

Aleksandra Kulpa-Puczyńska

FLEXIBLE FORMS OF WORK ORGANIZATION VS THE DEMAND FOR NEW PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES – ACCORDING TO EMPLOYERS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF LABOUR MARKET INSTITUTIONS

„[...] *Substituting a qualifications-based career model with a competencies-based career model leads to... focusing on developing one's own new life competencies, such as entrepreneurship, flexibility, readiness to decide on self-employment – at least as an emergency option.*”

[Author's own translation after: A. Bańka 2008]¹

Summary

Flexible organization of work makes it easier for modern employees to adjust their work to other aspects of life, e.g. caring about their families. It also gives the possibility to achieve professional goals more effectively and provides more space in terms of choosing the type, time and place of work. Flexible forms of employment and work organization encourage the motivation to learn new things, because changing the job may go together with the need to gain new qualifications and professional competencies². However, can we say that the changes within work organization generate the demand for specific knowledge, skills and conduct of life? If it is so, what kinds of competencies support our existence in the flexible labour market? In the present article, the above-mentioned questions are addressed to and answered by employers and representatives of labour market institutions. The analysis of selected aspects of this problem has been supported by data from the study³ titled: „The Preparation of Vocational School Students to Flexible Forms of

¹ A. Bańka, *Otwartość na nowe formy doświadczania pracy i codzienności a procesy integracji osobowości*, [in:] *Praca człowieka w XXI wieku. Konteksty – wyzwania – zagrożenia*, edity by R. Gerlach, Bydgoszcz 2008, p. 65-66.

² C. Selby, F. Wilson, W. Korte, J. Millard, W. Carter, *Almanach wiedzy o telepracy (Flexible Working Handbook)*. The report from the FlexWork project, realized as part of the 5th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development in EU, 2001, p. 6; W. Furmanek, *Zarys humanistycznej teorii pracy (nowe horyzonty pedagogiki pracy)*, Warsaw 2006, p. 372-373.

³ One of the immediate objectives of the research was to: determine employers' expectations towards the qualifications and competencies of vocational school graduates, getting to know their opinions on the topic of flexible forms of employment and work organization and the preparation in this scope. The survey involved 630

Employment and Work Organization”, which has been financed from the research funds in 2009–2010 as a promoter research project (MNiSW grant No. N N106 019236).

ELASTYCZNE FORMY ORGANIZACJI PRACY A POPYT NA NOWE KOMPETENCJE ZAWODOWE W OPINII PRACODAWCÓW I PRZEDSTAWICIELI INSTYTUCJI RYNKU PRACY

Streszczenie

Elastyczna organizacja pracy ułatwia współczesnym pracownikom m.in. godzenie pracy zawodowej z innymi aspektami życia np. z troską o rodzinę. Daje także możliwość bardziej efektywnej realizacji celów zawodowych, zapewniając większą swobodę wyboru rodzaju, czasu oraz miejsca wykonywania pracy. Elastyczne formy zatrudnienia i organizacji pracy sprzyjają też podtrzymywaniu motywacji do uczenia się, ponieważ zmiana miejsca zatrudnienia może oznaczać zdobywanie nowych kwalifikacji i kompetencji zawodowych⁴. Czy jednak przemiany w sferze organizacji pracy generują zapotrzebowanie na swoiste wiadomości, umiejętności, postawy życiowe? Jeśli tak, to jakiego rodzaju kompetencje pomagają nam w funkcjonowaniu na elastycznym rynku pracy? Odpowiedzi na powyższe pytania – w niniejszym artykule – udzielają pracodawcy oraz przedstawiciele instytucji rynku pracy. Analizując wybrane aspekty podjętego problemu, wykorzystano m.in. wyniki badań⁵ na temat: „Przygotowanie uczniów szkół zawodowych do elastycznych form zatrudnienia i organizacji pracy”, które były finansowane ze środków na naukę w latach 2009–2010 (Grant MNiSW Nr N N106 019236).

Introduction

The subject literature indicates that the desired attributes of a modern employee are comprised mostly in personality traits and let qualifications evolve into professional competencies, which constitute a new category of labour market requirements⁶. From the economic perspective, competencies are hidden human factors which define the return of human capital invest-

students and 122 teachers (from basic vocational schools, vocational high schools and post-secondary schools), 20 labour market institutions and 74 enterprises of various size and different operational profiles, localized across the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship but having a nationwide range. The results of the study have been acquired with the help of the poll method and the techniques of a survey questionnaire and an interview – prepared for the sole purpose of the study.

⁴ C. Selby, F. Wilson, W. Korte, J. Millard, W. Carter, *Almanach wiedzy o telepracy (Flexible Working Handbook)*. Raport projektu FlexWork realizowanego w ramach V Projektu Ramowego Badań i Rozwoju Technologicznego UE, 2001, s. 6; W. Furmanek, *Zarys humanistycznej teorii pracy (nowe horyzonty pedagogiki pracy)*, Warszawa 2006, s. 372-373.

⁵ Jednym z celów szczegółowych prowadzonych badań było: określenie oczekiwań pracodawców względem kwalifikacji i kompetencji absolwentów szkół zawodowych, poznanie ich opinii na temat elastycznych form zatrudnienia i organizacji pracy oraz przygotowania w tym zakresie. Zbadano 630 uczniów i 122 nauczycieli (zasadniczych szkół zawodowych, techników i szkół policealnych), a także 20 instytucji rynku pracy oraz 74 przedsiębiorstwa o różnej wielkości i różnym profilu działalności, zlokalizowane na terenie województwa kujawsko – pomorskiego, ale obejmujące swym zasięgiem teren całego kraju. W badaniach posłużono się m.in. metodą sondażu, techniką ankiety i wywiadu, opracowanymi na użytek badań.

⁶ Z. Wiatrowski, *Podstawy pedagogiki pracy*, Bydgoszcz 2005, p. 108.

ments incurred by an organization. They are characteristic features of employees, which turn up in case of any effective and/or outstanding achievements at work⁷. Thus, it is more and more common that the success of a given company depends on the scale of human capital investments.

According to the „Encyklopedia Pedagogiczna XXI wieku” [the 21st Century Encyclopaedia of Pedagogy], competency is put among various concepts „[...] *which are difficult to be embraced by a univocal definition, because of strong colloquial connotations of this concept in pedagogy*”⁸. Despite this perspective, the literature distinguishes two main approaches – first (narrower), referring to the Latin word *competentia*, meaning responsibility – the ability to take a certain position or the right to make a certain decision; and the second (broader) approach, referring to the potential and abilities of an individual and combining the competencies with knowledge, skills, experience and activity of that individual⁹. Krzysztof Symela believes that „[...] *competencies determine the link between individual skills, personality traits and qualities required for efficient implementation professional duties.*” The internal connections and the development within competencies constitute a function of numerous factors, e.g. characteristics of an organizational environment and stages of professional career¹⁰. D. Gnahs has a similar point of view, he thinks that acquiring competencies is a complex multi-layered process: it stretches across all aspects of human life and is determined by many factors¹¹.

Competent people, having a proper life attitude, perform their jobs well and have relevant knowledge and skills, which they take advantage of when facing dynamic professional changes¹². Such understood competencies mean, first of all, „the ability to...” (the meaning of competencies adapted in most European countries). According to C. Levy-Leboyer, competencies constitute a decisive factor that determines flexibility and possibilities of adaptation towards the evolution of tasks and types of employment¹³. The abovementioned approach is dominant in this article and its justification can be found in the results of research studies including employees who have taken advantage of flexible forms of work organization.

⁷ A. Bańka, *Kapitał kariery – uwarunkowania, rozwój i adaptacja do zmian organizacyjnych*, [in:] *Współczesna psychologia pracy i organizacji*, edited by Z. Ratajczak, A. Bańka, E. Turska, Katowice 2006, p. 70-71.

⁸ *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku*, edited by T. Pilch, Vol. 2, Warsaw 2003, p. 693.

⁹ E. Przybylska, *Europejskie trendy w zakresie profesjonalizacji edukacji dorosłych*, „Edukacja Ustawiczna Dorosłych”, 2008, No. 1, p. 19-21.

¹⁰ K. Symela, *Kompetencje i jakość pracy doradcy zawodowego*, [in:] *Edukacja dla rynku pracy. Problemy poradnictwa zawodowego*, edited by S. M. Kwiatkowski, Z. Sirojć, Warsaw 2006, p. 311-312.

¹¹ D. Gnahs, *Kompetenzen – Erwerb, Erfassung, Instrumente. Studentexte für Erwachsenenbildung*, DIE Bielefeld 2007, p. 32. After: E. Przybylska, op. cit., p. 27-28.

¹² A. Bańka, *Kapitał kariery – uwarunkowania, rozwój i adaptacja do zmian organizacyjnych*, op. cit.

¹³ C. Levy-Leboyer, *Kierowanie kompetencjami*, Warsaw 1997. After: Z. Wiatrowski, op. cit., p. 110.

What kinds of competencies are required by flexible forms of work performance? Selected results from author's own research

According to the surveyed people (employers and representatives of labour market institutions¹⁴), much depends on the type of flexible forms of employment or flexible forms of work organization¹⁵. Taking into account high diversity of these forms, it is difficult to talk about them in general. For example, the „new” forms of work organization, such as telework, require skills that include: good time management, work planning and determination of priority actions. Teleworkers must also be very self-reliant when performing their tasks, determining their speed rate and organizing their work in general¹⁶. The lack of rigid working hours determines the level of employees' responsibility, their availability and their involvement. Chart 1 presents the components of qualifications and professional competencies, significant from the perspective of flexible forms of work performance.

Not many of the surveyed individuals have indicated a definite type of knowledge or skills, which would be favourable for flexible forms of work performance. In case they attempted to approach this task, it usually turned out that the most important attribute, indicated by the respondents, was *knowledge in the field of labour law* and the *ability to organize the working time*. Here, it is noteworthy that work time organization shall include the following skills: determining specific targets, assigning target priorities, action planning, resources selection and controlling the achieved results.¹⁷ **However, the respondents were very reluctant to indicate specific personality traits.** While, the employers indicated personal traits (also in the „other” category) that play an important role not only in case of flexible forms of work organization but also work in general. They were: responsibility, diligence, punctuality, self-reliance, conscientiousness. The respondents admitted that the trait which should be one of the main attributes of a modern employee is *responsibility*¹⁸. Chart 2 presents the detailed description.

¹⁴ There have been a total number of 30 interviews with workers of 20 institutions, among which there were: Career Planning and Information Centre [Centrum Informacji i Planowania Kariery Zawodowej], County Labour Office [Powiatowy Urząd Pracy] and its accompanying unit of Sole Proprietors' Support Centre [Punkt Wspierania Samozatrudnienia], Education and Youth Labour Centre [Centrum Edukacji i Pracy OHP] plus several employment agencies.

¹⁵ From an organizational point of view, „flexibility” at enterprises is most often referred to forms of employment, work organization, production methods and work time management. Flexibility of work may also be defined by: flexible work places, flexible scope of work or flexible way of payment for performing the job. After: Z. Malara, *Przedsiębiorstwo w globalnej gospodarce. Wyzwania współczesności*, Warsaw 2006, p. 169.

¹⁶ J. Wiśniewski, *Zatrudnianie pracowników w formie telepracy*, Toruń 2007, p. 30-31.

¹⁷ A. Borowska, *Kształcenie dla przyszłości*, Warsaw 2004, p. 120-121.

¹⁸ The abovementioned fact has been noticed also in the article titled: *Expectations of Polish Employers Towards the Qualifications and Competencies of Vocational School Graduates* by A. Kulpa-Puczyńska. *Study report*, [in:] Lifelong Learning Continuous Education for Sustainable Development. Proceedings of International

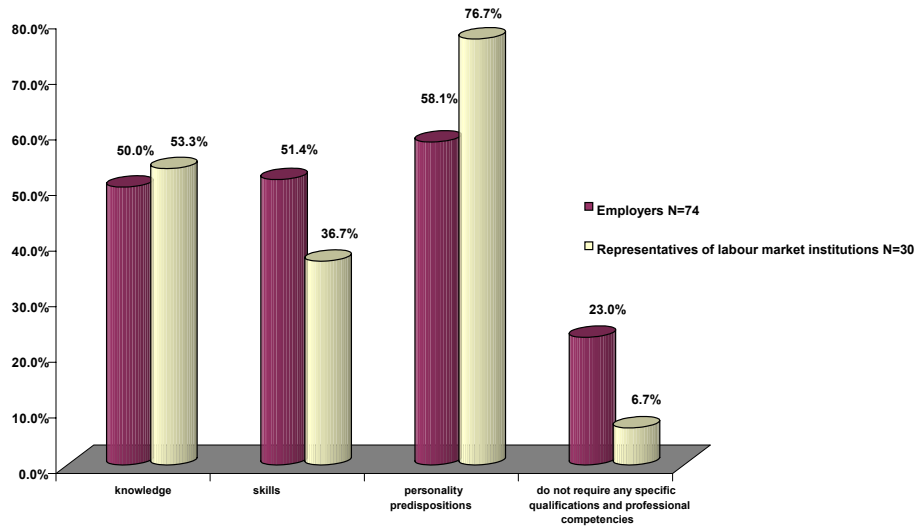


Chart 1. Components of qualifications and professional competencies, necessary in flexible forms of work organization – according to the surveyed individuals.

Source: self-analysis

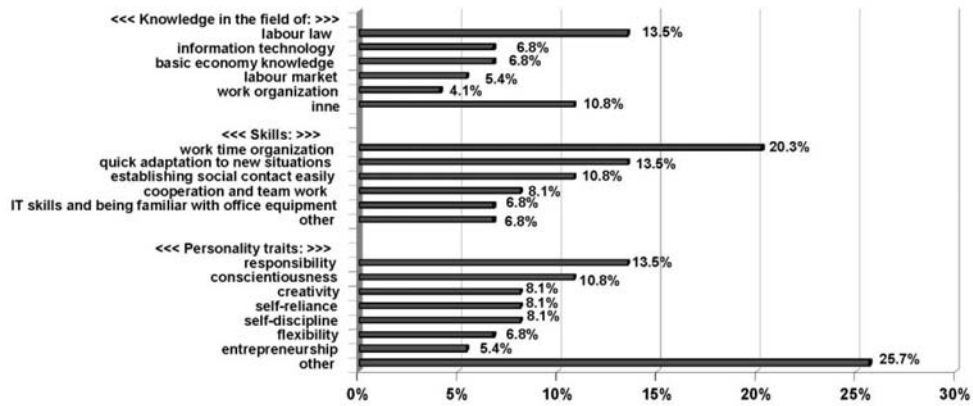


Chart 2. Knowledge, skills and personality traits that are believed to be beneficial to flexible forms of employment and work organization – according to the researched employers.

Source: self-analysis

Certain employers paid attention to such attitudes as openness to new challenges and the belief in one's own abilities, which accurately describe flexible employees. According to A. Borowska, „[...] the larger the belief in one's own abilities and possibilities is, the higher goals people aim for and the more they are committed to realize them”¹⁹. On the other hand, representatives of labour market institutions underscored the fact that it is extremely important to show the ability of effective communication and that these attributes are indispensable: flexibility, creativity, responsibility, entrepreneurship (less valued by employers) and self-reliance. Below there are some of respondents' answers: „*Flexible forms of employment and work organization constitute the alternative for flexible and venturesome people who do not want to work regular 8 hours a day behind the desk*”, „*Creativity is the most important. Strange 'ideas' may be good too*”, „*Flexible labour market is associated with the mobility of employees*”, „*It provides better opportunities for employees' development*”. Taking into account the specific character of flexible forms of work performance, representatives of labour market institutions focused their attention on social and personal competencies.

Forms of flexible employment can include either specialized jobs, which require high qualifications, or simple jobs limited to quick simple tasks. The subject of such employment may also include manual tasks or routine actions. Many jobs performed in such a way are adapted as interpersonal services²⁰. Therefore, the following question – *How would you characterize the employees of a company who take advantage of flexible forms of employment and work organization?* – was answered by the responding employers (the chart presents the scope of answers taken from 50 surveyed people) in the following way:

¹⁹ A. Borowska, op. cit., p. 111.

²⁰ M. Gawrysiak, *Jak komputer i sterowane nim maszyny zmieniają pracę człowieka*, [in:] *Edukacja i praca. Konteksty – wyzwania – antynomie*, edited by R. Gerlach, Bydgoszcz 2008, p. 287.

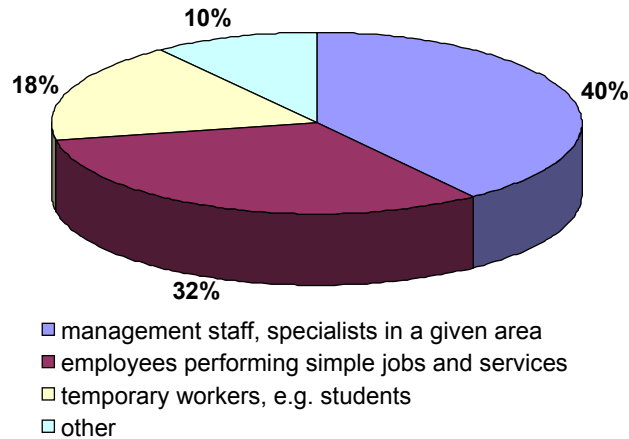


Chart 3. Workers employed at the surveyed companies, who take advantage of flexible forms of employment (including working at enterprises and the type of performed work).

Source: self-analysis

The perspective of flexible employment is exercised by people being at various stages of life – those dependent on their families and those living on their own, those with huge practical experience and those who have just begun their professional career. However, it is necessary to emphasize the fact that modern enterprises use flexible forms of work organization more often in order to attract valuable employees and take advantage of their varied competencies. As it is noticed by Z. Bauman (after J. Attali), these are people who „see novelties as good news, risk – as a value, instability – as an imperative and hybridism – as wealth”²¹.

Conclusion

In the world of dynamic and flexible labour market it is very important, first of all, to have the ability of performing self-analysis and organizing one’s own work, and secondly, show the following skills: team work, functioning in large organization communities, acquaintance with modern techniques and means of communication²². Therefore, the success on open la-

²¹ Z. Bauman, *Praca, konsumpcjonizm i nowi ubodzy*, Cracow 2006, p. 125.

²² P. Płoszajski, *Organizacja przyszłości: wirtualny splot kontaktów*, [in:] *Przedsiębiorstwo przyszłości*, edited by W. M. Grudzewski, I. K. Hejduk, Warsaw 2000, p. 30 and 41-42.

bour market will be waiting for those people who have acquired *complex communication skills* – including the ability to interact with others in order to get information, understand that information and determine the results of this activity²³. Moreover, it will be waiting for those, who are willing to progress and self-develop.

The knowledge, skills and personality traits that have been presented in this article – and have been indicated by the respondents to refer to flexible forms of work organization – relevantly characterize modern employees. They point out the fact that in the application process there is the demand for broader competencies: self-reliance in solving problems, ability to adapt to new situations and flexibility. In modern economies there are increasingly more and more work places which require general skills. Facing the world of dynamic technological changes, the ability to learn and all accompanying skills are more than essential²⁴. The focus on openness and motivation to learn is partly associated with the fact that most modern employers have to invest in their employees' development. We, in fact, acquire the necessary professional skills directly at the place of work.

The expectations concerning qualifications and competencies of potential employees result from the specific character of different operational fields (which has also been highlighted by the researched employers and representatives of labour market institutions) and they depend – according to the authors of the report „Kwalifikacje dla potrzeb pracodawców” (Qualifications for the needs of employers) – on the size and type of enterprises. In case of small companies versatile employees are the most wanted ones. The larger the enterprise, the more important is the meaning of team work abilities (often interdisciplinary and international), communication, negotiation and mediation abilities, as well as the responsibility for the assigned scope of work²⁵.

References:

- Bańka A., *Kapitał kariery – uwarunkowania, rozwój i adaptacja do zmian organizacyjnych*, [in:] *Współczesna psychologia pracy i organizacji*, edited by Z. Ratajczak, A. Bańka, E. Turska, Katowice 2006.
Bauman Z., *Praca, konsumpcjonizm i nowi ubodzy*, Cracow 2006.

²³ F. Levy, Murnane R. J., *The New Division of Labor: How Computers Are Creating the Next Job Market*, 2004. After: M. Gawrysiak, op. cit, p. 289-290.

²⁴ F. Levy, R.J. Murnane, *Education and the Changing Job Market, Educational Leadership*, 2004. After: *Learning for Jobs*. Synthesis Report of the OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training, Paris 2010, p. 60-61.

²⁵ U. Sztandar-Sztanderska, E. Drogosz-Zabłocka, B. Minkiewicz, M. Stec (editor), *Kwalifikacje dla potrzeb pracodawców. Raport końcowy*, Warsaw 2010, p. 26-27. The report has been created as part of the project titled „Kwalifikacje dla potrzeb pracodawców” [Qualifications for the needs of employers] realized by PKPP Lewiatan as part of the operational programme “Kapitał Ludzki” [Human Capital], co-financed with European Fund Services.

- Bańka A., *Otwartość na nowe formy doświadczania pracy i codzienności a procesy integracji osobowości*, [in:] *Praca człowieka w XXI wieku. Konteksty – wyzwania – zagrożenia*, edited by R. Gerlach, Bydgoszcz 2008.
- Borowska A., *Kształcenie dla przyszłości*, Warsaw 2004.
- Furmanek W., *Zarys humanistycznej teorii pracy (nowe horyzonty pedagogiki pracy)*, Warsaw 2006.
- Gawrysiak M., *Jak komputer i sterowane nim maszyny zmieniają pracę człowieka*, [in:] *Edukacja i praca. Konteksty – wyzwania – antynomie*, edited by R. Gerlach, Bydgoszcz 2008.
- Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku*, edited by T. Pilch, Vol. 2, Warsaw 2003.
- Learning for Jobs*. Synthesis Report of the OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training, Paris 2010.
- Malara Z., *Przedsiębiorstwo w globalnej gospodarce. Wyzwania współczesności*, Warsaw 2006.
- Płoszajski P., *Organizacja przyszłości: wirtualny splot kontaktów*, [in:] *Przedsiębiorstwo przyszłości*, edited by W. M. Grudzewski, I. K. Hejduk, Warsaw 2000.
- Przybylska E., *Europejskie trendy w zakresie profesjonalizacji edukacji dorosłych*, „Edukacja Ustawiczna Dorosłych”, 2008, No. 1.
- Selby C., Wilson F., Korte W., Millard J., Carter W., *Almanach wiedzy o telepracy (Flexible Working Handbook)*, 2001.
- Sztandar-Sztanderska U., Drogosz – Zabłocka E., Minkiewicz B., Stec M. (editor), *Kwalifikacje dla potrzeb pracodawców. Raport końcowy*, Warsaw 2010.
- Symela K., *Kompetencje i jakość pracy doradcy zawodowego*, [in:] *Edukacja dla rynku pracy. Problemy poradnictwa zawodowego*, edited by S. M. Kwiatkowski, Z. Sirojć, Warsaw 2006.
- Wiatrowski Z., *Podstawy pedagogiki pracy*, Bydgoszcz 2005, p. 108.
- Wiśniewski J., *Zatrudnianie pracowników w formie telepracy*, Toruń 2007.