



POLICY NOTES OF THE WORKING PAPER 5.10

Implicit theories of innovativeness: a cross-cultural analysis

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OBJECTIVE

The objective of this report is to provide an empirical evidence of the role of individual values and implicit theories of creativity and innovation play in people's attitudes to innovation in different cultural groups.

801 participants from 3 ethno-cultural groups of Russian Federation (Ethnic Russians, North Caucasians, Tuvins) participated in this study. The findings of the research presented in this working paper provide the results that can serve as both an empirical and theoretical backdrops for the SEARCH project and ENP policy for implementation of innovations in different cultural and regional surroundings.

METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

Goals of researches:

- To reveal and compare individual values of members of different ethno-cultural groups of Russians;
- To identify and compare implicit theories of innovativeness in different cultural groups;
- To identify direct and indirect (mediated by implicit theories of innovativeness) effects of individual values on attitudes to innovation in a cross-cultural comparison.

Participants: 801 university students and secondary school teachers from 3 ethnocultural groups: Ethnic Russians (Moscow region), peoples of the North Caucasus (Ingush, Chechens) from Chechnya and Ingushetia republics, Tuvins from Tuva Republic.

Methods of research: socio-psychological survey using SVS measure of values (Schwartz, 1992), a measure of attitudes towards innovation (Lebedeva, Tatarko, 2009), a modified adjective checklist to measure their implicit theories of the characteristics of innovators (Runco et al., 1993). The data was processed using SPSS (version 19). To determine the significance of differences we applied the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for independent samples and calculated the effect-size (Cohen's d). To determine the relationship between the variables we used structural modeling of latent variables through SPSS AMOS (version 19).

POLICY VALUE

The main findings:

- There are cultural differences in attitudes to innovations: the more modernized culture is, the more positive it's members attitudes to innovations are.
- Values of Openness to change promote and values of Conservation impede acceptance of innovations.
- There are cultural differences in implicit theories of innovativeness: Individual theories of innovativeness are more pronounced in more modernized cultures, whereas Social theories of innovativeness are more pronounced in more traditional cultures.
- Implicit theories of innovativeness play the important mediating role in the effect of Conservation values on attitudes to innovation, transforming the negative effect of Conservation values into a positive one.

We may suppose that in societies where people value tradition, security, conformity (values of Conservation in the Schwartz 'model) any innovation can cause fear, anxiety and mistrust, therefore it is obvious, that values of Conservation are negatively connected with acceptance of innovation. When Social implicit theories of innovativeness (regarding innovators as honest, trusted toward people, respect for authority), interplay as mediator between values and attitudes to innovations, they become a 'narrow corridor' through which the innovation can pass and be accepted by the conservative society. So, attribution to the innovators socially desirable qualities can serve as a real chance for innovation to be welcomed in traditional societies. It is interesting that such socially desirable threats of innovators are implicit ones, i.e. implanted in a system of beliefs of members of the given societies that reflects the deeply rooted aspiration of human societies not only to preservation, but also to updating. The notion that an innovator must possess socially oriented qualities (trust toward people, honesty, obedience, respect for authority) can contribute to acceptance of innovations, and this is important to consider when planning and implementing innovations in traditional societies. This study disclosed a culturally universal model of influence of values through implicit theories of innovativeness on attitudes to innovation. This indicates that innovative human behavior is conditioned not only by one's attitudes toward innovation, but also by the culture in which one was socialized and learned values and implicit theories of innovativeness. The study exposed the important mediating role of implicit theories of innovativeness on the effect of Conservation values on attitudes to innovation, transforming the typically negative effect of Conservation values into a positive one. The notion that an innovator must possess socially oriented qualities (trust toward people, honesty, obedience, respect for authority) can contribute to acceptance of innovations, and this is important to consider when planning and implementing innovations in traditional societies.

Policy recommendations:

1. Support and encourage in school education value priorities of Openness to change (self-direction, stimulation), which are the main predictor of acceptance of innovations.
2. Using public opinion and mass media in order to create socially desirable image of innovator, this will help in implementing of innovations in traditional societies.