

The dynamics of culture, innovation and organisational change: a nano-psychology future perspective of the psycho-social and cultural underpinnings of innovation and technology

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Abstract This article addresses salient conceptual issues in social organisational psychology in probing change in organisational systems, e.g., culture, innovation and implementation, reflective practice and change models. Insights from chaos–complexity research in the natural sciences which underpin the dynamics of flux and change to unravel the hidden, the unexplained, the disordered will be built on to explore the phenomena of change from a social psychological perspective. The concept of nano-psychology is introduced to open up a creative debate in the social psychological field on creative change which builds on the nano-insights evolving in the natural science field.

Keywords Organisational cultures · Contextual complexity · Innovation and change · Nano-psychology · Hidden dynamics of systems

1 The dynamics of culture

This article explores complex relationships between societal cultures, organisational cultures and human behaviour with a special focus on change and innovation and their impact on hidden human psycho-social cognitive dimensions.

Diversity has become one of the most important ideas of research in psychology, sociology, cross-cultural psychology and anthropology.

Six fundamental assumptions and research strategies that are shared in the indigenous psychologies approach and that are pertinent to our understanding of the dynamics of culture include the following:

- Understanding is rooted in ecological context;
- Affirm the need for each culture to develop its own indigenous understanding;
- Within a particular society, a multitude of perspectives not shared by all groups: societies can embrace both ‘traditional’ and ‘modern/westernised’ sectors;
- Acceptance of the indigenous psychologies approach does not affirm or preclude the use of a particular method;
- Cross-indigenous comparisons may serve as mirrors for understanding one’s own culture (Kleinman 1980);
- Indigenous psychologies approach does not assume a priori the existence of psychological universals, but it does seek as one of its goals the discovery of universal facts, principles and laws. This approach advocates the use of cross-cultural (Berry and Kim 1993) and cross-indigenous investigations (Enriquez 1993).

The unifying interest of anthropology as a whole is in the transmission of social culture (institutions and ritual), material culture (artefacts and skills) and mental culture (mentifacts and conventions) from one generation to another (see Posner 1989, Fig. 1). The mechanisms of transmission are known as ‘tradition’ (e.g. Lotman et al. 1975; Mead 1912).

The division of anthropology into the three branches outlined here undergirds the question of how social, material and mental cultures are transmitted from one generation to the next.

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