

# The Role of Social Civil Competencies in Organizational Performance

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**Abstract**—The European Union supports social and civil competencies as being a core element to develop sustainability of organizations, people and regions. These competencies are fundamental for the well-being of the community because they include interpersonal, intrapersonal as well as their civil, active and democratic participation in organizations. The combination of these competencies reveals the organizational socio-emotional maturity and allows relevant levels of performance. It also allows the development of various capitals, namely, human, structural, relational and social, with direct influence on performance. But along this path, the emotional aspect has not been valued as a capital, given that contemporary society is based on knowledge capital and is flooded with information viewed as a capital. The present study, based on the importance of these socio-emotional capitals, aims to show that the competencies of cooperation, interpersonal understanding, empathy, kindness, ability to listen, and tolerance, to mention a few, are strategic in consolidating knowledge within organizations. This implies that the humanizing processes, both inside and outside the organizations, are revitalized. The question is how to go about doing this and its implementation; as well as, where to begin and which guidelines to take on. These are the foci that guide the present study, bearing in mind the directions of the knowledge economy.

**Keywords**—Social competencies, civil competencies, humanizing, performance.

## I. INTRODUCTION

THE aim of this conceptual paper is to reflect on extant literature pertaining to the metaphors of organizational learning and learning organizations. The Knowledge Based View of the Firm informs this reflection. The constructs for this reflection include knowledge, unlearning, exploitation and exploration. The sub-constructs include competencies, innovation and entrepreneurship, within the context of Higher Education Institutions. Furthermore, knowledge is the vital resource in the new knowledge economy [1]-[3]. In addition, knowledge is considered to be “an intangible economic asset and is fundamental for organizational survival and sustainability” [4]. Knowledge Based View of the Firm [5] considers organizations as social entities. According to this approach, it is further highlighted that organizations are social entities that store internal and external knowledge which lies at the core of the survival and success of organizations. Knowledge falls within the construct of the metaphors of organizational learning, learning organization, unlearning. Thus, the metaphor of learning is useful to create new

knowledge. This is possible when organizations create a new mindset based on learning. In turn, this new mindset depends on a shift in paradigm. This paper explores this shift and further develops the notion of competencies through capacity building.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In order for organizations to have optimal performance, a new mindset needs to be nurtured. This is possible by embracing a shift in paradigm. This new paradigm, when observed from the lens of various metaphors, allows for organizational ambidexterity, which in turn, supports innovation.

### A. Personification in Organizations

A shift in paradigm requires organizations to change the mental models inherent in the employees. The old paradigm is of use to organizations based on mechanistic structures and mindset, however in the current based economy and in the era of increasing complexity, metaphors indicate the route in which individuals and organizational revitalization can occur. In the new organizational paradigm, one can expect that knowledge utilization improves employee performance and productivity. To corroborate that competitiveness, individualism, rationality and hierarchical control should be replaced with collaboration, community, sustainability, consciousness, participation in networks, continuous learning and development [6].

There is a significant disparity between the mindset of the old and new business paradigms, which is at times conflicting in nature. The new paradigm is positioned more in line with the tacit principals and individual mindset. The notion of materialism, associated with the old business paradigm, is replaced with intangible values and the new business paradigm relationships, people are the most important assets for organizations, not its buildings or materials, but its knowledge and skills [7]-[9]. The onus lies in managers who need to ensure their Intellectual Capital is motivated and challenged. In order to nurture human capital, it is vital that organizations develop their talent. Motivated human capital is essential and can be achieved when organizations create an alliance with their employees. Furthermore, in order to build capacity and uphold talent, individuals are required to innovate and create, ensuring the sustainability of the organization. Intangible values project individuals to greater levels of happiness which lead to higher individual performance levels with positive impact on the local community and society at large.

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Table I depicts the shift in paradigm by setting forth the distinction between Scientific Management School and the Knowledge Management School.

TABLE I  
PARADIGM SHIFT

Constructs	Scientific Management/Newtonian Paradigm/Old Paradigm	Knowledge Management/New Paradigm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Philosophical Orientation</li> <li>• Organizational metaphor</li> <li>• Mission/Purpose</li> <li>• Organizational purpose and leadership</li> <li>• Types of knowledge</li> <li>• Assumptions about employees</li> <li>• Major values</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positivism</li> <li>• Orderly, predictable sequence of events</li> <li>• Static state of being</li> <li>• Machine</li> <li>• Optimal financial return to stockholders</li> <li>• Hierarchical command and control</li> <li>• Bureaucrat: solely reliant on rules and regulations with a view totally focused inwardly on the organization</li> <li>• Power is based on position</li> <li>• Power is centralized</li> <li>• Managers are perceived as authority personified</li> <li>• Focuses only on his/her hierarchical authority</li> <li>• Thinks all subordinates must work for him/her</li> <li>• Objective and explicit/formal and systematic</li> <li>• Information is centralized</li> <li>• Compartmentalized</li> <li>• Outer oriented</li> <li>• People of all fit jobs</li> <li>• Homogeneity</li> <li>• Believes to be solely responsible: for everything in the organization;</li> <li>• When things run well claims all merits, but when things turn out wrong blames others</li> <li>• Win-lose situation</li> <li>• Rationality</li> <li>• Materialism and consumerism</li> <li>• Competition</li> <li>• Individualism</li> <li>• Exploitation of nature efficiency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ontology and epistemology</li> <li>• Uncertainty and chaos</li> <li>• Innovation</li> <li>• Disruption</li> <li>• Living organism</li> <li>• Emphasis on human capital: Customers, employees, society</li> <li>• Network participatory</li> <li>• Power is delegated and decentralized, ensures others are deal with challenges</li> <li>• Entrepreneur, interested in innovation and creativity;</li> <li>• Managers/leaders see themselves as suppliers</li> <li>• Focus on internal as well as external clients</li> <li>• Deeply concerned with the team ensuring the needs of the team are met</li> <li>• Tacit/subjective insight and intuition</li> <li>• Sharing of all information occurs</li> <li>• Holistic; Inner oriented</li> <li>• Jobs to fit people</li> <li>• Diversity</li> <li>• Believes in decision-sharing, facilitates group decision making, never impose own opinions</li> <li>• Has a vision/ awareness of working in teams and therefore the results are shared with others</li> <li>• Win-win situation</li> <li>• Those individuals who have decision-making roles are seen as leaders and facilitators</li> <li>• Consciousness</li> <li>• Spirituality and relationships</li> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Community</li> <li>• Sustainability</li> <li>• Continuous learning and improvement</li> </ul>

The shift in paradigm is needed to eliminate the dominant logic paradigm with a materialistic perspective that inhibits a holistic development, which will enable spiritual development by embracing a humanistic perspective focused on social calling.

According to Nonaka's SECI framework [10], [11], externalization makes use of metaphors. Dialogue among individuals leads to externalization with the articulation of tacit to explicit knowledge. Furthermore, metaphors can be viewed as bringing together those concepts considered to be distant by engendering new significance, thus appealing to the imagination [12]. In this way, tacit knowledge is augmented that leads to new knowledge is created [13], [14]. Metaphors are useful in bringing about new ideas to provide solutions. Organizational metaphors include organizations as machines, as organisms, as brains, as culture, as political systems, as psychic prisons, as flux and transformation, as instruments of domination [15].

Metaphors are regarded as a generative learning process [16]. Basic assumptions are challenged by conversation and dialogue, providing a new window through which the world can be perceived. Knowledge in organizations can be mapped via the theorizing role associated with a metaphor. When organizations are viewed as learning systems, this is referring to the figurative nature inherent in a metaphor which in turn, can also be regarded as a generative metaphor in view of it leading to creative new meanings. The learning organization

(LO) metaphor is expounded as a messenger of meaning. The LO metaphor has gained prolific use in organizational and managerial discourses. The LO metaphor depicts the discursive role of metaphors. This LO metaphor has spread across the individual as well as organizational learning domains, as well as, academic and practitioner discourse. The concept of organizational learning entails knowledge stored in the organizational memory via routines, symbols dialogue, as well as the classification of knowledge into processes and procedures as well as practices [17], [18]. The selective view of the LO metaphor engenders new meanings and images of the organization, which at times may not encompass all aspects of the reality in the organization in relation to learning. Metaphors are *per se* filled with value.

Organizational learning is part of the culture of the organization. There are two ways of perceiving the domain of learning, (i) the acquisition metaphor and, (ii) the participation metaphor. According to the acquisition metaphor, knowledge and learning are fundamental elements of learning and knowing, for example, mental models and schemata [19]. This metaphor is also perceived to be associated with the individualistic interpretation. Moreover, this metaphor gives rise to conceptual knowledge structures.

The participation metaphor [20] refers to learning as a collaborative process; the aim of this learning resides in knowing. The third approach of learning is the knowledge creation metaphor. In organizational learning, knowledge

acquisition by individual learners is associated with a monological approach; the participation of social interaction turns it into a dialogical approach. Learning as a process of knowledge creation relying on collaborative activities, emphasizes the dialogical approach [21]. In this way, the knowledge creation metaphor supports knowledge advancement and innovation.

### B. Innovation through Capacity Building

Organizational competencies are related to KM and organizational performance; OL and KM are interdependent. "In order to improve efficiency and knowledge diffusion, organizations need to invest in projects that energize humanization in the organization and in its people through competency management, a source of competitive advantage" [22]. Organizational learning theory is key to understanding competence development in organizations.

All individuals, regardless of their level, need to develop their behavior and attitude in search for competencies that are more in tune with the organization's strategy, which also presupposes that the actual organization needs to engage in a similar effort to improve the organization's culture. This course of action favors the acquisition of skills that facilitate learning thus making the individual's knowledge available for sharing with other employees and the organization at large. In this regard, innovation capacity complements with the absorption capacity to generate new capacity [23]. Special emphasis is given to innovation and productive efficiency. However, when organizations accept that innovation can disturb its technology this leads to flaws and failure.

Organizations spend millions of person hours in the quest of competency development, through making use of an array of tools such as, performance reviews, training programs, coaching sessions, workshops and courses in graduate or executive education [24]. There are a few lines of thought that believe competencies cannot be developed, either people are born with these and hence they possess them. However, there are other lines of thought that believe that competencies can be developed. According to this line of thought, some authors are of the opinion that "emotional, social and cognitive intelligence competencies can be developed in adults" [25]. Destructive organizational practices can be the cause for this, because competencies can be eroded.

Human capital is linked to one of the internal dimensions of intellectual capital and is made up of competencies, values, attitudes and education [26]. Human capital encompasses both the individual and organizational levels, thus viewing human resources as capital emphasizing key characteristics of flexibility and adaptability as well as the development of individual competencies [27].

Building individual and organizational capacity is defined as activities that strengthen the knowledge, abilities, skills and behavior of individuals.

Capacity building can improve structure and processes, allowing the organization to raise its performance and be sustainable [28]. Capacity building is associated with the construct of ambidexterity, which concentrates on the

organizational resources. A balance is sought between exploration and exploitation, which when achieved, leads to contextual ambidexterity an organizational learning theory. Organizational performance can be enhanced through ambidexterity. Professionalization of competencies can be nurtured through direct capacity building. Attending courses, following specialized academic programs, can be viewed as direct capacity building whilst, indirect capacity building is brought about 'learning by doing'.

### III. CONCLUSION

Ambidexterity can be considered as a dynamic capability in that it enriches the internal competencies in the organization allowing it to be sustainable. Future research should embrace the notion of capacity building with organizational ambidexterity.

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