

Organizational prerequisites for the transition of companies towards a green economy

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Abstract: The idea of an environmentally friendly, competitive, and green economy as a path to achieving sustainable development and rational use of resources is an important strategic measure of the EU. To implement this transition, organizations must have the necessary capacity for this purpose. Its creation and implementation are determined by numerous factors and certain organizational characteristics that they must possess to gradually build. Only in this way can the activities for the creation and use of "green" practices be guaranteed. The article aims to reveal the essence of the green economy approach and its characteristics in the context of sustainable development. In addition, it aims to determine and indicate the necessary prerequisites for building the required capacity of organizations to create conditions and attitudes for implementing this green transition. The method proposed and used by the author for studying and presenting dependencies and interrelationships favors the development of current and practically applicable solutions for the effective organization of work in companies to fulfill the tasks set in this direction.

Keywords: *Green transition, Human capital, Management, Organizational capacity, Sustainable development.*

1. Introduction

Part of the EU's measures to achieve sustainable development and efficient use of resources includes the idea of a green, competitive, and sustainable economy. The European Union seeks to integrate the idea of a green economy into the objectives it generates in all its policies. These ideas and objectives are well set out in the EU's Europe 2020 strategy. One of the main themes of the Rio+20 Conference "The Future We Want" [1, 2] was "The green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication". The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Environment Programme [3] prepared comprehensive reports on the green economy.

Nowadays, there is a serious conflict between the desire of organizations to unleash their potential and remain competitive in the market, regardless of the conditions of the multifaceted crisis in which they operate, and the desire of society for the well-being of all people. The well-being of people depends on the state of the environment. The well-being of people in the future will increasingly depend on the intensity with which the available natural resources are consumed today. The resources available to humanity are becoming increasingly limited because they are not always used rationally - we use more than we can sustainably provide. This irrational way in which humanity uses available resources also leads to changes in ecosystems and their parameters at a faster and unnatural speed. The sustainable development of enterprises must always be tied to the needs of the moment, without limiting the possibilities of future generations in this direction. Sustainable development is a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change are in harmony [4]. In this context, the development of society is based on the principles of justice, respect for existing resources, and care for future generations [5]. This idea, however, clashes with the reality of the modern world, in which the diversity of living

standards is promoted through increasing consumption and production, thus leading to adverse effects on the environment [6]. Climate change and its associated consequences are having a negative impact on agricultural production and its ability to provide people with quality food. Despite many years of research and discussions, the concept of sustainable development does not provide clarity regarding the reduction of sustainability in the environmental aspect [7].

The EU has taken measures and developed several strategies and legislative acts to better manage this transition to a green economy, such as Europe 2020, the Resource Efficient Europe initiative, the Waste Framework Directive, the Seventh Environment Action Programmed, the European Green Deal, etc. Transforming the EU into a resource-efficient economy is a current task that it is constantly striving for. This is a new economic style for sustainable development aimed at improving the quality of life of people and minimizing inequalities in society. All this must be combined with policies that protect the environment and maintain ecosystems in a normal state.

The article aims to reveal the essence and importance of the green economy as a modern economic approach and determine its characteristics in the context of sustainable development requirements. In addition, it aims to formulate, based on this approach, the necessary prerequisites for building organizational capacity that would allow and motivate companies to implement such a transition—the transition to a green economy.

1.1. The Essence of the Green Economy

The green economy was introduced by D. Pearce in 1989 in his book "Plan for a Green Economy." In it, he formulated the main characteristics and principles of the concept of sustainable development. Contributions to its development were made by Allen and Clouth [8]; Barbier [9] and Danaher [10]. The economic and financial crisis of 2008 prompted many governments of the world to begin the first steps and talks to shape a Global Green New Deal (GGND). In 2009, the UN presented a report in which the principles of the green economy are considered as a long-term strategy, the purpose of which is to help the economies of the countries overcome the current and deepening economic crisis. Another goal that was pursued was related to accelerating economic growth and reducing unemployment. Another significant problem that this green economy strategy was aimed at was improving the quality of the environment and restoring the ecosystems. The New Green Deal proposes to achieve the following goals:

- 1) Economic recovery;
- 2) Poverty reduction;
- 3) Reduction of carbon emissions and ecosystem degradation.

This report provides a framework for implementing the so-called green agenda and emphasizes the support of domestic and international policies in this direction for all countries, including less developed economies. Thus, the green economy has become an extremely important pillar of the main European and international strategies. The hope is that this will lead to a structural change in the economy.

Various international organizations focus their attention on particular features of this new strategy. Their definitions emphasize the following objectives:

- Resource use efficiency;
- Ecosystem sustainability through environmental protection and ecosystem services;
- Social justice is achieved through the enhancement of human well-being and equitable burden-sharing in society.

Organizations have different views on the place and role of these goals. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) prioritizes resource efficiency. The United Nations Development Programmed (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programmed (UNEP) adhere to environmentally sensitive approaches in developing their strategies. The World Bank and the European Environment Agency prioritize natural systems, taking into account resource limitations and their maximum limits. The social dimension of the green economy occupies an important place in the

definitions of the UNDP, UNEP, and the World Bank. “Green growth” is a term that they often used synonymously with “green economy”.

Some of the definitions of the “green economy” formulated by various international organizations are presented below:

- The European Environment Agency defines: “A green economy is one in which policies and innovations enable society to use resources efficiently, improve human well-being through an inclusive approach, while preserving the natural systems that support life on earth” [11].
- The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development considers: “green growth means stimulating economic growth and development, while ensuring that natural assets continue to provide the resources and environmental services on which our well-being depends. This requires stimulating investment and innovation that will lead to sustainable growth and open up new economic opportunities” [12]. The factors that influence environmental development and economic growth depend on the policy and institutional environment in a given country, as well as on the development of its economy and the resources available to it. This means that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Innovation plays a key role in this regard, as it can influence the quantity of natural capital. Existing production technologies and consumer behavior can be expected to produce positive results up to a certain point, after which the depletion of natural capital will harm overall growth. Innovation is what would help to expand this limit.
- The United Nations Development Programmed (UNDP) defines: “...new growth centers that have the potential to contribute to economic recovery, the creation of decent jobs and reduce the threat of food, water, energy, ecosystem, and climate crises that disproportionately affect the poor” [13].
- According to the United Nations Environment Programmed (UNEP): “... a green economy is one that improves human well-being and social equity by significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological deficits”. In its simplest form, a green economy can be seen as an economy that is low-carbon, resource-efficient, and socially inclusive. In practice, a green economy is one whose growth in income and employment is driven by public and private investments that reduce carbon emissions and pollution, improve energy and resource efficiency, and prevent the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services" (www.unep.org/greeneconomy). It is emphasized that the implementation of the principles of the green economy is expected to lead to three types of results: (1) new sources of income and jobs; (2) low-carbon emissions, reduced resource use, and reduced waste and pollution; and (3) broader societal goals of sustainable development, social justice, and poverty reduction.
- The World Bank defines: "... green growth - that is, growth that is efficient in the use of natural resources, minimizes pollution and environmental impact and is sustainable because it takes into account natural disasters and the role of environmental management and natural capital in their prevention” [14].
- The European Environment Agency in the "Environmental Performance Report 2012" interprets the "green economy" in a similar way, emphasizing the need to manage the multiple interactions between economic, environmental, and social systems. The analysis focuses on two main aspects of this management: simultaneously increasing resource efficiency and protecting natural capital and the sustainability of ecosystems.
- Other authors Danaher [10] define the green economy as environmentally sustainable since it takes into account the finiteness of resources and their limited capacity for self-renewal. It is believed that the green economy is also social since it aims to create access to resources for all people and thus improve their well-being at all levels by providing opportunities for personal and social development. Green policies are also related to local conditions, traditions, and communities since their good knowledge and consideration are a prerequisite for sustainability and justice.

In our opinion, some of the international organizations /UN through the Global Sustainability Panel and the United Nations Environment Program/ best reveal the essence of the green economy, defining

it as a potential engine for sustainable development and a stimulator of economic growth necessary to overcome poverty. All these programs provide a comprehensive approach to sustainable development, taking into account the needs and characteristics of each community, which allows for ensuring social protection and more stable development. This can be considered a model for long-term development, requiring the implementation of measures of progress other than those related to gross domestic product, as it sends price signals for the social and environmental costs incurred. It requires strict accountability, allowing accurate reporting of financial results, and promoting employment and green business. Its main characteristics are innovation in all areas, cooperation between institutions and all stakeholders, the use of energy from low-carbon and renewable sources, and a highly efficient use of resources.

1.2. Characteristics of the Green Economy in the Context of the Concept of Sustainable Development

Based on the above definitions, it can be concluded that the green economy is an approach to achieving sustainable development. It requires avoiding resource-intensive growth models, the implementation of sustainable consumption and production models, and reinvestment of the resulting added value in resource-rich developing countries. In the context of this approach, there is an increase in the amount of resource consumption in developed countries, although their production is increasingly less resource-intensive, which implies rather a shift in the environmental impact to other countries through the channels of international trade. At the same time, the intensity of resource consumption and production in developing countries may increase due to the process of industrialization. These trends negatively affect resource depletion and environmental protection.

From this perspective, a green economy requires the inclusion of marginalized segments of the population in the development process. This requires reducing the differences in labor productivity and access to technology and scientific knowledge between developing and developed countries. It is advisable to strengthen the capacity of developing countries to implement technology and innovation policies oriented toward green solutions to the climate, food, and energy crises. Improving education systems, increasing research and innovation capacity, and promoting cooperation between developing and developed countries, as well as public-private partnerships, are also of priority. Countries dependent on the import of resources must have access to new green opportunities for diversifying their economies.

It is important to emphasize that in a green economy, income and employment growth are driven by public and private investments that reduce carbon emissions and pollution. They also make a major economic contribution by increasing energy and resource efficiency and preventing biodiversity loss. These investments need to be supported by targeted public spending, policy reforms, and regulatory changes. Natural capital needs to be maintained and restored, as it is an important and dynamic component of social capital. This is particularly important for poor people, whose livelihoods and security are linked to natural resources. The main objective of the transition to a green economy is to enable economic growth and investment while improving environmental quality and social inclusion. To achieve this goal, it is crucial to create conditions for public and private investments to include environmental and social criteria. As economic growth and investment become less dependent on the destruction of environmental assets, this allows both developing and developed countries to achieve more sustainable economic development. The concept of a green economy contributes to enriching the concept of sustainable development. Most researchers assume that achieving sustainability is possible only with proper and stable economic development.

At an operational level, a green economy is seen as an economy whose income and employment growth are driven by investments that lead to:

- Reducing carbon emissions and pollution;
- Improving energy and resource efficiency;
- Preserving biodiversity and expanding ecosystem services.

They also include investments in human and social capital, which will increase the level of human and social capital, improving human well-being and achieving greater social justice.

The objectives of the green economy should be consistent with the objectives of the concept of sustainable development, emphasizing the importance of addressing the risks and constraints that people face on the path to their economic development. By adopting sustainable development as the ultimate goal, the green economy can be seen as a way to open up pathways to achieving Sustainable Development Goals, which are action-oriented and apply an approach based on sound economic analysis of current trends, risks, and opportunities, as well as the application of established national and international practices. The concept of the green economy should be seen as compatible with and as part of the broader and older concept of sustainable development. Specific characteristics of this broader concept are its holistic nature, as it includes the three pillars of development – economic, social, and environmental, and emphasizes intergenerational equity. This is reflected in the definition of a green economy formulated by the United Nations Environment Programme, which defines it as an economy “that improves human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological deficits”.

The economy is not simply “greening” sectors of the economy, it is a means to achieve sustainable development goals by:

- Improving human well-being, ensuring better health, education, and job security;
- Enhancing social justice by reducing poverty and ensuring conditions for equal social and economic inclusion;
- Reducing environmental risks by addressing climate change and its adequate management, including addressing hazardous pollutants and stored waste;
- Reducing the ecological deficit by ensuring access to fresh water, and natural resources and improving deteriorating soil fertility.

The green economy model seeks a more balanced portfolio of investments in social, human, natural, and financial capital, which resonates with the goals of the concept of sustainable development. The recognition of the importance of market mechanisms remains at the forefront, but they are not seen as the only or best solution to all problems. Natural capital and its power are taken into account and used, especially in the development of solutions for that part of the population whose livelihoods depend largely on access to and quality of natural capital. and these are usually the poorest in society. Since they are the most dependent on access to and quality of natural resources for their livelihoods, the green economy and the associated green growth are seen as an important means to achieve a just and inclusive way of life for people.

It can be concluded that most authors /UNEP, OECD, and World Bank/ define the green economy as "a means to achieve sustainable development". Both concepts support the social dimension of development. This is indicated in the objectives of the green economy, namely to create jobs, as well as to promote good governance through inclusion, accountability, and transparency. Other areas of similarity between the principles of the green economy and the concept of sustainable development are that the green economy should eradicate poverty, enhance natural capital, and increase resource efficiency and energy efficiency.

The transition to a green economy aims to achieve: a change in the economy towards an effective, efficient, and economical use of natural resources; reduction of material loss; and work without waste generated in production and consumption. The green economy requires continuous consistent actions and commitment of stakeholders over decades; application of new production technologies; new technological literacy of leaders, managers, and employees; new consumption patterns, and behavior committed to the "green" cause by everyone. A study by the European Investment Bank [15] which covers more than 12,500 enterprises and 685 local authorities, found that workers in the EU lack green economy skills. More than four-fifths of the surveyed companies and 60% of local governments stated that the shortage of qualified people, especially in the engineering and digital sectors, hinders the

implementation of projects aimed at climate change. Manpower Group [16] reported that 95% of companies in Japan do not have the necessary human resources to achieve their goals. The transition to a green economy presents serious challenges for human resource management in organizations: the urgent need for a highly skilled and innovative workforce to drive the green economy; attracting and retaining talent; attracting Generation Z and creating a green economy mindset; coping with the competitive labor market.

1.3. Building Organizational Capacity for Change

The accumulation of potential and the building of capacity for transition to change are associated with specific activities for the creation and/or acquisition of fundamentally new or modernized production resources (technical-technological, material, human) to implement them for the production of fundamentally new or improved products/services with successful market implementation. However, for the manifestation of the potential as acquired and successfully mastered knowledge and skills to increase the organizational capacity for ecological change, it is necessary to build specific organizational prerequisites for the implementation of modern innovative solutions that orient and adapt the organization's activities in the transition to a green economy.

The organization's capacity for change needs to be viewed through the prism of a set of organizational characteristics that encourage and support its activities toward ecological renewal. First of all, it should be determined what these characteristics are and to what extent the organization possesses them; to examine the main manifestations of the organization's ability and degree of competence for change, oriented towards a fair green transition, towards a conscious and responsible ecological change in their activities. In summary, the potential for change is an available, but not yet realized opportunity for transformation in the organization, and its capacity expresses the ability to realize this potential to sustainably maintain and increase its competitiveness.

The susceptibility or opposition to change is based on a certain culture of the organization, whose role becomes the subject of scientific discussions and research, when it is established that the attitudes and efforts for renewal in the organization do not always lead to the desired results, regardless of the resources invested - human, financial and material. The successful implementation of innovative ideas and projects depends not only on the intentions and expectations but also on the actions and skills of the people who make decisions and implement them. The success of the realization of the innovation potential can be sought in the most essential and significant, but also the most difficult to "accessible" for research definiteness of culture - a system of values, influenced by the characteristics of the organizational environment. Therefore, interest is aroused by those dimensions and manifestations of culture in the organization that create conditions favorable for the realization of the available potential, directly related to the achievement of the organizational capacity for change and renewal.

The positive business climate and socio-cultural environment for implementing the green transition in the organization are identified with creativity, imagination, entrepreneurship, a willingness to take measurable risks, readiness for lifelong learning, and cost mobility. The organizational culture must contain certain principles, based on which the ability to succeed in introducing innovations is developed, and the uniqueness of competitors in the transition to a green economy is preserved.

Therefore, for the organization's "green policy" to be successful, it must be linked to ensuring comparative competitiveness, taking into account the peculiarities of the cultural identity (value system, way of thinking, and behavioral parameters), the available potential and capacity of the organization, and the practical steps that must be taken for this purpose are in the following directions:

- Development of human capital - training aimed at improving its qualifications, promoting readiness for lifelong learning, creating and tolerating skills for creative application and dissemination of acquired knowledge in practice;
- Accumulation of intangible assets (owned or acquired): patents, licenses, know-how, documentation, programs, and plans for testing the results of scientific research;

- Learning good practices in the relevant field - striving for information related to already implemented "green" projects and the associated positive and negative results, as well as revealing the reasons that led to the achieved success/failure or efficiency/inefficiency in their implementation.

However, the mechanical transfer of good practice in a given organization does not guarantee its success in another organization. Attempting to directly apply positive experience can lead to even greater problems and general disappointment that the renewal process is doomed. When studying successfully implemented good practices, it should be remembered that they operate within a system of organizational dimensions and are oriented toward interaction with the elements of their respective organizational cultures. Each organization should strive to create its own "good green practice", suitable for its socio-cultural environment, and implement its management mechanism for successful renewal, rather than imposing a ready-made solution.

A key factor for realizing the organization's potential for renewal and building the relevant organizational capacity is implementing an effective management mechanism based on a compatible/positive culture of the organization towards changes and conscious motivation as a component of human capital. Undoubtedly, human capital is decisive in manifesting the potential for change through: the leader-innovator, staff with creative and innovative competencies, research partnership, and innovative management - factors that guarantee organizational capacity for renewal in support of the consciously undertaken transition to a green economy. Culture creates an organizational environment for using the potential and building the organization's capacity and for forming competitive advantages on its basis, only if it expresses the organization's desire and readiness to adopt innovations and turn them into new products, services, or processes.

At the same time, there is a complex and continuous interaction between each organizational structure and the external environment in which it is positioned. The environment, as a set of conditions, driving forces, regulations, and constraints, affects the development, activities, and results of the organization and affects the manifestation of its capacity. Therefore, the elements of the environment, the combination and interaction between them, defined as a modern business ecosystem [17] influence the opportunities and decisions of the organization to build capacity for the transition to a green economy.

1.4. Organizational Prerequisites for Green Transition

The organization's attitudes to engage in the green transition and its behavior as a participant in this transition are determined in-depth and contextually by: the organization's policy for renewal; the ability to respond to the innovative actions of competitors and take into account trends in the industry (sector); the dominant culture in the organization; the innovativeness of available resources, including information; the flexibility and dynamism of management decisions to implement innovative initiatives; the ability to understand not only the technological determination, but also the socio-cultural characteristics of the organization that influence entrepreneurial behavior.

According to the authors' chosen approach to determining organizational capacity, its generation and deployment are determined by the combination of certain organizational characteristics that guarantee the implementation of activities to create/acquire and use "green" innovations. The most important organizational characteristics that determine the development of potential and stimulate the building of the organization's capacity are strategic management, organizational culture, and the provision of resources and information.

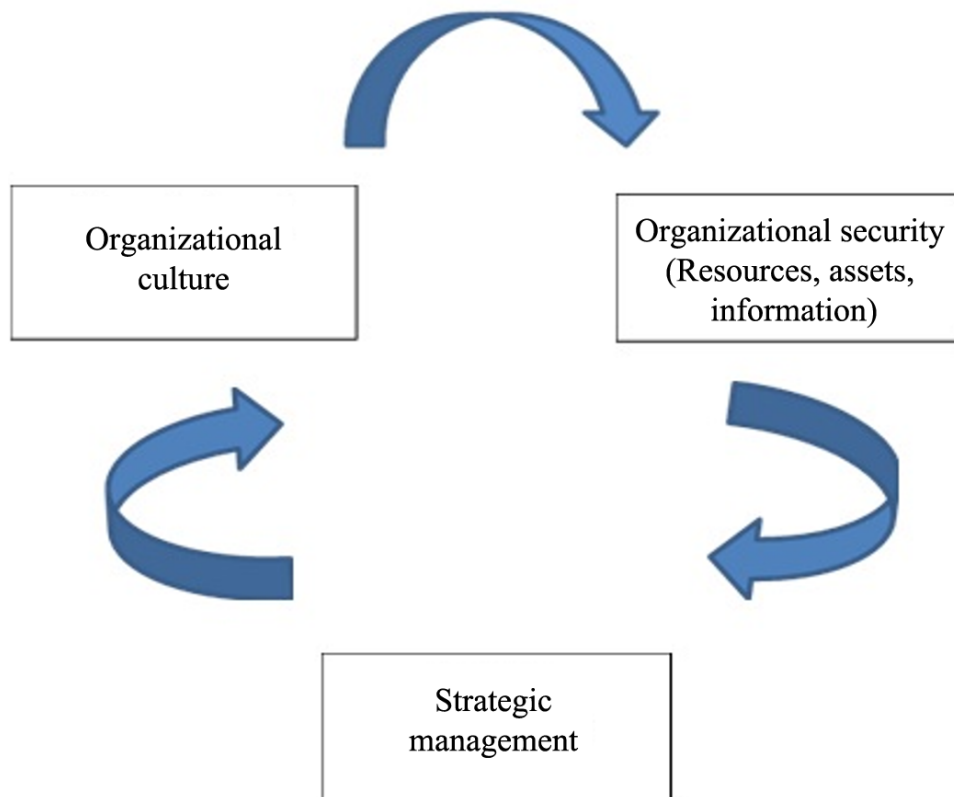


Figure 1.
Organizational characteristics for implementing green innovations.

Of course, for successful inclusion in the transition to a green economy, the organization must have:

1. Sufficient funds to finance its "green" activities, the sources and forms of financing depend on the organization's general financial condition, the innovations implemented, and the chosen green transition strategy within the framework of the general organizational strategy.
2. An appropriate material and technical base for renewal, the basis of which is the high-tech level of the organization's activities.
3. The necessary human capital and intellectual resources, including highly qualified human and intellectual capital capable of generating and implementing new ideas and solutions, innovative attitudes, and expectations in the organization.
4. An organizational structure and management system conducive to the implementation of the organization's "green" policy; the use of available organizational and management resources must be aimed at reducing bureaucratic obstacles to the implementation of innovations and stimulating change.

Successful management of the organization means sustainability of the acquired competencies, as well as the discovery of additional ones. The manifestation of organizational capacity is guaranteed by management skills based on creativity and initiative, innovative ideas and entrepreneurship, motivation, and competence.

Therefore, organizational capacity is the ability to effectively mobilize the resources of the organization to achieve its goals and solve its professional tasks. This is its ability to form modern business attitudes and proactive behavior, oriented towards a fair transition of the organization to a green economy, towards conscious and responsible environmental changes in its natural environment.

Rational and modern management of organizations is distinguished by a constant and systematic search for appropriate directions and methods for the development and use of the capacity that they possess and develop. "Green ideas and solutions" are the result of the pursuit of growth and development, the acquisition and application of new knowledge, and the discovery of modern unique abilities and skills in each member of the organization.

The competencies of the organization, incl. and for the introduction and adoption of "green activities", are an expression of the combination of personal characteristics and skills of human capital and are a prerequisite for organizational capacity to achieve and maintain sustainable competitiveness.

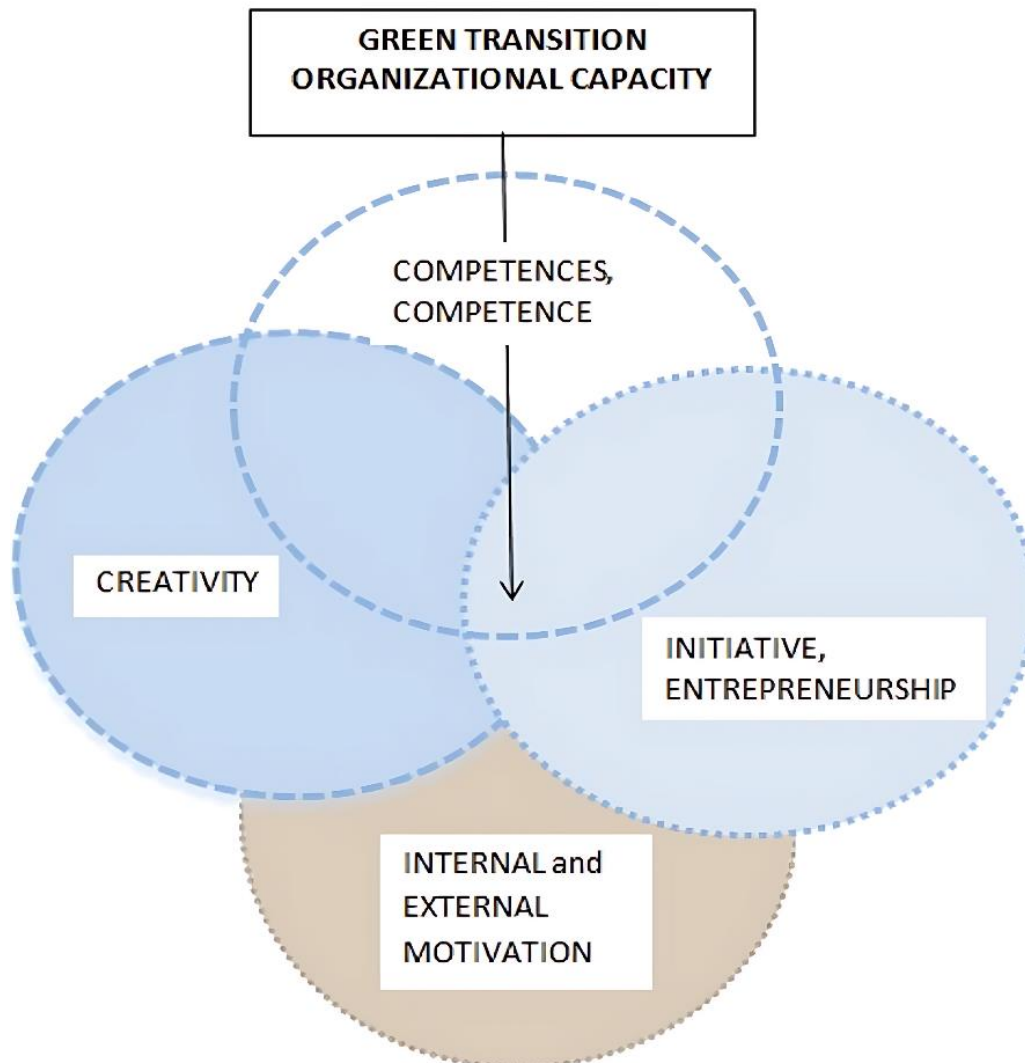


Figure 2.
Organizational capacity for green transition.

Human capital and its competent management have long occupied a central place in determining the state and use of human potential. The trends have been described in detail by Schultz [18]; Becker [19]; Armstrong [20] and Tripon and Blaga [21] etc. In several studies Pikkemaat and Peters [22] and Ottenbacher and Gnoth [23] special attention is paid to educational potential as an essential element of human potential. The mentioned researchers highlight as drivers of progress the education

and training of employees, the expertise of employees, the commitment of employees, the strategy for management, and the development of an innovative network in the specific organizational structure. The authors establish that the nature of the renewal processes is much less important than the effectiveness of employee management, their involvement, and creativity in the performance of their functions; It has been found that the failure rate is high when knowledge about how to develop and implement innovations is limited and insufficient.

Continuous learning enriches knowledge and abilities, broadens perspectives and horizons, and develops innovative skills and ideas. As a result of the knowledge, competencies, and experience acquired in the process of lifelong learning (long life learning), employees contribute to improving the performance of the organization and to dynamizing its capacity [24].

The above allows us to assume that organizational capacity is not only a characteristic of a given structural unit but a category that reflects the methodological foundations of real processes and phenomena related to development, renewal, and improvement within the organization.

The creation of good organizational capacity makes it possible to adequately reflect both specific interactions and the relevant relationships, and long-term processes - trends in the effectiveness of the organization's functioning. Therefore, educational potential can be considered as the potential for transforming the existing organization into a new state, in response to newly emerging needs (of the innovator, of the consumer, of the market as a whole, etc.). Educational potential is only an opportunity to achieve innovative results and innovative behavior but reflected in the capacity of the organization, it reveals the ability to implement them. The effective use of educational potential through the corresponding organizational capacity includes moving from a hidden opportunity to a manifest reality, i.e. from one state to another (from the traditional to the new). Organizational capacity reflects the organization's ability to change improve and progress based on new knowledge. The organization creates its sustainable competitive advantage through a well-developed competency management system and continuous employee training.

Positive changes in relationships within the organization lead to changes in both the formal and informal rules that determine the behavior of individuals and the organization as a whole.

2. Conclusions

The model and transition to a green economy seeks a more balanced portfolio of investments in social, human, natural, and financial capital that meets the objectives of the concept of sustainable development. This does not reject the recognition of the importance of market mechanisms, but they are not seen as the only or best solution to all problems. The productive power of natural capital plays an exceptional role and is taken into account and used in the best way, especially when developing solutions concerning that part of the population whose livelihood and well-being depend to a large extent on the access and quality of natural capital.

Based on an analysis of organizational capacity, management effectiveness, and human capital motivation, the possibilities for impact on the results of the activity, its qualitative and quantitative dimensions can be explored and determined. Interpreting the concepts of potential, respectively, capacity, as mutually presupposing quantities, the author seeks the logic of their connection with the culture of the organization, with the focus not only on establishing and analyzing the facts but also on discovering relevant answers to the question of why a given process or specific phenomenon does not proceed and/or does not manifest itself according to the expectations set in the initial assumptions.

The fact that there is sensitivity to the relevant issues should not be overlooked. The debates, which are still being waged intensively today, are focused more on purely economic, political, institutional, and even ideological reasons.

The non-financial environmental performance of enterprises in an international, European, and national context is the focus of economic literature and international institutions, due to its great importance for the sustainability of business concerning environmental risks and challenges. In this sense, its importance as a guarantor of corporate sustainability

Transparency:

The author confirms that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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