
The Evolution of Perceptions of Competency in the Literature

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Abstract:

Purpose: The following article is an attempt to classify and systematize the concept of competency on the basis of the available and analyzed literature, according to various currents and criteria that allow to look at competency from different perspectives.

Design/Methodology/Approach: In the scientific and business community there are many approaches, definitions and views on competency, which shows the importance and complexity of the issue, but also indicates the problem of unification of the concept. The most important and commonly used divisions are presented, their analysis is made, and an attempt is made to clarify the concept of "competency".

Findings:

Practical Implications: Competencies are growing into one of the most important areas of interest in the business or management community. They are becoming the most important parameter describing the value of an employee in the labor market, his success and, consequently, the success and success of the company.

Originality/value:

Keywords: Evolution, competency, competencies, competency structure, skills, qualifications (competence).

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1. Introduction

Competencies in scientific considerations are an important part of knowledge related to the effectiveness, as well as the efficiency of any employee.

They are gaining even more value in the eyes of employers, especially in companies focused on viewing the employee as the most important value-added factor for the company. There is an increasing uptake of predispositions, qualities, advantages, abilities that are expected of employees, managers or executives.

Often in everyday language, the above phrases are synonymous with competency, but is this in line with accepted paradigms? In the considerations undertaken, the authors carried out a consideration in proving that competency has a broader meaning.

As a concept, they have been used and defined raptly for several decades. In the early days having many meanings, describing various phenomena, and most often inaccurately associated with formal qualifications (or competence) to perform certain functions or hold certain positions. In recent years, more and more attention has been paid to them.

The reason for this state of affairs is the greater scale of empirical research and the increase in knowledge, which translates into an increased awareness that competencies are of key importance for the development of enterprises, employees of society and the economy for which they have become an important capital, and largely determine their success.

The purpose of this article is an attempt to describe the changes that have taken place in the field of competencies, to determine their meaning, the evolution of definitions over the years in order to systematize knowledge. The authors focused on describing the concept of "competency" as it has been defined so far, what it is and what it is today.

2. Materials and Methods

The term competency dates back to the 13th century, and over the past 200 years has been used mainly in legal, administrative and military contexts³. It is derived from the Latin word "competentia", which refers to the action or meaning "is authorized to judge" or "has the right to speak"⁴.

³J. Erpenbeck, L. Rosenstiel, *Handbuch Kompetenzmessung, Schäffer-Pöschel, Stuttgart, 2007, s. 18.*

⁴G. Caupin i in., *ICB – IPMA Competence Baseline, International Project Management Association, 2006.*

However, according to M. Fügemann, the concept of competency dates back to the ancient Roman period and referred to Roman law⁵. Since 1960, researchers also began to use the term in the social sciences and in communication studies⁶.

It should be noted that as early as 1911, F. Taylor, in his work *The Principles of Scientific Management*⁷, raised questions about the skills of employees, their relationship to their work and professional development, which in later years formed the basis of works on competency.

J. Flanagan, in a 1954 article, singled out skills as an important defining element of human potential, considering the means by which people solve problems that arise, he concluded that in "a situation in which the purpose and intentions of the person taking an action are obvious to the person observing it, and the consequences of that action are sufficiently apparent so that there is no doubt about the results to which the event has led"⁸. Consequently, he described and linked the effects of actions to the means of action.

Almost until the end of the 1950s, the dominant approach was to see skills as a trait that defines a person's potential. Over time, the conceptual plane was expanded and referred to as competency.

Despite the fact that professional competency became the subject of deeper research in only the final two decades of the twentieth century, as early as 1959 R. White defined the concept of competency as "an acquired skill, that is, a behavior that leads to the building of the ability to grasp, hold and let go of objects effectively, to name one example, is not a random behavior resulting from widespread excess energy. It is a focused, selective, persistent and continued action taken not because it serves primary motives that cannot actually work until they are perfected, but because the action satisfies an inherent need to deal with the environment"⁹.

Since the entry into force of the concept of competency, there are more and more new definitions more or less elaborate to describe competency, while also using interchangeably close terms such as skills, behavior, qualifications, abilities,

⁵M. W. Fügemann, *Zuständigkeit als Organisationsrechtliche Kategorie*. W K. Stern, & P J Tettinger (red.), *Studien zum Öffentlichen Recht und zur Verwaltungslehre*. Monachium: Verlag Vahlen, 2004, s. 140.

⁶M. Jana-Tröller, *Arbeitsübergreifende Kompetenzen älterer Arbeitnehmer: eine qualitative Studie in einem Telekommunikationsunternehmen*, Wiesbaden 2009, Springer, s. 47.

⁷F. W. Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management*, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1911.

⁸J. C. Flanagan, *The Critical Incident Technique*, *Psychological Bulletin*, VOL. 51, No. 4 JULY, 1954, s. 327-358.

⁹R. W. White, *Motivation reconsidered: The concept of competence*, *Psychological Review*, 1959, no 66, s.318.

aptitudes, talents, which make it difficult to clearly capture competency and provide one comprehensive, generally accepted definition of competency.

Issues of competency began to be addressed more broadly in the 1980s, separating them from acquired skills, such as knowledge acquired in the process of education, skills acquired in the course of education and career, as well as qualifications acquired in the course of one's personal development, assimilated through differences in positions held and jobs performed.

Researchers point out that when writing about competencies, it should be strongly emphasized, and constantly reiterated, that competencies are not the same as qualifications.

Competencies are a set of behaviors, abilities, skills, innate, acquired, allowing you to perform assigned duties better, faster, easier and cope with emerging problems and difficulties in specific situations, ensure the success of the implementation of assigned tasks with the best possible result, and importantly are immeasurable. One can measure the effect of having competencies, high or low, but not the competencies themselves. It also seems inappropriate to narrow the concept of competency to the performance of an employee, or specific jobs.

Qualifications, on the other hand, should be seen as education, knowledge, experience supported by certificates, diplomas, certificates or certifications confirmed by specific institutions.

F. Delamare Le Deist and J. Winterton argue that the concept of skills and qualifications and used inconsistently and should refer in the case of "skill" to behavioral areas, and in the case of "qualification" generally to functional areas¹⁰.

Qualifications are acquired by fulfilling formal requirements, graduating from certain schools, universities, courses, training, often crowned with an official exam confirming the successful completion and completion of education, training and acquisition of formal knowledge and skills, and thus are measurable in some way. The term competency - is a behavioral approach, refers to the behavior of an employee that enables him to achieve high work performance¹¹. Qualifications - is a functional term, referring to the ability to achieve the minimum standards of established goals.

Competency refers to the ability to perform a specific task. Some may use the term as another word for "professional skills." Competency can also refer to the behavior

¹⁰F. Delamare le Deist, J. Winterton, *What is competence?*, „*Human Resource Development International*”, Vol. 8, No. 1, 27 – 46, March 2005, s. 27-46.

¹¹K. Szczepańska-Woszczyzna, *Kompetencje menedżerskie w kontekście innowacyjności przedsiębiorstwa*, PWN, Warszawa, 2016, s. 57.

itself, as well as how a person achieves skills. Any person can attain many competencies after training or studying in a particular area or company in a process referred to as lifelong learning.

Qualifications, on the other hand, are defined as the ability to generally understand and perform anything at a basic level. It refers to knowledge and a general state of being. Qualification, usually includes skills related to learning and understanding. It also includes standards for measuring skills or knowledge.

They also refer to the ability to understand activities or knowledge at different times in life. That is, it occurs at different stages of life as one grows older, learns new things, meets new people and experiences new environments. It also includes understanding basic responsibilities or requirements for action at each stage of life or career.

Due to the frequent but also erroneous use of the definitions and terms competencies and qualifications interchangeably, resulting from the similarity of terms in English, it is important to point out the differences between the two. Competencies in Polish are mostly used in the plural similar to the terms door or pants. However, in contrast to them, competency in Polish is in the singular-competency, just like in English.

The problem probably stems from the difficulty in translating the English words competency, competencies, competence, competencys, which are uniformly translated by translators as one term: competency, or rather should be contextually translated as: competency- singular competency, competencies-plural competency, competence-singular qualification, competences-plural qualification.

When we talk about a person's competencies, it usually refers to that person's skills or activities, referring to how a person achieves qualifications. When, on the other hand, we talk about a person's qualifications, it usually refers to what a person knows, or his or her general knowledge of a particular subject.

Qualification is a general state of knowledge or understanding of something. It means that someone usually performs some action to achieve that knowledge. People may refer to competency as action because it refers to someone's ability or performance in a particular situation. It means that a person has the knowledge and skills required to do his or her job. An employee demonstrates competency by revealing the ability to perform those skills.

Competency and qualification also differ in their meanings when referring to skill level. Competency means a person's more advanced ability and skills to perform a task. It means that they perform the task better than the average person or a person with a so-called basic qualification. It can also refer to the behavior of the person performing the task, such as the training they have received to perform the activity to the best of their ability.

Qualification means the basic ability of someone to perform an activity. It means that the person performs the activity as well as the average person.

The authors cite the view of T. Teodorescu, for whom the concepts of competency and qualification are not the same and it is wrong to overlook the differences between them¹². He also made his comparative analysis of the concepts in question in terms of definition, model, resulates and application.

Professionals use the words competency or competencies more often than people in general environments, because they use these words to refer to specific training and behavior relevant to the job. These words often describe a behavior or training that a person has learned to achieve a certain standard. People in general environments tend to use the word competent more often, because this word refers to the average person's ability and knowledge of a general task. It can refer to any general task, while professionals often use the word competency to refer to advanced training.

In the legal community, competency refers to someone's ability to actively participate in and understand the proceedings of a trial. This can include defendants, prosecutors, witnesses and jury members. If someone is mentally unfit to stand trial, the court may refer to them as 'legally incompetent' (legally incompetent). Officials may refer to people with minimal or no mental problems as mentally competent and capable of standing trial¹³.

R. Zemke points out "competency, competencies, competency models or competencies-based training are words that can mean whatever the person uttering them has in mind. The root of this problem is not malice, stupidity or marketing greed, but rather the fundamental procedural and philosophical differences that exist among those attempting to define these terms and develop their concept. These people seek to develop a model that will enable us all to use competency"¹⁴.

It is worth emphasizing at this point that the term "competency" like the term "qualifications" in most considerations is used in the plural, which indicates that we are not concerned with one single competency (just as in most situations it is not a single qualification but a set of them) but with their sum that creates value, the power of competencies resulting from complementary and mutually reinforcing¹⁵.

¹²T. Teodorescu, *Competence versus competency. What is the difference?*, "Performance Improvement", Vol. 45, No. 10, Nov/Dec, 2006, s. 27-29.

¹³Zespół redakcyjny Indeed, *Competence vs. Competency: What's the Difference?*, 2021, tłumaczenie własne. <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/competence-vs-competency>.

¹⁴R. Zemke, *Job competencies: Can they help you design better training?*, "Training" 1982, 19/5, s. 29.

¹⁵A. Piwowarczyk, *Kompetencje komunikacji międzykulturowej. Rozwój kompetencji przyszłych ekonomistów i menedżerów*, C. H. Beck, Warszawa 2020, s. 11-14.

F. Delamare Le Deist and J. Winterton argue that the concept of competencies as qualifications and competencies as skills is used inconsistently and should refer in the case of "competency-qualification" generally to functional areas, and in the case of "competency-skill" to behavioral areas¹⁶.

In the analyzed literature there are statements that there are more than four hundred definitions of competencies¹⁷. This is probably due to the far-reaching ambiguity of the word competencies and the resulting different understandings of the concept, the lack of a clear line between competency and qualification. On the one hand, being competent as being effective in action, successfully achieving the goal, the intended effect, and on the other hand, competency as a skill, a possessed ability.

According to C. Gonsalvez and F. Calvert, the reason for this situation is the interest in qualifications and competencies by different scientific disciplines¹⁸, E. Page, C. Hood and M. Lodge believe that the reason is the different approaches that are emerging in the US, and Europe¹⁹, and Ł. Haromszeki sees differences in the way different sectors of the economy, both private and public are viewed²⁰.

S. Whiddett and S. Hollyforde point out, however, that precision in defining competencies and the avoidance of ambiguity is a prerequisite for the smooth functioning of the system of professional competency management²¹.

3. Results and Discussion

The article presents the definitions in chronological order of the most commonly used and most relevant to reality, as well as the closest to the concept.

D. McClelland 1953, first recognized the human trait, which he called "competency," and was the first to start using the concept and the concept of

¹⁶F. Delamare le Deist, J. Winterton, *What is competence?*, „*Human Resource Development International*”, Vol. 8, No. 1, 27 – 46, March 2005, s. 27-46.

¹⁷Z. Antczak, *Kwalifikacje a kompetencje (rozdawiania metodologiczno-systematyzujące)*, za S. Witkowski i T. Listwan (red.), *Kompetencje a sukces zarządzania organizacją*. Difin, Warszawa, 2008, s. 15–18.

¹⁸C. J. Gonsalvez, F. L. Calvert, *Competency-based Models of Supervision: Principles and Applications, Promises and Challenges*, (w:) „*Australian Psychologist*”, Vol. 49, 2014, s. 201.

¹⁹E. Page, C. Hood, M. Lodge, *Conclusion: Is competency management a pasiona fad?*, *Public Administration*, vol. 83, no. 4, 2005.

²⁰Ł. Haromszeki, *Expected features and the behavior of talented leaders in the three sectors of the Polish economy in context with other Central-Eastern European Countries*, *Journal of Intercultural Management*, vol. 6, no. 4, 2014.

²¹S. Whiddett, S. Hollyforde, *Modele kompetencyjne w zarządzaniu zasobami ludzkimi*, *Oficyna Ekonomiczna*, Kraków 2003.

competency widely and disseminated in the 1970s²², stating that in assessing competency, it is more appropriate to analyze the behavior of the employee who achieves the best dimensions when performing certain jobs. As a result of his research, he concluded that professional success is not determined by a strict and direct relationship between qualities such as intelligence quotient, personality type or level of education, but other qualities which he termed competencies.

According to D. McClelland, a competent employee is one who has knowledge of how to achieve a set goal, knows what actions to take to achieve that goal and is determined to behave in a certain way. He states that three determinants make up the competencies model: knowledge, skills, motivation.

Knowledge, which can be divided into declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge: declarative is knowledge of facts, people and situations, while procedural means knowledge of procedures, techniques, problem solving. Skills, on the other hand, are the ability to use knowledge in practice, that is, to apply it to specific situations in a smooth and flexible manner that ensures the achievement of the goal. Attitudes, on the other hand, are the maintenance of behaviors derived from knowledge and skills. Attitudes trigger the mechanisms responsible for initiating, directing and maintaining actions²³.

It should be mentioned that earlier, in 1965, Noam Chomsky "devoted attention to mental abilities of the nature of intuitive and unconscious knowledge,... competency refers to something psychological or mental (in the mind/brain of the individual)"²⁴. Skills as an element of competencies were defined in 1980 by G. Klem describing them as "the basic qualities of a person, which qualities determine the effective performance of tasks and achieving above-average results"²⁵.

Another approach in defining competency was pioneered by R. Boyatzis in 1982. The concept of competency definition presented by him stating that: "competency is the potential that exists in a person, leading to such behavior that contributes to the satisfaction of the requirements of the job within the parameters of the organization's environment, which in turn produces the desired results."²⁶, while pointing to threshold competencies, which are basic to perform a specific job, and competencies

²²D. C. McClelland, *Testing for competence rather than for "intelligence"*, *American Psychologist*, No. 28, 1973, s. 1–14.

²³J. Rzepala, *Kompetencje Indywidualne i Organizacyjne w Zarządzaniu Projektami-Ujęcie Systemowe*, *Zeszyty Naukowe Politechniki Śląskiej, Seria: Organizacja I Zarządzanie* z. 114, Nr kol. 1993–2017, s. 420.

²⁴A. B. Żurek, *Model Kompetencji Językowej Noama Chomsky'ego*, *Wrocławskie Naukowe Rozprawy Komisji Językowej XXXII*, Wrocław, 2006, s. 49.

²⁵G. O. Klem Jr, *The Assessment of Occupational Competence. Report to the National Institute of Education, National Institute of Education, Washington, 1980, s. 23.*

²⁶R. E. Boyatzis, *The Competent Manager: A Model for Effective Performance*, *John Wiley and Sons, New York 1982, s.18.*

related to related to activities that distinguish high performance from low performance. His concept of competency is the closest to the concepts and definitions created and developed so far and most accurately reflects the meaning of the modern understanding of competency, and equally importantly indicates that competency is not equivalent to qualification.

H. Evarts defined competency as "the basic characteristic of a manager that contributes to better performance at work"²⁷.

According to B. Hogg "competencies are the qualities of a manager that lead to the demonstration of skills and abilities that result in effective performance within a professional area. Competency also means the ability to transfer skills and abilities from one area to another"²⁸.

D. Hornby and R. Thomas indicate that "competency is the ability to perform management functions effectively in a work situation"²⁹.

In a similar vein, L. Spencer and S. Spencer define competency by stating that it is "a basic characteristic of a person, which shows a causal relationship with the work effectiveness measured according to accepted criteria and above-average performance of the person in the course of a given task or in a specific situation"³⁰.

D. Ulrich, T. Jick, and M. von Glinow, M. view "competencies as the skills, abilities, knowledge and qualities required to perform a job effectively"³¹.

D. Thierry, Ch. Sauret, N. Monod, describe competency as "the ability of an employee to act to achieve an intended goal under given conditions by specific means; it is also the totality of knowledge, skills, attitudes, experience and readiness of the employee to act under certain conditions, including the ability to adapt to changes in these conditions"³².

According to C. Page, M. Wilson, D. Kolb, "competencies can be defined as the skills, abilities and personal qualities needed by an 'effective' or 'better' manager.

²⁷H. Evarts, *The Competency Programme of the American Management Association. Journal of Management Development*, 7, 1988, s. 48-56.

²⁸B. Hogg, *Realizing the Potential of Your Employees through Assessment and Development*, London 1989, Tata- McGraw-Hill Training Series.

²⁹D. Hornby, R. Thomas, *Toward a Better Standard of Management. Personnel Management*, 1989, 21 (1), s. 52-55.

³⁰L. M. Spencer, S. M. Spencer, *Competence at Work*, Wiley, New York 1993, s. 9.

³¹D. Ulrich, T. Jick, M. von Glinow, *High impact learning: building and diffusing learning Capability, Organizational Dynamics*, Autumn 1993, s. 52-60.

³²D. Thierry, C. H. Sauret, N. Monod, *Zatrudnienie i kompetencje w przedsiębiorstwach w procesach zmian, Poltext, Warszawa 1994*, s. 6.

This definition emphasizes both explicit (e.g., knowledge and skills) and hidden (e.g., personal qualities), detectable and testable competencies"³³.

T. Gilbert states, "defining competency - as the state of being competent refers to having the ability to consistently produce the results (valuable behavioral outcomes) that are required to most effectively and efficiently achieve larger organizational goals"³⁴.

S. Pary states that "competencies are a set of interrelated knowledge, skills and attitudes that are central to a person's job role and responsibilities, that are associated with job performance, that can be measured against well-set standards and that can be strengthened through training and development"³⁵.

In contrast, C. Levy-Leboyer characterizes competency as follows "competency refers to the integrated use of abilities, personality traits, as well as acquired knowledge and skills, in order to bring about the successful execution of a complex mission within an enterprise. They represent a specific category of individual characteristics that are closely linked to value systems and acquired knowledge"³⁶, and further adds "Competencies are a set of behaviors that certain individuals master better than others, making them perform more efficiently in a particular situation"³⁷.

J. Woodall and D. Winstanley state that "competencies are skills, knowledge and its application, traits, values, beliefs and attitudes that lead to good performance in a specific context, situation or role"³⁸.

A. Carroll, J. McCrackin define "competencies as the knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes and behaviors that ensure excellent job performance under specific conditions"³⁹.

T. Athey and M. Orth, point out that competencies refer to "...a set of observable performance dimensions, including individual knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors, as well as collective team, process and organizational capabilities that are

³³C. Page, M. Wilson, D. Kolb, *Management competencies in New Zealand : on the inside, looking in?*, Ministry of Commerce, Wellington [N.Z.], 1994, s. 5.

³⁴T. Gilbert, *Human competence*. Silver Spring, MD: International Society for Performance Improvement, 1996.

³⁵S. B. Parry, *The quest for competencies*. *Training*, 33(7), 1996, s. 48-56.

³⁶C. Levy-Leboyer, *Kierowanie kompetencjami*, Poltext, Warszawa 1997, s. 21.

³⁷*Ibidem*, s. 32.

³⁸J. Woodall, D. Winstanley, *Management Development: Strategy and Practice*, Blackwell, Oxford 1998.

³⁹A. Carroll, J. McCrackin, *The competent Use of Competency-Based Strategies for Selection and Development*, *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, 11 (3), 1998, s. 45-63.

associated with high performance and provide an organization with a sustainable competitive advantage"⁴⁰.

B. Mansfield defines "competencies as a set of characteristics of a person that determine what kind of results he or she achieves in his or her work, good or above average"⁴¹.

M. Armstrong, equally succinctly writes that "competencies represent the potential to contribute to the achievement of specific, measurable results"⁴².

F. E. Weinert defines competencies as "cognitive abilities and skills available or learnable from individuals to solve specific problems, as well as related motivational, volitional and social dispositions, and the ability to use solutions to problems effectively and responsibly in a variety of situations"⁴³.

According to J. Buford, and J. Lindner, a competency includes a validated decision-making tool correlated with a specific group of activities that describes the key knowledge, skills and abilities needed to perform those activities⁴⁴.

N. Rankin links competencies to employee performance, pointing out that they are used to determine the expected results of a person's actions, as well as how to perform the tasks, and competencies can serve as a common commonly understood way of describing expected job performance⁴⁵.

B. Becker and M. Huselid briefly define "Competencies are knowledge, skills, abilities or personality traits that directly affect the results of a person's work performance"⁴⁶.

D. Dubois and R. Rothwell in 2003 defined competencies as "a person's qualities that he or she uses appropriately and consistently to achieve expected results. These qualities include knowledge, skills, certain aspects of self-perception, social behavior, character traits, thought patterns, attitudes and ways of thinking, feeling and acting"⁴⁷.

⁴⁰T. Athey, M. Orth, *Emerging Comptency Methods for the future. Human Resource Management*, 38(3), 1999, s. 215–226.

⁴¹B. Mansfield, *What is „Competence” all about?*, *Competency nr 6 (3)*, 1999, s. 24-28.

⁴²M. Armstrong, *Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi*, Dom Wydawniczy ABC, Kraków 2000, s. 241.

⁴³F. E. Weinert, *Leistungsmessungen in Schulen*, Weinheim/Basel 2001, s. 27.

⁴⁴J. A. Buford Jr., J. R. Lindner, *Human resource management in local government: Concepts and applications for students and practitioners*, Southwestern. Cincinnati 2002.

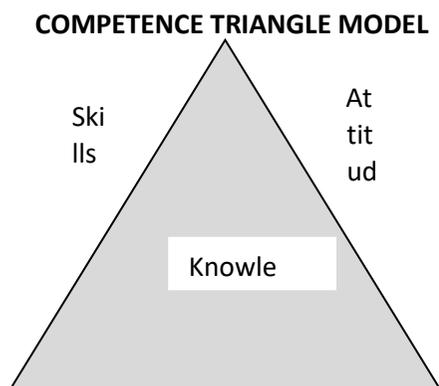
⁴⁵N. Rankin, *Raising performance throught people: the ninth competency survey*, „*Competency and Emotional Intelligence*”, 2002, January, s. 2-21.

⁴⁶B. E. Becker, M. A. Huselid, *Karta wyników zarządzania zasobami ludzkimi*, Oficyna Ekonomiczna, Kraków 2002, s. 162.

⁴⁷D. D. Dubois, W. J. Rothwell, *Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi oparte na kompetencjach*, Helion, Gliwice 2008, s. 32.

With the above formulation of the concept of competency, they created a universal, widely used and accepted definition which inspired the creation of a competency model based on knowledge, skills and attitudes described as the Competency Triangle Model.

Figure 1. *The classic triangle of competency*



Source: *Own elaboration based on J. Ciszewski, Trójkąt kompetencyjny w public relations: umiejętności, postawy, wiedza, 2018, <https://publicrelations.pl/trojkat-kompetencyjny-w-public-relations-umiejtnosci-postawy-wiedza/>.*

S. Whiddett and S. Hollyforde, on the other hand, state that competency: "in terms of work performance, is a set of characteristics of a person, which consists of elements characteristic of that person, such as motivation, personality traits, skills, self-esteem related to the related to functioning in a group, and the knowledge that this person has acquired and uses"⁴⁸.

S. Jackson, R. Schuler capture skills as the knowledge, abilities and other characteristics that a person needs to perform a job effectively⁴⁹.

According to D. Rychen and L. Salganik, competencies are "the potential to successfully cope with complex demands in a specific context by mobilizing psychological premises"⁵⁰.

Ch. Woodruffe states that the word "competencies is a set of behavioral patterns that a person must exhibit in order to carry out assigned tasks and functions in accordance with qualifications"⁵¹.

⁴⁸S. Whiddett, S. Hollyforde, *Modele kompetencyjne w zarządzaniu zasobami ludzkimi. Oficyna Ekonomiczna, Kraków 2003, s. 13.*

⁴⁹S. E. Jackson, R. S. Schuler, *Managing Human Resources through Strategic Partnerships, South-Western, Mason, OH, 2003.*

⁵⁰D. S. Rychen, L. H. Salganik, *A holistic model of competence. In D.S. Rychen and L. H. Salganik (eds.), Defining and selecting key competencies. Hogrefe & Huber, Seattle 2003, s. 41-62.*

N. Gangani, G. McLean, A. Braden see competencies as a mixture of knowledge, skills, abilities, motivations, beliefs, values and interests⁵².

F. Draganidis and G. Mentzas write about competencies: "Competencies are those direct and indirect skills and behaviors that enable individuals to perform tasks or assigned roles effectively"⁵³.

R. Chung, and C. Lo state: "Competencies are the skills, knowledge and abilities that individuals should possess when performing assigned tasks or achieving goals"⁵⁴.

G. Steward and G. Brown define "competencies are the qualities and abilities that people need to perform their duties effectively and achieve success in work tasks"⁵⁵.

Other studies define that "competency means the ability to perform according to the standards expected in employment: it is a combination of practical and thinking skills, experience, knowledge and personal behavioral and understanding ... competency describes the knowledge or skills that a person should have in order to perform the assigned task"⁵⁶.

S. Krumm and I. Mertin see "...competencies as a set of abilities, skills and other characteristics that contributes causally to a person's ability to handle effectively in complex (work) situations effectively"⁵⁷. However, they point out that this "set" can be developed through learning and experience⁵⁸.

In the opinion of V. S. Chouhan and S. Srivastava "competencies include a set of success factors necessary to achieve important results in a specific job or professional role in a particular organization. Success factors are combinations of

⁵¹Ch. Woodruffe, *Ośrodki oceny i rozwoju. Narzędzia analizy i doskonalenia kompetencji pracowników, Oficyna Ekonomiczna, Dom Wydawniczy ABC, Kraków 2003, s. 92-94.*

⁵²N. Gangani, G. N. McLean, R. A. Braden, *A competency-based human resources development strategy*, (w:) "Performance Improvement Quarterly", Vol. 19. No 1, 2006.

⁵³F. Draganidis, G. Mentzas, *Competency based management: A review of systems and approaches, Information management & computer security, 2006.*

⁵⁴R. G. Chung, C. L. Lo, *The development of teamwork competence questionnaire: Using students of business administration department as an example. International Journal of Technology and Engineering Education, 2007, s. 55-57.*

⁵⁵G. L. Steward, K. G. Brown, *Human Resource Management. Linking Strategy to Practice, John Wiley Sans, USA 2009, s.134.*

⁵⁶Ch. Sakhardande, autor techniczny, *Guidelines for Competency Management Systems for Downstream and Petroleum Sites, Petroleum Industry Association Ltd, published by Cogent, 2011.*

⁵⁷S. Krumm, I. Mertin, *Kompetenzmodelle. In W. Sarges (Hrsg.), Management-Diagnostik, Hogrefe, Göttingen 2013, s. 491-499.*

⁵⁸S. Krumm, I. Mertin, C. Dries, *Kompetenzmodelle. Hogrefe, Göttingen 2012, s. 3.*

knowledge, skills and abilities that are described in terms of specific behaviors that are demonstrated by top performers in these jobs or job roles"⁵⁹.

For J. Erpenbeck, competency is "...the self-organizing, creative capacity of individuals or collective entities, especially the core competencies of companies and organizations"⁶⁰.

B. Sieber-Suter, K. Reinhardt, K. North⁶¹, J. Wollersheim and I. Welpé⁶² define competency as the ability to "...act in a self-organizing, situationally appropriate and responsible."

B. Brand comes up with a rather simple definition. He presents competencies "as a summary of skills, abilities, knowledge and know-how"⁶³. In doing so, he specifies that knowledge is understood as "the body of knowledge and skills that individuals use to solve problems"⁶⁴, and qualifications are the disposition of knowledge and skills confirmed by certificates⁶⁵.

Other researchers recommend not to talk about competencies, but only about the characteristics of requirements⁶⁶. For example, the already cited S. Krumm, I. Mertin and C. Dries are of the opinion that the concept of competencies is not necessary, while the concepts of skills and abilities are sufficient⁶⁷. Some authors, for various reasons, completely reject the term competencies⁶⁸.

⁵⁹V. S. Chouhan, S. Srivastava, *Understanding Competencies and Competency Modeling — A Literature Survey*, *IOSR Journal of Business and Management e-ISSN: 2278-487X, p-ISSN: 2319-7668. Volume 16, Issue 1. Ver. I, 2014, s. 16.*

⁶⁰J. Erpenbeck, „Kompetenzen“, *Die Zeitschrift*, III/2014, s. 20-21.

⁶¹B. Sieber-Suter, K. Reinhardt, K. North, *Kompetenzmanagement in der Praxis: Mitarbeiterkompetenzen systematisch identifizieren, nutzen und entwickeln*, Springer, Wiesbaden, V, 2018.

⁶²J. Wollersheim, I. M. Welpé, *Kompetenz versus Dynamic Capability - Unterschiede und Gemeinsamkeiten zweier verwandter Konzepte*. In E. Barthel, A. Hanft, J. Hasebrook (Hrsg.), *Integriertes Kompetenzmanagement – Innovationsstrategien als Aufgabe der Organisations- und Personalentwicklung*, Waxmann, Münster 2011, s. 53-65.

⁶³B. Brand, *Die Relevanz von Talenten für ein wirksames Führen*, Springer Fachmedien, Wiesbaden 2020, s. 29.

⁶⁴G. Probst, S. Raub, K. Romhardt, *Wissen managen: Wie Unternehmen ihre wertvollste Ressource optimal nutzen*, Springer Gabler, Wiesbaden 2012, s. 23.

⁶⁵S. Klimesch, *Kompetenz, Persönlichkeit und Berufserfolg in Zeiten organisationalen Wandels (Dissertation)*, Universität Wuppertal 2009, s. 6.

⁶⁶Ch. Woodruffe, *Development and assessment centres: identifying and assessing competence*, CIPD Publishing, London 2000.

⁶⁷S. Krumm, I. Mertin, C. Dries, *Kompetenzmodelle*. Hogrefe, Göttingen 2012, s. 3.

⁶⁸J. Rekus, *Kompetenz – ein neuer Bildungsbegriff*, In: *Engagement, Zeitschrift für Erziehung und Schule* 3/2007, s. 155-160.

Moreover, the term competencies is used - including in widely cited publications - without defining it more precisely^{69, 70, 71}. Due to the diversity in the use of concepts and definitions of competencies described in this chapter, it is certainly possible to speak of a great deal of conceptual blurring^{72, 73}.

J. Erpenbeck, I. von Rosenstiel, S. Grote, W. Sauter state "that there can not and will not be a "definitive concept of understanding competencies"⁷⁴, and J. Erpenbeck adds "to date there is no generally accepted definition of competencies - and there can be no such definition in view of the wealth of available knowledge"⁷⁵.

T. Thomas Batsching defines that "competencies are what people perceive them to be"⁷⁶.

The European Commission, on the other hand, defines them as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context⁷⁷.

As can be seen in the above definitions, there is no uniform definition of competency, and there is a big problem in developing one. It seems that one of the reasons is the problem of understanding and the very translation into other languages of the words competence, competences competency, competencies, which when translated very often mean the same thing.

In Poland, for example, these four terms are often translated as one term: competency, or alternatively with a distinction between the singular or plural:

⁶⁹M. J. Tippins, R. S. Sohi, *IT competency and firm performance is organizational learning a missing link. Strategic management Journal*, 24(8) 2003, s. 745-761.

⁷⁰R. Henderson, I. Cockburn, *Measuring competence? Exploring firm effects in pharmaceutical Research, Strategic management journal*, 15(S1), 1994, s. 63-84.

⁷¹C. A. Prado da Silva Jr, Fontenele H. B., Rodrigues da Silva A. N., *Transportation engineering education for undergraduate students: Competencies, skills, teaching-learning, and evaluation, Journal of Professional Issues in Engineering Education and Practice*, 141(3), 2014.

⁷²D. C. Galunic, S. Rodan, *Resource recombinations in the firm knowledge structures and the potential for Schumpeterian innovation, Strategic Management Journal*, 19(12), 1998, s. 1193-1201.

⁷³B. Brand, *Die Relevanz von Talenten für ein wirksames Führen, Springer Fachmedien, Wiesbaden 2020*, s.28.

⁷⁴J. Erpenbeck, L. von Rosenstiel, S. Grote, W. Sauter, *Handbuch Kompetenzmessung, Schäffer-Poeschel Verlag Stuttgart 2017*, s. 12.

⁷⁵J. Erpenbeck, „Kompetenzen“, *Die Zeitschrift*, III/2014, s. 20-21.

⁷⁶T. Batsching, *Kompetenzen für Lebensphasen und deren Wirkung auf Arbeit an Innovation, Dissertation zur Erlangung des Grades Doktor der Wirtschaftswissenschaft der Juristischen und Wirtschaftswissenschaftlichen Fakultät der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg 2020*, s. 25.

⁷⁷European Commission, *The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF)*, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg 2008.

competency or competencies. C. Rowe⁷⁸ suggests that it is appropriate to use the term qualification (competence) to denote the skills and performance standards achieved, and the term competency to refer to the behaviors by which these standards are achieved. In other words, the former describes what people can do, while the latter focuses on how they do it. Therefore, a kind of coupling between the two emerges, i.e. competent implementation of skills can contribute to acting in a competent way, and vice versa.

Figure 2. *The coupling between qualifications (competences) and competencies*



Source: Own elaboration based on T. Kupczyk, M. Stor, *Zarządzanie kompetencjami: teoria, badania i praktyka biznesowa, Wyższa Szkoła Handlowa we Wrocławiu, Wrocław 2017, s. 16* za C. Rowe (1995), *Clarifying the use of competency and competence models in recruitment, assessment and staff development*, (in:) *“Industrial and Commercial Training”, Vol. 27, Iss 11, s. 13.*

4. Summary

The presented definitions of competencies often differ from each other in form, content, conceptual scope. They show the influence of various broadly defined characteristics on the behavior of a person in a specific environment, professional, social. They include such aspects of human functioning as knowledge (declarative and procedural), qualifications (understood as the level of education), skills, aptitudes, predispositions, ambitions, personality traits, professed principles and values, beliefs, interests, attitudes, motivations, styles of action, talents, health and physical condition and other psychophysical characteristics⁷⁹.

Singling out a variety of traits, behaviors, qualities that allow to describe in different ways and define competencies, it can be put in terms of qualities, dispositions and abilities.

A competent person is one who - using his knowledge and experience (knowledge) - wants and has the motivation (attitude) and ability (skills) to complete a given task at a certain level. The definitions provided mostly relate the concept of competency to

⁷⁸C. Rowe (1995), *Clarifying the use of competence and competency models in recruitment, assessment and staff development*, (w:) *“Industrial and Commercial Training”, Vol. 27 Iss 11, 1995, s.12.*

⁷⁹A. Piwowarczyk, *Kompetencje komunikacji międzykulturowej. Rozwój kompetencji przyszłych ekonomistów I menedżerów*, C.H.Beck 2020, s. 13.

the professional environment and the way work is carried out. However, this is a significant narrowing.

For it seems that we can also talk about competencies outside the work environment - basically in any sphere of human life⁸⁰ and all these definitions boil down to one thing - coping skills. Dealing with different situations, with different challenges, problems and difficulties, overcoming and overcoming them thanks to those component qualities discovered, named, singled out and mentioned in the above definitions. Someone who is competent in a particular field is able to act competently in different contexts because they are able to apply the right combination of knowledge, skills and psychosocial factors⁸¹.

At the same time, it should be emphasized that all the above definitions are correct, properly define the concept of competency, bring new terms and expand the catalog of perceptions of competency, indicating new elements that have a significant impact on the understanding of the concept of competency. Competencies assume that many things can be learned. However, they themselves cannot be taught in the process of education, but rather perpetuated through the experience of various situations that shape attitudes and roles.

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⁸⁰*Ibidem*.

⁸¹S.Vitello, J. Grestore, *What is competence? A shared interpretation of competence to support teaching, learning and assessment*, Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2022, <https://www.cambridge.org/news-and-insights/insights/What-is-competence-A-shared-interpretation-of-competence-to-support-teaching-learning-and-assessment> (dostęp 12.04.2023 r.).

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