

Epale: Development of employability skills. (English version)

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Development of employability skills

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Are adult educators currently too focused on the development of employability skills? Or is the attention dedicated thereto inadequate? Which skills are truly required for work? And which are not?

During the recent years the issues of development of employability skills, improving employability and increasing employment have become quite significant due to the economic crisis and rising unemployment. However, adult educators find themselves often captured between the complaints that the training programmes are too focused on the needs of the labour market, and complaints that the programmes (especially those focused on general education) do not provide learners with knowledge useful in the labour market. In a situation in which the financial and human resources are limited, adult educators (as well as policy makers, providers of funding and researchers) must adopt decisions which programmes should be a priority – will it be creative workshops or foreign language courses for those who wish to pursue a career abroad. As a result the reflection of adult educators becomes challenged by numerous dilemmas, consideration and doubts.

The development of employability skills through libraries is not a novel idea. [The Employment Information Service at the Ljubljana City Library](#) has been operational for nearly twenty years, so we have been including this topic into various lectures and workshops organised by the library. The libraries also recognise the importance of employability skills at the international level, which is addressed by the [LinkINjob – job hunting with help of librarians](#) project. Moreover, the *Development of employability skills* was one of the [21 professional events](#) organised during the [Lifelong learning Week 2015](#) within the [Implementation of the renewed European](#)

[Agenda for Adult Learning \(EAAL\) 2014-2015 in Slovenia](#) project, which was dedicated specifically to the development of employability skills. Besides the Ljubljana City Library, the Employment Office of the Republic of Slovenia and the Cene Štupar public institute also presented their own activities at the event, while Vesna Velišček, Slocally, presented her personal experience.



Photo: Simona Resman presents the *LinkINjob – job hunting with help of librarians* project at the professional EAAL event

Several practical examples at the above-specified event demonstrated that the development of employability skills and development of skills for other areas of life are interlinked. E.g. the skill to search and manage information whether a potential employer regularly pays social contributions is similar to the search of information on leisure activities in the selected local environment. Moreover, public speaking and conflict resolution skills are useful in and transferrable between both the work and private life. Once that a participant in education masters the use of email, the acquired knowledge can be applied for the sharing of family photos, sending of job applications and communication with co-workers. Creative photo manipulation workshop can be applied by course participants to produce a creative presentation of their company or to turn a leisure activity, such as travel, into an entrepreneurial self-employment idea.

Interlinking of employability skills and skills for other areas of life further opens numerous questions, i.e. which skills to develop, when and how to develop them and who will pay for the development? Experience of mentors during lifelong career guidance and similar programmes and experience of participants in various employability skills development programmes have led us to the conclusion that consistent development of skills requires participation of different partners and combination of several work methods – counselling, coaching, education, job seekers' clubs, locations for work subsidies, depending on the needs of the individual, employer and the local environment. In the light of such context other significant activities include the activities of knowledge exchanges, autonomous learning centres, study circles as well as activities of numerous civil societies and libraries.



Photo: Employment Information Service workshop, Ljubljana City Library Archives

Our experience thus shows that the development of employability skills cannot be separated from an individual's personal development, while the individual's personal development and activities for that "other" side of life, i.e. leisure, free time, cultural engagement and socialising, are not separated from employability skills. However, fostering of the flow of knowledge and experience between private life and career is a challenge for those, who work in the field of adult learning.

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Simona Šinko is in the head of the Lifelong Learning Centre at the Ljubljana City Library. She is active at different levels of adult learning, ranging from individual work in the form of mentorship, to conceptual proposals and addressing of problems of adult learning policies. She is devoted to finding answers to question regarding the educational role of libraries and adult learning potential in the light of changing social relationships and improving the quality of everyday life of individuals.

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