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# CONCEPT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CREATIVITY

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## **Abstract:**

The organizational creativity is a relatively new concept in theory of organizational management. Its roots can find in the theory of innovative problem solving (TRIZ). Using the concept of organizational creativity an organization can bring to market valuable, useful and new ideas, products, services, production methods, technologies, processes and models. Our concept of the organizational creativity (as a process) allows to organize individual or group activity in order to transform the human experiences into creative ideas, products, services, production methods, technologies, processes and models. It consists of the following stages: mental form, subject form, organizational form, market form. The individual or group activity is supported by creative, innovative, entrepreneurial and expansive processes. All processes are evaluated by effectiveness. The most important factor in this concept is the creative organization: creative people, creative goals and tasks and creative means (structure, processes *reserves* (the special spaces for creators)). We evaluated our concept of organizational creativity using questionnaires addressed to respondents (managers from different companies). The results of surveys shows that our proposal for organizational creativity was accepted by the most respondents. This means that our proposal of the organizational creativity may be useful tool for managers and practitioners. For modern organizations seeking new opportunities and dynamism using the construct of organizational creativity can be a useful tool for change and building a competitive advantage strategy based on creativity.

**Keywords:** creativity, organization, entrepreneurship, innovativeness, expansiveness.

**JEL Classification:** D21, D22

## **Introduction**

Social, economic and technical projects undertaken by people have always been connected with their creative activities. This type of activity has accompanied humans since the dawn of time, enabling invention of various tools, devices and systems, and transformation of natural resources found in the environment. From the very beginning, creativity has been a process of searching for new values and formulating laws and rules that can be applied to various domains of social life. Practically until the end of the 19th century, creativity was understood as an activity performed by individuals with particular intellectual and cognitive capabilities. The 20th century witnessed a radical change in the approach to creativity – both to the process, as well as to the creative person. Currently, creation is regarded as personal, group and professional activity. The colloquial understanding of creativity as a nature's gift and/or an inborn talent of a person - creator for making innovative

discoveries was developed in the 21st century into concepts, which explained creativity e.g. in terms of information processing, transformation of experience in organisations<sup>1</sup>. This perspective results in the fact that creativity is now treated as an indispensable element of an organisation's functioning and management. Therefore, we may refer to organisational creativity, which should be understood as an innovative activity (valuable, useful, new) of a human entity and/or a group (team of people), having the form of a process covering experiences and feelings transformed into creative works in the mental, product-related and market forms.

Creativity can be analysed as:

- a creative process;
- a creative product (as a result of a creative process)<sup>2</sup>;
- a group of capabilities (intellectual properties or a set of personal characteristics);
- a group of social stimulants (the social climate of creative conditions).

The purpose of this thesis is to present the construct of organisational creativity as a process taking place in contemporary organisations. In this perspective, creativity may be seen in business processes, management practices, work processes, and in the widely understood diversity management in the organisation<sup>3</sup>. Contemporary organisations operate in a dynamic, uncertain and highly complex environment, to which they can adjust by developing creative processes. Creativity, being a strong opposition to triteness, affects many aspects of exploration and exploitation of the organisation's opportunities. The most crucial to understanding the phenomenon of creativity seems to be heuristics<sup>4</sup>, seeking and formulating methods fostering creativity.

## **1. Organisational creativity as a function of human creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship and expansiveness**

Currently, the designates of creativity in an organisation include human creativity, innovativeness, entrepreneurship and expansiveness.

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<sup>1</sup> Dereń A.M., Skonieczny J., *Zarządzanie twórczością organizacyjną*, Difin, Warszawa 2016.

<sup>2</sup> In legal regulations of a different kind the activity creative is seized as a rule with the regard of its two aspects: taken by the definite subjects of the activities and of definite right material being its effect (of products of creative activities) - A.M. D., J. S.

<sup>3</sup> Kalev A., Dobbin F., *Jak zwiększyć różnorodność*, Harvard Business Review Polska, Nr 165 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Heuristics (from grec. *heurisko* - I find) indicates the skill of the detection of new facts and the federations between them. Is collection of creative methods of problem solving. At first time-limit referred to the strategy of thinking, which though they did not guarantee solution, this increased chances on its finding through the designating of new directions of creative thinking. (K. Piech, *Wprowadzenie do heurystyki*, <http://akson.sgh.waw.pl/~kpiech/text/2003-kzif-heurystyka.pdf>. [07.11.2016]).

Creativity is a common term, trendy and, at the same time, ambiguous. According to the PWN Polish Language Dictionary<sup>5</sup>, someone creative is a person "creating something new or original". A creative person is someone, who is effective in creative thinking.

According to M. A. West, creativity depends to a large extent on a person's cognitive flexibility<sup>6</sup>; in particular, questioning the common beliefs, which often leads to exploring a new reality and to development<sup>7</sup>. As written by E. de Bono<sup>8</sup>, creativity is inspiring, abrupt, consists in searching for otherness, allows discovering the least probable solutions. Creativity concerns not only individual people (it depends on individual personal characteristics and capabilities); there have also been undertaken attempts to measure the creativity level of entire societies<sup>9</sup>. Creativity is "an important feature of all aspects of decision-making in business. It involves stimulating new thoughts, reformulating the past knowledge anew and analysing the assumptions in order to formulate new theories and paradigms or create awareness. It involves (...) discovering, selecting, exchanging and combining facts, ideas and skills"<sup>10</sup>.

T. Rickards<sup>11</sup> defined creativity as an "escape from mental stagnation", emphasising the role of creative thinking in the decision-making process and in solving problems. Creative approach also helps solve organisational problems, encourages introduction of innovative solutions, motivates employees and develops their skills, as well as fosters better teamwork<sup>12</sup>. Creativity is also very important in marketing and designing the company's global operational strategy. As a result of continuous flow of ideas concerning new products and services, and thanks to the concept of improvement in the functioning of processes in the organisation, its competitive advantage is also reinforced.

Figure 1 presents the relationships between organisational creativity and human creativity, innovativeness, entrepreneurship and expansiveness.

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5 Drabik L., Sobol E., *Słownik Języka Polskiego*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe . PWN, Warszawa 2014.

6 Ibid., s. 27 – 28.

7 Sloane P., *Twórcze myślenie w zarządzaniu*, Wydawnictwo GWP, Gdańsk 2005.

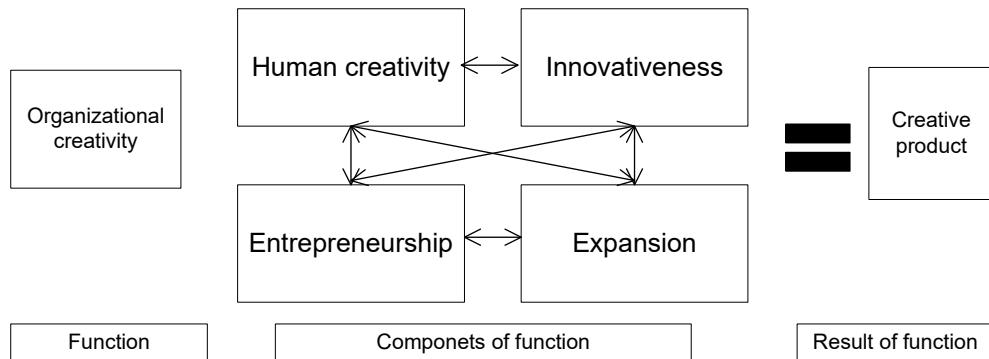
8 E. de Bono, *Z nowym myśleniem w nowe tysiąclecie*, Wydawnictwo Rebis, Poznań, 2001, s. 310 – 311.

9 Kaliszczak L., *Kreatywność i innowacyjność w kształtowaniu wartości rynkowej oraz przewagi konkurencyjnej przedsiębiorstw*, [w:] „Przedsiębiorstwo i Region”, Nr 5/2013, s., 80.

10 Proctor T., *Zarządzanie twórcze*. Wydawnictwo Gebethner & Ska, Warszawa, 1998.

11 Rickards T. ,*Creativity and Innovation: A Transatlantic Perspective. Creativity and Innovation*, Yearbook, tom 1, .Manchester Business School, 1998

12 Proctor T., *Zarządzanie twórcze*, op. cit.



**Fig. 1. Organizational creativity as a function of human creativity, innovativeness, entrepreneurship and expansion.**

Source: prepared by Authors.

Human creativity precedes innovation; it involves developing and expressing innovative ideas in order to solve problems or satisfy needs<sup>13</sup>. In this perspective, it is thus not so much a talent of its own, but rather a purposeful process of producing innovations.

Usually, it is assumed that innovation is a feature of individuals, which refers to their ability to create and implement innovations. It consists in constantly searching for and using in business practice the results of scientific research and research-development works, new concepts, ideas, inventions, improving and developing the used tangible and intangible (services) production technologies, introducing new methods and techniques in the organisation and management, improving and developing the infrastructure and the knowledge resources<sup>14</sup>. Innovativeness should also be understood as shaping culture in an organisation, which allows for creating and directing to the market a continuous stream of smaller, evolutionary (marginal) innovations.

Another variable of the creativity function is entrepreneurship. The term is ambiguous, since it is sometimes defined as e.g. the ability to save and raise capital; as transfer of economic resources from the area with lower efficiency, to the area with higher efficiency and higher yield; as the spirit of entrepreneurship that manifests in continuous search for innovations in all operations; as the ability to bear risk and the ability to act in conditions of uncertainty; as searching for changes, responding to them and using them as opportunities; as the ability of the manager to manage teams<sup>15</sup>.

13 Richards L., *Zarządzanie kreatywnością i innowacją. Techniki twórczego myślenia*, Harvard Business Essentials, MT Biznes, 2005, s. 123.

14 The given expression is referring to the classic take offered to the innovation through J. Schumpeter. (J. Schumpeter), *Teoria rozwoju gospodarczego*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa 1960, s. 104.

15 Moszkowicz M. (red.), *Zarządzanie strategiczne. Systemowa koncepcja biznesu*, Polskie Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne, Warszawa 2005, s. 172.

We believe that the contemporary formula of entrepreneurship should be expanded, and treated also as the process of creation in the organisation's culture, which enables rationalisation, restructuring, allocation and adaptation of various organisation's resources to develop creativity.

Another variable of the organisational creativity function is expansiveness. As compared to innovation and entrepreneurship, this term is not as commonly used in organisational creativity management; nor is it unambiguous, since it is used to describe various processes and phenomena from the dimension of politics, economics, culture, nature and sociology. According to T. Pszczołowski<sup>16</sup>, expansion means activation of an entity, expressed by expansion of the area of activity adequate to the possibilities.

In general, we believe that organisational creativity, understood as a process, will always be determined by human creativity, innovativeness, entrepreneurship and expansiveness. They can be thus treated as partial processes, the launch and conduct of which enables formation of creative works.

## **2. Organisational creativity as a process of producing creative works**

A creative process should be perceived in terms of expression and freedom, which results from the need to try and experiment, from curiosity and the strive to experience the surrounding reality on our own. The dynamics of this process depends on the intellectual potential of the creator, on his/her age, experience and the surrounding environment.

The outcome of a creative process is creation of a product, which is characterised by novelty, originality, generativity and social approval. Originality of a product may be understood as unusually, uniqueness or extraordinariness. However, it should be remembered that an original product is not always creative (return to the 1950s is now trendy and it is original, but not new).

Social conditions may facilitate or hinder the process of creation. Upbringing conditions whether a person becomes a creative individual and whether he/she has sufficient motivation to progress from creative attitude to creativity. When analysing this aspect of creativity, we should emphasise the important role played in this case by the family and school environment, as well as the barriers and myths about creativity imbedded in social awareness.

As noticed by E. Bendyk<sup>17</sup>, a creative act is currently no longer merely the capacity to

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<sup>16</sup> Pszczołowski T., *Mała encyklopedia prakseologii i teorii organizacji*, Ossolineum, Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków – Gdańsk 1978, s. 62

<sup>17</sup> Bendyk E., *Kulturowe i społeczne uwarunkowania innowacyjności*, Raport Innowacyjność 2010, Polska

create things that are new, but also socially recognised. Therefore, creativity cannot be detached from the culture system, where it is formed, as it would never acquire social recognition and understanding. It does not exist outside the cultural context.

In the systems theory of M. Csikszentmihalyi<sup>18</sup>, creative actions are ground-breaking in the development of a given domain, in which this creativity is based. The author claims that we can witness a constant exchange of: culture, experience and society between the systems, and the exchanged elements are represented, accordingly, by the domain of creativity, the creator, and the area of creativity<sup>19</sup>. In this way, the creative process involves the creator drawing the principles and forms from the domain of creativity, then internally transforming them and generating a novelty, which the creator then gives to the social system in the form of a new product in the area of creativity. Then, the novelty undergoes selection, which embeds the elements valuable for the cultural system into the given domain of creativity<sup>20</sup>.

A different view on creativity, with a unique tool dimension, is presented by H. Altszuller, who - after analysing Russian copyright certificates, patents of inventors and innovators - prepared an invention algorithm, understood as a group of operations, logical principles, which when precisely and consequently observed may result in solving a specific technical problem. The proposal of H. Altszuller<sup>21</sup> is an attempt to operationalise the creative process (of invention), as an ordered and logical alternative for the creator's activities based on the trial-and-error and the brainstorm methods. The algorithm developed by H. Altszuller makes it possible to precisely define the line of action of a creative inventor, narrowing down the "research angle", approaching the ideal solution ("ideal machine") in a systemic way, by elimination of technological contradictions<sup>22</sup>.

The inventiveness methodology and the idea of an algorithm for solving invention-related tasks, presented by H. Altszuller, although cognitively and pragmatically interesting, is only a section of the currently broadly understood process of creation, since it applies only to technical creativity. However, it is worth pointing out that H. Altszuller undertook to develop a theory for solving invention-related tasks (referred to in the literature as the theory of inventive problem solving<sup>23</sup> – TRIZ). Currently, TRIZ is regarded as a set of tools, a knowledge base and the basic technological model for creating new innovative ideas and

Agencja Rozwoju Przedsiębiorczości, Warszawa 2010, s. 73.

18 Csikszentmihalyi M., *Przepływ. Psychologia optymalnego doświadczenia*, Moderator, Taszów 2005.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid., s. 196.

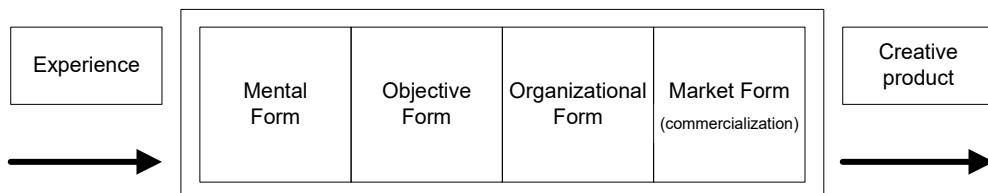
21 Altszuller H., *Algorytm wynalazku*, Wiedza Powszechna Warszawa 1975.

22 Ibid., s. 83.

solving problems. TRIZ contains various tools and methods allowing for ordering the process of formulating problems, the systemic analysis, the analysis of errors and possible evolution directions of technical systems (the "is" and "may be" approach). TRIZ, using a different method than "trial-and-error" and "brainstorm", which are based on random generation of ideas, tries to create an algorithm of subsequent approximations, enabling finding of the optimum solution to the problem by improving the existing solutions. It should be emphasised that this improvement must take place by identification and overcoming of technical and technological contradictions.

### 3. Organisational creativity as a mental, product-related, organisational and market process

The considerations presented above lead to a conclusion that the notion of organisational creativity should be understood as innovative activity (valuable, useful and new) of a human entity or a group (team) of people, taking the form of a process covering experiences and feelings transformed into creative works in mental, product-related, organisational and market forms (known as commercialisation). This definition is presented in Fig. 2.



**Fig. 2. Form the reason, objective, organizational and market-place in organizational creation**

**Source: prepared by Authors.**

A feeling, as defined by the dictionary<sup>24</sup>, is a mental state of a person resulting from strong stimuli, certain events or situations, leaving traces in human psyche. Description of human feelings is always subjective. Feelings can be also understood in the broad sense, as all

<sup>23</sup> Altszuller H., *Elementy teorii twórczości inżynierskiej*, Wydawnictwo Naukowo-Techniczne, Warszawa 1983, s. 42.

<sup>24</sup> Drabik L., Sobol E., *Słownik Języka Polskiego*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2007.

mental, intellectual, emotional, aesthetic, volitional and other processes<sup>25</sup>.

Feelings understood in this way are transformed into creative works in mental, product-related, organisational and market forms. An example of the above may be the design activity of an employee involved in industrial design in a company, consisting in imagining objects that do not exist, and then managing a process that will bring them to life. It also includes identification of the impressions left on customers when touching the products. It is a determination of the general shape and materials, textures and colours. It also involves cooperation with a group of designers in order to guarantee masterly finish of the final product<sup>26</sup>. Exhibition of the product-related forms is the product prototype, which is supposed to be marketed. In turn, the organisational form is expressed by creation of the organisational structure in the form of a task force, a functional group or a business group. The market form determines the mutual relationship between the organisation and the market environment. The objects of this exchange relationship are valuable, useful and new products, services, technologies, know-how and patents (final creative works).

Creative works created in the course of the organisational creativity process understood in such a way may have any form; it can be a work of art, a discovery, an original machine or structure, as well as an organisational project, a strategy or computer software.

In our opinion, a creative work combines the following features: value, usability and novelty. Creativity, including organisational creativity, is certainly the opposite of ordinariness, stereotypical and repeated activity. The essence of the creative process in the organisation consists in reorganisation of the previous experience and creating on its basis new combinations, new compositions of mental, product-related, organisational and market creations. These compositions constitute the notion of a creative work, which is a finished and organised whole that can be communicated.

A creative work is firmly embedded in a given context of social functioning of the organisation. The criteria of a creative work change along with the changes taking place in the organisation. The role of creativity obviously remains unchanged: creativity in terms of aestheticism is supposed to surprise, and in terms of pragmatics - generate progressive technological changes and be useful for the organisation. On the other hand, the perception of the creative work's value is modified. This means that there is a construct, which - sometimes intuitively - enables estimating the quality of products of the organisational creativity process.

<sup>25</sup> Kuroń J., *Działanie. Jeśli nie panujemy nad swoim życiem, ono panuje nad nami*, Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, Wrocław 2002, s. 34.

<sup>26</sup> Kahney L., *Jony Ive, geniusz, który zaprojektował najsłynniejsze produkty Apple*, Wydawnictwo Yinsinis, Media Kraków 2014, s. 225.

The definition of organisational creativity proposed by us is a starting point for considerations regarding the nature of the creative process. We treat this process as innovative activity of a human entity or a group, covering experiences and feelings, which are then converted into mental creations (idea concept, vision, plan, solution, scientific discovery, model, template), which are in the subsequent phase of the creative process converted into product-related creations (design, prototype, template, strategy).

The works distinguished in our organisational creativity definition proposal, which we call the organisational creations, are a result of combining and transforming the mental and product-related creations. The materials in this process include: task forces and functional groups, which - on the basis of the approved management methods and the possessed knowledge and competencies - arrange preparation activities of the organisational creations for the market needs. In order to better present this process, we can illustrate it with the following example. Based on the design idea, several prototypes were prepared in the creative workshop (in the design studio), which were then evaluated, and one of them was chosen for production. The task force was ordered to prepare a prototype for production. The next phase involves introducing the prototype to mass (serial) production, which is entrusted to a specialised functional group (e.g. production department). The task of another functional group (e.g. legal and organisational department) is to prepare an offer and conditions for introduction of the organisational creation so specified to the market. Both basic groups (the task force and the functional group) are supplemented by reserves, namely organisational units, whose task involves creation of new ideas in the atmosphere of a "garage workshop" <sup>27</sup>. The generated ideas can be quickly verified in such a place. These are the perfect places for direct creation, learning and testing of new ideas.

The final phase of the creative process in the organisation is commercialisation of the organisational creation, which may be done in the form of selling the creative work, granting a license for the creative work, or contributing the creative work in kind to a newly established organisation.

#### **4. Verification of the construct of organisational creativity**

In Poland, empirical research on the organisational creativity is not sufficiently tackled as the object of in-depth reflection and operationalisation, as well as comprehensive empirical

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<sup>27</sup> Schlesinger P. F., Sathe V., Schlesinger L. A., Kotter J., *Projektowanie organizacyjne*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 1999, s. 105-106.

verification. That is why we decided to undertake such studies in 2015<sup>28</sup>. One of the adopted research hypotheses was the following statement: *the construct of organisational creativity consists of four dimensions: (human) creativity, innovativeness, entrepreneurship and expansiveness*. For each of these dimensions, ten detailed questions were prepared, which fully characterised them. The surveys were sent to the group of 115 respondents - leaders, managers and employees employed in various organisations. After preliminary verification, 105 surveys were sent for further statistical analysis.

The respondents were supposed to assess hypotheses pertaining to the organisational creativity process understood in the above way applied in their organisations, on 7-point Likert scale (1 – entirely disagree, 2 – mostly disagree, 3 – somewhat disagree, 4 – neither agree nor disagree, 5 – somewhat agree, 6 – mostly agree, 7 – entirely agree). The obtained results were prepared statistically, which enabled positive verification of the adopted research hypothesis. Detailed analysis of the obtained results indicates that the respondents clearly preferred technical thinking, namely the one adopted by H. Altszuller, who identifies new solutions (inventions) with overcoming barriers. We found it slightly surprising that the respondents selected the statement concerning adaptation of new solutions created beyond the organisation as the key factor of innovativeness in the creative process. Perhaps this is a result of over 25 years of transition of the Polish economy after 1989, which was based on using and adapting the innovative solutions that already existed around the world. On the other hand, it may be a derivative of cultural conditions, which make the Polish economy still belong to the group of "innovation importers" rather than "exporters".

## **Summary**

In our opinion, the presented reflections are consistent with the discussion about organisational creativity in management of organisations. This discussion continues to be quite modest, which pushes us to continue the undertaken research and analyses that will make it possible to search for new business solutions, in which organisational creativity will be regarded as the key factor for developing the contemporary organisation.

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<sup>28</sup> In research accepted several research hypothesis; however, in consideration of talked over problem in hereby the article we report only one from research hypothesis – A. M. Dereń, J. Skonieczny.

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