

The Requirements to Develop a Competency Model for the Position of a Team Leader in Industrial Enterprises in Slovakia

Barbora Sokolovská^{1,2}(✉), Dagmar Cagaňová^{1,2},
and Kristína Kašníková^{1,2}

¹ Faculty of Materials Science and Technology in Trnava,
Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, Bratislava, Slovakia
{barbora.sokolovska,dagmar.caganova,
kristina.kasnikova}@stuba.sk

² Institute of Industrial Engineering and Management, Trnava, Slovakia

Abstract. In the selection process of a team leader, competency models find their application, which guarantee the occupancy of this position by a person, who is actually able to perform this role. This paper aims to highlight the requirements to develop a competency model for the position of a team leader. The paper presents the results of a questionnaire survey, which was aimed at industrial enterprises in Slovakia. These results confirmed that a competency approach is not a common fact in industrial enterprises and also that industrial enterprises are interested in the development of a competency model for the position of a team leader and its consequential usage in the selection of a team leader. These findings represent a great challenge to improve human resource management in industrial enterprises in Slovakia, but also in developed Danube region as a part of Danube strategy.

Keywords: Team · Teamwork · Competency · Competency model · Team leader · Industrial enterprise

1 Introduction

In current global business environment almost all enterprises have the same conditions for their operation – capital, sources, environment; therefore competing with competitors is very difficult. Enterprises have to seek to differentiate from their competitors and thereby gain a competitive advantage. Most enterprises do not realize that this can be achieved just by their workforce [15].

In modern management the idea of the team is increasingly rising in prominence. Consultants in the area of management propose restructuring of enterprises and institutions in favour of strengthening teamwork, directors of organizational boards draw the attention to the importance of the team for the whole enterprise and senior managers encourage their younger colleagues to develop teamwork at their departments. Team has become a recognized basic unit of organization of work [3].

And for this there are many reasons. Teams have a huge potential. Researches suggest that in all types of enterprises or organizations, whether in the public or private sector, teamwork improves work ethic and reduces employee turnover [3].

In the enterprise, which strives to apply teamwork, people work more effectively, experience lower stress and make more effort. They stay in the enterprise longer and they are absent from work for a shorter period of time. They contribute with new ideas and seek to develop in their work. The result is a smoother operation of the enterprise or institution that at the same time saves money and is more competitive [3].

Of course, not every enterprise that will apply teamwork has significant results. Some enterprises have introduced teamwork and revealed no major differences. But one thing is certain: *If the teamwork is applied correctly, it will lead to fundamental changes* [3].

The study of literature concerned with teams and also the experience of practitioners leads to the realization that the atmosphere in the team and performance of the team is extremely important to the way it is led [4]. Achievements thus depend on the personality of a leader and leadership styles, which they use [2]. However, there are many other factors, that affect the way of leadership – the kind of task, a little or a lot of time to complete the task, the nature of employees, previous experience of leader, etc. [14].

Practice shows that even highly developed teams, which already work very cooperatively, have not developed without a leader. When everyone feels responsible for everything and work is not divided according to the tasks and abilities, the team will become unproductive [10].

It follows that whether it is the newly established or developed team, each needs to have a leader. Sufficient attention must be given to the selection of the team leader. The authors of the paper claim that it is mainly about finding qualities, abilities, skills and knowledge, hence it is necessary to identify the leader's competencies.

The competency approach started to be expressively applied in the area of selection of employees, their development, their evaluation and in managing their career [7].

The authors of the paper emphasize mainly the application of a competency approach in the area of selection of employees, thus they focus on the use of the competency model in the selection of a suitable candidate for the position of a team leader.

1.1 Team and Teamwork

The current market environment and, particularly, changes in the economic area and entrance of mostly Western European enterprises to the Slovak market, have brought the necessity to solve many tasks through teamwork. This change is related to the necessity of rapid, the most effective solutions with minimal error rate in the final decision [2].

Therefore teamwork in recent years became common in various areas [19].

People, who are good and acquainted in their field, can prove a lot – but not everything. There are still tasks, which an individual alone is not able to do, in which they are dependent on knowledge, cooperation and ideas of others. Perhaps in any sphere it does not work without teamwork [11].

The authors of the paper identify with the definition of Duchoň and Šafránková [2], who define teamwork as a set of values that encourage certain ways of behaviour, e.g. listening to others, cooperative response to the ideas of others, expressing doubts in favour of the others and also in favour of fulfilment of the tasks, help the needy members and recognition of interests and achievements of others.

The concept of teamwork differentiates from the common cooperation in work groups. The essence of teamwork is to transfer responsibility to work teams so they can perform their tasks, without the fact, they would still have to ask higher components of the enterprise for approval. This means that teams must be sufficiently authorized to be able to make independent decisions in daily practice, and must have sufficient power to be able to ensure the proper fulfilment of the tasks [2]. In principle, a purpose of teamwork is delegation and authorization [3].

Teamwork is used in all situations, where a comprehensive and synergistic approach to solving the problem is needed [2].

We can talk about the teamwork, as a specific form of work organization, if its basic conditions or characteristics are fulfilled. These include [19]:

- assignment of common tasks or goals;
- association of people with different professional knowledge and experience.

In addition to the mentioned basic conditions or characteristics of teamwork, certain assumptions have to be created for its successful operation [21]:

- **to want** – the employee must want to do something, prepare, improve, organize, i.e. the employee is motivated to carry out the activities;
- **to be allowed** – the employee must have sufficient powers to carry out these activities;
- **to know and prove** – the employee needs to have not only professional, but also organizational knowledge and abilities to know and prove to do something, improve and organize.

The authors of the paper state that teamwork brings many benefits, whether for the enterprise or for co-operating employees themselves. People will learn to participate in the successes and also failures, gain a sense of fellowship and take collective responsibility. Consequently, the enterprise will be more competitive; it will achieve higher performance and become more attractive for potential employees, as well as for potential partners in the business.

The application of teamwork thus brings the necessity of team creation in enterprises. In Table 1, the authors of the paper provide definitions of the concept of team according to different authors.

A team is a very good tool for solving the difficult tasks and problems, for searching for new ways in project style of work [9], because the use of groups and teams gives an advantage for achieving a certain type of synergy. Employees [17]:

- produce a higher quality of outputs than either working alone (combination of effort);
- learn from each other;
- together correct errors and immediately solve arose problems;
- share knowledge, tasks and objectives.

Table 1. Definitions of the team according to different authors [own elaboration]

| Year | Author | Definition |
|------|-----------------------|--|
| 2005 | Střížová | Team is a group of people, who complement each other by their knowledge and skills, they are committed to a common purpose, they dedicate to the common work goals, for which they are mutual responsible, they combine skills, experience and perspectives of different people and thus they carry out more performance than individuals working alone or in large groups, they respond flexibly to changing events and requirements, they adapt to new information and tasks faster, more accurately and effectively than individuals acting in a network of large-scale organizational links. |
| 2008 | Duchoň and Šafránková | By team, we understand three or more individuals, who are in mutual interaction and have a feel of a common identity, a common consciousness of “we”. They all are trying to achieve the same goal. They respect mainly unwritten norms or rules, under which they voluntarily will work and act. |
| 2009 | Mohauptová | Team is a clearly defined whole of cooperating people with time limited goal, limited size, clear rules and roles and characteristic process of work. |

Often in connection with the effectiveness of the team, the equation of synergy can be seen, which should tell us that nothing beats the work of a team [9].

– **Synergetic equation of a team (the equation of the effectiveness of team):**
 $1 + 1 = 3$

The team achieves better results, than the individuals could achieve by themselves [9]. Two people together do more work than either alone. Mutual integration and usage of the talent in the team brings added value, which is worth to experience. It is not only the contribution of result, but also the contribution of the feeling. Mostly, people in a team feel the application, they are important to the others and they have a feeling of appreciation. Their motivation and commitment for the team is increasing [10].

– **The equation of work of several individuals (the equation of efficiency of a group):** $1 + 1 = 2$

The group has the same results as if the individuals work alone [9]. Two people together do the work of two people. There is no added value in the cooperation. If such added value does not arise, the cooperation will die and cease after time. Everyone does their own things [10].

– **The equation of an ineffective team:** $1 + 1 = -1$ or $1 + 1 < 2$

Even this variant may occur. The team is less productive than the individuals themselves. Employees would operate more effectively, if they did not seek to cooperate [9]. Two people together do less work than either alone. This is a description of many workplaces and it is a real disadvantage of the effort of cooperation [10].

The authors of the paper state that the benefit of team as a form of work organization stems mainly from the above mentioned synergy. The people in the team are open to different opinions and ideas, they are not afraid to present them in front of the other team members, and hence there may arise entirely new ways how to fulfil the tasks, how to cooperate and how to achieve the goal faster and more effectively.

1.2 Competency and Competency Model

The term competency is currently often used not only in the professional literature, but also in practice. But what does this term mean [1]? Although the term competency is naturalized in our vocabulary, its use and importance, which professional and general public attach to it, differ [20].

The term competency is usually used **in two basic meanings** [1].

The first meaning and interpretation of the concept of competency is often associated with the performance of profession or in general with work activity and it is traditionally used to label the power to make decisions and responsibilities for the consequences of made decisions following from this power. It follows that competency is in this case the term semantically related to other terms such as power, influence or positional or formal authority [18]. It can therefore be concluded that competency is power, authorization, scope of powers usually given by some authority or belonging to some authority [2]. Competency in this meaning is possible to move on someone [1].

The second meaning of this term refers to the fact that competency is the ability to perform some activity, to be able to perform it, to be qualified in the concerned area on the basis of the necessary knowledge and skills [2]. Competency is therefore the expression of the general ability to adequately evaluate the situation (by far not only work situation) and be able to adapt own behaviour to it or be prepared (know) to respond to the situation [18]. A competency can be understood as specific set of knowledge, skills, experience, methods and procedures, but also, for example, attitudes, which the individual uses for successful solving of different tasks and life situations and which enable the individual's personal development and fulfilment of life aspirations [20].

The concept of competency as ability was brought into the managerial practice by R. Boyatzis in the work "Competent manager" [5].

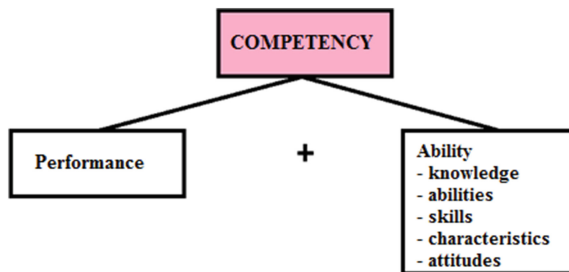
Each author, dealing with the issue of competencies, firstly defines this concept. The authors of the paper offer in the following Table 2 an overview of definitions of the concept of competency by different authors, whereby definitions are listed in ascending order according to the year.

A person in order to perform successfully individual tasks, needs to have desirable competencies [12]. Competent is the one, who usually handles efficiently different tasks and situations [20]. A competent employee is therefore the one, who, on one hand, has the assumptions (knowledge, skills, abilities, characteristics, attitudes) for achieving performance (i.e. he is able for performance) and, on the other hand, really achieves required performances [12]. For better illustration serves Fig. 1.

If the employee is competent, thus they fulfil the assigned role well or on an excellent level, it means that they fulfilled three assumptions [2]:

Table 2. Definitions of competency according to different authors [own elaboration]

| Year | Author | Definition |
|------|------------------------------|---|
| 1982 | Boyatzis | Competency is the ability of a person to behave in a certain way corresponding with the requirements of work in the parameters given by the environment of the enterprise and thus bring the desired results. |
| 2006 | Hermochová | Competency is a set of required characteristics of employees, which are deduced from the nature of work tasks and situations peculiar for particular workplace or work position in the enterprise. |
| 2010 | Bartoňková | Competency is a set of knowledge, skills, experience and characteristics, which supports the achievement of the objective. |
| 2011 | Steigauf | Competency is personal provable task-specific and transferable knowledge and skill for the particular goal or task. Competency is acquired in the course of time. |
| 2013 | Procházka, Vaculík, & Smutný | Competency is a summary of knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics, which a person needs to achieve a good work performance. |

**Fig. 1.** Competency [12]

- the employee is internally provided with characteristics, abilities, knowledge, skills and experience, which he necessarily needs for such behaviour;
- the employee is motivated to use such behaviour, thus they see value in the desired behaviour and are willing to invest necessary energy in this direction;
- the employee has a possibility to use such behaviour in the particular environment.

While the first assumption concerns the skills and knowledge, which can be relatively easy to develop, the second one has an entirely different nature. It is affected more difficult, because it is about motives, attitudes, values, beliefs and philosophy of life. This area belongs to the stable components of human personality. The third assumption included into the list is maybe a little surprisingly. It is related to the external conditions and not to the personality of employee. However, these significantly affect both above mentioned areas [8].

In order for an employee to be competent, all three conditions have to be fulfilled simultaneously. The absence of whichever of them block competent performance. In this sense, all three conditions are equivalent. If the employee really wants to deliver a good performance and also such performance is required, but they lack, for example, skills, they will not reach the expected result. If they are not motivated, they will not make an effort to use the skills, even if they have them at their disposal. If the environment does not allow them to use the competencies, even the fact that they are capable and willing, will not help them [8].

In the following, the authors of the paper discuss the competency model and its possibilities of application in practice.

Competency models are used in increasingly more enterprises. These are mainly enterprises with foreign participation. In Slovak enterprises a competency model can be rarely encountered and also there is relatively little professional literature, which addresses to this issue [6].

Firstly, it is necessary to define what the concept of competency model means. The following Table 3 offers an overview of definitions of competency model from the perspective of different authors.

Table 3. Definitions of competency model according to different authors (Source: own elaboration)

| Year | Author | Definition |
|------|------------------|--|
| 2006 | Hroník | A competency model contains the individual competencies, which are selected from all possible and arranged according to some key. |
| 2010 | Kocianová | A competency model determines the requirements for a person in relation to their work activity; it includes the abilities and characteristics of personality, which are necessary for performance in the workplace. The individual characteristics are generally classified into homogeneous groups, which are then referred to as competencies. |
| 2013 | Procházka et al. | A competency model is a set of competencies associated with a particular position or role within the enterprise. |

There are universal competency models, models of managerial competencies and models for certain work activities, for example, models of competencies of sellers [7]. Hroník [5] points out to the fact that the more the model is universal, the more it can unify, but less differentiate.

The most common domain of utilization of competency models is the area of leadership and management of human resources. Competency models are successfully used for planning of recruitment of employees, selection of employees and their evaluation, management of performance and development of employees and they are used due to their contribution for individuals (leaders) as well as for the enterprise [13].

Contribution of the competency model for an individual [13]:

- it includes the experience and view of other leaders;
- it specifies a set of useful patterns of behaviour;
- it is a tool, which managers can use for their development;
- it defines a framework, which can help to choose leaders, develop and understand their effectiveness.

Contribution of the competency model for an enterprise [13]:

- it allows to openly communicate important patterns of behaviour of leaders;
- it helps to distinguish the performance of individuals;
- it connects the behaviour of leaders with the strategic direction and goals of the enterprise;
- it provides integrative model of leadership, which is relevant to many positions and situations.

In identifying desirable competencies of the leader, it is necessary to take into consideration the fact that we are looking for such competencies, which are causally related to the efficient and/or standard or exceptional performance of the work. A practical tool, which can be used in the process of cognition of the key competencies are competency models [13].

It is very difficult – but not impossible – to create a comprehensive or general model of competencies [20].

The authors of the paper emphasize the fact that competency models are increasingly coming to the forefront in enterprises. This actuality has for the consequence mainly their wide use and benefits not only for enterprise, but also for employees.

The authors of the paper claim that the competency model is a set of competencies, which employees must have to be able to perform the work on the particular work position with the desired results. A competency model then not only helps to choose suitable candidates for work positions in the enterprise, but also serves to plan their further development.

2 Method of Research

In the following part of the paper, the authors present the method of research, which was used during writing this paper.

The authors of the paper used a questionnaire survey. It is a pilot survey, which is a part of the dissertation thesis conducted at the Institute of Industrial Engineering and Management, Faculty of Materials Science and Technology, Slovak University of Technology. The dissertation thesis is focused on addressing the issue of leadership in teams and competencies of the team leader.

A pilot survey was conducted through questionnaire survey, which was aimed at industrial enterprises in Slovakia. The questionnaire was made with the application GoogleDocs. It consisted of eight questions, while the first three were designed to obtain basic information about the enterprise – size, subject of business activity and

branch of industry. Another five questions served to obtain the information concerning leadership, teamwork and competency model in the particular enterprise.

Data collection took place in the time period from 6.12.2014 to 31.12.2014. The questionnaire was sent to email addresses of 515 respondents, while 55 questionnaires were returned completed. The return thus constitutes 10.68 %.

In the following chapter, the authors of the paper connect the theoretical backgrounds, which were previously mentioned, with the important results of the questionnaire survey conducted by the authors of the paper.

3 Results of the Questionnaire Survey

In the paper, the authors specifically focus on four questions from the questionnaire survey. In the following text, gradually explained and also graphically illustrated are the answers of the respondents to the selected four questions.

The first of the selected four questions was focused on the importance of teamwork in the enterprise. It is positive that almost all, i.e. 53 respondents, consider work in teams in an enterprise as important. Only two respondents were unable to answer this question, which may be caused due to the fact that these enterprises do not apply work in teams and therefore the respondents cannot assess its importance to the enterprise.

Another question served to investigate the opinion of respondents on whether the performance of the team is affected by the way a leader leads their team. Everyone, i.e. 55 respondents, answered this question clearly yes.

Through the next question, the authors of the paper sought to determine whether enterprises use a competency model in the selection of the team leader. 18 respondents claimed that they use a competency model and 10 respondents answered negatively. 27 respondents were not able to express their opinion, which may be caused due to the fact that the respondents did not have sufficient information to answer this question. The percentage expression of the answers of respondents is shown in Fig. 2.

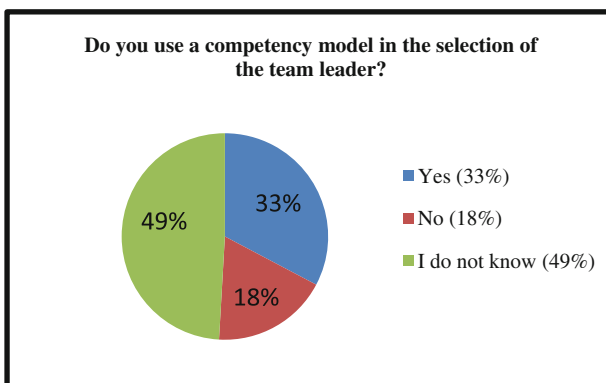


Fig. 2. The answers to the question: Do you use a competency model in the selection of the team leader? [own elaboration] (Color figure online)

Through the last of the four selected questions, the authors of the paper identified whether enterprises would be interested in the creation of a competency model for the position of a team leader. More than a half, i.e. 31 respondents, would welcome the creation of a competency model for a team leader. 7 respondents rejected this option and 17 of them were not able to express to this question, which may be caused due to the lack of information to answer this question. The percentage expression of the answers of respondents is shown in Fig. 3.

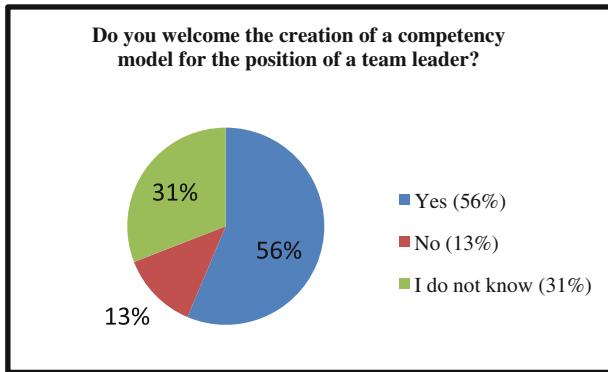


Fig. 3. The answers to the question: Do you welcome the creation of a competency model for the position of a team leader? [own elaboration] (Color figure online)

In the following chapter, the authors of the paper summarize the answers of respondents to the selected four questions and draw conclusions.

4 Discussion

The purpose of the paper was not only to determine what importance is attached to teamwork in industrial enterprises in Slovakia, but also to verify whether enterprises use a competency model in the selection of suitable employees on the position of a team leader.

In the previous chapter, the authors presented the results of the questionnaire survey. These results confirmed that teamwork has its application in industrial enterprises and employees really considered it as an important form of work organization. Among respondents, there was a clear consensus in the opinion on the fact that the performance of a team is affected by the way a leader leads his team. Such a clear consensus among respondents, however, was not in the area of using a competency model. More than a half of respondents were unable to answer this question and 18 % of respondents claimed that they do not use a competency model in the selection of a team leader. From the answers to this question, therefore, the authors can deduce that the competency approach is not a common fact in industrial enterprises in Slovakia. For further research, it is a positive finding that more than a half of the respondents would

welcome the creation of a competency model for the position of a team leader. Thus, it makes sense to deal with the issue of leadership in teams and competencies of a team leader further.

From the findings it followed that teamwork has its application in enterprises, therefore it is very important to ensure the effective functioning of teams. This can be achieved by choosing a suitable employee on the position of a team leader. The best tool for this is precisely the competency model, and therefore the authors of the paper recommend using a competency model for ensuring the selection of a suitable employee on the position of a team leader.

The authors of the paper acknowledge some limitations of the conducted research, such as the low return of completed questionnaires, which can distort the results.

Nevertheless, the authors of the paper emphasize the importance of the obtained information and they recommend devoting time to this issue, particularly to the creation of a competency model for the position of a team leader to facilitate the industrial enterprises in Slovakia to choose the best employees for these positions according to possibly the most consistent criteria. It is a great challenge for Danube region as a part of Danube strategy.

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