

Response to comment 1: English style

The article was proofread by a few persons. We were convinced that it is written correctly. So, we can only apologize and assure that we will have the English style corrected by a professional company that proofreads scientific articles.

Response to comment 2: design of ALMP to address transversal competence issues

We believe that labour market institutions generally have limited tools to influence competences. Directing the unemployed to trainings, or I would rather say “enforcing” them to train has failed for years in Poland. Besides, transversal competences are harder to acquire the older the person is. Of course there are certain exceptions – the use of new technologies can, and should be trainable. All in all, we believe that the problem of acquiring transversal competences is an educational policy issue rather than a labour market policy issue. In the case of educational policy, we have comments to teaching certain skills, with reference specifically to a Polish educational system. We did not include them earlier, because we thought that they would be too specific in this article presenting a method. We mentioned something in conclusion, but here is the extended discussion. We can extend the article with these comments.

‘English’ language skills were the most popular competence, but ‘German’ language was also very popular; they often co-occurred in job offers. Kocór et al. (2015: 50) state that these languages are mostly required for several occupations: specialists, managers and clerical support workers. Polish companies aspire to enter global supply chains and export activities, hence the significant demand for foreign language skills. According to Cywiński and Harasym (2016), Polish companies absorb innovations in the form of computer information, proprietary rights and economic competences from foreign investments. Without foreign languages, assimilation of intangible capital is practically impossible.

Pieniążek et al. (2014) indicate that Polish graduates have little awareness of the importance of communication skills, thus these skills should be emphasized in the education process. There is also a need for a more practical approach to learning foreign languages (focusing more on conversations and less on grammar). Thus, more verbal communication should be incorporated into the core curriculum of the Polish and foreign language courses in the general education system. Crucial for companies, verbal communication is undervalued in the Program Bases, which describe the minimum school programs.

We also found certain thinking skills and competences important for companies. It is commonly thought that these skills are developed during science courses. And although science courses indeed develop them, we believe that arts and humanities do so too, an underestimated conception in Poland. Schools should put more emphasis on shaping students' thinking skills (such as analysis, creativity, and abstract thinking)—also when during humanities, including artistic, historical, and philological courses—at the same time reducing the emphasis on knowledge. Currently the requirements for knowledge are far too high (at all education levels, from primary through high-school up to university education), while the creation of cognitive competences is underestimated.

Among competences concerning individual traits, employers most often looked for workers who can work independently, are committed, and have strong self-discipline. Employers value such competences also because they are unable to shape them through company training, and thus they should be developed throughout the education process, starting from its lowest levels. Having such competences, however, does not increase chances of getting a job, even though they are known to increase returns to them during work (Kwiecińska-Zdrenka 2013). According to managers, it is difficult to verify such competences during recruitment, so their evaluation is delayed. It is perhaps for this reason that soft skills are uncommon in job offer requirements for technical and science positions, and thus, though highly needed, they are not a condition for employment.

Since managerial skills (such as decision making, time management, and showing initiative) were more important for companies, demand for managerial skills was higher than that for analytical skills. The former seem to be more practical than the latter, especially in middle-developed countries, which have a relatively low share of innovative companies. From among social skills, employers rather looked for competences related to cooperation, working in a team, and efficient contacting with contractors than those related to leadership. Among skills related to handling new technologies or application of knowledge, the most important were 'use operating systems' and 'use electronic databases.' It is likely that there is a set of competences all or almost all companies consider essential (such as 'use mobile phone' or 'use printers') without even pointing them in a job offer.

We show that majority of Polish employers undervalue employees' approach to work environment and ethics at work. One reason might be that most companies focus on short-term goals, disregarding long-term business development—an unreasonable approach in the context of sustainable development that might require measures to increase Polish companies' awareness of the determinants of economic stability. A notable exception is high-technology and knowledge-intensive companies, where these competences are valued due to their role in the long-term economic performance of a company (Pieniązek et al. 2014). Such companies invest significant resources in research and development and create intellectual property, which is also associated with the possession of intellectual capital in the form of, among others, employees with advanced qualifications and competences.

Unlike the size of demand for skills, its structure was relatively stable, or at least did not change considerably with the business cycle. If any, social competences slightly increased its share, with a slight decrease in a language and communication category. Work as part of a team and attitudes towards work showed the most visible positive trends. Unlike demand for transversal competences, demand for occupations and job-related competences has undergone significant structural changes during the analysed period (see Kocór et al. 2015). Demand for workers with

lower qualifications increased while that for highly qualified workers decreased. It was connected to a deficit for vocational workers, resulting from their high emigration.

References

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