

SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS OF CREATIVITY AMONG LATVIAN ENTREPRENEURS: FROM COGNITIVE TO BEHAVIOURAL ASPECTS

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Abstract

In an increasingly globalizing and competitive working place, where innovativeness and its underlying creative abilities becomes the key for survival, it is urgent for Latvian economy to address the issue of how creativity actually is understood. Social representations study of the 'creativity' concept took place on the basis of 120 respondents sample of entrepreneurs of different domains.

Results have demonstrated that creativity is understood as an abstract theoretical phenomena, not applicable to the each day situation and professional context.

This suggests the need to further promote creativity concept and introduce programs for so doing on different state and educational levels.

Keywords: Social representations, creativity, Latvian entrepreneurs.

1. INTRODUCTION

During the periods of economic recession it is quite hard to build a new enterprise or keep up the business, not even speaking of its flourishing. As argued, globalisation creates another constraint for the middle size business (Miranda, *et al.*, 2009). It is emphasised by many authors that this period of history requires creativity as never before, and it becomes not only a competitive advantage, but also a key to a survival in business (i.e. Фостер, 2009). Already in 1991 M. Porter (1991) has argued that is not only the adaptability to the constraints but also the ability to shift these constraints which is in the core of competitive advantage of the company, stressing this way the importance of creativity.

A. Green (Green, 2008) believes in creativity to the extend that sees the only solution for today's world, opposing flexible thinking, creative freedom to *stupidity*, and he argues that business without curiosity, without a common sense and flexibility, without creative approach becomes 'simply stupid' and contributes to generation of a whole 'stupid society' with its bureaucratic demands and unnecessary 'security' proceedings. Amabile (Амабайл, 2006) studies suggest that attention paid to creativity development during the last twenty years resulted in enhanced productivity of business and society's general well-being.

Dealing with risk, creativity, autonomy, continuous learning are emphasised as a core of entrepreneurial activity (Sternberg, *et al.*, 2011). Studies suggest that entrepreneurship is based upon innovativeness and its underlying creative skills (Martins, Terblance, 2003).

The aim of this article is to describe the results of the study of the social representations of creativity construct among Latvian entrepreneurs.

The tasks therefore include a brief analysis of literature on creativity and social perceptions, demonstration of the results and elaboration of conclusions promoting the discussion for the practical implications following from this study.

- One of the basic society reasoning elements is the formation of social perceptions. S. Moscovici (Moscovici, 1993) following E. Durkheim statements has proved in his theory of social perceptions that the human being choosing an activity does not refer to the stimulus of objective reality but rather to his/her perceptions and imaginations of what this reality is. According to S. Moscovici, social representations are universal socio-psychological phenomena, which contains all of the cognitive functions – thinking, imagination, knowledge, and which is shared by all the members of a certain society (Moscovici, 1983).

If social representations are in the basis of human abilities to perceive, conduct the conclusions about the world, build memories and self-awareness, the term creativity then is often referred to collective unconsciousness concept verbalised as an ability to act creatively (Chikshentmihalyi, 2003) and it has positive connotation in humans' perceptions (Sternberg, 2003). According to Pavlov (see Барышева, Т. А., Жигалов, Ю. А. (2006), creativity is in the base of orientation instinct of 'what it is?' and 'what if?' as well as a part of playful behaviour, which is pleasant and releasing activity. Scholars of creativity emphasize its novelty and appropriateness as obligatory pre-requisites of the term (e.g. Lubart, 2000, Cropley, 2001, Любарт *et al.*, 2009). Creativity refers to product – something new and practical, 'the best solution', personality – the one who is looking for unusual decisions, process – ways of doing something in an innovative or untraditional manner (Ильин, 2009, Sternberg, *et al.*, 2011).

The crucial role of creativity is emphasised in analysis of critical situations, self-realisation processes and self-satisfaction personal references (Любарт *et al.*, 2009). As to Tezci, Karaca and Sezginsoy (Tezci *et al.*, 2008) a creative personality can be any person who is able to find a new solution to the problem and make generalisations of high level of abstract thinking.

Latin *creatio* – creativity is in a way deviation from the traditional thinking schemes (Ильин, 2009). It is a multidimensional psychic organisation, which is not just an intellectual potential, but involves also the spheres of motivation, emotions, and esthetical, existential and communicational parameters (Sternberg, 2008, Барышева, Жигалов, 2006).

K. Rogers by creativity understands the human ability to compose unusual ideas, to find original solutions, as well as new ways of self-realisation (Rogers, 1972). P. Torrens (In: Gardner, 1993) in his turn, observes creativity as a process of sensitivity towards a problem, knowledge deficit drive, search for the incongruence in the knowledge, need for formulation of new hypothesis. Creativity is a beginning of any possible potential discovery. Thus, creativity can be referred not only to the masterpieces of Picasso, Van Gogh, Da Vinci, but it also finds its expression in the duties of a common housewife in her search for original decision of everyday life. (Любарт, *et al.*, 2009). Therefore, creativity can be expressed in communication, modes of behaviour, ways of dressing, etc... (Tezci *et al.*, 2008).

H. Gardner in order to distinguish among each day works and solutions met by every person and influential level of creative and innovative discoveries proposes so called "small – C" (Small creativity), and "Big-C" (Big Creativity), which involves societal level with changes it brings (Gardner, 1993). M. Boden (Boden, 2005) research divides creativity into a psychological category (*P-creativity*), when individual is doing something new for him/herself, discovers own horizons, and a historical category (*H-creativity*), when the individual is doing new for the humankind, something not done by others.

Thus, creativity is underlying ability for the innovativeness, which can be expressed in different spheres of human activity: cognition, thinking style, professional activity, self-realisation, and on different levels: personality (potential), process and result (Ильин, 2009).

The model of T. Amabile (Amabile, 1998, Amabile *et al.*, 2004, Амабайл, 2006) was used in the study, as her considerations are based upon profound studies of creativity on its theoretical and practical levels. Concluding her 20 years of research of business creativity and theory of creativity Amabile has identified the following creativity components: 1) competence - the sum of knowledge; knowledge as an intellectual space, which is used to acquire and solve the problems, the wider it is – the better; 2) the creative thinking - flexibility and openness to ambiguity. It depends greatly on personal traits and abilities as well as habits for creative imagination; and 3) motivation - intrinsic interest in a problem (Дерманова, Крылова, 2004).

2. METHODS AND SAMPLE

The question of the research was formulated: what are the social representations of the term creativity among Latvian entrepreneurs?

120 entrepreneurs aged 34 – 46 composed a sample of this study. It was decided to select representatives of the different production and service industries, such as wood processing, food, textile and beauty inance industry. Pilot study was based on 20 respondents sample, and 100 entrepreneurs participated in the main study. They were approached personally, and the method of free association analysis was applied. The study was not aimed to distinguish the gender or national differences in regards to the social representation of the term 'creativity' but the sample nevertheless was homogenous in these terms, consisting to 54% of men and 46% of women.

Method of free association analysis is widely used in the research of social representations (e.g. Di Giacomo, 1980; Doise, Clémence, Lorenzi – Cioldi, 1993; Tsoukalas 2006; Zakrizevska, 2010). Each respondent was asked to produce three associations with the word ‘creativity’. Latvian or Russian language was applied depending on the mother tongue of the participant.

3. RESULTS

“Association field” analysis demonstrated that “creativity” has generally low frequencies of its ‘association field’. Highest frequency associations are combined in Table 1 below.

In Table Nr. 1 association with highest frequency are presented, artistic creativity was mentioned twelve times, which composes only 4 % from the total amount of associations. Among the frequency of 3 x, the following other words appeared: fashion, velocity, money, smart, inspiration. There were 149 words which appeared only ones, and major part of them did not open up the meaning of the construct, for example, there were produced such associations as cretinism, advertisement, good look, scarf, and so on.

Table 1

High frequency associations

Association	Frequency (x)	Explanation
Artistic creativity	12	As a synonym
Non-standard	8	As a refuse of traditional ways of thinking
Luck/success	7	Connected with successful result
Intelligence	7	Fast, smart solutions
Cognition	6	As a sphere of cognitive abilities
Courage	6	As a personality trait
Risk	6	As working in unclear conditions, where the result is not guaranteed
Movement (development)	5	On the personal level, as a self-growth and education
Communication	5	Possibility to attract attention of other people

This suggests that “creativity” as a concept is not completely understood by the entrepreneurs. The nuclear of this word has a low frequency, is not completely represented in the minds of Latvian sample of those doing business. We can argue that it might be connected with the fact that entrepreneurs do not use this word in their each day practice, and they don’t have a strong image of what exactly in might be.

There were also used T. Amabile business creativity components to structure the answers around three categories (please see Tab. 2).

Table 2

Business creativity components

Business creativity components	Frequency
Competence as acquired knowledge (general, social, technical, methodological)	14 associations or 5 %.
Cognitive style as ability to think creatively: divergence and flexibility	137 associations or 46 %
Intrinsic motivation	17 associations or 6 %

Source: based on Amabile (2006)

The biggest amount of association was connected with cognitive style as ability to perceive information and proceed it, using creative approach: to be flexible, orientation to multiple solutions, exit from trivial thinking, readiness to re-structure knowledge – all together such associations compose 46% of answers (or 137 associations). Intrinsic motivation and competence were ‘figurating’ relatively little in our study. Competence as knowledge, intuition and experience was mentioned in 5% of the answers (14 associations), and motivational drive received its 6% part (17 associations) of reference. 43% (132 assoc.) fell under the category “others”, they could not be referred to either one of these categories. They were mentioned above

words, such as cretinism, advertisement, good look, scarf, and so on. The demonstration is provided in Figure 1 below.

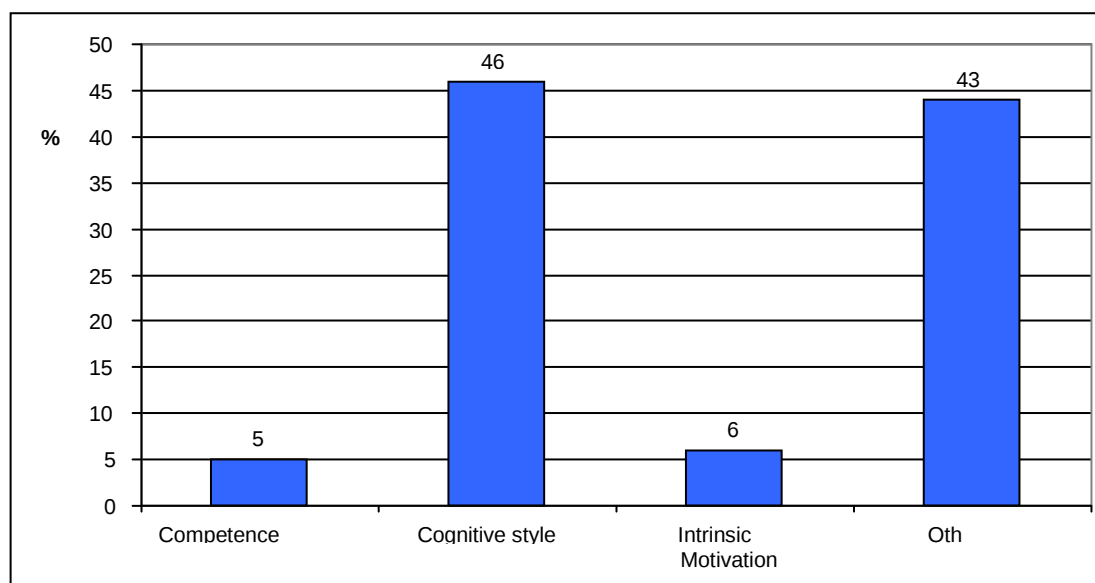


Figure 1. Distribution of the results of Social representation of the term creativity using Amabile conception of business creativity

To observe from statistical point of view, using Pierson Criteria, we have (please see Table 3) found that with $\rho = 0.466 > 0.05$, the social representations of creativity do not have statistically significant correlation with Amabile distinguished components.

Table 3

Pierson Criteria χ^2		
	Value	Two-side value level (ρ)
Pierson X^2	900.0	0,466

The social representation analysis of the creativity construct demonstrated that entrepreneurs were not connecting it with entrepreneurship, with their each day work, but rather as a term related to a show industry, or to the artistic skills. Amabile cognitive component is addressed in the answers, as well as motivation and competence, but not the degree to say that these components form clear association with the term creativity. Entrepreneurs lack the knowledge about the creative personality traits, about intrinsic motivation, innovativeness; they don't connect it with practicability and competencies. Intuition and inspiration remained unvalued as well.

During the study some entrepreneurs spontaneously committed that creativity is not for them, and they are 'struggling with much creativity at work', that 'people are already lazy enough' and 'it is hard to find a good worker', so creativity would be the last concern for them. The comments of such character showed that under-evaluation of creativity takes place.

The results have demonstrated that major part of entrepreneurs who were approached in the study were not concerned with providing creative environment, they were not aware of techniques of creativity enhancement and they don't connect business development with this term.

If the social representation of the word is practically absent, should we then conclude that part of entrepreneurs of Latvia are not connecting entrepreneurial skills, motivation, business strategy with creativity in their each day work? This may probably shed the light to Latvian relatively low innovation efficiency index in comparison to other countries (China is on the 3 place, Germany is ranked 15, Sweden – 6, while Latvia's rank is 72) and our overall economic stagnation (INSEAD the global Innovation Index, 2011).

4. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

In the conditions of the modern economy creativity by all means is a required skill due to growing demands for creative and innovative solutions, individuality expressions, and growth of temps of technology.

Analysis of social perceptions of creativity with the free association method demonstrated that entrepreneurs of Latvia connect the word creativity to the abstract possibility to be artistic rather than to its practical meaning or its usage in entrepreneurial activity.

Comparing the results with T. Amabile business creativity theory we are concluding that the biggest amount of associations (46%) were connected with the creative thinking style, so it is most often associated with the thinking peculiarities, competence was mentioned in 5 % of cases and motivation in 6%. Entrepreneurs of Latvia are lacking the perception of creative personality character traits, its competences, motivational drives, etc.

Surprising result was that 43% of all associations were not connected with the term creativity directly. This suggests that there might be a significant amount of people doing business in Latvia who are not aware of the meaning of creativity; who might not be aware of its techniques and possibilities for businesses and society.

The results of this study have permitted us to conclude that there is certain ignorance in regards to creativity among the entrepreneurs of Latvia, and raise an argument of the lack of promotion of knowledge about creativity in business community. This suggests that more education is needed in regards to creativity. A further study with more precise sample selection criteria should be conducted in order to verify the results and justify the conclusions. The need to specify who exactly should be considered an entrepreneur is urgently addressed. As to study of creativity in the workplace or entrepreneurship, other methods should be definitely applied in order to answer the question of how creativity is actually met.

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