

STUDYING "MANAGEMENT" AS A CHALLENGE TO DEVELOP YOUR OWN COMPETENCES

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Purpose: The first aim of the article was to investigate whether high school graduates who want to study management take up gainful employment before starting their studies and how much was their salary. The second goal was to determine the reasons for starting studies and choosing a field of study, and the third was to determine the degree of identification of professional interests of first-year students in the field of Management.

Design/methodology/approach: For the research presented in this article, an analysis of the literature in the area of professional competences and career development was used. Research was also carried out using questionnaire forms with open questions. The research covered all first-year students of Management at the University of Szczecin.

Findings: Almost all first-year management students worked before starting their studies. They started their studies guided mainly by their interests in the field of management and the desire to run their own business, but they do not have exactly what exactly they would like to do after graduation.

Research limitations/implications: In the future, research will be continued on a larger research sample.

Practical implications: students have poorly identified interests. Their task is to try to identify these interests, but the support of lecturers is also important.

Originality/value: Reasons for starting studies and choosing the field of Management and Identification of students' interests. The research results can be used by academics and students.

Keywords: competences, studying, self-development.

Category of the paper: research paper.

1. Introduction

The undisputed issue is that, especially nowadays, studies are a path to work and professional career, and not only a period of gaining knowledge and / or spending time more freely. During university studies, by definition, the students' knowledge is primarily developed, but more and more often and to a greater extent practical skills and personality traits. Therefore, the development of knowledge is a necessary condition, but more and more often it is

insufficient to obtain such professional competences, so that after graduation, you have a job that is satisfying, in line with your interests, giving development opportunities, satisfactory remuneration, etc. This knowledge should in many cases be supplemented on the basis of complementarity with experience in business practice.

Research shows that the effects of studying, for example in the form of higher salary, lower risk of work, job satisfaction, and job satisfaction can be significantly influenced by the reasons for choosing studies and the field of study and the moment of defining one's professional interests (Jarecki, 2012). Therefore, the first aim of the article was to investigate whether high school graduates who want to study management take up gainful employment before starting their studies. The second goal was to determine the reasons for starting studies in the field of Management, and the third was to determine the degree of identification of students' professional interests. In order to achieve this goal, research was carried out on a group of 111 first-year students of Management at the University of Szczecin, full-time. The research was carried out during classes in the subject of Self-development management.

By implementing the above goals, the author wants to encourage students to reflect on their own interests, predispositions, strengths and weaknesses, and thus to actively study and develop their interests, acquire knowledge, but also to take up employment in their free time, because it all affects development of competences developed during the studies.

2. The concept and essence of competences

The concept of competence, especially in Polish literature and practice, is relatively new. Previously, the category "qualifications" was mainly used. For some authors, these terms are synonyms, but nowadays qualifications more often refer to formal aspects: diplomas, certificates confirming knowledge, experience and other elements related to people related to their work. Competencies, on the other hand, generally refer to the compliance of knowledge, education, experience and personality traits with the needs of the job (Mięczkowska, 2003). In view of this, it can be said that the King correctly defined the concept of competences, defining that they are "predispositions in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes, ensuring the implementation of professional tasks at an effective and (or) distinctive level, in accordance with the standards set by the organization for a given position" (Król, 2014). A. Springer (Springer, 2018) conducted an extensive analysis of the concept of competences, indicating, inter alia, on the variety of terms, different levels of competence and types. On the other hand, U. Jeruszka emphasized the diversity of interpreting the concept of competences and its multidimensionality, as they can be considered from the point of view of an individual and their personality traits, as well as from the point of view of the team and the entire organization (Jeruszka, 2016). A similar opinion was expressed by C. Bach and R. Sulikova (Bach, Sulikova,

2019). In turn, V. Wickramasinghe and N.de Zoyza indicated key competences in various areas of professional activity, indicating, for example, that the most important in management is the ability to manage time, cooperation and communication (Wickramasinghe and de Zoyza, 2009, pp. 344-360). R.R. Wood and T. Payne identified communicativeness and results orientation as the most common competences (Wood, Payne, 2006), which is a very important observation in the context of this article. It is also worth emphasizing that due to the variability of the environment, another element of competence is indicated, which is the efficiency of functioning in difficult and surprising situations (Heyse, Erpenbeck, Ortmann, 2015).

An important element of the development of competences, and at the same time a factor conducive to this development, is the identification of interests. Such identification allows to define the professional goal as well as the means and directions of personal development to achieve this goal. It is not easy in such a dynamically changing economic, legal, political and technological environment, with the progressive flattening of the organization, changing professions and requirements in those that exist (Smolbik-Jęczmień, 2017). As a result, there are also changes in shaping individual careers (Miś, 2012), manifested in particular by the fact that it is the result of previous experiences of a given person, the development of their traits, but not in relation to the organization, only to that person. Thus, the responsibility for shaping a career has been transferred from the organization to the employee (Bohdziewicz, 2014). Career development and achievement of professional success require him to be self-directed, set goals, communicate, constantly acquire knowledge (Smolbik-Jęczmień, 2017) as well as build social capital in the form of relationships. It is also emphasized that an important requirement of a modern professional career is employability, which can be treated as the ability of a person to constantly keep a job or to find one that meets expectations (Wiśniewska, 2015), and it is closely related to the competences of a given person (Bentson, 2008) and results from the potential of her knowledge, professional and adaptive skills, personality traits (Van der Heijden, Van der Heijden, 2006), while it can be assumed, in some simplification, that the development of competences, also during studies, is updating the activities of a given person in the professional field (Erpenbeck, Sauer, 2001).

Bearing in mind the above, research was conducted on starting work before starting studies, the reasons for starting studies and choosing a field of study, and identifying interests. The test method and results are presented in the next section.

3. Research method and results

Empirical research was conducted in October 2022 among all first-year full-time students of Management at the University of Szczecin. Survey forms were used. The students could choose one answer. The questions were open. The most similar responses were grouped during

the analysis. The classes were attended by 111 students, or about 90% of first-year students. All those present filled in the questionnaires, but six people did not answer the question regarding the identification of professional interests (table 3). The remaining questions related to the net salary obtained in the period from the matura exam to starting studies (table 1) and the reasons for starting studies and choosing a field of study (table 2).

The data presentation began with the presentation of the amount of received remuneration. This issue was raised because to some extent it shows the willingness of these young people to take up professional work, but the information on the percentage of people who started work before their studies is equally important. It allows them to learn their own skills, check their communication skills, build relationships, bear the hardship of work, etc.

Table 1.

Salaries obtained after graduation and before starting studies, i.e. June-September 2022 (N = 111)

Net salary (PLN)	Number (frequency)	Number of working people (total and percentage)
- 2000	5	5 (6%)
2001 - 4000	9	14 (17%)
4001 - 6000	14	28 (34%)
6001 - 8000	4	32 (39%)
8001 - 10000	20	52 (63%)
10001 -12000	5	57 (69%)
12001 - 14000	7	64 (77%)
14001 - 16000	8	72 (87%)
16001 - 18000	0	72 (87%)
18001 - 20000	5	77 (93%)
20001 -	6	83 (100%)
Did not provide	15	-
Did not work	13	-
Average salary of the employed	10669 PLN	-

Source: own research.

The data in Table 1 show that out of 111 people, 83 worked and not 13 worked. If we omit people who did not say whether they were working, it can be assumed that about 86% of people were working. This should be considered a very high result showing that young people improve their professional competences by acquiring practical experience even before their studies. The advantage of this behavior is also the chance to better understand the theoretical issues related to management presented in class. It should be added that most people, 63%, earned up to PLN 10 000 net, with an average of almost PLN 11 000.

The next table (table 2) presents data on the reasons for starting studies and choosing a field of study.

Table 2.

Reasons for starting studies and choosing the field of Management (indication of the main reason)

Reason for starting studies (N = 111)		Reason for choosing a field of study (N = 111)	
Reason	Number of people	Reason	Number of people
Getting a higher education	21	Interest in management	28
Gaining knowledge and education	21	Acquisition of management of your own company	22
Willingness to develop - in general	14	Interesting direction	9
Acquisition / development of competences	12	Acquiring management skills	8
Higher earnings	8	Gaining knowledge of management	7
Continuation of education	5	It gives better opportunities for development	6
For the best, the situation on the labor market	5	Learn HRM and/or Marketing	5
Getting to know people	4	Practical direction in professional life	5
To run a business well	3	For higher earnings	4
Because he doesn't know what he wants to do	2	For a better job	3
Better promotion opportunities	2	Direction according to what I want to do	3
Parent expectations	2	Recommended	3
Stable work	2	Because he likes to manage	3
Convincing others	2	Easy direction	2
For being a student	2	Case	1
Better travel opportunities	1	He didn't get into another direction	1
Insurance	1	Convince the parent	1

Source: own research.

The two main reasons for choosing studies as a way of life after graduation, but very similar to each other, are: obtaining higher education and acquiring knowledge and education. These two responses were indicated by 42 people. The third place was the desire for personal development (14 people). These three responses were indicated by a total of 50% of the respondents. From interviews with students, after collecting the questionnaires, it appeared that the first two answers differ from each other in that some people only want to obtain a formal diploma, and knowledge is something of a secondary nature. But such an interpretation concerned only a few of the 21 people. A significant part of the remaining people indicated references to the labor market as the reason for starting studies (development of competences, remuneration, stable work, etc.). For a few people, the reasons were not related to the need for development (getting to know people, parent's expectations, persuasion of others, possibility of trips, insurance).

The two most important reasons for choosing Management are the interest in this issue and the acquisition of skills to manage your own company. It is worth noting that 20% of the surveyed students want to have their own company. The next, almost all other indications also refer to management, and only a few refer to other aspects (on recommendation, easy direction, accident, he did not get into another, prompting a parent, 8 people in total). Thus, about 90% of people consciously chose the field of study, which should be assessed positively.

In the next question, the students were asked to answer what they would like to do after graduation. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3.

Identification of interests: what I would like to do after graduation, as my main professional activity (N = 105)

Kind of interest	Number
Own company – undefined	37
Own company – precisely defined (real estate, renewable energy, education, transport, restaurant, pub, hotel)	9
Work "for someone else" – in general	8
Manager – general	8
Does not know	6
Full-time job, then own business	6
Manager – more precisely (marketing, HRM, hotel, marketing, social media, trade)	6
Continue to develop	4
Work "for someone else – specific indication (marketing, psychologist, office, beautician)	4
Receive high salaries	3
Work in a family business	3
Develop a passion	2
Manage human resources	2
Low stress work	1
A job that gives you good development opportunities	1
Start a family	1
Work in a large company	1
Be involved in sports	1

Source: own research.

Interestingly, there is some contradiction in the students' responses presented in Table 3. Bearing in mind what they would like to do after graduation, 46 people, or about 44%, want to have their own business. The problem, however, is probably that of these students do not know what the company would be, what they would do. Only 9 people have a specific vision of the area of activity of their future company. The rest of the respondents indicated answers that can be grouped a little. Some of them indicate a general willingness to work, i.e. they do not have specific interests (working for someone, a manager, receiving a high salary, working in a large company, etc.). Several people plan professional activities (sports, starting a family, developing a passion). Therefore, it can be concluded that 15 people out of 105, i.e. 14%, know quite exactly what they want to do after graduation (their own company is precisely defined and a manager is clearly indicated in what area). This is not good news for students, but also academic teachers and university authorities, because students without precisely defined interests may not know what they would like to develop in particular and, as a result, it will be more difficult for them to gain knowledge. It is also a challenge for universities to support students in specifying their professional interests.

4. Summary

People with secondary education undertake studies for various reasons. However, it should be borne in mind that studies are not an end in itself, but they result in personal development, gaining knowledge, improving the situation on the labor market, and increasing professional competences. The latter effect should be a consequence of commitment to the use of studies for professional development. Therefore, it is necessary to undertake studies in accordance with your interests, and this in turn depends on the identification of your interests. The conducted analysis, which requires in-depth research on a representative sample, shows that the surveyed students have quite poorly defined professional interests. They are only indicated on the general level regarding the name of the field of study. There is, however, quite a good starting point for identifying interests. It is taking up studies and choosing a field of study that interests them. Such activity is also fostered by taking up gainful employment by almost 90% of the surveyed students.

The question that students should ask themselves is also this: will I really use the studies to develop my competences and will they be the way to work?

Combining science and practice is becoming a requirement of modern times (Jarecki, 2006). The rapid flow of information, the development of technology and technology, changes in values, in the economy, law and politics, mean that there is a growing need for a greater confrontation between science and experience. On the other hand, combining science and practice may foster greater interest in enriching knowledge, but also in gaining new experiences. These are challenges both for students and academics, who are faced with the challenge of supporting students and, on the other hand, conducting in-depth research in the field of study efficiency, the essence of competences in the context of generational changes, the impact of environmental changes on the development of competences.

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