituted by both materialities and meanings, in line with (Barad, 2003) view.

In conclusion, the most effective way to account for materiality is to place practices—which are always material-discursive—at the center of reflection on materiality.

#### **2-1-4- Organizational change**

Scholars such as (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002) argue that traditional approaches to organizational change have been dominated by assumptions privileging stability. As a result, organizational change has been reified and treated as an exceptional rather than a natural phenomenon. In their research, they invite us to consider change as an omnipresent phenomenon that is constitutive of reality.

This dynamic conceptualization of organizational change rests primarily on the necessity of accounting for the micro-processes of change in order to understand the phenomenon of change on its own terms.

#### **2-2- Management innovations**

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, we have witnessed a renewed interest in a particular form of innovation, namely management innovations, also referred to as organizational or administrative innovations. Numerous scholars, including (Le Roy & al., 2013); (Le Roy, Robert, & Giuliani, 2013); (Birkinshaw, Hamel, & Mol, 2008), and (Hamel, 2006); have drawn attention to the marginalization of these forms of innovation in academic research, where the focus has been almost exclusively directed toward technological innovations. These authors particularly emphasize the superiority of management innovations over other forms of innovation in generating a sustainable competitive advantage for the firms that adopt them.

##### **2-2-1- Management Innovations and Competitive Advantage**

A frequently emphasized aspect of management innovations lies in their capacity to provide a sustainable competitive advantage compared to other forms of innovation. This observation highlights the need for further research into the conditions and configurations under which management innovations become genuinely performative within organizations (Birkinshaw, Hamel, & Mol, 2008); (Hamel, 2006); (Le Roy & al., 2013), (Le Roy, Robert, & Giuliani, 2013).

Here, we focus more specifically on two aspects of management innovations that are directly related to our current work. The first concerns the relationship between management innovations and organizational change. The second pertains to the understanding of the various conceptualizations of management innovations, particularly those related to their structure. Through these conceptualizations, we seek to propose our own conceptualization of management innovations, situated in relation to prior conceptualizations and connected to research on sociomateriality, and more specifically to the material-discursive approach advanced by (Orlikowski & Scott, 2014).

**2-2-2- Management innovations as a form of organizational change**

(Birkinshaw, Hamel, & Mol, 2008, p. 826), in their presentation of what constitutes a management innovation, define it as follows: *"Management innovation involves the introduction of new practices within an established organization and, as such, represents a particular form of organizational change."*

Although management innovations are considered as a form of organizational change, it should be emphasized from the outset that this form of innovation itself constitutes a much more complex phenomenon with deeper performative consequences (Birkinshaw, Hamel, & Mol, 2008).

**2-2-3. Management innovations as Material-Discursive Practices**

By drawing a parallel between the different conceptualizations proposed by (Birkinshaw, Hamel, & Mol, 2008) and Hatchuel and Weil (1992) (Canet, 2012b, p. 65), we arrive at a conceptualization that we ourselves propose, that we present in the last column of Table 1 below:

**Table 1. Different Conceptualizations of the Structure of Management Innovations**

Mamman (2009)	Hatchuel & Weil (1992)	Birkinshaw, Hamel, & Mol (2008)	Authors conceptualization
Philosophy	Management philosophy	Abstract level	Discursive level Managerial discourse
Principles	Simplified vision of Organizational Relations		
Practices	Technical substract	Operational level	Material level Discourse materialization

**Source: Elaborated by the authors**

From this point, we can already make explicit the reasoning that we seek to unfold in this text. This paper conceptualizes management innovations as material-discursive practices (Orlikowski & Scott, 2014) and as a form of dynamic organizational change (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). On this basis, through the material-discursive approach proposed by (Orlikowski & Scott, 2014) we will analyze management innovations.

**2-3- Managerial discourses**

Managerial discourses constitute a central element that we mobilize as an analytical framework, drawing on the works of (Barley & Kunda, 1992) and (Saussois, 2012). However, before presenting these contributions, we will provide a brief overview of the notion of management.

### **2-3-1- Management and managerial discourses**

This section aims to highlight the ambiguous and complex nature of the notion of management. We contend that mobilizing the concept of managerial discourses offers a fruitful way to apprehend what management is. It is worth recalling that, in the absence of a unanimous and univocal definition of management, various approaches exist to grasp this central notion within our field. Without claiming to be exhaustive, we present below some of these approaches.

#### **a) Characterization of management:**

This approach consists in identifying, from a set of definitions of management, the recurrent features that characterize it. An example of this approach is illustrated by the work of (Kaehler & Grundei, 2019), who characterize management as a process, that is, a set of functions mobilizing different resources with the aim of achieving a well-defined objective.

#### **b) The Greek etymological origin of management:**

Another approach to apprehending what management is consists in exploring its etymological origins. A recent paper by (Zartaloudis, 2019) offers a highly promising avenue, as it examines the Greek roots of management found in the term *Nomos*, a word also presents in familiar terms such as “economy,” “agronomy,” and “ergonomics.” (Zartaloudis, 2019, p. xxv) Highlights the semantic evolution of the term under study, emphasizing its gradual transformation toward meanings close to those associated with management and administration. He notes that this evolution was, from the outset, marked by multiple and metaphorical uses, often poetic, involving successive extensions and abstractions. Thus, we believe that the recent work of (Zartaloudis, 2019) provides a genuine opportunity to rediscover the meaning of management through its Greek roots, and more specifically through its multiple and metaphorical uses.

#### **c) Conceptualization of management according to Saussois (2012):**

Another approach to apprehending the notion of management is the one proposed by (Saussois, 2012, p. 214), who suggests understanding management as a formalization of practices in the form of pragmatic statements. In the absence of a theory of management, these statements acquire meaning only within a historical perspective, that is, in light of the concrete problems faced by firms as they undergo transformation (Saussois, 2012, p. 214). This conception, by the term “statements,” directly refers to the concept of managerial discourses (managerial ideologies, managerial rhetoric’s), which lie at the core of the analytical approach that we implement here.

### **2-3-2- Evolution of managerial discourses**

Building on a critique of the prevailing dominant position regarding the evolution of American managerial discourse, —an evolution described as linear, having gradually shifted from a coercive to a rational and ultimately to a normative rhetoric of control—. (Barley & Kunda, 1992), following their analysis of historical data, concluded that American managerial discourse has since 1870, been constructed through alternating waves of normative and rational rhetorics of control. Table 2 illustrate this evolution.

**Table 2. Successive managerial ideologies since 1870**

<b>Ideology</b>	<b>Era of ascent</b>	<b>Tenor</b>
Industrial betterment	1870-1900	Normative
Scientific management	1900-1923	Rational
Welfare capitalism/human relations	1923-1955	Normative
Systems rationalism	1955-1980	Rational
Organizational culture	1980-present	Normative

**Source: (Barley & Kunda, 1992)**

By “ideology,” (Barley & Kunda, 1992, p. 363) refer to a stream of discourse that, albeit inadvertently, promulgates a set of assumptions concerning the nature of the objects it addresses. In this sense, all theories possess an ideological component, since all theorists must adopt some ontological stance in order to proceed with their work. The two authors specify that the rhetorical objects of managerial theories generally concern organizations, employees, managers, and the means by which the latter direct the two former objects.

(Barley & Kunda, 1992) Explain the origin of this alternating model of normative and rational rhetorics of control by reference to cultural considerations specific to Western societies, suggesting that American managerial ideology has evolved within the limits of a bipolar ideational structure. Regarding the timing of the emergence of the five ideologies of control identified by the authors, these correspond to periods of economic expansion and contraction. Normative conceptions of control coincide with cycles of economic contraction, whereas rational conceptions of control align with cycles of economic expansion.

### **2-3-3- Organizational spaces**

(Minchella, 2015, p. 30) Highlights the decisive influence of Henri Lefebvre’s work on organizational spaces. Three of Lefebvre’s major contributions prove particularly fruitful for organizational analysis: first, the emphasis placed on the lived experience of space users; second, the conception of space as a dynamic social construction, shaped by social relations and historical processes; and third, his renowned analytical triptych

of space— “perceived, conceived, lived”—which provides a compelling conceptual framework.

This interpretive framework, initially proposed by Lefebvre, enables a plural reading of materiality. On the one hand, the “conceived” dimension refers to how materiality is envisioned by the organization, to the managerial intentions that preside over its shaping, and to the structural configurations that result from it. On the other hand, the “perceived” dimension corresponds to its tangible, objectified reality, as it presents itself to the observer before any symbolic or representational charge. Finally, the “lived” materiality designates the subjective, affective, and imaginative meanings attributed to it by the social actors who inhabit and experience it on a daily basis—being the only ones capable of grasping its implicit and invisible dimensions for an external observer (Minchella, 2015, p. 98).

### **3- Case study**

The selected single case study aims to explore the discursive materializations leading to the production of performative transformations in Human Resource Development practices, as well as in the management and leadership of executives within the Cevital Group, through the development practices induced by the establishment of the Group’s Corporate University. These practices will be compared with the patterns of Human Resource Development practices that predated the implementation of the Corporate University within the Group.

#### **3-1- Presentation of the case study**

Our choice of the Cevital Group as the setting for our field study is justified on several grounds. The Cevital Group, owing to its size and reputation, together with the renown and respect accorded to its Founder-President, enjoys heightened visibility, as do the initiatives he has launched, particularly with regard to management innovations and the implementation of innovative management practices.

#### **3-2- Analysis and discussion of results**

Through our case study, we explored Human Resource Development practices, and more specifically, practices related to the development of management and leadership within the Cevital Group through its newly established Corporate University. These practices were compared to those implemented prior to the creation of the Corporate University (such as mini-MBA training programs and coaching by expatriate managers). The purpose of this comparison was to understand how material-discursive practices of Human Resource Development—and, more precisely, those concerning management and leadership development—transform development practices taking place within the framework of a Corporate University, and with what subsequent outcomes. In other words, what are the implications

for managers and management, for HR professionals—and more specifically HR development professionals—for the Corporate University itself, for the Cevital Group, and for the Executive Education Industry?

The examination of management innovations through the lens of sociomateriality and as material-discursive practices represents an innovative and original approach to the study of organizational phenomena in general. The originality of our work is further reinforced by the consideration of the Algerian context in which the study is conducted. The key findings derived from the analysis of the collected data are presented as follows:

First, with respect to the Human Resource Development framework embedded within the new Corporate University. We observed materializations reflecting issues of a strategic nature, as expressed by the Group's shareholders and Top Management, concerning both the control of the Group's current and future growth and a profound concern regarding the management's capacity—at that time and at all levels of the organization—to accompany such growth. The scale of the initiative to establish a Corporate University (including substantial investments, support from an international consulting firm specializing in this area, significant mobilization of resources within the Group and its subsidiaries, and the sustained involvement of shareholders and Top Management, etc.) represents a first materialization of the strategic stakes associated with the Group's growth, diversification, and internationalization. In contrast, within the framework of development practices prior to the establishment of the Corporate University, this link to the Group's strategic objectives was not explicitly affirmed, and development initiatives remained limited and fragmented, sometimes initiated at the Group level and at other times by subsidiaries. In this earlier model, some Managers were sent to attend MBA programs (more specifically, mini-MBA programs), yet without any significant connection to well-defined strategic objectives. These initiatives may be interpreted as a recognition of the loyalty of the selected Managers toward the Group during its early years of creation. This aspect is well documented in a passage of the biography dedicated to the Group's founder. The programs followed within this framework, similar to most MBA programs, focused on the rhetoric of rational control, in line with the interpretation provided by (Barley & Kunda, 1992) concerning the major reforms undergone by MBA programs in the United States, which in fact constitute the main model for such programs worldwide.

The second, notable result identified concerns the materialization of a limited number of development programs primarily oriented toward the enhancement of management and leadership skills among the Group's

executives, specifically those destined to become the future heads of the Group's Business Units. In this regard, following the analytical framework related to managerial discourses. The examination of the first programs deployed—namely the “ADN Program” and the “Welch Way Program”—indicates a materialization of a rhetoric of normative control, as identified by (Barley & Kunda, 1992), through initiatives such as the development of organizational DNA, the promotion of corporate culture, leadership development, and team management.

Another observation related to Human Resource Development within the framework of the Corporate University is the materialization of mechanisms designed to ensure the compatibility of training programs with the Group's values and history, captured in the expression “the Cevitalization of the Group's management.” These mechanisms include the establishment of a Corporate University Charter, which defines, among other elements, the model of Corporate University to be implemented, the Group's priorities and philosophy regarding training and development, and so forth. Among these mechanisms, one finds the creation of a founding program aligned with best practices in Corporate Universities. This founding program, the “ADN Program” seeks to instill across all levels of the Group, and among both new and existing employees, the values, history, and legacy of the Group and its founder. Adherence to the precepts of this program constitutes an essential condition for employee development. Current and future programs—whether developed within the University or purchased externally—must conform to this founding program and the criteria defined in the Corporate University Charter.

In contrast, the development practices deployed prior to the creation of the Corporate University were not subject to any such requirements, whether regarding the training programs themselves or the providers offering such programs.

Another aspect of the normative rhetoric of control, which characterizes the new managerial discourse of the Group and its managers, is the articulation of the Group's values, summarized under the acronym IRIS (Initiative, Respect, Integrity, and Solidarity).

It should be noted, however, that the Corporate University also envisages programs that align with a rhetoric of rational control, as identified by (Barley & Kunda, 1992). These programs are primarily aimed at developing technical and professional skills. Nevertheless, the Corporate University's resources are primarily oriented toward management development with a normative orientation—unlike the previous model of development.

These materializations are fully consistent with the managerial discourse of the Group, its shareholders, and the Top Management. We argue that the Group's managerial discourse largely privileges the development of employees' "soft skills" over "hard skills," even though the latter remain necessary. Supporting evidence for this orientation is found both in the biography of the Group's founder and in interviews and other collected documents.

Another significant result concerns the absence of a physical space dedicated to housing the Corporate University, as well as the absence of staff assigned to it. While, during its project phase, the University had a structure composed of group members and consultants involved in the project, and while a "symbolic" space had been designated to host it, the choice of the term "symbolic" is noteworthy. This is explained by the fact that Corporate University models are increasingly moving toward an online presence, which is inexpensive than a physical one. The lack of a materialized physical space, even a modest one for administrative offices, has hindered—or, put differently, slowed down—the dynamic of producing the development model conveyed by the University. Nevertheless, once the University was launched, a General Director was appointed in February 2014, though he left his position in December of the same year. Since then, the Corporate University has remained without leadership, without staff, and without a building to house its structures and materialize its presence in reality. Ultimately, only the "ADN" and "Welch Way" programs were temporarily deployed, but they had to be suspended due to constraints, notably the inability of internal trainers to be released for longer periods than what best practices in the field recommend. It should be noted that the very emergence of "internal trainers" and "facilitators" constitutes a materialization in itself—one that contrasts with the previous model, in which training was delivered exclusively by external providers.

These materializations extend further, as we observed the emergence of new roles related to the creation of the Corporate University. Such roles include the designation of a "Sponsor" of the Corporate University and "Champions" of the University—elements absent from previous development practices.

Another notable materialization relates to the Group's communication channels (e.g., the internal Group Review, Flash News), which the Corporate University initially relied upon for dissemination. While these communication tools played their role effectively during the project phase, they have paradoxically disappeared since then, and no further information about the Corporate University has been published—aside from a few mentions on the Group's website, which themselves

gradually disappeared over time. This communication was directed toward not only internal audiences but also external ones beyond the Group.

We observed the disappearance of the Group's internal magazine *Cevital News*, which ceased publication after Issue No. 08 of April/May 2013. A new internal magazine, *CeviMag*, was launched in 2022, with its first issue published in September of that year. Strangely, the magazine included a paper entitled "Launch of the ADN Training," which recalls the well-known "ADN Program," the founding program of the Corporate University. It is rather surprising to note that the text makes no mention whatsoever of the Corporate University, nor even of the "ADN Program" as its foundational program. It is as if the Corporate University had completely disappeared and never existed. Furthermore, we note the use of the term "training" instead of "program," which was the terminology initially used within the framework of the Corporate University.

Another notable element we observed is the use of a new vocabulary, specifically the term "collaborators" to refer to employees or staff. This expression has become ubiquitous in oral and written communications across the Group's various documents. It signals a form of valorization of the Group's employees. Clearly, this element is inscribed within the normative rhetoric of control that characterizes the Group's managerial discourse during this new era. It is worth noting, however, that to our knowledge, this term has not been formalized in any theoretical framework that would clarify its meaning or content.

Other concepts materialized during this period include "talents," "high potentials," and "talent management." While these concepts appeared in the discourse of both managers and employees, no concrete materialization of a talent management process was established within the Human Resources Departments, whether at Group or subsidiary level. This absence represents a critical omission, given that such a process should have constituted a prerequisite for the developmental work incumbent upon the Corporate University.

The absence of a dedicated organizational space for the Corporate University prevents us from evaluating it in terms of its own organizational space, as understood through Lefebvre's triptych. We will never know what forms of appropriation might have emerged from clients and staff in relation to the University and its designated space. Yet, it is precisely the lived experiences of users of such a space that matter most.

The developmental practices within the framework of the Corporate University enacted materializations that were entirely different from those associated with the developmental model that preceded its creation. The specific developmental model of the Corporate University enabled the

production of material reconfigurations in several aspects related to the Group's managerial discourse, as well as in the management of its executives and their own self-conceptions. We noted significant changes in the language employed by managers, who now describe themselves not only as managers but also as leaders. Likewise, employees are now referred to as "collaborators," though the precise meaning of this term remains unclear. However, we cannot affirm that these materializations have produced profound performative transformations within the Group or the executive education industry as a whole, given that the materializations identified—or those expected to materialize—did not persist over time.

The absence of certain materializations, such as the lack of a building to host the Corporate University's structures and personnel, as well as the sudden interruption of other materializations such as the disappearance of *Cevital News* internal review and the temporary suspension of programs deployed under the Corporate University, prevented the production of more pronounced performative transformations at different levels.

A crucial point concerns the Group's relationship with actors in the Executive Education industry (ExEd or Exec. Ed) (e.g., Business Schools). Although these external providers were not excluded from the Corporate University's logic, their programs had to undergo a prior evaluation by the Corporate University in order to assess their compatibility with the Charter, philosophy, values, and ADN of the Cevital Group. This represents a notable aspect of the performative transformations of the "Exec. Ed" induced by the materializations of development practices fostered through the establishment of the Corporate University.

Concerning the normative rhetoric of control that characterizes the managerial discourse of Cevital Group—materialized through the Human Resource Development practices of the Corporate University model—this rhetoric can be explained by the context of uncertainty that marked the Group, its shareholders, and the Top Management. At that time, the Group had reached a certain level of growth and was anticipating substantial international expansion by 2025. This context must be related to the weakness of managerial capacity among the Group's executives overall, which urgently required development in order to elevate them to the highest international standards of management.

Following our analysis, we observed that the examination of management innovations—and particularly that of Cevital's Corporate University—aligns closely with the material-discursive approach proposed by (Orlikowski & Scott, 2014). Indeed, Human Resource Development practices, and especially those related to management and leadership

development, display materializations that differ significantly from those found in earlier development practices. Moreover, we confirm that the new materializations generated by development practices within the Corporate University framework produce performative changes at multiple levels—within the organization, among individuals, and even beyond the organizational boundaries (The Exec. Ed Industry).

#### **4- Conclusion**

It clearly appears that the Human Resource Development practices undertaken within the framework of Cevital's Corporate University have indeed produced notable materializations—materializations precisely as envisioned by the material-discursive approach of (Orlikowski & Scott, 2014). However, the non-materialization of certain aspects, such as the absence of a dedicated building to accommodate the structures and staff of the Corporate University, the lack of dedicated personnel, and the disappearance or suspension of some materializations identified in the previous section, has prevented the emergence of deep performative transformations. From the standpoint of the Group's size, no significant change is observed: the Group still employed 18,000 collaborators in 2014, although it aimed for a workforce of 100,000 by 2025. Similarly, the target of achieving USD 25 billion in turnover by 2025—of which 50% was expected to be generated internationally—has not been reached and remains at the same level as in 2014.

Despite the interruption (temporary or permanent—only the future will tell) of the Corporate University experience, we were nevertheless able to observe changes in development practices, materialized through the adoption of new vocabulary. The use of the term “collaborator” instead of “employee” or “worker” signals a greater respect and consideration for staff. The Group's managers have also undergone transformations in their relationships with their collaborators, in their attitudes, behaviors, and in their self-conception as managers—or even as leaders—extending as far as their dress styles and posture. More importantly, above all else, we observed the materialization of a normative rhetoric of control within the Group's managerial discourse, which aligns with the concerns and stakes identified earlier.

We therefore conclude that, although the material reconfigurations did not produce deep performative transformations of the Group or of the Exec. Ed Industry as a whole, they nonetheless produced different managers and employees, accompanied by a managerial discourse markedly distinct from that which prevailed before the creation of the Corporate University. Further research in the future is needed to explore development practices within Corporate Universities, as well as the range of management

innovations conceptualized through the practices they enact and contribute to reconfiguring, with all that this implies for management, organizations, and their environments. We wish to highlight here the power of the approach proposed by (Orlikowski & Scott, 2014), and the potential it offers for the study of management innovations, particularly Corporate Universities, as well as Human Resource Development and other management and organizational practices.

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