

KEY SOCIAL SKILLS AS A GUARANTEE OF SUCCESS IN BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

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Purpose: The main objective of the article is to analyse the available literature on social competences, business competences and future competences and to find which of known competences are most needed.

Design/methodology/approach: The main methods used in the article are the analysis of data contained in reports on the employment and competences of employees and a review of the literature on competences and skills.

Findings: Social skills and competences are more important for employers than digital skills. The most important competences for employers are skills and experience related to the job position, followed by the ability to work in a team and customer service. Language competences as required skills appear less often in job offers than degree requirement and experience.

Social implications: The results of research and analysis of available literature on desirable social skills and competences can help to consider how to improve the quality of training for employees, including the development of social skills.

Originality/value: The article may be aimed at business managers in order to draw attention to the importance of social skills in company management. Determining which skills are most desirable according to reports can help in creating new training courses for employees, taking into account customer service quality and teamwork skills.

Keywords: competences, management, human resources.

Category of the paper: Literature review, viewpoint.

1. Introduction

In the modern era of often rapid economic changes, both individuals and businesses are forced to be flexible and adapt quickly to changing realities. The development of technology, information science and artificial intelligence allows companies to discover ever newer, previously unknown methods of solving problems, but also requires them to assimilate contemporary trends. Existing standards related to Quality Management Systems indicate directions for various types of activities so that a company can develop not only in its home

market, but also internationally, and among the activities aimed at improving the QMS of companies in various industries, those related to human resource management are extremely important.

The main objective of the article is to analyse the available literature on social competences, business competences and future competences, available reports from employer surveys on human resource management, and to consider which key competences are most useful in the era of Industry 4.0 and which competences are still in short supply.

2. Literature review

2.1. The definition of competencies

Quality management in companies involves not only process management, but also human resource management. Human capital is defined as ‘a resource of knowledge, skills, vital energy [...], which can be increased through investments, known as investments in people’ (Domański, 1993). In everyday life, the word ‘qualifications’ is often used interchangeably with the word ‘competences’. It should be noted that these words are not synonymous. Colloquially, “competences” are defined by the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English as ‘the ability to do something; skill’. In turn, ability can be understood as something that is characteristic of an individual (of every human being) – as a mental or physical trait, and a competent person is one who is able to make appropriate use of their skills and knowledge in a changing reality (Dale, 1993). For a company to operate effectively, and thus generate income and be successful on the market, it is important to bear in mind that it is the work potential (employee potential) that directly influences the company's potential. In turn, work potential depends on the employee's health, working time and competences (Niedzielski, Walkowiak, 2004).

Competence can be understood in a behavioural context as the behaviour of a competent person, or in a task context as the skills used in the workplace (Armstrong, 2000). Qualifications, on the other hand, can be defined as a set of skills and mental and physical characteristics necessary to perform professional duties (Butkiewicz, 1995).

Although qualifications and competences are two different terms, there is a network of relationships between them, which are presented in Figure 1.

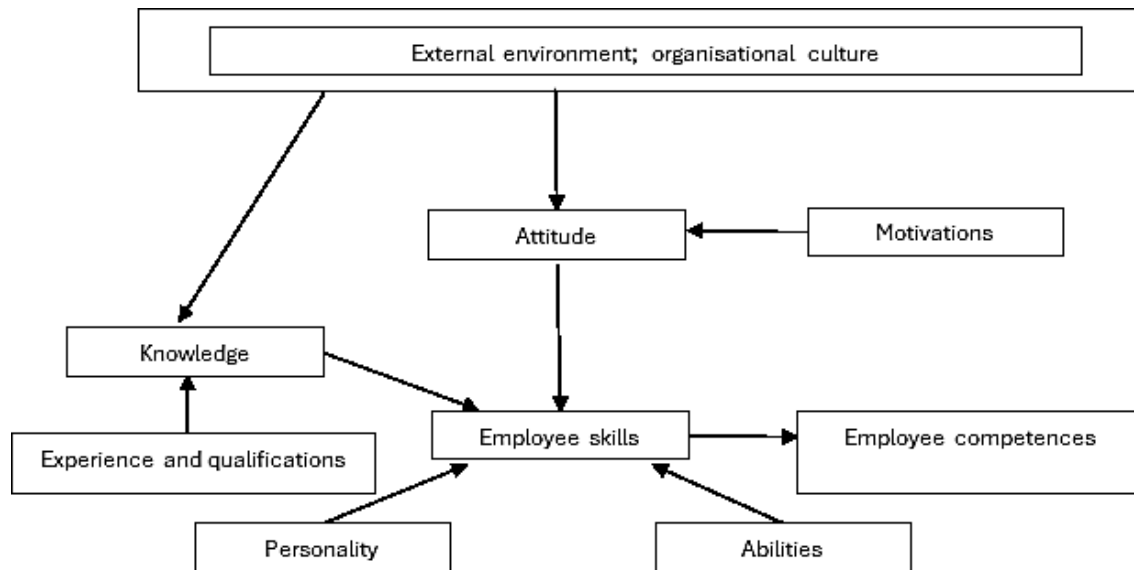


Figure 1. Relationship between skills, competencies and qualification.

Source: Rogozińska-Pawelczyk, 2006.

All elements are interrelated and must be taken into account in the area of incorporate organisational culture. Competences are always connected directly with skills. Employee skills consist of qualifications, experience and attitudes, while employee attitudes are driven by motivation.

2.2. Competences of the future

In today's world, employee competencies are a key aspect ensuring the possibility of improving quality management systems and, consequently, the functioning of the entire enterprise. An analysis of the available literature shows that the competencies of the future can be divided into four groups (Dębkowska et al., 2022):

- Social competences.
- Cognitive competences.
- Adaptive competences.
- Transformative competences.
- Digital and specialist competences.

Social competences include aspects such as emotional intelligence (the ability to recognise other people's emotions), negotiation skills (reaching compromises, reconciling different positions), human resource management (the ability to motivate, lead people and develop their abilities) and the ability to work in a team.

Cognitive competences are based on creativity, a broader view of the functioning of the company, critical thinking skills and so-called cognitive flexibility, which is the ability to analyse problems from different perspectives.

Adaptive competences refer to skills such as ‘the ability to find and interpret signs of change in the organisation's environment, the ability to identify signs of unlikely events that could significantly affect the company's situation, and the ability to act in situations of uncertainty’ (Dębkowska et al., 2022).

An important skill, which is also an indicator of moral and emotional maturity, is the ability to take responsibility (not only for oneself, but also for others). In complex situations, fraught with tension between people, it is also important to be able to pay attention to the values that guide other people. These skills belong to the transformative competences.

In addition to the above-mentioned competences, it should be borne in mind that those related to the human learning process are equally important. According to the European Council, the key competences in this area include:

- Digital competences.
- Personal, social and learning competences.
- Civic competences.
- Entrepreneurship competences.
- Multilingual competences.
- Reading and writing competences.

Each of these types of competences is necessary for a person to function in society and in the workplace (Gonzalez-Perez, 2022; Balcar et al., 2014). The divisions of competences are diverse, but it is important to understand that each competence consists of:

1. Attitudes – ways of perceiving and responding to situations, people and ideas (Lanzo, Olmo, 2010).
2. Knowledge.
3. Skills.

In view of the above, future skills can be defined as those skills that enable employees to perform their duties and take action in dynamically developing companies, dispersed geographically and operating in a market that requires rapid adaptation to technological changes, including the development of AI (Włoch, Śledziewska, 2019; Biggs, Lowenstein (2011)). In further part of article the author consider, using available data, which of skills are most required during the job and employee research.

3. Overview of social research available in reports

An analysis of publicly available statistical data provided by reliable companies was conducted. The weakness of the analysis is that it is based solely on data available to the average person. These studies were not conducted by the author. Reports available on the PARP website from 2025 were analysed: Job offers in Poland, Grant Thornton reports and ‘Every talent is

worth its weight in gold — inclusive employment? — a report by the Union of Entrepreneurs and Employers for the current year.

According to a PARP report from July 2025, which is partly presented in Figure 2, the most important (most desirable) skills that a good employee should have are: customer service (35% of responses), strategic thinking (31% of responses) and team management (33% of responses).

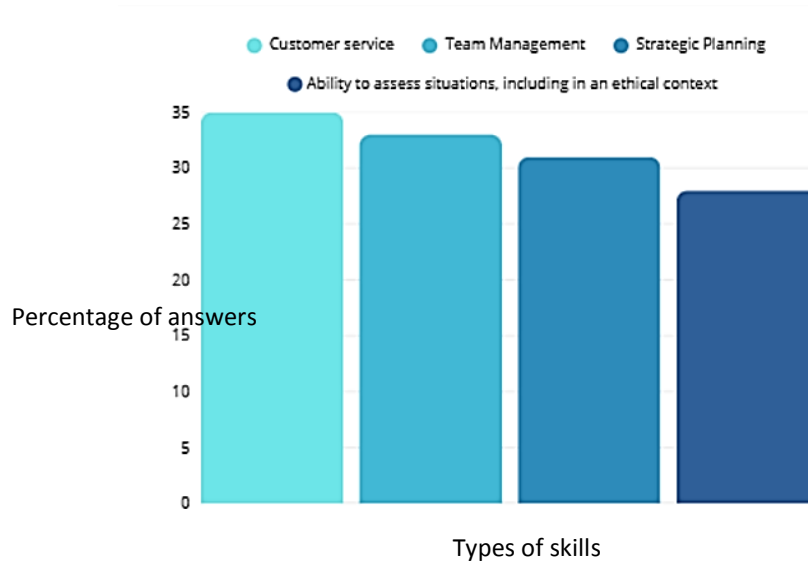


Figure 2. Most important skills according to the result of the study contained in the PARP report.

According to a report by PARP (Polish Agency for Enterprise Development) from July 2025, the most important competences for employers are skills and experience related to the job position, followed by the ability to work in a team, customer service, and, to a lesser extent, problem-solving, digital and management skills (Figure 3).

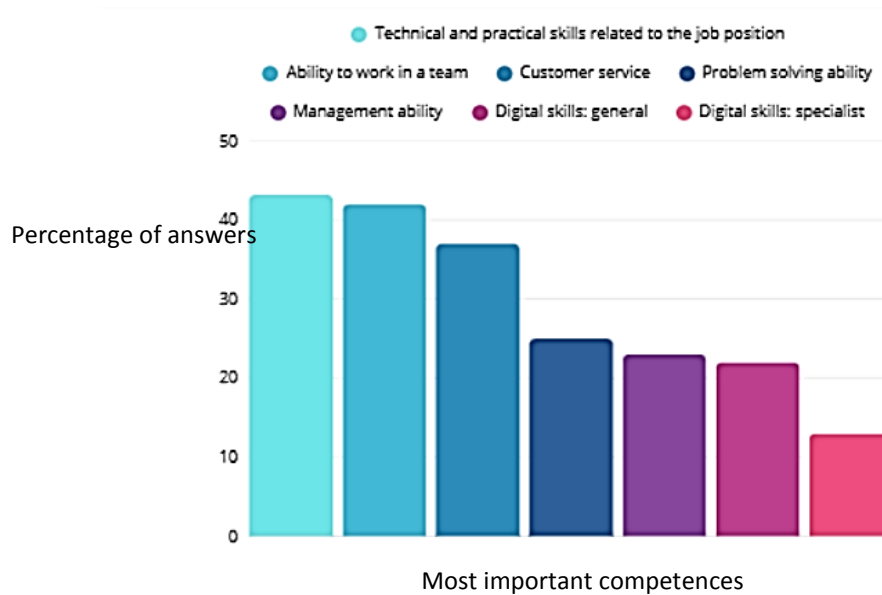


Figure 3. Most important competences for employers.

According to Grant Thornton's 2025 report on job vacancy research (as of June 2025), experience (technical, job-related) is the most important factor when hiring new employees. The highest percentage of job offers requiring experience was recorded in June 2023 (86%), and in the same month of subsequent years there was a decline – in June 2025 to approx. 57% (Figure 4).

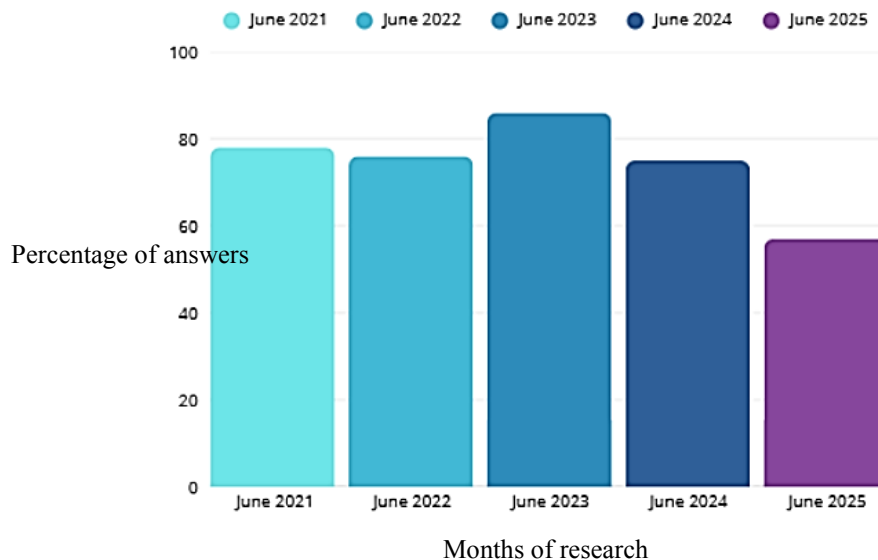


Figure 4. Quantity of job offers with experience required.

In 2021, approximately 48% of job offers in Poland required potential candidates to have a degree. In June 2025, this figure reached 42%, and in the meantime, there was a decrease in the number of offers requiring a degree, which is presented in Figure 5.

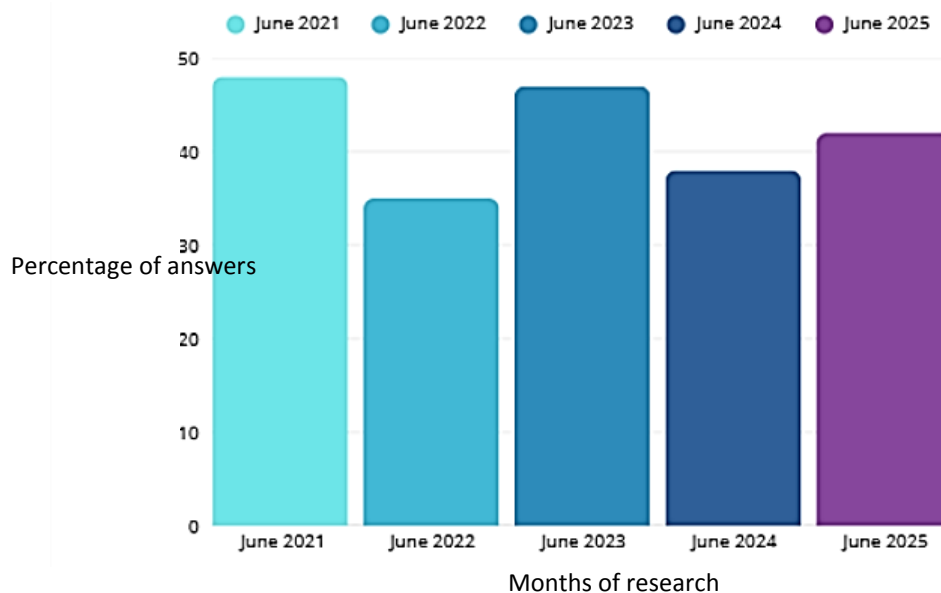


Figure 5. Quantity of job offers with degree required.

In June 2025, there was a decrease in the number of job offers requiring language skills (approx. 26%). For comparison, the highest percentage of job offers requiring language skills was recorded in June 2023 and amounted to 45%. (Figure 6).

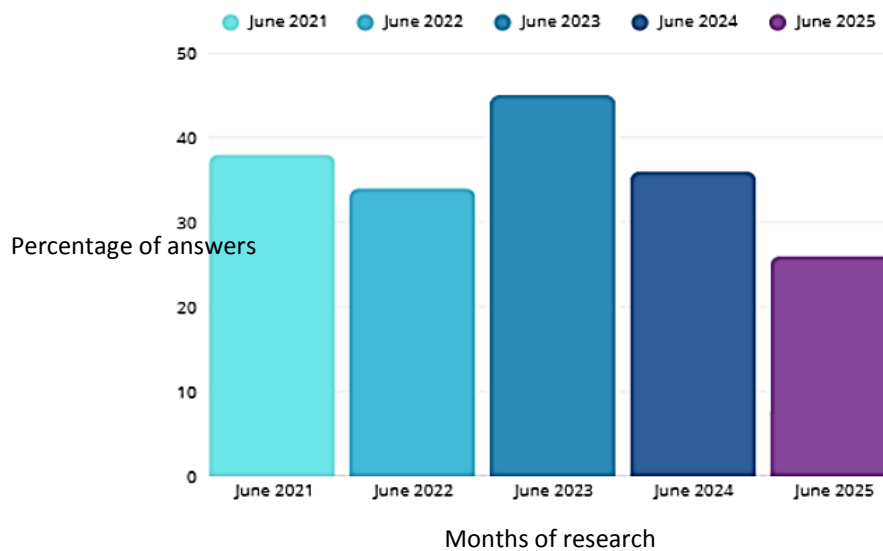


Figure 6. Quantity of job offers with language skills required.

4. Discussion

In today's world, experience is the most sought-after skill on the labour market. Interestingly, research shows that even experienced employees must constantly improve and update their qualifications in order to keep their jobs – in the EU market, almost 50% of adults are forced to supplement their professional qualifications (PARP, 2025). Despite the emergence of training centres, there are staff shortages, e.g. in the medical professions. An interesting trend can be observed in the case of language skills. According to a 2025 Grant Thornton report, since 2023, the number of job offers requiring language skills has fallen significantly (from 2023 to 2025, this decline amounts to almost 20 percentage points). Digital competences – both specialist and general – are not as desirable as, for example, the ability to work in a team (which is a social competence) or problem-solving skills. However, the most important factors are the skills and experience required for a specific job. Staff shortages in various professions raise questions about whether current training methods are insufficient, how to develop the skills of young people, and how to improve the skills of existing employees. According to what we have found in the literature, there are no studies that simultaneously refer to and describe how to identify an employee's weaknesses and develop social skills in order to manage the entire company effectively. Interestingly, available sources indicate that less qualified employees in professions where social skills are very important are more likely to leave their jobs (Aghion et al., 2023). Therefore, this is an area that needs to be addressed more often and quality management systems need to be improved to take this factor into account. There are general approaches to the subject of training, but the psychological differences between employees are problematic.

5. Summary

An employees should have the competence, skills and knowledge to be able to do their job effectively (Prien, 1981). Employers often find it difficult to find suitable candidates for jobs in their companies, regardless of the type of business. This is because the generation entering the labour market does not yet have the relevant experience in a specific field. The skills acquired after graduation are very important, but work experience is crucial during the recruitment process. Companies organise internships during which young employees can gain professional experience. However, social skills are second in terms of importance. The development of an employee's social skills within a company is a key aspect of quality management systems. The age of the employee, their abilities, and limitations (despite their professional experience) should be considered. The results of the research conducted can serve as a guideline for the development of employee training programmes, but also as a guide for job seekers on the extent to which they should further their education or develop their skills in order to increase their chances of finding employment.

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