

# REFLECTION OF TRANSPORT LOGISTICS' GRADUATES COMPETENCES IN THE VACANCY NOTICES FOR TRANSPORT MANAGERS POSITIONS

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**Abstract.** *The contemporary landscape of the logistics industry is evolving, introducing fresh challenges for companies. Consequently, it is imperative to focus on the competency of employees and anticipate the skills that will be essential in the future. Therefore, it is important to not only identify professional competences of the logistics graduates but also to make sure that they coincide with the skills required by the labour market. To achieve this end, vacancy notices published in an online media (CV bank) in the last quarter of 2023 were collected and analysed. Then, the obtained results were compared to the identified competences of the graduates of Transport Logistics in 2023 at Vilnius College of Technologies and Design. The article reveals that vast majority of the graduates of Transport Logistics at the Vilnius College of Technology and Design have knowledge and skills that by large reflect the requirements laid out in the analysed vacancy notices.*

**Keywords:** *competences, skills, the point of view of employer, transport logistics manager, vacancy.*

## Introduction

Conducting the same tasks in specific job roles and assessing employees only by their position in the organizational hierarchy hinders business entities from reaching goals like growth, diversity, inclusion, and agility (Ginavičienė, Piščikienė & Sprogytė-Bredelienė, 2023). Therefore, organizations are moving towards an administering model for work performance and the employees, where competences, and not the position, play the central part of the job roles. However, acquiring skills and competences required by employers takes time and practice, and in many cases, newly graduated workforce can only boast about their graduate skills from the university or college, but not the ones sought by labour market. The graduates' employability has become a serious concern due to mismatches between the competences gained at university and competences wanted by employers (Osmani, Weerakkody, Hindi, Al-Esmail, Eldabi, Kapoor, & Irani,

2015). For many years, the link between higher education and the labour market has been in the focus of higher education institutions, government bodies and employers. According to research, identification of the skills required from professionals and labour market is important in higher education institutions to ensure that curriculum remains relevant and up-to-date, this way increasing the rates of graduate employment and attracting new students (Messum, Wilkes, Peters & Jackson, 2017). What is more, research suggests the mismatch between job requirements listed in job advertisements and the actual expectations of the employer. Such discrepancy is even more worrying, as accurate recognition of the essential skills needed in professions and industries is crucial for higher education institutions. This ensures that the curriculum stays up-to-date and relevant, graduate employment keeps rising, and study programs attract new students.

The present study examines vacancy announcements aimed at manager job seekers in transport and logistics companies in Lithuania with the aim of identifying the most sought competencies, and to determine whether the competencies of transport logistics graduates from Vilnius College of Technologies and Design align with the competencies sought by employers in the specialists of transport logistics in 2023 job market. Additionally, the results of the analysis of vacancy announcements will be compared to the results of the employers' survey to identify any mismatches between competences identified in vacancy announcements and skills required by actual employee roles.

### **Literature review**

Various researchers have explored the concept of competence from different perspectives. For instance, competency is defined by United Nations Industrial Development Organisation as a set of knowledge, features and skills that a person requires to conduct an activity within a specific job (El asame & Wakrim, 2018). Competence definition by Torkkeli & Tuominen (2002) states that competency is a cross-functional integration and coordination of capabilities (Ginavičienė, Piščikienė & Sprogytė-Bredelienė, 2023). Scholars such as Dobroszek, Mourao & Grzesiak (2019), posit that the specialists' competences play a crucial role in managing a working environment and determining an organization's competitiveness (Ginavičienė, Piščikienė & Sprogytė-Bredelienė, 2023). Some argue that the competences of logistics specialists in a company, coupled with technology investments, create a momentous competitive edge in the market, this way enhancing both the current and future service potentiality of a transport organization (Katinienė, Jezerskė, & Vaičiūtė, 2021). Liikamaa (2015) takes a different perspective, defining competence as a core characteristic in individuals that is linked to efficient job execution (Ginavičienė, Piščikienė & Sprogytė-Bredelienė, 2023). Katinienė et al. (2021) describe competence as personally applied skills, abilities, and professional knowledge needed for choosing

operational methods and performing specific types of activities or functions (Ginavičienė, Piščikienė & Sprogytė-Bredelienė, 2023). Another viewpoint characterizes competence as the capacity to carry out a particular task based on gained abilities, knowledge, values and skills. (Čižiūnienė, Vaičiūtė, & Batarlienė, 2016; Prusak, 2016, Ginavičienė, Piščikienė & Sprogytė-Bredelienė, 2023). Vaičiūtė, Skirmantienė, & Domanska (2017) highlight competence as the manifestation of professional performance and the ability to execute assigned tasks in both real and simulated work situations (Ginavičienė, Piščikienė & Sprogytė-Bredelienė, 2023).

In general, competence can be stated to refer to a set of abilities, as well as special and personal skills, that aid in accomplishing assigned tasks, indicating the employee's capacity to carry out specific responsibilities.

Within the scientific literature, there are numerous classifications of competencies. In research, competencies are frequently categorized based on study-oriented, theoretical, logical criteria, such as Prior and Empirical Classification, Soft and Hard competencies, Threshold and Performance competencies (Mühlbacher, Nettekoven, & Putnova, 2009, Ginavičienė, Piščikienė & Sprogytė-Bredelienė, 2023). The Competence Baseline, according to Boyatzis (2008), further categorizes competences into behavioural, technical and contextual, representing a behavioural approach to emotional, cognitive and social intelligence (Ginavičienė, Piščikienė & Sprogytė-Bredelienė, 2023). A framework provided by Goleman categorizes competences into two main groups and five subgroups. Personal competences include cognitive skills, self-regulation, self-awareness, motivation, while social competences are comprised of empathy and social skills (Liikamaa, 2015, Ginavičienė, Piščikienė & Sprogytė-Bredelienė, 2023). Martinkus, Neverauskas & Sakalas (2002) identified several general competence types, such as personal, social, methodological, professional and management (Ginavičienė, Piščikienė & Sprogytė-Bredelienė, 2023). Personal competences involve personal development, communication with colleagues and team members, and they encompass skills like communication, delegation, cooperation, stability, creativity and self-confidence, as well as the capability to work intensively in a team. Well-developed social competences are demonstrated when working with colleagues, executives, clients, and creating a positive company climate. This includes the ability to establish contacts, present oneself, negotiate, express opinions, cooperate, ask questions. Methodical competences encompass such skills as acquiring, processing, evaluating information, providing suggestions, and contributing to the improvement of future operations. Professional competences require knowledge, preparation and skills it takes to carry out specific professional tasks, requiring expertise, experience, and product knowledge. Management competences incorporate ability to oversee a specific professional area or organization, ensure company results, production

supply, foster innovation, strategic reasoning and planning, and motivate employees (Ginavičienė, Piščikienė & Sprogytė-Bredelienė, 2023).

In transport logistics, an extremely agile industry, skillset and competencies of transport managers, are very important. According to Puodžiukienė & Aksomitienė (2019), the primary workload and profit-generating tasks in Lithuanian transport companies typically rest on transport logistics managers (Ginavičienė, Piščikienė & Sprogytė-Bredelienė, 2023). Consequently, the competence level of employees and their ability to promptly adapt to market changes are of a tremendous importance. The review of various research reveals that a number of studies targeted skills and competences required in Business field. Chang & Lin (2018) presented a framework encompassing 83 required skills in logistics industry (Ginavičienė, Piščikienė & Sprogytė-Bredelienė, 2023). Vaičiūtė et al., (2017) identified the following three main competence groups: special competences, social competences, personal competences (Ginavičienė, Piščikienė & Sprogytė-Bredelienė, 2023). For the purpose of this research, personal competences, social competences and professional competences were taken as the main skillset categories, as they were consistently distinguished by all researchers (Puodžiukienė et al., 2019; Chang et al. 2018; Vaičiūtė et al., 2017; Liikamaa, 2015)

*Table 1 Competences (prepared by the authors)*

| <b>PERSONAL<br/>COMPETENCES</b> | <b>SOCIAL<br/>COMPETENCES</b>           | <b>SPECIAL<br/>COMPETENCES</b>               |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| Responsibility                  | Knowledge of foreign language           | Planning                                     |
| Creativity                      | Leadership skills                       | Employee work organization                   |
| Initiative                      | Collaboration /Team                     | Quality assurance management                 |
| Commitment                      | Capabilities Relationship building      | Supply chain management                      |
| Persistence                     | Organizational skills                   | Initiation and implementation of Innovations |
| Self-control                    | Negotiation skills                      | Preparation and Implementation of Projects   |
| Self-confidence                 | Good computer skills                    | Searching new clients and carriers           |
| Goal and result-orientation     | Ability to expeditiously solve problems | Transportation management                    |
| Diligence                       | Management                              | Logistics law and regulation                 |
| Good memory                     | Delegation                              | Global logistics management                  |

Contemporary labour market offers jobs that are very agile and require readiness to lifelong learning, adaptability and social interaction, which involves the development of skills that complement the theoretical and practical knowledge specific to the profession (Hernández-March, Martín-del-Peso & Leguey (2009). However, skills needed to gain a job appear to be different from those required once a job is secured (Messum et al., 2017). Required competences in vacancy announcements define a position, and in some cases, they are very similar for the same job description. Also, management rarely informs an employee about their expectations in writing; moreover, the needs of the company can change with time, and so the expectations may alter (Barbouletos, 2011)

Feldman et. al. research revealed that specific information provided in vacancy announcements has tremendous impact on applicants (Feldman, Bearden & Hardesty, 2006; Orme, 2008). Also, receiving up-to-date information from the employers helps higher education develop a more relevant curriculum that meets the needs of the labour market (Singh, Thambusamy & Ramly, 2014). In light of the research conducted by Elzarka & El-Nakib (2014), coherence between the expectations of employers and the competencies of students will only be achieved through constant review and update of the educational materials. Universities will only be able to develop successful content of undergraduate programs which would meet industry needs if academia is constantly informed of the competencies expected by employers. (Tsitskari, Goudas, Tsalouchou & Michalopoulou, 2017).

### **Methodology**

In order to ensure the study produced representative outcomes, a specific survey group was identified. This group consisted of employers of companies that employed the most graduates of the Transport Logistics study program of the Vilnius College of Technology and Design. In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the updated data of the 2023 study of competences of Transport Logistics graduates of the Vilnius College of Technology and Design were used.

As before, in the last quarter of 2023, representatives of transport logistics companies were provided with information on how different competencies are defined and how these competencies can be divided into three categories (Table 1). On the basis of compiled lists of competences, respondents were asked to evaluate special competences required for work, as well as social and personal competences. For the purpose of the study, 150 interviewees were contacted, 90 % of them responded. Respondents were asked to assess what competencies transport logistics specialists should possess, and to rank these competencies according to their importance. Also, the interviewees had to assess which competences are the most significant for a transport logistics manager. In order to conduct a quantitative study, a questionnaire was prepared electronically using

the questionnaire preparation website [www.apklausa.lt](http://www.apklausa.lt), a link to the questionnaire was sent to employers by personal e-mail.

Then, a sample of 150 vacancy advertisements was compiled. The advertisements were taken from CVbankas website, and addressed those job seekers who were looking for a transport managers position. Survey took into account a fact that some of the vacancies were advertised for more than one day.

The advertisements then were analyzed in light of the listed requirements, which later were categorized by using the same categories as in the employers' survey.

In the final stage of the research, the collected data were systematized and analyzed in Microsoft Office Excel. Descriptive statistics (percentage distribution) were used to analyze the results. In order to fulfill the purpose of the research, two sets of data (one based on questionnaire data, the other based on collected information about vacancy advertisements) were compared, the observed similarities and differences were identified.

## **Research results**

Individuals who have completed the Transport Logistics study program at Vilnius College of Technologies and Design engage in diverse roles. These roles encompass tasks such as sourcing cargo and transport, planning routes and driver schedules, overseeing and coordinating vehicle movements, handling customer orders, monitoring the cargo transportation process, communicating with clients, and managing documentation associated with cargo transportation. Such comprehensive range of tasks requires numerous skills, so for this study only ten skills in each category, that appeared most frequently in the advertisements, were taken into account.

The first category, personal competences, included such qualities as diligence, responsibility, self-control, self-confidence, goal and result orientation, persistence, commitment, initiative, creativity, responsibility. Figure one presents the comparison of the mentions of the required personal competences in vacancy announcements and the ones indicated by the survey respondents.

The only competence (Fig. 1) that equally meets both the requirements set by employers and the requirements set for candidates in job vacancies is a good memory, other competencies were evaluated differently. Initiative was mentioned by the employers twice as often as it was in the ads for the position, with creativity producing a very similar result. The most sought personal competence by employers was goal and result orientation, while the advertisements named this competence by a third less frequently. Responsibility was the most often mentioned personal competence in the vacancy ads for the position of a transport manager with the employer requirement following close.

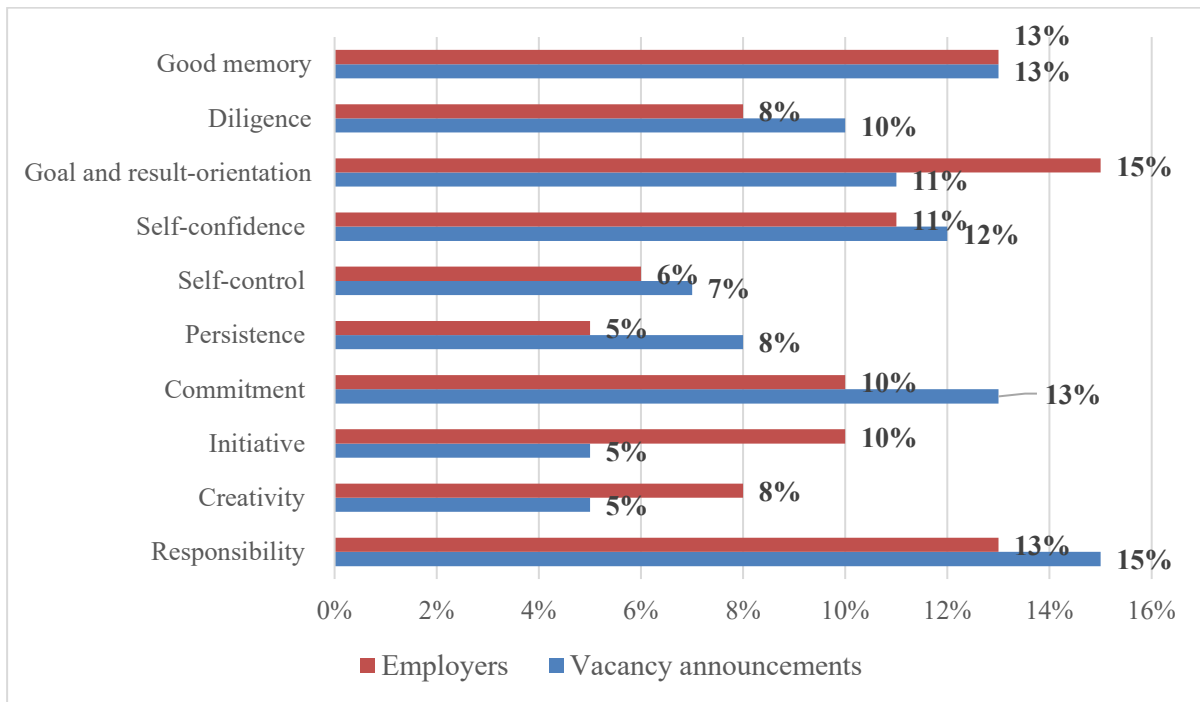


Figure 1 *Personal Competences* (prepared by the authors)

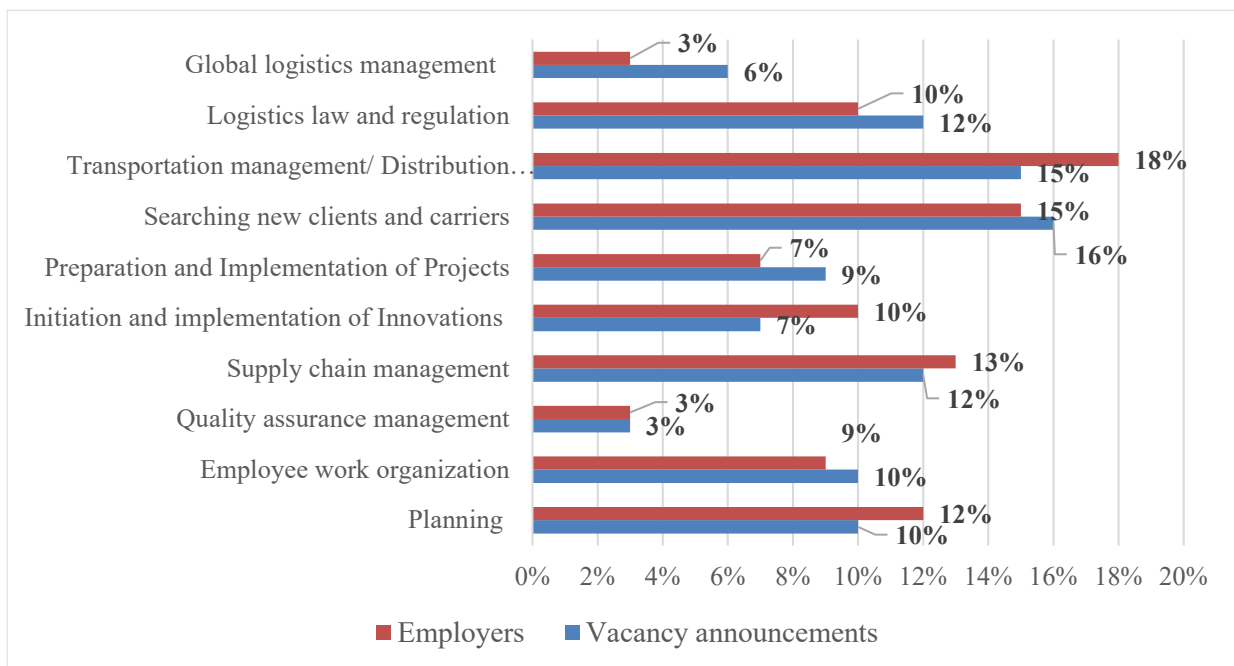
The analysis of social competence list (Figure 2) produced a rather similar set of results.



Figure 2 *Social Competences* (prepared by the authors)

One fifth of the employers named knowledge of a foreign language as an important competence (Fig.2) for a transport manager, the same result was found in the vacancy advertisements. Both samples indicated English as the most useful language for the activity, the least required languages were Italian and French, knowledge of Russian came the second, and German – the third. The least mentioned skills in both sets of samples were negotiation and relationship building capabilities. All the competences, except knowledge of foreign language, were mentioned in between five to fifteen percent of the samples.

Finally, Figure 3 presents the category of special skills. As it is shown in the figure, transportation management and searching new clients and carriers received the highest number of mentions by both employers and vacancy announcements. The least sought competences in both samples appeared to be quality assurance management and global logistics management. The difference in the number of mentions of the competences between the samples varied from one to three percent.



*Figure 3 Special Competences (prepared by the authors)*

Transportation management was comprised of such skills as route planning, documentary verification and coordination of vehicles received more mentions in vacancy announcements, while fuel control was requested more by employers.

In summary, the results of this study reflect the attitude of a large part of Transport Logistics professionals regarding which competences are particularly important and valuable for employees working in the field of transport logistics. Research insights can be relevant in decision-making regarding the suitability of



candidates for a position and facilitate the employee selection procedure, at the same time, research insights are useful in assessing what kind of employee competency development training the company could organize in order to achieve possible benefits in the long-term perspective.

### **Conclusions**

This study established that the mismatch between the competences required by the employers of graduates of Vilnius College of Technologies and Design and the competences requested for the transportation manager's position in vacancy announcements is minor. When analysing personal competencies, the opinions of job vacancies and employers coincided only with good memory. An insignificant difference between requirements in vacancies and those of employers is self-confidence and responsibility. Employers value goal and result-orientation, initiative and creativity, while these skills are significantly less required in job vacancies. Vacancy announcements emphasize commitment and persistence as personal competencies as more valuable skills required from the workforce. In general, social competencies, such as delegation, organizational skills, ability to expeditiously solve problems, appeared to be valued by employers more than they are reflected in job advertisements. However, such social skills as collaboration, management and leadership skills were emphasized in the job advertisements more often than by the employers. The results of special competences' analysis revealed numerous discrepancies between requirements in the vacancy announcements and those named by the employers.

The current study corroborates previous research that businesses and employers have to cooperate with academia and keep searching for common ground while developing or upgrading study programs as constant review and update of the educational materials is the only way to equip graduates with skillset needed by the labour market.

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