

Chapter 3

In Search of Social Intelligence

Jairo Simião Dornelas

UFPE – CAPES, Brazil

James Anthony Falk

Faculdade Boa Viagem/DeVry, Brazil

ABSTRACT

How many new concepts have or will appear around the concept of intelligence? It is this question that this chapter strives to answer. To this end, it seeks to establish a consistent track on the various uses of the term intelligence in today's organizations. It takes the seminal concept of intelligence as its starting point and adapts it in an organizational sphere, the so-called business intelligence (BI), in all its apparatus of technologies and associations. After this, it seeks to establish a visible and viable relationship between both business intelligence and organizational intelligence, anchored in knowledge management. Once a connection between these "intelligences" is developed, the chapter redirects itself towards the subject of collective intelligence. This concept is born from individuals, groups and organizations supposedly intelligent, and is in a transfer process to the collective use of information technology featured in social communities. Finally, after the mention of communities, and the spread and practice of social networks throughout communities, the outbreak of social intelligence is suggested as a possible next step for the insertion of the concept of intelligence into the organizational world and within the scope of information technology.

INTRODUCTION

Many definitions have been created to discuss what it means to be intelligent. It is indeed a broad concept to be appropriated at different levels, from different angles and with different connotations. Initially, it is a concept regarding know-how. It also means the ability to be able to examine the context and search for a solution or a viable explanation for a given fact or problem.

In its broadest sense, the word intelligence can be understood as the mental capacity to reason, think and have ideas (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2003). This function involves the ability to plan, to abstract, to understand and to learn. Thus, intelligence is a feature that has inherent human aspects and can be properly exercised by individuals and groups. In this case, a social action can be intelligent and, thus, could be easily passed on and constructed in organizational arrangements.

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This is possible since organizations can be considered as composed of individuals and groups with defined purposes in order to reach prefixed objectives (Barnard, 1979; Maximiano, 2008).

Typically, when used in a formal process, we recognize that an organization makes use of the traits of their intelligent members (Robbins, 2009). So, when we are talking about organizational intelligence, we are talking about the sum of intelligence of all organizational members (Fuld, 2006).

This question, however, is not quite as simple as it seems. Truly, it is slightly more complicated because it involves knowing who the intelligent members are, how they capture intelligence from the organizational structure and what portion of the organizational intelligence may be attributed to them i.e., we must enter into the world of organizational intelligence and its various categories.

Initially, we should address the topic of organizational intelligence as operational characterized by procedures and instruments for planning and control (Luftman & Kempaiah, 2007). Then comes the question of technological intelligence (Moss & Atre 2003), which is perceived as that derived from technological artifacts (which will be treated later as artificial intelligence). Then there is a third level of intelligence in an organization which is its business intelligence (Lönnqvist & Pirttimäki, 2006). Business Intelligence is known as the merging or combined usage of operational elements (processes) and technological elements in order to support management from the tactical and decision-making points of view (Choo, 2001). Rodrigues and Barbieri (2008) also link this view with the idea of Business Intelligence, which they say is normally linked to knowledge management. Historically, this model has been associated with the label: the learning organization (Senge, 1998; Argyrys, 2004).

Finally, admitting that this new entrepreneurial, intelligent and as competent as possible organization exists (Huber, 2007), and valuing its talents (Quinn et al., 2003), a good question emerges:

If people and organizations are intelligent, what would the next level of standardization of the aspects of intelligence (like here exhibited) be?

For the answer, we propose to observe the level of society. Considering that the transmission and dissemination of intelligence is feasible, it would be reasonable to guess that society, the locus of individuals, groups and organizations, should become a community with intelligent processes under the label equivalent to collective intelligence (Lèvy, 1996) or social intelligence (Bergeron et al., 2003; Albrecht, 2007).

Such an arrangement could provide the means that allows the measurement of the intelligent contributions provided by individuals, groups and organizations towards the cooperation in building the social or collective intelligence of an enterprise.

The analysis of the question proposed is, of itself, a great challenge. The goal of this paper is to dive deep into the literary foundations about intelligence seeking to identify relevant concepts and arrangements of various hues that may enable us to enunciate, even without any empirical evidence, a social framework and its sources of support, which accommodates different ideas on intelligence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this space a list the major aspects that contribute to link intelligence from the traditional view (at the level of human beings) to an organizational perspective (not human entities) is attempted. It also contemplates technical aspects that support the intelligence connotation.

Intelligence

It is a huge challenge to try to fit the concept of intelligence into any field of study. Primarily, this is due to its broad spectrum of meanings, ranging from neuroscience to artificial intelligence (Da-

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