

## Improving employability by means of personal competencies in HR

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## 1. Introduction

Employability can be described as generating values, creating jobs, getting compensated for it and, at the same time, increasing the ability to find jobs in the future. It is a management philosophy, acknowledging that employment and business success derive from the workers' effort, innovation, expertise, the initiative, creativity, and competencies of all employees.

Employability means creating a working environment for employees that will offer incentives for personal and career development. A degree subject and academic abilities may influence career choice, but skills, values, interests and personality will be just as important in making final decisions on a career.

In order to manage work and career successfully, it is essential to possess the proper resources and competencies [1]. Personal competencies are also essential in team building and job satisfaction [2]. It always depends on the context or situation what we actually mean by this term. Moreover, competencies are job-related. Job competencies are such knowledge, skill and ability parts that play a central part in career management and which can be influenced by the individual [3].

The Competent Manager by [4] is still a great treasury for competency profiles and examples, in which the manager has a key role. According to Boyatzis, the job competency is an underlying characteristic of a person that leads to or causes superior or effective performance. Another useful resource is the book, written by [5] 10 years later, in which more than 1500 competency models can be found. The well-spread definition for competencies by Spencer and Spencer is the following: 'Competencies are underlying characteristics of an individual that is causally related to criterion-referenced effective and/or superior performance in a job or situation' [5, p. 9]

In the past 50 years several competence models have been constructed [5–11]. However, not all the authors supported competency models or the idea itself. Who were against it noted that it is difficult, expensive and time-consuming to use [12, 13] also argues that current competency methods lack future orientation.

The aim of the research was to find out how competencies have been transformed; whether appreciated or depreciated; or re-evaluated. The authors were also curious to know what skills and abilities are no longer necessary to be successful in the labour market versus the ones that were not required previously but have become indispensable these days.

## 2. Material and method

After the literature review, the qualitative research was also conducted as one of the objectives was to compile and validate an independent competency structure, tailored to the situation and the special features of the Hungarian labour market, based on the opinion of the members in the sample. A focus

## IMPROVING EMPLOYABILITY BY MEANS OF PERSONAL COMPETENCIES IN HR

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**Abstract:** The subject of the present paper, among others, is to illustrate what employability means and what key business and personal competencies (can) enhance the success of employees and their competitiveness in the labour market together with some personality traits that have a powerful impact on hiring. Aim of research: An answer is also sought to the question of how competencies have been transformed, how their role was appreciated and re-evaluated and what skills and abilities are no longer necessary to be successful in the labour market versus the ones that were not required previously, but have become indispensable these days.

**Result of research:** An overview of the current Hungarian labour market situation and specialities was given on the basis of our primary research.

**Conclusions:** The present analysis contains the correlation between employability and (personal) competencies.

**Keywords:** employability, competence, skills, labour market, success, appreciation.

group examination of 15 experts was conducted on the basis of a semi structured interview guide to guide us in selecting the key personal competences.

In the second phase, this pre-tested and finalised competency structure was analysed, and their relations were explored by means of factor analysis. Questionnaires were distributed among the students to detect the possible differences on the question of the importance of competencies, whether they have been appreciated or depreciated in the last 5 years. When compiling the standardised questionnaire, both open and closed questions were used.

## 3. Results

The world of work is in a state of continuous transition. Employers are therefore looking for graduates and trainees who are enterprising, resourceful, and adaptable and who possess a range of skills that can be used

in a wide variety of settings as well as in their careers. These are known as employability skills. As previously mentioned, based on focus group interviews, a set of competences, most frequently mentioned by the expert, was compiled, which can be typical of the Hungarian labour market. It was stated, that employers look for a range of skills, such as communication, teamworking, leadership, initiative, problem-solving, flexibility and enthusiasm.

*But what skills do students perceive as collateral of labour market success? – this is one of the key questions, our paper is striving to answer.*

According to the 745 student respondents, good communication skills, IT and foreign language skills are necessary in most cases for a successful career. ICT is followed by negotiation techniques, closely attached to it and concentrating on speaking as well as self-knowledge as the only one personal competency. The labour force of the future sees the collateral of a successful career in being able to make use of the knowledge gained. At present there is a need for adequate knowledge, tailored to labour market requirements, which can be used in practice, too.

Students thought that gaining new knowledge is also essential for success. This also highlights the viability of concepts, such as lifelong learning and lifewide learning (LLL and LWL).

The authors were also curious to know the students' opinion about shifts in stress within the domain of competencies. In their opinion technical, business, and entrepreneurial skills, learning from mistakes and discretion are the competencies that were appreciated to the greatest extent in the last 5 years. **Table 1** presents the results.

To sum up the results above, students stated that the skills and abilities, inevitable to become a successful entrepreneur (flexibility, decision making, discretion, taking risks and endurance), should be developed predominantly by higher education.

**Table 1**  
Evaluation of competencies (skills and abilities) in the last 5 years (*in percentage*)

Competency	Appreciated	No change	Depreciated
Cooperation	30	33	37
Persistency	38	27	35
Learning from mistakes	60	12	28
Reliability	40	30	30
Motivation	35	28	37
Preciseness	48	20	32
Problem solving	35	14	51
Self-improvement	26	14	60
Flexibility	32	14	54
Coping with stress	22	20	58
Initiative	49	16	35
Persuasion	50	8	42
Loyalty	45	26	29
Independence	35	19	46
Sense of responsibility	42	22	36
Taking risks	35	21	44
Self-discipline	53	25	22
Preciseness	44	25	31
Organisational skills	45	12	43
Hard working	49	25	26
Endurance	21	15	64
Patience	32	45	24
Decision making	44	19	37
Discretion	55	22	23
Ability to learn	47	12	41
Communication in a foreign language	20	8	72
IT skills	16	1	83
Entrepreneurial skills	50	10	40
Communication skills	33	5	62
EU basics	49	9	42
Technical skills	57	8	35
Economic skills	60	6	34
Social awareness, empathy	41	41	18

Source: research in 2019, N=745

#### 4. Discussion

The importance of the so-called modern entrepreneurial competencies (ICT: communication, foreign language, IT) has been revealed, which is in perfect harmony with the requirements of the business sector. It is suggested to develop these competencies more intensively either under institutionalised circumstances (at schools) or non-formal education. However, it must be noted, when talking about the role of personal competencies that updating them and putting a proper stress on them is of vital importance in the content of the training, which could

promote (better) harmonisation between the labour market and education.

As a result, the further appreciation of competencies in the future has been proved, based on the opinion of the respondents. In addition, it was also concluded, that it is necessary to improve the practical side of education and developing professional and general skills and abilities. It is one of the points, where the dialogue between the labour market and education could be improved and also an area, where further research must be conducted.

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