

Research Paper

Skills in the Light of Knowledge: New Learnings

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aims to analyze competence as a multidimensional construct, demonstrating its dual nature: simultaneously as an instrument or construct of management and an expression of organizational culture. The central objective is to reinterpret competency-based management as an integrated system that influences behavior, organizational identity, and contemporary human resource management practices.

Methodology: The methodology adopted is exploratory and qualitative in nature, based on a critical and integrative literature review. Classic and contemporary authors who address: (i) the epistemological foundations of competence; (ii) the relationship between competence and organizational culture; (iii) the evolution of evaluation and development models; (iv) the impact of digital technologies and artificial intelligence on professional profiles were considered.

Results: The results indicate that competencies function as strategic assets that directly influence the competitiveness and sustainability of organizations. The study shows that: (i) competencies have a technical dimension, guiding planning, evaluation, and development processes; (ii) and a symbolic dimension, reflecting values, beliefs, and practices that shape organizational identity and culture. The research demonstrates that competence plays a dual role, structuring management practices while reinforcing the collective ethos.

Originality: The originality of the study lies in its integrative and holistic perspective, treating competence not as an isolated operational mechanism, but as a culturally rooted and strategically articulated system. The approach highlights the hybrid nature of competence and contributes to a broader understanding of its role in modern human resource management practices.

Keywords: *Culture; Management; Organizations; Skills; Knowledge.*

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1. Introduction

The notion of competence has been widely mobilized in recent decades as a structuring axis of human resource management practices. Initially conceived as a technical construct, associated with individual performance and competitive advantage (Sadikin, 2024; Ketchiwou, 2024; DevSkiller 2025), competence has evolved to incorporate behavioral, relational, and symbolic dimensions, also becoming an instrument for the expression and reproduction of organizational culture (Schein, 2017).

Competence thus presents itself with multiple interpretations, influenced by cultural factors, institutional values, epistemological views, and individual experiences. Despite the plurality of approaches and the polysemy that marks the term, it is possible to identify a semantic matrix that gives it coherence and transversality (Sardenberg, 2023, pp. 32-34).

In this context, competency management can be interpreted through two complementary lenses: (i) as a management construct, representing a rational and strategic model, focused on the identification, development, and alignment of human capabilities, also rooted in the logic of results-based management, resource theory, and performance engineering; (ii) as an instrument of organizational culture, competence becomes a symbolic vector, reflecting the values, beliefs, and practices that define the organization's collective identity. In this case, competency management acts as a mechanism for cultural reinforcement or transformation, shaping desired behaviors and legitimizing standards of excellence (Brito, 2024, p. 10).

As technology redefines society, it is observed that organizational culture not only influences but is also influenced by the advancement of artificial intelligence. This phenomenon sparks multidisciplinary interests. Competencies become part of an integrated set of knowledge, techniques, and behavioral dispositions that significantly impact individual performance in the functions performed. These competencies are assessable based on predefined criteria and can be improved through structured processes (Stor, 2024, p.45–62).

The adoption of a competency-based management model in organizations constitutes an integrative strategy, capable of aligning knowledge, attitudes, and skills with institutional objectives. This alignment promotes a dynamic of mutual development, in which

knowledge and symbolic capital are transferred to you, adding capabilities and values. It is a dialectical and continuous process that strengthens both corporate identity and organizational behavior (Voss, 2022, p.18-26).

Continuing along this line of reasoning, the proposed question – construct or instrument – does not seek an exclusive answer, but rather to open space for reflection, where competence is simultaneously technical and symbolic, strategic and cultural, individual and collective. This approach allows us to understand competency management as a hybrid system, capable of articulating rationality with intentionality, promoting not only performance, but also meaning-making and engagement (Afandi, 2024, pp. 45-58).

Based on these assumptions, competence was considered as the ability to transform knowledge, skills, and interests into concrete and effective results. Currently, possessing know-how is no longer sufficient – true competence manifests itself when these elements are mobilized in favor of specific objectives, needs, or commitments. The organization is a repository of knowledge, values, and learning, essential and fundamental to its growth (Jovanelli, 2022, pp. 89-106). Therefore, competence results from the articulation between cognitive components.

Additionally, a new narrative emerges, reflecting the diversity of domains, namely: (i) technical skills, consisting of specialized mastery of tasks; (ii) intellectual skills, based on mental abilities focused on analysis, synthesis, and logical reasoning; (iii) cognitive skills, referring to the integration between intellectual reasoning and mastery of knowledge; (iv) relational skills, residing in the aptitude to interact and communicate; (v) social and political skills, based on active involvement in social and institutional contexts; (vi) didactic/pedagogical competencies, focused on educational practice and the transmission of knowledge; (vii) methodological competencies, residing in the ability to apply techniques and organize work processes; (viii) leadership skills, found in the art of influencing, guiding, and mobilizing people towards common goals; (ix) organizational competencies, manifested through management and strategic development (Cordeiro, 2024, pp. 102-117).

Truth be told, competence represents the ability to mobilize and integrate knowledge, ensuring procedures with quality and common sense. However, it is necessary to distinguish the concepts of "being competent" and "having competence." Being competent refers to the punctual demonstration of satisfactory performance in a specific task, while having competence implies possessing knowledge, know-how, and ability,

which can be mobilized recurrently and adaptively in different contexts (Brito, 2024, pp. 2288-2297).

Competence, therefore, is not limited to an isolated result, but represents the ability to apply, continuously and contextually, the personal resources - technical and behavioral - necessary for the effective performance of a task whenever required. In other words, competencies come in two fundamental categories: technical and behavioral. Behavioral competencies refer to the attitudes, postures, and patterns of conduct that the individual manifests in the professional environment, directly influencing the ability to relate, adapt, and make decisions. Technical competencies, on the other hand, concern the mastery of specific knowledge and the application of operational skills in defined process functions.

In other words, competence transcends mere technical mastery; it acts responsibly. This competence implies the mobilization, integration, and transfer of knowledge, resources, and skills, generating economic and social value. Acting responsibly means fully committing to institutional objectives, assuming a posture of dedication and involvement, in alignment between personal purpose and organizational mission (Barney, 1991, pp. 99-120).

Therefore, organizational competence is a set of attributes and capabilities that an institution develops continuously, with the goal of producing and improving goods and services that effectively meet market demands. These competencies constitute the strategic foundation that sustains organizational competitiveness and sustainability (Jovanelli, 2022, pp. 89-106).

2. Literature Review

The development of competencies is intrinsically linked to the performance of people. Organizations are not constituted solely by physical structures or automated systems, but rather by the conscious and strategic action of their workers (Bunch, 2007, pp. 142-163). They are the primary agents in the construction, maintenance, and evolution of core competencies that confer identity and competitive advantage. In other words, institutions are people, and people make institutions. Without people, there are no institutions.

Furthermore, within this line of thought, these competencies are disseminated across multiple divisions and functional areas, representing a competitive advantage that is

difficult for competitors to replicate. Such competencies become highly relevant intangible assets (Souza, 2021, pp. 1-19).

From another perspective, competence not only involves the articulation between knowledge and know-how, but is also directly linked to the creation of value – whether for the individual or for the organization. Thus, it can be stated that, from different perspectives, all definitions share a common basis that supports contemporary competency-based management models. Indeed, an organization's competitiveness lies in the mobilization of a restricted set of essential practices and techniques capable of impacting the various business units across the board (Cordeiro, 2024, pp. 102-117).

Competencies, as the foundation of organizational performance, are configured as a managerial construct that consolidates strategic identity and preserves organizational memory. Because they are unique and structuring, these competencies transcend mere operability, becoming strategic assets that permeate internal processes (Lipparini, 2000, pp. 16-25).

In this vein, the development and strengthening of these competencies should be priorities on the strategic agenda. By mastering certain competencies, the institution not only consolidates its current performance but also establishes a solid foundation for facing future challenges (Parry, 1998, pp. 58-64). Thus, individual competence can be defined as the articulated set of knowledge, behavioral dispositions, and technical skills that an individual mobilizes to act effectively and efficiently in a given domain. It is a synthesis between what one knows, what one knows how to do, and how one acts.

Continuing the textual journey, from the 1970s onwards, the concept of competence provoked a profound transformation in organizational paradigms, especially in the way managers evaluated their human resources. Traditionally, the focus was on intellectual attributes and academic degrees (Silva, 2025, pp. 4-15).

With the development of resource management and innovation, a method was created capable of mapping effective competencies, based on observable behaviors and concrete results, promoting a more equitable and functional approach to processes and procedures. This approach implied a paradigmatic shift, replacing previous models with artificial intelligence resources and cognitive assessments, guided by criteria of greater equity and functionality (Dalmau, 2023, p. 5-12).

In this new era, attitude - previously underestimated - has come to occupy a central role in talent assessment. Commitment, proactivity, adaptability, and delivery are now recognized as fundamental elements for business success. Returning to the initial argument, it becomes pertinent to ask to what extent performance management differs from competency management. Competency development is one of the most effective ways to face contemporary challenges and align organizations with the demands of new global paradigms. In a scenario marked by intense competitiveness and rapid transformations, organizations can no longer depend on traditional management models (Chaves, 2024, p. 5-16).

Among the various competencies that permeate the organizational environment, the influence of institutional culture stands out, being operationalized through specific management instruments, namely (i) outlining profiles, aligned with productivity and strategy; (ii) guiding the development of teams based on the competencies required for each function; (iii) performance management, based on measurable and observable criteria and objectives (Souza, 2021, p. 1-19).

Notwithstanding what has already been said, the implementation of a competency model as an instrument of organizational culture implies mapping the knowledge and practices that the institution needs to face strategic challenges. This initiative not only aligns human resources with the organization's strategic intent, but also establishes a conceptual basis for the articulation between human and organizational competencies. In this sense, competency management ceases to be an isolated practice and becomes part of a broader management system, in which institutional culture acts as a vector for development and support, whether in core transversal competencies or functional transversal competencies (Silva, 2025, pp. 4-15).

Managers are thus able to promote alignment between institutional objectives and operational practices. These unfolding processes allow for a more precise establishment of the requirements necessary for the development of structures, from: (i) service orientation; (ii) collaboration orientation; (iii) change and innovation orientation; (iv) results orientation (Afandi, 2024, pp. 45-58).

However, each organizational unit must precisely identify the knowledge required for effective performance. This alignment should consist of the following: (i) critical analysis and problem solving; (ii) knowledge management; (iii) communication; (iv) initiative; (v) negotiation and influence; (vi) organization, planning and project management; (vii)

orientation towards inclusion; (viii) orientation towards participation; (ix) orientation towards safety; (x) decision-making; (xi) emotional intelligence; (xii) team coordination (Dutra, 2019, pp. 34-45).

Based on the previously designed organizational competencies, the human resources area thus becomes more efficient in management as well as in action planning. In this context, training and development assume a strategic role, providing concrete information about the competencies that should be worked on in each scenario. This makes planning more effective, targeted and aligned with the real needs of the organization (Fleury, 2004, pp. 44-57).

Professionalized management, as a structuring axis, is now considered indispensable to the strategic development and sustainability of institutions. This reciprocity strengthens the bond between people and the institution, better preparing top management for new challenges.

3. Methodology

This manuscript is characterized as a qualitative exploratory study, developed in the form of a narrative essay with a theoretical-conceptual basis. Unlike systematic or integrative reviews, this approach does not aim for exhaustiveness of scientific production or the application of a rigid protocol for study selection, but rather the construction of a critical and interpretative reflection on the concept of competencies in the organizational context.

The choice of a narrative essay is justified by the nature of the phenomenon analyzed - competence as a theoretical construct and management tool - marked by conceptual polysemy, epistemological diversity, and continuous reconfiguration in the face of organizational and technological transformations. In these contexts, the literature recognizes the theoretical essay as an appropriate strategy to deepen concepts, articulate perspectives, and identify analytical tensions, without the intention of producing generalizable syntheses.

The sources were selected from an intentional and non-probabilistic process, guided by theoretical relevance, conceptual consistency, and contribution to the academic debate on competencies. The following were prioritized: (i) classic authors who underpin the concept of competence; (ii) contemporary contributions that discuss its reconfiguration

within the scope of management, organizational culture, and digital technologies; (ii) academic books, scientific articles, and institutional reports widely recognized in the field.

No formal inclusion or exclusion criteria were defined based on temporal cut-offs or bibliometric metrics, since the purpose of the study is not to map the entirety of existing scientific production, but to critically engage with studies that structure and problematize the issue.

The analysis of the sources thus followed a qualitative, interpretative, and comparative procedure, centered on the critical reading of the selected texts. The contents were organized into thematic axes, as can be seen throughout the manuscript, defined from the recurrence and relevance of the debates identified in the literature, namely: (i) epistemological foundations of the concept of competence; (ii) articulations between competences, organizational culture, and people management; (iii) evolution of evaluation and development models; (iv) impacts of digital technologies and artificial intelligence on the redefinition of professional competences.

The interpretation sought to highlight convergences, divergences, gaps, and conceptual trends, thus allowing us to understand competence as a multidimensional phenomenon that integrates technical, behavioral, symbolic, and strategic dimensions.

Considering the nature of the essay, this methodology does not aim for replicability or empirical generalization, but rather the production of theoretical-reflective knowledge. Thus, the text assumes as a limitation the absence of a formal review protocol, while valuing analytical density, argumentative coherence, and conceptual contribution as criteria for scientific validity.

In this way, the methodology adopted proves to be adequate to the objectives of the study, by allowing a deeper understanding of competence as a management construct and a constitutive element of organizational culture, contributing to the academic debate in a scenario of organizational transformation.

4. Conclusion

Competency-based management focuses on an innovative and strategic approach to human resource management. In fact, it promotes a break with traditional models centered exclusively on formal and conservative processes (Parry, 1998, pp. 58-64).

The systematization of performance evaluation, through standardized procedures and scales, became a dominant practice with the rise of Taylorism, reflecting the logic of control and efficiency that permeated industrial organizations in the early 20th century. In this context, evaluation came to be conceived as a technical instrument for rationalizing work, aimed at the objective measurement of individual contributions to organizational results.

By recognizing that the individual becomes an active agent in the organizational process, capable of continuous development and contributing decisively and positively to institutional results. This human valorization implies not only investment in training, but also in expanding the space for participation and recognition. Therefore, competency management and performance management thus demonstrate an interrelationship that challenges the conventional separation between models, favoring strategic integration in organizational practices (Brito, 2024, pp. 2288-2297).

The integration of these assumptions and procedures underlying management practices and techniques proves available to guide and enhance institutional values, particularly those related to human capital management. In this sense, competencies and performance are not presented as competing practices, but as synergistic dimensions of the same organizational model (Souza, 2021, pp. 1-19).

By accepting these premises, it is proposed to replace traditional nomenclatures with competency-based performance management, an expression that better translates the structural interrelationship between the processes of evaluation, development, and strategic alignment of people (Cordeiro, 2024, pp. 102-117). Finally, it can be deduced that competence can be seen simultaneously as a management construct - that is, a structured tool for planning, evaluation and development - and as an instrument of organizational culture, reflecting values, beliefs and practices that shape collective behavior. This duality reveals that competence is not only a measurable attribute, but also an expression of organizational identity (Chaves, 2024, p. 5-16).

Therefore, in a globalized and highly competitive scenario, competency management emerges as a core strategy to strengthen human performance in organizations. In other words, competencies represent not only a methodological change, but a new management philosophy, guided by the appreciation of applied knowledge and co-responsibility between people and organizations. The development of competencies transcends the logic of institutional survival in uncertain environments. It is a direct contribution to strengthening the productive and innovative capacity of organizations.

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