The Effects of Higher-Order Thinking Dispositions, Job-Related Learning and Creativity on Innovation Behaviour

Mark Kong Chew Loon
(BABA, MBA, DBA)

Doctor of Philosophy in Management

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Statement of Originality

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Mark Loon

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Acknowledgements and Dedications

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ABSTRACT

Innovation is crucial for all organisations to thrive and survive. Its importance is well recognised in both practice and in academia. Innovation-based initiatives such as research and development, and design constitute the core competencies of many contemporary organisations. In the domain of academia, innovation is well researched in relation to what constitutes innovation and the different forms that innovations take. Innovation is also well researched from many perspectives such as processes and systems, leadership and group dynamics, and at different levels (e.g. organisational, group and individual).

Whilst there is a substantial amount of literature on innovation at the individual level, such as motivation and skills, there are still paucities at the intrapersonal level, specifically higher-order thinking dispositions. The role of cognition and intellect in innovation are generally well established however the subject matter of dispositions such as higher-order thinking and their relationship with innovation remains an area that may provide opportunities to gain further insight into factors that contribute to innovation. In addition, there is a growing recognition and acceptance from scholars that an evaluation of the ‘whole-person’ (e.g. cognitive and dispositional factors) provides for a better explanation of behaviours and potentially organisational outcomes.

From a practitioner perspective, higher-order thinking dispositions are crucial because they help to predict typical performance rather than maximal performance. Typical performance is crucial in organisation as ideas for innovation can occur at any time and involve multiple stages (e.g., conception, prototyping, and implementation). Individuals with higher-order thinking dispositions are arguably predisposed to conceive, recognise, act upon and further develop new ideas. Innovation behaviour, in turn, facilitates organisational performance, competitiveness, and enables organisations to not only adapt to change but also potentially shape change.

This longitudinal study involved 202 participants. The hypotheses and an overall model based on the hypotheses were tested using partial least squares analysis. The major findings are as follows: i) the relationship between each of the five higher-order thinking dispositions and creativity is partially mediated by job-related learning; ii) the relationship between job-related learning and innovation is partially mediated by creativity; iii) when the five higher-order thinking dispositions are used concurrently to predict job-related learning, multiple perspective-taking is the only significant predictor; iv) when the five higher-order thinking dispositions and job-related learning are used concurrently to predict creativity, job-related learning is the strongest predictor whilst systems thinking and multiple perspective-taking are also significant predictors; and v) when the five higher-order thinking dispositions, job-related learning and creativity are used concurrently to predict innovation, creativity is the strongest predictor whilst job-related learning and multiple perspective-taking are also significant predictors.

This study contributes to theory by extending our knowledge on innovation behaviour from a dispositional perspective, and supports the argument that both dispositional and cognitive elements are drivers of innovative behaviour. In addition, the findings also highlight the need for organisations to adjust their HR policies to recruit, select and develop those with higher-order thinking dispositions for innovation-based organisational outcomes.