

# THE READINESS OF POLISH AND SLOVAK UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TO FUNCTION IN THE GLOBAL BUSINESS WORLD

*Pripravenosť poľských a slovenských vysokoškolských študentov na fungovanie v globálnom svete podnikania*

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## ABSTRAKT

Globalizácia ovplyvňuje mnohé aspekty nášho života vrátane rozvoja budúcej podnikateľskej kariéry mladých ľudí. Univerzity zohrávajú strategickú úlohu pri príprave odborníkov súťažiť na otvorenom a globalizovanom trhu práce. Tento príspevok skúma a porovnáva pripravenosť poľských a slovenských vysokoškolákov čeliť globalizácii podnikateľského sveta prostredníctvom hodnotenia úrovne ich globálnej podnikateľskej gramotnosti. Za týmto účelom vyplnilo online dotazník 320 poľských a slovenských vysokoškolákov a dosiahnuté výsledky boli porovnané prostredníctvom dvojvzorkového t-testu a Mann-Whitney U testu. Medzi poľskými a slovenskými študentmi sme našli určité podobnosti, ako aj rozdiely, pokiaľ ide o úroveň ich globálnej podnikateľskej gramotnosti, ktoré sú najzreteľnejšie v dimenziách rozvoja vzťahov, sebauvedomenia a uvedomelého využívania médií.

**Kľúčové slová:** Globálne podnikanie. Gramotnosť. Vysokoškolskí študenti. Poľsko. Slovensko.

## ABSTRACT

Globalization influences many aspects of our lives including development of future business career of young people. Universities play a strategic role in preparing professionals to compete on an open and globalized labor market. This paper examines and compares the readiness of Polish and Slovak university students to face globalization of the business world by assessing the level of their global business literacy. For this purpose, online questionnaire was filled out by 320 Polish and Slovak university students and the achieved results were compared via two sample t-test and Mann-Whitney U test. We found certain similarities as well as differences between Polish and Slovak students with regard to their level of global business literacy, which are the most obvious in the dimensions of relationship development, self-awareness and conscious media use.

**Key words:** Global business. Literacy. University students. Poland. Slovakia.

## INTRODUCTION

Rapid and often unpredictable social, economic as well as technological changes resulting to interconnectedness of the world impose new requirements especially on young people to function effectively in the global business world Gallo (2022). There is an obvious call for new literacies and their development within educational institutions, which was already highlighted in the book series edited by Jacobs et al. (2013). One of

these new literacies related to effective adaptation and functioning in the global business environment is generally referred to as global business literacy Arevalo et al. (2012). Importance of this literacy is highlighted by the fact that business and work have become more geographically complex Dorow (2017) and at the same time, there are shifts in the mix of jobs available in the economy as well as the speed at which people acquire skills under the influence of

globalization Davidson et al. (2020). These trends particularly effect students of economics and business, who aspire to do business or work in the global environment. This paper is aiming to assess the readiness of Polish and Slovak university students to function in the global business world. Both of these countries can be considered significant recipients of foreign direct investment, which positively shape the labor market in the long run thanks to the phenomenon of creative destruction Jude & Silaghi (2016). However, not much is known how future graduates are prepared for these new challenges.

This paper is aspiring to diminish this gap in the literature, based on the difference analysis of the results of online questionnaire survey conducted on a sample of 320 university students in Slovakia and Poland. The rest of the paper is organized as follows. The first section highlights important challenges within a global business environment that shape acquirement of new skills and competences. Following sections introduce the methodology used within own research, bring results and their discussion, followed by concluding remarks.

## **1 Challenges of a global business environment**

The growing interconnectedness and interdependence of the countries in the world are challenging patterns of performing business in the global environment. According to Washington et al. (2012) there are some significant factors that reduce the success of international business ventures, namely lack of intercultural competences leading to failure in effective intercultural communication as well as failure to observe appropriate business etiquette.

An increasing attention has subsequently been devoted to the construct of global mindset, which is often framed as a set of one's cultural intelligence and global business orientation Story et al. (2014). Building the global mindset can be an effective tool in coping with workplace diversity that is associated with differences among people working in the same organization with respect to the complex of sociological, physical or psychological

factors, such as ethnicity, gender, political or religious beliefs, language or sexual orientation Cletus (2018).

Nekvapil & Sherman (2018) use in regard with functioning of multinationals a term "superdiversity" by which they point out to the fact that multinationals act as an important diversifying element within their foreign subsidiaries and their wider geographical surroundings by influencing social processes taking place there. The term "superdiversity" expresses the new social transformations that are taking place globally and provide new opportunities for studying people, differences and inclusion Ozkazanc-Pan (2019).

Although superdiversity can be seen as a source of potential misunderstandings, it can also be seen as a challenge due to its potential to create social cohesion, communication and openness among colleagues and thus create well-being in the workplace Holck & Hjortlund (2018). To cope effectively with superdiversity, specific competences should be developed, especially polycultural and ethnocultural competences of students Almazova et al. (2019).

However, university graduates are often not equipped with enough competencies to face the global business world. Winterton & Turner (2019) critically analyzed the arguments that the provision of education is not sufficiently in line with the needs of the labor market and concluded that locally oriented research is important in developing specific solutions that fit economic, cultural and institutional contexts. Hence, within this study we look in more details at the level of global business literacy of university students in two countries, namely Poland and Slovakia.

## **2 Methodology**

The aim of the paper is to evaluate the differences in the readiness of Polish and Slovak university students to function in the global world, with the emphasis on the level of global business literacy development. For this purpose, online questionnaire survey was conducted on a sample of 136 Polish (PL) university students, studying at the University of Economics in Katowice and 184 Slovak (SK) university students, studying at

the University of Economics in Bratislava, Faculty of Business Economy with seat in Košice. The students were asked to fill out the questionnaire electronically, via the MS Forms platform, during the last week of the summer term of the academic year 2021/2022.

In the questionnaire, students expressed their level of agreement/ disagreement with a total of 46 statements, on a 7-point Likert-type scale. The statements in the questionnaire were adopted from other studies, namely, statements forming following dimensions of global business literacy were adopted from the study by Arevalo et al. (2012): relationships development (6 items), self-awareness (7 items), self-efficacy (8 items), technical competence (9 items) and willingness to learn (8 items). Moreover, in line with our previous investigation (see Bobenič Hintošová, Bruothová, 2022) we added also the dimension of conscious media use (4 items), which statements were adopted from Koc and Barut (2016) and from Jones-Jang et al. (2021), as well as the dimension of risk-taking tendency (4 items), which statements were adopted from Dohmen et al. (2017) and Donthu and Gilliland (1996).

Descriptive characteristics of the variables used, namely average responses to individual statements for each dimension separately, are shown in Table 1.

In general, the higher the score, the higher the achieved global business literacy in the particular dimension. For the purpose of analysis of differences in the level of global business literacy between Polish and Slovak university students, a parametric two sample t-test as well as a non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test applied to independent samples were used. The null hypothesis being tested is that there are no differences in the level of global business literacy between Polish and Slovak students.

Table 1: Descriptive characteristics of the studied dimensions

Dimension	Country	N	Mean	Median	Std. dev.
Relationship development	PL	136	4.81985	4.83333	0.83864
	SK	184	5.09801	5.16667	0.75515
Self-awareness	PL	136	4.83929	4.85714	0.56221
	SK	184	5.17226	5.14286	0.67082

Self-efficacy	PL	136	5.00551	5.12500	1.09986
	SK	184	4.82308	4.93750	1.08612
Technical competence	PL	136	4.84906	4.88889	0.80281
	SK	184	4.82903	4.77778	0.74719
Willingness to learn	PL	136	5.09244	5.18750	0.97696
	SK	184	5.38111	5.50000	0.83657
Conscious media use	PL	136	5.55510	5.75000	0.70099
	SK	184	5.28130	5.25000	0.80388
Risk-taking	PL	136	3.29230	3.25000	1.01496
	SK	184	3.37910	3.25000	1.00985

Source: own processing

### 3 Results

To compare the level of global business literacy between Polish and Slovak students and identify the significance of differences in the mean scores for particular dimension, the two sample t-test was first applied. Table 2 reports the differences in the mean scores for particular dimensions and the results of statistical testing of the significance of the differences at the 5 % level.

Table 2: T-test for equality of means

Dimension	Mean difference	Sig. (2-tailed)
Relationship development	-0.27815	0.002
Self-awareness	-0.33297	0.000
Self-efficacy	0.18244	0.141
Technical competence	0.02003	0.819
Willingness to learn	-0.28868	0.005
Conscious media use	0.27390	0.002
Risk-taking	-0.08680	0.449

Source: own processing

Positive differences show higher level of global business literacy for Polish students, while negative differences show higher level of global business literacy for Slovak students. The results of t-test detected significant differences between Polish and Slovak students in four dimensions of global business literacy, while in three cases, namely development of relationship, self-awareness and willingness to learn, Slovak students reported better results. On the other hand, Polish students are able to use media more consciously.

Further, we applied also non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test, which can be used also for non-normally distributed data. We used this test to compare medians of the particular dimensions of global business literacy of Polish and Slovak students. Table 3 shows the achieved results of statistical testing of the significance of the differences at the 5 % level.

Table 3: Mann-Whitney U test

Dimension	Median PL	Median SK	Mann-Whitney U	Sig. (2-tailed)
Relationship development	4.83333	5.16667	10147.0	0.004
Self-awareness	4.85714	5.14286	8971.5	0.000
Self-efficacy	5.12500	4.93750	11360.5	0.159
Technical competence	4.88889	4.77778	12204.5	0.707
Willingness to learn	5.18750	5.50000	10410.0	0.010
Conscious media use	5.75000	5.25000	9689.0	0.001
Risk-taking	3.25000	3.25000	11871.0	0.432

Source: own processing

Mann-Whitney U test gave us basically the same results as in the previous case, i.e. Slovak students are significantly better in development of relationships and are more self-aware. Willingness to learn is also higher in the case of Slovak students, but statistically not significant. Polish students, however, show significantly higher media literacy. Within the rest of the dimensions of global business literacy behave Slovak and Polish students approximately equally.

Although the previous study showed a relatively low level of financial literacy among students in the Visegrad region (Frączek 2017), this does not apply to global business literacy. In general, it can be concluded that both Polish as well as Slovak students reported above-average level of global business literacy (the mean score in each dimension except for risk-taking is above 3.5). This finding corresponds to the results of the study by Ali (2021) who reported good readiness of students in facing globalization in terms of competency aspects, personal readiness, as well as communication, teamwork and technology readiness. However, besides similarities, we revealed also some differences between Polish and Slovak students. Similarly, existence of differences as well as similarities in terms of personal processes and tools for personal processes used in companies in Poland and Slovakia showed a study by Vetráková et al. (2021). The detected differences between Polish and Slovak students in the level of their global business literacy can be explained on a basis of following considerations.

Regarding the relationship development, better performance of Slovak students in this dimension can be attributed to higher racial diversity in Slovakia (ethnic fractionalization is 25.39 %) compared to Poland (ethnic fractionalization is 11.83 %) as resulting from the World Population Review (2023). Thus, Polish students are with lower probability used to develop relationships with foreigners in their home country. Similar is valid for the self-awareness dimension, which is related to recognition and respect for diversity. Moreover, Atwater et al. (2009) showed that this dimension can be positively associated with some cultural characteristics, including power distance, which is significantly higher in Slovakia (Hofstede Insights 2023). On the other hand, Polish students are significantly more media literate, which can be seen as a result of the changing media environment towards its increasing structural polarization in Poland (Klimkiewicz 2021).

## CONCLUSION

The present study was focused on comparison of the readiness of Polish and Slovak university students to function in the global business world. The own research was based on online questionnaire survey conducted among 320 university students studying at the University of Economics in Katowice and the University of Economics in Bratislava, Faculty of Business Economy with seat in Košice. Results of the two sample t-test as well as Mann-Whitney U test revealed certain similarities as well as differences between Polish and Slovak students with regard to their level of global business literacy.

In general, both group of students reported above average level of global business literacy in all dimensions, except for risk-taking tendency that reflects overall cautious behavior of these students. The difference analysis showed that Slovak students more easily develop relationships with foreigners and are significantly more self-aware what may be associated with higher racial diversity in Slovakia. On the other hand, Polish students can better cope with media sources and messages. In the rest four dimensions of global business literacy

showed Polish and Slovak students more similar behavior.

Both Polish and Slovak students seem to be prepared to face global business world, however, there is still a place for improvement in this regard. It seems that for further development of some dimensions of global business literacy higher exposure to multiculturalism and diversity as well as training of individuals' diversity awareness could be helpful.

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### Affiliation

The paper presents partial results of the project KEGA No. 026EU-4/2021.

“Development of Global Business Literacy of Students of Economics and Management” in the frame of the granting program of the Scientific Grant Agency of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic and Slovak Academy of Sciences.

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