

Future Skills for Employees in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in the context of Industry 5.0

Joanna Dzieńdziora

WSB University, Poland
e-mail: jdziendziora@wsb.edu.pl

Malgorzata Smolarek

Humanitas University, Poland
e-mail: malgorzata.smolarek@humanitas.edu.pl

Justyna Wiktorowicz

University of Lodz, Poland
e-mail: justyna.wiktorowicz@uni.lodz.pl

Katharina Weissenlehner

WSB University, Poland
e-mail: kathi.weissenlehner@gmail.com

Abstract

Ongoing technological, social, and organisational transformations associated with the concept of Industry 5.0 are redefining the scope of competencies required to maintain the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The aim of this article is to evaluate the applicability of the Future Work Skills model developed by the Institute for the Future (ITF) as a tool for measuring SMEs' readiness to operate within a knowledge-based economy characterised by digitalisation and a human-centric approach.

The study adopts an analytical and critical approach, including a review of the relevant literature and an analysis of the Future Work Skills model in the context of the specific characteristics of SMEs. A representative nationwide survey was conducted using the CAWI method among 312 SMEs operating in Poland.

In the paper a measuring future competencies method was assessed. The analysis was based on data obtained from a representative country-wide CAWI survey conducted in 2025 among 312 employees of SMEs in Poland. Statistical analysis was conducted according to the standard scale validation procedure, including the measures of reliability, and exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis.

The article contributes to the research on measuring future competencies and provides a foundation for the development of diagnostic tools supporting the competitiveness of SMEs.

The obtained results offer implications for both management theory and organizational practice. The findings indicate that the future competencies model may serve as a useful diagnostic tool for assessing the level of organizational readiness for organizational and digital transformation; however, it requires adaptation to the structural and resource-related conditions of SMEs.

Keywords: Industry 5.0; future skills, SMEs, competitiveness, digitaltransformation, human-centric.