

La Mentoría como un Mecanismo de Creación de Conocimiento Regional: Caso Suyusama – Un Programa Regional de Desarrollo Sostenible en Colombia

Mentoring as a Mechanism of Regional Knowledge Creation: Case Suyusama – A Regional Sustainable Program in Colombia

ABSTRACT

This article presents the foundations of a doctoral research whose objective is to find a theory that explains how informal mentoring could enhance or inhibit knowledge creation processes in the context of Suyusama, a regional program for sustainable development in Nariño, south of Colombia, where it works hand in hand with peasants and indigenous communities that are economically vulnerable. Grounded theory is taken as a research strategy. By the developing of this research, it has been identified that the process of regional knowledge creation (RKC) focuses on the participatory formulation of *life plans*, in which the region and community organization potentialities are detected during the analysis of local resources. From there, they build *development plans*, and subsequently formulate, manage and implement *strategic projects*. This implies the importance of taking into account indigenous knowledge and conversations among the diversity of people, as well as the local talent in cooperation with the external one and the consideration of the members of the community as autonomous subjects who decide about their dear life in a regional sustainability framework: food, environmental, cultural and social safety. In this context, Suyusama could be considered as a "mentor organization" and therefore, it is important to find out how informal mentoring relationships are generated and how mentors or experts can promote or inhibit the opportunities to create new knowledge, share it and use it in communities in order to generate solutions that enable them to achieve their "dear life" while they preserve their memory and indigenous knowledge, and thus contribute to its capitalization towards generating solutions and alternatives to provide their needs.

KEYWORDS:

Mentoring, Regional Knowledge Creation, Regional Sustainable Development, Mentor Organization Suyusama

1. INTRODUCTION

Doing a relevant review of literature in order to study the topic of *organizational knowledge creation* and its application on regional learning and development, it has been found that several authors justify or validate research on that topic based on *knowledge* as a source of *competitive advantage*. In most of the academic papers it is clear that organizational knowledge creation is relevant because of the changing market conditions where it becomes necessary to innovate continually. In that turbulent environment, as Nonaka (2007, p. 162)

highlights, “[...] where the only certainty is uncertainty, the one sure source of lasting competitive advantage is knowledge. When markets shift, technologies proliferate, competitors multiply, and products become obsolete almost overnight, successful companies are those that consistently create new knowledge, disseminate it widely throughout the organization, and quickly embody it in new technologies and products”.

The mentioned turbulent environment and Nonaka’s concept about the relation between *knowledge creation* and *competitiveness* can be applied and be part of the basis for the strategies in regional development projects, but it is necessary to take into account, as Kostiaainen (2002, p. 613) evidences, that region’s competitiveness is an entity that consists on many elements: *the regional innovation system, the quality of human environment, human resources, and learning*. And, in addition, one should consider what Castells (2005) called a *network society* as the way today’s society operates, dominating activities and processes in global or regional networks. For this reason, the human perspective presented in Saito (2007) and Nie, et al. (2007) is followed in this research, in which the knowledge creating process is interpreted as a social practice where the ways to create or produce the context (Ba or place)¹ and facilitate the connections to improve the process are analyzed permanently, specifically focusing on the knowledge conversion process (SECI model) or the interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge.

On the other hand, the “everyday turbulent environment” of a “third world country”² is exposed on news articles about one of the following topics: political corruption, natural disasters, legal and illegal mining destructive “exploitation” processes with irreversible consequences on the environment, agricultural strikes where farmers require to get better income, access to education and social security, violence and many people living in deplorable conditions, among others. Alongside academic research and university life, it is easy to see every day that there are many things in a process of deterioration: nature, society and quality of life. Hundreds of thousands of people are dying of hunger, while others continue to live their daily lives. According to FAO (2013), the world’s population has

¹ The Japanese concept of “ba,” which roughly translates into the English word “place.” (Nonaka & Konno, 1998)

² Colombia, South America, for the case under study.

doubled since the late 1970's to approximately 7 billion³ people, and it is projected to increase considerably over the coming decades. There are 867 million chronically undernourished people in the world today (one in eight of the people in the world), 70% of the food insecure population is in the rural areas and 60% of the total world population depends on agriculture for their livelihood. Facing these critical situations, concerns and questionings turn up and suggest some kind of discordance: After thousands of years of evolution, and all the attention human beings have put to increase knowledge in all areas and to develop information systems to communicate the entire world, how is that we have come to build this world in which destruction is a constant made under the guise of the economic growth and the development of the regions?

All the things mentioned in the previous paragraphs, along with the opportunity of meeting Suyusama, a Regional Sustainable Program in the South of Colombia, were the cause that aroused the interest of a research about regional knowledge creation where its importance and pertinence has not only been to consider this process as one of the sources of regional competitive advantage, but also to develop alternative ways to construct a better world for peasants and indigenous communities that are part of what in an academic lexicon is called a regional system of innovation. As Max-Neef (2005) expressed in a conference, “reflecting on communitarianism, solidarity and human scale development is based on that we are in a world that we would like to change, and a world where most of the people do not feel satisfied. And despite all the promises the dominant economic model has already made, bewilderment and anguish grows in people wherever one goes” (p.33).

Current circumstances are enabling the emergence of new perspectives on the present and future of Latin American countries. It is necessary to rethink new ways of seeing and experiencing the world and this is the scenario where this research has been carried out and this review paper has emerged. Proposals of change made by various authors have been appearing in the readings in order to build the framework to make contributions for the situations that suggest changes. This is a conceptual research where *knowledge creation* is interpreted in a development network within a framework conformed by Suyusama and the regional community organizations and it has been raised to provide tools in their definition of

³ A billion is 1000 million.

development strategies and projects to reach their “dear life⁴”. The main question is how informal mentoring within the context of a *regional development network* can enhance or inhibit the process of knowledge creation framed in the SECI model of knowledge-conversion-raised by Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995) originally created for *organizational knowledge creation*.

2.METHODOLOGY

This work is part of a doctoral research in a PhD study of Engineering, Industry and Organizations. It is a qualitative research which, according to Strauss & Corbin (2002), attempts to understand the meaning or the nature of the people experience with an identified problem, or to obtain details of a complex phenomenon for which it is required to do field work in order to find what people think, feel and do. This initial stage of inquiry, a conceptual research, has served the researcher to delve deeper into the problem and to understand how knowledge creation occurs locally in the context of a sustainable development program, where *knowledge creation* is interpreted in a development network within a framework conformed by Suyusama and the regional community organizations. From a quest to understand how Suyusama operates and the subsequent interviews in the region under this study, it was found that the foundation to create knowledge in the region is that communities could reach their “*dear life*” or “*good living*”, which led to a review of literature on this concept for subsequent linkage with the regional knowledge creation process and mentoring.

3.KNOWLEDGE CREATION

As knowledge is a broad concept, the conceptual framework is presented. Thus, looking for definitions, three approaches are followed: “*we know more than we can tell*” presented by Polanyi (1967, p. 4); the aphorism used by Maturana & Varela (2007, p. 13), “*all doing is knowing and all knowing is doing*”; and the last one is represented in the following statement: *describing and explaining is not the same as understanding*, so “*we live in a world that needs to be understood, more than to be known*” (Max-Neef, 1991, p. 2). In the book *The Study of Man* (Polanyi, 1966), the author refers to the ability to think as an outstanding attribute of human beings and in the process of understanding themselves, human knowledge is studied. Trying always to discover objective knowledge and reflecting on that, people find

⁴ In Spanish, the expression is called “la vida querida”, “buen vivir” or “vivir bien”

themselves in the act of providing a foundation for their own knowledge and to affirm that this is true, so those truths and beliefs enlarge their world into something that was not yet incorporated: the object of his present knowledge. The process continues so on, and therefore, it seems to be impossible to reach an exhaustive knowledge of the human beings. For the author, this is a logical curiosity and he suggests that the solution seems to lie in the fact that human knowledge is of two types: the first one is the one that can be written in words, diagrams or mathematical formulas and is called *explicit knowledge*, while the second is the not formulated knowledge such as the one a person has in the time he acts, and is named *tacit knowledge*. Then, "*we always know tacitly that we are holding our explicit knowledge to be true*" (p. 10). Even though tacit knowledge is considered as particular and subjective, this should not invalidate it. From that perspective, the author devoted his research to show that tacit knowledge is the dominant principle of all knowledge.

According to Nonaka (2007, p. 165), individual tacit knowledge is made up of technical skills, a type of informal competencies or what is commonly referred as *know-how*. As an example of that, the author exposes how a master craftsman after years of experience develops an expertise; however, this person is often unable to articulate the scientific or technical principles behind his or her knowledge or experience. Tacit knowledge has an important cognitive dimension because it is composed of mental models; that is, beliefs and perspectives taken for granted and therefore cannot easily be articulated. For this reason, these implicit models profoundly shape the way the world is perceived. Also, Nonaka & Takeuchi (2011, p. 60) propose the existence of a third type of knowledge which they call *practical wisdom* whose origin lies in the concept of phronesis - "a true and reasoned state of capacity to act with regard to the things that are good or bad for man"-, one of the three forms of knowledge identified in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics VI.6. *Practical wisdom* is a kind of *tacit knowledge* gained from the experience that allows people to make wise decisions based on a situation and guided by ethics. According to the authors, this concept is similar to the Japanese expression *toku*: a virtue that leads a person to seek the common good and moral excellence as a way of life. Or to the Indian term *jukta* that connotes fair or appropriate. For example, people who believe that the purpose of a business is not only to make profits but also to serve people and improve the welfare of society observe *jukta* and are away from excess and greed.

In the creative activities of human beings, a spiraling process of interactions between tacit and explicit knowledge is presented and it is from there where knowledge is created and expanded. This interaction is called knowledge conversion or SECI model, and it is characterized as an interactive social process between more than one individual that serves as an outline for knowledge creation. The four forms of knowledge conversion are: socialization (from tacit to tacit); externalization (from tacit to explicit); combination (from explicit to explicit), and internalization (from explicit to tacit). The authors proposed a knowledge creation model that is based on the assumption that organizational knowledge is created in a continuous, permanent and five non-sequential phases. The first relates to socialization, in which an individual shares his tacit knowledge in order to amplify it within the organization. During the second phase, tacit knowledge becomes explicit and takes the form of a new concept, which is justified in the third phase, in order to determine whether is worthwhile to develop it or not. In the fourth phase, the new concepts are converted into an archetype: a prototype if it is the development of a physical product, or an operational mechanism innovation if it is an abstract or a new administrative system or innovative organizational structure. During the fifth phase, created knowledge is distributed inside or outside the organization. All this in a spiral-loop that provides enabling conditions for the knowledge creation process to occur (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

When talking about knowledge, the following question comes to mind: *how can I know that I know what I believe I know?* Trying to answer that question was the bridge to the second approach used to build the framework for this research. From the book *The Tree of Knowledge* whose subject is *knowing how we know*, Maturana & Varela (2007) present the idea of *the need to know ourselves* based on their concern of how it is possible that humanity having conquered all the environments on The Earth may be coming to an end, and the civilization can be seen in real danger of disappearing just because humans have failed to conquer themselves, understand their nature and act from that understanding. There's still time for reflection and subsequent change of direction. It consists on changing the value about what is important. Moving from only thinking about the demand and supply curves; the urgency of liquidity and profitability at any cost; the exploitation and destruction of non-renewable natural resources; and how cheap or expensive a product can be within the free trade agreements without taking into account the real social costs. According to Max-Neef

(2005, p. 37) “*we know much but understand little*”. Understanding is the result of integration, while knowledge is the result of separation: understanding is holistic, while knowledge is fragmented. Just knowing is not enough and just understanding is incomplete. For the proposed research presented here, the challenge is to follow the three approaches presented in the previous paragraphs. Thus, it is necessary to bear in mind during the knowledge creation processes the importance of tacit knowledge, reflection about what is done and the complement between knowledge and understanding. And also, as Max-Neef proposed, one must also face the challenge of a change in language. It is impossible to solve the current problems if the same language that gave rise to the problem continues being used. Therefore, *knowledge* as proposed in this research should be a source of change in a holistic context, and ultimately it can become a source of competitive advantage for a region.

4.KNOWLEDGE CREATION FROM A LOCAL CONTEXT

According to Kostiainen (2002) developing a region is a complex process where many actors interact, and as a result of that, local or regional development policies can emerge. All actors have their own strategies and goals therefore, the process management must take into account the specificity way of working as networks that cannot be controlled by a single actor because their relationship is not based on hierarchies or power. The actors, who through their own activities and mutual cooperation have an influence on the development of a region, conform a *development network*, which at the same time, is a loosely organized strategic network. Even though the primary objective of the members of the network is not necessarily the development of the entire region, their cooperative work ends up influencing it and that's why it is considered strategic. In order to study and understand that process in the selected region, it is important to present the philosophy of the sustainable program: how it works along with the community organizations, and the possible difficulties and challenges they have gone through. Also, to go further, a look at a definition of *sustainable development*⁵ becomes necessary and it is taken from Latouche & Harpagè (2011, pp. 30-36) as a form of economic development that satisfies present needs without compromising the ability of future generations; then, sustainable regional development projects are formulated for the regions in order to arise forms of economic development within a framework of resource preservation

⁵ Defined by the United Nations in the report of the World Commission in 1987.

and respect for the environment, ensuring that future generations have the same opportunities to meet their needs as current ones have. Within the context of Suyusama, knowledge is created from the interaction of the community organizations with other groups that are characterized by the heterogeneity of the different actors and include representatives of firms or companies, universities, technology centers and some public or private organizations that will support the development projects of the region. This scheme matches with the definition that Harmaakorpi & Melkas (2005) give for a *regional innovation system (RIS)* where they present that it is a kind of cluster that is composed of various organizations that operate as networks, which aim to increase the innovation capacity of a specific region. Compared to individual organizations, these systems have loose structures and therefore, a particular attention has to be given to the relationships within networks in order to develop a common language and forms of interpretation to create an atmosphere of trust that allows them to overcome the uncertainties of the process.

Within this scenario, knowledge can be considered as being one of the sources of competitive advantage for a region providing opportunities to the community organizations to reach their proposed goals and objectives raised in their strategic projects. The real challenge, according to Max-Neef (1991), consists on looking for and developing alternative hypotheses to build a better world and within this framework is where knowledge-based innovation can be contemplated as one source of regional development in a context of regional systems of innovation that are defined by Buesa, et al., (2006) as a set of networks between organizations, public and private, which interact to perform activities in order to adapt, generate and extend knowledge and innovations which are the basis of economic development in an specific region. Edquist (1997) in Buesa, et al., (2006) specifies that the most important characteristics of this approach are at first that holistic and interdisciplinary innovation and learning are the nucleus point, where the idea of interdependence not linearity is an essential aspect to take in account and then “divorcing itself from the neoclassical economic tradition and the idea of the existence of an optimal point in the allocation of resources” (p. 464). From Krugman, 1991 and Lundvall, 1992, cited by Harmaakorpi & Melkas (2005, p. 642), “agglomeration and clustering result in advantages in regional development because of externalities achieved by geographic proximity”. The intercommunication among the diverse actors in the region ends up in interactive learning processes due to the information processing from the surroundings. To Harmaakorpi & Melkas (2005), the important thing

here is to evaluate the mechanisms for transforming information into knowledge, which leads to the need to consider a regional knowledge management system common in order to study how and what kind of knowledge and information is transmitted in the network. In regional systems of innovation, making personal knowledge available to others can also be taken as the central activity of knowledge creation. It begins with an individual who makes his knowledge available to others, so it could be transformed into regional knowledge and valued as a whole. According to Nonaka (2007, pp. 164-165), knowledge creation is not simply a matter of "objective information processing", but rather, it mostly depends on how to take advantage of tacit knowledge, hunches and intuitions, often highly subjective in an individual. The key to this process is the individual commitment and sense of identity to the organization and its mission, which requires that some leaders feel comfortable with the use of a language of images, symbols, metaphors and analogies, as when they are employing precise or explicit numerical expressions.

Complementing the above, given that local knowledge creation can also be oriented towards technological developments integrated to strategic projects, the following are some reflections done by Aguilar, J.P, (2003, p. 104): *“In local scenarios, the exercises of dialogue and cooperation among different sources of knowledge favor the reintegration of science (lost from the Cartesian and mechanistic notions) and it is relocated to its role as instrument in the service of life. Integrated approaches of participatory technology development are very relevant in this context, since different projects, challenges and concerns of local communities are strongly articulated and interrelated. In contrast, a single-issue vision of the “experts” creates much confusion and waste of resources”*. An important aspect to remember in the knowledge creation processes from the local point of view is that they develop in multicultural and diverse scenarios, where men and women of different ages, educational levels and backgrounds meet. Therefore, a dialogue of knowledges⁶ should be promoted, and that is the integration of traditional and contemporary forms of knowledge, with the ultimate purpose of achieving the *“dear life”* of the people involved in the community organizations, concept which will be explained below and contributes to the understanding of what for De Sousa Santos (2009) is an *Epistemology of the South*, regarding to what the view of the world is for the regional inhabitants and its implications in politics and the exercise of power.

⁶ This term is used in Spanish as “Diálogo de Saberes” and it generally refers to indigenous communication or knowledge exchange among diverse people.

5.SUYUSAMA AND THE ALTERNATIVE OF “DEAR LIFE” OR “GOOD LIVING”

For more than two decades ago, in southern Colombia, participative dynamics have been promoted in order to work on planning and management through the implementation of people's councils. In this framework, the Sustainability Program for Regional Andean Nariño and Putumayo, Suyusama⁷, was created in 2004. The Program is the result of the articulation of the social centers of the Society of Jesus (IMCA⁸, CINEP⁹, SJR¹⁰, Programa por la Paz¹¹), in collaboration with Pontifical Xavierian University in Bogotá, and its purpose is to contribute effectively to build local and regional economic alternatives to construct and reach the communities' "*dear life*" (PUJ, 2013). The program begins with the assistance they give to the communities in the development of their *life plans* at different municipalities of the region. From there, it accompanies the community through the formulation of development plans, and the subsequently development, management and implementation of strategic projects. This cycle, articulates the political agenda in the region and aims to provide information to qualify the political culture of the communities, as protagonists of their own development (Suyusama, 2011). Then, it is necessary to explain what "*dear life*" means, because "*reaching the dear life*" is considered as the ultimate goal for which local or regional economic alternatives are built as products of the regional knowledge creation processes. Dear life or well living are assumptions with ancestral roots that have in common a search that native indigenous people have had to give a place in their territory to what in the Yala Abya¹² represents a unit of the world and also the way life is organized based on understanding and building social relationships in an integrated world. According to Ibáñez & Aguirre L., (2013, pp. 12-13), these perspectives of perceiving and organizing life focus on four issues, as follows:

- *Everything is life*. It is about understanding nature as a subject or a living being; therefore, one can speak of the rights of nature.

⁷ Suyusama is a Quechua word that means "beautiful region".

⁸ Instituto Mayor Campesino / Peasant Major Institute

⁹ Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular / Center for Research and Popular Education

¹⁰ Servicio Jesuita a Refugiados / Jesuit Refugee Service

¹¹ Programa por la Paz / Program for Peace.

¹² Term used by Tule-Kuna (Panama and western Colombia) meaning "Land at full maturity", "Land of Vital Blood", and used for the indigenous world to name the whole continent of America (López H., 2004).

- *Everything is all and all is everything.* That is to consider human-nature relationship as a unit and it is a part of the sociability among living beings.
- *Construction of knowledge and learning.* Integrating knowledge, ethics, spirituality, and production within an indivisible process.
- *The deep sense of aesthetics* is related to the ability to build in harmony with nature and other human beings, so the beautiful life arises, in which "we are a unity."

In productive projects, the *dear life* concept takes on a special meaning, and as mentioned by De Roux Rengifo JP, (2010, p. 233), what this is about is to build collectively "the way of life that people want to live. That is to create the conditions to protect and express the greatness of human dignity, as people want with their traditions, sensitivity, environment and dreams". As an example of this, one can consider projects in rural areas where the development of "peasant farms" is fostered and therefore food for families and neighboring villages can be guaranteed. Also, if simultaneously, the production of leading agro industrial products is promoted, it could help to increase the income and be one of the ways to reach a "dear life" for the communities of the regions. So, having a glance at the *dear life* leads people to a different paradigm in which the following aspects can be considered: 1) the unit or complementarity between human beings and nature; 2) the importance of the local over the global; 3) the recognition of the diversity in life; and 4) the possibility of building a new society from the autonomous work of the communities in their territory in order to reach their *dear life*. Thus, according to Huanacuni (2010, p. 17), "to solve global problems, structural global solutions are needed. A wide change about the vision of life is necessary. All humans seek for an answer and some indigenous pose for this life crisis the paradigm of the culture of life, which is naturally communitarian. The paradigm of the culture of life emerges from the view that everything is connected and integrated, and that there is an interdependence between all and together".

6.Ba - SECI Model - Mentoring

The "place" or the context where knowledge creation happens is called "Ba" which is a Japanese term that refers to a shared space for emerging relationships or human interactions that can be physical, mental or virtual. Ba is a place of meaning, since all knowledge is located within their social, historical or cultural context, and this is why this space offers the

possibility of creating knowledge through the interaction between individuals, which may be changing over time. Ba may take a physical form when spaces or offices in the organization are used; it could take a virtual form when knowledge is created by mail, intranets, meetings or social encounters; or it can be mental when knowledge is created through ideals and ideas (Von Krogh, Nonaka, & Rechsteiner, 2011). The concept of Ba was originally proposed by the Japanese philosopher Kitaro Nishida, further developed by Shimizu¹³, and then Nonaka & Konno (1998, p. 40) adapted it for the purpose of elaborating the model of knowledge creation. Ba provides the platform for advancing individual or collective knowledge where needed information is integrated and serves as a foundation for knowledge creation. Knowledge is embedded in Ba and acquired through one's own experience or reflections on the experiences of others. According to the authors, when knowledge is separated from Ba and can be communicated independently from it, it turns into *information*, which resides in media and networks. Information is tangible, and in contrast, knowledge is intangible, boundaryless, dynamic, and it is of no value if it is not used at a specific time in a specific place. For Nonaka & Konno (1998, p. 41), “Ba is the world where the individual realizes himself as part of the environment on which his life depends. [...] The collective embraces the self when an individual enters the Ba of teams. Just as the Ba for individuals is the team, the organization in turn is the Ba for the teams”. For an individual to participate in a Ba means to get involved and transcend his or her own limited perspective or boundary what is necessary for linking reason and intuition that produces creativity.

For each one of the four stages of the SECI model there is one type of Ba that correspond to it, and each one of them offer platforms for specific steps in the knowledge spiral process. In two of the stages of the SECI model (externalization and internalization) the roles of expert individuals and mentors are mentioned. Nonaka & Konno (1998) didn't clarify specifically the definition of those concepts, but for the purpose of this research it is necessary to deepen these definitions. As mention in Kram (1988) seminal work on mentoring, the word *mentor* could mean different things to different people depending on their diverse perceptions. That's why in mentoring research it is important that researchers provide a definition of mentoring in

¹³ Shimizu, H. (1995). Ba-principle: new logic for the real-time emergence of information. *Holonics*, 5(1), 67-79.

order to reduce variability among the participants in the studies with regard to their conceptualization of a mentor or a mentoring relationship (Haggard, Dougherty, Turban, & Wilbanks, 2011). From a review of literature on mentoring, Haggard, et al., (2011) describes how this construct has changed over the years from the seminal work of Kram, since the decade of the 80's. The authors identify about 40 different definitions that have been stated in the empirical literature since that time and also state that "many scholars share a general view that a mentor is a more senior person who provides various kinds of personal and career assistance to a less senior or experienced person (the "protégé" or "mentee")" (p. 286). According to Kram (1988), a mentor is an older person with great experience that helps a less experienced individual, usually younger, to learn how to navigate the world of adults and employment. The mentor supports, guides and advises the young person for the purpose of helping and developing his career, and together they establish a mentoring relationship. Then, mentoring is a "life-altering relationship that inspires mutual growth, learning, and development". It can have an effect to transform individuals, groups, organizations, and communities, and transcends time, gender, and culture (Kram & Ragings, 2007, p. 3). For Kram (1988), these kind of relationships can be significantly affected by the context in which they develop, as by the expectations, needs and competencies or skills of individuals.

From some research works, it has been found that to optimize the coordination and execution of knowledge creation processes, and in order to capitalize the knowledge within the organizations, it is necessary to consider mechanisms for accessing, transferring and retaining existing knowledge. For that purpose, according to Renaud, et. al.,(2004, pp. 25-28), expert individuals are crucial as well as the monitoring and ensuring the reuse of knowledge acquired, which is going to be one of the ways to accelerate the innovation processes. Furthermore, Karkoulian, et al., (2008) have concluded through an empirical investigation that informal mentoring is positively and significantly associated with the processes of transfer and use of knowledge. This implies to delve further into the concept of mentoring relationships finding in the literature that formal and informal mentoring can be found within the context of organizations. Formal mentoring occurs when the organization provides the needed structure to generate mentoring relationships in which ensure that participants have purpose, clear roles and support for such relationships to occur and to be successful. Moreover, informal mentoring occurs when two people without the assistance and guidance of the organization establish a development partnership. According to Singh, et al., (2002),

informal mentoring is characterized by having very little involvement of the organization and, by contrast, formal mentoring programs are carefully structured and monitored. In informal mentoring, both the mentor and his protégé decide how to proceed. While in formal mentoring, the organization usually uses contracts, which clearly specify the objectives, deadlines, expectations and patterns of the mentoring relationship. In this case, individuals who require or seek mentors generally fill application forms indicating their interests and needs, so through an information system, the better mentor will be located. In this case, it is common for the role of mentors to be a task imposed by managers, so they could perform without having a particular interest in the development of their protégés. This formality can affect the evolution of a personal, healthy and creative relationship supplier of benefits for several years. However, an informal mentoring relationship may fail if there is not a specific framework in which to operate; this indicates that an informal mentoring relationship may also have benefits when initially the organization fosters a space that facilitates it and where the expectations of both mentor and protégé are clear.

From the above, it was detected that there is a high potential for a research approach where mentoring is linked with regional knowledge creation. This can also be supported by authors like Singh, et al., (2002) to whom mentoring can be seen as a mechanism for knowledge transfer, organizational learning and communication among departments, or in other words, as nodes in a network of information and suggest further research in mentoring seen as a community of practice for the production of knowledge. In turn, Haggard, et al. (2011) indicate that mentoring has been recognized as a mechanism for the transfer of knowledge, but very little research has focused on knowing what kind of information is transferred in mentoring relationship.

7.CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Initially, due to the proposed dynamics, it can be inferred that the creation of regional knowledge is a complex process that requires a deep and different study that the one is usually done at the organizational levels where power structures are defined. Initially, in this context, it has been detected that the process of knowledge creation occurs in the following situations:

- Within community organizations, where it is important to consider the ancient knowledge to create new knowledge being consistent with the sustainability programs and defining by their own what they want to achieve for their “dear life”.
- In the dynamics of the relationships among all the organizations that are part of the system.
- Within Suyusama as an organization that also needs to capitalize its experience translated into knowledge in order to optimize resources and be able to have a broader scope.
- Within inter organizational networks, each consisting of companies or institutions linked from strategic alliances to increase the effectiveness of operations across the network.

An interesting element to be considered within the context under study is that community leaders could play a mentor role in the development process of the community organizations to which they are party of. Either they can encourage the formulation and development of strategic projects or they can support one zone, playing a role as monitors of the organizations like Suyusama. This relationship fits the definition of informal mentoring, although, it could be thought that it would be possible to create formal mentoring programs conforming teams to develop specific goals, in the case where the program will feature the financial resources to compensate these community leaders and therefore, managing the work done by these "mentors".

One possible way to contribute to regional development programs is through the creation of "**mentor organizations**", originally defined in this research as nonprofit organizations that carry out social programs and contribute with its expertise in the sustainable development of the regions. Initially, it has been thought that the positioning of this type of organization must be based on its know-how and expertise, in the selfless way to support the community and on the success results with previous works (previous success cases). It is important to make clear that a “**mentor organization**” aims for sustainable regional development through support, sharing and creating knowledge. It is not a charity or a gift or money giver organization.

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