



## Employability skills explored

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## What are employability skills?



- Employability skills is an oft-used term
- But what do we mean?
  - the skills needed for a first job?
  - a precise list of specific skills?
  - a learning process?
- A discussion paper, informing an expert seminar
- A national employer survey

## The view from the FE system perspective



- 'Employability skills' resist one formal definition
- Particular skills have greater or lesser importance depending on:
  - job type
  - stage of career
  - industry sector
- Common features – skills, attributes and behaviours
- The role of literacy and numeracy
- They don't stop – need ongoing development to get on

## The view from the employer perspective



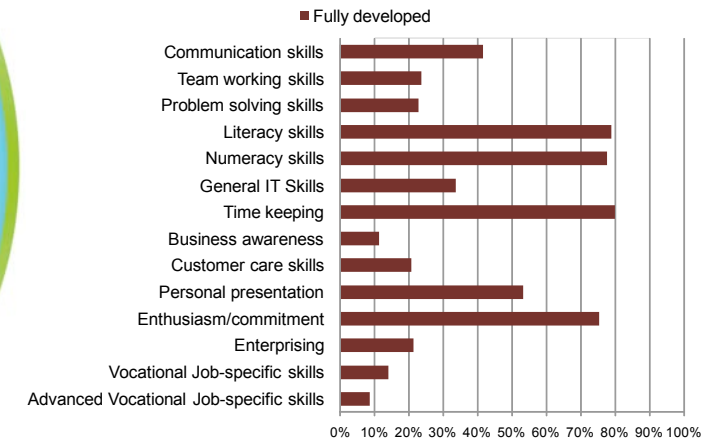
- What do employers think about employability skills?
- Survey of 1137 senior decision makers across industry
- Developed by LSN, carried out on our behalf by YouGov
- Asked views on the most cited employability skills

## The skills explored

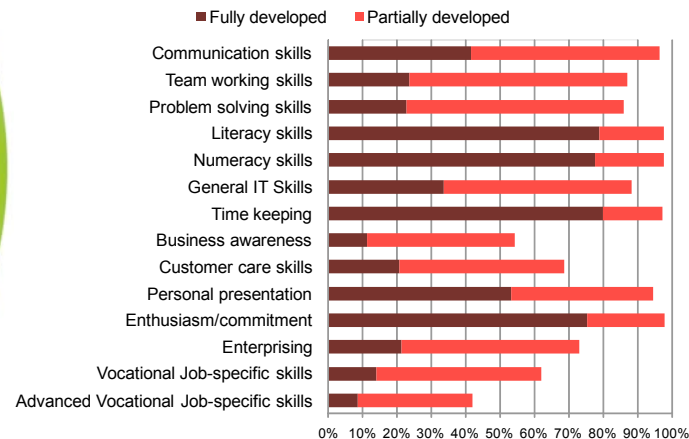


- communication skills
- team-working skills
- problem-solving skills
- literacy skills
- numeracy skills
- general IT skills
- timekeeping
- business awareness
- customer care skills
- personal presentation
- enthusiasm/commitment
- enterprising
- vocational job-specific skills
- advanced vocational job-specific skills.

## How well developed do they need to be?



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## How important are they?



- Asked to rank them in order of importance
- Top ranked (in order) were:
  - communication skills
  - literacy skills
  - numeracy skills
  - enthusiasm/commitment
- Timekeeping ranks sixth

## The 'Deal-breakers'



- At what point does a lack of a certain skill prevent employment?
- We asked which of our skills would be 'deal-breakers'
- Respondents averaged four 'deal breakers' each
  - literacy skills (55%)
  - communication skills (51%)
  - enthusiasm/commitment (49%)
  - numeracy skills (47%)

## Employability skills later on



- After five years, experience, what are the expectations?
- Most of the employability skills should be fully developed
- All the skills should be at least partially developed
- Largest increases in 'workplace specific' skills

## Who pays?

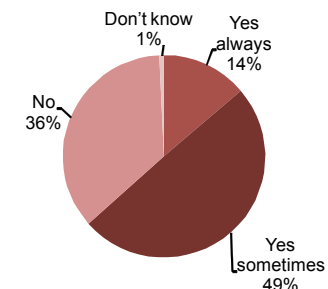


- A lot of development over five years
- How should that be paid for?
- The individual, the state, the company or some form of shared responsibility?
- The individual or the state is responsible for those skills that should already be fully developed
- Many employers are prepared to take or share responsibility for those skills that were only partially developed
- A shared model for vocational skills

## The employers' experience



- Had they been able to recruit?
- Of those that tried:



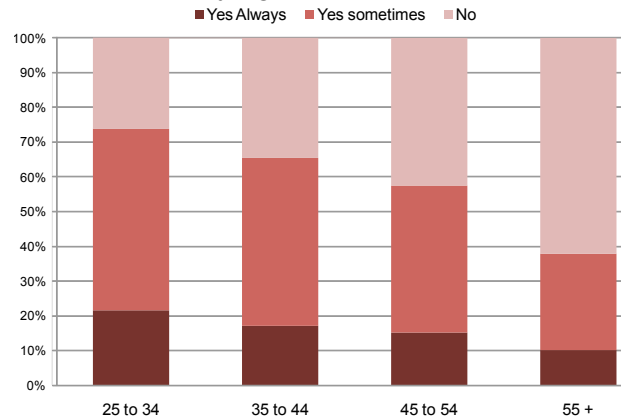
The reasons they gave for failing to recruit:

- Literacy, numeracy, the right attitude and communication

## A generational divide?



- Those with frequent responsibility for recruitment, by age:



## Conclusions



- A mix of skills, attitudes and behaviours
- The 'big four' are recurrent themes
- Other skills need partial development
- The development must continue
- Employers will pay, but not for everything
- Employers can struggle to recruit young people