



## REQUIREMENT OF COMPETITIVE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT FOR THE STUDENTS - A FIELD STUDY

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**Abstract:** *Organizational performance depends on the way that the company manages its intangible resources. In this sense, the creation of organizational value requires the development of a knowledge management approach. Indeed, competitive intelligence and knowledge management support decision makers with relevant and value-added information and contribute to the transformation of this latter into knowledge. This paper attempt to find the required skill set for the students to face the competition. In this regard a field survey was conducted by the MBA students of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar University, Srikakulam and find out the interest of the students to develop their competitive skills.*

*Keywords: e-leadership, Competitive Advantage, Knowledge Sharing, Decision-Making.*

### Introduction

In today's organizational practice, competitive intelligence and knowledge management practices have generated a remarkable amount of interest in both business and academic communities, and have led to some misunderstandings and confusion. Therefore, the differences between these two concepts need to be clarified. Competitive intelligence and knowledge management are described as systematic processes that produce relevant and timely information and help decision makers to counter threats and take advantage of the emerging opportunities and challenges.

Joblessness and underemployment among youth are two of the most challenging economic and social problems that policymakers face in developing countries. One of the primary reasons of the young unemployment and failure to satisfy the expectations of the newly graduate students in the present competitive world is insufficient cross-cutting capabilities based on ICT such as e-leadership skills.

Education and competition are two universal ingredients of all human cultures, in fact, of almost all human life. Humans have always considered education and competition important issues, both in the past and in the present. Of course, there have been fluctuations in emphasis and much has changed throughout the centuries.

All life forms somehow possess knowledge and skills for survival and propagation. Such knowledge and skills are transmitted from generation to generation in various ways. On one hand, there is the direct path via inheritance. Properly expressed genes provide the offspring that carries them with built-in knowledge and skills, sometimes referred to as instincts and reflexes. On the other hand, there is the indirect path via education, where education is meant in a broad sense. The offspring learns by observing and imitating mature members of the species. The knowledge and skills transmitted by education are collectively known as the culture of a species.

For most species, inheritance is the dominant mode of transmission. The human species, however, relies very much on education, because for certain types of knowledge and skills, humans inherit only the ability to learn them. For example, the ability to learn language is inherited, but subsequent development of this ability through education is needed to learn any particular language. It is often not clear whether something, such as for example a desire to compete, is inherited or acquired (resulting in the nature-nurture controversies).

The presence of education in human cultures can be inferred from the oldest historical records, dating back to about 3000 BC. These records indicate that education was at that time already formalized to some extent. That is, our early predecessors were aware of the educational process, which itself was a

part of their culture, and certain members were specialized in dealing with educational matters. The knowledge and skills of formal teaching are, thus, in turn transmitted culturally. We do not know when education first appeared in this formalized way, but it is generally assumed that it is much older than the first references that have been preserved.

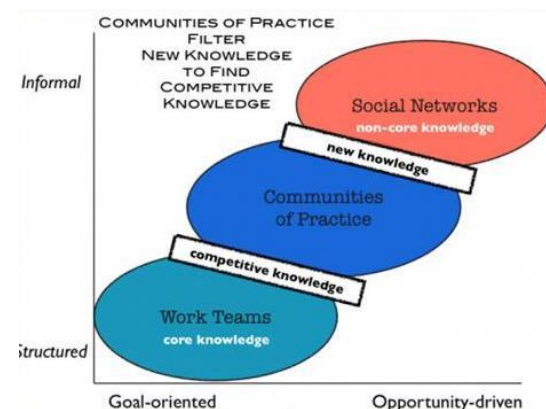
Formal education in more complex societies gave rise to teachers, Universities, and out-of-context learning in classes, because this specialization allows a more efficient transmission of culture. Over the centuries entire education systems have been developed with their own educational philosophies. Today, the partition into primary, secondary, and optional tertiary (university or vocational) education is predominant, and the educational duties of Universities are clearly prescribed by law. Note, however, that informal education, such as happens within the family, still plays an important role. Oscar Wilde once said: "Education is an admirable thing, but it is well to remember from time to time that nothing that is worth knowing can be taught."

As the demands on a society change, its culture changes, and consequently also its educational practices must change. Though difficult to understand in detail, this process of change appears to be a never-ending, self-propelling cycle. In order for a system with feedback to be stable, the response to change must be delayed. Education, therefore, always seems too late in its adjustment. Currently, the knowledge and skills to survive in what has become known as the information society are being incorporated.

The roots of education lie hidden in an unknown past; those of competition are even less traceable. Students spontaneously seek competition with their peers. They seem to have an innate desire to compare themselves with others in every way, for example, by running and wrestling. Such play is obviously beneficial to a student's development. Just as with education, also some forms of competition became formalized long ago in human history. That is, competition is bound by rules and becomes organized by specialists. However, early historical records are much less explicit about this than in the case of education.

It is not surprising that education and competition are intimately related. On one hand, it is natural for student to compete and, therefore, understandable that competition is put to educational use. On the other hand, competition may be found so important in adult life, that a society especially educates their young to compete.

These are areas of new evolving knowledge that the company knows a lot about. This knowledge may well give them a competitive advantage – the first learner advantage. In areas of evolving knowledge, the company that learns the best and learns the fastest, has the potential to outperform its rivals. The Knowledge Management focus for competitive knowledge is on the development of best practice. As this knowledge is being applied around the business, there needs to be a continuous capture of knowledge from practice, comparing of knowledge through communities of practice, and development of best practice. Ownership of competitive competence probably lies with the communities and networks.



One challenge of finding new knowledge is that social networks are comprised mostly of non-core knowledge. There is often more noise than signal. However, given their diversity, social networks are where we can find innovative ideas. Testing new knowledge is where communities of practice can be handy. Gaining competitive knowledge is to fostering internal and external communities of practice.

So here is a clear value proposition. Communities of practice act as filters of new knowledge in order to find competitive knowledge for the educational institutions. People who understand the context of the work teams must participate in communities of practice, as only they can identify what new knowledge could be competitive. That means that

those doing the work need time and support to get away from their teams and see the bigger picture. Does your organization provide this time, or is everyone too busy focused on managing core knowledge? The implications of myopic work practices are quite obvious.

### Responses to “Competitive knowledge”

Very interesting point about the communities of practice that sometimes block knowledge to evolve, because they do not have the courage to open the clan to fresh ideas, challengers that are going to attack the existing foundations, or simply the fact that people will like to seat on a normalized, stable environment and do not want to make knowledge evolve, until it turns into a crystal. It's challenging these days to measure the type of knowledge that is being played.

### The Skills required:

Identify the skills that were brought up the most in an attempt to determine which skills to the students will need to be successful in their futures. The following are the 10 skills mentioned the most often:

1. **Adaptive Thinking:** In the digital age, things are changing at exponential rates. By the time employees learn the newest software or program, a better version is coming about. Future employers will need to continuously adapt to changing conditions as well as be able to learn new things quickly and efficiently. We need our students to learn how to learn.
2. **Communication Skills:** There continues to be an emphasis on the ability to communicate. In the digital age, however, we have access to a wide variety of new ways to communicate from video-conferencing to social media. Future employers need to be able to communicate with people within their team, as well as people outside of the team and organization.
3. **Collaboration Skills:** Most classrooms foster a culture of competition and independence rather than one of teamwork and collaboration. Future employers will need to quickly adapt to a culture of collaboration. They will need to collaborate with others within and outside of the organization, often using a number of new technologies.
4. **Critical Thinking and Problem Solving Skills:** There is a decreased emphasis on employers following directions and an increased emphasis on employers thinking critically and solving problems. In a rapidly changing world, employers need employees who can solve problems, provide ideas and help improve the organization.
5. **Personal Management:** This includes the ability for employers to independently plan, organize, create and execute, rather than wait for someone to do this for them.
6. **Inquiry Skills:** The large majority of academic assessments ask students for answers. Rarely do we assess students on how well they can ask questions. The ability to ask great questions, however, is a critical skill that is desperately needed in a culture which requires constant innovations.
7. **Technology Skills:** Almost every business that I talked to said that employers will need to be skilled at using technology. In the digital age, technology is everywhere. Schools, however, have been slow to adapt to this change. Rarely are students required or taught to learn technology efficiently. This needs to be emphasized.
8. **Creativity and Innovation:** This skill is mentioned often. I believe that it correlates with the ability to ask good questions and the ability to problem solve. Employers will be looking to employees more and more for creative and innovative solutions to issues that exist.
9. **Soft Skills:** Schools rarely spend time teaching students soft skills, including skills such as time management skills, organizational skills, the ability to look someone in the eyes when talking to them, or using a firm handshake. I have heard a number of times, by different business

leaders, that these skills seem to be disappearing.

10. **Empathy and Perspective:** Although this skill has always been important, it seems to be another one that is slowly disappearing. The ability for our students to put themselves in someone else's shoes, to understand their feelings, and to help solve their problems.

Higher education has engaged in much discussion about the need to prepare students to be globally competitive in this increasingly complex world. On the other hand, society is more and more dependent on technology. The only way in which this situation can be sustained in the longer run, is by integrating advanced technology into the University curriculum. However, the success of modern technology also works to its disadvantage. Engineers are persuaded to make technology more and more invisible, thereby reducing the attraction to engineering disciplines. Competitions are an excellent vehicle for incorporating technology into the future curriculum, and for opening the 'high-tech box' in an enjoyable way.

### Knowledge creation

In today's competitive environment, companies have been encouraged to develop new managerial practices that help decision makers to face external forces that they should live with and react to, such as competitive intelligence and knowledge management practices. Before exploring the various facets of knowledge management and competitive intelligence, we first need to re-examine the notion of tacit and explicit knowledge, and the standard triad of data/information/knowledge.

Basically, data, information and knowledge are the cornerstone of these practices. An attempt to clarify these notions is made, and a theoretical framework for integration is recommended by focusing on their various roles and aspects within a decision-making process. Thus, in economic analysis, concepts such as: data, information and knowledge are generally assimilated. For Reix "*The difference between data, information and knowledge has undergone little practical value*". However, some differences between these three concepts have been highlighted. In short, data (words, numbers, symbols ...) are viewed as simple isolated facts and

are obtained by a simple process of observation, however information is acquired via an interpretive model that consist of putting data into a context and combining within a structure.

Consistent with this view, knowledge is the result of information processed by individuals through a cognitive process. Furthermore, even if both terms of knowledge and information are used indifferently, there are some elements that should be nuanced between these two concepts. In this sense, information is recognized as a flow of messages, while knowledge is perceived as a set of rules and a process of simultaneously knowing and acting.

### Competitive intelligence: a lever for knowledge creation

In today's fast-paced context, knowledge creation, which refers to the capability of an organization to develop innovative and valuable intangible commodities, has become one of the major concerns of organizations. Accordingly, competitive intelligence has emerged as a central theme in the knowledge-based literature and has become a more generalized discipline that has been examined under various titles. This emerging field has attracted significant interest among researchers, academicians and practitioners, and as often in this kind of general concepts, there is no single universally accepted definition. Hence, several definitions have been proposed to better understand this concept.

According to Martre, competitive intelligence can be defined as "*all the coordinated actions of collection, processing and distributing of useful information for the economic actors with the aim of its exploitation. These actions are taken legally with all the guarantees of protection necessary for the conservation of the company's patrimony, in the best conditions of quality, of delay and of cost*". This definition was developed by Juillet, who states that "*competitive intelligence is the mastery and protection of strategic information in order to allow company managers to take the right decision at any given time*".

In this spirit, Levet privileged the logic of coordination to define competitive intelligence. In others words, competitive intelligence enhances cooperation and coordination among stakeholders within and outside a company. Drawing on the

researches of Sutter *et al* competitive intelligence is viewed as a process that aims at clarifying the strategic objectives of organizations. Besides, competitive intelligence is not limited to information search and tracking, it focuses more on managing external knowledge resources by involving different organizational levels and using cognitive skills to solve decision-making problems.

In other words, the main objective of competitive intelligence is the collection, processing and interpretation of the content of information arising from the business environment and required by different levels of decision. As a result, competitive intelligence is, on the one hand, a process of scanning and detection of opportunities and threats and adaptation to a changing environment and, on the other hand, an organizational learning process. According to Besson and Possin, "*competitive intelligence is a collective system of acquisition, production and transformation of information into useful knowledge. This system aims at improving the decision-making system, exercising influence, detecting opportunities, preventing threats and risks, protecting and enriching the heritage, performance, maintaining and straightening the image, and creating values*". Going forward, many scholars have stressed the need to implement a knowledge management system [.

In this sense Guilhon and Levet consider that competitive intelligence should not only manage information flows, but also convert this latter into knowledge and skills, and therefore, into competitive advantages. Thus, for Levet, competitive intelligence is generally regarded as the "infrastructure" of a knowledge-based economy. In this spirit, competitive intelligence as a process of knowledge creation offers a new representation of the firm for twomain reasons:

- Firstly, the importance of the firm's intangible and cognitive resources is increasingly confirmed compared to technical resources, and knowledge inputs are relatively large compared to physical capital expenditures.
- Secondly, organizations face new challenges and problems related to innovation that require new and effective managerial practices.

Based on these concerns, it appears that competitive intelligence emphasizes the importance of individual and collective ability to understand information and to produce knowledge that might be at the origin of organizational performance. Hence, one of the most popular dimensions in the context of competitive intelligence is the creation and the capitalization of the company's knowledge.

More specifically, competitive intelligence is often perceived as a part of a collective activity shared by a group of actors whose goal is organizational knowledge creation that might reduce uncertainty, provide tangible benefits, and contribute to convert the company into "a learning firm". Additionally, Crozier and Friedberg suggest that the first major source of power is the possession of a difficult and replaceable skill or functional specialization. In this case, having knowledge confers power to the person or the organization that holds it. From this perspective, Guilhon and Levet consider that the creation of competitive advantage does not depend solely on technical division of labor, but rather on a cognitive division based on information and knowledge. In other terms, information and knowledge are recognized as a powerful resource that contributes significantly to value creation.

### Research Design

The objective of this study is to investigate the knowledge-sharing behavior of the students in Srikakulam District and to cover areas such as the purpose of sharing knowledge, communication channels preferred for sharing, and factors that inhibit or motivate knowledge sharing among students.

A questionnaire was designed for collecting data and using simple random sampling technique a sample of 50 students from Srikakulam who have completed their 10<sup>th</sup> class, Intermediate education, Under Graduation and Post graduation were selected in the study. The data was collected with the interaction of the student respondents by MBA students of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar University, Srikakulam as a part of community engagement programme.

## Conclusion

In this paper, we have presented a discussion of competitive intelligence, knowledge management, and organizational performance based on a review, interpretation, and synthesis of a wide array of pertinent literature. Some typical conclusions may be drawn from our work: by examining the roles of competitive intelligence and knowledge management in enhancing knowledge creation, this research paper revealed the existence of synergy between these two concepts via a number of aspects of complementarity. We can summarize such complementarity by considering that competitive intelligence is an extension of knowledge management process.

The literature findings indicate that the firm is required to continuously develop a knowledge culture which contributes to encourage the creation of intangible assets that are considered as the main factors of its competitiveness in the current competitive market.

The field study clearly depicting that 40 per cent of the respondents clearly stated that they are not aware to preparing competitive examinations and 50 per cent of the respondents are interested for the competitive examinations but not preparing in their domain area. Another 10 per cent of respondents interested for competitive exams and prepare in a structured way.

It was found that, generally, students displayed a positive attitude towards knowledge sharing and were appreciative of its importance in peer learning. However, it was interesting to note that the respondents were less inclined to share knowledge for academic activities that were graded. The study also revealed that competition among students to outperform their fellow students and lack of depth in peer relationship were the two main factors that inhibited knowledge sharing.

## Practical implications

The field study argues that fresh approaches to learning are desirable to make it less competitive, which is likely to encourage active knowledge sharing among students.

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