

The force field around a culture of simplicity and empathy: management from people governance

El campo de fuerzas alrededor de una cultura de la simplicidad y empatía: gestión desde el gobierno de las personas

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Juan Carlos Robledo Fernández

Doctor in Administration (PhD) from Universidad EAFIT, Colombia. General Vice Rector, Corporación Educativa del Litoral.
Mail: jrobledo@litoral.edu.co. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6303-8688>.

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Abstract

In a complex, volatile and ever-changing world, there are challenges for management. changing, there are challenges for the Administration, the Organizations and for the Management. The main challenge challenge is evidenced in the depletion of an administrative paradigm paradigm based on traditional schemes under an excessively analytical an excessively analytical, excessively functional and excessively scientific rationality. I ti s necessary, therefore, to and validate new paths towards a more pertinent, coherent and capable of more relevant, coherent and capable of dealing with complexity without increasing it, in order to improve business performance of the companies. In this order of ideas, simplicity and empathy emerge as two opportunities for intervention in companies, based on their organizational cultures.

Keywords: *Empathy; Simplicity; Strategy; Mastery*

Resumen

En un mundo complejo, volátil, que está en permanente cambio, se producen desafíos para la Administración, las Organizaciones y para el Management. El principal reto, se evidencia en el agotamiento de un paradigma administrativo basado en los esquemas tradicionales bajo una racionalidad excesivamente analítica, excesivamente funcional, y excesivamente científica. Es necesario, por tanto, encontrar y validar, nuevos caminos hacia una administración más pertinente, coherente y capaz de lidiar con la complejidad sin aumentarla, en función al mejor desempeño de las empresas. En este orden de ideas, la simplicidad y la empatía emergen como dos oportunidades de intervención en las empresas, desde sus culturas organizacionales.

Palabras Clave: *Empatía; Estrategia; Dominio; Simplicidad.*

Introduction

The exhaustion of the traditional paradigm of administration is a clear way of inviting us to rethink the company, its organization and the administration that is currently practiced. On the other hand, questions arise such as: Are we teaching what should be taught in administration¹? What are these new realities of Latin American companies, and what challenges do they confer on the field of administration?

This conceptual article seeks to explore in this sea of challenges, two elements that are considered key in the emergence of new concepts that allow the development of business management models based on the idea of good governance of people. These concepts are Simplicity and Empathy, and their respective field of forces, to intervene in the organizational culture and seek a performance not based on obedience but on understanding.

The reader will find in this document, first, an approach to the frame of reference that seeks the critical elements for defining simplicity and empathy; second, a discussion section of these elements; and fourth, conclusions based on a review of the topic discussed on the culture of simplicity and empathy.

In this way, we hope to contribute to this intellectual exploration in the field of administration and organizations, but especially to understand and seek alternative paths for the development of good governance of people for a better administration of things.

SUMMARY FRAME OF REFERENCE

"The longer a hedgehog takes to be born, the more spines it will have."

Undoubtedly, today the rise of organizations makes it difficult to conceive of social construction, the "most efficient use of the resources available to a society", and in practice, human beings spend at least 50% of their lives in them. They are also the building link in a process of satisfying needs that emerge as new components of progress and the development of science and technology appear.

It is difficult to think that today we attend any event in our lives without it involving an organizational process: going to the cinema, to the supermarket, to a hospital, or to an embassy for a visa, going to a notary's office, to a school in search of qualifications, going to the university, shopping centers, and places of entertainment etc... everywhere, everywhere we attend and are attended by organizational processes. On the other hand, assisting or being assisted by organizational processes or organizations is in itself the practical and experiential development of an "organizational grammatical model²". There is no human activity, which should not be mediated by language, by the spoken and written word, loaded at all times with symbols, meanings, signifiers.

¹ Remarks by Ruben Darío Echaveerry, at the International Colloquium on the Challenges of Administration in Latin America, held at Unimagdalena, August 24-26, 2015.

² In this case, it is intended to establish that any organization is measured and constituted in its essence by the spoken and written word: memos, guidelines, instructions, there is nothing that does not involve the grammatical act.

giving meaning to the reality experienced by each observer, by each actor of his own life in relation to his environment.

These processes and moments of interaction, however, are often understood with "functional ease" with a marked economic rationality, from where, acts, interactions are measured with a transactional metric of cost-benefit, interactions are of course not "innocent" or at least do not enjoy the properties of innocence, in other words, with the exception of children who in their innocence in acting do not project or premeditate the results of their actions, on the contrary, people who are no longer children are rational predictors of the expected results of each of their actions normally undertaken.

The volume of these infinite transactions that organizations experience on a daily basis, both inside and outside their own structure, subjects them to a framework of complexity that, as the organization advances in maturity and scope, becomes more complex, and even makes management more complicated. However, this complexity, from these traditional and scientist management schemes, seeks to deal with its complex spaces through excessive rational mechanisms, seeking explanatory, predictive and even anticipatory answers and methods, sophisticating the frames of reference of configuration and strategic planning. Therefore, they reach such a degree of rationalization that stochastic models are already incorporated, systems of equations are formed and the incorporation of components of basic sciences and calculus to the "art of governing a company" is increasingly sought. In this type of administration, an expertise of "*functional self-sufficiency*" is finally developed, in which barriers to interaction and, of course, barriers to collaborative, team and cooperative work are erected. The remedy sought to these problems is of course the creation of soft meta-administrative methodologies, which are intended to relieve the pressure and ontological tension in the organization. The end result is more complexity, and more complicated processes.

At the end of the day, the reality of daily life in organizations can be summed up by their success or failure, generally determined not by truly technical or scientific problems, but by problems of an ontological and axiological nature,

These problems are not only developed and consumed within the organization, but, in many cases, are consciously or unconsciously transferred to the customer of the company or organization.

It is in this frame of reference, from the complexity that is woven within organizations, that the need emerges to seek new concepts, methods and, if necessary, paradigmatic approaches that deal with complexity without increasing it. It is in this sense that this document proposes to delve into the identification of the field of forces that can be a constitutive and constituent base of an organizational culture based on simplicity and empathy, and that this framework of action be oriented from a management model supported on the premise of *people governance*.

Connecting simplicity and empathy³ under a model that allows the good governance of people within organizations, clearly escapes from the traditional model of management, based on the scheme of rational economic calculation of expected results both in *optimization, maximization and minimization* goals. It is therefore a paradox to seek to dig into the oxymoron of a simplicity of complexity, connected to the emergence of a practice of empathy as a constitutive element of human behavior and natural cognitive scheme of people. Corruption generates distortions in the public sector by diverting public investments to capital projects in which bribes and kickbacks are more abundant (Reyes-Ramírez, 2017).

Or as stated by Hoffman (1987) "The central idea is the integration of affect and cognition beyond information processing". In this perspective, the author seeks to pose empathy as a motivational process that motivates to help in the other's problem. That is, at a more mature level of empathy it can facilitate in the behavior of individuals to be more disposed to the vital condition of the other and not only of oneself (Hoffman, 1991).

Eisenberg (2004), for his part, opts for empathy as a path in the formation and moral development of people, understanding it as an *emotional response of an individual who understands the situation of another person*. This implies that an empathic response to circumstances inside or outside the organization configures or evidences the individual's capacity to understand the other person and put himself in his place based on situations such as conversation, observation, verbal information received or accessed from memory itself. Hence, this perspective of empathy can be understood as a pro-social disposition of people towards other people.

Various researchers have given empathy a meaning from their respective perspectives, for example, Mestré Escrivá (2004) gives empathy a character of capacity and ability of the person from his emotional intelligence that allows him to understand the feelings, emotions and thoughts of other people. On the other hand, Moya-Albiol, et.al (2010) defines empathy from a neuroscience perspective, as a capacity related to biological factors linked to the conformation and linking of brain structures.

However, regardless of these positions and others, the premise of this paper is that empathy plays a preponderant role in the construction of human and social relationships, and therefore, (Bórquez et al. 2019), not only has to do with the ability and capacity to put oneself in the place of the other, but also *with a way of knowing, of disposing and exposing oneself* by each individual to the environment from where he/she develops his/her daily life. Furthermore, this empathic characteristic is in itself a response capacity to *the tensions* that are experienced within the organization, and is totally linked to the constitution and maturation of the organizational culture.

In addition, in the state of the art of management studies, few works have been discussing simplicity and empathy as critical factors in the constitution of

³ The term empathy formally appeared in the 18th century, being referred to by Robert Vischer (cited in Davis, 1996) with the German term "Ein- füllung", which translates as "feeling inside". It was only in 1909 that Titchener (cited in Davis 1996) coined the term empathy as it is known today.

a field of forces that can be intervened from a management model based on the good governance of people, or, as Professor Alain Chanlat commented at the time, "The good treatment of people".

On the other hand, traditionally companies and their organizations have been studied and even configured so that within them the discipline of total control of the processes is exercised under an excessive rational scheme (Robledo, et.al, 2015), which somehow indicates that the organization is not mature enough, since it is inferred *the hypothesis that the less control the greater the organizational maturity*, understood as the opportunity to have empowered and trusted members of the organization. On the other hand, control is a factor not only of tension but also of extension of internal discomfort towards the companies' clients themselves.

It is not intended to say that the organization does not need to incorporate control mechanisms, in itself, it is necessary, however, control can have an equivalent in trust, in empathy practiced from a perspective of trust and good treatment.

In addition to control, the organization of work within the company has traditionally been delineated by a rationality of optimization that often destroys the individual's own identity by subjecting him to a framework of organizational culture mediated by an *artificial system of values and behaviors* that only obey pre-established conditions by plans and planning, but do not obey a natural condition of adaptation and development at will of the disposition to the best performance within the organization, bordering on the idea that a person defends his job not to preserve his identity but for the *"sense of hunger"*.

In the particular aspect of simplicity, in the context of this paper, it is understood as the ability and capacity of the person, to work based on a *natural environment of his own consciousness*, developing *skills of precision, synthesis, ingenuity, creativity, method, spirit of help*. On the other hand, simplicity cannot be confused with simplism. The latter is a human attitude based on elements of ignorance, facism, negligence, habit, and a total disregard for pro-social behavior.

This paper, in the sense of what is expressed in the previous paragraph, takes up maxims such as the one expressed by Katsuhiko Ogata who said "When trying to build a model, a balance must be struck between the simplicity of the model and the accuracy of the results of the analysis. This also brings us to Edwaed de Bono when he said "The search for simplicity must allow us to rethink everything, not just the problem areas". And so simplicity is an appropriate means to address the problems of simplicity in a world that is not only chaotic but also disordered, and the profound power of simplicity was summed up by George Sand when she said: "Simplicity is the hardest thing to achieve in this world, it is the last limit of experience and the last effort of genius". This same force of simplicity was expressed by the creator of the Apple company, Steve Job when he said: "Aim for simplicity...the simple can be more difficult than the complicated, you have to work hard to achieve that simplicity...".

Now, simplicity seen in a much more philosophical approach warns of its own contradictions, expressed at the time by Jaume Balmes (1860): "Simplicity sees the one and sees the multiple, but it cannot see that the one can, at the same time, be multiple. It can separate what is linked or it can unify what is dispersed and diverse. All this is possible because man is a biological being, but at the same time, an evidently cultural being, meta-biological and living in a world of language from which his humanity and his ontogeny are constructed and constituted with his ideas and his own consciousness.

Simplicity is then a manifestation of the very beliefs of each human being that constitute his own existence, which he shares inside and outside the organization, as well as constituting the awareness that there are unperceived parts of the processes. As Balmes himself said (1860) "Here one cannot but observe how transcendental analysis confuses those who do not admit simplicity in thinking beings; for it is found that simplicity comes before composition and that the latter cannot be conceived unless the former is presupposed". Simplicity is then a natural law of every being, it dwells in him, and therefore it is possible to put it to conjugate in the collectivity of the organizations themselves.

Simplicity admits unity, therefore, in its constitution and implementation in the framework of organizations, therefore, it can provide organizations *with the principles of unity of purpose and unity* of principle as elements of mastery and governance.

Following these ideas, this paper, as far as the concept of simplicity is concerned, shares what Ken Segall, a member of Apple's creative team, said about simplicity:

"Simplicity is what human beings are instinctively comfortable with. It is equivalent to clarity, evidence and absence of confusion. It is something that is easy to remember and hard to forget."

In the particular case of this paper, whose origin derives from a research work in progress, which seeks to answer the following questions:

What is the force field around a culture of simplicity and empathy? What factors currently favor simplicity and empathy in companies/organizations? What factors currently hinder simplicity and empathy in companies/organizations?
What actions are recommended to promote simplicity and empathy in companies/organizations?

On the other hand, why approach simplicity and empathy from a force field approach? In principle, to speak of the force field is necessarily to refer to the technique developed by Kurt Lewin (1951), which provides a framework for observing the forces affecting a specific situation or phenomenon. According to Lewin, any situation can be described as a temporary equilibrium caused by two sets of opposing forces: the driving forces and the repressive forces. In this context, as it is necessary to take a look from the culture of

In the organization, it becomes imperative to understand the forces that drive change and the forces that resist it.

DISCUSSION

The incessant search for the best results is a business reality, this is a fact. Results are the best indicator of how things are being done within the organization and these will surely be linked to a management style. The best results are the ideal that guides the rationality of those who manage companies.

During the 20th century, organizations developed robust methodological bodies based on the principles of rationality in planning, which they made synonymous with control. From this perspective, "managerial craftsmanship" focuses on leading the company to the achievement of objectives in conditions under its own control, and in this perspective management easily entered the "Marale's circle" phenomenon. However, the 21st century demands a "managerial craftsmanship" more focused on the problem of complexity in which conditions are not under his control.

On the other hand, to think that results are the best indicator can only be true in a logic strictly based on the economic rationality of the organization. However, the daily life of companies and their organization is mediated by the grammatical and dialogical character of human beings. That is, results are not only related to the conditions of the administration of things, but on the contrary, they are the result of a better governance of people.

Hence, since the results of companies are linked to their relationship with their customers, it is the latter who perceive the effects of the dialogical, ontological component that is constituted within each company and its respective organizational system.

Therefore, this paper proposes the hypothesis about the maturity of an organization not measured from its control system and administrative rationality system, but from its ontological components mediated by the simplicity and empathy that inhabit and are proper to each being.

There are several examples worldwide of large and important companies that have fallen into the worst of their performance not precisely because of their "technical incapacities", but because of their inability to have a more comprehensive vision of the organization itself and its relationship with the environment. They are organizations that during their growth have increased their complexity and have incorporated very complicated management systems. Finally, their direct and indirect clients receive the impact of their organizational pathologies.

Hence, it is said that the challenge today is to incorporate Management for Understanding, not with the objective of getting people to obey, but rather, to get people to understand the organization and its context (Gore, 2012). This could also be understood from what was expressed by Professor Kurt Lewin, (2011) "The best way to understand and comprehend something is to try to change it". This appreciation leads to the inference of the fact that an or

subordinated organization, subjected only to its routines, can only offer more of the same.

For a long time, traditional management based on positivist schemes has sought to explain the organization only from the intentions of its actors; however, this source of explanation is today insufficient to understand the very complexity faced by a company and its own organizational system. Professor Gore expresses this need to search for new elements as follows: "Humans live in organizations like fish live in water. Only fish find it difficult to understand that they are wet, and we sometimes find it difficult to understand and comprehend organizations". To this I could add the fact that in organizations they not only meet as individuals, but also constitute themselves as such.

Addressing, therefore, a field of forces that is delineated from simplicity and empathy as constituent pillars of a new way of understanding action within the organization and its external effects, involves not only understanding the organization itself, but also understanding the processes of organizational communication and lifelong learning, which Chris Argyris once called "ecological adjustments in the organization". These adjustments, then, allow inferring that organizations do not really have goals but many constraints to overcome (Perrow Charles, 1986) indicating that what is driving action within the organization is not so much the perception of a future goal, but the appreciation of an immediate constraint (Gore, 2012).

The point here is that constraints within the organization are more influential on managerial character than its perceived objectives themselves, and that both have to do with complex and complicated configurations of strategic design. At this point, a culture of simplicity and empathy can intervene as a field of forces that, guided by a design of governance of people, can go beyond the traditional and rational methods mediated by control and planning, can manage to move the deepest human fibers, that is, their ontological aspects oriented to overcoming restrictions and the complex space in which the company's routines are generally consumed and the organizational scenes are challenged. This leads us to ask ourselves: What are we doing, what are we here for, and we will surely discover that the crisis that companies are experiencing today is not a crisis of strategy, but a crisis of meaning. And this, understanding the fact that "organizations only exist when there is someone doing something with them" (Gore, 2012).

Therefore, organizations, as Ernesto Gore (2012) puts it, are what people do when they do things together by connecting their behaviors. In this sense, organizations are not a noun but a verb.

In this paper we note, of course, that there is a complex organizational field, but that, nevertheless, the job of the manager in his art of management is not to add more complexity, but on the contrary to achieve an organizational model based on simplicity, not simplism, a management model that allows him to develop the human aspects of empathy in the constitutive framework of a good performance by the members of the organization. And it is only at this interface that the

idea in which the Strategy makes a correct equation with the result of the company and its organization, "in the understanding that in the face of the unknown we act; and by acting we define it" (Gore, 2012).

Therefore, to propose orienting the framework of action of the organizational culture from the factors of simplicity and empathy, implies of course modifying the semantic field of the organization, considering that it compromises a social structure where people want to do something and to that end produce relevant interactions among themselves. Moreover, this semantic field is the one that allows people to give meaning and value to their interactions with others. Hence, and according to what Weick and Roberts (1993) propose, "To approach the organizational phenomenon, the unit of analysis cannot be the individual but his or her interconnected behavior, that is, the link he or she establishes with the other members of the organization".

In this sense, simplicity and empathy are incorporated into the behavior of individuals in the organization, subordinating it to their own representations of what others do, what Weick called at the time "the collective mind. It is to take the concept of organizational alignment not along the path of obedience but along the path of coordination. Understanding also that simplicity and empathy will make sense and become understandable if they are incorporated into shared practice within the organization.

CONCLUSION

The culture of simplicity and empathy, and their respective force field for managerial action and organizational development, are the evidence around the fact that an organization must take care of the details, the creation of "good" environments for the performance of human work. And above all, the challenge of approaching complexity from a multidisciplinary perspective as a method of action in the organization.

Exploring new paths for more coherent management action is a challenge in management thinking, especially because it is necessary to improve the frames of reference to address issues related to the performance, productivity and sustainability of companies in hostile environments, in increasingly interconnected, complicated and unstable economies.

Exploring new logics of human and organizational performance, from the administrative and managerial aspects, requires a new look inside the organizations in which human activity links are developed, mediated by an organizational model of strict grammatical order, that is, language as the guiding thread of action and coordination. It is therefore necessary to overcome the problems of functional self-sufficiency, the old ways of thinking and configuring strategy, and to take a deeper look at the management environment and its complexities.

On the other hand, talking about simplicity and empathy is a way of thinking about facing the problem of transferring organizational complexity to customers and the market. It is a way of observing the tension between productivity and human work performance.

Finally, to look at the intervention of the organizational culture through a culture of simplicity and empathy, is to seek that these two conditions act as skills and capacities at the service not only of people but also of their respective organization. Empathy in its role of a better construction of human relationships, and simplicity as a capacity to give the absence of confusion. In addition to seeing empathy as a way of knowing, exposing oneself and making oneself available to the service of the community and not only of oneself. Empathy as a capacity to respond to organizational tensions, most of the time caused by a problem of complexity and the artificial system of values that are cultivated in organizations.

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