

EVALUATION OF SPECIALISTS' COMPETITIVENESS IN MODERN ENTERPRISE

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Abstract. The competitiveness of enterprise to a great extent is dependent on each employee's as specialist's competitiveness, therefore it is important to evaluate the specialists' competitiveness and promote its development in modern enterprises as learning organization. At the end of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century increasing attention in social sciences is paid to the concept of competitiveness and its different contexts. At present, the competitiveness develops not only as the category of economics, but also as the main category of the science of pedagogy and education because at the beginning of the 21st century the paradigm of competitiveness changed significantly. Competitiveness is an integrative totality of an individual's qualities (qualities of a personality and a specialist) that ensures its viability, including development and self-actualization, under the conditions of changing environment. The basis for the personality's competitiveness is experience. While developing the methodology for the evaluation of staff' competitiveness in modern enterprise, it was important to substantiate the structure of competitiveness, indications of competitiveness and use this methodology in empirical research. The worked out methodology for the evaluation of a specialist's competitiveness which was grounded on the results of previously performed studies was approbated within the pilot research at one of the Latvian enterprises. The aim of this article is to publish the results of the specialists' competitiveness evaluation in a modern international insurance agency.

Keywords: learning organization, specialist's competitiveness, sustainability, modern enterprise.

Introduction

Since Latvia became the Member State of the European Union, the importance of our society's competitiveness, the competitiveness of our enterprises and each member's competitiveness had become even more important. The development of the competitiveness of the population of Latvia and the national economy must be ensured. The important means for the development of competitiveness are lifelong and lifewide education, therefore enterprises and other various institutions become learning organisations that promote the professional development and competitiveness of their staff. The competitiveness of an enterprise to a great extent depends on the competitiveness of each employee as a specialist, therefore it is important to evaluate the specialists' competitiveness and promote its development at modern enterprises.

The ecological and synergetic paradigms in social sciences, including education sciences, enable to study a personality and/or an organization as a self-developing, self-organizing and self-evaluating system that functions in various spheres and learns to live, plan and forecast; constructs and accumulates its own experience; that is able to choose and to be responsible for the consequences of its own actions under the conditions of modern changes. The synergetic approach enables to draw a conclusion that nowadays an individual and/or an organization as an open (dissipative) system must learn to live and change in the interaction with the changeable environment.

As we can see, in the old paradigm the competitiveness more often is related to the personality's success and victories over its competitor, sometimes it is related to an image of a harsh fighter, who has no mercy towards the enemy, competitor and who considers any means useful for achieving the goals. It is possible to draw the following conclusions from the substantiation of *the new paradigm of competitiveness*: crisis shall be attributed to all, even to the most successful entrepreneurs, the most advanced society and economy; however, to be competitive means to be able to adapt to new conditions, to overcome difficulties and to achieve more than before – before the crisis. In the new paradigm the ability to change, to live and develop in the changeable environment is particularly important. The development of an entrepreneur's (businessman's) competitiveness nowadays is related not only to the features characteristic to a leader, but, first of all, to the socio-psychological and moral characterizing indicators, the interaction of a personality with society, attitude towards other people, oneself, duties, moral and ethical values.

There are three spheres of the development of a specialist's competitiveness: 1) the sphere of professional activities; 2) the sphere of interaction with the environment, including interaction with

social environment – other people; 3) the sphere of a personality's self-development, including self-awareness and self-determination.

The aim of the article is to publish the results of theoretical and empirical research, including evaluation results of specialists' competitiveness and the worked out *Conception of Support and Promotion System for the Development of Specialists' Competitiveness at a Modern Enterprise*.

Materials and methods

Several trends of our theoretical research served as the methodological substantiation for studying, evaluation and promotion of specialists' competitiveness. During several years the authors of this article performed research in collaboration with Gita Katana (the chief specialist of the corporation "Balta" in Latvia).

The article authors' and other scientists' scientific publications became the theoretical base for the empirical research.

The theoretical trends of the research that are represented in this article are the following: 1) *Concurrentology*; 2) *Learning Organization*.

The aim of the research: to study and evaluate specialists' competitiveness in a modern insurance enterprise.

Research methods: analysis and evaluation of scientific literature, a questionnaire, performing mathematical processing of data.

- **Concurrentology**, including substantiation of the concepts: personality's competitiveness and specialist's competitiveness [1-8];

In order to support and promote the development of a specialist's competitiveness at an enterprise, at the beginning it is important to answer the following questions: What is **competitiveness**? What is the methodological basis for the assessment of competitiveness? These questions could be answered by studying the results of the research performed in the field of *Concurrentology, Ecology of Education and Management Sciences, including Personnel Management*.

After the theoretical research we can offer the definition of the competitiveness concept. *Competitiveness* is an integrative totality of an individual's qualities (qualities of a personality and a specialist) that ensures its viability, including development and self-actualization, under the conditions of changing environment. The competitive personality is characterized by the following qualities/features: 1) characterizing indicators of a personality orientation and self-conception, including determination and action oriented towards success; readiness to overcome difficulties and take a risk; persistence, adequate self-assessment and daring to take a risk; 2) well-developed self-regulation, including volition, stress endurance, self-reflection, including *analytical-evaluating* and *systemic thinking*; *personality's flexibility* (flexibility in thinking, emotional sphere, behaviour), the ability to make a decision; the responsibility for the made decisions and their consequences; 3) different competences, including professional competences and creativity as an ability, *oneself- (ego-) and environment- (eco-) oriented friendly thinking, attitude and behaviour*: observation of moral and ethical principles, principles of environmental, including social environment (community), balance and sustainability, readiness for co-operation with other people; 4) readiness to change oneself in order to maintain the balance with the changing environment, readiness to start changes in the environment on the basis of environment-friendly attitude and action.

- **Learning Organisation** [9-15].

It was important to scientifically substantiate **a modern enterprise as a knowledge organisation or a learning organisation**. Why was it so important? The modern enterprise can be friendly and supportive environment for promotion of specialists' competitiveness if it becomes a *knowledge organisation and sustaining*. A viable and sustainable system is only a system that is:

- open for new information;
- able to study the processes going on in the surrounding environment, including transformational processes;
- can learn from the own and others experience;

- on the basis of the obtained new information and new experience, ready to draw conclusions which are necessary for ensuring its viability and sustainability and ready to change continuously on the basis of these conclusions.

On the basis of the analysis and evaluation of scientific literature, we concluded that there were *seven basic principles* identified that enable an enterprise to become a learning organisation: 1) analysis and evaluation of environment; 2) vision and aims; 3) cooperation; 4) taking upon the initiative and risks; 5) control of study process; 6) recognition and enhancement; 7) continuation of professional development. We offer the eighth principle: development and improvement of specialists' competitiveness in the environment of the enterprise as a knowledge organisation.

In order it would be possible to study and evaluate the competitiveness of the research base enterprise employees, it was necessary to have a *research methodology*. For this purpose I. Katane, the author of the article, elaborated the methodology for the evaluation of a specialist's competitiveness, which was grounded on the results of previously performed studies [2; 3; 5] and which, in collaboration with G. Katana and I. Kristovska was approbated within the pilot research at one of the Latvian insurance enterprises.

The system of indicators for the evaluation of specialists' competitiveness consists of 66 indicators. The methodology elaborated and applied for the research aim comprises not only the system of indicators for the evaluation of competitiveness, but also a questionnaire developed in conformity with it, as well as the methodology for the determination of the specialist's competitiveness levels and the competitiveness coefficient.

The elaborated research methodology of competitiveness enables to evaluate each specialist's competitiveness not only according to 66 criteria, but also to determine each specialist's competitiveness coefficient and competitiveness level according to the scale of levels from 0 to 9. (Table 1).

Table 1

Methodology for Determination of the Common Level of Competitiveness

No.	Level of Competitiveness	Limits of Obtained Self-evaluation Points	Level of Competitiveness
1.	9	244-264	Very high level
2.	8	222-243	High level
3.	7	200-221	Relatively high level
4.	6	178-199	Level, which is a bit higher than the average level
5.	5	156-177	Average level
6.	4	134-155	Level, which is a bit lower than the average level
7.	3	111-133	Relatively low level
8.	2	89-110	Low level
9.	1	67-88	Very low level
10.	0	0-66	Critical level of competitiveness

At the research base enterprise, which is one of the international insurance agencies in Latvia, there are more than 700 employees employed. The enterprise has 59 branches in Latvia. It is one of the most significant employers of the insurance industry in Latvia. Since the research base enterprise is working on its growth and sustainable development on an ongoing basis, the enterprise management was truly interested in this study.

Results and Discussion

There were 18 specialists of the division Y of X International insurance agency in Latvia involved in the research. The participation was voluntary. The specialists self-evaluated their competitiveness. There were questionnaires given to the research respondents.

There were 66 indicators for the evaluation of competitiveness defined in the questionnaires. The respondents had to evaluate their competitiveness according to each of these indicators in the scale of 4 points. If a respondent fully agreed to the statement, he or she marked the statement with a tick, choosing the answer “Yes” in the respective column of the table, which, according to the nominal scale, meant 4 points. If the respondent completely disagreed to the statement, he or she marked the statement with a tick in the column of “No”, which in the data processing gave 1 point. Partial agreement to the statement in the nominal scale equalled to 3 points, whereas partial disagreement – to 2 points. The maximum number of points, which could be obtained by a respondent, was 264 points (in total for the evaluation according to all 66 indicators).

For each specialist employed at Y division, who participated in the research, there was determined not only the level of competitiveness, but also the coefficient of competitiveness by dividing the number of the obtained points by the maximum number of points, which could be obtained (Table 2).

Table 2

**Results of Evaluation of Insurance X Enterprise Y Division
Respondents' Competitiveness ($N = 18$; $n = 66$; $\Sigma_{\max} = 264$)**

No.	Respondents	Competitiveness Evaluation Amount (Σ)	Level of Competitiveness	Coefficient of Competitiveness
1.	A	209	7th level	0.79
2.	B	217	7th level	0.82
3.	C	209	7th level	0.79
4.	D	219	7th level	0.83
5.	E	218	7th level	0.83
6.	F	233	8th level	0.88
7.	G	223	8th level	0.84
8.	H	191	6th level	0.72
9.	I	227	8th level	0.85
10.	J	238	8th level	0.90
11.	K	204	7th level	0.77
12.	L	222	8th level	0.84
13.	M	216	7th level	0.81
14.	N	198	6th level	0.75
15.	O	215	7th level	0.81
16.	P	192	6th level	0.72
17.	R	199	6th level	0.75
28.	S	196	6th level	0.74

Table 3

**Proportion Indicators for the Levels of Respondents' Competitiveness
in the Sample ($N = 18$; $n = 9$)**

No.	Absolute Number of Respondents ($N = 18$)	Proportion of Respondents in the Sample ($\Sigma = 100\%$)	Levels of Respondents' Competitiveness ($n = 9$)
1.	5	28	6th level
2.	8	44	7th level
3.	5	28	8th level

Irrespective of the fact that the coefficients of competitiveness determined as a result of self-evaluation performed by the respondents – specialists of the research base enterprise Y division are relatively high, because they are close to “1”, and the levels of specialists' competitiveness are within the range from level 6 to 8 (Table 2 and Table 3), several indicators show that it is necessary to provide assistance.

Having analyzed and evaluated the obtained results according to the indicators, we drew a conclusion that the highest evaluation was given by the respondents to their *driver's skills* and licence as an indicator of competitiveness, because independent and fast moving from place to place by means of one's own vehicle ensures their mobility in the labour market, thus adapting to the fast pace of modern society's life, as well as providing a potential perspective to work at several work places, if necessary.

Alongside with the driver's skills and licence, *the respondents have given high assessment for several indicators of their competitiveness* (Table 4).

Table 4

Top Rated Competitiveness Indicators ($n = 18$; $\Sigma_{\max} = 72$)

Indicator serial number	Indicators	Sum of Evaluation Points (Σ)	Ranks (R)
66	Driver's skills and licence as an indicator of competitiveness	71	1.5
4	A desire to improve oneself as a personality, including acquisition of new knowledge, to develop one's skills and abilities	71	1.5
5	I have my own principles, which I try to observe, because they are grounded on values in my life	68	4
10	Readiness to take upon responsibility for one's words and actions before oneself and others	68	4
14	Other people's respect, who can achieve a lot in life	68	4
32	A desire that I would be respected by others, including colleagues and the management of enterprise	67	6.5
3	A desire and striving to achieve success in one's life, including one's profession	67	6.5
2	A desire and orientation towards the success in one's life	65	8.5
33	A desire to achieve success, to receive recognition and praise from others – this enhances self-confidence, creates positive emotions and inspire to start new activities	65	8.5
31	A specialist's professional competency	64	10
45	An ability to forecast the events of the nearest future and to model own behaviour according to the situation	62	11.5
7	The ability to develop own career successfully by achieving high results in any sphere	62	11.5
15	I am not envious and malevolent. I am glad not only to for my success, but also for the success of others.	61	13.5
42	Readiness to overcome difficulty in order to achieve the planned	61	13.5

The lowest evaluations were received concerning several indicators, which proves that the research participants need assistance regarding the following spheres of competitiveness: public speech and presentation skills; a psychologist shall assist in learning how to manage one's emotions, mood; achievement of planned aims (if it is impossible to achieve the set aims, perhaps, the specialists shall assist in adjusting aims and motivation spheres); flexibility of behaviour and conformity with the particular situation; forecasting skills in relation with critical thinking.

Unfortunately, it is necessary to admit that: 1) respondents have relatively low self-confidence; 2) respondents do not see the opportunities to have professional growth at the research base enterprise, as well as they do not know how to realize it. Most of all the research participants are afraid of making mistakes. When establishing a system for the support and promotion of the development of competitiveness at the enterprise, it would be necessary to assist the specialists from the above mentioned fear through mutual cooperation.

On the basis of the results of the theoretical research, as well as on the results of the evaluation of specialists' competitiveness at the research base enterprise (International Insurance Agency in Latvia) there was *Conceptual Model of Support and Promotion System for the Development of Specialists' Competitiveness at a Modern Enterprise* elaborated. The aim of this conceptual model is to *develop the specialists' competitiveness*, providing appropriate and friendly environment for the specialists' professional and career development.

There are three functional spheres of *specialists' competitiveness support and promotion* at a modern enterprise as knowledge or learning organization: mentoring; personnel management; career counselling. These three functions differ due to the specificity of each sphere, but they also mutually complement each other, showing that the functional segments of these spheres partially overlap.

The detailed description of this conceptual model see in the authors' scientific publications [16; 17]

Conclusions

1. The competitiveness of an enterprise to a great extent depends on the competitiveness of each employee as a specialist, therefore it is important to evaluate the specialists' competitiveness and promote its development at modern enterprises.
2. *Competitiveness* is an integrative totality of an individual's qualities (qualities of a personality and a specialist) that ensures its viability, including development and self-actualization, under the conditions of changing environment..
3. The methodology specially elaborated for the research aim and applied for the evaluation of specialists' competitiveness consists of three parts: 1) a system of various indicators for the evaluation of competitiveness; 2) a questionnaire; as well as 3) a method for the determination of the coefficient of competitiveness and the level of competitiveness. This methodology could be applied for the evaluation of specialists' competitiveness at any enterprise, and it enables to obtain valid and credible results.
4. The modern enterprise can be friendly and supportive environment for promotion of specialists' competitiveness if it becomes *knowledge organisation* and *sustaining*. Several principles and features of organization testify that it is learning or knowledge organization.
5. The obtained results show that the levels of the research base enterprise specialists' competitiveness are within the range of levels 6 to 8. But the range of the coefficient of competitiveness is from 0.72 to 0.9. This proves that the specialists employed at the research base insurance enterprise have a relatively high self-evaluation level of their competitiveness.
6. The results of the research allowed to find advantages and disadvantages with regard to the enterprise specialists' competitiveness. However, irrespective of the above mentioned, the methodology for the evaluation of competitiveness enabled to analyze and evaluate in detail the strengths or advantages and the weaknesses or disadvantages of the specialists employed at the enterprise, which identified the problems existing in the sphere of cooperation and mutual relations, as well as in the sphere of career development at the enterprise.
7. Basing on the analysis and evaluation of the research results, the authors developed a model for promotion of specialists' competitiveness in the enterprise. There are three trends of competitiveness promotion in enterprise: mentoring; career counselling; personnel management.

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