

---

## **The Concept of Innovation in Libya**

**Emhamad Elmansori**

*Department of Management, faculty of Economics-Omar Al-Mukhtar University, Albayda, Libya*

---

### **ABSTRACT**

The importance of the role of innovation in the industrial development and its ability of a competitive modern industry has become basic need, that considered the key motivation for growth and development, which requires the preservation of human elements through provide creative educational environment appropriate to the innovation. Therefore, the aim of this research is to gather information from within the categories that represent the key characteristics of the research: education, training, business, and innovation. A questionnaire was used to determine the current status of innovation in Libya as a part a wider development process. A survey was carried out with different stakeholders, including leading Libyan academics and professionals, working both in Libya and abroad. The questionnaire was distributed in Libya to academics in leading universities, teachers, officials, businesses, engineers, doctors working abroad, and Libyan students studying at the UK universities.

This paper is based on the responses of 39 survey respondents on the extent to which innovation is considered the key for growth. Innovation remains outside of the Libyan education curriculum, both in schools and universities. This strongly suggests that innovation could come after change culture process in the society. This paper is submitted with the purpose of stimulating debate concerning the challenges that face innovation management in Libya.

**Keywords:** Education, Innovation, Training and Libya

---

### **INTRODUCTION**

Libya is a member of 23 Arab countries, occupy an excellent geographical location in the north of Africa on the Mediterranean coast, it has an enormous oil wealth. The Libyan companies able to offer new and better products. In order to be competitive, manufacturing enterprises need to pursue innovation in their products and the way they generate them. These activities will allow Libyan small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) to take advantage of some of international agreements to design product, innovation and to increase their market share (Fries, J.and Obrien, C).

Innovation helps countries and regions develop in the industrial and service sectors, and the growth of innovative businesses and services should be encouraged. Innovation has long been known to be a catalyst for growth, regardless of the conditions of the large economy. It has been a topic for discussion and debate for many decades. For instance, in the nineteenth century, economic historians observed that rapid economic growth was the result of technological progress (Trott, 2005).

The importance of the role of innovation in the industrial development and its ability of a competitive modern industry has become basic need, which considered the key motivation for being able to extend the life of existing products and services. However, the biggest challenge many countries face creating a culture that supports and embraces innovation such as Libya (Phillips, 2007). In addition, Innovation

---

*\*Address for correspondence:*

elmansori2010@yahoo.co.uk

plays an important role in the development of successful economies (O’Riordan, 2008), especially countries and regions that lack the knowledge to innovate and improve their positions in the global market. Growth and development, which requires the preservation of human elements and to provide creative educational environment appropriate to innovation (United Nations, 2005).

### **Innovation**

Innovation may be defined as exploiting new ideas leading to the creation of a new product, process or service. According to (Smith 2010:5) innovation is “The first commercial application or a new process or product or Innovation is the successful exploitation of ideas” these definitions are more effective because It is not just the invention of a new idea that is important, but it is actually bringing it to market, putting into practice and exploiting it in a manner that leads to new products, services or systems that add value or improve quality. It possibly involves technological transformation and management restructuring. Innovation also means exploiting new technology and employing and generate new value and to bring about significant changes in society. (Trott, 2005 give one of the more comprehensive definitions, citing of Myers and Marquis 1969) Innovation is not a single action but a total process of interrelated sub processes. It is not just the conception of a new idea, nor the development of a new market. The process is all these things acting in an integrated fashion.

### **The Problem**

According to the Global Competitiveness Report, 2010-2011(Schwab 2010) concluded that most Arab countries which include Libya, face numerous challenges related to the inefficiency of their goods, labour, and financial markets, as well as underdeveloped infrastructure and low level of technological adoption and innovation. Nonetheless, there is a growing interest in innovation and its potential contribution to the economy.

This Paper set out to answer the following question:

- How do Libyan educators and professionals relate to the concept of innovation?

### **The Aim**

This paper contributes to discuss understanding the innovation in education as a factor of success in economy. A central reason for studying aspects of innovation in Libya, where have been acknowledged that innovation is one of the engines of economic growth. Thus, the competitiveness of an SMEs is critical not only for the success of enterprises but also for the economy. It included lack of interest to study whether in schools or universities, because of the problem a lack of funding that would help the development of innovation in Libya.

### **METHODOLOGY**

A questionnaire was distributed in Libya to academics in leading universities, teachers, officials, businesses, engineers, doctors working abroad, and Libyan students studying at the UK universities. The questionnaire was used to determine the current status of innovation in Libya as a part a wider development process. The purpose of this questionnaire was to gather information on the key areas of interest to this research: education, training, business, and innovation.

### **Data**

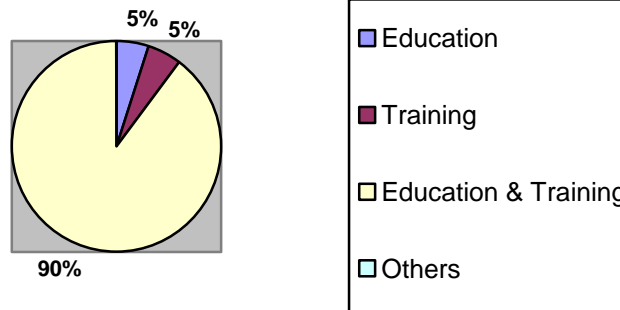
The table below shows the number of respondents from each category; 39 out of 70 questionnaires were returned, which equates to a response rate of 56%. Which is a very acceptable rate at the busy schedule of the participate involved.

The categories of key characteristics of the research as follows:

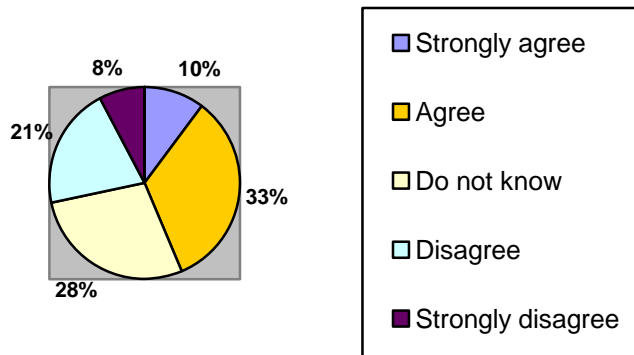
**Table1.** Categories of questionnaire respondents

Academics	Engineers	Businesses	Officials	Teachers	People working abroad	Students in the UK
7	6	4	4	6	5	7

The resulting data shows that a high 90% of respondents agreed that the combination of education and training are most important for development of innovation in product design, with 5% for education and 5% for training (See figure 2 below).

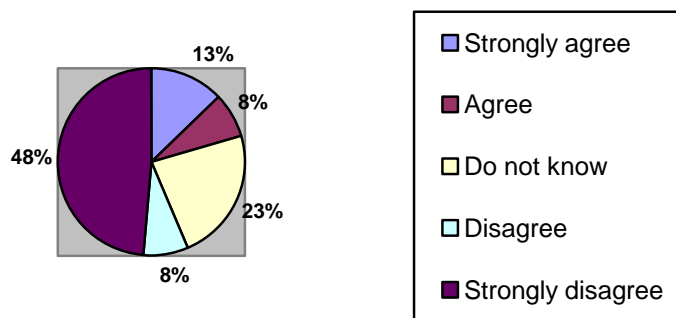


**Figure1.** Which of the following do you think is the most important for the development of Innovation?



**Figure2.** People I work with are actively encouraged to put forward new ideas?

About encouraging people to put forward new idea the percentage of respondents who strongly agreed/agreed was 43%. The percentage of respondents who either strongly disagreed/disagreed was 29 % with 28% answering ‘do not know’. (See figure 3). The above data allow the author to state that encouraging people for new ideas is considered an important element for their business activities.



**Figure3.** Do you feel that the government supports innovation?

This question aimed to determine the level of perceived governmental support for Innovation. The responses were 56% for either ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’, 21% for ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’, and 23% for ‘do not know’.

**Question 4. Do you think that innovation is important?**

The purpose of this question was to gauge the opinions of respondents about the importance of innovation. 92% of respondents were sure that innovation is very important.

**Question 5. Should innovation and product design be taught in Schools or Universities?**

For this question, 90% of responses were either ‘yes’ or ‘possible’.

**Question 6. Are there any training programmes currently available in Libya that focus upon innovation?**

Of the responses, 72% indicated ‘no’ or that they did not know about any training programmes in Libya.

**Question 7. Do you know of any exchange programmes between Libya and the UK with the focus upon innovation?**

Most responses (33 out of 39) to this question were either ‘no’ or ‘do not know’.

**Question 8. Do you know of anyone who has attended a training course focussing upon innovation in product design in Libya?**

Almost 70% of responses were in the negative – most respondents did not know of anyone who attended a training course focus upon innovation in Libya – and 10% answers were ‘yes’, with the remaining responses given as ‘no’ answers.

**Question 9. Do you feel that the high school curriculum in Libya facilitates innovation?**

Of the responses, 49% were ‘do not feel that the school curriculum in Libya facilitates innovation’, while 51% ‘have no idea’, ‘do not know’ or provided no answer.

**Question 10. Do you feel that the university curriculum in Libya facilitates innovation?**

Similar to the previous question, 47% of the responses were ‘no’, while the remaining responses were ‘do not know’ and ‘no’ answers.

This questionnaire depended on the knowledge, academic levels, and positions of responders. As such, there was a disparity in the answers. However, it was surprising that most respondents seemed to recognise the importance of innovation in product design.

## **DISCUSSION**

There is broad agreement that the innovation capacity of an individual is based on a number of skills, attributes, and values, but also on the organisational context within which these skills come into play. These include high performance levels in terms of: planning, organising, and communicating teaching and training. Findings from newer research on learning suggest that effective learning is based on a deep understanding of and engagement with core concepts and principles of the subject in order to achieve higher order learning and generic skills and capabilities associated with innovation (Smith, et al, 2003).

According to (Shapiro, et al., 2007) the idea of national or regional innovation systems playing a key role to economic prosperity and with non-technological and user-driven innovations increasingly being emphasised. This development accentuates the potential role of education and training for

innovation. It is generally acknowledged that innovation is a key driver for economic growth. Many argue that to increase the contribution of higher education systems to innovation implies that universities share knowledge with society and reinforce the dialogue with all stakeholders. However, the challenge for education and training institutions is to adapt to the innovation practices that are predominant in the specific regional or local context and to stimulate innovation by supplying competences and knowledge that are required at the forefront of these practices.

The researcher believes that innovation requires learning and teaching approaches and strategies based on students gain knowledge through exploration and active learning. Libya needs to find ways to begin to analyse and develop indicators on the impact and value of different types of novel or existing learning practices.

## **CONCLUSION**

Libyan culture may act as a deterrent to the development of innovation, detracting from the development and implementation of novel approaches and products. Although that majority of survey responses reinforce the view that innovation is important, there is an apparent lack of innovation in Libya, in spite of a growing interest in the topic and its potential contribution to the economy and education. This paper contributes of the debate of lack of innovation in Libya and proposed for the Libyan government to adopt of innovation in their business and education.

This guideline is used for IJRHSS. These are the manuscript preparation guidelines used as a standard template for all paper submissions of IJRHSS. Author must follow these instructions while preparing/modifying these guidelines.

## **REFERENCES**

- [1] Fries,J.and Obrien, C.,(n,d) Industrial Design and Innovation in Mexican Enterprises [Internet], Available from: < <http://www.idemployee.id.tue.nl/g.w.m.rauterberg/conferences> > [Accessed 21 December 2010].
- [2] Hague, P.N. (2002) Market Research: A Guide to Planning, Methodology and Evaluation. 3rd ed. London, Kogan Page.
- [3] O’riordan, S. (2008) Research and Development in Financial Services and the Role of Innovation. Article ed. UCC, Financial Services Innovation Centre.
- [4] Phillips, J. (2007) Creating a Culture of Innovation: Changing Your Culture to Accept and Embrace Innovation Implementation,[online],<http://www.innovationpurpose.com/pdf>. (Accessed 15 Sept 2010)
- [5] Schwab, K. et al. (2010) the Global Competitiveness Report. World Economic Forum Geneva, Switzerland 2010.
- [6] Shapiro, H, et al.,. (2007) Background Paper on Innovation and Education, the European Commission, DG Education & Culture in the context of a planned Green Paper on Innovation
- [7] Smith, D. (2010) Exploring Innovation. 2nd ed. Berkshire, McGraw-Hill Education.
- [8] Smith, D.et al. (2003), Learning, teaching and Innovation, a review of literature on facilitating innovation in students, schools and teacher education with particular emphasis on mathematics, science and technology, Faculty of Education and Social Work, The University of Sydney.
- [9] Trott, P. (2005) Innovation Management and New Product Development. 4th ed. England: Pearson Education Limited.
- [10] United Nations (2005) Networking Research, Development and Innovation in Arab Countries [online]. United Nations, [online], <http://www.escwa.un.org>.

### **AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHY**



**Dr. Elmansori’s**, a Lecturer at Omar Al-Mukhtar University. He is also the Editor-in-chief of Al-Mukhtar Journal of Economic Sciences at the Faculty of Economics- Omar Al-Mukhtar University/ Albayda-Libya. He was a public sector employee, 1985-2005 and has been a Faculty member of the Faculty of Economics, Omar Al Mukhtar University-Libya since 2005. He was a Head of the department of Business Administration, Omar Al- Mukhtar University, 2007. Dr. Elmansori has been published in different academic conferences and Journals.

Currently Dr. Elmansori's joined the Editorial Board of International Journal of Research in Business Studies and Management.