Chapter 14
Demystifying Unlearning and Innovation in Higher Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT
This chapter analyzes human and emotional capitals as the main source for organizational change, innovation, and learning. Individuals and teams thus have the aptitude to revitalize their learning ability. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the relationship between intentional unlearning and forgetting. Dynamic capabilities and knowledge management emphasize that organizational innovation depends on knowledge considered to be the vital resource. The old dominant logic must be unlearned for organizations to embrace innovation and creativity. Organizational learning models are critiqued and the capacity for unlearning in organizational learning processes is highlighted. Unlearning typologies and related barriers of organizational forgetting are critiqued. Furthermore, unlearning leads to innovation as re-learning is based on initiative and experimentation between individuals in a blameless culture. The organizational learning social constructivist perspective is adopted in a dynamic capability theoretical framework. Furthermore, the notion of transdisciplinarity embraces a new age mindset which refutes the old dominant logic.

INTRODUCTION
In the contemporary economy, knowledge and information are profuse. This may give rise to positive results vis-à-vis innovation. The behavior and attitude of all stakeholders are directly influenced and thus urging the need for greater critical, assertive, insightful and demanding decision-making. Concomitantly, the current organizational context is constantly fluctuating which challenges missions of
organizations in this competitive environment. Nevertheless, in this information abundant market, these new technologies compel the rise of new competencies that may support the search for new skills, and which may encourage more state-of-the-art technologies to be taken on. In this interactive context, these technological changes, encourage the need for new skills to sustain the innovation processes as well as other domains that are the source of productive gains, namely, social, organizational and technological.

Social and organizational changes facilitate technical changes thus leading to a rise in employee autonomy and responsibility. In this context, due to various reasons, there is an increasing demand for new cognitive skills, a few being, (i) skills enabling the production and analysis of data, (ii) skills that enable taking on responsibility and working autonomously, (iii) skills enabling interaction with stakeholders. However, in order to gain these skills, it is imperative that individuals learn how to unlearn so that this learning is sustainable in a society where information increases at a startling rate and is not compatible with internal routines.

From this ‘new learning’ context, this study reflects on learning as the source of productive gains from a dynamic perspective. The emphasis is placed on learning to unlearn as a source for updating new knowledge. The reflection concomitantly embraces intellectual capital, more specifically, emphasizing human capital and focusing on the distinctive emotional capital as a distinct competence that individuals have in order to learn to unlearn. Proactivity is important to know how to learn to unlearn and this stance is supported in this study because organizations that embrace this learning implement strategies that are challenging and bold. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are adept to perform innovation processes, at various levels, organizational, human and social. Therefore, this research path further endorses knowledge as a factor of production when there is the need to merge tacit with explicit knowledge arising from connecting skills with new competencies relevant for the current society.

This chapter is concerned with knowledge creation in HEIs, which are traditionally viewed as the custodians of knowledge. However, the dilemma which has arisen over the past years, is whether HEIs allow for the creation of knowledge or indeed hamper this creation. The argument is whether HEIs foster deep learning through the capacity of unlearning in order to create new knowledge. The further predicament is whether HEIs endorse innovation and creativity or indeed accept unlearning which is the basis of innovation. Therefore, this chapter argues the importance of the constructs of innovation and creativity through unlearning and forgetting. Furthermore, this chapter postulates that this unlearning and new learning is possible when education moves away from the Cartesian duality and reductionism and embraces the transdisciplinarity of holistic thinking. The main aim of this chapter is therefore, to ascertain whether unlearning and forgetting is possible in HEIs in order to create new knowledge.

ELUCIDATING UNLEARNING, FORGETTING AND LEARNING

In the current twenty first century education continues to be compartmentalized, fragmented, mechanical and authoritarian. Barabasi (2003) holds the same view in that,

Reductionism was the driving force behind much of the twentieth century’s scientific research. To comprehend nature, it tells us, we must first decipher its components. The assumption is that once we understand the parts, it will be easy to grasp the whole. Divide and conquer; the devil is in the details. Therefore for decades we have been forced to see the world through its constituents. We have been trained to study atoms and superstrings to understand the universe; molecules to comprehend life; individual