CONTENT

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- **Text format:** Times New Roman 12, 1 line spacing, with diacritics if the text is in Romanian
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  Rea, A., Tripier, M. (2008). *Sociologie de l'immigration.* Paris: La Decouverte

  Koh, H. K. (2010). A 2020 vision for healthy people. *New England Journal of Medicine, 362*(18), 1653–1656

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APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCES, ACTION RESEARCH AND THE RETURNING OF INQUIRY FINDINGS

Mihai PASCARU [1]

Abstract: *This paper aims to highlight some connections between the applied social sciences, action research, and the returning of inquiry findings. Usually, the applicability of a social science is defined by its openness to the complexity of (psycho-) social change as described by the intervention design meant to trigger this change. We will also see how the social sciences collaborate with action research. This is mainly the case in social psychology, a field in which this orientation is largely contained. Through this study we would like to foster the possibility that the applicability of any social science may be strengthened by action research as a specific form of intervention and change. The returning of inquiry findings to the subjects may also be linked to action research as it focuses on involving the subjects of the research in the debate concerning the results. The returing of inquiry findings can be strengthened by connecting it during the research process to the potential of a social science.*

Keywords: *basic science and applied science, action research, participation, return of inquiry findings.*

Introduction

This paper aims to highlight the significant theoretical and practical issues regarding the practical dimension of disciplines such as sociology and social psychology and the role they can play in substantiating the applicability of action research. Returning the results of the research is viewed in this context as a tool for applied research, but also as a means to support the applicability of these social sciences. Interest in such an approach can be linked with what Gwen Stern called scientific research oriented towards the problem (problem-oriented research), as it is useful to make a distinction between an approach in which the role of sociologists is to provide potentially useful information versus an approach in which sociologists participate in solving problems by using information to provide guidance. According to Stern, the second orientation always

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involves two research objectives: 1) to produce new knowledge and 2) to participate and document the process by which such knowledge is used to solve problems. Producing knowledge concurrently with problem-solving is highly important for action research (Stern, 1985: 230).

In sociology discussion about action research is rarely theorized, as the term *intervention* is mostly preferred. In the field of social psychology one can identify special issues dedicated to the connections between *participatory research* in its various forms, and the contribution of the discipline to social change. The terms most often used to describe those kinds of research aimed at changing situations in society, says Senn, are *action research*, *participatory research* and *activist research*. (Senn, 2005:357).

Our experience in the area of action research has been limited in recent years to returning of the findings (Pascaru, 2006; Pascaru and Buţiu, 2007, 2010) and in some studies to promote *territorial intelligence*, the latter defined itself through *a participatory important component* (Pascaru, 2006; Girardot, 2007). We have chosen to present in this paper some of the outcomes of returning the results as a technique and step in a common research design, with potential openings for social change control.

Pure social sciences - Applied social sciences

Applied social psychology and its opportunities

Applied social psychology "is a branch of social psychology that draws on social psychological theories, principles, methods, and research evidence to contribute to a) the understanding of social and problems and b) the development of intervention strategies for improving the functioning of individuals, groups, organizations, communities, and societies with respect to social and practical problems." (Schneider, Gruman and Coutts, 2005: 5-6).

These three American psycho-sociologists remind us that Lewin was the one who in the early 30s conducted research on a variety of practical and social problems, Such as about how people could be led to adopt a healthier diet, or how interpersonal relations and productivity are affected by different management styles. (Schneider, Gruman and Coutts, 2005: 7).

Applied social psychology, as the three specialists note, is oriented both towards solving *social problems* and towards solving *practical problems*. AIDS prevention is an example of a problem with profound social implications, while among practical problems we may mention better cohesion of a sports team, or improving decision making in an organization. It is also considered that social psychology can be theoretically relevant when approaching social issues and practices from all walks of life, from everyday life to the complexity of human communities. (Schneider, Gruman and Coutts, 2005: 14-15).

Basic sociology and applied sociology

As Steele and Price note, all sciences have at least two paths: basic (pure) science and applied science. For the authors mentioned above, in basic science, the goal is to produce

good theory, while in applied science, the goal is to solve real-world problems. (Steele and Price, 2007: 3). Steele and Price agree that applied sociology refers to any use (often focused on client) of a sociological perspective and/or its tools for understanding, intervention and/or enhancement of human social life. (Steele and Price, 2007: 4).

An example of basic sociology and applied sociology seems quite appropriate at this time. We can find it in Steele and Price's work. It is about complex organizations in which specialists seek to understand and initiate projects, primarily because of their own interest in the topic, seeking to build or test sociological theory. But if someone decides to change the organization in which they work, "this becomes a real-world, not only for the person who needs to lead the change, but also for person who lives and works in the organization." (Steele and Price, 2007: 4-5).

The statement made by Steele and Price that applied sociology is not atheoretical but it rather plays a different role in applied sociology as compared to basic sociology seems particularly important. Moreover, when applied sociologists work ro solve client-driven problems, they often find it necessary to create a new theory to fit the circumstances of the problem. (Steele and Price, 2007: 5). For Sullivan, basic sociology refers to sociological research which has as its aim to increase our knowledge of human social behavior with little concern for any immediate practical benefit that may result, while applied sociology "consists of research and other activities designed to focus sociological knowledge or research tools on a particular problem identified by some client with some practical outcome in mind" (Sullivan, 1992, p. 16).

Closely related to applied sociology, clinical sociology is frequently discussed. (Glass, 1979; Sevigny, 1997; Houle, 1997).

Returning to applied sociology, we should retain some of its specific techniques, as presented by Sullivan: 1) program evaluation, 2) needs assessement, 3) social impact assessement, 4) social indicators research, and 5) cost-benefit analysis. (Sullivan, 1992: 140). For Sullivan, program evaluation is the use of "systematic observations to assess whether a social program or practice achieves its goals." These assessments, Sullivan believes, "are a way of assessing whether society's investment in these programs is warranted and wise" (Sullivan, 1992: 141). Needs assessment, according to Steele and Price, can be made using either qualitative or quantitative tools, or often both. Although we aim at objective results, "needs assessment always includes an element of value judgment." (Steele, Price, 2007: 22). In Sullivan's conception, social impact assessment refers to making an estimate of the likely consequences of programs and projects proposed by individuals, groups, neighborhoods, communities, regions, or other social institutions. In this case, sociologists usually "work with economists, anthropologists, and other social scientists on social assessment because the consequences of major projects can be widespread" (Sullivan, 1992: 150). Sullivan, like another experts, see social indicators as quantitative measurements of significant social phenomena. The term social, he explains, "implies that the focus is on the status of and change in social behavior, groups, institutions, or larger social systems." In this regard, the divorce rate, for example, is a way to measure the change in time of social institution of the family. (Sullivan, 1992: 156). For Sullivan, cost-benefit analysis is to compare the benefits of a program with its costs. It is sometimes part of a program evaluation or a social impact assessment and "it

enables program managers and policymakers to weigh whether the benefits are warranted given the cost." (Sullivan, 1992: 161).

Action research and applicability

Being a science of social dysfunction and negative phenomena in the life of human communities, as Miftode writes, sociology essentially aims at transforming the investigated social universe and improving people's living conditions. In this perspective, action research is the main way to achieve those objectives and is also the main sociological method. (Miftode, 2004: 339). The issues addressed by action research are, in Miftode's opinion, the dominant practice identified in the real life of human communities and the implementation of direct intervention as soon as possible. Miftode identifies in Romanian society: 1) offensive poverty and social misery, 2) increasing state violence and crime, 3) increased early school-leaving and illiteracy, 4) excessive unemployment and social parasitism, 5) juvenile delinquency, 6) health and substance abuse 7) social exclusion and self-exclusion, 8) victimization and self-victimization. Investigation of such phenomena, the sociologist considers, cannot remain at the level of knowledge, but rather requires recovery actions or changes in the initial situation. (Miftode, 2004: 339-340).

Action research, as Senn considers, is the oldest of the types of research aimed at social change. (Senn, 2005: 357).

One important theoretical issue is the distinction between intervention and the action research method. Brincker and Gundelach appreciated that intervention methods differentiated themselves from integrative research-action by an insistence on conflict and social change. Another important difference between action research and the intervention method concerns the role of social actors: while the role of research-action is to cause social change, the intervention method does not aim at generating social change as such, but rather aims to create a collective understanding among stakeholders of the potential and role of social change. (Brincker and Gundelach, 2005: 369).

Somekh characterizes action research through its own methodology which "bridges the divide between research and practice" (Somekh, 1995: 340). This is, then, the outline of the main differences between action research and other forms of research: 1) it is carried out by people directly concerned with the social situation investigated, based on practical questions that arise in the everyday work, 2) the findings of action research are fed back directly into practice, 3) action research is highly pragmatically orientated, 4) action research is grounded on the culture and values of a social group whose members are both participants in the research field and researchers, 5) action research raises ethical issues, especially when a researcher studies his working environment and thus the behavior of his colleagues. (Somekh, 1995: 340-342).

Finally, action research is a matter of inclusion. Inclusion in action research, according to Stringer, presupposes: 1) maximizing the involvement of all relevant individuals, 2) inclusion of all affected groups, 3) inclusion of all important issues (social, economic, cultural, political) rather than a focus on administrative agenda, 4) ensuring cooperation with other groups, agencies, and organizations, 5) ensuring that all relevant groups will benefit from the activities. (Stringer, 2007: 35).

Returning the inquiry results: supporting its applicability

As noted in other occasions, references to returning the results can be found in late 20th century France, which made considerable efforts towards spatial areas. (Pascaru and Buţiu, 2007). Prior and well made rural surveys, in the view of Roger Mucchielli, become increasingly important as feedback surveys, i.e. returning the conclusions of the survey to the community in which the survey was carried out (where the community itself accepted the survey) can cause an awakening in local dynamism. From this point of view, such a survey is considered to be a decisive event. If specialists were able to get cooperation and permission to start an investigation from residents, and if they were able to engage local leaders, formal and informal, and if they returned the results to the community (and if people recognized themselves in this image of the results), this could represent a decisive moment. (Mucchielli, 1976: 73). Complexity refund is unfortunately rarely addressed.

Though many research textbooks and other methodological guidelines are tools and offer tips for fitness and organization of data collection, in the view of Bernard Bergier, many have also neglected their relationship with their recipients and its impact on sociologists and ethnologists. (Bergier, 2000: 5). The return (*restitution*, in French) has as its intended recipient the interlocutors in the field of the researcher. Bergier defined returning of the results as the act or the dynamic by which the, for ethical and/or heuristic reasons, shares with interlocutors in the field the interim results and/or the final processing of data collected for analysis. (Bergier, 2000: 8). We could even go further and speak according to these objectives about a refund ethics, knowledge or heuristic refund. Bergier advocates for a refund, but integrated into all the activities of the researcher. Integration means that the refund may participate, in certain circumstances, to the production of scientific knowledge and to validate the conclusion. Such reimbursement, he said, requires the subject to be recognized simultaneously both as an object of knowledge and as knowing, that is both an object and subject of research. (Bergier, 2000: 18). *Restitution*, stresses Bergier, addresses interlocutors in the field because it deals with issues that are rooted in their applications. Bergier recommends the oral return of results, which is a return made withthe presence of the intervener and the local system actors, whose presence makes possible a mutual interpellation. This return is formative, with personal guidance. It does not share the scholarly knowledge of the intervener, but produces a recognition of the provisions, motives, intentions, aspirations, and the fears and hopes of individuals. In Bergier's conception, such information must be returned to the representative population groups in the field. *Restitution* is conflictually scheduled. Tensions between the conflicting interests of different groups should be highlighted. (Bergier, 2000: 57-58).

Various studies that have used our results started back in 2000, in a local development project in a mountainous area of Romania. We identified key local problems and development opportunities through extensive sociological surveys in rural communities in the area. Sociological survey results were returned to the participants of the investigation, and other interested local actors. Return refund was made through interviews (individual) and a public debate with broad participation (community members, formal and informal leaders, representatives of public authority departments,

etc.) The refund validated and invalidated some results of the research. In addition, a series of local conflicts (between authorities and citizens, between authorities and local entrepreneurs from different parts of the local communities) was revealed. The problem of solving these conflicts was discussed on that occasion, with a number of solutions being outlined. In the following years, our research was focused on government rural communities. Sociological surveys were conducted among citizens and their results were presented to local authorities. This is what we once called government participation that is sociologically driven. (Pascaru and Buţiu, 2010: 505).

Both of the studies presented above have been, at least partially, action research based, as well as applied research. They belong in the field of sociology, but we can also design research in the field of social psychology where action research, with intervention, defines the applicability of this discipline.

Conclusions

Because in terms of applied social psychology, research-action is a clear concept, we will refer to it in terms of applied sociology and the main points in which it can supportresearch-action. We propose starting from the five specific techniques presented by Sullivan and summarized by us above: 1) program evaluation, 2) needs assessement, 3) social impact assessement, 4) social indicators research, and 5) cost-benefit analysis. Evaluation of these programmes can be done by those who run the program or without them. If the object of the programme is to improve the evaluation and the elimination of errors in the evaluated program roadmap, or in future programs, then a participatory evaluation is preferred. Hence research-action that can bring an added-value to the evaluation that can substantiate the new habits of correct programs becomes useful. Action research can contribute to the strengthening of accountability and of critical consciousness. These needs are the result of the combination of micro and macro trends, and of the interactionist perspective, which cannot be neglected. If, at the macro level, work can be done using other tools of sociology, such as the analysis of official documents, micro-level research-action can develop the needs and the purposes of human rationality deep in their evolution. Where there are needs or social problems, there must be resources and solutions. It is desirable to identify the resources and the solutions to come from the point of view of those who express these needs. Here, research-action can play an outstanding role.

Assessing the impact of a program should be done in conjunction with the process of community development implied by the program, or with territorial communities. Research-community-based action finds its place here. Social indicators reveal the existence or non-existence of social problems. Even if they take the form of abstract statistical rates, behind these are concrete people and real human collectivities, as anyone who supports social issues can identify. And the solutions are not statistics, but are reflected in the policies and the strategies for solving these reported social problems. Research-action can play an important role in ensuring the consistency of policies and strategies by involving the direct beneficiaries. Cost-benefit analyses always have a bookish component, but also a deep human component which is, unfortunately, often overlooked. The costs and benefits of programs are not only financial, but most of the time, are defined by the human capital

involved. This can end up being very important in terms of cost-benefit analysis, and can involve socio-psychological identity, attachment, solidarity, trust, intolerance, and different feelings or frustrations of all sorts. Here research-action may reveal that given an inefficient financial sector, the monetary costs are greater than the benefits, but can also reveal a number of remarkable socio-psychological benefits, such as increasing the capital of tolerance and trust within a community, a benefit that cannot be expressed. But research-action is not easy to implement. It requires more time and emergent design. Because of the remarks of the other authors, Reason and Bradbury claim that research-action information is clearly an evolving process, being "a verb rather than a noun." The consequence is that research-action cannot be defined in quick terms, being rather a "work of art" (Reason and Bradbury, 2008: 2). In these circumstances, returning the results can be used with success in the short term and for more concrete targets.

Thus, in the case of the evaluation of refund programs, the evaluation results can be an opportunity for the promoter's analysis program or, better still, in meetings between the promoters and beneficiaries of a programme, the assessment may point to a sociological survey, and in this case we can use this opportunity to return the survey results as a tool for sociologically priming the adjustment of a programme or the rethinking of future programmes. We can also organize the survey of the assessment of needs in line with other sociological methods (observation, interview, analysis of documents). In this case, returning the results of sociological research can support action in order to identify the resources required to meet the needs identified. The debate over the results can then involve both the authorities and the ordinary members of the concerned communities. Results of the evaluation of the impact of a program can also be returned to the promoters and beneficiaries alike. Communities can also become involved to withstand the impact of a program. If a program is an innovation for the community, then numerous barriers will be removed. For example, by using the refund results, we have identified a series of psycho-sociological barriers to promoting participatory governance at the local level. (Pascaru and Buțiu, 2010). Results of the analysis of social indicators, in the form of major trends they reflect, can be presented to those who develop various social policies on the basis of the indicators analyzed. Such a presentation can be made to the beneficiaries of social policies. For example, indicators on the health of the population may be the subject of debate at the level of government, but at the level of the entities and non-governmental organizations representing patients that promote prevention of sickness or a healthy lifestyle. The same indicators may be debated in joint meetings between the government and the beneficiaries of a health system. The results of cost-benefit analyses, as well as socio-psychological costs and benefits, can also be returned to the beneficiaries and promoters of the programmes a like. A comprehensive approach is needed here. The refund results, paradoxically, may reveal the human sensitivities of costs and benefits, and address sensitivities and comprehensive speech at the same time.

Beyond all these issues presented so far, the connections between the applicability of social sciences and public policy should be stressed here. Both sociology and applied social psychology are open to support or change in public policy, and are not just limited to solving specific social problems. Sullivan himself observed that, in general, applied social research is used both in public policy and by private sector businesses and corporations. The role of applied social research in public policy, Sullivan believes, is to

provide systematic data for evaluating alternatives at the policy level, and this could be carried out in three steps: 1) problem formulation, 2) policy formulation, 3) policy implementation. (Sullivan, 1992: 169-170). When formulating a problem from sociological data one can develop judgments about a situation that should be considered a social problem worthy of public attention. During the policy formulation stage, applied research is used to formulate some feasible and measurable solutions to a given problem. Finally, at the policy implementation stage, according to Sullivan, applied research is a key tool in assessing how well the policy has achieved its objectives, and to identify any positive or negative impact, be it intentional or unintentional. At this stage, "applied research often takes the form of program evaluations or cost-benefit analyses that are designed and constructed explicitly to assess a particular policy." (Sullivan, 1992: 170).

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS AS A CRITICAL FACTOR IN THE SUCCESS OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

Victor CHIKADZI[1]

Abstract: *This article examines the role played by Boards of Directors in contributing to the success of social enterprises in the South African non-profit sector. Previous studies by several scholars have painted a gloomy picture on the contributions of Boards of Directors to the success of organisations within the non-profit sector. Highly involved and effective Boards of Directors have been argued to be an infrequent phenomenon, an exception rather than the norm. Using primary data from a qualitative study, this article argues that Boards of Directors are playing a significant role in the success of many social enterprises within the South African non-profit sector.*

Key words *Board of Directors, social enterprise, social entrepreneurship, non-profit sector,*

1. Introduction

Organisations that operate with the non-profit sector in South Africa are required by law to appoint a Board of Directors (hereafter, BOD). The BODs are by law the legal guardians that are mandated to govern non-profit sector organisations. Given that Non- Profit Organisations (NPOs) do not have any shareholders to which their managers account, BODs are appointed to play a significant governance role in these organisations. BODs hold the trust of the public served by the NPOs as well as the many donors who give to NPOs. Given the common place financial scandals and misuse of donor funds, the BODs have come to play a vital role in ensuring that NPOs deliver on their mission with honour and integrity. To this end, the governance role played by BODs is central and key to the very existence and operation of NPOs.

The role played BODs in NPOs extends beyond governance to embrace duties such as fundraising, active involvement in strategic and operational planning of NPOs activities, and volunteering expertise to the NPOs, among other things. Several studies that have been carried out over the years on the role of BODs portray a very gloomy picture on the performance levels of BODs in most NPOs around the globe. Taylor, Chait and Holland (1999: 53) carried out extensive research into the workings of BODs

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and came to the conclusion that "too often, the board of a non-profit organisation is little more than a collection of high-powered people engaged in low-level activities." They argue that in most instances BODs tend to be involved in trivial matters while the key decisions that affect the running of NPOs are left to management, often to the detriment of the organisation. Thus despite the common trend in most NPOs of recruiting high-powered individuals who hold positions of influence within business, the community, and politics, these people often contribute very little to the success of non-profit sector organisations. Carver (1997: 9) raises similar concerns about BODs: he argues that "the problem is not that a group or an individual occasionally slips into poor practice, but that intelligent and caring individuals regularly exhibit procedures of governance that are deeply flawed."

The extensive research done over a period of 10 years by Taylor et al. (1999) reveals that in most instances BODs are far removed from key day to day decisions made by NPO managers. At best they simply rubber stamp the proposals put forward by management without actively engaging in the crafting of these proposals. In some cases the BODs only tends to be involved in the drafting of policy guidelines on NPO operations but fails to get involved in the active implementation of the policies together with management. BODs have been argued to simply engage in meetings and other functions of NPOs to simply fulfil the 'ritual' without any deep commitment to the cause. Similarly, research done by Klauser and Small in (2005) confirms the findings of Taylor et al (1999). They observe that many BODs often fail to carry out the governance tasks required of them. To this end, scholars such as Worth (2012) concur with the insights gleaned from Taylor et al (1999, 54), who argue that "effective governance by the board of a non-profit organisation is a rare and unnatural act."

This article examines the contributions of BODs to the successful running of social enterprises in South Africa. Exploring the role of BODs is critical given that the non-profit sector plays a significant role in promoting social development within the South African welfare sector. Given the fact that the phenomenon of social enterprises is still in its infant stages of development in South Africa, the objective of this article is to help unravel how BODs in social enterprises contribute to the success of this new breed of organisations. By so doing the paper adds to the steadily growing body of knowledge on social enterprises. A qualitative approach was adopted in the study and a case study design was utilised. This paper is divided into five major sections: this first section has given an overview of the topic under discussion, the second section discusses literature review pertinent to the study, the third section reports on the methods adopted in the study, the fourth section discusses the findings of the study, and the fifth section presents the conclusions reached by the study.

2. Brief review of literature

Over the past few decades, the fundamental role played the non-profit sector in promoting welfare through interventions particularly in the areas of health, education, poverty reduction and sustainable social development is beyond question. Organisations within the non-profit sector spectrum are also commonly identified as Non- Profit Organisations (NPOs) or Non- Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

depending on context. In the early years of the evolution of the non-profit sector, the primary role of the non-profit sector was seen as that of complementing and making up for the deficiencies of the state and the private sector in promoting social welfare. However, in recent times, the non-profit sector has come to be acknowledged as an indispensable constituent part of the tripartite coalition of institutional role players that promote development, namely the state, the private sector and civil society. Korten (1991) observes that in times past, the non-profit sector was taken to be marginal and mainly insignificant an actor in development. The 1980s was the period in which NGOs became a central point of attention for development thinkers and practitioners.

Today, non-profit-making organisations have come to be known as the third sector within the economies of most countries worldwide and the role and significance of non-profit-making organisations continues to grow. Hudson (2003: 1) observes that, "it is increasingly recognised that community, social, cultural and even economic development depend on a diverse and healthy[?] nonprofit sector". Thus nonprofit sector organisations are instrumental in shaping today's global society in many ways. Whereas in the past NPOs relied on donated income, in recent years there has been a proliferation of a new breed of NPOs that are now popularly termed social enterprises. These organisations largely operate within the market economy to raise money for accomplishment of their social mission. At present there is a lack of consensus among scholars on the definition of social enterprise. Social enterprise is a complex concept, and literature in the area of social enterprise is so new and little. that no consensus has emerged among scholars on this phenomenon (Jones, 2007). In the same vein, Young (2007: 2) observes that "the term social enterprise is interpreted in a variety of ways by scholars, policy makers, leaders in the business, non-profit and public sectors, and by interested parties in different parts of the world... The variety of understandings derives in part from the fact that social enterprise takes place in different economic and political contexts, giving rise to alternative manifestations of the common underlying thrust". The most common thrust adopted by several scholars focus on social enterprise as a business that primarily exists to accomplish a social purpose and all profits generated in the business are reinvested in furthering the social mission of the organisation. The main difference between conventional enterprises and a social enterprise would be that in a conventional enterprise profits are distributed amongst shareholders while social enterprises mainly operate as NPOs and are bound by a non-profit distribution constraint. This means that there are no shareholders in social enterprises (Young, 2007; Cheung 2006).

Boards of Directors in Non-Profits

According to the Department of Social Development (2001, p. 5) a BOD is defined as a "group of an NPO's constituency representatives who are elected or invited to voluntarily serve as the constituted leadership of an NPO. The governing body can be given the title of, among others: Board, Board of Directors, Trustees, Council or Steering Committee." BODs are seen as playing a key function in the fulfilment of NPO missions. To this end, it is expected that people who are appointed must be capable of contributing significantly towards the running of NPOs to which they are appointed. It is also expected that members of the board must be enthusiastic about

their participation and need to demonstrate dedication to ensuring that they help the NPO they serve to best accomplish its mission. In South Africa, there is no prescribed procedure that is to be followed when appointing a board. How boards get composed is often a direct consequence of the emergent context of the NPO itself and this will vary from one NPO to another. It a common practice in most NPOs that once every year members of the community and other constituencies with a vested interest in the operation of an NPO get to vote for a new board. This does not however have universal applicability and some NPOs have different procedures on how they get to elect members of the board (Department of Social Development, 2001).

There are several duties that boards are expected to play in South African NPOs. Firstly, members of NPO boards are expected to undertake the duty of care. This means that they are to serve NPOs in a conscienscious way when carrying out their duties. Secondly, members of boards are expected to fulfil the duty of loyalty, meaning that at all times members should act in ways that show their total commitment to an NPO and serve its best interests. Thirdly, board members are expected to subscribe to the duty of obedience, meaning that members must make decisions based on the constitution of their organisation without violating its statutes. Fourthly, members of boards are expected to play myriad other roles which include, but are not limited to, the determining of the organisation's mission and purpose, the selection and appointing of the chief executive officer, participating in strategic organisational planning, helping in the harnessing and management of resources, determining and monitoring programmes and services offered by an NPO, and working to enhance the public image and appeal of the NPOs they serve (Department of Social Development, 2001).

Theories on the role of BODs

There are several theories that have been put forward to explain the roles BODs of non-profit sector organisations. The first model is the resource dependency theory. This theory (propounded by Pfeffer and Salanick, 1978) posits that BODs mainly work to help organisations to generate resources. BODs are seen as comprising people who are highly networked and bring with them social capital that can be used to generate financial, material and human capital which benefit the organisation (Hillman and Dalziel, 2003; Herman and Renz, 2000). High performance in non-profit organisations has been linked to an active BOD that works to initiate and sustain multiple sources of income and resources that flow in the organisation (Bielefeld, 1992; Green and Griesinger, 1996). Apart from the networks that members of the BODs bring with them, members are themselves seen as key human capital that directly contribute to the functioning of organisations (Hillman and Dazel, 2003). To this end fundraising is seen as the major role of BODs with the resource dependency theory.

The second theory is the group process model. This theory focuses on how people relate, the processes that lead to decision making, and how information is managed and used. It is thought that diversity within BODs leads to the generation of high quality decisions given that members contribute multiple perspectives during brainstorming. The more members on the board, the better insights they bring and the more social capital they bring, and the likelihood of better resource mobilisation is increased

(Erhardt, Werbel, and Shrader, 2003; Zander. 1994). Similarly, Chait, Holland, and Taylor (1991) observe that more diversity in number, skills and areas of competency among BODs leads to increased capacity to solve complex problems due to the diversified views that can be harnessed. The challenge however could be that having more members on the board may lead to increased conflict as members fail to agree on some key matters. Thus diversity may either foster or hinder effectiveness of group process (Brown, 2005). Despite this, the group process theory rests on the premise that diversity and increased numbers in boards are necessary and desirable in as far as they lead to multiple and better insights and ability of boards to solve complex challenges.

The last model that will be discussed is the agency theory. The agency theory looks at the organisation of relationships between two parties when one part must arrange for work that must be accomplished by another part. To this end, members of boards are seen to play the important role of keeping management in check by controlling how the organisation is run, ensuring that they task management to take on activities that further the mission of the organisation without deviating from the core mandate given. BODs are seen as embodying the interests of the community that is served by the organisation. Thus as far as possible, it is seen as desirable to have board members who have weaker ties with management to ensure that no conflict of interests exists and that board members continue to be vigilant in monitoring activities of the management. Consequently, closer ties between members of the board and management is seen as compromising 'agency' (Brown, 2005; Green and Griesinger, 1996; Fama and Jenson, 1983).

Modes of governance at which Boards of Directors operate

There are several modes of governance that BODs may adopt in running NPOs. Chait, Ryan and Taylor (2005) note that there are three modes of governance in which boards tend to operate. The first one is the fiduciary mode; a board that operates in this mode is pre-occupied with ensuring smooth governance of the organisation. This involves dealing with matters such as stewardship of assets that belong to the organisation, ensuring management's adherence to the mission, ensuring that staff are held accountable for their work and ensuring that the organisation is run in such a way that all practices are done in accordance with the law and adherence to all legal obligations. The second domain is the strategic mode; boards that operate in this mode tend to not only focus on the necessary fiduciary responsibilities but go beyond this and contribute largely in the framing of the organisation's strategic direction. Consequently, BODs that operate in the strategic mode tend to have more influence in how an organisation is run. Lastly, boards can also operate in the generative mode. A board that operates in a generative mode not only engages itself in critical thinking about the strategic direction of the organisation but also generates innovative ideas on how the organisation can approach its work in order to increase its impact on the communities served. This mode of governance calls for inventive and transformational leadership which allows for new thinking and new practices to emerge. This contributes to vital progress in an organisation. This is an advanced level of operation which is a missing ingredient in most boards within non-profit sector organisations. Findings of the study reveal that members of boards in social enterprises tended to operate in the three different modes, though there were fewer manifestations of the generative mode of operation.

3. Methods

Study objective

This article is based on the findings of a doctoral thesis. The objective of the study from which this article is based was to examine factors critical to the success of running a social enterprise in South Africa.

Research strategy and design

The study adopted a qualitative research strategy. Qualitative studies help the researcher to obtain detailed and holistic accounts from participants pertaining to the phenomenon under study and findings from such studies tend to yield new insights (Henning, 2004). A case study research design was utilised and a total of 15 social enterprises were selected for study.

Participants

A sample of 20 participants was chosen via purposive sampling. Participants were chosen from the senior management teams within the various social enterprises selected for study.   Data was collected via in-depth face to face interviews which were guided by a semi-structured interview schedule. The interviews were tape recorded by the researcher to avoid data loss that tends to occur due to memory decay and thematic content analysis was used during the analysis process.

4. Results and discussion

The findings of the study reveal that most Boards in social enterprises contribute significantly to the success of these organisations. Most participants agreed that they counted on their BODs for many things. Firstly, the BODs were found to give credibility and legitimacy to the function of social enterprises given that the social enterprise phenomenon is still relatively new within the South African non-profit sector. Secondly, the BOD was also looked upon as a critical source for access to resources given that most BODs are commonly highly ranked and networked people in society and brought social capital that social enterprises could exploit for their success. On the other hand, members of the BODs largely did pro bono work for the social enterprises and this enabled these organisations to cut huge costs that they would ordinarily have incurred in the absence of the BODs. Another factor that enabled the BODs to have such a huge impact on the success of social enterprises relates to the careful and strategic selection of the BODs. These factors are discussed in detail below.

a) The BOD provides access to resources for social enterprises

The BODs in social enterprises were seen to contribute to the unlocking of external resources for social enterprises in several ways. It was common for most organisations that participated in the study to have on their boards persons within the top

management of the companies that mainly funded their social enterprise. In a way, this is a clever 'ploy' to ensure continued support from the funder given that people on the board are also the same people who make funding decisions in their companies. It becomes common cause that an influential executive of a private company serving on the board of a social enterprise would be extra motivated to influence funding decisions in favour of the social enterprise on whose board he/she serves. On the other hand, most board members were also able to contribute a significant amount of social capital given the strong relations, ties and connections they have outside the organisation. From such social capital, a lot of financial, information and material resources that benefited social enterprises could be harnessed. This is clearly visible in the following participant's accounts. One participant argued that *"our board members tend to be from various business backgrounds so it allows for greater networking and access to more knowledge, opportunities and resources."* In the same vein, another participant remarked, *"I think board members have helped us as an organisation as well, [they promote our] organisation, giving our organisation professional networks for a purpose and I think that's an important element as well"*.

b) The BOD does pro bono work for social enterprises

Apart from the board contributing to social capital and resources access for social enterprises, members of the board themselves also contributed a significant amount of expertise to the social enterprises that recruited them. All participants highlighted the fact that their board did work for them at no charge. Much of the work done at no charge was of such a significant value that it would have taken a lot of finances to hire external personnel. Consequently, the work that is done by most board members at no charge enables social enterprises to cut costs. In turn, such savings not only contribute to the financial health of the organisation, but the resources can also be redirected to furthering the social mission of the organisation. On the other hand, most participants also noted that the board did the strategic planning for their organisations in conjunction with top management. One can therefore argue that to some larger degree members of the board also bring with them ideas that contribute to progress in social enterprises. In this way, the boards largely contribute to the success of social enterprises in South Africa.

The claims made in the discussion above are apparent in the following participants' accounts given while commenting to the aspect of BODs in their social enterprises;

One participant noted, *"our chairman is in data management, so our whole computer networking system was put together with his help. We have somebody else in human resources, somebody else a chartered accountant, somebody else who works for an organisation called the food bank, so what he learned there, he shares with us. Then we have one of our retailers on board"*. Similarly, referring to the role of board another participant asserted that *"they see that there is strategic planning, they finalise strategic planning, and they play a role in decision making in terms of strategic planning of the company. To ensure that it's going the right direction as a whole, that's the main functions I suppose and obviously it's about corporate governance its making sure that it's done properly you know"*. A similar view was echoed by another participant who argued that, *"They help with strategic planning, yeah; I would say that they play an integral role"*.

It is clear from the participants' accounts above that boards are a critical factor in contributing to the success of many social enterprises in South Africa. This contradicts the assertion by Taylor et al. (1999), who argued that, "too often, the board of a non-profit organisation is little more than a collection of high-powered people engaged in low-level activities." They further posit that it is not common to find BODs with effective functionality. Similar claims are made Andreasen (1999) who argues that board members are often an underutilized source of management expertise. However, looking at the findings of the study, at least as claimed by participants, the board of social enterprises in a majority of the organisations that participated in the study were largely involved and significantly contributed to the welfare and success of social enterprises.

c) The BOD is crucial for accountability, legitimacy and credibility

For most participants, one of the core functions of the board is that of giving accountability, legitimacy, and credibility to the organisation. Participants noted that, in some social enterprises, founders of social enterprises can sometimes want to run a single man show and end up abusing resources and power and the board is seen as a check and balance mechanism. Also, given that social enterprises are in essence businesses, even though the ultimate aim is to create social impact, income generation in NPOs is uncommon for some funders and there is always a hesitance to give social enterprises money so that they can in turn make more money. However, any suspicions that investors and funders may have are dispelled once they realise that the organisation has a board which is seen as being critical for accountability. This is apparent in the participants' accounts below.

Commenting on the importance of the board as a source of accountability and legitimation of their organisations, one participant argued, *"Well I think in any organisational form, having a governance mechanism is really important regardless of whether you are an NGO, private company or a social enterprise so I think it more of a question of independence of the social enterprises. In the start phase of organisations, governance is not usually one of the main priorities. But I think particularly in the social enterprise sector where there is a lot of confusion around what these organisations stand for; is it non-profit trying to do good, or is it for profit trying to make money so people often are a little bit cautious having a board of governors does tend to... give you that sense of accountability and responsibility and also depends on who is on the board but for anyone whether it's an investor or it's a donor relatively strong governance in terms of a board is really important"*.

Referring to the board as a key source of accountability within social enterprise, another participant remarked, *"it's very important because it means greater accountability and transparency to make sure that the various projects, overall that they work together but also that no single individual has all the decision making power and end up going off course at some point. So it creates accountability."* A view by a key informant affirmed the accounts given by participants above. She argued that the board is *"very important... it's critically important for the board to ensure good governance and particularly where there is no real structure that caters for social enterprises in South Africa. So, they become doubly important to have those checks through the body of directors you have control"*.

These findings concur with the study by Kitzi (2002), who argued that the board is responsible for holding public trust in an organisation given its accountability function.

He further notes that the board safeguards clients and investor interests from potential abuse by management and founders of social enterprises. In South Africa, where social entrepreneurship is yet to gain mainstream acceptance within the non-profit sector, BODs become a vital mechanism that ensures that social enterprises are not viewed with suspicion mainly by funders who may be unwilling to give their money to organisations who actively raise most of their income via market driven principles.

d) Strategic selection of the BODs

One of the major contributing factors to the undoubted value that boards brought to social enterprises relates to the fact that thoughtful considerations were made before appointing people to the Board. In almost all social enterprises that participated in the study, they had carefully chosen the board to be composed of a diverse range of skills such as law, accounting, politics, and business. Such a composition of skills no doubt adds a lot of value to the organisation. In many instances, social enterprises had BODs that comprised people with expert knowledge in the field in which they specialised. Such people proved to be an invaluable resource for strategic guidance as well as providing access to the bureaucracy.

Referring to the strategic considerations given when selecting the BODs, one participant argued that *"if you look at the composition of our board, there is representation of our own strategic interests as well like the South African nurseries association, there are guys from media in South Africa, we have got a Financial Director, who has been with Forestry SA for years, and with us now for 22 years. So they are understanding, they understand farming, they understand environmental conditions in South Africa, so it's vital. And I think form the governance aspect as well, it adds to the voice of integrity"*. In the same vein another participant remarked, *"the selection of board members is also key to the success of your organisation, there is no doubt about tha*t".

In view of the above, there is no doubt that the success of some social enterprises in South Africa is largely because of the support and contributions of BODs. Kitzi (2002) maintains that the board is one of the critical and indispensable resources available to executives in social enterprises. From the study, it is clear that organisations largely put their BODs to good use, which significantly improved the performance of the social enterprises. Be that as it may, one participant raised an important point that warrants attention relating to a possible creeping of complacency on the part of the BODs especially when the organisation becomes well established and is enjoying high success levels. He noted that, *"the board becomes complacent when you are successful, they do, they can become complacent because now you have got this level of success"*. Such complacency can lead to potential pitfalls such as abuse of resources by employees as well as creating a situation where management within social enterprises becomes overly powerful with the board largely becoming docile thereby failing to play its accountability 'insurance' role.

5. Conclusions

This paper examined the contributions that BODs play in the success that many social enterprises in South Africa have managed to attain. Despite the prevailing notion that

BODs often play an insignificant and marginal role in the running of NPOs, the findings of this current study show that boards of some social enterprises in South Africa are playing a notable role in contributing to the successful pursuit of organisational goals in the social enterprises they serve. The presence of a board in social enterprises was seen to be important in giving credibility and legitimacy to social enterprises given that they are a relatively new typology of NPOs whose acceptance is yet to permeate mainstream thinking. Boards in social enterprises also played a prominent role in helping social enterprise to access financial and other material resources. This was mainly due to the rich social capital that board members brought with them owing to their high standing in society. Consequently, board members could easily tap into their networks to help social enterprises access resources. Founders of social enterprises also tended to recruit people with high level skills often related to their area of operation; as a result, board members would contribute their expertise at no charge to the social enterprise on whose boards they sat. This was found to help social enterprises save significant finances which they would have used to hire such skills as provided by members of the board. Moreover, how boards are composed was found to be a significant factor that contributed to the value addition by board members to social enterprises. The research findings show that careful considerations were put in place when selecting board members and potential value addition was seen as key rather than just looking at one's standing in society. To this end, how and who gets selected to sit on BODs in NPOs becomes a matter of vital importance if organisations are to realise significant contributions from board members. This, bearing that in mind, previous research has shown effective functioning board members to be a rare breed.

This study mainly confirms the assertions made by proponents of the resource mobilisation theory, such as Hillman and Dalziel, 200; Herman and Renz, 2000; or Pfeffer and Salanick, 1978, that members of boards are key resources to organisations and the major role that they play is to generate financial, material, and human capital, as well as intellectual resources that lead to the effective functioning of organisations. Thus, contrary, to the established view that effective governance by BODs is a rare occurrence (Taylor, et al. 1999), the findings of this study reveal that BODs are playing multiple and vital roles in contributing to the effective running of many social enterprises in South Africa. It must however be noted that while social enterprises are registered as NPOs, they differ markedly in their modus operandi from traditional NPOs in that they are entrepreneurially driven and operate on business principles even though there is no shareholding and profit distribution. It is therefore possible that different conclusions may be reached if a study is carried out that focuses on boards of NPOs that have not adopted social entrepreneurship principles.

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List of acronyms

BODs	Board of Directors
NPO	Non-Profit Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation

SOCIAL CAPITAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL INNOVATION: THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION

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Abstract. *The present study aims to investigate the impact of social capital on organizational innovation by studying the mediating factor of entrepreneurial orientation in auto parts manufacturers. The statistical population of the study includes the executive managers of Iranian auto parts companies. The collected data was analyzed using the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) method. The Smart PLS 2.0 software was applied for analyzing data and path modeling with latent variables. Our findings showed that social capital has a positive, significant impact on organizational innovation and entrepreneurial orientation among the staff. Entrepreneurial orientation of the staff in turn affects organizational innovation, which confirms the mediating effect of entrepreneurial orientation on the relationship between social capital and organizational innovation. The findings of the study can help managers of auto parts companies to improve innovative activities and motivate the staff toward entrepreneurial activities.*

Keywords: *social capital; organizational innovation; entrepreneurial orientation.*

1. Introduction

In today's business environment, organizations need to consider innovation as a key factor in organizational products and processes to survive in highly competitive

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international markets and changing technologies (Alegre et al., 2006; Baron and Tang, 2011). In addition, numerous scholars believe innovation is the main source for competitive advantage and many have noted that innovation plays an important role in economic development (Agbor, 2008; Chen and Chen, 2009; Gumusluoglu and Ilsev, 2009; Karkalakos, 2013). Different factors can affect innovation; among them social environments (consisting of networks, trust, norms etc.), has attracted the attention of many scholars and is known as social capital altogether (Kaasa, 2009). Social capital as a social phenomenon can lead to creativity, idea generation, facilitation of innovative behaviors, and risk-taking (Coleman, 1998); it is more than a social organization or social value. Social capital improves the output through increasing other efficient resources such as physical and human assets (Chou, 2006). Florida et al. (2002) argue that "in a high social capital society, individuals are more eager to work with each other; their risk-taking capabilities improve and this rich social capital leads to innovative activities among them".

During the past two decades the concept of social capital, beside other concepts such as human capital, physical assets and entrepreneurship, has been used to explain economic development. Beugelsdijk and Schaik (2005) argue that despite widespread use of the terms, some ambiguities and conflicts exist on the concepts related to social capital that could be accounted for by its multivariate, multidimensional characteristics (Doh and Mc Neely, 2011). On the other hand, since the concept of organizational entrepreneurship has been the subject of many management and organization researches, studying mechanisms related to entrepreneurial activities seems essential if we are to improve organizational performance. Entrepreneurial orientation is one of these mechanisms that facilitates the creation or exploration of entrepreneurial opportunities for organizations (Li et al., 2009).

Therefore, social capital is a fundamental concept in understanding creativity, innovation, and creating entrepreneurial behaviors as well as organizational dynamics because it affects and facilitates the processes of creativity, innovation, and team learning (Goyal and Akhilesh, 2007). Reviewing the literature of social capital reveals a lack of studding this concept with regard to organizational factors and entrepreneurial themes, which provides reasons for choosing the present research topic that aims to examine the impact of social capital on organizational innovation by studying the mediating factor of entrepreneurial orientation of organizations. As for secondary goals, the study will reach the goal of testing the relationships between different aspects of social capital and organizational innovation with an eye on entrepreneurial orientation among the staff.

The structure of the article is as follows. In Section 2 we elaborate the theoretical basis of the research in terms of three main constructs: social capital, organizational innovation, and entrepreneurial orientation. The relationships between them are considered to build the three hypotheses and, consequently, propose the research model. In Section 3, the research methodology regarding the sample and constructs' measurement is outlined. Section 4 covers the method of analyzing data and findings. Finally, this study is discussed and concluded with our findings as well as recommendations in section 5.

2. Theorithical basis of research and hypotheses

2.1. Social capital

Different scholars around the globe have increasingly studied social capital. It is being used in different disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, politics, economics and organizational studies. Different approaches to studying social capital as well as its interdisciplinary nature have caused confusions among scholars. Moreover, a great deal of the research conducted on social capital in the field of organizational studies has reported contradicting results (Alguezaui and Filieri, 2010).

Fukuyama (1995) defines social capital as a set of informal norms. He also uses the term for describing trust building and its direct effect on competitive advantage (Fussel et al., 2006). In other research, Putnam (1996) states that social capital focuses on aspects of social life that help the members to cooperate in achieving shared goals (Chou, 2006). Nahapiiet and Ghoshal (1998) define social capital as a set of values which are hidden and stem from a network of personal and organizational links. In other words, communication networks are considered sources of value creation for individuals and organizations. Social capital has been studied on different levels including the individual (Burt, 1992), organizational (Nahapiiet and Ghoshal, 1998), and social levels (Dakhli and De Clecq, 2004). On the organizational level, social capital is defined as an organizational value which is formed based on the relationships between its members in order to cooperate in collective activities (Freel, 2000). In general, it could be said that social capital is a sociological approach to human actions which considers an individual as an agent formed by social factors.

2.2. Dimensions of social capital

Nahapiiet and Ghoshal (1998) take an organizational approach to maintain that social capital (SC) has three aspects, namely relational, cognitive, and structural (Carey et al., 2011). They argue that the relational aspect of SC is indicative of a type of personal relationship in which individuals form relationships based on the background of their interactions. The most important aspects here include: trust, norms, requirements and expectations, and identity. According to Anderson and Narus (1990) trust is the source for discourse and the main pillar of communication. Starbuck (1992) maintains that social norms, honesty and teamwork are key characteristics of knowledge-based firms. Coleman (1990) discriminate the requirements from generalized norms and takes it as expectations formed within personal relationships. Kramer and Tyler (1996) believe that the sense of identification developed in individuals, which is known as identity, increases the anxieties about processes and collective results and, in turn, the possibility of information transfer (Andrews, 2010).

Nahapiiet and Ghoshal (1998) include the cognitive aspect as goals, perspectives, and shared values between the agents of a social system that enables them to acquire information and classify them to perception groups. Cognitive aspect of SC is indicative of the fact that as long as individuals interact as members of a group, they can form better sets of shared goals for organizations. Shared views and goals create values that facilitate the development of integrity and shared responsibility (Leana and Pil, 2006).

Nahapiiet and Ghoshal (1998) define the structural aspect as the combination between individuals and units that shows how and to whom you are connected to. Koka and Prescott (2002) studied SC along with broad perspectives including network characteristics such as sharing knowledge and information and the capabilities related to social interactions (Lawson et al., 2008). In fact, SC consists of social networks as two formal and informal forms (Carey et al., 2011).

2.3. Organizational innovation

Today organizational innovation (OI) is considered one of the main factors for competitive advantage and achieving long-term success in a competitive market (Richard et al., 2011; Petuskiene and Glinskiene, 2011). The reason is that organizations with innovative capabilities can respond to environmental challenges faster than non-innovative organizations. This, in turn, could increase the efficiency of organizations (Jimenez et al., 2008). OI includes all new ideas, methods, or goals of an organization which are successfully executed in markets (Molina and Martinez, 2010). Organizations seek to bring about new, successful changes in the market to improve their performance (Menguc and Auh, 2010). OI is showing openness, acquiring and generating new ideas and the tendency toward change through new technologies, resources, skills, and administrative systems (Ussahawanitchakit, 2008).

2.4. Dimensions of Organizational innovation

Scholars consider different aspects with regard to OI, most of which include the three aspects of productive, administrative, and process innovations (Jimenez and Valle, 2011).

1) Productive innovation is the instrument for production (Ojasalo, 2008) and refers to development and new products and services. In fact, productive innovation is the extent to which an organization is proactive in providing new services, allocating financial resources to R&D and similar cases (Song and Thieme, 2006).

2) Process innovation is an instrument for retaining and improving quality and lowering expenses (Jimenez et al., 2008). It includes new or integrated production, distribution, or delivery methods. Process innovation is the extent to which an organization employs new technologies and tests new methods for doing organizational tasks (Prajogo and Ahmed, 2006).

3) Administrative innovation refers to procedures, policies, and new organizational forms. It includes changes affecting policies, resource allocation, and other factors related to the social structure of the organization (Jimenez et al., 2008). Administrative innovation is the extent to which organization managers use modern management systems to manage the organization. Administrative and technological innovation might have slight similarities in their functional aspects, but from the standpoint of decision-making process, they are totally different (Kimberly and Evanisko, 1981).

2.5. Entrepreneurial orientation

Entrepreneur organizations, in order to improve their performance, must have an outlook which encourages risk-taking and innovativeness and in this way adapt to the

changeable global economy (Lumpkin and Dess, 2001). Firms that intend to successfully trigger organizational entrepreneurship within need an entrepreneurial orientation (Najmabadi et al., 2013). Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) proposes a mental framework and an outlook for entrepreneurship which is reflected in current processes of the company and organizational culture. Majority of entrepreneurship researchers believe that organizations with a strong EO achieve their goals more efficiently (Dess and Lumpkin, 2005). Many of the existing articles have defined EO using words such as processes, methods and decision-making activities that leads to development of products or new and innovative services which can distinguish a company from others in the market (Jambulingam et al., 2005; Chen et al., 2006; Naldi et al., 2007).

Covin and Slevin in their studies suggest that EO is a multi-dimensional structure and can be evaluated from different viewpoints (Chang et al., 2007). Miller (1983) first proposed the main framework of EO dimensions. He suggested specified dimensions for describing EO. Miller defines an entrepreneurial company as one which is involved in the markets with innovative products, including slight risk, leads in innovation, and puts its rivals in a tight spot (Morris et al., 2007). Innovativeness is the reflection of a company's tendency toward new ideas and creative processes, the result of which may exist in new products, services or technological processes. Risk-taking indicates the tendency of companies toward allocation of basic resources to the projects which have success or failure possibility in them. Furthermore, risk-taking can be referred to rapid pursuing of opportunities, rapid provision of resources, and bold activities. Being a leader in the market is a forward-looking characteristic of a market leader who has an outlook toward taking the opportunities in predicting the future demand; entrepreneurs in the organization can use this outlook to stimulate the employees and help them in confrontation with the challenges they face (Lumpkin and Dess, 2001). Lumpkin and Dess (1996) add two more factors to the cases above, which can play a major role in entrepreneurial orientation: competitive aggressiveness and autonomy. Competitive aggressiveness refers to a company's tendency to get involved in hard and direct challenges with competitors to improve its market situation. Companies that aggressively compete and take opportunities with force to achieve profitability may be able to better maintain their competitive advantage in the long term, provided that their target is overtaking rivals and not hitting them (Dess and Lumpkin, 2005). Autonomy refers to independent activities of people or teams in order to create ideas and implement them. In other words, organizational actors pursue self-control opportunities and independent activities, making key decisions by themselves and implementing new ideas (Chang et al., 2007). Autonomy provides an ambition for organization individuals to identify opportunities and pursue them until they are offered to the market (Lumpkin et al., 2009). Overall, specifications of EO extend to methods of decision-making and actions of an organization's members. These factors, namely innovativeness, risk-taking, proactiveness, competitive aggressiveness, and autonomy, are often in interaction with each other in order to improve the entrepreneurial performance of an organization. Figure 1 depicts the dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation.

Figure 1. Dimensions of Entrepreneurial Orientation
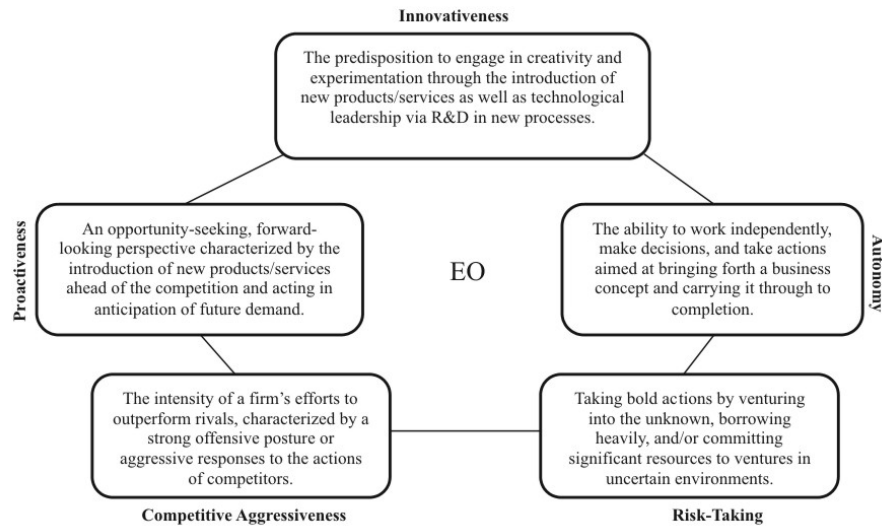
Source: Adapted from Lumpkin et al. (2011)

2.6. Social capital and Organizational innovation

Social capital can influence innovative activities in different ways: first, innovation requires the convergence of different knowledge pertaining to different members of an organization which is provided by social capital (Song and Thieme, 2006; Zheng, 2008). Second, social capital facilitates innovation through motivating cooperation and coordination between different members/units in an organization (Nahapiiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Adler et al., 2002; Leana and Pil, 2006; Brooks and Nafukho, 2006; Goyal and Akhilesh, 2007). On the other hand, it corresponds to initiating new product strategies positively (Hsieh and Tsai, 2007). Moran (2005) highlights the relational aspect of social capital through investigating the level of personal understanding and the concept of trust in communications and argues that when there are close relationships between members, they are more motivated toward new innovative ideas and could change ideas into successful project (Lavado et al., 2010).

Therefore, innovation is essentially the output of shared efforts. In addition, social capital is known as a key factor in creating innovation in organizations (Subramaniam and Youndt, 2005). In this regard, based on the theoretical foundations elaborated above, the first hypothesis of the research is as follows:

Hypothesis 1: social capital has a positive, significant impact on organizational innovation.

2.7. Social capital and Entrepreneurial orientation

Different scholars have proposed various theories regarding the relationship between social capital and entrepreneurship. Most of this research, however, shares one point: social capital is considered social interaction and provides information, resources, and supports for entrepreneurs. Social capital provides excellent foundation for developing entrepreneurial activities and facilitates the achievement of competitive advantage (Huang and Wang, 2011; Huang et al., 2010; Kaasa, 2009; Chisholm and Nielsen, 2009; Chen et al., 2007). Social capital plays a key role in entrepreneurial activities because it is a socio-economic process relying on social context and circumstances from two points; first, entrepreneurs are products of their social environment. Second, entrepreneurship is a social activity and existence or lack of social links and connections affects the nature of businesses (Anderson and Miller, 2003). In addition, people in higher social capital groups are located in strong positions in networks. This increases the possibility of identifying economic opportunities by these individuals. Jones (2005) argues that the foundation for strategic opportunities and entrepreneurial activities is built through combining individual and organizational characteristics. This, in line with organizational learning and social capital, leads to innovation which, in turn, improves performance and competitive advantage. Based on the theoretical literature related to social capital and entrepreneurial orientation, the second hypothesis is as follows:

Hypothesis 2: social capital has a positive, significant impact on entrepreneurial orientation.

2.8. Entrepreneurial orientation and Organizational innovational

As previously mentioned, entrepreneurial orientation refers to strategic activities of an organization and shows how companies discover and exploit new opportunities (Wiklund and Shepherd, 2003; Teng, 2007). Entrepreneurial orientation describes a company's inclination toward engagement in pursuing market opportunities and revising operational fields (Hult and Ketchen, 2001). Entrepreneurial orientation makes a company create an innovative, proactive, and risk-taking climate in the organization (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996). By adopting a strong entrepreneurial orientation and organizational learning, and facilitating social ties between companies, an organization could promote the required knowledge to create innovation (Zahra and George, 2002). Entrepreneurial orientation provides the latest knowledge that help in exploiting the new and innovative market opportunities (Li et al., 2009). An entrepreneurial climate could create a knowledge sharing aptitude in the organization and this in turn would help different divisions of the organization to discover new opportunities and drive it toward becoming innovative in the future (Li et al., 2006). Therefore, the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and innovation would be as follows:

Hypothesis 3: entrepreneurial orientation has a positive and significant effect on innovation.

Figure 2 shows the hypotheses as conceptual model of our study:

Figure 2. Hypothesized Research Model
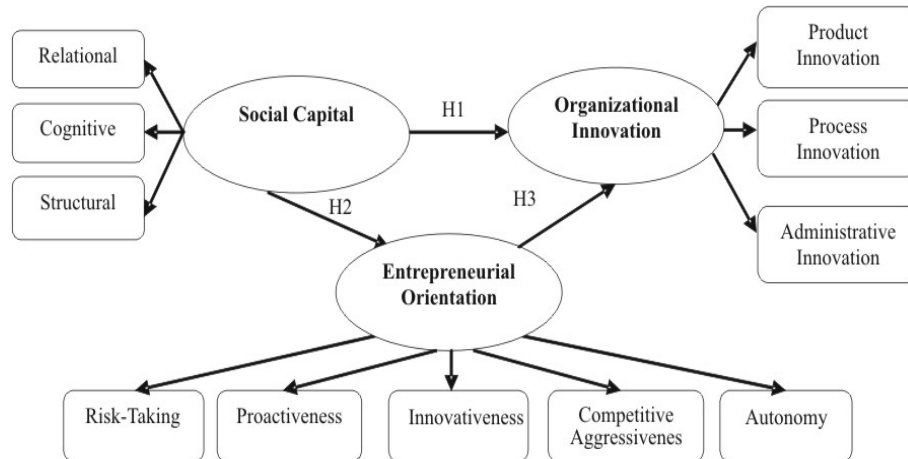
Source: Developed by the authors

3. Research methodology

Structural equation modeling (SEM) is used to survey our causal-type study and investigate the cause and effect relationships between constructs and allows us to carefully examine the conceptual model. SEM is the best tool for research analysis in which the observable variables have measurement error and also the relationships between variables are complex (Reisinger and Mavondo, 2007). By employing this method one is able to, on the one hand, measure the precision of indexes or observable variables and, on the other hand, investigate the causal relationships between latent variables and the amount of explicated variance (Hair et al., 2010). SEM is comprised of two sections of measurement model and structural model. Besides, Variables in SEM are divided into two categories of observable and latent variables (Kline, 2010), in such a way that social capital, organizational innovation and entrepreneurial orientation are latent variables. Relational, cognitive and structural dimensions of social capital are focused on in this paper. On the other hand, innovativeness, risk-taking, autonomy, proactiveness and competitive aggressiveness are dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation. Moreover, performance is evaluated via five indexes of growth in sales, return on investment, operating profit margin, return on equity, and customer retention.

3.1. Sample

We chose our sample from executive managers of Iranian auto part manufacturers containing about 540 people. We used stratified random sampling to categorize people of our sample and then Cochran's formula to calculate the sample size: $n = (Z^2pqN) / (N^2 + Z^2pq) = 225$

Where n is the sample size, N is the population size (540), Z is the confidence interval, P is the estimated proportion of the attribute under study, q is derived from 1-p and finally e is the precision level (Cochran, 1977). Besides, Based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for determining sample size, for a given population of 550, a sample size of 225 would be needed to represent a cross section of the population. However, to ensure more, 250 questionnaires were distributed and 228 questionnaires were completed (response rate 91%).

3.2. Measurement of constructs

Our survey instrument contains three sections each with items related to three constructs. The first section of our questionnaire includes 19 items for measuring social capital based on Chang and Chuang (2011): the first 4 items are related to the structural dimension, the next 12 items consider the relational dimension, and finally, the last 4 items measure the cognitive dimension of social capital. The second section includes 22 items for measuring entrepreneurial orientation: the first 5 items adapted from Dess and Lumpkin (2005) for measuring autonomy, 6 items for innovativeness and 3 items for risk-taking (Covin and Slevin, 1989) which Covin and Wales (2011) pointed out, 3 items related to proactiveness and finally 2 items for aggressive competitiveness (Lumpkin and Dess, 2001). Finally, the third section of our questionnaire includes 9 items for measuring organizational innovation based on Jimenez et al. (2008) which measures product innovation (the first 3 items), process innovation (the next 3 items) and administrative innovation (the last 3 items). All measures use a seven-point Likert-type response scale and are reflectively specified because we treat the Latent constructs as giving rise to their observable indicators (Diamantopoulos and Siguaw, 2006).

4. Analysis and findings

4.1. Method of analysis

For our data analysis, we applied structural equation modeling (SEM) and a component-based approach. Partial least squares (PLS) using Smart PLS 2.0 software (Ringle et al. 2005) was used to conduct the modeling and test our hypotheses shown in the model of Figure 3.

4.2. Measurement model

Before proceeding with the structural model, we first conducted a confirmatory factor analysis using the software Smart PLS 2.0 for assessing measurement model in terms of reliability and validity. Item reliability (Rivard and Huff, 1988) and convergent and discriminate validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981) are assessed through data analysis.

4.2.1. Reliability assessment

For item reliability, the loadings parameters between construct and measures were assessed to indicate that significant variance was shared between each item and the construct. The loadings showed that none of them are equal or higher than 0.4 (Hulland, 1999). Therefore,

none of items were removed from the analysis. We also assessed internal consistency by Rho (the ratio of construct variance to the sum of construct and error variance). As shown in table 1, the values of Rho for all first order constructs are significantly greater than 0.5, which indicates suitable status for internal consistency (Rivard et al., 1997). Besides, alpha cronbach values of our first order constructs are above or close to 0.7 which implies the acceptable level for reliability (Fornell and Larcker, 1981):

Table 1. Reliability assessment

Variables	No. of items	Rho	Cronbach's alpha	Mean	S. D.
Structural dimension of SC	4	0.82	0.71	5.1	0.21
Relational dimension of SC	12	0.86	0.69	4.9	0.34
Cognitive dimension of SC	4	0.84	0.72	4.8	0.34
Autonomy	5	0.70	0.74	4.4	0.43
Innovativeness	6	0.73	0.75	4.6	0.57
Risk-taking	3	0.75	0.69	4.9	0.58
Proactiveness	3	0.77	0.75	4.1	0.43
Aggressive competitiveness	2	0.73	0.68	5.0	0.47
Organizational innovation	3	0.80	0.78	4.6	0.35

Source: Developed by the authors

4.2.2. Convergent and discriminant validity assessment

To evaluate Convergent and discriminant validity, first we used the confirmatory factor analysis procedure in PLS. All items loaded well on their respective constructs, which were noticeably greater than all cross loadings. This implies adequate convergent and discriminant validity (Pavlou and Gefen, 2004).

In next step, we used average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) especially for assessing convergent validity. As shown in table 2, all values are higher than threshold: 0.5 for AVE (Hulland, 1999) and 0.7 for C.R. (Nunnally, 1978):

Table 2. AVE and C.R.

Variables	SD	RD	CD	AU	IN	RT	PR	AC	OI
AVE	0.69	0.62	0.62	0.63	0.70	0.64	0.64	0.72	0.61
CR	0.80	0.81	0.82	0.84	0.84	0.79	0.84	0.71	0.87

SD: Structural dimension; RD: Relational dimension; CD: Cognitive dimension; AU: Autonomy; IN: Innovativeness; RT: Risk-taking; PR: Proactiveness; AC: Aggressive competition; OI: Organizational innovation.
Source: Developed by the authors

For assessing discriminant validity separately, we used comparison between constructs correlations with each other and the square roots of AVE values calculated for each of the constructs. Fornell and Larcker (1981) applied a correlation matrix for this comparison, which includes the correlations between different constructs in the lower left off-diagonal elements of the matrix, and the square roots of AVE values of each constructs along the diagonal. For sufficient discriminant validity, the diagonal elements should be significantly higher than the off-diagonal elements in the corresponding rows and columns. As displayed in table 3, all values in the diagonal (the square roots of AVE values of each constructs) are higher than other elements of the matrix, representing adequate discriminant validity.

Table 3. Discriminant validity

| Variables	SD	RD	CD	AU	IN	RT	PR	AC	OI
SD	**0.83**								
RD	0.37	**0.78**							
CD	0.31	0.16	**0.79**						
AU	0.11	0.12	0.17	**0.79**					
IN	0.18	0.21	0.21	0.10	**0.83**				
RT	0.22	0.37	0.30	0.21	0.28	**0.80**			
PR	0.34	0.33	0.35	0.19	0.14	0.10	**0.80**		
AC	0.33	0.38	0.34	0.31	0.16	0.17	0.41	**0.85**	
OI	0.33	0.39	0.35	0.30	0.14	0.11	0.27	0.26	**0.78**

Source: Developed by the authors

4.3. Structural model

The second step of structural equation modeling is the assessment of the structural model. We used Smart PLS 2 (Ringle et al., 2005) to test our hypothesis: H_1, H_2 and H_3. Moreover, we checked model quality by R^2 values of endogenous constructs. Our results from Smart PLS 2 as depicted in figure 3 indicate that all of R^2 values (inside circles in parentheses) are high demonstrating the sufficiency of structural model. Besides, as depicted in Figure 3, our hypotheses (H_1, H_2 and H_3) are accepted due to the t-values which are presented in the parentheses related to each path. According to figure 3, all t-values are more than 1.96 ($p < 0.05$).

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Figure 3. Research model with path coefficients and significance level
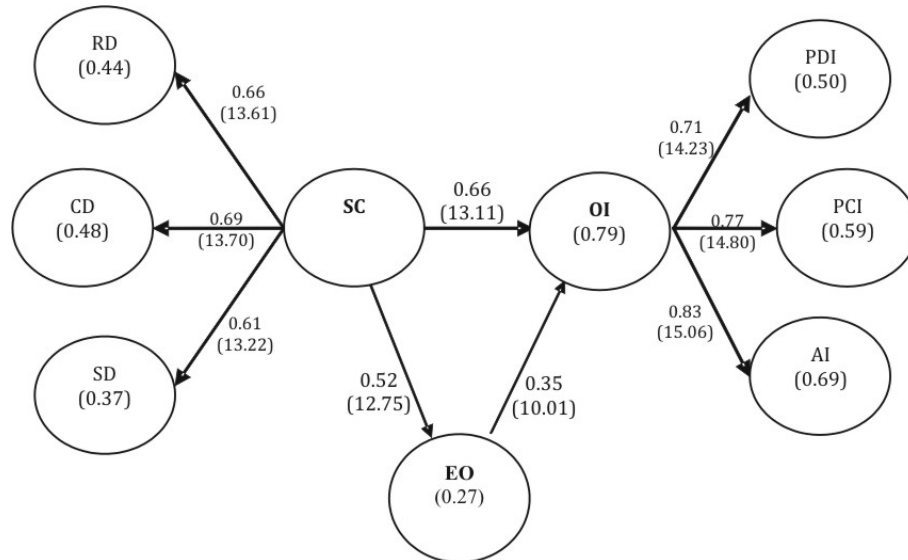
SC: Social Capital; OI: Organizational Innovation; EO: Entrepreneurial Orientation; SD: Structural dimension of SC; RD: Relational dimension of SC; CD: Cognitive dimension of SC; PDI: Product Innovation; PCI: Process Innovation; AI: Administrative Innovation.

Source: Developed by the authors

5. Discussion and conclusion

The results of the study showed that organizations need different stimuli and driving forces in order to implement and execute innovation. Social capital is one of them. (Brooks and Nafukho, 2006; Kaasa et al., 2007; Laursen et al., 2012). By improving the organizational cognitive, structural, and relational aspects of social capital, the organizations could facilitate the implementation of innovation. Moreover, entrepreneurial orientation plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between social capital and organizational innovation.

In the first hypothesis, it was revealed that social capital has a direct and significant impact on innovation in the organization. This is to say, the higher the degree of communications and the larger the employee's social network, the better the context for the occurrence of innovation. This may be due to the increase in the exchange of ideas and new concepts when the employees come into closer contact with each other. As Brooks and Nafukho (2006) argue, knowledge sharing among the organization members plays an important role in the occurrence of innovation. In fact, they are referring to the possibility of information transfer when the relationships between organization members are improved. Wu et al. (2011) also introduced network-like relationships between individuals as an important and effective factor in the occurrence

of innovation. Moreover, Jimenez et al. (2008) introduced the relational aspect of social capital as being composed of trust, individual's identity, and interaction and then illustrated the effect of the relational components on innovation. For example, with respect to trust, they argue that it is after building trust among the organization members that one could expect information transfer among members to lead them to new ideas and methods. Moreover, their research results are consistent with the present research results. The cognitive aspect of social capital, on the other hand, also has a positive and significant effect on organizational innovation. This is to say that shared views and goals among the organization members brought about through value creation, fosters innovation in the organization. Quoting Pearce and Ensley (2004), Zheng (2008) states that shared vision among the organization members encourages innovation in products and processes. According to them, shared vision reduces conflicts between employees and makes it easier for them to arrive at new ideas. Furthermore, Kaasa et al. (2007) argue that employees' civic engagement, which is a result of norms and shared values, affects innovative activities. In fact, they believe that when the organization members share the same visions, goals, and values then innovation will find room to thrive. Ultimately, the positive effect of the structural aspect of social capital on innovation indicates that the components of the structural aspect of social capital including the extent of the network have a strong effect on innovation. The research findings of Zheng (2008) and Kaasa et al. (2007) also show that social capital, especially its structural aspect in the shape of formal and informal networks and civic engagement, has a positive effect on innovative activities.

The second research hypothesis suggests a positive effect of social capital on entrepreneurial orientation in the organization. Recent research indicates a relationship between the interactions of individuals in a social network and innovation, renovation, and entrepreneurship. The role of social capital in the improvement of entrepreneurship in organization has been the subject of recent research. A lot of research supports the theory that social capital provides a suitable ground for the development of entrepreneurial activities (Runyan et al., 2006; Nan and Zhong-ming, 2007; Huang et al., 2010). The individuals in social groups who have more social capital are more likely to effectively recognize and exploit business opportunities. The relationships between the organization members, more particularly, indicate the relational aspect of social capital and when solid and sturdy, it enhances a feeling of trust among them which in turn leads to innovative ideas, risk-taking, proactiveness in exploiting opportunities, dynamic competitiveness, and organizational autonomy. Furthermore, the shared visions and goals among organization members indicate the cognitive aspect of social entrepreneurship, which via value creation leads to integrity and a sense of responsibility and is eventually conducive to entrepreneurial orientation in the organization. In addition, the improvement of the relationships between organization units indicates the structural aspect of social capital, and it promotes entrepreneurial orientation by facilitating innovative ideas among different units.

In the third research hypothesis, it was revealed that entrepreneurial orientation has a positive and significant effect on organizational innovation. In fact, new ideas, risk-taking in activities, proactiveness in exploiting opportunities, autonomy, and competitiveness encourage innovation in the organization (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996;

Wiklund and Shepherd, 2003; Li et al., 2009). In other words, new ideas lead to the implementation of new methods or mechanisms in the organization. Furthermore, the implementation of high-risk decisions and encouragement of risk-taking is the result of searching for new solutions and methods of problem solving in the organization. Likewise, implementing organizational proactiveness in exploiting opportunities in the business environment leads to unique and innovative activities. Implementing the autonomy policy in the organization leads the executive mechanisms to support new decisions. Finally, organizational competitiveness requires new ideas and initiatives more than anything else.

Therefore, given the fact that social capital results in innovation, as the main capacity of the organization, it is essential that managers be alert about social capital management in their organizations by assessing, measuring and improving social capital in order to benefit from competitive advantage and to increase the organizational efficiency and effectiveness. On the other hand, there are other important concepts on the state of entrepreneurship which need attention, such as entrepreneurial orientation, which was the focus of the present research. Thus, one of the ways to foster or improve innovation in the organization is to improve the entrepreneurial orientation aspects.

On the other hand, considering that there are many other factors that could affect innovation, for the future research it is recommended that researchers investigate the effect of each one of those factors on organizational innovation and hence determine the significance of each factor more evidently. Moreover, researchers could examine the factors that moderate the relationship between social capital and innovation in the organization for future research.

List of Acronyms

SC: Social Capital

OI: Organizational Innovation

EO: Entrepreneurial Orientation

SD: Structural dimension of SC

RD: Relational dimension of SC

CD: Cognitive dimension of SC

AU: Autonomy

IN: Innovativeness

RT: Risk-taking

PR: Proactiveness

AC: Aggressive Competition

PDI: Product Innovation

PCI: Process Innovation

AI: Administrative Innovation

SEM: Structural Equation Modeling

PLS: Partial least squares

S. D.: Standard Deviation

AVE: Average Variance Extracted

CR: Composite Reliability

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COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE: RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF SENIOR MANAGERS IN FINANCIAL SECTORS IN LAOS

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Abstract: *The focus of this research is to identify the importance of recruiting and retaining senior management resources in the banking industry in Laos. This paper reports on some of the findings. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were adopted to collect data from three banks in Laos. Interview section: the questions were designed to explore participants' understanding of basic concepts of HRM and their perspectives towards HRM in their organisations about recruitment and retention. Questionnaire section: part one involves demographics data, while part two of the survey questions are focused on participants' attitudes towards HRM processes such as recruitment in their organisations. The findings of the study demonstrate that HRM plays a critically important role in their banks in terms of keeping their competitive advantage. There is a lack of development and implementation of HRM practices and policies to recruit and retain the right people.*

Keywords: *Employees, competitive advantage, human resource management, recruitment, retention*

1. Introduction

Human resource management (HRM) plays a critical role in determining organisations' success and it is a process of acquiring, training, appraising and compensating employees.

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According to Dessler (2011) and Nel et al (2012) employees are truly the most important asset an organisation has. It is the hearts and minds of people, rather than their hands, that are essential to growth and prosperity for an organisation (Cascio, 2010).

Managing employees as assets that are also fundamental to the organisation to achieve competitive advantage it is stated by Nel et al (2012) that employees are the lifeblood of organisations. An organisation's workforce represents one of its most potent and valuable resources as a result the extent to which a workforce is managed effectively is a critical element in enhancing and sustaining organisational performance. Committed human resource (HR) practitioners who create new ideas, deliver value and innovate for growth in order to maximise organisational performance are key assets of organisations (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, & Wright, 2010; Redman & Wilkinson, 2009)

In today's competitive and dynamic global business environment, it is very important for organisations to have effective HR systems that select, develop and produce a level of performance that can justify organisational investments (Du Plessis, Nel, San Diego, 2013). According to Dessler (2011) for businesspeople, globalisation's essential characteristic means that increased globalisation meant increased competition and increased competition meant additional pressure to be world-class with higher productivity at lower costs.

HR managers who are knowledgeable in effective workforce management also play critical roles in companies, to support future competitive endeavours. It will be even more challenging for countries that for historical and political reasons have not long been engaged in the open economic market and Laos is one example of such a country

A recent New Zealand Herald newspaper article (McIvor, 2011, January 28) emphasises that HR managers also play a critical role in companies that are knowledgeable in order to manage the workforce effectively and support future competitive endeavours. Managing a company's human resources effectively gives the HR manager extra hands and legs. However, this is not a straightforward matter for HR at the managerial level in the financial sector of the Lao economy.

The recruitment of Lao nationals to take managerial positions and to retain them has proven to be problematic. Initially, there were insufficient teachers and finance professionals to teach and mentor students and employees in this sector, and this resulted in low numbers of graduate students in finance, as well as employees who were not suitably qualified to work for international organisations investing in Laos (Bank of Laos, 2008; United Nations Development Programme, 2006).

Although there are two universities and five financial training institutions to provide knowledge to students on financial topics, these institutions do not possess the level of skill, knowledge and capacity needed to provide relevant training for Lao students. In many cases, lecturers need to upgrade both their financial knowledge and real world experience in order to effectively apply modern study materials rather than rely on outdated resources and processes (United Nations Development Programme, 2006).

Currently Lao students have to look to foreign countries such as, Thailand, Australia, New Zealand and Singapore in order to gain relevant qualifications and real world

experience. Upon completion of their studies, some did not return to Laos because of more lucrative career opportunities in the countries in which they had studied. For those who did return, it is often difficult to adapt to a local system of working that is different from the countries where they had studied (United Nations Development Programme, 2006). Educated people are needed in a country such as Laos to maintain the financial industry's competitive advantage.

2. Problem statement

The problem is that for many years Laos was in political turmoil, with significant loss of life, and many of the more highly educated people moved to other countries as refugees in order to pursue better lives. Hence, Laos has had to wait for a new generation of qualified employees to fill the gap (Gifford, 2003). Laos was in a very weak condition, with a dearth of opportunity, a lack of capacity, and complete isolation from the rest of the world.

From the 1990s onwards, Laos began to integrate into an open economic system, changing from a small and self-contained market into a larger economy that actively sought to trade across borders. There was a sharp increase in foreign direct investment flow into Laos and, at the same time, the emphasis was put on people who could be recruited in senior positions in local banks and other financial institutions. They began to experience a need for knowledgeable staff in higher positions, in order to fill their employment vacancies and expand the scope of their businesses. This in turn led to an increase in demand for financial sector managers with the necessary knowledge and qualifications to take the country into this new environment and also retaining them.

3. Aims of the study

An increasingly competitive nature of business today means that all managers, including HR managers must justify their plans and contributions in measurable terms in order to gain a competitive advantage (Dessler, 2011; Du Plessis, Nel, San Diego, 2013).

The aim of this study is to identify the importance of retaining senior management resources in the banking industry in Laos from the perception of the relationship between human resource management and organisational performance.

4. Literature review

Nel, Werner, Poisat, Sono, Du Plessis & Nqalo (2011, p. 6) define HRM as "the productive use of people in achieving the organisation's strategic objectives and the satisfaction of individual employee needs"; and Marchington & Wilkinson (2008, p. 8) posit that "human resource management is a distinctive approach to employment management which seeks to achieve competitive advantage through the strategic development of a highly committed and capable workforce using an array of cultural, structural and personnel techniques". These definitions highlight how HRM seeks to manage knowledge assets, and potential employees in organisations, in order to achieve high levels of performance.

The general purpose of HRM is to make sure that the organisation is able to achieve success through people, because people are the organisation's key source of competitive advantage through their commitment, adaptability and high level of skill as well as performance. Organisational performance, therefore, mainly depends on them (Armstrong, 2009; Dessler, 2011; Lengnick-Hall & Lengnick-Hall, 2003). HRM also sets out a strategy that focuses on supporting plans for improving organisational effectiveness, fostering policies in areas of knowledge management, developing talented managerial staff, and making the organisation a good place to work (Dessler, 2011; Noe et al., 2010).

HRM is a major force in organisational success and a key contributor to the consistent improvement of the organisation's performance (Huntley & Kleniner, 2005; Hussey, 2002). Like many other areas of management, HRM involves setting policies, formulating plans and trying to make the best decisions possible (Brewster, 2004). HR policy involves how people should be managed in the organisation and how employees should be treated. The policy provides guidance on how HR issues should be dealt with, for example employment issues, discipline, capability and redundancy (Noe et al., 2010).

The aim of an HR policy is to ensure that HR issues can be dealt with consistently in accordance with the values of the organisation in line with certain defined principles (Byars & Rue, 2008). The overall HR policy determines how the organisation fulfils its social responsibilities to employees and sets out its attitudes towards them, and shows its values and beliefs about how employees should be treated (Armstrong, 2009; Rodriguez & Rios, 2007).

In the new knowledge economy, the emphasis is more on people and they have become a key source of competitive advantage for many organisations and this has important implications for their management. Human capital is a key resource for most organisations, regardless whether they are manufacturing or service companies, large or small domestic or international, profit or non-profit, government or non-government (Byars & Rue, 2008; Cascio, 2010; Zupan & Kase, 2007).

Thus, it is critical to recruit and select the right employees who will be well integrated and contribute to their best competence (Marchington & Wilkinson, 2008; Noe et al., 2010). An HR department should prepare to recruit talented people in the labour market and then find ways to motivate, train, compensate and retain those skilled individuals (Byars & Rue, 2008; Hussey, 2002). In today's competitive market, organisations have to engage in strategic planning in order to survive and prosper.

Strategic management is a process, a way to deal with the competitive challenges organisations face, a pattern that integrates an organisation's crucial aims (Noe et al., 2010). It is clear that HRM plays a significant part in organisational performance. This factor indicates the transition of HRM from a traditional service to the newer service of business partner services and strategic partner (Dessler, 2011; Noe et al., 2010). Some organisations have even renamed their HR generalist to "business partner" in order to show their support and indicate a strategic working relationship between the HR department and other departments (Noe et al., 2010).

In many organisations the amount of time HRM departments devote to traditional administrative tasks is decreasing, and they are increasing their roles as a strategic business partner. Redman & Wilkinson (2009) also agree that strategic approach might require HR functions to evolve from a simply administrative role to become a responsible strategic partner in order to contribute to the organisational achievement. The role of strategic partner focuses on processes rather than employees and this can lead to HR managers neglecting the primary role of improving employee well-being (Redman & Wilkinson, 2009).

 Furthermore, having new technology, the Internet for instance, can make administration of service such as, routine activities, maintaining records and providing self-service to employees, more efficient and effective. This provides more time for HR to focus on strategic issues. However, organisations need to make sure that their HRM functions are creating value for the firm and managers should become more responsible for HRM practices (Noe *et al.*, 2010).

New technologies and management approaches are additional challenges for human resource managers. Technology has affected human resource managers in many ways, the most obvious is in information systems and is changing almost everything businesses do (Dessler, 2011). Where previously the traditional function of accounting and payroll calculations were used these have been replaced by computerised information systems (Byars & Rue, 2008). Cyberspace and the Internet are keys in changing the traditional way many human resource managers operate. For example, the Internet can be used for engaging in valuable networking and discussion. Furthermore, some organisations establish Web-based human resource systems that allow employees to complete their human resource tasks online, and enabling them to view current and historical pay information and a range of benefits. This all means an increasing need for human managers to learn such new technology (Byars & Rue, 2008; Dessler, 2011).

As the Laos continues to integrate into the global community, organisations in the Lao financial sector need leaders who can make good decisions and plan good business strategies. As Armstrong (2009) notes those people are the organisation's key source of competitive advantage, and an appropriate range of HR policies and processes need to be developed and implemented in order to positively impact on firm performance. However, without such leaders, some organisations can find themselves in difficult situations when taking part in domestic and international trade, and a failure to take full advantage of existing and future opportunities can often be attributed to a lack of human capital in the form of effective leadership skills.

People are the key factor to organisational success, innovation and profitability. So recruiting employees and maintaining the employment relationship is considered a crucial step in framing the organisational structure and the future of the organisation (Central Bank of Egypt, 2007). HR managers also make sure that employees are placed in appropriate positions with the right skills and at the right time. The following stage is developing and maintaining those employees (Caye *et al.*, 2008; Milla, 2006). HR managers should focus on ways to build employees' skills, motivation and commitment to meet the needs of organisations. Remuneration and benefits, training and development are the key elements to work forwards achieving those desires (Du Plessis & Frederick, 2012; Bartol *et al.*, 2008; Caye *et al.*, 2008; Milla, 2006).

Finding, evaluating and assigning individuals to work are all fundamental processes of staffing the organisation. Appropriate selection tests and strictly controlled recruitment will gives those employees who are selected a sense of quality, and high expectation of performance (Webster, 2011). Recruiting suitable employees is difficult, time consuming and there is no guarantee of getting the right employees, therefore, once the organisation has done it. HR managers should ensure that they stay (Du Plessis, Paine, Botha, 2012; Caye *et al.*, 2008; Milla, 2006). Although employees leave their jobs for many reasons, the main reason is that employees choose to leave their managers rather than their organisations because the workplace culture is driven from the top. If the management level does not perform its job properly then employees are unlikely to obtain job satisfaction and they will seek it elsewhere (Main, 2008).

5. Methodology

5.1. Sample Selection

The scope of this research focuses on HRM in the financial sector and the shortages of HR at managerial level in Laos. The banking sector plays an important part in the Lao economy and therefore, the survey was conducted on a sample frame population of the leading banks in Laos. The sampling technique for this research is representative sampling and thus offers the entire population of employees an equal opportunity to get involved. Another reason for choosing representative sampling is that it is commonly used for surveys and allows for statistical analysis and summarised characteristics of the population from the sample (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). The key selection and participation condition for this study was respondents who work in the banks. As of 10 October 2010, the total number of banking employees in the three banks was 626.

5.2. Pilot Study

After finishing translating the questionnaire and in-depth interview questions into Lao the researcher also conducted a pilot study in Laos. Six banking employees who worked in the Indochina Bank in Laos were invited to be involved in this study. Before distributing the questionnaire of the survey these employees were asked to give constructive feedback on translation in order to avoid losing any concepts in translation.

5.3. Questionnaire Data Collection

The questionnaires were collected by the researcher on 24 November 2010, 26 November and 30 November in the banks of Lao Foreign Trade, Lao Viet bank and ANZ bank in Laos respectively. The reasons for choosing these organisations are Bank of Lao Foreign Trade is the biggest state owned bank enterprise and also the leading bank in Laos, having over 420 employees. Lao-Viet Bank is a joint venture bank between Laos and Vietnam and it has branches both in Laos and Vietnam with over 130 employees. ANZ Bank in Laos employs more than 106 staff and it is a foreign direct investment bank.

5.4. Interview data collection

The researcher visited the HR managers in three banks to conduct three pre-arranged interviews. The interviews took about 40 to 60 minutes for each interview with the HR manager from the three banks. The researcher asked the HR managers 13 main questions during the interview. Two interviews were recorded while the one HR manager did not feel comfortable to make audio recording while the interview was in progress and preferred the researcher take notes. The entire interview process was conducted with confidentially and in a highly respectful way from both sides. After finishing the interviews both parties still carried on some discussion on HR issues, this shows that the HR managers were interested in these issues.

5.5. Data Analysis

A quantitative methodology was utilised to analyse the all completed questionnaires and responses data from the survey was entered into a programme called Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). This programme utilises quantitative analysis in terms to manage, analyse and present the data. The researcher chose this program because of its useful functions in analysing large amounts of quantitative data and it also facilitated the researcher to carry out several statistical tests precisely and swiftly; for example, presenting graphs, tables and charts. Graphical presentation is a helpful technique for presenting basic descriptive statistical data that will helps readers understand the entire survey more easily. The researcher used a descriptive method to analyse the survey results, for instance, frequency distributions, standard deviations and mean in order to examine the data in more detail.

6. Analysis of the results

The focus of this research is to identify the importance of recruiting and retaining senior management resources in the banking industry in Laos from the perception of the relationship between human resource management and organisational performance.

6.1. Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment and retention are important HRM processes and having the right people filling the right positions from the beginning will help the organisations save both time and money. It is interesting to note that 41.8% of the respondents (from the three banks) understood that the banks should recruit people by promoting within the organisation. Retention of high performance employees is the primary focus of HRM practices. However, it becomes more challenging for employers in a competitive market today and organisations should provide good working conditions and motivate employees to reduce turnover. Retention is about keeping the employees who are producing the results that the organisation needs (Frank, Finnegan, & Taylor, 2004). With employees being acknowledged as valuable assets and a competitive advantage of organisations employers are facing more challenges in the competitive market environment in not only looking to retain high performance people, but all those employees who are meeting organisational needs (State Trainning Board, 2007).

Respondents, (48.3%), from this study suggested that better working conditions and bonus schemes are the best methods to retain high performance people. The results show that HR managers have the ability to attract, develop and retain individuals who can contribute the most valuable outcomes to the organisations by providing good working conditions and appropriate remuneration. Respondents were asked to provide an evaluative rating of the HR functions to enhance retention that apply for HR in their organisations. Respondents from the three banks revealed that in general this is viewed as positive. This suggests that all of the aspects; for instance, meeting day-to-day functions in respondents' organisations, developing employees' careers, financial reward for employees, recognition of employees' contribution to organisational success, securing compliance with employment regulation and improving employees competencies to achieve business targets, are key dimensions for enhancing high performance employee retention.

In study a done by Paine (2009) recruitment and retention were identified as the most commonly cited priority in the HR function, i.e. to recruit and retain key staff and a total of 91.6% of the respondents in her study regarded as highly important. Clearly, HR practitioners in her survey are preoccupied with this activity. The intensifying competition for talent makes recruitment and retention a key priority for organisations, and it is imperative for HR practitioners to rethink their organisations' plans to attract and retain employees. This research found that recruitment and retention are significant parts in the HRM process and are key contributors to organisational performance in achieving fruitful outcomes.

6.2. Recruiting

Figure 1: Recruiting employees
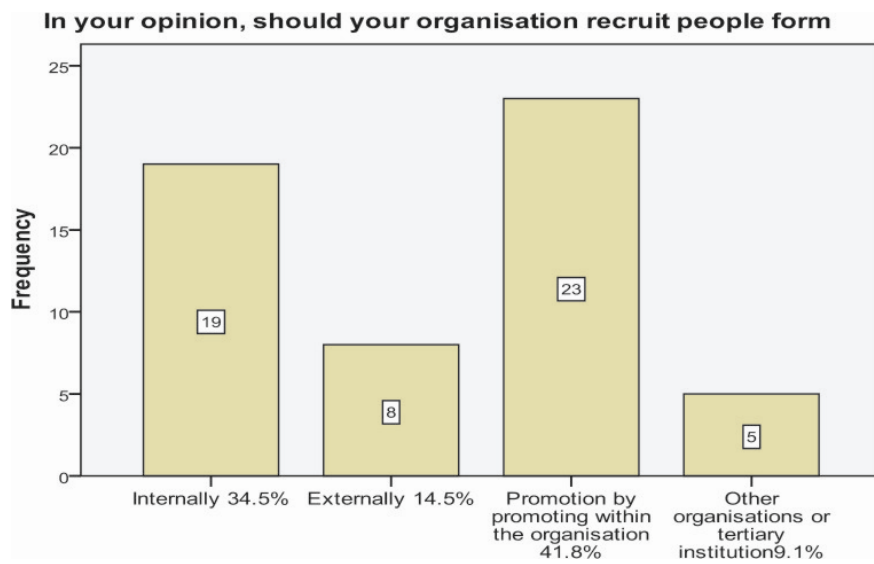
Respondents had to give their opinion about where organisations should recruit people from in an effort to retain their employees. The respondents were offered four options and had to choose one: internally, externally, by promoting within the organisation and other organisations or tertiary institutions. The results of this question are displayed in Figure 1, above, and reveal that 41.8 % of the respondents believe that an organisation should recruit people by promoting within the organisation, internally 34.5%, externally 14.5% and other organisations or tertiary institutions 9.1%

6.3. Retaining

Figure 2: Opinion on retaining key staff
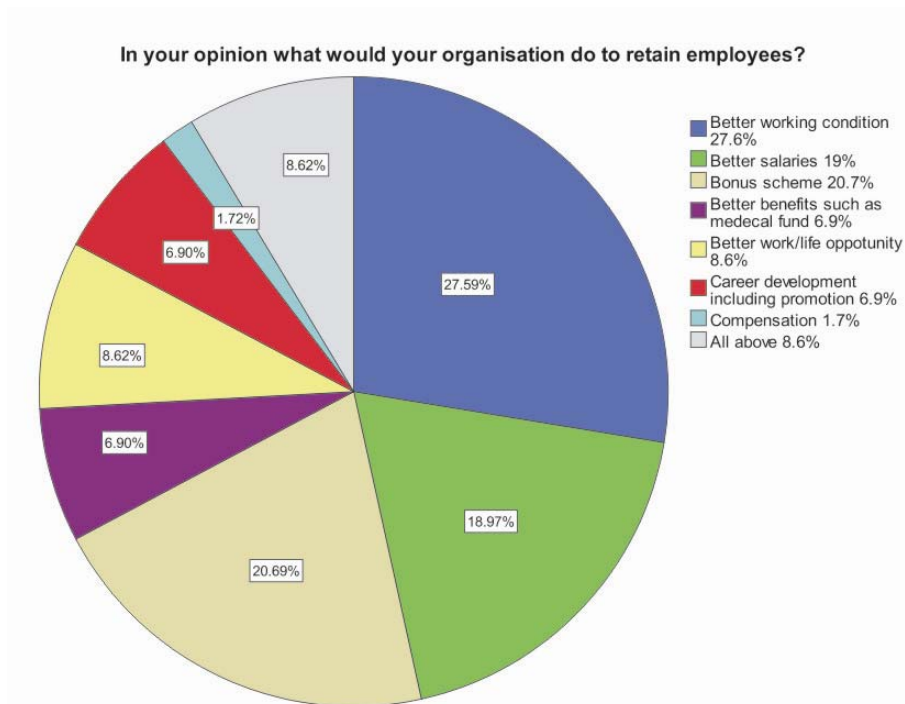
Furthermore, the respondents had a few options to give the researchers an idea what employers could do to retain their employees. Higher salaries and bonuses are very close and also the second and third highest on 19% and 20.7% respectively. What seems to be more important for employees is better working conditions on 27.6% which is well ahead of the second important issue, bonus scheme (20.7%).

Medical fund and career development both achieved only 6.9% which is significant in that employees are more interested in working for a bonus (individually) and to get recognition in monetary value for it than to develop and enhance their careers. It can be

deduced that the employees maybe don't understand that they have to develop their careers to be able to be promoted in their own organisations.

7. Recommendations for hr managers

- Lao banks should ensure that their HR managers have a sound knowledge of diverse cultures because they recruit globally.

- Assessment of the organisational HR policies and employee guidelines to make ensure that the right people are recruited for the right job.

- The HR managers should provide clear expectation from the bank's HRM department in order to get employees to know what the bank's policy is regarding promotion or recruiting within the bank for senior positions.

- HR managers should implement and maintain competitive pay practices and benefit programmes to foster a motivational climate for employees

8. Conclusion

The research focuses on investigating HRM practices in three banks in Laos, Bank of Lao Foreign Trade, Lao Viet Bank and ANZ Bank in Laos. Collecting data and studying the current HRM practices in these banks was carried out with the emphasis on people to identify better ways for selection, recruitment, retention of senior managers.

The research executed interviews with the HR managers from these banks and also conducted a questionnaire survey of employees. The researcher achieved expected results from these banks. In analysing the results, the researcher observed that an increasingly critical role of HRM is to influence the banks' management in order to enable these banks to remain competitive. HRM is a necessary managerial function for providing effective and fair policies to create and control relationships in the work place.

Recruitment and retention are key challenges faced by HRM practices in Laos while the nation is expanding its economy. According to the HR manager at the ANZ Bank, recruitment is a real problem for his bank because there are about 10 different banks operating in Laos at the moment and to attract the right talented people is very important. To attract potential candidates, every bank has to provide reasonable policies based on the local market conditions and understand what candidates need, for example, providing employees with training and development opportunities and better working conditions. The HR manager of ANZ Bank in Laos went on to say, despite offering good options, the pool of talent is limited in Laos. Therefore, the bank sometimes has to employ workers because they need a person to fill a certain position, even if that person is not the right one for the job. This clearly shows that shortages of HR people have impacted on banking recruitment and these banks have to come up with good strategies to attract potential candidates in their workplaces.

Retention is another challenge for Laos and these banks have to make retention of senior managers a primary focus of HR management practices. It is becoming more challenging in today's competitive market. The HR managers from these banks stated

that most of their employees left for better working conditions and too often, they did not give any warning signs before leaving. The results from this research also indicated that 48.3% of respondents from the three banks understand that better working conditions and an effective bonus scheme are the main factors for employee retention. This is a clear indication that if the organisations do not treat their employees properly, the best people will have different options and be the first to leave.

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REDEFINING SOCIAL DESIRABILITY: POLICIES FOR ALTERNATIVE FAMILIES IN EUROPE AND IN ROMANIA

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Abstract*: The crisis in family policies of the welfare state is not only caused by economic and demographic factors but also because these policies have not been adjusted to the changing values and lifestyles of the population. The welfare state has as its main target group a stable, legally constituted nuclear family with a male breadwinner in the context of a heterosexual marriage. However, the welfare state is not yet prepared for alternative families, such as: dual-career families, multi-generational families, single-parent families, cohabitations, homosexual couples, blended families, trans-national families, etc. This paper draws on a research project rather than on completed research. We intend to review more potential explanations for analysing the recent reforms of policies for alternative families but our focus is on the role of paradigm shifts at national and supranational (EU) levels, with a mini-case study on Romania. The recent paradigm shift is the result of a permanent and mutual adjustment between political mobilisations, governments and public opinion. The EU approach regarding alternative families originated in the family policies of its member states, but afterwards it became autonomous and began to influence domestic family policies, as was the case in Romania. The methods we intend to use in order to answer our research objectives and hypotheses are based mainly on secondary analyses: documentary analysis, discourse analysis, and analysis of databases of opinion polls.*

Keywords*: family policy, alternative families, paradigm shift, European Union, harmonization.*

1. Introduction – paradigms and policy change

Many studies about family policies are interested in a 'technical' perspective, such as assessing budgets, instruments, institutional machineries and impact. Another approach is constructivism, which studies the complex interactions between stakeholders. Our perspective is different: we want to clarify the role that latent paradigms play in changing family policy. Our assumption is that family policies do not necessarily change in order to improve their technical aspects or as a result of interactions between stakeholders, but rather change as a result of paradigm shifts.

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The word paradigm has a long history and many meanings: pattern, example, common representation, model, *Weltanschauung*, matrix, referential etc. Thomas Kuhn (1970) has used this word to study the evolution of science. In anthropology, Victor Turner (1977: 61-80) invented the *root paradigm* as a key-concept in explaining social change. More recently, Peter Hall (1993: 275-296) re-launched this word as a tool for analysing the ideas underlying public policy processes. Our understanding is different: we use paradigm to mean the synthesis of latent values and operational goals of a policy. In our view, discovering the paradigm is very useful in understanding the real issues of a particular policy, and in identifying its silences regarding the marginalization and invisibility of certain social groups and topics.

Paradigms are not immovable. They change because of endogenous and exogenous factors, economic crises, social conflicts, cultural shifts, new social expectations, zeitgeists and intellectual fashions. For instance, the influence of economic, financial and demographic factors on welfare state crises is undeniable, but many studies underestimate the role that values and lifestyle changes play. The welfare state has as its main target group a stable, heterosexual, legally constituted nuclear family with a male breadwinner. However, the welfare state is not yet prepared for alternative family models, such as: dual-career families, single-parent families, cohabitations, homosexual couples, blended families, trans-national families, etc. Therefore, welfare state reform needed a new paradigm in order to cope with the new trends in family evolution.

Our research questions:

– What are the main presuppositions – latent and manifest, pragmatic and ideological – that found different family policies?

– How these presuppositions influenced by policies regarding alternative families, especially at the European Union (EU) level?

– How has accession to the EU changed Romania's approach regarding alternative families?

Our hypotheses:

– Family policies in Europe changed their paradigms from social control to a more humane and anti-oppressive approach

– This paradigm shift encouraged a more favourable approach towards alternative families as a result of permanent and mutual adjustments between political mobilizations, governments and public opinion

– The EU approach regarding alternative families combined different policies of its member states, but it became eventually autonomous, influencing domestic family policies, as was the case in Romania.

The methods we intend to use in order to answer our research objectives and hypotheses are based mainly on secondary analyses: documentary analysis, discourse analysis, content analysis, analysis of statistical data and opinion polls.

2. Why are governments concerned about implementing family policies?

We can summarize some possible, partially overlapping explanations:

– To control families and their behaviour and impose a desirable model family: social control.

– To ensure economic development: utilitarianism.

– Because governments were forced by social movements: political mobilization.

– To legitimize the political regime: legitimation.

– Because governments value human rights: humanism (anti-oppression).

– Combinations of the above.

Social control: A very important issue for the family policies – even if indirectly – is controlling demographic behaviours, especially fertility, in order to achieve military, ideological or economic goals. Family policies are the result of a long historical formation of the modern state and of dramatic ruptures from traditional society. Governments needed to control 'pathological' manifestations accompanying these ruptures. Therefore, family policies promote stability of families and their capacity to care and provide for their members. The paradigm of social control is based on social and political pragmatisms: rights, benefits and social services are delivered in exchange for respect for the normative order and social peace. The paradigm of control is characterised by the stick and carrot: a passive social protection and a restrictive family law, which punishes any deviance. Foucault's theory of normalization (1976: 137) is essential in understanding why governments are interested in imposing certain family behaviours in controlling privacy, the human body, eroticism, fertility and sexuality. Those who do not behave in a desirable manner are considered abnormal and treated accordingly.

Utilitarianism: Family policies are justified because the family is a reservoir of human resources and investing in human capital is productive. This perspective is illustrated by the works of Esping-Andersen (2002: 1-24; 26-67) and Giddens (2006: 378-388), for example. According to these two authors, governments must invest in active social policies and be considerate of productive target groups: women, youth, and children.

Political mobilisation: Target groups become aware of existing inequalities and they begin to organize themselves in social movements - trade unions, political parties, associations - putting pressure on governments (Cameron, 1974: 138-171). It is only because of these movements and interest groups that governments begin to grant rights and benefits to families.

Humanism: The modern states – except totalitarian ones, of course - experienced a slow evolution towards humanism, compassion and empathy. Family policies begin to value human rights as an end in itself. Families - and especially the marginalised and disadvantaged ones - have the right to have free access to social services, to receive

various benefits, and to be respected and protected without any other ulterior motive. The humanistic perspective is consonant with an existing trend in the 'bourgeois' public sphere. Habermas (1991: 48-56) explains modern humanism by the effort of the bourgeoisie to legitimize their rights by transferring the concept of human rights to the whole of humanity.

New family policies no longer speak of beneficiaries but of customers who have rights, who can choose, who can decide what is best for them and who are involved in the design and implementation of family policies (Croft and Beresford, 1998: 111). Instead of homogenisation and equalisation around a desirable model, there is diversity, equal opportunities, and affirmative action. The humanist paradigm is, at the same time, anti-oppressive, that is to say:

> 'This approach is concerned with resisting forms of social and cultural oppression and developing a transformative politics. The precondition for human emancipation is seen to be the recovery of the voices of the oppressed.' (O'Brien and Penna: 55)

The anti-oppressive paradigm is in opposition to the classical welfare state. The most important values of the anti-oppressive paradigm are anti-discrimination and empowerment. These new operational objectives and instruments are complemented by a new vocabulary: social integration is replaced by inclusion, equality by equal opportunities, protection by participation, beneficiaries by customers and non-discrimination by affirmative action.

3. Latent paradigms and the desirable family model of the welfare state

The dominant paradigm of the welfare state is, in our opinion, social control, not only because of its anti-liberal roots but also because it conceives social solidarity as a trade-off between governments and people (Esping-Andersen, 1989: 10-14). The welfare state wants to shape family behaviour by using social protection as a means of social control. This is the government that decides - instead of people themselves - what is best for them: i.e., people should marry and have children to become eligible for family allowances and tax cuts. Certain behaviours are encouraged and others discouraged. Thus, the family policies of the welfare state invade the private sphere and try to impose a desirable family model. This model is the nuclear-conjugal family, formed by a monogamous, heterosexual, and officially married couple (consisting of a housewife and a male breadwinner) and their children born after the marriage. This model is eligible for most social programmes and desirable because it is more stable and, therefore, more controllable. Women are forced to stay married because they are economically dependent, and in this way fertility is better served, for the strength and greatness of the nation. This type of family better serves the political control of the body, sexuality and motherhood. Without the support of the extended family, the nuclear family is more dependent on state support and is therefore more disciplined. It can be used more easily as an agency of socialisation and transmission of the dominant political culture.

The result of this policy, centred on this family model, is the exclusion, marginalisation and invisibility of other family models, for which there are no specific social policies. Instead, alternative family structures are seen as social and personal failures and as threats against the 'fragile' desirable model, which hence needs to be protected. This typical attitude is clearly recognized by one of the welfare state's fathers, Beveridge, who considered illegitimacy as synonymous with immorality (Weeks, 1981: 235).

4. Emerging alternative families

We have already operationalized what is the desirable family model of the classical welfare state. An inventory of alternative families will always be incomplete: multi-generational families, single parent families, dual-career families, polygamous families, cohabitations, homosexual couples, adoptive families, blended families, transnational families, single, childless couples, communes, serial monogamy.

The complexity of factors that changed the structure, function and size of the family has been extensively studied and described, from various perspectives, even (Bumpass, 1990: 483-498; Roussel, 1992: 149). These factors can be classified into two major categories: exogenous (structural factors of the macro-social context) and endogenous (characteristics of family members and family background factors). For the first category we can mention the increase in the average level of education and employment of women, promoting their autonomy of decision. This progress is, however, counteracted by new social risks: precarious employment, single parenthood, and difficulties in reconciling career and family life. For the second category we can refer to the theory of rational choice: the traditional family model is no longer the optimal solution for personal life because people locate their fulfilment outside of the family. Axiological and attitudinal changes are very important as well. Survival (physical or symbolic) no longer depends on the family group, and people are able to build their own social identity by themselves. These mutations are objectified by demographic phenomena: declining birth, fertility and marriage rates, increased divorce rates and high numbers of children that are born out of wedlock, the growing rate of celibacy and cohabitations (Eurostat, 2013). The frequency and visibility of alternative family models were favoured by changes in current public opinion, toward tolerance and acceptance of atypical sexual behaviours and greater sexual freedom (European Social Survey, 2010).

All these developments have contributed to the erosion of the ideal type of family favoured by the classical welfare state. Paradoxically, this type became statistically marginal but is still politically dominant, in a latent manner at least, as shown by the analysis of official discourse and analysis of budgets. Cohabitations and dual-career couples have become the majority and family policies have finally followed these changes, in most European countries:

> 'Only the Mediterranean countries, Luxembourg and Ireland still have a relatively high share of one breadwinner households (over 50%). The share is the lowest in Sweden, Denmark, Portugal, Belgium and the UK (under 30%)... In the Netherlands, the UK and Germany, the dominant norm is a household in which the husband is working fulltime and the wife part time' (Letablier, Luci, Math and Thévenon, 2009: 100).

5. Interplay between the EU and its member states on family policies

The EU is not a supranational welfare state and its social dimension is not just a translation of national social policies to the European level. There is interaction and mutual and permanent adjustment between the EU and its member states. This interaction is visible during the slow process of changing social paradigms. At the beginning of European integration, the continental social model[1] - based on social control - of the founding states was dominant. Gradually, successive enlargements and institutional maturation of the EU contributed to the creation of a specific and autonomous social vision in relation to its national social paradigms, though stillinspired by them. Once established, this view has had a rather strong influence on the social policies of the member states, especially in the political vocabulary, principles and legislative harmonization. Still, the national contexts are too different in order to implement a real convergence:

> '…although domestic actors have participated in the processes stemming from the soft acquis, and have in many cases adopted the corresponding EU discourse, they have often not translated this into domestic policy changes. Such national responses are possible because of the very nature of the hard and soft social acquis as well as of the absence of effective monitoring and sanctioning mechanisms. Accordingly, national actors may be in a position to seriously limit the impact of the social acquis in their domestic context' (Keune, 2008, p.17).

The EU approach regarding families has changed a lot since the Treaty of Rome (1957), which contains more or less implicit references to women, gender equality - especially at the workplace, protection of children, and protection of immigrant families. This approach seems to be influenced by the continental corporatist model of the founding states, as demonstrated by the keywords in the document: industrial relations, social partners, social dialogue, employment security, equality between women and men (Treaty of Rome, 1957). Successive enlargements have caused major changes in the European paradigm, adding utilitarian (after the accession of the United Kingdom) and anti-oppressive dimensions (after the Nordic enlargement: Denmark, Finland, and Sweden). This paradigm shift is visible in the reformist documents: The Green Paper (1993) and The White Paper (1994).

The regional social model most open towards the needs of alternative families is the Nordic one, based on a humanist and anti-oppressive paradigm. The axiological foundation of social Europe has been greatly influenced by the Nordic model. In fact, the EU represents a kind of vehicle spreading the social values of the Nordic model at the European level. Gradually, the existence and rights of alternative families came to be recognized in the European social *acquis* (Table 1).

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[1] The regional social models in Europe are: Continental, Anglo-Saxon, Nordic (Scandinavian), Eastern, and Mediterranean (see also Hemerijck, 2002: 173-217).

Table 1: An European synthesis?

National level	Supranational level (documents; examples)	Keywords	Target families
Founding states : social control	Corporatism, passive approach [Rome Treaty, certain directives before1990 : Equal pay (75/117/EEC) ; Equal treatment (76/207/EEC; 79/7/EEC); Equal treatment in occupational social security schemes (86/378/EEC); Equal treatment of self-employed workers (86/613/EEC)]	Support, protection, integration, social security, solidarity, equality, equal treatment, assistance	'Classic' family Working mothers
Anglo-Saxon model: utilitarianism (economic dimension subordinates the social one)	Women's labour; training; flexibility [Directive Maternal Leave (92/85/EEC) Organisation of working time (93/104/EC) Framework Agreement on part-time work (97/81/EC) European Employment Strategy (1997)]	Human capital, human resources, investing in people, long-life learning, activation, flexibility	Dual-career families Single parent families Adoptive families
Nordic model : anti-oppressive policies	Individualisation ; anti- discrimination [Directives parental leave (96/34/EC, 2006/54/EC, 2010/18/EU); Burden of proof in cases of discrimination based on sex (97/80/EC); Non-discrimination (2000/43/EC, 2000/78/EC); Equal opportunities strategy for 2010-2014; Action Plan Implementing the Stockholm Programme COM(2010) 171; EU policy framework to fight violence against women (2010/2209(INI)); Common criteria concerning minimum guarantee of resources; Free movement (EU) 492/2011, Directive 2004/38/EC]	Inclusion, rights, human dignity, freedom, person, equal opportunities, participation, diversity	Singles, Heterosexual and homosexual cohabitations Single parents Transnational families Blended families

Source: http://eur-lex.europa.eu, accessed 20 April 2013.

One can find a very prominent expression of utilitarianism in the work of Esping-Andersen: 'A recast family policy and, in particular, one which is powerfully child-oriented, must be regarded as social investment' (Esping-Andersen, 2002: 40). The same author observed changes in family patterns induced by the employment of women: 'All this mirrors heightened individual freedom of choice, but also insecurity and risk' (Esping-Andersen, 2002: 13). One of the flaws of the utilitarian paradigm is the difficulty in employing all family members because many of them cannot work, being too sick, too old, too little trained…

Discourse analysis of the essential documents for the European approach on family (directives, strategies, green and white papers ...) shows the increasing contribution of the Nordic model in configuring the supranational European paradigm: adaptable arrangements, flexicurity, equal opportunities, social inclusion, and participation. The main objectives of anti-oppressive family policies are no longer procreation and child care, but the social inclusion of alternative families. The 'classic' family policies were oppressive, that is to say, they promoted a socially desirable family model and sanctioned alternative families, defining their needs abusively. On the contrary, anti-oppressive policies consider identity as a key-issue for the definition of needs. Public authorities must respond to the real needs of target groups, each of them with their specific identities. The risk of this paradigm is the fragmentation and weakening of the nation, divided into groups and factions, and, consequently, the fragmentation of social solidarity. Another risk is the difficulty for these target groups, which usually have a disadvantaged status, to become capable of self-definition of their needs. The anti-oppressive family policy gives legitimacy and support to alternative families and for new lifestyles, allowing the 'marginal' to become the real target of family policy.

In conclusion, the EU vision on family policy is a chronological synthesis of the family policies of its member states, but it eventually became autonomous and influential through various documents, directives, strategies, a open method of coordination, etc... A critical evaluation of the role of the EU in family matters detects, in our view, favourable and less favourable aspects for alternative families. For example, we have identified in many European documents the growing contribution of the humanist and anti-oppressive paradigm: eliminating the monopoly of marriage; neutrality regarding gender, sexual orientation and marital status; incentives to work for women and single parents; inclusion of single-parent families. However, the desirability of the family with children persists: for example, social protection of the family is defined as 'support in cash or in kind related to the costs of pregnancy, childbirth and adoption, care and education of children' (Mutual Information System on Social Protection, 2010: 6-9).

6. Spectrum of policies for alternative families

It is difficult to say whether policies shape actual developments in families or if they recognize the existing developments, such as divorce, single parenthood or cohabitation. The new family policies do not consider a desirable family model but give equal opportunities to all, with even more attention paid to marginal families. Living as a couple or as a family is a choice like any other, and one lifestyle among many others. Compared to the early welfare states, social solidarity is no longer seen as the main solution to address social risks; in the presentthe emphasis is put on individual responsibility and individual effort to cope with new challenges.

Family policies in the member states of the EU share - roughly speaking - the main principles of the European paradigm, defending a pluralistic concept of the family as the basis of an emerging legislation for alternative families (McGlynn, 2006). But even if there were to be a legislative harmonization, family policies are very diverse, ranging from an explicit prohibition of certain family models, to ignorance, tolerance or tacit acceptance and, further, to their social inclusion based on the recognition of their

specific needs and identities (Table 2). The most frequent bans refer to homosexual cohabitation (and gay marriage) and polygamy (or polyandry). The paradigm shift in family policy is, usually, a gradual process, through interaction between different social and political actors, political parties, non-governmental organizations, mass media and public opinion. Slowly, the paradigm of social control loses its importance and alternative families become more and more appreciated from economic, political and cultural points of view.

For instance, single parent families have more consistent support from public policies: higher child allowances, various social services, better access to housing. Thus, we can speak of a kind of positive discrimination for these families.

Regarding dual-career families, there is a development of policies of reconciliation between work and family responsibilities of working parents. These policies are based on different paradigms: utilitarianism (using the female labour force), humanist (supporting the autonomy and rights of women, reducing the 'double burden'), and social control (controlling demographic behaviour). Some studies show the influence of political ideologies in the design of reconciliation policies: right-wing governments emphasize the role of parental leave and the function of women as caregivers, while left-wing governments develop flexible work arrangements and social services, in order to support the working parent's rapid return to the labour market (Morgan and Zippel, 2003: 49-85).

Another trend is the consideration of the rights granted to samesex couples. Often, the first manifestation of favourability to alternative families is the mechanical extension of welfare policies, social rights and services, which were initially designed for the 'classic' family model (e.g. succession, property, social security, health, adoption, protection against domestic violence, child care). However, this extension hides abusive definitions of the needs of alternative families and neglects their specific needs. Thus, they are forced to normalize, in order to be accepted as a 'legitimate' target for family policies. For example, a 'normal' gay couple must be relatively stable, monogamous, loving, just nearly having a 'normal' household. In our opinion, this simple extension perhaps meets the principle of equality, but it does not meet the aspirations of those who choose alternative family models in order to escape the social control exercised by secular or religious authorities. This extension of rights and benefits recognizes implicitly the relationship between rights and freedoms as a zero-sum game: if one wants equal rights then he must accept restrictions on freedom - andconversely- more freedom means fewer rights.

The spread of the anti-oppressive paradigm provides specific family policies in customized policies instead of ready-made policies. Should we abandon collective rights in exchange for individually negotiated rights and obligations? In our opinion it is perfectly possible to ensure equal access to rights and benefits for all family models and to all people, by diversifying social services and by guarantying free choice. This finding raises questions regarding the future and the necessity of family policies: if the individual becomes the target of social policies and the traditional family an obsolete model, then family policies represent an action without object. Although there are public interventions directed to individuals, groups and communities, these

interventions also need to consider individual autonomy; therefore, references to the family are no longer needed. These trends have been observed for quite a long time and crystallized in the concepts of defamilialisation and individualisation (Hantrais, 2004: 199). Individuals become (through the development of services) free of their family obligations.

Table 2: Spectrum of policies for alternative families

Same sex couples	Cohabitations	Dual- career families	Single-parent families	Immigrants/ Transnational families
- Non-discrimination - Acceptance into the mainstream: visibility, respect, representation, status - Civil partnership - Marriage - Adoption of children - Various social services and benefits (...)	- Rejecting pejorative terms (illegitimacy, cohabitation) from the public and legal language - Equal rights for children born out of wedlock - Right to succession - Alimony - Allowances - Protection against domestic violence - Registration	- Child Care Services - Nursery Schools - Various parental leaves - Free choice allowance - Part-time employment - Conciliation policies focused on parents of young children - Lack of instruments to achieve a more equal distribution of family responsibilities between men and women, especially for the care of elderly or other dependent persons	- Positive discrimination - Larger, diversified, and consistent family benefits - Social assistance, social services - Tax deductions and exemptions - Incentives for divorced or separated parents for maintaining relationships with their children	- Right of residence - Non-discrimination and equal treatment at the workplace - Equal pay - Access to housing - Child allowances - Social benefits for inactive persons - Education and scholarships for children - Social Minima - Reduction of expenses for travel

Source: personal analysis of Council of Europe Family Policy Database, 2009.

7. Policies for alternative families in Romania

Our assumption regarding the development of these policies in Romania is the slow evolution from the paradigm of social control to a utilitarian one, with some anti-oppressive accents. However, this evolution is not the result of endogenous factors of Romanian society, but rather of exogenous ones, such as EU influence during Romania's accession and integration.

Transposing the social acquis into Romanian legislation, devising new institutions for implementing family policies, the action plans, national strategies and programmes – all

of these things contributed to significant changes in family policy paradigms in Romania. Absorption of structural funds contributed as well.

EU pressure modified even the language (the jargon) used by formal documents when referring to family. Vocabulary and the general tone are timidly approaching those of European documents, using words such as: equal opportunities, social inclusion, diversity, reconciliation etc. But behind these beautiful words, deep down Romania remains committed to the traditional family. That family model was promoted by the propaganda of the Ceausescu regime and supported by today's most important social institutions and influential opinion leaders. Public opinion is generally hostile to alternative families. This is demonstrated by several opinion polls. The Romanian public is greatly influenced by the Orthodox Church, which enjoys great respect in Romanian society (Bădescu, Kivu, Popescu, Rughiniş, Sandu and Voicu, 2007: 57-62). The persistence of the traditional family and the low development of alternative families are demonstrated by statistical data. For example, these data indicate a large majority of married people and a low frequency of cohabitations (Graph 1). Studies about cohabitation in Romania (Ghebrea, 2000; Popescu, 2009) reported a polarization of this behaviour: it is more frequent in extreme segments of society, either high social statuses (students or intellectuals living in cities) or low social statuses (disadvantaged, even marginal persons). In Romania, cohabitation is not the result of a process of emancipation from tradition, or empowerment of the individual in relation to the family group, but rather the result of poverty and exclusion. Therefore, it is recurrent among the Roma minority, among people who do not have a defined job, and among those living in rural areas.

Graph 1: Marital statuses of Romania's adult population
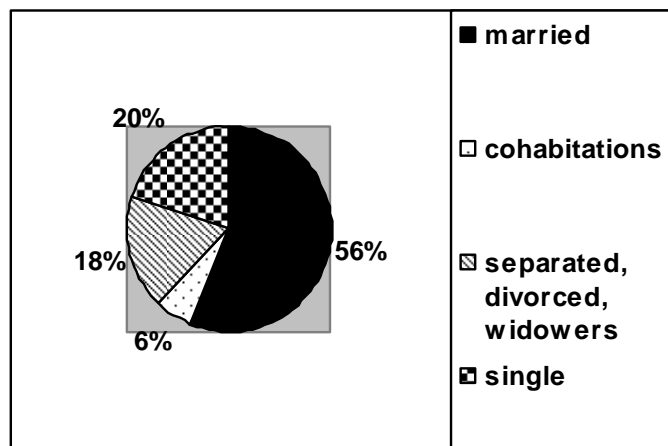
Source: Bădescu *et al.,* 2007, p.12

Homosexuality is a subject on which polls were silent. But this silence was torn by the 'Life in Couple' Barometer (2007). According to the survey, 9% of respondents acknowledged a sexual attraction to the same sex (Bădescu *et al.,* 2007: 63).

A study by the Ministry of Social Affairs (Ministerul Muncii, Familiei și Protecţiei Sociale, 2009a: 8) estimates the proportion of single-parent families to be 26% of families with children and the same proportion (26%) of children born out of wedlock, of all children. In 83% of cases, the single parent is the mother.

The number of intergenerational families is diminishing but they still account for 7% of Romanian households (Pescaru-Urse and Popescu, 2009: 10). On the contrary, the number of transnational families is rising. Many children live in Romania separated from their parents because those parents are working abroad. (Soros Foundation Romania, 2007). Usually, it is the task of the grandparents to take care of these children

Regarding dual-career families, the employment rate for women has decreased significantly after the fall of the communist regime, down to 52% (Pescaru-Urse and Popescu, 2009: 34). The distribution of domestic responsibilities between women and men remains inequitable. Social services are underdeveloped; household activities and care for dependent persons are supplied only by family members in the case for 2/3 of the population between 25 and 45 years of age. (Pescaru-Urse and Popescu, 2009: 35-38).

In conclusion, alternative families are a minority in Romania. Yet the anti-oppressive paradigm of family policy calls for equal opportunities for all, for the right to diversity and freedom of choice in family behaviour. We are now trying to analyze and evaluate the presence of this paradigm in family policies in Romania. Recently, Romania has repealed the former communist Family Code, which dated from 1953, and transposed the references to the family to the new Civil Code (Law 287/2009, Book II). Analysis of the respective texts easily demonstrates the persistence of a paradigm of social control and of paternalism, which reduces the family to a passive entity to be 'protected' and 'supported' by the state. Thus, the family is strictly defined and identified as being in the context of a monogamous heterosexual marriage (Art.258). The state supports and protects explicitly only a family model founded on marriage between spouses, spouses being a man and woman united in marriage; and marriage being a voluntary union according to legal conditions. The text of Article 258 of the new Code is almost identical to that of the Family Code of 1953, in which 'the state protects marriage, family, mother and child' (Article 1).

The tone of the text of the new Code is not only condescending but also punitive, containing a long list of prohibitions: the adoption of children is banned for the same-sex couples (Art.261), bigamy is prohibited (Art.273), marriage between relatives is prohibited (Art. 274), the marriage of the mentally impaired is prohibited, the same sex marriage is prohibited (Art. 276), marriages between persons of the same sex concluded abroad are not recognized in Romania, civil partnerships contracted between persons of the opposite sex or the same sex are not recognized in Romania, and so on. Therefore, the Code provides for the discrimination against LGBT persons. Homosexuality was recently decriminalized in Romania, but civil partnership, marriage and adoption are prohibited for LGBT persons. Spouses are obliged to live together

(chapter V, 2) so, transnational families and other families that temporarily separate the spouses do not have legal status. Cohabitations are not recognized and they are discriminated against compared to married couples. However, children born out of wedlock have the same rights as children of born of a marriage (art. 260).

There is in Romania a powerful opposition to alternative families, which are considered as a threat to the family institution and to the future of the nation. Parliament, even women parliamentarians, church, public opinion, media - everyone is against the codification of cohabitations. Nicolae Păun, a deputy of the Roma minority in the Romanian Parliament proposed in 2002 a bill on 'concubinage' (which is a deprecatory term) that recognizes equal rights between married couples and common-law unions after ten years of cohabitation, or provided they are recorded in a special register. This bill was ignored and postponed without term by the Romanian Parliament. The new Civil Code uses a subterfuge in order to recognize cohabitations: the formalisation of engagement, as a test marriage (Art. 266-270). The Code does not provide for mutual obligations between the two fiancés, or common ownership or a common surname. Property rights are regulated by the legal framework for the condominium.

The policies of the Romanian state towards dual-career families - see especially the Labour Code (Law 53/2003, republished in 2011) and The Law of Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (Law 202/2002) - are marked by a utilitarian paradigm, but the effort of harmonization with the EU acquis has some anti-oppressive accents as well. For instance, a major innovation within the policies of reconciliation between family and career has been gender neutrality of parental leave, even if there are only few fathers who profit: in average 17-20%, and the proportion is higher - 30% - in rural areas (Ministerul Muncii, Familiei şi Protecţiei Sociale, 2009b, p.4). In contrast, the reduction of working time is allowed only for mothers. The empirical result of parental leave in Romania is the consolidation of the unequal distribution of family responsibilities and of the traditional role of women. All public debates brought to this subject are focused on mothers; fathers are completely absent from the public sphere. The mass-media speak only about allowances for mothers, although the law also provides for the right of fathers. The president Traian Băsescu in 2010 (during a protest by mothers against the government's decision to reduce the duration and the amount of money for parental leaves) spoke that Romania had become 'a nation of mums and babies' (Băsescu, 2010).

Overall, the approach of reconciliation policies is rather passive: instead of developing social services and incentives for working mothers, the state has focused on parental leaves. Their duration was increased to two years (even three years in certain conditions), revealing demographic and traditionalist goals. On the contrary, some studies (Pescaru-Urse and Popescu, 2009: 38-41) showed:

— Insufficient incentives to return to work (only 7% for mothers of young children use such incentives)

— Inadequate development of social services (childcare and other services for dependent persons and for the household in general: only 3% of children in the age group 0-3 years are in a nursery)

- Lack of flexibility at the workplace (only 9% of respondents take advantage of part-time or flexible hours)

- A period (between 2 and 3 years of the child) where there is no parental leave or opportunity to attend the nursery (which is for children older than three years only).

In conclusion, active reconciliation policies are quite uncommon in Romania, and the public and labourunions are not interested in this subject, which is not even set in collective agreements (Teşiu, 2008: 130-136).

Single-parent families receive more consistent family benefits, additional allowances and support (Ministerul Muncii, Familiei şi Protecţiei Sociale, 2009a).

Social and psychological support services for transnational families have been implemented in recent years, especially at the local level (Pescaru-Urse and Popescu, 2009: 57).

7. Conclusions

The evolution of the family and of family policies in Europe went through significant changes during the last half-century. Still, this trend is not the same in all European countries. The Nordic countries,–in which the political mobilization of vulnerable groups (women, minorities) occurred earlier, experienced a more favourable evolution of policies for alternative families, while other social models are more indifferent and even hostile. Although, apparently, the treatment of family models is quite similar in different countries, sometimes this similarity conceals different paradigms that drive and justify these respective treatments (e.g., both the utilitarian paradigm in the United Kingdom and the humanist paradigm in Sweden promote women's employment). In fact, family policies of within country (and even at the EU level) are not consistent: there are usually several paradigms that coexist and determine the use of a variety of legal provisions, benefits and services for alternative families.

The EU approach towards alternative families is quite autonomous from national developments; however, it reflects the influence of successive enlargements (and, especially, the enlargement to the North). The chronologically observed trend in European documents is the shift from the paradigm of social control in favour of a less oppressive paradigm, based on equality of rights and respect for human dignity. The EU has become the vehicle for the spread of this paradigm among all European countries. Although the EU is more open to alternative family models, it remains attached to the model of the family with children, which is at the centre of its policy of social protection.

The landscape of family models in Europe shows the end of the statistical dominance of the traditional family of the welfare state. New family models are classicized, for example, dual-career families, cohabitations, single-parent families. Despite the persistence of certain taboos (gay marriage in most countries, the right of adoption of children by homosexual couples, polygamy/polyandry everywhere) society was able to build a more flexible concept of social desirability. Family policies are trying to become

more open to the needs of people, regardless of the family arrangement chosen by them. The recent legislative amendment in France, a traditionally pro-natalist country, that recognizes same-sex marriage is an example of this process.

In Romania, alternative families are statistically a minority. Public opinion is generally hostile. However, accession to the EU and transposition of its social acquis into Romanian legislation created a new, more tolerant political vocabulary of official documents. Devising new institutions for implementing the equality acquis, action plans, national strategies and programmes contributed to significant changes in family policy paradigms in Romania, from social control to certain anti-oppressive accents. Still, this trend was insufficient to change the general tone of the new Civil Code, which remains punitive and prohibitive, even if other strategic documents call for equal opportunities for all, for the right to diversity, and for freedom of choice in family behaviour. Homosexuality was recently decriminalized in Romania, but civil partnership, marriage and adoption remain prohibited for LGBT persons. Regarding other alternative families, there is a powerful opposition against the codification of cohabitations. The main instrument for reconciliation of family and work is parental leave. Even if fathers with young children have the right to use this instrument, it remains a mothers' attribute. Therefore, this revolutionary, gender-neutral instrument in fact consolidates, in fact, women's traditional role as caretakers. Overall, the approach of reconciliation policies is rather passive, lacking effective incentives for returning to work. The number of transnational families is growing but there are insufficient social programmes for them. Single-parent families receive more consistent family benefits but there are not enough other social programmes for their social inclusion, such as legal and psychological counselling, day-care centres, social clubs and after-school programmes.

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UNDERSTANDING RUNAWAY BEHAVIOUR IN GROUP HOMES: WHAT ARE RUNAWAYS TRYING TO TELL US?

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Abstract. *This paper explores runaway behaviour in foster care through the lens of* Lazarus and Folkman's *(1984) transactional model of stress and coping. To better understand the context and meaning of this behaviour in these troubled youth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 runaway adolescents in foster care. Thematic and conceptual analyses were used. The foster care system's response to runaway behaviour was also examined by constructing foster trajectories for every youth in the study. The results show that running away can be understood as a coping mechanism that displays adolescents' need for connection, empowerment, and emotion regulation, factors not addressed in foster placement. The trajectories suggest that foster care system intervention plays a role in placement disruption and runaway behaviour. In light of these findings, changes in foster care structure and policies seem essential in order to provide stability and continuity of care, as well as an environment where connections, empowerment, and emotion expression and regulation are possible to achieve.*

Keywords: *Runaway Behaviour, Coping, Conduct Disorder, Child Protection Services, Youth Intervention, Qualitative Research*

Introduction

A large number of studies have shown the many risks associated with runaway behaviour in adolescents, such as the development of mental health problems and the risk of exploitation, abuse, prostitution, and gang affiliation (c.f. Hoyt, Ryan, & Cauce, 1999; Kaufman & Widom, 1999; Molnar, Shade, Kral, Booth, & Watters, 1998; Whitbeck, Hoyt, & Bao, 2000). Over the long run, running away seems to be one of the

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main risk factors for homelessness as an adult (Biehal & Wade, 1999; Poirier, 2006; Simons & Whitbeck, 1991). While researchers across the board agree on the negative effects, few studies have examined this risky behaviour in adolescents placed in an alternative living situation (e.g. foster care residential units or group homes*)*. An estimated 24% to 42% of these adolescents run away at one time or another during their stay (Biehal & Wade, 2000; Fasulo, Cross, Mosley & Leavy, 2002; Robert, Thérien & Jetté, 2009). Runaway behaviour is not new; it is acknowledged by specialized institutions working with troubled youth (in the U.S., Canada, England, etc.) and by researchers working on the problems affecting these adolescents. From a scientific point of view, runaway behaviour is part of a large spectrum of behavioural problems that manifest in these adolescents (other problems include substance use, impulsive or aggressive behaviour, delinquency, etc.) and that generally lead to diagnosis of a conduct disorder (CD). Based on this perspective, runaway behaviour can be a symptom or indicator of a more complex psychological problem. Researchers and clinicians are therefore more interested in the nosological category that this behaviour is associated with (i.e. CD) than they are in the behaviour itself. Because runaway behaviour is a recurring and lasting behaviour in residential units for teens in every state and country, institution staff have become accustomed to dealing with this type of behavioural problem. Researchers and intervention centres alike tend to associate running away with the other characteristics of the client (relationship problems, authority defiance, substance abuse, etc.) and this association is how they explain runaway behaviour.

We consulted a modest number of studies that have, over the past two decades, focussed on runaway behaviour in adolescents housed by Child Protection Services (CPS). Given the long- and short-term harmful consequences of running away, these studies have attempted to shed light on the explanations for these behaviours. There are two predominant types of explanations presented by the researchers: the first focuses on the structural characteristics of the institutional living situations, whereas the second focuses on the unique clinical challenges involved in working with these youth. These two types of explanations are not incompatible, but are complimentary. Used in practice during the intervention, these scientific explanations make it easier to appreciate the significant challenges that come with adolescent runaway behaviour in residential group homes.

The unique environment of these housing types—centered on authority, rules, and discipline—plays an important part in whether or not an adolescent will decide to run away. Angenent, Beke, and Shane (1991, pp. 94–97) found that adolescents that run away have a negative perception of the living situation in these homes. Adopting an empowerment perspective, Leaf (2002) mentions that support for these vulnerable adolescents must aim to give them a feeling of "being in control" and to promote independence. This theoretical standpoint is underpinned by the Clark et al. (2008) intervention model, which states that the adolescents' involvement in their intervention plan will improve their sense of control over their life and will decrease the incidence of running away. Robert et al. (2009) have observed that adolescents who are less likely to run away are more aware of their intervention plan: they know the reason behind their placement, the placement's possible duration, and the conditions for release. Therefore,

they have a better understanding of their presence and its clinical necessity as well as the behavioural changes that are expected of them. Echoing these research results are a number of authors who have noticed a feeling of helplessness in youth in alternative living situations. These authors also believe that running away is an attempt to regain control (Courtney et al., 2005, pp. 44–54; Martinez, 2006, p. 85; Penzerro, 2003, p. 238).

The constraining nature of living in these situations is not the only factor that could explain runaway behaviour; the clinical nature of the interventions for these adolescents could also be a contributing factor. For example, Fasulo et al. (2002, pp. 635–637) showed that a continuous and intense therapeutic link with youth had a positive effect and significantly diminished the risk of running away. Therefore, establishing a bond of confidence between the foster care worker and the adolescent is the first step towards therapeutic treatment, which in turn can have a beneficial effect on runaway behaviour. Referring to the attachment theory, the authors explain that most adolescents under alternative care have suffered from negative experiences with the caregivers, making them more vulnerable and susceptible to having relationship problems (Leaf, 2002; Penzerro, 2003; Stefanidis, Pennbridge, Mackenzie, & Pottharst, 1992). Furthermore, the high number of placements/displacements during the course of the adolescents' lives creates a relational instability that exacerbates these difficulties (Biehal & Wade, 1999; Courtney et al., 2005; Courtney & Zinn, 2009; Nesmith, 2002; Robert et al., 2009). The lack of attachment, which can be traced back to the adolescents' pasts, can compromise the support process, especially if the institutional living environment (authoritarian climate, multiple displacements) does not allow a significant relationship to form between the foster care worker and the youth. The runaway behaviour itself prevents youth from establishing a relationship with the foster care system/workers (Biehal & Wade, 2000; Penzerro, 2003; Stefanidis et al., 1992).

Conceptual framework and study goals

Our study is inspired by the transactional model of stress and coping constructed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). This complex and dynamic model, which factors in the interaction between the individual and their environment (Chabrol & Callahan, 2004; Paulhan & Bourgeois, 1995), is undoubtedly pertinent to examining the contexts (internal and external) in which runaway behaviour arises (Courtney et al., 2005). The model posits that the concept of "coping" is inseparable from the concept of stress. Stress comes from the dynamic between the individual and their environment where stress is equivalent to a risk for the well-being of the individual or to a situation surpassing their resources. The appraisal done by the individual gives their perception of the situation and is as real as the situation itself. The coping strategies used to manage the needs and emotions caused by the stress vary according to the availability of internal and external resources as well as the perceived and possible level of control over the situation. Examining runaway behaviour will help us better understand which needs the adolescents respond to and what makes them express themselves in this manner. In other words, we seek to understand the many meanings that this type of behaviour has for adolescents.

A second aspect of runaway behaviour is equally important to investigate considering that it falls in line with our research topic—the meaning behind running away. Our study will focus primarily on the institution's point of view. Researchers have not extensively documented the response of the foster care system to runaway youth, for whom they are legally responsible. How does an institution, responsible for the care, security, and rehabilitation of youth, manage runaway behaviour? At an institutional and legal level, runaway behaviour refers to an unauthorized absence. It is reported to the police and is recorded in the files after a set number of hours, which varies according to different regulations. In Canada, there is no specific legislation on how to manage runaway adolescents in the care of Child Protection Services (CPS). Institutions are obligated to report the missing youth to the police, but the institutional measures are established on a case-by-case basis when they return. By documenting the institutional responses to runaway behaviour, we can better understand the current guidelines and practices for managing and preventing runaway behaviour.

Our study has two goals. The first is to propose further theoretical development for the explanations provided by the current studies by examining runaway behaviour through the lens of coping strategies. By studying and analyzing it in its context, we can better evaluate to what extent runaway behaviour is a coping strategy for the runaway adolescents. The second goal is to examine the responses of the foster care system in terms of the measures taken following the runaway behaviour by tracking the trajectories of the services the adolescents in the study received over the course of their lives.

Following our analysis, we will be able to update the specific dynamics that implicate the adolescent and the intervention situation that are created around the runaway behaviour. These dynamics will help us better understand the issues at stake in runaway events and identify possible solutions.

Methodology

Participants

Our sample consisted of 10 adolescents between 14 and 17 years old who had been removed from their original home environment and placed in a substitute home environment during their adolescence. At the time of the interview, all participants were under the care of CPS and living in special units for adolescents in difficulty. This convenience sample was chosen using two selection criteria: 1) the youth had to be in the foster care and be between 14 and 17 years old (so they could freely consent to participating in the study) and 2) they had to have run away from their institutional housing at least once in the six months preceding the interview.

Most of the youth we interviewed were around 11–13 years of age when they ran away for the first time. The total number of times they ran away varied between 2 and 20 for the majority of the youth, and they ran away for a period varying from a few hours to 6 months. Some of the youth have been in several care homes or have had frequent past contact with CPS. The age of first contact with CPS varied from birth to 14 years old (3

before age 3, 3 at age 6 or 7, 2 at age 10 or 11, and 2 at age 13 or 14). Because of the number of contacts and early age of first contact with CPS, several of the youth had had various types of placements: foster homes, less-restrictive group homes (where youth continue to attend their usual school), group homes with more intervention and less freedom (e.g., allowed to leave on weekends only) and detention placements. The number of placements and displacements (P/D) throughout the life of these adolescents varied from 1 to 17 (4 youth had 5 P/Ds or less, 2 had 7 and 8 P/Ds, and 4 had 12–17 P/Ds).

Data collection methods

We used two types of data collection methods to meet our two research goals. To meet the first goal, we conducted semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 60 minutes, where youth were invited to tell their life stories. The interviews with our participants are rich and contain a wealth of information, but not all of this information will be used for this article. We will use only the information that allows us to document the contexts and dynamics (individual/environment) surrounding the runaway behaviour during placements.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim to make them more accessible and easier to analyze. We analyzed the qualitative data in two steps—thematization and conceptualization, as described by Paillé and Mucchielli (2005, pp.123–179). Firstly, the thematic analysis was based on the interview transcriptions. It consisted of identifying the themes relevant to the study that were discussed by the participants. Secondly, we performed an analysis using conceptual categories. These conceptual categories came from meaning inferred by the researchers based on the adolescents' stories, the conceptual framework, and the research questions. The researchers discussed these categories until they reached a consensus.

Finally, using digital data from the PIJ system (an information system used in CPS), we created individual trajectories for each youth. These trajectories present events in chronological order and include the external services received by the youth and their families, the placements and displacements in alternative living situations, and the times they ran away.

Results

The adolescents mentioned several types of reasons or motives for their runaway behaviour. In general, they identified a separate reason for running away each time they did it. Few of the adolescents said that running away was similar each time. Some of the motives they gave were running away to be with a loved one (e.g. boyfriend/girlfriend, parent), running away to be with friends and have fun, running away to have more freedom, running away from a stressful situation or to forget their pain and distract themselves from their troubles, and running away because their placement is longer than they would like. In addition, we analyzed the interviews, which brought to light the needs the youth feel and sometimes express when they run away. This information allowed us to determine the role that running away has for the youth. We identified

three main categories of runaway behaviour, each corresponding to a coping strategy for a specific need. These needs are 1) reconnecting with their natural environment; 2) taking back control of their lives; and 3) expressing their feelings.

Running away as a way to reconnect with the outside world

In some cases, running away seems to have a normalizing function, since its goal is to "reconnect" with important life events outside the youth's residential unit (special occasions like spending Christmas with family, celebrating New Year's, celebrating their birthday, snowboarding season, etc.) and with their loved one(s) (certain family members, friends, girlfriend or boyfriend) who they have been distanced from because of their placement. Running away is an attempt at reuniting or making a connection with family or friends with whom they feel or hope to feel loved and wanted. We think running away is not only a response to the need to control their life like any "normal" youth, but also a coping strategy that allows them to temporarily integrate into their natural social environment and to renew important relationships.

Running away as a way to regain control over their lives

The majority of youth have a hard time accepting their placement and enjoying it, so running away lets them "make up for lost time". Their placement in residential units gives them the feeling that they are losing control over their life and losing their freedom and autonomy. The adolescents frequently stated that they did not have any decision-making power: they described their placements and displacements in various living situations as an outside decision. They used expressions like "they put me," "they decided I would go," and "they threw me," as if they were an object being manipulated. The rigidity and inflexibility of the rules also led to this feeling of loss (of control, freedom, and autonomy). Because of their negative impressions of foster care and CPS, which often also includes foster care workers and social workers, running away is a way for many adolescents to escape and distance themselves from what they see as an alienating environment. In such a context, where running away is an escape, it is a coping strategy that youth use to try to regain control over their lives (Courtney et al. 2005). This behaviour appears to be a response to an environment that the youth perceive as coercive; furthermore, this environment appears to contradict the need for autonomy that is particularly pressing at this stage of development. Confirming our interpretation, some adolescents conveyed to us that running away gave them a feeling of power. Running away means taking care of oneself and surviving without help. Therefore, running away is a way of declaring independence and self-determination, which are values generally esteemed by adolescents, especially those from less fortunate circumstances.

Running away as a way to express their feelings

Finally, our analyses show that sometimes, running away meets a need that the youth may not have clearly expressed during the interview; running away is an outlet for

emotional tension created by a conflict or a crisis situation (the loss of a loved one, the announcement of an unexpected forced placement) or for feelings related to a stressful experience from the past brought on by something in the present (the feeling of being abused, provoked, or disrespected). Runaway behaviour appears to be impulsive and unpredictable in contexts where youth feel ambiguous emotions and struggle to identify and control them.

All three cases are often found in one adolescent's past, which makes it difficult to pinpoint only one reason or explanation for runaway behaviour. However, they cover most runaway situations (individual/environment) identified in the youth's stories.

The foster care system's response to runaways

The trajectories in Figure 1 help us obtain information on the services (Foster Care System) provided to the adolescents over the course of their lives. The main objective is to examine how the system responds to runaway behaviour with particular attention to the following elements: time of the first runaway (R), number of home displacements that occur after the runaway (ND), increase, more or less pronounced, in runaway behaviour in terms of length and frequency (R+ and R++), and finally, placement in a detention centre. The courts decide this placement after the youth has committed a delinquent act.

For half of the adolescents (five), the decision to take them out of their original home and place (P) them in a substitute environment (foster home or other) was followed by runaway behaviour (R) or an increase in the number of runaways (R+ and R++) if they had already run away from their family home. Even though we cannot establish a cause and effect relationship between the first placement in a substitute home and the start of runaway behaviour, it is plausible to think that this decision brings on significant stress for the adolescent, who can then react with runaway behaviour.

Once runaway behaviour seemed to be more instilled in a youth's life, we noted that they are displaced more often (ND) and, inversely, one or more displacements (D) are followed by runaway behaviour, or an increase in this type of behaviour (R+ and R++). This creates a to-and-fro motion between runaways and displacements in different types of living environments (group homes). The increase in frequency or length of runaway behaviour (R+ and R++) leads not only to more displacements but also to increasingly restrictive housing (the type of home is not represented in Figure 1). For half of the adolescents in our study, the displacement to more secure housing does not have a counter effect on their runaway behaviour. This behaviour continues until they commit a crime during a runaway, are arrested by the police, and are taken into custody.

Figure 1 – Child Protection Services Trajectories and Runaway Behavior
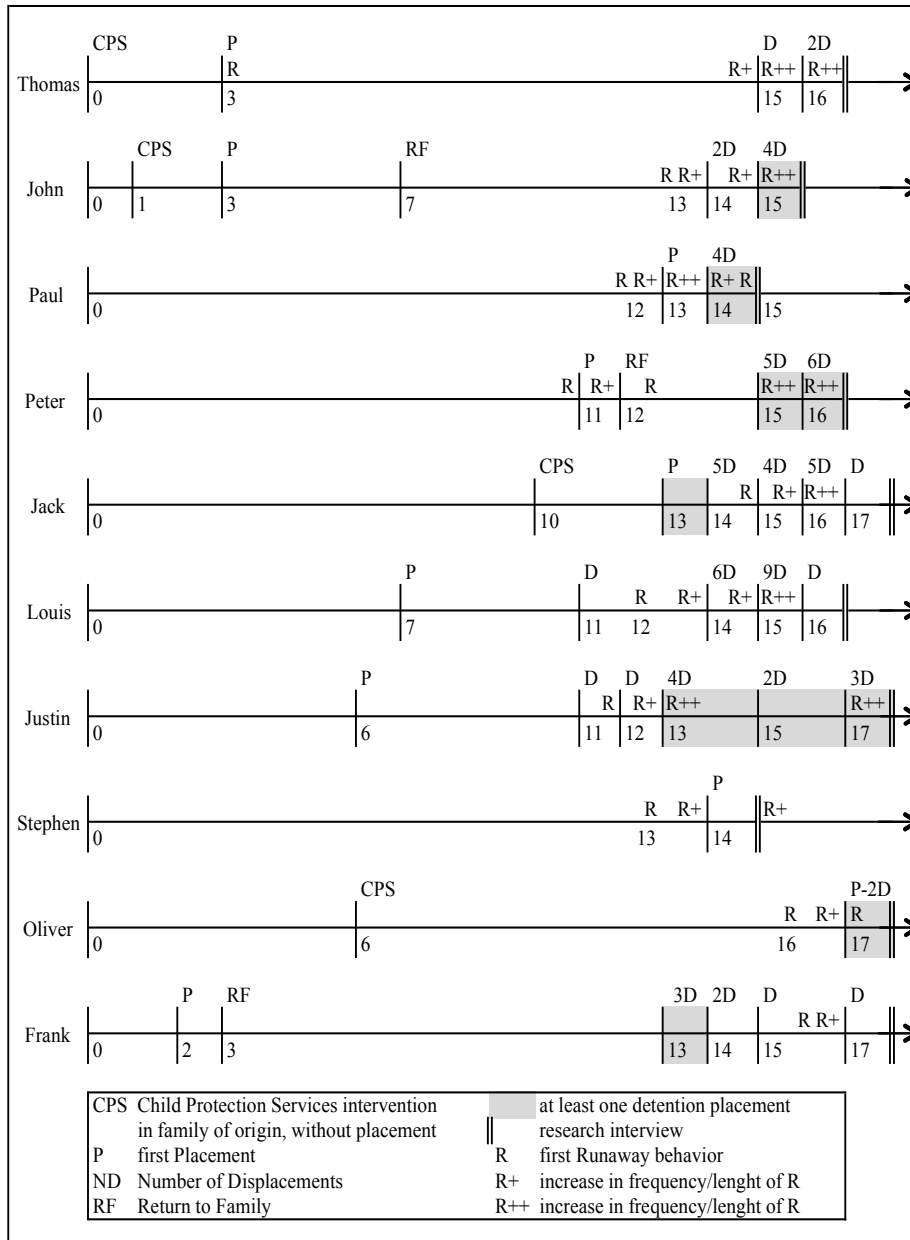
Service trajectories help us see the different ways CPS responds to runaways. We can conclude that the institutional answer to runaway behaviour, which precedes or follows

the first placement, consists in displacing the youth to a substitute home, generally a more secure or supervised place. In all cases, this answer does not stop runaway behaviour that, when it continues, accelerates to delinquent acts that automatically lead to an arrest and placement in a detention facility. Some of the adolescents in our study were without a doubt informed by foster care workers of the consequences runaway behaviour can have on their life in the long run. Furthermore, a few adolescents mentioned that they appreciated the homes that are stricter or that have more supervision or are harder to run away from, even though these places were more restrictive to their freedom.

Discussion

The analysis of the situation (individual/environment) related to runaway behaviour gives us a better and more informed look at this singular reaction, but the reason behind the behaviour is smoothed over by associating it to a conduct disorder (CD). Once placed in their real setting, runaway behaviour seems to be a coping mechanism and not an indicator of a CD. A coping mechanism seems to be a healthy reaction for youth faced with a situation over which they have little control (Tischler, 2009). We do not doubt that the youth in our sample answer the diagnostic criteria for CD. This diagnostic knowledge seems sterile according to the foster care workers. The emphasis we give to runaway behaviour is transferable to the world of practice because it allows us to figure out what the youth try to express by running away.

Three types of situations seem to encourage them to run away: 1) when the youth cannot find another way to express their desire to "reconnect" with the outside world (loved one or important event); 2) when they want to retake control of their life; and 3) when they have strong emotions that are difficult to manage. Furthermore, we have not excluded the idea that running away is a way of expressing a resistance to making a connection with the foster care workers, yet this connection is necessary for therapeutic conditions that lead to rehabilitation. Runaway behaviour, with these adolescents, is a great challenge for the implementation of clinical conditions necessary for their rehabilitation.

Currently, it is not certain that the answers or reactions of the foster care system correspond to the needs expressed through runaway behaviour. Multiple displacements, and the result of running away, can risk compromising the establishment of an important link between foster care workers and the youth. The therapeutic connection that should be built during an institutional placement takes time, patience, regularity, and a lot of availability on the part of the foster care worker. The Angenent et al. study (1991, pp. 94-97) showed that the relationship climate between foster care workers and the youth was a determining factor for runaway behaviour. Additionally, supervision and discipline alone in certain environments would not be a risk factor for runaway behaviour; it is more a combination of these characteristics with a cold, distant, and authoritative relationship between the foster care workers and the youth that can be a risk factor. The testimonies of some of the adolescents that mentioned feeling good in their more restrictive group home suggest that supervision and structure could prove to be beneficial and reassuring. Without a doubt, these group homes offer favourable conditions for trust and a

therapeutic relationship between the youth and the foster care workers. The study led by Fasulo et al. (2002, p. 636) shows the existence of a connection (inversely proportional) between the intensity of the therapeutic relationship and runaway behaviour. There could be numerous benefits for the youth: the development of a sense of security in their environment, a sense of ownership to the therapeutic approach, a better understanding of the situation, expression of emotion instead of acting on them, etc. Furthermore, all of these may lead to stopping runaway behaviour.

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VIRTUALLY SPEAKING: HOW DIGITAL STORYTELLING CAN FACILITATE ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING

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Abstract: *Digital storytelling can be used as a tool in participatory action research. An organization developed to enhance teaching and learning in high schools used this method as a way to collect narratives from the rural community it served. The staff and students who participated in digital storytelling became researchers focused on the personal narrative. Digital storytelling was used to give voice to community members and also to explain policy initiatives that directly affected the community. Digital storytelling was a way for the organization to engage its members in a way that would benefit all stakeholders.*

Keywords: *Digital storytelling; organizational learning; participatory action research; social engagement; multimedia technologies*

1. Introduction

Members of an organization need to understand their organization. Each organization has a language, standard operating procedures, rites, rituals, and normative practices. These are formal and informal, canonical and non-canonical, explicit and implicit. Organizations spend a great deal of time searching and recruiting individuals with certain traits, experiences, and expertise. Then, organizations invest heavily in the development of the new members in the *ways of the organization*. The purpose here is to assimilate and to retain its membership. While the conceptual and empirical research and pop cultural literature has elucidated the philosophical *why* and procedural *how* of integrating and inaugurating members into an organization, little has been said about the important roles of the individual in the evolution of the organization itself. In short, individual development and organizational efficiency and effectiveness are not mutually

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exclusive. Missing are tools that help strike the delicate balance between the socialization of members into the organizational code and the individual members' beliefs (March, 1999a).

The purpose of this article is to report on a tool that is a vehicle for interactive or double-loop organizational learning (Argyris & Schon, 1996). We begin with an overview of the power of member voice as a necessary ingredient for organizational learning. Next, we explore how participatory action research can promote democratic inquiry and organizational effectiveness through member narrative. More specifically, we reveal Digital Storytelling as one such approach to promote organizational learning. Finally, we offer an example of Digital Storytelling in use and the implications for organizational learning.

2. Organizational Learning, Why? How?

Early organizational work sought the "one best way" to improve productivity (March & Simon, 1958; Taylor, 1911). The rational view characterized humans as inert objects and focused on the influence of such variables as cost, capacity, speed, and durability (March, 1978; March & Simon, 1958; Simon, 1957). A rational system is considered a self-correcting, interdependent organization that has the ability to build consensus between goals and means and then coordinate the dissemination of information and predict problems (Weick, 1979). However, March and Simon (1958) warned that such rationality oversimplified "models that capture the main features of a problem without capturing all its complexities" (p. 169). Consequently, the shift from the cult of efficiency (cf., Callahan, 1964) to member input and transparency has not been easy.

Understanding and diagnosing organizations has proven difficult (see Harrison, 2005). Organizational learning theory has emerged as a bridge that connects an organization's quest for efficiency and the individual members' need for place and sensemaking (see Argyris, 1992; Cohen & Sproull, 1996; March, 1999c; Weick, 1995). Here the value of the individual is prized. In 1950 researcher George Homans discovered that efficiency was not only a product of activity, but also of sentiment (satisfaction and motivation) and interaction (relationships and communication) (Homans, 1950). The late 20th century press to be systemic and create knowledge-based, open systems (see Deming, 1986; Drucker, 1993; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Senge, 1994; Toffler, 1990) presupposed that organizational members were "in a position to shift from naively performing actions to reflectively engaging in argumentation" (Habermas, 1984: 195). Similarly, Argyris (1992:7) states, "One way to alter behavior is through direct behavior modification . . . Another way is to understand the meaning people create when they deal with each other". Organizational learning theory offers promising leads to simultaneously adding organizational and individual value to efforts.

James March posits that organizational learning is a function of "knowledge equilibrium" (March, 1999a). Here equilibrium is achieved when the organizational code (what the organization want members to learn) does not outpace the members' socialization (changes in members' beliefs). That is, the organization and the individuals that comprise it must balance the need for exploration (discovery, novelty, innovation, variation, risk taking and experimentation) with exploitation (refinement, routinization,

production, implementation, efficiency, and reliability) (March, 1999a). Other models highlight this balance between discovery and enactment (Daft & Weick, 1984), advocacy and inquiry (Bolman & Deal, 2008), or inquiry and action (Militello, Rallis, & Goldring, 2009). However such "balance is a nice word, but a cruel concept" (March, 1999b: 5); That is, it "requires developing coupling loose enough to allow groups to develop their own knowledge, but tight enough to be able to push the knowledge along the lines of process" (Brown & Duguid, 2000: 115). Nonetheless, when a balance is struck, a window of opportunity or a zone of proximal development or enactment may be opened (c.f., Wink & Putney, 2002).

Brown and Duguid (1991) posit that narration or storytelling, collaboration, and social construction make up the triumvirate of work practices. However, most formal organizational learning occurs without these practices. Participatory action research and evaluation methods have emerged as a means to simultaneously react to organizational needs and to provide a place and space for members' voice.

3. Digital Storytelling As Participatory Action Research

Evaluative and research processes have been used to understand organizational learning. Some have been information such as reflective practice and others more formal, such as program evaluations. Additionally there are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches used to evaluate and research organizational learning. In all cases, an explicit effort is made to hear participants in order to understand the questions being explored. New methods and tools have emerged as inquiry has sought to hear from and understand multiple members of an organization, including members that were previously silent. Patton (2001) states that such participatory action-based inquiry have "increased the access of nonresearchers to both research findings and processes. In combination, constructivist, dialogical, and participatory approaches offer a vision of research and evaluation that can support deliberative democracy in the postmodern knowledge age." (p. 190). Others have described participatory action research as empancipatory, democratic, practical and collaborative, critical and transformational (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). This type of participation allows "Participants in the process [to] *own* the inquiry" (p. 185, italics in original). Participation in inquiry has included the construction of one's narrative (see Beverley, 2005; Chase, 2005; Polkinghorne, 1988). Chase (2005:656) states: "Narrative is a way of understanding one's own and others' actions, of organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, and of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events". The advancements in technologies have allowed narrative inquiry to enter into the digital age; enter Digital Storytelling.

Digital Storytelling is a tool that can be considered participatory action research. Joe Lambert at the Center for Digital Storytelling in California popularized this methodology in the early 1990s. The Center is sub-titled: "Capturing Lives, Creating Communities" and continues to focus on their mission of: "Everyone has a story to tell" (Lambert, 2002). While Digital Storytelling incorporates the qualities of participatory research, it is able to do so in a digital format. That is, technology has provided opportunity (i.e., user-friendly tools) and access (i.e., ubiquitous platforms for

viewing). Lundby (2008:6) stated that "Digital media facilitate… the possibility of narrative co-production and participation". Now with new advances in Web 2.0 technologies (e.g., social networking, wikis, blogs, avatars, Second Life, etc.) Digital Storytelling has become "mediatized." This mediatization of narratives can be best defined as a "process through which core elements of a social or cultural activity (like work, leisure, play, etc.) assume media form" (Hjarvard, 2004: 48).

Digital Storytelling is driven by its creators; that is, it is a "'user-generated' media practice" (Lundby, 2008: 4). Perhaps recent technological advances have provided means to return to our storytelling roots. Lambert (2002) states, "In traditional cultures, the intermingling of personal stories, communal stories, myths, legends and folktales not only entertained us, but created a powerful empathetic bond between ourselves and our communities" (p. xviii). Here storytelling is the creating *and* the sharing where "narratives are seen as cultural tools we all relate to and use in our meaning-making and activities" (Erstad & Wertsch, 2008: 22). Lambert (2006) posits that digital storytelling has taken hold because "it speaks to an undeniable need to constantly explain our identities to each other" (p. 17).

Freidus and Hlubinka (2002) studied the use of Digital Storytelling in a work environment. The study revealed that the process allowed participants to articulate purpose by distilling meaning to a wider audience. This process created affinity among participants: "Through reflective practice, individuals and groups give their work conscious attention, thereby examining and improving their positions as leaders and learners in their communities" (Freidus & Hlubinka, 2002: 26). The researchers summarize that the use of Digital Storytelling allowed "individuals [to] learn to tell a story, and in doing so, become more effective actors in collaborative work environments" (p. 24). Other research in K-12 educational settings demonstrates that digital storytelling "has great potential as an innovative and progressive way of learning inside school . . . [giving] students the opportunity to make self-representations in the school setting and foster agency" (Erstad & Silseth, 2008: 229).

Digital Storytelling also gives rise to the aesthetics of voice (Friedlander, 2008; Nyboe & Drotner, 2008). Lundby (2008) states that the process "may actually give [participants] voice, or be significant in other ways" (p. 4). The development of stories multiplies authorship and gets "to the meaningful heart of people's social experiences by asking them to participate in a process of construction and reflection, which fosters creativity and gets the brain working in a different way" (Gauntlett, 2008: 254). What this actually looks like in an organizational setting is explicated next.

4. Digital Storytelling In Action

In a recent conversation in preparation for this article, a group of south Texas residents sat around a table to reflect on the past 10 years of storytelling work. A nonprofit worker who as a high school student collected oral histories of his grandparents, their neighbors, and others, sat at the table. A student who leads a service learning initiative sat beside him. Next to the student sat a teacher, who as a teenager approximately 15 years previously, pioneered the work of the Llano Grande Center. And facilitating the conversation was the long-time teacher who founded the Llano Grande Center for

Research and Development, a rural south Texas organization that first collected stories to enhance teaching and learning in the local high school. So what did these storytellers have to say?

- The nonprofit worker said, "We tell stories, that's what we do, but we had no idea the stories could influence people outside our social circle. That's what digital storytelling has done."

- "And it has also impacted the work of the Center," said the high school student, "it's actually one of the important reasons why the organization has kept the youth involved in the work."

- The younger teacher responded, "I think digital storytelling took off with this organization because we were already an organization grounded in storytelling; that's been a big part of our identity from the beginning…we tell stories."

We could produce a digital story out of this dialogue. It would be set to music, include still photos, and guided by the voices of the nonprofit worker, the student, and the teacher. One may be the master narrator, or maybe all three and others perhaps, would constitute the mix of voices that give shape to the story. The story could be a reflection of the impact of digital storytelling on the organization, and it could be used by the organization to assess its work. In that case, it would be a *specific digital story* because it takes the standard form of voice-over, stills, and focuses on particulars of the organization. The other form, the *generic digital story* is a more broadly defined product and process that include online games, interactive DVDs, and the like (McWilliam, 2008).

During the past decade, a number of community-based organizations, particularly education related organizations, have opened themselves to change through the use of digital storytelling. Some of these changes have been challenging, but they have also been exciting, often infusing new energy into the daily work of the organization, as well as defining future work. As organizations struggle with what March (1999a) called the exploration/exploitation trade off of an organization's work, some have viewed digital story as a mode through which to capitalize on both the exploitation of an organization's extant practices and the possibilities of exploring new visions of how to advance the work. Much of this, of course, is contextual within an organization, and more specifically about the social context of how an organization learns. This section explores how several organizations scattered across the country have dealt with the introduction of digital storytelling into their work; in each case, digital storytelling advanced the mission of the organization and revitalized the work and practice of its members.

4.1. The Llano Grande Center

In 1998 the Llano Grande Center[1], a nonprofit organization in rural south Texas founded by teachers at Edcouch-Elsa High School, participated in a Kellogg Foundation national initiative called Managing Information with Rural America (MIRA). During the first national gathering held in Battle Creek, Michigan, the

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[1] More information about the Llano Grande Center including sample digital stories and a link to the Center's digital storytelling toolbox "Captura" can be found at www.llanogrande.org

Foundation invited Dana Atchley, one of the innovators of digital storytelling, to perform his show, "Next Exit," in front of about several hundred rural community development practitioners. Ten representatives from the Llano Grande Center sat in the audience and saw Atchley tell his digital story.

- "Wouldn't it be great if we knew how to use that technology to tell our stories," said one south Texan.

- "Imagine what we could do with the couple hundred oral histories we already have…we could make the voices of our elders so much more powerful," said another.

Bam! The proverbial light went on. Digital storytelling, as the Llano Grande members had just observed through Atchley's masterful performance, could be a skill set that could ramp the oral history work that was being done at the organization to a whole other level.

Fortunately, the Foundation also hired the Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS), an operation based out of Berkeley, California, managed by Atchley's pioneering colleagues Joe Lambert and Nina Mullen, as consultants to the different communities participating in the MIRA initiative. South Texas quickly signed up for what the CDS called a "storytelling boot camp." Within a few months, Joe Lambert and Thenmozhi Soundararajan travelled to south Texas to facilitate the boot camp with a group of about a dozen students, teachers, and other community members. The Llano Grande Center would never be the same.

Though the Center would be transformed by digital storytelling, its identity was clearly rooted in the early years of its oral history project, where dozens of local elders were interviewed as part of the curriculum building and community based research work. The stories of the elders inspired the trajectory of the Center's work in every way— from the college preparation work, to the community development initiatives, and even to the policy advocacy outreach (M. Guajardo, F. Guajardo, & Casaperalta, 2008).

Through the boot camp, participants learned the technical skills of how to organize a story through digital media—digital, meaning a way to represent information numerically for input, processing, transmission, and storage; the digital system, as opposed to the analog system, which represents data through a continuous range of values (Couch, 2007). Joe and Thenmozhi taught participants how to convert voices and still photos into digital audio and images, and they taught their students how to use computer-based digital video editing software. Each of the participant's digital stories followed the formula of: (1) identifying a compelling or formative story, (2) writing a short narrative about that story, (3) recording a voiceover of the narrative through the appropriate use of enunciation, pace, rhythm, and volume, (4) selecting music for emotional/evocative effect, and (5) organizing digital images through use of the video editing software. They imported all relevant voice, photograph, and music data into a computer file and then brought it all together to create a digital story.

The process was so innovative and compelling that the Llano Grande Center staff and students began to think differently about themselves and about the work of the organization. The Center began its work in the early 1990s with a focus on preparing

high school students to go to college, but the identity of the work was also defined by the place, this rural south Texas community. The Center built a college preparation program by training students how to become effective community-based researchers, civically engaged citizens, and leaders in their environment (M. Guajardo & F. Guajardo, 2004). Students emerged as researchers as they developed community asset maps, organized public forums, and conducted oral histories with elders. The oral history research was particularly special, because it was a clear and tangible process through which students made connections with their family members and with the narrative of the community as they interviewed the town's elders (F. Guajardo, 2007).

The oral histories, the civic engagement, and the entire college prep work were driven by building the time-tested skills of conversation, interviewing, and paper pencil data collection followed by computer data entry. The first oral histories were captured through basic audio recordings and paper pencil notes; then the Center moved into video taping the interviews on VHS cassettes—hours and hours of data were recorded on the old VHS format. Regardless of the technology, the oral history work was transformative, as students, teachers, and others were moved by the stories of the elders. Young people began to emerge as storytellers. As they listened to the stories and learned from the experience, they began to understand the structure of story, the rhythm of its form, and the power of owning it—indeed, they learned the transformative value of storytelling (Bruner, 1988; F. Guajardo, 2005).

The digital storytelling boot camp experience challenged Llano Grande staff and students to re-think the organization's use of technologies and modes of data collection. The year following the boot camp saw the Center undergo a deep organizational change, but only because the members who worked at the Center committed to changing themselves, specifically in re-imagining the modality of work. Staff members began to produce digital stories about themselves, about their families, and about their community. Oral histories began to be recorded through digital media. When one student produced a digital story based on his an oral history he conducted with his grandparents, "It changed how my family members valued the long history of my family," he said, "The digital story was also a way to bring the family closer, because we all started thinking about our own stories." Other digital story production included footage from public seminars, and students even began to create digital stories as part of their college admissions process. As this student's life was changed, the work of the Llano Grande Center also changed.

While digital modes and forms of expression became ubiquitous at the Center, they did not supplant the fundamental culture of the place. To the contrary, the Center embraced digital storytelling in large part because it was a place where stories and the narrative form were highly valued. Conversation and storytelling still reigned supreme, as staff meetings continued to follow a distinct storytelling and dialogical rhythm, but it became apparent that the work of the Center could be much more far-reaching because of this new skill set. Beyond the impact on the organization, digital storytelling had implications for curriculum in the schools, for assessment of student growth, just as it evinced a range of possibilities for the Center's civic engagement work.

From the boot camp, Llano Grande members focused on the personal narrative, the story that tugs at an/the audience's emotional heartstrings; producing the evocative

aesthetic is at the core of the work of the Center for Digital Storytelling. But from the moment the Llano Grande students and staff heard the introduction to digital storytelling, they understood that the practice could be utilized to impact broad audiences as well. "When Lambert showed samples during the intro," recalled a staff member who went through the training, "Juan and I looked at each other, and we both knew that we could use this skill set for some serious outreach work." Subsequently, the impact of digital storytelling on Llano Grande would be twofold: (1) on how individuals saw themselves, and thereby gained personal power, and (2) how the organization saw itself using digital storytelling for social engagement.

4.2 *Digital Stories for Social Engagement*

An example of the Llano Grande Center's use of digital storytelling for social engagement occurred recently when the local school district found deep resistance from local taxpayers to vote for a proposition to pass a bond issue to build new schools. The community's dramatic population growth warranted more schoolhouse space. Students, teachers, and others recognized the need to build new schools, and state law would even allow the community to recapture 90% of its cost in the construction of new instructional facilities, but many residents opposed such a proposition.

That's when the students at the Llano Grande Center got involved. They told the superintendent of schools that locals opposed the idea because they simply were not well informed about the reimbursement law or the overall needs of the school. The superintendent deferred to the students, who then promptly produced a digital story that informed the community as the story was broadcast through public access cable television. The informational digital story, along with other face-to-face public forums proved effective in educating the community about building new schools in this particular community, and when the community voted yes to the proposition, the school district proceeded to build 21 million dollars worth of new schools (F. Guajardo, 2010).

The following year, a similar experience happened in a neighboring school district, where residents learned from the work of the Llano Grande Center and its digital story. In the other community, a series of digital stories were produced as part of a public engagement campaign, and the results were similarly positive. Today, that school district is building more than 112 million dollars worth of new schools. Other organizations across the country have also incorporated digital storytelling into their work. Through its work with the Kellogg Foundation the Llano Grande Center has established close working relationships with the Boys and Girls Club of Benton Harbor, Michigan, the Laguna Department of Education in New Mexico, and the Flathead Reservation in Montana. Each of those places has found digital storytelling as a method through which to reach out to young people and to the larger community (F. Guajardo, 2010).

5. Lessons Learned

Many lessons have been learned since the introduction of digital storytelling into the work of the Llano Grande Center. The organization's identity has evolved because of

the use of this new technology, just as members have found themselves much more reflective about their own personal lives and identities. Both the organization and its members have changed contemporaneously in an apparent symbiotic relationship. One educator recently said, "There's much deeper introspection, and I would say even imagination, that takes place within the organization, because of the use of this new media." It is important to state that local elders have a great deal to do with this change. They have challenged the organization from the beginning, primarily as a result of their stories. As the elders told stories through the oral history process, they challenged numerous long-held assumptions, such as the veracity of the dominant narrative of the community, telling what Bell and others call counter-narratives (Bell, 1992; Delgado, 1995; F. Guajardo, 2007). When 97 year old Jose Isabel Gutierrez told students he was a "founder of Edcouch," because he had dug the ditches to lay down the water pipes for the town of Edcouch (F. Guajardo, 2007), he challenged everyone to think about the concept of "founder" differently. "When he first said he was a founder of Edcouch, we all looked at each other," said a student, "how can a laborer be a founder?" The production of Mr. Gutierrez's digital story then generated more conversations within the organization about the concept of "founder," and counter-narrative, and so much more. Everyone had to check his or her (or its) own precepts—personally and organizationally.

The local school district also learned that tapping resources such as the Llano Grande Center helped the school become more efficient as it pursued its goal of informing the community about a bond issue. Utilizing the organization's digital storytelling capacity was the key in accomplishing the school district's goal, but perhaps the greatest lesson is seeing the power of the digital storytellers, the young people, at work. When the school superintendent appealed to students for assistance on a public engagement campaign because of a skill set they possessed, the students assumed a position of potential power. Their subsequent work in producing a compelling digital story as part of a broader public engagement campaign was both meaningful and transformative—for themselves, for the organization, the school district, and the community at large. This was not meaningless, trivial work; rather, it was genuine youth participation, about accomplishing real tasks that led to potent outcomes. The stories have become a source of veritable power—to shape the identity of the members of the organization as well as the organization itself, to engage youth and others in community development initiatives, and to advocate for policy at a wide range of levels.

6. Conclusion

The comedian George Carlin remarked, "You learn something new every day. Actually, you learn something old every day. Just because you just learned it, doesn't mean it's new. Other people already knew it. Columbus is a good example" (Carlin, 1997: 135). As organizations race to increase productivity they often pass over possible solutions that exist within the capabilities of current members. Capturing the work of the organization and the stories of the individuals that make up the organization can be a healthy task.

We have offered digital storytelling as a way to assist organizations in striking the delicate and important balance between the need for members to learn an

organizational code and the socialization of members in the organization. Without balance, organizational learning will be myopic or rooted in superstition (March, 1981; March & Levinthal, 1999). However, when such a balance is found organizations can promote and welcome thoughtful, meaningful, and effective learning. For this to take place, multiple voices must be heard, not just those of the vocal majority or minority, but all voices. Additionally, when organizational learning is at its peak there is a marked shift from the traditions of a leadership hierarchy to a collective style of leadership (Benham, Militello, & Ruder, 2010). In such a model the organization and its members are mutually connected by the enterprise of the organization and they share in the successes and are mutually engaged in problem solving (Wenger, 1998).

Currently there exists a unique opportunity to marry new technologies and old storytelling rituals. Digital skills are now central to work and life, and multimedia technologies offer rich, diverse, and accessible avenues for self-expression. Digital storytelling may allow an organization to: become self-correcting, anticipate problems, and seek innovative and sustainable solutions. However, digital storytelling as an end product does not help organizations learn. Rather, it is the process of engaging the organization and its members that is important. The process allows participants to be: reflective, appreciative of others, and engaged in the goals of the organization. This is living what Argyris and Schon (1996) call Model II thinking and learning practices. Digital storytelling is one tool that provides an avenue for voices, virtually speaking.

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CAREER DECISIONS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract: *Student career decision-making has attracted research attention in the last two decades especially when it comes to choosing tertiary education. Despite the importance of decision-making skills, there are still limited studies exploring this phenomenon in practice. Therefore, this study aims to explore the potential role of three different platforms including family, learning, and technological environments on the career decisions of university students. A survey about career choices was designed in order to identify the agreement levels of university students in Bosnian higher institutions. The study findings for students' career choices indicate a positive overall picture. Both family and technological environments were found to be influential on students' career choices. However, no impact from learning environment was identified. In order to generalize the findings, further research is required involving other contexts and subject groups. Only by systematically investigating fundamental aspects of students' career choices and by critically examining alternative theoretical decision-making models can further studies continue to progress on this subject matter.*

Keywords: *Student Career Choice, Survey, Technology, Teaching Methods, University Students*

1. Introduction

The human being, through his life, is continuously involved in decision-making or a selection process from available/created options. Decision-making is making a kind of trade-off, because a most suitable option of an alternative that perfectly satisfies all the appropriate criteria is rarely given.

Student decision-making has attracted the attention of research in the last two decades, particularly concerning education/career choices. As a result of economic rationalism, students have become *autonomous choosers* (Peters & Marshall, 1996) who make decisions about whether to enroll in tertiary studies, which course to enroll in, and which institution to attend. James (1999) identifies that the ideology of student choice does not enable non-traditional students to capture the necessary information needed to make qualified decisions. These studies have shown that decision-making is not well

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described by econometrics models (Perna, 2000) and is not a rational, linear process as it is proclaimed to be (Tyler, 1998). Social and cultural capital need to be incorporated in econometrics models in order to increase their explanation of students' decisions (Perna, 2000) since decision making is *a complex nexus in which habitus, personal identity, life history, social and cultural contexts, action and learning are inter-related* (Bloomer & Hodkinson, 1997: 46). Therefore, this work aims to explore the degree of importance of each dimension of the proposed model on the career choices of university students.

In relevant research, the focus is on important theoretical and empirical contributions related to students' career choices. Therefore, in this study, students' decision-making on careers is addressed by introducing and applying a modified model of student career choice.

The study prefers survey as the data collection method. The survey is based on questions regarding the improvement of students' decision-making skills and highlights improving career decision-making through the help of adequate teaching methods and technology.

The paper is structured as follows. First, it starts with this introductory section. In the following section, the relevant literature about students and their career choices is reviewed. Afterwards, the general data characteristics are presented. Then, the employed research methodology is described. This is followed by a presentation of results of descriptive analyses, followed by by the discussion of the findings with the literature. Finally, the paper is concluded with the contributions/limitations of the study and future implications for research and practice in the last section.

2. Literature Review

This section is drawn from past research, practice and studies in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of students' decision-making as a ground for developing and improving career choices as well as students' decision-making. Firstly, the section provides the literature concerning the proposed decision-making model components, which are also used to develop the survey questionnaire.

2.1. Family Environment

Socio-economic status is reported to be one of the strongest predictors in student decision-making, especially regarding the choice of tertiary study (Stage & Hossler, 1989; Chalmers, 2001; Looker & Lowe, 2001). Wagenaar (1987) identifies a causal relationship between socio-economic status and post-school choices. It is also reported that the effects of socio-economic status are important at all stages of the decision-making process (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000). Family size and family composition may also be considered related to socio-economic status (Lillard & Gerner, 1999; Nguyen & Taylor, 2003). Looker & Lowe (2001) identify three characteristics of socio-economic status including parents' education, parents' occupation, and parents' income. These produce social capital (the available resources that enhance the connections with the environment) as well as cultural capital (non-economic assets produced by high levels of education and the experience of middle and upper class values and attitudes.) Reay et

al. (2001) use the idea of habitus in order to explore whether family and institutions have impact on students' choices in their continuing education.

2.2. Learning Environment

Even though the literature suggests mixed results as to the influence of school environment on decisions, it has still been suspected that the school environment can affect decisions, and so it could be considered as an influencing factor in decision-making. The two key factors within schools are reported to be teachers, particularly subject teachers, and career guidance staff. Subject teachers can be very influential (Reay et al., 2001) and can act as *positive influencers* for students of low socio-economic status, providing information and advice to make a difference for them (Connor & Dewson, 2001). Bland (2002: 6) noted that *over 50% of students praised particular teachers for their role in directly motivating them and providing a high degree of care.* According to another study, 73% of students said that course teachers are an important source of support in their decisions (Boyd & McDowall, 2003). Teachers are reported to have moderate influence as advisors in Lilly et al.'s study (2000). However, they are also rated as having low impact by Keller & McKeown (1984). In contrast, the studies of James (2000) and Wagenaar (1987) do not suggest them as a factor.

Career guidance, on the other hand, is highly suggested in some studies as a support for people and advisors (Chalmers, 2001; Boyd & MacDowall, 2003). However, Keller & McKeown (1984) reported career guidance as a poor construct, like teachers. Schools, teachers and career guidance staff can have significant influence as Boyd & Chalmers (2001) identified for students from lower socio-economic groups in their decision-making process. Moreover, Connell (2004: 238) suggests that lower class families *are more heavily dependent on the school and teachers to guide, advise, support, encourage and provide information to their children.* St. John (1991) suggests that schools provide special programs to improve academic achievement and to enable students to systematically plan their college degrees. Boyd et al. (2001) stressed the importance of personal attention through career interviews and the development of career plans, as well as increased parental involvement (Perna, 2000). Looker & Lowe (2001) emphasize the importance of teacher-student interaction in students' post-school plans. Moreover, Connor and Dewson (2001) accept teachers and career staff as potential mentors or *Higher Education champions.* Therefore, it can be concluded that schools have the potential to positively influence students' decision-making processes.

Material is delivered to students in a lecture-based format according to the traditional passive view of learning. However, in the modern, constructivist view of learning, students are expected to be active in the learning process by participating in discussion and/or collaborative activities (Fosnot, 1989). Overall, the research generally focuses on the effectiveness of teaching methods and active learning methods. The findings of de De Caprariis, Barman and Magee (2001) suggest that lecturing influences the ability to recall facts, but discussion increases the level of comprehension. Further, the research on group-oriented discussion identifies that both team learning and student-led discussions enhance favorable student performance and encourage greater participation, self-confidence and leadership ability (Perkins & Saris, 2001; Yoder & Hochevar, 2005).

Morgan, Whorton and Gunsalus (2000) compare lecturing combined with discussion to active, cooperative learning methods and identify that the use of lectures combined with discussion resulted in superior retention of material among students. However, when the students' preferences for teaching methods are considered, Qualters (2001) suggested that students do not favor active learning methods because of (1) in-class time taken by the activities, (2) fear of not covering all of the material in the course, and (3) anxiety about changing from traditional classroom expectations to the active structure. In contrast, Casado (2000) examined the perceptions of six teaching methods: lecture/discussion, lab work, in-class exercises, guest speakers, applied projects, and oral presentations, and found that students prefer the lecture/discussion method. Lab work, oral presentation, and applied projects are also found to be favorable. Hunt et al (2003) also studied favorable student attitudes towards active learning methods.

2.3. Information Collection

Christie et al. (2004), by using the critiques of Martinez and Munday (1998), recognize that decisions are made in complex social networks through interpersonal communication. In their studies, they found that young people, who do not have access to such information networks, may be eliminated because they have difficulty in accessing important information. Brennan (2001) also argues that the most important sources of information are interpersonal channels. Boyd and MacDowall (2003) identify that all members of interpersonal information networks have significant influences on decisions. Watts and Sultana (2003), in their synthesis of three major studies on career guidance, observe that many of the evaluated 36 countries attempt to provide lifelong career guidance using a variety of information networks. This synthesis suggests that institutions that engage with interpersonal information networks are more successful. Whitley and Neil (1998) distinguish *in-school* and *out of school* information flows and suggest that in-school information provided by teachers and career guidance people is more important, but that peers play a significant role in providing out-of-school information, especially among students of low socio-economic status.

2.4. Technological Environment

Technology, as a tool in education, provides opportunities for students and increases both their awareness and understanding of the importance of making informed choices. Such awareness enhances students' thinking and encourages informed decisions (Patronis et al., 1999; Kennett & Stedwill, 1996). In a Digital Leadership Divide (2004) survey, school leaders reported that they accept technology as a tool to improve productivity and efficiency. 74% of them confirmed that technology provides timely data for decision-making, 71% agreed that it improves staff efficiency, 71% agreed that it increases administrators' productivity, 70% reported that it improves communications among parents, teachers and the community, and 61% said that it increases teacher productivity.
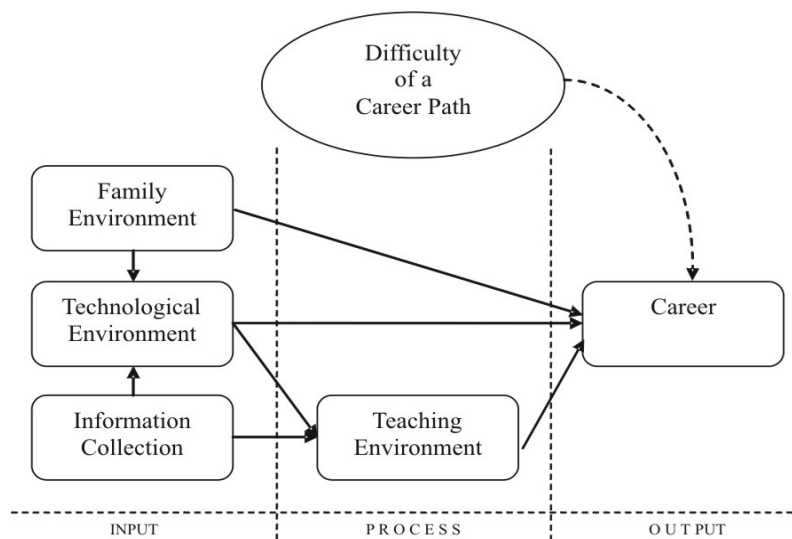
2.5. Career Choice

There are many critical factors influencing career decisions. One recurring factor is academic aptitude and achievement. Stage & Hossler (1989) suggest that student school

success is positively associated with planning for university study. When secondary school options are considered (actually choosing a post-school career), academic aptitude appears to be a critical factor. Wagenaar's (1987) findings showed that educational attainment in secondary school, when combined with social class background, influences tertiary study choices. Within the career development literature, the student career decision-making process has received a lot of theoretical and empirical attention. Almost all models propose that the career decision-making process occurs in a series of predefined phases (Gati, Shenhav & Givon, 1993; Peterson, Sampson, & Reardon, 1991). A more recent model of career decision-making by Germeijs and Verschueren (2006) distinguishes six basic tasks in the process: (1) orientation to choice, (2) self-exploration, (3) broadly exploring the environment, (4) in-depth exploration of the environment, (5) choosing an alternative, and (6) committing to a particular career alternative. Another model by Van Esbroeck, Tibos and Zaman (2005) includes six career choice development activities: (1) sensitization (becoming aware of required career choice activities), (2) self-exploration, (3) environmental exploration, (4) combining (2) & (3), (5) specification (deepening knowledge of career options and specifying choices), and (6) choosing one alternative. Empirical research with these models confirms their validity and utility for career development (Gati & Asher, 2001; Germeijs & Verschueren, 2006; Tibos & van Esbroeck, 2003).

2.6. Research Model

Regarding the literature review, this study proposes a research model including seven variables with its sub-items (see Table 1). The model represents a basis for constructing the survey (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Research model

3. Data and Methodology

3.1. The Survey Questionnaire

The survey was designed in order to examine the agreement levels of the respondents on the influencing factors on students' career choices. The survey included questions regarding the improvement of students' decision-making skills by highlighting improved career decision-making as a result of using adequate teaching methods and technology. The questions were designed in accordance with the proposed research model including seven major factors (variables), with subsequent sub-items. The survey employed a 5-point Likert scale where 1 is used for the negative end point and 5 is used for the positive end point. In total, excluding the demographic section, the survey covered 29 questions (see Appendix).

Table 1. Variables and Sub-items

Family Environment	Post-school choices
	Family size and composition
	Parental education and occupation
	Parental income
	Habitus
Learning Environment	Teacher
	Career staff
	Special programs
	Career plans
	Career interviews
	Parents
Information Collection	Peers
	Interpersonal communication
	Information networks
Technological Environment	Staff efficiency
	Teacher productivity
	Communication
	Administrators' productivity
Teaching Environment	Discussions
	Self confidence
	Cooperative learning
	Active learning
Career Choice	Sensation
	Self-exploration
	Environmental exploration
	Relationship self/environment
	Specification
	Decision for an alternative

3.2. Data

Undergraduate students in Bosnia and Herzegovina were targeted while conducting the survey. The reason for selecting this particular group was the need to obtain a realistic view on the perception of career and influential factors of students' career decision-making. 273 surveys out of 350 distributed surveys, through Google docs and by hand, were filled out completely and accurately according to the survey guidelines that were specified on the survey sheet and Google docs online form. The response rate (78%) and number were found to be quite enough in order to run analyses. After conducting the survey, the data was entered into an excel spreadsheet and analyzed descriptively.

4. Results

This part presents the results of the analysis of the collected survey data. The first section examines respondents' demographic information, and the next sections present respondents' views about the Family Environment, Learning Environment, Information Collection, Technological Environment, Teaching Environment, Career Choice and other Influencing factors on career choice. The final section presents the most notable comments on all mentioned dimensions.

4.1. Respondent demographics

In the demographics section of the survey, parents' education level and employment status as well as overall family size, in addition to their year of study and gender are provided.

Figure 2. Year of Study and Family Size
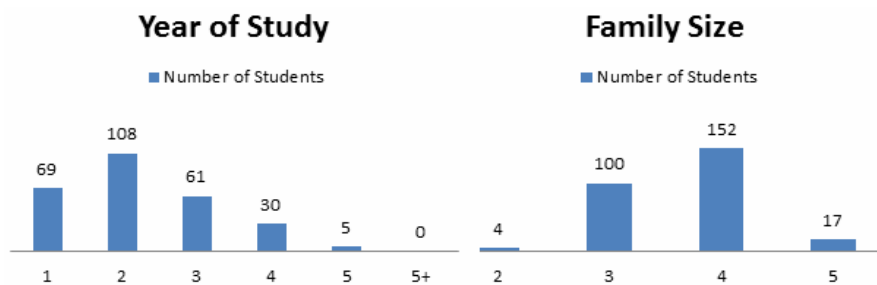
119 males and 154 females contributed to the study. The data regarding the year of study and the data about family size can be seen on the chart (Figure 2). The respondents are mainly from first, second and third grades. Very few students about to graduate were involved in the study. It can be seen that the family size is changing between 3 and 4 members.

Table 2. Parents Information

Parents Education Level and Employment Status					
Education Level	Primary	Secondary	Bachelor	Master	Doctoral
Father	0	114	138	16	5
Mother	12	141	115	5	0
Total	12	255	253	21	5
Employment Status	Employed	Employer	Self-employed	Unemployed	Retired
Father	184	6	44	22	17
Mother	129	0	25	97	22
Total	313	6	69	119	39

Parents' education levels are found to be not high, and they are generally employed. A high percentage of unemployed parents may have a negative influence on the students' career choices. Therefore, the sample seems to represent children of small and employed families.

5.2. Family Environment

The respondents strongly feel the involvement and influence of their parents in their education and career choices. It is identified that the home environment is supportive for learning. Furthermore, they are comfortable with the income level of their parents in supporting their career development (Table 3).

Table 3. Descriptive Results for Family Environment

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
There is a supportive learning environment at home.	4.47	.536
My parents are involved in my education and career.	4.16	.595
My parents' had a lot of influence on my education and career choices.	4.59	.492
My parents' income is good enough to support my career development.	3.83	.819

5.3. Learning Environment

According to the results, it is observed that schools provide no career advisors, plans or programs for the career development of students. However, they seem to be almost neutral about the interests of their teachers on their careers (Table 4).

Table 4. Descriptive Results
for Learning Environment

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
Most of my teachers are/are interested in my education development.	2.67	1.388
My school organized career interviews that helped with my career choice.	1.97	1.043
I had a career advisor who helped me with my career and education choices.	1.92	1.133
My school developed career plans for students.	1.73	1.124
There are/are special programs for career development at my school.	1.33	.670

5.4. Information Collection

There is a strong influence from peers and friends on the respondents' career choices, but respondents don't gladly accept constructive criticism from other people. The majority of the respondents seem to have a resistance to incorporating information from others into their decision-making. Finally, they did not use the internet to make their university choices (Table 5).

Table 5. Descriptive Results
for Information Collection

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
My friends influenced my school choice.	3.77	.570
I visited many sites (blogs, forums, etc.) before choosing my university.	1.97	.757
I talk to others to obtain information for easier decision-making.	2.52	1.198
I consider other people's opinions and constructive criticism.	2.88	1.000

5.5. Technological Environment

The students strongly believe that they can get a benefit from technology to increase their career development opportunities. They use technology to a high degree in order to communicate with their teachers and peers. However, they don't feel that technology is used by the instructors to improve their understanding or career development (Table 6).

Table 6. Descriptive Results
for Technological Environment

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
I regularly use technology to communicate with my teachers and peers.	4.67	.472
My instructors use technology to enhance our understanding.	2.60	1.137
University staff provide important career and education information for us through the university network.	2.54	.817
I believe that technology provides crucial career development opportunities.	4.84	.365

5.6. Career Choice

The respondents are observed to be strongly confident in their career related considerations, always having known what they were capable of doing, now and in the future. They feel that they can assess career alternatives and compare them to their abilities and possibilities. Furthermore, it is observed that they found out all their career alternatives and made their career decisions accordingly (Table 7).

Table 7. Descriptive Results for Career Choice

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
I always knew what I wanted to do in the future.	4.07	.552
I am aware of my abilities and possibilities.	4.42	.495
I can assess my career alternatives.	4.14	.663
I can compare my abilities and possibilities with my career alternatives.	4.24	.520
I explored all my career alternatives in detail.	3.71	.677
I chose my career path after I analyzed all possibilities.	3.75	.632

5.7. Influencing Factors on Career Choice

The respondents answered this group of questions positively, except concerning the opportunity to work abroad. They are influenced positively by easy to do jobs, their friends and family members, available scholorships, and job opportunities. Furthermore, low necessary experience level for a job is also influential on their career choices (Table 8).

Table 8. Descriptive Results for influencing Factors on Career Choice

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
Friend or family member working in a similar career	4.14	.529
Ease of subject matter - easy for me influence my career choice	4.32	.467
Job opportunities affect my career choice	3.98	.612
Availability of scholarships affect my career choice	4.13	.782
Opportunities to work abroad affect my career choice	2.75	.792
Good prospects in obtaining a first job without any prior experience affect my career choice	3.66	.742

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to identify the potential role of three different platforms including family, learning and technological environments on the career decisions of university students. Student career decision-making attracted the attention of research in the last two decades, especially for choosing tertiary education. A literature review suggests that the development and improvement of students' decision-making skills should be an important part of general education. Technology and teaching methods are influential on students' career choices.

Despite the importance of decision-making skills, there are still limited studies about this issue in practice. Research studies generally consider optimization techniques during decision-making processes. However, other methodologies such as survey and interview studies can be employed in order to collect and analyze data.

The study findings on students' career choices indicate a positive overall picture. The results concerning the influences of three different environments including family, learning and technological environments provide mixed results. The respondents seem to be mainly influenced from the family and technological environments but not from the learning environment. The findings are in accordance with literature that suggests that students' families have a high influence on their career and school choices. Contrarily to the literature, the respondents slightly agree that their teachers are interested in their education development and career choices. However, support from career advisors is not identified. This result is not surprising, since most educational institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina still do not have career advisors or planners.

Technology seems to be considered as a career opportunity, but teachers in Bosnia are still not keen enough on using technology as a tool for knowledge transfer. The respondents are observed to be highly dedicated towards their career choices, being aware of their abilities, possibilities and career alternatives, knowing what they want to do in the future, and exploring all these in order to choose their career path. However, they still prefer easier subject matters for their careers, that is, they tend to follow an easier path to achieve their career goals.

It is obvious that the results of this research are limited to a specific higher education context. Future studies may consider the perceptions of the students in private and public universities. Moreover, alumni can be included in research to state their satisfaction with their career choices.

This research is important in that it is among the few works of its kind done in Bosnian territory. This study can be a guideline for the government and companies, in that they can encourage students by stimulating their career paths for necessary positions in the labor market, and lower the high unemployment rate.

Universities would benefit from this research by creating models for students' career paths, advising them on their careers through their studies, and opening new study areas by considering students' career decisions.

In order to generalize the findings, further research is required which would consider other contexts and subject groups such as parents, members of educational institutions, in order to achieve a clearer picture of students' career choices. Future research is also necessary to study the impact of various tasks, environment and people related to students' careers.

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Appendix

Students' Decision-making Questionnaire

Please answer all questions.
For each numeric question, circle the number that best reflects your opinion of the factor judged:
1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree
Circle only one number for each scale.

Thank you for doing this survey!

General Demographics									
Gender:		Year of study:					Family size:		
Male	Female	1	2	3	4	5	2	3	4	5	5+

Father's		Mother's	
Employment status:	**Education level:**	**Employment status:**	**Education level:**
Employed	Primary	Employed	Primary
Employer	Secondary	Employer	Secondary
Self-employed	Bachelor	Self-employed	Bachelor
Unemployed	Master	Unemployed	Master
Retired	Doctoral	Retired	Doctoral

ll question relate to your previous and current education
(primary, secondary and tertiary)

1.	Family Environment	Disagree			Agree	
a.	There is a supportive learning environment at home.	1	2	3	4	5
b.	My parents are involved in my education and career.	1	2	3	4	5
c.	My parents' had a lot of influence on my education and career choices.	1	2	3	4	5
d.	My parents' income is good enough to support my career development.	1	2	3	4	5

2.	Learning Environment	Disagree			Agree	
a.	Most of my teachers are/are interested in my education development.	1	2	3	4	5
b.	My school organized career interviews that helped with my career choice.	1	2	3	4	5
c.	I had a career advisor who helped me with my career and education choices.	1	2	3	4	5
d.	My school developed career plans for students.	1	2	3	4	5
e.	There are/are special programs for career development at my school.	1	2	3	4	5

3.	Information Collection	Disagree			Agree	
a.	My friends influenced my school choice.	1	2	3	4	5
b.	I visited many sites (blogs, forums, etc.) before choosing my university.	1	2	3	4	5
c.	I talk to others to obtain information for easier decision-making.	1	2	3	4	5
d.	I consider other people's opinions and constructive criticism.	1	2	3	4	5

4.	Technological Environment	Disagree			Agree	
a.	I regularly use technology to communication with my teachers and peers.	1	2	3	4	5
b.	My instructors use technology to enhance our understanding.	1	2	3	4	5
c.	University staff provide important career and education information for us through the university network.	1	2	3	4	5
d.	I believe that technology provides crucial career development opportunities.	1	2	3	4	5

5.	Career	Disagree			Agree	
a.	I always knew what I wanted to do in the future.	1	2	3	4	5
b.	I am aware of my abilities and possibilities.	1	2	3	4	5
c.	I can assess my career alternatives.	1	2	3	4	5
d.	I can compare my abilities and possibilities with my career alternatives.	1	2	3	4	5
e.	I explored all my career alternatives in detail.	1	2	3	4	5
f.	I chose my career path after I analyzed all possibilities.	1	2	3	4	5

6.	Influencing factors on your career choice?	Disagree				Agree
a.	Friend or family member works in a similar career	1	2	3	4	5
b.	Ease of subject matter - easy for me influence my career choice	1	2	3	4	5
c.	Job opportunities affect my career choice	1	2	3	4	5
d.	Availability of scholarships affect my career choice	1	2	3	4	5
e.	Opportunities to work abroad affect my career choice	1	2	3	4	5
f.	Good prospects in obtaining a first job without any prior experience affect my career choice	1	2	3	4	5

UNDERSTANDING MULTICULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND COOPERATION THROUGH MULTICULTURAL DOBROGEA

Vladimir-Aurelian ENACHESCU[1]

Abstract: *An ethnic mosaic - this is the way Dobrogea has been described at the beginning of the XXth century. Together with the Romanian people, in Romania live other ethnic groups, each with its specific tradition, culture and religion. This article highlights the uniqueness of multicultural phenomenon, demonstrating the possibility of harmonious intercultural cohabitation as a model that can provide an algorithm for the interpretation of intercultural communication and cooperation. The psychological, sociological and historical interpretation provides an overview of the phenomenon addressed.*

At European level we search for solutions to improve multicultural environment. It is necessary that solutions be found just inside the European multicultural space and adapted to each scenario individually.

Keywords: *Co-ethnicity, multiculturalism, Dobrogea, social learning*

1. Introduction

There are many concerns about the issue of multi-ethnicity and relations between different ethnic groups today (Modood, 2013; Joppke, 2004; Parvin, 2009; Fesja, 2012; Otovescu, 2012; Nicolaescu, 2012) or networks of communication created during modern times (Mircea, R., & Dragoi, V., 2008; Vladutescu, 2012). Most authors report the problem from the perspective of multiculturalism in the European space and believes that current policies and approaches are required to state specifically the lack of cohesion due to existing ethnic mosaic. Possible solutions are advanced such as intercultural education, measures that will be addressed in this paper. Contemporary world is traversed by ethnic conflict and identity crisis and this is so obvious that it need not prove. Tragic events of September 11, 2001 fall on the same phenomenology.

Both Europe (Eastern and Western) have their common cultural sources in Greek literature, Jewish religion and Roman law. Rivers surging from a single parted, but to irrigate lands of spiritual and different histories, bringing to flow into two distinct life meaning two models.

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Even if critics of multiculturalism (such as Rubin, M., Watt, S. E., & Ramelli, M., 2012) may argue against cultural integration of different ethnic and cultural groups to the existing laws and values of the country, this idea cannot be a model of judging the whole phenomena. Alternatively critics may argue for assimilation of different ethnic and cultural groups to a single national identity but this is not the situation of imposing another identity but it is a matter of choice.

2. Communication and cooperation in Dobrogea – a model of understanding multiculturalism

To apply the concepts described in the concrete reality of intercultural relations in contemporary Romania is first necessary to more precisely circumscribe the content of these relations. In this regard, it stand out two fundamental dimensions that define polarized communities and intercultural relations in Romania: ethnicity, national membership actually ethnically, reflected by the concept of "national minority", and religion without the two dimensions that there is a total overlap. In terms of ethnic relations, can be observed three categories well differentiated: the case of relations with the Hungarian minority, the Roma minority and relations with all other national minorities publicly stated. In the interfaith relations, traditionally, on the one hand, the majority Orthodox church relations with other faiths in general and, on the other hand, relations orthodoxy - Catholicism, reflected primarily by the Greek-Catholic relations. Of course, this classification is inevitably simplistic but it is relevant to guide analysis of the causes and dynamics of intercultural relations, while recognizing the high degree of variability present within each of the categories considered. We further analyze each case from two perspectives: that of the majority and the minority. Findings set out are based greatly and performed by Intercultural Institute activities, media coverage of this issue and some empirical studies. They should be considered as starting points as hypotheses that require more rigorous validation.

Dobrogea is still a model of tolerance and ethnic diversity that can serve as a European model of intercultural communication.

Dobrogea is a historical region shared today by Bulgaria and Romania. It is situated between the lower Danube River and the Black Sea, and includes the Danube Delta, Romanian coast, and the northern most part of the Bulgarian coast. The territory of Dobrogea comprises Northern Dobrogea, which is part of Romania, and Southern Dobrogea, which belongs to Bulgaria.

In Dobrogea area cohabits members of 34 different ethnic groups. It is a unique situation that demonstrates the possibility of tolerance and intercultural communication. Dobrogea area is extremely generous in terms of space, resources and geographical location, being basically a link between the Balkans, Eastern and Western Europe.

Characteristics of ethnic acceptance are also co-ethnicity phenomena in Dobrogea area, not exclude it and related issues: ethnicity specific question, possibilities and ways of living, historical and socio-economic development of the common territory housing. "Coetnicity is the phenomenon of coinhabitation with all representations of a territory's economic, historical, psychological, biological and which operates with the notion of teaching sociology housing" (Păduraru, 2006).

Understanding the model of multiethnic coexistence of Dobrogea area is a successful model that can be recommended in any space for good coexistence and multicultural development in respect of the European values and principles.

A rigorous statistical analysis demonstrates the presence of different ethnic groups on a large and representative time period. Processing of such data is a challenge for any statistician, an analysis of intercultural communication instructions, assumes a statistical analysis but also historical linguistic, religious, demographic, cultural, educational, ethnological, anthropological and even psychological. "The major issue raised by the analysis of specific environments, is to ensure the data on which to make this analysis. The existence of such problem is easily justified if the inadequate quality of data used can completely cancel the positive effects of performance measurement methods and analysis models used" (Mihaila&Mihaita Niculae, 2012).

Recent research supports the fact that one explanation for the absence of major conflicts between different ethnic groups is found in the tolerance that is possible in times of prosperity and political and social positive environment. Ethnic communities are often characterized by traditionalism and closing, but the in the space of here Dobrogea, multicultural communication allows openness to other communities and sharing own values.

The entire region of Dobrogea has an area of 23,100 km² and a population of rather more than 1.3 million, of which just over two-thirds of the former and nearly three-quarters of the latter lie in the Romanian part.

Minority activism in Dobrogea has virtually nothing to do with numerical share of minorities in the demographic structure of the region. Refunds focused on the role of some ethnic minorities in the new political scene during 1944-1948, with doubts about the representativeness of the moment given the statistical records, the figures are exaggerated for propaganda purposes to illustrate a political representative.

This period with the post-revolutionary interesting symmetry appears as cloudy in the history of most country-wide and at the micro level of the various ethnic communities forced to adapt to the "new order" communist. A special chapter is the information about the nationalization of properties of the stalwarts of ethnic communities - refineries, factories, shops, etc.. - Entering the communist state with many heritage buildings that belonged to minorities (Nationalization in the Annex to Decree no. 92/1950 of 39 where he notes that 29 buildings belonging to members of national communities being affected families Avramide, Carvelas, Chiriachide , Grinberg, Hrisofi, Hasan, Jacobin, Margulis, Mustafa, Cernevski and others).

Moral and material reparations after 1989 is hard but the majority and minorities are involved in a project open society that restores the social memory of ideology trend, with significant gains and losses, each step following the recent past to distance the risk of losing all the time accumulations in an effort to adapt to the new paradigm of European integration, poles cultural change, the new legal framework, enhanced mobility and access to resources.

From a demographic perspective, a steady population can be observed in Dobrogea, as seen from the statistics below.

Table 1: The ethnic structure of the population
in Dobrogea area (1905 to 1913)

Ethnics	Constanţa County		Tulcea County		Dobrogea	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1905						
Romanians	93.806	59,9	54.047	37,7	147.853	49,2
Turks/Tatars	30.453	19,4	5.596	3,9	36.049	12
Bulgarians	12.345	7,9	33.932	23,6	46.277	15,4
Russians -Lipoveni	2.103	1,3	29.415	20,5	31.518	10,5
Germans	4.100	2,6	4.042	2,8	4.142	2,7
Greeks	5.198	3,3	4.278	3	9.476	3,2
Other	8.901	5,7	12.232	8,5	21.133	7
Total	156.906	100	143.542	100	300.448	100
1913						
Romanians	129.066	61,6	87.339	51,1	216.425	57
Turks/Tatars	35.142	16,8	6.300	3,7	41.442	10,9
Bulgarians	24.377	11,6	26.772	15,7	51.149	13,4
Russians -Lipoveni	2.349	1,1	33.510	19,6	35.859	9,4
Germans	5.580	2,7	2.117	1,2	7.692	2
Greeks	5.231	2,5	4.768	2,8	9.999	2,6
Other	7.806	3,7	10.053	5,9	17.859	4,7
Total	209.571	100	170.859	100	380.430	100

Source: Enachescu, V.A. (2013). Communication and cooperation in Dobrogea area – multicultural approach. Bucharest: ASE

As seen in the table above, there were variations on the ethnic structure of the population in Dobrogea, but ethnic groups have maintained the presence in terms of population, which show the presence of a climate of tolerance and cooperation even if there are some differences in terms of beliefs, traditions, individual linguistic domain and even from a psychological perspective. Free access to resources and security of individuals is a key factor in the continued presence thereafter allowing free expression of specific values of each ethnic group.

Even notice an evolution in terms of the main ethnic demographic constantly here so a clear climate of normality on inter-group relations. Permanent cooperation was possible not only as an element of preserving a common geographical space but also in terms of common interests either commercial purposes, occupational or basal - security.

Mutual understanding of ethnic groups in their interaction fosters communication process. The process involves knowledge-ethnic cultural patterns, the symbols, specific languages, experiences and practices of each ethnic group.

Table 2: Current ethnic structure of the population in Dobrogea area
(both Romanian and Bulgarian Dorogea)

Ethnicity	Dobrogea		Romanian Dobrogea		Bulgarian Dobrogea	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
All	1,328,860	100.00%	971,643	100.00%	357,217	100.00%
Romanian	884,745	66.58%	883,620	90.94%	591[1]	0.17%[1]
Bulgarian	248,517	18.70%	135	0.01%	248,382	69.53%
Turkish	104,572	7.87%	27,580	2.84%	76,992	21.55%
Tatar	23,409	1.76%	23,409	2.41%	4,515	1.26%
Roma	33,422	2.52%	8,295	0.85%	25,127	7.03%
Russian	22,495	1.69%	21,623	2.23%	872	0.24%
Ukrainian	1,571	0.12%	1,465	0.15%	106	0.03%
Greek	2,326	0.18%	2,270	0.23%	56	0.02%

Source: Enachescu, V.A. (2013). Communication and cooperation in Dobrogea area – multicultural approach. Bucharest: ASE

Major cities in Dobrogea are Constanţa, Tulcea, Medgidia and Mangalia in Romania, and Dobrich and Silistra in Bulgaria.

Dobrogea has been a model of interethnic living since a long time ago. The reason for promoting it is the interethnic conflict but also confessional situation which have been extended in the Balkans and in the ex-soviet space, so close to us. As an example, „a Dobrogea model" can support getting away from history and politics accumulated in the Central and South-Eastern Europe.

The ethnic, religious and cultural mixture leads to different realities. First, it stands out interferences which assume transfers of strong elements which belong to two or more ethnic groups and confessional communities and second aspects of life are output through well preserved identities and particularized for every ethnic groups, sometimes living in the same region, other times far away from each other.

An ethnic mosaic - this is the way Dobrogea has been described at the beginning of the XXth century. This is why the Romanian writer, Nicolae Iorga, affirmed at Gotha in 1905 concerning its publication: „The history of Romanians" that: "Dobrogea is a very curious country geologically, which geographically doesn't belong to any of the Carpathians and Balkans, and whose people have been since the beginning of time as diverse as its ground's shapes and nature."

"Social learning theory seeks to explain human behavior in terms of understanding his need for social efficiency. Over time many theories have tried this approach by focusing more on individual actions behavioral type. Bandura proposes perspective causal analysis of individual actions. It has regard to the epistemological and methodological attributes the jump to detailed examination of internal and external influences of the individual" (Drămnescu, 2010).

Together with the Romanian people, in Romania live other ethnic groups, each with its specific tradition, culture and religion. The regions with the biggest number of ethnic

groups in Romania are: Transylvania, Banat, Bucovina and Dobrogea. In the areas with a reduced ethnic diversity, like Oltenia and Moldova, there is the thinnest opening of ethnic and politic pluralism. The worst perceptions about the Romanian Magyars are in the regions where they are few numerically (Oltenia, Muntenia, Dobrogea, Moldova), and the best perception about them is in Transylvania.

Dobrogea has been an interethnic living model for a long time, often invocated and quoted. The actuality of its promotion is motivated by the interethnic and confessional conflicts situation extended in The Balkan Peninsula and in the ex-Russian space, so close to us. Lifted to the position of model, "the Dobrogea model" can support the overtaking of the historical and political stress, accumulated in Central and S-E Europe.

Dobrogea, as a space of interference between cultures (Orient- Occident), between religions (Christianity- Islamism), between political and military areas (NATO - URSS, Russia), between regions and economical ensembles (E.U- CAER, CSI), carries the imprint of the different influences, adopted or imposed and which confers individuality and specificity.

Between the historical areas of Romania, Dobrogea is territorial and demographic between the smallest, representing about 6,5% as surface and 4,5% as number of inhabitants, reported to national level. But, with all this, Dobrogea is constituted in a geographical reality, both well marked and complex. To the geographic and geologic diversity it's associated an historical and demographical evolution, a succession of civilizations and cultures that left a geographical reality, previously mentioned which no matter how much it's studied it's far of being complete and exhausted.

Interethnic living in a confliction area made from Dobrogea a place similar to "West America", a beautiful territory, with good development perspectives, but also full of difficulties and dangers. In XX century, the affirmation and development of the Romanian country, the establishing of the population in parallel with its numerical increase took to strengthening and developing the areas, with variable intensities and different senses. In Dobrogea, was outlined a system of settlements, integrated in the national one, but with many particularities, consequences of the ethno-cultural diversity.

The dynamic of the ethnic structure of Dobrogea is dominated by several factors, such as colonization by moving of flocks and definitive migration for work of a Romanian population, the exchange of a serious number of Romanian people from the Cadrilater and their transfer in the old Dobrogea, the transfer of Bulgarian population from Dobrogea (60.000) to the gave away Cadrilater, the massive emigration of the Germans (10.000 only in 1940) to Germany, USA, Canada (1928-1941), of the Jewish People (1940-1943) and of a serious part of the Turks (in 1922-1930), a getting old tendency, accentuated at a few ethnic groups with low weights: the Armenians, the Greeks, the Italians and the Poles and also the forced evacuation to URSS of a part of the Germans (surprised in Romania by the Russian occupation) and the Tatars.

According to the 2002 census, 10,5% of the Romanian population represents another ethnic group than the Romanian one and 9% of them talks another language than the Romanian language. Today, 18 minorities have an officially deputy, and the Hungarian party (UDMR) has 27 deputy mandates (7.83%) and 12 senator mandates (8.57%), this

includes the ethnic groups with a population number bigger than 1000 persons. "It is useful to observe that the concerns inspired by the contemporary challenges are widely spread and shared, up to the global range, since most of the problems have been either created or amplified by the globalisation process" (Lacatus&Staiculescu, 2012).

3. Conclusions

Based on this study globalization may be endanger the integrity and authenticity of a successful model of coexistence by reducing the cultural diversity as a result of reporting to a common template and implicitly by constructing a new identity. "Besides the lack of existence of a common language, another important question that requires communication barriers at European level is low trust between experienced and new members join the EU. How could this capital gain confidence? Maybe by contact between citizens of different European countries" (Stavre, 2011). For this question the answer is clear from the understanding of the existing model of multicultural in Dobrogea, as a measure of tolerance and mutual respect towards cultural and spiritual values in the direction of preserving and promoting ethnic identity.

The limits of any research in this area range from issues of subjectivity of the author to variables such as time, resources or validity of the target group. However, as revealed from the literature pursuing multicultural phenomenon in Dobrogea area can be more than a simple indicator. It can be a model for the understanding of multiculturalism, and later to form a pattern of thinking. We appreciate Dobrogea model is marked primarily by uniqueness, being permanently connected to the realities of the contemporary world.

Even if Dobrogea multicultural space represents only a successful experience of cooperation from multicultural perspective, this might be considered as a potential solution to reach the multicultural ideal. Free access to resources, democratic governance, tolerance, freedom of expression and exploitation of the potential of each ethnic group are key factors present in Dobrogea area that can be adopted in any space to build a favorable multicultural cooperation. Conflicts can be removed just by preventing situations tension and encouraging ethnic group identity is a key factor in this respect.

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Book Review:
FINANCING THE ACTIVITIES
OF THE SOCIAL ECONOMY

Coordinators:
Victor NICOLĂESCU, Corina CACE,
Dimitris HATZANTONIS, Expert Press, Bucharest

Lucian SFETCU[1]

Before approaching the technical details of this book, we need to mention the fact that the activation of the social economy in Romania is a recent occurence, boosted by the co-financing provided by the European Social Fund through the Sectoral Operational Program Human Resources Development 2007-2013. We also have to emphasize the constant endeavour of the coordinators of this book to approach the rather new theme of the social economy by publishing reference papers.

Within the context of a social framework affected by the deep economic crisis, it seems that "there is no universal panacea that can be applied by national policies in the attempt to limit the crisis and to end the recession" (Cace C., Cace S., Cojocaru Ș., Nicolăescu V., 2012, p. 51). The current economic crisis overlaps the consequences that are reflected at the level of society's vulnerable groups: social tensions generated by the higher rate of poverty, the fear of losing job loss, the increased number of families having serious financial problems, restrictions on consumption credits, as well as the effects of workforce mobility (Bostani I., Grosu V., 2010, p. 20). It seems that the financial crisis bears stronger on specific groups of the population, and that any measures should target those groups that are living at the brink of social exclusion, and cannot provide for their own bare necessities (Cace C., Cace S., Nicolăescu V., 2011b, p. 34). It is thus obvious that the social economy can effectively contribute to social cohesion and that it can be one of the major players in the struggle against social exclusion (Cace S., Nicolăescu V., Scoican A. N., 2010, pp. 192-193).

The efforts of social economy organisations to develop social economy initiatives are confronted by major institutional problems, including the inability to access modern or traditional instruments and mechanisms/means for financing. In some European countries, social economy organisations which run commercial activities start and end

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their life cycle without even using the usual, conventional means of financing a small business, by consuming the stock of free subsidies from a range of national and international sources.

In the EU countries, in general, the problems experienced when attempting to access sources of financing are not the exclusive "privilege" of the social economy. The problem of difficult access for small companies to bank loans is as acute and incurable as during the period after the activation of guaranteed financing and of risk capital. Economic sociology made attempts to organise the different theoretical approaches of social enterprises (Nicolăescu, 2011), highlighting several debates which are relevant for the definition of the social economy at the local level.

This book has been compiled within the framework of the project "INTEGRAT – resources for socially excluded women and Roma groups". This project is co-financed by the European Social Fund through the Sectoral Operational Program Human Resources Development 2007-2013, and is implemented by the Association for Socio-Economic Development and Promotion, Catalactica, Bucharest branch, in partnership with the Research Institute for Quality of Life (ICCV) and Bolt International Consulting – L. Katsikaris – I. Parcharidis O.E. (Greece). The targeted regions of development are Bucharest-Ilfov and South-East (Bucharest, Ilfov, Buzău, Brăila, Galaţi, Constanţa, Vrancea, Tulcea). The coordinators of this manual – Victor Nicolăescu, Corina Cace and Dimitris Hatzantonis – present the critical problem of financing the social economy and its business/enterprises in a comprehensive manner, intending to create a useful guidebook for the organisations that design policies and instruments for the development of the social economy.

The book has five chapters: it starts with the conceptual description of the social economy and of social entrepreneurship and continues with two chapters which present the traditional sources as well as the alternative sources of financing this sector; it continues with a section dedicated to micro-crediting as a challenge for the social economy and finishes with the expanded categories of financing identified across Europe. The compilation of this manual uses established patterns which, however, are insufficiently experimented with in Romania, as well as some patterns which are in their early stages of development in other EU member states. From this perspective, the book brings added value by drafting a comparative space for the application of financial exercises used for the social economy, acknowledging that the "*Process of financing cannot mean just an effort to organise better events and lotteries to raise funds; rather, it means the management of strategic instruments which will ensure the long-term existence of the organisation so that it can accomplish its mission.*" (p. 74).

The first chapter of the book analyses the social economy and social entrepreneurship in Europe, and approaches the definition of the sector: "*The definition of the social economy is not, therefore, a simple matter, because this expression is used to define a complex world and a system of relations which govern the third sector and the non-profit enterprises: creation of flexible jobs, active citizenship, services for people, decentralised social work, safety of human rights, consolidated policies of local development and social cooperation*" (p. 18). The approach of the social economy sector from the perspective of conceptual clarifications is correlated with the significance of social capital and with the distinction of the social enterprises on the economic market.

The integration of the different streams recorded within this sector is structured around the five European patterns of social economy: Scandinavian, Continental-European, South-European, Anglo-Saxon, Central and Eastern-European. Within this chapter, social entrepreneurship is revealed theoretically by depicting the general framework of functioning and by describing the practical operation of a social organisation entity from Greece (Klimax Plus). As an observation, we mention again that particular stress is put on the present relations of the associative organisations – associations and foundations – with the social economy, and on knowing the interference of private and public areas with the economic sector (Cace S, Nicolăescu V., Anton A.N., Rotaru S. (2011, p. 89). The problem of financing small enterprises and, obviously, social enterprises, will probably be the most important dimension to be considered by policies that aim to develop entrepreneurship as a whole, taking into consideration that entrepreneurship can be applied both in the economic field (business) and in the social field, referring to a behaviour that can be displayed in multiple ways (Cace C., Cace S., Nicolăescu V., 2011a).

In Romania, the significance of social entrepreneurship is developed by the practitioners in the social field, and academic rigour often misses the presentation of good practices (Popoviciu I., Popoviciu S., 2011, p. 43). The present stream of promoting the social economy seems to be revolving around the social enterprises that are, in many ways, caught in the trap of the context which often limits their access to the public and private resources (Nicolăescu V., 2011, p. 114). While in Europe, except for the United Kingdom, the social enterprise refers to a cooperative or to a social association established with the purpose of providing employment services or specific care through participative ways, in the United States, it includes any type of non-profit activity involving income-generation (Pîrvu D., Ungureanu E., Hagiu A., 2009, p. 53).

Chapter two of the book shows the traditional sources of financing the social economy sector, within the context in which *"the major goal of a social enterprise and of non-profit organisations is not to generate income for the stockholders, but to return – via its activity – the social values and benefits to the favour of their members, employees and of the whole society"*. (p.69)

The existence of inherent obstacles and constraints in the management of traditional resources prompted the identification of specific financing alternatives for social economy organisations, as presented in Chapter 3. Thus, the challenge that these entities with social activities experienced in obtaining funds for their activities resulted in the adoption of working mechanisms similar to those from the business environment; this requires more and more often evaluating the social worth of the investments made by social economy organisations. This new direction is fully justified: *"Knowing the yield of the enterprise it is much easier to address the market in order to raise funds and to offer profit to the potential investors"* (p.88). As a consequence, it is worthwhile to note that various forms of dividing public funds have been noticed in Western Europe, these public funds being transformed into benefits for the community (Nicolăescu&Nicolăescu, 2012, p. 741).

Chapter four of the book focuses on the **techniques of micro-crediting** by describing the compulsory premises for them, the proposed services and the line which differentiates them from traditional banking and financing. Taking into account the fact

that "there are many and diverse practices of micro-credits, from projects of poverty control in Asia and Africa, to the initiatives for controlling social exclusion in the suburbs of the European capitals" (p. 112), this section shows some relevant aspects which point towards a new, expanded social entrepreneurship, much more adapted to the current economic conditions. First, the practices of micro-financing are presented, with the intention to explore all the possible ways, from **micro-credit** to the **mobilisation of the local economies**, by which social economy initiatives can be financed. Micro-crediting is substantially represented in the book by **social vouchers**, a rather widespread technique among the services outside the field of social economy, which stimulate the consumption of services supplied by social enterprises, while facilitating commercial activities (confronted with the problem of liquidities). A rather common error in many countries is the limitation of this discussion just to the mechanisms of collaterals for bank loans. However, what is usually lacking is the inclusion of a guaranteeing instrument within a full set of financial services which can take into consideration the needs for instruments and the parallel means of businesses, such as risk capital, the access to small business financing, etc.

The final section of the book reviews the framework for social economy financing developed throughout Europe following various initiatives to achieve the set objectives or following the option to support the public acquisitions of public interest.

Therefore, it is clear that, in view of planning/preparing policies for the social economy and entrepreneurship, one has to make a thorough analysis of the policy of small business financing, of the access to bank loans and to other methods of financing.

The countries with a recent tradition of the policies which support the entrepreneurial initiatives recorded a large number of small businesses which managed without bank loans and which ensure their participation in business by covering the risks with additional guarantees. Definitely, this uncovered need reaches all the types of commercial activities from the sector of the social economy.

In Romania, the positive dynamics of the social economy during the recent years, in terms of the acquisition of knowledge, is due to financing through structural instruments, but is nevertheless shadowed by the perspective of discontinuities in project operation and in maintaining a constant flow of non-reimbursable funds for these innovating actions. In this respect, it is important to evaluate the endogenous capacities to manage European co-financing (Cace C., Cace S., Iova C., Nicolăescu V., 2009, p. 94), or to generate new ways of absorption of structural funds (Cace C., Cace S., Nicolăescu V., 2010, p. 100). Given the major stress on transposition in practice of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the need to monitor and evaluate social economy initiatives is acute (Nicolăescu V., Cace C., Cace S., 2012, p. 535). It also is extremely important to present the mechanisms which allow the establishment of a healthy and vibrating ecosystem through this form of economy that supports innovative social entrepreneurs (Cace S., Arpinte D., Cace C., Cojocaru Ş., 2011, p. 65; Neguţ A., Nicolăescu V., Preoteasa A.M., Cace C., 2011).

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