KNOWLEDGE STRATEGY OF THE ORGANIZATION

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Abstract

The main objective of the following article is to present issues associated with building a knowledge strategy in the organization. In the first part of this article the concept of resource-based view of the firm in comparison to positioning view have been briefly characterized, discussing such issues as organizational competitive potential and advantage, resources and their strategic nature, organization strategy based on resources. Further part of this article focuses mainly on the specificity of knowledge as strategic resource and it describes some models of knowledge strategies in the organization. The author has also attempted to build own model of knowledge strategy combining positioning school and resource-based theory of the firm. The final part of the article includes findings resulting from theoretical consideration.

From the perspective of strategic management, a focusing just on the environment in the process of searching for the sources of competitive advantage for the organization or just on the internal resources and skills without including external factors is not good. Therefore, organizations should try to adapt and use the achievement of both approaches – positional and resource-based. Organizations which are able to develop their knowledge quicker and better and/or acquire necessary knowledge from external sources and then combine these knowledge resources and integrate them with other resources and competence may create a specific, difficult to imitate cluster of resources which if appropriately used as a response to the occurring chances and emerging dangers gives better possibilities of creating values desired by the customers and consequently achieving competitive advantage.

Key words: knowledge, strategy, resources, competitiveness, knowledge strategy.

Classification JEL: M12 – Personnel Management

1 Introduction

Nowadays, widely understood environment of the organization is changing incessantly, often in the way that is impossible or difficult to predict. These changes are connected *inter alia* with macroeconomic and political factors, but also with globalization and increased market competition, systematic emergence of the economic, social and technical innovations, shortening of products lifecycle, and evolving customers' requirements, which have to be met in order to stay on the market.

The rapid rate of scientific, technological, and socio-political changes are forcing companies to access a much broader range of ideas, talent and intellectual property to drive their businesses *(Matuska, 2010, p. 121)*. Due to dynamic development of global market of the idea, almost every existing concept and formula is available to the competitors today. It is more and more difficult to maintain the advantage of new products, services and productivity. What brought competitive advantage in the past, within the time has become a standard *(Davenport, Prusak, 1998, p. 16)*. So the question arises – what an organization can base its competitiveness on nowadays?

2 Positioning approach vs. knowledge-based theory of the firm

To compete effectively on the market, organizations should have an appropriate potential of competitiveness, defined as the entirety of widely understood tangible and intangible resources, which enable the organizations to use the best instruments of effective competing *(Stankiewicz, 2002, p. 9)*. Skilful use of competitiveness potential enables the organization to achieve the competitive advantage.

There are two basic models of the competitive advantage. One, coming from the course of industrial organization and developed by M. Porter, is called the school of positioning, while the second derives from the resource-based view of the firm (RBV).

According to the positioning school foundations, success of the organization on the market depends on its reactions to the changeability of the external conditions and events. M. E. Porter proposed a model enabling the **competitive analysis** of the organization, according to which it is determined by *(Porter, 1996):*

- threat of new competitors entering the market,
- market rivalry,
- availability of substitutes,
- bargaining power of customers,
- bargaining power of suppliers.

These organizations, which react to changes taking place in the widely understood environment faster than other firms, get the competitive advantage. M. E. Porter suggested two strategies of creating the competitive advantage: through lower costs (cost advantage) or by diversifying products and services (differentiation advantage). Durability of the competitive advantage can be provided by entry barriers, constructed in order to protect the organization from potential rivals. The extent of these barriers is affected by such factors, as: economies of scale, experience, access to the technology, capital requirements, brand power, the costs of changing suppliers, access to distribution channels, government regulations *(Głuszek, 2004, p. 22).*

Nowadays some researchers consider the above mentioned model as obsolete however it seems that immediate reaction to changes still remains one of the more important determinants of the organization's competitiveness. It is vital to remember that widely understood competitive environment of the organization changes incessantly therefore they are forced to systematic efforts to adapt their products and services to consumer needs and expectations. Organizations which are not flexible enough to respond to changes quickly, and to counteract the threats and exploit opportunities, will not be able to achieve and maintain competitive advantage.

At present, many authors perceive internal factors as the most important determinants of the competitiveness of the organization. An example of this trend is the resource-based view of the firm, which has become a dominant theoretical perspective in strategic management today *(Fey, Birkinshaw, 2005, p. 598).* According to RBV, the source of the success of the organization is a strategic potential in the form of appropriately selected, competitive resources, and firms' ability for their innovative and effective application *(Gierszewska, Romanowska, 2009).*

The amount of resources limits the scale of the organization's functioning. Their flexibility and mobility affect the ability to change the company's position in the environment. Resources which are available to the company reduce a set of possible behaviors (in given environmental conditions) to the set of feasible behaviors *(Kompendium…, 2009, p. 56).*

The concept of resources is defined differently by various authors. According to R. Amit and P. Schoemaker resources are a set of available factors owned and controlled by the organization. Some factors, such as machinery, technologies and personnel, can be bought by organizations on the market. While others are unique, worked out by organizations in the long term (e.g. knowledge, reputation, good relationships), *(Amit, Schoemaker, 1993).*

J. Barney defines resources as all assets, capabilities, organizational processes, firm attributes, information, knowledge, etc. controlled by the company, enabling it to conceive of and implement strategies that improve its efficiency and effectiveness. He proposes the division of the resources into three categories: physical, human and organizational *(Barney, 1991, p. 101).* M. Stankiewicz divides resources into the tangible (stocks, tangible fixed assets, and financials) and intangible resources (relations, competence, functional systems, attitudes, and capabilities), *(Stankiewicz, 2002, p. 105)*.

Not all resources of the organization have the same meaning in terms of shaping its competitiveness. Organization can build its competitiveness on the market, exploiting opportunities and countering threats, thanks to the strategically valuable resources. They are standing out with the fact that they are *(Barney, 1991, pp. 105-111):*

- strategically valuable,
- rare (unique), hard to acquire for current and potential competitors,
- difficult to duplicate and imitate,
- difficult to replace by other valuable, but available and possible to imitate resources.

According to J. Barney an organization characterized by heterogeneity and immobility of resources, achieves sustainable competitive advantage, when *(Barney, 1991, p. 102):*

- implements the value -creating strategy, which is not simultaneously implemented by any other current or potential competitor,
- competitors are not able to copy benefits of the strategy implemented by the organization.

Assumptions of the J. Barney's model are presented in Figure 1.

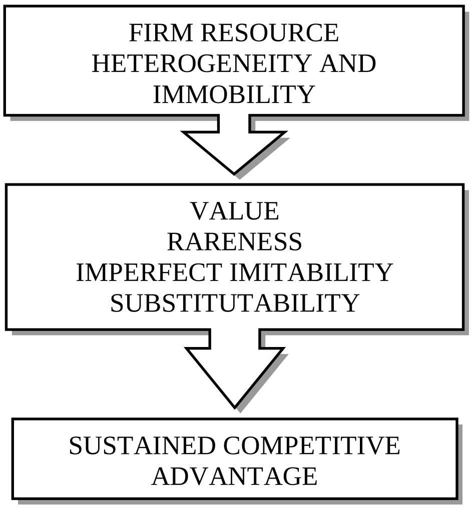

Figure 1. The relationship between resource heterogeneity and immobility, value, rareness, imperfect imitability and substitutability, and sustained competitive advantage
Source: based on: Barney, J.: Firm Resource and Sustained Competition Advantage. In: Journal of Management, Vol. 17, No. 1/1991, p. 112

A. Sopińska pays attention to the fact, that there is not a universal and lasting profile of resources, which would guarantee market competitiveness for the organization *(Sopińska, 2006, p. 115)*. The more flexible, unique and difficult to imitate and substitution is that profile, the greater possibility of obtaining and maintaining the organization's competitive advantage on the market.

In the resource based view of the firm a great importance in creating competitive advantage is attributed to skills and competencies, including the so-called key competences. Process-oriented skills integrate resources in order to achieve synergy effect. Competencies are a complicated bundle of resources, capabilities and processes across the firm. Whereas we can speak on core competencies only if they form a measurable, valued and visible benefits to customers, that is when they are clearly connected with the requirements of the market *(Głuszek, 2004, pp. 31-32).*

In summary, if the resource contributes to the realization of the organization's strategy, has a significant impact on goal setting, customer satisfaction and – consequently – on improve business performance, furthermore, if this resource is impossible or very difficult to imitate, its transferability and substitution are difficult, and the most part of added value created by the resource remains in the possession of organization, then that resource is considered as a strategic competitive factor.

3 Competitive strategy based on resources

Organization's competitive strategy describes the structure and exploitation of competitive potential, and the goal of its development and use is to take the best competitive position by the organization.

The resource-based view of the organization postulates a building the strategy "from the inside out." This strategy is focused on acquiring and/or creating of valuable resources, protected by mechanism of isolation, and then seeking out opportunities to create market offer based on these resources *(Godziszewski, 2006, p. 18).*

According to P. Schoemaker and R. Amit, to build a competitive strategy based on resources, a set of strategic assets should be selected, taking into account the potential actions that may be taken by competitors, and consumers' preferences. Procedure of building such strategy consists of five stages *(Schoemaker, Amit, 1994, pp. 21-27):*

- identification of organization's assets, changing which may bring an increase of competitive advantage of the organization,
- estimation of the competitive gap, that exists between an organization and its major competitors on the market, in relation to each asset,
- analysis of the assets taking into consideration pace and size of investment needed to make changes in the existing gaps,
- evaluation of assets, which consists of making a more thorough analysis of these assets in terms of their use to build an organizational strategy,
- selection of strategic assets, which will be the bases of building the organization's competitiveness strategy.

The organization should strive to develop these assets, in which implementing changes can bring positive reaction of customers, and which can be changed quickly with relatively small investments. At the same time these investments should not encounter neutralizing reaction from the competitors, because they can perceive certain actions as a time-consuming and costly *(Schoemaker, Amit, 1994, p. 24).*

R. M. Grant proposes another approach to strategy formulation, according to which resources and competencies of the organization should guide the strategy and form the basis of income earned by the company *(Grant, 1991, pp. 115-118).* Building the strategy, procedure involves the following steps:

- Identification, inventory and classification of the organization's resources, in terms of their strengths and weaknesses compared to competitors.
- Identification of business competencies, which must be carefully researched, clearly and precisely formulated and named.
- Evaluation of the competitiveness potential of the resources and competencies, determined by their value, rarity, difficulty to replace and imitation, and the value they represent to the consumer and the possibility of appropriation the revenue generated by them.

- Selection of strategy that will enable the best use of resources and competencies of the organization in response to emerging opportunities in the widely understood environment.
- Identification and filling gaps of resources and competencies, consisting of completing, widening, and improving the organization's resources.

Resource-based approach to building a strategy is based not only on the use of currently available resources, which may lose their strategic nature due to various reasons, but should also focus on the development of new resources that would broaden the company's strategic market opportunities *(Głuszek, 2004, p. 51)*.

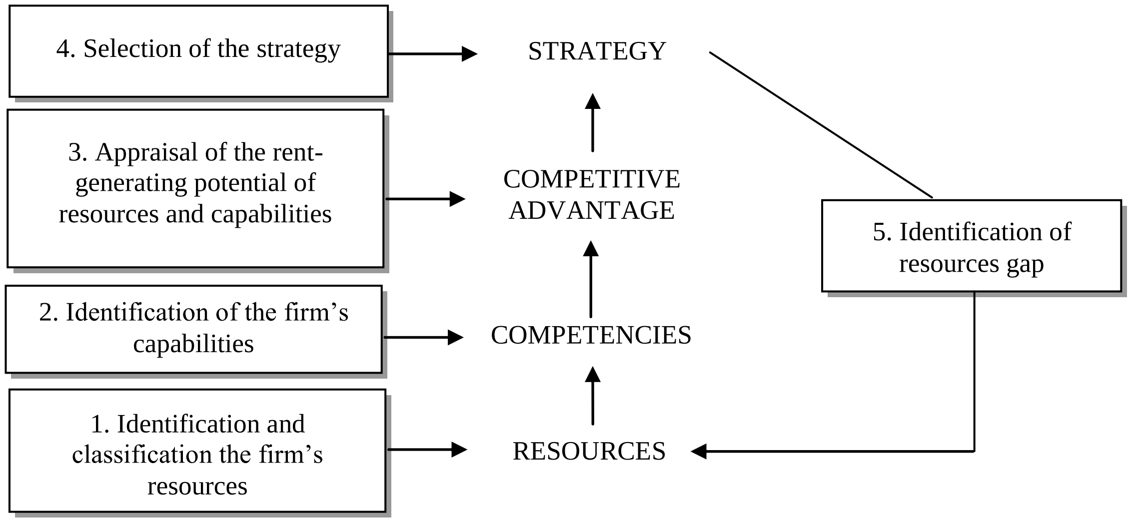

Figure 2. A resource based approach to strategy analysis
Source: based on: Grant, R. M.: The Resource-Based Theory of Competitive Advantage: Implications for Strategy Formulation. In: California Management Review, 1991, p. 115

4 Knowledge as a resource

One of the assets, perceived by the representatives of RBV as a resource of strategic importance for an organization, thus being the major determining factor of its competitiveness, is knowledge. However, the approach arouses many doubts. In economics a resource is defined as a given amount of assets component in a given moment *(Begg, Fisher, Dornbusch, 1997, p. 361)*. Meanwhile, knowledge, because of its nature is not subject to precise measurement as there are no accurate units of measure in which knowledge could be demonstrated – thus we cannot refer to it using quantitative descriptions. Organizations may not even be aware of the fact that they possess specific knowledge, until a problem occurs which requires that knowledge to be solved. At the same time knowledge in an organization may be developed (deepened and broadened) through learning, gaining experience, collective work etc. but on the other hand some areas of knowledge can become outdated or obsolete. Thus it cannot be clearly specified what knowledge is at company's disposal at a given time.

In the definitions of assets, the claim occurs which states they should be left under the control of an organization. Generally speaking, the control consists in checking the actual state with the required, appropriate or previously declared one. Meanwhile, as far as many other resources are concerned their actual state can be assessed, in the case of knowledge it is not possible. The possibility of determining the required state of knowledge, especially the state of innovative knowledge, is also highly questionable because such knowledge cannot be predicted, declared and planned. What can be determined is the direction in which the development should be conducted, but it cannot be assumed in advance what the outcome of this process will be. It is equally difficult to determine precisely what state of knowledge is appropriate. It may be achieved indirectly describing the effects which knowledge should yield. It can be stated that the appropriate state of knowledge, with the assumption that it is effectively used by an organization, is when it contributes to the obtainment and/or maintenance of sustainable competitive advantage. The following statement, with which it is difficult to disagree, doesn't contribute much to the discussion on the control of knowledge.

Having taken everything into account, the assumption regarding the control over knowledge resources executed by the organization is not possible to implement especially with reference to hidden knowledge, located in employees' heads. One cannot control something they don't know it exists. What can be controlled is the goal realization and defined tasks within organization but not knowledge which enables these processes.

Knowledge is regarded as an element of intangible assets. R. Hall points out that some intangible assets have actually 'assets' nature (e.g. patents, brands, databases, contracts, etc.) others are rather regarded as 'abilities'. The latter group includes employees' knowledge and organizational culture *(Hall, 1993)*. It appears that perceiving knowledge as an intangible asset of an ability nature can be accepted and from now on in this paper it shall be referred to as 'knowledge resources'.

The potential of the organization competitiveness constitute all tangible and intangible assets, thus does knowledge. Potential can be graded therefore organization can be more or less competitive depending on what knowledge is at its disposal.

Knowledge is an asset which has the greatest impact on the ***heterogeneity of the organization*** and at the same time it affects their effectiveness in using their competitiveness potential and as a consequence they have different financial results. Organizations may vary in the possession of other resources, e.g. they can implement different technologies to produce the same goods. We must bear in mind that on the one hand no new technology would have been created without knowledge but on the other hand it is knowledge that gives basis for decision-making which specific technology shall be used in a given organization. It can be said that knowledge is included in other resources, contributes to their creation and it decides about their implementation.

A. K. Koźmiński regards knowledge as 'primary' asset which controls the multiplication and changes in configuration of other assets, but at the same time it is their essential ingredient. Knowledge in organization in transformed into 'secondary' assets (people, culture, capital, brand, technology, market access etc.), which are then used in a management process and in consequence affects its ability to obtain competitive advantage *(Koźmiński, 2005, p. 96)*. Knowledge integrates all organizational processes, it is also a necessary asset required for effective planning, organizing and realizing all the management processes in a contemporary enterprise *(Walczak, 2009, p. 222).*

On the basis of the analysis of numerous publications on this subject matter it can be stated if appropriate knowledge is developed and skilfully used it provides organizations with many benefits. Such knowledge among other things:

- facilitates taking appropriate decisions and actions,
- limits the risk of running a business,
- accelerates and simplifies the implementation of innovations from outside,
- increases the effectiveness of actions taken by organization,
- accelerates the reaction to changes occurring in a widely comprehended environment,
- enables economical use of resources,
- facilitates the creation of appropriate relations with clients, suppliers and contractors,

- enables the access to various sources of financing and their better utilisation,
- has an impact on better quality of products and services,
- has an impact on the enhancement of products, procedures and structures,
- integrates business processes.

5 Strategic nature of knowledge

Analysing knowledge as a resource it is worth reflecting whether it has the attributes characteristic of strategic resources such as valuability, rareness, being difficult to imitate and to substitute, which are decisive factors for the obtainment of competitive supremacy by a given organization.

Enterprises operate on the market in conditions of uncertainty. If they assess the prospective value of a given resource aptly then acquiring a given resource or developing it within company they can draw income bigger than the competition. In comparison to companies which assessed incorrectly they will gain competitive supremacy. The likelihood of taking a right decision increases if it is based on knowledge. Knowledge facilitates the anticipation of changes in the environment and this enables organizations to make use of supervening occasions and withstand emerging threats. In the case of changes which cannot be perceived and ipso facto cannot be prepared for possessing appropriate knowledge enables quicker reaction to them and taking right decisions and actions.

M. H. Zack points out that organizations which have better knowledge can co-ordinate and combine their traditional resources and competence into new, different from the current ones and these give a better value for the clients than the value offered by the competitor *(Zack, 1999)*. Knowledge is mainly perceived as a main source of creating the value of the organization, which suggests that it can be treated as a capital which yields economic effects for its owner.

To sum up, knowledge, enabling the organization to exploit emerging opportunities and withstanding threats, conditions the possibility of being successful in competing on the market and affects the size of this success. The aforementioned arguments prove that knowledge is valuable as a resource.

Knowledge possesses yet another feature attributed to strategic resources, namely rarity. Hidden knowledge constitutes the basis for competitive advantage of the organization, which is difficult to access or is not accessible at all to current or potential competitors. This feature is connected with the lack of mobility or hampered mobility of the resource. Knowledge, especially specialist, is usually of greater value when it is used in a given organization than when it is transferred to another one. It is worth emphasizing that such knowledge often yields appropriate effects only when it is used in connection with other resources (e.g. reputation, corporate culture), with which it is connected in a characteristic for this organization way.

Imperfect imitability of knowledge as a resource means inability to imitate it precisely by potential competitors. Knowledge belongs to these resources which to a large extent are created by organizations in a long period of time. The companies entering the market or operating on the market for a short period of time are unable to build such a knowledge base which would give them competitive advantage. The accumulation of knowledge is easier when its new resources are added to the existing ones, which leads to the creation of more valuable knowledge.

Companies which do not possess appropriately developed knowledge are unable to 'keep pace' in learning with these organizations that have such knowledge. That is why organizations should search for domains of experimenting and learning, which potentially may increase the value of hitherto prevailing knowledge *(Zack, 1999)*.

It is also worth emphasizing that the relations among company resources which ensure competitive advantage are not always fully understandable and the development path of current knowledge resources within an organization is inimitable. As a result the possibility of their duplication by competitors is insignificant and sometimes such possibility does not even exist *(Głuszek, 2004, pp.41-42)*. The competitors are also unable to duplicate the knowledge resources which give the organization competitive advantage since they are unable to define which of them and in what extent contribute to it. In case of hidden knowledge its principles of behavior or rules based on it are difficult to grasp and describe even for its own users.

Knowledge is a difficult resource to replace. In the case of classic production factors it is relatively easy to replace one with the other, for instance the work of 20 employees can be replaced with the work of a machine manned by one employee. In the case of knowledge it is not possible because there are no strategic resources equally valued by the market, which would replace it.

The aforementioned considerations point out that knowledge meets conditions of a strategic resource, however not every type of knowledge meets these conditions as much. Competitive advantage of a given organization mainly relays on the know-how type of hidden knowledge of its employees as well as on hidden knowledge included in organizational routines, gained and developed in a long period of time through experience. Referring to a different typology of knowledge it can be said that the obtainment of competitive advantage is determined by advanced knowledge enabling direct and effective competition with other organizations on a given market as well as by innovative knowledge distinguishing a given organization from others.

Organization which wants to base its competitiveness on knowledge should perform the following quicker than competitors:

- Identify these sources of knowledge which due to its specificity are most important to achieve and maintain competitive advantage on the market.
- Develop knowledge, especially innovative so that the organization could operate on new, higher level.
- Acquire knowledge, which the organization cannot develop, e.g. establishing contacts with external experts.
- Using knowledge in activities aimed at creating new products and services or enhancing the existing ones as well as to enhance organizational processes and procedures.

If it is to be feasible the infrastructure of the organization should be organized in such a way so that appropriate technical equipment, the Internet, intranet, knowledge banks, libraries, systematic training sessions and meetings stimulate effective teamwork, creativity, positive attitude, self-belief, advantageous environment *(Rampersad, 2007)*.

However, such a position and competitive advantage are not achieved once and for all but have a defined impermanence. Therefore, organization should manage its competitiveness, which can be understood as constant, purposeful, well-considered, planned and accurately aimed influence on all elements including knowledge and these combined determine the competitiveness of the organization.

6 Knowledge strategy

Organizations that want to achieve and keep the high competitive position on the market, should build and implement knowledge strategies.

M. H. Zack presents a comprehensive approach to this issue. He defines the knowledge strategy as the strategy of competitiveness built up around organizational intellectual resources and competence. An identification of strategic resources based on knowledge and competence, and determining, how they support organization’s products and reinforce its market position, are essential elements of the knowledge strategy. Organizations must determine their strategic objectives, identify the knowledge essential to implement the planned strategy, and then compare it with the possessed knowledge, identifying existing knowledge gaps or surpluses.

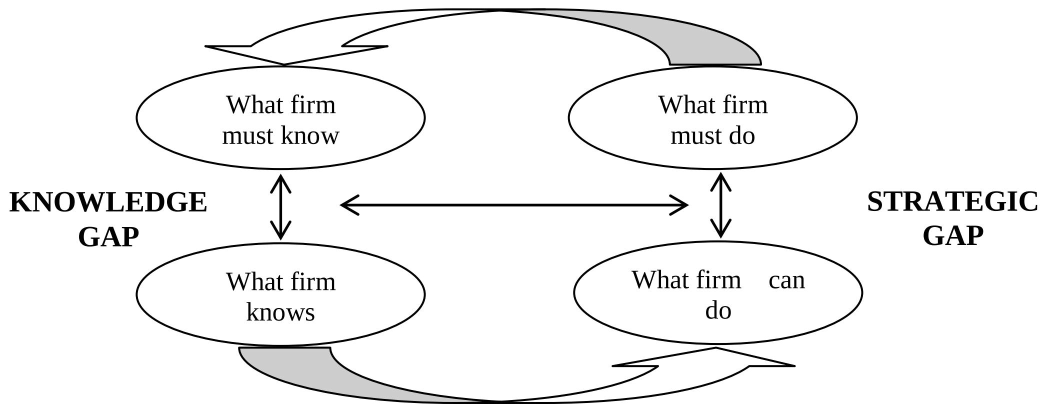

Figure 3. Gap analysis
Source: Zackm M. H.: Developing a Knowledge Strategy. In: California Management Review, Vol. 41, 1999

Gap between what the organization must do, in order to be competitive, and what is doing, constitutes the strategic gap. The potential knowledge gap is a difference between what the organization must know in order to implement its strategy, and what currently knows. Internal knowledge gap exists when organizational knowledge isn't sufficient for implementing the strategy or for defending own position on the market. External knowledge gap exists when the level of organizational knowledge is lower than the level of market competitors' knowledge. In both cases an organization must take specific, knowledge-based actions, in order to fill identified knowledge gaps. It requires determining what knowledge should be developed in the organization, and what should be gained from the external sources *(Zack, 1999)*.

Organizations can build more or less ***aggressive strategies.*** In industries, in which the knowledge diffusion is slow and knowledge isn't becoming outdated quickly, organizations apply the more conservative knowledge strategy. This strategy consists in using internal knowledge and creating barriers of its transfer beyond the organization. Companies operating in knowledge-based industries, use both an internal and external sources of knowledge, and apply the aggressive strategy.

S. Callahan introduces other concept of knowledge strategy. He moved the accent from approach consisting in planning to approach directed to development of principles, heuristic, schemes, which can be applied in order to improve knowledge environments of the organization. He considers the strategy as a combination of actions that are supposed to cause achieving assumed business results, and are a result of many folded activities taken in the organization. The author uses the term *knowledge strategy* in reference to the identification of valuable knowledge assets and to implementation of business actions, which influence these assets and cause their development, what thus leads to improvement in the organizational performance *(Callahan, 2002)*.

According to S. Callahan knowledge framework, environment and initiatives are the elements of knowledge strategy *(Callahan, 2002)*. Knowledge framework allows members of the organization to understand concepts of knowledge management and describes how the organization perceives knowledge and knowledge management in aspect of their relation to business activity of the organization. Knowledge framework is modified in time, in accordance to changes occurring both in organization and in the firm's environment.

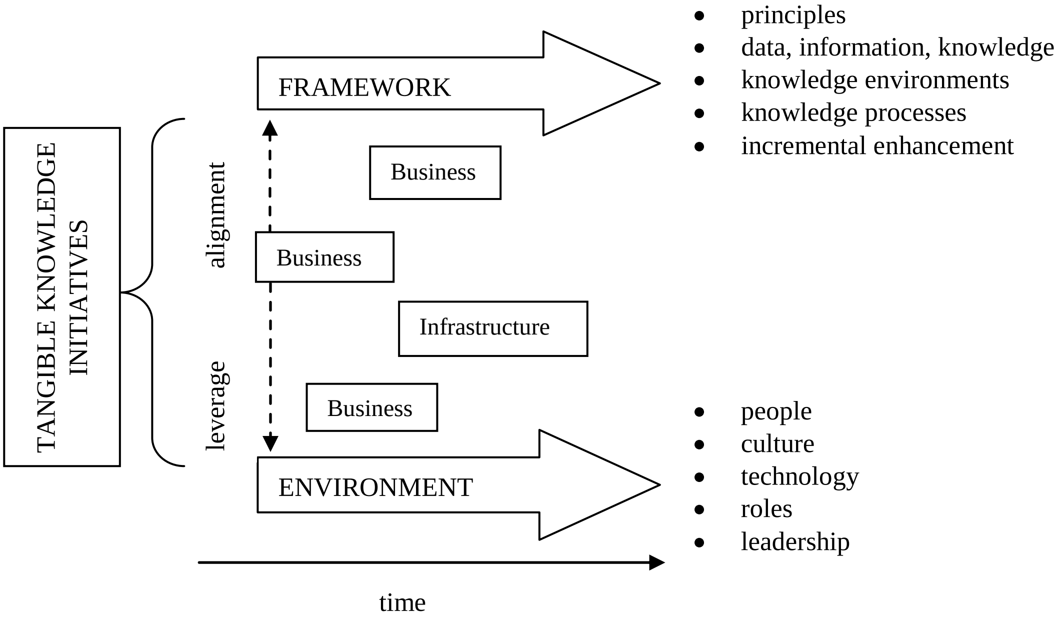

Figure 4. Knowledge framework, knowledge environment, and tangible knowledge initiatives in a knowledge strategy
Source: Callahan, S.: *Crafting a Knowledge Strategy*. Canberra. Anecdote Pty. 2002.

Organizational knowledge environment is created by: people, culture, strategy, roles and responsibilities, workplace design, technology, communities and their practices, content, organizational structure, budget, leadership, incentives, sanctions and motivation. It should be improved and developed by the organization to create the best conditions for the development of knowledge processes *(Callahan, 2002)*.

The next element of knowledge strategy is knowledge initiatives. A purpose of their implementation is creating and improving the knowledge environment, resulting in achieving better financial results by the organization. Examples of such initiatives are: mentoring, knowledge sharing, leadership training, document and records management, competitive intelligence, search and find, lessons learned, innovation management, communities of practice, collaboration, training and education etc.

Knowledge framework, environment and initiatives interact in order to improve the knowledge environment of the organization.

Both discussed models show somewhat different approaches to building the organizational knowledge strategy. S. Callahan focuses on the “interior” of the organization. His model reflects resource-based approach to building the organization’s strategy, and doesn’t attach great significance to environment. M. H. Zack puts in his model a great meaning to the “interior” of the organization, but also takes into consideration some elements of the environment and their influence on competitiveness of the organization.

7 Knowledge strategy combining positional and based on resources approach

The evolution of strategic management, from positional approach to resource-based view of the firm results in underestimation of the role of environment, which arouses some doubts. The external environment of the organization determines the possibilities and directions of using knowledge. It is a source of changes and thus a source of uncertainty, risk, but at the same time a source of opportunities. It is also an important source of resources for the organization including knowledge. Even if the organization in the process of shaping its competitiveness is aimed at developing and utilizing its own, unique knowledge, it is still penetrated by knowledge from outside through various channels in different forms. Ignoring or rejecting this type of knowledge may lead to a situation in which previously achieved advantage would lose its significance and consequently the organization would lose its position on the market.

Furthermore, it is also worth noting that competitive advantage and position are always determined with reference to competitors operating on the market, therefore, operating in the company's environment. That is why the analysis of the impact of knowledge on the competitiveness of the company always requires the examination of its external environment.

Approaching the analysis of the environment it is difficult to anticipate which of its elements will be the most important for the organization in the future that is why it is difficult to make a decision, which of them deserve most attention and time. The environment of the company consist of so many mutually and in many ways connected elements that their total and deep analysis would mean the necessity of bearing substantial costs, it would also be quite time-consuming and the credibility of its results wouldn't be reliable anyway. Moreover, thorough examination of the surroundings is not always possible due to, *inter alia*, hampered or sometimes impossible access to numerous pieces of information mainly regarding competitors. The organization's ability to determine the scope of the analysis of environment and the methodology of its execution is not an easy task and may constitute one of organization's competences determining its competitiveness.

As aforementioned, changes occurring in the environment are often unpredictable therefore nowadays minor significance is attributed to planning as it is believed that future will verify the possibility of implementation and validity of the developed plans. It is advisable to focus more on creating such an organization which will be able to adjust flexibly to the changes occurring in the surroundings thanks to the resources and ability of using them.

Creating such an organization is not an easy task. Flexible reaction to changes concerns all employees of the organization, it is connected with the development and implementation of appropriate procedures, processes and structures enhancement etc. It also requires skills which must be developed in advance as well as corporate culture based on knowledge and trust, supporting creativity and innovativeness, in which changes are perceived as opportunities.

Strong and flexible enterprise with appropriate corporate culture, rich in resources, skills and being able to use them appropriately has greater chances of facing challenges. On the other hand organization should have a vision of its future presenting the desired position on the market and potential ways of achieving it. As A. Kaleta points out that *„(...) canalized development, thus structured, eliminating unnecessary impulses which only cause chaos, especially in unstable conditions seems to be especially desired," (Kaleta, 2006, p. 69).*

That is why, in the process of formulating knowledge strategy, it is worth trying to combine flexibility of resourceful approach with logic and cohesion of positional approach. In other words the knowledge strategy of the organization should be created on the basis of its own knowledge resources and enhanced by the analysis of the surroundings it functions in.

Based on the previous considerations regarding advantages and disadvantages of RBV in comparison to positional approach, the role of resources in general, especially knowledge, in building competitive advantage as well as on the basis of presented models of resources strategy, an attempt has been made to create a model of knowledge strategy combining the aforementioned approaches. It has been assumed that this model should be flexible enough to enable the organization to react quickly to challenges from the environment at all levels of the creation of the strategy and it should show the direction of the best possible knowledge use, resulting in the direction of the development of the organization (vision, goal).

The knowledge strategy describes the structure and use of knowledge resources, being an element of competitive potential to achieve competitive advantage and consequently the best possible competitive position on the market.

The first step to build strategy of knowledge in an organization is vision and connected with it the goal of organization. The next step is the identification and classification of all resources thus determining which of them are of strategic nature – valuable, unique, difficult to replace and imitate. Although the following analysis is aimed at interior areas of the organization, it must be supported by knowledge regarding its environment.

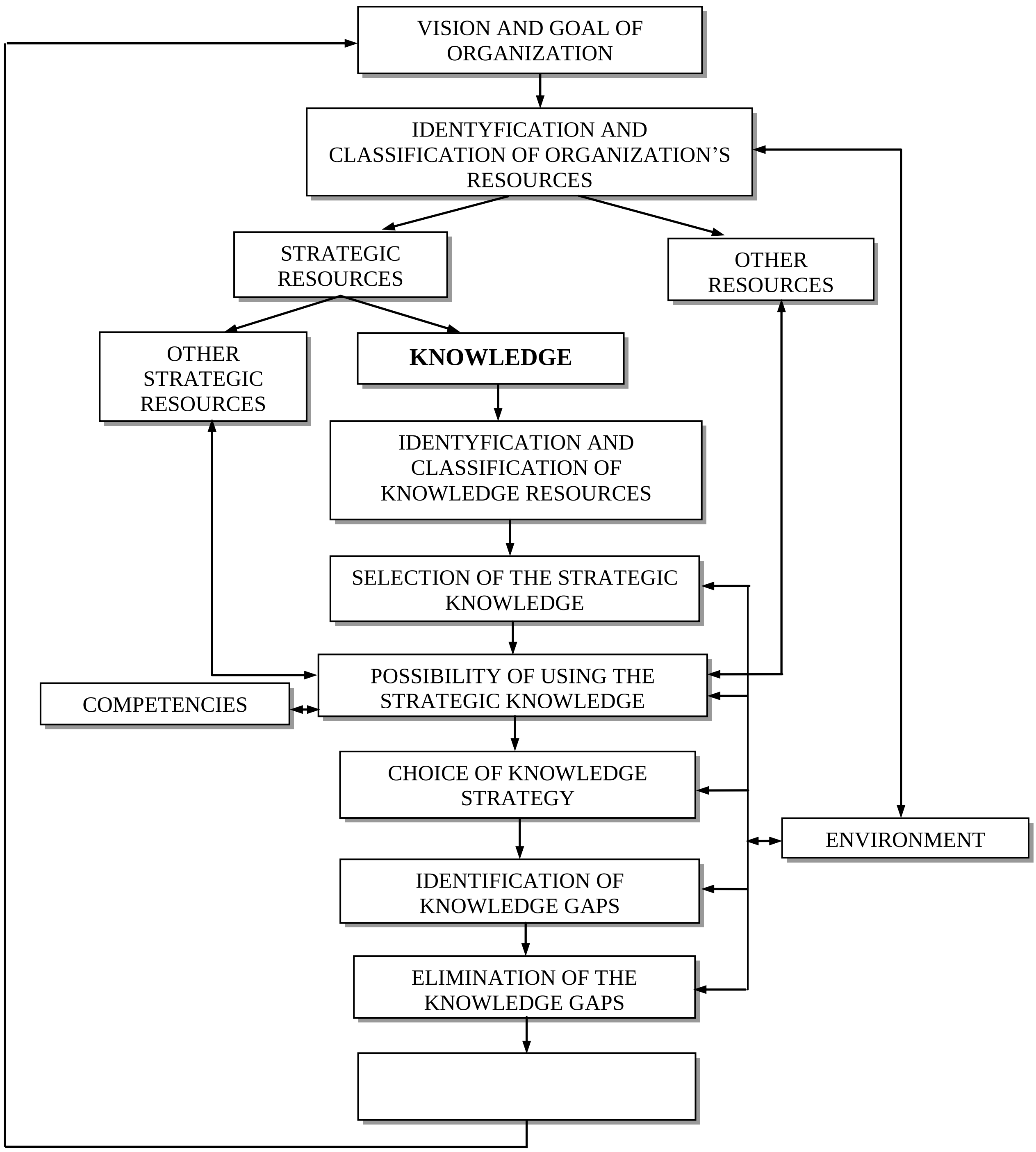

Figure 5. The knowledge strategy combining resource-based and positioning views of the firm
Source: own

Starting with analysis of all resources and not just with the analysis of knowledge in the strategy of knowledge is justified because knowledge as a resource gains special significance in the process of shaping organization's competitiveness once it is connected with its other strategic resources and competence.

As aforementioned in the following study, not every type of knowledge is equally important in the aspect of its influence on achieving and/or maintaining organization's competitive advantage. That is why the next step of formulating the strategy of knowledge is identification and classification of knowledge resources, which will facilitate the process of selecting strategic knowledge. At this stage it is necessary to define which types of knowledge within organization have the characteristics of strategic resources.

The further step is aimed at determining the possibility of using strategic knowledge to create such an offer (goods, services, processes, procedures, etc.) which will be highly rated by the market. Establishing these requires among other things the identification of possible consumer expectations which are to be matched if the organization's offer is to be attractive for them. The methods of using strategic knowledge depend on the possibilities and ways of its unique connection with other strategic resources as well as with other resources and competencies, which will consequently enable the organization to create a unique offer. It is even suggested that not only should organizations meet the market needs effectively but also, where it is possible, try to anticipate them or even create.

The next step consists in choosing the strategy of knowledge presenting constant, purposeful and considered influence on knowledge, open to new circumstances, shaping the competitiveness of the organization. A well-developed strategy not only enables the organization to be successful in its current activities but it also can create a possibility of entering new markets.

Next, comparing, on the one hand current resources of strategic knowledge with the desired resources which enable the realization of a chosen strategy and on the other hand with the knowledge resources possessed by competitors, it is necessary to determine internal and external knowledge gaps. Their identification in the next stage leads to the determination of actions, which the organization should take in order to eliminate them – should these be actions aimed at the development of the own knowledge or at acquiring knowledge from external sources or maybe at combining both processes. Taking such a decision demands the determination of the possibility of realization of these development processes and/or the knowledge acquisition as well as broadly-comprehended costs which are connected with it.

Organization's constant striving for the elimination of the discovered knowledge gaps through the development of internal knowledge and/or acquiring the necessary knowledge from external sources and subsequently its appropriate use may enable the organization to gain competitive advantage on the market. Such supremacy, which provides an organization with new opportunities, may result in the modification or change of the development of the organization.

8 Conclusion

To sum up, from the perspective of strategic management focusing just on the environment in the process of searching for the sources of competitive advantage for the organization or just on the internal resources and skills without including external factors is not good. Therefore, organizations should try to adapt and use the achievement of both approaches – positional and resource-based. Organizations which are able to develop their knowledge quicker and better and/or acquire necessary knowledge from external sources and then combine these knowledge resources and integrate them with other resources and competence may create a specific, difficult to imitate cluster of resources which if appropriately used as a response to the occurring chances and emerging dangers gives better possibilities of creating values desired by the customers and consequently achieving competitive advantage. It must be emphasized that the success of the strategy depends not only on how well it was created but mainly on people who implement it.

Nowadays, formulating a knowledge strategy of the organization is a complex problem. The following article doesn't deplete the topic and is only a basis for further considerations.

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