

Methods and Practices Supporting Tacit Knowledge Mobilisation in Continuous Improvement: A Rapid Review

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Abstract

Aim: The aim of this article was to identify current research directions concerning the methods and practices for mobilising tacit knowledge in continuous improvement (CI) processes.

Methodology: The article is based on a systematic literature review using the rapid review format. The review was conducted using the Web of Science Core Collection, Scopus and EBSCO databases. A search strategy based on three conceptual blocks related to continuous improvement, tacit knowledge, and methods and practices for mobilising tacit knowledge was employed. A total of 67 articles meeting the criteria were identified. After deduplication and screening, 20 publications qualified for full-text assessment, and 14 papers were included in the final analysis and synthesis.

Results: Research has shown that the mobilisation of tacit knowledge in CI is most often understood as a process embedded in work practice and requiring direct engagement with actual work processes. The literature abounds with methods for eliciting tacit knowledge based on observation and action learning, interviews, workshops, and reflective meetings, as well as organizational practices for knowledge transfer and tools for knowledge externalisation and codification. The analysis also highlighted examples of modern digital solutions supporting the externalisation and transfer of tacit knowledge in improvement processes, including elements of artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality (VR).

Implications and recommendations: Further research is needed to assess the relative effectiveness of methods for eliciting tacit knowledge and to explore how the AI and VR-based solutions can improve the externalisation of tacit knowledge in organizational practice.

Originality/value: This article organizes the fragmented findings from the continuous improvement field related to the mobilisation of tacit knowledge, presenting a synthetic overview of the methods, practices, and boundary conditions for its mobilisation in CI from 2015 to 2025. By synthesizing diverse research perspectives, the article contributes to a better understanding of the mechanisms of tacit knowledge mobilisation, including its elicitation, transfer, externalisation, and codification, in the context of continuous improvement processes.

Keywords: tacit knowledge, tacit knowledge mobilisation, continuous improvement (CI), knowledge elicitation, knowledge transfer, knowledge externalisation

1. Introduction

Continuous improvement (CI) is one of the key mechanisms for the efficient functioning of quality systems in modern enterprises (Sanchez & Blanco, 2014; Singh & Singh, 2015). The effectiveness of CI depends not only on formal tools or indicators, but also on the organization's ability to mobilise knowledge generated 'in action', namely during daily work practices at individual and team levels. Tucker and Edmondson (2003) pointed out that solving problems encountered in daily work is one of the methods of organizational learning. For this reason, front-line employees, i.e. those directly involved in operational processes, are crucial to continuous improvement initiatives as they can contribute to improving the organization's functioning and reduce decline in quality and customer satisfaction. At the same time, many organizations fail to fully utilise their employees' knowledge, in part due to difficulties in eliciting, externalising, and transferring tacit knowledge generated during everyday work (Bolduan et al., 2024; Shatrov et al., 2021).

In this context, tacit knowledge becomes particularly important, understood as knowledge based on experience, intuition, and practical skills that is difficult to articulate formally and communicate through procedures or instructions (Tsoukas, 2002). In the context of continuous improvement, tacit knowledge includes practical know-how related to carrying out work processes, recognising irregularities, responding to non-routine situations, and identifying the root causes of problems. The mobilisation of tacit knowledge is therefore essential for the effectiveness of continuous improvement initiatives. Unless employees' experience and observations are effectively elicited, discussed, and applied, organizations may fail to identify the actual causes of problems and fully exploit improvement opportunities arising from everyday operational practice.

In recent years, despite continuing interest in continuous improvement and knowledge management, findings across these fields remain fragmented. Research in the area of continuous improvement often focused on implementation outcomes and success factors (Condé & de Toledo, 2023; Ramírez-Zavala et al., 2024), while studies on tacit knowledge describe, among other things, the nature of knowledge, barriers to knowledge sharing, or the process of eliciting it (Jayaram & Bhatta, 2023), not always grounding the analysis in continuous improvement practices. An additional problem is terminological inconsistency. Some publications described the disclosure of know-how without using the terms 'elicitation' or 'knowledge externalization', which makes it difficult to identify evidence without broad operationalisation. The identified research gap concerns the lack of a systematic and up-to-date understanding of methods for eliciting tacit knowledge, organizational practices supporting knowledge transfer, and tools for knowledge externalisation used in continuous improvement (CI) initiatives. The practical gap, in turn, stems from the lack of integrated guidance for CI leaders on how to effectively mobilise employees' tacit knowledge in continuous improvement initiatives. The aim of this article was to identify and synthesise current knowledge on methods and practices used to mobilise tacit knowledge in continuous improvement initiatives. To achieve this aim, a rapid literature review was

conducted, covering publications from 2015 to 2025. Accordingly, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1: What methods are most commonly used for eliciting tacit knowledge in continuous improvement initiatives?

RQ2: What organizational practices support tacit knowledge mobilisation in continuous improvement?

RQ3: What barriers and enablers influence tacit knowledge mobilisation in continuous improvement?

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Continuous Improvement

At operational level, CI can be understood as a continuous, systematic, and repeatable process of identifying problems, planning improvements, testing solutions, implementing changes, standardising, and sustaining results (Knop and Mielczarek, 2015; Míkva et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2014). The roots of continuous improvement can be traced back to Total Quality Management (TQM), which emphasises the continuous examination of processes to identify better ways of meeting increasingly demanding customer expectations (Dean & Bowen, 1994). Today CI is understood as an organizational capability that supports systematic, incremental improvements (Kaizen) and also the generation of more substantial changes and innovations.

At its core, Kaizen involves continuous, small-scale improvements with employee participation and an emphasis on on-the-job learning (Glover et al., 2011). Bessant et al. (1994) pointed out that continuous improvement is also seen as an important complement to more radical forms of innovation, therefore it encompasses the entire company, enabling the creation of a stream of continuous, incremental innovations. Boer and Gertsen (2003) also discussed continuous innovation. In summary, CI is viewed as a purposeful, iterative, and structured process of systematically improving an organization's operations, including processes, standards, quality, and productivity, most often through incremental changes and organizational learning embedded in daily work. These changes may support both organizational redesign and innovation.

This concept encompasses methodologies and practices aimed at systematically improving processes, enhancing quality, reducing costs, and increasing safety, such as Kaizen, lean management, Six Sigma, TQM, PDCA. In practice, continuous improvement is implemented through a range of organizational practices, methods, techniques, and tools that support problem identification, organizational learning, and improvement implementation, including the PDCA and PDSA cycles defined as methodologies for coordinating process improvement efforts aimed at organizational excellence (Popescu & Popescu, 2015), the A3 problem-solving method (Pereira et al., 2019), Kaizen events (workshops) (Manos, 2007), Root Cause Analysis (RCA) (Pietsch et al., 2024), daily shop floor management (Gisi, 2023), and employee suggestion systems (Lasrado et al., 2015).

2.2. Tacit Knowledge

Tacit knowledge as a concept and research topic began to develop in the second half of the twentieth century following the work of Polanyi, who stated that “we can know more than we can tell” (Malik, 2023). This statement refers to knowledge that develops through experience, such as knowledge acquired by employees over many years of work. This type of knowledge cannot be fully transferred through instructions or textbooks (Ribeiro, 2013). Ambrosini and Bowman (2001) cited the following as the main characteristics of tacit knowledge:

- it is difficult to record and formalise, meaning that the person who possesses it often knows how to act effectively but cannot clearly explain the rules behind their actions. Therefore, this knowledge is manifested more in practice than in descriptions or instructions;

- it is personal in nature and strongly connected to the individual, namely it is based on internal thinking models, experiences, and habits that are deeply ingrained within a person, making its articulation and communication to others even more difficult;
- it is practical and action-based, meaning it is not primarily linked to “what one knows”, but “how one acts”, hence it refers to the ability to use resources in practice, and thus it is closer to the concept of competence or know-how than to the information resource itself;
- it is highly context-dependent. It arises primarily through action, in specific professional and organizational situations, and is rooted in practice or the work environment in which it was developed.

Tacit knowledge can therefore be defined as knowledge that is difficult to articulate, personal, practical, and embedded in a specific context of action. In the context of this study, tacit knowledge mobilisation is understood as a set of deliberate mechanisms, organizational practices, and tools that lead to the elicitation, transfer, externalisation, and codification of tacit knowledge, so that it can be applied, shared and reused within an organization. This knowledge is highly contextual, embedded in action, and difficult to fully formalise (Alves & Pinheiro, 2022; Hemmecke & Stary, 2004; Kucharska & Erickson, 2023).

The primary theoretical framework explaining the role of tacit knowledge in organizations is the knowledge conversion model developed by Nonaka et al. (1996), where organizational knowledge is created through continuous interactions between tacit and explicit knowledge (Tsoukas, 2002). The authors defined this model as a process that organizationally amplifies the knowledge created by individuals and crystallises it as part of the organization's knowledge system. The SECI model comprises four modes of knowledge conversion: socialisation (tacit to tacit), externalisation (tacit to explicit), combination (explicit to explicit) and internalisation (explicit to tacit) (Nonaka et al., 1996). In the case of socialisation, tacit knowledge is transferred into tacit knowledge through observation, imitation, and practice (master-apprentice relationship). Externalisation occurs when knowledge is articulated and takes the form of concepts, models, hypotheses, metaphors, and analogies. Combination, or the transformation of explicit knowledge into explicit knowledge, involves combining different forms of explicit knowledge. In turn, the transformation of explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge occurs when explicit knowledge is internalised through practice and experience, and then internalised by the individuals involved (Tsoukas, 2002). The SECI model provides a useful theoretical framework for analysing how knowledge generated through everyday work can be transformed into organizational knowledge and applied in continuous improvement initiatives. In the context of continuous improvement, the processes of socialisation and externalisation are particularly important because they facilitate the transfer and dissemination of operational knowledge among employees and teams. These two modes of knowledge conversion constitute the theoretical foundation for understanding tacit knowledge mobilisation in continuous improvement.

In this article, knowledge mobilisation is adopted as the overarching concept, encompassing activities aimed at sharing and exchanging knowledge (cf. Zakrzewska-Bielawska et al., 2024) in CI processes. Within this process, three complementary groups of activities were distinguished. The first comprises methods for eliciting tacit knowledge, understood as a set of techniques and methods aimed at obtaining knowledge from domain experts, typically through some form of direct interaction with them (Shadbolt & Smart, 2015). The second group consists in organizational practices supporting tacit knowledge transfer, such as on-the-job training (OJT), mentoring, and continuous improvement activities implemented within Kaizen, which facilitate the exchange of experience and the application of knowledge within the organization (Matsuo, 2015). The third group comprises knowledge externalisation and codification. Externalisation refers to the transformation of tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge (Nonaka et al., 1996), whereas codification involves organizing and documenting this knowledge in a form that enables its storage and subsequent reuse (Hansen et al., 1999).

To avoid ambiguity, a distinction was made between the concepts of method, technique, tool, and practice. Since these terms are sometimes used interchangeably in the continuous improvement

literature, the following definitions were adopted by the author. A practice refers to a recurring organizational activity or routine embedded in the continuous improvement system, such as collecting customer feedback, process analysis, or mentoring (Dean & Bowen, 1994). A method can be understood as “a system of assumptions and rules that organizes theoretical or practical activity in such a way that a consciously defined objective can be achieved” (Dźwigoł, 2015, p. 136), therefore represents a structured approach to achieving a specific continuous improvement or knowledge management objective. A technique refers to a specific way of implementing a method or eliciting tacit knowledge, whilst a tool is an instrument used to support the implementation of methods and techniques.

3. Methodology

The aim of this article was to identify and synthesise the current research directions concerning methods and practices for mobilising tacit knowledge in CI. To achieve the study’s objective, a rapid review, a simplified form of a systematic review (Garritty et al., 2024; King et al., 2022), was used. The choice of a rapid review was guided by the aim of the study, which was to provide an up-to-date synthesis of knowledge on a relatively narrow research topic. It also sought to determine whether new research directions had emerged in response to the rapid development of digital technologies and artificial intelligence. Compared with a full systematic literature review, the adopted approach was limited to three bibliographic databases, a single-reviewer screening and data extraction process, and a qualitative synthesis of the findings without conducting a meta-analysis. At the same time, the review retained the core elements of a systematic literature review, including the formulation of research questions, the development of a search strategy, the definition of eligibility criteria, duplicate removal, record screening, and systematic qualitative content analysis of the included publications. The findings were synthesised using qualitative content analysis and narrative synthesis. The synthesis focused on methods for eliciting and externalising tacit knowledge in continuous improvement processes, as well as on barriers, facilitating factors, and research gaps, which enabled a systematic synthesis of the current state of knowledge and provided answers to the research questions.

The search was conducted in the Web of Science Core Collection, Scopus and EBSCO databases on 23-24 February 2026. The selection of databases was based on their complementarity. The Web of Science Core Collection and Scopus are among the most widely used databases in management research, providing broad coverage of high-quality peer-reviewed literature. EBSCO was included to increase the comprehensiveness of the search as it additionally indexes journals in the field of management and quality sciences that are not covered by the other two databases. The search strategy was constructed around three conceptual blocks: the context of continuous improvement, tacit knowledge, and methods and practices for tacit knowledge elicitation, transfer, externalisation, and codification. Additionally, to focus the review on commercial organizations, the review excluded publications related to healthcare, clinical settings, education (e.g. teachers, students, or curricula), and the construct of knowledge hiding. Detailed search strings are available from the author upon request.

The study was limited to the period from 2015 to 2025, with no restrictions on publication language. The time frame was limited because the aim was to identify contemporary research directions on tacit knowledge mobilisation in continuous improvement, particularly those reflecting the increasing use of digital technologies and artificial intelligence in CI processes. Inclusion criteria included quantitative, qualitative, or mixed empirical studies, research articles, review articles, and conference proceedings that addressed the three previously described thematic areas: continuous improvement, tacit knowledge mobilisation, and methods or practices for eliciting, transferring, externalising, and codifying tacit knowledge. Conceptual papers, publications without full-text access, studies focusing exclusively on knowledge hiding, and publications related to education and healthcare were excluded from the review. Restricting the review to full-text publications was necessary because only complete articles allowed reliable data extraction on methods, organizational practices, barriers, and research

findings. All the included publications had undergone peer review. The final corpus consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles and peer-reviewed conference papers, ensuring an appropriate level of credibility for the analysed sources.

The study selection process consisted of several stages. In the first stage, the search results were exported from databases. A total of 67 publications were identified. After merging the search results from the three databases, duplicates were removed using the Rayyan web platform based on DOI identifiers and matching of titles, authors, and publication years. This was followed by title and abstract screening, and subsequently by a full-text eligibility assessment against the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The final analysis and synthesis included 14 publications, and the procedure is presented in Figure 1.

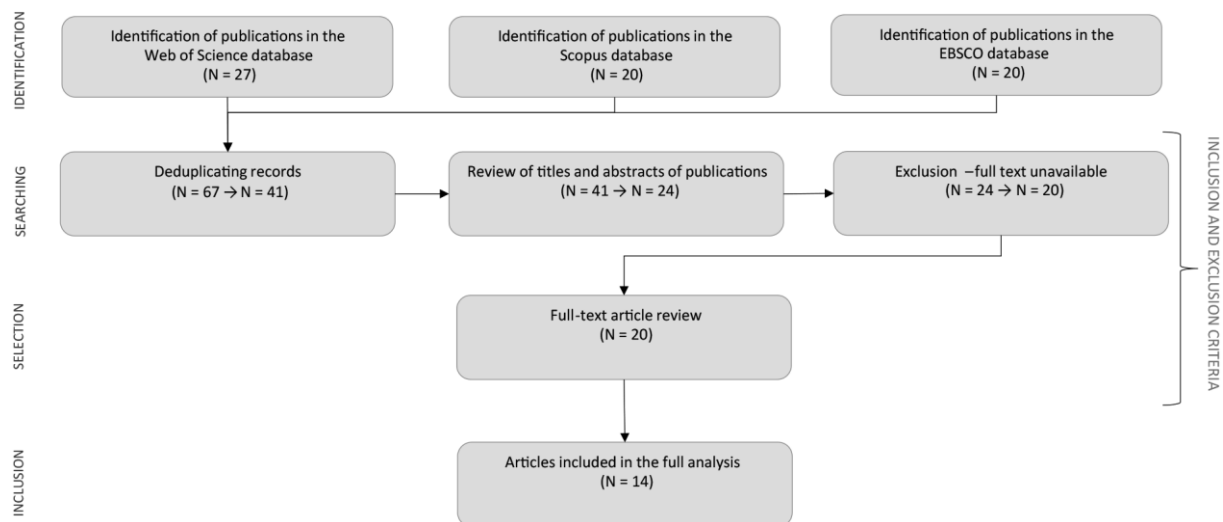


Fig. 1. Flowchart showing the publication selection process

Source: own study.

The selection of publications, data extraction, and analysis were conducted by a single researcher using a predefined data extraction form with standardised coding categories. The data were analysed using qualitative content analysis and narrative synthesis. Publications' quality was assessed based on peer-review status, methodological transparency, and the theoretical and practical value of the findings. Artificial intelligence (AI) was used solely for editorial support, language editing and consistency checking. The author remains solely responsible for the analysis and conclusions.

4. Results

The synthesis included 14 publications from 2015–2025, covering diverse organizational and sectoral contexts: manufacturing (including SMEs and multi-plant networks), construction (including lean construction and road infrastructure), high-risk environments, project management, the defense sector, and the pharmaceutical industry (Ahonen et al., 2022; Al-Nakeeb et al., 2023; Al-Zoubi et al., 2020; Al-Zoubi et al., 2022; Demeter & Losonci, 2019; Kryštof et al., 2024; Letmathe & Rößler, 2019; Matsuo, 2015; Pereira et al., 2023; Radhakrishnan, 2025; Skagert et al., 2025; Tezel et al., 2018; Village et al., 2016; Weigel et al., 2022). The publications covered qualitative research (case studies, work activity analysis, longitudinal studies), quantitative studies (including SEM and laboratory experiments), and project-based studies (Ahonen et al., 2022; Al-Zoubi et al., 2020; Al-Zoubi et al., 2022; Letmathe & Rößler, 2019; Radhakrishnan, 2025; Weigel et al., 2022).

Table 1. Research context in the area of tacit knowledge in continuous improvement processes

Authors	Context	Continuous improvement	Primary tacit knowledge mechanism	Evidence type	Key finding for the SLR objective
Radhakrishnan (2025)	SMEs, production	Improving the maintenance process using BPMN	Conversation with a chatbot, acquiring knowledge into BPMN (externalisation)	Design/prototype (proof-of-concept)	LLM enables the rapid extraction and codification of process knowledge into BPMN (AS-IS/TO-BE), reducing the formalisation barrier
Skagert et al. (2025)	Production and real estate	Improving team work in the context of remote work, team improvement routines (daily meetings)	Workshops, interviews, (socialisation/externalisation)	Qualitative	CI routines and trust support knowledge disclosure, remote work limits socialisation
Kryštof et al. (2024)	Production, safety processes	Continuous Improvement Process (PDCA)	Lessons learned (externalisation/reuse)	Concept/model, illustrative case study	A simple PDCA cycle organizes the transfer of knowledge from incidents. Barriers include time consumption, instruction quality, and culture
Pereira et al. (2023)	Production (lean)	Organization of work in an enterprise operating in accordance with lean management	Demonstration, job observation, interviews, on-the-job experiment (OJT)	Qualitative (activity analysis)	The transmission of know-how is hampered by production pressures. Effectiveness depends on time, autonomy, and the design of learning environments
Al-Nakeeb et al. (2023)	Project management	Experiential learning and project management improvements	Lessons learned sessions	Qualitative (expert interviews)	Lessons learned converts experience into an organizational resource, but reuse is hampered by time, motivation, and lack of tool integration
Weigel et al. (2022)	Product, service, SME	Designing improvements (feedback loop)	Shadowing, knowledge transfer via VR demonstrator, (socialisation)	Design Science Research (VR demonstrator), qualitative interviews	VR increases designers' knowledge and improves design decisions
Ahonen et al. (2022)	Lean construction (tact)	Production, tact, data-driven continuous improvement	Tacit feedback, suggestions, (codification and implementation)	Design science, semi-structured interviews, practice observation	Data-driven CI requires a parallel mechanism for handling tacit knowledge (feedback, update governance); data and contracts are the barriers
Al-Zoubi et al. (2022)	Defence sector	Ability to improve (problem solving/innovation)	Communities of practice (CoP) as a channel for socialization and support for organizational learning	Quantitative (survey, SEM)	CoPs mediate the impact of tacit sharing on capabilities (problem solving/innovation); barriers include confidentiality, bureaucracy and trust
Al-Zoubi et al. (2020)	Pharmaceutical industry	Ability to improve	Mentoring as social learning (mediator)	Quantitative (survey, SEM)	Mentoring strengthens the transfer of tacit sharing into skills. The mere willingness to share knowledge does not always translate into problem-solving

Authors	Context	Continuous improvement	Primary tacit knowledge mechanism	Evidence type	Key finding for the SLR objective
Letmathe & Rößler (2019)	Production	Improving efficiency and quality in ramp-ups through organizational learning	Observation and imitation	Quantitative (experiment)	Transferring tacit knowledge by observation speeds up learning (time) but may degrade quality; reveals trade-off for job design
Demeter & Losonci (2019)	Multinational corporations (MNCs)	Corporate multi-site improvement programs based on lean management	Lean knowledge transfer practices (KT practices) on the Web of practices (visits, rotations, onsite projects)	Qualitative (multiple case)	Lean scaling is based on a mix of tacit and explicit transfer practices and governance (lean office, top management), not on a single tool
Tezel et al. (2018)	Infrastructure construction	Lean implementation in the supply chain	Indirectly: training, standardisation, metrics, sharing groups	Mixed methods (interviews, survey)	The main barriers to CI are the lack of standardisation and measurement of benefits and insufficient know-how/experience retention; the risk of pseudo-lean
Village et al. (2016)	Production	Business improvement (human factor and corporate strategies)	Interviews, cognitive mapping, workshop (externalisation)	Qualitative (case)	Cognitive mapping reveals tacit knowledge and understanding of the problem and translates it into improvement initiatives (shared mental model)
Matsuo (2015)	Production	Kaizen, PDCA, Human resource development programmes	OJT, off-the-job, kaizen, PDCA	Qualitative	An integrated HRD system (OJT, reflection, kaizen/PDCA) builds capabilities (e.g. hypothesis testing) and enhances knowledge transfer/creation

Source: own study.

Based on the qualitative content analysis of the fourteen included publications, three main analytical categories related to tacit knowledge mobilisation in continuous improvement processes were identified: methods for eliciting tacit knowledge, organizational practices supporting tacit knowledge mobilisation, and barriers and enablers influencing tacit knowledge mobilisation, including the use of digital technologies supporting knowledge externalisation. These categories provided the basis for answering the research questions.

4.1. Methods for Eliciting Tacit Knowledge in Continuous Improvement

The literature consistently views tacit knowledge in CI as a resource embedded in work practice. Consequently, its elicitation requires direct interaction with employees in their work environment rather than relying solely on documents or formal procedures. The reviewed studies identified two main groups of elicitation methods: observation and learning through action, and dialogue and reflection. They also highlighted organizational practices supporting tacit knowledge mobilisation and tools for knowledge externalisation and codification.

Letmathe and Rößler (2019) demonstrated how indirect learning between successive production runs influences tacit knowledge transfer, achieved through observation and imitation. A case study analysis of the Toyota Technical Development Corporation showed that the transfer of explicit and tacit knowledge is facilitated through the complementary use of off-the-job and on-the-job training, i.e. learning by doing, embedded within the Kaizen process (Matsuo, 2015). In the study by Pereira et al.

(2023), tacit knowledge elicitation through observation of operators' activities on the production line, interviews, and the collection of verbatim comments from operators during observed work situations, as well as during feedback and discussion sessions, was crucial for tacit knowledge mobilisation. Many studies pointed to the use of dialogue, workshops, and reflective meetings as methods for eliciting tacit knowledge. Skagert et al. (2025) listed team workshops and interviews as methods for eliciting tacit knowledge, whilst Village et al. (2016) noted the usefulness of cognitive mapping, in which interviews serve as a basis for building maps and integrating them at the group level.

With regard to tacit knowledge externalisation, the literature also highlighted the use of the lessons learned approach in project management, through discussions, interviews, and sessions aimed at formalising project results in standardised records (Al-Nakeeb et al., 2023). Their research was linked with another thread in the literature on knowledge externalisation. The transformation of tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge appears in publications on formalizing processes and recording them in the form of process maps using the Business Process Model and Notation (BPMN). In this case, one can point to the use of a conversational assistant based on a large language model (LLM), which collects explicit and tacit knowledge on the shop floor and gradually and interactively transforms it into BPMN 2.0 diagrams (Radhakrishnan, 2025). Unlike the classical concept of externalisation proposed by Nonaka et al. (1996), in which tacit knowledge is articulated primarily through dialogue between people, the approach proposed by Radhakrishnan (2025) employed a large language model (LLM) as an intermediary supporting the articulation process. AI does not generate new tacit knowledge, but rather facilitates its articulation, organization, and codification into BPMN models. Thus, the use of AI changes the way the externalisation process is carried out, but not its underlying purpose.

Another example is the use of a virtual reality (VR) demonstrator, which supports knowledge transfer by enabling designers to adopt a service perspective and ensuring collaboration across organizational boundaries (Weigel et al., 2022). In the case of the VR demonstrator, the technology does not replace knowledge transfer between employees but provides an environment that enables a more realistic experience of work processes and facilitates the sharing of experience among employees. This suggests that VR functions as a tool supporting the processes of socialisation and tacit knowledge transfer rather than as an independent method for eliciting tacit knowledge.

The literature also suggests that tacit knowledge mobilisation should be a continuous and cyclical process. Kryštof et al. (2024) proposed a PDCA-based knowledge transfer model, pointing to the need to structure the analysis, implementation, and effectiveness evaluation of this transfer to support lessons learned. In terms of production processes, tacit knowledge can also be elicited and externalised through a structured system that reduces barriers to employee participation (Ahonen et al., 2022).

4.2. Organizational Practices Supporting the Mobilisation of Tacit Knowledge in the Continuous Improvement Process

The analysis showed that the effectiveness of tacit knowledge mobilisation depends on the organizational environment in which these activities take place. Three recurring categories of organizational practices were identified across the reviewed studies: practices fostering collaborative learning, practices facilitating tacit knowledge transfer, and practices supporting knowledge retention and reuse. According to Skagert et al. (2025), team learning processes, including the mobilisation of tacit knowledge, are determined by the overall policies, procedures, and culture of the organization, including its support systems and approach to development. The authors argued that standardised CI workflows and meeting routines (e.g. daily steering meetings) create an infrastructure that supports team learning and tacit knowledge transfer. In turn, Demeter and Losonci (2019), while addressing the issue of explicit and tacit knowledge sharing in interorganizational lean management, highlighted a wide range of practices, including occasional and regular meetings and audits, and pointed out that the involvement of management staff and appropriate structures plays a significant role in this regard.

The literature also reported emerging applications of modern technologies supporting tacit knowledge externalisation and transfer, such as VR and AI (Radhakrishnan, 2025; Weigel et al., 2022). Practices supporting the mobilisation of tacit knowledge also include lessons learned repositories and the use of a Project Management Information System (PMIS), which enable the storage and retrieval of knowledge captured during projects (Al-Nakeeb et al., 2023).

4.3. Barriers and Enablers of Tacit Knowledge Mobilisation in Continuous Improvement

The analysis indicated that the barriers and enablers of tacit knowledge mobilisation in CI processes operate at three interrelated levels: organizational, social, and technological. Barriers affecting the effectiveness of tacit knowledge mobilisation included organizational, operational, and technical and implementation-related barriers. Pereira et al. (2023) pointed out that a common problem in tacit knowledge transfer in production processes was the conflict between production requirements and the need to transmit know-how, which limited the space for demonstration, explanation, and learning through action. In the context of remote or hybrid work, a barrier was the loss of spontaneous interactions and observations, which in a stationary setting support socialisation and tacit knowledge transfer (Skagert et al., 2025). In project management, the problem of insufficient time and motivation to document knowledge was highlighted, which hindered the effective reuse of lessons learned (Al-Nakeeb et al., 2023). In the case of process identification using a conversational assistant based on a large language model (LLM) with embedded AI, challenges arose related to selecting the appropriate model and its performance, system latency and token efficiency, and managing non-deterministic results (Radhakrishnan, 2025).

The literature analysis revealed three groups of factors supporting the effective mobilisation of tacit knowledge in CI processes. The first was management support and a culture of trust, which strengthen the conditions for team learning and tacit knowledge transfer (Matsuo, 2015; Skagert et al., 2025). The second group included organizational relationships and learning mechanisms, such as Communities of Practice (CoP), mentoring, i.e. the relationship between master and apprentice, and on-the-job training (OJT), which serve as mechanisms for the transfer of tacit knowledge (Al-Zoubi et al., 2020; Al-Zoubi et al., 2022; Matsuo, 2015). The third group comprised tools supporting tacit knowledge externalisation and codification, including BPMN models, work packages, lesson-learned templates, and cognitive maps, which support knowledge retention and reuse while facilitating collaborative discussion and the implementation of improvement actions (Ahonen et al., 2022; Al-Nakeeb et al., 2023; Radhakrishnan, 2025; Village et al., 2016; Weigel et al., 2022).

4.4. A Proposed Framework for Tacit Knowledge Mobilisation in Continuous Improvement

The analysis identified three complementary groups of activities related to tacit knowledge mobilisation in CI. Based on these findings, a conceptual framework was developed to integrate the fragmented evidence and present tacit knowledge mobilisation as a set of interrelated activities comprising methods for eliciting tacit knowledge, organizational practices supporting knowledge transfer and application, and tools for knowledge externalisation and codification (Figure 2). All three groups of activities were supported by common organizational factors, including organizational culture, leadership, communication, a CI culture, and knowledge management technologies.

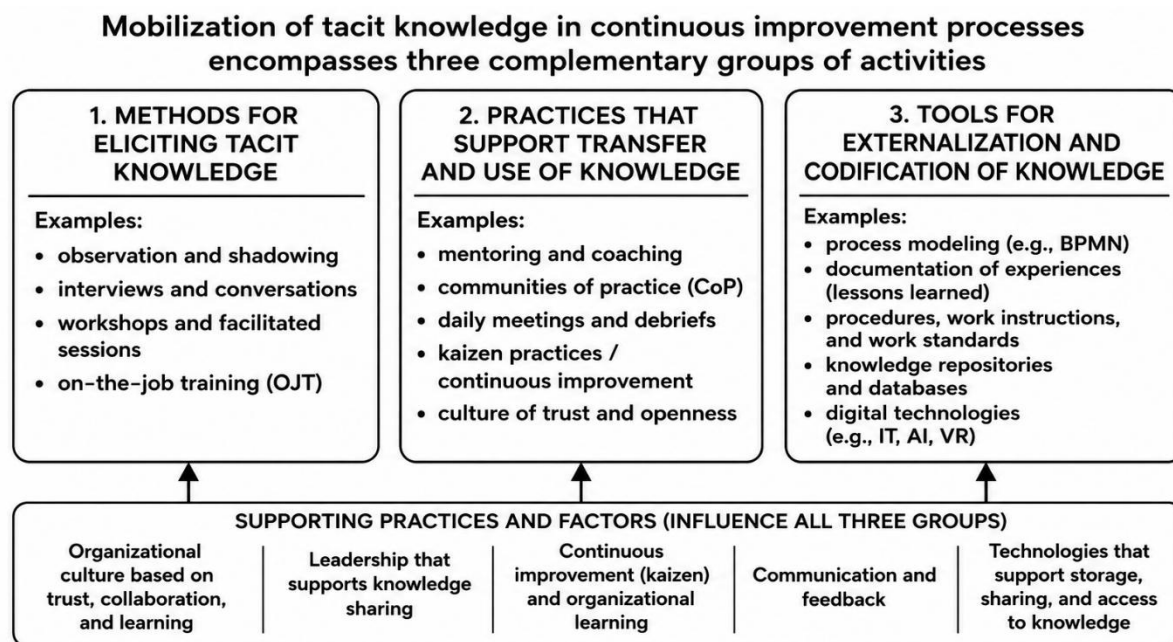


Fig. 2. A proposed framework for tacit knowledge mobilisation in continuous improvement

Source: own study.

The proposed framework integrates the fragmented findings on tacit knowledge mobilisation in the context of continuous improvement. The analysis showed that most studies focused on individual methods, organizational practices, or tools, while rarely considering them as components of a single, integrated process. The framework may serve as a foundation for future research examining the relationships among these components and their contribution to the effectiveness of continuous improvement.

5. Discussion

The presented findings indicate that in the literature on continuous improvement prevail approaches that treat tacit knowledge as a resource embedded in action, suggesting that mobilising this type of knowledge requires direct engagement with actual work processes and problem situations. Therefore, the methods for eliciting tacit knowledge were largely focused on observation, learning in action, dialogue, reflection, and the gradual formalisation of what was initially non-verbal and difficult to codify (Letmathe & Rößler, 2019; Matsuo, 2015; Pereira et al., 2023; Skagert et al., 2025). The findings address the research gap identified in the Introduction by showing that previous studies have focused primarily on individual methods or organizational practices supporting tacit knowledge mobilisation, while rarely considering them as components of a single, integrated process supporting continuous improvement. The analysis also revealed that tacit knowledge elicitation is rarely a one-time event, and usually it is a cyclical learning process in which the transformation of tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge that can be stored and reused is crucial (Ahonen et al., 2022; Al-Nakeeb et al., 2023; Kryštof et al., 2024). The effectiveness of tacit knowledge mobilisation depends not only on its elicitation, but also on the organization's ability to complete the entire process, from eliciting knowledge in practice, through its externalisation, to its reuse in subsequent improvement cycles. The results regarding organizational practices confirmed that mobilising tacit knowledge within CI processes requires both appropriate institutional and social infrastructure. Systemic mechanisms operating within organizations in the area of continuous improvement, such as regular meetings of improvement teams or management staff, create conditions for tacit knowledge transfer and the development of shared

understanding. Solutions supporting the long-term storage and retrieval of knowledge, such as lessons learned repositories and information systems supporting project management, also play a crucial role, as they are a prerequisite for the externalisation and codification of tacit knowledge in a reusable form (Al-Nakeeb et al., 2023). Against this backdrop, modern technologies, e.g. VR and AI-based tools, emerge as supporting elements that can increase the scope and quality of externalisation, but they do not replace the social mechanisms on which the transfer of tacit knowledge still relies (Radhakrishnan, 2025; Weigel et al., 2022). This suggests that digital technologies primarily play a supporting role, while interactions among employees and organizational conditions conducive to learning remain the key drivers of tacit knowledge mobilisation.

The analysis of the barriers and factors contributing to the mobilisation of tacit knowledge indicated that the primary constraints are organizational and operational in nature. The conflict between production requirements and the need to transfer know-how is particularly pronounced, limiting the space for demonstration, explanation, and learning through action (Pereira et al., 2023). Significant barriers also emerge in remote and hybrid work environments, where the number of spontaneous interactions typically associated with face-to-face interactions decreases (Skagert et al., 2025). Insufficient time and motivation for documenting knowledge is also pointed out, which hinders the actual closure of the lessons learned process through its reuse (Al-Nakeeb et al., 2023). These barriers are further compounded by technical and implementation challenges, evident in the use of modern technologies. At the same time, the literature identified three categories of factors that facilitate tacit knowledge mobilisation in continuous improvement: management support and a culture of trust, organizational relationships and learning mechanisms, and tools supporting knowledge externalisation and codification (e.g. BPMN, work packages, lesson-learned templates, cognitive maps) that facilitate collaborative knowledge sharing and its translation into improvement actions. To sum up, effective tacit knowledge mobilisation in CI is not simply a matter of selecting a single method but also requires the coherent design of working conditions, social relationships, and mechanisms for externalising and reusing tacit knowledge.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this article was to systematise and synthesise current knowledge on tacit knowledge mobilisation in continuous improvement through a rapid review of the literature published between 2015 and 2025. The review identified the most frequently reported methods for eliciting tacit knowledge, organizational practices supporting its transfer, and tools for knowledge externalisation and codification. It also resulted in the development of a conceptual framework integrating these complementary groups of activities. The review results indicated that the literature on tacit knowledge mobilisation in continuous improvement primarily describes the mechanisms and boundary conditions of tacit knowledge mobilisation, but does not provide comparable evidence regarding the effectiveness of individual solutions. This study has certain limitations. First, it included publications with diverse methodologies and levels of evidence (case studies, quantitative research, project work project-based studies, experiments), which limited the possibility of quantitative generalisations and comparisons of method effectiveness in a meta-analysis. The review was conducted by a single author, which increased the risk of subjectivity in selection and coding, despite the use of strictly defined search criteria and standardised data extraction form. The limited time frame (2015-2025) and the selected databases and keywords may have resulted in the omission of some publications. The analysis suggested the need for further research assessing the effectiveness of various methods for eliciting, transferring, externalising, and codifying tacit knowledge in comparable CI settings. Future research should also examine the use of modern digital technologies, such as AI and VR, to support tacit knowledge mobilisation in continuous improvement processes.

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Metody i praktyki wspierające mobilizację wiedzy ukrytej w procesach ciągłego doskonalenia: przegląd literatury w formule *rapid review*

Streszczenie

Cel: Celem artykułu jest identyfikacja aktualnych kierunków badań dotyczących metod i praktyk mobilizowania wiedzy ukrytej w procesach ciągłego doskonalenia (CI).

Metodyka: Niniejszy artykuł opiera się na systematycznym przeglądzie literatury w formule *rapid review*. Przeglądu dokonano w oparciu o bazy Web of Science Core Collection, Scopus oraz EBSCO. Zastosowano strategię wyszukiwania opartą na trzech blokach pojęciowych związanych z ciągłym doskonaleniem, wiedzą ukrytą oraz metodami i praktykami jej mobilizowania. Łącznie zidentyfikowano 67 artykułów spełniających kryteria. Po usunięciu duplikatów i przeprowadzeniu procesu selekcji do oceny pełnych tekstów zakwalifikowano 20 publikacji, a do ostatecznej analizy i syntezy włączono 14 prac.

Wyniki: Badania wykazały, że mobilizacja wiedzy ukrytej w CI jest najczęściej rozumiana jako proces osadzony w praktyce pracy i wymagający kontaktu z rzeczywistym działaniem. W literaturze dominują metody elicytacji wiedzy ukrytej oparte na obserwacji i uczeniu w działaniu, wywiadach, warsztatach oraz spotkaniach refleksyjnych, a także praktyki organizacyjne służące eksternalizacji i kodyfikacji wiedzy. Analiza uwidoczniła również przykłady zastosowania nowoczesnych rozwiązań cyfrowych wspierających eksternalizację i transfer wiedzy ukrytej w procesach doskonalenia, w tym elementy sztucznej inteligencji i pracę w środowisku VR.

Implikacje i rekomendacje: Potrzebne są dalsze badania, aby ocenić względną skuteczność metod zdobywania wiedzy oraz zbadać, w jaki sposób rozwiązania oparte na sztucznej inteligencji i rzeczywistości wirtualnej mogą usprawnić eksternalizację wiedzy ukrytej w praktyce organizacyjnej.

Oryginalność/wartość: Artykuł porządkuje rozproszone ustalenia z obszaru ciągłego doskonalenia związane z mobilizacją wiedzy ukrytej, prezentując syntetyczny obraz metod, praktyk oraz warunków brzegowych jej ujawniania w CI w latach 2015-2025. Badanie to, syntetyzując różne perspektywy badawcze, przyczynia się do lepszego zrozumienia mechanizmów mobilizacji wiedzy ukrytej obejmujących jej elicytację, transfer, eksternalizację oraz kodyfikację, w kontekście procesów ciągłego doskonalenia.

Słowa kluczowe: wiedza ukryta, mobilizacja wiedzy ukrytej, ciągłe doskonalenie, elicytacja wiedzy, transfer wiedzy, eksternalizacja wiedzy
