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THE POLYFUNCTIONAL ROLE OF KNOWLEDGE IN ENSURING THE COMPETENT ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

In the contemporary knowledge economy, organizational development is increasingly determined by an organization's capacity to effectively generate, integrate, transfer, and utilize knowledge as a strategic resource. The formation of a competent organization presupposes the creation of conditions for the continuous accumulation and reproduction of knowledge that ensures the development of individual, collective, and organizational competencies. Concurrently, knowledge acquires a polyfunctional character, serving not merely as a factor in enhancing operational performance, but also as the foundation for innovative activity, organizational learning, adaptation to change, and the formation of long-term competitive advantages. This underscores the necessity for in-depth investigation of the role of knowledge in ensuring the development of the competent organization under conditions of growing complexity and uncertainty in the external environment.

The theoretical foundation of this study draws upon the resource-based and knowledge-based theories of the firm, the concept of organizational learning, and the competence-based approach to strategic management. Seminal contributions to the development of these frameworks have been made by B. Wernerfelt, J. Barney, R. Grant, I. Nonaka, H. Takeuchi, and P. Senge [1–5]. Of particular significance for the study of the competent organization are the works of G. Hamel and C. K. Prahalad [6–7], who substantiated the concept of core competencies as a source of long-term competitive advantages. Within these theoretical frameworks, knowledge is conceptualized as a strategic resource that ensures the formation of competencies, organizational learning, innovative development, and the organization's adaptation to changes in the external environment.

The objective of this study is to provide a theoretical substantiation of the polyfunctional role of knowledge in ensuring the development of the competent organization.

Structurally, the competent organization is characterized by reduced hierarchical rigidity, greater autonomy of units and teams, well-developed horizontal linkages, and network-based coordination. Such structures facilitate knowledge exchange and rapid decision-making grounded in distributed expertise. A critical distinction between the competent organization and the conventional learning organization lies in its focus on transforming learning into specific organizational competencies of strategic value. Learning per se is not the ultimate objective – it must give rise to capabilities that are difficult for competitors to imitate and that generate tangible market value.

In the context of organizational development, knowledge acquires a polyfunctional character, ensuring both the operational effectiveness and the strategic capability of the organization (Table 1).

Table 1

The complex of interrelated functions of knowledge in the organizational development processes of the competent organization

Function	Implementation
Diagnostic basis for identifying the need for change	Constitutes the foundation for identifying the need for organizational change. Systematic analysis of organizational knowledge (its distribution, quality, relevance, and gaps) enables the identification of problem areas and opportunities for improvement
Cognitive basis for developing development strategies	Understanding of technological trends, market opportunities, industry best practices, and the organization's own capabilities allows for the determination of promising directions for transformation
Critical resource in the implementation of organizational change	Successful realization of new strategies, processes, or technologies requires the rapid acquisition of necessary competencies by employees, which can substantially accelerate personnel adaptation to new conditions
Knowledge of one's own experience of change	Forms the organizational capacity for more effective management of future change. Systematic reflection on organizational development projects and the documentation of lessons learned creates a knowledge base that enhances organizational maturity in change management
Knowledge of the external environment	Informs the processes of organizational adaptation to external challenges. The organization's absorptive capacity (its ability to assimilate external knowledge) determines the speed and depth of organizational learning

Source: authored elaboration

The complex of interrelated knowledge functions presented in Table 1 attests to their system-forming role in the organizational development processes of the competent organization. Knowledge functions not merely as the informational basis for managerial decision-making, but also as a key resource for competency formation, innovation, and organizational learning. Their integration into managerial and operational processes ensures the alignment of strategic and tactical development objectives. It is for this reason that knowledge becomes a critical factor in enhancing the adaptability and resilience of the competent organization.

Furthermore, knowledge management provides the informational and intellectual foundation for organizational change, while organizational development creates the context and incentives for the generation of new knowledge. This bidirectional interaction constitutes a fundamental characteristic of the competent organization. In turn, the competent organization represents a qualitatively distinct organizational archetype characterized by the capacity for continuous learning, high absorptive capacity, well-developed dynamic capabilities, effective organizational memory, interdisciplinary learning, and systematic reflective practice. These characteristics do not emerge spontaneously, but rather as the result of the deliberate integration of knowledge management and organizational development. The mechanisms of synergistic interaction between knowledge management and organizational development manifest at the strategic, processual, cultural, and individual levels.

At the individual level, transformation entails the development of employees' personal competencies, the cultivation of attitudes oriented toward continuous learning and readiness for change, as well as the acquisition of personal knowledge management skills. Critically important is an understanding of the value of knowledge sharing. Employees must learn to reflect upon their own experience, verbalize tacit knowledge, and actively seek new knowledge. At the group level, transformation encompasses the creation of teams and communities oriented toward collaborative learning and problem-solving. Practices of collective reflection, experience exchange, and the co-creation of knowledge are established. Norms of trust and psychological safety are cultivated, enabling the open discussion of mistakes and experimentation with new approaches. Teams acquire the capacity for self-organization and adaptation. At the organizational level, transformation presupposes the creation of institutional mechanisms for knowledge management and organizational development and their integration into strategy and operational processes. Organizational memory is actively developed,

preserving and making accessible the collective experience of the organization. Organizational routines that support learning and adaptation are formed, and organizational culture is transformed in the direction of greater openness, experimentation, and a development orientation. At the inter-organizational level, the competent organization develops the capacity to learn from partners, clients, suppliers, and other stakeholders. Knowledge ecosystems are created in which expertise is exchanged and innovations are co-created, and the organization becomes part of broader networks of learning and development.

Thus, the interaction between knowledge management and organizational development is bidirectional and synergistic in nature, constituting the system-forming foundation of the competent organization. The competent organization emerges as a dynamic archetype capable of continuous learning, the development of dynamic capabilities, and the effective utilization of both internal and external knowledge. Transformational processes are realized at the individual, group, organizational, and inter-organizational levels, thereby ensuring the integrity of knowledge flows and the development of organizational memory. Accordingly, the integration of knowledge-based and developmental mechanisms represents the key condition for the formation of an adaptive and innovation-capable organization.

In conclusion, knowledge within the competent organization fulfills a multifunctional role, encompassing diagnostic, cognitive, resource-based, and reflective functions. Knowledge forms the diagnostic basis for identifying the need for organizational change and serves as the cognitive foundation for the development of strategic initiatives. Moreover, knowledge constitutes a critical resource in the process of implementing change, ensuring its effective realization and the organization's adaptation to the external environment. Taken together, these functions confirm the defining role of knowledge in the formation of a resilient, adaptive, and competent organization.

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