

KEY COMPETENCIES EXPECTED ON THE CONTEMPORARY LABOUR MARKET

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Summary. A lot has been said and written about competencies in the recent years. They are an object of interest of many scientific disciplines: psychology, educational studies, anthropology, sociology, management science, but also of the labour market. The question of competencies sought after on the modern labour market frequently appears in the conversations among people who search for work, and among the employers. What competencies must a person have in order not to become unemployed? What are the competencies which the employers look for? What competencies may ensure good work?

In order to get the answers to the above questions, the article presents a theoretical analysis of available literature.

KOMPETENCJE KLUCZOWE OCZEKIWANE NA WSPÓŁCZESNYM RYNKU PRACY

Słowa kluczowe: współczesny rynek pracy, kompetencje, kompetencje kluczowe

Streszczenie. W ostatnich latach dużo się mówi i pisze o kompetencjach. Są one przedmiotem zainteresowania wielu dyscyplin naukowych: psychologii, pedagogiki, antropologii, socjologii, nauk o zarządzaniu, ale również rynku pracy. Pytanie o kompetencje pożądane na współczesnym rynku pracy pojawia się często w rozmowach osób poszukujących pracy, jak i pracodawców. Jakie należy posiadać kompetencje, aby uchronić się przed bezrobociem? Na jakie kompetencje pracodawcy zgłaszają zapotrzebowanie? Jakie kompetencje mogą zapewnić dobrą pracę?

Chcąc uzyskać odpowiedzi na powyższe pytania, w artykule dokonano analizy teoretycznej dostępnej literatury.

Contemporary labour market

The labour market is where there are, on the one hand, people who search for work and their offers and, on the other hand, the enterprises that create jobs and search for employees. The contemporary labour market is very difficult and demanding for employees and employers. Its characteristic features include, among other things:

1. Variability of professions and variability of professional functions and tasks, which require abandonment of narrow professional specialisation.
2. Liquidation of functions, activities and tasks which are simple, standard and repeatable, and their replacement with technical equipment.
3. Appearance of new professions, changes in the existing ones and disappearance of some other professions.
4. Searching for employees with broad general knowledge and well prepared as regards specialities, but also those who are reliable, capable of solving problems, able to cooperate and learn, adjust to new situations, innovative, as well as caring for the quality of products and services.
5. Mental and physical work mixing.
6. The increase in the importance of the work of managers, engineers, technicians and middle supervision personnel.
7. One job for the whole life is no longer possible.
8. The position of an employee depends on their qualifications. Knowledge becomes a process and learning is an integral part of manufacturing; a new form of activeness.
9. The existence of unemployment. Unemployment is a modern phenomenon. It will not be abolished, although its scope may be reduced and controlled¹.

These phenomena are part of the difficult and constantly transforming labour market processes. Some of these difficulties are:

1. Business activity today is based on highly intellectualized technologies. Their effective use requires the employment of highly qualified employees.

¹ Z. Czajka, *Rynek pracy a system edukacji*, „Praca i Zabezpieczenie Społeczne” 1997, nr 3, quoted in: W. Furmanek, *Humanistyczna pedagogika pracy. Rynek i rynek pracy jako obiekty badań*, Wyd. UR, Rzeszów 2017, s. 106.

2. In the modern labour market, both low-skilled employees (because there are no or very few simple jobs) and employees with the highest specialist qualifications (expecting a highly paid job) have particular difficulties.
3. The employee employed – in their subjective opinion – in a position lower than their competences and capabilities, does not use their potential, but being in a situation of constant dissatisfaction, they fall into various health difficulties, fatigue and frustration at work.
4. Flexible production systems allow to produce a lot. It is cheaper, goods find buyers, so more and more products are being produced, the market is expanding, and consumption is growing.
5. Currently, production generates a new phenomenon of self-destruction of its staff. High demands on employees, fear of losing their jobs force employees to work beyond strength, fear of getting into the trash of culture and marginalization.
6. Phenomena of stress and burn-out are becoming problems affecting increasingly larger groups of employees.
7. The mentioned phenomena affecting working people generate new attitudes towards work: workaholism and burn-out².

Awareness of the above changes in the labour market leads to reflection and seeking answers to the following questions: How to prepare to entering the labour market? What competencies are searched for on the contemporary labour market?

Requirements for the employees

Today, professional career is related to abrupt changes of the workplace, position or profession. Abandonment of the principle of one job for the whole life is the characteristic feature of the fast-changing market. The Institute of Public Affairs (IPA), after having analysed the labour market, concluded that Poland will need not only highly qualified specialists but also those who will be able to change their profession or speciality³. According to IPA, a person who started working in the 1990s will have to change their speciality or profession at least 6 to 7 times in order not to drop out of the labour market.

² Compare: W. Furmanek, *Humanistyczna pedagogika pracy. Rynek i rynek pracy...*, s. 107–108.

³ Idem, *Humanistyczna pedagogika pracy: charakterystyka dyscypliny naukowej*, UR, Rzeszów 2013.

The requirements expected from the candidates for a job usually concentrate within three categories: **education, experience** and **competencies**⁴. Education is the criterion which seems to be obvious to many people. Higher education is perceived as a need but, unfortunately, insufficient for effective operation on the labour market. Another criterion is professional experience. In order to fulfil the criterion, many young people take various jobs (paid, voluntary, internship) already during their school education. An extremely important criterion in the selection of candidates for work are competencies, and specifically their type and level. The market evolves towards the market of competencies.

Key competencies

The term *competence* (Latin *competentia*) is defined as reliability, compliance, right to action, result of the learning process⁵. A competence is a scope of rights, powers, a scope of activities of an institution, a scope of affairs subject to a specific body, a scope of someone's knowledge or responsibility⁶. The pioneers in analysing competencies were David C. McClelland (1973: 1–14) and Richard E. Boyatzis (2001: 241–250), who defined the category as predisposition and characteristic features of a person which have a cause-and-effect relationship with the person's achievements at work or in a specific situation. C. Levy-Leboyer (1997: 26) emphasised that competencies refer to integrated use of abilities, personal features and the acquired knowledge and skills. To conclude the definitions by the authors, it may be stated that competencies may be equated with predispositions of a person as well as their talent and knowledge, which translates into measurable achievements at work⁷.

Competencies represent a multi-aspect and multi-meaning category related to professionalism, expertise, and skills⁸. Particularly important are those competencies, the shaping of which brings advantages in personal or professional life but are at the same time beneficial to the society. The literature describes such competencies as the key ones. **Key competencies** are those which are needed

⁴ A. Wawrzonek, *Młodzi dorośli wobec zmian na rynku pracy*, „Studia Edukacyjne” 2014, nr 33, s. 309.

⁵ W. Okoń, *Nowy słownik pedagogiczny*, Żak, Warszawa 2017, s. 185.

⁶ E. Sobol (red.), *Słownik wyrazów obcych PWN*, Wyd. Nauk. PWN, Warszawa 2000, s. 575.

⁷ E. Kolańska, *Kompetencje a rynek pracy i struktura społeczna*, „Acta Universitatis Lodzianensis, Folia Sociologica” 2011, nr 38, s. 92.

⁸ A. Pocztoński, *Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi*, PWE, Warszawa 2018, s. 155.

by everybody for self-realisation and personal development, active citizenship, social integration and employment. Within the European Reference Framework eight key competencies have been listed:

- 1) communication in the mother tongue,
- 2) communication in foreign languages,
- 3) mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology,
- 4) digital competence,
- 5) learning to learn,
- 6) social and civic competences,
- 7) sense of initiative and entrepreneurship,
- 8) cultural awareness and expression⁹.

The listed competencies are deemed to be equally important. Each of them may contribute to a better life within a society. Competencies are particularly important in the knowledge society, guarantee higher flexibility of an employee, enable faster adjustment to continuous changes in the world. In the contemporary world, the possession of the selected key competencies becomes more important than the possession of broad knowledge.

Competencies expected on the contemporary labour market

Within many social surveys, the issue of competencies in the context of the labour market has been considered¹⁰. Interesting information in that regard is provided, for example, by the report entitled *Qualifications for the needs of the employers*. The surveyed employers listed the following requirements for the candidates to work:

- loyalty towards the company,
- willingness to study and develop one's competencies,
- ability to admit to the lack of knowledge,
- ability to work in a team,

⁹ Dziennik Urzędowy Unii Europejskiej. Zalecenie Rady z 22 maja 2018 r. w sprawie kompetencji kluczowych w procesie uczenia się przez całe życie.

¹⁰ M. Kocór, A. Strzebońska, M. Dawid-Sawicka, *Pracodawcy o rynku pracy. Na podstawie badań zrealizowanych w 2012 roku w ramach III edycji projektu Bilans Kapitału Ludzkiego*, PARP, Warszawa 2012; M. Kocór, S. Czarnik, *Bilans potrzeb zatrudnieniowych pracodawców i możliwości rynku pracy* [w:] J. Górniak (red.), *Młodość czy doświadczenie? Kapitał ludzki w Polsce. Raport podsumowujący III edycję badań BKL z 2012 roku*, PARP, Warszawa 2013; D. Turek, *Kompetencje osób młodych na rynku pracy – oczekiwania pracodawców*, „E-mentor” 2015, nr 3.

- openness and motivation to learn the necessary professional skills,
- ability to cooperate with people, communicate, negotiate and mediate¹¹.

In the article entitled *The employers about the competencies and qualifications searched for among higher-education graduates – survey results*¹², the authors presented the expectations of employers regarding the competencies and qualifications of higher education graduates. In accordance with the declarations of the employers, a decisive factor in taking a decision on employing a graduate are mainly their **personal and interpersonal competencies** (32% of responses). In that group the following are listed: reliability, engagement, openness to learning and continuous development, independence, ability to work under pressure, ability to make decisions, ability to communicate in an effective manner.

The projection regarding those competencies which will be needed on the labour market in 10 years' time has been undertaken by the authors of the Future Works Skills 2020 report¹³. In their analyses they considered the social and economic contexts which will contribute to the changes on the labour market. The factors that affect the change of expectations for the employees is the extending life expectancy, more frequent use of machines in repeatable, routine activities, the environment of new media, growth of importance of highly structured organisations and growing globalisation. Considering the above determinants, the authors of the report have identified ten competencies of the future¹⁴:

1. **Ability to perceive deeper meaning, hidden sense** – such skills of reasoning will never be taken over by a machine. The skills will be highly important because they enable critical view of the decisions taken.
2. **Social intelligence** – the ability to communicate with others. The importance of social, communication skills will be growing, because the employees must cooperate in larger and larger, highly differentiated teams.
3. **Innovative thinking and adaptation ability** – in the future the ability to react to unexpected situations and creativity will be more important. The 'employee of tomorrow' will have to learn how to perform tasks which are not subject to clear rules and procedures. The very ability to perform

¹¹ U. Sztandar-Sztanderska, E. Drogosz-Zabłocka, B. Minkiewicz, M. Stec, *Kwalifikacje dla potrzeb pracodawców. Raport końcowy*, Warszawa 2010.

¹² A. Budnikowski, D. Dabrowski, U. Gąsior, S. Macioł, *Pracodawcy o poszukiwanych kompetencjach i kwalifikacjach absolwentów uczelni – wyniki badania*, „E-mentor” 2012, nr 4(46), s. 4–17.

¹³ A. Davies, D. Fidler, M. Gorbis, *Future Work Skills 2020*, Institute for the Future for the University of Phoenix Research Institute 2011.

¹⁴ <https://www.pulshr.pl/rekrutacja/te-kompetencje-beda-potrzebne-na-ryнку-pracy-juz-za-trzy-lata,44049.html>

tasks which require adaptation to new situations and abstract thinking ability will be essential in the future.

4. **Multicultural competencies** – the ability to work in various cultural environments, ability to adapt to the changing conditions and reacting to varied cultural contexts. Changes which are present in the world, globalisation, spreading of the activities of international corporations require such skills.
5. **Analytical thinking** – the ability to interpret data, ability to reason based on vast quantities of data. The competence will gain value as the quantity of available data has been continuously growing, therefore, the demand for employees capable of analysing the data will also grow.
6. **Ability to handle new media** – the next generation of employees will have to be fluent in creating and presenting information in visual form (video).
7. **Transdisciplinarity** – the ability to understand concepts in various fields of science. An ideal employee of the future will possess specialised knowledge in one field, supplemented with the general knowledge of other areas.
8. **Project approach** – the ability to perform projects which lead to the expected results.
9. **Ability to filter information** – in a world rich in information, a cognitive overload may be experienced. In order to effectively perform their duties, employees will have to be able to skilfully filter information they receive and focus on the most important issues.
10. **Virtual cooperation** – the ability of effective operation as a member of a virtual team. Cooperation in such an environment requires completely different competencies than cooperation in the real world. It will be needed to learn various strategies engaging and motivating a dissipated group. The members of virtual teams create for themselves an environment which motivates them to work, to replace the working space present at companies.

The changes occurring in the labour market will force the ability to adapt, adjust to the changing work conditions, use technologies, etc. In the future, there will be a greater need for professional mobility, and higher readiness to change the workplace. The world changes, and the requirements of the labour market change. The World Economic Forum has supported the specification of future skills. Based on regular discussions with HR managers the organisation forecasts which skills will be needed by the employees within the perspective of several years. Among those forecast ones are:

Comprehensive problem solving – the ability to analyse multiple data and information, making decisions and implementing solutions.

Critical thinking – the ability of logical reasoning and cool analysis.

Creativity – the ability to be of absolutely key importance not only in sectors such as media or entertainment but anywhere. Work will await people who think in a non-standard way, because they will invent new services and products.

Human resources management – the employees are going to need emphatic leaders who will be able to control body language and clearly communicate with people.

Cooperation with others – the ability to adjust one's decisions and behaviours to the behaviours of others. This means some flexibility instead of keeping to one's opinion, as well as openness to colleagues.

Emotional intelligence – research has long reflected that the higher the emotional intelligence, the higher the productivity of an employee. A person with such competencies is capable of recognising and naming their own emotions and those of others. Thus, they are capable of solving conflicts and defuse stress.

Reasoning and decision-making – work in the future will require independence and the ability to make decisions in a fast manner.

Focus on services – an employee focused on supporting others will be sought after on the market. This means both working in a team and serving a customer.

Negotiations – peaceful problem solving and ability to reconcile various views and stands.

Cognitive flexibility – assumes the ability of finding and merging various thoughts, ideas and data. The ability to see connections between seemingly different things guarantees development to companies.

Looking through the job sites and recruitment platforms, a lot of information regarding competencies needed on the modern labour market from the point of view of recruiters may be found. The most frequently appearing ones include:

- ability to work in a multicultural environment,
- ability to work in a group of people of varied ages,
- ability to communicate effectively,
- knowledge of foreign languages,
- goal orientation,
- ability to work in a group of people,
- self-organisation,
- project work ability,
- ability to work under time pressure,

- ability to use modern technologies,
- abstract and analytical thinking ability.

Considering the catalogue of the presented competencies it must be taken into account that not all of them are needed at the same time for a respective job. Other competencies will be expected by an employer of a computer specialist, an electrical engineer, or a person managing a large team of people in an international corporation. There is no doubt that the above-mentioned competencies determine the operation of the labour market. Therefore, they should be included in the learning outcomes at every stage of education.

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