

Transversal skills in research

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The nature of researchers' work in the 21st century is changing rapidly. Researchers, both in academia and in the corporate sector, need to develop skills to be adaptive, agile, persuasive communicators, aware of diversity in intercultural research groups, and manage stressful steps in research, while also remain creative and innovative at the same time. The most important challenges of researchers are the following:

1. Conducting research is an expensive exercise and the competition for research funding and resources is increasing. Therefore, researchers should develop skills to explain clearly to the wider society, what their research is about and how that research contributes to the society. Furthermore, researchers need to clearly communicate what the nature of their expertise is, and how this expertise important in both academic and industry contexts.
2. As society progresses into the information and communication technology driven world, research also has to keep up with societies demands. Researchers are facing more and more complex problems, which need interdisciplinary research approaches, requiring cooperation across different fields. Research discussions are now done on a global scale, and researcher networks are playing a critical role in facilitating those discussions.
3. Researchers are a high-risk group when it comes to psychological illnesses and work related risks. Oftentimes they work under high stress levels, using expensive sensitive equipment, and working towards unpredictable research outcomes. For instance, the number of researchers diagnosed with burnout is growing steadily, however there is very little organizational support available for the researcher affected.
4. Usually, researchers work in isolation for many years, which can be very demanding. Working on ways how to establish lasting networks and connections with peer researchers is important, as these connections provide feedback, social interaction and future opportunities. These are beneficial for both the researchers and in improving the quality of research output.
5. Despite high demand for researchers on the labour market, it is difficult to find the right people, which compromise the skills for quality research output. Furthermore, after finishing PhD training, researchers oftentimes leave academia and find employment in the private sector, where the demanded set of skills is significantly different compared to academic positions. Hard, research-specific skills, are not enough anymore! Researchers need a number of critical soft skills in order to maintain their employability.

Training in transversal skills can respond to these challenges. Developing transversal skills allows researchers to be healthier, more embedded in their societal context, and more flexible to meet the demands of the modern researcher labor market. Most of these soft skills should precede or be part of researcher training (best to start in early childhood). However, it is never too late to raise awareness and improve European researchers' skills in the following areas:

- Communication skills for both academic and non-scientific audiences
- Awareness and management of the psychological risks of their work
- Continuous self-development (learning to learn)
- Efficient networking and openness for new ideas and disciplines
- Showing expertise to the public
- Maintaining high standards of research ethics

This type of training is best done in small groups or in some cases (e.g. stress management) on an individual level.

TranSkills: A good practice in transversal skills training in research

TranSkills is a follow-up training school of the MCA ITN Eduworks-Network (www.eduworks-network.eu), aiming at training researchers in transversal skills. These are important in the current and future research related jobs, both in academia and industry. With TranSkills' Europe-wide network of experts, we are delivering high quality workshops for groups of researchers (both early stage and experienced researchers), where diversity and interdisciplinary is in the focus of their activities. TranSkills delivers two type of trainings:

- 1) Short courses (1-2 days) focusing on the improvement of a specific skill
- 2) Summer and Winter schools (5-6 days) focusing on interconnected skills sets, while also foster networking through helping researchers from several disciplines, but similar research interests to meet and share their knowledge and ideas.

The current TranSkills course catalogue covers the following important areas:

- Psychological wellbeing / Stress management
- Media management and publishing skills
- Communication skills for broader audiences
- Critical Thinking and Reasoning
- Intercultural collaboration
- Career management and employability

TranSkills is currently providing training in three locations:

- Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- Budapest, Hungary
- Alicante, Spain

Courses are open for both individual researchers and groups of researchers from research projects and faculty groups.

More information: www.transkills.eu info@transkills.eu