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# WAYS OF MANAGING ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING

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## Abstract

Organizational learning is a significant aspect in every organization that aims for performance. Thus, identifying ways of managing organizational learning becomes relevant. Through this paper, we aim to identify and detail some ways of managing organizational learning from the literature and to propose some ways of managing it, based on the literature. The paper is original and innovative through our analysis of the literature, interpretation of the findings from the literature and through proposing certain new elements that are relevant for managing organizational learning. By managing organizational learning we refer to means, actions, strategies, practices and tools through which the process of organizational learning may be facilitated or the organizational learning capability may be enhanced. The results highlight the practices and tools identified in the literature. The paper is useful for both decision makers and employees who are interested in identifying and applying ways of managing organizational learning.

## Introduction

After analyzing the scholarly, scientific literature that addresses the topic of “organizational learning”, the author of this paper considers that the literature is vast, fragmented, contradictory regarding to some of the issues or lacking empirical research in some of the issues. Comparatively, the scholarly, scientific literature and, specifically, empirical studies, in which organizational learning management is treated is almost non-existent. The studies in the area of organizational learning management are in very few number and are undertaken based on different perspectives. These studies refer to practices and/or tools through which the facilitation of organizational learning is aimed (more specifically, the facilitation of the use of sub-systems that are part of an organizational learning system is aimed) or a connection to organizational learning capability is identified, from which it could be inferred that, through some practices/tools, organizational learning capability may improve (hypothetical expressing is used because only the correlation has been identified, but not the causality).

One possible cause for the precariousness of studies on the topic of managing organizational learning might be the fact that organizational learning has been studied from different point of views, that do not converge to a common reference point, which could make it difficult to propose ways of managing organizational learning. However, this task would be eased if the contexts are well defined. This latter aspect – the difficulty of proposing or identifying actions, means to achieve organizational learning management, to facilitate the process of organizational learning, to improve organizational learning capability – can be explained by the fact that the multitude of factors that influence the process of organizational learning, facilitating or inhibiting it, and the multitude of perspectives from which organizational learning was approached may lead to great difficulties in elaborating ways of achieving organizational learning management.

By managing organizational learning the author of this paper refers to means, actions, strategies, practices and tools, instruments through which either the process of organizational learning may be facilitated or the organizational learning capability may be improved (the author of this paper focuses on means such as human resource management practices, on implementing organizational learning systems and their management and on managing based on the factors that influence organizational learning, thus on the means through which the presence and action of the factors that have a positive impact on organizational learning is facilitated).

## The concept of “organizational learning”

Organizational learning is a concept that is widely approached in the literature and, at the same time, it is a vast and disputed concept.

Marshall, Smith, and Buxton (2009) highlight that, although the notion of organizational learning was first used by Cyert and March in 1963, the interest in this concept has become more prominent in the early 1990s (also see Crossan, & Guatto, 1996). Organizational learning as a construct emerged in 1958, with the work of Dearborn, and Simon (Casey, 2005).

Tsang (1997, p. 73) highlights that the writings in the literature on organizational learning have “little consensus in terms of definition, perspective, conceptualization, and methodology”. This aspect can be appreciated to be true until the present day.

Many definitions have been given for the concept of “organizational learning”. One of the first ways of defining organizational learning is in terms of error detection and correction and it was offered by Argyris, and Schön (1978). However, due to the limited size of this paper, and taking into consideration that including and analyzing the large number of definitions that exist in the literature would exceed the scope of this paper, the focus is going to be on the definitions that are in agreement with the author’s of the present paper point of view on organizational learning.

Slater, and Narver (1995, as cited in Bontis, Crossan, & Hulland, 2002, p. 439) define organizational learning in the following way: “At its most basic definition, organizational learning is the development of new knowledge or insights that have the potential to influence behaviour”.

Crossan, Lane, White, and Djurfeldt (1995, p. 353) offered the following definition: “Learning is a process of change in cognition and behavior, and it does not necessarily follow that those changes will directly enhance performance.” The author of this paper is interested in this definition due to the idea related to performance. However, regarding behavior the perspective with which the author agrees is that of Slater, and Narver (1995, as cited in Bontis, Crossan, & Hulland, 2002).

It has been considered that learning takes place at the cognitive level (changes in cognition) and that changes in behavior mean adaptation (Fiol, & Lyles, 1985), but, according to more recent and comprehensive opinions, learning can take place both at cognitive and behavioural level (Easterby-Smith, Crossan, & Nicolini, 2000; Argote, 2011), even without making distinction between the two (Easterby-Smith, Crossan, & Nicolini, 2000). The author of this paper adheres to the perspective according to which learning can occur both at a cognitive and a behavioral level.

Learning is a multi-level process. Learning can take place at individual, group, organizational and inter-organizational levels, after Boh, Slaughter, and

Espinosa, 2007; Holmquist, 2004; Ibarra, Kilduff, and Tsai, 2005; Sanchez, 2001 (in Škerlavaj, Dimovski, & Desouza, 2010).

Organizational learning can be analyzed as a process or as capability.

As a process, organizational learning is composed of a certain number of processes, constructs or phases. Two perspectives that are of reference in the literature are those proposed by Huber (1991) and respectively Crossan, Lane, and White (1999).

Huber (1991) treats organizational learning from the perspective of four constructs: knowledge acquisition, information distribution, information interpretation and organizational memory.

Huber (1991, p. 89) emphasizes the following perspective on organizational learning: "An entity learns if, through its processing of information, the range of its potential behaviors is changed."

Crossan et al. (1999) adopt a perspective on organizational learning based on four processes: intuiting, interpreting, integrating and institutionalizing, and they consider the individual, group and organizational levels. One of the researchers' premises is that "Organizational learning involves a tension between assimilating new learning (exploration) and using what has been learned (exploitation)." (Crossan et al., 1999, p. 523).

Intuiting is mainly a subconscious process. Intuition is considered to involve "some sort of pattern recognition" (Crossan et al., 1999, p. 526, after Behling, & Eckel, 1991), while interpreting is related to the "conscious elements of the individual learning process" (Crossan et al., 1999, p. 528). Cognitive maps are developed by individuals, through this process. Integrating involves "coherent, collective action" (Crossan et al., 1999, p. 528). Institutionalizing "sets organizational learning apart from individual or ad hoc group learning" (Crossan et al., 1999, p. 529).

By correlating the four processes (intuiting, interpreting, integrating and institutionalizing) with the three levels (individual, group and organizational) considered by Crossan et al. (1999), the researchers appreciate that the four processes can appear in the following manner: intuiting at individual level, interpreting at the individual and group levels, integrating at the group and organization levels and institutionalizing only at the organization level.

A more recent proposal on the processes of organizational learning is that of Argote (2011): creating, retaining and transferring of knowledge.

As was previously mentioned, organizational learning can also be analyzed as capability.

Organizational learning capability is considered to be the "organisational and managerial characteristics that facilitate the organisational learning process or allow an organisation to learn" (Chiva, Alegre, & Lapiedra, 2007, p. 225).

Organizational learning capability is directly related to factors that facilitate organizational learning.

Organizational learning capability has been studied in several studies throughout the literature.

Chiva et al. (2007) have considered five dimensions for organizational learning capability: experimentation, risk taking, interaction with the external environment, dialogue and participative decision making.

Gelard, and Mirsalehi (2010) have taken into consideration the following dimensions: open environment and experimentation, risk taking, interaction with the external environment, distribution and sharing of internal knowledge, system thinking, ongoing training and participative decision taking.

Jerez-Gómez, Céspedes-Lorente, and Valle-Cabrera (2005) proposed the following dimensions: managerial commitment, systems perspective, openness and experimentation, knowledge transfer and integration.

These details regarding organizational learning capability are presented with the only purpose to understand what this concept refers to. Thus, the author is not going to further present in detail notions about organizational learning capability.

Another relevant aspect is the relationship between organizational learning and organizational performance.

Organizational performance is a concept to which many definitions have been attributed (see Abu-Jarad, Yusof, & Nikbin, 2010).

Abu-Jarad et al. (2010, p. 28) present several definitions of organizational performance, according to different researchers' visions: "performance is equivalent to the famous 3Es (economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of a certain program or activity" (after Javier, 2002), "organizational performance is the organization's ability to attain its goals by using resources in an efficient and effective manner" (after Daft, 2000), "the ability of the organization to achieve its goals and objectives" (after Richardo, 2001).

Okafor (2006, p. 1) defines performance as "the outcome of work" and mentions that "it provides the linkage between the goals of an organization and its effectiveness".

Another way of defining performance is through "the actual results achieved compared to the desired results" (Leen Yu, Hamid, Ijab, & Soo, 2009, p. 815, after Dess, & Robinson, 1984).

Organizational learning is considered to be "a source of sustainable competitive advantage" (Škerlavaj et al., 2010, p. 189, after de Geus, 1988) and a "driver of corporate performance" (Škerlavaj et al., 2010, p. 189, after Sorenson, 2003; Stata, 1989; Tucker, Nembhard, & Edmondson, 2007).

Superior knowledge bases that result from organizational learning are associated to superior

performances of organizations (Garvin, 1998; Senge, 1990, in Curado, 2006).

Thus, it can be seen that the literature emphasizes that organizational learning influences organizational learning directly and positively.

However, the relationship between organizational learning and organizational performance is complex, as Crossan et al. (1995) state, but this aspect will be treated at a later point in this paper.

### **Ways for improving organizational learning capability and/or facilitating the organizational learning process**

#### **Practices and tools used in an organizational learning system**

In this paper some details about systems and about organizational learning systems are included, considering that practices and tools that can be used for the benefit of organizational learning will be treated further. The practices and tools can facilitate the use of sub-systems that are part of a model of an organizational learning system or can enhance their learning capabilities (Chen, 2005b).

Organizational learning systems is an area in the field of Organizational Learning thematic that is not cristalized in the literature.

Considering the systems theory, the following definition of a system (in general) can be considered: "A 'system' is described in basic texts as:

- a set of inter-related parts;
- specified (or specifiable) relations between the parts; and
- a system boundary (implying a system environment" (Stewart, & Ayres, 2001, p. 81, after Alexander, 1974; Teague, & Pidgeon, 1985).

Another definition would be: "A system is a set of interacting units or elements that form an integrated whole intended to perform some function" (Skyttner, 1996, pp. 16-17).

From a constructivist perspective, systems do not exist independently from the human mind (Skyttner, 1996). The author of the present paper considers that this also applies in the field of Management. When referring to organizational learning systems, after analyzing the literature, it can be inferred that these are, in general, mental constructions.

Although the literature which treats the management of organizational learning is poor and lacks consistency, certain practices/tools can be identified.

Chen (2005b) has identified several practices and tools through which organizational learning capability may be enhanced. Through the notion of "organizational learning capability" Chen (2005b) refers to the capability of an organizational learning system, which is composed of nine organizational learning sub-systems, thus the focus is on

enhancing the organizational learning capabilities of the nine sub-systems.

Chen (2005b) starts from an integrated model of an organizational learning system, which was proposed in another work of Chen's (2005a). The researcher treats in both papers the problematic of the proposed system and in one of the papers the researcher identifies and details several practices and tools through which the use of each organizational learning sub-system is facilitated and, respectively, the nine sub-systems' learning capabilities can be enhanced.

The nine sub-systems of the organizational learning system proposed by Chen (2005a, 2005b) are: discovering (discovery and monitor of challenges, opportunities, changes or problems from the internal and external environment), innovating (for finding new ways of dealing with changes), selecting (allows organizations to make appropriate choices between different innovative ideas), executing (putting the new ideas into practice in an effective way), transferring (what is obtained by individuals or teams in terms of experience, ideas or practices needs to be transferred to the rest of the organization), reflecting (useful in order for organizations to learn from their experiences), acquiring knowledge from environment, contributing knowledge to environment, building organizational memory. Taking into consideration that our focus is not on organizational learning systems, we are not going to further detail each of the nine sub-systems.

Chen (2005b) addresses organizational learning from the perspective of organizational learning systems. It is considered that all organizations have an organizational learning system. Chen (2005a, p. 481) conceives the organizational learning system as an ensemble of nine sub-systems, and defines an organizational learning system as being a system that is "embedded in an organization's human resource, structure, process, policy and culture". It can be interpreted that Chen (2005b) puts an equal sign between the organizational learning system and the organizational learning capability of a company. Although the author of the present paper considers plausible and agrees to the idea that organizational learning systems may have different learning capabilities, the author of the present paper appreciates that an organizational learning system may have a capability equal to zero, therefore becoming inexistent within an organization.

Chen (2005b) does not take into consideration the perspective according to which organizational learning capability would be represented by facilitating factors of organizational learning. Chen (2005a, p. 480) analyzes "organizational learning from the perspective of system instead of process". The model proposed by Chen (2005a), that aims an organizational learning system, has been developed based on qualitative research methods, hence

there should be caution regarding the generalization of the model, according to Chen (2005a). However, the author of the present paper considers that the organizational learning system developed and detailed by Chen (2005a; 2005b) is a useful starting point and a basis for further research that could address organizational learning systems.

In connection with the organizational learning system with its nine sub-systems, Chen (2005b) has identified 35 practices and tools through which the use of the nine sub-systems can be facilitated and, respectively, the learning capabilities at the level of the nine sub-systems that are part of the organizational learning system can be enhanced.

Also, each of the 35 practices/tools has a heavy impact on one of the nine sub-systems of the organizational learning system and some of the practices/tools also have a light impact on one or more of the sub-systems (Chen, 2005b).

The 35 practices and tools, after Chen (2005b), are: employee survey system; customer survey system; scenario planning; TCS (Total Customer Satisfaction); TFE (Teaming For Excellence); work-out; "I Recommend"/ "Idea Box"; system thinking; reverse thinking; dialectical thinking; dialog; optimal decision-making; open competition for jobs and promotions; CAP (Change Acceleration Process); PDD (Planning and Development Discussion); internal benchmarking and best practice sharing; mentor system; job rotation; AAR (After Action Review); 360-degree performance evaluation system; external benchmarking; recruiting talent from outside; external advisory group; employing external consulting; attending external training programs; searching external knowledge; collaboration, joint venture or strategic alliance; mutual exchange activities; providing training programs to outside; publishing organizational management experience; consulting for outside organizations; public presentations; providing knowledge on a public Web site; building an organizational knowledge base; building an organizational knowledge map.

Chen (2005b) presents details for all of the 35 practices and tools.

The author of the present paper has selected a number of 10 practices and tools, that are detailed below.

The employee survey system implies developing different methods through which an organization can obtain information from its stakeholders (employees, customers, suppliers and so on). This practice implies adopting analytical tools for data analysis, so that emerging problems, challenges or opportunities can be discovered (Chen, 2005b).

The customer survey system is useful for collecting information about customers: customers' satisfaction, suggestions or potential problems (Chen, 2005b).

AAR (After Action Review) implies reflecting on and reviewing of different situations that took place in an organization (Chen, 2005b).

Attending external training programs implies acquiring knowledge through employees' participation to trainings that are held by experts from outside the organization (Chen, 2005b).

Searching external knowledge implies searching information/knowledge from different sources, such as books, journals, web sites and so on (Chen, 2005b).

Collaborations, joint ventures, or strategic alliances involve acquiring and also contributing with knowledge to an organization's partners (Chen, 2005b).

Building an organizational knowledge base implies creating a base in which different documents, reports, academic journals, books and so on can be stored electronically (Chen, 2005b).

Building an organizational knowledge map: the knowledge map contains people's names, their contact information, experiences and expertise. The map must then be distributed so that people can find others in the organization with whom they can consult with for solving different problems of share experiences (Chen, 2005b).

TFE (Teaming For Excellence) implies cross-functional cooperation (Chen, 2005b).

Dialog can be considered to be related to teamwork and team learning. Through dialog, team members "enter into a genuine <<thinking together>>" (Chen, 2005b, p. 15, after Senge, 1990).

The 10 practices and tools that we have selected are presented more thoroughly in Chen (2005b).

As Chen (2005b) argues, organizations should consider some aspects when taking into account the implementation of different practices and tools, through which developing organizational learning capability (from the perspective of organizational learning sub-systems) is aimed. To exemplify, organizations should take into account which of the practices/tools are easier to implement and which are their priorities regarding the improvements of the nine organizational learning sub-systems capabilities, according to the needs that an organization has at a given time.

Through the practices and tools identified by Chen (2005b), facilitating the use of the nine organizational learning sub-systems/enhancing the learning capabilities of the nine sub-systems is aimed. Between the nine organizational learning sub-systems and the organizational learning processes/constructs identified in different perspectives from the literature several similarities or even overlaps can be identified.

If we relate to Huber's (1991) perspective for the organizational learning processes/constructs (knowledge acquisition, information distribution, information interpretation and organizational

memory), the following correspondence between the nine sub-systems of the organizational learning system (Chen, 2005b) and the four organizational learning processes/constructs (Huber, 1991) may be made. For example, discovering sub-system and acquiring knowledge from environment sub-system may be linked to the process of knowledge acquisition; organizational memory is also a sub-system (“building organizational memory sub-system”) of the organizational learning system and a component of organizational learning (however, proposing this type of associations is subjective). Considering the above ideas, it may be appreciated that the practices and tools that aim a part of the sub-systems of the organizational learning system proposed by Chen (2005b) are useful for facilitating the occurrence of processes of organizational learning.

### **Human resource management practices**

Human resource management practices could represent another way of managing organizational learning, with an emphasis on organizational learning capability.

To analyze different methods, modalities to improve organizational learning capability or to facilitate the process of organizational learning, in short, ways of managing organizational learning, the following definition of organizational learning capability (OLC) is included: “The OLC of a company is defined as the set of organizational factors or values that influence the propensity of the company to create and use knowledge” (López-Cabrales, Real, & Valle, 2011, p. 346, after Sinkula, Baker, & Noordewier, 1997).

Starting from the definition of organizational learning capability that was previously presented, and considering that “Organizational learning can be understood as a process” and that organizational learning capability “is constituted by those organizational characteristics that enable an organization to learn” (López-Cabrales et al., 2011, p. 346), López-Cabrales et al. (2011) have undertaken a research through which they analyze: the associations between human resource management practices (selection, development, appraisals and rewards) and organizational learning capability; the association between the value and, respectively, the uniqueness of human capital and organizational learning capability; the possibility that the relationship between human resource management practices and organizational learning capability is mediated by the human capital (by the value and, respectively, the uniqueness of human capital).

In the present paper, the interest falls on the association between human resource management practices and organizational learning capability. The author of the present paper extends the idea

and links human resource management practices with the process of organizational learning.

Thus, some aspects treated in the research conducted by López-Cabrales et al. (2011) are included in this paper, giving the fact that the mentioned research can constitute a starting point in proposing ways for achieving organizational learning management. Although in the mentioned research only the correlation has been determined, but not the causality relationship between human resource management practices and organizational learning capability, the ideas treated in the article may represent a starting point for improving organizational learning capability.

Although the researchers do not address a potential relationship that might exist between human resource management practices and the organizational learning process, we do not exclude the possibility that there might be an association between the two.

López-Cabrales et al. (2011, p. 346) highlight some actions that are considered to foster the capacity of organizations to learn: “generation of ideas by means of experimentation, continuous improvement and observation, working in teams, and participative policies.”

López-Cabrales et al. (2011) consider Jerez-Gómez et al.’s (2005) perspective on organizational learning capability, according to which organizational learning capability has four dimensions: managerial commitment (includes recognizing the importance of learning and the development of a culture in which learning is promoted), systems perspective (involves common language, joint action), openness and experimentation (a climate of openness, being open to new ideas, promoting creativity), knowledge transfer and integration (simultaneous occurrence).

After some authors, learning is related to the process of knowledge creation (López-Cabrales et al., 2011, after Huber, 1991). Taking into consideration the fact that, in some authors’ opinion, knowledge creation in an organization is determined by the type of employees that are staffed (see López-Cabrales et al., 2011), López-Cabrales et al. (2011, after Lepak, & Snell, 1999) appreciate that selecting personnel that has a high potential for learning could provide higher learning capability than in the situation of selecting people that have a low potential. Furthermore, in order for an organization to improve its organizational learning capability, it should hire individuals who have potential for acquiring new knowledge and skills, who can tolerate high uncertainty, “who can adapt to changes in organizational contexts and in the dynamic of work activities” (López-Cabrales et al., 2011, p. 347, after Dyer, & Shafer, 1999).

Further, López-Cabrales et al. (2011, after Lengnick-Hall, & Lengnick-Hall, 2003) consider that organizations should incorporate, in the

selection processes, the attitude towards teamwork, interpersonal adaptability and other similar criteria. We agree with the ideas presented by López-Cabrales et al. (2011) regarding the emphasis on the link between human resource management practices and organizational learning capability. If, in the selection processes, an assessment of the candidates in terms of their capacity for learning, openness to teamwork and knowledge sharing, tolerance towards uncertainty, adaptability, these activities might lead to improvements in organizational learning capability.

Other practices are represented by the implementation of adapted, personalized policies for personnel development, such as: trainings, delegation of responsibilities, involving employees in the decision making process or individual career management (López-Cabrales et al., 2011). These practices prove the commitment of the managers towards organizational learning and the openness to experimentation (see López-Cabrales et al., 2011, after Garvin, 1993).

Another type of practices that is considered by López-Cabrales et al. (2011) to be positively associated with organizational learning capability is represented by competence-based appraisals and rewards. Through the performance appraisal systems acquiring new skills or knowledge can be measured; another related aspect that is taken into consideration is represented by rewarding creativity (López-Cabrales et al., 2011). Regarding the process of appraisal, managers must offer feedback so that performance related issues can be solved, overcome and learning (from solution assessment) can be fostered (López-Cabrales et al., 2011, after London, & Smither, 1999). It is considered that appraisals that are based on employees competencies “motivate employees to acquire new knowledge and skills that they can apply in an organizational context of openness and experimentation”, which are dimensions that are part of organizational learning capability (López-Cabrales et al., 2011, p. 348, after Kang, Morris, & Snell, 2007). It is also considered that including “incentives in order to reward the search for new solutions” is necessary (p. 348, after Mumford, 2000).

The above presented ideas highlight the fact that human resource management practices could represent ways, methods, modalities through which the improvement of organizational learning capability could be facilitated.

Although in López-Cabrales et al.'s (2011) research the link between human resource management practices and the process of organizational learning is not approached, there may be a correlation between the two. Also, organizational learning capability and the process of organizational learning may be correlated.

López-Cabrales et al. (2011) also indicate the existence of an association between human capital and organizational learning capability, but this issue is beyond the scope of the present paper.

### **Proposing other ways of managing organizational learning**

There has been previously stated that, in terms of managing organizational learning, the interest, in this paper, is on means through which organizational learning capability may be improved, enhanced and the process of organizational learning may be facilitated.

Starting from the factors that can influence organizational learning positively, facilitating it, or negatively, inhibiting it, there can be identified different ways of managing organizational learning, through interventions on the factors that influence it.

An analysis of the factors that influence organizational learning is beyond the scope of the present paper. The literature is vast and different perspectives take into consideration different factors, some that are more general, some that are more specific.

A series of factors that can be considered to be general have been identified by Fiol and Lyles (1985): culture, strategy, structure and environments. By “culture” it should be understood “organizational culture”. Two other factors that appear in studies are: organizational stage of development, resource position (see Bapuji, & Crossan, 2004).

Organizational culture is a factor whose major influence on organizational learning can not be disputed.

A learning oriented culture has attributes such as (Hawkins, 2005): shared values (after Hitt, 1995; Ulrich, Jick, & Von Glinow, 1993); collaboration (after Leithwood, Leonard, & Sharratt, 1998), openness (after McGill, & Slocum, 1993; Nevis, DiBella, & Gould, 1995; Snell, 2001) or trust, commitment (after Barker, & Camarata, 1998) and actively promoting learning communities (after Teare, & Dealtry, 1998).

Thus, one way of intervening would be by developing a coherent system of values and norms or making changes to the existing system of values and norms, so that it includes aspects regarding organizational learning (knowledge acquisition or creation, knowledge transfer, organizational memory). The system of values and norms needs to be accepted by the employees. Ideas such as collaboration, trust and commitment should be promoted.

Another measure through which the organizational learning process can be facilitated is by enunciating objectives at organizational, departmental, team and individual levels. This way, learning can become an integrated aspect in current activities

and it can be seen as a finality of the experiences through which employees, teams and the organization are passing through.

Organizational learning capability is directly related to contextual factors that influence organizational learning. Some classifications for the dimensions of organizational learning capability have been mentioned earlier in this paper. Chiva et al. (2007) have considered the following dimensions: experimentation, risk taking, interaction with the external environment, dialogue, participative decision making.

Knowledge acquisition and knowledge creation may be facilitated through experimentation, in association with accepting and taking risks. Creating an organizational climate in which experimentation and risk taking are promoted can lead to improvements in organizational learning capability, which facilitates the occurrence of the organizational learning process.

To improve organizational learning capability and to facilitate the organizational learning process, an organization's management should take into consideration and promote currently the employees involvement in decision making processes. This way, the employees' commitment increases, they feel more motivated (also, see Chiva et al., 2007, after Scott-Ladd, & Chan, 2004), more responsible and more useful and, indirectly, it/these can lead to an increase in employees' interest for learning, in order to improve the way in which they perform their tasks, to improve the way of solving current problems or new ones and to improve the way in which challenges are addressed.

Another aspect that could lead to improving organizational learning capability/to facilitating the process of organizational learning would consist in taking responsibility at corporate level for organizational learning.

### **Management of the relationship between organizational learning and organizational performance**

A very important issue in the study of organizational learning is the relationship between organizational learning and organizational performance.

It is generally appreciated that there is a direct and positive link between organizational learning and performance. More precisely, better organizational learning would lead to better performance at organizational level. In this section, reference is made to the process of organizational learning (the ideas presented below refer to organizational learning as a process).

However, some researchers, such as Crossan et al. (1995), highlight that the relationship between organizational learning and performance is a complex one. In this paper, there is agreement with this point of view.

It is generally admitted that learning is beneficial and also that it can be influenced in order to enhance performance (see Crossan et al., 1995). However, learning is considered to be "a process of change in cognition and behavior, and it does not necessarily follow that those changes will directly enhance performance" (Crossan et al., 1995, p. 353). Thus, learning and improvements in performance can not be considered equivalent.

Crossan et al. (1995) also highlight that, in the short term, learning may have a negative impact on performance due to the fact that practices that are familiar may be abandoned in favour of "new and unfamiliar ways of operating" (Crossan et al., 1995, p. 353).

Considering the ideas approached until this point, it can be seen that managing the relationship between organizational learning and organizational performance becomes relevant.

Crossan et al. (1995) state that, through an active management of the relationship between organizational learning and performance, the probability to obtain improvements in performance can increase. In this regard, the researchers offer an example (p. 353): the recognition of the fact that "performance may deteriorate before it improves".

The author of the present paper takes the previous idea one step further and highlights that the valorisation of the changes in cognition and behavior, which might lead to deteriorations in performance, before a potential improvement in performance, is important and it would represent a mean of managing the relationship between organizational learning and organizational performance.

Organizational learning may influence organizations' performances positively or negatively (Hawkins, 2005, after Crossan et al., 1995). Thus, organizational learning is not always beneficial to an organization.

Thus, the author of the present paper can formulate two ideas that could relate to the management of the relationship between the process of organizational learning and organizational performance. One idea refers to an awareness regarding the fact that organizational learning is not always beneficial for an organization. From this idea derives another one: trying to guide what the organization learns, so that learning is beneficial.

The ideas presented in this section represent potential ways of managing the relationship between the process of organizational learning and organizational performance.

### **Conclusions**

Through this paper, the aim was to identify and detail some ways of managing organizational learning, from the literature, and to propose some ways of managing it, based on the literature. Although the focus was on organizational learning

capability and the process of organizational learning and possible ways of enhancing respectively facilitating them, in this paper there has been considered the idea of managing the relationship between the process of organizational learning and organizational performance. When studying organizational learning, its relationship to organizational performance is important. Thus, managing the relationship between organizational learning and organizational performance becomes relevant.

It can be concluded that the literature is fragmented and studies are quite inexistent when it comes to analyzing possibilities for managing organizational learning.

Chen (2005b) focused on an organizational learning system and identified 35 practices and tools that are used in organizations. Although Chen's (2005b) study refers to an organizational learning system, it can be appreciated the practices and tools identified by Chen (2005b) may be useful facilitating organizational learning.

López-Cabrales et al. (2011) focused on human resource management practices and associated these practices with organizational learning capability. In the present paper, it has been appreciated that also the process of organizational learning could be facilitated through these practices.

The author of the present paper has also considered a series of aspects that could represent punctual ways that could be used for enhancing organizational learning capability or for facilitating the process of organizational learning (the first can lead to the second).

Finally, in this paper there has been highlighted that another important aspect is the management of the relationship between the process of organizational learning and organizational performance.

Concluding, the literature treating methods, modalities, actions, practices, tools and so on through which organizational learning capability can be enhanced or the process of organizational learning can be facilitated is quite precarious and vague, leaving room for researcher to further propose ideas in terms of ways of managing organizational learning, more precisely enhancing organizational learning capability or facilitating the process of organizational learning. Also, managing the relationship between the organizational learning process and organizational performance leaves room for further theoretical or empirical studies.

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„Performance and excellence in doctoral and postdoctoral research in Romanian economics science domain”

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