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**Process management  
in organizations  
- a discussion on  
terminology**

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**1. Introduction**

Management is a universal process focused on achieving a goal using specific resources. In the literature, we can identify a number of definitions and different ways of interpreting and describing the terms process, management and managing processes or process management. Therefore, the attempt in this article to organize the terminology is purely for cognitive value, which allows us to capture common areas and relationships. With the development of industry, there have been demands for increased productivity and efficiency (Taylor, 1914), attention has been paid to managerial activities (Fayol, 1947) and to the functions of tasks performed by others (Koontz and O'Donnell, 1955).

There is some conceptual ambiguity in descriptions of management, which makes it difficult to identify its literal meaning (Alänge et al., 1998). One concept can be given different meanings according to the subjective perceptions of members of a given organization since "the impact on organizational practice lies primarily in its interpretations and not in its original content" (Bender and Bijsterveld, 2000). This means that in order to say anything

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about how useful management ideas are, we need to examine how they are applied. This also applies to the other concepts identified in this publication, i.e.: process orientation, process approach, managing processes and process management.

The purpose of the article is to try to identify differences and similarities and to systematize terminology relating to process management in organizations. The study used literature research based on the exploration of the Web of Science and Scopus databases, with the analysis limited to scientific publications only, and in the selection of available materials, other materials such as communications, reviews or other documents were excluded from the analysis. The following research questions were posed, viz.: 1) What are the similarities and differences between managing processes and process management? and 2) Do process approach and process orientation mean the same activities in companies?

The article is of a review-conceptual nature and is based on a thoroughly planned review of scientific databases in order to gather scientific publications on the issues under study that most closely reflect the research objectives set in the paper. The phenomena studied are quite well described in the literature on the subject, which makes the selection of the vast resources collected in scientific databases quite a challenge for researchers. In an attempt to cope with this barrier, the authors proposed their own model of reviewing scientific databases using subjective criteria for the selection, verification, elimination and acceptance of individual literature items. As a result, this allowed the selection of a specific number of publications for a full substantive analysis and made it possible to systematize and organize the terminology of process management in organizations.

## **2. Theoretical considerations on the definition of management and process**

The term management is used with different meanings by different researchers. Sometimes authors use the phrase to refer to the process of planning, directing, coordinating and controlling, other times they use it to describe the function of managing people or as a body of knowledge and practice. There are authors who describe management as a technique of leadership and decision-making (Terry, 1971). Drucker (1954) merely pointed out that “[...] management is a multifunctional body that manages the enterprise and manages the managers and manages the employee and the work”.

**Table 1. Selected definitions of management in the literature**

Author/Source	Definition of management
Taylor, 1914	(...) it is knowing exactly what you want to be done in the best and cheapest way.
Mooney and Railey, 1939	(...) it is the art of guiding and inspiring people.
Fayol, 1947	(...) it is anticipation and planning, organizing, directing, coordinating and controlling.
Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 1948/95	(...) it is the process of controlling or dealing with people or things; control and decision-making in an enterprise or other similar organisation.
Drucker, 1954	(...) it is a multifunctional body that manages the organization, its managers and each employee and his work.
Lundy, 1957	(...) it is the task of planning, coordinating, motivating and controlling the efforts of others towards a specific goal.
Louis, 1958	(...) that is what the manager does.
Vance, 1959	(...) it is the process of making decisions and controlling the actions of human beings with the express goal of achieving predetermined goals.
Koontz, 1961	(...) it is the art of carrying out activities by people and in formally organized groups.
Clough, 1963	(...) it is the art and science of decision making and leadership.
Farmer and Richman, 1964	(...) it is the coordination of human and material resources to achieve organizational goals, as well as the organization of production functions necessary to achieve specific or adopted economic goals.
Terry, 1971	(...) it is a distinct process consisting of planning, organizing, running, and controlling activities, performed to define and accomplish specific goals using people and other resources.
Kotarbiński, 1975	(...) it is the decision to start or cease an activity on the basis of knowledge of objectives and means.
Pszczółowski, 1976	(...) it is the act of disposing of resources.
Keith and Gubellini, 1978	(...) it is a force that integrates humans and the physical plant into an effective operating unit.

Zieleniewski, 1982	(...) it is the meaning of the exercise of power over people, which results from the ownership of things which are necessary for them objects or instruments of work (apparatus necessary for their acquisition of means of subsistence), or from the authority received from the owner of these things.
Robbins and DeCenzo, 2002	(...) it is a process that results in the accomplishment of certain things, efficiently, effectively, together with and through other people.
Griffin, 2004	(...) it is the process of controlling or dealing with people or things; control and decision-making in an enterprise or other similar organisation.

**Source:** own elaboration on the base of: Taylor 1914; Fayol 1947; Mooney, Railey 1939; Drucker 1954; Lundy 1957; Vance 1957; Louis 1958; Koontz 1961; Clough 1963; Farmer, Richman 1964; Terry 1971; Pszczółkowski 1976; Keith, Gubellini 1978; Zieleniewski 1982, p. 393; Gliński et al. 2000; Robbins, DeCenzo 2002; Griffin 2004; Kotarbiński 1975, p. 104; Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 1948/95, p. 1027

In each of these definitions of management presented in table 1, their authors emphasize different aspects and elements of management. Taylor (1914) highlighted the engineering aspects in his description. Fayol (1947) pointed out five functions of management, which include the activity of doing work without which there can be no management in an organization (Griffin, 2004). In turn, their implementation by managers leads to the achievement of certain goals (Lundy, 1957). There may be a difference in what functions are required for management by managers in an organization, but these functions are constantly used, interdependent and interrelated. Therefore, some authors view management as a process because it involves multiple functions. Kiezun (1997) formulated guidelines for efficient operation, among which the basic principle is that "one should act in an organized manner". At this point, it should be pointed out that the manager's decisiveness and his directing of the work of others is an essential element of management (Clough, 1963), as he is the one who motivates and directs people in the organization toward a specific goal. As Vance (1957) points out, decision-making and control over employees' actions are necessary social and psychological issues, and managers achieve their goals because they skillfully organize and direct the work of others without having to perform the tasks personally (Bielski, 1997).

In addition to delegating and monitoring any tasks, managers achieve specific goals by motivating those involved (Mooney and Railey, 1939). Terry (1971) pointed out that management is the art of working through and with other people. Therefore, in the definitions of management operating in the literature,

there is no reference to the qualifications of a manager which are necessary in an organization with a certain profile. In contrast, the cooperation of people in an organization while recognizing its technical capabilities and the skills of its employees is a fundamental element of management (Koontz, 1961). Other definitions also emphasize the aspect of possessed power and decision-making authority (Zieleniewski, 1982).

In the literature, we can also encounter a definition of management that refers neither to the activities nor to the personnel carrying out management. In this case, management should be understood as a specific body of knowledge, both practical and theoretical. Kotarbiński (1975) aptly defined that management is the decision of managers to start or stop the implementation of a given project based on an analysis of available goals and means. According to Taylor (1914), “management is the art of knowing what to do, when to do it, and seeing to it that it is done in the best and cheapest way”, indicating the need for knowledge to effectively manage all the resources an organization has.

This is analogous to the approach of defining the term *process* in the literature, where each author describes it differently (Palmberg, 2008). The Dictionary of the Polish Language (Doroszewski, ed. 1996-1997) defines a process as “a course of consecutive and causally related specific changes”. In the Polish literature, the first references to the definition of a *process* appear in the works of, among others, Pszczołowski (1978), where a *process* would be a string of events forming a single whole and having a specific set of them. *Processes* are the way things are done by people and organizations (Pritchard and Armistead, 1999), which require managers to take steps towards process orientation (McCormack, 2001). The process definitions presented in the table below (table 2) do not represent a closed catalogue but only a small fraction of it.

**Table 2. Selected process definitions in the literature**

Author/Source	Definition of process
Davenport, 1993	(...) these are structured and measurable activities that have been designed to produce a specific product for a specific customer.
Hammer and Champy, 1996	(...) it is a set of activities that requires input and gives a result that has a certain value for the client.
Rentzhog, 1996	(...) it is an activity or a set of structured and related actions that transform input-to-output in a repeatable flow.

Durlik, 1998	(...) it is a structured, repeatable and interconnected set of activities carried out over a specific period of time, which have their beginning and end as well as measurable expenditures and results.
Manganelli and Klein, 1998	(...) it is a series of interrelated activities leading to the transformation of all available inputs into process products
Bednarz, 1999	(...) it is a set of structured activities that, using the organization's resources, lead to the creation of goods / services important for the customer.
Norma ISO 9001:2000	(...) it is a set of interrelated or interacting actions that transform inputs into outputs.
Perechuda, 2000	(...) it is a set of activities running in parallel, conditionally or sequentially leading to a change in the organization's resources at the entrance to the final effects at the output.
Rummler and Brache, 2000	(...) it is a planned and implemented band of activities enabling the preparation of a specific product.
Brilman, 2002	(...) it is a stream of activities that transform raw materials, semi-finished products, information and services that come from suppliers into products/services containing a specific added value.
Kubiak, 2003	(...) it is a set of decisions and actions that the organization takes to transform the defined input into a defined output, i.e. transforming all inputs into a process product.
Gabryelczyk, 2006	(...) it is the course of successive activities during which inputs are transformed into a specific result. They have a beginning and an end and a clearly defined contribution and outcome.
Grajewski, 2007	(...) it is a set of sequential activities that are linked by cause-and-effect relationships, so that the results of the preceding activities become the inputs of subsequent actions.

**Source:** own elaboration on the base of: Davenport 1993; Hammer and Champy 1996; Rentzhog 1996; Durlik 1998; Manganelli and Klein 1998; Bednarz 1999; Gomółka 2000; Norma ISO 9001:2000; Perechuda 2000; Brilman 2002; Kubiak 2003; Gabryelczyk 2006; Grajewski 2007; Rummel and Brache 2000

A set of activities performed by people that has a beginning and an end can be called a process (Durlik, 1998). Similarly, we can call a process a set of decisions and actions that an organization takes to change a defined input into a defined output (Kubiak, 2003). In another definition, a process is the

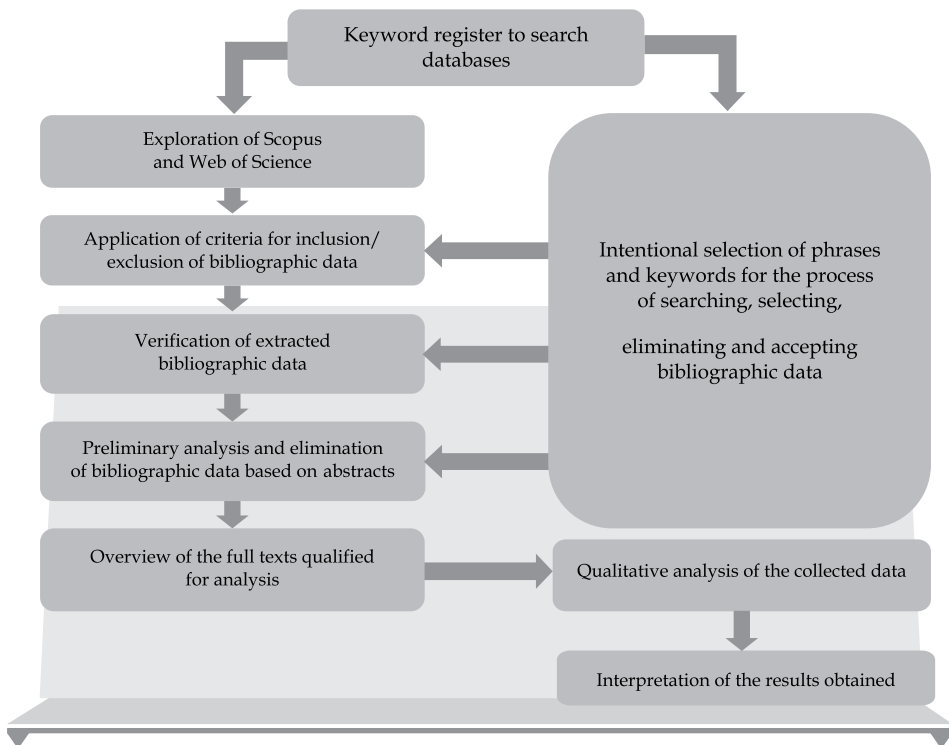
realization of consecutive activities, having a beginning and an end, which involves a certain amount of work and resources ultimately transformed into a specific result (Gabryelczyk, 2006). Grajewski (2007) sees a process as a set of consecutive activities, in such a way that the results of the preceding activities become inputs for the activities that follow. Rummmler and Brache (2000) defined a process as a planned and executed string of activities that will ultimately enable the preparation of a specific product or service, which is the same as the definition presented in ISO 9001. Also, a process will be an activity or set of ordered and related activities that transform inputs into outputs in a repetitive flow (Rentzhog, 1996). In this sense, we will not be able to define a process as an activity the order of which becomes random, as it is a link between distributed activities in an organization that builds its effectiveness (Hammer and Champy, 1996). The multiplicity of definitions of a process may be the result of their authors pointing out various elements and indicators that characterize this activity. When analyzing the elements that determine the structure of a process, i.e.: inputs, outputs, measures, activities (actions), events, transformations, relationships, resources, added value, suppliers/recipients, it is important to note the extensive stock of terminology describing the same activity or place.

The review of the most common definitions of the term process and the term management cited above indicates that authors often present quite distant positions towards the same issues. Some emphasize social and psychological issues, while others concentrate on organizational and technical, or economic aspects. In this context, it seems difficult to propose a single universal definition of process and management that would be able to include all the proposals that are presented in scientific works. Due to the complexity of both concepts, it is very difficult to give universal descriptions of them. Nevertheless, it should be noted that both concepts occur in all organized social and economic activities performed by and with the participation of people and are an integral part of society's activities.

### **3. Research methodology**

The research was conducted from November 15, 2022 to March 30, 2023. The research used mixed methods of data collection, i.e., quantitative methods were used including review of bibliographic data in selected databases and qualitative method of /a purposively selected sample (fig.1). For the purpose

of the study, a research model was developed for a structured review of Web of Science and Scopus scientific databases to review scientific publications related to the research objective assumed in the paper. In the first stage, a list of keywords and phrases was compiled against which the databases were searched and scientific publications were collected. Keywords used in this process included: management, process, managing processes, process management, process approach, process orientation. The search of databases also used keyword strings, i.e.: process and management, process and approach, process and orientation, and process and management and process and approach and process and orientation.



**Figure 1. Methodology of the research process of database mining**

Source: own elaboration



The next step was to identify subsets of potentially relevant articles from the available resources of each database that dealt with issues related to *managing processes, process approach, process orientation and process management*. For this exercise, it was necessary to apply selection using the following inclusion/exclusion criteria:

- publications that did not involve keywords (process management, managing processes, process approach, process orientation) were excluded,
- only materials in open access were included,
- only materials in English were included,
- only articles, chapters in a book, books, post-conference materials were included,
- no exclusion was made due to the year of publication.

Exploration of selected databases using specific keywords confirmed that topics related to management and processes are widely covered in the literature and are the subject of numerous scientific papers (table 3).

**Table 3. Summary of the results of database exploration**

Database	Keywords	No exclu- sions	Applied exemptions
Web of Science	process management	846,274	241,817
	process orientation	138,274	36,354
	process approach	1,387,631	424,523
	process management, process orientation, process approach	4,651	1,199
Scopus	process management	4,771,137	1,364,053
	process orientation	902,871	241,304
	process approach	7,428,914	444,150
	process management, process orientation, process approach	211,995	58,901

**Source:** own elaboration

As many as 4,771,137 materials were identified in the Scopus database using the keyword string *process and management*, while only 846,274 items

were identified in the Web of Science database. For the keyword string *process and orientation*, the Scopus database identified 902,871, while the Web of Science database identified 138,795 items. Similar disparities in the number of identified materials in the Scopus and Web of Science databases appeared for the next keywords, i.e. *process and approach* and *process and approach and orientation and management*. The set size of 4,651 materials is the smallest subset that was selected in the Web of Science database with the combined use of all keywords *process and approach and process and approach and orientation and management*, whereas in the Scopus database their number was 211,995. The largest number of searched materials occurred with the use of *process approach* as a keyword both in the Scopus database - 7,428,914, and in the Web of Science database - 1,387,631.

The juxtaposition of the terms i.e.: *process and management* in the Scopus database received almost half as many searches as the phrase *process and approach*. In contrast, in the Web of Science database, the combined use of the keywords *process and management* yielded 846,274 searches, where *process and approach* resulted in more than 1,387,631 materials.

The next step involved identifying subsets of potentially relevant scientific publications from the available resources of the respective databases using predetermined keywords. For this activity, another selection and elimination had to be applied using the following inclusion/exclusion criteria:

- publications that were not relevant to the keywords (process management, managing processes, process approach, process orientation) were excluded,
- only materials in open access were included,
- only materials in English were included,
- only articles, chapters in a book, books, post-conference materials were included,
- no exclusion was made due to the year of publication.

This scanning process reduced the number of available materials satisfying all exclusions/inclusion of materials in total. For the phrase *process management*, the number of available materials decreased to 1,364,053 for the Scopus database and to a value of 241,817 for the Web of Science database. The situation is no different with the next keywords, the number of which in the available materials decreased several times in the specified databases after applying exclusions and inclusions. Analysis of the data presented in table 3 shows that the number of materials available in the databases decreases almost four times after applying specific exclusions/inclusions. A search of all fields on the total combination of all terms yielded 1,199 hits on the Web of Science database and 58,901 on

the Scopus database portal. The next step in the bibliographic analysis of the available materials was to identify the subject areas in which each keyword appears (table 4).

**Table 4. Qualitative analysis of the occurrence of the analyzed subject areas in selected scientific databases**

Base	Thematic areas	Keywords			
		Managing process	Process orientation	Process approach	Process management
Scopus	Business, Management and Accounting	109,557	22,364	95,495	18,671
	Economics, Econometrics and Finance	55,794	8,095	56,229	6,188
	Engineering	226,912	39,165	390,48	8,468
	Medicine	294,677	27,667	348,69	6,175
	Mathematics	81,730	9,425	203,763	1,734
	Multidisciplinary	46, 730	10,504	87,591	1,333
	Psychology		28,880	111,277	8,638
Web of Science	Business, Management and Accounting	21,725	856	11,888	519
	Economics, Econometrics and Finance	995	330	4,811	66
	Engineering	41,678	4,898	82,228	147
	Medicine	12,247	254	9,761	31
	Mathematics	6,071	353	11,907	7
	Multidisciplinary	9,018	2,250	21,264	86
	Psychology	4,890	3,093	11,907	107

**Source:** own elaboration

The data presented shows that particular expressions are commonly used in many fields of science including medicine, mathematics, psychology, engineering, finance, accounting and management. In the case of the Scopus database, the keywords used, i.e.: process management, were identified in such subject areas as medicine - 294,677; engineering - 226,912; business, management and accounting - 109,557. The bibliographic data obtained indicates an extensive range of source materials. It constitutes a kind of confirmation that the term managing processes is widely used in several fields of research (Armistead et al., 1999). From the collected database, a selection of publications was made based on the analysis of abstracts, and a total of 100 scientific publications were finally selected for further analysis (see the literature list). Texts of these publications were fully analyzed and subjected to qualitative analysis guided by the purpose of the research and the research questions. The authors are aware that the review cannot be considered exhaustive, since only those materials were selected that the authors of the study subjectively considered relevant to the research area.

#### **4. Managing processes or process management**

Process management has emerged in recent years as one of the most important management concepts significantly affecting the success of organizations (Hellström and Eriksson, 2013). Despite the numerous definitions of both management and process, researchers in many disciplines are struggling to come up with a definition that is accepted by all concerned (Palmberg, 2008). In addition, the ubiquitous occurrence of closely related terms (often used interchangeably), i.e. process management, process orientation and process approach, does not make it easy for individual authors to systematically analyze and develop a universal definition. When a manager reaches for English-language literature, the level of difficulty further increases. There are processes in every organization and their efficiency translates into the efficiency and effectiveness of the people in the organization (Nowak ed., 2004). Process management involves continually reviewing and improving processes (Jokiel, 2006) by making adjustments and changes when results deviate from those originally planned. Organizations implementing process management must consider the fact that the effectiveness of this management is significantly influenced by the way things are done. This means that individual activities in the process are assigned to one person or to a whole group of people, disregarding the vertical division in the organization (Skrzypek, 2000; Kraśniak, 2000).

**Table 5. Selected definitions of process management in domestic literature**

Author/Source	Definition of process management
Skrzypek, 2000	(...) is the assignment of process components to one person or a whole group of people that were previously carried out in different departments in the organization.
Kraśniak, 2000	(...) it is the implementation of processes that were previously carried out in various functional departments, through the accumulation of activities that make up the overall processes and their assignment to one person or group of people.
Borkowski, Siekański, 2004	(...) it is a set of activities consisting in controlling processes and links between them in order to obtain specific results.
Trocki, 2004	(...) it is the harmonization of the activities that make up the processes, which results in the achievement of the intended results of the process within a certain time, with a certain amount of resources.
Jokiel, 2006	(...) it is a flexible and dynamic adaptation of processes to the changing situation of the organization.
Grajewski, 2007	(...) it is an activity consisting in optimizing the structure of the organization's elements, due to their impact on creating the value of the final effect of the separated processes.
Nowosielski, 2008	(...) it should be interpreted more broadly - in the sense of philosophy, management orientation.
Roszak, 2013	(...) these are issues related to the identification of processes, their connection with the strategy of a given entity, and thus the definition of principles and criteria for controlling and supervising processes and the development of documentation
Trocki, 2016	(...) it is a comprehensive concept of management in both operational and tactical dimensions, based on process and structural harmonization.
Wąchol, 2018	(...) it is a systematic application of appropriate concepts, methods and tools of influence at the stages of identification, modelling, controlling, implementation and improvement of processes.
Biesok, 2019	(...) it is a kind of awareness and orientation of the organization to the processes taking place in it.
Bitkowska, 2021	(...) it is a holistic and comprehensive approach to managing a modern organization.

**Source:** own elaboration on the base of: Skrzypek 2000; Kraśniak 2000; Borkowski and Siekański 2004; Trocki 2004; Jokiel 2006; Grajewski 2007; Nowosielski 2008; Roszak 2013; Trocki 2016; Wąchol 2018; Biesok 2019; Bitkowska 2021

Based on Trocki's (2016) definition, process management is a holistic management concept in both operational and tactical dimensions (table 5). Similarly, Bitkowska (2021) assumes that process management is a holistic and comprehensive approach to managing a modern organization. Nowosielski (2008), on the other hand, points out that process management is a philosophy while referring to it as process orientation. There are definitions in the literature, the authors of which view process management narrowly, as a way of improving processes using specific tools, concepts and methods at each stage (Wąchol, 2018). More broadly, researchers describe process management as a special kind of perception and orientation of people towards processes in an organization (Biesiok, 2019). For example, Grajewski (2007) sees process management as an activity that managers use to optimize particular elements of the organizational structure. Its scope encompasses issues related to the identification of processes, their connection to the strategy of a given entity, and, consequently, the definition of principles and criteria for controlling and overseeing processes (Roszak, 2013). This is no different from the definitions of process management, the number and variety of which are extensive in the literature. According to Trocki (2016), process management refers to the course of a single process. While Nowosielski (2008) understands it as a method of management.

**Table 6. Selected definitions of managing processes in the domestic literature**

Author/Source	Definition of managing processes
Grajewski, 2007	(...) it is a way to develop a structure of process components that will focus on creating added value for the entire organization.
Nowosielski, 2008	(...) in terms of: · broad – continuous and systematic application in the organization, concepts, methods, tools, in order to meet the needs of its and interested parties, · narrow – planning and monitoring the course of changes that are to improve processes in the organization.
Biesok, 2013	(...) it is an impact on the system of interrelated processes in the organization to achieve goals and meet the needs of stakeholders.
Cyfert et al. 2014	(...) these are issues related to processes, m.in. methods of their improvement and management, process maturity of the organization, process architecture design, process management structure and methods of measuring their effectiveness and effectiveness.

Trocki, 2016	(...) these are issues related to the course of individual processes.
Szczepańska and Bugdol, 2016	(...) it is making decisions using the resources you have to achieve your goal.
Bitkowska, 2017	(...) it is a constant search for a workflow that will give you the opportunity to implement the organization's strategy in the right way.
Brzozowski, 2018	(...) it is the implementation of management functions in relation to the processes identified in the organization.
Biesok, 2019	(...) it is a traceable result of the implementation of the process approach in the organization.
Belz et al. 2019	(...) it is a subdiscipline of management and quality sciences.

**Source:** own elaboration on the base of: Grajewski 2007; Nowosielski 2008; Biesok 2013; Cyfert et al. 2014; Trocki 2016; Szczepańska and Bugdol 2016; Bitkowska 2017; Brzozowski 2018; Biesok 2019; Belz et al. 2019

One definition of managing processes (table 6) points out that it is related to the management functions carried out in individual processes (Brzozowski, 2018). On the other hand, in another definition presented by Bitkowska (2017), managing processes replaces managing functions which leads people in the organization to constantly search for the right workflow to achieve planned goals. Another definition presented by Szczepańska and Bugdol (2016) indicates that managing processes is the realization of a goal through decisions made by people in the organization, taking the resources at hand into account. Some authors in their definitions focus on issues concerning how processes are implemented in an organization, while others, in describing managing processes, point to methods for designing, improving and managing them, including methods for measuring their effectiveness and efficiency (Cyfert et al. 2014). Similarly, Nowosielski (2008), broadly defining managing processes, points to the need for planned and continuous application by people in the organization of concepts, methods and tools to achieve a specific goal. At the same time, in narrow terms, he emphasizes that managing processes is the plan and constant monitoring of changes made to improve processes in the organization. In carrying out activities in the organization, people focus primarily on results rather than tasks and make decisions using the resources they have (Szczepańska and Bugdol, 2016). Therefore, such management is an ongoing process in which teams and organizations are constantly looking for ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of managing processes by influencing a network of interrelated

processes to realize specific results (Biesok, 2013). Grajewski (2007) defined managing processes as a way to develop an arrangement of process components focused on creating added value for the entire organization.

There is a wide range of descriptions in the national literature of what process management and managing processes is and is not. Each author, researcher or practitioner will find a number of different definitions of the same term, which, in addition to different nomenclature, can also be a consequence of different interpretations of translated materials. All these elements result in a kind of conceptual and meaningful chaos. In contrast, in the English-language literature, researchers use a single, universal phrase from English - process management, as presented in table 7.

**Table 7. Selected definitions of process management in the English-language literature**

Author/Source	Definition of process management
Elzinga, Horak, Chung-Yee, Bruner, 1995	(...) it is the use of a set of structured, systematic approaches to supervise, analyze and improve processes in the organization.
Rentzhog, 1996	(...) it is continuous management and improvement of processes.
Zairi, 1997	(...) it is a structured approach to the analysis and continuous improvement of basic activities in the organization, i.e.: production, marketing, communication.
Lee, Dale, 1998	(...) it is a systematic approach to the analysis, continuous improvement and control of activities in order to increase the quality of products and services offered by the organization.
Pritchard and Armistead, 1999	(...) it is a holistic way of managing all aspects of the business and a valuable perspective that can be taken when determining organizational effectiveness.
Brilman, 2002	(...) it is a systematic assessment of processes and their effects, maintaining their functioning and making adjustments if the results achieved deviate from the standards.
Salwa, 2004	(...) it is a belief in the need to optimize the organization's activities, taking into account the processes carried out, not the functions.
Weske, 2007	(...) it is an approach to efficiency improvement that combines information technology with process methodologies such as objectives, strategies and value chains.



Mudimigh, 2007	(...) it is a structured approach to understanding, analyzing, supporting and continuously improving fundamental processes such as: production, marketing, communication and other core elements of the company's operations.
Plamberg, 2008	(...) these are two streams of process management: - improvement of a single process and system process management.
Hantriy et al. 2010	(...) it is a strategy and its technology for managing and improving the functioning of the organization through continuous monitoring and optimization of processes.
Meerkamm, 2010	(...) it is an internal concept of leadership, organization and management of an organization influencing goal-oriented time, quality and cost management to achieve both strategic and operational goals.
Harmon, 2015	(...) it is a management discipline that focuses on improving the efficiency of an organization by managing its processes.

**Source:** own elaboration on the base of: Elzinga, Horak, Chung-Yee, Bruner, 1995, pp. 119-128; Rentzhog 1996; Zairi 1997, pp. 64-80; Lee and Dale 1998, pp. 214-225, ; Pritchard and Armistead 1999, pp. 10-32; Brillman 2002, p. 300; Salwa 2004; Weske 2007; Mudimigh 2007; Plamberg 2008, p. 210; Hantriy et al. 2010, pp. 27-54; Meerkamm 2010, pp. 429-440; Harmon 2015

Regardless of the definition of managing processes or process management presented by the author, there is a single phrase process management in English-language texts. However, this does not make the view of what process management is uniform among management practitioners and theorists (Isaksson, 2006). According to Plamberg (2008), there are two different descriptions of how process management can be defined. According to one, process management refers to individual processes carried out by people in an organization (Elzinga et al., 1995). The management and coordination of a single process represent a systematic and structured approach to the analysis and continuous improvement of that process (Zairi, 1997; Lee and Dale, 1998). Brillman (2002), in his definition, emphasizes the need for systematic monitoring and evaluation of both the operation of the processes themselves and their results in order to make necessary improvements. Salwa (2004), who focuses his definition of process management on the need to optimize an organization's activities from the perspective of processes rather than functions, thinks no differently. In contrast, the second description emphasizes the management of the entire system of related processes,

which includes the management of the entire organization in every aspect (McCormack, 2001). In Lee and Dale's (1998) definition, we can find elements of both descriptions, as the authors point to activities related to the integration of the entire organization as well as tools that will help it improve individual processes.

Currently, process management is becoming crucial to the development of an organization, since, in addition to the end result of an activity, what matters is the process of its implementation, the resources used for this and those not wasted. This is what makes the interpretation and application of process management so important for any organization.

## 5. Process approach or process orientation

In addition to the definitions of managing processes and process management, phrases such as process approach or process orientation are also used when analyzing the literature. In this case, too, we can speak of different interpretations depending on the language of the publication. The process approach is a management strategy by which an organization is seen and managed as a system of processes. According to ISO 9001, it also encompasses risk-based thinking, indicating that an organization's processes are not only managed and controlled, but that people in the organization consider how they fit together.

**Table 8. Selected definitions of the process approach in the literature**

Author/Source	Definition of process approach
McCormack, 2001	(...) is the level at which an organization focuses on its processes and thus on delivering value to customers by improving the structure of work patterns.
Pszenica, 2001	(...) it is a universal approach that allows the organization to be represented by its individual building blocks.
Lichtarski, 2004	(...) it is the focus on the process and its result and the entire coordination and integration of all activities that make up the process.
Cyfert, 2006	(...) it is to ensure greater standardization of activities, which in turn enables more effective functioning of the organization.
Grajewski, 2007	(...) it is the assumption that you should optimize operations, with processes, not functions, in mind.

Jedynak, 2007	(...) it is an element of broader management concepts, such as Total Quality Management, Business Process Reengineering, and increasing the efficiency of the organization.
Nowosielski, 2008	(...) it is the ideological layer of organization management, which is primarily interested in customer-oriented processes (internal and external), based on the structure of the process organization (configuration grouping implementers not according to the criteria of generic similarity of tasks, but according to participation in separate processes).
Plamberg, 2009	(...) it is the improvement of a single process and the management of processes to improve the system.
Nowosielski and Marciszewska, 2011	(...) it is a narrow ideological layer of process management and broadly all regulations and process-oriented tools.
Nowosielski, 2011	(...) is a process orientation. This is a peculiar management philosophy. The idea that even requires seeing the organization through the prism of interrelated processes.
Stabryła, 2011	(...) it is a concept that exposes the way a given system is approached.
Tkaczyk and Kowalska - Napora, 2012	(...) is to identify related activities and define their dependencies
Trocki, 2014	(...) this approach distinguishes dynamic aspects and process harmonization of activities and emphasizes satisfying the needs of the organization's clients.
Standard ISO 9001:2015	(...) it is to establish processes in such a way that they act as an integrated and compatible system.
Brzozowski and Rogala, 2018	(...) enables process improvement based on data and information evaluation.
Bitkowska, 2021	(...) it is one of the most modern and effective management trends, consisting in focusing on processes, their control and proper control.

**Source:** own elaboration on the base of: ISO 9001:2015 norm; Bitkowska 2021; Brzozowski and Rogala 2018, pp. 19-28; Grajewski 2007, p. 62-63; Cyfert 2006, p.203; Jedynak 2007; Trocki 2014, p. 68; Pszenica 2001; Plamberg 2009, pp. 203-215; Nowosielski, Marciszewska 2011, pp.73-83; Lichtarski 2004; McCormack 2001, pp. 51-58; Nowosielski 2008; Tkaczyk and Kowalska-Napora, 2012; Nowosielski, 2011; Stabryła 2011

According to the definition presented in the Polish language dictionary, an approach is “a way of treating someone or capturing something(...)”. Hence, we can define a process approach as a holistic view of all processes carried out in an organization, taking into account not only the processes themselves, but also their interrelationships and influences (Table 8). The process approach used by managers involves identifying related activities and defining their interdependencies (Tkaczyk and Kowalska-Napora, 2012) with the goal of continuously optimizing processes rather than their functions (Grajewski, 2007). Similar views are presented by Cyfert (2006), indicating that the process approach removes most of the limitations in functional structures and increases the standardization of activities. In this view, the entire organization forms a team, where individual cells do not compete with each other, but support each other during the implementation of processes. The process approach, on the other hand, can be described as a concept that describes an organization from a process perspective (Stabryła, 2011). The degree to which managers focus on processes and delivering specific value to customers by continuously improving them constitutes the process approach used in an organization (McCormack, 2001). All of this makes it necessary for managers to think holistically rather than partially about an organization.

A slightly different view is presented by Nowosielski (2011), who points out that the vague definition of the process approach results in equating the process approach with process management. Therefore, it should be regarded as the ideological layer of process management or the totality of all regulations and tools in an organization that are process-oriented (Nowosielski and Marciszewska, 2008).

Process orientation can be described as the ability to discern and evaluate the processes carried out in an organization. Co-author of the concept of reengineering Hammer (1999) defined process orientation as “recognizing and naming the processes in a company, fixing their importance in the minds of employees, measuring the efficiency of processes and continuously improving them”. The author believes that it is also necessary to systematically implement the measurement of process efficiency and effectiveness while taking continuous improvement into account.

**Table 9. Selected definitions of process orientation in the literature**

Author/Source	Definition of process orientation
Davenport, 1993	(...) it is a look beyond the limits of the organization. Process orientation requires the organization to adapt processes to different customers and their wishes.
Hackman and Wageman, 1995	(...) it is an important element of Total Quality Management.
van Rensburg, 1998	(...) it is placing customer needs in the centre of the organization's interest and implementing not only process management, but also, m.in, creating a structure and organizational culture focused on processes.
Lee and Dale, 1998	(...) it is a set of tools and techniques to improve processes, as well as a method of integration of the entire organization and must be understood by all employees.
McCormack, 2001	(...) it emphasizes process as opposed to hierarchy with a particular focus on results and customer satisfaction.
Zairi, Al-Mashari, Irani, 2001	(...) it is an analysis of all processes and introducing changes in management structures and methods, aimed at improving the flow of processes, including by eliminating downtime and duplication of activities.
Smith and Fingar, 2003	(...) it is a clearer view of processes and greater flexibility of the organization.
Harmon, 2004	(...) it is the level at which the organization pays attention to its relevant processes (a comprehensive view across departmental boundaries, etc.).
Becker and Kahn, 2008	(...) it allows for efficient planning, control and control of the implementation of public services.
Nowosielski, 2008	(...) it is the organization's focus on processes and looking at the organization from the customer's perspective.
Bitkowska, 2009	(...) it is a holistic thinking about processes as interrelated activities. Identification of processes allows for a better understanding of value creation, and their improvement and continuous improvement increase both the efficiency of the organization's functioning and the degree of customer satisfaction.
Kohlbacher and Gruenwald, 2011	(...) it is a focus on processes, not on functional structure or hierarchy.
Hellström and Eriksson, 2013	(...) it allows for a wide spectrum of different uses of the same original idea and cannot be treated as a single idea or application.

**Source:** own elaboration on the base of: Davenport 1993, pp. 100-103; Hackman and Wageman 1995, pp. 309-342; van Rensburg 1998, p. 218; Lee and Dale 1998, pp. 241-225; McCormack 2001, pp. 51-58; Zairi, Al-Mashari, Irani 2001, pp. 437-455; Smith and Fingar 2003; Harmon 2004, pp. 1-11; Nowosielski 2008; Becker and Kahn 2008; Bitkowska 2009; Kohlbacher and Gruenwald 2011, pp. 267-283; Hellström and Eriksson 2013, pp. 733-751

Davenport (1993) views an organization using process orientation as an entity that looks through the lens of processes unconstrained by, among other things, the structure of the organization. A process-oriented organization adapts its structure, performance measurements, resources and their allocation to these processes (Kohlbacher and Gruenwald, 2011). According to McCormack (2001), process orientation should favour the processes implemented in an organization and be an important factor in the efficiency of its operations (Zairi et. al. 2001). Organizational culture is also characteristic of process orientation, which should be oriented toward meeting customer needs and achieving desired results (van Rensburg, 1998).

Romanowska and Trocki (2004) point out that increasing competition, market uncertainty, development of information technology tools, increase in requirements and individualization of customer preferences are just some of the factors determining the development of organizations towards process orientation. In process-oriented organizations, the most important thing is to solve the customer's problems comprehensively, hence a great emphasis is placed on the organization's operational flexibility, which ensures its innovation and creativity (Nowicki and Szymańska, 2013).

An important element for the development of process orientation is also the system of metrics necessary for continuous process improvement (Malachowski, 1997), as its goal is to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of a given process/processes, and thus the entire organization in which it is implemented. When describing process orientation, it should be noted that in the literature one can find narrow and broad meanings of the term. It is also often not attempted to define it and at the same time equate it with process management, which blurs the differences between the two (Nowosielski, 2011). Process orientation is an organization's orientation to processes, that is, looking at all the processes that take place in organizations (Nowosielski, 2008). Described in this way, process orientation requires an organization to focus not only on its processes, but on all those activities around them. It emphasizes greater organizational agility (Smith and Fingar, 2003).

From the overview presented, it is clear that processes are the centre of today's and tomorrow's competencies (Willaert et al. 2008), and the process mindset offers many opportunities in the global and competitive environment in which companies currently operate. As with process approach, holistic thinking about processes as interrelated activities should be applied when applying a process orientation (Bitkowska, 2009).

## 6. Discussion

Many authors have defined the term process, management, managing processes and process management as well as process orientation and process approach taking into account the aspects that are key to them. The different interpretation and understanding of the various definitions is due not only to the different approaches to specific activities, but also to the different terminology of the authors they have resorted to when describing them. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that management, as well as process, are indispensable elements of any organization wishing to be perceived as effective and efficient. An analysis of the existing body of research indicates that certain features of management and processes converge and appear together in all terms such as process approach, process orientation and managing processes and process management. Management, which is a deliberate process that integrates resources, seeks to maximize the use of resources in relation to results, and above all is universal in nature. This means that regardless of the field and nature of an organization's activities, managers and executives can use them in any of the cases (table 10).

**Table 10. Selected features of process and management**

Feature	Process	Management
<b>Expediency</b>	It leads to the achievement of specific results or effects.	It strives to achieve set goals or results.
<b>Resources</b>	Requires specific resources.	It requires specific resources, i.e. material, human, financial, competences.
<b>Action</b>	It is a set of actions or a sequence of events.	It is a process or a series of interrelated activities.
<b>Productivity</b>	Continuous improvement of individual activities in order to perform these activities more effectively and efficiently	Process optimization, i.e. striving for effective and efficient process implementation.

**Source:** own elaboration on the base of: Nowosielski 2008; Bitkowska 2021; Palmberg 2009

Process, as well as management, regardless of the definitions in operation, are purposeful activities aimed at achieving certain results. They also need

adequate resources or inputs that will ultimately lead to certain results. A process without inputs, like management without resources, is unable to run efficiently and effectively. One might even be inclined to say that the lack of one component is the reason why the entire process or management may be flawed or ineffective.

Both the process and management also need certain resources at the input in order to carry out subsequent and specific activities, which will result in certain results at the output. At this point, management is a process, that is, a sequence of specific tasks and factors that are also the basis of any process. Managed through managers, an organization strives to achieve certain goals by effectively and efficiently carrying out the activities that exist within it, that is, which means optimizing processes. The same is true of managing processes, process orientation and process approach. Each of these definitions implies a greater or lesser focus on processes and their interrelationships. They place the obligation on decision-makers to identify resources and use them optimally to achieve their goals. Process and process management are characterized by a continuous, structured and systematic approach to process improvement with a view to the resources at hand. This coincides with the functioning descriptions of process orientation as well as process approach, which are referred to as an element of TQM.

Another element that characterizes all concepts is the flat organizational structure, among others, the alignment of processes with customer expectations. In a process organization, functional barriers disappear and interdepartmental cooperation directed at processes and the customer comes to the fore. Customer satisfaction with the delivered product/service, i.e. the result of the process, proves that the process, not the product, is the differentiator of an organization's competitive strength.

Bitkowska (2009) points to the goals set for process management, i.e.: reducing process lead time, reducing process costs, increasing the quality of processes and final products, increasing employee productivity as well as strengthening competitive advantage. Attention to resources, customer satisfaction, flexibility as well as process control and steering are also elements of process approach and process orientation.

Process management is also a set of practices combining a methodological approach with human resource management (Anderson et al. 1994). This definition coincides with that by Flynn et. al. (1994), which states that the goal of process management is the outcome of the entire organization, not individual units, and requires employees to work as a team. What is



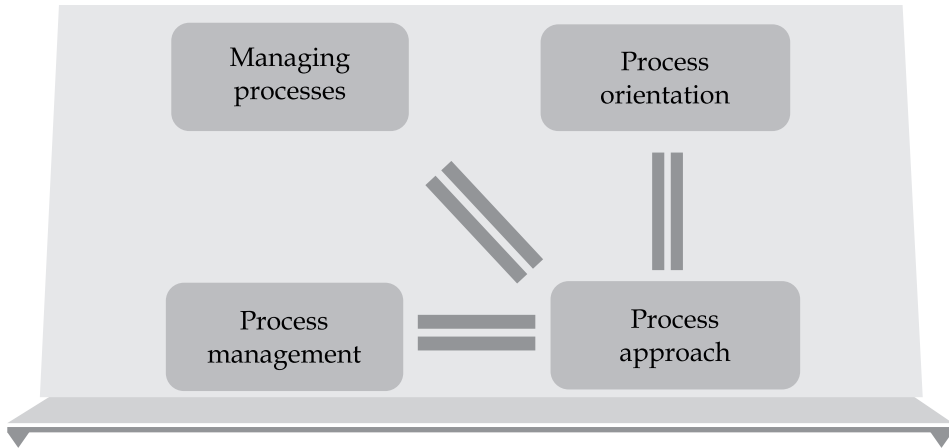
important is that such goals are relevant to all the definitions mentioned in the publication. It represents decision-makers' focus on a horizontal structure in the organization that focuses on processes and concentrates on customer satisfaction with the product or service provided.

Most definitions of process management assume that there are always opportunities for process improvement, which implies the need for systematic, structured analysis of process flow, improvement, monitoring and performance management. The managers' choice of process approach and orientation means that the organization will use indicators to measure and monitor activities for continuous improvement.

When using process approach, managers must pay particular attention to the need to collect information about the progress of each process; analyzing the inputs and outputs as well as the resources required to start the process at the input and the effects/results that will be obtained at the output. This requires managers in the organization to conduct communication with all the stakeholders at every level. The process-oriented approach seeks to drive improvements. It motivates observers to take action to achieve results that are closest to the benchmark.

In process-oriented organizations, the most important thing is to solve the customer's problems in a comprehensive way, hence a great emphasis is placed on the organization's operational flexibility, which ensures its innovation and creativity. Nowicki and Szymańska, (2013) and Willaert et al. (2007) grouped the features of process orientation into eight dimensions, i.e.: customer orientation, process view, process performance, organizational structure, organizational culture, people management and information technology. They point out that the more of these characteristics are identified in an organization, the more it will be considered process-oriented. An important element for developing process orientation is also a system of metrics, which forms the basis for continuous process improvement.

Managing processes and process management refer to the management of either a single process or an entire system of processes. Both definitions indicate the need for a horizontal structure, where processes rather than functions are important, and indicate the need for continuous process optimization. This is also a key element of the process orientation and process approach described as part of TQM. Some authors indicate that process orientation is process approach (fig. 2).



**Figure 2. Selected relationships between different definitions**

Source: own elaboration

In the literature, we can also encounter the conceptual equation of process management with process approach (Marciszewska and Nowosielski, 2011). Definitions describing process approach often indicate that it is a philosophy and at the same time a way of seeing the organization as a system of processes. This would suggest that the process approach is not only managing processes, but also process management. Process approach is also process management according to some researchers (Sopinska, 2004), where process management is a holistic view of all processes in an organization.

Process orientation is also looking at the organization through the lens of processes, but also managers' discernment of processes in order to evaluate them. The use of process orientation is the ability to identify duplicative activities and the points where they are slowing down, which is also evident in process approach (Maciag, 2016). Here, too, a great deal of emphasis is placed on gaining greater flexibility in processes and thus in the organization. The culture and structure of the organization reflect a horizontal arrangement focused on processes in terms of the preferences and expectations of individual customers. In summary, both process orientation and process approach are based on the same element, which is the process. Therefore, the two terms are often used interchangeably in the literature since the goal and focus on processes are the same for them. Some sources indicate that process orientation is the same as

process management, and that process approach is a layer of process management. Others, however, postulate that managing processes and process management are used interchangeably in the literature (Bitkowska, 2013; Grudowski, 2007) with process approach (Jokiel, 2017).

Summarizing the above discussion, it can be noted that some authors understand process management through the prism of a set of tools and methods, while the rest as only a set or a single method. Meanwhile, some researchers also point to a more holistic approach to both management and processes.

## 7. Conclusions

Regardless of the choice of words and taxonomy, all of the concepts mentioned in the chapter have in common, which are targeting processes, goals, resources and, above all, targeting the customer. It is its satisfaction that is crucial, and the organization should do everything possible to satisfy it. Therefore, whether it is considered a philosophy, a tool, a method, an orientation approach or an action, it ultimately has no influence on an organization's competitive advantage.

What is important for the organization and its perception in the socio-economic environment is the continuous improvement of processes, interdepartmental cooperation and communication, the use of employee knowledge, the delegation of responsibility and the increased awareness of all participants in the process of its essence and value.

The so-called horizontal coordination of the organization's activities involving many different organizational units involved in specific processes is also gaining importance. Hierarchical supervision is reduced in this concept in favour of other forms, such as mutual alignment or standardization of processes. The organizational culture is also changing to foster teamwork focused on meeting customer needs and achieving desired results.

Most of the identified descriptions of process management focus on contributing to a more systematic improvement of individual processes or their entire system. This can be justified by the fact that many organizations are now striving to apply managing processes, as it is managing processes or process approach or process orientation that have broad potential to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Their use by decision makers makes it possible to lead organizations to higher efficiency with sufficient flexibility in their operations. Findings from the literature review indicate that there is really no common definition of the concept of processes and process management (Armistead et al., 1999; Isaksson, 2006). The similarities of all definitions are productivity, expediency, resources,

and action. The differences identified between them indicate the wide use of individual, exceptional terms. Nevertheless, the meaning of meaning for the researcher and the practice is identical: each definition strives, in an effective and efficient way, to achieve a specific goal or effect, using specific resources. Research and analysis of these definitions is of great importance for the further development of both science and management practice. The aim of this publication is to draw the attention of both researchers and practitioners to the important elements that give meaning to these terms. Such action can be a kind of tool used to develop a universal and acceptable definition by all concerned. The broad spectrum of definitions adopted for examination may also lead to a more general and at the same time universal view of these terms, taking into account the most important components of each definition. Trying to compare individual definitions can give organizations, researchers, and practitioners a very different perspective on what governance is and should be. Not only will it provide scholars and practitioners with a more thorough understanding of their field, it can also influence managers' understanding of organizational behaviour.

The primary goal of management is the efficient management of the organization, i.e. the proper use of resources, improving productivity, mobilizing the best talent and planning for the future. Organizations that understand the logic of organizing around processes will survive and be competent in the future (Hernaus, 2011).

## 8. Recommendation and Limitations

The authors realize that the proposed model for exploring scientific databases for scientific publications is not a perfect tool and is subject to a subjective selection of search criteria and selection and elimination of source data. Nevertheless, given the vast resources available to modern scientific databases, it is necessary to apply boundary criteria to select a specific sample of data for deeper analysis. It would be worthwhile to conduct further simulations using various combinations of keywords and phrases in order to develop some kind of model approach for this kind of exploratory research. Dedicated software for analyzing qualitative data, such as NVIVO, is also present on the market, which also facilitates the synthesis and presentation of results. In world journals, it is increasingly common to find articles that present a systematic review of previous research by other researchers in order to identify trends and directions of ongoing research based precisely on the exploration of scientific database

resources. It seems that this direction of research also has a wide range of possibilities in Poland, but it requires researchers to be familiar with databases and know how to use them.

## Summary

In the literature on the subject, one can notice quite a lot of freedom in the approach to formulating and understanding of terms relating to process orientation, process approach and managing processes and process management. In recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in interest in the study of process management not only of organizations, but also of individual activities such as projects. Managers are looking for indicators and metrics to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of processes in their activities. The purpose of the article is to try to identify differences and similarities and to systematize terminology related to process management in organizations. The study uses literature research based on an exploration of the Web of Science and Scopus databases, with the analysis limited to scientific publications only, and the selection of available materials excluded other materials, such as communications, reviews or other documents, from the analysis. The article is of a review and conceptual nature. The collected research results were subjected to comparative analysis, logical analysis and critical analysis. The research and analysis results presented in the article are an attempt to organize terminology that can be used in further scientific research.

**Keywords:** *process management, process orientation, process approach.*

**JEL**

**Classification:** L16; L21.

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