

Employability Skills: Correspondent Hard and Soft Employability Skills for Main Economic Sectors

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Abstract

Employability skills identification is becoming a key instrument to match the workforce demand in the current labor market. Which professional and general skills specific to the labor market are formed because of graduating from a certain level of education, are they different from the skills held in the labor supply and the skills needs in the labor market? A marked imbalance in the labor market is due to many inactive population and the inability of employers to find qualified staff and to fill vacancies. For this article the competencies considered essential for the main economic sectors in Romania for optimizing the integration of potential employees in the labor market were listed, the employers emphasizing that it is necessary to increase the current level of employability skills. The triangle of actors responsible for developing the skills needed to obtain and maintain a decent job is composed of the governments, the social partners, and the individuals.

Key words: labor market, soft general skills, employment growth

J.E.L. classification: E24, J21, J23

1. Introduction

In recent years, more and more articles, studies, national and international employment, and training policies have drawn up lists with the abilities, aptitudes, and general competencies needed for the newly formed jobs, for career development skills, career advancement, mobility training, and the formation of a lifelong learning culture. National and international education, training, and employment training strategies and policies have several common ideas, which converge towards the same goal, increasing employment by preparing the workforce for the new labor market, qualified labor force appropriate to market needs, developing mobility, and flexibility along with the training of skills needed for future changes and opportunities. (World Economic Forum, 2020)

National and European education and employment strategies aim to develop human capital, emphasizing the need to update technical, specific, digital, and transversal skills held by individuals to increase economic competitiveness. The proposed directions of action are to stimulate the participation of adults in lifelong learning programs through counseling and career guidance, participation in continuing education courses. These national and European strategies are aimed at ensuring a balance between supply and demand in the labor market through measures aimed to reduce the imbalances between the technical and transversal competencies needed by those trying to fulfill a job vacancy.

2. Literature review

What professional and general skills specific to the labor market are formed as a result of graduating from a certain level of education, are they different from the skills held in the labor supply and the skills needs in the labor market? Another imbalance highlighted by these strategies, also found in studies, is due to a large number of inactive population and the inability of employers to find qualified staff and to fill vacancies.

The International Labor Office defines employability as the ability of the individual to use the skills and qualifications acquired through education and training to obtain and maintain a decent job, to ensure continuous professional progress, to adapt to changes in the labor market, and of the technological ones. (ILO, 2013, ILO 2016)

Employability from the perspective of the individual is characterized by the dimensions: choice of job, the period between graduation and employment, professional characteristics, desire for continuing professional training, set of specific and general skills. (Institute for Employment Studies, 2020)

Individual employability, defined by the benefit of the individual, the community, and economic growth, is a set of skills, abilities, and achievements that make it easier for the graduate to obtain, maintain a job and advance professionally. (Knight and Yorke, 2006) (Tymon, 2013)

In the literature, the skills needed for a job are listed as transversal, specific, key, soft, generic skills. These competencies define skills, abilities, professional characteristics, qualities, values. Some authors analyzed the skills needed to develop employability, a comparison between the perspectives of relevant actors in the labor market. (Harvey, 2001)

Creating a model that includes the factors that determine an individual's employability is actually quite complex. The educational units through its programs offer several opportunities to develop the employability of students, including training the skills needed to get and keep a job, as well as the skills needed for career training and career advancement. The curriculum of educational institutions and vocational training centers provides the training of the skills to complete the CV, presentation, and communication skills necessary for the candidate's interview to obtain the desired job.

3. Research methodology

Research methodology proceeded in literature review of the employment concept defined by the abilities developed as a result of completing education and the skills demanded by the employers. The major objective of this study was to research employment and education strategies and agendas to determine whether there is a list of employability competencies list commonly accepted.

The hypotheses are that: there is a common list of specific job skills demanded by companies in the main economic sectors, there is an acknowledged list of transversal employability skills for the main economic sectors.

In view of the strategies, agendas, and data published by the Ministry of Labor and Social Justice, IRES, MTS, INCSMPS that has been identified a common list of the specific employability list and a transversal skills list of occupations among the main economic sectors, and a list of the insufficient held competences by the employers.

4. Findings

For a complex definition of the concept of employability, it is proposed to follow the indicators of employability, such as the employment rate of graduates, the time between graduation and employment of the graduate, the connection of the job obtained with the level and field of training completed, the employment index skills and competencies learned and developed during school or as a result of training programs, career development, and career advancement. (ILO, 2013, CEDEFOP 2020)

Sectorial plan of the Employment, Research, and Development of Ministry of Labor and Social Justice, developed through the Strategy for the Romanian Skills Agenda 2020- 2025 makes a complete report with the results of the studies carried out and updated data of the necessary skills to meet the needs of enterprises, the needs of the current labor market. (Ministry of Labor and Social Justice, 2019)

Tabel no. 1 Employment specific skills insufficient held by workers

Economic Sectors/ Skills	Technical skills	Equipment use skills	Document writing skills	Numerical skills	Management / coordination skills	Professional ICT Skills	Skills for efficient use of raw materials and energy	Science process Skills
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing	66.70%	57.80%	41.50%	36.70%	42.40%	33.20%	46.70%	32.50%
Extractive industry	72.90%	92.40%	83.20%	40.10%	84.20%	64.70%	67.40%	64.70%
Manufacturing industry	67.30%	56.30%	38.60%	31.50%	45.10%	31.80%	58.80%	30.20%
Production and supply of electricity and heat, gas, hot water, and air conditioning	37.40%	19.70%	37.40%	19.70%	25.50%	33.30%	19.70%	27.60%
Water distribution, sanitation, waste management, decontamination activities	58.20%	55.70%	43.50%	19.10%	37.10%	32.30%	53.00%	22.90%
Construction	68.40%	59.20%	46.00%	34.80%	48.00%	35.10%	47.20%	31.10%
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	52.50%	46.70%	41.00%	37.30%	50.50%	37.80%	46.10%	23.50%
Transport and storage	54.90%	52.10%	39.80%	35.30%	40.90%	42.00%	42.60%	25.00%
Hotels and restaurants	56.90%	63.70%	51.90%	44.70%	57.60%	38.40%	65.20%	23.60%
Information and communications	60.90%	26.20%	30.00%	19.80%	62.10%	51.00%	29.90%	36.40%
Financial intermediation and insurance	27.20%	33.50%	27.20%	27.20%	61.60%	41.10%	33.50%	27.20%
Real estate transactions	36.10%	28.10%	35.40%	14.90%	58.40%	29.50%	37.40%	19.70%
Professional, scientific, and technical activities	55.00%	35.40%	34.40%	25.10%	51.50%	31.20%	33.20%	23.30%
Administrative and support service activities	42.80%	47.00%	35.10%	20.90%	47.80%	27.80%	47.50%	24.00%
Health and social work	53.40%	46.20%	30.20%	16.30%	44.20%	37.70%	29.50%	30.30%
Other activities	62.70%	45.70%	40.10%	29.40%	42.30%	25.10%	50.80%	21.30%

Source: Ministry of Labor and Social Justice, 2019. *Romanian Skills Agenda 2020- 2025, Report 2*, pg. 158

Tabel no . 2 Employment general skills insufficient held by workers

Economic Sectors/ Skills	Communication skills	Foreign language skills	Teamwork skills	Problem-solving and decision-making skills	Personal, social, civic, and multicultural skills	Competence in learning to learn	General ICT skills
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing	54.80%	39.20%	57.70%	42.70%	39.60%	56.80%	33.20%
Extractive industry	51.50%	47.70%	64.70%	64.70%	31.00%	84.20%	67.30%
Manufacturing industry	53.40%	35.50%	62.30%	56.60%	37.30%	66.10%	33.40%
Production and supply of electricity and heat, gas, hot water, and air conditioning	45.30%	33.00%	27.60%	45.30%	19.70%	51.20%	15.70%
Water distribution, sanitation, waste management, decontamination activities	50.10%	21.80%	48.40%	40.70%	39.80%	45.40%	34.00%
Construction	53.10%	37.40%	58.60%	53.90%	32.80%	57.70%	39.50%
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	63.10%	35.50%	66.90%	54.40%	39.60%	63.00%	42.40%
Transport and storage	60.60%	50.40%	56.90%	51.70%	39.30%	59.10%	44.10%
Hotels and restaurants	76.60%	65.90%	75.90%	59.20%	43.90%	75.90%	46.40%
Information and communications	61.50%	44.70%	70.60%	69.20%	50.10%	69.60%	36.80%
Financial intermediation and insurance	73.50%	41.10%	61.60%	61.60%	33.50%	47.40%	47.40%
Real estate transactions	50.80%	33.40%	32.90%	54.10%	38.00%	51.00%	29.50%
Professional, scientific, and technical activities	52.80%	48.40%	62.00%	48.70%	30.20%	51.80%	32.10%
Administrative and support service activities	66.80%	44.50%	73.60%	54.90%	47.60%	65.70%	34.00%
Health and social work	57.30%	25.90%	50.00%	44.30%	25.50%	39.00%	36.30%
Other activities	62.70%	60.10%	36.40%	62.60%	57.50%	21.30%	31.80%

Source: Ministry of Labor and Social Justice, 2019. *Romanian Skills Agenda 2020- 2025, Report 2*, pg. 158

These tables identify the skills required by employers for the sustainable development of the company's economic activity.

The skills agenda highlights that the outcome of active labor market policies has not been as expected, it has had a limited impact, the measures have focused on financial incentives and not on personalized approaches to current labor market needs.

According to the study *Identifying the fundamental competencies for the 21st century from the perspective of employers and job seekers* (INCSMPS, 2018), for the productivity of companies and carrying out economic activity in optimal conditions, employers have identified, in the right of employees, the following essential competencies which should be improved:

- *use of the company's equipment*
- *efficient use of raw materials and energy*
- *coordination and organization*
- *understanding and writing documents*
- *general digital*
- *professional digital*
- *calculation*
- *in the field of science, technology, and engineering*
- *to work in a team*
- *to learn to learn*
- *techniques of communication*
- *problem solving and decision making*
- *communication in foreign languages*
- *personal, social, civic, and multicultural*

Source: Identifying the core competencies for the 21st century from the perspective of employers and job seekers. (INCSMPS, 2018), pg. 155

Is there a list of general and transversal professional skills common to the main economic sectors? The report on the skills agenda ROMANIA 2020 - 2025 identifies job-specific skills in each economic sector but also the common cross-cutting skills needed by employers as insufficiently held by employees but also by candidates for job vacancies.

In table no. 1 shows the necessary professional skills insufficiently held by workers in each economic sector, and in the following table, table no. 2, the transversal competencies are displayed.

Table 2 shows the general, transversal competencies: communication skills and teamwork skills and the lifelong learning ability to occupy the first three places in the needs of employers in order to fill vacancies and to obtain an efficient job performance. the company. General competencies are more related to the behavioral skills, personality, and desire for personal and professional development of the individual, but for employers are important criteria for selecting candidates for available jobs.

The competencies formed after graduating from a form of education or a professional specialization program were not in line with those sought by employers according to the analysis of the relevance of the education system. This report contains a list of skills needed for vacancies in each economic sector in Romania, but also a list of skills insufficiently held by workers in these economic sectors. The objectives of this strategy emphasize the need to correlate the school curriculum, by the level of education, depending on the needs of the labor market, according to the results of studies conducted, surveys among employers. (Ministry of Labor and Social Justice, 2019, IRES, MTS, 2018)

5. Conclusions

The quoted reports and listed skills are considered realistic and dated as it identifies the current needs of the labor market and contain the weaknesses, but also the strengths of education and training policies, and useful recommendations. This report highlights the need for the development of career guidance and counseling services and their use by students, young people, and job seekers. The report mentions the need to validate learning outcomes in informal and non-formal contexts.

Among the weaknesses is the lack of a system for recognizing the transversal competences acquired by future employees by participating in non-formal education activities, a system through which the accumulation and development of transversal competencies by employers would be proven. An important step will be to capitalize on the knowledge about skills needs and the training and development of these skills for graduates who will be seen in the satisfaction of employers. (Souto-Otero M. et al, 2012)

These skills are considered essential for optimizing the integration of potential employees into the labor market, with employers stressing the need to increase their skills.

Who is responsible for training and developing the skills and abilities needed in the labor market? The ILO lists three people in charge of Increasing Youth Employment. The importance of the key skills needed for the job. (ILO, 2013) The triangle of actors responsible for developing the skills needed to obtain and maintain a decent job: governments, social partners, and individuals.

Among the main responsibilities of governments and countries, decision-makers are education, guidance, and training through counseling services and pre-employment training programs, basic skills training, training of the unemployed and people with special needs. (ILO, 2013) The social partners play a significant role in obtaining and maintaining employment through continuing vocational training, the provision, and the provision of work experience. Individuals have the responsibility to take advantage of education and training opportunities, opportunities for professional development, and participation in lifelong learning programs.

Equal funding opportunities for all businesses ensure investment in human capital and new technologies. The design and management of the framework programs, a set of personal skills and abilities, for adult education, training, and professional qualification, is mandatory for obtaining and maintaining a good job. This indicates a need for measures that must focus on the importance of lifelong learning, in order to have economic growth along with the prosperity of the employer and the employees.

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