

Innovativeness Unveiled: Exploring Concept and Shaping Conditions in Personnel Function

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Abstract: **Background:** Innovativeness concerns various organisational aspects and manifests at different social life levels. Innovativeness has its source in the intensity of changes inside and outside the organisation. Many terms for innovativeness revolve around two keywords: ability and inclination.

Research objectives: The paper aims to explain the concept of innovativeness and to recognise the conditions shaping it according to respondents. It also examines conditions affecting the implementation of personnel functions in the surveyed enterprises.

Research design and methods: Empirical data were obtained using the survey technique using the author's questionnaire survey form. Empirical research has been characterised by the object and subject of research and research time and space.

Results: Most respondents generally understand innovativeness as the ability to introduce changes in the personnel area, which partially confirmed the first research hypothesis. No significant discrepancies were observed regarding the conditions that cause or even force the use of innovative ways of performing the personnel function and specific tools in this functional area of the enterprise.

Conclusions: The theoretical considerations and empirical research presented on their basis allowed us to determine how the concept of „innovativeness“ is understood in the personnel area. The respondents, representing enterprises of all sizes located in different parts of the Malopolska Region and with different scales of operations, also perceived innovativeness differently.

Keywords: innovativeness, determinants, personnel, change.

JEL Codes: J24, M54, O31, O35

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1. Introduction

Man is an entity creating every area of the company, especially the personnel, and each of them impacts the company's innovativeness. Innovativeness can also be associated with the ability and/or willingness of the organisation to use improved or new solutions, ways of proceeding, and instruments in the personnel sphere; the ability to make changes in the personnel area; the ability to create, disseminate and use knowledge; the ability to put innovation into practice; the process of refining new ideas and turning creative ideas into practical solutions.

Innovativeness depends on specific resources (e.g., technology) but should be linked to people. No machines, devices or processes will start until people act. In the current conditions of the organisation's environment, where the progressive processes of automation and roboti-

sation of activities carried out in various areas of the organisation (also in the personnel area), together with artificial intelligence and the introduction of innovations, are perceived as the most important factors in the development of the organisation, it is necessary to emphasise that the subject of each of these activities is a man and that a lot depends on him. In the organisation, he is the subject of the personnel function. Currently, the personnel function of the company is undergoing the most profound transformations. The HR function is expected to have an innovative approach to its implementation. In the context of the above statements, it will be valuable to research the understanding of innovativeness in the personnel sphere and the conditions for implementing the personnel function in enterprises.

In order to recognise how the concept of innovativeness is perceived in business practice, empirical research was conducted among a deliberately selected research sample. 115 respondents from various enterprises of the Małopolska region took part in the survey. The research problem was formulated as a question: What does the term »innovativeness in the personnel area« mean to you? In addition, the respondents were asked: Do you think the current conditions cause or even force the use of innovative (or modified) ways of performing the personnel function and specific tools in this functional area of the company? The research questions posed gave rise to the definition of research hypotheses:

H1: Innovativeness in the personnel area is understood as the ability to make changes in the personnel area and to implement innovations in practice. H1 consists of two parts. The first part assumes the understanding of innovativeness as the ability to introduce changes in the personnel area; the second – is the ability to implement innovation in practice;

H2: The personnel function in an enterprise is largely determined by using innovative (or modified) ways and tools in its implementation.

The publication has a theoretical and empirical character to which the structure of the work has been subordinated. The theoretical part presents the definition of innovativeness in selected literature. Attention was also paid to the determinants of innovativeness. The empirical part describes the methodological issues of the conducted research and then the results of the research procedure. The study ends with conclusions.

2. Literature review

Innovativeness in organisations attracts great interest in the literature on the subject (Dos-Santos et al., 2022, p. 574). The issues of organisational innovativeness are currently eagerly addressed by both theoreticians and practitioners of management (Motyka, 2021, p. 235).

The literature on the subject contains numerous approaches to innovativeness, which refer to various organisational aspects, e.g. technology, product or human behaviour (Wiśniewska, 2014, p. 33). Innovativeness is also manifested at various levels of social life, both at the individual, group and organisational level (Pająk, 2006, p. 31). It may concern, for example, building lasting relationships between the company and customers (internal and external) and cooperation with creators and other innovative units that implement such projects (Brojak-Trzaskowska, 2008, p. 172). The innovativeness of enterprises is determined by many external and internal factors (Rojek, 2022, p. 487). Innovativeness has its source in the intensity of external changes in various branches of the economy, based on new computer, telephony and multimedia technologies, which strive to introduce new solutions (Berłowski, 2013, p. 51). External factors affect the internal environment, e.g., the work's nature and performance conditions (Pocztowski & Miś, 2022, p. 144). Therefore, the innovativeness of enterprises is expressed in

creating conditions that enable the implementation of innovations (Kamińska, 2014, p. 88) and innovative solutions in response to these changes. Companies capture and generate ideas through their internal processes and transform them into innovative (new) products or services (Juris & Cugova, 2020). The innovativeness of enterprises is determined by, among other things, their activities (Kamińska, 2023, p. 211). As Makiela notes, „In the broad understanding of the term »innovativeness« there is the ability to implement new solutions (new products, new types of activities, new technologies, new entities and institutions, new forms of organisation and management) in all spheres of social and economic life” (Makiela, 2018, pp. 28-29). Organisational innovativeness is a broad concept related to the company’s propensity to innovate (Salavou, 2004, p. 33). From a business perspective, innovativeness means realising a great profit, sustainable growth and development (Ramadani & Gerguri, 2010, p. 102). Therefore, man, as a subject of work, should be able to develop and engage his potential in the work process (Myjak, 2021, p. 68).

A review of the literature on the subject leads to the conclusion that many terms of innovativeness oscillate around two keywords: ability and inclinations. „Ability” includes several internal factors relating to the analysed scope of activity and the factors surrounding this area of economic activity. This ability includes knowledge, skills and social competencies. It is also important to have the ability to recognise and read signals coming from the external environment (Białoń & Werner, 2014, p. 35). The company’s propensity to innovativeness means its readiness to create and develop new solutions and adapt them from the outside. Propensity is not synonymous with ability. A high propensity to innovativeness may characterise an enterprise but not have the ability (capability) to implement these innovations due to existing barriers. It is, therefore, desirable for an enterprise to have both a high propensity and the ability to generate and implement innovations (Kamińska, 2014, p. 88).

According to Francik (2003, p. 69), innovativeness lies in the ability and inclination to:

- search for new products, technologies, services, markets, management methods, etc.,
- create and implement new products, technologies, services, management methods, etc.,
- take action in an uncertain situation,
- observe the market and competition, anticipating the development of the market situation,
- react quickly to emerging changes,
- break routines, habits,
- make changes in ways of communicating, new methods of work organisation, etc.

Table 1 contains some definitions of innovativeness according to selected authors.

Table 1. Definition of the term “innovativeness”

Author, year	The term “innovativeness”
Sosnowska et al. (2000)	Innovativeness is the ability to permanently generate and implement innovations that recipients recognise due to the high level of modernity and competitiveness on a global scale
Bogdanienko (2004)	Innovativeness is the ability to create and implement changes in various spheres of socio-economic life
Rogoda (2005)	Innovativeness means the introduction by the organisation of new solutions in the field of organisation and management or marketing, as well as characterises the frequency of changes
Kowalak (2006)	Innovativeness means the improvement and development of existing production, operational and service technologies, the introduction of new solutions in the field of organisation and management, the improvement and development of infrastructure for the collection, processing and sharing of information

Author, year	The term “innovativeness”
Talar (2009)	Innovativeness is understood as the ability to create, disseminate and use knowledge (commercialisation of innovation) and is widely recognised as the most important source of competitive advantage, as well as the main factor ensuring the economic development of the country in the conditions of international competition of the twenty-first century
Pomykalski (2009)	Innovativeness is the ability of an organisation to seek, implement and disseminate innovations constantly
Wodnicka (2009)	Innovativeness is the ability and motivation of an organisation to constantly seek and use in practice the results of scientific research, new concepts, ideas and inventions
Kasprzak & Pelc (2012)	Innovativeness is a feature of the culture of modern societies
Ulrich & Brockbank (2013)	Innovativeness is about taking advantage of opportunities and focusing on future successes, not relying on past achievements. This is an important value because it determines the development
Białoń & Werner (2014)	Innovativeness is the ability to create and implement innovations, it is a state that characterizes the ability to design and implement changes at various levels of management
Cannon & McGee (2015)	Innovativeness is the process of refining new ideas and transforming the best, creative ideas into practical solutions
Woźniak et al. (2015)	Innovativeness is the ability to make innovation a reality in practice
Gierszewska (2016)	Innovativeness is the ability to acquire resources, qualifications and key competencies required in various processes
Czyż (2017)	Innovativeness is an extremely complex category, requiring an interdisciplinary approach and a look from many perspectives
Tutaj (2019)	Innovativeness is the ability of an organisation to search, implement and disseminate innovations constantly
Wolniak (2022)	Innovativeness is an important factor which can be done in centralised or decentralized way
Ruba et al. (2023)	Innovativeness is an organisation’s propensity to innovate

Source: own elaboration based on the literature on the subject.

The definitions in Table 1 show that innovativeness is quite broadly understood by individual Authors, who interpret it in terms of, for example, the organisation’s ability to seek, create, implement and disseminate innovations. Some refer to the indication that innovativeness leads to the implementation of innovations; others, in turn, draw attention to implementing new solutions. All these terms lead to one more statement: innovativeness is an effective instrument for building a competitive advantage of an enterprise.

Innovativeness can be considered considering four specific planes that determine it (Table 2). One of them is an individual, singular level. Essential qualities of the human individual are desirable here, such as creativity, originality, responsibility or self-confidence. On the second level, team cooperation, common goals, diversity and efficiency seem important. Looking from the manager’s level, team management, promotion of pro-innovation projects, openness to change and appreciation of employees’ inventiveness determine innovativeness. In turn, values supporting innovativeness, knowledge resource management, communication and support for innovative initiatives and projects create organisational determinants of innovativeness.

Table 2. Basic determinants of innovativeness

Level	Determinants of innovativeness
At the individual level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - willingness to take responsibility for one's actions - willingness to take risks - faith in the competencies and effectiveness of undertaken activities - creativity (the ability to find innovative ideas and solutions) - originality (the need to stand out) - the ability to participate in teamwork - emotional intelligence, self-confidence - ability to solve conflicts and problems - communicativeness
At team level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a diverse team due to different experiences and potential of employees - work in small teams, allowing frequent meetings and free discussion - focus on efficiency and common goals, combined with a sense of common striving to achieve ambitious achievements - a high level of security allowing both expressing a dissenting opinion and supporting non-standard ideas
At the managerial level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - participatory model of team management (the manager supports the autonomy and independence of employees) - striving for continuous improvement and modelling such attitudes in employees - taking on the role of a promoter of innovation and manager of pro-innovation projects - high level of openness to change - ability to manage risk - representing values in which employees' inventiveness is appreciated
At the organisational level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - focus on high efficiency and lack of extensive control processes - values supporting innovativeness, diversity and a culture of empowerment - effective and efficient management of knowledge resources, efficient communication systems - strong decentralisation, decision-making freedom, independence in making decisions - lack of extensive control processes - supporting innovative initiatives and projects from the board level

Source: own elaboration based on (Filipowicz, 2019, pp. 152–153).

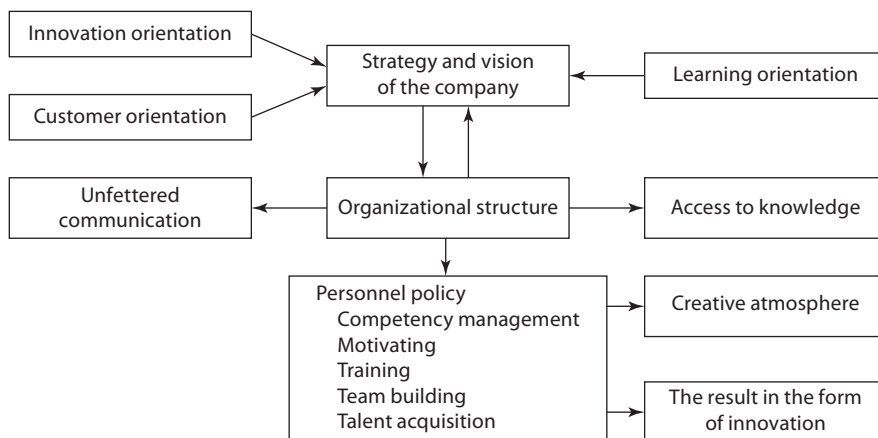


Figure 1. Determinants of innovativeness

Source: (Lewicka, 2010, p. 261).

Figure 1, in turn, presents a schematic approach to the determinants of innovativeness in the enterprise. It largely coincides with the tabular list above. Particular attention is drawn (both in the tabular and graphic juxtaposition) to the „human factor“, whose „presence“ is marked. Focus on innovation, knowledge, and creativity are just some of the necessary elements conditioning innovativeness. However, they would not have the *raison d'être* if man had not started his activity.

3. Research Method and Material

The variety of phrases of the term „innovativeness“ in the literature inspired the author to examine this issue from the point of view of business practice related to the personnel area of enterprises and with the participation of respondents employed in them. The research aimed to obtain answers explaining the concept of innovativeness in the organisational practice of enterprises. A quantitative research approach using survey methodology was used to achieve the goal. The choice of study and quantitative methodology was based on the conceptualisation of the research. The research problem was formulated through specific research questions: First, what does the term „innovativeness“ mean to you in the human resources area? Secondly, do you think the current conditions cause or even force the use of innovative (or modified) ways of performing the personnel function and specific tools in this functional area of the company? A purposeful selection of the research sample was made as part of the research process. The study took the form of a standardised survey, which was distributed in a printed (paper) version. The completed forms were returned in the same form. The author's survey from the questionnaire was used. The survey questionnaire consisted of substantive and recorded questions, open questions with an option for respondents to comment, and closed questions with an option to choose from. 115 business entities took part in the survey. Characterising empirical research, it was indicated:

- the subject of research – the survey involved owners of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises or decision-makers representing the enterprise; one person from each company answered the question,
- the object of research – the research process was carried out based on indications of terms describing „innovativeness“ in the personnel area,
- research implementation time – the research was started and finalised in 2022 in production, trade and service enterprises with various range of activities: local, national and international,
- research space – organisations participating in the study were located in the following counties of the Malopolska Region: Nowy Targ, Gorlice, Nowy Sącz and Limanowa.

4. Results

The results presented in the paper reference the part (not all) of the questionnaire. The research results are, therefore, a part of the author's more extensive empirical research. They present the basic research results, which was the author's intention (without making an in-depth analysis). When describing empirical data, descriptive analysis of basic research results was used. Empirical data are presented in full per cent responses. Respondents were asked directly to answer the question of what the term „innovativeness“ means to them in the

field of personnel. The respondents had the opportunity to indicate up to three characteristics, so the data in Table 3 do not add up to 100%.

Table 3. Definition of the concept of “innovativeness” in the personnel area

Specification	% of indications
the ability to make changes in the personnel area	54
the ability and/or willingness of the organisation to use improved or new solutions, procedures, and instruments in the personnel sphere	40
the ability to create, disseminate and use knowledge	40
the ability to put innovation into practice	31
the process of refining new ideas and turning creative ideas into practical solutions	23

Source: own elaboration based on research results.

The data presented in Table 3 shows that more than half of the respondents understood „innovativeness” in the analysed area to be the ability to introduce changes in the personnel area. Out of five respondents, two considered a different term for innovativeness: the ability and/or willingness of the organisation to use improved or new solutions, ways of proceeding, instruments in the personal sphere, as well as the ability to create, disseminate and use knowledge. Almost every third opted for the ability to implement innovations in practice, and every fourth indicated the process of refining new ideas and turning creative ideas into practical solutions.

Table 4 presents the respondents’ responses to the definition of “innovativeness” in the HR area, broken down by the characteristics identifying the enterprises (i.e. size, type and range of activities of enterprises). In the opinion of every fifth respondent (in relation to all respondents) representing a micro and small enterprise, innovativeness was associated with the ability to introduce changes in the personnel area. This was also the opinion of every fourth respondent representing companies operating in the domestic market. For every fifth respondent from companies operating locally, innovativeness was identified with the ability and/or willingness of the organisation to use improved or new solutions, ways of proceeding, and instruments in the personnel sphere. Analysing the respondents’ answers – taking into account the opposite pole, i.e. the smallest percentage of indications – it was noticed that innovativeness was defined as refining new ideas and transforming creative ideas into practical solutions. This option was indicated by practitioners representing micro, small and medium-sized service and production enterprises, as well as those operating in the local and international markets.

The next question was formulated: in your opinion, do the current conditions cause or even force the use of innovative (or modified) ways of performing the personnel function and specific tools in this functional area of the company? The vast majority of respondents (84%) answered this question in the affirmative. The opposite opinion was less than every fifth respondent (16%). The respondents’ answers broken down by identifying characteristics of the surveyed entities are given about the total number of respondents (Table 5).

Table 4. The concept of “innovativeness” in the area of personnel – respondents’ answers broken down by the characteristics identifying the company

Specification	Most indications	Least indications
Employment		
Micro company	the ability to make changes in the personnel area (20)	the process of refining new ideas and turning creative ideas into practical solutions (5)
Small Business	the ability to make changes in the personnel area (20)	the process of refining new ideas and turning creative ideas into practical solutions (10)
Medium business	the ability and/or willingness of the organisation to use improved or new solutions, ways of conduct, and instruments in the personnel sphere (12) the ability to make changes in the personnel area (12)	the process of refining new ideas and turning creative ideas into practical solutions (7)
Type of Activity		
Production	the ability to make changes in the personnel area (14)	the process of refining new ideas and turning creative ideas into practical solutions (3)
Service	the ability to make changes in the personnel area (32)	the process of refining new ideas and turning creative ideas into practical solutions (13)
Trade	the ability to make changes in the personnel area (9)	the ability and/or willingness of the organisation to use improved or new solutions, ways of conduct, and instruments in the personnel sphere (3)
Market		
Local	the ability and/or willingness of the organisation to use improved or new solutions, ways of conduct, and instruments in the personnel sphere (20)	the process of refining new ideas and turning creative ideas into practical solutions (6)
Domestic	the ability to make changes in the personnel area (26)	the ability and/or willingness of the organisation to use improved or new solutions, ways of conduct, and instruments in the personnel sphere (15)
International	the ability to make changes in the personnel area (5)	the process of refining new ideas and turning creative ideas into practical solutions (1)

Source: own elaboration based on research results.

Table 5. Innovative ways and tools in the implementation of the personnel function

Specification		Yes (%)	No (%)
Employment	Micro company	27	8
	Small Business	32	8
	Medium business	23	2
Type of Activity	Production	17	4
	Service	52	12
	Trade	15	No indication
Market	Local	30	6
	Domestic	38	10
	International	9	1

Source: own elaboration based on research results.

5. Conclusions

The presented theoretical considerations and empirical research on their basis allowed us to determine how the term „innovativeness” is understood – in the personnel area. The respondents, representing enterprises of all sizes located in different parts of the Malopolska Region and with different scales of operations, also perceived innovativeness differently. Most respondents generally understood innovativeness as the ability to introduce changes in the personnel area, which partially confirmed the first research hypothesis. Far fewer defined innovativeness as the ability to make innovation a reality in practice. On the other hand, the least indications concerned the perception of the concept of innovativeness in the context of the process of refining new ideas and transforming creative ideas into practical solutions. The second hypothesis was confirmed regarding the conditions that cause or even force the use of innovative methods and implementation of the personnel function and specific tools in this functional area of the company.

It is worth pointing out that the research results cannot be applied to all enterprises to the same extent due to the diversity of respondents. They represent enterprises of various sizes, scopes, and forms of activity. The specificity of enterprises differing, for example, in the size of employment, is different. The understanding of innovativeness in the personnel area by respondents of a small enterprise is determined by different considerations than in the case of a medium-sized or large enterprise. Small businesses also differ from large companies in terms of their personnel practices. Limitations of the research procedure should also be indicated, such as non-random selection of the research sample or limiting the research to one voivodeship.

However, presenting research results in a wider range would be justified, given that the respondents could indicate up to three features characterising the concept of innovativeness, i.e. one, two or three. Further research analyses could be focused on identifying how many respondents indicated one trait, how many indicated two, and how many indicated three. Any additional analysis could contribute to knowledge in this area. In-depth research results could be presented graphically on charts and supplemented with appropriate commentary.

The issues raised are important and current and raise the need to conduct further, in-depth analyses that would allow for broader conclusions in such an important functional area of the enterprise. Future research directions could concern a broader recognition of innovativeness in the personnel area of the organisation and its key determinants in this sphere. Then, a mixed approach (quantitative and qualitative) could be used to highlight the importance of the topic.

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Conflict of Interest

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