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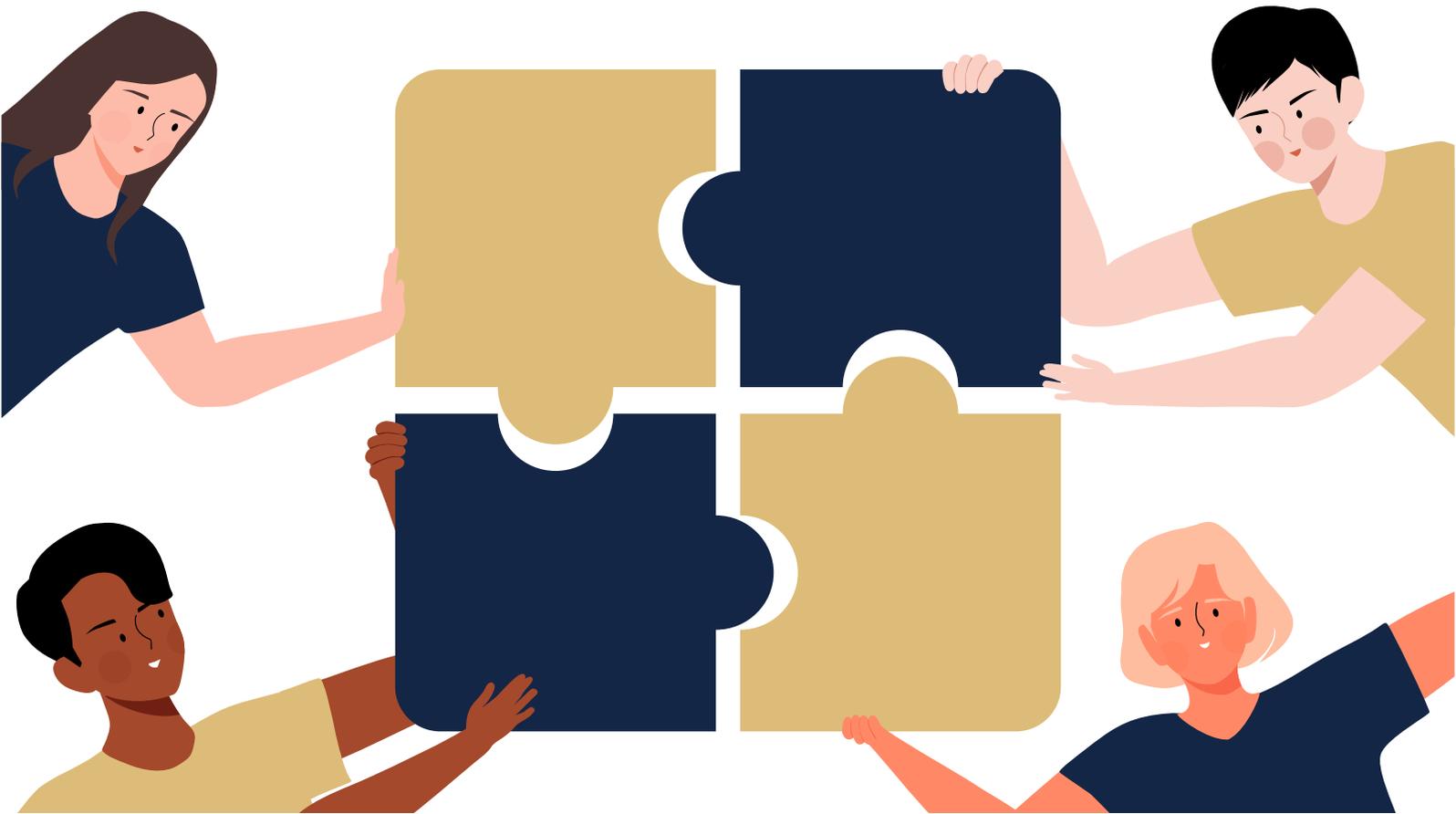
EMPAD

Empowering adults from disadvantaged
backgrounds to access a job

KEY STEPS FOR THE INCLUSION OF LOW SKILLED ADULTS ON LABOR MARKET

Support handbook for social
workers and NGO sector workers.

Material created under the project "Empowering adults from disadvantaged backgrounds to access a job" - 2022-1-R001-KA210-ADU-000084921, financed by European Commission through Erasmus+ program.



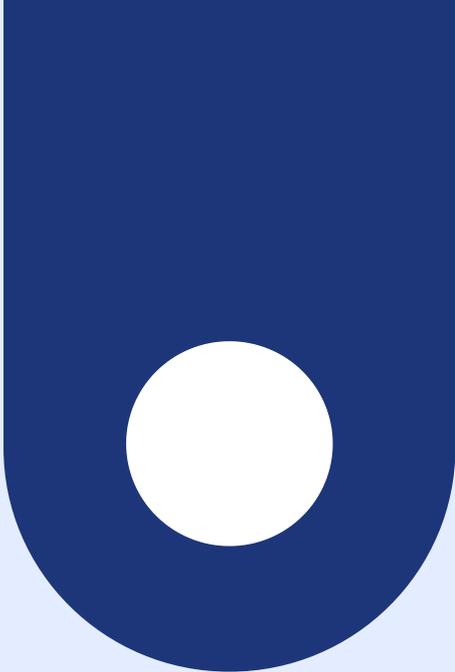


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Introduction

The inclusion of low-skilled adults in the labor market refers to efforts and initiatives aimed at providing employment opportunities and support to individuals with limited skills and qualifications. It recognizes the importance of ensuring that everyone, regardless of their educational background or skill level, has access to gainful employment and the chance to contribute to the economy.



There are some key points and strategies related to the inclusion of low-skilled adults in the labor market:

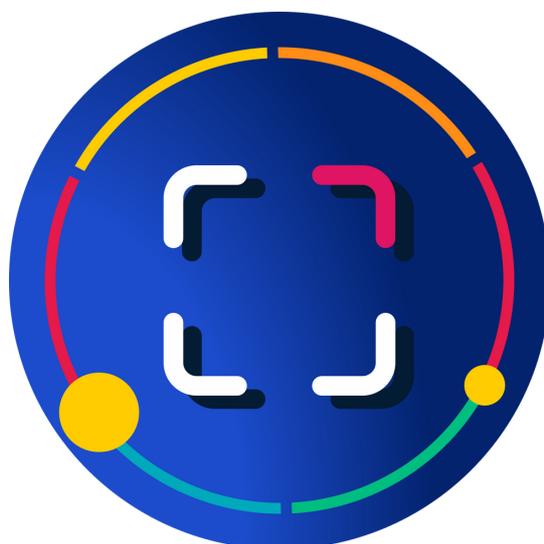
- **Skills Development:** Providing training and skill development programs tailored to the needs of low-skilled adults is crucial. These programs focus on enhancing their employability by teaching basic job skills, improving literacy and numeracy, and providing vocational training in specific industries.



- **Targeted Support:** Low-skilled adults often face various barriers to employment, such as lack of experience, limited access to job opportunities, or personal challenges. Providing targeted support services, including career counseling, mentorship programs, and job placement assistance, can help address these barriers and increase their chances of finding suitable employment.



- **Recognition of Prior Learning:** Recognizing and valuing the skills and knowledge that low-skilled adults have acquired through informal means, such as work experience or self-learning, is important. Establishing mechanisms to assess and certify these skills can help individuals demonstrate their competence to potential employers and enhance their employability.



- **Lifelong Learning:** Promoting a culture of lifelong learning is crucial for low-skilled adults to continually upgrade their skills and adapt to changing labor market demands. Encouraging and facilitating access to continuing education and upskilling opportunities helps individuals remain competitive and enhances their prospects for career advancement.

Efforts to include low-skilled adults in the labor market require a **comprehensive approach** involving multiple stakeholders, including governments, employers, training providers, and community organizations. By providing opportunities for skill development, targeted support, and creating an enabling environment, it becomes possible to enhance the employability and economic participation of low-skilled adults.





Vision

This material covers the **"skills development"** key point of low skilled adults with the purpose of their inclusion on labor market. The booklet is based on local researches aimed to understand what are the 'basic employability skills' needed by low-skilled adults to better integrate into the labour market in Italy, Romania, Hungary and Serbia, in order to develop tailored tools for the intermediary professionals working with them.

The document is part of the project *"Empowering adults from disadvantaged backgrounds to access a job"* - 2022-1-R001-KA210-ADU-000084921, financed by European Commission through Erasmus+ program, implemented by:

- Activity Foundation - Romania;
- "Io, Noi" Associazione di Volontariato per la solidarietà e l'integrazione sociale - Italy;
- Tudás Alapítvány - Hungary
- Asocijacija za edukaciju omladine i odraslih - Serbia.

This booklet highlights 4 action points that can be used to support the inclusion of low skilled adults on labor market as follows:



Communication skills

Effective communication skills play a crucial role in the inclusion of low-skilled adults in the labor market. By developing strong communication skills, low-skilled adults can effectively convey their abilities, collaborate with others, and navigate the workplace environment. These skills contribute to their employability, career advancement, and overall success in the labor market.



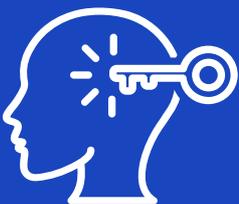
Entrepreneurial skills

Developing entrepreneurial skills can empower low-skilled adults to create their own opportunities in the labor market. By developing these entrepreneurial skills, low-skilled adults can become self-starters and create their own employment opportunities. These skills provide them with the tools and mindset to navigate the challenges of entrepreneurship and succeed in the labor market.



Digital skills

Digital skills are increasingly important for the inclusion of low-skilled adults in the labor market. By developing these digital skills, low-skilled adults can effectively navigate the digital landscape, access online job opportunities, and contribute to digital-driven workplaces. These skills enhance their employability, open new avenues for career growth, and support their inclusion in the labor market.



Cultural competences and personal awareness

By developing cultural competences and personal awareness, low-skilled adults can better navigate the diverse labor market, build strong relationships, and contribute effectively to their workplaces. It promotes a more inclusive work environment that values diversity and supports the success of all employees.

Communication skills



Effective communication skills play a crucial role in the inclusion of low-skilled adults in the labor market. People from disadvantaged backgrounds have a communication handicap caused by a certain sense of inferiority in relation to an employer. For this reason it is necessary to carry out exercises during their support in the process of finding a job that can increase their self-esteem and their ability to communicate appropriately in an interview and during employment.

We must also bear in mind the reality that equality of opportunity does not mean the same thing to everyone, whether it is gender, age or ethnicity. By developing strong communication skills, low-skilled adults can effectively convey their abilities, collaborate with others, and navigate the workplace environment. These skills contribute to their employability, career advancement, and overall success in the labor market.

Here are some communication skills that can contribute to the successful integration on labor market of low skilled adults:

Clear Verbal Communication:

Encourage low-skilled adults to develop clear and effective verbal communication skills. This includes speaking clearly, using appropriate language, and expressing ideas and thoughts effectively. Provide opportunities for practicing communication in professional settings, such as mock interviews or role-playing exercises.

Active Listening:

Emphasize the importance of active listening skills. Encourage low-skilled adults to attentively listen to others, ask clarifying questions, and show genuine interest in the conversation. Active listening helps build rapport, understand instructions, and respond appropriately.

Non-Verbal Communication:

Teach the significance of non-verbal communication, including body language, facial expressions, and gestures. Help low-skilled adults understand how their non-verbal cues can convey confidence, respect, and engagement in the workplace.

Confidence Building:

Help low-skilled adults build confidence in their communication abilities through practice, constructive feedback, and encouragement. Conduct workshops or activities that focus on building self-assurance and assertiveness.

Interview Preparation:

Offer guidance on interview techniques, including how to articulate skills and experiences effectively. Conduct mock interviews to help low-skilled adults practice their communication skills in a job interview setting.

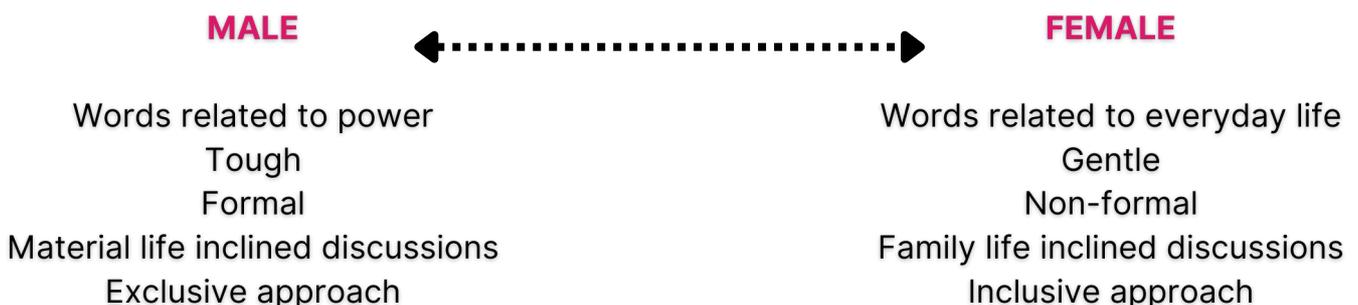
Barriers in communication

Gender inequality

Gender inequality in disadvantaged communities can act as a significant communication barrier, impacting various aspects of interaction and participation.

Addressing gender inequality as a communication barrier in disadvantaged communities requires comprehensive efforts, including promoting gender equality, empowering women and girls, challenging stereotypes, providing access to education and resources, fostering inclusive representation, and creating safe spaces for open and respectful communication. By addressing these barriers, disadvantaged communities can promote gender equity, enhance communication abilities, and ensure the meaningful participation of women and girls in social, economic, and political spheres.

Differences of language (in most cases, not generalized):





Poor general attitude

Attitude plays a crucial role in communication because it influences how we perceive and respond to others, as well as how others perceive and respond to us. Here are the reasons why having a winning attitude is preferable to a losing attitude:

- **Positive Engagement:** It encourages individuals to engage in constructive and meaningful interactions, fostering a productive and collaborative environment.
- **Open-Mindedness:** It promotes active listening, respect for diverse viewpoints, and a willingness to consider different opinions. This fosters effective communication and enhances the exchange of ideas.
- **Solution-Oriented:** It encourages individuals to approach communication with a problem-solving mindset, seeking resolutions and opportunities for growth. This positive mindset fosters a can-do attitude and drives progress.
- **Building Relationships:** It cultivates trust, respect, and empathy, which are essential for effective collaboration and teamwork. A positive attitude encourages others to be more receptive to our messages and promotes rapport.
- **Motivation and Inspiration:** It creates a positive energy that encourages individuals to strive for excellence, take initiative, and go beyond their comfort zones. This motivation can have a ripple effect, inspiring others to adopt a similar mindset.
- **Resilience:** It enables individuals to maintain a positive outlook, bounce back from failures, and keep striving towards their goals. This resilience in communication helps maintain focus, confidence, and determination.
- **Influence and Persuasion:** It creates a favorable impression and increases credibility. People are more likely to be receptive to messages delivered with confidence, positivity, and an optimistic outlook. This can positively impact negotiation, teamwork, and leadership skills.

While a winning attitude doesn't guarantee success in every situation, it significantly improves the chances of positive outcomes and effective communication. It creates an environment that fosters collaboration, growth, and achievement. Adopting a winning attitude contributes to personal and professional development and enhances the overall communication experience for everyone involved.

Practical EXERCISES

EXERCISE 1 - Clear Verbal Communication in Job Search

Objective: To develop clear verbal communication skills when engaging in job search activities, including phone calls, networking events, and job interviews.

Instructions:

Phone Call Practice: Pair up participants and assign one participant as the "Job Seeker" and the other as the "Employer/Contact Person." Provide a list of common job-related phone scenarios, such as calling to inquire about job openings, scheduling an interview, or following up on an application. Instruct the Job Seeker to practice making the phone call while focusing on clear verbal communication, speaking clearly, using appropriate language, and effectively conveying their purpose or questions. The Employer/Contact Person should provide feedback on the Job Seeker's verbal communication skills, including tone, clarity, and overall effectiveness.

Elevator Pitch Development: Explain the concept of an elevator pitch, which is a concise summary that effectively introduces oneself and highlights key skills and qualifications. Instruct each participant to develop their own elevator pitch that they can use during networking events or when introducing themselves to potential employers. Encourage participants to focus on clarity, brevity, and the ability to convey their value proposition effectively within a short timeframe. Provide time for participants to practice delivering their elevator pitches to each other and offer constructive feedback on clarity, organization, and delivery.

Mock Job Interview: Conduct a mock job interview scenario where participants can practice clear verbal communication in an interview setting (*see next exercise)

Group Discussion and Reflection: Facilitate a group discussion where participants can reflect on their experiences during the exercises. Discuss the importance of clear verbal communication in job search activities and the impact it can have on employers' perception and understanding. Encourage participants to share their insights, challenges faced, and strategies they found helpful in improving their verbal communication skills.



EXERCISE 2- Job Application Scenario

Objective: To practice active listening skills during a job application scenario, focusing on understanding and responding effectively to information provided.

Instructions:

Set up a Job Application Scenario: Create a mock job application scenario that includes a job description, company background, and specific requirements.

Pair up Participants: Divide the participants into pairs. Assign one participant as the "Job Seeker" and the other as the "Employer/Interviewer."

Provide Job Description and Instructions: Provide the Job Seeker with a written job description that outlines the position, responsibilities, and requirements. Instruct the Job Seeker to listen carefully to the Employer/Interviewer's instructions and questions.

Conduct the Mock Job Interview: Have the Employer/Interviewer initiate the mock job interview. The Employer/Interviewer should ask questions related to the job description, responsibilities, required skills, and qualifications. They can also provide additional information or scenarios related to the job role.

Active Listening Practice: Instruct the Job Seeker to actively listen to the Employer/Interviewer's questions, prompts, and any additional information provided. Encourage them to focus on the content, tone, and non-verbal cues of the Employer/Interviewer.

Respond Appropriately: After the Employer/Interviewer finishes speaking, the Job Seeker should respond to the questions or prompts based on their active listening. Encourage the Job Seeker to provide thoughtful and relevant responses, demonstrating that they have understood the information and requirements effectively.

Switch Roles: After a set amount of time, instruct the pairs to switch roles. The Job Seeker becomes the Employer/Interviewer, and vice versa. Repeat the process so that both participants have the opportunity to practice active listening and responding effectively.

Entrepreneurial skills



One of the most worrying aspects of the unemployment phenomenon is related to the fact that it tends to concentrate on the disadvantaged people, who, even in the presence of a favorable situation of the economy and the labor market, continue to find themselves in situations of marginality and exclusion.

Disadvantaged is, in fact, any person belonging to a category that has difficulty entering, without assistance, into the labor market. Some of this disadvantage is already so severe that it is recognized and considered by public services: it is the so-called certified disadvantage.

Another significant portion of the disadvantaged, on the other hand, consists of individuals who, while not falling into defined and easily recognizable categories, undergo processes of weakening and marginalization that result in exclusion from the labor market:

- long-term unemployed individuals who have been without regular paid employment for at least 12 months;
- Young people between the ages of 15 and 24;
- Individuals who do not hold a high school diploma or vocational school diploma or have completed full-time training without obtaining their first regular paid employment.
- workers over 40 expelled from the labor market labor market;
- single adults with dependent children;
- employee in occupations or sectors characterized by a male-female disparity rate that is at least 25 percent higher than the average male-female disparity across all economic sectors if the worker concerned belongs to the underrepresented gender;
- immigrants at the beginning of their migration; immigrants in need to improve their language and vocational training or work experience to increase their prospects of access to stable employment.

For disadvantaged people, work plays a key role

All individuals should be able to live and work in a state of equity and equal opportunity. This is the assumption from which the concept of social inclusion starts, on which all interventions and initiatives aimed at changing the cultural system and fostering the active participation of all people are based. In addition, work activity fosters the construction and recognition of an identity through the professional role and inclusion in the social network.

Work, therefore, not only provides income, but is a place of fulfillment, of strengthening confidence and self-respect, of exchange and social relations, of enhancement, learning, personal and professional growth, and the acquisition of independence and autonomy. Working then constitutes a foundational and qualifying element in building a path to social inclusion, becoming the indispensable starting point for a path of human growth and social rehabilitation.

For the community, ensuring the job placement of disadvantaged people constitutes an advantage from several points of view: it contains forms of deviance, encourages the employment of people from disadvantaged social backgrounds, increases tax revenue and removes people with problems from the circuit of assistance.



Social inclusion has employment inclusion as a key component

Claiming equal access to the labor market proves to be crucial especially for disadvantaged groups, such as youth, women, immigrants, who may face more discrimination. As stated by the European Commission, in a rapidly changing society, it is essential that everyone could take advantage of the best opportunities for growth, to work with others, to manage dynamic careers, and to shape the future for the common good.

To achieve these goals, a vision that can combine everyone's knowledge, skills, and aptitudes is needed to generate social value and foster everyone's full participation in the development of their community.

Poverty is traditionally associated with a severe lack of opportunities for social mobility or an absence of adequate education, training and resources.

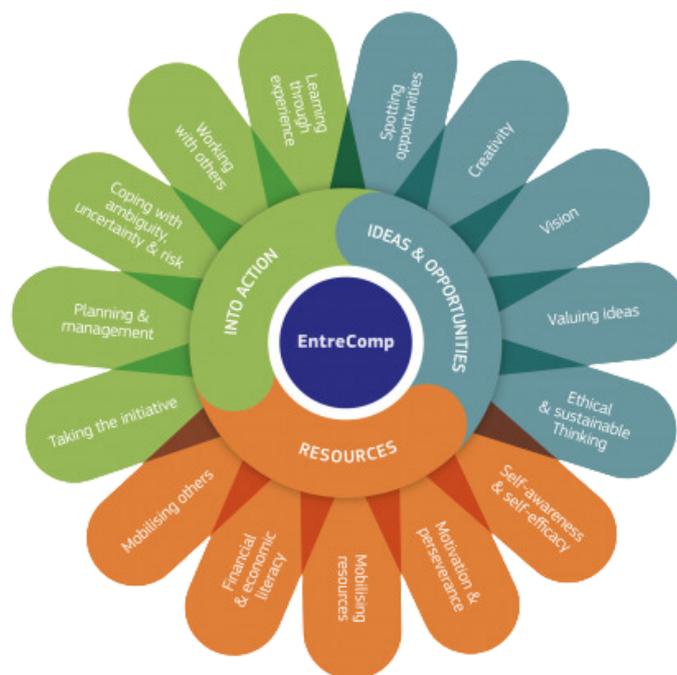
Alongside these critical issues, the phenomenon of poverty of opportunity is also highlighted, which mainly affects young people, women, immigrants, refugees, and the disabled, at a time when intersectional problems such as pollution and the environmental crisis, the pandemic emergency, conflict in various regions, as well as the lack of vocational training have certainly influenced the trend of the global economy, decreeing an expansion of the marginalization of the most vulnerable categories.



Jeffrey Alves, the editor of the International Council for Small Businesses journal, reported that nearly half of the world's population is about to enter a workforce afflicted by rates of unemployment. Nevertheless, entrepreneurship can help combat these issues as a career option. **Facilitating the inclusion of entrepreneurship in educational curriculums around the world can change the perception of opportunity and encourage marginalized communities to consider additional options.** A curriculum revolving around entrepreneurial values, such as innovation and perseverance, is also able to instill skills in people that can be utilized for other available jobs.

Additionally, entrepreneurial success is not an isolated incident and often gives back to local attitudes, resources, and infrastructure. Entrepreneurship gives various marginalized groups the opportunity to start their own stable source of income and consequently give back to the community they came from. It inspires a proactive approach toward local, regional, and international participation that is not traditionally granted to those that are denied an active role in society.

In this scenario, **supporting the process of employability and learning through entrepreneurial thinking and action is a strategic goal set by the European Commission policy**, which also reiterates that to ensure equal opportunities, access to the labor market, and inclusion at multiple levels, it is essential to Improve employment opportunities for vulnerable and marginalized groups through access to skills training on enterprise development, recognizing entrepreneurial competencies as a key part of lifelong learning.



Practical EXERCISES

EXERCISE 1 - The Envelope Exercise

Instructions:

For this activity, print fake money and place small amounts in envelopes for individuals or small groups of students.

You can choose to give everyone different amounts of money or keep it all equal. Explain that your students' goal is to increase their investment — and in doing so, use the collaboration and critical thinking skills that are important in entrepreneurship.

Give students 20 to 30 minutes to brainstorm before having each individual or group share their ideas. Odds are high that they will be surprised by how easy it is for them to make money!

EXERCISE 2 - The Two-Minute Pitch Exercise

Instructions:

For this fun entrepreneurship activity, give students any two objects and have them brainstorm ways they can combine the objects into one invention. Then they must define the invention. Have them answer questions such as:

- What is it?
- What can it do?
- Who uses it?
- How could it be used differently?

After defining the invention, students have two minutes to pitch it to the class. They should start by introducing themselves, the name of their company, and their invention. Once they've made their introductions, have them explain how their invention works and why people need it.

Digital skills



Having a strong grasp of digital skills has become increasingly crucial, especially in the job market. With the rapid advancement of technology, many job roles now require proficiency in digital tools and platforms.

Firstly, it significantly increases their employability as employers often consider digital proficiency a fundamental requirement. With the ability to work remotely, individuals can explore job options beyond their immediate surroundings and tap into a broader pool of employment opportunities. Enhanced productivity is another advantage of developing digital skills. Acquiring digital skills also fosters lifelong learning and personal development. By embracing digital skills, individuals can keep up with the ever-changing job market and remain competitive.

To improve digital skills, we propose the following exercises:

- **Basic Computer Skills:** Practice using essential computer functions such as opening and closing programs, navigating file systems, and managing folders.
- **Internet Browsing:** Explore different websites and practice navigating web pages, using hyperlinks, and bookmarking favorite sites.
- **Online Search:** Choose a topic of interest and conduct online research using search engines like Google. Practice using search operators and refining search results.
- **File Management:** Create folders and subfolders on your computer to organize files. Practice moving, copying, and deleting files within the file system.

By understanding the importance of digital skills, recognizing the benefits they bring, and learning how to overcome digital barriers, individuals from disadvantaged communities can empower themselves to thrive in the job market. This section serves as a foundational step in their digital skills journey, laying the groundwork for the subsequent sections of the handbook

Internet and Email Skills

This section of the handbook focuses on equipping individuals with the necessary knowledge and abilities to browse the internet, utilise search engines, evaluate online information, and proficiently use email. We guide individuals through the process of creating email accounts, familiarise them with email interfaces, and offer guidelines for composing professional emails.

Managing emails effectively, handling attachments, managing email threads, and promptly responding to emails are crucial skills covered in this section.

To reinforce the concepts covered, a series of practice exercises is provided:

- [Creating an Email Account and learning how to manage and organise it.](#)
- [Online Safety and Privacy:](#) Learn about common online threats and how to protect yourself. Practice identifying phishing emails and implementing strong passwords.



Writing a CV for Job Applications



When it comes to a well-crafted Curriculum Vitae (CV) we begin by emphasising the significance of a well-structured and tailored CV in the job application process. It presents an overview of an individual's skills, experiences, and qualifications to employers.

It comprises several key elements, including personal details such as name and contact information. Work experience is another vital component, where relevant job history, including job titles, company names, employment dates, and key responsibilities and achievements, is detailed. The section also addresses listing educational qualifications and relevant certifications.

Organising educational information chronologically, emphasising relevant coursework, and including professional certifications provide a comprehensive overview of an individual's knowledge and expertise. Showcasing key skills and competencies is another essential aspect, where individuals identify relevant skills for the desired job position and support them with specific examples or accomplishments from previous work experiences.

Transferable skills gained in different contexts or industries are also highlighted. Proper formatting is crucial for readability and a professional appearance. Selecting an appropriate CV template that is clean, professional, and easy to read is recommended.

Exercises that involve crafting a tailored CV for a specific job position, reviewing and providing feedback on sample CVs, and incorporating feedback to improve the overall quality and effectiveness of the CV:

- **Self-Assessment:** Reflect on your skills, experiences, and qualifications.
- **Drafting a CV:** Use a word processing software to create a CV.
- **Tailoring for Specific Jobs:** Choose a job posting or description and customize your CV to match the requirements of that position.
- **Formatting and Editing:** Pay attention to the layout, font styles, and spacing



Accessing Online Job Opportunities

In today's job market, the internet has become an invaluable resource for finding job opportunities. To begin, it's crucial to understand the significance of online job search platforms. These platforms provide accessibility and convenience, allowing individuals to search and apply for jobs from anywhere and at any time and it's important to identify reliable ones ("LinkedIn"), researching reputable platforms is essential, considering factors such as credibility, user reviews, and platform reputation.

Building a professional profile that includes relevant work experience, education, skills, and certifications using relevant keywords and terminology helps enhance the visibility of the online job profile. It is also important to showcase achievements, transferable skills, and unique qualities that make individuals stand out to potential employers.

Tailoring job searches and setting up job alerts with advanced filters, such as location, job type, salary range, and experience level, helps narrow down job search results. Setting up job alerts based on preferences ensures individuals receive notifications for newly posted positions. Building a professional network by connecting with professionals in the desired field, attending industry events, and joining relevant professional groups is beneficial.

Crafting effective online job applications by customising resumes, cover letters, and other application materials to match the specific job requirements and demonstrate qualifications is essential.

To reinforce the concepts covered, practice exercises can be included:

- **Researching Job Platforms:** Explore various online job search platforms such as Indeed, LinkedIn, or industry-specific websites. Identify their features and understand how to navigate them.
- **Setting Up Job Alerts:** Create job alerts based on your preferences and desired job criteria on a selected job search platform. Familiarise yourself with the process of receiving notifications for new job postings.
- **Applying for Jobs Online:** Choose a job listing and practice submitting an online job application. Pay attention to the required documents (resume, cover letter) and any additional instructions provided.
- **Networking Online:** Join professional groups or forums related to your desired field on platforms like LinkedIn. Engage in conversations, connect with professionals, and build a network of contacts.

By effectively accessing online job opportunities, individuals from disadvantaged communities can expand their job search options, connect with potential employers, and increase their chances of securing employment.



Practical EXERCISES

EXERCISE 1 - Mastering basic computer skills and internet browsing

Instructions: Learning computer principles enables people to participate successfully in the digital world, improving communication, productivity, and access to information in a variety of areas. Here are ten easy steps to master working on the computer with the use of internet:

Step 1: Hardware Overview

By pushing the power button, you can turn on the computer. Learn how to use the keyboard and mouse. Click, double-click, and drag the cursor.

Step 2: Using the Desktop

Investigate the desktop icons and learn about their functions. Click the icon of a program (for example, a web browser) to launch it.

Step 3: Basic Internet Browsing

Launch the web browser and navigate to a simple website, such as a news website. To browse between pages, use the mouse to click on links.

Step 4: Making Use of Search Engines

Launch a web browser and use a search engine such as Google to look up a topic. Click on the search results to visit different websites and learn more.

Step 5: Email Fundamentals

Set up an email account with a service like Gmail or Outlook. Send a straightforward email to a friend or family member. Learn about phishing scams and how to identify questionable emails.

Step 6: Online Safety

Recognize the significance of strong passwords and change your email password.

Step 7: Investigating Online Videos

Look for a video on a platform such as YouTube. Play, stop, and change the video volume.

Step 8: Downloading and Saving Files

Access the internet and download an image or document. Save the downloaded file to a convenient location on your computer.

Step 9: Interaction on Social Media

Create an account on a social media network such as Facebook. To see someone's posts, send them a friend request or follow them.

Step 10: Conduct Online Research

Choose an area of interest and look for more detailed information. Visit various websites, read articles, and acquire knowledge about the subject.

All steps are performed in pairs with the presence of a teacher or educator who comes to help only when he judges that it is necessary. Take your time with each exercise and practice frequently. You'll eventually learn the fundamentals of computer use and internet browsing as you gain confidence.



EXERCISE 2 - Creating an online CV application

Instructions:

This exercise can be performed individually or in pairs, with the presence of an educator or without his presence but then, the educator is required to review the completed CV or CVs if work has been done in pairs. The exercise is divided into two sections, where the first is the collection of relevant information for the CV, and the second is the creation of the CV using the aforementioned information.

Section 1: Gathering the info

Gather personal information such as your full name, contact information, and a professional photo to construct a reputable online CV. Create a brief professional summary that highlights your career objectives and essential talents. List job titles, business names, locations, dates of employment, and duties and achievements for work experience. Include information about your education, such as degrees received, names of institutions, subjects of study, graduation dates, and any distinctions. Take note of necessary technical talents, soft skills, and certifications.

Describe projects, show your portfolio, and include information about any volunteer work or internships. Mention languages, publications, honours, and professional affiliations. Include optional hobbies and interests, and mention that references are available upon request. This detailed information will enable you to create an online CV that successfully highlights your qualifications and experiences



Section 2: Making an online CV

Step 1: Choosing an Online CV Builder, in which you choose an appropriate platform such as Canva or Zety.

Step 2: Creating a Profile and Personal Information, where you will enter your name, contact information, and a professional photo. Add your work history, including job titles, company names, dates, and responsibilities.

Step 3: Detailing Your Professional Experience.

Step 4: Highlighting Your Education and abilities follows, in which you include your educational history, degrees attained, abilities, and certifications.

Step 5: Customising the Design and Finishing Your CV by choosing a design, tweaking fonts, and proofreading for errors. These exercises will walk you through the steps of creating a comprehensive internet presence.



Cultural skills



"Cultural competence should be the wish towards understanding and evaluating culture. We must learn with others and from others."

Department for Education (South Australia), 2016

Cogitation about cultural competence goes back to a far greater past in international specialised literature than the definition of cultural competence and expressiveness. Moreover several different explanations consider cultural consciousness to be part of cultural competence. Later on we will detail this more thoroughly.

According to the European Council (2018) cultural consciousness and expressiveness *"includes understanding and respecting how ideas and reports are being expressed and stated in different cultures through the other forms of arts and culture. This also includes that people can see and express their own ideas and place in the society in many various ways and situations."*

In order to acquire competence it is important to know the different cultures and their expressiveness and also skills such as interpreting, identifying and co-operating as well as respect for open attitude and diversity of cultural expressiveness. Knowing the concept it can clearly be stated that both the competence of cultural consciousness and expressiveness and cultural competence are extremely important although not the same.

The competence of cultural consciousness and expressiveness largely concentrates on the diversity of works of arts, the understanding needed to this and the respect of differences deriving from this. It means the ability which - with the help of various possibilities like music, literature as well as fine arts and performing arts - attracts attention of the importance of ideas, experiences and emotions. Cultural competence approaches effective co-operation among people coming from different cultures and also differences hiding in ways of expressions from a different aspect.

One of the most often quoted definition of cultural competence can be linked to Cross and his coworkers (1989): saying cultural competence *“is the totality of congruent behaviour, attitude and rules, which are connected in a system, agency or among experts and which make the particular system, agency or trades possible to work effectively in transcultural situations.”*

Cross and his coworkers (1989) mention five points developing the individual to be culturally competent:

- appreciating diversity,
- ability for cultural self-assessment,
- raising awareness for the dynamics hiding in interaction of cultures,
- institutionalised cultural knowledge,
- working out adaptations reflecting understanding cultural diversity for the services.

Cross and his fellow workers (1989) examined the concept of cultural competence in the relation of business and economic co-operation. Cultural competence can be approached in several well-distinguishable ways unlike the concept of cultural consciousness and expressiveness, however they all have a common thought, which can be considered the elixir of cultural competence.

According to Tustin (2020) cultural competence is a term that originally used to be used in connection with different systems of nursing care e.g. health care. Later on it was applied in educational surroundings.



Tustin (2020) says **cultural competence refers to the complex of behaviors, approaches and beliefs whose acquirement enables experts to act effectively in transcultural situations.** Transcultural situation is a kind of interaction during which experts are expected to cooperate with people having different cultural conviction from their own.

The Australian Health Education and Training Institute (2020) defines cultural competence as follows: “we should be aware of the existing cultural differences, respect and understand them as well as accept them. This (that is cultural competence) also means we have to be prepared that not only our own behaviour, beliefs and acts should be accepted as norma.”

This approach supplements the thoughts mentioned before saying that cultural competence is *“the ability of individuals and systems to react people with different cultures, races, ethnics, sexual disposition, faith and religion respectfully and effectively in a way that they realise, strengthen and respect the achievements of these people and also protect their dignity.”* (Nash - Velazquez, 2003). The American institution named Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC) (2020) when defining cultural competence calls the attention to the factors which - among others - points out the differences between cultural competence and cultural consciousness.

According to CDC (2020)

- cultural competence aims effective functioning in different cultural contexts and also changing the practice of reaching different cultural groups
- cultural knowledge, sensitive and consciousness do not include this concept. These concepts suggest understanding in connection with cultural similarities and differences, but they do not mean any activities or structural changes.



Cultural competence includes three policies:

- Understanding the individual's cultural identity, bias, prejudices as well as the special advantages deriving from the individual's culture and the experiences coming from marginalisation.
- Continuous efforts considering skills, knowledge and personal development are needed to create meaningful connection among people with different cultural background.
- Life-long commitment for an action that supports fairness in the particular school community.

By Tanner and Allen (2007) cultural competence in education puts emphasis on the effectiveness of the teacher considering students whose personal characteristics or cultural background differs from the teacher's. Among different features gender, ethnicity, religion, country the person is coming from and sexual identity can be found. Citing Diller and Moule, Tanner and Allen (2007) summarise cultural competence as follows: *"Explaining in the most simple way: this (cultural competence is the ability which students coming from different cultures can be taught by. This includes acquiring certain personal and interpersonal consciousness an sensitivity, getting to know special parts of cultural knowledge and acquiring skills which together are based on effective education between cultures."*



Practical EXERCISES

Exercise 1: Cultural Competence Through Cultural Exchange

Objective: To develop cultural competence by engaging in a cultural exchange activity that promotes understanding and appreciation of different cultures.

Materials Needed:

- A diverse group of participants representing different cultural backgrounds.
- Time and space for group activities.
- Notebooks and pens for participants.

Instructions:

Preparation: Gather a group of low-skilled adults who come from various cultural backgrounds. Ensure that the group is diverse in terms of ethnicity, nationality, language, and customs.

Introduction (30 minutes):

- Start with an icebreaker activity to help participants get to know each other.
- Discuss the importance of cultural competence in today's multicultural workplaces and communities. Emphasize that understanding and appreciating different cultures is essential for effective communication and collaboration.

Cultural Exchange (90 minutes):

- Divide participants into smaller groups, ideally with a mix of different cultural backgrounds in each group.
- Assign each group a specific task related to cultural exchange. For example, they could prepare a short presentation about their own culture, including traditions, customs, and holidays. Encourage the use of visuals, photos, and personal anecdotes.
- Each group should also prepare a set of questions to ask other groups about their cultures.

Cultural Presentation (30 minutes):

- Allow each group to present their culture to the larger group. Encourage participants to share personal stories and experiences.
- After each presentation, open the floor for questions and discussions. This is an opportunity for participants to learn from one another and gain insights into different cultures.

Cultural Lunch (60 minutes):

- Organize a potluck-style lunch where participants bring dishes from their own cultures to share with others.
- Encourage participants to explain the significance of the dishes they brought and how they are prepared. This can lead to further discussions about food, culinary traditions, and cultural symbolism.

Reflection and Discussion (30 minutes):

- Gather the participants for a reflective discussion. Ask them to share what they learned, any cultural insights they gained, and how they feel this experience will help them in the labor market.
- Discuss the importance of cultural competence in the workplace and how it can lead to better teamwork, communication, and problem-solving.

Action Plan (15 minutes):

- Have participants create an action plan for applying their cultural competence skills in job search and workplace situations. This could include strategies for building relationships with diverse colleagues, addressing cultural misunderstandings, and promoting inclusivity.

This exercise not only enhances cultural skills but also fosters a sense of inclusivity and teamwork among participants. It equips low-skilled adults with the knowledge and attitudes necessary to thrive in diverse work environments and promotes cultural sensitivity and understanding.

Exercise 2: Cultural Sensitivity Scenarios

Objective: To develop cultural sensitivity and awareness by engaging participants in discussions and problem-solving scenarios related to cross-cultural situations.

Materials Needed:

- Scenario cards (prepared in advance, each card describing a specific cross-cultural situation).
- Flip chart or whiteboard with markers.
- Timer or stopwatch.

Instructions:

Introduction (15 minutes):

- Begin by discussing the importance of cultural sensitivity in the workplace and during the job search process. Explain that understanding and respecting different cultures is vital for effective communication and collaboration.

Scenario Presentation (15 minutes):

- Provide each participant with a scenario card describing a cross-cultural situation. These scenarios should depict common challenges related to cultural differences in the workplace or during job interviews.
- Ask participants to read their scenarios silently.

Small Group Discussions (30 minutes):

- Divide participants into small groups, ensuring diversity in each group.
- In their groups, participants should discuss the scenarios they were given. They should consider the challenges presented and brainstorm solutions or responses that demonstrate cultural sensitivity.
- Encourage open and respectful dialogue among group members.

Scenario Presentations (30 minutes):

- Invite each group to present their scenario to the larger group. They should describe the situation, the cultural aspects involved, and their proposed solutions or responses.
- After each presentation, facilitate a brief discussion where participants can share their thoughts, insights, and alternative approaches.

Role-Playing (30 minutes):

- Select a few scenarios from the set that lend themselves well to role-playing.
- Divide participants into pairs or small groups and assign each group a scenario to role-play. Encourage them to act out the scenario and demonstrate how they would apply cultural sensitivity in that situation.
- After each role-play, discuss the effectiveness of their approach and any improvements that could be made.

Reflection (15 minutes):

- Gather participants for a reflection session. Ask them to share what they've learned about cultural sensitivity through this exercise.
- Encourage them to think about how they can apply these lessons in real-life job search and workplace situations.

Action Plan (15 minutes):

- Have participants create an action plan for incorporating cultural sensitivity into their job search strategies and future work environments. They can set specific goals and identify steps they will take to enhance their cultural competence.

This exercise encourages participants to think critically about cultural sensitivity, practice problem-solving in cross-cultural contexts, and develop strategies for navigating cultural differences in the workplace. It equips them with practical skills for fostering inclusivity and effective communication in diverse job settings.





Conclusions

Adapting skills and empowering low-skilled adults in their journey to find and secure employment is a critical endeavor. Many individuals in our communities face unique challenges, such as limited education or work experience, which can hinder their ability to navigate the job market successfully. However, by providing **targeted support** and **opportunities for skills adaptation**, we can unlock their potential and foster inclusive economic growth.

Supporting low-skilled adults in adapting their skills opens doors to new opportunities. It allows them to bridge the gap between their current skill set and the requirements of available jobs. Through tailored training programs, vocational courses, and apprenticeships, we can equip them with the necessary knowledge and competencies demanded by the evolving labor market. This not only increases their employability but also contributes to a more diverse and skilled workforce.

Moreover, assisting low-skilled adults in skill adaptation cultivates confidence and self-belief. It demonstrates that their potential is valued and that they have the capacity to grow and succeed. By offering mentorship, career counseling, and access to support networks, we create an enabling environment that fosters personal and professional development. This, in turn, empowers them to actively engage in job searching, interviews, and the overall process of securing employment.

The impact of supporting low-skilled adults in skill adaptation extends beyond individual success. It has positive implications for social cohesion and economic well-being. By investing in their potential, we reduce the risk of social exclusion, poverty, and long-term unemployment. We contribute to building resilient communities where everyone can thrive and contribute their unique talents.

It is a collective responsibility to create an inclusive society that values and uplifts all individuals, regardless of their initial skill levels, and ensures equal access to opportunities for a brighter future.



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