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Article

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IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT DURING BUSINESS UNIVERSITY STUDIES

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Abstract

Adequate level of social competencies after university graduation is necessary for today's competitive environment. This study aims to identify and present most important social competencies based on perceptions of students and graduates of case business university. The data were collected by questionnaire survey of graduates in 2017–2018. Two dimensional statistical methods were used to evaluate the results. Examination of graduates leads to identification of factors affecting preferences in higher education to fill expectation of current society and labor market. Specific factors impacting evaluation of business education and its development are discussed. The results show current approaches towards social competency development. Limit of the study is a narrow focus on one private business university. It may be taken as case study and a base for further research and benchmarking between universities.

Keywords

Social Competencies, Assurance, University, Evaluation, Education, Management

I. Introduction

Today's globalized world demands new competences of students, such as social, cultural, environmental and technical interconnectedness. This is especially true for Central European Economies in former Danubian area. All colleges and universities worldwide and also in Central Europe are facing growing need of students and stakeholders to increase social competencies of students during the course of study. Other reasons that increase

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the need of social competences of young generation are unequal regional development, differences in society worldwide, emerging religious and ethnic conflicts and political challenges. Students need to be able to work with and resolve these issues. Therefore, it is crucial for higher education institutions to develop student competencies in these areas. Past years, curricula of higher education institutions started to be criticized mainly because those do not adequately prepare students to multidisciplinary social competences. Most of accreditation bodies still stress out that there is still low focus of higher education institutions on of internationalization and social competences. Nowadays, it is possible to notice first pioneers in higher education institutions that redesigned their curricula to incorporate training opportunities for improving student social and international competence. To achieve skilled graduates promoting excellence on the job market is the main goal and motivation of all higher educational institutions across the world. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to students and graduates social competence development. To define necessary social competence and evaluate their usability, attractiveness for employers and potential employees and to suggest the best practices to obtain those competences during university education we conducted this research. We believe that to achieve broad social skills and competences is the core mission of universities nowadays and in the future, as the job market and society is changing towards multidisciplinary, changing environment, industry 4.0, COVID-19 and other trends. Thus, socially competent graduates are necessary and universities need to train them.

The paper aims to identify, and present most important social competencies based on perceptions of students and graduates of selected case business university.

The article follows with literature review on the concept of social competence and its importance in education process. Then, methodology and experimental design of the study is described in Methodology section. Data analysis and research findings are presented in Results section. The last section covers discussion and conclusions from the study, pedagogical implications, limitations, and suggestions for further research.

II. Theoretical Background

The trend in higher education is the focus on globalization, social competences, networking, and it is necessary to employ this trend also in curricula to meet students' and employers' expectations (Windham, 2005; Devlin, Samarawickrema, 2010; Merryfield, 2008; Wodarski, Machnik-Slomka, Semrau, 2019; Chiru et al. 2012). Those and other factors need to be taken into account while addressing quality of study programs (Berk, 2005). To gain desirable competencies, usually the most common requirement by students is the combination of theoretical basis of taught subject with practice (Lucas, Milford, 2009; Li, 2013) and practicing with activities to train their competencies and skills (Stankevičienė et al., 2007).

The employers directly have a number of positions at disposal that require not only analytical/logical thinking but also other characteristics and competencies, both hard skills and soft skills from their holders (Stanton, Stanton, 2020). We can rank skills like statistics knowledge, quantity analysis, the ability to use various analytical, statistical or modelling tools among the hard skills (Geczy, 2015; Harris, Mehotra, 2014). Soft skills

required include the already mentioned ability to communicate and present the analytical piece of information in an understandable and convincing way, next the team cooperation, the creativity and the ability to solve problems (Baird, Parayitam, 2019; Leonard, 2016; Frehill, 2015; Baczyńska, 2015).

Abbas and Sagsan (2019) mention in this context that those having soft skills tend to make practicable decisions and propose viable solutions. Azevedo, Apfelthaler and Hurst (2012), however, state that employers are frequently discontented with the graduates' common or social competencies necessary for their assertion skills and their quality work performance, among which the intellectual competencies (critical thinking, problem solving), interpersonal (communication and teamwork) and work competencies (professionalism, work ethic, social responsibility) belong. Yet Storey, Killian, O'Regan (2017), Lohmann, Rollins, Joseph Hoey (2006) or Bensley and Spero (2014) again stress the role of educational institutions in the competencies development and further add, that if a graduate should cope with everything, he or she has to know how to judge the situations in wider context and understand the effect of his/her decisions.

To obtain social competencies, Bryk, Schneider (2002) consider interpersonal relationships among students, teachers other school staff and, where applicable, other interest groups an essential part of the social school environment. One of the essential conditions for the existence of this determination is the participation of students in teaching. Studies investigating the relationship between students' attendance and their study results have been carried out for many years (see, for example, Devadoss, Foltz, 1996; Dolton et al., 2003, etc.). The conclusions of these research studies are unambiguous. We may find that attendance at lectures, seminars, etc., clearly provides the students with several benefits (Stanca, 2006), Lindstadt (2005), McCluskey et al. (2004) or (Reimers, 2009).

The graduates' employability and their ability of assertion on the job market is in the centre of attention of all universities in Europe (Barbosa and Freire, 2019). The attention focuses above all on the graduates' competencies necessary for their assertion. Gay and Betts (2020) mention that the most important competencies that employers seek in a graduate's CV are: the ability to solve problems, the ability to work in teams and the communication, which Šafránková and Šikýř (2016) mention as well. Among other important competencies an individual should have we can name the ability to persuade, influence, motivate and lead others, to build relations within the team, then the competencies in the field of critical and analytical thinking, the ability of time management and self-regulation, the ability to consider things in wider interdependence or the ability to present and communicate the issues (Podoskiy and Pogozhina, 2018; Storey, Killian, O'Regan, 2017; Azevedo, Apfelthaler, Hurst, 2012).

Strengthening competencies connected with innovations in the working environment is specially stressed (Wodarski, Machnik-Slomka, Semrau, 2019). Universities and their cooperation with employers play a very important part in the development of students and graduates' competencies needed for the job market (Baird, Parayitam, 2019). From the point of view of the market functioning and the good assertion of graduates it is necessary to reconcile the employers needs with the students and graduates' competencies and the education at university (Busteed, 2014).

Competences related to decision making

Currently, a problem emerges that situations often solved during studies do not correspond to the real problems that the student or graduate meets afterwards in the work process, which influences negatively his ability to make quick and quality decisions in real situations and solve a particular problem (Danaher, Schoepp, 2020). In his/her professional life he or she is then forced to solve more complex, multidimensional problems. Therefore, the curriculum should be therein adjusted, because the ability to make decisions effectively and to solve problems is a prerequisite for the success at work, especially for the positions which the graduates are working in it is the main part of the job content (Danaher, Schoepp, 2020; Passow, Passow, 2017).

Olewnik and Yerrick (2020) focus on the importance of solving the problems via case studies within the educational process, which develops the students' competencies in the field of making decisions and solving problems. However, the ability to make decisions and to solve problems is in many cases negatively impacted by the fear of a bad decision and the consequences it will bring (Rodrigues Martinez, Cortés Pascual, 2019; Kynt et al., 2014). Thus fear can hinder the willingness to take responsibility and put initiative into the decision-making process, which is a key factor of decision-making (Passow, Passow, 2017).

It is interesting that although both the universities and their students and graduates try to react to the employers' and the market requirements and improve their strategic competencies, the students and graduates' decision-making style is not directly impacted by the real life demand (Torres, Augusto, 2017). The decision-making ability is being associated with the process of formulating the strategy and fulfilling the objectives. The decision-making process includes the ability to collect and analyse relevant information, formulate the solution versions and understand and correctly assess the consequences of the decisions made. The quality of the decision-making process and especially its result, i.e. the decision, depends so on the analytic thinking ability of the person making the decision (Baird, Parayitam, 2019; Torres, Augusto, 2017).

It is also necessary to take into account that the decision-making is, to some degree, associated with stress. It always depends on a particular decisive situation, as well as on the stress related to such a situation (Porcelli, Delgado, 2017; Starcke, Brand, 2016). The stress connected with the decision-making and the decision-making process grows with the importance and the impact presumed of the chosen solution version.

The fact that it is important, whether the decision is made under the certain risk or uncertain circumstances plays a profound role. Especially making a decision under the uncertain circumstances is then the most difficult version of a situation for the subject of decision-making. Of course, also other stress factors influence the decision-making process, e.g. the lack of time for making the decision, the lack of the information relevant, insufficient competencies or personal characteristics of the person making the decision, etc. (Porcelli, Delgado, 2017; Starcke, Brand, 2016; Hu et al., 2015). The decision-maker plays a key role in the process for the decision to be effective, so his/her stress resistance and ability to work quickly and make decisions effectively in a stressful situation is very important

(Porcelli, Delgado, 2017; Starcke, Brand, 2016; Hu et al., 2015; Madan, Spetch, Ludvig, 2015).

Stress can also influence the degree of risk in the decision-maker's acting. Provided the decision-making is influenced e.g. by time pressure, a situation can occur that the decision-maker chooses a more risky version of a solution, which can have a negative impact regarding the consequences of the chosen decision version (Porcelli, Delgado, 2017; Starcke, Brand, 2016; Hu et al., 2015; Madan, Spetch, Ludvig, 2015). So admittedly, it is necessary to view stress as a part of life and decision-making, but at the same time it is essential to learn how to work with it and how to release it efficiently. From this point of view, it is necessary that the graduates come into the work process with the information about decision-making and its stressfulness, and about the methods and techniques of the stress management. Jameson et al. (2016) even mention the knowledge of the stress management and its application as a necessary part of the individual's working actions and one of the key factors of his/her success.

The important part of the decision-making process is also the information exchange among the team members and the way their information is handed over and further processed, which places high demands on the decision-maker's ability to communicate the information (Torres, Augusto, 2017; Wheelen, Hunger, Hoffman, Bamford, 2015; Narayanan, Zane, Kemmerer, 2011; Parayitam, Dooley, 2009). Martin, González, González (2019) mark especially the ability of logical thinking, problem solving, decision making and one's own decision communicating as the employees' key competencies. However, in real life, especially the communicativeness or communicative skills and the critical thinking abilities are the graduates' weaknesses. (Echegaray, Martin, 2019; Jashik, 2016).

The researches show that the individual's decision-making style is influenced also by cultural aspects. These aspects effect also the morality of a decision or they influence the ethic of the decision-making process. If the individual acts ethically within the decision-making, it means he or she is able not only to feel, what is ethical, but is also internally motivated to behave ethically. The decision-maker then considers, how the chosen version of solution will influence the surroundings (Baird, Parayitam, 2019; Morales-Sánchez, Cabello-Medina, 2013; Hannah et al., 2011). Hannah et al. (2011), deals in her research with the cognitive abilities that the individuals need to be able to recognize a moral problem, to make a moral judgement and to create moral intentions. We can say that moral and ethical competencies influence the result of the decision-making process (Baird, Parayitam, 2019; Morales-Sánchez, Cabello-Medina, 2013, Hannah et al., 2011). Baird and Parayitam (2019) also stress the importance of ethics in their researches. Masa'deh et al. (2019) and Robles (2012) rank the ability to maintain the working ethic, honesty and good civilized acting among the employees' most important competencies.

Competences related to logic thinking

The ability to solve problems is directly connected with the ability to think logically and consider things. Wodarski, Machnik-Slomka, Semrau (2019) as well as Abbas and Sagsan (2019) suppose that logical thinking, language competencies and the ability of communicating play a key role for graduates to be able to assert on the job market. Also, Finch et al. (2016) or Barbosa and Freire (2019) place logical thinking among key competencies. Logical thinking includes the ability to analyse problem situations, which leads to more quality decisions or more relevant conclusions as for the problem situation. It concerns the individual's ability to arrive at a conclusion coming out of particular information or a particular situation. Logical deduction happens within the language and every area of activities forms its own language, its own terms and so its own logic.

It is possible to say, that the ability to think logically influences also the ability to make quality decisions, which can be considered as a key point for any working position performance (Griffin, Coelho, 2019; Abbas, Sagsan, 2019; Griffin, Annulis, 2013). Working with hypotheses, testing, argument analysis, considering facts, probability and the level of uncertainty assessment and last but not least the ability to solve problems belong to basic skills related to the type of thinking mentioned (Dwyer, Boswell, Elliot, 2015).

The need to use logic during considering and analysing the information is stated also by Podoskiy and Pogozhina (2018), who concurrently mention that the quality of those competencies manifests in the problem solving and decision-making processes. In this connection Baczyńska (2015) mentions the term analytic intelligence, which he considers to be the most widespread and the most valid indicator of the professional and educational productivity. At the same time, he in his researches points to the relation between the analytical intelligence and the ability to solve and resolve a problem situation. Further, in relation with the analytic intelligence and problem solving the term practical intelligence is often mentioned, which is considered to be the individual's ability to find the most appropriate way among the possibilities, enabling both to react to the requirements of a situation and to follow the goals set. This ability enables the individual to quickly adjust himself/herself to the situation or to adjust the environment to his/her needs (Baczyńska, 2015).

Within work problems solving, not only a particular individual's ability of logical thinking, but also the ability to work with information in general is important. Above all it is essential, if the individual is able to find and gather relevant information, which helps him/her to solve the problem, and further sort the information and analyse it (Echegaray and Martin, 2019). The ability to work with information is considered to be a key factor from both the employers' side and the graduates' side (Šafránková, Šikýř, 2016). It is necessary to mention also the ability of taking the detail into account in connection with logical thinking and the ability to gain information, and Echegaray and Martin (2019) or Chiru et al. (2012) mention it in their researches together with accuracy and self-confidence in that context.

From the employer's point of view, especially detail orientation is considered to be one of the key factors of success in fulfilling job duties. Job applicants often stress the skill that they are able to focus on detail in their CVs, which shows that they are aware of

the fact that a lot of employers consider this competence to be a key one. The detail orientation ability can then be regarded as a potential indicator of the work results and work performance quality (Echegaray and Martin, 2019; Chiru et al., 2012). The authors' researches then show that except for the ability to work with information the employers expect the employees to have the ability of teamwork in the framework of which they will motivate both themselves and the others to high performances and the tasks finishing (Šafránková, Šikýř, 2016).

Competences related to communication skills

As for the communicative abilities the individual should be able to put forward sound arguments and take part in a discussion. However, Utriainen et al. (2017) mention that for a lot of university graduates, argumentation is a problem. Especially the argumentation and the ability to compare information is considered to be the key skill within the critical thinking, though (Utriainen et al., 2017; Bensley, Spero, 2014).

Conceptual thinking, multiculturalism and interpersonal competencies which include the motivating skills, team communicativeness, and above all the ability and willingness to make decisions, are classified as key competencies in the market environment (Wodarski, Machnik-Slomka, Semrau, 2019; Finch et al., 2016). The ability to motivate others is often connected with the individual's sufficient self-confidence and his/her inner focus on achieving goals (Echegaray and Martin, 2019; Šafránková, Šikýř, 2016; Bridgstock, 2009). It is important for the employers, so that the graduate is able to cooperate effectively with others. This places high demands on competencies in the field of communication and as for the ability to communicate the information gained not only by speaking but also by writing. In this connection Baczyńska (2015) mentions competencies related not only to communicativeness (verbal and non-verbal), but also assertiveness, i.e. the art of being able to hold by his/her own opinion and neither let himself/herself influence by manipulation of others nor vice versa manipulate the others. It is also necessary to be able to work in a team to be able to move successfully on a higher position within a company or to maintain the position already achieved. The competence in the team cooperation area and the ability to motivate both him/herself and the others to higher performance is considered to be a key one (Baird, Parayitam, 2019; Šafránková, Šikýř, 2016; Baczyńska, 2015).

Parks et al. (2020) deliberately deal with the research of social competencies in relation to communication, respectively roles of the language as a mediator. To gain the social competence the learning through visual perception, the willingness to accept the language or the accessibility to the language, respectively to the speech, is important as for the sense of being a good listener to others. Appropriate reactions in social relations either during the studies, the employment or in the society are formed in the field of communication within the social competence improving and widening (Parks et al., 2020). There appear differences in social competencies in the area of social communication on the bases of social relations also from the viewpoint of gender. It is proved that men create a different system of social relations than women (Siegelman, Bogaerts and Frost, 2017). Stadick (2020) revealed a positive correlation between the attitude to work in teams and the ability to cooperate in teams, and a positive correlation between the finished educational process

and the ability to react in the interdisciplinary way. Quality findings then pointed exactly to the communication as one of the main categories that influence the social competence in the field of the ability to communicate. Other profound categories then were the roles in the society and the values shared (Stadick, 2020). Vasconcelos (2020) adds the importance of the professional moral courage, ethics, altruism, hope, optimism, the ability to cooperate, the attitude to the organisational justice and the ability to listen to others (Vasconcelos, 2020).

Stadick (2017) within communication skills stress the ability to cooperate and the attitude to the organisational justice. Also, Banister (2020) refers to ethic as one of the main aspects of social competence in the area of communication. Rogat (2019), who conducted a competence study, mentions the goal orientation as one of the main competencies researched, and assesses it from the point of view of the individual and teamwork.

The social competence in the field of the ability to communicate is also the subject of interdisciplinary cooperation and the adaptability. It is especially the environment, where within one workplace various professions occur, between which it is necessary to establish the cooperation. Therefore, Persaud (2020) designates the social competence focused on cooperation to be very important (Persaud, 2020). Havig et al. (2020) deals with the social competence in the area of the ability to communicate oriented on assessing the others, where, based on his own research, he confirms the high stress put on the others assessment. He also stresses the importance of evaluation, and the evaluators themselves, for the new workers' preparation based on competencies that are the key ones for the real-life situations (Havig et al., 2020).

The social competence in the area of communication focused on the ethic is connected with the question to what extent the workers come into contact with ethical and law issues or if they have a sufficient level of qualification to be able to deal with such an issue appropriately. For example, Viens et al. (2020) states that it is necessary to develop and support social competencies in the field of communication focused on ethic by offering the education, expert preparation, consultations and mentoring.

In his study Takawira (2020) stresses the social competence in the area of communication needs to be focused on adaptability. He points it as one of the key aspects of the job assertion (Takawira, 2020). Urbanaviciute et al. (2020) takes the same view. He feels the adaptability in communication to be one of the tools against the uncertainty on the job market. Brown (2020) measured the communication competence rate in the area of the active listening in his study, and he ranked it among the predictors of interpersonal communication skills (Brown, 2020).

Matthews (2020) mentions the area of intercultural communication as the mechanism mediating the intercultural experience. He stresses that the prevailing methods used in the intercultural communication, namely the intercultural competence, do not emphasize the role of reflexivity in achieving the cultural adaptation very much (Matthews, 2020). Also, Sole Blanch (2020) deals with the intercultural competence, and he assesses it in relation with approach to the global experience and information gaining (Sole Blanch, 2020).

Competences related to self-consciousness

As Persouad (2020) states, the employers look for the employees with a number of social competencies based on special personal characteristics. The exact combination of the competencies needed differs depending on the level of the working position and the tasks to be solved. Competencies are being connected with the self-determination theory according to which the understanding of the human motivation requires the appraisal of innate psychological needs for the competencies and autonomy gaining (Zhou, Guo, 2020). Another field of social competency is the area of self-confidence. Self-confidence is formed during the studies, when the main idea is, as Andreev (2018) states, that the improvement of functional links between the modern humanities education and the forward oriented social changes and social methods is of fundamental significance. The author focuses on the identification of the real historical self-esteem, which enables to take into account the situation in the social environment and adjust education to the needs of the developing society. In connection with this he gives reasons supporting the idea of switching to the flexible curricula that can quickly respond to deep socio-cultural trends of various types (Andreev, 2018).

It is possible to summarize that students' performance and competency building are formed by number of factors. These include, for example, peer opinions (Ryan, 2001), teachers' motivation influencing indirectly students' performance (Sammons et al., 2011), and academic responsibility (Merchant et al., 2012). It is also possible to mention implementation of practical examples and situations into the classroom, which increases students' professional competences (Colombo, Gómez Pradas, 2014), and is therefore often required and highly valued by students. Also, interactivity of tuition and engagement of students in their education processes is crucial (Gámiz Sánchez et al., 2014; Kramarski, Michalsky, 2009). On the side of students, the main factor is the efforts made by students themselves. Students are usually influenced by classmates, attitudes of teachers and learning environment (Hopland, Nyhus, 2016), including use of modern technologies for knowledge and skills development, such as e-learning (Alepis, Virvou, 2014).

Along with internalization of university education, the learning process is one of the drivers of developments in society. Furthermore, the increased need for social accountability requires leaders of universities to constantly improve quality and promote transparency in order to safeguard public interest (Garwe, 2014). For example, ACBSP (2019) and IACBE (2019) states that overall quality of education depends on the education processes used by the academic business unit. These include processes such as teaching and other faculty interactions with students, faculty development and scholarly activities, curricular innovation and strategic planning.

The urgency of increasing quality in higher education brings necessity to focus on currently needed skills and competencies required by the society and trends in economy and demography. It is also necessary to pay attention to stakeholders involved in the process of education at higher education institutions. Therefore, we may state that universities are currently located in a highly competitive environment. Nowadays, colleges and universities act as competitors in service market. In order to retain interest of customers (students, graduates, employers, contracting research and development projects, representatives of

practice), these services and delivery have to be up to date, address current needs of society and social trends. Therefore, we conducted this research to identify key social competences needed in current labor market.

III. Materials and Methods

This paper was prepared utilizing a quantitative survey, analysis of secondary and primary resources and knowledge synthesis. The article consists of a theoretical section elaborated on the basis of content analysis of articles from scientific databases. Publications and articles were searched electronically using keywords such as student, competence, curricula, graduate, university, etc. Additionally, materials and methods of the higher education quality management were searched and reviewed (i.e. accreditation standards and TQM in higher education area in Europe and USA, such as ESG, EQAR, ACBSP, AACBS, IACBE, ATHEA and others). Websites of the mentioned higher education institutions that actively deal with the analysed issue were also used.

The data for the evaluation of current level of competences of students/graduates at a Czech private university were collected in a primary quantitative survey by means of the questionnaire investigation. The questionnaire focused on evaluation of competences of graduates in case business university. The analysis was used to classify the analysed competencies, when there were a number of variants of answers per question. The survey had 31 questions. Six questions were open, 24 were multiple-choice questions and 1 question was using Likert-type scale. The survey was collected by CAWI method (Computer Assisted Web Interviewing). Results were loaded in computer, cleared and further tested. Graduates of searched university were contacted by e-mail to fill online questionnaire. The sample contained all graduates of a private business university in the Czech Republic in past five years (2012 to 2017). The total number of graduates was 870; overall return was 238 full responses, i.e., 27.4% of the total sample. The final sample of graduates is representative for the given university, based on the formula:

$$\frac{z^2 * N * r * (1 - r)}{(d^2 * (N - 1)) + (z^2 * r * (1 - r))} \tag{1}$$

where:

- N ... total number of graduates,
- z ... level of significance (95%),
- d ... error rate (0.05),
- r ... expected deviation rate (0.5).

The sample contained 81 men (34.0%) and 155 women (65.1%) and 2 (0.9%) respondents did not indicate their gender. The age structure of respondents at the time of their graduation was the following: age group 20–25 years contained 51 respondents (21.4%), from this age group there were 9 men (3.8%) and 42 women (17.6%); 26–30 years (72 respondents, 30.3%); from this age group there were 42 women (17.3%) and 30 men (12.6%); 31–35 years (37 respondents, 15.5%); from this age group there were 16 men (6.7%) and

21 women (8.8%); 36–40 years (29 respondents, 12.2%); from this age group there were 21 women (8.8%) and 8 men (3.4%); 41–45 years (29 respondents, 12.2%); from this age group there were 10 men (4.2%) and 19 women (8.0%); 46–50 years (9 respondents, 3.8%); from this age group there were 6 women (2.5%) and 3 men (1.3%); 51 years and more (9 respondents, 3.8%); 4 women (1%) and 5 men (2%); 2 respondents did not indicated the age (0.9%).

Furthermore, focus groups were conducted to gain detailed information and explain results of the survey. Four focus groups were added to the research of graduates. Focus groups were questioning graduates who declared interest to participate. All four focus groups used the same scenario and questions on necessary competencies at work or job position and graduates' experiences at workplace. Focus groups had participants both from graduate and post-graduate alumni. Each focus group lasted one hour and included three to seven respondents. A total of 18 respondents were part of focus groups. During every meeting, two observers were part of the evaluation; one observer was a psychologist. Observers were recording the communication into two Dictaphones and made written notes. Outputs were after the end of focus groups analysed using content analysis based on key words and phrases identified during first reading and counting of most commonly mentioned words and phrases.

The evaluation of the need of social competences influencing the graduates' job performance were collected and tested. All collected data were evaluated using descriptive statistics and two-dimensional statistic tests were used: correlation analysis and analysis of differences between age and defined areas stated by the hypotheses using the Pearson's chi-squared independence test. The tests used were performed at the significance level of 0.05. Statistical software IBM SPSS was used for data processing and analyses.

It is necessary to mention that the conducted research has several limits: the questionnaire was voluntary and therefore it was filled only by those respondents who wanted to participate. Moreover, the research is focused on only one case business university. Despite these limits, however, it can be stated that respondents are representative for the case university, come from different backgrounds and hold different job positions. Therefore, it is possible to omit this limit, and the conclusions of this research can be considered as significant input into the area as a case study.

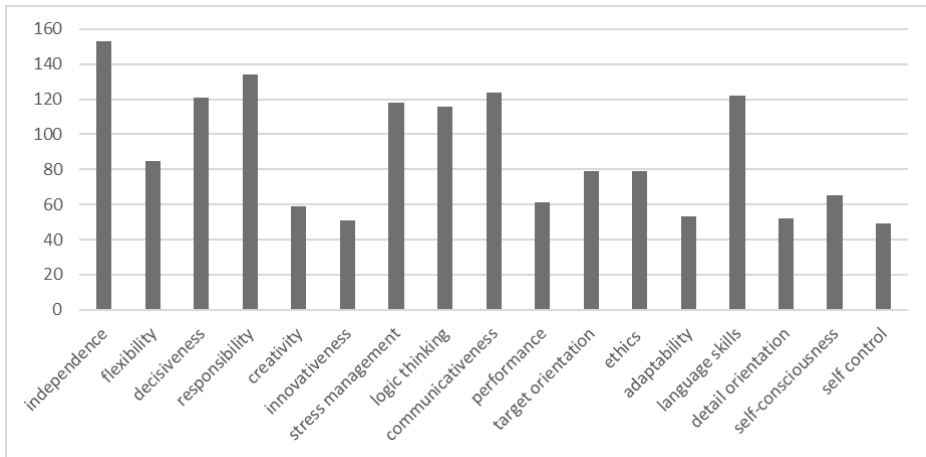
IV. Results

All chapters, including the conclusion, should be numbered as shown above using Roman numerals.

This chapter analyzes and presents perceptions of students towards social competencies gained through their studies at studied business university. Person's correlation was used to evaluate the primary data gathered from the survey of graduates in past five years. Examination of graduates' interest was conducted to identify groups of competences that forms factors affecting preferences in higher education to fill expectation of current society and labor market. Specific factors impacting evaluation of business education and its development are further discussed. The results show current approaches towards social competency development in higher education.

Firstly, most important competencies for labor market marked by case university graduates are presented in Figure 1. Respondents could mark more of offered competencies and choose those, which are the most important at their current job position (all respondents were employed or self-employed at the time of surveying). The Figure 1 shows absolute frequencies of respondents' answers.

Figure 1: Most important competencies for labor market according to graduates



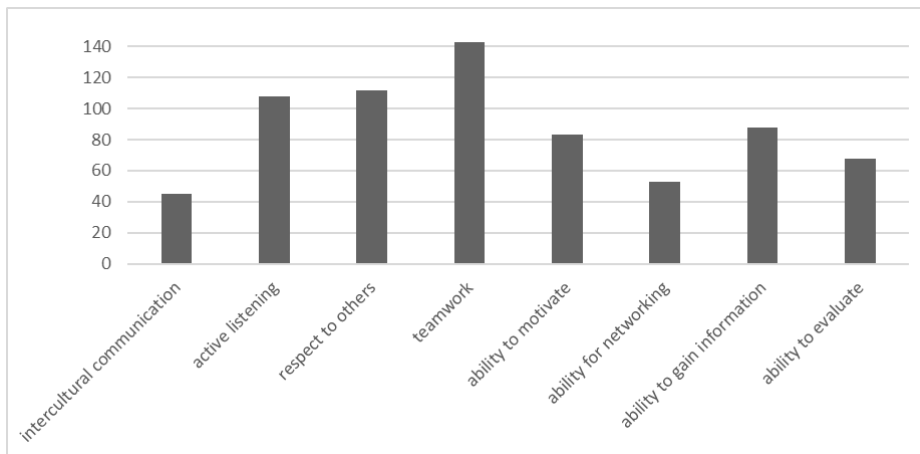
Source: own survey

Respondents stated that to be successful at their jobs, they mainly need independence, decisiveness, responsibility, stress management, logic thinking, communicativeness and language skills. It is possible to state that those are mostly self-management skills and skills related to communication at workplace. Contrary, the least important are innovativeness, creativity, detail orientation, adaptability, self-control and surprisingly performance. This result was further discussed with graduates in focus groups and respondents of focus groups stated that performance is expected from university graduates automatically and thus nobody pays attention to it.

Because of this result, we focus on communication skills and competencies in more detail in Figure 2. Again, respondents could mark more possible competencies from the list. The Figure 2 lists absolute frequencies of respondents' answers.

Results of Figure 2 indicates that within the communication skills, the most important competencies are teamwork, respect to others and active listening. The least mentioned by graduates were intercultural communication, ability to networking and ability to evaluate others. It is possible to see that the basic teamwork communication competencies are the most important. Specific competencies are used by lower number of graduates.

To be able to find relations between competencies listed as important by questioned graduates, correlation analysis was conducted. The relations between social competencies were studied. The results show significant groups of competencies important for current working place and labor market.

Figure 2: Importance of competencies for workplace

Source: own survey

First group was found in relation to the ability to decide regarding job tasks and management decision-making. Table 1 shows significant relations between decision making and sub competencies. Associations were found with logic thinking, communicativeness, target orientation, ethics, self-consciousness, stress management, intercultural communication and ability to motivate others.

Table 1: Competencies related to decision making

Pearson's correlation	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i> -value
Decision making – logic thinking	0.342	0.000
Decision making – communicativeness	0.311	0.000
Decision making – target orientation	0.455	0.000
Decision making – ethics	0.455	0.000
Decision making – self-consciousness	0.245	0.000
Decision making – stress management	0.258	0.000
Decision making – intercultural communication	0.246	0.000
Decision making – ability to motivate others	0.337	0.000

Source: own survey

From relations found in Table 1 it is possible to see that development of decision making also affects competencies listed in the table. Students, who are trained and developed in their decision making are focused also on their outputs (competencies target orientation, logic thinking, ethics), self-management (competencies self-consciousness, stress management) and are able to work in the team (competencies communicativeness, intercultural communication and ability to motivate others).

Second group was found in relation to logic thinking. Table 2 shows significant relations in this area. Logic thinking is related to competencies communicativeness, performance, language skills, detail orientation, self-consciousness, active listening, ability to motivate others, ability to gain information and ability to evaluate others.

Table 2: Competencies related to logic thinking

Pearson’s correlation	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i> -value
Logic thinking – communicativeness	0.309	0.000
Logic thinking – performance	0.258	0.000
Logic thinking – language skills	0.250	0.000
Logic thinking – detail orientation	0.235	0.001
Logic thinking – self-consciousness	0.232	0.001
Logic thinking – active listening	0.225	0.001
Logic thinking – ability to motivate others	0.223	0.001
Logic thinking – ability to gain information	0.255	0.000
Logic thinking – ability to evaluate others	0.241	0.002

Source: own survey

The competencies listed in Table 2 related to logic thinking can be divided into two groups. Those are output orientation (competencies performance, detail orientation, ability to gain information) and team orientation (competencies communicativeness, active listening, language skills, ability to motivate others, ability to evaluate others)

Third group is related to communication skills. It is possible to see in Table 3 that competencies related to communications can be again divided into three parts: orientation on outputs (competence target orientation, ability to gain information), orientation on self-management (competencies self-consciousness, adaptability) and abilities to work in the team (competencies intercultural communication, active listening, ability to networking, ability to evaluate others).

Table 3: Competencies related to communication skills

Pearson’s correlation	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i> -value
Communicativeness – target orientation	0.202	0.004
Communicativeness – ethics	0.243	0.000
Communicativeness – adaptability	0.267	0.000
Communicativeness – self-consciousness	0.288	0.000
Communicativeness – intercultural communication	0.207	0.003
Communicativeness – active listening	0.264	0.000
Communicativeness – ability to networking	0.221	0.001
Communicativeness – ability to gain information	0.229	0.001
Communicativeness – ability to evaluate others	0.203	0.004

Source: own survey

Fourth significant group of significant competencies was found in relation to self-consciousness. Table 4 shows competencies related to self-consciousness are mainly related to skills and abilities to work in team (intercultural communication, respect to others, ability to motivate others, ability to evaluate others).

Table 4: Competencies related to self-consciousness

Pearson's correlation	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i> -value
Self-consciousness – intercultural communication	0.218	0.002
Self-consciousness – respect to others	0.215	0.002
Self-consciousness – ability to motivate others	0.224	0.001
Self-consciousness – ability to gain information	0.209	0.003
Self-consciousness – ability to evaluate others	0.341	0.000

Source: own survey

The results can be summarized that outputs shown there are four main groups of competencies: competencies related to decision making, logic thinking, communication and self-consciousness. Each group of competencies shown inclination to three main areas, which formed the resultant factors affecting preferences of development in higher education.

Three main factors of competencies needed in workplace, which was confirmed by already working graduates who responded to conducted survey. These factors are abilities to achieve results, abilities related to self-management and abilities to work in the team.

V. Discussion

Nowadays, when the employment issue represents the foundation stone of the whole society, the employment possibilities represent the most important predator of the contentment with the university education. The question how universities can better prepare their graduates for the job market becomes more and more the key one. In his study, Monteiro (2020) assessed the competencies developed during the university studies and the employment rate, and he states that the research results confirm career adaptability to play a profound role in self-perception, self-evaluation and employability of a particular person. Although academic competencies form a certain prediction of employability, the results showed that the university graduates should be equipped by the tools of the career management. Simultaneously, the results have shown that it is important to improve the competencies gained. This means that the universities should support gaining competencies by their integrating into the students' professional preparation and the real-life situations (Monteiro, 2020). Bogren et al. (2020) mentions in his study that university programmes of both bachelor's and master's type should be designed within the international context in such a way, so that they meet a particular international standard given. He states that the programmes should be put together in such a way, so that both the students of bachelor's programmes and the students of master's programmes could

achieve as high level of the competencies as possible, and then follow it up and further improve the competencies.

The presented study shows that students' preferred competencies and their levels differs, as stated by Pintrich (2003). Students are in most cases outcome-oriented, but each of them prefers different outcome. But the goal of all of them is to increase their employability, as previously mentioned by Glover, Law and Youngman (2002) or Wharton, Goodwin and Cameron (2014). As found in this paper, students prefer development of competencies related to their decision making, logic thinking, communication and self-consciousness. These areas are significantly related to important skills and competencies needed at workplace, such as networking, listening, motivating and evaluating others, gaining information, self-management and ethics.

The critical thinking, assessment and argumentation are key kinds of knowledge the students and graduates should take from the university studies into the work process with them (Forbes, 2018), for it is the arguments or proposals assessment activity and consequently making the conclusions, which can lead to forming convictions and realising activities necessary for achieving the goals. In this connection, the ability to give, but also accept feedback belongs to desirable competencies (Baird, Parayitam, 2019; Griffin, Coelho, 2019; Griffin, Annulis, 2013).

Feedback is fundamental for the development of logical and critical thinking and it is assessed positively also by students and graduates (Forbes, 2018). The ability to work with feedback depends on the individual's ability to conclude, think logically and project his/her judgements into the problem situations solving process and into choosing the final decision. The decision-making ability is so connected with the individual's ability to defend his/her own decision in the field of communication with others (Tai, Ajjawi, Boud et al., 2018).

It is possible to agree with Fryer et al. (2016) that the main benefit of higher education perceived by students is the vision of a future wealth and security, gaining further competences and experience, by the acquisition of a university degree. Furthermore, according to Merriam and Brockett (2007), surveyed students/graduates are mostly learning-oriented (highly important are gained knowledge, competences or abilities). It is also possible to agree with Sheldon and Elliot (1999) that self-concordance of study aims, and applicability of lessons learned is very important for students and this leads to greater efforts to achieve these goals.

We may summarize that students should be taught appropriate competences during their studies. The overall performance of graduates is dependent on the acquisition of competencies, skills and abilities during their studies, which was also found by Mocanu, Zamfir and Pirciog (2014).

Researches (e.g. Coetzee, Ferreira, Potgieter, 2015; Faber, López, Prescher, 2012) show, also supported by results of this study, that a graduate is successful at work and his/her employability on the job market is high, if he or she has all these competencies mentioned altogether, i.e. the ability to solve problems and make quality decisions, to think logically, to collect and analyse the information, to communicate well and to motivate others (to have skills in social relationships) and if he or she has ethical consciousness and is able to act and

behave ethically. However, if we focus directly on decision-making and consider it from the point of view of the competencies, which the decision-maker should have, then we should mention following eight competencies (Passow, Passow, 2017): he or she should be able to communicate effectively, coordinate the effort, take initiative, gain information, define limits, think creatively, make a decision and plan the whole process. Coetzee, Ferreira, Potgieter (2015) then especially stress the decision-maker's – the graduate's ability to be oriented on achieving the goal, together with the whole-life education to be the key factor for the success.

VI. Conclusion

This paper shows perceptions of business university graduates towards social competencies gained through their studies at case university. Results shown there are four main groups of competencies: competencies related to decision making, logic thinking, communication and self-consciousness. Examination of graduates' interest identified factors affecting preferences of development in higher education: (1) abilities to achieve results, (2) abilities related to self-management and (3) abilities to work in the team.

The first factor includes competencies performance, detail orientation, ability to gain information. Second factor consists of competencies self-consciousness, stress management. Third factor is formed by competencies intercultural communication, respect to others, ability to motivate others, ability to evaluate others.

The identified factors should be followed in university education and development to fill expectation of current graduates, society and labor market.

The topic of this paper is currently highly relevant for curricula development. The article also reflects the progress in career development of graduates. The limit of this paper is its focus on one case business university in the Czech Republic, but the results are presented as a case study. The results are representative for graduates of the searched university.

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