



KEY COMPETENCES ON THE LABOUR MARKET

Fruzsina Éva Lukács, Ildikó Budavári-Takács, Csilla Judit Suhajda

Szent István University, Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences

Annotation

Competences that employees should have can be found most explicitly in advertisements for job vacancies. The aim of our research is to study key competences, competences of leaders and of their employees, and competences linked to specific work areas based on advertisements for jobs, thus representing the demands of the labour market. The theoretical background is the competence framework of József Nagy (2000). His theory defines 4 subcategories of competence: personal, social, cognitive and specific competence, and closely resembles the key competence framework of OECD published in 2005. Our research was carried out in 2013. We have systematically selected 300 job advertisements from a pool of 5000 ads. These 300 advertisements were then studied by collecting the terms that referred to personality traits, skills and competence, and the categorization of these terms into competence categories by experts. We used the subcategories of József Nagy (personal, social, cognitive and specific competence) in the process and listed competences based on the frequency of other variables (e.g. competence of a leader / employee; area of specialty of the job mentioned in the advertisement), as well. A clear innovation of the study is that key competences and specific competences, which are linked to a specific area of expertise, could be differentiated. In accordance with our hypothesis our findings suggest that the labour market demands few of the key competences from employees and leaders.

KEY WORDS: Labour market; employee; employer; key competences; suitability

Introduction

The needs of the management towards employees are most explicitly stated in job ads. Therefore it is reasonable to study, what skills, personality traits and other attributes employers look for from time to time. By studying job ads we can get a clear picture of job-related competences (linked to occupations and jobs) that employers want to 'get', thus we can see what competences should a job-seeker have to find the job that suits him the most, making him successful in it.

Studying competences in the world of work became popular in the 1960s. That was the time when it was stated that the correlation between personality traits that can be tested, and work performance is much smaller, than it would fit for predicting the success of one's performance in a given job position (Mischel, 1968). After this revelation they started to first study behavior (McClelland & Daley, 1973), then competences in the field of success at work. In the last 50 years many competence models were formed that are applicable for the world of work (Spencer & Spencer 1993, Bartram, 2005, Kurz, 1999, Borman és Motowidlo, 1993, Hogan & Holland, 2003, Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, & Sager, 1993, Scullen, Mount, & Judge, 2003). At our faculty, at Szent István University of Economics and Social Sciences, we regard studying competences linked to work and labour market to be of high importance, resulting in many publications in the topic (Bajor et al. 2001, Mészáros et al., 2007, J. Klér, Budavári-Takács, 2010, Varga, Vas, Szira, Bárdos, 2013, Csehné Papp, 2007). The metaanalysis carried out at the university (Bajor et al. 2001) listed communication, the ability to quantify,

teamwork, problem solving, learning and performance as pivotal key competences on the labour market.

In our research we have used the competence model of József Nagy (2000) as our theoretical background, as it makes competences expected from employees easy to apprehend. This theory resembles closely the key competence framework of work that was introduced by OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) in 2005.

The theoretical framework specifies four competence categories that are built up from subcategories. It distinguishes personal, cognitive, social and specific (work related) competences. In our previous study (Budavári-Takács, Suhajda, 2015) we defined what competences were included in each of these categories and what they meant based on competences found in job advertisements (Table 1.)

The Survey

In our study we used two different scientific methods to study competences that employees should possess. The first method was to examine advertisements of jobs on a national website. Job advertisements were collected in three waves of data collection (Mészáros, 2013) in a 3-months time frame on given days (11.01., 11.02., 11.03.), that allowed us to get an overview of ads in the first quarter of the year. The sample only included ads for Budapest and for full-time jobs. At each sampling time we collected in every area of specialty four- four ads (if available) at ISCED 3- 5 level (referred to as 'secondary' education) and at ISCED 6 (referred to as 'university degree') level or higher. We analyzed 311 job ads, with 132 ads at ISCED 5, and 179 ads at ISCED 6 level

education in their requirements. We analyzed the content of each ad's requirements section. Words used here were collected, listed and clustered based on József Nagy's

competence model. Two independent experts participated in this job.

Table 1. Definitions of personal, cognitive, social and special competences based on analyses of job advertisements (n=311)

Personal	Social	Cognitive	Special
Activity: energetic, dynamic and agile personality Adaptability: flexible personality, adaptability to changing work conditions, willingness to be mobile Outcome orientation: outcome, solution, performance and success oriented personality Liability: precision, thoroughness and liability in work Creativity: creative and constructive thinking Self-confidence: confident and firm appearance Responsibility: responsible personality Independence: the ability to work alone, high range of independence Proactivity: proactive and energetic personality, being an originator Stamina: the ability to work hard and enduring,	Cooperation: the ability to cooperate, be part of teamwork and cooperate with others The ability to make contact: open, easy-going personality, the ability to connect to other people Communication: good communication skills Management: the ability to organize, coordinate, plan and manage Empathy: amiable, friendly, helpful approach to others, client-oriented approach	Analytic thinking: the ability to analyze and integrate, analytic thinking The ability to bear monotony Problem solving: problem solving thinking Strategic thinking	Foreign language literacy : knowledge of foreign languages (on different levels) Digital competence Entrepreneurship: business 'spirit', sales approach

Our second method was an online survey, where employees were given a list of competences found in job ads. Subjects had to rate how important they think each given competence is for employers. The questionnaire was filled out by 112 persons, 42% of them were men, 58% of them women. Their age division :11% 17-20 years old , 69% 20-30 years old, 10% 30-40 years old and 9 % 40-50 years old. The mean age of the sample is 26 years, which means that our study represents the attitudes of young adults the most. 65% of the subjects in our sample completed secondary education or is currently studying there and 35 % graduated university.

Hypotheses

We have 4 suppositions, we hypotyse that:

1. Competences mentioned in job ads will have a moderate number and they will mostly be key-competences.
2. There will be differences in the competences of managers and other employees mentioned in the ads (e.g. management, coordination).

3. There will be a distinctive pattern of personal, cognitive and social competences linked to the area of expertise.
4. Competences stated by employers in the ads and competences that employees think they should have are the same.

Results

We gathered the words for the requirements of the 311 job advertisements in a previous research (Budavári-Takács, Suhajda, 2015). Based on József Nagy's competence framework we clustered requirements into four groups according to their content. We listed 23 competences this way (Table 1.). For every competence gathered from the job ads we computed frequencies, and then ordered a frequency rank to the competence (Budavári-Takács, Suhajda, 2015). To be able to do that we computed the percentage of job ads that included a given competence (Fig 1).

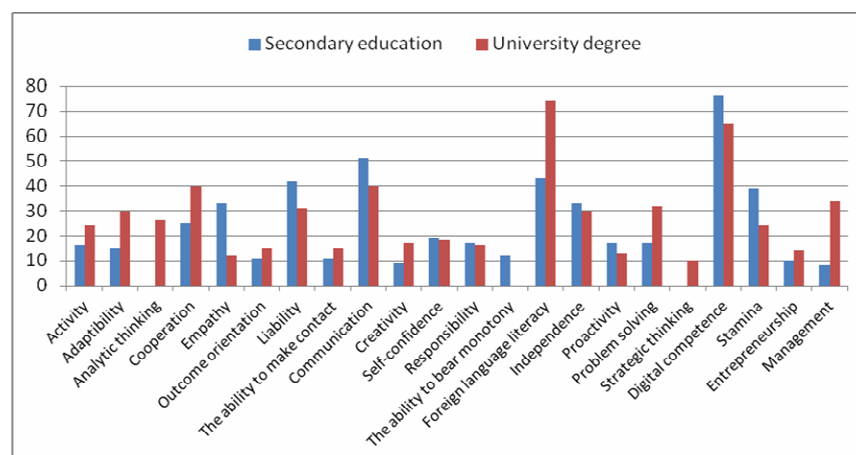


Fig. 1: Percentage of job ads that included a given competence by education level. (n=311)

Foreign language literacy (with more than 70% in job ads for university degrees) and ICT skills (with more than

70% in job ads for secondary education) ranked first. In ads for secondary education communication came second

(with slightly more than 50%). The first five competence also include liability and cooperation. These all are competences that Siegrist (1993) already empathised as important requirements for a job.

We analyzed the competences that employers look for in job ads, based on the level of education and found some differences. First we listed competences sorted by education level based on rank (see table 2). This ranking

gave relatively few information, we could only detect some differences in the lists. One of the profound differences was that stamina and empathy are preferred more at the 'secondary education' level, while management and analytic thinking is more looked for jobs than require university degree.

Table 2: Rank order of competences listed in job ads with 'secondary education' and university degree requirements (n=311)

Secondary education	rank	University degree
ICT skills	1	Foreign language literacy
Communication	2	ICT skills
Foreign language literacy	3	Communication
Liability	4	Liability
Stamina	5	Independence
Independence	6	Cooperation
Empathy	7	Management
Cooperation	8	Problem solving
Confidence	9	Adaptability
Problem solving	10	Analytic thinking
Proactivity	11	Stamina
Reliability	12	Activity
Activity	13	Self-confidence
Adaptability	14	Creativity
The ability to bear monotony	15	Reliability
The ability to make contact	16	The ability to make contact
Outcome orientation	17	Outcome orientation
Entrepreneurship	18	Entrepreneurship
Creativity	19	Proactivity
Management	20	Empathy
		Strategic thinking

Leading competences (foreign language literacy, communication, ICT skills) are the same in the two lists based on rank, but they differ somewhat in the least preferred competences: for 'secondary level' education they are creativity and management, for university degree level strategic thinking, empathy and proactivity.

Features of areas of specialties based on job ads

We listed competence needs that were presented in the job advertisements in competence categories of József Nagy's (2000) competence framework, resulting in these frequencies by education level (Fig 2 and Fig 3).

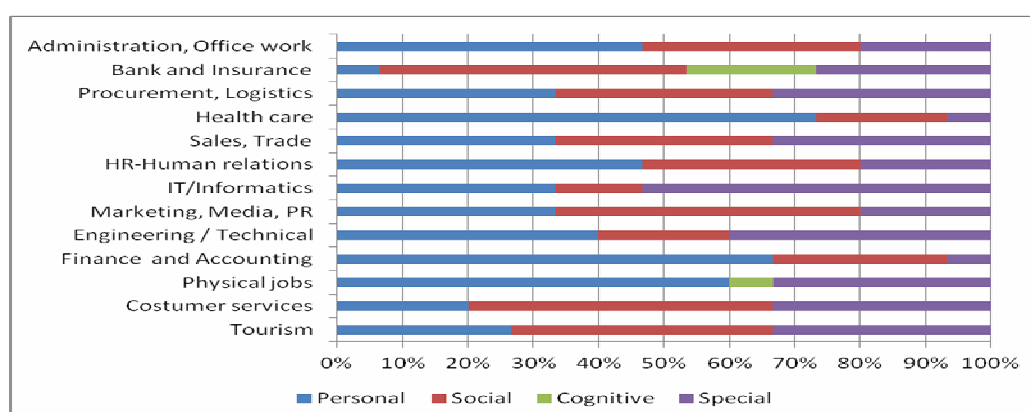


Fig. 2. Frequencies of competences in job ads on the 'secondary education' level

When studying the proportion of competences in the different categories, we can state that for jobs with 'secondary education' training, cognitive competences are demanded the least. The other three competence categories' ratio is dependent on the area of specialty: personal competence is most looked for in 'Health care', 'Finance and accounting', 'Physical jobs' and

'Administration and assistance', while social competence is prominent in 'Bank and insurance', 'Customer service', 'Tourism' and 'Marketing/PR'. Special competence is most needed in the fields of 'IT/ Informatics' and 'Engineering/ Technical'.

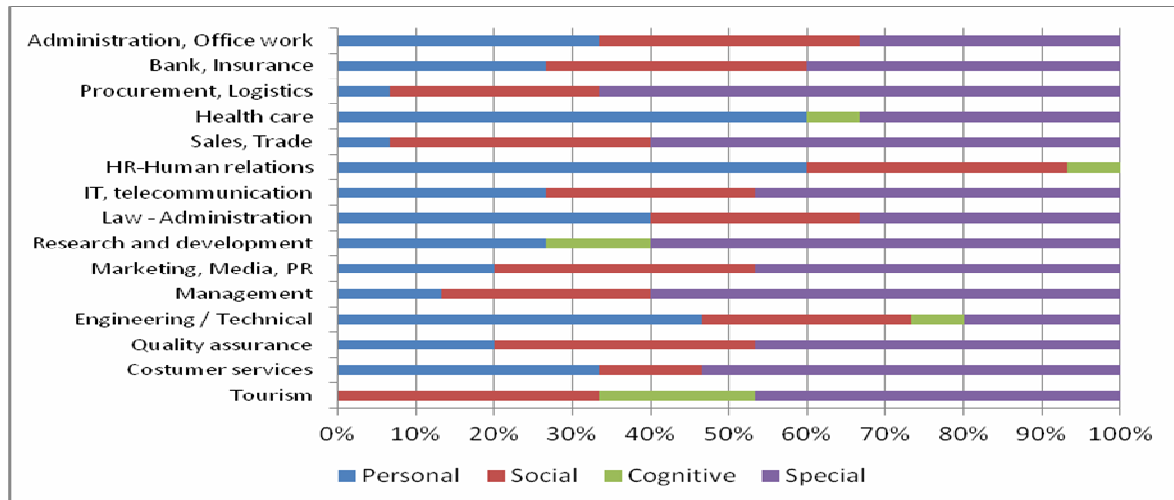


Fig. 3. Frequencies of competences in job ads for university degree jobs

When we look at the ratio of different competence requirements for positions with university degree, we can see that the importance of special competence has increased: from the 15 specialties of areas 9 has this category with most competences belonging to it. Parallel to this personal competences become less important, they are only dominant in the field of 'Health Care', 'HR/' and 'Engineering/Technical'. It would be reasonable to suspect that cognitive competences are important with jobs that require a university degree, but it is only in the top five within five area of specialties with a relatively low ratio.

How employees and employers think about competences

When cross-examining competences desired by employers in job advertisements and the beliefs of employees about competences that employers look for (Table 3.), we can state that the level of career-management skills is not as low among employees as we hypothesized. Both persons with secondary school diplomas and the ones with university degrees listed competences in their top 10 list that employers mentioned in their advertisements as important ones.

Table 3. Frequency rank of competence needs of employers based on content analyses of job ads (n=311) and the beliefs of employees about the needed competences, divided by necessary education level (secondary/ university degree)

Persons with secondary education			Persons with university degree		
Job ads- needs of employers	rank	Survey- beliefs of employees	Job ads- needs of employers	rank	Survey- beliefs of employees
communication	1	problem solving	communication	1	literacy in foreign language
liability	2	responsibility	literacy in foreign language	2	problem solving
digital competence	3	stamina	liability	3	communication
independence	4	ability to bear monotony	independence	4	digital competence
literacy in foreign language	5	cooperation	digital competence	5	cooperation
stamina	6	liability	cooperation	6	decision-making
cooperation	7	independence	problem solving	7	competitiveness
empathy	8	digital competence	analytic thinking	8	independence
self-confidence	9	willingness to learn	stamina	9	willingness to learn
problem solving	10	communication	activity	10	stamina

One major problem though is that persons with secondary school diplomas still- even after 25 years after

the change of regime and despite the openness of the country-, do not realize the importance of literacy in

foreign language(s), as they did not list it in their top ten. Persons with university degrees have not mentioned one of the most commonly (rank 3) expected key competence: liability in their top ten competences they believe employers look for (Table 3.). This result is extremely interesting as this group consists of young adults and the most important psychological criteria of adulthood is liability.

Conclusions

In our study we were looking at how key competences are presented in job ads, and how informed employees are of these requirements, so how consciousness they are.

We had four hypotheses. We hypothesized that Competences mentioned in job ads will have a moderate number and they will mostly be key-competences. We formed 23 categories of the requirements mentioned in 311 job ads, most of them were key competences related to employment, so we regard our hypothesis to be proven.

In our second hypothesis we were stating that there will be differences between competences of employees and managers (e.g. planning, coordination). Our results

show that despite that there are some differences between education levels, they are not relevant, they have more features of an ad hoc thing than trends. Given this our hypothesis is only partly proven.

We hypothesized that there will be distinct pattern of personal, cognitive and social competences for areas of specialties. Results show that there are some differences between areas of specialty, but they are not representative for them. So our hypothesis was only partly proven.

We hypothesized finally that competences stated by employers in the ads and competences that employees think they should have are the same. Our results confirmed our suppositions. Employees are more conscious in this field than in knowing other features of the labour market (Budavári-Takács, Csehné Papp, Jekkel, 2014).

Based on the study we can see what competences are most desired by employers in an employee. It is clear from the analysis that job ads operate with relatively few requirements, most of them being key competences related to employability. Special features for areas of specialty could barely be detected. Further studies should be carried out on the topic.

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Fruzsina Éva Lukács PhD is an assistant lecturer at Szent István Egyetem, Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, Psychology Department. Her fields of research: competences, career indecision, identity, career counselling. Contact: lukacs.fruzsina@gtk.szie.hu

Ildikó Budavári-Takács PhD is an associate professor at Szent István Egyetem, Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, Psychology Department. Her fields of research: competences, life goals, counselling, human resource management.

Csilla Judit Suhajda is a PhD student at the University of Pécs and an assistant lecturer at Szent István Egyetem, Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences. Her fields of scientific research: competences, career orientation, counselling, human resource management, contact: suhajda.csilla@gtk.szie.hu