The Implications of Information and Communication Technology and of Emotional Intelligence within Organizations

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Abstract

Lately people say more and more about emotional intelligence, about knowledge based economy, about intangible assets and intellectual capital. The permanent improvement of the knowledge supply will be decisive for reaching the success. But only the creation of the networks of knowledge dissemination will not automatically generate the intended results. Organizational change represents one of the most interesting themes concerning organizational behavior analysis, and approaching this topic implies discussing the transformations that are taking place in society, or, specifically, in organizations. Another topic worth treating is the aspect of emotional intelligence, so necessary for individual success, but also for the organizational one.

Keywords: *communication, emotional intelligence, information technology, organizational change.*

JEL classification: M 12, M 14, M 15

1. Introduction

Beside globalization, another challenge for the contemporary society is generated by the rhythm of technological changes, that of information technology in particular, that have determined the "categorization" (description) of the postindustrial society as (being) an "informational" one. Analyzing the impact of the new information and communication technologies is almost impossible without considering the force and consequences of the globalization.

2. About globalization and Information and Communication Technology

The unprecedented development of the new information and communication technologies has offered and created the premises for the simultaneous transmission of enormous information quantities to the most various

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of locations. Of course, the following question may arise: Who, and in what conditions, decides whether this information transformed into knowledge is used to contribute to the wellbeing and progress of the human society, to security insurance or, on the contrary, is used for destructive purposes? It is desirable for the access to certain types of information to be restricted for mass users, especially that information regarding state security, protection against terrorist acts, chemical and biological weapons attacks.

Theoreticians like Bell (1972) have argued that postindustrial society may be characterized especially by making reference to information acquisition, processing and distribution methods, all of them being overturned by the introduction and mass use of computers. Bell showed that the global economy emergence had taken place due to the simultaneous action capacity of information and knowledge. Information technologies have supported and stimulated production and market globalization, and globalization has facilitated the increase of information propagation speed. There are a few relevant examples: the power and the capacity of integrated circuits are doubled every 18 months; in 1970, there were approximately 50 thousand computers around the world, in 1996, the estimated number was 140 million, reaching 500 million in 2002, 800 million in 2005. The particularities and the uniqueness of information technologies, related to any other foregoing technology (for example, electricity), are considered to rely on their grasping and application potential and capacity into any economy or social life sector, but foremost on their ability to influence each management function. Thus is created the foundation for the new industrial structure defined by Estabrooks (1995) as being "a capitalism that is electronic, optical … and, so, both immediate and global".

In these conditions it becomes obvious that the unprecedented development, the propagation and massive application of information and communication technologies have created the premises for new organizing and action methods.

An implication determined by introducing and applying the new information technologies, mentioned and discussed especially by Naisbitt (1989) in "Megatrends", is aimed at hierarchies flattening or even their abandonment in favor of communication networks, which leads to the transition from horizontally structured organizations to vertically structured ones. The new organizational methods imply the democratization of the organizational life, given that the entire activity is focused on knowledge and communication, and less on control, the way it happens in traditional industrial organizations. The postindustrial forms of the organizational prototype are represented by the network which coexists with a series of other forms such as "joint ventures" strategic alliances or virtual organizations. The difference between network type organization and classic forms of organization specific to the industrial era relies on the replacement of control relations and also vertical communication with lateral relations. This change in organization forms can be explained precisely by the progresses made at the information technology level. More and more researches on the impact of

technological progress on postindustrial organization have proven that applying the new information technologies has at least two consequences: increasing information processing capacity, on one hand, and decreasing its processing cost, on the other. As a result, the coordination costs dwindle thus the organization obtains greater liberty in searching for more production structural alternatives.

During a much broader research on 549 firms over an 8 year period, Hitt (1999) tried to analyze the relation between information technology, internal costs and the external coordination costs, vertical integration and diversification. His conclusion is that a more intense use of information technology at the firm level correlates with a significant decrease of vertical integration, at the same time prefiguring a positive relation (even if a weaker one) between the use of information technology and diversification. Among his results, the author has argued that information technology reduces both internal and external coordination costs.

If all these tendencies continue to maintain over the next period, we can expect labor activities to be more focused on acquisitioning, processing and distributing, over larger and larger areas, considerable quantities of information and data. These requests demand intelligence and experience from the persons that have to convert information into knowledge and decisions. However, if we take a deeper look at the problems generated by the "invasion" of the information infrastructure (e-mail, Internet, mobile telephones, pagers, GPS) and at the technological impact on people's lives and activities, it may seem that we are pretty far away from the situation in which people from organizations can efficiently and effectively absorb all these "instruments".

For that matter, Toffler, talking about the organization of the future characteristics (defined by him as adhocracy), had foreseen even three decades ago the possible negative impact of such an organization on people. The author admitted that more information sent with the greatest speed leads to the diminishing of people's capacity to adapt. It is most probable that the necessity of rapid changes, the acceleration of the flow of information that people need to assimilate and the temporality of the relations that organizational members have to establish may lead to anxiety, nervousness and even loss of personal balance. Toffler's predictions on the poor capacity of people to adapt related to that of organizations have proven to be right. For instance, in a study that analyzed the impact of new information technologies on the labor activities of 350 executive directors (in several USA firms), 58% have responded that "technology has not made their live easier, but busier". Over 55% from the interviewed persons have appreciated the information technology's ability to "add value" as being "overrated a great deal", and 43% affirmed that technology "saves as much time as it consumes". Half of the interviewed persons have mentioned that information technology means "serious abundance of information and overload" (Toffler, 1973)

The results of such researches prove by the power of evidence that the advantage of new information and communication technologies is counterbalanced, in many situations, by anxiety, feelings of frustration or nervousness, all these

being determined by the reduced capacity of people to "keep up" with the rapid rhythm of the new changes. Furthermore, even though new technologies supply means of more frequent interaction and more rapid communication between people, they will never manage to replace the human need of direct relationships at interpersonal level. For example, in the upper mentioned study that was focused on a number of 350 executive directors, 54% of them have sustained that information technology has generated more misunderstandings than "real human conversation", and 50% have said that human relations have suffered.

From the organizational behavior perspective (equally focused on organization and humans study), identifying the effects of the rapid rhythm of technological progress on organizational members has a remarkable relevancy. In this direction, it is being argued that the individual generic personality influences the way that knowledge and information are acquisitioned, interpreted and utilized. For instance, it has been discovered that the differences among people in the way they process information are determined by the domination of the one or the other brain hemispheres. If in the industrial era organizations, in the thinking and problem solving process, the analytical, logical approach was prevailing (the responsible being the left brain hemisphere), nowadays, the idea of more and more thinking processes and activities being more efficient by the predominating use of the right brain hemisphere (the intuitive, creative, imaginative part) is promoted. Henry Mintzberg (1994) has been one of the most influential promoters of this idea, demonstrating that the activities held by the right hemisphere should be used especially for solving strategic management problems. In the same manner, especially via the management perspective, Gary Hamel (1997) sustains the importance of creativity and of the processes supported by the right hemisphere, where you can think unconstrained by rules. "The opportunities for innovative strategy do not pop up from number crunching and sapless analysis – they appear from new experiences that create new interpretation possibilities.

3. Emotional Intelligence within Organizations

The more and more visible tendency to consider the emotionality role on organizations has lead to the development of whole pieces of literature dedicated to analyzing this aspect Goleman (2001) has introduced the term "emotional intelligence in order to describe the large spectrum of abilities used by people in managing (maneuvering) their own emotional egos, so that they take out the most from relating to others. He identifies a emotional competences palette like: the capacity of being empathic, self-control, socializing and the capacity to solve a conflict. The author's argumentation is that emotional intelligence may contribute to the physical wellbeing of the person, in discovering the emotional balance or stability, but also to a more efficient realization of labor activities, being extremely important in leadership success.

On the other side, nowadays, labor rules are in full mutation, thus we are being judged through a standard, not only for cognitive intelligence or professional

competencies, but (also) for our behavior towards others. This "new" criterion considers the intellectual aptitudes and technical know-how as being self explanatory in the professional activities and is focusing on personal characteristics like: adaptability, initiative, empathy, persuasion. Researchers have marked personal traits that constitute the majority of the ingredients for an excellent activity – especially concerning leader abilities, and to understand the way these traits need to be induced may be crucial for a successful career. As Goleman (1998) says: "the necessary aptitudes for success are measured by the intellectual horse-power – but there is also need for affective qualities in order to stimulate the entire skills potential. The reason why people do not mobilize their entire potential is their lack of emotional self awareness".

The non-cognitive aspects of intelligence include affective, personal and social factors, they being essential for the individual's success in life.

In times when service safety is no longer ensured, when the "service" concept itself is replaced by that of portable competencies, these aptitudes increase individual's chances to employment. Brought up under different names, from "character and personality" to "soft abilities and competencies", in time, a more precise comprehension of these talents and qualities has been outlined, that have been given the name of "emotional intelligence". All the emotional qualities imply a certain affective availability, a certain sensibility and talent, beside cognitive elements. Emotional restraint does not seem to be an innate personality trait, but it is acquired, it is learned and it self develops, as Lynn (2006) says: "Experience does not influence only the knowledge level, but also the emotional structure that contributes to people's maturity. Like Goleman, Lynn agrees that emotional intelligence is built starting with a good foundation of self awareness, "to profoundly understand one's own emotions, strengths and limitations, but also values and incentives."

There are more and more companies which admit that the emotional intelligence traits encouragement is a vital component of the managerial philosophy from any organization: now the competition is no longer in products, but also in the way you know how to use your people. . Profit making is the fundamental dimension for an enterprise to sustain, perform and grow, which means wealth maximization and mobilization (Dobrea & Găman, 2011). In conclusion, the investment made in the intellectual capital in general and people in special are determining factors in order to be competitive in this global civilization.

4. Conclusions

Success, for each organization, will belong to those that will manage to quickly comprehend and interpret the emerging changes, self educating their capacity to focus on *what* and *how* to do, in a punctual manner. The following question remains open: How many organizations, companies, managers and employees will have the capacity to adapt to rapid changes and assimilate advanced technologies, exploiting their advantages for their own benefit? It seems like until now, the real challenge that the future offers us refers not only to technological

change, but mostly to the change of perceptions, attitude, our capacity (rational and emotional) to approach and confront change, in general.

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