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Professional Competencies and Organizational Modernity in Emerging Economies: A Comparative Study between Taiwan and Brazil

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Abstract

By using the Professional Competencies Required scale and the Organizational Modernity Assessment Approach, the study presents a comparative analysis of empiric data surveys collected from professionals in emerging economies: Brazil and Taiwan. In methodological terms, the research can be characterized as quantitative, conducted by survey. After the data had been treated by means of multivariate and descriptive statistical techniques, it was possible to notice perceptions as regards the high degree of demand for the competencies assessed. The findings show that Taiwan was the country in which professionals perceived the greatest demand for the set of professional competencies investigated (ICR=8.1), comparing to Brazil (ICR=7.7). We should mention Entrepreneurial Capacity (5.7) as a less-emphasized competence in Brazil, and in particular in Taiwan. In relation to organizational modernity, it was verified perceptions regarding the prevalence of decision-making processes that involve little participation, transparency and decentralization, as well as perceptions about the low degrees of autonomy given to the professionals targeted by this study. In practice, what was found was the prevalence of an organizational trait that is still authoritarian, hierarchical and centralized, despite also having found encouragement towards establishing internal climates that are favorable to continuous learning processes and the establishing of organizational environments that facilitate teamwork and encourage action and decision initiatives. Overall, the demand for the professional competences investigated has not been followed, to the same extent, by modernity as regards policies and managerial practices, suggesting the need for organizational environments more closely aligned with the professional profiles required, as well as theoretical-methodological-conceptual approaches that seek to understand the competence construct in a more systemic manner, factoring into the analysis not only individual dimensions, but also organizational factors that favor the application and development of the required knowledge, abilities and attitudes.

Keywords: Professional competencies; Organizational modernity; Emerging economies

Introduction

Economic globalization, the opening of markets, and stronger competition, all these have required organizations, mainly the ones in the more competitive sectors of the economy, to develop broad adaptive capacity as well as a systematic quest for elements that tend to ensure sustainable competitiveness [1,2].

Within such a context, there has been a growing emphasis on developing new organizational competencies that have usually been described as a set of knowledge, skills, technologies and behaviors that an organization must seek and have available, in an integrated way, in a quest to impact its development positively and ensure its competitive advantage [3,4].

This has led to several authors' pointing out a demand for new professional profiles that will also display a series of new professional competencies attributes that will make it possible to achieve more effective responses to the challenges permeating this new business and organizational environment [5-11].

Steffen [11], for example, stresses the demand for new various cognitive, relational, emotional and leadership aspects, while Deluiz [7] points out five broad groups of professional competencies required: technical-intellectual, organizational and methodological, communicative, social and behavioral. At management level, Barlett and Ghoshal [6] group together the professional competencies attributes that are more widely required within the contemporary context into three great categories: personality characteristics, knowledge attributes and specialized skills.

Despite so broad and diversified professional competencies

demanded, it still seems difficult to state that such a demand can find capacitating contexts within organizations as a whole that will allow them to manifest themselves effectively. This fact becomes even more relevant within the context of organizations from emerging economies such as Brazil, Russia, India, and China, the so-called BRIC countries, an acronym coined by Goldman Sachs head of research on global economy Jim O'Neill in 2001. It is expected that this group of countries will become the dominant force in the world's economy within the next 50 years, as "their combined GDP may collectively exceed that of the G6 in U.S. dollar terms" [12].

As it takes such aspects into account, this study's core aim is to investigate the Professional Competencies Required and Organizational Modernity constructs by analyzing up to what point the demand for professional competencies that are usually pointed out as the ones required to face the current business context are accompanied by modernity and management policies and practices by organizations operating in emerging economies.

Therefore, this study involved carrying out two empiric data surveys with an initial sample of professionals regularly enrolled in

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MBA, EMBA, and Executive Education programs in Brazil (624) and Taiwan (203). The set of data that was gathered made it possible to measure up to what degree the organizations that employ the surveyed professionals have required new professional competencies that are considered to be core ones as regards competitiveness within a global business environment in which such economies are increasingly participating, as well as their degree of alignment to these new skills and attitudes and to the knowledge required by modern policies and practices at their organizations.

The theory review that was adopted made use of the Professional Competencies Required scale that was developed by Sant'Anna [13] and that involves a set of competencies that have been repeatedly mentioned in papers reviewed by this author as being the most emphatically ones needed by contemporary professionals as a response to demands put forth by the current business environment. To measure the modernity of management policies and practices, the study adopted the Organizational Modernity Assessment Approach, as proposed by Eboli [14] and later adapted by Sant'Anna [13].

In terms of relevance, this study is significant mainly because it broadens the scope of the set of studies developed about competencies by correlating it to other constructs such as organizational modernity. It is also relevant as it seeks to extrapolate traditional competencies approaches, which are centered on designing, recruiting and selecting ideal profiles, by incorporating the importance of building organizational environments that work to support the application and development of the required competencies. Furthermore, it is relevant because it allows a cross-cultural analysis to be carried out that involves respondents from the two emerging economies - a Latin American one (Brazil), and an Asiatic, Taiwan - dealing with the constructs investigated to help to overcome the lack of studies and dissemination of literature generated within such contexts. Lastly, it is not possible to ignore its potentialities in the sense of contributing with results that will allow organizations from these countries to develop change projects that are more broadly based on the notion of modernity while taking special notice of one of its core dimensions, one that is, however, frequently ignored: The human element.

Professional Competencies

According to Zarifian [15], current definitions that support the so-called competence model, although they emerged in literature in the mid-80s, are still currently characterized by remarkable approaches that are typical of the 70s as regards the concept of "job qualification" [16-18]. Thus, according to Conseil National du Patronat Français – CNPF, actual Mouvement des Entreprises de France-MEDEF: "Professional competence is a combination of knowledge, knowhow, experiences and behaviors that are carried out within a precise context. It can be verified through its use in a professional situation, which is when it can be validated."

When faced with such a scenario, a concept of competence that has been broadly disseminated in this country portrays it as a set of bodies of knowledge mobilized within work situations: 1) The specific knowledge needed to carry out a task; 2) The skills, personal and professional intelligence; 3. the willingness to put into practice and to develop new professional competencies [16,19-23].

Thus, competence is understood as the end result of multiple bodies of knowledge that can be obtained through the most diverse means: through transfer, learning, and adaptation, all of which make it possible for individuals to create a knowledge base and to develop skills that can solve problems within concrete situations [7,16,20].

Along these same lines, Stroobants [23] understands competence as the result of three main components: 1) Body of knowledge or formal knowledge that can be translated into facts and rules; 2) Knowhow, which belongs to the world of empiric procedures, such as recipes and tacit job knowledge that will be developed in the day-to-day practice of the profession or occupation; 3. and knowing how to behave, understood as social knowledge or common sense, which mobilizes complex strategies and reasoning, interpretations and ways to look at the world.

Le Bortef [23,24] understand that "competence does not reside on the resources (body of knowledge, knowledge, capacities, skills) to be mobilized but on the mobilization of these resources."

According to Dubar [20], there are other elements that define the concept of competence just like it is presented in the current context, highlighting the following: 1) New assessment criteria that value the so-called third dimension competencies, which are characterized by being neither manual skills nor technical knowledge but personal and relational qualities (responsibility, autonomy, teamwork, etc.); 2) The emphasis organizations place on continuous development, and close relationship with their strategies [21]; 3) The multiplication of the adoption of the formulas to individualize pay, companywide agreements (linking career to performance and to development) and experiences with new means of horizontal mobility in a quest to make it possible to keep the job; 4) The direct or indirect discrediting of old-style classification systems based on levels of qualification and which stemmed from collective bargaining.

Despite the different existing perspectives and approaches that surround this construct, there are some shared points related to the notion of competence that can be identified. Firstly, competence is usually presented as a characteristic or a set of characteristics or requirements - body of knowledge, knowledge, aptitudes, and skills - that are pointed out as a condition that can produce results and/or solve problems [16-18].

Another point that is shared by the various acceptations of competence is the high degree of conformity of this concept to the current business discourse, as well as to the demands stemming from restructuring and productive modernization processes that are in fashion [19,23,25].

Setting forth from understanding of competence being the result of a combination of multiple bodies of knowledge and from a broad review of Anglo-American approaches - including papers based on studies carried out by Spencer and Spencer [18], Boyatzis [16], Mcclelland and Dailey [17] - and French ones - and taking into account, among others, domestic and international papers based on studies carried out by Zarifian [15], Perrenoud [9], Dubar [20], Stroobants [23], Le Bortef [23] - on this topic, Sant'Anna [13] used the content analysis by category technique to identify a set of 15 professional competencies that have been more repeatedly pointed out in the papers reviewed as criticism to facing the current business context, and these competencies were used as the foundation to carry out this study: Capacity to rapidly assimilate new concepts and technologies, Capacity for teamwork, Creativity, Broad and overall world view, Capacity for commitment to the organization's objectives, Capacity for communication, Capacity to deal with uncertainties and ambiguities, Skill in mastering new technical know-how relating to your job or occupation, Capacity for innovation, Capacity for interpersonal relationships, Initiative to take action and decisions, Emotional self-control, Entrepreneurial capacity, Capacity to produce effective results, Capacity to deal with new and unexpected situations.

Evolution of Management Policies and Practices: The Notion of Organizational Modernity

In historical terms, the notion of modernity can be introduced from specific characterizations - the technology myth, the prevalence of scientific reasoning, the progress idea, and the exaltation of democracy - that differentiates it from previous periods or phases of mankind, such as the primitive world, the ancient world and the medieval world.

According to Touraine [26] the notion of modernity, by its core characteristics, ensues from two major currents of thought: on the one hand, the Greco-Roman rationalism, resumed by Renaissance humanists, and on the other hand the Christian conception of the soul, as secularized by the notion of subject. However, for a long time modernity was defined only by the effectiveness of instrumental rationality, ignoring the human as liberty and as creation. From such reduction, Touraine [26] adds, ensue the foundations of its crises, whose defeat - and establishment of a new modernity - assumes the rescue of the other half: the subject.

Therefore, modernity can be understood as the redirectioning of man towards the center of society, contemplating its many dimensions: technological (combining rationalization and subjectification); social (to the extent that subjectification is only possible by means of social movements); political (since democracy is the regime that permits the political expression of occupational); and cultural (since liberty and effectiveness values are found at its roots) [27,28].

Seeking to transpose the characteristics of modernity to the organizational context, and understanding the modern organization as one that replicates the characteristics of modern society Eboli [14] established a set of indicators for modernity analysis at this level.

Resting upon the approach proposed by Eboli [14] and ensuing from the application of multivariate analysis, Sant'Anna [13] found a new cluster of modernity indicators as proposed by that author around three factors: Administrative and Human Resources Management Practices Modernity, Political Modernity and Cultural Modernity, which items were used for the purposes of empirical data surveys subsidizing the analyses submitted in this article.

Methods

Due to the traditional typology for research methods, the empiric data surveys that subsidized the results of this study can be characterized as being of a quantitative nature and carried out through the survey technique. Similarly, since they propose to determine the incidence and distribution of the characteristics and opinions held by populations of people by gathering and studying characteristics that presumably represent such populations, they show the characteristics of a descriptive study. The study can also be characterized as being of a comparative nature, since it proposes to analyze the similarities and differences between the audiences that were surveyed, in different target countries, as regards the constructs that were studied.

Data Collection

As previously mentioned, this study encompasses transcultural surveys involving data from two countries: Brazil and Taiwan. A three-part questionnaire was prepared to gather data. The first one involved a scale made up by 15 items to measure Professional Competencies Required. A second one consisted of a scale made up by 25 items aimed at assessing Organizational Modernity. The third list was dedicated to variables aimed at the socio-demographic and professional characterizing of the respondents.

The perception of the respondents about the importance of the competencies was assessed by an 11-point Likert-type scale whose extremes were entitled "Not Required" (0) and "Strongly Required" (10). Similarly, the scale aimed at measuring Organizational Modernity involved 11 points, used the traditional Likert model and ranged from "Fully Disagree" (0) to "Fully Agree" (10).

It is worth mentioning that the questionnaires were translated by native individuals into the Chinese language and that before they were applied they were submitted to previous validation tests as regards form and content.

In Brazil, this study involved a sample of 624 professionals who were regularly registered in MBA programs in two Brazilian capitals: one in the Southeast, the one with the highest level of economic development, and another one in the North, the region with the lowest economic and social development indexes in the country.

As regards the respondents' demographic profile, similarity could be observed in relation to the percentage of male individuals (50%) and female ones (50%). Individuals between 26 and 30 years of age (27%) predominated, while 46% of them were single and 42% were married. As regards education, 32% of those who were surveyed in the Southeast reported they had graduated in the administration, compared to 13% in the North, where the number of pedagogues, accountants and economists was higher. In both regions, the organizations they are linked to, there was a predominance of professionals working at private institutions (75% in the Southeast and 60% in the North).

The survey in Taiwan sampled 203 professionals, who regularly enrolled in EMBA programs from two national universities in the northern part of Taiwan.

Among the respondents, 64.3% were male, and 35.7% were female. The majority of the respondents were on their 30's (consisting of 48.3% of the Taiwanese sample). Concerning the marital status, 23.6% are single, and 75.4% married. With regard to the basic education, respondents predominantly majored in business administration (41.5%), followed by engineering (22.0%). There was a predominance of professionals employed at private institutions (79.2%).

As to the area of job, 18.9% of respondents work in the area of finance; 3.7% in marketing; 15.3% in sales; 3.2% in planning; 6.3% in production; 11.6% in human resources; 8.4% in administrative support; 26.3% in technology, and 6.3% in areas not specified.

The majority (59.4%) of the respondents in Taiwanese sample were in the positions as administrators (manager/director/CEO). This is due to the nature of EMBA students. Those who are enrolling in EMBA programs are very often in their middle ages and mostly experienced workers who face the competitiveness in their work settings, and have strong needs for gaining up dated, and comprehensive knowledge in business areas. The majority of the respondents worked in the current company for 6-15 years (49%). The seniority of the respondents also reflects the needs for returning to school as their positions in organizations become more critical. According to a recent research, the labor quality, particularly middle-aged workforce (30-55 yr. old) with higher education, contributes significantly to firms productivity in Taiwan.

The majority of the respondents work in the company over 1,000 employees (51.5%). 54.5% of respondents work in private companies; 33.5% in transnational corporations; 11.5% in the state own companies; and 1% in joint-stock companies. 40.7% of respondents work in manufacturing (industrial) sector; while 55.7% work in service sector.

Data Analysis

The analyses carried out began by verifying the quality of the data obtained and the presuppositions of the quantitative analysis methods that were employed [29]. Taking into account the comparison among the countries that were investigated, we adopted disaggregate analysis, which makes it possible for the peculiarities of each country to be identified and isolated throughout the analytical process. As recommended by Netemeyer et al. [30], this process focused on determining the metric equivalence and the structure of the scales conditioned to the different cultural contexts being analyzed, that is, on verifying up to what point the variables that make up the professional competencies required and the organizational modernity scales differ among the countries that were surveyed.

To calculate the indexes of Professional Competencies Required (ICR) and Organizational Modernity (IMO), the study uses a simple average of the indicators that make up the scales aimed at measuring such constructs. Based on such a procedure, the averages (M) and the standard deviations (S) of the indicators and constructs analyzed in this study were estimated. To compare the two countries, the study applied the Kruskal Wallis test by using the Mann Whitney test as a post hoc verification test. Such a choice came about because it was found that the data did not follow normal distribution.

Based on these analyses, it was observed that the difference among the groups are statistically significant for practically all the variables that were analyzed, and the prevailing trend was that averages for Brazil were superior to those for Taiwan. As such differences could represent a mere artifact of the method, introduced by differences in answering styles among cultures [31], and supposing that this analysis is interested in identifying the most prevailing individual and political competencies and management practices in the selected countries [32], it was recommended that it should proceed to standardize individual responses. The procedure adopted was to standardize each answer using the score Z standard (taking into account the average and the standard deviation of each respondent). After standardization, results were converted to the original study scale by multiplying the individual Z score by the original standard deviation for the whole scale and adding the standard deviation. Results outside the 0 to 10 limits were reverted to this valid limit. Thus, it is possible to obtain the same response scale but the individual pattern effect is eliminated, which allows the items that are more or less relevant in each country to be revealed. Lastly, it is worth highlighting that the data were treated by using the data treatment software programs SPSS 15.0, AMOS 7.0, FACTOR 7.0 and Microsoft Excel.

The Descriptive Analysis of the Results

Respondent perception regarding professional competencies required

This subtopic displays the perception of the professionals targeted by this study regarding the degree up to which the professional competencies assessed are demanded by the organizations they are linked to, taking the standardized averages into account. Table 1 presents the results obtained from the samples from the two countries targeted by this study.

Data from Table 1 shows that Taiwan was the country in which professionals perceived the greatest demand for the set of professional competencies that were investigated (ICR=8.1), and the following were the most required competencies: Capacity for Communication (9.2), Capacity for Interpersonal Relationships (8.8), Capacity to Deal with New and Unexpected Situations (8.8) and Capacity for Teamwork (8.7).

We should mention Entrepreneurial Capacity (5.7) as a less-emphasized competence in Brazil, and in particular in Taiwan. The spectacular Chinese economic growth in the past 30 years and its increasingly rising middle class still share space with strong hierarchies (father-son, governor-governed, husband-wife, elder brother-younger brother). These traits tend to undermine the population's entrepreneurial and innovative behavior, and consequently, that of Chinese workers [33].

Next came Brazil, with a lower index of professional competencies required (ICR=7.7), compared to data obtained in Taiwan, and the competencies that were most in demand were: the Capacity to Produce Effective Results (8.2), Capacity for Interpersonal Relationships (8.2), Capacity for Teamwork (8.1), Capacity for Commitment to the Organization's Objectives (8.1), Capacity for Communication (8.1), and Initiative to Take Action and Decisions (8.1). The high value attributed to the "produce effective results" competence can be explained by the management model that Brazilian organizations have been practicing in the past decades, as it is based on a broad commitment to organizational results and a strong link between task-result, as well as on the preeminence of efficiency and productivity criteria. Once again, Entrepreneurial Capacity (7.2) ranked as the least emphasized competence.

Respondent perception regarding organizational modernity

The aggregate results relating to Organizational Modernity according to factors proposed by Eboli [14], and adapted by Sant'Anna [13], for the two contexts studied, are summarized in Table 2. The data lead us to mention that Taiwan, despite having the highest perception level as regards the demand for the set of competencies that were investigated, displayed the lowest assessment indexes for Organizational Modernity Index (IMO=6.3), compared to the results obtained in the Brazilian context (IMO=6.5).

	Variables	Taiwan		Brazil	
		M	S	M	S
Q1.1	Capacity to rapidly assimilate new concepts and technologies.	8,3	-1,8	7,7	-1,7
Q1.2	Capacity for teamwork.	8,7	-1,6	8,1	-1,7
Q1.3	Creativity	7,2	-2,2	7,5	-1,8
Q1.4	Broad and overall world view.	7	-2,3	7,3	-1,9
Q1.5	Capacity for commitment to the organization's objectives	8,3	-1,7	8,1	-1,7
Q1.6	Capacity for communication.	9,2	-1,5	8,1	-1,7
Q1.7	Capacity to deal with uncertainties and ambiguities.	8,4	-1,6	7,3	-1,9
Q1.8	Skill in mastering new technical know-how relating to your job or occupation.	8,5	-1,6	7,5	-1,8
Q1.9	Capacity for innovation.	7,3	-2	7,5	-1,8
Q1.10	Capacity for interpersonal relationships.	8,8	-1,6	8,2	-1,6
Q1.11	Initiative to take action and decisions.	8,6	-1,6	8,1	-1,5
Q1.12	Capacity to produce effective results.	8,4	-1,4	8,2	-1,6
Q1.13	Emotional self-control.	8,4	-1,7	7,7	-1,8
Q1.14	Entrepreneurial capacity.	5,7	-2,6	7,2	-2,1
Q1.15	Capacity to deal with new and unexpected situations.	8,8	-1,5	7,8	-1,6
	Professional Competencies Required	8,1	-1,2	7,7	-1,2

Note: Results are based on paired tests assuming equal variances at a 5% level of significance. For each pair with significant differences, the letter of the lowest average is shown below the average of the group with the highest average. The tests were adjusted for all comparisons by means of the Bonferroni correction.
Table 1: Professional competencies required: Standardized indicator averages by country.

Another latent aspect on Table 2 is the perception of a low political modernity index in the two countries that were assessed when compared to the modernity (cultural and administrative) results achieved by the other groups. These are evidences that point to challenges from the perspective of the decision-making systems at the organizations that were surveyed.

Considering all the indicators of the three groups of modernity, in the case of Taiwan, the highest scores were attributed to the following items: The organization encourages individual responsibility and initiative (8.2). The in-house atmosphere of the organization encourages people to learn continuously in their everyday work (7.5) and the organization focuses strongly on results (7.5). The lowest scores were attributed to the following variables: The organization favors autonomy in taking decisions (4.9). The decision making process in the organization is decentralized (5.5), the decision making process are participatory and transparent (5.6) and with regard to the political aspect the prevailing system in the organization can be described as democratic (5.6).

Among Brazilians, the following variables achieved highest scores: The working atmosphere facilitates personal relationships even at different hierarchical levels (7.4), the organization focuses strongly on results (7.2), The organization encourages individual responsibility and initiative (7.0), the organization's strategy, mission, objectives and goals are clearly defined (7.0), the organization accepts diverging behavior and respects individual differences (7.0).

Just as for the other country (Taiwan), the lowest scores were attributed to aspects associated to the political dimension of organizations as well as to the absence of remuneration systems that reward competence: The decision-making process in the organization is decentralized (5.3), the organization's remuneration system rewards acts of competence (5.8), the organization favors autonomy in taking decisions (5.9), there is an assessment system that helps differentiate a good from a bad performance (5.9) and the human resources policies and practices encourage people to be concerned about ongoing learning (5.9).

As regards cultural modernity, specifically, data presented on Table 3 make it possible to observe agreement by a significant percentage of respondents as to the encouragement offered by the organizations they are linked to regarding internal climates that encourage values such as initiative, individual responsibility and continuous learning.

Respondent perceptions regarding the modernity dimension of administrative and people management practices point to the prevalence, to a higher degree, of modernity aspects that are more closely associated to the administrative dimension itself, notably the emphasis on sharing purposes, mission, objectives and organizational goals, as well as a focus on results. Other perceptions that stand out are related to encouragement offered towards setting up work environments that are more favorable to communication and integration among people, even though they may be placed at different hierarchical levels (Table 4).

On the other hand, aspects associated to the dimension named management practices, as practices, such as the existence of assessment systems that allow differentiation between good and poor performance, remuneration systems that reward competent action, as well as human resource practices that encourage people to concern themselves with continuous learning reached the lowest scores for the two groups that were studied (Table 4).

Paradoxically, data obtained on the political dimension suggest that, despite the efforts made to establish climates that are more open

to innovation, organizational characteristics that still carry traces of centralization, and hierarchical rigidity still endure (Table 5).

In other words, at the same time that increasingly higher degrees of competencies are demanded, often indistinctly, when they seek to apply their competencies those who hold them come up against management systems that are still traditional and that do little to favor the development and application of the new competencies that are demanded.

Conclusions

Once the relationships between the Professional Competencies required and Organizational Modernity constructs have been investigated and their diagnosis has been performed with the professionals targeted by this study, we can move on to its main findings and conclusions, based on the theoretical referential used.

Based on the set of data gathered by the two empiric data surveys carried out, it was possible to find, overall, perceptions by the respondents as regards the high degree of demand for the competencies that were assessed vis-à-vis moderate degrees of modernity in management policies and practices.

Despite perceptions as regards significant demand for the set of competencies that were researched, it is worth highlighting the greater emphasis on those that are directly related to organizational performance, such as the capacity to generate results and commitment to the results of the organization, which is aligned with the notion of competence itself. Worthy of note, too, are the perceptions as regards the high demand for social and relational competencies such as the capacity for communication, capacity for interpersonal relationships, and capacity for teamwork.

Perception regarding the high demand for the set of competencies that were investigated brings to mind the observation made by Gitahy and Fischer [34] about the superman-building syndrome, which they identified in research carried out at the subsidiary of a multinational corporation that operates in Brazil.

At the same time, the findings of this study allow was to state that the most valued competencies according to the perception of the professionals who were surveyed are those that are more directly related

Variables	Taiwan		Brazil	
	M	S	M	S
Cultural Modernity	7,2	-1,9	6,8	-2,2
Administrative and People Management Practices Modernity	6,3	-2,2	6,4	-2,5
Political Modernity	5,7	-2,3	6,3	-2,5
Organizational Modernity Index	6,3	-1,7	6,5	-1,9

Table 2: Organizational modernity.

Variables	Taiwan		Brazil	
	M	S	M	S
The in-house atmosphere of the organization encourages new and creative ideas.	6,6	-1,9	6,7	-2,3
The in-house atmosphere of the organization encourages people to learn continuously in their everyday work.	7,5	-1,9	6,8	-2,3
In the organization, the atmosphere encourages people to do their job - seeking to excel .	6,3	-1,9	6,7	-2,2
The organization encourages individual responsibility and initiative.	8,2	-1,9	7	-2,1
Cultural Modernity	7,2	-1,9	6,8	-2,2

Table 3: Cultural modernity.

Variables	Taiwan		Brazil	
	M	S	M	S
The organization's remuneration system rewards acts of competence.	5,9	-2,5	5,8	-2,9
The organization focuses strongly on results.	7,5	-1,9	7,2	-2,2
There is an assessment system that helps differentiate a good from a bad performance.	6,2	-2,3	5,9	-2,9
The organization achieves a good balance between financial results, people and innovation.	5,8	-2	6,3	-2,4
The human resources policies and practices encourage people to be concerned about ongoing learning.	6,5	-2,3	5,9	-2,7
The main criteria for promotion are the person's skills and productivity.	6,4	-2,5	6,6	-2,6
The organization combines equal use of advanced technologies and people's creativity.	5,8	-2,4	6,3	-2,3
The technology used encourages interaction between people and areas.	6,3	-2,2	6,5	-2,3
The organization's policies and practices encourage people to always be well informed and up-to-date.	5,7	-2,2	6,5	-2,4
The organization's strategy, mission, objectives and goals are clearly defined.	6,6	-2,2	7	-2,5
The organization's human resources policies and practices encourage personal and professional development.	6	-2,2	6,1	-2,6
In general, the employees know what to do to collaborate with the organization's objectives.	6,8	-2,1	6,9	-2,3
Administrative and People Management Practices Modernity	6,3	-2,2	6,4	-2,5

Table 4: Administrative and people management practices modernity.

Variables	Taiwan		Brazil	
	M	S	M	S
The decision-making process in the organization is decentralized.	5,5	-2,3	5,3	-2,9
The organization favors autonomy in taking decisions.	4,9	-2,3	5,9	-2,6
With regard to the political aspect, the prevailing system in the organization can be described as democratic.	5,6	-2,4	6,3	-2,6
The decision-making processes are participatory and transparent.	5,6	-2,4	6,3	-2,6
The organization provides participatory management systems that encourage people's initiative and action.	6	-2,3	6	-2,5
The organization accepts diverging behavior and respects individual differences.	6	-2,2	7,0	-2,2
The working atmosphere facilitates personal relationships even at different hierarchical levels.	6,4	-2,3	7,4	-2,2
Political Modernity	5,7	-2,3	6,3	-2,5

Table 5: Political modernity.

to the dimensions of knowing how to behave and knowing how to act, which shows the need for organizations to develop organizational environments that will contribute effectively towards enabling people to generate results, in practice, as well as to deal with unpredictable situations within the current business context.

The focus of this study does not allow us to carry out a thorough and detailed comparison regarding the relationships between the constructs that were studied and the Culture construct. Nevertheless, we believe it is of great value to register preliminary impressions between the competencies that are most required in each context and traces of their respective realities. Taiwan, for example, is where the highest scores for 9 out of 15 competencies that were investigated can be found, and the following stand out: capacity for communication, capacity to deal with new and unexpected situations, capacity for interpersonal relationships, capacity for teamwork and initiative to take action and decision. This shows a possible demand to overcome remarkable cultural traits within that context, such as high introversion and deep respect for authority and hierarchy.

It is interesting to point out that Entrepreneurial capacity was the competence that was, in both countries, the one that was the least required among the 15 competencies investigated. In Taiwan, this finding suggests the influence of historical traces such as strong government presence in a large part of these economy as well as characteristics associated to existing organizational environments.

Lastly, we should stress the emphasis given to the competence of individuals to produce effective results within the Brazilian context. Such evidence can be explained by the management model that Brazilian organizations have been adopting in the past decades and whose basic premise is a strong link between individuals' activities and organizational results.

In relation to organizational modernity, we must stress perceptions regarding the prevalence of decision-making processes that involve little participation, transparency and decentralization, as well as perceptions about the low degrees of autonomy given to the professionals targeted by this study. In practice, what was found was the prevalence of an organizational trait that is still authoritarian, hierarchical and centralized, despite also having found encouragement towards establishing internal climates that are favorable to continuous learning processes and the establishing of organizational environments that facilitate teamwork and encourage action and decision initiatives.

Such findings corroborate the thesis defended by Leite [35] that the modernization process in fashion in less developed economies encompasses a process that, even now, can be defined as one of conservative modernization, which suggests the need for organizations to adopt management policies and practices more closely aligned to the new professional profiles that are required.

Thus, differently from the findings obtained in studies carried out in Brazil by Weil [36] and Leite [37], the findings of this work indicate that demands for a new worker profile have not been followed, to the degree recommended by these authors, by a new set of principles based on worker autonomy and participation in decision-making processes.

The opposite is true, as the findings reinforce the need for changes to the behavior of organizations that find themselves within these contexts, so that vertical and centralized structures can give way to ones that are more horizontal and decentralized and that will lead to greater worker autonomy, participation and involvement, which presupposes deep changes not only to management structures, systems, policies and practices, but also and mainly to organizational culture.

At the same time, the results point to contradictions between discourse and practice in fashionable management models. Nevertheless, there is still hope that, as in a virtuous circle, the demand for professionals who hold increasingly encompassing and sophisticated competencies will bring modernity to management policies and practices that will lead to organizational environments that will be more conducive to the development and application of the utmost potential of its human elements.

In summary, given the ensemble of data gathered it is possible to conclude that organizations have required a broad array of competences; however at the higher level at which the modernity of their policies and managerial practices is observed. By way of consequence, the main contribution offered by this study consists in overcoming traditional competence-management approaches centered upon investigating the individual dimension solely – attraction and development of individual competence attributes-forgoing the fact that competence only happens in action, presupposing the existence of organizational factors-including management policies and practices – in its favor.

Limitations of this study include not obtaining all the assumptions for the adoption of statistical multivariate techniques; specific problems with the normality assumption were detected. In this respect, it is well to consider the difficulties indicated by Johnson and Wichern [38] in obtaining data behaving exactly like a normal distribution in social sciences. Nevertheless, to the extent that none of the factors gathered showed discrepancies vis-à-vis the literature, it is appropriate to suggest some robustness in multivariate techniques, even though not all assumptions were reached.

Another challenge the authors met is the absence of internationally accepted criteria for the evaluation of the adopted multivariate analyses results. Albeit reported in literature, as a rule the acceptance/rejection values vary by author, indicating the need for further advances of investigations into this theme. In addition, the authors acknowledge that ruling out absent data and outliers, although enabling greater multivariate analysis robustness may, on the other hand, imply limitations regarding the generality of findings.

The authors highlight the importance of new studies such as to confirm or refute the results unveiled by this study, considering other emerging economies-including continental China-to provide an increase of the investigation's homological chain involving the constructs studied.

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