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## Exploring the dynamics of the legitimacy judgment about the public sector: the case of the Spanish Ministry of Education and its media legitimacy (2011-2015)

### Abstract

This paper is part of a research project that looks at how management of intangible assets can play a role to rebuild trust in the public sector. More specifically, it looks at legitimacy conceptualized as an intangible asset. The aim is to explore the logic of legitimacy judgments about public organizations and to assess whether there is congruence between a ministry (and the minister)'s actions and how the media perceive and assess them. Four types of legitimacy are examined: 'Procedural', based on evaluations of the soundness of the ministry's procedures and processes; 'Consequential', which regards outcomes, results and achievements of the ministry's public policies; 'Structural' refers to buildings, working policies, budgets and resources; and finally, 'Personal legitimacy' regards judgments which refer to the minister. It is also analyzed whether these dynamics of the legitimacy judgment followed a hybridization logic between online and offline organizational communication and between online and offline media. The analysed organization is the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, 2011-2015. Based on findings, the paper discusses practical implications for government communication legitimacy strategies.

### Keywords

**Intangible assets, legitimacy, media legitimacy, legitimacy judgement, public sector, social media, government communication**

### 1. Introduction

Present economic and financial crisis is associated with a decrease in trust in public institutions and with uncertainty. Resources are coming under threat and citizens' expectations are being less satisfied than before, being thus public sector organizations impelled to legitimize their activities and to work on their intangibility (Dincer & Uslander, 2010; Carpenter & Krause, 2012; Thomas & Louis, 2013; Luoma-aho & Makikangas, 2014; Canel & Luoma-aho, 2015).

This paper is part of a research project that looks at how management of intangible assets can play a role in rebuilding trust in the public sector. An intangible asset is a non-monetary asset (without physical substance), which enables and gives access to tangible capital. Therefore, it gives rise to a resource from which a future (long-term) benefit or value (social, monetary, etc.) is expected to flow both for the organization as well as for stakeholders or citizens (Egginton, 1990; Hall, 1992; Lev & Daum, 2004; Canel & Luoma-aho, 2015; Canel & Luoma-aho, in press). Though built on past events (and linked to the behaviour of the organization), intangibles require communication to exist.

Conceptualized as an intangible asset, legitimacy is understood in organizational literature as the perception that different publics have about the right of an organization to exist, and hence, it rests in the minds of the different publics. Organizations attempt to build legitimacy through communication strategies, and in order to succeed in this endeavour, they need to explore and listen to how different publics formulate their legitimacy judgements.

This paper explores the dynamics of the legitimacy judgment in search for clues that can help elaborating legitimacy strategies. It compares a) those judgments made about itself by an organization with those made about the same organization by the media, and b) the legitimacy judgements made by offline communication with online communication.

The structure of the paper is as follows. First, the concept of legitimacy is discussed, with particular elaboration on the process through which legitimacy judgments are formulated, for which a typology of legitimacy is introduced. Second, how the media shape the process of legitimacy judgment is discussed introducing the concept of 'media legitimacy'. A helpful resource for this analysis is the concept of 'hybridization', which is discussed in third place. Finally, findings of a content analysis are presented and discussed to conclude with practical implications.

## **2. Theoretical background**

### **2.1 Legitimacy and its online expression**

Building on institutional theory, this paper conceptualizes legitimacy as an intangible asset of public sector organizations. Literature on organizational communication understands that legitimacy is to some extent based on stakeholders' perceptions, for legitimacy is a judgment, about an organization's actions, made by its strategic audiences, according to cultural norms and standards (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Suchman, 1995; Deephouse, 1996; Tyler, 2006; Johnson, Dowd & Ridgeway, 2006; Bitektine, 2011). Organizations are perceived as legitimate when there is congruence between organizational values and activities and accepted behavioural norms in social system (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975: 122 and Parsons, 1960: 175, quoted in Suchman, 1995: 573). Legitimacy reveals then certain logic between social values, norms, and expectations with the actions, performance and outcomes of organizations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Suchman, 1995; Deephouse, 1999; Johnson, Dowd & Ridgeway, 2006; Bitektine, 2011). To the extent that it is social norms against what the judgement is formulated, it can be stated that the legitimacy of an organization is built through a collective social process (Johnson et al., 2006).

There is an extensive body of literature that considers legitimacy as an intangible asset that is conferred upon or granted to organizations by organizational stakeholders (Hamilton 2006; Suchman, 1995; Hamilton, 2006; Tyler, 2006; Díez et al., 2010). Legitimacy enables and gives access to tangible assets. It affects an organization's ability to garner resources, and organizations with a higher level of legitimacy will produce and increase resources more easily (Baum & Oliver, 1999; Díez et al., 2010). Legitimacy gives rise to resources and, to the extent that it is "the degree of cultural support of an organization" (Meyer & Scott, 1983: 201) and that it justifies the organization's role in the social system, legitimacy is itself a resource

(Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990: 177). The value of being perceived as legitimate might be becoming a crucial resource for the survival of public organizations in contexts of conflict, crises of trust, and resource scarcity. Legitimacy is also associated with the resource of trust to the extent that legitimate organizations are perceived not only as worthier, but also as more meaningful, predictable, and credible (Hamilton, 2006; Tyler, 2006). In this sense, apart from the benefit that it provides to the organization (for it promotes acceptance of its decisions and the rules that it promulgates), legitimacy also provides a benefit for society in the respect that the more a public organization is supported, the more stability and institutional effectiveness there will be (Tyler, 2006: 391).

What confers legitimacy to public sector organizations? What are norms, values and beliefs of citizens towards which the idea of legitimacy might be contrasted? How are the perceived features of an organization processed by the person who judges? In exploring the legitimacy judgment, there is extent literature that distinguishes types of legitimacy to differentiate analytical processing that yields different types of judgments that can be rendered with respect to the organization (Scott & Meyer, 1991; Hunt & Aldrich, 1996; Deephouse & Carter, 2005; Golant & Sillince, 2007; Díez et al., 2010; Bitektine, 2011). Typologies are helpful conceptual tools to explore the dynamics of legitimacy and thus to identify different aspects, angles and objects on which the legitimacy judgment is focused on.

Their typology of moral legitimacy suggested by Suchman (1995) is a helpful tool. Consequential legitimacy refers the judgment to what the organization accomplishes (outcomes, results and achievements, e.g. mortality rates at public hospitals). Procedural legitimacy is based on favorable evaluations of the soundness of the procedures, processes and means, and applied to the public sector, procedural legitimacy refers to the process followed in public management (such as dialogue, consensus seeking, following procedural requirements; e.g. “this regulation of hospitals has been passed by consensus with all political parties”). Structural legitimacy refers to organizational structures: general organizational features, including buildings, resources, quality control, working policies, etc. Finally, personal legitimacy refers to the person who represents the organization, either referring to his/her professional capacity or to personality features like empathy, communication, integrity, etc.

The application of this typology might provide clues to an organization for the formulation of communication strategies, and help identifying the conditions in which people evaluate and predict how they are going to react to the messages. All in all, it can help to properly manage intangibility itself.

The concept of online legitimacy emerges as society changes: citizens increasingly ask organizations to justify themselves in many different areas and aspects (such as economic, social and environmental issues), and the way they do so is being affected by new possibilities to interact. New media are generating the need for a new type of organizational legitimacy and dialogue (Colleoni, 2013). Castelló, Etter y Arup state that “the adaptation to this new cultural and network order is ultimately related to the organization’s ability to challenge the assumptions about who influences the legitimation process” (2016: 420). “Breaking the organizational rules, norms, and routines and reducing the efforts to control the engagement, facilitated organizational legitimacy in the new Internet based community” (Castello et al., 2016: 420). An organization can increase its online legitimacy if it has a close relationship with its stakeholders.

## **2.2. From traditional media to social media: building legitimacy in a “hybrid media system”**

Social media are suitable platforms for undertaking organizations–public dialogue (Moreno & Capriotti, 2009; Lee et al., 2012; Fieseler & Fleck, 2013; Castelló et al., 2014), and it has been argued that social media help organizations becoming more relational, as well as destabilising the current institutional order to adapt to new cultural norms and networked forms (Bitektine & Haack, 2015). Social media enable politicians and public administrations to address their publics directly without the traditional media interferences (Giansante, 2015: 21). Indeed, social media can help policy making to the extent that politicians will be more aware of citizens’ needs and requirements through online communication.

Twitter is a good example in this regard: it is a social network that provides a bidirectional communication between public organizations and citizens, and in which both sides can lead the process (García & Zugasti, 2014; Zamora & Zurutuza, 2014). According to Grimmelikhuijsen & Meijer, “one of the most promising social media platforms for creating information access and easy ways of interacting with public officials is Twitter” (2014: 4). In fact, the number of media and journalists’ profiles in Twitter have increased in recent years, and according to Ramos del Cano (2013), this social network has consolidated as a tool for communication professionals. Twitter profiles of media and journalists have become sources of information for their followers.

In what refers to the specific object of this paper, social networks may enhance legitimacy because with them transparency is improved (Bertot, Jaeger & Grimes, 2010; Mossberger, Wu and Crawford, 2013; Oliviera & Welch 2013; Kim, Park & Rho, 2015), and there is research which evidences that social media use is associated with high consequential legitimacy and procedural legitimacy (Grimmelikhuijsen & Meijer, 2014). However, social media can operate as a double sword (Bertot, et al., 2012): as they improve transparency, they also allow citizens to monitor public authorities and to subsequently challenge their legitimacy and their reputation.

In exploring the dynamics of media legitimacy in this paper, we resort to the concept of “hybridation”, which has been suggested by Chadwick (2013), within the context of the “hybrid media system”, to explain the phenomenon by which traditional and social media tend to converge. More specifically, what Chadwick argues is that in the news dissemination process, the information usually starts in traditional media –where it is elaborated– and then spreads throughout the social media; there are not then divergences. It is the traditional media, Chadwick stresses, that set the agenda and thus they have more influence on society than social media. Moreover, what is shown in this phenomenon is that traditional media have adapted to social media, creating their own profiles in social networks, thus becoming influential actors in the latter (Chadwick, 2013).

It seems then reasonable to take Twitter as object of study in exploring the dynamics of the legitimacy judgment about public sector organizations, as also it looks relevant to consider the phenomenon of hybridation as a starting point for the analysis. Do organizations and the media hybrid their message converging their offline communication with their online communication?

## **2.3. Approaching the concept of media legitimacy**

An associated notion to legitimacy is media legitimacy, and it is the legitimacy that derives from journalists’ judgments about an organization (Pollock & Rindova, 2003; Aerts & Cornier, 2009). To the extent that the media are stakeholder of organizations, what they judge operates in favour or against the legitimacy of the latter. Not only that: what the media judge may shape the legitimacy judgment of other stakeholders. Pollock & Rindova state that “the media are ‘propagators’ of legitimacy” (2003: 632).

The legitimacy that the media grant to an organization can be shown at different levels. First, at the access that they grant, and according to Yoon (2005), there are three indicators of media access: prominence, dominance and valence. Prominence is the quantity of media coverage that an organization gets. It includes all the coverage, whatever the source is. Dominance is the relevance a specific organization is granted by the media as source of information, and is measured by the amount of coverage in which the organization speaks for itself. Obviously, the prominence will be larger than the dominance (for prominence includes all the stories, even those in which other sources are speaking about the organization; an organization never dominates all the coverage it gets). And finally, valence is the positive, negative or neutral tone an organization gets in the media coverage.

Thus, the media can award legitimacy to organizations if they provide spaces (or not) to a specific organization. This amount of space (the volume of the coverage) will determine the audience exposure to an organization (Pollock & Rindova, 2003). In this sense, Yoon claims that “journalists consider some sources more legitimate than others and then treat the more legitimate sources favourably, granting them more media access” (2005: 764). This author has proven that, when journalists regard an organization as legitimate, the latter receives more consistent coverage throughout the year.

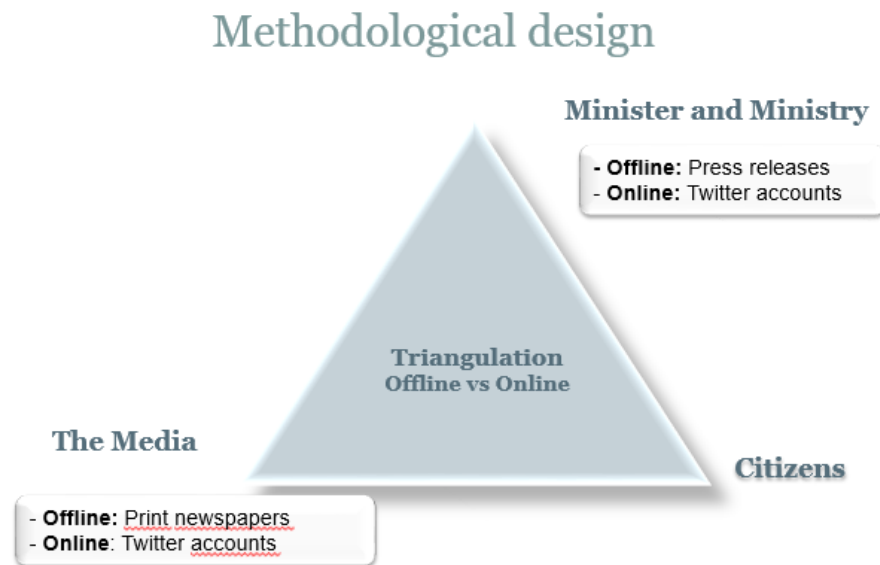
The second level in conferring legitimacy is revealed in the content of the judgments that are in the allocated space of the coverage. This content can be analyzed looking at the categorizations attributed to an organization.

To sum up, the volume of coverage, the frame and the tone that the media use in covering organizations can help or damage their legitimacy and thus, they are helpful indicators to assess the media legitimacy of a specific organization.

### **3. Methodology**

This research explores the dynamics of the legitimacy judgment, and following the review of the concept above discussed, the methodological design should allow to analyze the congruence that there is between what the organization judges of itself and what its stakeholders do. Therefore, in its broader scope, methodology aims at contrasting the organizational message (that is to say, the ministry’s and minister’s statements and addresses) with the media coverage of the organization and with citizens’ judgements about the legitimacy of the organization. Figure 1 represents the methodological design of the broader research to which this paper is part of.

Figure 1. Methodological design



For this specific article, the two first levels are looked at: the organizational communication and the media coverage. The analyzed organization is the Spanish Ministry for Education, Culture and Sports in Spain from 2011 to 2015, which had two ministries, Jose Ignacio Wert and Iñigo Méndez De Vigo. Wert was appointed Minister of Education, Culture and Sports on 22 December 2011 and his term lasted until June the 24<sup>th</sup> 2015. During his tenure, the minister had been among the worst ranked ministers in the popularity barometer of the Sociological Research Centre (CIS). On January 31st, 2012, he unveiled its secondary education draft reform which generated great controversy among trade unions, teachers and students. This, and other issues like disagreements with the Catalan government education policy, got a media coverage which was large in prominence and in dominance, but very negative in valence; causes for this have been explored in Robles, 2015. On June 26th, 2015 Inigo Méndez De Vigo, who was then the Spanish Government Secretary of State for the European Union, succeeded him in office.

The aim of the methodology design is:

- a) to explore the congruence of the legitimacy judgements made about itself by the organization (the ministry and the ministers) and by the media;
- b) to compare the dynamics of the legitimacy judgment of the traditional media with those of the social media in order to assess whether there was a phenomenon of hybridization.

Regarding the timeframe, we identified the most popular landmarks from December 2011 to December 2015, what yielded a sample of 17 days. For the ministry's (and minister's) offline communication, a total of 397 press releases were analyzed; for its online communication, a sample of 2.190 tweets was analysed (234 tweets by the ministers' account and 1.946 by the institutional ministry's account). The analysis was conducted by one of the authors, though the elaboration of the code and its test in different meetings as also post-coding checks were conducted by both authors.

For the traditional media coverage, news related to the ministry and minister as well as to the education policy were coded from the print newspapers *El País*, *El Mundo* and *ABC*. These newspapers are the choice for the vast majority of the Spanish people, and hence the decision to analyse them. Overall, 277 judgments were analysed. For the online media coverage, these journals' Twitter accounts were analysed, a total of 126 tuits.

Research questions are the following.

RQ1: Does the typology of legitimacy (procedural, consequential, structural and personal) apply? Is there a predominant type?

A variable was elaborated with four exclusive categories.

RQ2: What are the predominant attributes in the legitimacy judgements?

A coding system was devised to measure the main normative judgement type to assess main attributes included in the judgements. The categories of this variable are trust, honesty, popularity, responsibility, attitude about explaining decisions, respectfulness with procedural requirements, according to law, efficacy, efficiency, sympathy/empathy, personality, commitment, closeness, history of organization, exemplarity, corruption, leadership and communication skills.

RQ3: What is the predominant tone of the legitimacy judgements?

Finally, we measured the predominant tone of the organization and media judgments, on the traditional and digital context. When it was positive, we considered it as a good judgment, with positive connotations or expressions. If a judgment was neither positive nor negative, it was coded as neutral. If a judgment has negative connotations like disapproving sentences, it is code negative.

RQ4: Is there congruence between the organization judgments and the media judgments (regarding the three analyzed aspects: types, attributes and tone)?

RQ5: Are there signals of “hybridization” between offline and online communication?

RQ6: What are the implications for legitimacy strategies of public sector organizations?

## 4. Results

Results are here reported differentiating the organization’s communication from the media, and online communication from offline. The first three sections will deal with RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3. In each section, RQ4 (congruence of legitimacy judgments) and RQ5 (hybridization of online and offline communication) will be addressed. RQ6 (practical implications) will be dealt with in the discussion and concluding section.

### 4.1 The presence of four types of legitimacy

To respond to the first research question (“Does the typology of legitimacy (procedural, consequential, structural and personal) apply?”) a variable was constructed to be applied to all legitimacy judgments: ‘Procedural’ legitimacy is based on evaluations of the soundness of the ministry’s procedures and processes; ‘Consequential’, which regards outcomes, results and achievements of the ministry’s public policies; ‘Structural’ refers to buildings, working policies, budgets and resources; and finally; ‘Personal legitimacy’ regards judgements which refer to the minister. We wanted to identify which type of legitimacy was more relevant in each case. Results are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Presence of four types of legitimacy in the organization and the media

Actors	Type of legitimacy			
	Procedural	Consequential	Structural	Personal
Online organization	93,8% (1.950)	2,4% (49)	3,2% (67)	0,6% (12)
Offline organization	91,4% (363)	8,6% (34)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Online media	79,8% (99)	9,7% (12)	0% (0)	10,5% (13)
Offline media	51,3% (139)	35,8% (97)	0,4% (1)	12,5%(34)
N= 2.870				
Chi-square= 0,000				

Source: own elaboration

According to the data, procedural was significantly the most prominent type of legitimacy in all the cases (Chi. square 0.000). It scores much higher than other types. Procedures seem to be what is cared the most.

How congruent is the organization's message with the media coverage in what regards to the types of legitimacy? Are there signals of common concerns for these two different actors? The organization scored higher than the media in the procedural legitimacy: while the organization almost only cares about processes, the media's interests are broader, including also outcomes (consequential legitimacy) and the leader (personal legitimacy). Interestingly, structural legitimacy seems not to be important at all (all actors scored about less than 3% for this type of legitimacy). Laying on these data it can be stated that there is a lack of congruence between the Minister for Education, Culture and Sport's judgments of legitimacy and the media legitimacy.

Was there a process of hybridization between online and offline communication? There seems to be great convergence between the organization's communication online and the organization's communication offline: both follow the almost exact pattern of focusing on procedural legitimacy in more than 90% of the analyzed judgments. Different is the picture for the media. Comparing offline legitimacy with online one, offline media behaved differently: only one in two (a very lower 51,3%) judgments focused on the process, while a 35'8% (high if compared with the rest of actors, which scored less than 10%) focused on the outcomes. These data imply that the organization, who showed a clear procedural legitimacy in their press releases, did not manage to set the agenda of the offline press (that were procedural but also consequential); in other words, online media are more similar to the organizational pattern (both offline and online) than to the offline media pattern.

Overall, being the procedural legitimacy the most predominant in all the cases, the dynamics of legitimacy judgments still vary among actors, and differences between online and offline communication are important in what regards to the media.

#### 4.2 The attributes in the legitimacy judgments

We used a selective coding variable to measure the major attributes included in the legitimacy judgement. Results are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Attributes of the legitimacy judgement

Attributes	Online organization	Offline organization	Online media	Offline media
Trust	0% (1)	0.8% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Transparency	0.7% (15)	1.3% (5)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Attitude about explaining decisions	1.4% (31)	17.4% (69)	22.8% (28)	15% (40)
Respectfulness with procedural requirement	34.9% (754)	22.2% (96)	11.4% (14)	19.5% (52)
According to law	0% (1)	1.8% (7)	0.8% (1)	4.5% (12)
Efficacy or efficiency	58.6% (1.266)	53.7% (213)	60.2% (74)	50.9% (136)
Responsability	0.1% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0.4% (1)
Commitment	0.1% (2)	0.3% (1)	0% (0)	0.7% (2)
Sympathy or Empathy	0.2% (4)	0% (0)	0.8% (1)	3% (8)
Communication skills	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0.4% (1)
Corruption	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0.4% (1)
Closeness	3.7% (79)	0.3% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Popularity	0% (1)	0% (0)	1.6% (2)	1.5% (4)
History of organization	0.1% (2)	0% (0)	1.6% (2)	3.7% (10)
Ejemplarity	0% (0)	0.5% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Leadership	0% (0)	0% (0)	0.8% (1)	0% (0)
N= 2,946				
Chi-square= 0.000				



How congruent are the organization's legitimacy judgments with the media's? There seems to be a pattern that gives efficacy/efficiency the top position in the ranking; for both actors, it is more than one in two judgments that are referred to this attribute (Chi-square=.000). As some examples show, efficacy can be understood as a positive statement judgement, with wordings like "It is a privilege to take part in the opening day of the new building of my old school"; but also as a negative statement like "The system, which Wert wanted to start up, would have excluded 75% of scholarship holders".

Another attribute that was relatively significant was "respect with procedural requirements" that got high scores, especially higher for the organization (34,9% online organization and 22,2% offline organization) than for the media (11,4% online media and 19,5% offline media). This finding might be indicating that for the organization it is relevant to ensure that procedural requirements are followed. The third attribute in most of the actors is "attitude about explaining decisions", that, as expected, is more relevant for the media than for the organization. Paradoxically, there is scarcely any mention to corruption, even in the case of the legitimacy judgments made by the media. It is also unexpected that leadership and exemplarity were attributes not mentioned in the judgments made by the organization.

On the whole, it could be stated that certain congruence appears to be between the organization and the media in what refers to the attributes that were more paid attention in the legitimacy judgments.

Was there a process of hybridization between online and offline communication in what regards to attributes? Findings allow to say that while the organization hybrids its own communication (with some nuances though), the media does much less. Thus, except from the attribute 'Respectfulness with procedures' –where there is a 10-point gap–, the organization scores similarly in its online and offline communication. In contrast, the media online communication behaves to some extent differently than the offline: there is a difference of 10 points for the efficacy attribute, and of about 5 points for the next three most scored ones.

### 4.3 Predominant tone of legitimacy

What is the predominant tone of the legitimacy judgements? In Table 3 we measured the predominant tone of the organization and media judgments in the traditional and digital context in order to see whether it is positive, negative or neutral.

**Table 3.** Predominant tone of the legitimacy judgments

Actors	Tone of judgement		
	Positive	Negative	Neutral
Online organization	4,5% (99)	0% (0)	95,5% (2.079)
Offline organization	9,1% (36)	0% (0)	90,9% (361)
Online media	7,3% (9)	42,7% (53)	50% (62)
Offline media	16,1% (44)	51,8% (142)	32,1% (88)
N= 2.973			
Chi-square= 0,000			

Results pointed out interesting and significant differences (Chi-square=.000) across actors, where the organization was highly more neutral in its judgments (95,5% for online organization and 90,9% for offline organization), while the media were more negative (42,7% for online media and 51,8% for offline media). This means that the media was far more negative and did not follow the organization pattern of being purely neutral. This is not an unexpected finding, since the media tend to be much more polarized than a public organization.

Comparing online with offline communication, results show something consistent with what has been referred to in previous sections: while the organization tends to hybrid its online-offline communication, the media does not. In this case, the organization is neutral in both contexts (in more than 90% of the judgements). But online media is less polarized than offline media (50% neutral judgements versus 32,1%), and offline media is almost 10 points more negative than online media.

When we considered the predominant tone of judgment by types of legitimacy in each actor (see Table 4), some significant results were also identified.

**Table 4.** Predominant tone of judgment in the organization and media judgments by types of legitimacy

Actors	Tone of judgement	Type of legitimacy			
		Procedural	Consequential	Structural	Personal
Online organization	Positive	1,8% (36)	42,9% (21)	0% (0)	33,3% (4)
	Negative	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
	Neutral	98,2% (1.912)	57,1% (28)	100% (67)	67,7% (8)
Chi-square= 0,000					
Offline organization	Positive	6,1% (22)	41,2% (14)	0% (0)	0% (0)
	Negative	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
	Neutral	93,9% (355)	58,8% (29)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Chi-square= 0,000					
Online media	Positive	6,2% (6)	8,3% (1)	0% (0)	15,4% (2)
	Negative	43,3% (42)	33,3% (4)	0% (0)	46,2% (5)
	Neutral	50,5% (49)	58,3% (7)	0% (0)	38,5% (5)
Chi-square= 0,630					
Offline media	Positive	15,2% (21)	16,7% (16)	0% (0)	18,2% (6)
	Negative	50,7% (70)	57,3% (55)	100% (1)	36,4% (12)
	Neutral	34,1% (47)	26% (25)	0% (0)	45,5% (15)
Chi-square= 0,021					
N= 2.873					

When procedural legitimacy is more present, the neutral tone is the predominant, something less clear in the case of the media than in the case of the organization. However, when consequential legitimacy is present, neutral and positive tone define the judgements in the case of the organization, while neutral and negative define judgements in the case of the media. The introduction of the consequential legitimacy is then, to a certain extent, what increases polarization, which turns to the negative (in the case of the media's judgments) or to the positive (in the case of the organization's judgments).

It is also relevant that when personal judgements are present (mostly about the political leader) they are mostly neutral when they are rendered by the organization, while they are negative or neutral when rendered by the media. No relevant trends were found for structural legitimacy.

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

Based on theory discussion about legitimacy, conceptualized as an intangible asset, this research has attempted to a) explore the dynamics of the legitimacy judgements contrasting those made about itself by the organization (the ministry and the minister) and those made by the media about the organization; and b) to compare the dynamics of the legitimacy judgment of the traditional media with those of the social media in order to assess whether there was a phenomenon of hybridization in the process of legitimacy judgments.

The analysis has shown that the Suchman's typology of moral legitimacy is helpful to analyze the contrast between the organization and the media. In what regards to the minister and ministry for Education, Culture and Sport between 2011 and 2015, both the media and the organization were highly concerned about processes of public policies rather

than about outcomes, structures and leaders. People care about whether openness, transparency, and all procedural requirements are followed in public policies. This finding corroborates previous research findings which showed that the process by which people render these judgments is “complex and nondeterministic” (Bitektine, 2011: 151); judgments of different types of legitimacy interact with each other in stakeholders’ minds and even pull in different directions. For the case of Spain, research found that for the years of the economic crisis, citizens’ trust in the Prime Minister is less explained than before by party affiliation and more by public policies outcomes (Canel & García, 2013). However, in 2011 and associated with a higher visibility of corruption scandals, people seem to care more about the legitimacy of the process (honesty, transparency and dialogue) than about the legitimacy of outcomes (Canel, 2014; Canel et al., 2016). Processes seem to matter the most in the Spanish context. On the contrary, structural legitimacy seems to be a type that does not apply.

But this predominance of the procedural legitimacy for both the organization and the media does not equal to high correspondence in the legitimacy judgment. Being legitimacy and intangible asset that reveals whether there is a logic between an organization behaviour and the norms socially accepted, this research has shown that there was congruence between the media and the Ministry for Education, Culture and Sport only in what regards to the attributes of legitimacy: both give high relevance to efficacy and efficiency. But there is less congruence in what regards to the types of legitimacy and the tone of the judgment. While the organization almost only cares about processes, the media’s interests are broader, including outcomes (consequential legitimacy) and the leader (personal legitimacy). Seemingly, the polarized judgments of the media do not resemble the almost only neutral judgments of the organization. Further research is testing the impact that this lack of congruence might have in the legitimacy judgments of citizens about the minister and the ministry.

Findings have also shown that the organization does hybrid its own message: there seems to be consistency between what the ministry says in its press releases with what he says in Twitter, in what regards to the types of legitimacy, to the attributes and to the tone. However, against Chadwick’s (2013) concept of “hybridization” by which traditional and social media tend to converge (traditional media sets the agenda of social media), the media tended to behave differently across contexts: offline media were more polarized (positive and negative judgments) than online media (more neutral), had a broader scope of interests (caring not only about procedures but also about outcomes and leaders) and referred, more than the online media, to the attribute of “respectfulness with processes” besides that of “efficacy”. Online media followed more the organizational pattern than offline media. Further research is testing how this (no)hybridization of the message impacted on citizens’ judgments on legitimacy about the minister and ministry.

From these findings, several remarks can be made for the building of legitimacy in public sector organizations. The predominance of the procedural legitimacy as well as of the efficacy/efficiency attribute, highlights the need that governments develop communication strategies that combine outcomes with processes, and with which it can be shown whether outcomes are being produced through the required procedures. Taking into account the finding that the media does not hybridize its communication, governments should develop choral strategies to adjust their communication in order to set the agenda for legitimacy judgments in the different type of media.

To fully explore the implications that these findings have for further research and practice of government communication it would be needed to contrast the data presented in this article with the data produced from the analysis of citizens’ judgements about the same organization. The aim would be to assess whether citizens’ judgments resonate more with organizational judgements or with the media judgements.

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