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## SELF ASSESSMENT AS A SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE PROCESS OF AN ORGANISATION IMPROVEMENT

**Abstract:** *Turbulent surrounding makes it necessary for an organisation to improve constantly and in a comprehensive way as well as adjust it to occurring changes. In knowledge society it seems rational to create the process of management by means of the use of pro-qualitative concepts, methods and tools enabling its effectiveness. It seems that self-assessment should be included in this group because its introduction favours growth of the level of organisational maturity solutions leading to the excellence of organisation functioning. The aim of the publication is the presentation of self-assessment significance as information and knowledge source conditioning later growth of the management process efficiency.*

**Keywords:** *knowledge, self-assessment, improvement, management process*

### 1. Introduction

Changing and complex surrounding in which 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations must function, makes it necessary for them to improve systematically and in a comprehensive way so that they can maintain the ability to survive and adapt to occurring changes. It is essential to gain competence conditioning adaptation to social, economic, technological, political and legal as well as ecological changes. What seems to be the key of an organisation's success in 21<sup>st</sup> century is complex integration, harmonising its functioning with needs or surrounding expectations. It is necessary to form action strategy, into which there comes the ability to use appearing chances and avoid dangers which can, to a great extent,

reduce effectiveness of organisation functioning as well as its development capabilities. It is crucial to work out such competence that will allow to maintain balance through changes introduction and strategies modification, the modification of structures, culture or identified processes conditioning the effectiveness and ability to set goals which are adequate to the needs of economic reality. Uncertainty, changeability and complexity of surrounding emphasise the difficulty in rational decision making in the realm of changes implementation. The changes mentioned should be started earlier than in competition in order to maintain competitive predominance. It becomes clear that chances to survive and develop should be seen in systematic and complex process of improvement, quality creation, intellectual capital, competence expansion, gaining, generating and using knowledge, which will allow to make resistance to changes smaller

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and challenges better to overcome. The presentation of knowledge significance in the process of organisation management is necessary as necessary becomes the presentation of self-assessment as a tool whose use has a beneficial influence on its process.

## 2. The notion and meaning of knowledge

Knowledge is perceived as a rare and hard to copy resource thanks to which human civilisation is made possible. The growth of surrounding turbulence at the end of 20th century became an impulse to perceive in it the source of chances to gain competitive predominance of an organisation. It has become the subject of direct and straightforward management, what has been seen in it is 'the resource of content (information and data) collected and made permanent in human mind, constituting a derivative of experience as well as the process of learning' (Mikołajczyk, 2003), and to a man attribute special skills in the field of understanding, collecting, using and processing information gained with its final result of obtaining the new one. This cognitive processing and combinations with obtained experience and the skill of learning leads to the extension of general information allowing to reflect reality in their mind and generate new parts of knowledge.

The effect of its use are innovations which are the chance to create modern and effective solutions conditioning constant improvement of the quality of identified in an organisation processes, the processes which enable to form changes in order to better use economic or social potential possessed (Drucker, 1992). Efficiently functioning knowledge management system favours necessary conditions to expand competence, which is used during the process of organisation's improvement, formation of pro-qualitative values or identified in an organisation processes. The perception of knowledge as

the quality, which is in the possession of a man, makes it constitute a catalyst for their actions making aware of the chances and ways how to use it (Buckley and Cartera, 2000).

The strive for optimising of management system, in the realm of which there can also be observed a subsystem of quality management or knowledge, has essential influence on the development of an organisation because it conditions 'comprehensive combining activity which overwhelms the net of connections and dependencies the processes of work and actively goes into the entity of subject functions' thus 'it is ,so to say, active function which controls the usage of resources and function coordination' (Steinman, 1992). Management may be understood, in a wide sense, as a system approach comprising the following determinants: 'purposefulness, structure, tools' and in a narrow sense, according to which it is 'controlling action of decision making, team leading, processes monitoring, monitoring of resources and information' (Piekarz, 2003). Comprehensive quality management favours the promotion and acceptance of the set of 'rules, methods, means, database, set of people and the nets of their interrelations, which allow to accept and realise the strategies of knowledge management in order to achieve the aims of an organisation' (Mikoła, 2006). Thus, subsystem of knowledge management should be seen as a tool which is able to integrate and support other subsystems which, in turn, have crucial influence on the efficiency of its functioning.

What is needed to create the system of knowledge management are the following:

- 1) Definitions of aims to achieve.
- 2) Creation of suitable relations (interrelations) between accepted set of rules, methods, tools, means, information and development of people interested.
- 3) Building of strategy of knowledge management.

- 4) Striving for integration knowledge management system with inner processes of organisation (business, culture, technology) enabling the achievement of additional value.
- 5) Assessment of synergy level between identified possibilities of behaviour and technology which condition survival in turbulent surrounding.
- 6) Creation of culture characterised by openness favouring the availability of knowledge on the level of the whole organisation and not only work team, providing with access to information.
- 7) Creation of the system of functioning control system.

The process of the creation of knowledge quality (the system of knowledge management) requires undertaking actions with the use of at least six aspects in which the following should be included (Mikula, 2006): purposeful, organisational, technological, legal, economic and social aspects. Within the range of knowledge management there should be distinguished two dimensions, i.e. strategic and operational (Skrzypek, 2002). Strategic dimension is connected with: the creation of awareness of knowledge significance, inscribing it into mission and vision, existing strategy, the creation of culture favouring quality optimising. However, the efficiency of operational system is connected to many actions, realisation of aims and completion of tasks to which should be included among others:

- 1) Identification, flow, gathering, selection, integration, storing, assessment, usage and knowledge development.
- 2) Definitions of the state of human mind (there is stored so called hidden knowledge), formation of behaviour types and attitudes of workers, creation of such conditions that would encourage cognitive possibilities, competence e.g. by means of motivation system optimising.
- 3) Definitions of the quality of knowledge possessed (the ability of creative

thinking, own problem solving and decision making).

- 4) The review of tools, methods, techniques used (used in the process problem solving).
- 5) Comparison with the proposals of scientists, solutions existing in other organisations.
- 6) Definitions of the quality of knowledge gained in organisational documents, procedures identified processes, practices used as well as used norms.
- 7) Definitions of information quality, its credibility in reference to surrounding reality, attributing to it structure (processing, interpretation, connection with the process of changes), the use of an organisation operation.
- 8) Definitions of methods of measurement and the way of systematisation, combination of knowledge with organisational mechanisms enables to its active use making its value and usability bigger, knowledge management aims at integration of concepts and possessed tools in order to lead to optimising the process of using and developing knowledge possessed.
- 9) The usage of the mind to created pioneering organisational and technological solutions, of which effect is an innovative product.

In the process of quality optimising a great role is attributed to operational knowledge which encompasses 'concepts, process realisation technologies, as well as heuristic methods. In the majority of cases it refers to inner standards of an organisation and publicised by means of documents (e.g. the books of management/standards, procedures or instructions), as well as trainings' (Urbaniak, 2010). One of the basic barriers in the process of knowledge usage is diffusion, which is often associated with knowledge sharing. This, in turn, explains its intense use. Its perception as a resource, which has a key significance in the process of gaining competitive predominance, makes it possible for the problems to get to it and

proper use of it occur. Technological, product, operational or market knowledge strengthens its value in the situation when all workers have access to it and on whom product or action quality depends (Perechuda and Sobińska, 2008).

Knowledge flow depends on, above all, an individual entity, created inner and outer structure. The quality of knowledge transfer depends on those elements, thus what should be taken into account is the fact that they should be characterised by openness, neither of them could be hermetically closed and each element could be able to absorb as well as emit it. The flow of knowledge depends on existing quality relation between the elements of created system. In final effect, it generates values (Sveiby, 2005). The system of knowledge management favours knowledge expansion, gaining information and skills used in the process of problem solving and decision making, which gives the chance to reflect reality in the human mind, work out creative attitude and creative thinking essential during the process of new solution making. Such stance has a great impact on the growth of efficiency and effectiveness of the system of quality management, functioning of identified processes. This, obviously, constitutes the chance for new product development, optimising of costs structure, the improving of efficiency of action and using resources possessed.

In conditions of new economy, knowledge quality is the factor which guarantees the success of an organisation. It is seen as a resource which is created under the influence of possessed skills, experience, which clarifies its ability of effective reaction and reply to surrounding changes as well as the needs of customers. An organisation running in the conditions of turbulent surrounding and the society of knowledge, requires competence gaining in the field of dynamic processes encompassing both inner side of an organisation as well as the variety of relations with surrounding. Therefore, it is essential to emphasise the quality of non-

material resources – knowledge, information, mutual relations, because they constitute the source of competitive predominance giving chance to general innovations, seen as the determinant of novelty and competitiveness of an organisation (Skrzypek, 2008).

### **3. Self-assessment as a tool supporting the process of knowledge quality formation**

Self-assessment is defined as one of the tools making the chance of effective and efficient management greater, which is possible thanks to constant and comprehensive improvement of existing organisational solutions. Self-assessment should be also perceived as a source of information about currently achieved results, which becomes absolutely useful in the process of decision making, planning, implementing and strategy management or the use of tools in the process of optimising of possessed resources usage. Presently, self-assessment has been gaining in popularity in the whole world as a tool used in order to measure progress in an organisation, which favours integration of management system and claiming that striving for organisational excellence is an idea present in everyday practices.

The process of self-assessment aims at striving towards improving existing in an organisation solutions, which is reflected in the level of efficiency and effectiveness. It constitutes the chance to make the ability of fulfilling requirements of quality optimising greater, make organisation functioning better as well as the level of identification higher. It should encompass all organisational steps striving for the formation of a team conditioning optimal use of possessed capital thanks to proper use of human capital. Conduct of self-assessment gives the chance to identify weak and strong points of a surveyed organisation, to define chances and possibilities resulting from surrounding,

vitaly influencing on the quality of the creation of its current effectiveness, optimal use of possessed and the creation of future resources in such a way that would allow to create the strategy including a set of key decisions conditioning permanent success achievement in the future. Self-assessment makes the chances of defining whose needs and how an organisation should fulfil higher, in which areas of market it should operate and what type of knowledge it should possess – competence is necessary in this point in order to achieve economic effectiveness. Self-assessment by means of orientation towards constant improvement of all organisational elements favours the improvement of knowledge quality, skills of doing something in the way that would make the chance of an organisation higher, the chance of achievement and maintaining for a longer period of time competitive predominance on the market.

The use of self-assessment allows to monitor and measure in order to define and estimate present improvement results and future directions as well as needs resulting from the changes in surrounding. This constitutes a premise to the implementing actions aimed at making the distance of an organisation closer to realise set goals and making the effectiveness of system organisation greater. The tool of self-assessment enables measurement conduct and definitions ‘in what place on the way to excellence there is enterprise and allows to understand flaws in order to identify their sources, which may constitute the base of the assessment of the level of implementation of TQM in an organisation’ (Pajor, 2011). Thus, what should be claimed is that ‘it is useful for each and every organisational entity, desiring to develop and control the implementation of TQM concept, and using it in a cyclic way allows to make measurement because there appears the necessity of result comparison (Bugdol, 2008).

Self-assessment might be attributed the following functions (Zymonik *et al.*, 2013):

verifying (the presentation of a subjective estimation of organisational solutions), comparative (the comparison of current state with the past – definitions of changes in the level of organisational solutions maturity), informative (providing information, knowledge on the subject of a variety of spheres of organisation functioning essential in the process of rational decision making), initiating (the initiation of the use of correctional and preventive operations in order to improve a chosen strategy), integrating (making bigger the chance of the usage different criteria in assessment and reducing the risk of mistake making), the function of making aware (making knowledge quality of organisation functioning greater), or culture function (the growth of acceptance to create quality, gain knowledge, organisational learning).

Self-assessment enables the realisation of assumptions and postulates of precursors of quality management (W. E. Deming, K. Ishikawa, J. Juran), heading for making functioning of an organisation easier, the organisation perceived as a system made up of interrelated processes. What should be done are identification, documentation, controlling of operation and improvement. Such actions favour making value for a customer greater. The perception of self-assessment as a tool of improving of organisation functioning facilitates business maturity, makes the improvement of final results control, the effectiveness of predicting and plan realizing better. Constant improvement influence in a positive way on the creation of infrastructure and culture of an organisation, necessary to realise the concepts and practices of management which are essential to make effective transfer of organisation orientation from its inner side towards perspective of the orientation to the needs of surrounding, making organisational maturity solutions greater, defined as control, predictability and effectiveness (Lockamy and McCormack, 2004). Thus, the aim of introduction of self-assessment is to create a perfect object which is characterised

by: ‘abundance in positiveness (goodness, advantages), completeness (completeness), purposefulness, functionality, simplicity, harmony, consistence (accordance in a variety – the excellence of accordance) and quality (Borys and Rogala, 2011). Such action makes the chances of development greater, the development which is characterised by permanence, ability to survive on the market, maintaining balance between: the possibility of supplying innovative products, finding the sources of their funding, achievement of expected level of costs, which conditions effective realisation of short-term and long-term goals (Lober, 2009).

#### 4. Practical use of self assessment in the process of improvement

Self-assessment favours proper diagnosing of the level of maturity of organisational solutions, definitions of the stage of the development of implemented system, conditioning the initiation of its

improvement. It explains the fact that that the criteria of maturity assessment May not be construed in a static way but should maintain ‘dynamic features, in spite of the fact that the assessment of maturity does not have endless character but is conducted periodically’. Therefore, it should be agreed that the present state of those systems functioning is never ideal and always can be improved. Characteristic of action towards constant improvement unknown to management characteristics of target state, which can be achieved. The only azimuth of endeavors and efforts of an enterprise is characterised by transient aims and intentions” (Jedynak, 2007).

It can be agreed upon that it is rational to distinguish (Haffer, 2011): initial level of maturity, basic approach, defined system approach, constant improvement management and the most excellent in its class. In Table 1 there is a short characteristics of mentioned levels.

**Table 1.** Maturity levels (excellence levels) of the system of organisation management

<p><b>Level 1 – initial level of organisation solutions maturity</b> It is characterised by: lack of respect towards rules and regulations or identification of business processes necessary for implementation of normalized management systems. Organisation may gain success through individual actions defined as ‘heroic efforts’.</p>
<p><b>Level 2 – basic approach (repetition of processes)</b> In an organisation there have been formed quality management basics aiming at repetitive nature of processes as well as eliminating inconsistencies. Lack of taking steps towards quality optimisation. What is observed here is the tendency to use information obtained from basic control measurement processes. Thus, process discipline is present which allows to repeat successes achieved beforehand.</p>
<p><b>Level 3 – defined system approach</b> An organisation possesses competence allowing to define business processes which are thought to be understandable and integrated in the field of system approach. It means that there has been implemented the system of quality management which is systematically and comprehensively improved through active use of managing tools and informational and technological solutions. The management of an organisation strives for the integration of local environment standards system, safety and work hygiene management as well as realisation of actions responsible socially.</p>
<p><b>Level 4 – constant improvement management</b> An organisation possesses competence conditioning the management of constant improvement. All requirements of efficiency and functioning of quality management effectiveness have been</p>



fulfilled as well as basic requirements of business excellence models (EFQM, MBNQA, PNJ). There has appeared high level of system integration, improvement goes according to defined methods, methodologies and concepts, what, in turn, leads to comprehensive integration of processes in the whole organisation. Such activity leads to the provision of additional value and achievement of the state of complete customer satisfaction.

**Level 5 – the most excellent in its class**

An organisation should be created as one the best in its class, able to full integration of used management standards, achievement of constant success – capability of development in the long run. An organisation is characterised by competence in the aspect of effective strategy choice structureoptimising or creating the culture which is able to flexibly accept the change. Each organisation which gained level 5 should be treated as the closest to the excellence.

Source: self - elaborate based on (Haffer, 2011; Paulk, 1995; Hormon, 2003; Cobb, 2003)

Self-assessment makes the chance bigger of the growth of the level of the maturity of organisational solutions. Promoting pro-qualitative management favours active realisation of the principles of quality management proposed in normative solutions. According to PN-EN ISO 9001:2009 norm, crucial influence on functioning and development of an organisation exert: orientation towards a customer, leadership, commitment of people,

process approach and system approach, constant improvement, decision making on the basis of facts as well as beneficial relations with suppliers. Their perception and complying with the regulations and requirements of PN-EN ISO 9004:2010 norm (Table 2) favours directing an organisation towards permanent success by means of the use of quality management approach.

**Table 2.** Permanent success of an organisation determinants

Strategy and policy: forming, developing and communicating of strategy and policy.
Resource management: financial resource, people in an organisation, suppliers and partners, infrastructure, work environment, knowledge, information and technology, natural resources.
Process management: planning and process steering, responsibility and process privileges .
Monitoring, measurement, analysis and review: surrounding monitoring, identification of changes, gained results measurement, defining of the level of aims realisation (inner audits, self-assessment, benchmarking), the analysis of collected data in order to make rational decisions, the review of information based on monitoring, measurement and analysis.
Improvement, innovations and learning: comprehensive and constant improvement aiming at the introduction of improvement elements, making maturity level higher, implementing innovative solutions enabling an organisation to adapt to turbulent surrounding, accepting organisational learning, creating the ability to combine individual competence with the possibilities of team with organisational aims.

Source: elaborate based on: PN-EN ISO 9004:2010

Respecting quality management principles and norms of PN-EN ISO 9004:2010 leads to orientation of organisation management towards permanence of its success, so it favours the creation of abilities to set goals, rational decision making, favours the creation of abilities to permanent and

balanced development in a longer period of time.

Subjective area of work takes into account the character of mining branch. Empirical research was conducted in the group of 25 companies of exploitation and refining building aggregate functioning in

małopolskie and podkarpackie province. Their main subject of action is mining of raw materials different from energetic (code CB according to Polish Category of Action).

Factories, apart from exploring, processing and purifying of natural aggregate offer also geologic, repair and transport services. Few of them, additionally, works as producers of

cement, loose material, glue and mortar.

Information and data gathered during empirical research enabled to make self-assessment of key elements from the point of view of the growth of organisational solutions maturity leading to the achievement of permanent success of an organisation (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Self-assessment of key elements for growth of maturity level

Key element	Maturity level characteristics	Maturity level assessment
<b>What is management based on?(Management)</b>	The concentration falls onto balancing identified needs of interested parties. The emphasis is put on constant improvement as the part of the centre of an organisation's interest.	4
<b>What is the attitude to leadership? (Management)</b>	The approach is pro-active and there are authorizations delegated to decision making.	3
<b>How is it decided on the important?(Strategy and policy)</b>	Decisions are based on strategy and are connected with the needs of the interested.	3
<b>What is needed to get results? (Resources)</b>	Resources are effectively managed and in the way that takes into account their shortages.	4
<b>How are actions organised? (Processes)</b>	Actions are organised in an effective and efficient system of quality management, based on process approach which allows for flexibility.	3
<b>How are results obtained? (Monitoring and measurements)</b>	The results are consistent, positive, forecast with permanent trends. Improvements and innovations are introduced systematically.	4
<b>How are results monitored? (Monitoring and measurements)</b>	Key indicators of effectiveness are in compliance with organisational strategy and used to monitor.	4
<b>How are decisions about improvement priorities made? (Improvement, innovations and learning)</b>	Priorities of improvement are based on the needs and expectations of some interested parties as well as suppliers and the people of an organisation.	3
<b>How does learning happen?(Improvement, innovations and learning)</b>	Learning happens systematically from successes and failures of an organisation.	2
<b>Average value of maturity level in the realm of key elements pricing</b>		<b>3,33</b>

Source: self-elaborate based on an organisational documents

Gained average result - 3,33 certifies that surveyed group of an organisation should be qualified do maturity level 3 – defined

system approach. What seems worrying is gaining only 2nd level– repetition of results in the field of improvement, innovation and



organisational learning. In the remaining research fields organisations got satisfactory results. Research conduct with the use of self-assessment allows to gain information, knowledge essential to effective conduct of improvement process.

Organisations functioning in market economy must know how to start relationships with those inner and outer interested people, on whom in a direct way, there depends their development and adapt to occurring changes in further surrounding which has indirect influence on them. Comprehensive acceptance of one of the basic principles of quality management seems to be a rational way of behaviour. To be more precise, it is constant development, which leads to systematic and comprehensive improvement of present situation of organisational solutions and is a necessary condition to maintain flexibility in organisation adapting to appearing challenges. In order to do so, organisations strive for the achievement of the state of excellence understood as the highest level of quality management, action, which should reflect itself in characteristics and features of an offered product.

The success of an organisation depends on the level of its flexibility in adapting to the changes happening in economy world. This skill is a dominant factor in gaining competitive predominance of an organisation as well as its development skill. It seems that the implication of self-assessment favours information collecting, knowledge necessary to restructure, reorganise, make innovative level of organisational solutions higher. All of these make reflection in the level of effectiveness and make it possible to gain competitive predominance. Development of an organisation requires flexible acceptance of changes, it may be defined as: the process of changes happening subsequently in an organisation. If they have positive and permanent character there may be progress mentioned (Machaczka, 1998). The use of self-assessment favours information gaining, knowledge conditioning the maintenance of

effectiveness in the search for possibilities and changes implementation or opportunities identification, of which making use leads to progress. It becomes crucial to work out competence, skills, conditioning the maintenance of consistence, harmonising of particular system elements for its functioning. Self-assessment favours the identification of areas and directions conditioning making changes which enable to adapt to transformations happening in different spheres of surrounding.

What should be remembered in creating knowledge quality is that it is the resource which is hard to get and use in a complex way, it is characterised by multi-dimensional aspect (difficulty in monosemantic interpretation), tendency to become outdated in a fast way, ability to get a variety of poses and dynamics (mere fraction of its gaining may cause a significant increase).

## 5. Conclusion

The conduct of self-assessment allows to gain information, knowledge necessary to diagnose current situation and undertake actions timing at adaptation of an organisation to market reality, by introducing modifications conditioning its effective and efficient functioning and development. Pro-qualitative management obliges to indulge into the process of improvement, self-assessment of all interested by functioning and developing of an organisation. Above all, what is expected is active participation of workers who should actively take part in the process of improvement and definition of the realm and direction of introduced changes. Improvement with the use of self-assessment makes system more effective, makes it possible to introduce changes which make it possible to gain and maintain competitive predominance. The use of the tool in question, makes it possible to carry out systematic and rational analyses which make the efficiency of an organisational learning better. This, in turn, leads to make workers

more open to changes, making aware of the necessity of creating new behaviour types and attitudes crucial to adapt to new conditions. Currently, the greatest significance is attributed to the creation of the skill of changes identification in the needs of customers and flexible response to them. Systematic self-assessment conducting

allows to obtain information and knowledge perceived as elusive resource, resource which are hard to copy and vital to find effective solutions which let maintain competitiveness of an organisation in conditions of dynamically changeable and complex surrounding.

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