

# Learning in organization

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This study aims at identifying the presence of the dimensions of learning capabilities and the characteristics of a learning organization within two companies in the field of services, as well as identifying the relationships between their learning capability and the organizational culture.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This has been a transversal study on a convenience sample of 64 employees from two companies. The questionnaires' purpose was to identify and assess organizational learning capability, dimensions of the learning organization and the role of organizational culture.

**Findings** – The results showed a better represented capability of organizational learning and a more evident presence of the dimensions that characterize a learning organization within a private company. Also, the type of organization is a moderator for the relationship between the hierarchical culture and adhocracy on one hand and the dimension of experimenting organizational learning on the other hand, but also between the market culture and dialogue dimension.

**Research limitations/implications** – The reduced dimension and the structure of the sample or using certain self-report-type questionnaires represent some of the limits of this study.

**Practical implications** – The results highlight the way the type of organization and the organizational cultures influence the factors that facilitate learning. Knowing this allows the specific intervention upon those factors that can contribute to the increase of the organizational learning capabilities.

**Originality/value** – The study depicts the factors that make a difference on the learning and action level of the organizational culture in two different organizational realities: a public one with local top management and a private one with foreign top management.

**Keywords** Learning organization, Workplace learning, Organizational culture

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

Organizational learning is considered to be a necessity to any company, irrespective of culture or field of activity, increasing the chances for survival on the labor market due to its ability to provide flexibility and adaptability (Örtenblad, 2002). A company that wishes to become a learning organization must stimulate learning, which thus becomes its central activity. The difficulty in carrying this out is of a practical nature, for the managers as well as for the consultants (Thomsen and Hoest, 2001). Although one can speak of an increasing interest in organizational learning and learning organizations, the absence of a rigorous framework regarding conceptual clarifications, the existence of few empirical research studies and few attempts to provide an integrative framework, or to explain the way in which organizational learning influences organizational performance, all lead to the obvious question whether these concepts represent only an academic rhetoric (Heraty, 2004). Another question that comes up is whether any



organization must or should be a learning organization (Örtenblad, 2015) to be competitive on the work market. Research into the learning organization was carried out within organizations in various fields of activity: in the public field (Davis and Daley, 2008), in the medical field (Andrews and Delahaye, 2000), in the educational field (Bowen *et al.*, 2006) and the banking field (Dirani, 2009). This study focuses on two companies in the services field, one with private capital and foreign top management and another with state capital and local top management. Their selection was based on how they are perceived by the local community. They are very attractive considering wages, work environment, safety and security, thus being the most “hunted” companies to work for. Another reason for this choice was to understand why in a company with state capital – the only one in the city that offers this kind of services, which had access to significant European funds and where legislation enforces fast adaptation to European standards – the learning process is very difficult. During the first stage of the study, we wanted to identify which of the two companies presents more characteristics of a learning organization and in which one there is continuous learning capabilities better represented. During the second stage of the study, we focused on the relationships between the organizational culture and the organizational learning capabilities, but also on the types of organizational culture that support stimulating factors in organizational learning. The results showed a clear image of the situation in the two companies, showing information regarding ways of intervention to create or improve learning opportunities.

### Organizational learning and learning organization

While some authors use the terms “organizational learning” and “learning organization” interchangeably (Fulmer *et al.*, 1998; Klimecki and Lassleben, 1998), Thomsen and Hoest (2001) assumed that they represent the two sides of the same coin. Attempting to clarify as well as differentiate the two terms, Örtenblad (2001) indicates that the most often encountered distinction refers to the learning organization as a form or a type of organization, whereas organizational learning is the activity or the learning process within organizations. Yang *et al.* (2004) think that the learning organization refers to the organization that manifests or tries to implement the characteristics of continuous and adaptive learning, whereas organizational learning implies collective learning experiences, used to acquire knowledge and develop skills.

The basis for a learning organization is promoting and sustaining team learning, being in control of one’s own destiny or personal skills, the mental patterns that work in an organization and the presence of a collective vision and of systemic thinking (Senge, 1990). All of these dimensions or features give rise to a set of mechanisms and practices, developing a culture that stimulates and supports the habit of continuous learning. Continuous learning and perfecting doubled by reassessing mental patterns create a favorable environment for collective learning, which eventually leads to the development of a common vision. If these aspects are supported by a systemic thinking, and the organization’s activity takes into consideration the impact of influences of the physical and social environment, it lays the ground for a competitive organization in an economic environment that may stand out as a learning organization (Glăveanu, 2008).

Viewing the organization as a learning entity that reunites a number of people, one cannot speak of organizational learning before dealing with individual learning (Liao *et al.*, 2010). A learning organization not only promotes learning at the organizational

level but also reunites the multiple individual learning experiences (Chermack *et al.*, 2006). This leads to a double approach in the study of organizational learning:

- an individual one – focused on exploring organizational learning as individual learning in an organizational context and in the manner in which this learning is linked to possible organizational changes; and
- an organizational approach – seen as more than the sum of individual learning experiences (Örtenblad, 2001; Antonacopoulou and Chiva, 2007).

Popper and Lipshitz (2000) talk about “learning within” an organization – individually, and “learning of” the organization – collectively. The actual connection is directly observable and adaptive between the two, ensured by the mechanisms of organizational learning, which represent structural and procedural regulations that allow organizations to acquire knowledge, analyze information and experiences and store, distribute and systematically use information relevant to the organization’s and to all of its members’ performance (Popper and Lipshitz, 2000).

There is knowledge within each individual, in his/her mind; it can also exist between people, by means of dialogue that enables information exchange and construction; also, we may find knowledge in routines or encoded in symbols. Therefore, there can be knowledge within individuals, as well as outside, on an organizational culture level (Örtenblad, 2001). In fact, among the factors that seem to influence individual as well as organizational learning, research studies indicate: the company’s type of leadership (Naot *et al.*, 2004), the involvement and support shown by the company in the learning process (Hayes and Allinson, 1998; Popper and Lipshitz, 2000), the employees’ sense of trust (in requesting information, in credit given to those who provide the information and to those with whom they share the obtained information – Andrews and Delahaye, 2000) and the organizational culture and structures (Bohmer and Edmondson, 2001). Therefore, an organizational learning culture begins on an individual level and extends to an organizational level, ingraining into the organizational structure (Hung *et al.*, 2011).

Public companies, unlike private ones, rather have a bureaucratic structure and function in a stricter legal framework, with a higher degree of former operations (Voet, 2014). Within a bureaucratic hierarchy, individual learning is limited to the responsibilities of the particular position. In the case of a complex adaptive hierarchy – that allows employees’ involvement in various tasks to achieve common objectives – there is a tendency to learn different things and acquire various competencies. This allows the organization to develop multiple and various competencies, a more flexible workforce and, therefore, the ability to adapt to change (Bennet, 2006). Also, studies show that communication and sharing of knowledge between employees are enabled by a less centralized organizational structure (Wang and Noe, 2010), a structure that more often characterizes private companies. In the public sector, dominated by control procedures, scheduling and routines – with the role of reducing risks and surprises (Merad *et al.*, 2014), with a more complex hierarchy and a higher degree of centralization and formalization (Voet, 2014), change becomes harder to implement.

Based on these aspects, the following hypotheses were drawn up:

- H1. The dimensions of organizational learning capability are present to a greater extent in private organizations than in public organizations.

- H2. The specific dimensions of a learning organization are present to a greater extent in private organizations than in public organizations.

### Organizational learning and organizational culture

In [Tucker's \(2001\)](#) opinion, in the organizational culture, one finds the company's values, traditions, priorities and patterns of action, and implementing all the organizational changes is influenced by its existence. The culture encompasses the taken-for-granted values, underlying assumptions, expectations, collective memories and definitions present in an organization, representing "how things are around here" ([Cameron and Quinn, 2011](#), p. 16). [Khan et al. \(2012, p. 63\)](#) suggest a definition based on work practices and not on values, in which organizational culture is seen as "the set of particular organizational functions that are carried out by organizational members in a specific way that makes it different from other organizations or from other units within an organization".

Learning takes place in a certain context, and within a company, this context or learning environment is provided by culture. Elements of organizational culture can thus influence the direction of organizational learning, which plays an important role in defining the context it takes place in ([Sørensen, 2002](#)). By means of organizational learning, the company builds, enriches and organizes its knowledge and organizational practices in relation to the specific activities within its own culture ([Dodgson, 1993](#)), which creates a tight interdependence between organizational learning and culture ([Phang et al., 2008](#)). Also, organizational learning acts as a catalyst in implementing an organizational learning culture (those behavioral types that harness and promote learning – [Kandemir and Hult, 2005](#)), and this culture of learning will in turn improve organizational learning ([Liao et al., 2010](#)). The congruence between the values promoted within the organization by means of its culture and the employees' values shapes the quality of the relationships established between employers and employees, having a direct impact on their attitudes and behaviors, the means of communication, assessing performance, motivation, work satisfaction and employees identifying with the company ([Zeitlin et al., 2014](#)).

Different attributes of the culture influence the dynamics of knowledge dissemination and individual or team learning within a company, both horizontally and vertically – between the different levels of the organization ([Wiewiora et al., 2013](#)). Thus, the distribution of this knowledge is modeled by the organizational structure, either encouraging or discouraging interactions among employees ([Wang and Noe, 2010](#)). It seems there is a high degree of centralization associated with stability, but also with the low probability that employees would seek new or innovative solutions for the issues they face – meaning new exploration and learning. The high level of formality could contribute to difficulties in the adaptation and learning process, innovation and experimentation, as a result of the authority level according to the position within the hierarchical structure, but also the rules and regulations that could delay communication ([Voet, 2014](#)).

A first step in designing and implementing change within a company is knowing and understanding the prevailing values that guide an organization – meaning the type of culture. There were many means of measuring and diagnosis proposed for the organizational culture that could be taken into consideration. One of the best known is the competing values framework, which has "a high degree of congruence with

well-known and well accepted categorical schemes that organize the way people think, their values and assumptions, and the ways they process information” (Cameron and Quinn, 2011, p. 33). Based on this model, the organizational culture assessment instrument (OCAI) tool has been developed, which facilitates the diagnosis of an organization’s cultural strength, cultural type and cultural congruence. The four types of culture identified with the aid of this tool are represented by (Cameron and Quinn, 2011):

- (1) *Clan culture*: Which focuses on the dissemination aspects of knowledge, enabling teamwork and implication; the liaison on the organizational level is represented by loyalty and tradition, and success is defined in terms of internal climate and carrying for people.
- (2) *Adhocracy culture*: Which stimulates creativity and entrepreneurial spirit; visionary, innovative and risk-oriented leadership; employees are dedicated to experimentation and innovation, and preparation for change and new challenges is essential.
- (3) *Hierarchy culture*: In which norm observation, routine, maintaining stability and internal control and long-term objectives being focusing on stability, predictability and efficiency are all important.
- (4) *Marketing culture*: Focused more toward the external environment, valuing competition, productivity or efficiency; the liaison that keeps the organization united is an emphasis on winning, and the long-term focus is on competitive actions and achieving stretch goals and targets (Cameron and Quinn, 2011; Wiewiora *et al.*, 2013).

Knowing that the competing values framework also orders attributes of organizations in addition to cultural values and forms of organizing (Cameron and Quinn, 2011), we put forward the research hypothesis according to which:

- H3. The employees of the private organization have a different perception of the specific type of organizational culture in comparison to those belonging to the public organization.

### **Learning organization, organizational learning and organizational culture**

Numerous publications and research studies regarding learning organizations and organizational learning mainly aim at conceptual and descriptive aspects and less at empirical aspects, because little is known about the way they can be measured (Chermack *et al.*, 2006). The complexity and dynamics of the situations and issues encountered at an organizational level, as well as the cost of the necessary instruments for gathering data, make the measurement of organizational learning difficult (Spector and Davidson, 2006). In research studies on learning organization, the approach is prescriptive – oriented toward how organizations should learn; the studies on organizational learning are descriptive – focused on how organizations actually learn (Tsang, 1997). Prescriptions are provided as to the utility of tools and to work structure with regard to learning, however, without providing clear answers to how these tools or structures support and enable the development of a learning environment in practice, or to how learning can be improved (Thomsen and Hoest, 2001). Among the measurable aspects of organizational learning, the following are considered: actions (flowing of

information, innovation, involvement and results); leadership involvement (sharing the vision); reflexive actions (collaborating for identifying problems, assessing situations and considering alternative solutions); emotions (reflected in attitudes, trust, support); teamwork; and tolerance regarding errors (Spector and Davidsen, 2006).

To establish whether an organization is a learning one, Popper and Lipshitz (2000) suggest mapping the mechanisms of organizational learning, the culture within which these work and the extent to which these variables contribute to improving the members' performance and skills to change the organization's mission and values. In a study on assessing organizational learning in schools, Bowen *et al.* (2006) speak of two measurable key features, which are found in organizational learning: actions (directly observable) and feelings (indirectly observable, but inferred from the organizational culture). Examining the relationship between total quality management, organizational learning and innovative performance within the organization, Hung *et al.* (2011) use the culture of learning and the learning strategy as dimensions for measuring organizational learning.

Not yet able to speak of maturity regarding the research and empirical evaluation of the constructs that characterize organizational learning and the tools to make this possible (López *et al.*, 2006), our study has tried to identify the factors known to stimulate organizational learning, the presence of the dimensions that literature considers characteristic of a learning organization and the type of organizational culture present in a company.

In this case, the formulated hypothesis is:

*H4.* The type of organizational culture differently influences and supports factors that facilitate organizational learning.

## Method

### *Objectives of research*

By means of established objectives we aimed at:

- identifying in which of the two companies in the services field (public or private), the dimensions of continuous learning capability are better represented and which of the two shows to a greater extent the features of a learning organization; and
- capturing the connections between organizational culture and organizational learning capability in each of the two organizations.

### *Participants*

Data were obtained from a convenience sample of 64 employees from two organizations – one public and one private. All participants were informed about the purpose to which obtained data would be used and about respecting the confidentiality of the answers provided. The public organization (N1 = 31) is an operator of public water and plumbing services. Its major responsibilities include consumer health and comfort, environmental safety and protection of water resources. It offers services for about 80 localities in the region and operates through five branches. During the past 10 years, it coordinated programs of millions of euros with non-reimbursable funds to improve services offered to the general population. Participants for the study were volunteers, of top management, middle management and administrative support level,



working at headquarters. The average age of the subjects is 37.28 (SD = 10.40), and average job tenure is 10.76 years (SD = 9.75). The private organization (N2 = 33) is the branch office of a multinational company activating as a provider of turnkey telecommunications solutions for telecommunications companies, utilities providers and public institutions. It has a complex activity of research-development, design, assembly, maintenance and consultancy. It also has an excellence center and close relationships with the technical universities and the local community. The selection included middle-management employees and those from the administrative support departments. The average age is 32.51 (SD = 8.67), and average job tenure is 7.24 years (SD = 7.66).

### *Instruments*

Identifying the dimensions of the learning organization was carried out using The Dimension of the Learning Organization Questionnaire (Marsick and Watkins, 2003), used in research studies regarding learning organizations (Chermack *et al.*, 2006), organizational learning (Joo and Shim, 2010) or learning organization culture (Song and Chermack, 2008; Dirani, 2009). This is considered to be the only questionnaire subjected to multiple statistical analyses of validity and precision (Chermack *et al.*, 2006; Davis and Daley, 2008), and we have the permission from the original authors to use it. The sample is made up of 55 six-step Likert scale questions (1 – complete disapproval and 6 – complete approval), aimed at eight dimensions of the learning organization, represented by eight subscales: continuous learning; inquiry and dialogue; team learning; embedded system; empowerment; system connection; provide leadership; and financial performance (the latter was not used in the current study). The internal consistency (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ) for the seven scales varies between 0.90 and 0.95.

The organizational learning capability was identified using The Organizational Learning Capability Scale (Chiva *et al.*, 2007), based on the analysis of the factors that enable organizational learning. The item sample is made up of 14 Likert scale items with seven steps each (1 – never, 7 – always), aimed at five dimensions of the organizational learning capability represented by five subscales: experimentation, risk-taking, interaction with the external environment, dialogue and participative decision-making. The internal consistency (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ) for the five subscales varies between 0.83 and 0.86. We also have the permission from the original authors to use it.

Assessment of the organizational culture was carried out using the OCAI questionnaire, developed in 1997 by Cameron and Quinn and validated for the Romanian population by Pitariu and Budean (2007). The OCAI questionnaire uses an ipsative answer scale to assess the four types of cultures, according to the positioning of the organizations on the dimensions of internal/external and flexibility/control orientation, allowing the study of six aspects of culture: dominant characteristics of the organization; organizational leadership; management of employees; organizational glue (the bonding mechanism that holds the organization together); strategic emphasis; and criteria of success. The questionnaire has two distinct sections: the first is made up of six aspects referring to the six dimensions requiring the subjects to assess the state of affairs in the company; in the second section, we find the same items, only this time, the subjects are asked to divide the points according to the way they wish the organization was (Pitariu and Budean, 2007). The sample was used on the Romanian population in a series of studies that claim the precision of this tool (which is publicly available), the

values of Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient exceeding the satisfying level for each scale, varying between 0.74 and 0.79 for the clan culture; 0.79 and 0.80 for the adhocracy culture; 0.73 and 0.76 for the hierarchy culture; and between 0.71 and 0.77 for the market culture (Pitariu and Budean, 2007). In this research, only Section "A" of the questionnaire was used, the study aiming at identifying the type of culture present in each of the two companies. The values obtained for Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient varied between 0.70 and 0.80.

## Results

### *Organizational learning*

Based on the analysis of the results obtained, one can notice statistically significant differences between the two types of organizations regarding four of the five dimensions of organizational learning capability (Table I).

### *Learning organization*

Regarding the dimensions that characterize a learning organization, one can notice the statistically significant differences between the two types of companies regarding all of these dimensions (Table II).

### *Organizational culture*

Table III indicates that the private organization's employees perceive culture as a clan culture, followed very closely by the market-type culture, whereas the public organization's employees perceive it as a hierarchy culture.

We were very interested in finding out what is the effect of each type of culture upon the factors that facilitate organizational learning, according to the organization type (Table IV). According to regression analysis, the presence of a hierarchical culture (Table V) in an organization inhibits all five factors that facilitate organizational learning. The type of organization (public or private) is a moderator only for the relationship between the experimenting dimension and the hierarchical culture: in private organizations, the relationship is negative (inversely proportional), and within public organizations, there is no relationship between the two variables (Figure 1). The presence of an adhocracy culture in an organization (Table VI) stimulates all five factors

Organizational learning capabilities	Organization type	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Experimentation	Private	10.93	2.03	4.01	0.000
	Public	8.09	3.48	3.95	
Risk-taking	Private	10.51	2.20	4.81	0.000
	Public	7.58	2.65	4.78	
Interaction with the external environment	Private	14.24	3.00	1.48	0.143
	Public	12.87	4.31	1.46	
Dialogue	Private	23.84	3.57	3.51	0.001
	Public	18.83	7.32	3.44	
Participative decision-making	Private	13.63	4.06	2.51	0.014
	Public	10.45	5.93	2.48	

**Notes:** \*Nprivate = 33; Npublic = 31

**Table I.**  
Differences between the private and public organizations from the perspective of the dimensions of organizational learning capability



**Table II.**  
Differences between  
the private and the  
public organizations  
from the perspective  
of the learning  
organization  
dimensions

Learning organization dimensions	Organization type	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Continuous learning	Private	33.24	5.30	5.50	0.000
	Public	25.03	6.59	5.46	
Inquiry and dialogue	Private	28.39	5.99	5.00	0.000
	Public	21.16	5.54	5.01	
Team learning	Private	27.57	5.79	4.97	0.000
	Public	20.61	5.37	4.98	
Embedded system	Private	27.96	5.05	4.95	0.000
	Public	20.45	6.98	4.90	
Empowerment	Private	26.87	5.82	4.46	0.000
	Public	20.64	5.29	4.48	
System connection	Private	26.21	5.25	2.46	0.016
	Public	22.74	5.99	2.45	
Provide leadership	Private	26.75	5.61	2.64	0.010
	Public	22.32	7.67	2.62	

**Notes:** Nprivate = 33; Npublic = 31

**Table III.**  
Descriptive statistics  
for perception of type  
of culture in public  
and private  
organizations

Type of culture	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Market culture	150.96	52.85	160.90	75.68
Clan culture	130.06	66.54	<b>162.72</b>	91.75
Adhocracy culture	115.38	42.99	134.39	47.88
Hierarchy culture	<b>200.35</b>	90.62	142.87	63.97
	Npublic organization = 31		Nprivate organization = 33	

**Table IV.**  
Descriptive indicators and correlation matrix of variables included in the hierarchical regression models

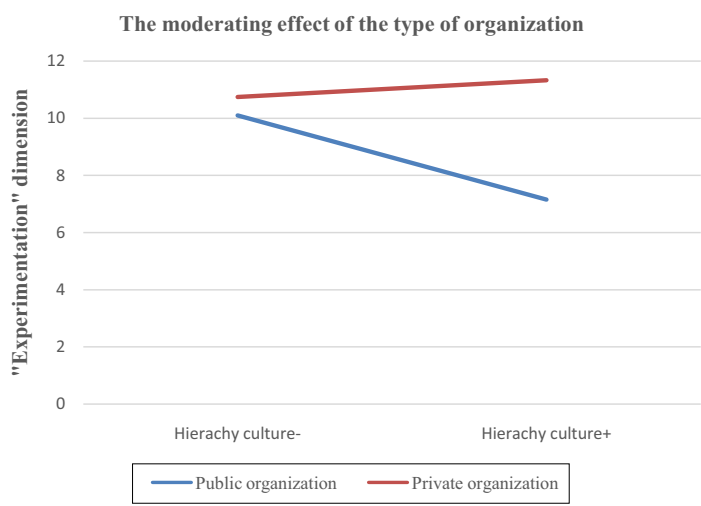
Organizational learning capabilities	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
Experimentation	9.56	3.15	-0.39**	0.50**	0.12	0.02	-0.45**
Risk-taking	9.09	2.83	-0.44**	0.37**	0.26*	-0.01	-0.43**
Interaction with the external environment	13.57	3.72	-0.34**	0.29*	0.14	0.08	-0.18
Dialogue	21.42	6.19	-0.45**	0.35**	0.33**	-0.05	-0.40**
Participative decision-making	12.09	5.26	-0.43**	0.41**	0.29*	-0.11	-0.30*
<i>Predictors</i>							
1. Hierarchy culture	1.70	8.26	-				0.35**
3. Adhocracy culture	1.25	4.62		-			-0.20
5. Clan culture	1.46	8.15			-		-0.20
7. Market culture	1.56	6.53				-	-0.07
9. Type of organization	1.48	0.50					-

**Notes:** \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$

Variables	Experimentation			Risk-taking			Interaction with the external environment			Dialogue			Participative decision-making		
	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$
<i>Step 1</i> Hierarchy culture	0.159	0.159**	-0.399*	0.201	0.201**	-0.448**	0.120	0.120**	-0.346**	0.204	0.204**	-0.452**	0.187	0.187**	-0.433**
<i>Step 2</i> Hierarchy culture Organization type	0.272	0.113**	-0.274* 0.358*	0.353	0.152**	-0.302** 0.416**	0.124	0.005	-0.321* 0.073	0.275	0.071*	-0.353** 0.284*	0.214	0.027	-0.372** -0.174
<i>Step 3</i> Hierarchy culture Organization type Org_Hierarchy culture	0.335	0.063*	-0.188 0.385** 0.263*	0.362	0.009	-0.270* 0.426** 0.100	0.173	0.049	-0.245 0.097 0.233	0.318	0.043	-0.281* 0.306* 0.218	0.228	0.014	-0.332* 0.187 0.123
<b>Notes:</b> * $p < 0.05$ ; ** $p < 0.01$															

**Table V.**  
Hierarchical multiple  
regression results for  
every type of  
organizational  
culture – hierarchy  
culture

**Figure 1.**  
Hierarchy culture  
and dependent  
variable  
“Experimentation”



which facilitate organizational learning. The type of organization is a moderator only for the relationship between the adhocracy culture and the experimenting dimension: the relationship is stronger in a private company compared to a public company (Figure 2). The presence of a clan culture in an organization stimulates only three of the factors that support organizational learning: risk assumption, dialogue promotion and participation in decision-making (Table VII). The type of organization is not a moderator for any of the relationships. The presence of a market-type culture in an organization (Table VIII) does not influence any of the factors that facilitate learning. The type of organization is a moderator only for the market-type culture and the dialogue dimension: the relationship is positive in public organizations and negative in the private ones (Figure 3).

**Discussion**

The first objective of research was to *identify in which of the two companies activating in the services field (private and public), the dimensions of continuous learning capability are better represented and which possesses the characteristics of a learning organization to a greater extent*. To this effect, we started by highlighting the factors that enable organizational learning and the dimensions that characterize such an organization, suggested by literature as defining for a learning organization.

*Organizational learning and learning organization*

Organizational learning is possible only by acquiring knowledge and information, thus becoming truly efficient when exploiting and using these (Voet, 2014). Sharing knowledge or information among employees, within teams but also among these, allows the company to become a learning organization and to exploit and capitalize on knowledge-based resources (Wang and Noe, 2010). The results of our study highlight statistically significant differences regarding organizational learning capability, in favor of the private organization. This is the sort of organization that is more likely to seek innovative solutions to the problems it faces, take risks, promote dialogue and involve employees in decision-making, considering their ideas valuable in the process of

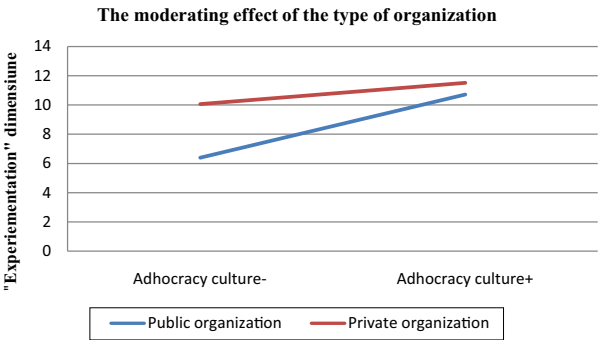
Variables	Experimentation			Risk-taking			Interaction with the external environment			Dialogue			Participative decision-making		
	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$
<i>Step 1</i>															
Adhocracy culture	0.253	0.253**	0.503**	0.144	0.144**	0.379**	0.085	0.085*	0.291*	0.123	0.123**	0.350**	0.168	0.168**	0.410**
<i>Step 2</i>															
Adhocracy culture	0.381	0.128**	0.427**	0.349	0.205**	0.283**	0.101	0.016	0.264*	0.240	0.117**	0.278*	0.218	0.050	0.362**
Organization type			0.366**			0.463**			0.131			0.350**			0.230
<i>Step 3</i>															
Adhocracy culture	0.429	0.048*	0.459**	0.322	0.006	0.294**	0.134	0.033	0.290*	0.278	0.039	0.306**	0.247	0.029	0.387**
Organization type			0.358**			0.461**			0.124			0.342**			0.223
Org_Adhocracy culture			-0.222*			-0.075			-0.184			-0.198			-0.171
<b>Notes:</b> * $p < 0.05$ ; ** $p < 0.01$															

**Table VI.**  
Hierarchical multiple regression results for every type of organizational culture – adhocracy culture

organizational development (Table I). Also, one can say that the private organization is more involved in the process of continuous learning, in promoting dialogue and obtaining necessary information, in encouraging collaboration and team learning, in raising awareness among employees and in encouraging the strategic use of learning (Table II) – specific dimensions for a learning organization. This can be explained by the specifics of the private organization which on this particular market segment (telecommunications and IT) faces a larger competition and needs to permanently adapt. For the public company, there are no competitors, it being the only one on the local and regional market for providing such services. According to the models of organizations that learn, proposed by Örtenblad (2015), our public company could be assimilated to the "Learning safety organizations" model. In this case, for reasons related to public security and safety, it is recommended to keep a higher level of formality and observation of rules. This could also be an answer to the question launched at the beginning of the study regarding the difficulty in organizational learning in a public company.

Regarding the second objective of the study, it focused on *identifying relationships between organizational culture and organizational learning capability within each of the two organizations*. It is a well-known fact that within a hierarchy culture, dialogue and the employees' opportunity for action tend to be limited, as its values are oriented toward formality, logic, order and submission (Cameron and Quinn, 2011). Through the well-known attributes of bureaucracy (rules, specialization, meritocracy, hierarchy, etc., Cameron and Quinn, 2011), for the company with state capital (Table III) in a larger measure than within the private company, the hierarchical culture does not stimulate experimentation of new processes, methods or services; dialogue and interaction with the environment; or adapting the good practice of competition for the particularity of the specific company. This is significant for a "Learning safety organization", in which the focus of activities is only on observing and implementing the legal requests in the field and solving issues when they come up, rather being a single-loop learning (Ortenblad, 2015).

The clan-type culture values teamwork and encourages dialogue and each employee's contribution to improving activity and raising performance. The organization is interested in developing a humane work environment, in empowering employees and facilitating their participation, commitment and loyalty (Cameron and Quinn, 2011; Wiewiora *et al.*, 2013). The main values within the clan culture (employee



**Figure 2.**  
Adhocracy culture  
and dependent  
variable  
"Experimentation"

Variables	Experimentation			Risk-taking			Interaction with the external environment			Dialogue			Participative decision-making		
	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$
<i>Step 1</i>	0.015	0.015		0.071	0.071*		0.021	0.021		0.109	0.109**		0.090	0.090*	
Clan culture			0.122			0.267*			0.145			0.330**			0.299*
<i>Step 2</i>	0.207	0.192**		0.299	0.228**		0.046	0.025		0.230	0.121**		0.152	0.062*	
Clan culture			0.032			0.168			0.112			0.258*			0.248*
Organization type			0.448**			0.448**			0.163			0.355**			0.255*
<i>Step 3</i>	0.224	0.016		0.302	0.003		0.098	0.051		0.235	0.005		0.167	0.015	
Clan culture			0.079			0.188			0.196			0.285*			0.293*
Organization type			0.438**			0.484**			0.144			0.349**			0.245*
Org_Clan culture			-0.135			-0.057			-0.241			-0.078			-0.130
<b>Notes:</b> * $p < 0.05$ ; ** $p < 0.01$															

**Table VII.**  
Hierarchical multiple regression results for every type of organizational culture – clan culture



**Table VIII.**  
Hierarchical multiple regression results for every type of organizational culture–market culture

Variables	Experimentation			Risk-taking			Interaction with the external environment			Dialogue			Participative decision-making		
	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$
<i>Step 1</i>															
Market culture	0.001	0.001	0.024	0.000	0.000	-0.012	0.007	0.007	0.081	0.003	0.003	-0.056	0.014	0.014	-0.117
<i>Step 2</i>															
Market culture	0.207	0.206**	-0.011	0.275	0.275**	-0.053	0.039	0.032	0.067	0.173	0.170**	-0.088	0.113	0.099*	-0.141
Organization type			0.455**			0.526**			0.180			0.414**			0.315*
<i>Step 3</i>															
Market culture	0.234	0.027	0.056	0.304	0.029	0.016	0.047	0.008	0.104	0.205	0.069*	0.018	0.119	0.007	-0.109
Organization type			0.450**			0.520**			0.177			0.405**			0.313*
Org_Market culture			-0.178			-0.183			-0.097			-0.283*			-0.087

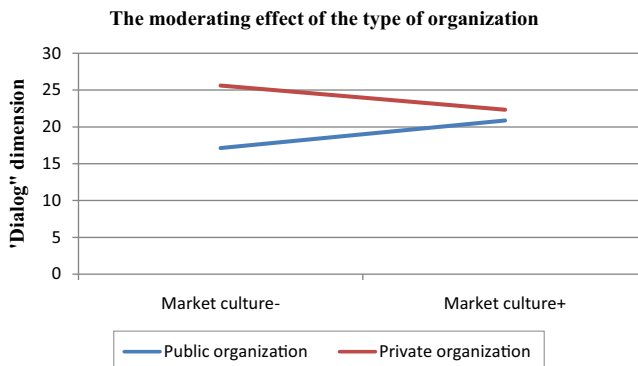
**Notes:** \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$

involvement, collaboration, teamwork) facilitate organizational learning and spreading of knowledge. In the market culture, the emphasis is on competitiveness and productivity, permanent adaptation to the market and to the client – through external positioning and control, on reaching the established goals (Cameron and Quinn, 2011). According to the authors, the market-type culture is focused more on transactions toward the external environment (customers, contractors, suppliers, etc.). All these characteristics are found within the specifics of the activities of the private organization studied (Table III).

Regarding the impact of each culture type upon the factors that facilitate organizational learning, the results we found emphasize the following:

- a hierarchical culture within a public organization, compared to a private one, inhibits to a higher degree the search for new solutions for the issues it is confronted with, the understanding of the way things work, experimenting and accepting new ideas;
- having a adhocracy culture within a private organization stimulates experimentation in a higher degree than the same type of culture does in a public organization; and
- a market-type culture in a public organization facilitates spreading and building knowledge, while its presence in a private organization diminishes dialogue.

The degree in which the type of culture influences factors that facilitate organizational learning depends on the type of the organization, the impact being different in a state capital organization compared to a private capital one. Implementing changes in companies from the public sector is more difficult because of the hierarchical system, the habit of employees to work in a certain style or the limitation of development owing to a fixed budget (Carmeli and Tishler, 2004). Having control procedures, excessive planning and routine can lead to a deficient administration and an undermining of creativity and flexibility (Merad *et al.*, 2014). Many authors think that maintaining learning abilities within public organizations can be done through moving to “a king of coercive centralized and domination bureaucracy to a learning, representative and enabling bureaucracy” (Merad *et al.*, 2014, p. 23).



**Figure 3.**  
Market culture and dependent variable  
“Dialogue”

## Conclusion

Developed as a tool for business management oriented toward productivity and efficiency (Saw *et al.*, 2010), the concept of learning organization stresses the importance that learning has within a company's growth and development, knowledge being "one of the most strategic weapons that can lead to sustained increase in profits", business must keep on learning to maintain its competitiveness (Liao *et al.*, 2010, p. 3793). Starting from Finger and Brand's (1999) statement that public organizations more rarely make the subject of such research studies, the current study has tried to carry out an x-ray of two companies in the field of services – one private and one public, focusing on two important dimensions for the existence of a company: organizational learning and culture. With the starting point of local community perception upon the two companies (salaries, work conditions, security level of the workplace), we set out to see if there is an empirical support and if this image is determined by the fact that these two promote learning and if they are organizations that learn.

There are some limits to our research that determine precautions in generalizing the results:

- the reduced number of participants, which is still representative though for the intended branches;
- the two companies cannot be considered as being representative for the specific field of activity; and
- the structure of the sample – only employees on management and support level have been questioned.

Another limit could be using formatted questionnaires of self-report that depend on the ability of respondents to be accurate in their introspection and so it could be affected by distortions such as social desirability or tendency toward approval. Involving larger numbers and more diverse types of companies and employees could lead to relevance increase of the obtained results. In spite of these limitations, we still believe that the results bring an added value for the theory and practice within the area of organizational learning.

Thus, results confirm the first two hypothesis (*H1* and *H2*), emphasizing an organizational learning capability better represented within the organization with private capital, and also a larger presence of dimensions specific to a learning organization. This could be determined of the IT specific of the organization with private capital, but also by the restructuring that took place lately within the mother-company: it being bought by a tycoon in the field, expending its activities' portfolios, working with universities. In the company with public capital, whose main responsibility is to ensure citizens' health and safety, we rather speak of an adaptive learning, which is present only for correcting mishaps from norms and legislation.

According to the assumption regarding the presence of different perceptions upon the type of organizational culture focusing on the type of organization (*H3*), results show that within the public company, the dominant type of culture is the hierarchical one, while within the private company, we find a clan-type culture, followed by a market-type culture. On one hand, these perceptions are according to the "Learning safety organizations" model for the companies that provide this sort of public services,

and on the other hand, with the companies whose main activity is research-development in the IT and telecommunications field.

The fourth hypothesis stipulates that the factors that facilitate organizational learning are differently influenced by the type of organizational culture. Thus, it seems that a hierarchical-type culture inhibits all factors that stimulate and support organizational learning; the adhocracy-type culture stimulates all these factors; the clan-type culture stimulates risk assumption, dialogue and participating in decision-making; and the market-type culture is no predictor for any of the factors that support organizational learning. Regarding the moderating factor of the type of organization, results show that the type of organization (public or private) moderates the hierarchical type of culture relationship, respectively adhocracy and the experimenting dimension of organizational learning – as new ideas are accepted, curiosity for how things work or looking for new solutions; also, the type of organization is a moderator both for the market-type culture and the dialogue dimension of organizational learning – the process of building common understanding.

### **Theoretical and practical implication**

The results of this study bring an added knowledge regarding the relationship between the type of the organization and organizational learning, but also regarding the way organizational culture acts upon the factors that influence learning. From a practical point of view, the study offers the management an image upon the way employees perceive two essential aspects for the company: learning and organizational culture, and an answer regarding variables that influence organizational learning and how. Highlighting the differences perceived for the dimensions specific to a learning organization and for organizational learning capability enables the management to become aware of the aspects that they can intervene on (e.g. promoting dialogue by creating and maintaining formal and informal networks of knowledge distribution, employee involvement in the decision-making process, encouraging collaboration and team learning, etc.) to stay competitive on the market. Knowing the influence that organizational culture could have in implementing organizational changes (Liao *et al.*, 2010), its identification helps to understand employees' behavior, the impact that these types of culture have in the learning-development process or the necessary structures for optimizing these mechanisms. For example, in a safety organization which must follow the rules, learning can be promoted through keeping a balance between the ability to learn within the organization and the ability to preserve the main characteristics of the organization that should or must be preserved through time (Merad *et al.*, 2014). Last but not least, the study's results offer a starting point in rethinking the efficiency of the leadership styles within a certain organizational culture; the supportive and participative styles are seen as the best solutions for promoting and maintaining continuous learning (Wiewiora *et al.*, 2013).

Because the study did not focus on the relationship between organizational learning and performance, we would like to undertake this subject in a future research, combining it with identifying the degree in which investing in training employees can influence development and promotion of an organizational learning culture.

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