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**Application knowledge management in the practice  
of business subjects in Slovakia**

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**Abstract**

Ability of man to transform data to the information and lately to the useful knowledge can change considerably character of work, education and everyday life of people as well as organization. In present time it connects with the developing theory and practice of knowledge management. There is increasing need to obtain and use information, but also their management by this way that they can serve the best for the needs of decisions of every employee, organizations and society. Knowledge is more and more considered as most valuable asset, to which there is necessary to invest and develop it. Contribution shows to the necessity to install knowledge management in every organization. Its part is also discussion about research results, orientated to the knowledge management in the business subjects, realized at the sample of organizations in Slovakia in the frame of VEGA project.

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**1. Introduction**

Strategic source for 21st Century is knowledge, they can secure stable tempo of performance growth and competition convenience. Therefore knowledge are more and more in attention, knowledge management had become more and more spoke about in theory and practice of organization management, without regard to their task or activity. Basic principles of knowledge management can be applied in production firm, business organization, education institution, health organization, and also in offices of state administration. Such new access means confusion of concepts borrowed from various area of human activities, where belongs for example artistic intelligence, creation of knowledge system, reengineering of firm's processes, management of human sources or organization behavior.

Knowledge can have attention at some levels, their explanation is subject of expert discussions among theoreticians and practitioners, but still in present time it is not clear. For example Bureš (2007) illustrated knowledge management at figure No 1 as a basis for further levels of knowledge management. Basis is therefore knowledge management where products and outputs have application at organization level. Organization level creates basis for knowledge economy at national level and also for knowledge society at over national level.

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In expert literature we can find expressions as for example „*knowledge managing*“, „*management of knowledge*“ or „*knowledge management*“. Also here such expressions are very similar, but in reality they are very different from the view of the content. We can see attention given to the knowledge at several levels:

- over national level (knowledge society),
- national level (knowledge economy),
- organization level (knowledge management),
- level of knowledge managing.

Over national level of work with knowledge is most extended, general and it create basis frame for lower levels. In knowledge of certain problem there are obvious significant mutual differences between people, resp. between their more or less organized groups, firms, institutions, etc. Chaos of information society has begun to transform to the other, more organized way of so-called *knowledge society*. Seems to be that it will be characterized by mass access of knowledge and using of knowledge and skills deposited and elaborated by information techniques according users demands.

## 2. Research orientated to the state of knowledge management in the business subjects in Slovakia

Introduction of knowledge management is in present time in Slovakian organizations still at the beginning, yet few business subjects can show off their experiences in this area and to transit them further. Today is such situation that managers of the individual organizations in Slovakia are yet differently explaining what does it means „*knowledge management*“ for their concrete needs according its content. They are trying to elaborated systems for knowledge evidence, their stocking and protecting, useful forms of their transiting for its employees' needs, as well as for present and future using in the business activities. More and more perfect elaborated access to the conversion to the knowledge management can be seen in those Slovakian business subjects that got by their transformation, resp. that have foreign investor. Those ones may invest according their previous experiences due to the financial reasons more sources and energies to technical, organizational and personal readiness.

Similar considerations lead into the detection of knowledge management state in the conditions of firms that are presented in this contribution. We describe research about knowledge management in the practice of chosen business subjects in Slovakia with goal to obtain review about managers informing about this problematic, their interest about knowledge management, as well as formal support, personal, technical and technological readiness for its implementation and also estimation of its contributions and effectiveness for the subject. Research was realized in the frame of VEGA project No 1/0270/08 with title „*Suggestion of the model for knowledge management in the firm and evaluation of investment to the human capital as assumption for increasing of the subject's competition.*“

## 3. Methodology of the research and evaluation process:

There was used questionnaire method, designed for the managers of the business subjects at any level of management.

Research was realized at the sample of managers from business subjects with different volume, functioning in various branches of activity in Slovakia. Totally there was asked 150 managers, 92 questionnaires was returned, (44 ones by emails and 48 ones personally), from which 3 questionnaires was excluded from the elaboration due to the incompleteness of obtained data. Return presents then 61, 33%. Personal distribution of questionnaires proved to be more effective due to the higher return, where during personal contact there was possible to communicate with respondent and to present the aim of questionnaire.

Basic assumption of subject research is that in Slovakian business subjects the personal, expert, organizational and technical assumptions that are necessary for introduction of knowledge management was fulfilled only partially. Before single obtaining and collecting of data there were stated partial hypothesis for the research:

Hypothesis 1: Assumption that majority of respondents does not have idea about content of „*knowledge management*“ conception.

Hypothesis 2: Assumption that Slovakian business subjects have built basic technological infrastructure that is necessary for introduction of knowledge management with support of information and communication technology.

Hypothesis 3: Assumption that managers do not give enough attention to further professional education, or investment to the human sources in the firm.

Hypothesis 4: Assumption that in Slovakian business subjects there is not enough emphasis to the firm’s or knowledge culture, including communication channels and relations among individual wearer of knowledge.

Hypothesis 5: Assumption that business subjects do not know to state importance and expected contributions from knowledge management introduction.

**Choice of research sample and structure of respondents:**

Respondents of realized research have been distinguished according following criteria of business subject volume:

- according employees number (figure 1),
- according ownership of business subject (figure 2),

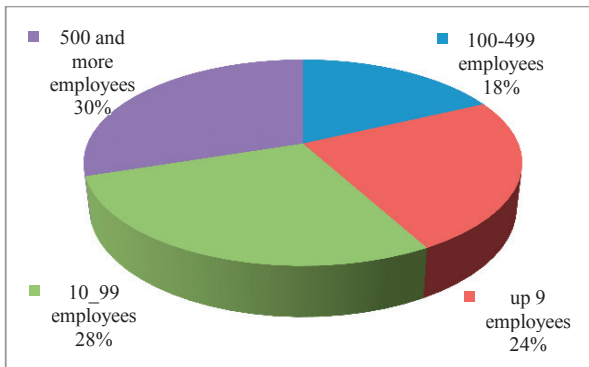


Figure 1. Volume of business subject

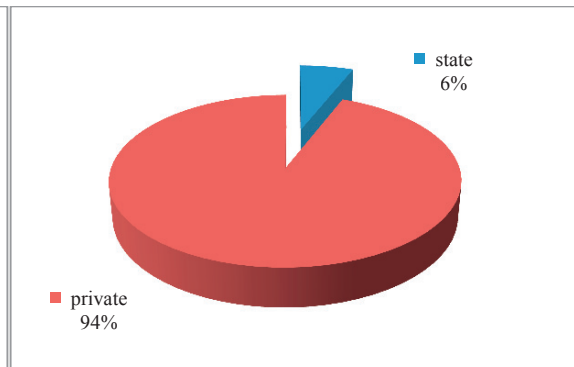


Figure 2. Ownership of business subject

- according branch of prevailing activity of business subject (figure 3),
- according geographical position of business subject in region of SR (figure 4),

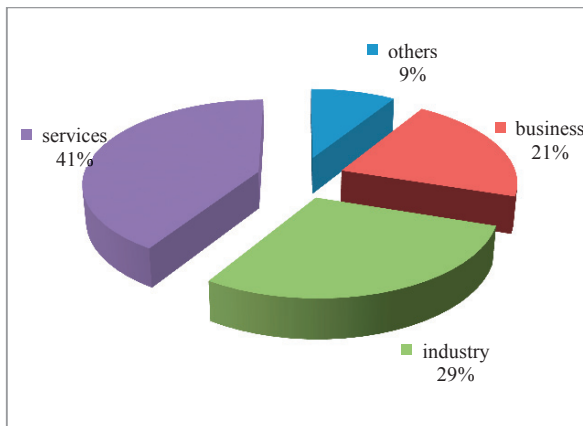


Figure 3. Activity of business subject

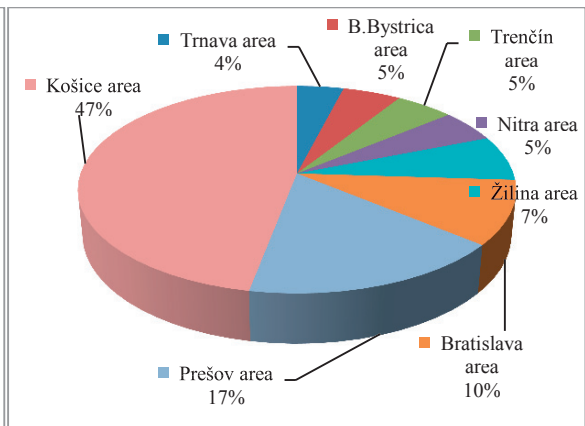


Figure 4. Business subjects according region of SR

- according functional ranking of manager in the business subject (figure 5),
- according highest achieved education of manager (figure 6).

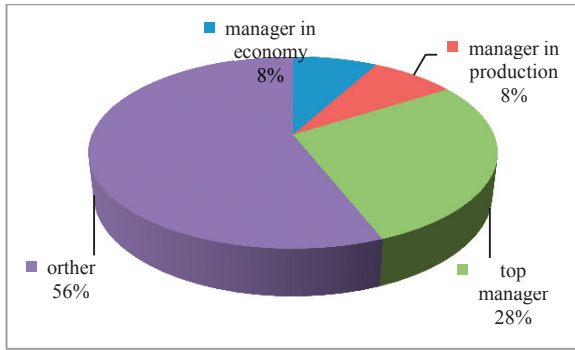


Figure 5. Respondents according position

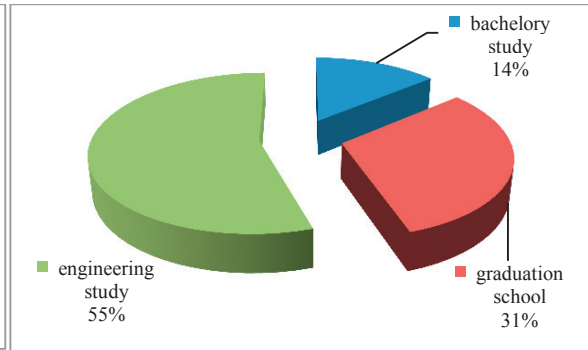


Figure 6. Respondents according education

During elaboration of data there was used test of homogeneity of contingency tables according Pearson criteria and Fisher exact test was used for tables, in which there was lower number then 5:

- from answers we can state confirmation of hypothesis No 1, that means assumption that majority of managers does not have proper idea about content of „knowledge management“ conception, meanwhile only 79% of quizzed persons have partially proper idea,
- from answers hypothesis No 2 can be confirmed that means assumption that Slovakian business subjects have built basic technological infrastructure, necessary for introduction of knowledge management with support of information and communication technology, which confirms 69% of respondents from quizzed business subjects,
- through evaluation of answers we can further state confirmation of hypothesis No 3, that means assumption that managers do not give enough attention to further professional education and investment to the human sources, which is confirmed by 37% of respondents,
- from answers we can state also negation of hypothesis No 4, that means assumption that in Slovakian business subjects there is not enough emphasis on firm's or knowledge culture, including communication channels and relations between individual wearers of knowledge,
- answers negated hypothesis No 5, that means assumption that managers does not know how to identify importance and expected contribution for introduction of knowledge management.

Through testing of five partial hypothesis of research also main hypothesis has been confirmed, that means assumption that in Slovakian business subjects personal, organizational and technical assumption, which are necessary for introduction of knowledge management are fulfilled only partially.

But positive discovery has been interest of quizzed managers about knowledge management that expressed in open question of realized research. Such interest of the managers is orientated for example to the education in this area that means lectures, seminars, conferences, etc. They asked also for concrete process during implementation of knowledge management to the firm, as well as possibility of invested means return, etc. Here we can see space for other activities, connected with informing of managers and other employees of organizations and firms, for example also offer of publication, preparation of seminars and conferences, etc.

## Conclusion

If business subject want to achieve by their activity increased performance and innovation, they must make steps that lead to the permanent increasing of quality during the process of whole life education and individuals' development, as well as organization as a whole. Knowledge about clients, competitors, products, production processes, etc., have high strategic value also due to the fact that they serve for achieving and maintaining of competition advantage. But in the practice it is more complex, since there is not so easy for the firm to make change of individual knowledge, which is in the minds of employees to the firm's knowledge, which could be available for anybody, who needs them for effective performance of his job (Palaščáková, 2010). One of the possibilities that can provide prosperity of business subject also in Slovakia is applied system of knowledge management to the practice.

When we consider by this way about knowledge, any organization does not have natural competition advantage, but it can obtain it by the way that it removes obstacles for knowledge management introduction and that it obtains and maintains knowledge manager – specialist and it will provide for every employee permanent access to the information and support their permanent development. Learning organization must have created system and processes that could develop permanently abilities of the individuals, necessary for stated goals achievement.

Basic principles of knowledge management can be applied in production firm, business organization, education institution, health care, as well as in offices of civil service. At this level there is increased attention, given to the knowledge, system and systematical work with knowledge (Čarnický & Mesároš, 2006). This new process presents fusion of concepts from other different areas of human activity, where belong for example artificial intelligence, creation of knowledge systems, reengineering of firm's processes, management of human sources, or organizational behavior.

If a process of building a society based on knowledge economics advances, immediate commercial effects from knowledge production, its dissemination through educational processes and results application in a whole complex of economic processes will originate. It will be possible to appreciate, promptly and universally, what science, knowledge and education bring. Centralizing the academic and professional capacities will allow achieving, based on customer approach and corporate order, real economic effects, which are also acknowledged by market economy influence. By implementation and exercitation of knowledge management practically, in strategic meaning, we can expect from organizations:

- return on investment into human capital (qualification, capability, ... ),
- assessing human capital (sharing the vision, philosophy, the goals of an organization ...),
- management of self-development by an individual / team,
- higher working onset,
- better productivity, efficiency ,
- higher quality products which will satisfy constantly more demanding customers,
- gaining a competitive advantage, increasing a company's competitiveness
- improving the image and occupational reputation of a company,
- long-term perspective of employing individuals as well as an organization etc.

In the bosom of knowledge society knowledge economy has been gradually developed to the level of over national and knowledge management has been developed to the national level. Basic step to its application in practice is preparation of people for knowledge sharing through whole life education with goal to prepare people for knowledge management in every organization at organizational level and implementation of learning organization.

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