The verification of the graduates' competencies as the element of education safety

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Abstract: While designing curriculums the university takes into account educational needs of stakeholders and confronts them with the demand for labour on the market. Achieving a high level of competencies by the graduate of the higher school increases their chances of being employed. The purpose of this article is to verify the graduates' competencies with the employers' expectations while making decisions in the recruitment processes. The result of the analysis is the finding that the employers' demand for employees' skills is justified in the supply of graduates' competencies on the labour market.

Keywords: education safety, competencies, graduate, employer

Weryfikacja kompetencji absolwentów elementem bezpieczeństwa edukacyjnego

Abstrakt: Uczelnia przygotowując programy kształcenia uwzględnia potrzeby edukacyjne interesariuszy oraz konfrontuje je z popytem na pracę na rynku. Uzyskanie wysokiego poziomu kompetencji przez absolwenta szkoły wyższej zwiększa jego szanse na zatrudnienie. Celem artykułu jest weryfikacja kompetencji absolwentów z oczekiwaniami pracodawców przy podejmowaniu decyzji w procesach rekrutacyjnych. Efektem analiz jest stwierdzenie, iż zapotrzebowanie na kompetencje pracowników ze strony pracodawców ma uzasadnienie w podaży posiadanych kompetencji przez absolwentów na rynku pracy.

Słowa kluczowe: bezpieczeństwo edukacyjne, kompetencje, absolwent, pracodawca

Introduction

One can find a huge variety of definitions of competencies in the subject literature. Three approaches to the definition are worth emphasizing: competencies oriented on the worker, on the work and mixed ones[1]. According to T. Oleksyn competencies are broadly understood as the range of knowledge, skills or responsibilities or the authorities to act[2].

Competence in the performed work is a set of person's characteristics which includes characteristic elements such as motivation, personality traits, skills, self–

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[1] Ł. Sienkiewicz, K. Trawińska-Konador, K. Podwójcic, *Polityka zarządzania kompetencjami pracowników,* Warszawa 2013, pp. 14–19.

[2] T. Oleksyn, *Zarządzanie kompetencjami. Teoria i praktyka,* Kraków 2006, p. 98.

assessment associated with functioning in the group as well as the knowledge the person himself acquires and uses[3].

Employees' knowledge is currently considered to be the success measure of the company[4]. The level of the knowledge and potential of the staff, properly promoted and directed by the organization, constitutes, to a large extent, its success[5]. Employer's promoting the value and importance of competencies is especially important in the case of companies providing knowledge–intensive services[6] where competitive advantage is based on the efficient use of the human resources[7]. In the competency approach the focus is on the employee occupying the workplace not the workplace itself. Thanks to this approach, the management of the company is individualized with the focus on the individual employee competence development as the part of the individual career paths[8].

"Competency profile is the set of all kinds of competencies required from individual employees, it lets compare competency requirements given to employees, enabling their hierarchical line–up due to competency requirements"[9]. Thus, it gives the employer a real picture of their fulfillment. It certainly helps him to select the right person for the right position along with maintaining specialized requirements and skills, and, in the course of employment, – the assessment of skill gaps, the verification of training needs and the evaluation of results.

Employee's having specific competencies at a high level guarantees employment and development. Furthermore, it is more important to develop competencies while educating at school. Currently, in higher education a great emphasis is placed on educating students in terms of knowledge,

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[3] S. Whiddett , S. Hollyfirde, *Modele kompetencyjne w zarządzaniu zasobami ludzkimi*, Kraków 2003, p. 93.

[4] com. F.N. Kayani, *A classification model for employee development*, Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business, 2012, Vol 4, No 1, pp. 396–404.

[5] A. Baron, M. Armstrong , *Zarządzanie kapitałem ludzkim: uzyskiwanie wartości dodanej dzięki ludziom*, Warszawa 2012, p. 22.

[6] Knowledge-intensive services are proVide: d by companies with high intellectual added value; their characteristic is to combine expertise from different fields; K.B. Matusiak (red.), *Innowacje i transfer technologii. Słownik pojęć*, Warszawa 2008.

[7] M. Alvesson , *Knowledge Work and Knowledge–Intensive Firms*, Oxford 2009, p. 22.

[8] M. Brockmann , L. Clarke, Ph. Mehau, Ch. Winch, *Competence–Based Vocational Education and Training (VET): the "Cases of England and France in a European Perspective"* Vocations and Learning, nr 1/2008, pp. 227–244.

[9] M. Juchnowicz , Ł. Sienkiewicz , *Jak oceniać pracę? Wartość stanowisk i kompetencji*, Warszawa 2006, za: Ł. Sienkiewicz, K. Trawińska-Konador, K. Podwójcic, *Polityka zarządzania kompetencjami pracowników*, Warszawa 2013, p. 15.

skills and attitudes[10], at the same time providing them with education safety. The assumed effects of the education[11] developed at the highest level by the student play an important role in the graduate's further career path, acting often as the indicator of being successful in employment.

Numerous studies have shown that the university provides students with education safety[12], thanks to the creation of Internal Quality Assurance Systems which specify the terms and conditions of education favouring assurance and the increase in the quality of education. The proper conduct of studies enriched with continual staff improvement as well as a wide range of educational and social offer does influence students to be well–prepared to enter the labour market. It is particularly important to master competencies at the highest level which are currently implemented both as a separate subject and developed in each area of study. Potential employers verify student's level of competence mastery during the apprenticeship period[13]. Honestly completed practice can help the student to build their own competence profile or check whether the ideal workplace or occupation is proper and suitable in regard to the competence level.

The purpose of this article is to verify graduates' competencies with the employers' expectations with regard to the demand and supply on the labour market. This verification constitutes the part of education safety as the reflection of its effectiveness. The raised subject lets us draw conclusions in the area of demand and supply on the labour market.

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[10] E. Chmielecka, *Wiedza, umiejętności, postawy – trzy wymiary edukacji wyższej wpisane w ramy kwalifikacji*; www.ekspercibolonscy.org.pl, [accessed: 23–rd September 2015].

[11] A. Kraśniewski, *Ocena sytuacji w szkolnictwie wyższym w Polsce w zakresie opracowywania efektów kształcenia związanych z wprowadzeniem Krajowej Struktury Kwalifikacji (Krajowych Ram Kwalifikacji)*; www.nauka.gov.pl/g2, [accessed: 23–rd September 2015].

[12] A. Smarzewska, E. Melaniuk, A. Szepeluk, A. Dymicka, *Bezpieczeństwo edukacyjne studentów PSW*, „Rozprawy Społeczne", nr 2 (IX), 2015, pp. 72–81; A. Smarzewska, E. Melaniuk, *Modyfikacja punktów ECTS w planie studiów*, Edukacja Ustawiczna Dorosłych, Nr 2(89)/2015, pp. 51–62.; A. Smarzewska, *Analiza preferencji wyboru uczelni oraz kierunku studiów Bezpieczeństwo Narodowe przez studentów I roku studiów stacjonarnych jako efekt zaspokojenia potrzeb w zakresie bezpieczeństwa edukacyjnego*, in *Obronność jako dyscyplina naukowa*, ed. A. Polak, K. Krakowski, Warszawa 2015, pp. 210–218.

[13] A. Dymicka, A. Smarzewska, E. Melaniuk, A. Szepeluk, *Praktyki zawodowe jako element bezpieczeństwa edukacyjnego*, in: *Perspektywy bezpieczeństwa narodowego w XXI wieku*, ed. M. Kubiak; A. Smarzewska, Biała Podlaska 2014, pp. 139–151.; A. Smarzewska, E. Melaniuk, *Wpływ oceny na dyplomie na możliwość zatrudnienia absolwentów kierunku Bezpieczeństwo Narodowe*, „Rozprawy Społeczne", nr 4 (VIII), 2014, pp. 43–49.

The organization of the research and data analysis

Taking into account the theoretical considerations one should pay attention to their importance in the empirical context. As an example, the authors will present the results of the research carried out in 941 medium and large enterprises operating at least since 2004 in terms of knowledge–intensive services, less knowledge–intensive or productive activities[14] and within the group of graduates of State School of Higher Education in Biała Podlaska. During the academic year 2013/2014 640 graduates[15] completed their higher education at Pope John Paul II State School of Higher Education in Biała Podlaska. 487 people filled in PSW graduate questionnaire form which stands for 76.1% of the total. The survey was being conducted from June to November 2014. The results were drawn up in the STATISTICA10 programme.

Quoting the research the most significant factor while deciding on employing the employee is competence/competencies – 76.9% of responses in the group of 941 companies. Next, qualifications (nearly 50% of surveyed respondents), formal education and commitment along with high work efficiency (nearly 40 % of responses). A detailed compilation is given in Figure 1.
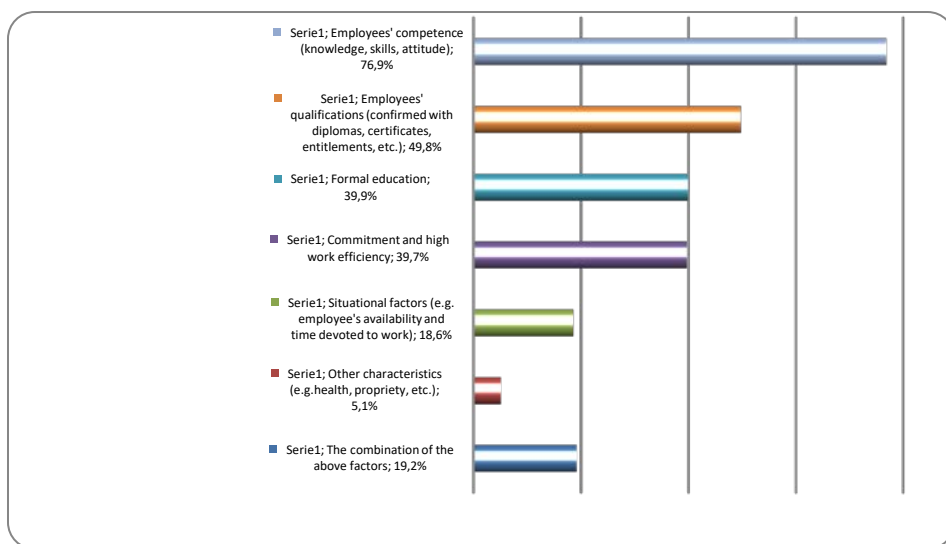

Fig.1. The most significant employees' personality traits while making employment decisions altogether (n=941). The Source: Sienkiewicz Ł., Trawińska–Konador K., Podwójcic K., *Polityka zarządzania kompetencjami pracowników*, Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych, Warszawa 2013, p. 68.

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[14] Ł. Sienkiewicz, K. Trawińska-Konador, K. Podwójcic, *Polityka zarządzania kompetencjami pracowników*, Warszawa 2013, pp. 23–24.

[15] On the basis of *Sprawozdanie o studiach wyższych S–10*, accessed: 30th November 2014 r., Central Statistical Office of Poland.

Taking into consideration the basic competencies expected from the candidates (Fig. 2) businessmen indicated mainly knowledge (72.9%), teamwork (40.8%), responsibility (35.8%), self–reliance (30.6%), communication and creativity (each 26.0%). It can therefore be assumed that this group of indicated competencies should be possessed by a potential candidate for the job.
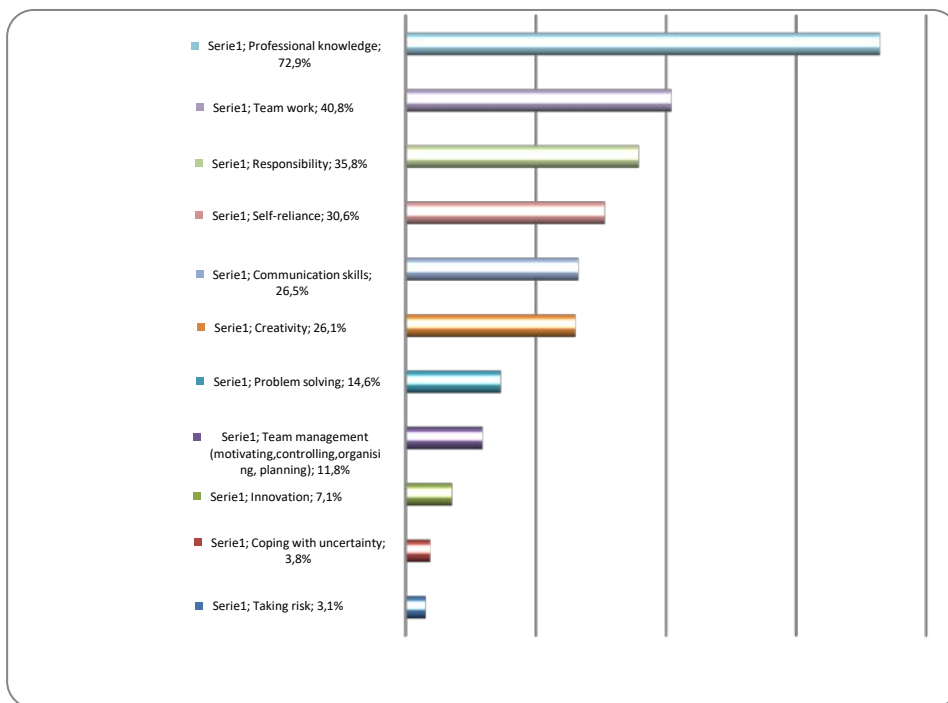

Fig.2. Basic competencies expected from the candidates for the job altogether

The Source: Sienkiewicz Ł., Trawińska–Konador K., Podwójcic K., *Polityka zarządzania kompetencjami pracowników*, Warszawa 2013, p. 69.

Confronting therefore the results of the research carried out at PSW in Biala Podlaska within the group of 2013/2014 graduates it should be noted that they are aware of their competencies and are able to assess the level of their mastery. The figure 3 presents prioritized competencies beginning with its most significant ones for the largest group of entrepreneurs[16] (almost 90%) to crucial ones for 30% of entrepreneurs. This means that the ability to cooperate as competence is important for 90% of entrepreneurs participating in the research, whereas creativity is important merely for every third entrepreneur. Thus, the higher-located competence is, the greater number of employers demand it.

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[16] M. Armstrong, *Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi*, Warszawa 2011, pp. 192–193.
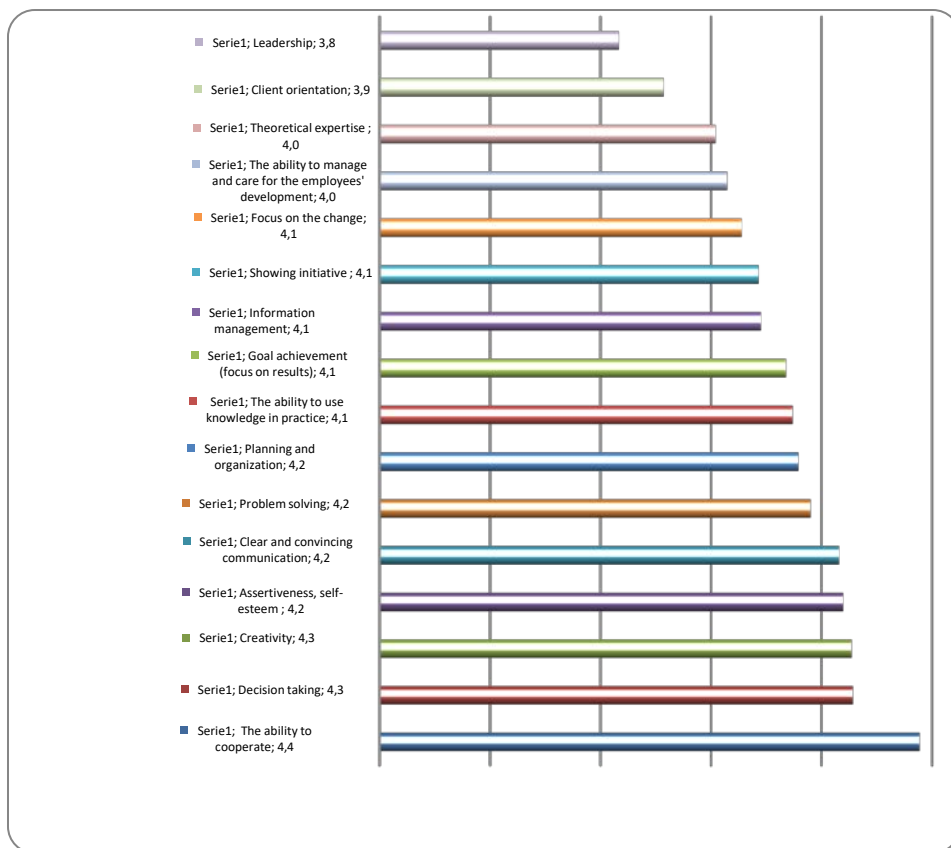
Fig.3. The degree of graduates' mastery of competencies

The source: own study.

In the depicted figure 3 graduates assessed the level of competence mastery ranked on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is the minimum and 5 maximum. It can therefore be concluded that the best mastered competencies in the group of 487 respondents included: the ability to cooperate (4.4), decision taking (4.3), creativity (4.3), assertiveness, planning and organization, communication and problem solving (4,2 each).

Comparing graduates' indications (Fig. 3) with the employers' expectations (Fig. 2) it can be noted that in the group expected competencies there are the ones that graduates have mastered at least at the level of 4.0 (on a scale of 1 to 5). This should be transferred into an advantageous position of the graduate who enters the job market. Moreover, in the group examined graduates' competencies one can distinguish them in the strategic, professional and work efficiency context.

The compilation of competencies shown in figure 2 is divided into four areas which allows to build a competence profile used to describe the

workplace or the organizational role[17]. The division into areas as well as and their assigned competencies are included in table 1.

Table 1. The distribution of competencies in terms of competence profile

| No. | Competencies | | | |
	Strategic	Connected with the realization of the scope of responsibilities	Connected with the work efficiency	Hard ones, supporting duty fulfillment
1.	The ability to cooperate	Clear and convincing communication	Goal achievement (focus on results)	Theoretical expertise
2.	Client orientation	The ability to manage and care for employees' development	Focus on the change	
3.	Creativity	Problem solving	Showing initiative	
4.		Planning and organization	Assertiveness, self–esteem	
5.		Leadership	The ability to use knowledge in practice	
6.		Decision taking		
7.		Information management		

The source: own study on the basis of Sienkiewicz Ł., Trawińska-Konador K., Podwójcic K., *Polityka zarządzania kompetencjami pracowników*, Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych, Warszawa 2013, pp. 51–52.

The analysis of the contents included in table 1 demonstrates that candidates' competencies expected by 941 researched employers are located in three of the four areas, i.e. strategic one, connected with the realization of the scope of responsibilities and supporting duty fulfillment. There are no competencies in the field of work efficiency. However, it should be noted that in the research carried out at PSW in Biała Podlaska within the group of graduates in each of the four areas graduates demonstrate skills at the level of at least 3.8 (on a scale of 1–5). It can therefore be concluded that graduates have mastered a much broader spectrum of competence than employers require. This conclusion is the result of actions undertaken by the University in the field of education safety. Education safety is treated dually, from the perspective of the university, actions are taken in the field of science and development of competencies; from the student's perspective, educational offer contributes to the personal and academic development, and, consequently, to the professional progress[18]. The contact with the labour market plays an indispensable role in these projects.

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[17] Ł. Sienkiewicz, K. Trawińska-Konador, K. Podwójcic, *Polityka zarządzania kompetencjami pracowników*, Warszawa 2013, p. 50.

[18] A. Smarzewska , E. Melaniuk, *Kompetencje studentów kierunku bezpieczeństwo narodowe PSW w Białej Podlaskiej*, „Kwartalnik Bellona", 4(2014), pp. 175–185.

The creation of education safety is influenced, among other things, by creating an educational offer in line with labour market needs as well as examining students' expectations in their demand for competencies or the identification of university candidates, students and graduates' key expectations to satisfy their needs and educational aspirations. Thus, the undertaken actions contribute to graduate's enhancement of chances of employment.

Conclusions

Therefore, competence development contributes to the activities in the area of the education safety which allows to draw the following conclusions:

1) Candidate's competencies are the most significant while making employment decisions.
2) The key competency is professional knowledge.
3) The level of graduates' mastery of competencies (n=487) equaled at least 3.8 on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is the minimum and 5 maximum, which accounts for 76%.
4) The researched group of 487 graduates have mastered a much broader spectrum of competencies than the employers' requirements towards the candidates for employment.

Considering the above, it seems justified to conclude that the graduate entering the labour market is the candidate for employment. Employers' expectations towards the candidates for work are met in the light of the results of the research. Taking everything into consideration, one can predict opportunities in the recruitment process in the above mentioned group of 487 graduates.

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