



## COMPETENCY MANAGEMENT, KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND CORPORATIVE EDUCATION: A STUDY ON BRAZILIAN COMPANIES

*Gestão por Competências, Gestão do Conhecimento e Educação Corporativa:  
Um Estudo sobre Empresas Brasileiras*

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### ABSTRACT

Competence is responsible and recognized act of knowing, that involves mobilizing, integrating, transferring knowledge, resources, skills, that adds economic value to the organization and social value to the individual. Knowledge management is the systematic and deliberated coordination of people, technologies, processes and organizational structure of the company with the purpose of adding value through use, reuse and innovation. The relationship between the two practices increases the organization's competitiveness potential. In order to understand this relationship, this research analyzed data on the practices related to knowledge management and corporative education and management by competences of Brazilian organizations through the database of the survey 'Best Places to Work' - using a quantitative approach. The data analysis allows us to infer a positive relationship between the practices that can demonstrate a human resources area more active next to the business strategy and seeking to raise the competitiveness of the organization.

**Keywords:** Management by competence, Knowledge management, Corporative education, Organization.

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## GESTÃO POR COMPETÊNCIAS, GESTÃO DO CONHECIMENTO E EDUCAÇÃO CORPORATIVA: UM ESTUDO SOBRE EMPRESAS BRASILEIRAS

*Competency management, knowledge management and corporative education:  
a study on Brazilian companies*

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### RESUMO

Competência é o ato de conhecer responsável e reconhecido, que envolve mobilizar, integrar, transferir conhecimentos, recursos, habilidades, que agreguem valor econômico à organização e valor social ao indivíduo. A gestão do conhecimento é a coordenação sistemática e deliberada de pessoas, tecnologias, processos e estrutura organizacional da empresa com o objetivo de agregar valor por meio do uso, reaproveitamento e inovação. A relação entre as duas práticas aumenta o potencial de competitividade da organização. Para compreender essa relação, esta pesquisa analisou dados sobre as práticas relacionadas à gestão do conhecimento e à educação corporativa e à gestão por competências de organizações brasileiras por meio do banco de dados da pesquisa ‘Melhores Empresas para Trabalhar’ - com abordagem quantitativa. A análise dos dados permite inferir uma relação positiva entre as práticas que podem demonstrar uma área de recursos humanos mais atuante junto à estratégia de negócios e buscando elevar a competitividade da organização.

**Palavras-chave:** Gestão por competência, Gestão do conhecimento, Educação Corporativa, Organização.

## INTRODUCTION

Knowledge is the most precious asset of a company and their contributors. That one that know how to use and share properly in a organization reach better results in productivity, information flow and end customer service (BARNEY, 1999 *apud* DUTRA,2017).

Fleury and Fleury (2001) remember that, for long decades, prevailed Taylorist and Fordist models of work organization, based on the production line and on the task fragmentation process. Discussions about competences mobilized in Europe, mainly in France, took in account the employee delivery for the execution of a work, or a task, using their knowledge to improve not only their work capacity, but also the productivity with its knowledge, aligning theory and practical applicability, that is: the attitude of doing different and bring improvements.

For Zarifian (1999 *apud* Fleury and Fleury, 2001), competence is the practice intelligence for situations that are supported by acquired knowledge and transform they harder, how much more grows complexity. Le Boter (1995 *apud* Fleury and Fleury), presents competence as a knowledge about knowing how and the way that is recognized by the others. It implies knowing how to mobilize, integrate and transfer the knowledge, resources and abilities, in a certain professional determined context.

Eboli (2008) promotes reflection about corporative education, as a development system of person, based on competence management and presents researches that evidence the strategic role about it, in Brazil, as well as their alignment with organizational competences.

Fischer and Amorim (2010) emphasize that, although they are interconnected, knowledge management and corporative education have some different elements, such as the character of learning and the production subject process of knowledge.

As a way of searching comprehension of in what way competence management and that one of knowledge coexist in the Brazilian organizational environment, this research analyzed data of large organizations by the research 'Best companies to work' [MEPT], annually published, since 1997.

**Objectives.** This research has as its general objective identifying knowledge management practices and education, together with Brazilian organizations and verify if they are together with a competence management by competencies.

Specific objectives are:

- (1) Lift which companies have knowledge management practices and corporative education;
- (2) Identify if there is a relationship between companies that have a competence management system.

**Justification.** Understanding possible relationship between systems of competence and knowledge management, and current relevance of these practices for organizations differ in a competitive environment, postulates the importance of identifying if there is relationship between practices of knowledge management and management competence and management system, as well as how it happens, in a Brazilian context of organizations.

MEPT research is on its third decade of existence, and since 2006 works in partnership with the Program of Studies in Management of People of Administration Institute Foundation [PROGEP-FIA] and Abril Publishing Company responsible for *Você S/A* magazine publication, whose research is linked. By academic viewpoint, this scientific work looks for support studies, where data are processed products to the professional public active in human resources (FISCHER, AMORIM, FEVORINI, & SILVA 2018)

## 1 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

### 1.1 Competence management

Fleury and Fleury (2000) define competence as “know how to act responsible and recognized that involves mobilizing, integrate and transfer knowledge, resources, skills that add economic value to the organization and social value to individual.

The debate about competence management permeates some chains. Mirabile (1997 apud Fleury and Fleury, 2001) remembers that Mc Clelland started up the debate about competence between psychologists and administrators in the USA. It, according to this author, was one of the characteristics underlying a person, casually related to the superior performance in carrying out a task, or in a given situation. It made a difference, in this way, aptness competence: natural talent of the person that may be improved, from skills, demonstration of a particular talent in practice and knowledge, what people need know to perform a task.

For Fleury and Fleury (2001), while prevailed Taylor’s and Ford’s model of work organization and business strategy definition, the concept of qualification provided the necessary reference to work the individual-organization professional relationship. Qualification is, usually defined by requirements associated with the position, or position, or knowledge, knowledge stock of the person that may be classified and certificated by educational system.

The French debate on competence was born in the 1970s, precisely the questioning of the concept of qualification and the process of professional training, mainly technical. Unsatisfied with the gap between the needs of the world of work (mainly industry), they sought to bring education closer to the real needs of enterprises, with a view to increasing the skills of workers and their chances of employment. It was sought to establish the relationship between skills and knowledge - the know-how - in the framework of diploma and employment (FLEURY and FLEURY, 2001).

According to Dutra (2001), in the last decades, there was a change in the profile of the people required by the companies. To the obedient and disciplined profile, one prefers an autonomous and enterprising profile. The change, in the demand pattern, generated the need for an organizational culture that stimulated and supported individual initiative, creativity and the autonomous search for results for the company or business.

Le Boterf (1995 apud Fleury and Fleury, 2001) situates competence at a crossroads, with three axes formed by the person (his biography, socialization), his educational background and his professional experience.

Competence is the set of social and communicational learning nurtured upstream by learning and training and, downstream, by the evaluation system. According to Le Boterf (1995 apud Fleury and Fleury, 2001), competence is a responsible act of knowing that is recognized by others. It involves knowing how to mobilize, integrate and transfer knowledge, resources and skills in a given professional context.

### 1.2 Knowledge management and corporative education

According to Dutra (2001), knowledge plays an important role in economic processes, and investments in intangible goods grow faster than those in physical goods. Countries, companies and people with a higher degree of knowledge are more successful, productive and recognized.

Knowledge originates from a set of experiences, information and values that allow to evaluate and to incorporate new data in a simultaneously fluid and structured way, allowing to subsidize the making of better decisions, which translate into actions more aligned to the reality of a company and of their objectives (DAVENPORT & PRUSAK, 2003).

The creation of knowledge in the organization is subjected to the context in which it is inserted, and focused on the dialectic of thought and action that opposes and integrates contrasting elements, to transcend its original contradictions and meanings, while exercising and receiving influences from the environment

with which relates (Nonaka & Toyama, 2003). In companies, the information cycle and its positioning in the market means that there is the exercise and accommodation of viable information for the creation of knowledge; companies are influenced by external variables, which means that knowledge strategies are adapted and modified to their needs to exist and grow in a market.

Such organizations generate and use knowledge and therefore must manage them, although knowledge is more a process than an object (Davenport, 1998). The generation of knowledge, mentioned by Davenport, occurs in a conscious and intentional way, and not necessarily unprecedented, only new to the organization itself.

Knowledge management is defined by Dalkir (2005) as the systematic and deliberate coordination of people, technologies, processes and organizational structure of the company, with the purpose of adding value through use, reuse and innovation. Such coordination is carried out thanks to the actions of creation, sharing and application of knowledge, besides feeding from lessons learned, best practices and important elements for corporate memory, directed to continuous organizational learning.

Barroso and Gomes (1999), in their studies, directly relate the importance of knowledge management to the growth of intangible assets of companies in relation to tangible assets, and defines knowledge management as: the transformation of intangible assets into values, through analysis, development and use of processes related to such knowledge.

In research with technology companies, Kuniyoshi and Santos (2005) identified practices and management initiatives, such as:

- (1) Declared knowledge management strategies and policies;
- (2) Corporate portals; repositories of lessons learned and best practices;
- (3) Recognition and award of best practices;
- (4) Taxonomy and ontology as facilitators of content management;
- (5) Document repositories and virtual or physical corporate libraries;
- (6) Corporate education and e-learning;
- (7) Network of experts;
- (8) Innovation centers.

For Fischer and Amorim (2010), corporate education and knowledge management, as organizational innovation movements of contemporary organizations, have emerged to revolutionize the way in which organizations treat the processes of training and learning.

According to Eboli (2008), the processes of knowledge management and corporate education gain strategic character, when they come to have as reference the organizational competencies of the company. Corporate education responds to the competitiveness challenges of organizations, making the processes of behavioral, technical or theoretical qualification strongly aligned with company strategies and with the precepts of modern management.

In common with knowledge management, corporate education focuses on the organizational phenomenon, learning and the product of this: knowledge. However, there are elements that define the specificities of each system: how learning is planned and performed and who is responsible for its production and appropriation (Eboli, 2008).

### **1.3 Competence management and knowledge management**

Corporate education has played an important role in building organizational competitiveness through the development of human skills related to organizational competencies (Eboli, 2008).

In dynamic markets with dispersed resources, organizational structures must foster learning and the generation of new knowledge, to integrate the company's intangible assets and use it as a sustainable

competitive advantage (Teece, 2007). Part of this knowledge must be provided by the company, using the training, the search for new knowledge in the market and adapting to the reality of the business.

According to Garvin (1993 apud Dutra, 2001), learning organizations are those able to create, acquire and transfer knowledge, as well as modify their behaviors to reflect these new insights and insights. They need to change to become competitive and, for that, they must invest in individuals who, with their knowledge, will be able to manage new forms of work and competitive models for it. Therefore, the relationship between a competency system and knowledge management becomes important, aiming at providing conditions so that employees can acquire such knowledge and, at the same time, deliver their work to improve their way of working.

For Senge (1990 apud Dutra, 2001), an organization is always expanding its capacity to create future. This ability translates into the need for flexibility and adaptability to the market where, in a globalized era, the external variables affect the internal variables of the organization, such as: human resources, machinery, equipment and product and service development areas.

According to Zarifian (1999 apud Fleury and Fleury, 2001), "competence is practical intelligence for situations that rely on acquired knowledge and transform it with more force, the more the complexity of situations increases." In this scenario, the required competencies of individuals are increasingly complex and therefore both employee and company must strategically know how to use knowledge to generate deliverables that add value to the business. Therefore, knowledge is fundamental for the creation of new competencies that make the company modernize and be competitive in the market where it operates.

Corporate education, in turn, plays a fundamental role in breaking paradigm to seek improvements in the way it works, providing a return to the organization and its individuals.

## 2 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

A quantitative research was carried out, with data analysis of the MEPT survey for the year 2017, published by Editora Abril, which lists the companies with the best evaluations based on the proposed criteria.

Lakatos and Marconi (2010) present the definition of technique as a set of precepts or processes that serve a science or art; is the ability to use such precepts or standards, the practical part. All science uses innumerable techniques in pursuit of its purposes.

According to them, besides the specific methods of the Social Sciences, such as the approach and procedure, the qualitative and quantitative methods are also very important in scientific research.

The quantitative method is characterized mainly by the use of statistical instruments such as: percentage, mean, standard deviation, correlation coefficient, regression analysis, among others. Moreover, Lakatos and Marconi (2010) also affirm that the way of collecting and analyzing data also differ from a qualitative method:

"In the quantitative method, the researchers rely on large samples and numerical information, while in the qualitative the samples are reduced, the data are analyzed in their psychosocial and the collection instruments are not structured" (LAKATOS AND MARCONI, 2010). , P. 269).

The methodology, in general, encompasses two distinct moments: the research / data collection and the analysis / interpretation, when one tries to investigate a certain subject.

In order to make feasible the statistical analysis, dichotomous questions related to the same variable within a construct were grouped in a Likert format. The use of numerical scales from questionnaires in a quantitative approach aims to obtain analyzes that would not be immediately available through formal records or simply observation of the phenomenon to be studied (HAIR, BABIN, MONEY, & SAMOUEL, 2005).

The MEPT research database is composed of approximately 79 issues related to the theme of this article, of which 16 are related to demographic and / or identification information, while the others, to the validation

and correlation between the proposed constructs.

The consultation to the MEPT database, which was accessed by the PROGEP-FIA team, returned a total of 456 respondent companies, with 33 main activities.

The authors' concern was to carry out a bibliographical survey to obtain a basis and support to the ideas explained during the text, both in the theoretical reference, as well as in the analysis of data collected by the MEPT research, seeking to satisfy the need to know, quantitatively, how the knowledge management and the corporate education collaborate to improve the competences in the analyzed companies. This provides a significant response to the importance of knowledge and the incentives provided by companies to improve their skills.

### 3 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

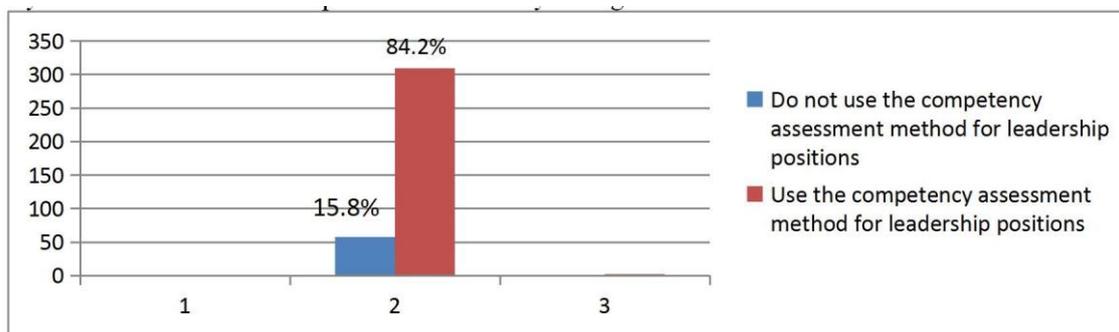
#### 3.1 Characterization of companies and the role of human resources

According to MEPT data, out of a total of 456 companies surveyed, there is an average operating time of 42 years. 45% are service providers; 23.4% belongs to industry; 9.2% are from the commercial branch in general; 4.4% work with agribusiness; 3.3% belong to business and technology; 1.2% to education; 12.9% of them did not identify the branch of activity.

The data showed that the main Human Resources decisions occur in: 45%, with managers consulting the HR area; approximately 17% with the HR area, consulting managers and the same index showing HR autonomy in making decisions; 2.4% of the decisions are taken, only, by the managers. It can be inferred that, based on the data, HR is a protagonist in the decisions, or involved in it, which allows for the integration in the different areas of the organization and better dissemination of HR practices. Thus, HR is the main source of consultation of managers and, therefore, is a strategy adopted by most companies surveyed.

#### 3.2 Results about competence management

Data analysis showed that 84.2% of companies adopt formal practices to define, disseminate, evaluate and internalize a competency profile for their leaders; and 15.8% reported that they did not have a defined competency profile, according to Chart 1. Of the 84.5% of them, 32.7% of the companies started to practice periodic review of the leadership profile, with the participation of managers, in up to 3 years and 67.3% revise the profile more than 3 years ago.



**Figure 1:** They Adopt Formal Practices Related to Skills Assessment

Data is sourced from MEPT (2017), treated statistically, and interpreted by the authors.

When asked if company formally announces the leadership profile, 40,1% of organizations informed that disseminates these practices by internal communication, like on: newspapers, magazines, intranet and murals; and, 59,9% disseminates these practices on interactive activities like: meetings, lectures or formal training.

It was raised that 48.2% of companies offer training, or guidance to managers on how to disseminate the leadership profile and 30.3% of these practices started in the last 3 years. 69.7% have been guiding and training their managers for more than 3 years (table 1).

**Table 1:** Percentage of Companies that Offers Training or Guidance to Disseminate Leadership Profile

| Question   | Percentage |
|--|------------|
| Companies that offer training or orientation for leaders on how to disseminate the Leadership profile. | 48,2%      |
| There are over 3 years   | 69,7%      |
| Started in the recent 3 years  | 30,3%      |

Data source from MEPT (2017)

For 71.3% of the companies, the leadership profile is taken into account for the performance evaluation, whereas in 28.5% they included this consideration in the last 3 years and 71.5% have practiced it for more than 3 years, remembering that the profile can be elaborated by the company, through HR, in partnership with the managers, by the description of the positions of the company.

According to the survey, 89.1% of companies use tools for leadership appreciation, such as performance and competency assessment. The main source used for this is the immediate manager, and self-assessment, for 21% of companies. 10.9% of them do not use tools for this procedure. As verified, the evaluation is validated by a committee within the organization, composed of high and medium management, a fact quite common in companies in Brazil.

Finally, 96.2% stimulate the practice of feedback to employees; and 3.8% of them promote some stimulus action. In 85.5% of the analyzed, managers are formally oriented on how to provide feedback; in 71%, the managers are charged in this sense, in relation to their leaders; in 39.5%, non-managers are formally encouraged to provide feedback to their colleagues and managers. It is important to emphasize that this practice makes possible the subsidy for the employee, its performance and which way to improve or develop the skills required by the organization.

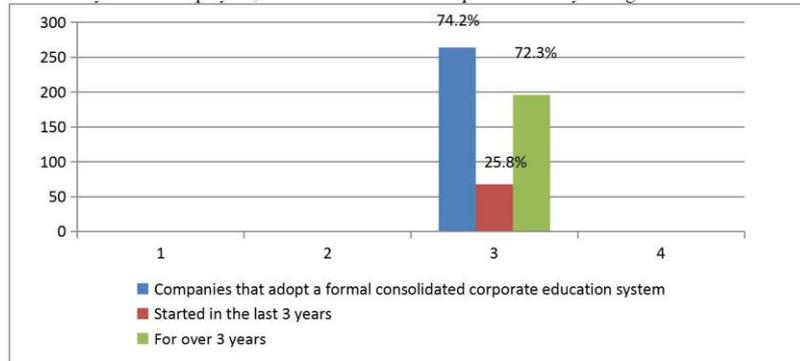
### **3.3 Corporative education and knowledge management results**

According to MEPT data, 72,3 companies that were searched adopt a consolidated formal system of corporative education. 25,8% started a practice of this system last 3 years and 74,2% have an education system for employees, contributors and leadership more than 3 years ago.

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**Figure 2** Companies that Adopt the Formal System of Corporate Education.



Data is sourced from MEPT (2017) and treated statistically and interpreted by the authors.

This result may indicate an evidence about importance given by Brazilian companies, nowadays, to knowledge management and the perception of this system, while competitive differential to them.

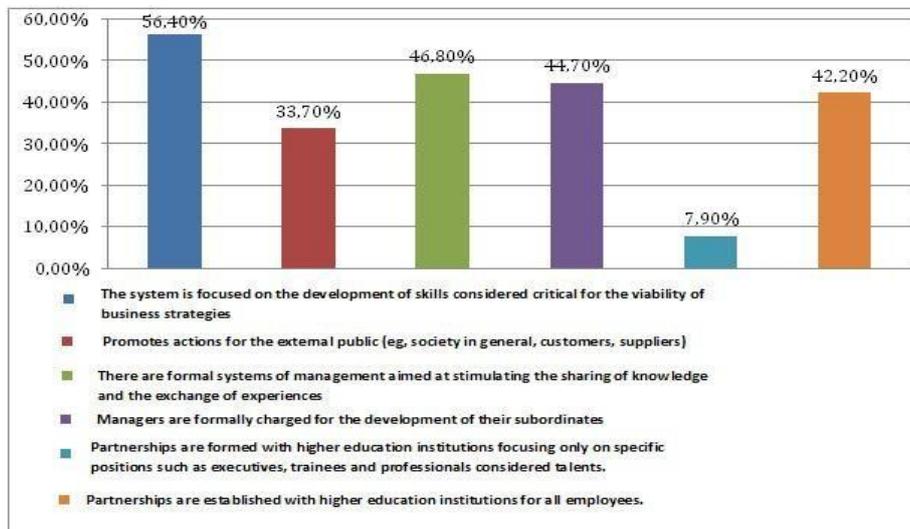
**Table 2** Percentage of Companies Surveyed Adopting a Formal Consolidated Corporate Education System

| Question  | Percentage |
|---|------------|
| Companies that adopt a formal consolidated corporate education system | 72,3%      |
| For over 3 years  | 74,2%      |
| Started in the last 3 years   | 25,8%      |

Data source from MEPT (2017).

As shown in Figure 1 companies that adopt a corporate education system: 56.4% of the practice is focused on the development of skills considered critical, for the viability of business strategies; and, 33.7% promote actions for the external public (eg society in general, customers, suppliers etc).

**Figure 1** Focus of Corporate Educational System



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As one of the focal points of the present article, the data show that 46.8% of the companies have formal systems of management aimed at stimulating the sharing of knowledge and the exchange of experiences. 67.7% have done this for over 3 years, and 32.2% have begun to stimulate sharing in the last 3 years.

**Table 3** The Following Practices Related to Knowledge Management Were Identified

| <b>Question</b>   | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---|-------------------|
| The system is focused on the development of skills considered critical for the viability of business strategies   | 56,4%             |
| Promotes actions for the external public (e.g., society in general, customers, suppliers)   | 33,7%             |
| There are formal systems of management aimed at stimulating the sharing of knowledge and exchange of experiences  | 46,8%             |
| Managers are formally charged for the development of their subordinates   | 44,7%             |
| Partnerships are established with higher education institutions, focusing only on specific positions, such as executives, trainees and professionals considered talents | 7,9%              |
| Partnerships are established with higher education institutions for all employees   | 42,2%             |

Data source from MEPT (2017).

In 44.7% of the companies analyzed, managers are formally charged for the development of their subordinates. When asked if there are partnerships with higher education institutions, 7.9% of companies have such partnerships focused on specific positions, such as executives, trainees and professionals considered as talents and 42.2% for all employees. Of which 73.5% have more than 3 years of service and 26.5%, up to 3 years.

86.6% of the companies carry out systematic evaluations of the training and development actions: 79.7% of the evaluations are aimed at verifying that the courses, programs and training have met the expectations of the participants. 65% establish a development plan, as assessed by training and development actions; finally, only 26.9% stated that they performed performance evaluations of the participants before and only after the training actions (table 4).

**Table 4** Systematic Evaluations of Training and Development Actions

| <b>Question</b>  | <b>Percentage</b> |
|--|-------------------|
| Verify that the courses, programs and training met the participants' expectations  | 79,7%             |
| Establishes development plan, as assessed by training and development actions      | 65%               |
| Carry out performance appraisals of participants before and after training actions | 26,9%             |

Data source from MEPT (2017)

59.5% adopt formal development practices specific to young employees: 34.9%, Young Apprentice Program; 30.6% have an Internship Program with a minimum duration of six months; 8.2%, Internship Program on vacation, or short-term; 15.3% Trainee Program; and, 11% Young Talent Program (Table 5).

**Table 5** Facilitating Corporate Education and Knowledge Incentive Programs

| Question  | Percentage |
|---|------------|
| Specific formal development practices for young employees | 59,9%      |
| Young Apprentice Program                                  | 34,9%      |
| Internship Program with a minimum duration of six months  | 30,6%      |
| Short Term or Internship Program                          | 8,2%       |
| Trainee Program   | 15,3%      |
| Youth Talent Program                                      | 11%        |

Data is sourced from MEPT (2017) and treated statistically and interpreted by the authors

53.7% have a program to stimulate employees who are participating in long-term courses (equal or superior to six months, such as technologists, undergraduate and graduate). Of these, 44% provide data from their operations to set up case studies and other academic research; 33.7% offer flexible scheduling options to facilitate employee education; in 16.7%, employees can go through job rotations, in areas related to the study developed, to facilitate the practical application of the learning; and, 5.6%, the companies reward the employees who develop their conclusion work based on topics of interest to the company

## CONCLUSION

When analyzing the use of knowledge management and corporate education in organizations, and its connection with the management by competences, this research identified evidence that allows to infer that there is an investment in managing its employees through a system of management by competencies, identified, especially when addressing the profile and management of leadership, as allocated in item 3.2 of the paper.

It is postulated that the use of knowledge management practices and corporate education make possible the implantation and institutionalization of organizational and individual competences. For this purpose, companies train, communicate, evaluate performance and establish practices to stimulate the development of individuals. It is also understood that companies work with proposals aimed at training, to generate knowledge and knowledge sharing.

Most companies have a formal corporate education system, providing knowledge management to improve the skills of employees, in order to guarantee the development of human capital and its competitive differential in the foreign market.

Some degree of maturity, or path, is observed for practices of knowledge management or corporate education and management by competencies, considering that, whenever questioned about the time that these practices were adopted, the majority was positioned indicating that they are previous the last 3 years.

The research provides us with elements capable of inferring that, in the majority, companies are concerned with the profile of the employees' competences and, to this end, they provide actions aimed at corporate education, as a way of generating and managing knowledge management in the organization, seeking to achieve, in this way, the organizational results are achieved, also being made possible by the sharing and dissemination of knowledge. It is possible to observe, and also, that the greater focus, when it comes to practices focused on the proficiency profile, is directed towards the leadership positions.

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