

Adult education revives careers

Demand for adult education is projected to rocket after a record-high year of lay-offs.

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LAY-OFFS and co-determination procedures increased dramatically in Finland in 2012, suggests the Central Organisation for Finnish Trade Unions, SAK. As labour force needs plummet across ailing industries, a career change becomes inevitable for many, while others prepare for redundancies amid deteriorating job security by acquiring new skills or refining old ones in adult education.

The demand for adult education services has rocketed, confirms **Nina Hakola**, a manager at Studentum.fi –

an online gateway to educational opportunities. “The demand has increased notably. Online enquiries concerning adult education have doubled in recent years,” she says.

One of the key responsibilities of adult education is to ensure the availability and competence of the labour force. Therefore, the Ministry of Education and Culture recognises that adult education also promotes national efforts to extend careers, reduce unemployment and enhance productivity.

In an evolving employment landscape with ever-increasing redundancies, adult education facilitates the

transition of employees from one industry to another.

According to Hakola, middle-aged people concerned about employment prospects have emerged among the largest user groups of adult education. “In e-mail enquiries, these people readily tell about being made redundant or the daunting threat of the axe.” For many, she believes, lay-offs represent an opportunity to realise their dream jobs.

“There is little despair, although many speak of lay-offs or uncertainty when weighing up their choices. They offer new opportunities.”

Some have no need for such incentives. “People who entered the labour market early in their lives may decide to pursue their dream jobs after ten or twenty years of work,” says Hakola. For yet others, the skills offered by adult education also represent means of preparation, and fall-backs.

Many faces of adult education

Typically, students in adult education combine studies with work, and therefore adult education is organised in a manner suitable for a variety of life situations. The

more than 1,000 providers of adult education services – adult upper secondary institutions, folk high schools, vocational institutes, universities, polytechnics and private service providers – also offer teaching on week-ends, in the evenings and in intensive periods.

The offerings include degree programmes, preparatory training, general education and on-the-job training for employees. In addition, students can select between distance learning, online learning, multi-form learning, independent studies, apprenticeship training or labour market training. Naturally, recreational courses in arts, crafts, languages, sports and computer skills are also available.

Statistics Finland suggests that, in total, adult education providers offered approximately 5.6 million classroom hours of teaching in non-degree programmes in 2011. According to Studentum.fi, nearly 1.7 million Finns partake in adult education every year.

There is also an earnings-related allowance available for persons who have been employed by a Finnish employer or have worked as a



For many, adult education offers an opportunity to realise their dream and learn a new profession – like cookery for example.

self-employed person in Finland for at least eight years.

Current trends

The demand for a skilled workforce is currently particularly high in the health and social care sector. “And for its part, adult education has responded to this demand,” states Hakola. Other fields to appeal to considerable masses of students include business and commerce. “Quite a few may have had a long career in business without formal competence. In times of uncertainty, these people want to obtain a formal qualification.”

Moreover, the short-term recreational study programmes offered by folk high schools are popular. “The one-year programmes in manual skills and languages are extremely popular. Many

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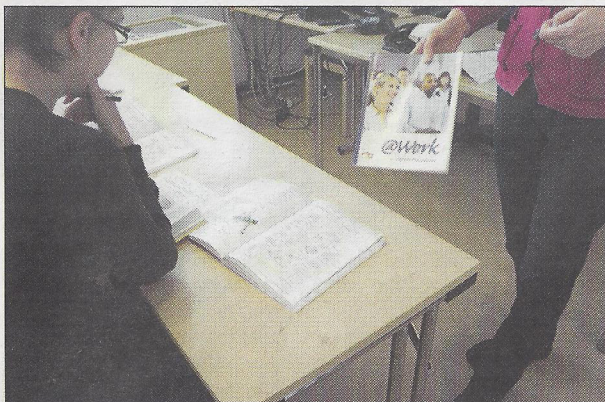
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on job alternation leaves consider indulging in studies offered by folk high schools,” Hakola says.



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Recreational courses in languages, for example, are a good way to enhance employment prospects.