

Educating in Employability as a Skill for Job Insertion

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ABSTRACT: This article aims to review literature about the term "employability" as an essential competition for the employment of the individual. Throughout this, it aims to deepen about what the word really means employability, what is meant and what link presents in terms of employment, in addition to what competencies and requirements are demanded to get a job. Finally, it also intends to seek a link between employability and education, so influential in the human aspect, and therefore should be addressed.

KEYWORDS: Employability, Job Placement, Skills, Education, Personal Satisfaction.

1. CONCEPT OF EMPLOYABILITY

Employability can be defined as the competence or disposition that enables a person to obtain a job. In a society that is undergoing many changes in both the economic and human spheres, it is essential that this ability is fostered, so that people can reach employment in a more effective way.

Martinez (2011) considers employability as "the competence that a person possesses to design his or her professional career, access the labour market and manage his or her own career development with success and satisfaction" (p.1). This leads us to the conclusion from the outset that, without the existence of this capacity in our personality, we will not be able to opt easily for the world of work or organise our working life with the aim of being able to adequately satisfy our needs.

This is why we consider it essential that the different social agents with whom the person interacts educate him/her with values based on employability and self-initiative.

Other authors conceive the term employability from a broader perspective. This is the case of Alles (2007), who considers employability as "the possibility of obtaining another job and/or maintaining the current job in a satisfactory framework for both parties, employee and employer" (p.13). This definition not only refers to the ability to get a job but also to keep the present one if one has one. It also emphasises the idea that for this to happen, both parties involved must be in agreement, and therefore agreement between the two parties is also seen as a prerequisite for employability.

2. CONCEPT OF LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION

In connection with what has been explained above, it is worth referring to the term labour market integration. The concept of labour market integration can be conceived as the integration of a subject into a job. In other words, it could be considered as the transition from the situation of an unemployed person to a situation of employment.

García and Gutierrez (1996) define the term labour market integration as "the process of incorporation into the economic activity of individuals (...) it is the social transition from positions in the educational system and the family of origin to market positions and family independence" (p. 1). This definition presents a conception of labour market insertion as the passage from a first stage in which the home and education are of special importance, to a second stage in which the individual begins to participate actively in society and the economy and decides to partially disengage from the home in order to forge his or her own destiny and create his or her own family.

It is true that several years ago, this conception was shared by a large sector of society, but nowadays, with the persistent crisis in Spain, this concept is somewhat outdated due to two essential aspects. Firstly, job placement may not imply independence, since in most cases it is for short, seasonal periods of employment, and secondly, due to the low rate of job placement, few people are able to become independent through work and start a family.

As far as labour market integration is concerned, the social, political and market contexts, etc. have a major influence. In addition to these contextual factors, it is necessary to mention that the personal factors of the individual also have an equal influence, with vocational training and personal characteristics standing out (Muñoz, 2012).

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3. EMPLOYABILITY AND EDUCATION

Education can be considered as one of the fundamental pillars on which the employability of an individual is based. As we know, from the time a person is born until he/she dies, various agents of socialisation have an important influence. The school is one of them, and that is why, taking advantage of the great power it has with regard to the development of the individual, we must educate in the best and most effective way possible. The employability of a subject, therefore, will be conditioned by his or her socialisation process and this is why education plays a relevant role in all of this.

Theories such as Human Capital, which relates the level of education or training with economic retribution, defend education as a fundamental aspect of a person's employability (Infante, Román and Traverso, 2011). Therefore, as these theories indicate, an individual will be more or less employable depending on his or her human capital, i.e. his or her level of education.

In addition to education, there are other factors that have a decisive influence on employability and for which, to a certain extent, schools must take responsibility. These aspects are the individual's environment and his or her attitudes and aptitudes, which, if they are perfected and oriented towards specific competences, will promote the employability of the subject. The key is to train for employability, and this is done through certain competences. Some of these, defended by Formichella and London, (2012) are:

- Learning to learn on a permanent basis, to do and to be.
- Ability to create and make decisions with judgement.

It is therefore very significant to highlight the importance of education in all areas and aspects of a person's life, as well as its importance in terms of their professional development. As Infante, Román and Traverso (2011) cite, "education assumes the role of a catalyst when it comes to accessing a job or changing jobs, i.e. it contributes to increasing a person's employability" (p.1).

4. EMPLOYABILITY AS A PERSONAL COMPETENCE.

From a more personal perspective, employability is a capacity or ability to achieve or maintain a goal. Martínez (2011) considers employability as a personal competence of social responsibility, as it is not only about obtaining and maintaining a job, but is something broader, it is about promoting a professional life project.

It is interesting what Perrenoud (2004) explains in this sense, stating that it is not only necessary to have these skills and knowledge, but it is also necessary to know how to apply them.

I think it is worth mentioning that there is currently a tendency to link employability to a competence rather than a skill. This is because the word competence encompasses a variety of skills, which is not the case with the word skill, and therefore the word competence is more in line with this meaning.

We conceive employability as a social competence of a personal nature as it demands a series of requirements such as "Teamwork ; Working in an interdisciplinary team ; Working in an international context ; Interpersonal skills ; Recognition of diversity and cultural variety ; Critical reasoning ; and Ethical commitment" (Martínez, 2011, p.4). In the labour market, all these aspects are required, and the choice of one person or another for a job, in some cases, is not only based on the required training, but also on other factors such as personal and professional initiative, the development that a person presents or his or her ability to master and adapt to different contexts.

This is why, as I mentioned earlier in certain points, education plays a key role, since it is responsible for educating us to become useful and civic-minded people in society.

In the following sub-sections, I intend to go deeper into the aspect of competences, explaining the main characteristics of "employability competences", the different categories into which they fall and which are in most cases decisive for a job.

4.1. Categories of competences

It should be pointed out that when assessing competences for employability, certain competences must be clarified. Spencer & Spencer (1993) divide the competences present for labour market integration into differential competences and differential competences.

1. Starting point competences. These refer to compulsory requirements to perform a job.

2. Differential skills. They aim to classify the subjects of higher levels, apart from the rest.

Differentiating and clarifying the meaning of both is fundamental, as we have to bear in mind what we must start from: knowledge about the job, basic skills to carry it out... (Starting point competences) and those capacities that we must develop and strengthen in order to stand out and distinguish ourselves from the rest and therefore, be more valued and chosen for the job: initiative, perfectionism, search for quality... (Differential competences).

4.2. Assigning competencies to a job

In order to recruit staff for a job, it is necessary that they meet a series of fundamental requirements for the work they are to perform. As Alles (2007) explains, it is important to take into account the personality traits of the individual, his or her motivation for the work environment and his or her self-concept and self-confidence. Every job requires a general purpose and responsibility, and only those who meet the most suitable profile will be able to get the job.

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We can, therefore, relate everything explained above to the term employability, since only those who are candidates for this position will be employable both in terms of their work and behavioural competences, those who from the initial point show the ability to do so and who at the same time possess skills that differentiate them and place them above the rest.

Alles (2007) proposes certain guidelines and recommendations defended by Almeida (2004), in order to define more precisely everything that refers to this aspect: "... selection processes will be more effective when they are more structured on procedures and instruments that allow minimising the subjectivism of the evaluations and visualising the future performance of the candidates" (p.44). This means that in order to set fixed and rigid guidelines for this process to be more effective and precise, this author presents a series of stages in order to optimise the effectiveness of this function:

Table 1. Influence of skills on employability (Almeida, 2004, p.30).



5. Employability and personal initiative for personal satisfaction

It is interesting to start this section with a quote from Hillage and Pollard (1998):

"... employability is conceived as the ability of individuals to obtain initial employment, maintain employment, move between roles within the same organisation, obtain new employment if required, and ideally, secure suitable and sufficiently satisfying work" (p.15).

In this definition of employability we can see that the term "satisfactory" is used. Although it may perhaps go unnoticed in the definition, it implies something fundamental in terms of employability, and that is that it is just as important to fulfil the skills and abilities required for performance, as it is for the individual to carry out this task with reward and satisfaction, which would lead to a more optimal performance.

As for personal initiative and the role it plays in this whole issue, it is worth mentioning that without it, we could not talk about the employability of the person. In such a competitive world of work, initiative is an essential aspect, since, as it is often said, "nobody is going to come home and give us a job".

Frese and Fray (2001) defend personal initiative as that which turns people into participating agents towards the improvement of work situations in society. That is to say, without initiative there is no change, therefore it is necessary that this initiative exists and that we all apply it in order to ensure the proper functioning of employment.

A very coherent definition of employability and initiative is provided by Gamboa et al. (2007), who argue that "personal initiative is a behavioural element that facilitates obtaining jobs in line with one's own preferences" (p.10). This definition attributes merit to the personal and cognitive capacity of the subject, and affirms that without it, obtaining a job would be much more costly. This is so because any employer or employer demands a worker with motivation and attitude, who knows how to manage in different contexts and situations and who always tries to surpass himself/herself, setting high level objectives.

For all these reasons, I consider a person's initiative and employability to be fundamental to their personal satisfaction. We have all experienced at some time the feeling of not being useful in some context; it is a feeling of personal dissatisfaction that in more extreme cases can even lead to illness. People should feel fulfilled, having a job is a great way to feel useful in society, therefore, a satisfaction. To get a job, employability skills and initiative are fundamental, so here is the close relationship between these three terms: employability-personal initiative-personal satisfaction.

6. CONCLUSIONS

As has been corroborated by the contribution of various authors, employability is undoubtedly a fundamental and essential competence during the whole process of job search, job placement and job maintenance. We should not only conceive employability as the ability to reach a job goal, but also as the ability to be able to maintain it, otherwise it would be of no use.

A person's employability encompasses a range of competences that he or she must possess in order to be suitable for a job. Without it, in a world based on job competence, a person would be disadvantaged. That is why we need to have those basic competences to perform any job, and at the same time, to deepen in differential competences, which distinguish us from the rest, providing us with a superior situation.

In order to be "employable" people, we must be trained for this and in this aspect education plays a fundamental role, being responsible and having the duty to educate us towards the world of work.

Not only does education have the obligation to train us, but we ourselves must be people with initiative and sufficient training, concerned about being useful to society and improving every day. It is therefore a social responsibility, but above all a personal one.

For all these reasons, I consider employability to be an extremely valuable and powerful tool for the world of work, and in this current situation of crisis, a very powerful weapon that, if we know how to strengthen it, can be of great help to us. Being employable is an obligatory social competence to survive in a competitive world of work, and we must conceive it as such, training and perfecting ourselves professionally and personally, looking for and adjusting to those profiles for which we can be candidates, in order to have a dignified life and collaborate in society.

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