

ABSORPTIVE CAPACITY IN AN ORGANIZATION SIMPLE STRUCTURE: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

The research aims to understand how external knowledge absorption happens, that is, how knowledge absorption capacity is developed in organizations that adopt a simple structure organizational configuration. The present study is characterized as an empirical of an applied nature, a qualitative approach and concerning the procedures, it is descriptive. The method used here was the case study. The data were collected through structured interviews with a script, and they were analyzed using the content analysis technique. The recognition capacity is favored by the employees' individual capacities and by their autonomy. The independence of the employee is driven by the charismatic leadership of the manager. The assimilation capacity, in turn, happens based on the individual skills and competences of the company members, also through training and informal team meetings. It is understood that the development of the assimilation capacity is minimized by the centrality in decision making by the main manager. This also occurs with the ability to apply knowledge, as a single individual has control over decision making, acting between strategic and operational issues. A multidimensional understanding of the constructive absorption capacity is proposed from the perspective of its relationship with the organizational configuration, since the organizational configuration can influence, in different ways, the efficiency and effectiveness of the recognition, assimilation and application process. knowledge. To present this relationship in a theoretical-empirical study is a relevant contribution to the study on this field.

Keywords: Absorptive Capacity. Organizational Configuration.

A CAPACIDADE ABSORTIVA EM UMA ORGANIZAÇÃO ESTRUTURA SIMPLES: UM ESTUDO DE CASO

RESUMO

Esta pesquisa objetiva compreender de que forma acontece a absorção do conhecimento externo, ou seja, como é desenvolvida a capacidade de absorção do conhecimento em organizações que adotam a configuração organizacional estrutura simples. O estudo caracteriza-se como empírico de natureza aplicada, abordagem qualitativa, e quanto aos procedimentos é descritiva. O método utilizado foi o estudo de caso. Os dados foram coletados por meio de entrevistas com roteiro estruturado e foram analisados pela técnica análise de conteúdo. A capacidade de reconhecimento é favorecida pelas capacidades individuais dos funcionários e também pela autonomia que os mesmos possuem. A independência dos funcionários é impulsionada pela liderança carismática do gestor. A capacidade de assimilação, por sua vez, acontece a partir de habilidades e competências individuais dos membros da empresa e também mediante a realização de treinamentos e de encontros informais da equipe. Entende-se que o desenvolvimento da capacidade de assimilação é minimizado pela centralidade na tomada de decisão pelo dirigente principal. Isto também ocorre com a capacidade de aplicação de conhecimento, na medida em que um único indivíduo detém o controle da tomada de decisão, atuando entre questões estratégicas e operacionais. Propõe-se um entendimento multidimensional do constructo capacidade de absorção na perspectiva da relação deste com a configuração organizacional, uma vez que essa pode influenciar, de formas diferentes, a eficiência e a eficácia do processo de reconhecimento, assimilação e aplicação do conhecimento. Mostrar essa relação em um estudo teórico-empírico apresenta-se como uma contribuição relevante no estudo dessa temática.

Palavras-chave: capacidade absorptiva; configuração organizacional.

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INTRODUCTION

The structuring theory of this research is the absorptive capacity (Acap), which originated in the late 1980s and early 1990s (COHEN; LEVINTHAL, 1989, 1990). The internal capacity to interact with the environment and transform the knowledge acquired in innovation, needs to be built, it is not spontaneous. It is the ability to identify, assimilate and apply external knowledge.

Empirical studies from different fields and analysis levels have allowed pointing out elements that influence Acap, that is, characteristics of external knowledge and also internal organizational characteristics (VAN DEN BOSCH; VOLBERDA; BOER, 1999; LANE; KOKA; PATHAK, 2006; MACHADO; FRACASSO, 2012). Regarding the background of Acap, the internal elements, it can be mentioned the previous knowledge (COHEN; LEVINTHAL, 1990; ZAHRA; GEORGE, 2002), the organizational configuration (COHEN; LEVINTHAL, 1990; LANE; KOKA; PATHAK, 2006), relationship capacity (FLATTEN *et al.*, 2011), among others.

The company's structure is relevant to maximize the knowledge circulation (DAGHFOUS, 2004). Lane and Lubatkin (1998), Van Den Bosch, Volberda e Boer (1999) and Espinosa *et al.* (2007) state that different types of structures have different consequences on Acap. Huang *et al.* (2011), Felin *et al.* (2012), Li *et al.* (2014), Duchek (2015) and Ali *et al.* (2017) assert that the organizational configuration, the way in which the company is organized is decisive for Acap. In the same perspective, Lane, Koka e Pathak (2006) refer that the configuration facilitates the knowledge transfer, as it allows sharing, communication and the granting of learning at an individual level to the organizational level, being an internal drive of the construct.

Although it appears that Acap studies have had theoretical and empirical advances (LANE; LUBATKIN, 1998; ZAHRA; GEORGE, 2002; JANSEN; VAN DEN BOSCH; VOLBERDA, 2005; LANE; KOKA; PATHAK, 2006; FLATTEN *et al.*, 2011; LI *et al.*, 2014; GUERRA; TONDOLO; CAMARGO, 2016; FERREIRA; FERREIRA, 2020; APRILIYANTI; ALON, 2017; ALI *et al.*, 2017; CAPPELLARI *et al.*, 2019), this research aims to understand how the absorption of external knowledge, that is, how the knowledge absorption capacity is developed in organizations that adopt the simple structure organizational configuration.

Mintzberg (1980, 1993, 2012) explains that the simple structure is characterized by a small managerial hierarchy, little differentiation between the units and by having few support advisors. The decision-making process is centralized, and the formalization of behavior is limited. The research contributes to the understanding of how an organization from its respective structural characteristics benefits or restricts the development of Acap.

A multidimensional understanding of the Acap construct is proposed from the perspective of its relationship with the organizational configuration, since the organizational configuration can influence, in different ways, the efficiency and effectiveness of the recognition process, assimilation and application of knowledge (LANE; KOKA; PATHAK, 2006). In the present study, it is intended to approach this relationship considering the specificities of this process in a typology of simple organizational structure configuration. A qualitative research approach was adopted, with interviews with the people responsible for the organization's superior decisions, considering the analysis based on the categories inherent to the constitution of this type of structure, evidenced in the literature.

The study is structured in four parts in addition to this introductory text. In the next section, is presented a literature review that discusses the absorptive capacity, organizational configuration, and organizational configuration and the relationship with absorptive capacity. Following are indicated the methodological procedures used in the empirical investigation, the results and, finally, the final considerations, limitations and suggestions for future studies.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In the present section the following topics will be discussed: Absorptive Capacity, Organizational Configuration and, the Organizational Configuration and the Relationship with Absorptive Capacity.

Absorptive Capacity

Cohen and Levinthal (1989, 1990, 1994) were the first to consider Acap at the organizational level. According to these authors, Acap is an essential element in the global innovation process. The authors consider Acap as the organizational capacity to identify, assimilate and apply external knowledge commercially. The initial proposition is associated that the organization needs previous knowledge and it is related to the assimilation and use of new knowledge to develop innovation or innovative performance.

Later, Zahra and George (2002) adopt a procedural perspective of Acap and explain that the effective distribution of internal knowledge and integration are critical elements of this capacity. The authors propose a reconceptualization of the construct, including the capacity for transformation, as well as the dimensions of Acap, potential (Pacap) and realized (Racap). Pacap considers knowledge acquisition and assimilation capacities and Racap understands knowledge transformation and application capacities.

In order to broadening the approach, Lane, Koka e Pathak (2006) present a detailed conceptualization of Acap in the perspective of process-oriented learning, with the ability of an organization to use external knowledge through three sequential processes: (i) to recognize new knowledge through exploratory learning; (ii) to assimilate new knowledge through transformative learning; (iii) to use the assimilated knowledge to create new knowledge and results through exploitation learning. The focus of the model is Acap, the conductors are considered by the authors as gaps in the literature. External conductors are considered knowledge characteristics, environmental conditions and characteristics of learning relationships and influence the breadth of knowledge, the depth of their understanding and the incentives to invest in Acap. Internal conductors, on the other hand, are characteristics of the firm members' mental model, characteristics of the firm's structure and processes, and the firm's strategy can generate positive or negative interference in relation to Acap. The results concerning knowledge, performance and business are considered outputs of the model, which interfere with Acaps future organizational capacity. Thus, successful commercial outlets and new knowledge generated can induce managers to adopt certain strategies. Knowledge outputs can transform mental models and facilitate evolution in the institution's organizational configuration and processes (LANE; KOKA; PATHAK, 2006).

Therefore, Acap is an important multidisciplinary and multidimensional concept. Thus, developing and maintaining Acap becomes essential for long-term organizational survival, as the

construct reinforces and/or redirects the institution's knowledge. That said, this study is based on the model proposed by the authors Lane, Koka e Pathak (2006) and also on the theoretical gap pointed out by them. It is intended to analyze the relationships between the typology of organizational configuration and simple structure (internal drivers) with the development of Acap (recognize, assimilate, and apply knowledge).

Thus, it is possible to say that Acap is an important multidisciplinary and multidimensional concept. So, developing and maintaining Acap becomes essential for long-term organizational survival, as the construct reinforces and/or redirects the institution's knowledge. Given the above, this study is based on the model proposed by the authors Lane, Koka e Pathak (2006) and on the theoretical gap pointed out by them.

Organizational Configuration

Chandler in 1962 was the pioneer in arguing about organizational settings. In its design, the configuration depends on the organizational strategy adopted, applied to resources and market demand. In the 1980s, Mintzberg (1980, 1993, 2012) asserts that the organizational configuration is defined by the division of labor into different tasks and that they are performed through coordination. The author's proposition comprises five pure configurations that in practice can be perceived as a mix between one and the other, being simple structure, bureaucratic machine, professional bureaucracy, divisionalized structure and adhocracy.

The simple structure is characterized for being central, the director is responsible for the administration of the whole. This typology is formed by the strategic vertex and the operational nucleus. The control is at the strategic point (power), over the execution of activities at the operational core. Communication takes place informally; the division of labor is minimal and formalized behaviors are rare. It refers to a flexible, dynamic, and compliant structure. However, the manager may present some difficulties for having several functionalities.

The bureaucratic machine has a high degree of control, formality at all levels, centralized and standardized procedures, trained and specialized work, division by task units and decisions are partially centralized. It consists of all the elements of the organizational structure and because it is a rigid structure, adaptability to external requirements tends to be late. Too much control impacts organizational dynamism, making problem solving slower and less efficient (standard solution for various problems).

In professional bureaucracy, members have autonomy and authority to work and to meet the different needs of customers. Individuals are specialists, they control their activities and act independently of their units, which is a characteristic that differentiates this configuration from the bureaucratic machine. Power is decentralized, based on standardization. The aim is to act in a uniform manner, improving skills and maintaining control of activities.

The divisionalized structure is an arrangement that juxtaposes itself to other structures acting in a semi-autonomous way. The operating and management units have an independent cost center, and the social elements are not considered by this typology. The main means of control is the standardization of the results of each operational unit and the divisions have a central structure, with the techno-structure and support staff common to the entire organizational configuration of the institution. The bureaucratic machine structure is predominant in each division, with repetitive and routine activities.

Adhocracy refers to a sophisticated, organic, and informal structure. This typology adjusts to innovations, ensuring that individuals from various units develop projects together. Communication takes place informally and the organization's professionals cooperate in group activities. These working groups are characterized by multidisciplinary, technical knowledge and are self-adjusting. Leadership plays a guiding role, with a view to fast and creative solutions.

It should be noted that the organizational configurations proposed by Mintzberg (1980, 1993, 2012) are presented as pure structures, but that in practice organizations have characteristics of more than one typology, that is, the most common is to find structures that approximate to one of the five typologies. Thus, De Ven *et al.*, (2013) indicate that Mintzberg's theoretical proposal (1980, 1993, 2012) is relevant to the research field, so this investigative approach was selected as the theoretical foundation in this research. It is noteworthy, in this sense, that this study comprises the simple structure.

Organizational Configuration and the Relation with Absorptive Capacity

The organizational configuration affects the degree of mobilization of an organization's affective, cognitive and behavioral resources, which in turn influence the effectiveness of learning processes related to the absorption of knowledge within the organization (ALEXIOU; KHANAGHA; SCHIPPERS, 2018). In this sense, the Acap literature reveals through empirical studies some elements that are related to the characteristics of the typologies listed by Mintzberg (1980, 1993, 2012).

The centralization of decision-making authority prevents the assimilation of new patterns, actions, and learning (GALBRAITH, 1973; MORGAN; RAMIREZ, 1983). A centralized structure interferes with the interaction between members of the organization, reduces opportunities and the creation of new knowledge (DAMANPOUR, 1991). Limited autonomy and a sense of control have implications for individuals who are part of the organization (SHELDON; RYAN; REIS, 1996). Although studies on the relationship between centralization and Acap have been positive in some cases (PIERCE; DELBECQ, 1977; LIAO *et al.*, 2011), in others the relationship has been negative (DAMANPOUR, 1991; KIM, 1980; ZHENG; YANG, B.; MCLEAN, 2010).

Authors state that centralization has a negative influence on the acquisition and assimilation of new external knowledge and a significantly positive influence on the application of new external knowledge (ALI *et al.*, 2017). Others argue that centralized structures can negatively influence the efficiency of assimilation and application of information (JANSEN; VAN DEN BOSCH; VOLBERDA, 2006; ALEXIOU; KHANAGHA; SCHIPPERS, 2018). Thus, a less centralized structure can reduce the knowledge differences between managers and subordinates, inspiring motivation, loyalty, and creativity (ADLER; BORYS, 1996; PARKER; BINDL; STRAUSS, 2010).

Decentralization provides freedom of interaction, increasing the capacity to generate knowledge (NONAKA, 1988; NONAKA; TOYAMA; KONNO, 2000). Decentralization increases the acquisition of new external knowledge; however, it does not benefit the assimilation of newly acquired knowledge. Participation in decision-making does not necessarily result in collective assimilation efforts, but it leads to the low-level assimilation of new external knowledge through a narrow focus of the unit's members (JANSEN; VAN DEN BOSCH; VOLBERDA, 2005).

A decentralized structure usually results in broader communication channels, improving the precise and timely flow of information, as well as the quality and quantity of ideas and

knowledge that can be shared (SHEREMATA, 2000). Acaps efficiency is associated with the procedures, routines, and tasks that the company employs in the process of identifying, assimilating, and applying new knowledge. The acquisition of knowledge is related to its dimension and the flexibility in this process concerns the access and reconfiguration of existing knowledge (VAN DEN BOSCH; VOLBERDA; BOER, 1999). So, the organization that has flexible assimilation practices, allows for the entry of external knowledge (MUROVEC; PRODAN, 2009). The use of a decentralized structure, that is, with a high degree of participation in decision-making, has been pointed out with a positive impact on the knowledge management process (PIERCE; DELBECQ, 1977; DAMANPOUR, 1991; JANSEN; VAN DEN BOSCH; VOLBERDA, 2005; ZHENG; YANG; MCLEAN, 2010).

Formalization makes existing knowledge and skills explicit and accelerates the dissemination of best practices within units (ZANDER; KOGUT, 1995). The rules and procedures are endowed with experiences that allow employees to search to assimilate external information (ADLER; BORYS, 1996). However, a high level of formality negatively influences flexibility and discourages innovation. In this sense, formalization may have a double influence on Acap. On the one hand, it can increase efficiency in the acquisition of knowledge, but on the other, it can prevent the transformation and application of knowledge, as rigid structures are a serious impediment (JANSEN; VAN DEN BOSCH; VOLBERDA, 2006).

The positive effects of formalization tend to be more visible in environments characterized by uncertainty, complexity, and interdependence (ALEXIOU; KHANAGHA; SCHIPPERS, 2018). Some authors consider that formalization can improve a company's ability to assimilate and apply knowledge (ALI *et al.*, 2017). For others, formalization contributes to the knowledge acquisition and assimilation process, as well-designed rules and procedures capture previous useful experiences for the process (JANSEN; VAN DEN BOSCH; VOLBERDA, 2005, 2006; ALEXIOU; KHANAGHA; SCHIPPERS, 2018).

Specialization (complexity) refers to the degree of differentiation that exists within an organization. It is suggested that it improves employees' skills and abilities in day-to-day activities, as they specialize in these activities (PERTUSA-ORTEGA; ZARAGOZA-SÁEZ; CLAVER-CORTÉS, 2010). It is emphasized that specialization and integration (coordination mechanisms) are positively related to Acap (ALI *et al.*, 2017). Complexity positively influences the stage of implementing new knowledge (DAMANPOUR, 1996). The work specialization, that is, qualified and trained employees facilitate the assimilation and application of external knowledge (VINDING, 2000; JANSEN; VAN DEN BOSCH; VOLBERDA, 2006).

The organizational configuration prescribes that the allocation of specificities and knowledge within the institution influences the Acap, that is, the organizational mechanisms established from the configuration encourage individuals to relate, amplifying the learning capacity (LI *et al.*, 2014). Social integration mechanisms improve Acap. The existence of a consistent network in the units can motivate employees to interact to assimilate and apply new external knowledge (COHEN; LEVINTHAL, 1990; MORRISON, 2002). The working groups, in a special way, positively influence the acquisition and assimilation of new external knowledge (JANSEN; VAN DEN BOSCH; VOLBERDA, 2005).

It is highlighted that formalization and mechanisms of social integration are interrelated. A high level of formalization can have a negative influence on a company's social integration

mechanism, as it reduces the need for communication between individuals (VAN DEN BOSCH; VOLBERDA; BOER, 1999). Formalization has a positive effect on the acquisition and assimilation of scientific knowledge, but it is not related to the ability to acquire and assimilate industrial knowledge, as the rules facilitate the conduct of research. Social integration mechanisms, on the other hand, have a positive effect on application, especially when knowledge has a lower level of applicability, requiring specific skills and better qualified personnel (VEGA-JURADO; GUTIÉRREZ-GRACIA; FERNANDEZ-DE-LUCIO, 2008).

The organizational configuration implies Acap by outlining patterns and constants of communication, rules, procedures, and decision-making places, which can influence the implementation of new ideas (HUANG *et al.*, 2011; ALI *et al.*, 2017). In this sense, it is understood that the organizational configuration influences the efficiency and effectiveness of the Acap process. Concerning the organizational configuration focus, this research uses a conceptual approach by Mintzberg (1980, 1993, 2012) and for Acap, the Lane, Koka e Pathak, (2006) model is used.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

The study is characterized as an empirical one of an applied nature (VERGARA, 1998; GERHARDT; SILVEIRA, 2009; GIL, 2010), a qualitative approach (MINAYO, 2008; MARTINS; THEÓPHILO, 2009) and the procedures are descriptive (TRIVIÑOS, 1987; PRODANOV; FREITAS, 2013). The method used was the case study (YIN, 2010).

Yin (2010) considers the use of the case study as appropriate when one intends to investigate how and why of an event set. The author states that the case study refers to an empirical research that allows the study of a phenomenon in its real context. This methodological choice was based on the deepening of an organization with specific structural characteristics, highlighting what is essential in it.

The selection of the organization to be the object of analysis happened intentionally, based on previous knowledge and documents (reports, photographs, publications, among others) about it, in the study purpose and in the theoretical contributions. The organization selected provides services in the beauty industry, it is in the northwest region of the state of Rio Grande do Sul/Brazil. It has 30 years of existence and 7 individuals as its staff. This organization has a small work structure, the division of labor is not strict, there is a minimal differentiation between its units and a small managerial hierarchy. The decision-making process and the coordination of activities is centered on the managing owner and beauty salon manager.

The organization has a configuration that meets the specificities of simple structure typology (MINTZBERG, 1980, 1993, 2012). It was chosen to interview people linked to the organization's top command, considering the characteristics of the organizational typology. So, the interviews were developed with the two people who are responsible for the decisions and coordination of the entire company administrative process, being the owner and the company's manager.

The interviews were conducted with a structured script, divided in two sections. With regard to the typology of organizational configuration, the questions were elaborated by the authors, based on the theoretical contribution of Mintzberg (1980, 1993, 2012), who considered

the following categories of analysis: Coordination mechanism and the functioning of the components; Specialization of jobs; Training and socialization; Formalization; Grouping form; Dimension of the units; Planning and control system; Connection mechanisms; Decentralization; Age and dimension; Technical system; Environment; Power. The second section is related to Acap, it was decided to adapt collection instruments by Jansen, Van Den Bosch e Volberda (2005), Cadiz, Sawyer e Griffith (2009), Camisón and Forés (2010) and Flatten *et al.* (2011), which considered the following categories of analysis: recognition; assimilation; application. The instrument was pre-tested for the purpose of refining interrogations. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The interview with the managing owner lasted 1h56m and the interview with the business manager lasted 1h42m. The interviews were recorded and transcribed in full.

For the data analysis and interpretation, the content analysis technique was used (BARDIN, 2006; FLICK, 2009), according to the three phases of investigation by Bardin (2006): pre-analysis, exploration of the material and treatment of the results, inference, and interpretation. In the pre-analysis, the interviews were transcribed. Then, a thorough reading of the transcriptions and analysis of the documents was carried out, to obtain the highlights in this stage of analysis. At the end of each interview, a systematization was prepared with the excerpts of each interview for further analysis.

Regarding the material exploration, the established categories were based on the characterization of the typology of organizational configuration (specialization of jobs, training and socialization, formalization, form of grouping, size of units, planning and control system, liaison mechanisms, decentralization, age and dimension, technical system, environment, power) and the development of Acap (recognition, assimilation, application).

Finally, the treatment of results, inference and interpretation of data was performed considering the theoretical framework of the present study. The data triangulation considered the sources of evidence used (theories, documents, and the relevant excerpts from the interviews), to understand the theme and obtain theoretical and empirical contributions.

It is worth mentioning that the qualitative analysis of the present research was supported by the NVivo®11 Software in the organization and categorization of information from the interviews. The option for this tool proved to be more suitable for this type of study, as it proved to be effective in the construction of the required analyzes.

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

In this section it is developed the presentation and analysis of the results from the methodological procedures adopted in the investigation.

Typology Simple Structure

The organization provides services in the beauty salon industry, located in the northwest region of the state of Rio Grande do Sul - Brazil. This organization has a small work structure, the division of labor is not strict, there is a minimal differentiation between its units and a small managerial hierarchy. It has little formalization, planning is limited, and, above all, it is organic organization, that is, focused on human development.

The coordination mechanism is carried out by direct supervision, that is, the power over all decisions is centralized in the hands of the managing owner and the manager of the beauty salon. In this way, the strategic top is the key part of the organizational configuration. The managing owner and beauty salon manager have a wide range of control, all the people who make up the organization report to them and the flexibility in decision making allows for a quick response, in view of the centralization of power.

In the operational core, jobs are specialized horizontally, based on professional knowledge and skills. The expertise in relation to the techniques for carrying out the service is developed through training and internal socialization, with the managing owner being responsible.

There is little formalization in the organization and communication flows informally between members. The grouping is performed by function and the size of the units is small at all points. The planning strategy formulation is the responsibility of the administrator, being intuitive and not analytical, guided by the search for opportunities. The centralization of power favors flexibility, adaptability, and extensive knowledge of the operational core.

The mechanisms for linking and integrating the work team occur essentially in the sectors of activity and in the exchange of functions. It has 30 years of existence and has a staff of 7 individuals. It is a small organization that trusts the charismatic leadership of the owner. It is a small organization that relies on the charismatic leadership of the business owner and manager.

The technical system is simple and non-regulatory, avoiding formal structuring instruments. The environment in which the company operates is considered simple and dynamic, simple because it is understood by one person and dynamic due to the absence of standards and the existence of uncertainties.

According to Mintzberg (1980, 1993, 2012), this organization presents itself predominantly as a simple structure, integrating some characteristic elements of an adhocracy, such as, multifunctionality among collaborators, overlap between planning and execution functions and capacity of mutual adjustment (collaboration between people). In this sense, there is a simple configuration that integrates attributes of a sophisticated typology. For a better understanding of this typology of organizational configuration, Table 1 is presented.

Table 1 – Structural Elements Typology Simple Structure

Structural Elements	TYPOLOGIES				
	Simple Structure	Bureaucratic Machine	Professional Bureaucracy	Divisionalized Structure	Adhocracy
Coordination and Operation Mechanism	X				
Specialization					X
Training and Socialization	X				
Formalization	X				
Grouping Form	X				
Units Dimension					X
Planning and Control System	X				

Connection Mechanisms	X				
Decentralization	X				
Age and Dimension	X				
Technical System	X				
Environment	X				
Power	X				

Source: The author.

The relation with the Recognition Capacity

Considering the organization with a simple structure typology, the research revealed development mechanisms that are predominant in the capacity to recognize the value of new knowledge, which are detailed below.

– Research Activities: the company seeks information about products and trends, seeking to work proactively. The surveys are informal and conducted mainly on the internet, using channels such as YouTube and the pages of renowned professionals, also through access to magazines in the segment, visits to projects in activity and participation in courses.

We search for information on the internet. We follow other professionals who are a reference in the beauty line. I participate in festivals, I go to other cities, capitals and see that they work. I am delighted with those giant spaces (E1).

We use a lot Instagram, Facebook and YouTube. We subscribe to beauty magazines too and we take many courses (E2)

– Interaction with External Partners: refers to an important strategic alliance of the company, since through the relationship with its suppliers it is possible to discover new options for products and services. That is, these partnerships bring a lot of information about techniques that are gaining market and arousing public interest.

Our partners are our suppliers. They spend a lot, participate in events and bring a lot of news. New services for skin, hair, nail, new products. There is a lot of shared strategy (E1).

I took several courses based on suggestions from our suppliers. We were pioneers in the city in offering techniques such as microblading and eyelash extension due to this exchange (E2).

– Interaction with Customers: it concerns to the act of understanding customers and their needs. The company is market oriented, with the needs and desires of customers being recognized through face-to-face conversations and with the help of informal satisfaction surveys carried out by the team.

Customers are everything to us. Satisfaction comes first. I always talk to girls, listen, pay attention, know what exactly each one who comes here wants, what best suits their way. Ask them what they would like the center to offer (E1).

We are getting very close to our customers. It is noticed that the result of the work improved with this (E2).

– Human Capital: human capital is related to the individual capacities of the working group that are matched to organizational purposes. Thus, the initiative of team members in the identification of opportunities to be explored is evident.

I am incredibly happy with my team, the girls search a lot on the internet, they are close to the customers. This is a lot of them (E1).

The girls search, they bring the discoveries. They always try to anticipate; they want to do new things. They say, how good it is to see the client surprised and happy with the result (E2).

The relationship with the Assimilation Capacity

In the organization with a simple structure typology, the research revealed mechanisms of development that are decisive in the ability to assimilate knowledge, which are described below.

– Systematic Meetings: refers to meetings in which the team discusses about the organizational purposes. Meetings take place on a weekly basis and on occasion communication and knowledge transfer take place. It should be noted that these are informal meetings and team interaction.

We usually meet every Tuesday morning, before opening to talk, interact. They all talk and exchange information (E1).

In our meetings we share the findings. Suggests thinking about customers. These meetings are very important (E2).

– Training: based on previous knowledge, new techniques for the provision of services are assimilated through training. The same happens individually and in groups, to acquire the essential skills to carry out the work with a view to customer satisfaction.

We train a lot; the service needs to be perfect. When we update ourselves in cutting and dyeing, we train a lot beforehand. I buy the material and the training takes place at home. New hairstyles the same thing (E1).

Our area demand lot of training. We learn in courses, on the internet and need to train. They happen in groups and at other times each one does his own (E2).

– Individual Behaviors: it is associated with skills and competencies of each member in line with organizational objectives. These are attitudes that contribute to the company, in to provide better results.

We notice from the experience when the girl who works with me has a way, a gift. They seek to learn, improve and bring it to the company (E1).

Our team has the girls who live it here, who like it, this behavior makes a difference (E2).

The relationship with the Application Capacity

In the organization with a simple structure typology, the research demonstrated development mechanisms prevalent in the ability to apply knowledge, which are detailed below.

– Entrepreneurial Behavior: this is the behavior and organizational ability to create, invent, innovate its processes and variety of services. It is noticed the constant renewal of production techniques and the service menu, surprising customers, and generating value for the company. The managing owner of the business is the protagonist, her creative and bold profile motivates and encourages the members that make up the organization.

I see my side as an entrepreneur talking, I want to expand, I want to do it, I want to evolve, I want to bring professionals with me. People talk to me, they praise that there are always new things, products, services (E1).

Our customers arrive and say, that every time we enter here we see something new. This for us is the feeling of accomplishment (E2).

– Acquisition of New Work Instruments: the aim is to supply the needs related to the improvement of work techniques, also to offer news through the acquisition of equipment products. In this case, the priority is always to maintain the quality standard established by the company.

Whenever you have a new service, you need to purchase something. The last acquisition we say was a haircut embroidery machine. With this machine, I can cut hairs without taking its length, only the split ends come out (E1).

In makeup we invest a lot in renowned products, which great makeup artists use. Not so long ago we acquired material to work with a Portuguese braiding technique (E2).

– Differentiated Services: the company offers news to its public, the specialized service combined with quality are essential elements for customer satisfaction. The services are differentiated according to the client's particularity (event/loyalty through experience) or to a specific interest group (loyalty at cost).

Quality always comes first. We created some packages like the bride's and 15-year-olds, we close the salon and served only them and bridesmaids, family members. We want to provide a unique experience (E1).

One thing we defend is that the crisis is not in here. The crisis is out there. So, we created a kind of schedule with small events for some groups. There's the blonde's day, the brunette's day, the redhead's day, the hydration, the cut, the tattoo, the nail, the massage, skin cleaning ... we do a day with certain services for half the time price (E2).

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Considering the structural characteristics, the results indicate that Acap is developed through mechanisms of recognition, assimilation and application of knowledge. The recognition capacity is favored by the employees' individual capacities and by the autonomy they have, that is, they carry out research activities, interact with customers and external partners, as well as monitor competitors. These results corroborate to the studies by Edvinsson and Malone (1998), Cabrita and Bontis (2008), Subramanian and Youndt (2005), Delgado-Verde, Martín-de-Castro e Navas-López (2011) and Martin-de-Castro, Delgado-Verde, López-Sáez, P. e Navas-López (2011), as human capital is related to the tacit knowledge of the working group and has the potential to create useful knowledge for the company. Still, individuals add creativity to the company, already signaled by Daghfous (2004) and Lane, Koka e Pathak (2006). The independence of

employees and freedom over their own actions is driven by the generally charismatic leadership of the manager, that is, leadership encourages employees to express their opinions and ideas, in line with the studies of Knox (2002) and Cepeda-Carrion, Cegarra-Navarro e Jimenez-Jimenez (2012).

The assimilation capacity is based on the individual skills and competences of the company members, also through training and informal team meetings. These results certify the study by Camisón and Forés (2010), by highlighting the importance of individual skills in the process of assimilating new knowledge. The research of Murovec and Prodan (2009) and Schmidt (2010) also corroborate that training is related to the assimilation of new knowledge.

It can be understood, considering the research findings, that the development of assimilation capacity is minimized by the centrality in decision making by the principal. This is a predominant characteristic in this typology, since the autonomy of the members is limited, and the control exercised by the managing owner and the business manager has consequences for the people who compose the company. This evidence reinforces the studies by Galbraith (1973), Morgan and Ramirez (1983), Sheldon, Ryan e Reis (1996), Jansen, Van Den Bosch e Volberda (2006) and Alexiou, Khanagha e Schippers (2018), as the centralization of authority makes it difficult to assimilate actions and learn. It is also noteworthy, in this sense, that a less centralized structure can reduce the differences in knowledge between administrator and workgroup, inspiring motivation, loyalty and creativity, as indicated by Adler and Borys (1996) and Parker, Bintl e Strauss (2010).

This also occurs with the ability to apply knowledge, since entrepreneurial behavior is a characteristic of the administrator and the decision to acquire new work tools and the availability of differentiated services are dependent on this individual. Therefore, it can be understood that the development of application capacity may be hindered, to the extent that a single individual has control over decision making, acting between strategic and operational issues. These results corroborate the research by Jansen, Van Den Bosch e Volberda (2006) and Alexiou, Khanagha e Schippers (2018).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research aimed to understand how the knowledge absorption capacity is developed in an organization that adopts the simple structure organizational configuration. The findings provided evidence of a significant relationship between the types of organizational configurations with the development of Acap. Seems that the organizational configuration is an important antecedent of Acap.

However, it is possible to have found evidence that offers support that the organizational structure simple structure influences the development of the organizational Acap, being the structural characteristics decisive for its development. The results highlight relevant inferences to the field of study of management and they contribute to the scientific development of this theme. The findings contribute to the understanding of how an organization, according to its organizational configuration and its respective structural characteristics, benefits or restricts the development of Acap.

As a practical contribution to the organization under study, the results can be used as a strategic tool. Identifying potentializing and/or restrictive capacities for the recognition, assimilation, and application of new knowledge in each type of organizational configuration, constitutes an important reference for managers when making their structural options.

Finally, in relation to the limitations resulting from this study, it is reiterated that the results found relate to the reality and context of the investigated organization. It is associated with the fact that the study considers only one organization and, from it, to infer about the relation object of the investigation already explained. Thereby, new discoveries on the topic may point to the total or partial confirmation of the results of this investigation, as well as to enable the identification of structural characteristics and their relations with Acap.

It is recommended research in organizations in the same segment, also in several organizations with a similar organizational configuration, to confirm or refute the results of this study. In the same way, other methodological approaches can be constituted in efficient research strategies, providing deepening about the theme and about the investigated phenomena.

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