

Original Article

# Re-Concepting the Spirit of Study through Absorptive Capacity and Leadership Empowerment

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**Abstract** - This article discusses the reconceptualization of the spirit of study, which is one of the pillars of Dominican spirituality (the spirit of study), which is implemented in school Y for the development of school quality and finding competitive advantages in school Y. competitive. Among the confusion, often the leader's response is not as expected. Therefore, this article presents an overview of how school Y should re-concept the spirit of study through absorptive capacity and empowering leadership. What steps for school Y to re-conceptualize the spirit of study through absorptive capacity, which has dimensions: acquisition, assimilation, transformation, and exploitation. Also, school Y re-concepts the spirit of study through empowering leadership with a focus on leaders empowering their leadership through organizational mechanisms, namely the ability to coordinate, system, and socialization. The result is steps that can be taken by school Y to re-concept in the spirit of study through absorptive capacity and empowering leadership.

**Keywords** - Spirit of Study, Absorptive Capacity, Empowering Leadership, Dominican Spirituality.

## 1. Introduction

This article is a conceptual article compiled in the context of the work of an institution with a Catholic background, specifically in the educational services they carry out. For some time, even in the last two or three years, the author often gets "chatters" or outpourings from some friends whom the author knows about the work of the ministry where they serve, which according to these friends, is currently stagnant. There is a feeling of boredom in terms of implementation. Competitive advantage. The confidant occurred because he recalled the early days of change, which began in 2009, and the process lasted almost a decade. Then, along with the change in the foundation's management, both the branch and the center that manages the school (to facilitate writing, it is called the initials of school Y), namely school Y, together with the new management, continue the journey of continuing its changes.

The continuance of the journey in guarding the changes they have been enjoying turns out to have a winding road and stumbles. Even though there has been training for substitutes or newcomers, it turns out that the message is often not fully conveyed, so the understanding of school Y's competitive advantage and its culture shifts in the frequency of understanding of each member. Competitive advantage or competitive advantages are things or programs owned by schools or organizations that produce higher quality services than their competitors (Porter, 1985), (Powell, 2001). With a shift in the frequency of understanding, it can be said that

there is disconnected communication because the knowledge of competitive advantage is not the same. On the one hand, maintaining a sustainable competitive advantage is essential to building a successful organization that is able to survive in the market (StudiCorgi, 2022). From there, quality differentiating power will be found so that schools or organizations achieve sustainable competitive advantage (Beal & Lockamy, 1999).

## 2. Portrait of the Past and the Present

Seeing the portrait of Y school about 13 years ago, Y school was in the middle of the city, easily accessible, consisting of a Kindergarten and Elementary School called a one-roof school. Currently, Y school is quite old, which is 36 years old. School Y has internal competitors within their foundation, both kindergarten and elementary schools. If you looked at it 13 years ago, school Y was indeed not an excellent school, so the attention from management could certainly be considered very lacking. In terms of physical appearance, school Y is very unattractive. Because of the size of the brotherhood or loose rules at school Y, at that time, anyone could enter the school and go anywhere without any constraints. Pedicab drivers who pick up and pick up children can communicate with the child through the classroom window without the teacher's permission or even having to go through courtesy.

School Y rose to self-organization which began 13 years ago, when the middle management at school Y, namely the administration of the Branch Foundation, had a



concern for building school Y by establishing a competitive advantage for school Y. Competitive advantage is that schools or organizations have something or programs that produce more quality service than its competitors (Porter, 1985), (Powell, 2001). School Y's competitive advantage is being an alternative school that is open to children with special needs and develops nine bits of intelligence, according to Howard Gardner. In order to support the implementation of this competitive advantage, all Y school organs hold or jointly implement the spirit of study in Dominican spirituality and apply discipline better to serve students. The spirit of study referred to here is the spirit of study which is one of the pillars of Dominican spirituality (Hinnebuch, OP., 1965), (Harley, OP., 2005), (Parker, 2006), (Franciso, 2015), (Regamey, OP., n.d.). Dominican spirituality is a way of following Christ inspired by the life and spirit of St. Dominic (Harley, O.P., 2005). Saint Dominic is a saint in the Roman Catholic Church who lived between 1171-1221; in 1216 founded the Order of Preachers in Spain, and until now, his order is still operating (Dominican Friars Province of St. Joseph, 2014). The administrators of the Y school are a group of Preacher Order nuns whose lives are based on Dominican spirituality.

Branch Foundation officials manage school Y by implementing the spirit of study, one of the Dominican spirituality's pillars. The four pillars are prayer, study, living together, and preaching (Hinnebuch, OP., 1965), (Harley, OP., 2005), (Parker, 2006), (Franciso, 2015), (Regamey, OP., n.d.). The study pillars are implemented in the education services they manage. The pillar or spirit of study is built, lived, and accustomed to through studying together at school Y. Middle management, namely the Branch Foundation Manager who manages school Y, invites all stakeholders to carry out the spirit of study by studying together once a week. At the beginning of learning/studying together, everyone is invited to open their minds by reading books that can inspire creativity, for example, reading a book entitled *Toto Chan* and continuing with the themes that have been programmed. Studying together as a form of implementing the pillars of the study of Dominican spirituality results in good changes at school Y. From this joint study, school Y's competitive advantage was found. The principal, teachers and employees compiled a competitive advantage program according to management functions, from planning, organizing, and implementing to monitoring and evaluation.

The spirit of study and implementation of management functions encourages all members of the Y school to be open-minded, creative, and keep abreast of the times. At the beginning of its implementation, namely in 2009, Y school reaped its fruits with the acquisition of new kindergarten students, which increased to almost four times the number at the beginning of the school year, from 21 students for all grade levels to 78 students (PSB Document). Likewise, for

SD at school Y, the number of new students doubled; even for grade 4, which previously had 11 students, it could reach 28 students because a student moved to School Y (PSB Document). The achievement of increasing the number of new students lasted for the next 10 years. The spirit of study continues to be carried out with up-to-date themes, inspires inspiration, and produces works.

HR support, namely teachers/educators and administrative staff, greatly contribute to the school, even much better than other assets (Maghviroh, 2014), and this has indeed been proven in school Y. become an alternative school that is open to children with special needs and develops nine bits of intelligence according to Howard Gardner. Along with better service, school Y can be financially independent. The school's income can pay the salaries of teachers and employees and fulfill all of Y's school operations. It is truly an extraordinary achievement. Everyone who comes to school Y has a twinkle of light. The teamwork among teachers, employees, parents and other stakeholders goes hand in hand. Every event or activity carried out has new things for everyone. School Y is truly a fun school.

Development of quality of Y school through the implementation of a competitive advantage which is conceptualized through joint learning as the implementation of the pillars/spirit of studies from Dominican spirituality and the implementation of management functions is also accompanied by improvements in its physical appearance. Facilities are also equipped, such as a sports room and space for creativity development packaged in an open room as a multifunctional space. Libraries and collections are also equipped. Play facilities no less interesting are also provided. Y School feels fresh and fun because of the vibrant spirit and the touch of colors used. The teachers and staff are passionate, very friendly and focused on providing excellent service to their students. It can be achieved because there is good cooperation between teachers, employees, parents, and the foundation's administrators.

It can be said that joint learning/study and the implementation of management functions together, judging from the description above, are also practical steps to deal with the downturn of school Y. Competitive advantage that is continuously maintained and developed provides answers for school Y users. This competitive advantage continues to be maintained and developed and can become a sustainable competitive advantage (Huang et al., 2015) for school Y. Along with changes in time and management, both top and middle management greatly affect the condition of school Y. Implementing the spirit of study by learning together seems to have decreased in quantity and quality. Competitive advantage begins not to be evaluated, so it becomes not understood by existing teachers and employees, so their competitive advantage becomes less developed.

On the other hand, teachers began to complain a lot about being tired. Regarding teachers, school Y often experiences teacher changes. Some of the teachers who used to be passionate and understood the philosophy of school Y chose to leave school Y because of their dissatisfaction with the situation. Fighting power has also decreased, it could be because teachers and employees currently do not understand the philosophy of school Y, or for new ones, no one tells the culture and anything related to school Y. The new principal does not really understand school Y's competitive advantages, so the principal cannot explain to new employee teachers. On the one hand, as a leader, you should listen to employee problems and concerns before they become formal complaints or demands, build loyalty and encourage increased productivity. Leaders are also expected to discover potential employee relations problems and learn about attitudes towards terms and conditions of employment (SHRM, 2022).

The implementation of the management process: of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling, which can be used to maximize competitiveness (Sumadi & Ma'ruf, 2020), seems to stagnate, causing communication to give and receive information to one another halt and even barely work. The current communication is only limited to announcements or technical information and no longer how to conceptualize a strategic program. In short, in terms of implementing the management function, there have been many shifts. Because many things are not in accordance with management functions, many HR complain but are slow to respond or even forget about it. HR orientation also shifts to be more passive and often even self-oriented.

Looking at the portrait of school Y above, it can be concluded that the problems faced today are 1) the waning implementation of joint learning, which has resulted in school Y being less transformative so that it has experienced a crisis of losing orientation about its competitive advantage, 2) the slowness of the leader's response to symptoms or phenomena that have arisen at school Y so that it resulted in many complaints and the rapid entry and exit of teachers.

### **3. The Context of the Spirit of Study on Past and Present Dominican Spirituality**

The spirit of study on Dominican spirituality referred to in this article is the spirit of study which is one of the pillars of Dominican spirituality (Hinnebuch, O.P., 1965), (Harley, O.P., 2005), (Parker, 2006), (Franciso, 2015), (Regamey, O.P., n.d.). Dominican spirituality is a way of following Christ inspired by the life and spirit of St. Dominic (Harley, O.P., 2005). Saint Dominic is a saint in the Roman Catholic Church who lived between 1171-1221 in 1216 and founded the Order of Preachers in Spain. Until now, his order is still operating (Dominican Friars Province of St. Joseph, 2014).

The spirit of study is continuing to learn through all life events to find solutions for services delivered to members. The main source of study is the Bible which is reflected as an embodiment of faith so that belief in God is implemented in everyday life (Order of Preacher, n.d.). According to St. Thomas Aquinas, one of the main tasks of members of the Order of Preachers is to carry out missionary tasks by harmonizing human thoughts with God's thoughts. In the context of the Catholic Church, the thinking of members of the Order of Preachers must presuppose that members must have the mind of God; members must have the mind of the Church. For that, members must have openness and universality. Members must not think narrowly but must be thorough, integral, and objective (Pierre Torrell, O.P., 2015).

From the explanation above, it can be concluded: 1) the purpose of the study is to benefit from implementing services that are the responsibility of members of the Order of Preachers, 2) study means studying everything that exists in this world for the sake of the demands of the times and to address the difficulties that occur in society, in works services for which members are responsible. The challenge for current members of the Order of Preachers is how to implement the spirit of study in their ministry work in today's world. This is because implementing the spirit of study should provide solutions for the community through service works that are the responsibility of the members.

Based on the context of the spirit of study and the portrait of school Y, it is necessary to reconcept or reconcept with adjustments to external and internal situations to develop a competitive advantage. Related to the spirit of this study, school Y as an organization must learn, apply new knowledge, disseminate it within the organization, and create new resources, including new technology (Zahra & George, 2002). This is in line with the meaning of study in Dominican spirituality, which complements or perfects the significance of the study in this broader community. It is essential to note that organizations should have transformation capabilities (Lewandowska, 2015), namely the ability of organizations to develop and refine routines that facilitate the integration of existing knowledge and newly acquired and assimilated knowledge (Zahra & George, 2002).

Studies have become the spirit of school Y and are proven to be able to answer solutions by establishing competitive advantage; currently, the spirit of study at school Y is declining and experiencing confusion over competitive advantage. It is necessary to re-concept so that all stakeholders of school Y have certainty about school Y, to restore this situation specifically its competitive advantage, which is found through the spirit of study of Dominican spirituality. Through Table 2 below, it can be seen the steps that can be taken by school Y in reimagining

the nature of the study to develop its competitive advantage. In preparing these steps, supporting literature is provided to strengthen the steps that need to be taken.

The steps to re-concepting the spirit of the study are carried out through absorptive capacity from studying all external knowledge, data collection, selection, determining the new knowledge to be applied, drafting the concept to socialization, promotion and publication. Thus for school Y, after conducting the study, school Y should have developed the concept of developing competitive advantage as a new service and finally socialize, promote, and publish for the advancement of school Y. This step or promotion strategy is needed to introduce a product or service so that the market notices it. (Yasa et al., 2020), because it is essential to retain customers and increase market share (Siregar et al., 2022).

#### 4. Re-Concepting the Study Through the Absorptive Capacity Process

Organizations are significant for learning because organizations are always dynamic. As a result of learning, organizations apply new knowledge, disseminate it, and create new resources, including new technologies (Zahra & George, 2002). To reconcept the spirit of the study, this article uses the view of the absorptive capacity process. Absorptive capacity creates and maintains a competitive advantage (Zahra & George, 2002). Zahra and George (2002) developed a model that concentrates on the internal processes of absorptive capacity, adding two major refinements to the original concept proposed by Cohen and Levinthal (1990).

Following Zahra and George (2002), school Y needs to apply the concept of absorptive capacity in re-concepting the spirit of study as a means of developing competitive

advantage. Cohen and Levinthal, the founders of absorptive capacity, define it as the ability of an organization to recognize the new value and external information, assimilate it and apply it for commercial purposes (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990). According to Zahra and George (2002), absorptive capacity contributes to organizational sustainability as the primary source of creating and maintaining competitive advantage. This is based on the important role of absorptive capacity in updating organizational knowledge, skills, resources and capabilities needed to be able to compete in a changing market. Absorptive capacity has four dimensions: acquisition, assimilation, transformation, and exploitation (ACAP) (Zahra & George, 2002).

Next, it is necessary to conceptualize how to build on one another to make ACAP a coherent dynamic capability that drives organizational change and evolution. Acquisition and assimilation capabilities are the "potential" capacity dimensions (PACAP), and those transforming and exploiting capabilities are the "realized" capacity dimensions (RACAP). PACAP makes organizations receptive to acquiring and assimilating external knowledge (Lane & Lubatkin, 1998). It captures Cohen and Levinthal's (1990) description of an organization's ability to assess and acquire external knowledge but does not guarantee the exploitation of this knowledge. RACAP is a function of knowledge transformation and exploitation. RACAP reflects the capacity of the organization to utilize the knowledge that has been absorbed.

The meaning of each dimension of absorptive capacity, namely acquisition, assimilation, transformation, and exploitation, can be read in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Dimensions of Absorptive Capacity

Dimension	Ability
Acquisition	The organization identifies and acquires externally generated knowledge that is critical to its organizational development
Assimilation	Schools analyze, process, interpret and understand information obtained from external sources
Transformation	Organizations develop and refine routines that facilitate the combination of existing knowledge with newly acquired and assimilated knowledge
Exploitation	Organizations are based on routines that enable the organization to refine, expand, and enhance existing competencies or to create new ones by incorporating acquired knowledge and adapting it into organizational operations.

Source: Zahra & George, 2002

**Table 2. Steps to Re-conceptualize a Study Through the Absorptive Capacity Process**

No	Absorptive Capacity Dimension	Steps	Supporting Literature
1.	Acquisition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Y records all external knowledge that occurs around the organization and, more broadly, worldwide. What are the challenges, what are the threats. Which are new ideas</li> <li>From the above data collection, school Y seeks and explores new knowledge regarding all events that exist in the world and builds networks with external parties to find solutions so that school Y and its network can find solutions that are useful for their school and society in general.</li> </ul>	Noting the potential for acquiring new knowledge motivates organizations to engage in external relations (e.g. inter-organizational collaboration, partnerships, etc.) (Hamel, 1991).
2.	Assimilation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Y forms a team to assess the feasibility of new knowledge that has been recorded and explored in the acquisition process to determine what will be implemented</li> <li>School Y places parents, community, and external stakeholders as key factors in determining the new knowledge to be applied</li> </ul>	Assimilation facilitates understanding new knowledge, determining whether new knowledge is compatible with prior knowledge, and assessing whether new knowledge should be changed to fit existing knowledge structures in the organization (Lefkowitz and Lesser, 1988).
3.	Transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Y coordinates internally the knowledge that has been selected to be applied</li> <li>School Y and the team develop a guiding concept for planning, organizing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating it as a competitive advantage for school Y</li> <li>School Y proposes the above concept (guideline for competitive advantage as a new service) that has been designed.</li> </ul>	Transformation allows companies to combine newly acquired and understood knowledge with existing knowledge (Lane et al., 2006).
4.	Exploitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Y requested approval of the concept of implementing competitive advantage as a new service to the foundation's management to be ratified by a Decree of the foundation's management</li> <li>School Y conducts socialization, promotion, and publication of the launch of school Y's competitive advantage through all media, both print and electronic media</li> </ul>	Exploitation is the ability to consistently use new knowledge gained for commercial use over a long period of time Zahra and George (2002)

Source: Researcher (2022)

**Table 3. Steps to Reimagining the Spirit of Study on Dominican Spirituality Through Empowerment Leadership in Driving Organizational Mechanisms**

No.	Organization Mechanism	Steps	Supporting Literature
1.	Coordinating ability		
	Inter-Cross-Functional Coordination Capability	<p>The principal carries out coordination between related organs and structures when obtaining external knowledge sourced from the community or stakeholders outside the school</p> <p>The school principal holds coordination meetings to gather input in the form of new knowledge about everything that needs to be learned related to the school that is</p>	Inter-functional cross-relationships enhance the knowledge acquisition and assimilation underlying the absorption potential of each unit (PACAP). In addition, cross-functionality enhances transformation and exploitation, which underlies the unit-realized absorptive capacity (RACAP) (Jansen et al., 2005) and looking for ways to reduce or even

		obtained as well as selecting and sorting external knowledge according to the needs of the school	stop turnover (IC. Huang et al., 2021) and implement promotion strategies (Siregar et al., 2022)
		The principal coordinates to formulate a competitive advantage in new services combined with existing knowledge in schools by taking into account all the opinions of teachers and employees to reduce the employee turnover rate	
		The principal school drives inter-departmental collaboration, both foundation and school administrators, in launching and promoting competitive advantage in school Y's new services	
	Participation in Decision Making	The school principal provides opportunities for teachers and employees, especially related sections, to seek competitive advantage and new services that are good and can be implemented in schools	Participation enables the acquisition and assimilation of knowledge and increases the potential of the absorptive capacity unit (PACAP) (Jansen et al., 2005) and reporting to superiors (Calvert, 1992) (Zahra & George, 2002) by providing opportunities for teachers and employees to participate (Bogler et al., 2013)
		Principals provide opportunities for teachers and employees to participate in selecting and determining new competitive advantages and services that are genuinely appropriate and needed by schools.	
	Job Rotation	The principal coordinates every teacher and employee or anyone in any part has a role in providing external knowledge input	Job rotation, therefore, allows the acquisition and assimilation of new external knowledge, which is a potential absorptive capacity (PACAP). Job rotation also enhances the transformation and exploitation of new external knowledge that underlies the unit realized absorptive capacity (RACAP) (Jansen et al., 2005)
2.	System Capability		
	Formalization	The school principal processes the submission of new competitive advantage and service plans to the Foundation Management for approval	Formalization, enhancing the transformation and exploitation of new external knowledge that underlies realized absorptive capacity (RACAP) (Jansen et al., 2005)
		The Foundation Management issues a Decree of the Foundation Management which is issued after the competitive advantage and planned new services had been approved	
	Routine	The school principal or the designated team coordinates joint studies and internal meetings every week to discuss the various policies selected to be applied to schools sourced from external knowledge	Routine allows realized absorptive capacity unit (RACAP) (Jansen et al., 2005) and well-coordinated (Bogler et al., 2013)
		Principals routinely coordinate teachers and staff to promote the competitive advantage of new schools and services	
3.	Socialization Ability		
	Structural aspect or relationship density	The school principal sets an example of being respectful and appreciative of fellow	Connectivity facilitates the transformation and exploitation of newly acquired

	Cognitive aspects or tactics of socialization	teachers and employees for all input in coordination meetings for the formulation of competitive advantage and new services	knowledge and develops realized absorptive capacity units (RACAP) (Jansen et al., 2005) as well as building trust through interpersonal relationships (Jena et al., 2018)
		The principal coordinates the aggressiveness of teachers and employees in promoting competitive advantage and new school services to the community.	Socialization tactics lead to strong social norms and beliefs, which increase commitment to and compliance with new external knowledge exploitation processes (Adler & Kwon, 2002). Thus, socialization tactics increase the transformation and exploitation of new external knowledge, developing realized absorptive capacity units (RACAP) (Jansen et al., 2005) through promotions (Yasa et al., 2020); (Siregar et al., 2022)

Source: Researcher (2022)

### 5. Conclusion

Leadership is an essential aspect of the organization because the success of an organization depends heavily on the effectiveness of the leadership process (Lin et al., 2018). Therefore, leaders are one of the keys to organizational success (Văcar & Miricescu, 2013). In this case, empowering leadership is essential in driving organizational mechanisms so organizations can move from planning to evaluation. The coordination of acquisition, assimilation, transformation, and exploitation is related to absorptive capacity.

This article tries to introduce that the spirit of studying Dominican spirituality can be a way to find a competitive advantage for those who implement it. In its implementation by following the times, it is necessary to re-conceptualize the spirit of study on Dominican spirituality based on absorptive capacity and empowering leadership. Because organizations must always learn and have the capacity to absorb external knowledge, record, identify and realize it within the organization in the form of new products or services. Empowerment leadership with the ability to manage organizational mechanisms can be used to respond quickly to existing phenomena so that problems can be resolved immediately. Re-concepting the spirit of study through empowering leadership can provide answers to how organizations conceptualize from planning to monitoring the concept of competitive advantage in the form of new products or services.

This article introduces the conceptualization of the spirit of study to the Dominican spirit through absorptive capacity and empowering leadership in the form of steps that can be implemented by organizations that implement the spirit of analysis and how the ability to absorb external knowledge can be utilized to generate competitive advantage. Likewise, steps can be found to re-conceptualize

the spirit of study through empowering leadership in the management of organizational mechanisms.

Re-conceptualizing through absorptive capacity and empowering leadership always starts with external knowledge and ends with socialization, promotion, and publication of new products and services. This conceptual article needs to be tested empirically regarding the steps to re-conceptualizing the spirit of study at school Y, whether they support it or not. In this way, it can, at the same time, prove that the purpose of the spirit of investigation in Dominican spirituality is to find solutions to the difficulties experienced in the work of services managed by anyone who implements the spirit of study, which is one of the pillars of Dominican spirituality.

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For this article to become a universal concept, a sample of this conceptual article needs to be added to reduce its limitations further. On the one hand, Dominican spirituality, one of the pillars of which is the spirit of study, can be considered exclusive because it belongs to a specific group, namely members of the Dominican family. However, the spirit of study can still be applied anywhere for those who wish because Dominican families exist all over the world

whose spirituality colors the environment in which they live.

This article has implications for the world of education in that spirituality can be used to create a competitive

advantage in an organization. In addition, it can also have implications for educational implementers (teachers, lecturers) to adopt the spirit of study in carrying out their duties.

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