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## Revisiting New Managerial Competences: Is There Enough Motivation to Apply Them?

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### Abstract

The paper deals with the results of the research into the new managerial competences evolved in the context of knowledge-based economies. 22 new managerial competences, primarily of “soft” nature, are surveyed from the point of view of the importance managers attach to them as well as frequency and motivation of managers to utilize them in real life. The results are presented for Slovak managers compared to the managers from other EU countries.

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### 1. Introduction

The current stage of evolution in the society frequently labelled as knowledge-based society materialised in the present economic position of developed countries is considered the core prerequisite of the progress in quality of life. The concept of knowledge-based society is closely linked to knowledge-based economy characteristic of globalisation and extraordinary utilisation of human thinking and knowledge in a specific way embedded in state-of-the-art technologies.

One of the consequences of knowledge economy emergence lies in its new and strict demands on managerial competences on all managerial levels in the organisations that want to be successful under these new conditions. Even though the managerial role remains managerial, there are many new conditions influencing the current managerial role.

In this respect, the change of the manager’s role is towards *a leader, coach, and mentor*. Partnership and good relationships between managers and workers are extremely important because the knowledge on which the organisation’s success depends is the property of its holder – the worker. Thus, success is equivalent to the knowledge workers’ willingness to share their knowledge with the others. To motivate the knowledge worker to open and trade their knowledge with the organisation asks for new competences in managers. Which are they? High level of

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communication competences and other soft skills of managers come affront. They are even more important in the context in which the workers' knowledge exceeds the one of their manager.

Motivation to materialise one's potential is a crucial prerequisite for managers to execute their tasks competently. Our perspective is based on Woodruff's<sup>2</sup> definition of a competence that requires three assumptions to be fulfilled: a person's internal capacity of qualities, abilities and knowledge, established conditions for competence utilisation and motivation to apply it.

As comes from the complexity of shifts in locus of importance placed on managerial competences, there is no surprise that one of the features typical of a knowledge-based economy is its focused and proactive investment in the development of every individual's potential via the support of his/her education and training as well as research activities securing the growth of innovative capacity<sup>3</sup>.

What should managers learn to become competent knowledge managers then? The recent results in the research into soft organisational competences show that organisations make effort in the following four areas to develop them:

1. in establishing trust where people within and outside the organisation believe in managers doing what they claim they do and, thus, to enjoy good reputation;
2. in the endeavour to become an open organisation, organisation without barriers enabling information and ideas easily cross hierarchical, horizontal and circumferential boundaries;
3. in developing flexibility allowing for permanent innovation;
4. in learning and undergoing permanent changes based on their knowledge<sup>4</sup>.

Taking into account the above mentioned, it has become an imperative for managers including executives at present to identify the needed competences and skills of workers and ensure their development. In our former research we identified the following competences relevant from the knowledge-based economy perspective. For better understanding we indicate also short description of behaviour related to the competences. Respondents were also given this description so they could understand what was meant by the surveyed competences. The resulting competences include: *Analytical skills* (choosing relevant data and analyzing them), *Feedback* (providing regular constructive feed-back), *Active listening*, *Language skills* (active knowledge of at least two foreign languages), *Respecting others* (showing respect to others), *Emphasis on awareness* (keeping others informed of relevant information), *Empowering* (empowering others in fulfilling the tasks), *Empathy* (understanding and supporting others), *Social interaction support* (creating opportunities for mutual interaction of employees), *Face-to-face contact support*, *Openness to information* (both "hard" (facts, figures) and "soft" (feelings of others)), *Collective problem solving* (solving problems in cooperation with employees), *Client focus* (Building long term relationships with customers), *Self-control* (responding calmly to stress situations, keeping emotions under control), *Respecting other cultures and values*, *Flexibility* (rapidly adapting to new work operations), *Driving organisational change* (Initiating and driving organisational change), *Professional knowledge* (knowing the background of management principles), *Self-development focus* (active identifying of own learning needs, permanent learning and developing own knowledge), *Focus on developing others* (active identifying of learning needs of employees, motivating others to permanent learning), *Ethical behaviour* (supporting and maintaining the ethical behaviour at the work place), *Opportunities equity* (protecting equal opportunities), and *Diversity support* (supporting and managing diversity – both personalities and opinions).

In this context, managers cannot ignore the fact that they must develop themselves as well as their subordinates. Hence, motivation of managers to acquire, maintain and develop new competences becomes the crucial aspect of the organisation's success.

## 2. Research and Its Objective

The research based on the previous results and carried out in 2010-2011 aims at identification of the motivation the managers enjoy in developing/applying soft managerial competences linked to knowledge-intensive environment.

The sample consists of 73 managers from 46 companies in Slovakia (78%) and other European Union member states, namely the Czech Republic (7%), Belgium (4%), Denmark (3%), Great Britain (3%), France (1.25%), Poland (1.25%), Austria (1.25%), and Italy (1.25%).

In addition to nationality of managers, the distinctive criteria include working experience (47% of managers had held the position for *less than 5 years*, 45% of managers for *more than 5 but less than 15 years*, and 8% of managers had occupied the managerial post for *more than 15 years*), and organisation size (23 *small organisations*, 10 organisations with *less than 500 employees*, and 13 organisations with *more than 500 employees*).

<sup>2</sup>Woodruffe, Ch. (1992). What Is Meant By A Competency? In: Boam, R., Sparrow, P.: *Designing And Achieving Competency. A Competency-Based Approach To Developing People And Organisations*. (pp. 203). London, McGraw-Hill.

<sup>3</sup>Co znamenavedomostnaspolocnost?(2007). Retrieved from <http://www.Euroinfo.gov.sk/index.php?Id=1461>

<sup>4</sup>Ulrich, D. (2009). *Mistrovskerizenilidskychdroju*. (1st ed.) Praha: Grada Publishing. p. 29

The questions of the questionnaire help identify if managers are motivated to use the identified competences at their workplace. In addition, the respondents were also asked to rate the importance and frequency of use of the competences in question.

### **2.1. Categorization of responses and scaling**

Respondents answered YES/NO questions referring to their motivation to utilise the competences at workplace. To identify the importance and frequency managers used 4-point scale where 1 represented *not important at all*, 2 *not particularly important*, 3 *important*, and 4 *very important*. In frequency rating 1 meant *to have no opportunity to use*, 2 *to have an opportunity but not to use*, 3 *to use sometimes, to a moderate extent*, 4 *to use usually, to a great extent*.

With regard to the nationality, managers were grouped to Slovak and foreign managers' pools. The sample of foreign managers consisted of those from 8 EU member states.

The tenure in the position covered the periods of *up to 5 years*, *6-15 years*, and *16+ years*. Size of the organisation was categorized into *small organisations, up to 500 employee organisations*, and *500+ employee organisations*.

### **2.2. Methodology**

The data were collected via a questionnaire distributed electronically or posted in paper format based on the preference of a respondent. The data gathered were processed in Microsoft Excell and descriptive statistics was applied.

### **2.3. Results**

Figure 1 depicts the results of the managers' responses to the question: "Are you motivated to use the identified competences at your workplace?"

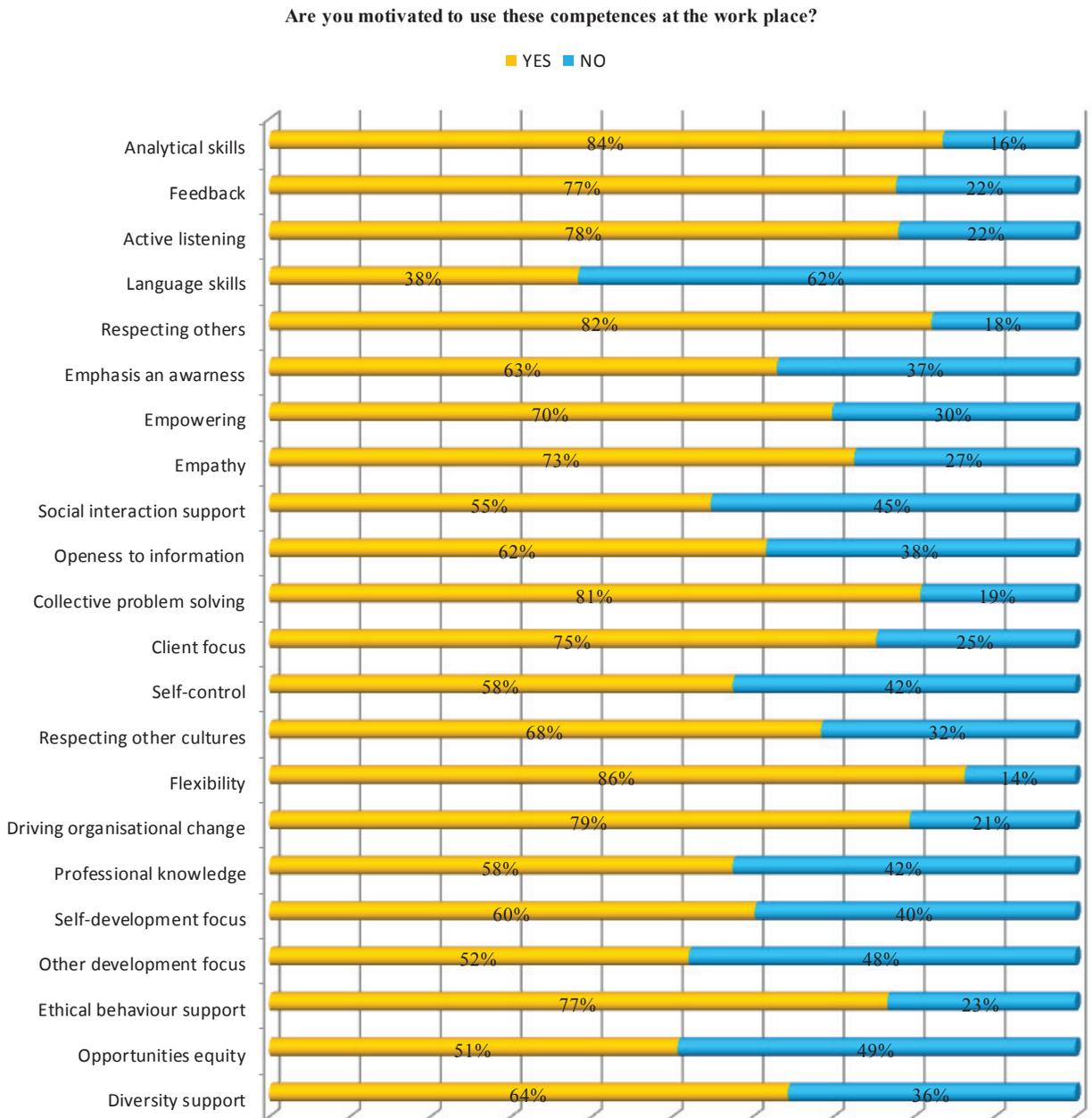


Fig. 1. Percentage of managers motivated to use the identified competences

Most of the respondents feel motivated to apply all the identified competences at workplace except for *Language skills*. The competence was defined as *an ability to actively use at least two foreign languages*. As comes from the replies, only 38% of managers are motivated to use *Language skills* representing the command of two foreign languages at their workplace.

Out of the research sample, the highest number of managers (86%) is motivated to apply *Flexibility*. Over 80% of managers are motivated to use the following competences: *Analytical skills*, *Respecting others*, and *Collective problem solving*.

Except for *Language skills*, the competences with lower motivating weight include *Opportunities Equity* (51%), *Focus on developing others* (52%), and *Social interaction support* (55%). However, it must be stressed that the positive replies represent more than a half of the total replies.

When comparing Slovak and foreign managers, on average, there are 65% of Slovak managers and 82% of foreign ones who are motivated to use the identified competencies (see Figure 2).

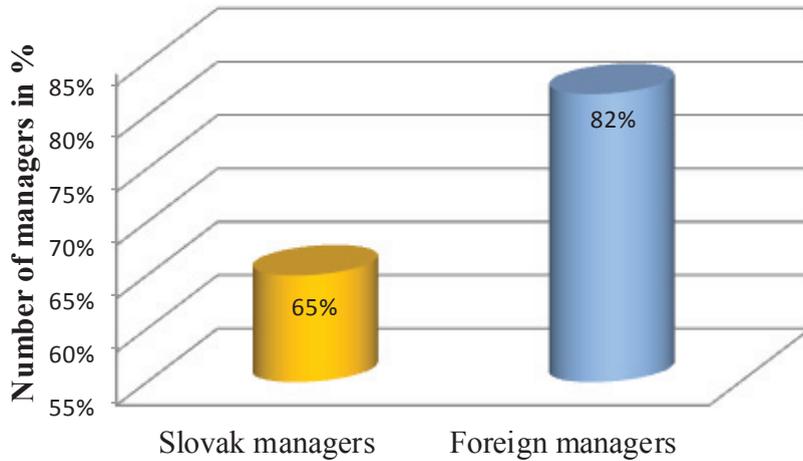


Fig. 2. Percentage of Slovak and foreign managers motivated to use the identified competences

The lowest number of both the Slovak (33%) and foreign managers (56%) are motivated to use *Language skills*. Most of Slovak managers are motivated to use *Flexibility* (89%), *Driving organisational change*, *Analytical skills*, and *Respecting others* (82%).

All foreign managers claim that they are motivated to use *Active listening*. The competences ranked next are as follows: *Analytical skills*, *Feedback*, *Empathy*, *Respecting other cultures*, and *Ethical behaviour support* (88%).

Less than a half of Slovak managers are motivated to apply the following competences: *Focus on development of others* (46%), *Opportunities Equity* (46%), and *Social interaction support* (49%).

Competences identified by the respondents as those they are most motivated to use change in dependence on the organisation size. In small organisations with <50 employees, managers are motivated most to use *Analytical skills* (85%), *Feedback* (82%), and *Active listening* (78%). In organisations with <500 employees, all managers are motivated to use *Active listening*. In that type of organisation 85% of managers claim to be motivated to use *Respecting others*, *Empathy*, and *Collective problem solving*.

In 500+ employee organisations managers are motivated most to use *Analytical skills* (91%), *Flexibility* and *Driving organisational change* (both 88%), and *Respecting others* (85%).

Figure 3 depicts the number of managers motivated to use the identified competences by the size of organisation. In small organisations, 62% of managers claim that they are motivated to use the identified competences. In <500 employee organisations, 68% of managers are motivated to use them together with 71% of managers in 500+ employee organisations.

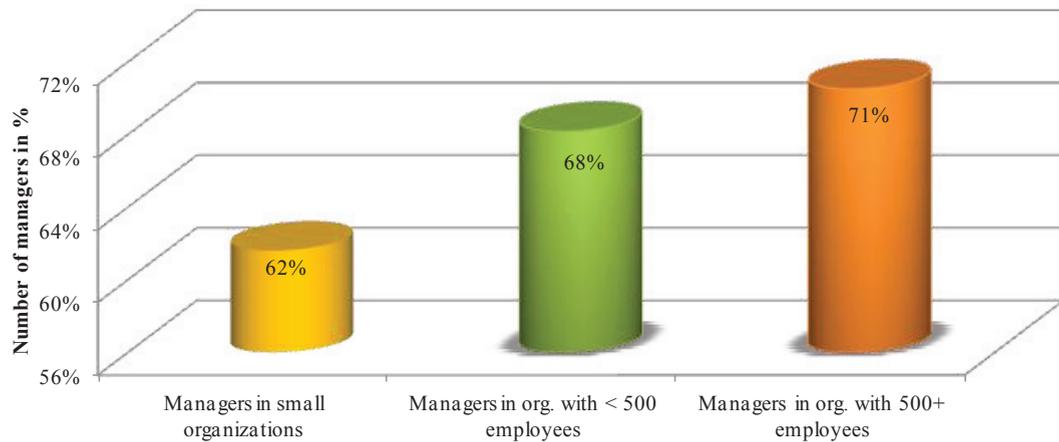


Fig. 3. Percentage of managers motivated to use the identified competences by the size of organisation

From the perspective of work experience – tenure in managerial position – the results show small differences in motivation to use the identified competences. The number of managers with the shortest experience, up to 5 years, and managers with the longest experience, 16+ years having the identical motivation is almost the same, i.e. the managers with work experience up to 5 years account for 69% and managers with the longest experience account for 71%. In the category of 6-15 year experience, there are 64% of the motivated managers. Taking into account work experience, Figure 4 depicts the motivation of managers to use the individual competences. All the managers with the longest period of experience, 16+ years, claim that they are motivated to use *Analytical skills* and *Collective problem solving*. These competences are also identified by relatively large number of managers with shorter period of experience. Again, *Language skills* are those the use of which is claimed to be motivated by the lowest number of managers in all categories.

The results show that the competences in knowledge-focus category belong among those that managers are less motivated to apply. They include namely *Professional knowledge* defined as *knowing the background of management principles*, *Self-development focus* described as *active identifying of own learning needs and applying new learned concepts*, and *Focus on development of others* defined as *motivating others to permanent learning*. In comparison with the other-competences, only low number of managers is motivated to use them at their workplace.

As capability of permanent learning and standing changes incurred by knowledge is an important condition for successful operations in a knowledge economy, organisations should make bigger effort and motivate their managers to utilise these competences (ideally all managers should apply them).

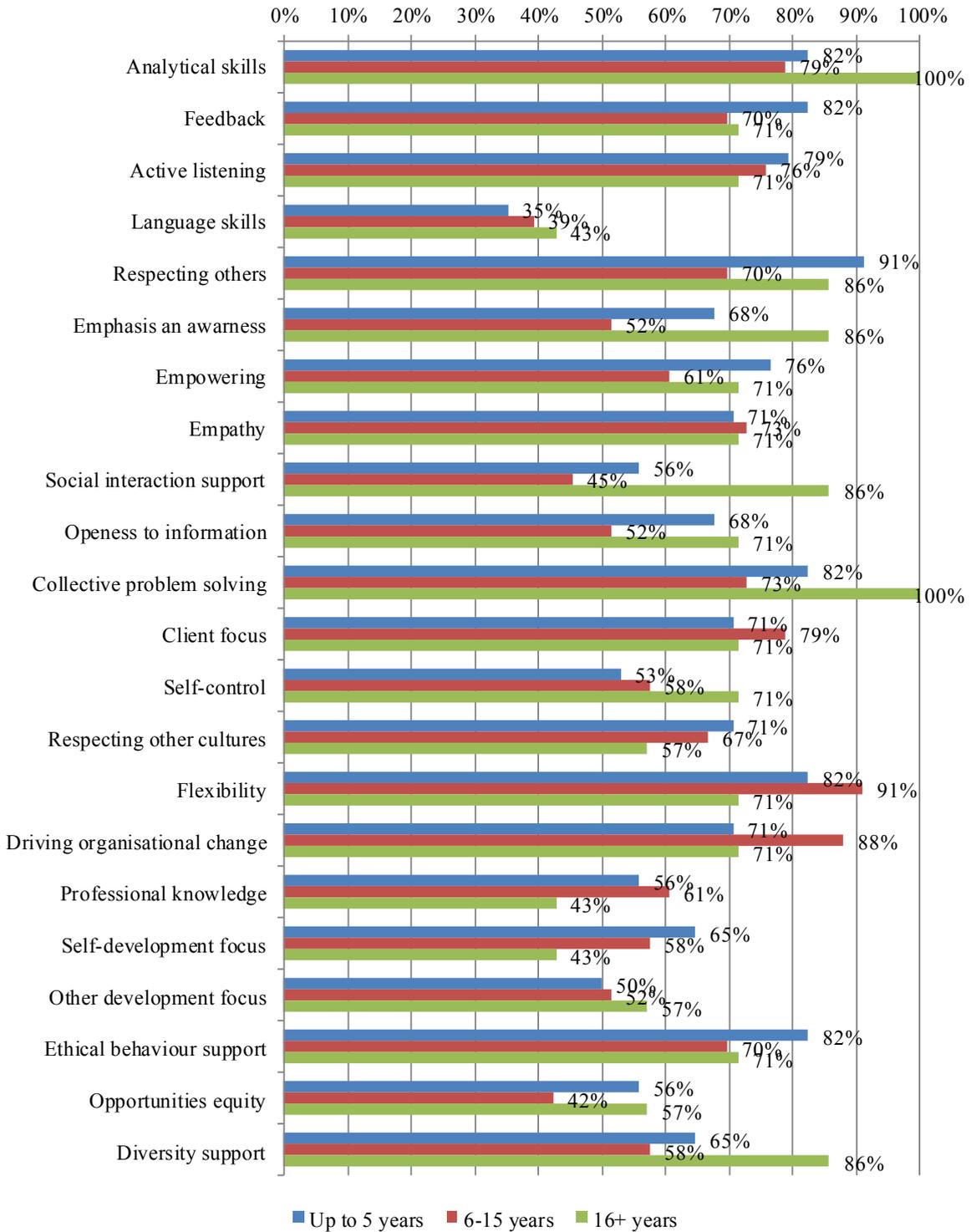


Fig. 4. Percentage of managers motivated to use the individual competences by work experience

Figure 5 presents the importance as well as frequency of the use of the identified competences as attached by the respondents. The competences which majority of managers are motivated to use are highlighted by a frame while the competences which the lowest number of managers are motivated to use are marked by a reversed triangle.

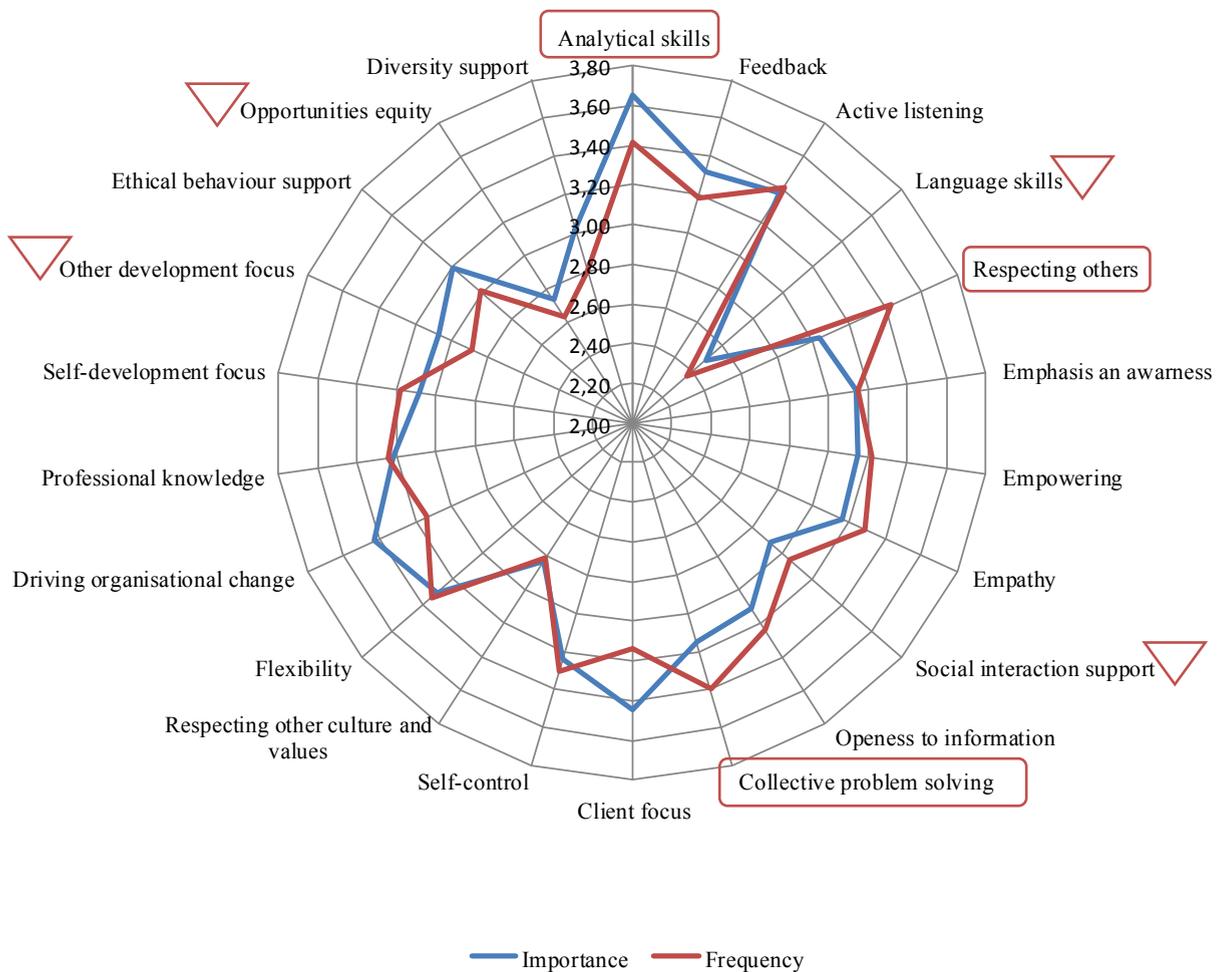


Fig. 5. Competences by motivation, importance, and frequency levels

Most managers identify all the competences introduced as important or very important. Just seldom respondents mark the competences as not particularly important and only 7% of managers consider them not important at all. On average, managers consider less important the following competences: *Language skills*, *Opportunities equity*, *Social interaction support*, and *Others-development focus*.

On the other hand, the highest number of respondents considers the following competences to be very important: *Analytical skills* defined as *an ability to choose relevant data and analyse them*, *Client focus*, and *Drivingorganisational change*.

As comes from the results, there is statistically significant correlation between frequency of using the identified competences and the importance attached to them. The correlation coefficient is 0.43 ( $p < 0.01$ , 90% CI 0.21 to 0.49). Generally, managers attach higher importance to competences they use more frequently. It is obvious, if managers consider the competence important they tend to use it more frequently.

However, there are also responses where the declared importance does not correspond with the increase in frequency of use. *Client focus* and *Drivingorganisational change* are among the competences ranked highest in importance, but managers claim that they do not use them often.

On the other hand, managers consider *Respecting others*, *Social interaction support*, *Openness to information*, and *Collective problem solving* not very important, but argue that they use them frequently. 80 % of managers claim to be motivated to use *Respecting others* and *Collective problem solving*.

As comes from Figure 5, the competences which the minority of respondents claim to be motivated to use constitute the pool of competences with the lowest importance and frequency.

To summarise, the results indicate that:

- a. Most managers are highly motivated to apply the surveyed competences. There are only few competences the use of which is motivating for less than 60% of managers. *Language skills* are used the least, only 38% of managers are motivated to apply them at their work places.
- b. Generally, more foreign managers use the identified competences than their Slovak peers (82% to 65% respectively).
- c. The organisational feature such as the size of organisation does not show any significant influence on the motivation of the identified competence use. From the viewpoint of the length of tenure all managers with the longest one are motivated to apply *Analytical skills* and *Collective problem solving* (100%).
- d. Generally, managers consider important all the identified competences, however, the importance of *Language skills*, *Social interaction support*, *Opportunities equity*, and *Others-development focus* are rated lowest.

### 3. Conclusion

In our research, most of the respondents present their motivation to apply the surveyed competences at work. *Language skills* account for the only exception – only one third of the respondents are motivated to apply them. *Flexibility*, *Analytical skills*, and *Respect for the others* are those that managers feel motivated most to utilise.

The size of an organisation exercises an impact on the extent to which managers are motivated to apply the identified competences: the larger the organisation, the more the managers are motivated to apply them.

The results show that, in general, foreign managers are motivated to utilise the new managerial competences more than their Slovak peers.

It can be concluded that the high percentage of managers motivated to apply new managerial competences in knowledge-based economies establishes good prospects. It indicates the possibility for managers to apply them more intensively. The finding is based on statistically relevant relationship between the motivation to apply the competences and frequency of their application. It shows that if motivation for competence application exists, frequency of their utilisation grows.

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