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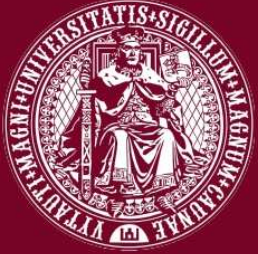
Towards a Learning Organization: the Role of Core Competencies as an Internal Factor for Transformation

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Aim

- **of this paper is to present the case study, which was aimed to identify whether decision to transform an organization into a learning organization may be triggered by internal rather than external factors.**



The hypothesis

- to identify which factors (internal, such as decision to develop competencies of members of an organization, or external, such as pressures of competitive market, globalisation, technological advancement, etc.) trigger the transformation of an organization to learning organization is possible while identifying members' attitude to their own core competence and the need to develop them



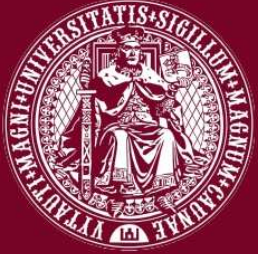
Used methods

- Critical and systemic analysis of references;
- Case study that included internal documents analysis, also a two-stage quantitative research, which was completed in 2008-2009.
- The following methods for an empiric study were used: analysis of recent internal and strategic documents and questionnaires comprising open and closed type questions.



Research limitations

- Only clients and members of one non-commercial, service orientated organization in one of ten counties in Lithuania were approached.
- This must be seen as a limitation of the study, and the results should serve as guidelines for further studies, rather than for generalisations
- *NOTE – whatever inconsistencies may have come in terms of enumeration of core competencies – are due to the fact, that the paper is based on a research report of 60 pages*



Core Competencies – the Concept and Classification

- Physical (health), educational (knowledge, know-how, skills), psychological (cognitive skills), social (right to act, understanding power boundaries), expertise (individual's unique expression in activities, based on his/her professional and personal abilities).
- Expertise is a functional ability to adequately perform certain activities is emphasised in other cases.



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8 core competencies (and their elements) are enlisted (EP)

- Communication in mother-tongue
- Communication in foreign languages
- Mathematical abilities and core competencies in research and technological areas
- Competencies in science area
- Digital literacy deals with reliable and critical appliance of IT at work, for leisure or when communicating.
- Learning to learn
- Social and civic competencies, initiative and entrepreneurship (ability to turn ideas into actions; creativity, innovation, readiness to risk, project planning and managing in the pursuit of goals raised),
- Cultural consciousness and expression



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Overview of the Concepts of Services

- Services have certain characteristics: heterogeneity, unsteadiness, client's participation in the process of service provision, the unity of service provision and consumption
- There is a variety of ways to classify services.
- Non-commercial services are not aimed at profit; rather they are aimed at meeting community needs.



Quality of Services and Core Competencies in a Learning Organization

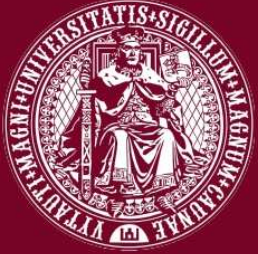
- To add to the complexity, the concept of the quality of services and its models are widely analyzed in management and marketing literature.
- It is impossible to evaluate quality of services and the quality of products applying the same criteria.



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Quality of Services and Core Competencies in a Learning Organization

- Every client individualizes specific services and differently prioritizes its features.
- Client is interested in basic characteristics of provider's activities, such as
 - professionalism and skills,
 - *attitudes* and
 - *behavior* (attentiveness, politeness and respect), also
- availability and flexibility (convenience of office-hours,
- short waiting time, convenient location).



An organization . . .

- . . .that that learns can manage the change process more effectively than can an organization that does not learn (rather, members of an organization) (Cullen, 1999).
- Learning organization is thought to be about increasing an organization's problem-solving capacity and about changing behavior in ways leading to improved performance at the individual, team and organizational levels.



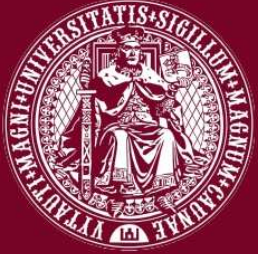
Research Methodology

- In order to clarify the hypothesis a case study was carried out in 2008 - 2009.
- The case study constituted of the following parts:
- analysis of internal documentation and
- a quantitative study comprised of (1) questionnaires for clients and (2) front office employees.



Research methodology: site

- Non-commercial organization may provide a better insight into the process, as external factors have a bit smaller impact than on organizations that are profit orientated.
- A state financed organization, therefore, may either continue reproducing status quo in terms of performance and goals, or strive towards development based on internal factors.



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Document Analysis.

- Findings seem to indicate that prerequisites for transforming an organization towards learning one started in organization X.
- However, it was also found that a more focused research on what were employees (including front-office) learning needs (in terms of core competencies), was not completed.
- Rather, a quite declarative statement instead of action plan appeared in strategic documents in recent years. Therefore, a study on how clients and front-office personnel perceive core competencies (and their elements) seemed important in order to help an organization to have a clearer and more focused view on itself, and to have information for an action plan.

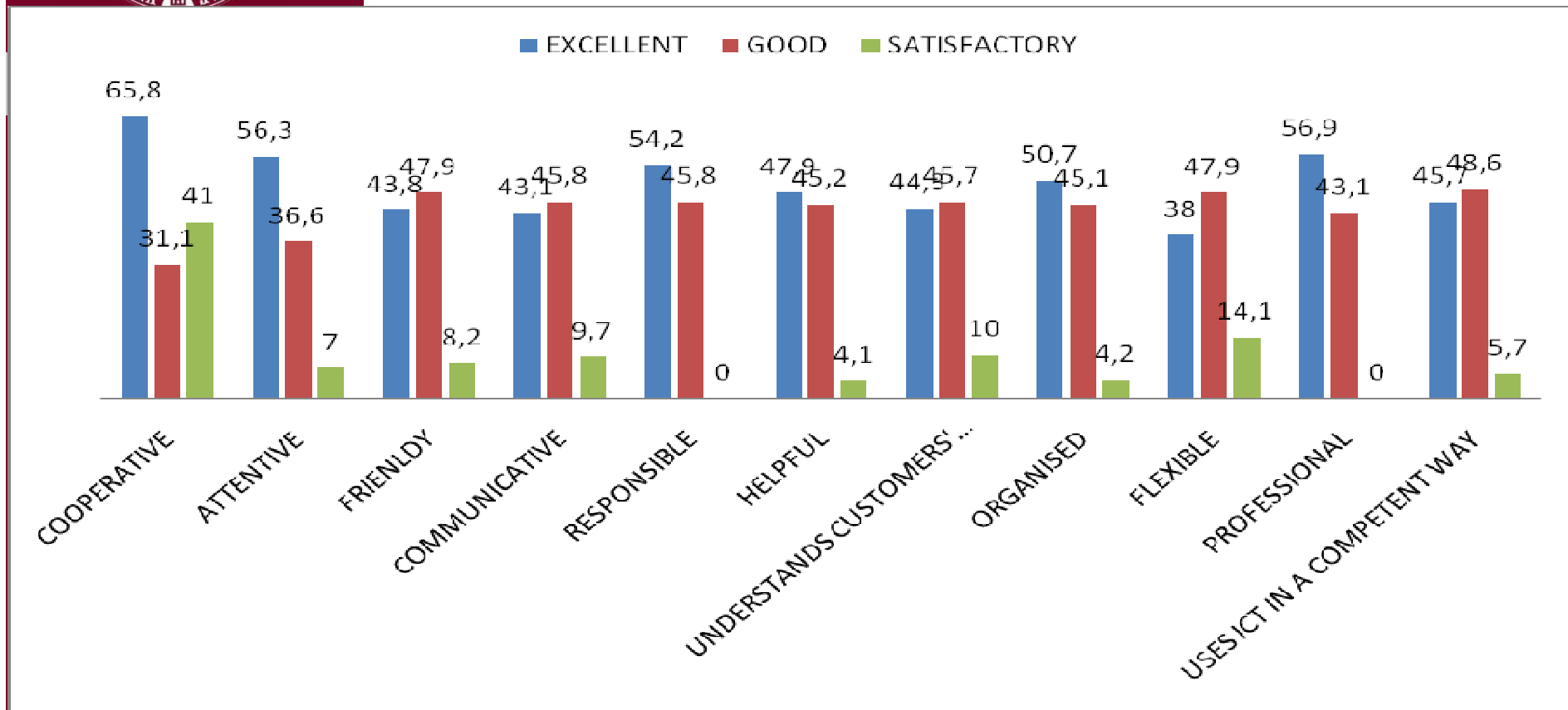


Clients' (Customers') Attitude

- Majority of the respondents (60.8%) are fully satisfied with the quality of services. None of the respondents have indicated that the quality of serving the customers at the library does not satisfy them. Based on initial theoretical insights on core competencies, personal, social and informative literacy competencies were provided in the questionnaire.



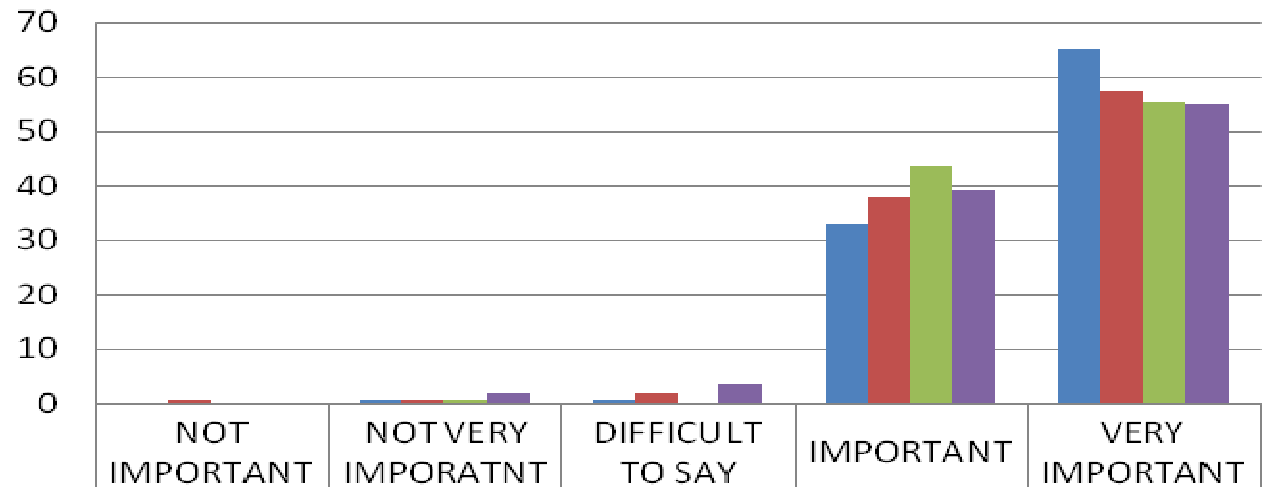
Clients' (Customers') Attitude



Evaluation of core competencies (and their elements) of front-office personnel as perceived by clients



The Attitude of Front-office Personnel (employees).

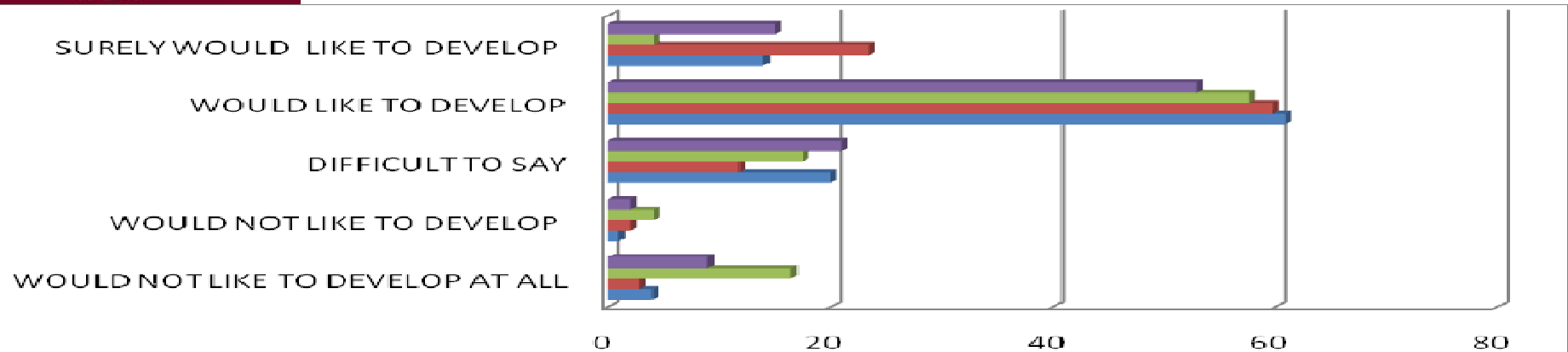


	NOT IMPORTANT	NOT VERY IMPORATNT	DIFFICULT TO SAY	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT
ABILITY TO PROVIDE INFORMATION	0	1	1	33	65
ABILITY TO LEARN	1	1	1,9	37,9	57,3
COMPETENCE IN ICT	0	1	0	43,7	55,3
ABILITY TO ORGANISE ONE'S OWN WORK	0	2	3,9	39,2	54,9

- **Front-office employees' perceived significance of core competencies for service provided (per cent of respondents)**



The Attitude of Front-office Personnel (employees).

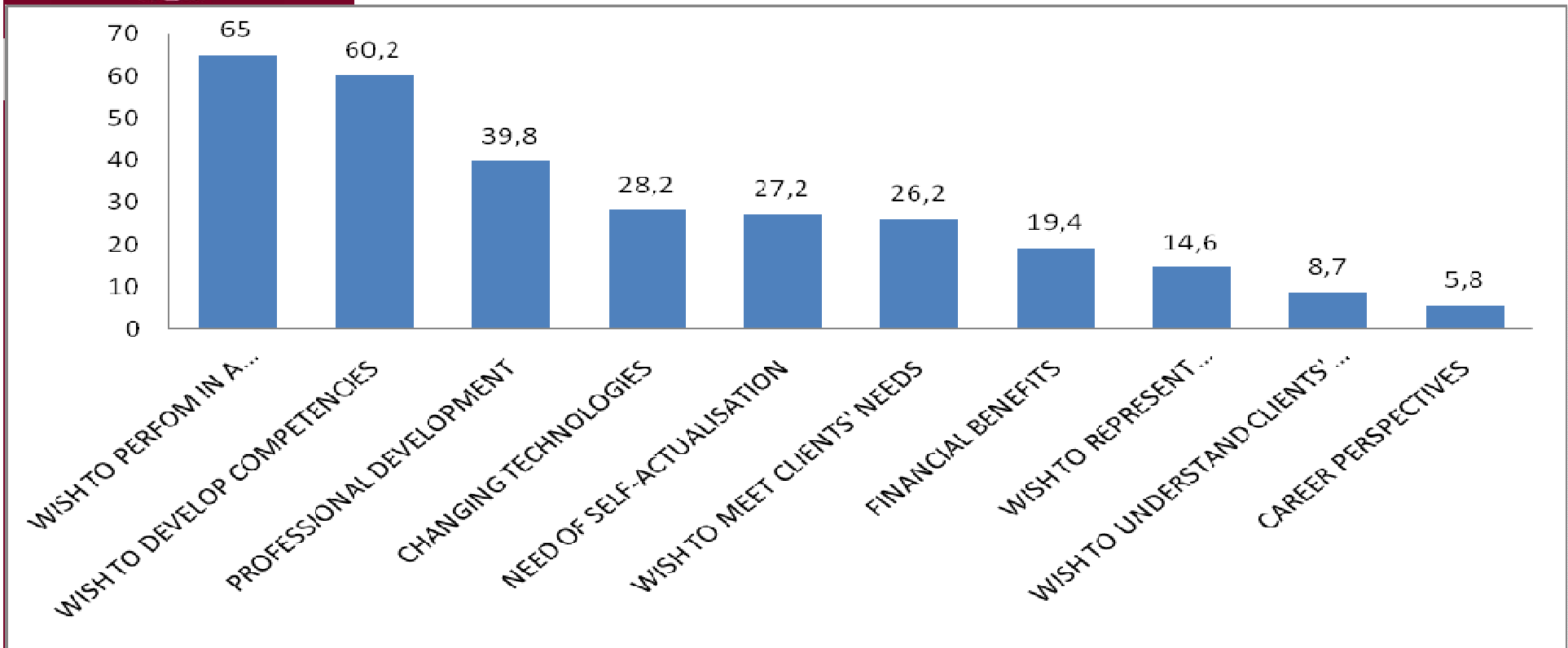


	WOULD NOT LIKE TO DEVELOP AT ALL	WOULD NOT LIKE TO DEVELOP	DIFFICULT TO SAY	WOULD LIKE TO DEVELOP	SURELY WOULD LIKE TO DEVELOP
■ PROBLEM SOLVING	9	2	21	53	15
■ COMPETENCE IN NEEDS ANALYSIS	16,5	4,1	17,5	57,7	4,1
■ COMPETENCE IN ICT	2,9	2	11,8	59,8	23,5
■ ABILITY TO LEARN	4	1	20	61	14

- Demand for developing core competencies of front-office personnel in pursuance of improving the quality of work (per cent of respondents)



The Attitude of Front-office Personnel (employees).



- **Factors encouraging the development of core competencies**



Conclusions

- Core competencies are widely applicable in different daily life and professional areas. They play a significant role in constant economical, social and other changes, and are acquired by continual development and learning. A number of similarities may be distinguished in different classifications. The only differences occur in their subdivision into elements.
- In the area of service management and marketing client is one of the central agents and the main evaluator of the quality of services. Accordingly, the significance of foreseeing his/her needs, satisfaction, and management of perceived quality and interaction with front-office personnel is highly emphasized. This influences the significance of the competencies and abilities of front-office personnel, such as recognition of needs, **communicational, conflict managing, decision making, educational, general culture, personal**, wide-scoped and etc., in pursuance of the quality of services.



Conclusions

- Transformation of an organization into a learning organization may be triggered by both external and internal factors or by interaction between internal and external factors.
- Non-commercial organization may provide a better insight into the process, as external factors have a bit smaller impact than on organizations that are profit orientated. Employees' decision to perform better, and to feel pride in what they are doing, readiness of employees to be able to learn together with colleagues, and to be able to organize work, also to develop other core competencies (and their elements), may act as productive internal factors for transformation.



Conclusions

- As an outcome of the empiric study it turned out that the following core competencies play the most important role in the activities of front-office personnel. When striving for a higher quality of activities, the employees **face a strong need for developing most of the core competencies.**
- A case study provided information for the organization X on the development of which core competencies to concentrate first. It seems that front-office personnel are in need to learn, and to learn to start and maintain contact with client.



Conclusions

- It may be concluded that internal factors (including attention to development of core competencies) may be of the same importance in triggering transformation towards a learning organization, as are the external ones (globalization, technological advancement, competitiveness).
- The hypothesis was partially confirmed.