

Perception of competence among managers in Algeria

تصور المدراء للمهارة في الجزائر

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Abstract:

Competence occupies a predominant place in business leaders' discourse, describing individuals' ability to mobilize the resources needed to meet the challenges of a constantly changing environment. This article aims to understand the perception of competence among managers, focusing on whether they distinguish it from related concepts such as qualification, professionalism, and experience, as well as the criteria they use for evaluation. An exploratory approach was adopted using a questionnaire administered to managers from different sectors of Algerian companies. The results show that competence is perceived as a crucial element in organizational development. However, some managers still confuse it with other concepts. The study highlights that most companies in this survey still need formalized systems for assessing competence.

Keywords: Competence, Qualifications, Professionalism, Experience, Evaluation.

Jel Classification Codes : M31, M30

ملخص:

تحتل المهارة مكانة بارزة في خطاب قادة الأعمال، حيث تصف قدرة الأفراد على تعبئة الموارد اللازمة لمواجهة التحديات في بيئة متغيرة باستمرار. يهدف هذا المقال إلى فهم تصور المدراء لمفهوم المهارة، مع التركيز على ما إذا كانوا يميزونها عن المفاهيم ذات الصلة مثل المؤهلات، والاحترافية، والخبرة، وكذلك المعايير التي يستخدمونها لتقييم المهارة. تم اعتماد نهج استكشافي باستخدام استبيان وُزع على مدراء من قطاعات مختلفة في الشركات الجزائرية. أظهرت النتائج أن المهارة تُعتبر عنصرًا أساسيًا في التنمية التنظيمية. ومع ذلك، لا يزال بعض المدراء يخلطون بين المهارة والمفاهيم الأخرى. تشير الدراسة إلى أن معظم الشركات في هذا البحث تفتقر إلى أنظمة رسمية لتقييم المهارات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المهارة، المؤهلات، الاحترافية، الخبرة، التقييم.

تصنيف JEL: M31, M30

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Introduction:

Competence constitutes a central concept in human resources management. However, the semantic vagueness surrounding this concept has yet to be dispelled, making it difficult to precisely define competence and determine the elements enabling it to be identified and circumscribed. (Everaere, 2000) Competence is part of the everyday language of any manager. A favorable judgment about a person in his job can be translated by expressions such as: “He knows his stuff,” “he is competent,” or “he is well qualified for this position.” Although these terms are not perfectly synonymous, they are very close. There are other related terms: capacity, aptitude, ability, experience, etc. However, the notions of knowledge, competence, and qualifications have become established with distinct meanings. They now structure the job market and influence the education and training system. As a multidimensional concept, competence includes not only knowledge and technical skills but also behavioral and interpersonal abilities. (Zarifan, 2001) However, how this competence is perceived and assessed can vary considerably from one manager to another, thus influencing human resource management practices, including employee recruitment, development, and promotion. (Parry, 1996) One of the significant challenges facing managers is clearly distinguishing between the concepts of competence, qualification, professionalism, and experience. While qualification refers to certifications and degrees obtained, professionalism encompasses the behaviors and attitudes expected professionally. Experience, on the other hand, refers to the duration and diversity of tasks performed over time.

On the other hand, competence is often perceived as a synthesis of these elements, requiring a more nuanced and contextual assessment. (Le Boterf, 2002) This research aims to explore how Algerian managers perceive the competence of their employees. Indeed, although the notion of competence is often put forward in human resources management practices, there remains uncertainty regarding the ability of managers to clearly distinguish competence from related concepts such as qualifications, professional experience, or professionalism. This confusion can impact the way talents are managed and developed within organizations. To identify the objective of our research, we asked the following central question: **How do Algerian managers perceive competence?**

To further explore this central question, this research also explores the following sub-questions:

- **How do Algerian managers assess competence?**
- **Can Algerian managers differentiate competence from other concepts, such as qualification or professional experience?**

To answer our questions, we opted for a questionnaire sent to managers from different sectors of Algerian companies. This choice allows us to understand better the place that the notion of competence should take in Human resource management practices. In other words, it stimulates reflection on the issue and helps us understand the logic of competence.

1. What is competence?

Le Boterf defines a competent person as *“a person who knows how to act appropriately in a particular context by choosing and mobilizing dual equipment: personal resources (knowledge, qualities, culture, emotions, etc.) and network resources (databases, documents, networks of expertise, etc.).”* (Le boterf, 2002)

Some authors add to this definition the notion of knowing how to be or of cognitive and behavioral aptitudes. (Jolis, 1997) For **Levy-Leboyer**, *“competence concern the integrated implementation of aptitudes, personality traits, and acquired knowledge to successfully carry out a complex mission within the framework of the company that has tasked the individual, and in the spirit of its strategies and culture.”* (Lévy-Leboyer, 1996)

Mitrani and Al (Mitrani, Bernard, & Murray, 1992) extend knowledge to all individual characteristics and motivations that can be reliably measured and manifest themselves to differentiate subjects in their activities significantly.

The definition often accepted by industrialists was stated by the movement of French enterprises (**MEDEF**) as *“a combination of knowledge, know-how, experiences and behaviors exercised in a specific context. It is observed during its implementation in a professional situation from which it can be validated.”* (MEDEF, 2002)

In this sense, for **ROME, (Répertoire Opérationnel des Métiers et des Emplois)**

“competence represents a set of knowledge mobilized to accomplish a job. It is about knowledge, know-how, and interpersonal skills that are manifested in the exercise of a profession in a given activity situation.” (Jolis, 1997, p. 27)

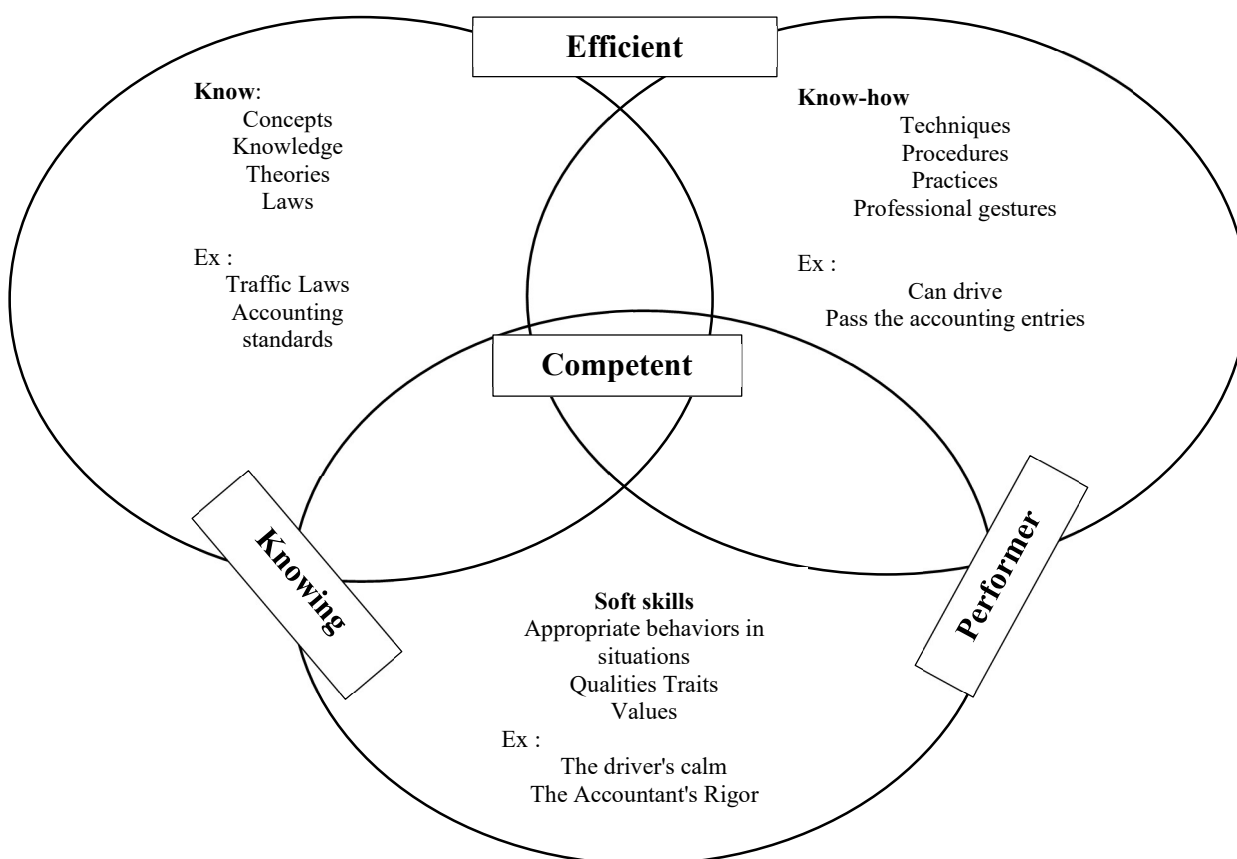


Figure 1. illustrates the types of knowledge that define competence according to ROME.

In the learning process, acquiring and applying all types of knowledge is necessary to become competent. One cannot be fully competent if one aspect of knowledge is missing.

For example, a person may have theoretical knowledge and interpersonal skills. Still, if his know-how is less effective, he might know the job in theory but cannot perform it correctly.

In contrast, a person with only knowledge and know-how can be very efficient in his job. However, if he lacks interpersonal skills, he may encounter difficulties in his relationships with customers or work colleagues.

A person who does not have soft skills and know-how but has gaps in theoretical knowledge will be an executor who lacks autonomy. He will be content to do what he is asked to do.

Competent people can master and combine their knowledge to carry out their profession.

For his part, **the Quebec Ministry of Education (2001)** defines it as “a power to act, succeed, and progress that allows one to adequately carry out tasks or work activities and which is based on an organized set of knowledge (knowledge, know-how, interpersonal skills).” Competence is a power to act, succeed and progress which allows one to adequately carry out tasks, work or professional life activities and which is based on an organized set of knowledge (knowledge, abilities from various fields, perceptions, attitudes, etc.)

As for **AFNOR**, it explains competence as the “implementation in a professional situation of capacities which allow one to properly exercise a function or a profession.” It is about combining the individual's resources to produce a performance.

Therefore, competence is not reducible to the performance sought or the resources needed to produce it. It is the process that leads to performance.

For example, if the professional environment recognizes an agent's ability to lead a meeting (identified performance), this implicitly implies that he has mastered other abilities beforehand, such as resolving interpersonal conflicts, speaking in public, regulating the interventions of the different participants, summarizing, reformulating, etc. All of these abilities, put together, allow him to lead a meeting correctly.

Jacques Tardif, Professor Emeritus of the Faculty of Education at the University of Sherbrooke, adds a fourth type of knowledge. He defines competence as “a complex know-how to act based on the effective mobilization and combination of a variety of internal and external resources within the framework of a family of situations.” (Tardif & Dubois, 2013)

Internal resources go beyond simple knowledge, know-how, and interpersonal skills and encompass postures, attitudes, habits, and action patterns. External resources can take various forms, such as software, equipment, publications, and colleagues who can be consulted or involved in solving a problem or project. In deploying competence, external resources can be as crucial as internal resources. (Poumay, Tardif, & Georges, 2017)

He adds that knowing how to act corresponds to a heuristic approach to a problem, eliminating possible solutions to retain only the optimal one. Knowing how to act cannot be exercised out of context or automated since each professional situation is unique, and many elements must be considered simultaneously. In addition, knowing how to act requires readjustment as the situation evolves.

The same is true of the model defended by **Le Boterf**, which is based on a combination of resources. This model stipulates that the individual competently performs activities by combining and mobilizing a dual set of resources: incorporated resources (knowledge, know-how, personal qualities, experience, etc.) and resource networks in their environment (professional networks, documentary networks, databases, etc.). (Le Boterf, 1999, p. 28)

These resources are personal, contextual, and environmental and refer to an individual's knowledge, know-how, relational skills, experiences, databases, and network of resource people. A person can have many skills, but if this same person does not know how to combine them and activate them in a work situation, he or she will be considered a learned person but not a competent person.

The skill is then contextual, situated, and dependent on the person's representation of the situation in which it is implemented. It assumes the mobilization and effective coordination of a series of relevant resources, which can be cognitive, affective, social, or contextual.

In this sense, **Christophe EVERAERE** emphasizes the “hypothetical and singular character of competence” (Everaere, 2000). He considers competence to be the hypothetical encounter between an individual and a work situation, thus highlighting its dynamic and contextual aspects.

The principle adopted is that competence emerges when the characteristics specific to each individual interact with those particular to each work situation.

It seems possible and appropriate to speak of competence at the singular, complex, and fragile intersection of these two dimensions: the individual and the work situation.

It follows that although competence is specific to each individual, it can only manifest itself in the concrete context of a specific work situation. Therefore, speaking of competence in an abstract and absolute way is impossible.

It is okay to state that a person is qualified without further clarification; it simply indicates that they have achieved a certain level of education, followed a particular course of study, or graduated from a specific school.

On the other hand, it is meaningful to state that a person is competent with further clarification. Thus, competence is only relative to a well-defined work situation.

Finally, the balance between the individual and the work situation is fragile. At any time, whether on the individual's or the work situation's side, the slightest event or change can disrupt the balance and call competence into question.

An individual may be ideally suited to a given work situation, but an intimate personal event can ultimately cause them to falter. Similarly, professional hazards such as a change in equipment or work tools, an increase or decrease in responsibilities, different physical or mental demands, unforeseen variations in the nature or frequency of tasks, more stringent performance objectives, or even a change in a work environment, can all disrupt the compromises established with the person occupying the work situation, thus calling into question their competence. Therefore, competence becomes the individual's ability to manage their potential in a situation. From this perspective, the context must be considered. (Ropé & Tanguy, 1994)

On this subject, **Le Boterf** (Le Boterf, 2002) specifies that companies continue to apprehend competence according to two models. The first model is consistent with a Taylorist organization of work in which employees are considered operators who must perform the

prescribed work. This model highlights know-how and the adoption of behavior and makes associating a particular competence with a specific behavior possible. It does not allow knowledge management but control of the training provided, which is focused on specific job tasks.

The second model considers employees as actors who must go beyond the prescribed work, implement actions, and react to events. It emphasizes the know-how to act, which allows for the adoption of behaviors. Its purpose is centered on employability.

For **Barber** (Barbier, 1994), **Bellier** (Bellier, 1999), **Terressac** (Gilbert de, 1992), and **Zarifian** (Zarifian, 1999), competence, seen beyond the work task, refers to the individual taking the initiative and taking responsibility for the professional situations he is confronted with. Competence is a practical understanding of situations based on acquired knowledge, which the individual transforms according to the diversity of situations.

From this perspective, competence refers to the ability to mobilize networks of actors around the same situation, share issues, and assume areas of responsibility. It also relates to initiative, accountability, cooperation, and professional rigour.

2. Competence characteristics:

The different definitions of "competence" that we have mentioned reveal its essential characteristics. These characteristics reveal the richness of competence. Some complement each other, others are nuanced, and others are part of a cause-and-effect relationship.

- **The skill is operational and finalized.** It only makes sense concerning the action (it is always "competence to act," inseparable from the activities through which it manifests itself) and to the goal pursued by this action: "One is competent for a task." There is no such thing as skill detached from action.
- Competence is always contingent, that is, relative to a situation in which the individual finds himself.
- The different elements of competence develop in a confrontation with action. Therefore, they are constantly adapted to the context in which the individual possesses their lives.
- **The skill is learned. We are not naturally competent;** we become so through a personal and social construction combining theoretical learning and experience.
- **The skill is structured.** It dynamically combines its constituent elements (knowledge, know-how, reasoning, etc.) to meet adaptation requirements.
- **Competence is abstract and hypothetical.** It is unobservable; we observe the manifestations of competence: behavior and performance.

- Competence is broader than just knowledge or know-how. It mobilizes “intelligence” and “initiative.”³
- A skill does not exist alone. It is an individual who carries it.
- Competence is produced by an individual or by a collective in a given situation (knowing how to act in a field of constraints and resources);
- It is named and socially recognized (validated by the direct environment);
- Competence is more associated with the process than with the result.

3. Competence and some related concepts:

Competence is a central concept in the professional world. Still, it is often confused with similar notions, such as professionalism, qualification, individual potential, experience, merit in one's work, and job position. While these concepts are connected and can overlap, defining them is essential for better comprehension. This text aims to explore these ideas in detail and illustrate their distinctions effectively. (Le Boterf, 2011)

3.1.Be Competent and Professional :

It is essential to clarify what we mean by professionalism.

Professionalism corresponds to the mastery of professional situations that an individual may be confronted with. This mastery is linked to his skills and is often evaluated by the quality of the work observed over time. (Georges A, 2003) Professionalism reflects the level of mastery of skills by the individual in his work. Professionalism refers to a person's attitude and behavior when performing their duties. Being professional involves acting seriously, competently, and ethically in one's field.

3.2.Be Competent and Qualified :

Qualification attests to acquiring knowledge or even mastering techniques by a certification body, most frequently the training body. In collective agreements, qualification often serves as a criterion for allocating positions and as a basis for remuneration.

It is considered a toolbox that an individual has built at school through professional training and professional and social experience. If the qualification is the set of constituent elements of this toolbox, competence is the only way for the individual to use it.

³ For **Philippe Zarifian**, competence is “practical intelligence of situations,” manifested by three types of behavior: autonomy, taking responsibility, and communication. Autonomy and responsibility are part of the basic definition of competence: “*We can say that these are social attitudes completely integrated into professional skills and which express new choices in terms of organization. These attitudes can only be learned and developed by taking on the required professional situations. (...)*”. The content and organization of work are not only dimensions in which skills are mobilized but also those in which they develop.

"The term competence covers knowledge, aptitude, and know-how mastered and implemented in a specific context. In contrast, qualifications formally express a worker's professional aptitude recognized at international, national, or sectoral levels".

Generally speaking, qualifications and skills contribute to productivity, economic competitiveness, and everyone's participation in economic and social life and, first and foremost, employment. In other words, Qualification refers to the knowledge, skills, and abilities that a person has acquired (Edu) through education, training, or work experience. The achievement of degrees or certifications often measures it.

3.3.Be Competent and Experienced :

In practical knowledge, experience is integrated into competence as one of its components: know-how. In the mind of a dynamic process, it corresponds to mastery in a given work situation or a professional career.

4. Research methodology :

This study aims to investigate in detail how managers view competence. It seeks to determine specific criteria to assess an employee's competence and verify whether they can distinguish competence from related concepts like qualifications, experience, or professionalism.

To carry out this research, we opted for an exploratory approach, and we chose to interview managers from different sectors of Algerian business using a questionnaire. The latter was sent to respondents electronically via professional platforms. The study lasted six months, from January to July 2024. The study sought to understand how managers perceive competence and concepts closely related to them, such as qualifications, experience, and professionalism. In addition, managers were asked about the specific criteria they use to assess the competence of their employees, as well as the evaluation methods implemented.

One hundred fifty-seven (157) questionnaires were collected. Seven were eliminated due to the high number of missing values, resulting in 150 usable questionnaires. Then, the data were evaluated using Excel and SPSS software.

5. Sample Description :

The 150 questionnaires are distributed as follows:

The sectors of activity of the managers interviewed show great diversity. Most of them work in the service sector, accounting for 44% of the sample, demonstrating the sector's significance to the Algerian economy. Industry makes up 24% of the respondents, underscoring its important contribution to Algeria's economic growth. 14% is made up of the public works and construction industry, and communication technologies (ICT) and agriculture are respectively

represented by (8%) and (6%). Finally, the health, safety at work, and environment sectors are represented by (4%) of the participants. Although this proportion is lower, it reflects a growing awareness of the management of professional and environmental risks within companies. The table below lists the specific areas of activity that were studied.

Table 1. Company sector of activity

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Agriculture	9	6.0	6.0	6.0
	Industry	36	24.0	24.0	30.0
	Construction public works	21	14.0	14.0	44.0
	Service	66	44.0	44.0	88.0
	Information and communication technology	12	8.0	8.0	96.0
	Occupational health and safety/environment	6	4.0	4.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

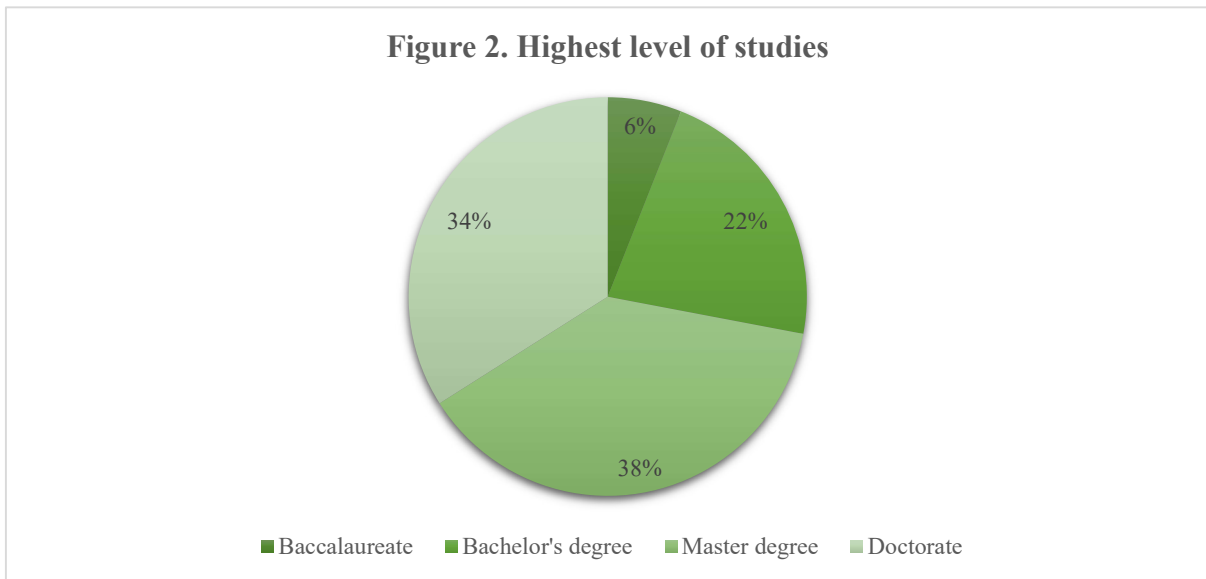
Source: Authors Computation with the aid of IBM SPSS Statistics, version 30

We also asked our participants about their qualifications (highest level of studies) and their years of experience. Our sample is mainly composed of managers, distributed according to the following levels of qualification: 38% have a master's degree, 34% have a doctorate, 22% have a bachelor's degree, and 6% have a baccalaureate (**See Figure 2**). The sample shows an attractive distribution of the highest level of studies, with a high proportion of managers holding a master's degree and a doctorate. This indicates that management positions in Algeria require a high level of academic training, which is consistent with the overall trend in many sectors to favor highly qualified candidates for positions of responsibility. Regarding their professional experience, 30% have held their managerial position for less than 5 years, 24% between 5 and 10 years, 20% between 10 and 15 years, 18% for more than 20 years, and only 8% have between 15 and 20 years of seniority (**see table 2**).

The sample shows a notable diversity in managers' years of experience. Most participants have less than 10 years of experience in their positions, which may suggest either a relatively rapid turnover in management positions or the emergence of a new generation of managers. In

contrast, 18% of managers have more than 20 years of experience, indicating specific stability and accumulation of expertise in certain sectors or companies. This distribution of

Source: Authors Computation with the aid of IBM SPSS Statistics, version 30



qualifications and experience is particularly relevant in analyzing the perception of competence. Managers with more qualifications (masters and doctorates) could have a more theoretical or academic perception of competence. In comparison, those with fewer formal qualifications but more years of experience could rely more on practical experience and skills acquired in the field. This could influence their ability to differentiate between competence, qualification, experience, and professionalism, an essential aspect of our research that we will see later.

Table 2. Year of experience

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Less than 5 years old	45	30.0	30.0	30.0
	5-10 years	36	24.0	24.0	54.0
	10-15 years old	30	20.0	20.0	74.0
	15-20 years old	12	8.0	8.0	82.0
	More than 20 years	27	18.0	18.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

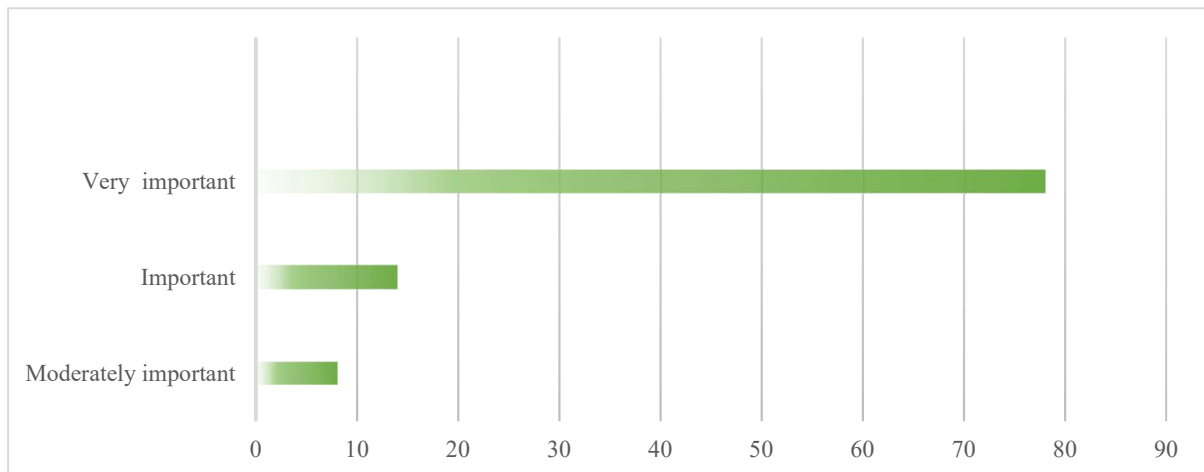
Source: Authors Computation with the aid of IBM SPSS Statistics, version 30

6. Results and discussion :

6.1.Managers' perception of competence :

After collecting information on the sample's composition, we asked managers how important competence is in performing their duties, using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (very important). The results are as follows: 78% of managers consider competence very important, 14% consider it important, and 8% find it moderately important. The fact that 78% of managers perceive competence as very important demonstrates how crucial this notion is in their role. This suggests a strong recognition of competence as a key factor in professional success and organizational performance. Respondents who consider competence important show a slight variation in the intensity of this appreciation, but without minimizing its role. This distinction could reflect differences in the nature of the positions held or specific responsibilities that require different degrees of competence. (See Figure 3)

Figure 3. Assessment of the importance of competence in the managerial role



Source: Authors Computation with the aid of IBM SPSS Statistics, version 30

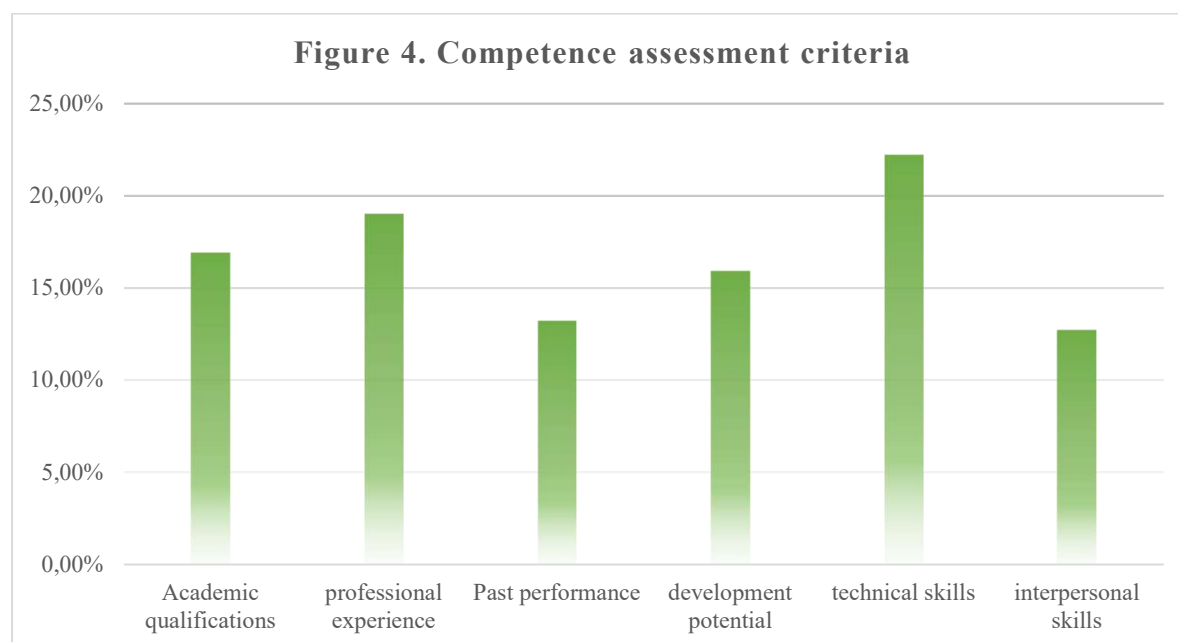
6.2.Competence assessment criteria :

Given the importance managers place on competence, examining the criteria they use to assess their employees' competence is essential. To this end, we asked a multiple-choice question that included criteria such as academic qualifications, experience, past performance, development potential, technical skills, and interpersonal skills.

The results show that 22.2% of managers rely more on technical skills when assessing their employees. This slightly higher figure than other criteria highlights the importance of mastering specific skills in today's job roles, particularly in sectors where technical expertise is crucial to performance. Professional experience is also a key criterion, with 19% of managers considering it. This highlights the perception that accumulating years of work is a crucial indicator of an

individual's competence. However, it could also mean that these managers value learning on the job and the ability to apply knowledge in real-world situations. In terms of academic qualifications, these are considered by 16.9% of managers. Although essential, they appear less decisive than technical skills or experience, which could reflect a tendency to favor concrete results and the practical application of knowledge rather than academic qualifications alone.

The development potential is considered by 15.9% of respondents, showing that some managers adopt a more forward-looking approach, assessing current skills and employees' ability to evolve. This criterion becomes crucial in dynamic environments where adaptability and progression are valued. Past performance influences 13.2% of managers, which may seem surprising in an environment where measurable results are often valued. However, this data could indicate that managers sometimes prefer to focus on future potential rather than past performance. Finally, 12.7% of managers base their decisions on interpersonal skills; although this criterion is the least selected, it remains important, particularly in functions requiring team management or collaboration between departments (See Figure 4).



Source: Authors Computation with the aid of IBM SPSS Statistics, version 30 & Excel

Having identified the criteria on which managers assess their employees' skills, it would be interesting to examine whether these results vary depending on the sector of activity.

Table 3. Relationship between evaluation criteria and sector of activity

Sector/Skills assessment criteria	Agriculture		Industry		Public works constructio n		Services		ICT	
	Effe c	Per %	Effe c	Per %	Effec %	Per %	Effe c	Per	Effe c	Per %
Academic qualification	3	33.33	18	50	12	57.10	45	68.20	12	100
Professional experience	9	100	27	75	12	57.10	45	68.20	12	100
Past Performance	9	100	27	75	7	33.33	20	30.30	0	0
Development potential	0	0	18	50	5	23.8	45	68.20	12	100
Technical skills	9	100	27	75	15	71.42	33	50	12	100
Interpersonal skills	0	0	18	40	0	0	66	100	0	0

Source: Authors Computation with the aid of IBM SPSS Statistics, version 30 & Excel

The results show how managers, depending on their sector of activity, choose to evaluate the skills of their employees by focusing on certain specific criteria. Here is a detailed analysis of the evaluation criteria used by managers in different

- **Academic qualification:**

Respondents in the ICT (100%) and services (68.2%) sectors perceive academic qualifications as very important to managers. This reflects the need for employees with specific training in these areas to cope with technical complexity or rapid market changes.

Managers in construction (57.1%) and industry (50%) also value qualifications, but to a lesser extent, as these sectors require a mix of technical knowledge and practical know-how.

In contrast, academic qualifications are less considered in agriculture (33%), indicating that managers consider field experience and practical skills more essential.

- **Professional experience:**

Professional experience is a crucial criterion for managers in almost all sectors, particularly agriculture and ICT (100%), where managers largely favor this factor. This suggests that

learning by doing and accumulating years of experience are key to assessing competence in these sectors.

This importance is also marked in services (68.2%) and industry (75%), where experience allows managers to judge employees' abilities to manage complex situations or specialized processes.

The construction sector (57.1%) shows moderate recognition for experience, which may indicate that other criteria, such as technical skills or development potential, are also considered.

- **Past performances:**

All managers in the agricultural sector value past performance and assess employees' ability to produce measurable outcomes. This could be explained by the sector's practical character, where quantifiable outcomes are crucial.

Past performance is likewise regarded as a crucial consideration (75%) in the industry sector. This shows that managers in these sectors rely on past success indicators to assess their employees' current skills. However, in services and construction (30%), managers emphasize past performance less, which a greater appreciation of the capacity for development and future potential could explain.

- **Development potential:**

Managers in the ICT (100%) and service (68.2%) sectors highly value development potential. Managers value employees' ability to adapt and progress in rapidly changing environments. Industry managers (50%) also share this perspective, but to a lesser degree, showing that innovation and skills development are still significant.

On the other hand, this criterion is not highly valued in agriculture (0%) and construction (23.8%). Managers probably prioritize skills already mastered over long-term development potential.

- **Technical skills:**

Managers in all sectors consider technical skills essential, particularly in ICT and agriculture. This reflects the need for specific expertise to meet these sectors' technical requirements. Managers highly value these skills in industry (75%), construction (70%), and services (50%). However, other factors can also assess employee skills.

- **Interpersonal skills:**

Managers in service sectors (100%) emphasize interpersonal skills, which are crucial for relationship management and communication. This shows that managers consider the ability to work with others to be as important as technical skills in this sector.

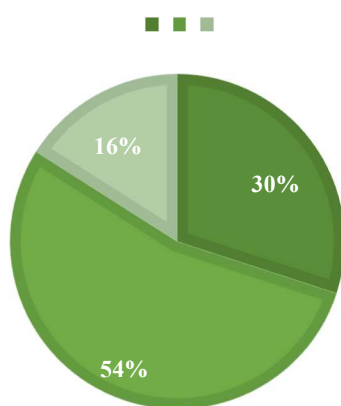
Managers in the industry (40%) also recognize the importance of interpersonal skills but prioritize them less than services. However, information and communication technology managers (0%) don't recognize these skills. Managers place more importance on technical skills and experience in these sectors, while social interactions may be less important.

In summary, These results reveal that managers evaluate the skills of their employees according to the specific needs of each sector of activity. Academic qualifications, development potential, and technical skills are prioritized in the ICT and industrial sectors. Conversely, professional experience and technical skills are the dominant criteria in agriculture and construction. Interpersonal skills are most valued in sectors requiring frequent human interaction, such as services, while other, more technical sectors consider them less of a priority. These differences reflect the expectations and requirements specific to each sector, influencing how managers assess and value the skills of their employees.

6.3.Skills evaluation process:

After examining the various criteria employed by the managers questioned in their organizations, it is crucial to ascertain whether these organizations have a formalized skills evaluation process.

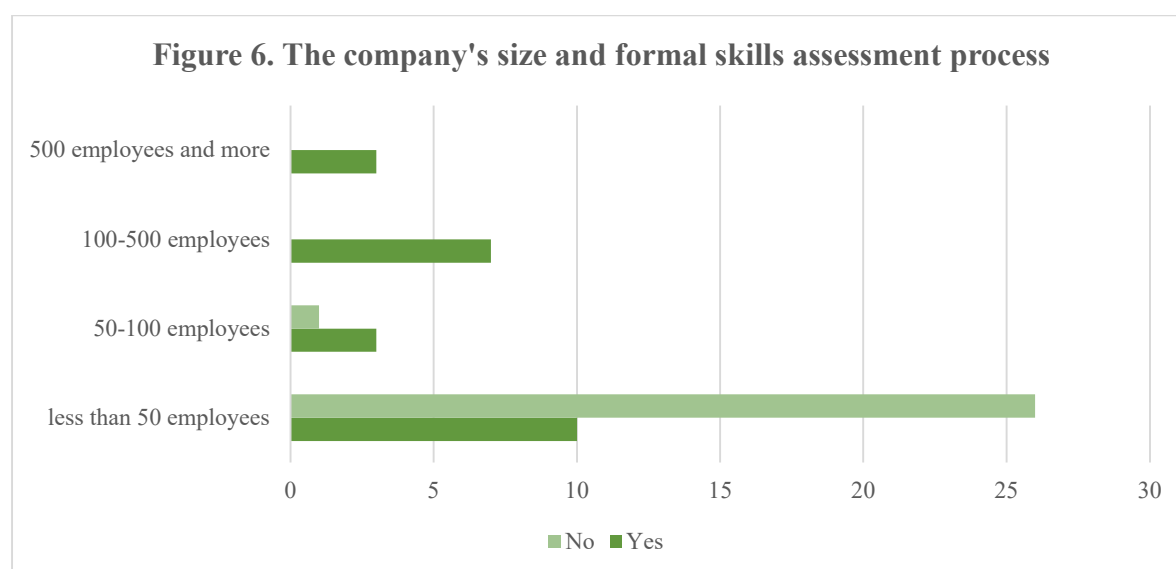
Figure 5. Formalized skills evaluation process



Source: Authors Computation with the aid of IBM SPSS Statistics, version 30

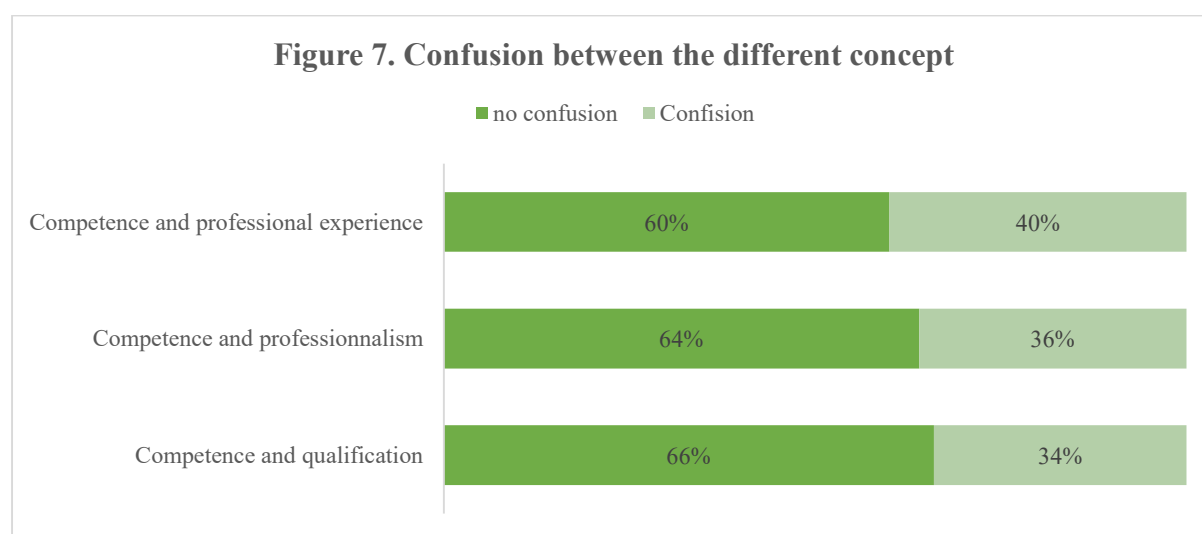
These findings suggest that in more than half of companies (54%), skills assessment is not formalized, which may limit the ability of organizations to consistently track skills

development and make objective decisions about promotion, training, or reorganization. The fact that 16% of managers are not aware of the existence of such a system in their own company reflects a need for better internal communication about skills management practices. Companies with a formal system (30%) are better equipped to manage skills development and ensure employees develop according to organizational needs. The absence of a formal assessment system in most companies indicates a culture where skills management is not a priority or other informal assessment methods, based on experience or perception, are preferred. However, we observed that these results are closely related to the company's size; the larger the company, the more likely it is to have formal skills assessment processes. (See Figure 6)



Source: Authors Computation with the aid of IBM SPSS Statistics, version 30

6.5. Confusion between the different concepts related to competence:



Source: Authors Computation with the aid of Excel

- **Competence and qualification:** 66% of respondents say they don't confuse these two concepts, which shows that most managers perceive a clear difference between competence (skills, know-how) and qualifications (diplomas, certifications). However, 34% acknowledge confusion, which may indicate that some managers consider academic qualifications a direct indicator of competence.
- **Competence and professionalism:** 64% do not confuse competence and professionalism, but 36% admit confusion. This could be explained by the fact that in some companies, professionalism (attitude, work ethic) is perceived as an essential aspect of competence, leading to an overlap between the two notions.
- **Skills and experience:** 60% of respondents believe there is no confusion between skills and experience, while 40% admit to confusion. This may reflect a view where experience (the number of years worked) is considered proof of skills, even if, in reality, experience does not systematically guarantee up-to-date or adapted skills.

Conclusion :

This study analyzed how managers in Algeria perceive and evaluate competence and whether they distinguish it from the concepts of qualification, professionalism, and experience. The results revealed that competence is perceived as a key factor in organizational development. However, some managers interviewed expressed confusion, particularly when competence is compared to experience. This reflects a tendency to value seniority as proof of competence. On the other hand, the distinction between competence and qualification seems more apparent because academic qualifications are more easily differentiated from practical skills in the field. All of the criteria for assessing competence are essential and complementary, although their degree of importance varies across sectors. However, our analysis revealed that professional experience and technical skills are necessary for assessing individuals. In other words, learning by doing and accumulating years of experience play a determining role in evaluating an employee's competence.

We also observed that most companies in this survey don't have formalized skills assessment systems, limiting their ability to monitor their employees' skills development consistently.

These findings suggest that companies should formalize their assessment systems to track skills development better and make objective promotion, training, or reorganization decisions. Furthermore, some organizations could clarify the distinction between skills and other concepts to improve skills management.

Despite the wealth of data collected, this study is limited to a sample of managers, which may limit the generalization of the results. In short, this research highlights the importance of Algerian managers' perception and evaluation of skills, paving the way for more practical skills management in a constantly changing environment.

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