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Organizational Learning at Purpose-Driven Enterprise: Action–Research Model for Leadership Improvement

Angel Losada-Vazquez 

Communication School, Pontifical University of Salamanca, 37002 Salamanca, Spain; alosadava@upsa.es;
Tel.: +34-608-263-830

Abstract: Knowledge Economy companies need to be aligned with social improvement challenges not only in order to promote sustainable innovation but also because knowledge workers need to feel their work is meaningful in both organizational and social terms. This is the reason why organizational purpose might play a strategic role and becomes a top management duty. Furthermore, organizational purpose, as part of the social enterprise identity, needs to be built as a result of a new kind of leadership performance, focused on learning processes and driven by individual and organizational communication capabilities. Such a challenge points out, on one hand, that a more socially concerned enterprise is needed and, on the other, that top management capabilities must be improved in order to play the new role they are compelled to in order to promote social economy and stakeholders capitalism. What is at stake applies to both theoretically sound foundations and transformational managerial practices such as those this paper intends to apply by presenting outcomes from a research project focused on the transformational role of leadership as drivers for organizational learning capabilities improvement in search of innovation and social impact.

Keywords: sustainable innovation; leadership; organizational learning; capabilities; change management; organizational design; social identity



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1. Introduction

Practitioners and academics agree on the relevance of corporate culture as a strategic factor and its social impact, specifically in terms of individual contribution to organizational and social change [1]. One of the most important lessons to be learned by managers is how to avoid change management project failure due to internal cultural resistance, either due to the different ways people can understand change or due to the lack of corporate cultural alignment [2].

1.1. Relevance and Novelty of the Research

Leadership, governance and sustainability: Boards and senior management are increasingly concerned about the complexity of the symbolic conditions of engagement processes and their impact on corporate governance. The determination of leadership capability is often linked to Transformational Leadership [3] and Organizational Purpose, which are helpful concepts when considering sustainability issues [4].

Although most organizational purpose management projects are so far only aimed at marketing and reputation goals, organizational purpose might be a relevant strategic asset due to its suitability as an expression of social enterprise identity.

The main relevance and novelty of our research topic comes from the strategic and social impact of leadership as authentic collective behavior, the managerial worthiness of which stands on organizational learning processes and its social development impact.

This is the reason why we deeply believe that organizational purpose brings senior management a glorious opportunity for social impact improvement. Nevertheless, most managers do not know how to manage corporate engagement and alignment, which are

the main factors of the leadership role in the Knowledge Economy. Furthermore, they are not even aware of the cultural nature of these factors [5].

Goal and scope: Our starting point is the current inefficiency of most strategic planes in order to deal with environment dynamism as a result of organizational rigidity [6]. Leaders' duties should move from planning and controlling to engagement and alignment processes focused on sense-making and knowledge production. That is the way organizational learning becomes a strategic management factor [7].

With this in mind, our main goal is to promote a better understanding of today's leadership role in order to promote change and innovation as a result of organizational learning [8]. The necessary leadership paradigm shift requires first leaders' development and transformation as individuals.

Thus, this research project aims to help managers understand, in its very organizational context [9], the implications of the strategic role of leadership regarding collective knowledge creation processes and, consequently, the new kind of leadership required for the demanded enterprise transformation.

This is the reason why our research project long-term goal is to design actionable transformational leadership programs based on the experiential learning basis [10] presented in this paper.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

Our research question regarding this emerging role of leadership striving to improve enterprise transition toward learning organization comes from organizational design theory and practice.

Such a challenge compels us to integrate perspectives from management and HR; PR and strategic communication; knowledge theory; cultural anthropology; speech theory and ethics. Moreover, global practitioners' methods, vision and expertise must be considered in order to approach the topic practically.

From this perspective, the digitalization process, the increasing social change rhythm, uncertainty and fragility encourage managers to continuously move [11], and, consequently, leadership roles must focus on building an enterprise mindset that enables members and stakeholders to continuously leave behind still-performing business models in order to explore new opportunities [12].

Setting up the enterprise for such a "second curve" requires a new paradigm regarding how we understand power, its relationship with the knowledge creation processes and enterprise duties in the knowledge society. The point is that strategic knowledge management processes require a mix of centralization–decentralization and organizational system openness [13]. Moreover, a new kind of market relationships, based on the social impact of enterprise behavior, are needed [14].

Current research state: Leadership is about getting the right people in the right place and balancing challenge and support; that means [15]: being a role model; inspiring employees, empowering them in order to open new paths and helping them to avoid obstacles; and aligning contributions from every single employee [16].

This kind of influence runs on the ability of making work meaningful as the result of the connection between individual, organizational and social meaningful challenges. Such a sense-making process is how integrity, coherency, consistency and accountability determine organizational behavior to be the worthiest engagement and alignment factor [17].

If autonomy is one side of the coin, the other is accountability and the need to be understood not only as a performance measurement tool but also as a scoreboard that provides meaningful data regarding how far every single contribution is from organizational goals and desired social impact achievement.

That is the reason why change management leadership roles and performance need to be studied, promoted and measured through the integration of all useful concepts, methods and expertise in order to gain a better understanding of who we are as an organization (identity), how we work (knowledge production) and how we face the future [18].

Leading people in the Knowledge Economy is about making work meaningful in individual, organizational and social terms and requires from managers four facilitating factors: integrity, active listening, storytelling and empowerment [17].

Moreover, leadership performance is the result not only of leaders' traits, skills or attitudes and the way they understand tasks and goals but also from the whole organization's traits such as autonomy level, self-knowledge of individual capabilities, relationships' contributions to individual improvement and relevance of social organizational contribution [19].

Thus, personal and collective thinking are necessary in terms of promoting a sense of continuity and emotional linkage. Senior management duties, consequently, include guaranteeing people's behavior is linked to their value; assuming that salary is not enough, and that people need recognition; facilitating relationships for personal care and promoting critical thinking [20].

In this way, leadership is called to play an educational role that requires a manager's maturity as an individual in order to produce idealized influence, personal concern, inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation [21].

This is the reason why we considered essential a joint study of the theoretical foundation and the managerial challenges (Table 1) that practitioners agree to consider may make the difference in terms of economic and social development.

Table 1. Theoretical foundations regarding managerial challenges according to current research.

Theoretical Foundations	Managerial Challenges
1. Corporate culture drives execution performance	- Engagement - Alignment
2. Reciprocity is the foundation of social economy	- Contextual Intelligence - Transformational Leadership - Common Good
3. Trust overcomes and drives change	- Trust - Tacit Knowledge - Organizational Learning
4. Experimentation gets the person in the center beyond organizational obstacles	- Strategic Communication - Sense Making - "Humanocracy"
5. Leadership's authenticity drives differential collective capabilities	- Active Listening - Symbolic Construction - Role Model
6. Organizational and social innovation is a result of learning process driven by beliefs	- "In-Use Theories" - Context Analysis - "Triple Loop Learning"
7. Organizational behavior is the result of meaningful processes	- Organizational Development - Transformational Conversations
8. Management is about dynamic knowledge production capabilities	- Dynamic Capabilities - Meaningful Jobs - VUCA Environment
9. Identity connects past and future	- Continuous Change - Leadership's Cultural Role
10. Culture becomes accountable by learning process awareness	- Intangible Assets - Collective Knowledge Creation

Research Gap and Questions: The point is, leadership becomes a strategic asset, but it is not worthy itself; it is valuable only if works out as individual, organizational and social capabilities improvement factors. Below, we discuss the way in which we can measure it.

Given the connection between transformational leadership and corporate culture, we have figured out that organizational purpose strength might be a meaningful indicator in order to analyze, improve and assess leadership as the transformational factor and its value in business and social terms.

That is the reason why we have considered organizational purpose to be worthy, in order to check out leadership transformational influence by monitoring its impact on being a role model, active listening, narrative influence and facilitating factor, the four key drivers for employee engagement [17].

Setting up corporate culture management as part of the leadership duties demands the recognition of complex cultural dynamics and encourages us to deeply study strategic communication as an organizational design factor that works under leadership's role regarding the promotion of collective knowledge creation [6].

Standing on this assumption, our research project aims to improve strategic leadership performance as an interaction process based on a set of organizational knowledge management capabilities, the outcome of which is not only both organizational and social learning but also organizational and social change, according to the digitalization process demands [22].

According to this intention, we have stated four research questions: What converts organizational purpose into such a powerful cultural leadership tool? How does it work? Why is it so useful for enterprise transformation? Is its measurable in business terms?

2. Method and Materials

Method: Our research project has been developed along 7 sequential steps (Table 2). We started by running an interdisciplinary literature review in order to identify research factors whose interactions have been studied from published case studies regarding enterprise change management projects: CEPSA [23]; El Bulli [24].

Afterward, we designed and applied a semistructured questionnaire for identifying practitioner global trends through 15 expert interviews: 4 human resources management consultants; 2 strategic communication consultants; 1 CSR Practitioner Association former president; 1 Corporate Communication Association former president; 1 Energy Enterprise Business Ethics chairman and professor; 1 hotel group chief of human resources; 1 US professor on organizational behavior; 1 German professor on human resources management; 1 professor on social psychology; 1 professor on business innovation; 1 professor on labor relations.

Experts have been selected according to their knowledge production background regarding the topic and their expertise on change management, social impact analysis and knowledge management, as well as decision-making processes, corporate narratives and their influence on employee engagement and service strategy.

Finally, we ran a one-case-study research focused on the strategic relationship between management and enterprise purpose. This case study was focused on Leroy Merlin, an ADEO group company owner of nearly 400 stores in 12 countries and 3 continents. According to assumptions regarding social brain conditioning factors, we consider it necessary to study leadership and its influence in purpose management on an analysis unit not bigger than 150 individuals [25]. Therefore, the case study was run in a Leroy Merlin store a 120-employee average.

We choose Leroy Merlin because of its organizational learning model interest and the consistency of its purpose statement, according results of a recent content analysis covering the way the 100 biggest Spanish companies by revenue express their purpose through social media [26].

Table 2. Method, materials and contents for the sequential research steps.

Research Step	Method/Materials/Contents
1. Literature review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organizational Theory - Management - Knowledge Theory - Strategic Communication - Social Psychology - Research Methods
2. Cases study analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CEPSA - GRUPO SM - EL BULLI
3. 15 expert interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chiefs of Human Resources (2) - Human Resources Consultants and Chief (4) - Strategic Communication (2) - Top Managers - Former CSR Manager - Business Innovation Professor - Labor Relations Professor - Business Ethics Professor - Social Psychology Professor - Organizational Behavior Professor
4. Action–Research model design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dialectic Organizational Development - Experiential Learning - Soft Skills Training
5. Leroy Merlin case study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comparative Enterprise Purpose Content Analysis - Data Analysis - Focus Groups - Interviews
6. Hypothesis formulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ground Data Gathering - Codification - Hypothesis
7. Further research actions design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quantitative Questionnaire - Longitudinal Studies

The main goal of the case study was to identify the operational influence of purpose as a learning factor in organizational vision and its impact on knowledge and change management.

According to this objective, we also ran a comprehensive documentation content analysis regarding purpose management in the whole Spanish division and on-ground research in a 120-employee store, where we conducted informal employee behavior observation, service strategy key processes identification and analysis, and managers interviews and focus groups.

Materials: According to the preliminary condition of this first research step, it focused on elaborating useful tools for further research; the first one, a quantitative analysis questionnaire focused on top management vision regarding leadership transformational role, was used for deductive hypothesis confirmation; the second one, an action–research model used firstly in the Leroy Merlin case study, was improved and updated (Table 3) for use in further research of organizational longitudinal studies whose outcomes hopefully will allow us to build new theoretical propositions regarding the topic.

The Action–Research Model is an intervention tool designed for on-ground gathering of information regarding the transformational influence of leadership by organizational learning improvement and, at the same time, acting as a kind of organizational development driver that compels the organization to move forward.

Table 3. Organizational learning action–research model.

Step	Task	Goal	Expected Results
Step 1: - Collective learning readiness analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Check out attitudes and processes - Use data platforms analysis - Seek organizational story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Compare exposed and “in use” theories - Use contextual intelligence - Identify and assess knowledge capabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Top management influence as a role model - Decrease change resistance - Organizational learning processes are recognized
Step 2: - Leadership shift	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delegating decision processes - Compensation system includes purpose contribution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leadership shifts from power to contribution - Promote knowledge co-creation processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaboration becomes a KPI - Tacit knowledge socialization
Step 3: - Collaborative thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organizational purpose conversations - Make every single job meaningful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visualize obstacles to collaboration - Understand the way we learn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make the learning process conscious - Imbue a vital sense of corporate mission
Step 4: - Leadership transfer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experimental learning goals - Make social impact accountable - Short-term social impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collective learning duties assignment - Knowledge soft skills training - Employees’ social concerns drive innovation and social change alignment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transfer management to project teams and networks - Self-knowledge and trust - Enterprise behavior suits social development
Step 5: - Collaborative capabilities assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Include purpose contribution as KPI on Balanced Scorecard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhance the collective understanding of the way the enterprise learns and changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leadership becomes a collective capability

This five-step action–research project starts with organizational capabilities analysis in terms of collective knowledge creation for social improvement. The first step is to focus on reinforce enterprise readiness in order to promote trusty and worthy stakeholders’ relationships [27] for economic and social environment openness.

The second step is about sharing senior managers’ testimonies of change commitment that is expected in order to prescribe a new organizational attitude based on collaboration and mutual adjustment to improve project management working, “ad hoc” decision-making processes and network creation [6].

The third step’s challenge is about promoting organizational development, which works out through three sequential loops [7]: single loop, first-level learning, based on the capability to fix mistakes; double loop, second-level learning, based on individual capabilities to change the assumptions that encourage people to behavior in a specific way; triple loop, third-level learning, based on the capability to understand how we change our assumptions, or, in other words, the capability to learn how we learn.

According to previous organizational learning capabilities, each step focuses on a specific managerial goal: quality improvement at level 1, strategic positioning at level 2 and innovation at level 3. Given the complexity of learning processes, starting at level 1 implies that the whole model must be run through by completing three five-step loops.

When the triple loop has been completed as the result of collective collaboration, we can consider that the organization gains continuous change capability based on collective leadership skills [28]. This kind of leadership, based on a dynamic process of mutual interaction, occurs due to a number of individual behavioral changes that set up organizational behavior dynamism [29].

This is the reason why organizational learning alignment with business challenges and organizational and social identities requires the awareness of a common purpose.

Promoting strategic conversations about organizational purpose allow leaders to overcome the main organizational obstacle in terms of knowledge workers' engagement: the fact that motivation, only, can be improved intrinsically by every single person and comes from vital work meaningfulness [30].

The fourth step, about making decisions, guides the organizational move from formal hierarchy toward vertical and horizontal decentralization processes. The point is that a flat structure is not needed all around the enterprise, but autonomy and accountability must be present wherever knowledge must be created on both agility and participatory bases.

The fifth step completes the cycle based on the alternance of cognitive (to see) and behavior activities (to act) and focuses on collective learning and leadership contribution appraisal using a Balanced Scorecard in order to match business improvements with organizational capabilities reinforcement.

3. Results

Literature review shows, and experts interviews confirm (questionnaire and experts' answers summary are shown in Table 4), that there is no worthier a concept as organizational purpose in order to understand and promote the senior manager's role in corporate culture management [31].

Change management processes are influenced by the way people understand change's causes, its meaning and its predictable consequences [32], which is what makes identity (understood as self-knowledge) a crucial factor for change improvement. Moreover, change is the result of a learning process that influences identity [33].

From this perspective, we can define corporate culture as the outcome of the evolution of our identity as organization, which is shaped through a dialogic learning process that allows us to leave out ideas used in the past in order to understand environment dynamism and make quality decisions [28].

Therefore, organizational behavior is the outcome of collective decisions guided by the meaningful expression of values based on common beliefs, symbols influence and the overall interpretation of reality. It is not a kind of linear process but the result of the struggle between changing wishes and the natural propensity of every single system for continuity [34].

The cultural dimension of management is not new, but the new environment induced by digitalization brings us increasing ambiguity and uncertainty, claiming not only a new way to understand leading people but also to assume that enterprise needs to put every single person in the center because talent is, as a strategic asset, more relevant than financial resources in the Knowledge Economy.

Thus, a person focused enterprise must replace old-fashioned models of power and role- or task-focused enterprise [30]. In order to promote such a transformation, the concept of servant leadership is pursuant of enterprise dynamism [35], as does transformational leadership [36].

Organizational development is, from this perspective, the result of decision-making processes that are based on honesty and vision openness. Therefore, transformational leadership stands on modeling the influence of top management involvement in transparent and trusted relationships [37]. A powerful narrative that works as a kind of cultural link seems to be really relevant [38]. This cultural link works out as a result of behavior traits such as modesty, gratuity, forgiveness and solidarity; encouragement to discuss identity; accurate performance model; and, finally, communication skills [35].

The Leroy Merlin case study outcomes agree with the literature review and experts' interview outcomes. They are summarized below:

Knowledge Economy encourages enterprises to play a social role in the meaning of social learning capabilities improvement, as we can realize in Leroy Merlin purpose, "Supports people all around the world improve their living environment and lifestyle, by helping everyone design the home of their dreams and above all, to achieve it", that

literally appeals to the supportive and helpful role of enterprise regarding dreams and achievements.

Table 4. Main outcomes from experts' interviews.

Question	Answers Summary
1. How does the stakeholders' purpose make a difference in strategic execution?	When purpose influences behavior, recognition and assessment, people feel encouraged and supported to go beyond.
2. How does a purpose-driven company enhance collaboration between stakeholders?	Improving organizational social impact enhances organizational learning skills that promote stakeholders' participation in service strategy.
3. Can purpose alignment help top managers increase autonomy?	Purpose drives experimentation beyond bureaucratic boundaries as a natural outcome of identity self-confidence.
4. What is the main organizational purpose inspiration outcome?	Organizational refresh processes need to be understood as the evolution of identity in tune with the dynamism of collective mental and psychological status in both organizational and social environment.
5. Why does a top manager's involvement in employee personal and social concerns increase engagement?	Employees take seriously senior management statements of personal consideration when daily executive duties are focused on taking care of them and when these concerns are aligned with customers' and social needs and expectations.
6. Why does organizational purpose speed innovation top-down and bottom-up?	To believe in the same purpose makes people to feel reciprocity in spite of having different interests, tasks to accomplish and hierarchical positions. This sense of reciprocity drives proactivity and overcomes hierarchy.
7. Why do purposeful internal conversations only work out when running within informal "cultural" processes?	Autonomy enables culture as the compass for experimentation that smoothly brings change management. In Knowledge Economy, strategic conversations are about people's lives, not about technical issues.
8. Does purpose consciousness help in terms of conflict reduction?	Purpose helps managers to transfer leadership duties and performance to project teams, far away from power plays and beyond structural obstacles that use to cause conflict.
9. Who is in charge of providing a sense of continuity through purpose alignment?	The top managers' role model influence, making jobs meaningful by connecting past and future, is the worthiest symbol when built on purpose.
10. Is possible and worthy to measure individual contribution in terms of purpose compliance?	As a learning and change management tool, purpose worthiness must be appraised not only in terms of performance but also in terms of its influence in processes and the customer's value of the proposal improvement.

Improving organizational learning capabilities and their social impact requires senior leadership involvement in specific training programs focused on communication and collective leadership skills training. As culture and experience are accumulative, new members must be selected through an accuracy trail and welcomed with a meaningful

program based on collective participation. From this point of view, top managers' role seems to be really relevant.

Organizational learning is a strategic factor because talking about a teams-only fellowship creates differential value. A senior manager's duty is to create cooperative working networks on a daily basis, so experimentation seems to be a worthy tool in order to recognize not only work results but also team performance and effectiveness.

Change runs as a natural event when trust is spread via a sense of community. The organizational refresh processes needs to be understood as the evolution of identity in tune with the dynamism of collective mental and psychological status in both organizational and social environments.

Employees take seriously senior management statements of personal consideration when daily executive duties are focused on taking care of them and these concerns are aligned with customers' needs and expectations. As individual development is a prerequisite for business success, in Leroy Merlin, every single day, one individual is named in charge of making the day of the whole staff. During the day in charge, the same person is responsible of managing customer complains.

Hierarchy becomes natural and influential when focused on helping employees to do their best. Testimony regarding accessibility and contribution to others' tasks inspires and encourages everyone to go beyond. To believe in the same purpose makes people to feel equality in spite of having different tasks to accomplish.

Autonomy is a matter of attitude and comes from the beliefs that mistakes are permitted and inhibition is not rewarded. Autonomy enables culture as the compass for experimentation that smoothly brings change management.

Purpose makes work meaningful, but purpose contribution needs to be part of compensation system. Making work meaningful is part of the emotional salary, but as innovation factor purpose helps employees to realize knowledge creation capability is the most relevant strategic asset and compensation points it out becoming an alignment factor.

Senior managers role model influence is the worthiest symbol. All around the company, Leroy Merlin employees feel they are day by day closer to the customer's home, but the way they do it is different in every single store thanks to each different microculture that allows them to fit to customers' social context. According to the French owner of Leroy Merlin, national culture is in the air of 12 different countries in which the brand operates. Values such as humility; commitment; agility; closeness; craziness and deft touch are spread by top managers' behavior and operates through creative dialogue with local culture.

Knowledge workers feel customers are looking for advice, not for delivery. Being aware of it transforms service in a learning process. Collaborative learning is not possible under anonymous relationships because the most meaningful learning process is about vital lessons, not technical ones. Therefore, knowledge workers get their most relevant recognition from customers, not from managers. This assumption, for instance, demands proactivity in terms of complaint management. Key factors are anticipation and dialogue (collaborative problem-fixing).

4. Discussion

According to these results, we assume organizational purpose can promote internal enterprise alignment to change management, promoting at the same time sustainable innovation and social impact by increasing social learning and development capabilities.

That is the way, as the literature review demonstrates, organizational purpose management becomes one of the most critical senior management roles because the desired transfer of leadership duties to the whole organization requires top management's ability to use vision, corporate culture and social commitment as adjustment factors in order to promote engagement and alignment, while at the same time promoting that autonomy is balanced with accountability [39].

Enterprise social impact becomes a must not only because of its reputational worthiness but also because social change rhythm increase encourages enterprises to make a stand on social environment trends in order to address their very transition process [40].

Therefore, enterprise transition toward a learning organization requires a leadership role shift that allows top management to focus on dialectic organizational development as part of a wider process of social improvement. That is why we also designed under action–research basis an organizational learning model that works specifically through in-company leadership competences training programs.

This action–research model helps us to accomplish three sequential tasks: first, understand strategic relevance of knowledge creation, performance gaps and implications of change in management; second, find a starting point to lead organizational development projects on collaborative learning bases; third, use the Balanced Scorecard model in order to measure organizational learning contributions to business goals.

Full learning enterprise contribution to the Knowledge Economy is achieved through collaborative value creation not only in enterprise inbounds but all around the market and social environment. That is the way we need to overcome the myopia of traditional stakeholder perspective in order to build a really Social Economy, based on strategic alignment between the market and social development [14].

There is no doubt that leadership needs to transform itself first in order to transform the enterprise model and the social environment, but both transformation processes are, indeed, the learning outcomes of the same continuous interaction process [13].

That is the reason why our research question is about how to improve managerial readiness to play the new role required for the enterprise’s transition toward becoming a learning organization.

The point is that most managers are not aware of leadership’s new role focused on transforming organization. Playing this role demands the understanding of the cultural nature of organizational behavior and requires the involvement of leaders in their very own transformation processes as part of the whole organizational transformation.

5. Conclusions

Today’s increasing enterprise power is a broader responsibility in terms of contribution to great social challenges such as inequality, environmental sustainability and participation.

Understood as the social identity of enterprise, the worthiness of a business’s purpose comes from its alignment to three worthy organizational learning loops (quality, positioning and innovation) and its triple impact: individual, organizational and social. Organizational purpose, from this perspective, is now in the center of most corporate concerns in terms of strategic execution.

In practical terms, it is more likely to be a matter of branding as “green” or “clean” than a social, ethics or even strategic concern. Unfortunately, such as a misuse of the concept and its strategic implications threatens its potential to guide sustainability not only in environmental terms but in economic and social terms, as well. It is a matter of fact that a search of sustainable innovation collective knowledge capabilities improvement is needed and becomes one of the highest critical concerns of management.

5.1. Managerial Implications

From the managerial practitioners’ perspective, the action–research model described above intends to guide top management to run analysis, intervention and assessment processes needed to lead change in management projects as a result of organizational learning capabilities reinforcement, according to research findings (Table 5).

Table 5. Managerial implications regarding research questions.

Research Question	Finding
1. What makes organizational purpose such a powerful cultural leadership tool?	F.1. Enhances trust within labor relations and the value chain F.2. Provides a sense of continuity that explains the reasons for change and the consequences of not moving ahead. F.3. Guides top management influence in order to engage and align the whole organization to learning processes
2. How does it work?	F.4. Organizational purpose plays its best strategic role only when: a. Setting specific commitments and aligned to the values that make work meaningful b. Encouraging individual judgment and commitment c. Organizational social commitment starts with employees' support
3. Why is it so useful for enterprise transformation?	F.5. When top management embraces purpose as a managerial tool, leadership becomes a "cultural driver" due to: a. Setting specific commitments and aligned to the values that make work meaningful b. The worthiness of individual and collective contribution assessment processes as cultural adjustment factors
4. Is its worthiness measurable in business terms?	F.6. The assessment of its strategic contribution can be accomplished using the Balanced Scorecard to measure: a. Customer value proposal reinforcement b. Internal processes improvement c. Learning capabilities enhancement

In spite of the preeminence of decent work in most enterprise purpose statements and the recurrent reference to knowledge as a strategic asset, organizational learning and its social impact, according to the experts interviewed, today, they are not part of recognition and compensation systems and are not specifically considered as part of senior managers' duties, as many leadership researchers claim to be and a few companies, including Leroy Merlin, do [41].

If we assume that a purpose statement and management are strategic assets, there is no doubt this idea needs to be a human resources management concern. Companies are used to leaving it to marketing and corporate communication areas. Research results point out that both human resources and marketing communication departments need to be involved in organizational purpose management. Otherwise, a third contribution, that from senior management, should lead the continuous change management process by providing legitimacy and trust [42]. Of course, it has relevant practical implications for business model development and organizational design [21].

From this perspective, senior managers in leadership must be developed under the consideration of group size conditioning factors regarding meaning, trust and commitment management. This is specifically important if we consider learning interaction processes to be the new alignment factor since the hierarchical structure is no longer the coordination tool it used to be [43].

5.2. Academic Implications

Managers are aware they need to redesign new organizational structures, but few assume they need also to redesign their own roles as business leaders. If they do not build up new knowledge–management structures and processes, they will fail to engage employees and customers to participate in a sustainable innovation process.

Therefore, as an expression of social enterprise identity, organizational purpose plays a strategic role in the Knowledge Economy because of its ability to become meaningful work in individual, organizational and social terms. Thus, leadership is no longer about planning and controlling but about execution accuracy based on learning collective capabilities.

Leadership influence is about trust, learning and modeling others' behavior in terms of change management and innovation improvement. Leaders need to show an ethical

behavior in line with societal expectations, to earn legitimacy and trust advice, and, finally, to be able to provide continuing learning for themselves and others [44].

Thus, today, leadership is about conversations regarding corporate identity and the way a company will face the future based on lessons learned in the past.

For such a new role, required skills cannot be gained by formal training [45]. On the contrary, leadership skills need to be developed within the same process of employees' empowerment: a dialectic process whose main outcome is an organizational behavior change as a result of organizational learning.

Furthermore, in academic terms, the action–research model we have designed allows us to achieve a deeper understanding of the cultural nature of leadership influence on stakeholders' collaboration, its requirements in operational terms, its effects in both organizational and social improvement, and, finally, the assessment of its strategic contribution.

At this point, we can summarize four conclusions:

1. Stakeholder collaboration reduces execution gap and increases trust, knowledge production and learning awareness.
2. Organizational purpose effectiveness requires coherence between enterprise mind-set and behavior, which points out top management duties in order to promote reciprocity, autonomy and accountability.

Reciprocity is a relational value rooted in corporate culture management by top–down and bottom–up informal conversations. It means that organizational engagement and alignment happens one person at a time, but environment matters.

Due to reciprocity's relational influence, control is no longer needed. Furthermore, it makes no sense to put a person in the center of the enterprise if they are not allowed to act responsible, or be autonomous and accountable.

3. The success of management change demands a kind of leadership based on the influence of values and principles. Two leadership styles based on the influence of power or utility (compliance–reward) that promote a reactive behavior, which is the contrary of dynamism, need experimentation stimulation.

If leading by principles and experimentation, on one hand, avoids resistance to change, it, on the other, reduces conflict because proactivity is needed to leave steady positions and focus on common interests, which requires a dynamic and collaborative approach.

4. Organizational purpose management helps top management drive collective leadership and make the organizational learning process accountable on individual, organizational and social bases.

Furthermore, we can measure the impact of stakeholders' collaboration and collective knowledge creation on strategic goals by using the Balanced Scorecard model appraisal. Indeed, leadership contribution can be assessed by how it proposes adding customer value, through internal processes and by measuring improvement of learning capabilities.

Therefore, exploratory research results allow us to construct three hypotheses to be verified on a mixed (quantitative–qualitative) basis by longitudinal studies:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *Transition to learning organization, considered as a dynamic result of continuous organizational change and market–society innovation, requires senior management leadership in sense-making interaction processes. Organizational purpose management is, from this perspective, one of the most relevant tools in order to improve engagement and alignment in both internal and social environments.*

Hypothesis 2 (H2). *Leadership in sense-making interaction processes is about promoting collective capabilities of knowledge management, which requires: role modeling, listening processes, narrative abilities and execution skills, based on conversational interactions with business leaders.*

Hypothesis 3 (H3). *Leadership in sense-making interactions create value, which can be appraised through its impact on: quality management, strategic positioning and social impact, innovation and customer-directed value increasing.*

5.3. Considerations for Further Research

As a result of the literature review and managerial trends analysis, we assume that, in search of innovation, corporate culture influences organizational learning and, at the same time, is shaped as a result of knowledge creation. Corporate culture is, indeed, the best asset to improve organizational dynamics according to market and society trends. Therefore, leadership can no longer be about planning and controlling but must now be about collective knowledge creation [46].

Enterprise innovation capabilities depend on leadership's commitment to have every single person as the center of the decision-making processes according to their contribution in terms of collective knowledge production and enterprise social impact [47].

Promoting people's capabilities in order to build performing communities becomes leadership's challenge and encourages senior management to be involved in transforming conversations [48].

The new role focuses specifically on social capabilities needed to deal with digitalization process [49] and that are rarely considered in managers' basic education or training programs: active listening, storytelling, mentoring and spreading trust. Furthermore, these dynamic capabilities, as part of collective learning processes, only can be improved on a ground bases because managers' awareness of these capabilities' worthiness requires a previous understanding of knowledge strategic relevance as a performing factor, as well as of collective leadership measurement methods.

This is the reason why we have designed a quantitative research tool for gathering intelligence from senior management's visions regarding today's leadership role in purpose management and its strategic relevance in terms of innovation and enterprise social impact.

The questionnaire was applied to a sample of 50 senior management personnel in order to check its comprehensibility and usefulness for gathering relevant information.

Quantitative analysis results allows us to focus on deductive research aimed at improving senior management leadership competences as a starting point for organizational learning and innovation improvement [50].

This is the way both materials, the questionnaire and the action-research model, will be used as research tools in further research, based on longitudinal studies [51] that hopefully will allow us to build new theoretical propositions regarding the topic.

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