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Organizational capacity and performance of SMEs: an explanation in the Cameroonian context

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ABSTRACT

The search for performance is one of the major challenges for any organization. It is more so for small organizations, including Small and Medium size Enterprises (SMEs), because of their vulnerability. This imperative certainly explains the rapid development of performance management systems. However, even if the initiatives are many, it is often difficult to measure the factors explaining the performance. Moreover, given the plethora of related works, few have considered the organizational capacity of SMEs. This study aims to fill this deficiency somewhat by applying it to an African environment like Cameroon. The results of the study show that, the capacity to acquire external knowledge and innovation significantly and positively influence the organizational performance of SMEs.

Keywords: Organizational capacity, Performance, SMEs, Cameroon.

1 Introduction

In a constantly changing world, organizations in general, and SMEs in particular, most often cause structural and cyclical barriers to remain competitive. To acquire and/or maintain a competitive advantage, SMEs must ensure a high level of performance, thanks to their organizational capacity. This last being viewed as the level of an organization's ability to deliver services and products that not only meet current customer expectations, but continually anticipate future market opportunities. The main elements of capacity are those associated with the human side of performance (Murphy, 2000).

According to the OECD (2006), capabilities refer to the ability of individuals, organizations and the community as a whole to successfully manage their business. Organizational capacity

can therefore be considered as the set of resources, including knowledge and skills that can be mobilized by an organization to achieve the objectives assigned to it. For Winter (2000), "an organizational capacity is a high level of routine (or a set of routines) (...) that gives the management of an organization a set of decision options to produce significant outputs of a particular type "(Winter, 2000, p.983). The concept of organizational capacity defines the ability of the organization to carry out its productive activities efficiently and effectively by deploying, combining and coordinating its resources and skills through different value-creating processes, according to the objectives defined in advance. For Teece *et al.* (1997), organizational capabilities refer to a company's habit of integrating, building and reconfiguring internal and external skills to respond rapidly to the ever-changing environment.

While SMEs account for 95% of the world's business population and 60% to 70% of employment (OECD, 2000), in Europe they make up more than 90% of enterprises in the European Union (European Commission, 1996). Cameroon is no exception, since 90% to 95% of the population of Cameroonian companies are SMEs and employ 49.7% of the assets (Perdrix, 2005). SMEs contribute significantly to economic development and job creation in the regions in which they operate (Vickers & North, 2000). Since the early 2000s, the Cameroonian public authorities, aware of the strengths of SMEs are trying, through various measures, to develop support for these vulnerable structures, including financial assistance. However, despite the many efforts made, many Cameroonian SMEs are experiencing considerable failures (Fansi, 2010) due to a deficit in their organizational capacity; arising from the problem of management which although constitutes constancy for any company, is even more important for the SME. It is even more so when we know that these SMEs have difficulty in better channeling and optimizing the skills within them.

In addition, in the current context of the pandemic Covid-19 crisis which has undermined many organizations, the survival and sustainability of SMEs depends more than ever on their organizational capacity, in particular by becoming more innovative and agile for better adapted to an increasingly complex, uncertain and paradoxical world, but also by responding to a growing demand from employees who aspire to more “well-being” and “freedom”. Cameroonian SMEs therefore have every interest in changing their managerial models and reinventing certain practices to better adapt to this new world (Boubakary, 2019; Boubakary and Zerbib, 2019). In addition, as pointed out by Kamdem (2016), over the next decade, more than half of the world champions of economic growth will be African, and SME managers would benefit from using all their creativity and ingenuity in order to achieve in the face of a crisis (Boubakary, 2020).

The objective of this research is, therefore, to contribute to enrich the theoretical knowledge that we have of the role of organizational capacities of SMEs on their performance. The thesis that we are trying to defend here is that the mobilization of resources and skills of the organization, which is often essential to explain strategic behaviors (Wtterwulghe, 1998); can have an important explanatory role in the achievement of the organizational performance of SMEs.

The article is structured in three sections. The first sets the theoretical framework for this study, showing the importance of skills and capabilities within the organization to achieve performance. The second presents the methodology adopted, as well as the measures of the

different variables of the study. Finally, the third section presents the results of this study as well as their discussion.

2 Conceptual framework and research hypotheses

In this section, we will successively present the theory of resources and skills, the conceptualization of organizational performance and the theoretical links between organizational capacities and SME performance.

2.1. The theory of resources and skills

Since the work of Penrose (1959), considered as the founding father of the approach by resources and skills, this theoretical approach is attracting increasing interest from researchers, consultants and practitioners alike. Resources can be defined as tangible or intangible assets attached to the business. Since Wernerfelt's (1984) first propositions, Barney's statement of fundamental principles (1991) and Conner's (1991) argument, the resource approach has risen to the rank of theory (Brulhart *et al*., 2010). For Wernefelt (1984), Barney (1991) and Collis (1991), the success of a company lies in the resources it has at its disposal or can mobilize to satisfy its customers. In this sense, the resource approach is seen as an option to Porter's (1980) speech, which highlights the company's positioning in the face of competition. Thus, the resource approach considers the enterprise as a set of basic resources or assets, some of which are of particular importance, such as the firm's know-how. This know-how refers to both the core competencies and the organizational capacities that make it possible to implement them. It is in this sense that Durand (2006) emphasizes that, the idea of key competences and resource-based theory became familiar only after the publication of the famous article by Hamel & Prahalad (1990), because these authors have had the merit of highlighting the difference from one company to another by the possession of scarce resources. Skills and abilities are therefore organizational routines, maintained and developed by collective learning (Burger-Helmchen & Frank, 2011). In other words, when resources are able to perform a task or activity, they are a competency for the firm that can provide a competitive advantage if it is valuable, rare and sustainable, hard to imitate, and non-substitutable (Penrose, 1959; Barney, 1991; Arcand, 2006). In this context, the competitive advantage no longer necessarily lies in the exploitation of a dominant and protected position in a market, but in the optimal valuation of its resources.

For Grant (1991), creating a skill requires an assembly of resources, but also involves learning, which will be done through repetition, experience. Desreumaux *et al.* (2006) go further to consider that the very foundation of the strategy lies in the ability of the company to exploit the external conditions that explain its performance. Resource analysis therefore emphasizes the importance of combining resources and skills in the pursuit of competitive advantage, as the business is equated with a portfolio of resources that cannot be traded on the market.

However, it should be noted that since the works of Hamel & Prahalad (1990), de Sanchez et al. (1996) and Quélin & Arrègle (2000), the competency-based approach is beginning to be proposed as an independent theory of resource theory (Freiling *et al.*, 2008). This separation should not appear as a source of conflict but rather as a wealth (Brulhart *et al.*, 2010). Nevertheless, in this study, we will combine these two approaches. Indeed, approaches that combine two theoretical perspectives are rare, but exist in the literature (Olivier, 1991, 1997).

Moreover, these two approaches are complementary, because the achievement of a performance requires a perfect match between the resources and the skills of the organization.

2.2. Conceptualization of organizational performance

Performance is one of the most complex concepts to describe in management, because it is difficult to separate from the context in which it is used. Performance is linked to an organization's ability to generate value in the future (Botton *et al*., 2012). For Messaoudène & Hernandez (2013), the complexity of the notion of organizational performance is due to the fact that it evolves according to the actors, organizations and sectors of action. It evokes the ability to achieve previously set objectives such as performance (reduce the differences between ends and means). Kalika (1988), on the other hand, defines organizational performance as "measures directly related to the organizational structure and not to its possible social or economic consequences. These indicators are interesting in so far as they make it possible to discern organizational difficulties through their first manifestations, before the effects induced by them are felt from an economic point of view "(p.340). According to Bouquin (1997), organizational performance refers to the ability of a company to properly identify and implement strategies as part of its intended objectives.

For Kalika (1988), organizational effectiveness is based on four factors: respect for the formal structure, relationships between services to minimize conflict, the quality and fluidity of the flow of information, and the flexibility of the structure to adapt to the constraints of the environment. For Morin, Savoie & Beaudin (1994), measuring organizational effectiveness is a judgment on an organization, based on a certain number of criteria, which are desired, desirable, sought-after results. For these authors, organizational performance has three dimensions: productivity, efficiency and profitability. Sicotte *et al.* (1999) and Giauque *et al.* (2008), on their part identify four dimensions to define performance: the accomplishment of the mission of the organization, acquisition and control of resources and skills, delivery of quality services and the development and maintenance of a common culture and values.

In the context of this study, considering the approach of these different authors, we consider organizational performance as the way the company is organized to achieve its objectives and how it manages to achieve them. However, to what extent do skills and abilities contribute to the achievement of organizational performance?

2.3. Theoretical links between organizational capacities and SME performance

To our knowledge, few studies have attempted to measure the impact of organizational capacity on business performance in an SME context. Yet, these appear to be strategic resources in so far as the knowledge, skills and aptitudes they represent are rare, imperfectly imitable and not substitutable (Penrose, 1959; Barney, 1991; Arcand, 2006). Nevertheless, some studies have shown that the organizational performance of SMEs necessarily involves taking organizational practices into account (Liouville & Bayad, 1995; Lacoursière *et al*., 2001; Arcand et *al*., 2002). In the same vein, Teece (1998) and Drucker (1999) respectively showed that knowledge and knowledge are variables to be taken into account in the implementation of the company's strategy and that the main concern of organizations of today is the maintenance of their stock of human capital and its preservation. The organizational capacity of the company thus contributes to redefining its productive activities by deploying

and coordinating its strategic resources in view of the increasing complexity of the organization's environment.

According to Zahra & George (2002), the quality of resource acquisition depends on several factors, including prior investments, motivation to gather knowledge and prior knowledge. The acquisition of external knowledge refers to a company's ability to identify and acquire externally generated knowledge that is essential to its operation (Zahra & George, 2002). It reflects the identification function, which represents the "generator" of intelligence for any organization. According to Liao *et al.* (2003), the more an organization has the capacity to acquire external knowledge, the more effectively it operates. For Jantunen (2005), knowledge acquisition capabilities consist of processes and mechanisms for collecting information and creating knowledge from internal and external sources.

Recent literature on knowledge creation within firms has focused on knowledge as one of the most valuable resources that provides businesses with a sustainable competitive advantage (Caloghirou *et al*., 2004). A large literature deals with various organizational characteristics corresponding to different mechanisms that facilitate the flow of knowledge between different actors and allow the dissemination and production of new knowledge.

The acquisition of external knowledge by companies is an important element that gives them a competitive advantage (Caloghirou *et al.*, 2004). Indeed, the acquisition of knowledge through training, for example, allows a company to obtain ideas of innovation from external sources (patent databases, journals, conferences, Internet) thus allowing it to create links with other entities (companies and universities or research centers), which have the immediate consequence of increasing their performance. In the same vein, Nonaka (1994) thinks that, through the search for innovation which is considered a source of performance, for it gives companies the means to acquire external knowledge and skills which allow them to supplement theirs and convert this knowledge into new products, processes or services (Nonaka & Takeushi, 1995), the company can remain competitive. Thus, the notion of capacity to acquire external knowledge (Kastelli *et al*., 2004) is therefore decisive for the quest for performance. Hagedoorn & Duysters (1997) also highlight the fact that in a world of rapid technological change, knowledge acquisition is a good way to generate positive returns from a long-term perspective.

However, Jantunen (2005) points out that, despite the important role of knowledge acquisition in the company's activities, its direct impact on improving performance remains unclear. It can be more indirect than direct, for example through innovation policy (Darroch & McNaughton, 2003). For this purpose, knowledge acquisition is considered a necessary but not sufficient condition for improving performance (Zahra & George, 2002). Nevertheless, as Flatten et al. (2011), the ability to acquire external knowledge can enable the company to create new insights that enable it to anchor its performance, as new knowledge can be translated into products and processes (Morgan & Turnell, 2003; Peyrefitte, 2007). It is in this light of the above discussions that we formulate the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: The ability to acquire external knowledge positively influences the organizational performance of the company.

To ensure organizational performance, the acquisition of external knowledge is necessary, but not sufficient. Hence the interest of taking into accounts the innovation capacity of the company.

Today, many SMEs are increasingly using innovation (OECD, 2005), which is even seen as a powerful driver of their competitiveness (OSEO, 2008). According to Neely & Dehoff (2004), innovation is a skill that makes it possible to define and create new products and services, in order to make them quickly available on the market. In this definition, it is not only about innovation in research and development, but also all marketing, management and distribution. The ability to innovate can be understood by the number of innovations an organization is able to adopt or successfully implement. Innovation is a popular term in the management field since it is central to the management of the organization and, above all, promotes its success and performance (Montoya-Weiss & Calantone, 1994).

Several authors have focused on the relationship between innovation and organizational performance. It is relevant to note that most authors agree on the achievement of superior performance due to innovation (Damapour, 1991; Capon *et al*., 1992; Slater, 1997; Hurley & Huit, 1998; Berton *et al*., 2004; Remon, 2012; Caverot *et al*., 2014; Temri *et al*., 2015). In particular, Damapour (1991) notes that, the adoption of innovation generally contributes to the performance and effectiveness of the organization. He mentioned that innovations are adopted to improve performance or eliminate the performance gap that may be caused by changes in the internal or external environment such as fluctuations in demand.

Indeed, firms with greater capacity to innovate are able to develop a competitive advantage and achieve a high level of performance (Hurley & Huit, 1998). Duong & Paché (2015), in a study of industrial shippers in Vietnam's agro-food industries, also support the role of dynamic innovation capacity in improving performance. In the same vein, Berger-Douce (2014; 2015), in two case studies conducted with an SME, confirms the positive impact of innovation capacity on performance. Van Echtelt *et al.* (2008), also highlight that the innovation capabilities created by a company and reused later, will allow it to achieve a higher organizational performance. The study by Bridgstock *et al*. (2010), in the same logic, illustrates that, the innovation capacity of social enterprises influences their organizational performance. In this view, the following hypothesis can be stated:

Hypothesis 2: The Company's innovation capacity positively influences its organizational performance.

3 Methodology

In this paragraph, we will successively present the sampling, the collection of data and statistical tools used and the choice and measurement of variables.

3.1. Sampling

The sample consists of 129 companies with 10 to 100 employees. Due to the lack of a database of all the companies, we created a convenient sample. These companies are located in the two main cities of Cameroon namely, Douala and Yaounde where 60% of the companies are concentrated in the country. 45% of the companies in our sample come from the industrial sector, 31% from the commercial sector and 24% from the service sector.

3.2. Collection of data and statistical tools used

The information was collected by a questionnaire administered face-to-face with business leaders. Data processing is done using SPSS software. To test our research hypotheses, we performed simple linear regression analyzes. In addition, to assess the quality of the regression, we had to resort to a certain number of indicators which are: the R which is the correlation coefficient, which indicates the intensity of the relationship between the variables studied and its value is understood between -1 and 1 (this value is good when it tends to 1 in absolute value); the R-squared, which is the coefficient of determination, measures the percentage of the variance of the variable to be explained as returned by the model; its value is between 0 and 1 (this coefficient is interesting when it is close to 1); Student's t, which measures the significance of the regression coefficients of the model; it is significant when its value is greater than two; and Fisher's F, which measures model robustness at the 0.000 significance level.

3.3. Choice and measurement of variables

Three major concepts are involved in this research. These are: organizational performance, innovation capacity and external knowledge acquisition capacity. To measure these different concepts, we used a five-point Likert scale ranging from "1 = strongly disagree" to "5 = strongly agree". However, for organizational performance, the manager was asked to compare the organizational performance of his company against that of his competitors over the last three years on a five-point scale ranging from "1 = very poor" to "5". = Very superior ".

Work dealing with the organizational performance we could retain 5 items from the studies of Chênevert *et al.* (2011), namely: satisfaction of the needs and expectations of the clientele; the organization's ability to attract and retain key employees; effective management of organizational processes; the organization's ability to develop quality products and services; effective management of employee relations and between management and employees. This choice is justified by the fact that the achievement of organizational performance requires the delivery of quality products and services to meet the needs and expectations of customers; the development and maintenance of a common culture and values.

In terms of innovation capacity, it was measured by 6 items borrowed from the work of Duong & Paché (2015) and Lavastre *et al.* (2014): you easily adopt the innovation program in your company; you are constantly looking for new ways to better meet the expectations of your customers; you are able to modify your current methods to meet the special requirements of your clients; you practice continuous innovation of the quality management system in your company; you have the structured tools and methodologies to support the deployment of an innovation.

Regarding the knowledge acquisition capacity, we used 6 items chosen from those proposed by Chauvet (2003; 2004). They describe the informational intensity of the individual. These are: prior investment and experience in R & D; the motivation of the actors to gather the knowledge; organizational culture; the nature of external knowledge mobilized; the motivation of the actors to share knowledge; ability of actors to create knowledge from external sources.

4 Results and Discussion

The statistical tests carried out to confirm our hypotheses were preceded by Principal Component Analysis (PCA) whose purpose is to control the operationalization of the variables.

4.1. The control of the operationalization of the variables

We will present, successively, the results of the PCA on the items of the concepts of knowledge acquisition capacity, innovation capacity and organizational performance.

4.1.1. Ability to acquire knowledge

The table 1 below presents the results of the factor analysis on the elements of the knowledge acquisition capacity.

Table 1: *Result of Factor Analysis on Knowledge Acquisition Capacity Item Items*

Items	***F1***	***Communality***
Prior investment and experience in R & D.	0.917	0.835
The motivation of the actors to gather the knowledge.	0.913	0,830
Organisational culture	0.911	0.842
The nature of the external knowledge mobilized.	0.905	0.822
The motivation of the actors to share knowledge.	0,810	0.656
Ability of actors to create knowledge from external sources.	0.808	0.649
Own values	**3,715**	
% of the explained variance	**81.637**	
Cumulative% of variance explained	**81.637**	
Cronbach alpha coefficient	**0.901**	

The concept of knowledge acquisition capacity is apprehended using a set of six items. The KMO index has a value of 0.839 and can be considered satisfactory. Similarly, the result of the Bartlett sphericity test of 356.269 at the 0.000 significance level indicates that the correlation matrix is not unitary. In view of these two elements, the PCA is relevant to our data. The results reported in Table 1 reveal a factor with own value greater than 1 and accounting for 81.637% of the total variance. In addition, all items have commonalities greater than 0.5. With respect to the internal consistency of this factor, Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.901 reflects the internal consistency of the variables constituting this unique factor.

4.1.2. Innovation capacity

The table 2 below summarizes the results of the factor analysis on the items of the innovation capacity.

Table 2: *Result of factor analysis on the items of the concept of innovation capacity*

Items	***F1***	***Communality***
You easily adopt the innovation program in your company	0.979	0.960
You practice continuous innovation of the quality management system in your company	0.951	0.976

You are always looking for new ways to better meet the expectations of your customers	0.951	0.858
You have structured tools and methodologies to support the deployment of an innovation	0.949	0.843
You are able to modify your current methods to meet the special requirements of your customers	0.930	0.839
Own values	**4.737**	
% of the explained variance	**85.251**	
Cumulative% of variance explained	**85.251**	
Cronbach alpha coefficient	**0.906**	

From a methodological point of view, five items make it possible to measure innovation capacity. We checked the relevance of the PCA for our observations. The value of the KMO index is 0.919. She is satisfactory. In addition, the Bartlett test is 1559.780 at the 0.000 significance level. After the factor analysis and based on the Kaiser criterion, we selected a factor. The results presented in Table 2 thus show that the factorial axis retained accounts for 85.251% of the total inertia. The five items are well represented by the single factor. The coefficient alpha of internal coherence of the scale is high (0.906). This scale of measurement is therefore faithful. The selected factor defines the characteristic features of the innovative capacity available to SMEs in our sample. The PCA thus confirms the one-dimensional character of the concept of "innovation capacity".

4.1.3. Organizational performance

The table 3 below recapitulates the results of the factor analysis on the items of organizational performance.

Table 3: *Result of factor analysis on the concept of organizational performance*

Items	***F1***	***Communality***
Effective management of relationships between employees and between employees and management	0.986	0.918
Effective management of organizational processes	0.984	0.908
The organization's ability to develop quality products and services	0.983	0.969
Meeting the needs and expectations of customers	0.958	0.967
The organization's ability to attract and retain key employees	0.953	0.972
Own values	**4.734**	
% of the explained variance	**89.367**	
Cumulative% of variance explained	**89.367**	
Cronbach alpha coefficient	**0.906**	

By performing the analysis of Pearson correlations between the items constituting the organizational performance, it emerges that these (items) are not orthogonal since there are significant correlations between them. This led to a PCA to identify the relevant but hidden dimensions of the concept. The results of the analysis, contained in Table 3 above, are satisfactory. Indeed, the KMO index and the Bartlett sphericity test give a value of 0.854 and 1393.561 respectively at the significance level of 0.000. This shows that the structure of the correlation matrices for the data of the study sample lends itself well to the PCA. This

analysis holds, according to Kaiser's principle, a single factor. All variables have a commonality greater than 0.5. The value of Cronbach's alpha for this factor is satisfactory, since it is greater than 0.65, which is the minimum threshold, which indicates an acceptable reliability of the scale used for the measurement of organizational performance.

4.2. Hypothesis tests

The results of the linear regression analysis between Knowledge Acquisition Capacity and organizational performance (Hypothesis 1) are reported in Table 4 below.

Table 4: *Summary of the linear regression model between Knowledge Acquisition Capacity (KAC) and organizational performance*

R	R-squared	Adjusted R-squared	Anova			Coefficients				DW
			Dof	F	Sig. of F		Beta	t	Sig.	
0.897	0.804	0.800	1	276.974	0.000	(Constant)		1.135	0.085	2.505
			128			KAC	0.897	9.416	0.000	

Overall, this table above shows that the model is satisfactory. Indeed, in addition to the existence of a strong link (R = 0.897) between the two variables, these results show us that the CAC explains, up to 80%, the organizational performance (adjusted R-squared). We also note that the model shows a Fisher F of 276.974 at the significance level of 0.000 for 1 and 128 degrees of freedom, and that the error terms are independent with a DW value of 2.505. Moreover, the regression coefficient between these two variables is significantly different from zero, as attested by Student t's (t = 9.416 at the p = 0.000 threshold). From all the above, we conclude that hypothesis 1 is validated. Thus, the ability to acquire external knowledge has a significant and positive influence on organizational performance.

These results confirm the claims of Cohen & Levinthal (1990) that, the more an enterprise has the capacity to acquire external knowledge, the more it can exploit externally acquired assets, and consequently, the better it performs. Thus, companies that have not developed such capabilities cannot manage external knowledge as successfully as those that have developed it; therefore, they are not likely to improve the organizational performance of their business (Flatten *et al*, 2011).

The results of the linear regression analysis between Innovation Capacity (IC) and organizational performance (Hypothesis 2) are shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5: *Summary of the linear regression model between Innovation Capacity (IC) and Organizational Performance*

R	R-squared	Adjusted R-squared	Anova			Coefficients				DW
			Dof	F	Sig. of F		Beta	t	Sig.	
0.904	0.816	0.814	1	197.677	0,000	(Constant)		1.050	0.045	2.945
			128			IC	0.904	3.547	0.000	

In a way, this table shows that the model is very satisfactory. Indeed, in addition to the existence of a very strong link (R = 0.904) between innovation capacity and organizational

performance, these results show us that the IC accounts for 81.4% of organizational performance (adjusted R-squared). We also note that the model shows a Fisher F of 197.677 at the significance level of 0.000 for 1 and 128 degrees of freedom, and that the error terms are independent with a DW value of 2.945. Moreover, the regression coefficient between these two variables is significantly different from zero, as is confirmed by Student test (t = 3.547 at the threshold of p = 0.000). From all of the above, we conclude that hypothesis 2 is validated. Thus, innovation capacity significantly and positively influences the organizational performance of SMEs.

These results are consistent with those obtained by Duong & Paché (2015), aimed at understanding the role played by the dynamic capacity for innovation in improving performance in the agro-food industries in Vietnam. However, the results of the study conducted by Duong & Paché (2015) show a coefficient of determination R- squared equal to 0.259 ($p < 0.01$, $t > 2.58$), which means that the capacity of innovation accounts for nearly 26% of the improvement in performance, contrary to our study, where innovation capacity accounts for about 81.4% of organizational performance. This difference can be justified by the size effect of the sample. Indeed, the authors conducted their study with 139 companies. Therefore, the high coefficient of determination of our study can therefore be explained by the small size of our sample (129 companies).

Moreover, these results can also be explained by the theory of innovation (Moscovici, 1979, 1985). Indeed, according to Moscovici, the capacity for innovation that can be considered as a competence (for example when the minority makes adopt a norm to answer a problem to which the majority does not have a pre-established answer) could be understood as capacities dynamics evolving over time. Minorities who strive to introduce new ways of thinking and behavior can influence their colleagues by adopting new practices and norms. This is a social innovation, that is, the conversion of the majority to the opinions of a minority.

This conception of ideas strongly influences organizational performance. Moscovici, describing the phases of innovation, finds that the phenomenon is explained and functioning in the same way at all levels of society. However, Cazals-Ferré (2011) believes that innovation driven by active minorities would lead, on the contrary, to the creation of conflicts, because of the questioning of the majority norm and the persistence of the minority group wanting impose its norm. Nevertheless, by proposing alternative solutions, minorities play a valuable role as innovators and change agents. They create new ways of visualizing and implementing new ideas into the management of the company and, most importantly, lead others to accept these changes, often without their awareness.

However, it should be noted that the results of this study could be strongly influenced by the African society, in general, and the Cameroonian cultural context in particular. According to Newman & Nollen (1996), managerial practices favorable to the United States, for example, such as participation, rewards based on merit, individual responsibility, are likely to be reckless in countries that are culturally different and could likely to reduce performance. For better efficiency, managerial practices must be adapted to the local culture.

Indeed, unlike Western organizations that are more individualistic and driven by excessive capitalism, the community spirit is rooted in the habits of African societies. The group tends to occupy a more important place in social life than the individual (UNESCO, 1983). This

community spirit that characterizes African society is therefore likely to federate the energies of the staff. In 1987, Desaumay already advocated that African organizations would be better off, on the one hand, to safeguard this characteristic of relational intensity that is sometimes a constraint but also a source of wealth. In this perspective, as emphasized by Nkakleu (2016), at the individual level, the participation of employees in this community life will allow them to benefit from various supports, including the sharing of professional experiences and the transfer of skills. Organizational effectiveness and the convergence of efforts thus presuppose the participation of actors, with a strong personal strength, being sufficiently open to difference-difference and who may be able, on the one hand, to relativize their skills, experiences and their previous practices, on the other hand, to enrich themselves with the contributions of their collaborators (Mutabazi, 2008).

Thus, it is necessary for staff to build a corporate culture around the strong values "that are the engine of action or the foundation of collective action" (Nkakleu, 2016: 94). Subsequently, the corporate culture must be understood as an internal integration factor that aims to federate and mobilize individuals who are a priori different around common objectives, generators of economic or social performance (Meier, 2013). In this perspective, without a strong, shared, and clearly innovation-oriented culture, it is difficult for a company to be competitive through the development of innovation (Deshpandé *et al.*, 1993). Collaborative work, which stimulates collective intelligence and boosts employees' knowledge, is therefore an undeniable factor in restoring a real collective dynamic among Cameroonian SMEs (Boubakary, 2015).

Moreover, the company being not only a productive structure but also a human group of different horizons, the organizational capacities must go through a real "cultural competence". Thus, to be culturally competent in a sustainable perspective, Puren (2013), it is essential to create a common culture of action, to agree on attitudes and behaviors acceptable to all, to be able to distance oneself from one's own culture and to be attentive to the erroneous interpretations always possible between people from different cultures, to have good knowledge of the culture of others and to share general values beyond specific values.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the results of this study could, in part, be explained by the African cultural context, in general, and Cameroonian, in particular. Indeed, favorable organizational practices in Africa such as communitarianism and respect for African values (Kombou and Feudjo, 2007) focused on family, community, work, can contribute to the performance of companies and justify the high explanatory power. of our results. Thus, to better implement an organizational practice, it is important to take into account the local culture in order to see if it is favorable or not to its implementation.

In fact, unlike Western organizations which are more individualistic and driven by excessive capitalism, the community spirit is anchored in the habits of African societies. This state of affairs, which facilitates the sharing of professional experiences and the transfer of skills, is likely to promote the organizational capacities of companies and, therefore, generate their economic or social performance (Nkakleu, 2018).

5 Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to highlight the influence of the organizational capacity of SMEs on their performance. At the end of this research, we came to the following conclusion: the capacity to acquire knowledge and the ability to innovate positively influence the organizational performance of the company. Given these results, we can make a number of observations, including their scope and limitations to guide future research.

On the theoretical side, the direct links between capacity and organizational performance being rare in the literature, our research brings additional results: previous studies having apprehended the performance of companies at the global level, we focused in this article on organizational performance.

On the managerial level, our results showed the importance, for SMEs, of knowing how to make a subtle mix of resources and organizational skills, but also strategic in order to guarantee their performance. In order to remain efficient, SMEs must take into account innovation and mobilize knowledge within them. In addition, through our quantitative study, managers can have a precision on strategic management tools adapted to the African context. Indeed, collective skills would enable SMEs to develop collective learning through, essentially the sharing of values, while making good practices profitable; the ability to innovate, in turn, would build customer loyalty by offering quality products and/or services, while minimizing costs. Thus, if they want to increase their performance, SMEs have an interest in gaining knowledge that will, for sure, give them a competitive advantage.

Our research has certainly helped to understand that organizational capabilities have an influence on the organizational performance of SMEs. However, it is not free of limits. The first is to have wanted mainly explanatory. It offers few tools within the reach of managers to make strategic decisions. Indeed, our choice to carry out, exclusively, a quantitative study based on the administration of the questionnaire, does not allow having more details and understanding of the phenomena studied, compared to a qualitative study based on semi-annual interviews. The second limitation of this search is the sample size that can be considered low. Indeed, although this sample is statistically acceptable (> 30), it remains limited, which could affect the accuracy of the results and leave some doubts about their generalization to all Cameroonian SMEs. In addition, much remains to be done to improve our knowledge of links between capabilities and organizational performance. Intuitively, one can imagine that cultural specificity plays, despite everything, an important role in the understanding of the organizational performance. It would therefore be interesting to take this factor into account in order to improve the quality of our results. Similarly, it would be particularly stimulating to question the existence of a business climate that could, more or less strongly, boost the company's capacity for innovation.

6 References

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