

# ROLE OF KNOWLEDGE CONTINUITY AND COMPETENCIES IN THE PROCESS OF DELEGATION\*

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The objective of organization is the effective management leading to the effective utilization of time, to minimizing errors and to increasing the performance of organizations. By effective delegation process of tasks and competence, which is based on selection of appropriate employee with utilization of his competencies it can improve the performance not only of those employees in the process of delegation but all organization ultimately. In order to achieve the effective satisfaction of the delegated task, it is necessary to find a suitable and a competent employee. The objective of this paper is to analyse of the importance identification of competencies in the process of delegation. The paper is prepared on a theoretical basis. One of the conclusions is that by focusing the management of organization on competencies of employees, which includes the knowledge and they ensure their continuity the organization can achieve improvement of the management process ultimately.

competencies; knowledge; knowledge continuity; process of delegation

## INTRODUCTION

The goal of organizations is efficient management. A means to achieve an organization's goals is the proper and efficient work of its managers. One of the basic manager's tools is the delegation of tasks and powers. Delegating is associated with a number of mistakes, occurring not because managers do not understand the basis and principles of delegation, but because they are not able or willing to apply them. Managers who want to delegate power efficiently have to be able to grant their subordinates the right to decide. On the part of the manager this is definitely a way of creating space for his/her managerial work. In order to ensure that a delegated task is performed efficiently, it is necessary to find a suitable and competent worker.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The objective of the article is to determine the importance of competencies in the process of delegation. The sub-goal is to specify the importance of ensuring knowledge continuity in organizations by the process of delegation.

The secondary sources of data have been used, in particular scientific studies targeted at competencies, process of delegation and utilization of knowledge management and knowledge continuity in the organization. The data collected have been processed using the methods of induction, deduction, analysis, and synthesis.

## RESULTS

### Process of delegation

The process of delegation can either be one-off or a relatively permanent authorisation of subordinates to carry out certain tasks. The factual aspect deals with the questions of "what" is to be delegated and "to whom", which requires a perfect knowledge of subordinates, in particular in terms of their qualification prerequisites. The formal aspect deals with the question of "how" to delegate and requires a good grasp of the personality structure of subordinates (Muir, 1995; Hron, 2006).

According to Eales-White (2005) and Tureckiová (2007) delegating is a highly efficient means of collaborators' development – it is a style of managing people, which incorporates a high level of their independence and participation in decision-making. It is very different from direct management as regards the level of directiveness and support – it anticipates not only the manager's/leader's capability and willingness to delegate and the ability of the subordinate to perform the delegated tasks, but also the subordinate's willingness to perform the delegated tasks and be co-responsible for the result. Tureckiová (2007) draws attention to the fact that delegating is voluntary and cannot be imposed on managers.

In the process of delegation the problem of delegating responsibility is often discussed. Truneček et al. (1995) says that delegating means that a subordinate is assigned certain tasks not on a case-to-case but permanent basis. The task has to be delegated together with the relevant responsibility (Hind, 1991; Truneček et al., 1995).

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On the contrary, according to Hron (2006) responsibility is fundamentally non-delegatable. It originates in the process of delegation and means that each executive is responsible for all tasks, activities and decision-making areas entrusted to him/her although some of them are further delegated, together with powers, to his/her subordinates. It is the opinion of Hron (2006) that each executive is responsible for his/her work as well as the work of his/her subordinates. On the other hand, pursuant to Schwalbe and Schwalbe (1995) as well as Truneček et al. (1995) responsibility is partially delegated together with the assignment of a task. Lauer (2008) states that while it is considered quite common to delegate work, it is the manager's choice whether and to what extent s/he is willing to delegate responsibility to subordinates and grant them relevant powers. Therefore it is essential for executives to realise the advantages of delegating responsibility and to overcome the unwillingness to provide the people on their team with the relevant level of responsibility.

### Knowledge continuity

Knowledge continuity is an area associated with knowledge management and defines the ratio of knowledge retained by the organization when a knowledge employee leaves the organization and the knowledge leaving together with the knowledge employee. Knowledge continuity management is a branch of knowledge management. While knowledge management focuses on the capturing and sharing of know-how important for colleagues who have similar tasks in the organization, knowledge continuity management is targeted at the transfer of crucial knowledge from departing employees to their successors (Beazley et al., 2002).

If organizations want to use their knowledge potential efficiently, it is crucial to ensure a continuous transfer of knowledge in particular within the organization and no later than at the time when employees leave the organization. At this time the organization should already have a successor who possesses the same critical knowledge necessary for the work as his/her predecessor does. By ensuring maximum knowledge continuity, it is possible to eliminate the negative consequences of knowledge loss (for example, an employee leaving to join a competitor, retirement, an employee's death, etc.).

Knowledge continuity is very important for organizations as it increases the willingness of new employees to gain new experience, reduces stress and improves their morals (Strack, 2008, cit. Stam, 2009). It is essential for employees to transfer and share their knowledge in the course of their work, on a regular basis, but certainly before leaving the organization. The aim of knowledge continuity is to find a suitable successor for the departing employee to prevent any loss of knowledge or to eliminate it to the maximum possible extent (Stam, 2009).

### Competencies

According to Kuběš et al. (2004) the term "competency" is defined as an ability or a capability to behave in

a certain way. Competency is always manifested as a certain form of behaviour. A definition by Woodruff (1992, cit. Kuběš et al., 2004) describes competency as a set of behaviour patterns that the incumbent needs to bring to a position in order to perform the tasks and functions with competency. A result-oriented definition of competency, as mentioned by Boyatzis (1982), says that it is a person's ability to behave in a manner that corresponds to work requirements within the parameters set by the environment in the given organization and thus to achieve the desired results.

Kuběš et al. (2004) deal with competency manifestations, and according to them competency manifests in behaviour, in particular in behaviour related to the performance of work tasks. By specifying the requirements that a given position imposes or will impose on an employee, we can identify the required competencies. The level of such competencies is measurable (Kuběš et al., 2004). The identified competencies and their level are then used to produce a competency model (McClelland, 1973; Rothwell, Lindholm, 1999).

Although competencies are not restricted purely to managerial positions, managerial competencies have earned a key position in the strategic development of organizations. There is not unambiguous agreement when it comes to the set of competencies a manager should possess in order to perform his/her managerial tasks well. The efficiency of a manager's work is evaluated on the grounds of a number of aspects and the selection of criteria is much broader than in case of experts' work (Kuběš et al., 2004). Managerial competencies play a special role in the competency approach as they relate solely to managers.

An important part of managerial competencies is the ability to delegate tasks and powers to subordinates. Efficient delegation requires the understanding of processes in the company and a good grasp of one's powers and responsibilities as well as of powers and responsibilities of colleagues and subordinates.

On the part of a subordinate, delegation means motivation. Motivation consists of several factors, one of them being one's own development – learning new things, obtaining independence and more complex tasks and the related recognition in one's professional as well as personal life. Since executives cannot delegate responsibility for the general performance of a task, they should not delegate any power unless they are willing to find feedback tools that would help them to find out whether the delegated power is applied to support corporate goals or plans. Frequently the resistance to power delegating and trusting subordinates arises from the low level of the superior's planning and his/her understandable concern that s/he will lose control of the situation.

The ability to delegate well is not common-place for all managers, but experience can be gained in practice; often the abilities to delegate are developed in courses dedicated to efficient delegation that helps managers to cope with the issues of managing all tasks and activities and delegating powers to subordinates as well as to deter-

mine what to delegate and how, etc. Managers should be able to understand the essence of delegating and how it can facilitate their work, be aware of the points they should concentrate on when delegating, identify priorities in their work programme, eliminate mistakes that are common in the process of delegation and prevent inefficient delegation, plan delegating, efficiently delegate powers to the team, master knowledge and skills that will help to efficiently delegate, work successfully with subordinates, etc.

### Selecting a suitable worker to whom a task can be delegated

The main objective of the delegating person is to select a competent worker to whom a task can be delegated. In the process of delegation this is the first objective to be achieved (see Fig. 1). Simultaneously, it is necessary to evaluate, in compliance with the conclusion of the previous chapter, an employee's competencies.

In order to make the right choice and delegate the task to a suitable employee or, if relevant, to distinguish among a larger number of candidates, it is necessary to identify the competencies of individual candidates. Spencer and Spencer (1993) categorise individual competencies as threshold and differentiating. The threshold competencies are the minimal requirements for behaviour, abilities, skills and knowledge that are necessary for the performance of a work task. The differentiating competencies are those that somehow differentiate the employee from an expected standard. Using these, work performance can be evaluated as exceptional, average or poor. In

the process of selecting a person to whom a task is to be delegated only, the differentiating competencies matter as it is assumed that all employees in the given position have the threshold competencies.

According to Kubeš et al. (2004) there are hundreds of behaviour manifestations that help an employee succeed in the given position. Competency analyses focus on the identification of critical manifestations that singularise excellent employees from those who are average or poor workers.

In a global corporate environment a delegating person, in search of a suitable person to be delegated with a task, does not have to restrict himself/herself to the closest circle of collaborators. If there are means to compare the needed competencies with those that are possessed by the employees, the process of selecting a suitable person can be quite efficient. In this context "efficient" means quick and involving a low level of risk that the task to be delegated is delegated to a non-competent person. A quite efficient method of identifying an employee disposing of the needed competencies is to use corporate knowledge systems that in fact are catalogues of employee's knowledge.

### DISCUSSION

The aim of a responsible manager is the optimal management of employees and the efficient use of time and minimisation of errors that can jeopardise the running of the organization or its results. This aim can be achieved by the optimal use of employees' competencies in the process of the delegation of tasks and powers. An efficient process of delegating based on the selection of a suitable employee and the use of his/her competencies can contribute to the improvement of the performance of the delegating person, the person who is the subject of delegation, the team and subsequently the organization as a whole. Simultaneously, it is necessary to realise that also the delegating employee has to have the required competencies in order to select a suitable employee who is to fulfil the task.

The crucial phase of the process of delegating is the selection of the person to whom a task is delegated (Fig. 2). The selection process and its complexity can vary according to the demandingness of the task to be delegated. In elementary cases knowing the task to be delegated and the candidates to whom it could be delegated is sufficient. In case of more complex tasks, attention has to be paid not only to the phase of selection and the use of specific criteria, but also to the phase of task assignment when the selected candidate has to have the content of the task explained as well as the responsibility and the powers arising from the task assignment and simultaneously has to be motivated to fulfil the task. To facilitate more complex processes of delegating, employee competence cataloging systems can be used (supported by knowledge management systems), in particular in the environment of global multinational corporations. In these corporations tasks are often performed by international teams of workers.

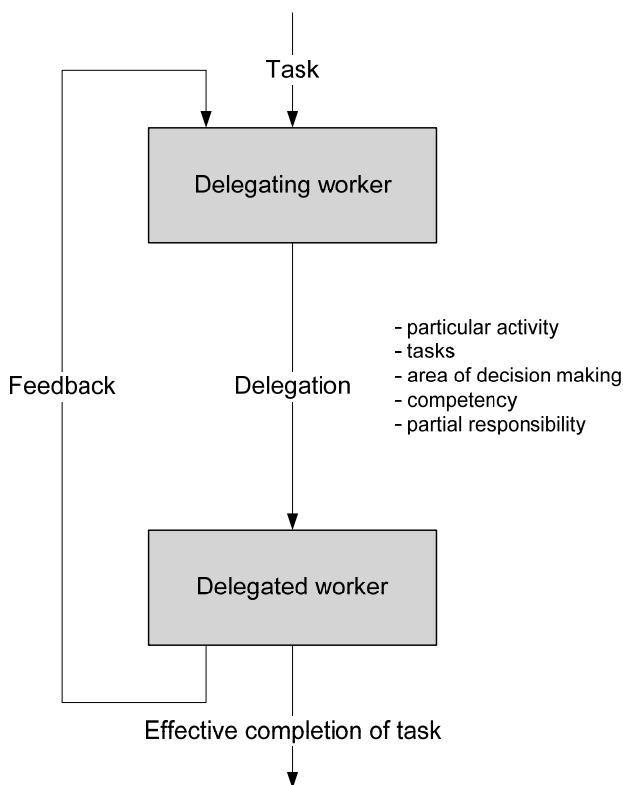


Fig. 1. Model of process of delegation with feedback (by authors)

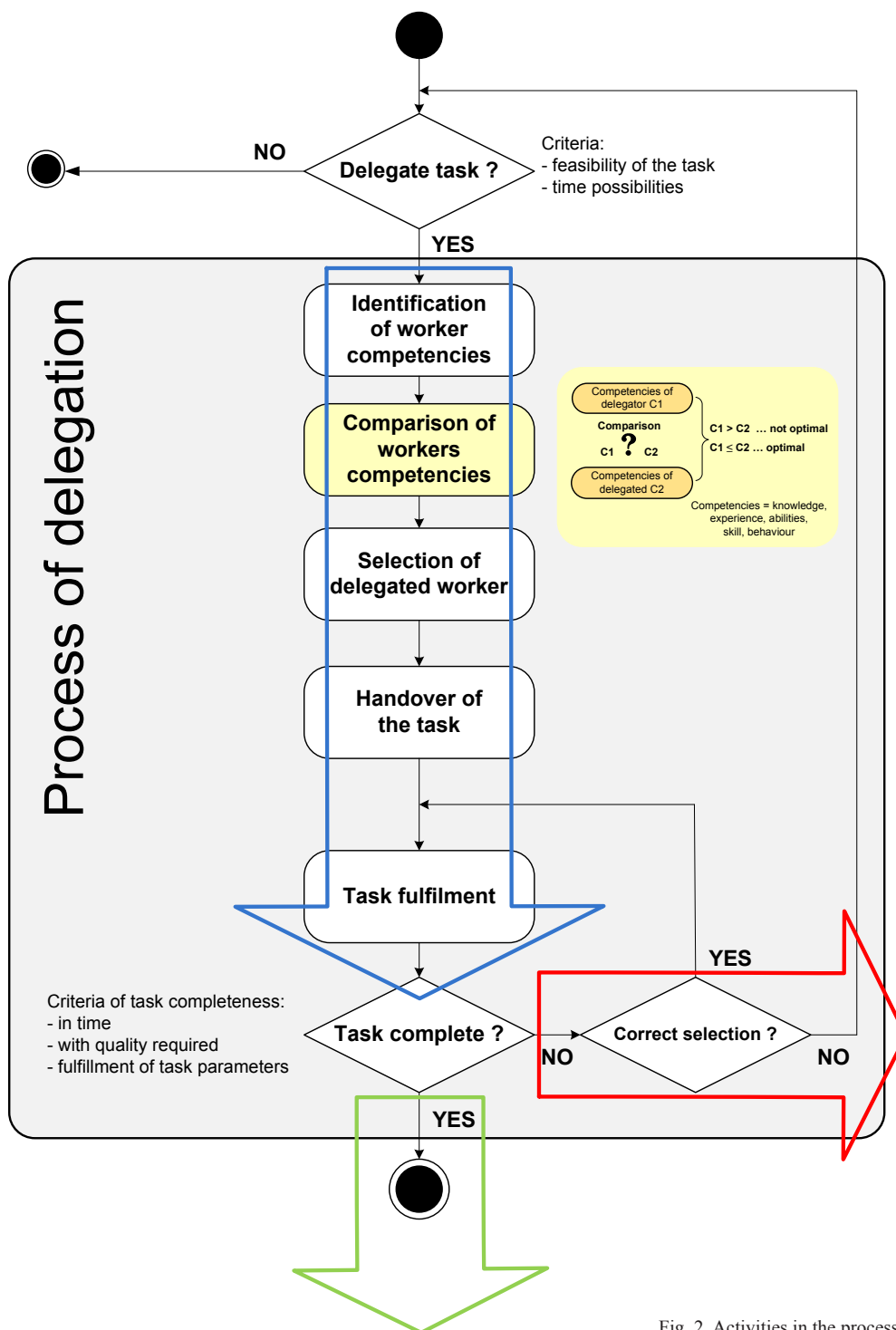


Fig. 2. Activities in the process of delegation

If the aim of a person delegating a task is to divest himself/herself, even partially, of responsibility, then this is a bad approach to delegating. It is not possible to delegate only routine chores and less important tasks, as this may be perceived by the delegated person as hindering his/her personal development and abuse by the superior. On the contrary, delegating more difficult and demanding tasks to specialists, even external, who can come up with a better solution to the problem and thus improve the management process is, in my opinion, an advantage.

The more the requirements for the performance of the task are in harmony with the required competencies, the

higher the probability that such an employee will perform the task brilliantly and this is, in fact, the best selection criterion. Within the process of delegating, competencies are compared in the following order: the delegating employee → the employee to be delegated. The comparison: the delegating employee ↔ the employee to be delegated takes place if the delegating person delegates a task, for which they themselves have the relevant competencies, however, which needs to be delegated, for instance, due to a lack of time or because the person to be delegated has better competencies or needs to be motivated, etc. The comparison of competencies in the process of delegating

is described by the relationships  $C1 \leq C2$  and  $C1 > C2$ . If the competencies of the delegated person are higher than or equal to the competencies of the delegating employee, it can be presumed that the task will be performed optimally. If the delegating person possesses better competencies than the other person, s/he should decide whether the task should not be fulfilled by him/her or whether it should not be delegated to another employee, if available. Another possible scenario is that the delegating person with lower competencies than the one to be delegated wishes to provide this employee with an opportunity for personal development or by delegating wishes to save time.

The process of delegating can be identified with the process of ensuring knowledge continuity in an organization as these processes are parallel the same. The objective of the process of knowledge continuity should be to find an optimal candidate to become a successor of the employee who is about to leave (i.e. for reasons of retirement or joining a competitor). Provided knowledge continuity is applied in the organization, the departing employee transfers to his/her successor, selected on the basis of identification of his/her competencies and subsequent comparison with the competencies of the departing employee, his/her knowledge and experience. See the blue arrow in Fig. 2. As soon as the knowledge is transferred to the successor, s/he will be able to take over the tasks of the predecessor without major problems and the organization will thus preserve the knowledge (see the green arrow). In the opposite, if the knowledge is not transferred to the successor or there is no suitable successor, this will cause the so-called "organizational forgetting" and the organization will lose the knowledge (the red arrow in Fig. 2).

## CONCLUSION

Efficient delegating is an important managerial task. Its success depends based on the abilities to communicate with people, to anticipate things and to create conditions for decision-making. The analysis of the relationship between the process of delegating and employee competencies carried out in the contribution has shown that the selection of an employee on the grounds of competencies has an impact on the quality of delegating. Knowledge

transfer contributes to the improvement of employee competencies and this in turn improves the final effect of the delegated task and helps to find, by identifying competencies, a suitable successor for the departing employee and thus ensure knowledge continuity. It is therefore possible to state that an organization, in which tasks are often delegated, focuses on ensuring knowledge continuity.

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**Postavení kontinuity znalostí a kompetencí v procesu delegování.**

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Cílem organizací je efektivní řízení vedoucí k efektivnímu využití času, minimalizaci chyb a zvyšování výkonnosti organizací. Efektivním procesem delegování, založeným na výběru vhodného pracovníka s použitím jeho kompetencí, je možné zvýšit výkonnost nejenom účastníků procesu delegování, ale v konečném důsledku celé organizace. Aby bylo dosaženo efektivního splnění delegovaného úkolu, je nutné nalézt vhodného, kompetentního pracovníka. Článek se zaměřuje na kompetence a kontinuitu znalostí coby předpoklad pro výběr osoby pro delegování úkolu. Kompetence nejsou záležitostí pouze manažerů, ale i specialistů. Velkou výhodou kompetenčního přístupu je měřitelnost úrovně kompetencí podle stanovených kritérií a možnosti jejich rozvoje.

Cílem článku je analýza významu identifikace kompetencí v procesu delegování. Článek je zpracován na teoretickém základě. K práci byly využity sekundární zdroje dat, především vědecké práce zaměřené na kompetence, proces delegování a uplatnění znalostního managementu v organizaci. Získaná data byla zpracována na základě metod indukce, dedukce, analýzy a syntézy. Jedním ze závěrů článku je skutečnost, že zaměří-li se vedení organizace na kompetence zaměstnanců, jejichž součástí jsou i znalosti, a zajistí-li jejich kontinuitu, dosáhne v konečném důsledku zlepšení řídicího procesu.

kompetence; znalosti; kontinuita znalostí; proces delegování

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