

Adaptors and Innovators: Styles of Creativity and Problem-solving

MICHAEL J. KIRTON (Editor)

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People vary in their preference for evolutionary change within existing viewpoints or for free thinking beyond the current pattern. This preference is independent of the ability to solve problems and, perhaps surprisingly, of the amount of creativity shown in the solution. Over 10 years ago, Michael Kirton developed an inventory measuring this preference and has now edited a collection of papers summarizing the substantial research using this measure. The research is unashamedly within the tradition of personality measurement (extroversion and all that) and there are many notes on correlation with other measures, e.g. of self-esteem.

Obviously written for researchers in the field, this book is concerned to give a scientific demonstration of points made and references to the original work. This, taken with the inevitable jargon, does not make for easy reading. However, the real problem is that the style of English is a strain to read. The first sentence will suffice as an example: 'More than for any other organism, at the core of the understanding of Homo Sapiens, is the study of the cognitive process at the command of the species'. This is a pity because the subject is interesting and useful. The authors discuss team-working and tolerance at work. There is even a comment on learning styles. There are paradoxes: the person who buys the most new food products is not the innovator but the adaptor who has adopted the new diet. Another application of the theory describes the life cycle of an organization.

This book is not directly relevant to OR, although many OR workers, especially heads of OR units, would be interested in the topic. I expect, however, that they will prefer to wait for a popular account of the theory. A suitable model would be Meredith Belbin's *Management Teams* in a related but not so different field.

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The Challenge to Western Management Development

JULIA DAVIES, MARK EASTERBY-SMITH, SARAH MANN and MORGAN TANTON (Editors)

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I was looking forward to reading this book because of the title but was astonished to find that, far from being a clarion call to Western management for defensive (or even offensive) action, the book consists of 18 conference papers on management education containing only passing reference to the successful economies of the East (Japan, Singapore, Taiwan). The challenge of the title is therefore somewhat muted.

I hope it is not too unkind to classify several of the case studies as descriptions of what went wrong in specific training programmes, more especially in the Third World countries. The main complaint was of lack of relevance to the future duties of the manager, particularly if the training was based on imported American-style courses. A few prescriptive suggestions are made, generally calling for a departure from the one-way communication style of a university lecture. With notable exceptions (e.g. Turkey, Bulgaria, Columbia), the 'what to know' syndrome was deemed less important than 'how to act' in a promoted situation. The point is made in Chapter 7 (on leadership actions) that the 'what' has common elements throughout the world, whereas the 'how' is culture-dependent: Chapter 9 (on BAT) suggests that top and junior management need training in 'how' skills, while middle management requires knowledge training, but without hard divisions. Lest it be thought these suggestions are like hitherto undiscovered nuggets of gold, it must be said they are rarely novel. Youker claims in Chapter 6 that much of the money donated by overseas agencies for management development in Africa fails to achieve its objectives because local culture is ignored.

It is inevitable that the style and content of conference papers will vary considerably. In this case, they range from a collection of quotations to make an ideological plea (e.g. Hong Kong) to a careful analysis followed by both general and detailed constructive recommendations (e.g. Columbia).