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Organizational values as tacit knowledge expansion factors for competitiveness in Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract

In a world where knowledge constitutes an asset for organizations, it is necessary for there to be transfer so that it can be enriched by new experiences. However, in this process, tacit elements come into play because individuals foster the development of organizational cognition unknowingly. Thus, elements like organizational values, whose explicit nature safeguards them in institutional documentation, can become subject to transformation in daily practice, giving rise to an alternative vision of their implementation in the everyday environment. This research fundamentally aims to analyze the factors that constitute the organizational values of higher education institutions, from the perspective of tacit knowledge, in order to understand whether they are precursors to the institutions' competitiveness inherently.

Keywords: Tacit Knowledge, Organizational Values, Competitiveness

Resumen

En un mundo donde el conocimiento constituye un activo para las organizaciones, es necesario que exista transferencia para que pueda nutrirse de nuevas experiencias. No obstante, en este proceso los elementos tácitos se hacen presentes debido a que los individuos promueven el desarrollo de la cognición organizacional sin darse cuenta. Es así que elementos como los valores organizacionales, cuya naturaleza explícita los resguarda en la documentación de las instituciones, pueden ser objeto de transformación en la práctica cotidiana, con lo que se crea una visión alternativa de su implementación en el entorno cotidiano. Esta investigación tiene como propósito fundamental el análisis de los factores que constituyen a los valores organizacionales de las instituciones de educación superior, desde la perspectiva del conocimiento tácito, con la finalidad de entender si son precursores de la competitividad de estas instituciones de manera nativa.

Palabras clave: Conocimiento Tácito, Valores Organizacionales, Competitividad.

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Introduction

An escalation in international competition within the domain of knowledge has become increasingly pronounced (Zhao, et al., 2023). Organizations that engage in the creation, accumulation, and dissemination of this invaluable asset now find themselves obligated to formulate strategies that distinguish them from comparable entities. These strategic determinations are influenced by a variety of factors, including an organization's core competencies, its dependency configuration, and even external elements such as the economic development of the locality and the amenities available in its environment (Chang, et al., 2021).

For numerous organizations, their strategic course of action is rooted in a comprehensive self-understanding. The internal environment functions as a source of contemplation and ongoing refinement. Leadership within each institution dictates the trajectory to pursue and establishes the criteria for comprehending the organization's actions within its operational context (Thai, et al., 2023). This process has engendered the articulation of organizational values that not only guide the conduct of institutional members but also steer stakeholders who engage consistently with various departments within the organization.

This phenomenon finds resonance within higher education institutions (HEI) as well. The development plans of each university outline a series of organizational values that must be heeded when navigating decision-making. The extent of their impact on the environment is shaped by the degree of ambition inherent in each institutional plan, governing aspects ranging from university personnel to teaching activities and other cognitive criteria.

However, a distinct reality remains discernible in these scenarios – organizational values do not inherently constitute explicit knowledge. This is due to the fact that their comprehension and integration into the day-to-day operations of higher education institutions rely on individual interpretation, serving as a source of conceptual approximation. Put simply, tacit knowledge holds the authority to dictate the application of personal values within the framework of organizational values.

Consequently, this research endeavors to scrutinize how organizational values serve as catalysts for the expansion of tacit knowledge within HEIs. Moreover, it aims to explore how these values can directly contribute to the competitive advancement of institutions from their most rudimentary form. The study also presents a concise theoretical model, the outcomes of which underscore the validity of the parameters employed in measuring the constituent factors.

Theoretical framework

In an epoch marked by the ascendancy of knowledge and an expanding receptiveness to innovation, universities must adapt in harmony with productive entities (Bejarano, et al., 2023). Grounded in this assertion, it becomes imperative to acknowledge that knowledge, functioning as a competitive resource, delineates a distinct demarcation concerning the trajectory organizations should pursue in their progression (Goh, 2002).

Since Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995) first introduced their SECI theoretical model, nearly 30 years have elapsed, bringing about a deeper understanding of the cognitive elements it entails. As a result, knowledge has solidified its position as a pivotal component in the realm of education (Al-Kurdi, et al., 2018). Its growing emphasis in academic and scientific research domains is progressively influencing the cultivation of competitive advantages (Mitchell, et al., 2021), enabling institutions to carve out a niche for themselves in an environment saturated with this invaluable resource.

Building upon this foundation, specific components of the knowledge management concept have been deconstructed to facilitate enhanced analysis. In this manner, the theoretical examinations of tacit knowledge and organizational values – factors that shape this concept within the framework devised for Mexican Higher Education Institutions – are presented in the following sections.

Tacit Knowledge and Organizational Values.

Knowledge sharing is a fundamental condition that contributes to the creation of novel knowledge and its dissemination within organizations (Ipe, 2003). This exchange need not be formal, but depending on the organizational structure, individual factors, organizational values, and, above all, the knowledge management strategy (Alves & Pinheiro, 2022), it can indeed be entirely tacit.

Tacit knowledge comprises the most significant cognitive capacity within a group (Moeen & Agarwal, 2017). Solutions to problems that arise from tacit knowledge can be better tailored to the needs and requirements of individuals (Mitchell, et al., 2021). Furthermore, knowledge itself tends to reconfigure through mutual interaction among individuals, leading to intriguing outcomes (Hadjimichael & Tsoukas, 2019), on par with its explicit counterpart.

Tacit knowledge is conveyed through hunches, intuitions, and subjective perceptions (Nonaka, et al., 2000). Consequently, its institutional-level application can be intricate and sometimes even unfeasible (Nonaka, 2007). Therefore, by unravelling its structure, even in partial ways, it can become an ally in decision-making processes (Sial, et al., 2023).

This cognitive opacity, at least in the view of researchers, holds the advantage that individuals can actively share practical aspects through simple interactions in their daily lives (Kucharska & Erickson, 2023). It is in this manner that the identification of factors constituting tacit knowledge has been challenging.

According to Edwards (2022), cultural elements, which pertain to an organization's culture, function as components of the underlying involvement within which human resources conduct their daily activities from the perspective of cognitive individualism. In other words, individual beliefs form connections with various stakeholders of the organization (Castañeda & Ramírez, 2021), creating a sort of repository upon which the tenets of the formal organizational culture act. This process transforms recordable knowledge into active tacit knowledge.

This notion of tacit knowledge often resembles traditional learning, wherein practice preceded theory (Aranda, et al., 2022). In essence, comprehending organizational culture almost inevitably requires an understanding at the individual level (Demigha & Karabsheh, 2019). From this perspective, individuals can dissect cultural elements into symbols, values, beliefs, norms, desirable behavior patterns, and rituals (Hofstede, 1991).

Based on the earlier paragraph's content, a search for such elements was conducted within university development plans, revealing that the so-called "*University Values*" were fashioned on this premise.

This philosophy of university identity through organizational culture establishes a level of guidance that presupposes an influence on the various coexisting levels within institutions (Shiferaw, et al., 2023), encompassing general administration members, teachers, researchers, administrators, and students. Organizational culture possesses a distinct capacity to nurture leadership as a tangible component while also becoming an integral part of the internal organization, akin to a prelude to the strategic process (Lee, et al., 2019). Technically, it represents a differentiating factor to the extent that it can be aligned to the point of laying the foundation for competitive advantages for the employing institution.

Competitiveness and Organizational Culture.

Phenomenologically, organizational culture can be understood as the interdisciplinary of internal thought within organizations, in terms of beliefs, myths, symbols, and rituals that naturally occur in any institution (Grueso, et al., 2022). For organizations with a high level of cognition, there exists a predominant element in the implementation of these components directed toward the institution's daily processes (Junior, et al., 2021). This establishes a collective criterion under which the diverse engines of activity can be developed.

The dimensions present in organizational culture can exhibit substantial variation from one institution to another. However, their general characteristics aim to establish elements of desirable behavior across different levels of decision-making (Ramalakshmi & Ravindran, 2022). This entails the ability to differentiate from other higher education institutions. The enhancement that a cultural element provides to higher education institutions brings about multidimensional changes (Amtu, et al., 2021), in addition to contributing to the redefinition of institutional mission, vision, and objectives (Middlehurst, 1997), aligning them with a future more suited to approaching times.

From a competitive perspective, cultural elements afford organizations both high performance and the creation of elements with which they can engage in their environment at macro and micro levels (Huang, et al., 2023). According to Ponomarenko et al. (2023), the prestige of higher education institutions is more anchored in their organizational culture than in their direct interaction with other institutions. This suggests that by creating participation and distinct identity elements, they generate more growth criteria than by attempting to compete with others.

In order to establish an effective competitive edge utilizing these aspects of organizational culture, the focus should shift towards adopting strategies that make it easier to incorporate the elements of organizational culture into the process of transferring knowledge (Fioravanti, et al., 2023). Consequently, the assessment of these elements becomes exceptionally significant.

Methodology

The methodological design of the research is initially developed through a documentary analysis (Beneyat-Dulagan & Cabonero, 2023), which allowed for the identification of elements to be considered for creating the quantitative instrument used to measure the factor referred to as "Organizational Values." Despite the comprehensive description of the assumptions outlined in the theoretical framework by these considered elements, they were extracted from the Institutional Development Plan of the University of Guadalajara (2019).

To thoroughly validate each of the items, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted based on the collection of the total surveys. It's important to note that the content presented in this research constitutes only a small portion of the comprehensive model obtained. This limitation is due to the methodological intention of observing organizational culture as a precursor to competitiveness in higher education institutions, as well as to determine which elements are most suitable for this purpose.

Regarding the scaling technique, it is evident that a variant of the Likert scale was chosen for convenience. Its simplicity in terms of responding to the administered instruments, coupled with its straightforward processing, led to its selection for obtaining primary data. Additionally, the

established models can be replicated for virtually any higher education institution using the adopted scale.

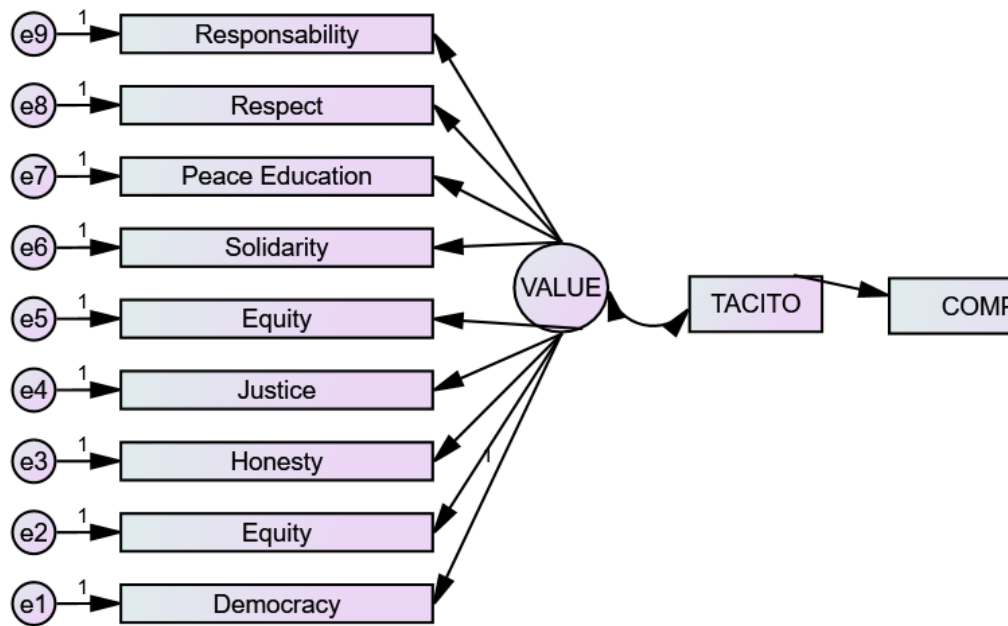
Lastly, subjectivity is eliminated in relation to the presented results, as these will be corroborated when running the structural equation elements. If there were any discrepancies in the data, primarily due to the analyzed phenomenology, such discrepancies would be eliminated from the final run to ensure the model's purity.

Research outcomes

In order to comprehend the processes occurring between the independent variable "organizational values" and the dependent variable "competitiveness," a modeling of these observed correlations was developed using the structural equation software SPSS® AMOS. As a result, the resultant diagram possesses a satisfactory level of explanatory power in multivariate terms.

Figure 1

Diagram of correlational modeling



Source: Self elaboration with data from instrument.

Initially, a reliability analysis was conducted using the Cronbach's Alpha statistic, which was validated in accordance with Alfonso-Mora et al. (2023). As such, the elements observed in the graphical model achieved an internal consistency level of 0.963, signifying a 96.3% confidence level. This suggests that, in a general sense, the specific results to be obtained will be suitable for explaining

how each of them interacts with both the direct tacit variable and the complementary or indirect variable of competitiveness.

Table 1

Primary correlations to adjusted model

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>High Value</i>	<i>Medium Value</i>	<i>Low Value</i>	<i>No Related</i>
<i>Democracy</i>	0.91			
<i>Respect</i>		0.853		
<i>Solidarity</i>		0.843		
<i>Equity</i>		0.811		
<i>Honesty</i>			0.722	
<i>Justice</i>			0.717	
<i>Responsability</i>			0.702	
<i>Equity 2</i>				0.323
<i>Peace Education</i>				0.162

Source: Own with output data.

It can be observed that the value of democracy within higher education institutions is exceedingly high. Therefore, if democracy is consistently implemented within these institutions, a much more pronounced appreciation for the creation of competitive advantages might emerge. Additionally, within intermediate values, respect, solidarity, and equality represent genuine advantageous components that can effectively manage internal elements.

On the other hand, low values point to honesty, justice, and responsibility. This implies that while these are robust factors for determining the most appropriate way to foster organizational growth, in reality, human resources do not perceive them as entirely suitable, at least from the perspective of the tacit knowledge they are developing. To maximize the impact of such values, it's essential for management, particularly senior leadership, to direct efforts toward identifying the points that generate any of these three elements. Based on that, criteria should be established to convey the organization's sentiment to the general population.

Finally, equity and a culture of peace were not included in these values due to their very low correlations. This indicates that human resources do not currently assimilate them. Consciousness-raising courses need to be organized to effectively work with these tools.

Going beyond the generated correlations, a specific component analysis was conducted to offer a more detailed view of the modeling element.

Table 2

Main Component Analysis

Independence Model	
CMIN/DF	4.5
RMR	0.002
RMSEA	0.015
Hoelter	0.5

Source: Own with model output.

The main component analysis results can be interpreted as follows:

The CMIN/DF ratio, which stands at 4.5, indicates that the model fits the data reasonably well. This ratio suggests that the Chi-square value is about 4.5 times greater than the degrees of freedom.

The RMR (Root Mean Square Residual) value is exceptionally low, at 0.002. This small value signifies a minimal difference between the observed and predicted covariance matrices. This indicates that the model has a very small residual error.

The RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) value is 0.015, indicating a high level of fit between the model and the population covariance matrix. A low RMSEA value like 0.015 suggests that the model's errors are negligible.

The Hoelter value, set at 0.5, signifies the minimum sample size necessary for an adequate fit of the model. A Hoelter value of 0.5 implies that the model's fit is supported by the sample size.

In summary, these results collectively point towards a favorable fit between the model and the data. The low residual errors and the small RMSEA value underscore the model's capacity to accurately depict the observed data.

Conclusions

In summary, the exploration into the value of democracy within higher education institutions reveals a remarkable prevalence that holds the potential for substantial benefits. If systematically integrated into these institutional environments, democracy could serve as a catalyst, giving rise to a heightened appreciation for the creation of competitive advantages. Additionally, when examining values of intermediate significance, such as respect, solidarity, and equality, their inherent potential to function as genuine assets becomes evident, adeptly managing internal dynamics and fostering a unified organizational environment.

Conversely, the presence of lower values underscores the intricate relationship between honesty, justice, and responsibility. While these qualities constitute the bedrock for effective organizational growth, there is a noticeable disconnect between their significance and their perceived

relevance within the realm of tacit knowledge development. To harness their transformative power, leadership at the senior levels must navigate the intricate nuances of these values, identifying pivotal points that give rise to them, and establishing criteria that effectively convey the organization's intrinsic sentiment.

Equally noteworthy is the exclusion of equity and a culture of peace from the core values due to their limited correlations. This stark realization highlights a disparity between these values and their current assimilation by human resources. Addressing this discrepancy requires a concerted effort through awareness-raising initiatives, aimed at nurturing shared understanding and active engagement with these fundamental ideals.

In the quest for comprehensive insight, the analysis transcends mere correlations, delving into the intricate fabric of the modeling element through specialized component analysis. This perspective enhances our understanding by providing a detailed viewpoint, enabling us to decipher the underlying mechanics with heightened precision. Such an approach adds depth and clarity to our comprehension of the complex relationships and interdependencies within the organizational framework.

In conclusion, this comprehensive exploration of organizational values and their implications sheds light on the multifaceted nature of their impact. The prevailing significance of democracy and the dynamic interplay of values offer a nuanced perspective on their role in shaping institutional excellence. As the institution navigates its path forward, the lessons derived from this exploration can serve as a guiding beacon, illuminating the route toward holistic growth, organizational harmony, and sustained competitive advantage.

For higher education institutions, it is essential to pay significantly more attention to organizational values. While these values might not be the sole drivers of competitive generation, they can directly contribute to the creation of tangible advantages, especially among personnel who utilize them on a daily basis. Thus, tacit knowledge can serve as an integral component of organizational development, even when it is challenging to isolate and even identify.

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