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Innovation management: subject re-evaluation

INTRODUCTION

This article has a conceptual character. It is founded on the assumption that there is both the necessity and the possibility of enhancing the subjective role of the individual (human) in the process of innovation. Therefore, the purpose of the article is to dissect the innovation process as the capacity to introduce innovations, and then to integrate it into a subjective approach to innovativeness. With this approach, and in line with the needs of an innovative economy, innovation management is nowadays becoming the main tool for ensuring and discounting development benefits through innovation. This is in accordance with the basic functions of management, but experience shows that problems are encountered in its implementation due to the special nature of innovative activities. These are characterized by a greater degree of creativity and a significant possibility of success. What makes the process of coordinating the activities of individuals under innovation management more difficult is the fact that the number of individuals increases due to the dissemination of the concept of open innovation (Bajenescu, 2019) in all areas of human activity, not just in business but also in the public or social sphere, and not only for corporations but also for small and medium-sized enterprises (Zastempowski, Przybylska, 2016).

Contemporary innovation management is largely subject-matter, characterized by the fact that the impact management instruments are oriented to the stages of the innovation process (Tidd, Bessant, 2013; Trott, 2008; Pomykalski A., Pomykalski P., 2013). In practice, this means that the role of the participants in innovative processes is underestimated in enterprises. Frequently their subjectivity (Bal-Woźniak, 2016) as well as their innovative competences are neglected (Przyborowska, Błajet, 2014; Marin-Garcia et al., 2016). This leads to a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, the development of a knowledge-based

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economy and the levels of uncertainty and risk require a good management skill set for efficient functioning and increased organizational efficiency (Skrzypek, 2013; Bratnicka, 2015). On the other hand, the resources of human/intellectual capital are wasted (Ujwary-Gil, 2017). The idea of lifelong learning is underestimated, although it is a key measure of the knowledge-based economy (Tkacz, 2019).

The developing trend towards positive organization management (Laloux, 2014; Helzer, Kim, 2019) shows the possibilities for the active involvement of members of the organization's community in shaping their own work environment (Shabunova et al., 2018). Due to changes in the environment of enterprises, mainly in the form of new types of competition, the progressive globalization of liberalization, digital revolution 4.0 and the dissemination of network structures, existing innovation management has become inadequate (Kraśnicka et al., 2018; Francik et al., 2018). The imitation of patterns based on the technocratic (objective) approach oriented towards innovation management is burdened with a high risk of ineffectiveness in the 'catching up' countries, which include Poland and other countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Bal-Woźniak, 2015b; Paliokaitė, 2019).

DEVELOPMENT DILEMMAS, INNOVATIVENESS OF ENTERPRISES AND THE POLISH ECONOMY

A multitude of empirical studies, together with a multitude of scientific studies and various types of guidebooks, may suggest that the problem of insufficient innovation among people, enterprises, regions and entire economies is well understood. In such a situation, the consistent implementation of enterprise development strategies as well as governmental and EU innovation programs should allow the effective achievement of development goals. However, regular reports continue to describe trends (GII, 2019; EIS, 2019) which do not confirm significant improvement. Irrespective of the cross-section studies and the scope of research, as well as the adopted research methods, the conclusions indicate 'weak research and development activities in many companies, resulting in a low level of innovation activity, which leads to insufficient innovation in the Polish economy' (Jasiński, 2014, p. 21). This situation in terms of a specific innovation gap has not changed significantly, even with access to a wide stream of European Union funds, both in relation to the country as a whole and in levelling the regional disparities (Czudec, Kata, Wosiek, 2019). Therefore, the conditions for integrated development are still more in the declarative sphere (Śłodowa-Hełpa, 2015). It is also difficult to talk about the impact of the modernization processes on deepening socio-economic cohesion, despite the fact that 'it is important to focus a coherent policy in the EU on creating new jobs, especially in new sectoral growth poles, which can be found mainly in services requiring high knowledge' (Cyrek, 2017, p. 203).

The elimination of the innovation gap, including the technological gap, is hindered in Poland by a number of factors, such as the issues of an effective investor,

exclusivity, voluntary transferability of property rights and conditions of the capital market functioning related to ownership relations (Woźniak, 2019b).

Andrzej H. Jasiński (2014, p. 21) summarizes the reasons for the too small supply of innovation in as five points:

- the lack of well-functioning R&D and innovation markets, with low demand for innovation from companies, the small scale of knowledge transfer and innovation diffusion between companies, and inefficiencies in the processes of innovation commercialization;
- poor location of the R&D potential, i.e. ‘far from the market;’
- insufficient cooperation between R&D and the business sectors;
- the lack of an innovation culture in companies;
- a slim R&D effort on the part of Polish companies.

The same author also emphasizes that ‘we must remember certain shortcomings in public innovation policy’ (Jasiński, 2014).

Little progress in eliminating the existing obstacles to innovation means that all the cases discussed can be treated as part of the premise that there is a great need to look for new ways to increase the innovativeness of Polish companies and the economy as a whole.

INNOVATION MANAGEMENT: AN APPLICABLE OBJECTIVE APPROACH

Traditional innovation management can be termed Schumpeterian as it refers to specific innovative ventures, mainly related to original technological (product and process) innovations. To describe this transformation process associated with new innovations, Joseph A. Schumpeter used the term ‘creative destruction’ (1942). This system involves letting outdated companies fail so that we can free up the resources that allow new companies to become huge and introduce innovations. The idea of ‘creative destruction’ therefore refers to business innovations, and in particular to innovations in industrial companies. The main emphasis can be placed on industrial companies for two reasons: industry is home to the vast majority of apparent technological innovations and the European Union currently places enormous stress on the development of the kind of industry indispensable for finding solutions to the challenges our society face, today and in the future (Jasiński, 2014, p. 17). We are currently observing the continuous development of this research trend, both using theoretical (Foster, Kaplan, 2001; Zorska, 2011) and empirical approaches (Chun et al., 2008; Andersson et al., 2011). Its notable effect is innovation, which in a broad sense is interpreted by OECD and Eurostat as the implementation of a new or significantly improved product (or service) or process, which should be new or improved and available to the potential user (Oslo Manual, 2018).

In fact, today we are dealing with a much broader wave of innovations, not only technological but also non-technological (organizational and marketing), as well as

social, financial, ecological, management (management innovations), educational, pedagogical, systemic (in relation to systems, e.g. education), political and institutional. In the ontological sense, they are all either a product or a process, but as for the domain criterion, their number is constantly growing. This means there is a need for mechanisms other than just ‘creative destruction’ to explain innovative processes. The concept proposed in the study gives appropriate consideration to this issue.

TOWARDS THE SUBJECTIVE APPROACH OF INNOVATIVENESS: ASSUMPTIONS

Innovativeness should be understood as the ability to introduce innovations. There seems to be agreement concerning this understanding. However, for speech and writing, this concept is understood as the intensity of implementing innovations. Meanwhile, there is a fundamental difference between competences and the effects of their use. Innovativeness is not a new concept, but it still does not translate into effective mechanisms of functioning in this sphere of activity for people and organizations. The opportunity to change this situation is in popularizing innovativeness based on the subjective approach (Figure 1). Demonstrating innovativeness in the subjective approach means expressing innovative behaviour. Therefore, the subjective approach to innovation is associated not only with the opportunity to focus innovations on catching-up with development but also to harmonize these methods with natural human traits. Innovative activities, in which the creative element is greater than in other areas of economic activity, can create special conditions for the self-realization of the individual.

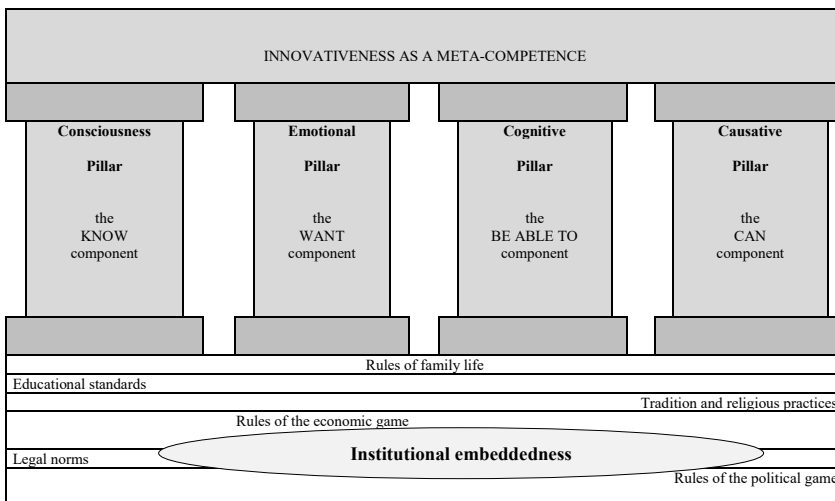


Figure 1. Innovativeness from a subjective perspective

Source: own work.

Adopting the assumption that the ability to introduce innovations is a category that is too aggregate to explore real sources of still low levels of innovation in enterprises and the economy has become the basis for deconstructing the category of capabilities (Czarniawska, 2010). Man's ability to effectively shape attitudes and take innovative behaviours as part of the implementation of the innovation process takes place in the following sequence: know – want – be able to – can (Figure 1).

The KNOW component means *being aware of the necessity for innovation in the context of opportunities and threats*. A human being can recognize a situation; in other words, notice and receive signals indicating the innovative character of a situation whose consequences (positive or negative) may be visible only in the future. Subjectivity in this aspect facilitates the recognition of the character of a situation by noticing and receiving various signals from a certain human situation, sent by other elements of the environment or being a derivative of the mutual relations between a person and other elements of an environment. In the case where there are no dispositions to observe development challenges in the context of innovations evaluated as valuable, and a low level of sensitivity of the subject, i.e. a lack of sufficient awareness of innovative needs, then the stimuli which signal the need to replace the current state with a new and more beneficial one according to various criteria will not be received.

The WANT component means *feeling obliged to engage in and release motivation for innovative activities*. A human being may evaluate and interpret the opportunity and necessity for innovative activities according to their own feelings (comfort or the lack of it) and aspirations resulting from them, as well as the feeling that there is an obligation to act. Subjectivity in the emotional aspect is connected with dispositions to release the feeling of an obligation regarding the search for new solutions to improve the wellbeing achieved by developing one's own competences, economic success and the business sphere. A rational explanation of this feeling is an expected surplus in the sum of benefits from the change, which is greater than its costs in comparison to the effects achieved in a situation of no change. Such expectations have, first of all, an intentional character, in that they stem from the certainty of innovation functionality in comparison to the realized development goals, and they are formulated based on, for example, opinions about the nature and characteristic of the innovations.

The BE ABLE TO component means *possessing necessary competences: knowledge and proficiency in using them*. A human being can understand a situation in the context of various relations thanks to their capability to connect the observed phenomena with patterns, based on the knowledge they possess. Subjectivity in this aspect facilitates making knowledge useful in all scopes, and also in seeking new knowledge (learning to learn) with reference to all spheres

of human existence. This happens when a subject becomes capable of using the knowledge to discover and develop creative potential.

The CAN component means *acting effectively: find opportunities, create those that are needed and seize the existing ones*. Opportunities in a general sense are the ways to achieve specific intentions. Subjectivity in the causative aspect leads to taking action in a sense of freedom, the possibility of self-determination and responsibility. Innovative action can mean a direct independent activity or combined team activities. It shifts the responsibility for the organizational level. Achieving these dispositions requires various (financial, technical, systemic, infrastructure) conditions. The behavioural attitude component and subjectivity connected with it refers to a disposition to shape implementation opportunities to introduce innovations in an organization, such as the process of seeking sources of financing for new solutions. These four types of dispositions: awareness, emotional, cognitive and behavioural increase the effectiveness of the implemented innovation process.

The process of isolating individual innovative competences (awareness, engagement, proficiency, effectiveness) into structural elements has an analytical character. This subjective mechanism can be used in all organizations, not only economic ones, where the effects of the functioning of a 'system' depend on people capable of creativity, binding competition and cooperating on single positions, not only in network structures but also within the framework of neighbourhood or public structures, and the structures of a family, and not only business and R&D structures, including transnational organizations.

It is also crucial to emphasize the issues of institutional embeddedness, which must always be taken into account when talking about behaviour. Our behaviour is influenced by various institutions related to all human environments such as family, school, religion, economy, law and politics (Turner, 1997). Institutions influence the development of people's professional maturity. Behavioural institutions (referred to as institution-rules, to distinguish them from institution-organizations) are defined as a formal and informal framework, limiting the space of free choice, shaping human interactions and the rules of the game in society (North, 1990).

THE CONCEPT OF THE SUBJECT-ORIENTATED MODEL OF INNOVATIVENESS

The consequence of adopting the concept of the subjective innovativeness is the subject-oriented model of innovativeness based on four separate pillars of specific innovative competences (Figure 2).

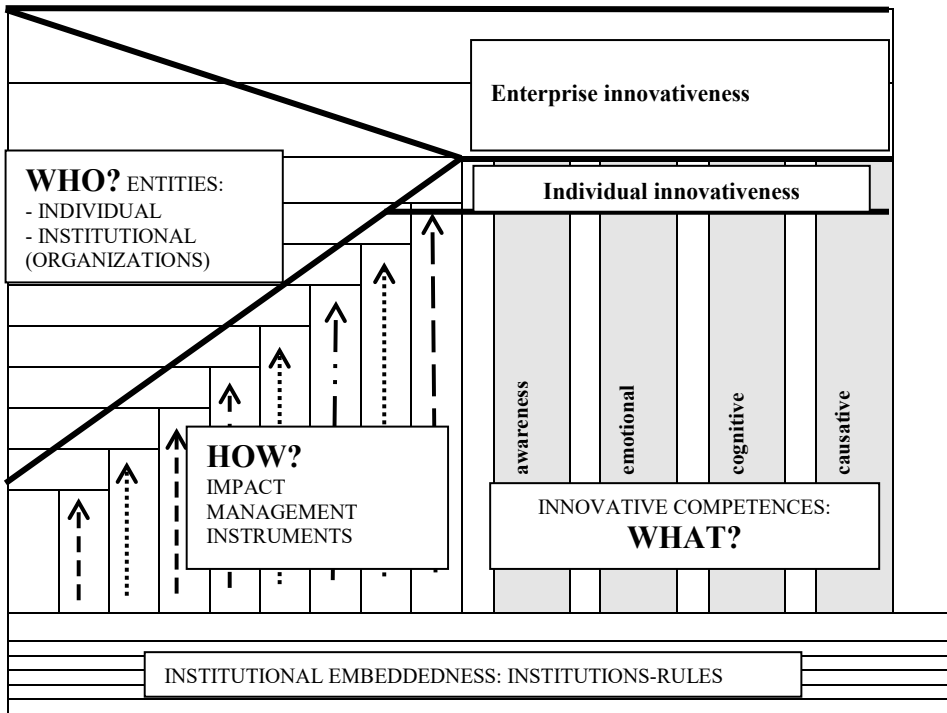


Figure 2. Subject-oriented model of innovativeness

Source: own work.

The area of potential solutions consistent with the model approach, as shown in Figure 2, is determined by the answers to three questions.

The WHO is mainly about the subjectivity of human beings acting as managers and employees in non-managerial positions, including the consumers and non-economic participants of organizations. Institutional entities, i.e. organizations set up to implement specific goals and respect a specific order, set by all behavioural institutions competent for these entities, are also included here. The theoretical basis for identifying subjects involved in given innovations may be the concept of stakeholders, widely used in management and quality sciences. However, the Quintuple Helix model is increasingly used, indicating the need for cooperation between universities and business, and the spheres of state and government in the media, civil society and the environment (Carayannis, 2012).

The WHAT refers to the specific innovation competences of individuals. The condition for achieving the objectives of the subject-oriented model of innovativeness is to incorporate into the mechanism of shaping innovative competences the rules of integrated development. This will ensure that innovation ‘does not diminish the possibility of achieving the development goals in non-business areas of human

existence.’ In this way, the model is associated with improving the quality of valuable life in all spheres of human activity. Apart from these three components respected in the concept of economically, socially and ecologically sustainable development, there are also five others: politics, consumption, knowledge, technology, and axiology (more on this subject in: Woźniak, 2019a).

The HOW is associated with the selection of specific procedures, tools, regulations as well as control and self-control mechanisms. For companies it is about selecting specific impact management instruments that are used as part of the management systems. Slightly different methods are used in the systems of government, administration or command. The selection of ‘impact instruments’ is important to prompt another field which seeks opportunities to include Multi-Level Governance according to Hooghe and Marx (2003). This will lead to the management of innovation as a meta-competence and increase the efficiency of innovation management.

INNOVATION MANAGEMENT IN THE SUBJECTIVE APPROACH: BASIC FINDINGS

The concept presented opens the perspective of making innovation a universal competence (meta-competence). It may lead to an increase in the effectiveness of innovation management in the form of stronger effort or higher innovation intensity. This higher efficiency is indirectly achieved by shaping the appropriate innovative attitudes and behaviours of people before they become active participants in various organizations, the employees of companies in particular.

One of the conditions for the implementation of the proposed management model is the requirement for individual treatment of participants in innovative processes in all environments. If the impact management instruments are to shape innovative behaviours in work environments, certain mechanisms can be activated to disseminate the expected (desired) individual innovative competences. They are anchored in the natural dispositions of each person, although they are considerably influenced by behavioural institutions.

Individual innovative competences form the ‘pillars supporting the innovativeness’ of companies, which are undoubtedly the main connection in national economies. Innovative competences are not effective until they reach a certain level.

The subject re-evaluation of innovation management is associated with the need to widely disseminate the belief that innovativeness is the ability to implement innovation that requires innovation competences from the people participating in the various innovation process. The key factor here is the correct understanding of the essence of innovation as an implemented change in various areas of human existence, both in the individual and social dimensions, over the long term.

CONCLUSIONS

The concept of enhancing innovation management by a subjective approach has epistemological and application implications. The results of the research conducted will increase understanding of the reasons for insufficient innovation by Polish enterprises and the economy as a whole. In practical terms, the findings of the study can help practitioners see the possibility of eliminating this specific innovation obstacle.

The main idea behind showing specific innovative behaviours from the perspective of a comprehensive (integrated) model is to direct our attention to a practical problem, which is not about incidental behaviour, but rather about the shaping and consolidating of specific repetitive, perceptible behaviours that give the whole organization the 'character' of an innovative one.

The concept proposed is also a response to the need for Polish society and the economy to take active preparations in order to achieve a new level of socio-economic development based on innovation. This is directly related to the idea of a sustainable enterprise (Bal-Woźniak, 2015a) and the program for sustainable development (UN, 2015).

The main advantage of the study is that it draws attention not only to the need to disseminate a subject-oriented approach to innovativeness, but it also shows the opportunities in this field. The original contribution is in exploring innovativeness as the ability to implement innovation by showing the spiral of feedback of the internal mechanism of attitude towards innovativeness. Some recommendations can be made, based on this mechanism, regarding the directions and methods of shaping pro-innovative attitudes and behaviours. These include:

- building innovation awareness at all levels and in various types of organizations; focusing on the possibilities of perceiving innovative situations in and around the enterprise;
- triggering innovative engagement to change passive, often sceptical and even reluctant attitudes towards innovation, i.e. stimulating interest in the innovative situation along with evoking a sense of necessity to take action or discomfort in the absence of action;
- rewarding proficiency, i.e. a high level of skills in using the available knowledge and suggesting opportunities to supplement the skills necessary to acquire proficiency;
- stimulating the taking of action to free people from feelings of helplessness, mobilizing them to take action, i.e. finding solutions to a problem in an innovative situation.

The concept of the subjective approach of innovativeness requires further study, including the institutional determinants of innovation and innovativeness, as well as providing the answers to three model questions in the context of subject-oriented innovation management.

The research also indicates some directions for integrating innovation management in the subject approach, with the innovation policy of governments and institutional reforms oriented towards the dissemination of civilization progress.

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Summary

The article is of a conceptual character and proposes a change in the paradigm of thinking about innovation management. The growing belief in the importance of innovation for increasing the competitive advantage of companies and the international position of the national economy does not go hand in hand with the effectiveness of innovation management. This applies in particular to the so-called catching-up countries, which include Poland and other countries of Central and Eastern Europe. It was the basis for proposing the concept of innovation management from the subjective approach and its operationalization in the context of the needs arising from contemporary development trends. The author proposes appreciating the subjective role of the individual (a human being) in the innovation process. Therefore, the purpose of the article is to dissect the innovation process as

the capacity to implement innovations, and then integrate them into the subjective approach of innovativeness. The hypothesis is proved by demonstrating that the new approach opens the perspective of causing that innovativeness becomes a universal competence (meta-competence), which may lead to an increase in the effectiveness of innovation management in the form of higher innovation intensity. This higher efficiency is indirectly achieved by shaping the appropriate innovative attitudes and behaviours of people. The results of the conducted research will increase understanding of the reasons for insufficient innovation in Polish enterprises and the economy as a whole. At the same time, they set the direction for further research, including institutional conditions for innovation and innovativeness, because people's innovative attitudes and behaviours are influenced by a series of behavioural institutions. The study also indicates some directions for integrating innovation management in the subject approach with the innovation policy of governments and institutional reforms oriented towards the dissemination of civilization progress.

Keywords: innovation, innovation management, innovativeness, innovative work behaviour.

Zarządzanie innowacjami: przewartościowania w kierunku podmiotowym

Streszczenie

Artykuł o charakterze koncepcyjnym postuluje zmianę paradygmatu myślenia o zarządzaniu innowacjami. Rosnące przekonanie o znaczeniu innowacji dla zwiększania przewagi konkurencyjnej firm i międzynarodowej pozycji gospodarki narodowej, nie idzie w parze ze skutecznością zarządzania innowacjami. Odnosi się to w szczególności do grupy tzw. krajów goniących, do których należy Polska i inne kraje Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej. Legło to u podstaw zaproponowania koncepcji zarządzania innowacjami w ujęciu podmiotowym i jej operacjonalizacji, w kontekście potrzeb wynikających ze współczesnych trendów rozwojowych. Przyjęto hipotezę o konieczności i możliwości dowartościowania podmiotowej roli jednostki (człowieka) w procesie innowacyjnym. Dlatego celem artykułu jest rozłożenie na czynniki pierwsze innowacyjności jako zdolności wprowadzania innowacji, a następnie wprowadzenie ich do podmiotowego modelu innowacyjności. Hipoteza dowodzona jest przez wykazywanie, że nowe podejście otwiera perspektywę uczynienia z innowacyjności uniwersalnej kompetencji (metakompetencji), co stanowi przesłankę wzrostu skuteczności zarządzania innowacjami w postaci większej intensywności wprowadzania innowacji. Ta wyższa skuteczność osiągalna jest pośrednio, przez wcześniejsze ukształtowanie odpowiednich postaw i zachowań innowacyjnych ludzi. Wyniki prowadzonych badań wzbogacają wiedzę z zakresu przyczyn niedostatecznej innowacyjności przedsiębiorstw i gospodarki jako całości. Wyznaczają jednocześnie kierunki dalszych poszukiwań badawczych, w tym nad instytucjonalnymi uwarunkowaniami innowacji i innowacyjności, ponieważ postawy i zachowania innowacyjne ludzi pozostają pod wpływem splotu instytucji behawioralnych. Z badań wyłaniają się także kierunki integrowania zarządzania innowacjami w ujęciu podmiotowym z polityką innowacyjną rządów i reformami instytucjonalnymi zorientowanymi na upowszechnianie postępu cywilizacyjnego.

Słowa kluczowe: innowacje, zarządzanie innowacjami, innowacyjność, zachowania innowacyjne w środowisku pracy.

JEL: O31, M10, I25.