
KNOWLEDGE-MANAGEMENT STYLES AND CHANGES IN ENTERPRISE COMPETITIVENESS

Introduction

The conditions under which contemporary enterprises function are constantly deteriorating. The methods that were effective not so long ago are becoming ineffective. Yesterday's leaders are today's outsiders. Companies must be more flexible and they must verify their models. The focus that has been placed on high efficiency so far is not enough anymore, as learning and acquiring new competencies and skills are vital in increasing the odds of success in the future. Management in contemporary organisations must take those requirements into account. The important decisions concern the course of organisational learning, the creation of the appropriate conditions, and the use of effective learning techniques. In general, it may be concluded that the learning process should be shaped by the appropriate knowledge-management style.

The aim of this article is to identify the connection between using a specific knowledge-management style and improving enterprise competitiveness.

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Organisational learning in contemporary enterprises

As open systems, enterprises are in constant interchange with their environment. The possible conditions of the environment may be placed on a continuum, with a stable environment on one end, and an extremely disturbed one on the other. The environment of contemporary enterprises should be situated near the latter end of the spectrum. In such conditions the conventional approach to management becomes unsuitable. As tensions and conflicts arise, various forms of learning should be taken on as management tools [10, p. 17].

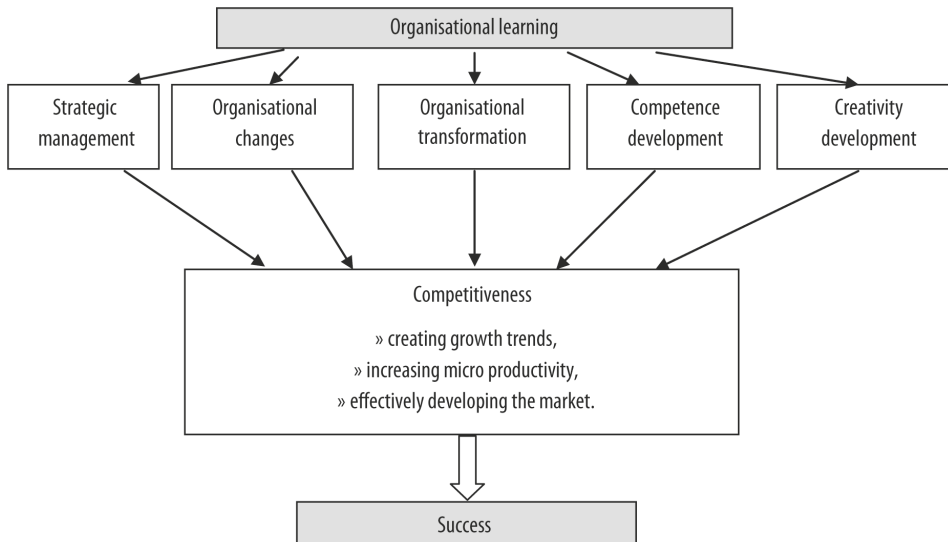
J. Batorski notes the impact of organisational learning on the success of an enterprise in several areas [2, p. 25–]

1. In the field of strategic management, productive learning
 - enables one to define the desired future of the enterprise and identify the obstacles to achieving a high level of efficiency
 - contributes to the accumulation of knowledge about effective enterprise management as a cognitive basis for making strategic decisions, facilitating communication and improving resistance to political pressures.
2. Organisational changes
 - nowadays, the significance of organisational learning as the main carrier of organisational change is emphasised,
 - organisational change is treated as a bottom-up phenomenon that arises as a result of a continuous process of adjusting the enterprise to the changing conditions,
 - any change is actually treated as organisational learning.
3. The competences of an enterprise
 - learning is the basis for shaping competence, and simultaneously acts as the source of the need to formulate and present strategic intentions that lead to a breakthrough,
 - key competences, acquired faster and less expensively than in the case of the competition, allow an enterprise to gain a strategic competitive edge.
4. The transformation of an enterprise
 - requires the re-considering and redevelopment of the fundamental processes in the enterprise in order to achieve a significant improvement in its key competences in the process of strategic transformations,
 - organisational learning is the medium of transformation
5. Stimulating the creativity (innovativeness) of employees
 - is considered to be one of the vital features of a company, and also a condition for conducting business activity in the form of an enterprise,

- the success of an enterprise, is e.g., the result of employees' creative responses to new phenomena taking place both within the organisation, and in its environment.

Organisational learning, by influencing the competitiveness of an enterprise, which is understood as the enterprise's capability to constantly create growth trends, an increase in productivity, and the effective development of ready markets [1, p. 128] also contributes to the success of the enterprise, as presented in the figure below.

Fig. 1. The influence of organisational learning on the success of the enterprise



Source: own study, drawing on J. Batorski [2, p. 25 -].

The above remarks provide the basis for the conclusion that organisational learning is generally assessed positively. In reality, there are situations in which learning may actually be harmful to the organisation. As a result of the pathological processes of learning, the identification and correction of any irregularities occurring in the institution may be inappropriate and the conclusions drawn from previous events are not always valid. It may be the result of what may be called “superstitious learning,” which leads to combining phenomena into cause and effect only on the basis of their succession in time, and not through analysing the nature of those phenomena. As a result, it is possible that organisational learning is implemented correctly over a period of time, but its effects may bring about negative consequences [2, p. 25]. The modes of behaviour and action, which have been positively verified in the past, do not necessarily work well in the new conditions in which the organisation operates, e.g. when the level of disruptions to the environment becomes higher. Members of

an organisation may become resistant to new experiences, while memories of past success may cause conservatism.

There are visible phenomena connected with organisational learning through which traditionally-operating enterprises delimit their capabilities. The most important of those phenomena include [4]

- a) A hindered transfer of important information up the organisational hierarchy; the employees, thinking that speed, efficiency, and good results are expected of them, may arrive at the conviction that their superiors should only be given information that is beyond any doubt. As a rule this kind of information makes up a body of explicit knowledge [8, pp 82–84]. Tacit knowledge, which is more difficult to verbalise and requires more effort from the recipient to understand, may fall prey to a certain self-censorship – when the employee makes an *à priori* assumption that the superior will have no time or need to become familiar with the message, so the employee decides not to inform the superior about something that may depart from the standards or customs adopted in the organisation, though, objectively, may be very important.
- b) Shortage of time for learning: focus on current efficiency results in too little emphasis being given to those fields in which learning processes are decisive. Actions in those fields may be put off or implemented with insufficient staff. In extreme cases, employees may be dissuaded from learning. The reason for this is the commonly-known phenomenon of a decrease in efficiency occurring when the process of implementing a change is launched. Therefore, those managers who focus on current results may even sabotage the implementation of technologies or competences which could prove useful in the future. A specific symptom of such practice on the part of managers is reducing the time that employees can spend on mutual contacts and exchange of experiences. This leads to a severe delimitation in the exchange of explicit and, particularly, tacit knowledge.
- c) Faulty motivation systems within the enterprise; they lead to unhealthy internal competition, which may be caused by the lack of systemic thinking by managers at the highest level of the hierarchy. Intending to improve the results of the entire enterprise, they may favour the employees from only those parts of the organisation that currently show the best results. Thus, they encourage egoism and reluctance to share potentially useful knowledge with the employees of other parts of the organisation. This restricts the flow of both explicit and tacit knowledge.
- d) The general opinion within the enterprise is that it is infallible; an effective business model, which allowed success in the past, leads to the conviction of the managerial staff that it is the only legitimate one. Accordingly, the model is not challenged, and not verified at all. Employees who call into question its future usefulness may be marginalised or even dismissed. Hence, the misconception about the infallibility of the enterprise narrows down the spectrum of knowledge

transmitted in the organisation to knowledge consistent with the overarching paradigm.

In order to avoid the situation in which organisational learning leads to negatively-assessed results, it should be productive, as only productive learning can contribute to the proper functioning and development of the enterprise [2, p. 25] facilitating the achievement of the set goals and functions.

Knowledge management

A knowledge-management system may be defined as a managerial activity aimed at the creation and allocation of insights and experiences and the use of the practical skills [11]. This system is a complex structure determined by the aspects of objectives, subjects, and structural, functional, and instrumental elements. The following are the detailed functions of the knowledge-management system

1. Recording and collecting knowledge,
2. Providing information and results of experiences to users, as suited to their needs,
3. Creating new knowledge (shaping progress in the fields of science and research),
4. Applying and transferring knowledge,
5. Integrating individual creative work and organising teamwork.

Performing an analysis of selected definitions of knowledge management allows one to list several of its features [6, p. 330]

- it is most often perceived as a process which leads to the identification, collection, creation, and use of knowledge,
- it is usually aimed at achieving the organisation's objectives (mainly creating value, improving competitiveness),
- it encompasses stimulating employees to share their knowledge, and creating suitable environment, procedures, and systems for knowledge transfer within the organisation.

Knowledge management must not ignore the problems faced by the enterprise. On the contrary – it should be ancillary to solving them. Both theoreticians and practitioners stress the impact of knowledge management on the efficiency of the functioning and competitiveness of the enterprise. It should contribute to a more effective processing of resources into products that meet the demands of clients, providing easier recognition of opportunities and chances, and eventually commercialisation.

Knowledge management in the enterprise may be performed intuitively, arising from the realisation by the managers of the need to implement some of its functions. This change in knowledge management is characterised by randomness, collectiveness, fragmentariness (accumulation of knowledge concerning only selected areas of an enterprise's functioning), lack of consistency (variable intensity), and

sometimes, when there are pressing problems in the enterprise, actions that make up such impoverished knowledge management may be stopped. Such an approach may be tolerated only in young, small enterprises, which are searching for an optimal enterprise model.

In mature enterprises with a developed model, it seems necessary to adopt an orderly, consistent, and comprehensive knowledge-management system. Knowledge-management strategies provide suggestions for specific solutions in enterprises.

Codification strategy is based on explicit knowledge [6, pp. 331, 332]. Enterprises that make use of this strategy focus on the preparation, implementation, and correct use of modern information technology, which facilitates the codification, storage, and later sharing of knowledge with employees who intend to use it. Codification strategy ensures common and multiple use of the accumulated body of knowledge. Its application is possible thanks to substantial investments in new technologies, skills in using such solutions, and the creation of a motivation system that encourage employees to store their knowledge in the organisation's databases.

Personalisation strategy places emphasis on tacit knowledge of individual employees and on the communication between them. This key role is played by direct contacts between employees. Telecommunications and IT solutions are used to reduce obstacles in the communication process. The organisation's role is to motivate its members to develop their knowledge bases, and to create a network of relations with others to make knowledge sharing easier. In practice both strategies are used at the same time, and should be complementary in nature.

Successfully meeting demands in the field of knowledge management, including improving the competitiveness of the enterprise, is subject to, among other factors, the choice of a suitable knowledge-management strategy. The nature of the desired knowledge-management strategy depends primarily on the features of the enterprise's products and the dominant type of knowledge used to solve problems in the course of its functioning [5]

- a) depending on the level of product standardisation, in the case of high standardisation, codification is recommended, in the case of low – personalisation;
- b) depending on the level of product maturity, if innovative products dominate, personalisation is recommended; in the case of products at the maturity stage – codification;
- c) depending on the dominant type of knowledge, when explicit knowledge predominates, codification is recommended; if tacit knowledge has the upper hand – personalisation.

Knowledge management, apart from directly affecting employees, should create suitable conditions for performing tasks through learning. One of the most important conditions is creating mental comfort. This means that nobody in the organisation will have been punished for asking for help, or admitting a mistake. This condition

is particularly important in organisations in which knowledge is subject to constant change, where employees must cooperate and make accurate decisions without the help of management. Such practice comes from the conviction that knowledge and best practices are constantly shifting, and that nobody can be completely error free.

Providing mental comfort does not mean being lenient or reducing quality standards, but it involves realising that achieving good results requires openness, flexibility, and cooperation. Such approaches are evinced by employees who have mental comfort. An employee's mental comfort is primarily influenced by his or her immediate superior. The signals sent out by the immediate superior are decisive in how willing the employees are to share their knowledge. Immediate superiors may improve the mental comfort of their subordinates by [4]

- a) acknowledging that there are no unambiguous answers to any questions faced by the team, which may encourage employees to be frank and open,
- b) asking actual, not rhetorical or answer-suggesting, questions, which is perceived by employees as a real willingness to understand their position and have their opinions heard.

The process of organisational learning may be considered effective if at least one of the following requirements is met [7, p. 48]

- there has been a permanent change in the way the organisation functions (positively assessed),
- there has been a change that, albeit temporarily, involves new, not previously-used elements,
- there has been a (positive) change in the amount of information held by the organisation.

Knowledge-management style

As pointed out above, the course of the processes of organisational learning depends largely on the managerial staff of the enterprise. The conduct of managers may facilitate learning, but it may also hinder, or prevent it altogether. Hence, any attempt at identifying the styles used by managers would seem relevant.

In studying, analysing, and evaluating the learning processes in organisations, one may use the following key phenomena

1. The technique of knowledge transfer, understood as a specific type of behaviour of the organisation's members that facilitates knowledge transfer between people – members of the organisation,
2. The method of knowledge transfer defined as a feature of the knowledge transfer process in the enterprise, identified on the basis of the strength and frequency of using specific knowledge-transfer techniques in the enterprise,

3. The style of knowledge management, which is an aggregate notion; it may be defined as a coherent set of tools systematically used by managers that influences the course of the processes of organisational learning, identified on the basis of the frequency of using specific methods of knowledge transfer in the processes of learning in the organisation.

Re: 1: Bearing in mind the direction of the transfer and the method of the transfer, one may distinguish the following techniques of knowledge transfer in particular

- a) direct and spontaneous – the exchange of opinions, informal discussions and employee meetings,
- b) internships within the enterprise, “apprenticeships” under more experienced employees,
- c) the observation of the behaviour of employees with more job seniority,
- d) the exchange of private opinions when working in organisational units or formal task groups,
- e) assemblies, meetings, and training sessions with the participation of the organisation’s own instructors, conferences, and practice,
- f) the exchange of experiences in the field of the relevant functional area during formal meetings or assemblies, and drafting reports on special events,
- g) transferring formal descriptions of procedures, courses of action, and using knowledge collected in a “data warehouse,”
- h) the exchange of experiences from the implementation of formal procedures.

Re: 2: On the basis of the criterion of dominant knowledge transfer techniques in an enterprise, one may list three fundamental methods of organisational learning

1. enquiry-based,
2. direct-instruction,
3. traditional.

The features of each method are listed in Table 1.

The enquiry-based method of learning is characterised by the equal position of the participants in the learning process, creating conditions for an intensive two-way exchange of knowledge, direct relations between members of the organisation, and frequent changes of roles in the learning process – “the provider” of knowledge becomes the recipient. As a rule, every participant in the learning process has some knowledge that other people may find useful. In using this type of learning, the number of participants is sufficiently restricted to enable direct contacts between every participant. The direct exchange of existing knowledge leads to a synthesis of new knowledge. Tacit knowledge is very often transferred in this way. The enquiry-based method of organisational learning allows a high mental comfort level and minimises the threat of incidents of a pathological nature.

Table 1. Methods of organisational learning

No.	Methods of organisational learning	The knowledge transfer techniques dominant in the organisation
1.	Enquiry-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ direct and spontaneous – exchange of opinions, informal discussions and employee meetings, ■ exchange of experience from the implementation of tasks in the enterprise, ■ open questions concerning the functioning of the enterprise, ■ spontaneous opinions concerning the functioning of the enterprise, ■ preparing and distributing notes about special events and the implementation of formal procedures.
2.	Direct instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ assemblies, meetings, and training sessions with the participation of the organisation’s own instructors, ■ the participation of employees in in-organisation conferences, practices, and internships, ■ handing over formal descriptions of procedures and courses of action, ■ encouraging employees to use the knowledge accumulated in data warehouses
3.	Traditional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ exchange of private opinions while working in formal task groups, ■ acquiring knowledge during work in one’s own position, ■ “apprenticeship” under more experienced employees, ■ observing the behaviour of employees with more job seniority.

Source: own study.

The direct-instruction method is characterised by a non-equal position among the participants in the learning process, the source of which is a privilege given to some people in the access to knowledge of a formal character. As a rule, large groups of employees are given explicit knowledge – codified knowledge, already existing in the enterprise, but as yet unknown to them. This knowledge is transferred by those employees who have “insight,” and use this knowledge, while the recipients are expected to acquire it as thoroughly as possible. Such a method of action leads to the unification and standardisation of knowledge used by employees, which is intended to standardise the ways of solving typical problems and to increase the predictability of behaviour of the organisation’s members. As a result, the proper functioning of the enterprise may be expected in relatively stabilised, predictable conditions. In the direct-instruction style of learning, mental comfort may be felt by employees characterised by opportunism or passivity. It is, however, a basis for the development of pathological phenomena in the processes of organisational learning.

It is also characteristic of the **traditional method** that the position of participants is not equal, being the result of varying experiences. As a rule, the learning process involves only a small number of participants, and in a special case only two – “the master,” and “the disciple.” Knowledge transferred is usually non-formal, with features of tacit knowledge, acquired in the course of the transferor’s personal experiences.

A passive attitude is dominant in the recipient, who is expected to include the knowledge transferred to the already-possessed resources and later to enrich it with his or her own personal experiences. Knowledge transferred in such a manner is usually useful in understanding tasks and solving problems on a specific position. This type of learning involves a limited degree of mental comfort in the participants, but it also creates only limited conditions for the occurrence of pathological phenomena.

The choice of methods in the implementation of organisational learning, the frequency of their use, and the extent of the achieved results, mainly depends on the preference of the managerial staff of the enterprise. The result of these preferences concerning the practical use of the specific methods of organisational learning is the style of knowledge-management in the organisation. The knowledge-management style is shaped by relatively constant preferences of the staff managing the process of organisational learning, and, to a smaller degree, the preferences of the organisation's members. It is also subject to some decisions concerning the structure and organisational procedures, and to cultural values, which influence the capacities of the organisation to learn and change.

The knowledge-management style, as a specific expression of the values and experiences of the organisation relating to the methods of learning, may

- contribute to creating or strengthening the organisation's learning capacity,
- increase the readiness of the organisation's members to accept change and to get involved in the process of change,
- allow a large group of participants to enrich their knowledge,
- facilitate the preparation and implementation of changes in the organisation and, as a result, it may facilitate the implementation of the functions of knowledge management, and contribute to the competitiveness of the enterprise and its successes.

A multi-dimensional concept of knowledge-management styles

The process of organisational learning is so complex that it cannot be evaluated in one dimension. That is why knowledge-management style, as a phenomenon that characterises organisational learning, must be treated as a multi-dimensional phenomenon.

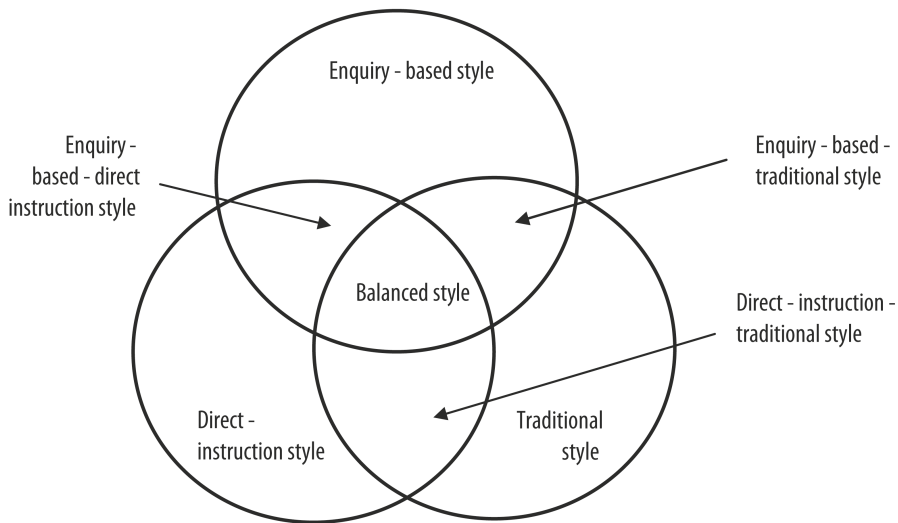
Treating knowledge-management style as a multi-dimensional phenomenon creates the necessity to look for a multi-dimensional evaluation space to systematise the field of an enterprise's learning [3, p. 67–69]. Such a space should take into account two elementary functions: weighing certain measures, and evaluating management styles for different measures. As a result, it is possible to create a procedure that leads

to defining the configuration of learning processes in enterprises, i.e. situating them in a systematising space. Both functions and their integration are aimed at the cognitive systemisation of the phenomenon of organisational learning.

A characteristic, company-specific, knowledge-management style should be perceived as a result of using the three above-mentioned methods of knowledge transfer. The described methods of organisational learning were treated as **measures of knowledge-management style.**

As a result of using a multidimensional approach to identifying and describing knowledge-management styles, seven styles of knowledge management can be distinguished, as shown in Fig. 2, three of which are “pure” – enquiry-based, direct instruction, and traditional, while the remaining four are “mixed,” combining the features of the “pure” styles. An evaluation of the identified knowledge-management styles in an organisation,

Fig. 2. A diagram of knowledge-management styles based on the criterion of the dominant learning style



Source: own study.

taking into account their level of usefulness for implementing management functions and fulfilling the need for mental comfort, is of a deductive character. With regard to the “pure” styles of knowledge management, this evaluation is presented in the following table.

Table 2. The possible methods of implementing knowledge-management functions and satisfying the need of mental comfort while using different styles of knowledge management.

No.	Functions of the knowledge-management system	Knowledge-management style		
		Enquiry-based	Direct instruction	Traditional
1.	Recording and accumulating knowledge,	Limited usefulness	Highly useful for explicit knowledge	Limited usefulness
2.	Providing information and experience to users, depending on their needs,	Good conditions for providing tacit knowledge	Favours providing explicit knowledge	Limited usefulness
3.	Creating new knowledge,	Good conditions for tacit knowledge synthesis	Limited usefulness	Useless
4.	Knowledge use and transfer,	Easier for tacit knowledge	Easier for explicit knowledge	Limited usefulness
5.	Integrating individual creative work and organising team work,	Favours solving innovation problems	Limited usefulness, easier typical work	Useful in relatively simple work
6.	Ensuring that the need for mental comfort is satisfied	Highly useful	Limited usefulness	Limited usefulness

Source: own study.

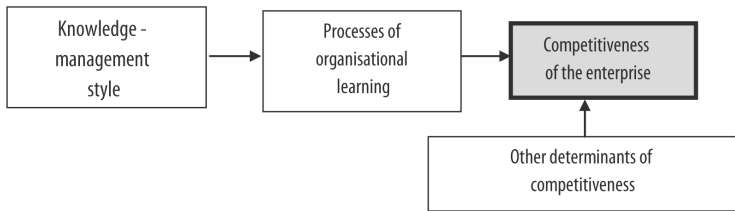
It follows from the above table that individual “pure” styles are characterised by diverse usefulness in the implementation of the functions of a knowledge-management system, so it may be assumed that “mixed” styles perform better in facilitating the adjustment of knowledge-management style to the needs of a specific company.

Study results

The study which formed the basis for this article considered, *inter alia*, the connections between the knowledge transfer methods used in the process of organisational learning and an increase in the competitiveness of enterprises. Below is a diagram of the connections under consideration.

In the course of the research, the influence of factors other than knowledge was omitted, which was possible due to the fact that respondents were explicitly asked about the influence of the said methods of knowledge transfer on the phenomena relating to the competitiveness of enterprises, so it was the respondents that omitted the influence of additional factors on the observed symptoms of the better competitiveness of enterprises.

Fig. 3. A diagram of the connections under study



Source: own study.

A multi-dimensional concept adapted to describing knowledge-management styles is based on the dominant method of organisational learning. The research instrument used makes it possible to determine the frequency of using the knowledge transfer techniques adopted by enterprises. The data allowed

1. The identification of the knowledge-management style,
 2. The estimation of the strength of the knowledge-management style
- in the following way

- low assessments of frequency were interpreted as indicators of a weak type of a knowledge-management style, meaning a process which has not yet taken shape,
- high assessments of frequency were interpreted as indicators of a strong type of a knowledge-management style, meaning a developed type of management style.

As shown in Fig. 3, the study looked for results showing that the processes of organisational learning influence the competitiveness of enterprises. In the course of the study, increased competitiveness was identified on the basis of the appearance of the effects of the learning processes in two fields – the competitive edge and the competitive positions of enterprises. Each included three specific phenomena. The phenomena connected with competitive edge are lower costs of operation, quicker adjustment to the clients' needs, and higher client satisfaction. Phenomena connected with competitive positions are higher revenue from operations, improved corporate image, and a better financial situation of the enterprise.

The information on the extent of increases in competitiveness in the enterprises studied was derived from the number of cases of a change in a situation within the above-mentioned phenomena identified by the respondents, connected to competitive edge or position. The following table presents data on the value of gains in competitiveness in enterprises using varied styles of organisational learning.

Table 3. The average value of the gain in competitiveness in enterprises using different styles of organisational learning and the percentage of enterprises studied that applied a specific style. (Other tools of statistical analysis were not applied due to the small numbers of participants in some of the groups in the enterprises studied)

No.	Name of organisational learning style	Percentage of enterprises	Value of gain in		
			Competitive edge	Competitive position	Competitiveness in total
1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Direct instruction – traditional	5.3	9	7.6	16.6
2.	Enquiry-based – traditional	16.1	9.3	5.7	15
3.	Balanced	60.8	8.1	5.8	13.9
4.	Traditional	5.3	9.3	4	13.3
5.	Direct instruction	5.3	8.7	3.3	11
6.	Enquiry-based	3.6	6.5	1.5	8
7.	Enquiry-based – Direct instruction	3.6	1.5	1.5	3

The numbers provided in columns 4–6 show the average number of changes noticed within the phenomena connected to competitiveness as a result of using the studied methods of organisational learning in a specific enterprise.

Source: own study.

All the knowledge-management styles distinguished were observed in the enterprises under study. The balanced style, encompassing elements of all the three “pure” styles, was the most common, being used in almost 61% of enterprises under study. This shows that styles are adjusted to the circumstances of particular entities. C.S. Nosal’s opinion that “the one who “mixes” well, i.e. applies specific elementary (pure) strategies in the correct proportions (frequencies) as part of a complex strategy, wins” [9, p. 146]. It should be taken into account that this style is also characterised by a relatively high effectiveness, considered from the point of view of a gain in the competitiveness of enterprises, allowing the achievement of nearly 84% of the results of enterprises using the direct-instruction-traditional style, which is the most effective from this standpoint.

The relatively high gains in competitiveness of the enterprises using the traditional knowledge-management style, both in its “pure” and mixed forms, is an interesting phenomenon. This may be explained by the business profile of the enterprises studied – in most cases it was a profile characterised by low levels of changeability and innovation. The frequent use of styles containing elements of the traditional style may also be interpreted as the domination of the codification strategy in knowledge-management in the companies under study.

Furthermore, to complement the data in the table above, the following should be pointed out

1. 67.9% of the enterprises studied applied a strong variant of the organisational learning style, and the average competitiveness gain in this group was 15.8%.
2. 32.1% of the enterprises studied applied a weak variant of the organisational learning style, and the average competitiveness gain in this group was 8.6%.

Drawing on the abovementioned data, the following conclusions may be reached

1. A knowledge-management style is a phenomenon that may be studied empirically; it is possible to identify the influence of knowledge management on selected aspects of an enterprise functioning.
2. The substantial majority of enterprises studied used a balanced style of knowledge management, which is characterised by a comparable frequency of using various learning methods.
3. Nearly four times fewer enterprises applied the enquiry-based-traditional style, combining the methods of learning which are particularly useful in contemporary conditions. Other types of knowledge management were sporadically used, including unusual combinations, such as the enquiry-based-direct instruction style.
4. The first four knowledge-management styles specified in Table 3 are different from the rest in their effectiveness, assessed from the point of view of contributing to the improvement of an enterprise's competitiveness.
5. The strong variants in knowledge-management styles are more commonly used in enterprises, and contribute to a much greater extent to the improvement of competitiveness than weak variants, which clearly shows that there is a positive relationship between learning and competitiveness of enterprises.
6. Certain factors have been identified showing that nearly 88% of the enterprises studied used the codification strategy, at least partially, in their knowledge management.
7. Irrespective of their influence on competitiveness considered cumulatively, it is observed that the styles under study usually contributed to the strengthening of the competitive edge of enterprises, while to a much smaller extent influencing an improvement in the competitive position of enterprises.

Summary

The knowledge-management style is an aggregate category that characterises the course of learning processes in enterprises. It follows from the normative principles of the concept of a learning organisation that learning enterprises function much better than those in which the learning processes are not advanced. Empirical research enables one to confirm this assumption. Enterprises which more frequently make use of various methods of organisational learning (the strong variants

of knowledge-management styles) achieve much better gains in competitiveness than enterprises which use these methods less often (using the weak variants of knowledge-management styles), which confirms the above-mentioned assumption. Also, the peculiarity of the learning methods used, expressed in the type of knowledge-management style adopted, contributes to a gain in the competitiveness of enterprises to a varying degree. In the case of enterprises with worse results, it may be a symptom of the learning styles not being adjusted to their situation, or of the non-productive use of suitably chosen knowledge-management styles. Both hypotheses may be verified in the course of further studies of organisational learning styles that may help discover additional factors contributing to the streamlining of the organisational learning processes.

The presented concept is not final, but it may constitute a starting point for the further research of organisational learning processes.

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Abstract

The article considered the impact of the adopted knowledge-management style on the competitiveness of the enterprise. The knowledge-management style was associated with the techniques and methods of learning. The author used a multi-dimensional concept of the knowledge-management style, in which it was identified on the basis of a measurement of the strength of emphasis put on specific methods of learning. Changes in the competitive position and edge reflected the changes in competitiveness.

It was concluded that those enterprises which employed strong variants of knowledge-management styles achieved much better gains in competitiveness than those enterprises which used weak variants. Moreover, it was concluded that knowledge-management styles with elements of the traditional style are more effective from the point of view of increasing competitiveness than other knowledge-management styles.

KEY WORDS: ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING, KNOWLEDGE-MANAGEMENT STYLE