The Executive Capability of Innovation in Knowledge Management: A Literature Review

Abstract

This study presents the incidence between executive capacity for innovation and resource-based knowledge management in small and medium-sized companies. This research is a documentary and systematic review of scientific articles, considering factors inherent to collaboration and change agents in the actions of executives. It was observed that the variables explain their implicit characteristics and their effects are identified as knowledge management development within the incidence of innovation in its different processes and products, creating work teams that lead to organizational remodeling in the competitive sustainability of the companies. It is concluded that the best benefit when applying a joint model of knowledge management and executive capacity for innovation is the competitive sustainability of companies.

Keywords: knowledge, innovation, organization, sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

The exchange of individual knowledge, between teams, and within the organization is the most valuable organization and a critical resource to achieve competitive advantage (Dayan, Heisig, & Matos, 2017). As a consequence, a high level of knowledge quality indicates that an organization is more productive when it reduces costs and increases sales in the process, while innovation intervenes within a company (Santoro, Vrontis, Thrassou, & Dezi, 2017). In this sense, knowledge management (KM) and executive capacity for innovation (CEI) are relatedto social ties, shared goals, and social trust, i.e., the major constructs that represent the structural, cognitive, and relational dimensions of an organization's social capital (Daniel & Huang, 2019: Ganguly, Talukdaran, & Debdeep, 2019).

Following an analogous line and in the matter of KM, organizations with a strong KM capability are more likely to successfully pursue innovation (Abouzeedan, Klofsten, & Hedner, 2013). Thus, the elemental quality of innovative ideas can come from the sharing of knowledge quality within firms (Robbins & O'Gorman, 2016). Therefore, KM is a systematic approach or strategy for finding, understanding, and using knowledge to generate value that increases the efficiency and productivity of internal resources (Ngah & Wong, 2020).

Meanwhile, organizations in these global times are challenged by the need to have the ability to innovate and respond to rapidly changing conditions (Leyva, Espejel, & Cavazos, 2020). That is, companies, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), due to their structure and general characteristics, resources, operations processes, and performance,have great barriers that make it difficult to act effectively (García, Quintero, & Arias, 2014). However, they have strengths and opportunities in directing their management in human capital through knowledge transfer (Kaur, Kumar, & Goyal, 2019).

This research is directed to the search for the existing relationship between two variables of the strategic management of SMEs such as KM and ECI (Kearney, Harrington, & Kelliher, 2018). This means that they are relevant in organizational growth to promote the competencies and performance of those who make up the company, demonstrating knowledge and skills in all its activities. For their existence, organizations, are in constant development of strategies that provide business excellence, seeking to be proactive in the process of their growth (Pereira, Mellahi, Temouri, Patnaik, & Roohanifar, 2018). In this context, the KM constructs and the ECI,

play an important role in the complex process of incorporating knowledge management with creativity and innovation (Apolinario & Guevara, 2021). Therefore, in this work we intend to develop a framework that yields the trends that give strategic answers directed to the management of business sustainability of SMEs by the executives of the organization (Hogan & Coote, 2014). This study should respond:

How does the executive capacity for innovation affect knowledge management in SMEs and what strategic model will be necessary for these constructs to coexist in an organization?

METHODOLOGY

The methodology applied was of the documentary exploratory type, based mainly on the literature review of first-impact articles. Then, with this vision, a total of 90 scientific articles were considered for review, from which 62 works were exhaustively chosen that define the relationship between the variables of the study, as well as the actions of the organizations now of interaction between the two variables. In this way, following the methodologies detailed in the articles of (Meier, 2011; Cabrera, & Mauricio, 2017; Pino & Ortega, 2018), which consisted of choosing the number of previously selected articles and identifying two criteria, the type of research and the keywords; as a second step, repeated keywords were eliminated from 210 words, 90 keywords were obtained; finally from those words that remained a grouping was made in seven criteria since the keywords that used to converge in the categories of knowledge, technology, innovation, organizational culture, managerial factors, organizational performance and supply chain management. Then, the dimensions and indicators were determined, considering the type of descriptive methodology with deductive logic, reaffirming the direct and indirect relationship of the articles between the variables studied, improving the understanding and direction of the subject, and allowing the orientation, using sequential methodological processes.The specific matrices were made beginning the exploration of the works, following the elaboration of the literature exploration matrices, and the development of argument by analysis (Machi & McEvory, 2009).

LITERATURE REVIEW

An exhaustive exploration of the literature concerning the conception of KM from the perspective of resource-based knowledge theory and ECI based on dynamic capabilities theory

(Beijerse, 2000; Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997) was conducted. In this way, knowledge is described in a mandatory way within the work environment where several factors are involved such as culture, strategies, infrastructure, and business systems that modify in a certain way how knowledge is managed (Lee & Wong, 2015). So also, ECI is focused on incremental improvement, strategic revitalization, and organizational capabilities that require agile and motivated executives to manage efficient and effective operational relationships (Kearney, et al, 2018). Therefore, this literature review contributes to showing how KM and ECI are related in an organization such as SMEs. The relationships of these constructs are in targeting the performance and operational capacity that organizations must direct their operations (Santoro, Vrontis, Thrassou, & Dezi, 2017). In this sense, the resource-based knowledge theory and the dynamic theory of capabilities contribute fundamentally to the paths that organizations should follow to rethink executing innovations from top management, seeking to be efficient, effective, and effective according to the needs of the companies (García, Quintero, & Arias, 2014). In this way, the handling of the literature review in an exhaustive manner and the necessary triangulation that merits these qualitative investigations presented the following categories.

Resource-Based Knowledge Management

This theory holds the assumption that an individual's earnings depend on the profitability of the firm, where the organization generates business and operational activity resulting in profitable hiring (Conner & Prahalad, 1996). In this sense, KM converges on the implementation of formal processes that reflect performance through the resource-based theory of knowledge (Beckett, Wainwright, & Bance, 2000; Shin, Holden, & Schmidt, 2001; Lee & Wong, 2015). Resource theory is determined by all that knowledge both tacit and explicit, internal, and external that are owned by organizations and suggests that resources and capabilities are valuable, difficult to imitate, and non-substitutable, which leads organizations in the long run to success (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; De Gooijer, 2000). Therefore, KM can be presented as a process of acquiring, storing, understanding, sharing, and implementing knowledge that is transmitted with strategies into the organization (Ngah & Wong, 2019). Simultaneously (Lee & Wong, 2015; Shrafat, 2017), express that there are needs based on the capabilities of organizations to facilitate and improve KM activities by analyzing their factors. KM models are promoted through

strategies, policies, processes, traditions, and procedures, which are adaptable to organizational sectors due to their complexity (Meier, 2011). Likewise, as part of the dilemmas, Vasconcelos (2008) maintains that in KM it is mentioned within the transfer and conversion of tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge or vice versa. For his part, Darroch (2005) indicates that KM is a coordinated tool and that organizations can manage their knowledge using resources more efficiently, being better at innovating and developing these projects (Liao & Barnes, 2015). Therefore, it is necessary the implementation of KM projects, involving staff for the implementation of new guidelines, projects, information technology (IT), or innovations (Robbins& O'Gorman, 2016). This is critical, as these resources become useless in the face of staff resistance to use them (Hanisch et al., 2009).

Dynamic Innovation Capacity

Teece & Pisano's (1994) theory of dynamic capabilities shows the relationship of resources and capabilities with dynamism in a changing environment, as well as the need for the company to renew to maintain a competitive advantage in organizations and remain in the market.In this sense, Lawson & Samson, (2001) argue that the development of the capacity to innovate, from the perspective of dynamic capabilities, builds and promotes innovation based on vision and competitive strategies. In addition, Shang, et al, (2009) state that the application of the dynamic capability theory of innovation in service SMEs has a direct relationship with external resources and stimulation, and their own internal knowledge allows the sustainability of innovation. Also, Laforet (2011) states that organizations that are willing to carry out innovative actions should be based on the desire to achieve success, as well as on the continuous improvement of working conditions. Similarly, Hogan & Coote (2013) agree that if dynamic capabilities for innovation are developed, then the probabilities of success in companies increase, this is because they would improve the competencies in the operational processes of these. In this sense, Daniel & Huang, (2019) link dynamic capabilities for innovation with the integration of knowledge and processes to operate strategically from the organizational perspective. This means that those organizations that manage to demonstrate in time-rapid and flexible responses can produce innovation and the ability to manage effectively, thus outperforming, in this way, their local and external competitors, emphasizing two aspects (a) the changing landscape of the sectorand (b) the central role in the management of strategies to adapt, integrate and reconfigure their organizational skills (Teece & Pisano, 1994). In the meantime, internal and external environmental changes have a direct impact on the resources and competencies of the entire organization. (Teece, et al., 1997). In this way, organizations maintain business performancewith

rapid and immediate innovation, taking advantage of dynamic capabilities to create, implement and protect intangible assets in the long term (Tecee, 2007).

Executive Capacity for Innovation in Organizations

Hogan & Coote (2014), explain that the ability to innovate is the key to the survival of organizations. Therefore, ECI processes are important for the practice of innovation processes (García, et al., 2014). ECI is based on the theory of dynamic capabilities, starting from the study of capabilities organizational, revitalization of strategies, and continuous improvement, characteristics that seek to promote and retain entrepreneurship activities with the aim of preserving capital and competitive adaptation, allowing efficient optimization of business processes at all levels (Tecee, 2007; Kearney, et al, 2018; Apolinario & Guevara, 2021). In this way, organizations target innovation in a systematic way, measuring and identifying how they impact business competitiveness (Pereira, et al., 2018; Åslund & Bäckström, 2017). Meanwhile, Kearney et al. (2018) examine the development of dynamic capability theory in the application of CIS, where managers must recreate, expand, renew, and modify management for the application of innovation in firms. In this way, Seo, Dinwoodie, & Kwak, (2014) agree that constant monitoring leads to change in the stability and excellence of the products or services that are offered and oriented in improving existing structures, behaviors, and markets, seeking to embrace ideas that in many cases are radical and express changing needs and desires for competitive survival. Maestrini, et al. (2018) add that ECI admits remodeling positions within companies proactively and intentionally according to the behavior of competition in a business and market environment. Meanwhile, Robbins and O'Gorman (2016) establish the need to verify the relationships between the factors and capabilities of learning, exchange, innovation, and transformation of internal knowledge, giving clues to the positive relationship that ECI has, as a support to the improvement, specialization, and performance of the different areas within an organization. Therefore, management is in performing actions that go incorporate tools that lead to keeping the organization in the creation of capabilities (Beijerse, 2000; Darroch, 2005; Lee & Wong, 2015; Liao & Barnes, 2015).

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is shown to be the key to the success of KM (Harrison & Bazzy, 2017). Therefore, the high level of trust of those who make up the organizations contributes to a social interaction that facilitates the flow of sharing and transferring knowledge, taking into consideration the tolerance of mistakes being part of the learning process (Deschamps, 2005). This makes it avoid penalties to maintain performance with the contribution of all members of the organization and its high level that, in accordance with the culture implemented, leads to the opening of new knowledge (Lee & Wong, 2015). In this sense, culture is linked to the strategies as critical points of long-term success and competitiveness in organizations and are aligned with thebusiness goals (Ngah & Wong, 2019). In this way, KM strategies in a clear, structured way add value in a cultural context (Ferreira, Mueller, & Papa, 2018). Therefore, it is necessary to mention that culture must be linked to excellent communication that leads to organizational commitment and avoid misunderstandings (Evans et al., 2009). In this way, infrastructure and resources are factors supporting knowledge management that have the necessary setting to establish organizational culture (Shrafat, 2017).

Technology in Organizations

Technologies in companies play a key role in new inventions and innovations (Abouzeedan, Klofsten, & Hedner, 2013). Thus, SMEs are based on their resources, which are necessary for innovation and new technologies, being one of their main characteristics ease of adaptation, and flexibility (Beijerse, 2000). In this sense, knowledge, and innovation depend heavily on technologies to incorporate into organizations, even changing behaviors of traditional employees who are opposed in some cases to the use of these (Daniel & Huang, 2019; Evans, Ralston, & Broderick, 2009). Authors such as (Hanisch, Lindner, Mueller, & Wald, 2009; Pino & Ortega, 2018) indicate that the primary benefit of technology is the improvement of information management, after this, conceptions such as innovation, knowledge, etc. are derived.

Management Aspects

A relevant pillar inside a company is the manager, their importance lies in the fact that they are the ones who focus, analyze, and integrate the information and knowledge that is generated for the purposes of the company and its members (Dayan, Heisig, & Matos, 2017;

Åslund & Bäckström, 2017). Managers empower and give support to their peers, listening to them, motivating them, giving them feedback, taking part in their daily work, finding ways to carry out the ideas of their peers, giving advice, and helping peers to perform their work (Cabrera & Mauricio, 2017; Teece & Pisano, 1994). Thus, the activities of management include managing the competence of human resources in their charge, they should be aware of research in the field of organizational innovation, which should formulate action strategies, as a manager should possess leadership, motivational ability, management style, and skills, and innovativeness(Lawson & Samson, 2001; Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997).

Organizational Performance

According to Beckett, Wainwright, & Bance (2000) the performance of processes is that information contributes to reducing costs, improving products, and constitutes knowledge to the companyby developing new market concepts. Also, knowledge acquisition processes are critical to futureorganizational performance, while knowledge retention processes are critical to present organizational performance (Lee & Wong, 2015). Thus, knowledge acquisition plays a key role in improving firms' flexibility in terms of product or process innovation performance (Liao & Barnes, 2015). On the other hand, Chang, Wong, Eze, & Lee (2019) express that the way in which the firm acquires, assimilates, and uses new technology in organizational operations is what determines its performance in the market. In that sense, Darroch (2005) indicates that performance is positively associated with business innovation, in financial and non-financial measures. Likewise, Diaz, Bornay, & Lopez (2015) indicate that there is a very close link between innovative activity, firm competitive advantages, and business performance (Kaur, Kumar, & Goyal, 2019).

Supply Chain Management

The importance of the study of supply chain management (SCM) lies in the responsibility that suppliers have for a company to create value in its production line, therefore, it is important to evaluate and control the phases of the supply chain (Maestrini, et, al. 2018). Thus, SCM is a key component of competitive advantage, while striving to improve productivity and profitability through the internal, supplier, and customer integration (Seo, Dinwoodie, & Kwak, 2014). SCM can also be seen as a tool that provides the firm with strategies to build long-term competitiveness (Sundram, Chandran, & Bhatti, 2016).

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

KM is presented as the process of acquiring, storing, understanding, sharing, and implementing knowledge. KM is currently considered one of the ways in which innovation can be fostered through new knowledge, affirming the research of Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995). It is agreed with Nonaka, et al. (2000) that in most cases, this new, different or innovative knowledge always comes from a brilliant entrepreneur, who seeks to develop and improve his or her tacit knowledge; in that sense, one way to check if the flow of knowledge or KM is working is that when tacit knowledge arrives in a company's knowledge base, it can be seen that the tacit knowledge is not only new, but also innovative to become explicit knowledge, but this must happen first within the organization and then through the chain associated with those involved (Nagh and Wong, 2019, Paoloni et al., 2020). Then, it is a fact that organizations are constantly building their intellectual capital, which means a real challenge, since, understanding how the members of the organization can improve, ensure, or facilitate knowledge sharing effectively helps issues such as innovation, competitiveness, and even sustainability (Muhammed & Zaim, 2020; Apolinario & Guevara, 2021). Meanwhile, it is ratified in the statement of Laperche & Liu (2013) who argue that the ability to innovate is a knowledge capital that establishes a set of specific information, which produces knowledge, and uses it in the creation of processes, both for large and small organizations. According to Ganguly, et al. (2019), it is contrasted that innovation capability provides a firm with a sustainable competitive advantage in the implementation of a comprehensive strategy.

According to what was expressed by Zairi (1995) it was compared with respect to the management of new information between departments and collaborators tends to have results through constant and valuable integration, being this, the basis of innovation activity, creating methodological structures, small skills, synergistic culture, and teamwork.

Therefore, the ECI is present in a direct relationship between knowledge sharing and innovation performance. In this way, Wu (2008) corroborates in the approach of management's responsibility in the need to make knowledge productive. For his part, Deschamps (2005) said that managers are the ones called to face the risks now of stimulating innovations and to assume the possible decreases in the organization's competitiveness. Therefore, it is necessary to select the work teams that will be entrusted with the management of the initiatives to execute product

or process innovations. Thus, innovation processes involving pre-existing knowledge usually require the generation and acquisition of new knowledge, as well as the establishment of relevant facilities in the processes of learning, knowledge creation, and innovation and improvement of the cycles within these processes, where the responsibilities for the generation of policies, strategies, and tactics are functions of top management and the organization, must be entirely involved in the process of knowledge creation (Robbins & O'Gorman, 2016; Åslund & Bäckström, 2017; Kearney, et al, 2018).

At the same time, Teece (2007) in the proposal of the formal and informal organizational structures and external realizations should think about the meaning of the innovation or to the assignment of competencies, as well as the evolution of this ECI, affirming that they must take this innovation moderating system according to its degree of application or according to the shortcomings of the work structures. Also, Chauvel & Depress (2002) express that knowledge must evolve according to the changes in its environment by means of adaptability processes based on the needs of new products or processes, creativity in the processes both in individuals and organizations until a point of satisfaction is reached that remains static.

In contrast, Wood (2007) argues that the relationship between KM and ECI starts from strategic processes that must be understood to avoid initial disorders, such as the use of organizational knowledge, promoting continuous adaptability in both goals and processes, resulting from extensive learning from the experiences of evolutionary innovation, leaving the capabilities inthe creation of economic and rapid ideas as part of the innovation strategy, allowing to emerge interrain less explored by rivals (Shrafat, 2017). Thus, the ECI argues that the use of new technologies and information media should be explored as part of continuous improvement, making changes in the work environment (Leyva, et al., 2020). At the same time, which exploitsthe central core of the organization's processes, requiring skills to identify, acquire, assimilate, and implement the creation of new knowledge into new opportunities, therefore, information technologies and KM are important factors in innovation (Chang et al., 2019; Ganguly et al., 2019). After defining the relationship between the variables KM and CIS, Figure 1 shows the elements of interaction between both variables, where the constructs were associated in such a way that the shared elements are identified concretely and objectively in both, differentiated by categories and codes.

Theories	Variables	Constructs	Categories	Codes
Resource-based knowledge theory Theory of dynamic capabilities	Knowledge Management (KM) Executive Capacity for Innovation (ECI)	● Strategies ● Infrastructure ● Culture ● Resources ● Strategy Revitalization ● Continuous Improvement ● Organizational Capacity	● Knowledge ● Technology ● Innovation ● Organizational Culture ● Management Aspects ● Organizational Performance ● Supply Chain Management	● Knowledge interaction ● Understanding ● Commitment ● IT Investment ● Infrastructure Investment ● Maintenance ● Internal Confidence ● Strength in its capabilities ● Tolerance to errors ● Internal Collaboration ● Communication ● Openness to new changes, ideas, and knowledge ● Investment in knowledge management ● Leveraging human capital ● Optimization of productive time

Figure 1. *Relationship between KM and IRB variables, based on the organizational constructs*

CONCLUSION

The literature review was carried out through articles taken from the ‘80s, considered asreferents of the study addressed, as well as current articles where the topics of innovation, strategies, capabilities, leadership, knowledge, and resources, among other related topics, are addressed. The methodology used allowed for determining the common elements between the constructs of the ECI and KM variables, i.e., the association between both is raised, agreeing with what was raised (Kearney, et al, 2018; Muhammed & Zaim, 2020; Apolinario & Guevara, 2021) that indicate that organizations seeking to improve performance should strongly consider innovation and how they can ensure the success of their KM initiatives.

This is because their study shows a strong connection between both variables. In that sense, if, on the one hand, the innovation process feeds back on experience-based learning, then, on the other hand, technical-critical knowledge is needed to identify the right moments to innovate. In addition, Darroch (2005) suggests that what we call intangible assets, is relatedto the components of tacit knowledge within the organization, and among those components is precisely the experience and intellectual capital of the organization's members.

Also, in conducting a thorough and exhaustive literature review using the triangulation method, it was found that the variables KM and ECI are related, as determined in their constructs and categories, and are associated with for KM, the constructs defined in the literature review were ratified and are directly associated with the ECI constructs. That is, according to the methodology used, the construct strategies that was classified in the variable KM is directly associated and are a consequence of the construct revitalization of strategies that was classified in the variable ECI, and they have common indicators such as knowledge interaction. This is supported by what Daniel and Huang (2019) state about the intuitive in thinking, that the greater proportion of tacit knowledge you have, the greater the explicit knowledge generated in a business context, this means, that the knowledge that is acquired at work through interactions, synergistic compressions, and the exchange of experience in different activities, resides in the mind of everyone. This relationship is accentuated in the understanding, where the conception of the capacity presented by the individual or groups of individuals in learning and retaining information is known as absorption capacity, which after operationalizing there is an added value effect in the human interpretative contribution in the resources and capabilities of the organization. In this way, it is found that individual and organizational skills and competencies recognize the value of external tacit knowledge, from different contexts, such as customers, suppliers, competitors, collaborators, and others, and incorporate it into the intrinsic bases of the organization's own knowledge.

This relationship of variables also shows that investment in infrastructure and technology is a necessary indicator because it is a trend and because it exists in a competitive market. That is, in the need to convert tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge, the effectiveness will be in maintaining all the resources in a system that stores this knowledge, which must necessarily be accompanied by this combination of infrastructure and technology. In this way, technology depends on infrastructure, this combination leads organizations to maximize profit, but, above all, to be in competition in the markets increasing profit, strategic improvement, and support within the intellectual capital of the organization.

Intellectual capital can be used to drive KM strategies, looking at the advantages from a business perspective to successfully improve the financial and operational performance of firms. Human capital was also found to be related to investment in KM, stating that organizations

should restructure themselves to manage information and knowledge, the learning process, human resources, entrepreneurship, and leadership functions, adapting to sustainability in the face of abrupt economic changes in the markets. By applying this model of corporate culture, increasing the sustainability of the organization is one of the greatest benefits that can be achieved.

The creation of new knowledge, it means that it is important to use both internal and external knowledge if knowledge is to influence innovation. Therefore, KM influences competitive strategies only if there is a bidirectional flow of knowledge. Thus, intellectual capital is functional to KM practices, so that entrepreneurs can employ it together with knowledge as a strategic management toolbox to improve their performance. In addition, the KM theory of resources suggests that the flow of knowledge, whether tacit or not, is embodied within organizations and transferred in various ways outside them.

Therefore, in an open environment, intellectual capital seems to represent a good approach to identifying internal knowledge embedded in human capital and external knowledge. Tacit knowledge may emerge by way of serendipity or with arbitrary manifestations of inspiring intellectual resonance, ideas that unexpectedly come together or simply occur when other considered and rational attempts to seek solutions to puzzles fail. It is crucial to note that, although tacit knowledge is the basis of all knowledge, there need to be routines that allow tacit knowledge to be encoded in activities that create opportunities for an evolution in the way of thinking about practice and dynamic capabilities. Therefore, tacit, and explicit knowledge management as a system are complementary and interdependent components of the knowledge development process, necessary for continuous improvement and optimal execution of innovative capabilities.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Although this review focused on SMEs, it is suggested that future research should consider specific and sectorized business spectrums. It also did not emphasize the possible differences in the association in a discrepant context with firm sizes. Contextualizing the variables in defined markets will help to obtain a deeper analysis showing high and low business competition. As for the knowledge model referred to in this scientific article, it is the dyadic model, i.e., tacit and explicit, where it can be directed towards other classifications that are

currently being demonstrated. It is recommended that a meta-analysis of these constructs be carried out, including using available software, where there will exist an exhaustive microanalysis between the elements to find more precisely the separation, the equal, the related, mutually inclusive, and interactive in the system of the area of study, using the grounded theory method. It would also be possible to carry out a study with a quantitative approach for the objective and positivist analysis of the constructs, which can emerge and merge to provide what is necessary for the resolution of organizational problems.

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