

# NEW PROFESSIONS AND COMPETENCES IN ADULT EDUCATION





**Adult education is currently undergoing a transformation under the influence of global megatrends, with a huge impact on the labour market situation, the needs of employers and those seeking employment and wishing to broaden their professional qualifications. These widespread changes are shaping the way adults learn and develop their skills. For this reason, adult educators also need to adapt their approach.**

According to the Trend Map 2024<sup>1</sup> developed by the infuture.institute, the main trends include a world of AI, in which artificial intelligence is playing an increasingly important role in all aspects of social, economic and technological life. Another mega-trend, which also affects the field of adult education, is the world of social change, where, on the one hand, we find demographic changes such as an ageing population and migration, and on the other hand, challenges including digital inequality and anti-science.

The reality of education at every level is influenced by changes in the labour market, where digitisation and automation are becoming more prevalent<sup>2</sup> and employers are more likely to focus their attention on skills than on education.

<sup>1</sup> <https://infuture.institute/mapa-trendow/#map>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bankier.pl/wiadomosc/Wykształcenie-zejdzie-na-dalszy-plan-i-pozegnanie-z-home-office-Trendy-na-rynku-pracy-w-2024-roku-8689659.html>

# NEW PROFESSIONS IN ADULT EDUCATION

Megatrends change not only what adults learn, but also how they learn and, by extension, what professions emerge, transform or grow in importance in the field of adult education. Below are examples of specialisations that are particularly relevant in this area.

## SOFT SKILLS TRAINER

If we take a look at the most important skills mentioned by employers, we can see that a lot has changed over the last few years. IBM's Institute for Business Value report "The enterprise guide to closing the skills gap"<sup>3</sup> points out that hard, technical competencies are no longer in such high demand. Soft skills, such as adaptability and flexibility, time management, as well as teamwork, are coming to the fore. For this reason, trainers in the field of interpersonal skills are in demand.

## E-LEARNING SPECIALIST

Education supported by new technologies is used by 54% of enterprises employing at least 10 people.<sup>4</sup> E-learning, as well as its younger form requiring wireless devices (M-learning), are used by numerous users worldwide. By 2030, it is estimated that the market for remote learning services will be worth \$645 billion. In comparison, in 2021 there was \$215 billion.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, there is a need for specialists who deal with the implementation and management of e-learning systems in companies and educational centres, but also for people who specialise in designing online courses. Creating materials for remote training, for example, requires taking into account a different type of interaction and involvement of participants in the course, creating a virtual space for questions and opinions.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ibm.com/downloads/cas/EPYMNBJA>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.e-learning.pl/e-wiedza/raport-z-ii-badania-hr-polskiej-izby-firm-szkoleniowych-komentarz-ekspertki-e-learning-pl/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.rp.pl/praca/art37535091-e-szkolenia-podbijaja-polski-internet-coraz-wiecej-na-nie-wydajemy>

# NEW PROFESSIONS IN ADULT EDUCATION

## EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY SPECIALIST

This term is broader than e-learning specialist, as it covers the design, implementation and management of educational technologies that support adult learning processes. These may include not only learning platforms, but also remote communication tools, content management systems or mobile applications that facilitate access to education and develop skills.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT

The mega-trends shaping the world we live in require career counsellors to adapt their services to the changing needs of employees and employers, including the use of technological tools, keeping up to date with trends in the demand for skills and supporting individuals who choose unconventional career paths.

In turn, the proliferation of remote and hybrid working means that adults can also look to counsellors for support in dealing with the challenges of remote working, such as time management, work-life balance and maintaining motivation.



# NEW PROFESSIONS IN ADULT EDUCATION

## ▶ COACH

In an era of rapid change, high competition in the labour market and an increasing need for continuous personal and professional development, coaches are becoming increasingly sought-after professionals.

A coach is a person who helps his/her client to achieve specific goals, using his/her skills, life experience, techniques and tools.



The work of a coach is based on a partnership and mutual trust.<sup>6</sup> Instead of giving ready-made suggestions, the coach asks questions in such a way that the client comes to the answers himself/herself.

A popular working model is the GROW model,<sup>7</sup> which is based on four pillars:

- G (goal) - the goal you are working towards.
- R (reality) - the reality of what you have now.
- O (option) - what you can do about it.
- W (will) - the choice of what you will do.

## ▶ DIGITAL SKILLS TRAINER

Digital skills trainers help adults to develop competences in using computers, the Internet, programming and understanding new technologies. It is important that a digital skills trainer has not only technical knowledge, but also teaching skills and interpersonal competences. Their task is to support others in mastering digital skills in order to function effectively in a digital society.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Coach (osoba) – Wikipedia, wolna encyklopedia

<sup>7</sup> Kim jest coach i czym się zajmuje? Co różni go od trenera? (wojciechbizub.pl)

<sup>8</sup> Kompetencje cyfrowe - Ministerstwo Cyfryzacji - Portal Gov.pl (www.gov.pl)

# NEW PROFESSIONS IN ADULT EDUCATION

## CYBER THREATS TRAINER

In an age of fake news, anti-science and widespread attempts to steal data over the internet, specialists in IT security training are becoming more important. Their main task is to impart knowledge and skills related to data protection, prevention of cyber-attacks, proper response to online threats and factchecking of information available online. The trainer can provide training for individuals, companies and institutions, helping them to understand the risks and effectively protect themselves against them.



# ESSENTIAL COMPETENCES

Adult learning in a world of new technologies, demographic changes and labour market transformations requires many skills. Pedagogical competences such as empathy and tolerance are key, as well as the ability to build a relationship with the client - the adult learner. Educators are also required to be patient and understanding - especially when the results of cooperation do not come as quickly as assumed.<sup>9</sup> On the one hand, educators need to communicate clearly, and on the other hand, they need to listen to and understand the needs of their learners.<sup>10</sup> The introduction of new technologies into educational processes, such as e-learning platforms, videoconferencing or instant messaging, additionally requires the ability to send and receive messages effectively in a virtual environment.

For educators working with adults, counselling skills, understood as the ability to support clients in identifying their goals, solving problems and making career and personal development decisions, are particularly important. In this respect, understanding individual needs, planning and adapting learning materials, as well as problem-solving and decision-making skills are worth considering.

It is also essential to be familiar with modern educational technologies and the ability to use them to deliver effective and compelling customer experiences. Therefore, educators also need to... educate themselves in order to keep up to date with trends. It is not uncommon for classes not to be conducted in the form of one-to-one meetings, so it is worthwhile for educators to know how to work with groups and to train skills to support cooperation and collaboration of participants and conflict resolution. In the context of



<sup>9</sup> [Rola i kompetencje pedagoga - Instytut Rozwoju Edukacji \(ire-studia.edu.pl\)](https://www.ire-studia.edu.pl/).

<sup>10</sup> [„Poszerzanie i rozwój kompetencji edukatorów osób dorosłych” – rezultaty projektu | EPALÉ \(europa.eu\)](https://www.epale.eu/).

# ESSENTIAL COMPETENCES

diversity, educators should be able to adapt to the different values, beliefs and communication styles of clients from different cultural backgrounds.

# TOOLS USEFUL IN CONTEMPORARY ADULT EDUCATION

Modern adult educator tools such as online courses, podcasts, virtual reality, digital libraries and content personalisation algorithms are revolutionising the learning process.

## ONLINE COURSES

Online courses are the domain of the e-learning specialists mentioned earlier. They offer flexibility in terms of time as well as topics - adults can choose courses according to their interests and career goals. The individual pace of learning allows the material to be absorbed more effectively. In addition, taking online courses eliminates the need to travel and the associated costs, making them more accessible to adult learners.



# TOOLS USEFUL IN CONTEMPORARY ADULT EDUCATION

## PODCASTS

A podcast<sup>11</sup> is one of the modern forms of training. Audio lectures have the advantage of being much easier to deliver than video training, while at the same time being very accessible to those wishing to broaden their horizons and gain additional knowledge. In addition, listening to podcasts develops the ability to listen with understanding, which is a key element of learning. Through podcasts, teachers can provide a variety of educational content, including supplementary material, interviews with experts, practical exercises and much more. The flexibility of the format allows educators to experiment with different teaching methods and deliver content in a way that best suits their students' needs and preferences.

## VIRTUAL REALITY

Virtual reality (VR) is a technology that enables people to experience and interact with a three-dimensional, computer-generated environment using special devices.<sup>12</sup> This solution makes it possible to conduct practical training sessions in a controlled environment, which is extremely useful in adult education, and the application of this technology will prove useful in many industries. The programmes can be tailored to different levels and individual learning styles, making the process more effective. VR allows you to simulate real-life situations that may be difficult to replicate in a



<sup>11</sup> <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/pl/blog/szkolenie-jako-podcast>

<sup>12</sup> <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/pl/blog/vr-w-edukacji-przyszlosc-i-trendy>

# TOOLS USEFUL IN CONTEMPORARY ADULT EDUCATION

traditional educational environment. For example, training on how to handle stressful situations in the workplace, business negotiations or project management can be more realistic and effective in a virtual environment.

## DIGITAL LIBRARIES

Digital libraries are online platforms or systems that provide access to a wide range of educational resources such as e-books, academic articles, online courses etc.<sup>13</sup> They allow users to browse, download and use these resources anywhere and anytime using a computer, tablet or smartphone. Digital libraries provide flexibility, personalisation and interactive tools to enable effective adult learning. In addition, they allow for easy updating and sharing of the latest information, making them an extremely important tool in today's digital learning environment.

## ALGORITHMS TO PERSONALISE DIFFICULTY LEVEL AND CONTENT

The use of content selection algorithms in adult learning allows to personalise learning, save time, increase motivation to learn, improve learning effectiveness and monitor progress. In this way, learners can achieve their learning goals faster by adapting materials to their individual needs and preferences. Content selection algorithms can use machine learning techniques to tailor materials to an individual's learning preferences. For example, some people absorb information better with visuals, while others prefer text. With the help of algorithms, the type of material can be matched to the learner's preferences, increasing the effectiveness of learning.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/pl/blog/biblioteki-cyfrowe-sprawdzona-wiedza-na-wyciagniecie-reki>

<sup>14</sup> <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/pl/blog/algorytmy-uciekac-walczy-czy-oswoic>

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATORS

The professional development and retraining of adult educators has a major impact on the quality of education, especially in a rapidly changing world in which new professions are constantly disappearing to make room for new ones. Educators who continually update their skills, keep up to date with the latest trends and use modern teaching methods are able to deliver more attractive, effective and tailored courses and training programmes. Re-skilling of educators can include training programmes, specialised courses or new qualifications, certificates or diplomas in new fields, as well as skills development in areas such as modern educational technology or career guidance.



Among the training programmes worth highlighting, we can distinguish such topics as new teaching methods, educational technology, career counselling, learning psychology or group management. On the other hand, specialised courses focus on specific professional areas or educational fields and allow educators to deepen their knowledge and skills in these areas. These may include courses related to professional specialisation (e.g. language teaching, negotiation techniques, project management), as well as courses in modern educational technologies or adult development psychology.

The development of adult educators can also be supported through participation in conferences, workshops, seminars and participation in discussion groups and professional communities. This allows educators to share experiences, learn about new working methods and build networks.

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATORS

Investing in the professional development and retraining of adult educators should be a priority for educational institutions, training organisations and the professionals themselves, as it contributes to the overall development potential of society and its ability to cope with the dynamic changes taking place in today's world.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ADULT EDUCATORS

The two main ways in which adult educators acquire knowledge relate to formal and informal learning. The former includes the aforementioned programmes or courses, while the latter arises from experience and social interaction.

Depending on the path taken, educators can specialise in, for example:

- career counselling, which requires constant updating of knowledge about the labour market, as well as the available educational offer in order to effectively plan development paths together with clients,
- teaching and training, i.e. focusing on the development of specific skills - both hard and soft,
- personal development, which includes, among others, psychological issues, work-life balance, occupational therapy.

## THE NEED TO KEEP UP TO DATE

Adapting to the changing needs of the labour market is a key element of successful education programmes and courses. Changing professional trends, technological advances and socio-economic developments require continuous adaptation of the educational offer to current labour market needs. There is therefore a need to update curriculum content and develop new courses in line with the expectations of employers and the community.

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATORS

In this respect, it is worthwhile to cooperate with active entrepreneurs who report specific needs regarding the skills that employees possess. In this way, courses can be easily adapted to train participants in areas that are currently most sought after on the labour market.



The project is co-financed by the EU. The views and opinions expressed are solely those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the European Union or the European Education and Cultural Executive Agency (EACEA). The European Union and the EACEA are not responsible for them.

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