SECTION 3. General issues in management

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Tacit and explicit knowledge from the point of learning processes – sketching critical approach

Abstract

The purpose of this article is:

♦ to present some definitions mentioned in the title of this article;
♦ to define the method used in the article;
♦ to search the relationships between the concepts mentioned in the title; finally,
♦ to develop critical perspective considering the issue of the article:

'Methodology' can be also understood in a limited sense as the various kinds of methods used for gathering data. The method of this article is "the study of concepts", i.e.:

♦ interpretative study of concepts: The data are written texts about concepts;
♦ interpretative study based on other written textual data: the data are written texts not specifically concerned with definitions of concepts, e.g., life histories, biographies, letters, diaries, and so on.

As a result we will have analysis of concepts of knowledge and organizational learning processes from the critical perspective. We can conclude that a functional managerial research approach is no longer the only form of "official" management science. Critical research and research on knowledge management and learning organization studies are now becoming equally approved as "official" fields of research. In other words, the mainstream (stressing functionalism in the sense of Burrell and Morgan) of management studies has expanded. This is a good thing, as stiffness and formalism tend to erode and narrow down the transforming science of management.

Keywords: organization, learning, tacit knowledge, critical theory.
JEL Classification: M1.

Introduction

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♦ Interpretative study based on other symbolic data: the data are visual and material, e.g., pictures, paintings, cartoons, logos, furniture, buildings and so on.

The interpretative study of concepts, thus, refers to research that emphasizes the interpretation and further development of concepts and their definitions as well as conceptual systems.

Since the *interpretative study of concepts* (ISB) is concerned with written sources, it could also be called *'desk research'*. The term emphasizes the methodical aspect of this research method with respect to data gathering. The researcher has not set out to the field to interview or to observe, but has collected written material which she or he then tries to interpret at her or his desk. The report would a be a compilation of associated text passages from the books and relevant journal articles. For example, the researcher may have listed and described numerous definitions of the concept of 'knowledge management' by different organization researchers. In a successful case the interpretative study of concepts can result in a fertile re-interpretation of the data from a completely new and fresh perspective. For example, should the many definitions of *'tacit knowledge'* by well-known theorists be interpreted from a some viewpoint, we might discover a new kind of meaning of the concept and, specifically, the kinds of some special assumptions that are implied in the definitions of the concept. This example illustrates how, by opening up the concepts and thus revealing the concealed meanings at-

tached to its definitions, it is possible to re-interpret the often already 'cemented' general truth (see Takala and Lämsä, 2004). In some cases this kind of methodological approach could be called as a *"compilation essay"*.

1. Knowledge and learning processes

Alas sees that it is common to many theorists that a learning organization is created, when the results of learning are institutionalized. It means that the knowledge will remain with the organization even after the departure of those who brought this knowledge in. Despite the lack of commonly accepted definition, there is a growing consensus among researchers and practitioners about the specific features of a learning organization. Most of the authors have mentioned information sharing, storage and transformation. Environment scanning, experimentation and system problem solving are the most relevant characteristics of learning organizations. In addition also empowerment, participation, strong culture and team learning are mentioned by different authors. Organizational learning takes place through the medium of individuals and their interactions, which together constitute a different whole (Alas, 2006).

Garcia-Perez & Mitra state that an extensive search for a definition of knowledge that considered both Polanyi's work and current knowledge management (KM) trends led adoption of Davenport and Prusak's approach to knowledge. According to Davenport and Prusak (1999) knowledge is

"a fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information. It originates and is applied in the minds of knowers. In organizations, it often becomes embedded not only in documents or repositories but also in organizational routines, processes, practices, and norms".

This definition acknowledges the role of the knower in all acts of understanding. It also considers Polanyi's view of explicit, abstract representations i.e. documents, routines etc., as "cognitive tools" that aim to enable purposeful human action. These tools cannot read themselves; they require the personal judgment of a human agent, a skilled reader, to be related and applied to the world (Garcia-Perez & Mitra, 2007).

Spender continues that allusions to works other than, e.g., Cyert and March (1963) and Argyris and Schön (1978), the references which dominate and define today's organizational learning literature, suggest that some of the deeper problems may have been understood for some time. We seem to presume that knowledge is made up of discrete and transferable granules of understanding about reality which can be added to an extant heap of knowledge. No modern epistemologists hold this view. Following Wittgenstein (1983), they presuppose knowledge comprises theoretical statements whose meanings and practical implications depend on their use and on the framework in which they are deployed. Wittgenstein's attention to praxis threatens any model of objective knowledge which assumes that knowledge that can be abstracted from the processes of its discovery and application. Such "objectified" knowledge may well exist and be stored in libraries or on dynamic random access memory chips, but we must also understand how such knowledge can become reattached to and embedded in the ongoing processes of the organization. According to Spender there is growing interest in organizational knowledge, and in the associated concepts of organizational learning and memory. Many argue that the organization's knowledge and learning capabilities are the main source of its competitive advantage. It is argued that the literature is fragmented and that these concepts, while interesting, need considerable refinement before they can be of real consequence to practitioners or organizational theorists. The argumentation made by Spender (he is criritizing positivism) assumes that the knowledge, learning and memorizing literatures are inconsistent in many ways (Spender, 1996).

Kersten set forth some psychoanalytical points when she said that organizational emotions, dysfunctions and neuroses were facts of daily life that pose continous problems and challenges, not the least of which is the constant question "who is really crazy" one. Psychoanalytic approaches to organizations can be very helpful by providing systematic examinations of these phenomena and helping us gain better a better understanding of their nature and causes (Kersten, 2001).

2. Tacit and explicit knowing

According to Mooradian the concept of tacit knowledge is at the center of knowledge management (KM). A quick review of the literature and trade press will turn up more titles with the word "tacit" in them than just about any other words besides "knowledge" and "management". It is clearly a topic of interest and a central part of most people's implementation strategies, be they researchers, software developers, or managers. On reflection, however, the distinction between tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge is not entirely clear. Different authors mean different things when they use the terms and sometimes the same author equivocates within the same paper. If the terms of the distinction are unclear, its role in any KM implementation will be unclear and the implementation will therefore

suffer from lack of precise guidelines or objectives. If the tacit/explicit distinction is going to be useful at the implementation stage, greater clarity is needed. The tacit/explicit distinction came to prominence in KM thinking through the work of Ikujiro Nonaka and Hirotaka Takeuchi and forms the basis of their theory of organizational knowledge creation. They in turn borrowed the concept of tacit knowledge from the chemist and philosopher of science, Michael Polanyi. The role of tacit knowledge in knowledge management theory KM research tends to treat tacit knowledge as the target of KM practice. Capturing tacit knowledge is seen as the challenge to organizations that want to spread knowledge throughout the organization or spur greater innovation. It is treated as a reserve deposited deep within the ground that needs to be detected and then pumped out. Explicit knowledge, by contrast, is treated as a kind of surface pool that is easier to detect and capture, but which represents only a fraction of the organizational knowledge (Mooradian, 2005).

McAdam & Mason & McCrory will stress that from his review of the literature Gourlay (2004) identifies two issues associated with tacit knowledge. The first is whether tacit knowledge is an individual trait or a trait that can be shared by both individuals and groups, and the second is whether tacit knowledge can be made explicit. To some degree these issues are interconnected, as one of the goals of making tacit knowledge explicit is to enable it to be shared throughout the organization. Sternberg and his colleagues "view all tacit knowledge simply as knowledge that has not been made explicit". Tacit knowledge needs to be made explicit if it is to be used in knowledge management systems. Instead of "extract[ing] knowledge from within the employees to create new explicit knowledge artefacts", organizations should focus on creating a "knowledge culture" that encourages learning and the creation and sharing of knowledge. Sternberg (1995), in his work on practical intelligence proposes a definition of tacit knowledge that has three characteristics which present a useful starting point for the study of tacit knowledge:

1. It is acquired with little or no environmental support.
2. It is procedural.
3. It is practically useful.

Sternberg et al.'s (1995) definition of tacit knowledge suggests that tacit knowledge "generally is acquired on one's own." The reasoning behind this limitation is that if outside sources facilitate the acquisition of knowledge, the sources also engage in some sort of selective encoding, selective combination, or selective comparison. Sternberg suggests

that knowledge is the most robust when learners engage in these three acquisition processes on their own and suggests that some explicit learning environments may actually decrease the likelihood and extent of the acquisition of tacit knowledge (see McAdam & Mason & McCrory, 2007).

Mooradian continues that to make tacit knowledge explicit, therefore, is to change it. Nonaka and Takeuchi's model of knowledge creation describes the process of converting tacit into explicit knowledge, recognizing that a change in its intrinsic character takes place. Further, they allow that something is lost in the conversion by noting that the translation of tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge takes place thorough the use of metaphorical and allegorical language. Use in the literature does not always adhere to this robust, subjective definition, but includes or consists in a much weaker distinction that amounts to contrasting what is "in people's heads" with what is made explicit through public pronouncement or documentation (Mooradian, 2005).

According to McAdam & Mason & McCrory Polanyi put tacit knowledge on the agenda with his dictum that "we know more than we can tell" (Polanyi, 1966). In general, tacit knowledge is seen as being one of two types of knowledge, the other being explicit knowledge. It has been suggested that one of the central dynamics of knowledge creation is the transformation of knowledge from tacit to explicit (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). However, Polanyi's original conception of tacit knowledge was that tacit knowledge was not a separate category of knowledge; rather it is an integral part of all knowing (McAdam & Mason & McCrory, 2007). The fundamental idea is that we use ideas to understand or create new ideas, and because our focus must be on the creating and understanding we cannot be aware of all the ideas actively participating in the act of knowing. Sometimes these mental states are experiential, sensual, and emotional. When that is the case, expression in a natural or formal language is difficult if not impossible. Sometimes, however, these mental states are linguistic and abstract (Mooradian, 2005).

McAdam & Mason & McCrory point out that Polanyi's theory about tacit knowledge (see Polanyi, 1966) describes how individuals develop and use knowledge in a processual and action-oriented manner. If one was to accept the view of Polanyi that all knowledge is tacit rooted then it is logically to assume that explicit and tacit knowledge are two dimensions of knowledge, rather than two distinct categories of knowledge as suggested by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995). Polanyi argues that tacit knowledge belongs to the personal domain, but is still embodied in the meeting between the individual

and the culture he/she belongs to. This view supports that of Vygotsky who suggested that all knowledge is social in some way (and hence has tacit roots), and is thus contingent on social structures existing in social systems. Moreover, Vygotsky (1986) views knowledge as existing in the collective structure existing in social systems. Therefore tacit knowledge cannot be studied without regard to the explicit part of the knowledge base. It is said that tacit and explicit knowledge are mutually constituted, or two dimensions of knowledge and should not be viewed at two separate types of knowledge (McAdam & Mason & McCrory, 2007).

Williams wants to consider the articulation of knowledge, or the fit between procedural information and contextual analysis. Again, there are limits to describing it as "tacit". Rather, it needs to be seen as a complex process, as it inevitably involves not just a single fit but rather a whole array of fits (social, personal, technical, institutional, financial, etc.). These fits, too, can be formalized and prescribed, but they are arrived at by a series of operational and strategic judgments, by persons or institutions, each of which is also complex – both in terms of the arrays of fits that they take into account, as well as their (dynamic) identities. And many times these fits are best left as flexible as possible, as contexts change. So, complex, yes, often very complex, but something quite different from just "tacit". Knowledge as it is defined here is not in any way amenable to the processes of subject- and context-stripping that are the hallmarks of objective information, and it is a fundamental epistemological mistake to think that it is. The reason why it is difficult to share knowledge is because it is inherently complex and dynamic across contexts, strategies and identities (Williams, 2006).

3. Narrative knowledge as a part of knowledge management

Kupers wants stress the fact there is widespread agreement in the discourses on and practices of **knowledge management** that implicit and narrative knowledge are important phenomena. Implicit knowledge is seen as fundamental to all human knowing and for knowledge management in particular. It has been argued that a large portion of the knowledge required for executing organizational activities and processes is implicit. Correspondingly also *narratives* and *storytelling* have been considered as an essential part of organizational life and its everyday communication. Accordingly the narrative side of organizations has emerged as a prominent topic in the knowledge discourse and more practically in knowledge management. Stories have been investigated in the knowledge management literature as one of the ways in which knowledge might

be transferred, shared and processed in organizational settings. However the understanding and interpretation of both processes vary, in terms of how they are constituted, levels at which they manifest, as well as status of explication and possibilities of usage. Moreover, the relation between both forms of knowledge is disputed and somewhat under-researched. This understanding is based on ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions that are highly problematic but rarely explicitly addressed in the knowledge management discourse (Kupers, 2005).

Linde states that the term tacit knowledge' is conventionally opposed to explicit knowledge, and is used to describe knowledge which cannot be explicitly represented. Clearly this covers a very broad range of meanings. Common examples of tacit knowledge include the knowledge of how to ride a bicycle, how to knead bread, how to use a word processor. However, when the notion of tacit knowledge is used within the field of knowledge management, it is frequently used to describe any form of non-quantifiable knowledge, particularly the knowledge about social interactions, social practices, and most generally, how a group or an institution gets things done. This type of knowledge is considered particularly problematic for knowledge management, because it is difficult to represent as propositions or rules. At the same time, such knowledge is not unspeakable: it is commonly and easily conveyed by narrative, although narrative exemplifies rather than exhaustively describes such knowledge. She suggest the following taxonomy of types of tacit knowledge, focusing on tacit social knowledge. Distinguishing *social knowledge* as a distinct subtype of tacit knowledge increases the precision of the discussion, since social knowledge is maintained and transmitted in very different ways than physical knowledge. In particular, the aim of this paper is to examine the relation of narrative and tacit knowledge, and it is most particularly social knowledge which narrative is suited to convey. In addition, she includes only types of social knowledge which are directly related to the problems normally addressed by knowledge management (Linde, 2001).

Critical points are stressed by Kupers who see that resource-based views and functionalist, representativistic and reifying approaches are missing or distorting the process of tacit, implicit and narrative knowing itself. By applying ill-conceived categories, insufficient modelling one-sided codifying and resource or universalizing orientation the influence of life-worldly practices and contexts are underestimated. What is needed instead of such reductionistic approaches and molecular forms and linear succession of data or information is a processual, non-

reductionist and relational understanding of knowledge which make the knowledge management theory and practice better equipped when examining and managing organizations (Kupers, 2005).

Williams states that we can distinguish between two quite different domains of information: on the one hand, processes and procedures for doing things and for making things – tool using and tool making, and on the other hand, descriptions of the contexts in which these tools might be applied and used. This division of information into two domains occurs at the point at which tool using transforms into tool making – and where work begins – work defined as appetite held in check – the point at which cognition becomes reflective cognition, or thinking, as it were. We work to make tools because we have an idea of a process that requires the production of an artifact that we will apply in a particular type of context. These artifacts are, at the most obvious level, physical artifacts, but they can range from simple physical artifacts through the range of natural language, right up to complex computer programs for running, supporting and managing all sorts of processes – both physical and social. Knowledge is the next articulation, and we define it as the fit or articulation between these two basic building blocks: procedural information and context.

The specific articulations are:

♦ B data into information, in terms of classification, distinction and basic taxonomies;
♦ B ante-formal processes into formalized procedural information;
♦ B descriptions, accounts and narratives into contextual analyses; and
♦ B knowledge as the articulation of algorithms with context (Williams, 2006).

Linde defines that a narrative is a representation of past events in any medium: narratives can be oral, written, filmed or drawn. Oral stories are extremely important and nearly unrecognized in every form of social institution from the informal group to the most formal organization. Stories provide a bridge between the tacit and the explicit, allowing tacit social knowledge to be demonstrated and learned, without the need to propositionalize ethics, specify in detail appropriate behavior, or demonstrate why particular heroes of the past are relevant today. The reason for this is that stories do not only recount past events. They also convey the speaker's moral attitude towards these events: the protagonist of the story acted well, acted badly, is to be praised or blamed, can be taken as a model for the hearer's own behavior. These evaluations are sometimes explicitly stated within the story, but more often are suggested through the use of a

single word or phrase. Indeed, it has been argued in the study of oral stories, that the most effective stories are those in which the evaluation is the least explicit. (Linde, 2001).

Kupers sets forth a new perspective when he states that the significance of narrative knowing has long been a neglected aspect in organizational studies . More recently, the narrative side of organizations has emerged as a prominent topic in the in organization studies and knowledge discourse as well in knowledge management. They have been investigated as the basic "phenomenology, in particular the advanced phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty (1962), offers a framework for clarifying the relational status of tacit, implicit and narrative knowing and their embodiment". Organizing principle of how perspective making and perspective taking occurs within a community of knowing. Narration is seen as a central feature of the modus operandi of informal communities-of-practice, reflecting the complex social web within which work takes place. Various influences, functions and the relevance of narrations in developing, distributing and enhancing organizational knowledge and knowing have been investigated. Narrative knowing influence, for example, the behaviors, thoughts and emotions and communication of embodied members of organizations by creating mental or imagined pictures and identities that shapes the orientation of everyday-life (Kupers, 2005).

Williams wants to revisit the notion of tacit and explicit knowledge, and the standard triad of data/information/knowledge, which is most often taken to refer to three discrete, hierarchical domains, to which the further distinction is added of "tacit" knowledge as opposed to "explicit" knowledge. He will unpack the relationship between the three key concepts to show that the relationships are far more complex, interactive, and multi-faceted, and try to develop a better framework for understanding the dynamic relationships between the many different aspects of knowledge management. Tacit and explicit knowledge Polanyi (1966) first came up with this distinction, based on the idea that "we can know more that we can tell". He then went on to draw a more formal distinction between tacit and explicit knowledge: tacit knowledge is highly personal and hard to formalize, making it difficult to communicate and share with others, and it consists of subjective insights, intuitions and hunches; it is deeply rooted in an individuals' actions and experience as well as in the ideals, values, or emotions he or she embraces. Explicit knowledge is codified knowledge that can be transmitted in formal, systematic language. Nonaka and Konno (1998) developed this further, in particular in the socialization, externalization, combination and internalization (SECI) model,

which outlines different interactive spaces in which tacit knowledge can be made more explicit (Williams, 2006).

We must cite again Kupers, who comes near to existentialism when he states that deprived of their tacit coefficients, all spoken or written words would be meaningless. That is explicit knowledge must rely on being tacitly understood and applied to be knowledge at all. Such "act"-notion of implicit knowing lays focus on the capacity to mobilize our beliefs and values in action, cognitively, emotionally and practically. With this, a phenomenology of implicit knowledge offers a base for a post-dualistic, inter-relational understanding of knowing; that is as a relational event, breaking with logo-centric interpretation of knowledge and its management. A relational paradigm finds its theoretical underpinnings in social constructionism. This combination allows, to consider not only that any understanding of reality is always mediated by historically and culturally situated, social inter-actions respectively interpretations, but to think about them also as embodied practices, which occur in immediate, spontaneous ways of experiential dimensions and mutual responding. Accordingly relational selves and processes are not only as discursively constructed de-differentiated and signifying "beings" or abstract "object" or power and semiotics (see Kupers, 2005).

I agree with Williams' concept of articulation. It is borrowed from linguistics and semiotics specifically the notion of the double articulation of speech: phonemes and monemes. Phonemes are the distinctive sounds that are the building blocks of human speech, and the digital basis of language – digital in the sense that they are discrete, and that they have no meaning in themselves, but only in combination with other phonemes, which form the next articulation, i.e. monemes, which are the smallest combinations of phonemes to which social groups ascribe meaning: for example, "it" or "go", which are arbitrary combinations of phonemes, as different languages ascribe meaning to them in quite different ways. Articulation takes many forms: in everyday speech, in formal discourse, as well as in algorithms, procedures and information systems, and in creating and maintaining communities of practice and discourse communities. Rather than referring to a domain called "tacit knowledge" it might be more useful to see if we can analyze in more detail the processes by which we articulate what we know, and then see what role the tacit/explicit distinction might still be able to play (see Williams, 2006).

4. Toward critical perspectives

According to Carr the term "critical theory" has a twofold meaning. It is used to refer to a "school of thought". At one and the same time it also refers to self-conscious critique that is aimed at change and emancipation through enlightenment and does not cling dogmatically to its own doctrinal assumptions. First, the "school of thought" with which critical theory is associated is commonly referred to as "the Frankfurt School". Its real title is Institut fur Sozialforschung (the Institute for Social Research). The second meaning of the terminology "critical theory" which also simultaneously includes, as perhaps the major instance, the work of those associated with the Frankfurt School is one which resonates with a particular process of critique, the origins of which owe multiple allegiances. Critical theory aims to produce a particular form of knowledge that seeks to realize an *emancipatory interest*, specifically through a critique of consciousness and ideology. It separates itself from both functionalist/objective and interpretive/practical sciences through a critical epistemology that rejects the self-evident nature of reality and acknowledges the various ways in which reality is distorted. The concept of dialectic employed by the early critical theorists owes much to this Hegelian formulation. Most philosophers have supposed that a philosophical system must have some foundation, some starting point upon which knowledge is built. Descartes, for example, supposed that if the point of departure can be shown to be true, and if the reasoning away from this point is absolutely rigorous, then the result must also be true (Carr, 2000).

Underwood-Stephens & Cobb see that Jurgen Habermas' conceptions of philosophy of knowledge, democracy and deliberation appear to provide a genuine synthesis between the technical and normative perspectives of this debate. Habermas (1984/87) contends that the end goal of both social science and philosophy is fair social change. To bring about that goal, a melding of scientific and ethical metatheories is required. In their article, they present both the technical and normative perspectives as we have seen them advanced in the academy. They then go on to make a Habermasian argument for the synthesis of the two perspectives in organizational development. Eschewing the synthesis, they contend, imperils the enactment of just organizational change. To ignore the normative component risks facilitating change without serious consideration of its ethical bases and ramifications; to ignore the technical component risks failing to facilitate change altogether. Habermas' theory, of course, is not constructed to provide concrete guidelines for, e.g., OD (organization development) practitioners. A central objective of scholarship on organizations is to provide managers with theory, language, and metaphors that can be used to guide practice. Habermas' work constitutes an excellent source of such theoretical guidance for OD (Underwood-Stephens & Cobb, 1999).

According to Reed perhaps the best perspective from which to demonstrate how critical theory can offer a sympathetic and consistent interpretation of CST's ambivalence towards capitalism is Jurgen Habermas' (1984/87) *"critical theory of modernity"*. The advantages of this approach are that it offers a broad and integrated analysis of the development of modern economic, political and social structures. In particular it is able to show the interconnections of identity formation, social integration and systems reproduction from a perspective that's hares broadly compatible ontological, epistemological and methodological approaches. Reed continues that it is necessary to examine two other aspects of Habermas' thought that lay the basis for this theory, i.e. his understanding of philosophy and his theory of communicative action. Second generation critical theory as exemplified in the works of Jurgen Habermas can perhaps best be explicated in terms of its opposition to two other broad trends in philosophical thought, i.e. philosophy of consciousness and postmodernism. Habermas' project can be broadly understood as an attempt at rescuing modernity and the "project of the Enlightenment" from attacks by postmodernism, while at the same time rejecting forms of philosophical foundationalism such as philosophy of consciousness. In rejecting a philosophy of consciousness as an unworkable attempt at foundationalism Habermas is in agreement with postmodern philosophy. Yet, Habermas remains distinctly modern in his defense of the possibility of reason leading to uncoerced consensus (Reed, 1995).

O'Donnell & O'Regan & Coates study the ontology of the communicative relation and the theory of communicative action establishes "an internal relation between practice and rationality". It can be proposed parallel relations between the orientations of intellectual capital creating people in interaction within a community of practice, and the four forms of action identified by Habermas (1984) as useful for theory construction in the social sciences. These allow us to distinguish concepts of participative social action according to how mechanisms or procedures of co-ordination are specified among the goal directed actions of people within a community of practice where intellectual capital is being created. Teleological or goal-oriented action involves a decision based on instrumental, means-end, or purposive rationality in Max Weber's sense. Strategic action is a variant in which an actor takes into account the likely behavior of other goal-directed actors. This utility-maximizing model of action underlies rational-choice, game-theoretic and decision-theoretic approaches in economics, sociology, social psychology and strategic management (O'Donnell & O'Regan & Coates, 2000).

A social scientific perspective is stressed by Reed. He is stressing that the sociological form of the philosophy of consciousness is best exemplified and takes its most influential form in Weber's understanding of modern rationalization processes. Enlightenment thinkers had hoped that the institutionalization of reason in the cultural, political and economic realms (through the diffusion of scientific knowledge, the establishment of a republican form of government, guarantees of personal liberties, personal freedom in the economic realm for people to pursue their self-interest, etc.) would not only lead to increased prosperity and freedom, but would also eliminate the influence of traditional religion, prejudice and superstition and lay a new foundation for meaning in modern culture. Weber's analysis of these rationalization processes contradicts the original hopes of Enlightment thinkers. While these processes of rationalization have brought increased control over the physical and social worlds, they have not been accompanied by a new basis for meaning, but rather a general loss of meaning, a "disenchantment" of the modern world. While the "institutionalization of reason" has been able to displace traditional religious worldviews, it has not been able to offer any substitute which can bring meaning and unity to life. This has lead to a "subjectivization" of ultimate ends (Reed, 1995).

Hoyrup has studied Habermas' (1996) most recent book. He renders the structure and intent of the *ideal-speech situation* somewhat more concrete. The ideal-speech situation is a forum in which every stakeholder is accorded equal opportunity to be heard. Those who are more powerful and who usually have relatively greater access would thus be placed at some sort of handicap, while the least powerful would be offered special accommodations to promote their participation. The end result would not be a simple plebiscite, or tallying of independent opinions; nor would it be a circumstance under which larger groups could prevail over smaller ones, or under which community norms could trump individual rights. Another important point is the concept of reflection. Common and agreed upon concept of reflection does not exist. For our purpose – to investigate how reflection can promote organizational learning – it is important not to be caught in the trap: to grasp reflection as an individual cognitive process that is as a process of introspection. It is important to grasp the full complexity of the concept of reflection. This means to distinguish between different forms of reflection: reflection and critical reflection; and to distinguish between different levels of reflection: the individual level, the level of interaction and the organisational level: organizing reflection. Different forms of reflection: reflection and critical reflection *Mezirow* understands reflec-

tion as an assessment of how or why we have perceived, thought, felt, or acted (Mezirow, 1990). Reflection in organizational learning; reflection is a mental activity aimed at investigating one's own action in a certain situation and involving a review of the experience, an analysis of causes and effects, and the drawing of conclusions concerning future action (Hoyryp, 2004).

Fenwicks states that the central problem with organizational learning (OL) from a critical perspective is that it is most definitely not emancipatory. The overall purpose of OL is to improve delivery to shareholders. Thus the changes OL seeks are status quo-oriented or self-serving, rather than targeting social transformation. In contrast, emancipatory learning for human beings is traditionally oriented to purposes of social transformation, social justice and equity: to form an active civil society and resist exploitation (i.e., by market forces). Emancipatory social change can be seen "as a fundamental departure from dominant practice or experience . . . [aiming] to free people from some oppression, to free them to take control of their lives". Thus the very conceptions of *emancipatory* change and OL, as they are debated in contemporary literature, appear to be separated by a deep ideological divide. Amidst the broader field of organizational studies, in which organizational learning is a recent subset, these critical notions are well established (Fenwick, 2003).

Further Hoyryp states that although the definition above conceive reflection as a complex process, involving interaction, the definitions seem to underline the individualized perspective: it is the individual who reflects – in a social context. This is the perspective often used in relation to the notion of "the reflective practitioner", and problem solving as the core process of reflection. But individuals also reflect together in an organizational context. Reflection in teams is important here. Reflection processes are embedded in social interaction. While reflection focuses on the immediate presentation of details of a task or a problem, the hallmark of critical reflection is the questioning of contextual aspects taken-for-granted – social, cultural and political – within which the task or problem is situated. *Critical reflection* includes the social context of reflection. Critical reflection involves a critique of the presuppositions on which our beliefs have been built. Mezirow presents an interesting distinction: we can reflect on the content, process or premise of problem solving. The latter is critical reflection: reflection on the premises of problem solving. Critical reflection involves a critique of the presuppositions on which our beliefs have been built (Mezirow, 1990, p. 1). In critical reflection the individual challenges the validity of his presuppositions. This way critical re-

flection is not concerned of the how or the how-to of action but with the why, the reasons for and the consequences of what we do. Mezirow states that critical reflection may imply learning at a deeper level, *transformational learning* (Hoyryp, 2004).

Again we must note that Fenwick see organizational learning studies (OL), however, critical approaches are rarely surface, despite the essentially political nature of organizational knowledge construction and learning initiatives, and the various calls for more rigorous focus on power and politics in OL. Setting aside the question about why this should be the case. It would be interesting to bridge what appears to be an unbridgeable chasm between critical pedagogies and OL. Can ideological wars be mediated to pursue more emancipatory effects in OL? Authors in the CMS (critical management studies) tradition have suggested incorporating critical thinking into management education, helping both educators and managers analyze organizational power-knowledge relations, inequities and oppression, and to question naturalized structures that shape how people think and act. However, the stirring of critical thought, even if achievable amidst the dominant market ideologies and management assumptions structuring contemporary work organizations and business schools, is not the same as transforming action. This is precisely why the long tradition of critical pedagogy has emphasized praxis, or critical reflection-within-(collective) action learning (AL) has become a popular set of technologies in which groups are facilitated through an inquiry process to solve an organizational problem (Fenwick, 2003).

Hoyrup (Mezirow, 1990) states it in this way: uncritical assimilated meaning perspectives, which determine what, how and why we learn, may be transformed through critical reflection. Reflection on one's own premises can lead to transformative learning. Critical reflection involves awareness of why we attach the meanings we do to reality, especially to our roles and relationships – meanings that are often misconstrued from the uncritically assimilated half-truths of conventional wisdom and power relationships. Our frame of reference can be wrong; individuals can be caught in an uncritical acceptance of distorted meaning perspectives. Critical reflection assumes that adults can engage in an increasingly accurate analysis of the world, coming to greater political clarity and self-awareness. By learning how to surface assumptions and then subject these to critical scrutiny, people can sort out which assumptions are valid and which are distorted, unjust and self-injurious. We can see that critical reflection is hunting assumptions. Hunting assumptions and posing questions may lead to a deeper kind of learning. *In critical reflection we scrutinize important social, organizational and cultural conditions of our lives* (Hoyryp, 2004).

Conclusions and applications

So, we can conclude that critical perspectives have became very actual in recent KM and OL studies. In the former parts of this article it has been presented several concepts, terms and definitions by the several important authors. These writings, cited in the text, have brought new insights compared with e.g. the famous Burrell and Morgan's text (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). This classic work put forth following elements of radical humanism:

♦ totality;
♦ conlicts;
♦ false consciousness;
♦ contradictions.

In the articles studied in this paper (Mooradian, Hoyrup, Fenwick, Williams, Kupers, etc.) more new kinds of critical elements are found. In the end of this section some future proceedings are presented.

Rusaw's view is that training employees does not guarantee they will or can make changes once they return to their workplaces. A common weakness of training programs is their inability to transfer the skills to the workplace. Reasons for *resistance* to training vary. But critical theory offers a fascinating perspective in suggesting that resistance may stem from a struggle between organizational domination and attempts to emancipate employees. *Domination* is rooted in an organizational ideology, a systematic set of norms, beliefs, values, and attitudes that people accept unquestioningly as guides for everyday thinking and behavior. Such ideologies produce "facts" that justify decisions. The reasoning behind such ideologies is never completely explicit, as it might divulge the source of political power that keeps centers of control intact. Training and other forms of adult learning are strategies they use to increase awareness and power. Rusaw continues that using critical theory: implications for trainers (e.g., organizational learning consultants) critical theory can help trainers navigate resistance to change by providing insights into ways power and authority become legitimized in informal practices, false assumptions embedded in unquestioned practices, and irrationality in defending unjust actions. (Rusaw, 2000).

The notion of Mezirow's concept of *critical reflection*. An interesting area of reflection is critical reflection on organisational values. When individuals question and exchange knowledge and understandings about existing organizational values, and the management of the organization creates a space for and values these processes as resources for organisational development, then reflection may imply involvement of the organization's members in organizational learning. *Reflection builds the bridge between individual and organizational learning* (Hoyryp, 2004).

Fenwick states that the central problem with organizational learning (OL) from a critical perspective is that it is most definitely not *emancipatory*.

According to Fenwick four proposed enhancements are presented:

1) greater focus on the workers' problems and interests;
2) greater attention to organizational practices and relations that unjustly exclude or privilege individuals or groups;
3) a process that acknowledges the complexity, context, and contested nature of learning; and
4) facilitation that uses democratic "power with", not "power over", approaches to working with people towards emancipatory change (Fenwick, 2003).

Underwood-Stephens & Cobb conclude that Habermas' (1996) treatise focus primarily on the polity, but he, like organizational change agents, contends that democratic nations must enact the principle of democracy not only at the macro level, but within its constituent institutions, including business organizations. With their expertise in social processes, *OD scholars* should be able to address questions such as these: How can *the ideal-speech situation* be approximated in an organizational setting? Whose voices should count for how much in making decisions about organizational change? How can the voices of the least powerful be brought into the discourse and assured of a respectful hearing? Is it even possible for organizational members representing disparate constituencies to hammer out mutually beneficial understandings that do not trammel the interests of the less powerful and of minorities? (Underwood-Stephens, C. & Cobb, A., 1999).

O'Donnell & O'Regan & Coates say that claims in an ideal instance are not settled by recourse to power or authority, but by providing reasons for or against in the mutual give-and-take of this higher rational argumentative discourse, although human reason must also learn to recognize the limits of its power over the phenomenal and interpersonal worlds. As we are analyzing an *essentially lifeworld concept within system settings such as knowledge intensive organizations*, issues related to the systemic steering media of money and power must of course be pragmatically considered in any empirical investigations or practical applications. Acknowledging Habermas' argument that inner-organisational relations "disempower" the "validity basis" of communicative action due to the systemic aspect of legal organization, a pragmatic approach is

suggested here in investigating the usefulness of this discourse-theoretic analytic. The employment relation is, by it very nature, an asymmetric relation; but perhaps it needs to become less asymmetric in the intellectual capital era? It is claimed that valuable insights may be gained from this Habermasian approach, and we seek to encourage others to join us in exploring this albeit critical and alternative, but potentially valuable, theoretical vein (O'Donnell & O'Regan & Coates, 2000).

Spender sees that intelligence must include both the ability to experience and the facility to abstract from that experience, i.e. to create knowledge and learn what can be memorized. In short, memory cannot be understood without an understanding of the intelligence it serves. The relationship between data and information is not completely obvious. In an uncertain, non-positivistic world, where there is no privileged access to truth, there are always problems of meaning. While data can be defined as that which can be communicated and stored, meaning cannot be stored unless it is rendered unproblematic – which is when data are treated as fact. Under the conditions of uncertainty which typically prevail in organizations, and in human affairs generally, a theory of meaning as well as a theory of learning is required to make sense of the concept of memory. Intelligence then encompasses both the creation and processing of data, as well as its interpretation or meaning. Without a theory of intelligence it is not possible to understand memory (Spender, 1996).

Underwood-Stephens & Cobb conclude that the applicability of *Habermas' theory of knowledge bases to the field of OD is apparent*. The utility of his concepts of ideal-speech situation and democratic deliberation may be somewhat more occult. Although Habermas is trained in both philosophy and sociology, and evinces an emphasis on praxis

that is typical of OD scholars, his emancipatory knowledge base is less concrete than is customary in OD. However, OD scholars, who are accustomed to transforming normative policy guidelines into specific structures and processes, could use Habermasian concepts as a moral starting point or, a guiding metaphor for bringing about just social change (Underwood-Stephens & Cobb, 1999).

As final words I will state that phenomena like globalization, colonialization and ultracapitalism have served as catalysts for critical research. In the field of business studies and management research, however, paradigmatic thinking has become rather fragmented instead of converged. The term "fragmented adhocracy" describes this disintegration of management studies into smaller and smaller, more or less isolated clusters. Now that the 21st century is well under way we can see that this tendency continues unabated. The ability or willingness of different research paradigms to communicate among themselves has not improved at the rate hoped for; the dialogue between them could be much more intensive. On the other hand, the postmodern polyphony of voices has increased. A functional managerial research approach is no longer the only form of "official" management science. Critical research and research on knowledge management, age management, female management and diversity are now equally approved as "official" fields of research. In other words, the mainstream of management studies has expanded. This is a good thing, as stiffness and formalism tend to erode and narrow down the transforming science of management. Creativity and fresh, innovative scientific solutions will be in a key position both in society as a whole and in academic research in the coming years. But critical research itself must also be ready to transform (see Takala, 2008).

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