

## Employability discourse and recruitment practices in Sweden - Consequences for non-traditional graduates

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The discourse of employability can be seen as part of a globalised labour market where national governments no longer can guarantee employment in a competitive global environment (Brown et.al 2002). Within the discourse there is a shift in responsibility from the labour market towards the individual (Fejes, 2010). In its broadest sense, employability is thereby defined as an individuals' ability to find, retain and/or move between jobs (Clarke 2008), which means a shift from being employed towards being or becoming employable (Williams 2016). Rothwell & Rothwell (2016) especially focus on graduate employability and define employability in relation to four broad categories, first in policies referring to the national level and changes in skill requirements on the labour market, second as a human resource strategy relating to the organisational level used as a "managerial toolkit" (ibid. p. 48), third related to the higher education (HE) context both with regard to HE policy and to the HE curriculum, forth to the individual perspective such as self-perceived employability and individual graduates evaluation of their own career potential. Their conclusion is that too much attention has been given to employability on the expense of employment, especially when it comes to HE graduates.

The concept of employability can be further analysed from a societal, organisational and/or individual perspective (Thijssen et.al 2008). The societal perspective consists of employment rates and economic health, the organisational level of the match between competence requirements and individual competence (Nilsson 2016). Finally, the individual perspective is related to an individual's opportunity to acquire and keep a job on the internal or external market (Williams et.al 2016).

From the societal perspective, HE seems to be a means for providing students with the competencies needed on the labour market as part of a knowledge-driven economy (Williams 2002; Rothwell & Rothwell, 2016). However, national policies in Europe use different definitions and measurement. Yorke (2006) makes a distinction between an employment- and a competence-centred approach. The later seems to be focusing on an individual competence and ability perspective, while the former relates instead to/on a societal and structural focuses on employment (Nilsson 2016). In Sweden, the concept of employability is usually defined from a competence-centred approach, as students' skills in relation to the needs of the labour market (Eurydice 2014; Yorke 2006). In the UKÄ reports, employability is measured by students' establishment on the labour market one to two years after the award of qualifications within the area for the graduate degree (UKÄ 2013).

From an organisational perspective, and as Nilsson (2016) suggests, employability is operationalised in the recruitment processes. The objective of recruitment is to employ the right person at the right position in order for an organisation, irrespective whether small, medium or big, to be

effective and competitive (Bergström 1998; Bolander 2002; Tovatt 2013). For instance, a large number of studies focus on how companies can identify and recruit good candidates for different positions in the organisation (Skorstad 2011) and what variables they have to take into account in the process of recruitment (Breugh 2000).

From an individual perspective the individual seems to be responsible for gaining the right competencies, which also can be related to the ability to market oneself and one's social, personal and cultural capital (Nilsson 2016). As Clarke (2008) claims many studies show that flexibility, adaptability, communicative skills etc. seem to be needed on the labour market in general. Still the discourse of employability pays little attention to 'demographic variables such as age, gender, material status, ethnicity and family responsibilities or physical characteristics' (ibid. p. 267). This makes it extra interesting to understand in-depth employability of non-traditional graduates, especially in regards to both the individual and the organisational perspective.

This paper is concerned with the employability of non-traditional graduates after HE from an individual and organisational perspective. Our definition of non-traditional graduates is based on our previous studies of non-traditional students but referring to students that have a university degree. By non-traditional we briefly mean students that are under-represented in Swedish HE (Bron et.al 2012). More specifically it includes social categories such as age, class, ethnicity, disability and gender.

The aim of the paper is to understand the discourse of employability through the biographical experiences of non-traditional HE graduates' transition between HE and working life, and employers' perspective on the recruitment of non-traditional graduates. The paper more specifically deals with the following questions:

- What struggles do non-traditional graduates express in the transition between HE and working life?
- How do employers perspectives on recruiting non-traditional graduates relate to non-traditional graduates strategies for becoming employable?
- What consequences do the recruitment practices have for non-traditional graduates' opportunities to become employed?

## Previous research

There is an extensive research about student transition from HE to working life in Sweden, sometimes also discussing issues of employability from a student perspective. The transition from HE to working life is discussed in relation to different educational programmes (Nyström et al., 2010; Reid et al., 2008; Johansson et al. 2007; Johansson et al., 2008; Nilsson & Nyström, 2013; Johansson, 2008; Löfgren Martinsson, 2008; Nilsson, 2007; Axelsson 2008; Nilsson 2007; Nyström 2009; Lindberg 2012; Ohlsson 2009; Fransson, 2006). Some of these studies show that students in general academic programmes learn both abstract, theoretical knowledge in HE and to do the work at the workplace (Axelsson 2008; Nilsson 2007). Furthermore, students in academic programmes are less confident in how to handle future work than students in professional programmes (Nyström 2009). Professional programmes are to a larger extent focusing on professional knowledge and professional identity formation and also internship periods. Even if getting a better view over the work area through HE, the researchers draw the conclusion that the work practice is most crucial for becoming a professional (Ohlsson 2009; Lindberg 2012). Löfgren Martinsson (2008) and Haake & Löfgren Martinsson (2009) explicitly focus on employ-

yability of HRM students, claiming that it is to be seen as a process starting in HE and continuing through working life.

In a previous European project (RANLHE) we were concerned with the access and retention of non-traditional students mostly regarding processes of identity formation and transformation in HE. (Thunborg et al. 2013; Thunborg et al. 2012, Bron et al. 2014; Thunborg et al. 2011; Thunborg & Edström 2010; Edström, 2009). From analyses of non-traditional students' stories, we found that students with another ethnical background regarded HE as a free zone from prejudice in society while students with lower educated parents regarded HE as a battle field in which they did not belong (Bron et al. 2014). In another analysis (Thunborg et al. 2012) we focused on the identities that non-traditional students form during their studies. We identified three identity types, the adopted, the floating and the multiple integrated identities. The first one relates to students who hide their social background and previous experiences behind a coherent identity related to HE. The second relates to students struggling with who they are and finally the multiple integrated identity where students seeing themselves as having multiple identities relate to different periods of life and life settings, but with a feeling of all of them being part of themselves.

There seems to be a lack of studies focusing on the employability of non-traditional graduates in Sweden. On a societal level and in an analysis of official statistics, we show that students with low educated parents choose educational programmes within the educational sector, and students with other ethnical backgrounds choose educational programmes in the health care sector Thunborg & Bron (in press). We thereby draw the conclusion that these groups help to fill the gap and fulfil labour market needs, while students having native parents with HE level to a larger extent participate in high status educational programmes and in general academic programmes for getting a unique individual competence to compete on the labour market. As a result, it seems like HE becomes a means for a segregated labour market rather than an arena for equality and social mobility.

Clarke (2007) suggests that demographic variables such as age, gender, material status, ethnicity and family responsibilities or physical characteristics are paid little attention in the discourse of employability on the organisational level:

*Although employers may deny that they have a tendency to stereotype on the basis of age, research suggest that older workers are often seen as incompetent, less flexible and adaptable, less willing and able to learn new things and less physically capable (Clarke, 2007; p. 267).*

In a study from the UK, Abrahams (2016) shows that there are differences between working-class and middle-class students, which do not only relate to their social capital but also to their feelings for the game and willingness to engage in it when it comes to employability. Working class students rely on their own honour and believe in meritocracy for being successful, while middle-class students are willing to use their social capital for handling the competition on the labour market. Abrahams (ibid) discusses the myth of meritocracy which normalises inequalities by converting from a collective to an individual responsibility where working class students blame themselves if failing and middle-class students turn to other resources in their social capital to ensure their own success.

## Theoretical point of departure

To understand the employability of non-traditional graduates in HE from an individual and an organizational perspective, we use the theory of biographical work (Bron & Thunborg, in press) and the theory of organising (Czarniawska 2014).

The theory of biographical work is part of biographical research concerned with persons' constructions of their every-day life experiences, through storytelling. The relation between the past and future is narrated at present. It draws attention to aspects of learning and how people form and transform identities throughout their lives. It also pays attention to the relation between social background and previous experiences in different life settings. Alheit & Dausien (2000) uses the concept biographicity for understanding the continual processes that people are involved in when forming their lives through storytelling. Identity formation is according to Mead (1934) a process formed in the relation between the spontaneous acting 'I' and the socialised 'me', where people have the ability to see themselves both as subjects and objects and thereby change their way of seeing themselves and acting in relation to others. The identity formation process is seen as a threefold process, first seeing and acting towards others through oneself, second, seeing oneself through the perspective of the other and finally forming a view of the generalized other. Identity transformation processes is related to radical identity changes and is described as a "battle" where peoples old and new meaning perspective(s) meet and compete with each other (Mezirow 1978; 2000).

This paper focuses on the transition between HE and working life. Transition is seen as a crucial process of change in a person's life, leading to struggles i.e. feelings of uncertainty in being in between the HE context and the context of working life which affects the formation of identity. The relation between agency and structure is of importance for understanding students' identity formation and transformation as the person's biography is formed in relation to different structural properties embedded in different contexts and discourses (Giddens, 1991).

For understanding non-traditional graduates from a biographical perspective we draw on a theory that we call biographical work (Bron & Thunborg, in press). We have earlier used biographical work as a way of understanding how non-traditional students form and transform identities in HE and life. The process of biographical work consists of identity struggles leading to processes of either anchoring or floating. Anchoring is defined as a process where people are working the boundaries between contexts holding on to something that can make them identify themselves (Fenwick 2006). Floating is defined a feeling of being stuck, not being able to go forward or back, not being able to connect to anything, and is related to life crisis (Bron 2000). Identity formation seems to be related to continual anchoring processes, while identity transformation seems to be related to floating followed by anchoring (Bron & Thunborg, in press). Identifying the strategies that students use is a way of understanding how they handle struggles between contexts, and thereby, relates to how they try to anchor in working the boundaries between HE and working life.

Summing up so far, a biographical perspective on employability focuses on non-traditional graduates' biographical work expressed in struggles related to their biography as well as their transition between HE and working life and their strategies for handling the transition and become employable. This is captured as ongoing processes of identity formation and transformation through processes of anchoring and floating.

To understand the organisational perspective on employability and as Nilsson (2016) suggests, employability is operationalised in the recruitment practices in organisations. The objective of recruitment is to employ the right person at the right position in order for an organisation, irrespective whether small, medium or big, to be effective and competitive (Bergsström 1998; Bolander 2002; Tovatt 2013). Recruitment is defined as the process of analysing job requirements, attracting work force, selecting candidates and sometimes even introducing new members in the organisation (Annell, 2015). Recruitment practices here refer to how organisations work with recruitment processes and regard patterns of actions and processes of making sense of these actions. In this article, recruitment practices are seen as part of organisations continual organising processes produced and reproduced in time and space (Giddens 1984). Czarniawska (2014) defines organising as ongoing processes constructed by actors through their actions and interpretations of what they and others are doing. Czarniawska (ibid) also means that narratives are actions related to organising. In this paper we analyse the narratives from employers trying to understand recruitment practices in different organisations. Narratives of recruitment are from a social constructivist perspective on organising, seen as actions, part of ongoing constructions of organising and of making sense of these actions.

Turning back to the discourse of employability we here try to take a theoretical point of departure for understanding the relation between, on the one hand, the recruitment practices based on employers narratives of how they find the right employee, and the perspective on biographical work for understanding non-traditional HE graduates' struggles and strategies for becoming employable, on the other.

## Method

The paper is part of an ongoing research and developmental project financed by EU Erasmus + (2014-1-UK01-KA203-001842-TP). The project aims to enhance employability of non-traditional students after HE. This paper is based on qualitative analyses of biographical interviews with non-traditional students studying at the programme for Personnel, Work and Organisation (PAO) at Stockholm University, and semi-structured interviews with employers with experience from recruitment.

The paper first of all consists of six biographical interviews with three non-traditional students, interviewed twice, once in the final year, and once after graduating. The interviews are selected from a sample of 35 interviews with 19 students: Emma who started HE three years after graduation from upper-secondary school, Lars, 39 years old with three children that he takes care of every second week. Clare a mature student, 45 years old from another EU country when starting HE for changing her career with a Swedish husband and a son. The biographical interviews were analysed qualitatively using first open coding in relation to each story forming vignettes. Second, we especially focused on identifying students' struggles and strategies in the transition between HE and working life. Finally, these struggles were related to the processes of biographical work.

The paper also consists of ten semi-structured interviews with employers. Four of them from the private sector (two as self-employed consultants having long experiences of being managers in different multinational companies, one that runs her own HR-company with ten employees, and one employed by a recruitment company). Three of the employers work in the public sector (one as HR manager in the military service, two as HR managers in hospitals). Finally, three of them work in the third sector (one as an HR manager in a labour union and two in branch organisations as executive managers). Seven of the interviewees have more than 20 years of work experiences

mostly in HRM work, two of them have between 10 and 20 years of experience and one less than ten years. They are between 25 and 53 years old, eight women and two men.

The interviews were analysed qualitatively. First, we identified different narratives of recruitment that formed four different recruitment practice types. In most of the cases the employers had experiences from different ways of recruiting. This means that the identified recruitment practices are found in more than one narrative. The employers' narratives of recruiting non-traditional students also gave rise to dilemmas concerning both how they looked at these groups and how to enhance the diversity on the labour market as a whole. In the second step these dilemmas were identified and related to the different recruitment practices.

In a final analysis we compared the strategies that students have in the transition between HE and working life with the recruitment practices narrated by the employers.

### **The biographical perspectives from non-traditional graduates**

In this section we first present vignettes of the stories of Emma, Lars and Clare. Thereafter we present analyses of the struggles and strategies expressed in their stories.

#### **The stories of Emma, Lars and Clare**

##### ***Emma***

Emma is 26 years old during the first interview and at the fifth semester of the PAO programme. She started to study when she was 23 years old, she has two brothers, one younger and one older. Her mother never went through HE, but got a good job and was trained on the job. Her father has a HE degree and encouraged all their children to study. Two years after finishing post-secondary education, her older brother started to read at the Swedish School of Sports and Health Science and Business studies. Her younger brother also studied economics. Emma was not keen to seek to the university but did it anyway to calm her father. She was admitted successfully, but did not enroll and instead started to work at the ICA-store, and was a phone salesperson. Both these jobs did not contribute much to her development, so she decided to begin HE.

Still, when working at the ICA, Emma became the victim of an armed robbery, which resulted in a trial, which was a crucial point in her life. As she did not know about her rights at that time she became interested in labour law. After leaving ICA she got another job through her brother's contacts. It was a family business where everyone knew each other. There she began to wonder about why one recruits in that way? Recruitment knowledge would fit well to understand such processes. She became a staff assistant to the person who dealt with staff questions and who was a trained HR specialist. These were all kinds of motives that directed her towards the PAO-programme at the University. During her study time, she learned that one needs to have a HR job placement before seeking a "real" job. This is what counts, so she got some part-time job even if quite short. It was first when her study companion had difficulties to get a job, as not having enough job experience, Emma realised that she needs to change her strategy and look for part-time job, too.

Looking for a job is difficult, and she worries about it. She talks about it with her study partner (as she writes the final paper together with), as it is very important for her to get a job. At the same time, she envies her friends who studied to become teachers as they did not have such worries. If they ever had a work, then it was only on weekends and holidays. Thus, she feels it is difficult for her and her maids at the PAO who struggle with getting a right part-time job when studying.

At the second meeting with Emma one year after the first interview, she has done her final exam, has a degree and has been successful to get a job. But looking for a job was a struggle. Even if it took her only one month, it felt like ages and a very difficult time with many uncertainties. She went through an interview for a job she wanted to have, but it was given to someone else. Luckily the recruitment company directed her to another job, and she became employed. She works in a big private firm with recruitment on the global market, and is very satisfied with the job she has.

### *Lars*

Lars was born in Sweden in 1977, choose the social science program at the upper-secondary school, got work and in-job training, before enrolling HE much later in life. He was working in technical security services, as a security officer, guardian officer and group leader. He is a single father with three children, three boys (four, seven and ten years old) every other week. Lars father was a teacher in upper-secondary school and, a humanist, who also had a physical disability. He influenced Lars very much. Before applying to the University, Lars wanted to secure his chances to be enrolled by studying at the municipal adult education. As he was tired of his job and felt stagnated, he wanted to get broader horizons. He needed academic education as he felt that he did not get enough recognition, coming from the educated family. The idea to study was delayed as he moved to Amsterdam with his partner who worked in the bank sector, while Lars stayed at home with their children. When he was back, after many years, he was ready to study and took a leave of absence for full time study and took care of children every second week. However, as he did not have enough studies in Mathematic, he was not able to enroll at the PAO-programme. Instead he studied two years at the labour market education programme at SOFI at Stockholm University, which included a lot of economy. After two years he could choose one-year more to complete his degree in Education or Sociology, and he decided to take it in Education. We met Lars when he is at his last semester and writes his final paper in Organisational Pedagogy together with a study partner. This did not go as planned, and he experienced a lot of struggles. He needs to get a new job, but did not think about it yet, as he has the final paper to write. During his study, and just half a year before the interview, many things happened that influenced his private life. First, his dad died after a long sickness, so there was a funeral and after that his partner decided to leave him, so he experienced a separation, he also had to handle the estate distribution. He also moved to his late father's house with his children.

When meeting Lars, a half a year later, at the second interview, he finished his studies and is back on his old job. He is struggling to find a new job, and changing career is demanding. Meanwhile, he renovated both his house as well as his cottage by himself and takes care of his three boys.

### *Clare*

When meeting Clare, the first time, she studies on her last semester at the PAO programme. She came to Sweden six years ago when she was 41, from one of EU-country where English is a main language. She has a degree in Law and Psychology, and 20 years of experience as a layer. Coming to Sweden because of being married to a Swede she thought that it would be no difficulties to get a job in her own profession. She started with learning the language already in her own country, and continued in Sweden. After a couple of years, she realised that it was just a dream. She needed to change her career to be able to work. Her mother and father didn't have an HE degree, but her sisters and brother have. Clare chooses the PAO-programme while talking to a career and study adviser at the University. She is a very good student who wants to learn as much as she can, thinking about the language and the content. Thus, she studies full time, not like other students having part-time jobs to compete with on the labour market. She is aware that there can be problems to find a job a she is too old. She actually applies for a part-time HR assistant job,

and is doing very well at the interview, but is told that she is overqualified. She is writing her final essay for the degree and applies for an Internship Course, which is given in connection to the PAO-programme after graduation to be able to find an internship place.

During the second interview Clare was successful with her graduation but the Internship course did not work out as she was not able to find a company that accepted her. Thus, before and after the summer 2016 she was applying for HR jobs, but was not even asked for the interview. Then she started to look for another job and in the late Autumn she became employed at the state Insurance Agency (in the public sector) first taking a six weeks course, and then being able to work provisionally during a half year to be finally employed permanently. Her Swedish university education obviously helped her to find a job, but the job does not have anything to do with HR. However, she is very happy that after such a struggle finally being able to get any position, and start a new life and career.

### **Struggles expressed by non-traditional HE graduates**

The three students describe four different struggles in the transition between HE and working life, the struggle of being non-traditional, not knowing what to work with, balancing between demands from HE and future employment, and getting the right job.

#### ***Being non-traditional***

The struggle of being non-traditional is expressed both by Lars' and Clare's stories, and relates to being too old, having another ethnical background and having family responsibilities. Clare worries the most about her age and fears of being discriminated on the labour market. In her narrative there are several expressions of being seen as overqualified and not getting internship which are examples of her struggles of being too old and too qualified:

*... I've achieved relatively well and with good results, it has been hard to be an older student, that is one thing that I really, when I think of coming to the market place, that's the one that I know is against me, if I was younger I don't see that there would be a problem, but I am now nearer to fifty than forty, I cannot believe that myself eh, but that how it was I was forty one when I came to Sweden, and now I am forty seven so, yes, so I foresee this as a problem...*

*... eh I think market places is extremely closed for people who you know first of all they need networks eh despite that this course highlights you know competencies, it's not competencies you now, there is the ages between 32 and 42, there is your employability that Sweden hires, employability, and I know that I passed that, and it is not that, I know that I have, that I can work and have ore to give, there is somebody who is 32 and has less experiences than me, eh I ye, you just know you can be down the pail on the older side, you know, particularly trying to start a new career and again it is contradictory information they can get, as I could see that one wants encourage people to change careers first starting to ...*

For Clare language is also a disadvantage if coming from abroad:

*...so I kind of it will be anything for people who have English, you know, employers are not going to communicate if there is not common language, I think it is very discriminating, in Sweden,*

Lars takes his age as an advantage, but is nevertheless aware of the age as a discriminatory factor:

*...Thus I have an advantage ... by my age, I can, I find it easier to ... make rational decisions and priorities I believe it is different for younger students who have less distance and perspective, I do not need to have the same performance-anxiety as part of them ... because I can see that it's not about making the best, it is not about to perform at the peak of ones' maximum capacity, but it is about to*

*perform as well as possible under the current conditions, with external factors playing a role and I think also huh ..but on the other side I have age against me for employability.*

Lars also worries about how to deal with his family responsibilities for his children when getting employment:

*...(having) children is a problem of employability there is not much I can do about it, no, I try to relate to it after all, but there are worries they are.....*

*... it is also in itself anxiety for employment, I, it requires some flexibility there, but I feel that, to understanding of parenting and understanding and acceptance of fathers has increased quite a bit last decade, so this is not impossible, it's just finding the right employer ...*

Both Clare and Lars have problems in getting employment within the area of their education and feel that it has to do with their age.

### **Not knowing what to work with...**

Emma expresses struggles related to not knowing what to do after HE. She thinks that the work-field is broad and contains too many options, which makes her feel anxious for her future:

*...I do not know what I want to work with, it is so wide, do I want to work with recruitment, do I want to work with that, or do I want to work in any branch I want to, uh they are very many, and there are many emotions that one did not know that one had I do not know what everything means nor because I have not been at any company or just because...but never tried one, maybe I should try?...*

### **Balancing between demands from HE and future employment**

Emma expresses this struggle as a wake-up call where everybody else discuss part time HR jobs for gaining employment she has not been thinking about it and feels forced to do something:

*.... So I was under a little pressure/stress in the fifth semester, I have to do something else, I have to, I want to get a job, more than that, I must have something to write on my CV, I have worked with this or that I had this service, something that stands out more...*

### **Finding a job or the 'right' job**

Looking for a job is in itself a struggle. This will be the first time after 1997, and Lars is annoyed, but thinking about changing careers, he says:

*...I can take any management position at any time ... because I do not know I don't bother by this worry, and this I have fled and yeah uh, I have not yet put the complete CV, I have not had time, no, I have had the very good help during that time, the second semester of AKPA, as we were assigned mentors.*

Clare struggles with finding a job altogether:

*...and I think I was a naïve when I came here because I thought that I obviously will be able get a job...*

*...I can certainly try to apply for a job as Human Resource assistant and my chances are probably very limited to be employed as many people in Sweden have this degree...*

They struggle with their lives while study, with handle the private life, part-time job and children, with writing their final essay, but mostly with the anxiety if they will be able to get a job after all. Thus they developed different strategies how to navigate with the most perfect way.

## Graduates' strategies for getting employment

Emma, Lars and Clare describe different strategies for getting employment after HE. One of the main categories is to have the right competencies. However, they seem to be using other strategies during their studies as well as after their studies for getting employment. In the following section we discuss their strategies more in detail.

### Having the right competence

The three graduates seem to be confident that a degree from HE is needed for getting employment and that the programme is important for a job within the HR sector. Clare also claims the importance of being good in Swedish. They also seem to value their previous work experiences as important for having the right competence.

*..., of course, it does not matter if I have good grades, you must complete it (the programme), you should have a degree, you must have experience, you should have working life experience in HR services as...Emma*

*...I have to say that life in Sweden become much easier now when I can speak Swedish, and I can do more ... Clare*

Emma talks a lot about getting work experiences. Even if she regrets starting to study late in life to begin study (three years later), it is still good to have work experience, she feels. This gives her insight how work place is functioning. Clare discusses her previous work experiences and her difficulties in using it in the Swedish context:

*... I had twenty years experiences as a lawyer and I always worked and I didn't see that it will be a problem because I also felt that Sweden is a country that very much is, works in English as there are many international companies, so I thought I must be able to get something without much difficulty, but then quickly you realise that it has not worked at all and I realise that as a lawyer and to use my experience that I would have to, you know, to re-educate myself that employers might find attractive... Clare*

### Strategies during the studies

Both Lars and Clare took part in a mentor programme for getting support in finding a job. She saw it as an opportunity to learn Swedish at the same time as she increased her opportunity to get a job. At the same time she struggled with being in between to professional careers. For Lars

*Clare took part in ... and intensive Swedish for academics, supposed for lawyers and economists, and something else I forgotten unfortunately we didn't really do anything for lawyers, they did have a Mentor program so I through Jusek, extremely useful, and my mentor was actually judge from Tingsrätt from Stockholm, but the problem here is again that you go between two careers and I haven't actually thought, I didn't know, I flow the programme, just concentrating more on learning Swedish, because I still thought I, you know, once I got my Swedish I will be able to get a job, eh and anyway I had this judge, she was lovely, but the difficulty is she couldn't use any of her contacts because it will seem like, you know, this pressure coming from a judge... (Clare)*

Lars got a mentor since two years whom she meets once a month and eats lunch together with. She wanted to give him a job. But it did not turn out. Emma realised that she had to start working part time within the HR sector for being able to get employment:

*... I really realized that maybe I should put more time thinking about work than the school (university) that is the job that would have meant something, that's the employment that I study for, I study to learn too, of course, but uh actually then it's just the primary purpose that I'll get a job I want to work with. If*

*I do not have a job, then I cannot put the skills I have learned here to practice, either, so visibility is important... (Emma)*

*...In order to get a job after graduation one must make an effort, so then when I heard about the position as HR assistant so I jumped at once... (Emma)*

For Clare her family responsibilities in having a five-year old son limited her from taking a part time job during her studies:

*... I just actually thought of getting a part-time work as other students do, have part-time jobs, with the sort of the same branch, you know a lots of people are recruiting assistances working in some kind of HR, I think it's great, I have two problems with that. One – my son is only five... After being on the interview ... I got to know that I was overqualified, so I realised I am not fitting the profile for being HR assistant... (Clare)*

Clare also refers to an internship course after the graduation from the PAO programme that she really tried to attend:

*...yes I have these strategies what I want to and I still do think that I am employable (je) but we will see how it turns out (je) depending what response I get, but I figure an internship place might do, if I might perused an employer to take me on (je) on the basis on what I would be actually doing or anything eh (ja, it is like that) ja I will see what's is good I will see x now I am starting the internship course with the PAO programme that starts in eh Spring, so I have my (eh) application...(Clare)*

From Clare's story we learnt that she was not accepted by an employer for getting an internship which limited her from becoming employable within the HR sector.

### **Strategies after the studies**

When talking about how apply for and get a job within the HR sector, Clare talks about the importance of trying to apply for an international company where English is the main language:

*...my kind of strategy is to apply for international companies that have English as a company language...Clare*

Lars discusses the importance of having a good CV:

*... I have not yet a complete CV, I have not had no, I have had that very well supported during this time second semester of AKPA so we were assigned mentors...(Lars)*

*...but I do not know, I will write a CV, I have received no .., I have gotten weak eh LinkedIn profile, which is still heard from some people sometimes (aha, OK), among others, I received one just as I could start working full time or start studying whole time I got an offer thus... (Lars)*

Emma and Clare discuss the importance of having good references. For Emma the part time job helped her with that, while for Clare her references did not work as they are too old and from another country:

*... but now I have received this HR position, so I got a reference that I needed, because I have worked...(Emma)*

*...I also am going to have a problem with my age of references because I know I didn't work for six years, so eh here in Sweden there is so much emphasis on getting references when you talk to the recruitment company that is always as if they have employment interview with referees, which I find*

*really surprising because the whole point of all that courses is to look at peoples competencies and one shouldn't discriminate and the kind of correlation between how one perform at another job is very low, but not understanding that they want to interview eh referees, so my referees, you know, are six years old...(Clare)*

Both Emma and Lars talk about using their social networks. For Emma it is all about creating a solid network and to get a 'foot' in:

*... But I still think maybe one can have more contacts with companies to be able to create a bigger and wider solid network and ... because it is so important exactly in this education to get the foot only in a place somewhere to show off that you are and what you can, or else you don't ... it becomes very difficult for you really, eh so right now I'm searching for the full, then we see what... Emma*

Emma is concerned about the way in which she has got the job through networks of acquaintances. Thus, she feels this is not really right or just to get a job through social contacts. For Lars it is a disadvantage to be older, not being able to use his parents' networks:

*... the disadvantage is that I'm older, I cannot use my parents network in the same way as younger students can, my mother has released her management positions she's talking to retire next year, her husband who ran his own consulting firm last few years, retired, and my dad is dead (yes) eh, however, I have the more friends of my own age with more specialised positions that you could use little later...Lars*

### **Summary**

From the three biographical stories we have identified struggles and strategies experienced in the transition between HE and working life. The struggles relate to finding a job, being non-traditional, not knowing what to work with, balancing between HE and working life and getting a job or the right job. From the stories we also know that other struggles in life also affect the period of transition, such as a death of a father. The strategies that the non-traditional students use are related to different periods during and after the studies. Getting the HE degree and the right competence are seen as the basics for having a chance. Other strategies during studies are related to getting a part time job, participating in a mentor programme and/or getting an internship, given as a course. After the studies, searching for the right company, having a good CV, previous work experiences and social networks seem to be important.

From the graduates' stories there seems to be a 'right path' in getting a part-time job during the studies, for being able to get the right work experience to put in the CV after having a degree. This path also supports possibilities of getting the right references and forming the right social networks for future employment. Not knowing the path or family responsibilities makes this path harder to follow.

### **The employers' perspectives**

One theme that emerged from the semi-structured interviews and is used in this paper, was employers' experiences of recruitment that covered issues like how they attracted and selected candidates and especially their experiences of recruiting non-traditional students.

### **Recruiting non-traditional graduates**

When talking about non-traditional students, the employers mainly talk about students with another ethnical background. They give rise to issues of how to enhance diversity on the labour market generally, how to counteract discrimination and difficulties in finding people with another ethnical background. One of the employers means that it is easier to recruit people with another

ethnic background, for example in health care than in the school system, because of the language barrier, another that it is hard to find people with another ethnic background for the Military Service. The employers also mean that the HR sector is dominated by “ethnic Swedish” women which makes it hard to find others. This is seen as a dilemma when it comes to increase diversity:

*...at one point I asked why we were only hiring girls that were graduates and the answer from the manager was that they are the best! ... I know what it looks like, around 98 per cent of the students at the PAO-programme are women, it is an obvious answer, but we had the discussion of finding someone with a non-European background or something like that.... I think you have to solve it by recruiting someone outside the normal norm that you have to make a conscious choice. (Employer 6, third sector)*

*I think we search for 1. Men 2. Other ethnic background to HR, we have not searched for people with disabilities or for older people... there are 30-year-old women studying HR I think... (Employer 10, third sector)*

*We see that it is more and more attractive to read HR and more students wants to study it and generally ... it has been many women that have been studying and as it's becoming harder to get access... girls often have higher grades; it becomes an unbalanced recruitment to the educational programme from the beginning. (Employer 1, private sector)*

The issue of gender and HR as a feminine practice is discussed by the employers and is also viewed as problematic even if there are good explanations:

*We have had very few male applicants here. There are few men the times we have recruiting no men have applied. (Employer 3, third sector)*

The employers also discuss students having disabilities as part of following the law against discrimination: The employer from the Military Service discusses the issue of disability in the following way:

*... we have an open mind towards disabilities, depending on what it is of course but we have many people with physical disabilities, because of what they have been experienced in work. We try to handle this as good as possible, it is quite normal for us, even if it could be problematic... it doesn't however limit anyone from getting an employment in our organisation... we have a man at our place that has a light autism but he has been in the organisation for a long time and we have found the right job for him, a job where he feels safe. A question is however would I have recruited him in competition with other candidates? No probably not, because I would probably have seen him limited in developing and do other work tasks. It is a challenge because everyone that are working in the military service are required to do international services, most of them are going to be placed in war after a two weeks training period, we have to be able to use the organisation at all times which makes it a little harder for people with some disabilities. (Employer 2, public sector)*

Another employer has experiences of recruiting graduates with disabilities:

*We have actually been discussing this and this morning I had a meeting with a co-worker that we have a woman that is blind, totally blind, she had fantastic references so we felt that we could not say no to her, it wasn't possible, she has been studying the law... she has a guide dog so we discussed if we have someone with allergies, and discussed the office and where she could have the dog, and it is a lot of practical issues before you can offer someone a job in this situations but we fight for it and see where. (Employer 10, third sector)*

Social class is mainly discussed by employers with experiences of coming themselves from a family lacking higher education. One of them is trying to formulate both the advantages and disadvantages with being non-traditional:

*I come from a family where no one has a university degree... my parents have at the most 4-6 years in school.... I have been wondering why I did this but I think I longed to come out and see things... what was hard for me and I do think it is the same today to know the alternatives, to see the alternatives in front of me, what you can do if you are not a nurse, fire man, carpenter or hairdresser or work in an office ... I do however think that this group has better sensitivity and understanding .... When I worked in the security business we had technicians that had difficulties in respecting all these women working in the reception, working their asses off ... and that their opinions and thoughts were worth the same. (Employer 4, Private sector)*

Another employer thinks it is important to work for enhancing diversity also referring to her own background:

*Maybe I am a non-traditional student because my parents do not have an academic degree and I have another ethnical background... I do believe in diversity, I really do and maybe it has to do with my own background... I look very careful at every candidate and age, I do not think it is important. I have recruited 60 years old and 62 years old and I am not afraid of that... It is important to have diversity in the team and that is as important in all departments, as important in HR departments but generally we do have less diversity than in the company as a whole and that is sad but I do think it turns out to be more of the same, that is important to think about. (Employer 1, private sector)*

Others do not seem to think that class matters. One employer seems to be surprised that there are differences in participation related to social class:

*I think that the class border has been blurred, are there more people with academic parents going into HE these days? ... In my group of acquaintance most of them have studied in HE, both from well-educated homes and from homes with low educated parents so I don't think that we see it that way, we don't ask. In our organisation we recruit higher education graduates and people with long work experience. (Employer 10, third sector)*

For others they do not know about the social background of candidates and do not ask about it:

*...I have a person here that doesn't have a traditional background but that isn't something I knew from the beginning, I liked her competence and drive, it was actually when I told her about this project that she said I'm one of them, and then I thought about it, but that isn't something that I thought was important. (Employer 3, third sector)*

When asking about mature students, some employers do not seem to think it is disadvantaging when recruiting. It is also considered one of the grounds for discrimination and against the Swedish law:

*It is very sensitive because age is one of the grounds for discrimination, so you need to really be aware of how you handle that, from my perspective, if you do have work experience and then start to study in the middle of life, I don't mind recruiting a man or a woman like that, absolutely not, it depends on what you bring in. (Employer 2, public sector).*

One of the employers however claims that it is easier to be young:

*I feel that it is easier to be young. The worst thing I have been through was when I hired a manager that I needed... I wanted a man that was about to turn 58 or 59. I met so much resistance from the HR manager, it was incredible. I had to put in all my power to get him (Employer 4, private sector).*

## Recruitment practices

From the employers' experiences of recruitment and the kinds of problem they have experienced in different organisations, we have identified four recruitment practices: the informal, the pragmatic, the standardised and the strategic practice.

### *The informal recruitment practice*

The employers have experience from recruiting internally, someone they already know or someone selected from informal contacts. To have someone recommended is seen as a guarantee for a person to do well at the workplace and also for the work place to provide a good job for the person.

*Informal contacts are decisive today when you apply for a job, if I get an informal reference on someone then the candidate comes up in the pile (of applications). It is worthless calling these phone numbers, because everyone is fantastic... but informally, that I know someone at another company somewhere and ... I call them and ask: how is this woman actually, if I get a good, then I know. (Employer 10, third sector)*

*We have found people within the organisation, in the structure, they have been at other departments ... of the organisation and we have felt they have the right competencies and profiles... we take him or her into the department to develop. (Employer 2, public sector)*

The informal recruiting practice concerns recruiting people within the organisation and recruiting people from recommendations of people you know and trust.

### *The pragmatic recruitment practice*

The employers describe this recruiting as a pragmatic or a sensible way of working. They balance between finding someone that "looks the same" as the one they used to have or someone that could make a change in the organisation. The way of attracting candidates does mostly happen through advertising and the selection is mainly from interviews, sometimes with many people from the organisation involved, referee-taking and sometimes through tests, something they feel comfortable with:

*It is the need for the organisation that is important. If I get a vacancy in my staff, Camilla is quitting and she has been working with these issues and have these competencies, but what do we need now, do we need her or can we move the tasks and do it some other place, or are we going to change the profile to get what we need... I don't think we have anything else but good sense. (Employer 2, public sector)*

The pragmatic recruitment practices seem to give rise to a dilemma: the dilemma of balancing between similarity and diversity in the organisation:

*I think it is a difficult act of balance. On the one hand you talk about values and the importance of fitting into an organisation and on the other hand you talk about diversity and you have to say that this is a contradiction. Then you have to be very clear with yourself. (Employer 1, private sector)*

The challenges with the pragmatic practices relates to trying to convince others about a different candidate than expected and to handle the prejudice from others in the organisation as a consequence. Recruiting only one different person is also seen as problematic as it raises expectations and makes it easier to fail. The pragmatic practice is thereby seen as an act of balance between the current and the future organisational culture and between the individual recruited and the organisation.

### *The standardised recruitment practice*

Standardised recruitment is described as activities organised and carried out, by recruitment companies, in accordance with a system for quality insurance from analysing job requirements to presenting a candidate:

*our recruitment process is certified so we have firm routines for how a recruitment process is to be done... from taking in applications to having a candidate, several steps that we cannot abandon as taking two references on each candidate, that candidates have to do the test as a first screening which is supposed not to discriminate a candidate from a personal point of view. That's why we sent out a test from different profiles, test profiles that we have created. Depending on what kind of position it shows the results differently to us as recruiters, but the test is the same for everyone. (Employer 7, private sector)*

As a first step the recruitment companies try to help their customers in defining the job requirements in more detail both in relation to knowledge, intellectual and practical skills and in relation to personal skills. The selection of candidates is handled in four steps. In the first step every candidate is given a personal test that is matched with the key personal profiles identified through the job requirement process. In the second step the CV's of those with the right personal skills are reviewed in accordance with key competencies. In the third step two different references are taken and finally the matched candidates are interviewed and presented to the company.

An advantage with the standardised recruitment processes is according to the representatives for the recruitment company to counteract discrimination:

*...we work extensively with discussing ...discrimination and it is very up to date at our company all the time how we work with this... which I think is profoundly good. To be reminded of what is important when working with recruitment and to be close to customers means to run into others asking us to discriminate, so we have to stop it... it makes me proud to know that I do not recruit on age or gender or ethnicity or anything else... (Employer 7, private sector)*

The critique against the standardised recruitment practice concerns not getting the right candidate for the job because of the standardised process and the financial transaction with the recruitment company:

*...recruitment processes is about measuring how good you are at taking yourself through the recruitment process and not how good you are at work, which is a huge problem and I do think that HR needs to take responsibility for identifying what competencies you really need in your work to be able to do it and organise the process in relation to that. You often have a standardised recruitment process... good you fit in the model but not in your work. (Employer 6, third sector)*

*It has become much of a transaction because you turn directly to a recruitment company that can find someone and I know that the recruitment company wants a fast delivery so what I get back through the recruitment company is a bunch of standardised persons, a quick fix in all senses, which means... no one is happy... I think we are generally scared to be challenged by HR saying do you really want someone with a traditional background, what are the competencies you really look for? (Employer 4, private sector)*

The employers give rise to one important dilemma, that *Standardised recruitment practices do not necessarily enhance diversity even if counteracting discrimination*. According to the employers', experiences of bad analyses of job requirements, together with standardised recruitment processes give standard persons that are good at going through the recruitment process, but not

necessarily the ones needed at the workplace, although within a quality insured process of not discriminating any candidate.

### *The strategic recruitment practice*

Most of the employers have experiences of working strategically with trying to enhance diversity on the labour market. One strategy is to have a diversity policy:

*We work with three different colours... it is not about having a pride flag but it is about that everybody cannot be 33,5 years old, living in Täby (upper class area of Stockholm) and being raised there, having children and being married ... we talk about that a lot that we don't want that ... it is a challenge and difficult when it comes to deliver to customers because we are always selling. (Employer 8, private sector)*

The employers have experiences of working with changing values in the organisation and to try to tie the widening of the recruitment practice to the business or success of the organisation in general.

*When I worked at company C it was a challenging task with widening diversity, because if you looked at the company as a whole there was a good diversity concerning ethnicity, but the problem was that everyone worked in the production and in the store house. We looked closer and realised that our sales men, they were white, middle aged men between 30 and 40 and we said okay but are we going to ... recruit others because our customers have a different ethnical mix... we turned it around to see how it could enhance the business. (Employer 1, private sector)*

*When I worked in the security business... we wanted to enhance diversity so we worked explicitly ... we wanted women and we explicitly worked with other ethnical groups and also with HBTQ and homosexual people, when you start it goes quite fast. ... It was a self-defined quotation to the disappointment from our American owners which made the whole thing a short exception that makes me disenchanted. Now they are fired, I quit, our manager got fired and every female manager quit. (Employer 4, private sector)*

Some of the employers have experiences from broadening the perspectives of candidates in recruitment. One problem with strategic recruitment is to find the right people. In Military Service for example there is a prejudice against the military service itself.

*In the military service we have had problems with reaching people born outside Europe because they do not apply through ordinary recruitment projects or through an advertise in the paper, so we have tried to find other ways of reaching them.... I would have been happy to have someone with another cultural background as well, to be able to have these questions illuminated from another perspective as we are working internationally as well, it is important in my department and I miss it but have not been able to find anyone... ...We learnt through a project that you need to go out in certain groups and discuss the role of the military service... sometimes it is also important to talk to parents because there are ways of looking at the military from their home countries that could be more or less problematic. In the civil organisation the mix is a little better ... (Employer 2, public sector).*

When talking about the practice of recruitment the employers see it as a way of enhancing the recruitment of certain groups. A dilemma is that working strategically with changing recruitment practices is easy to start, but hard to make part of the organisation routine. They become temporary changes in the organisations. Another dilemma is that it is hard to find candidates when trying to find special categories. New ways of recruiting, finding candidates seems to be one of the challenges.

## Summary

From the employers' perspective the recruitment of graduates with another ethnical background and disabilities is seen as an important task as they think these groups are disadvantaged on the labour market in general. When it comes to social class none of them think it is of importance in the recruitment process. There are different views of mature students, for some of the employers age does not seem to matter while others have personal experiences of difficulties with recruiting someone. The matter is however sensible as it is a ground for discrimination and against the law. Finally, gender is related to the difficulties of finding competent men within the HR sector.

We have also identified four different recruitment practices and dilemmas in relation to recruitment from the employers' perspective; the informal, the pragmatic, the standardised and the strategic practices.

## Discussion

The aim of this paper is to understand the discourse of employability through the biographical experiences of non-traditional HE graduates transition between HE and working life and employers' perspective on the recruitment of non-traditional graduates in different organisations.

As we claimed in the beginning of this paper, the discourse of employability can be seen as a labour market model where the individual is seen as responsible for being employable and HE a means for enhancing the right competencies needed on the labour market. We have in this article tried to view this discourse through a biographical perspective of non-traditional graduates and their transition between HE and working life, and through the recruitment practices described in employers' narratives.

Using biographical work as a theoretical concept the three graduates express different struggles in the transition between HE and working life. Emma's struggles seem to have led to a short period of floating where she really struggled with not getting employment. Even if only lasting a month she describes it as very troublesome emotionally. Becoming employed helped her to anchor in her life again transforming her identity from being a student towards becoming a HR worker. Clare does not seem to have gone through any transformation process in the transition, even if not being able to get a job within the HR sector. She seems to be anchored in herself and her life, since she transformed already from the period of floating she experienced when moving to Sweden and understood that she had to start studying again. Even if Lars struggled during his last semester in HE, and even if being anxious of not getting a job within the HR sector, he does not seem to have been floating because of being in the transition. His struggles leading to a floating period seems to be connected to the death of his father which seemed to have been an emotional crisis for him. He then seems to have anchored again, while working with restoring his house and his cottage. The transformation of the identity he went through was to a larger extent related to his private life than to employment.

One conclusion of this paper is that the transition between HE and working life seems to be most crucial for Emma and her struggles in getting a job, despite the fact that it is the other two graduates that do not get the right employment. From this perspective it could be argued that there are differences between young and mature graduates in how they struggle in relation to being or not being employed and how that affects their identity formation and transformation. An interesting question is however who is mature? Emma is struggling with maturity claiming that she started three years later than other students, viewing her as mature. From Clare's and Lars' expressions it is disadvantaging for becoming employed to be over 35 vs 45. Turning back to the

three identity types we defined in an earlier study (Thunborg et al. 2012) we think that Emma formed a floating identity during her floating period, and then an adopted identity in relation to working life, keen to become an HR worker, while Clare seemed to have formed a multiple integrated identity, seeing herself as having multiple identities related to different periods of life and life settings, but with a feeling of them all being part of themselves.

Emma also struggles with not knowing what to do after graduation which can be related to the PAO-programme being a general academic programme with a vague relation to the HR sector in general which is supporting previous studies concerning the relation between general academic and professional programmes (Nyström et al. 2010). She is however convinced that a degree from HE is crucial for being able to get a job, which means that the programme seems to be balancing on the border between being a fully academic or a professional programme. For Emma previous work experiences are of importance for getting a work but for Clare 20 years of experiences does not seem to matter or being an obstacle.

In this paper we have also identified four recruitment practices from the narratives of employers, the informal and the pragmatic recruitment practices seem to be narrated as a practical way of recruiting, while the standardised and strategic are narrated through an intentional logic of action (Czarniawska, 2014). In table 1 we compare the recruitment practices narrated by the employers with the non-traditional graduates' strategies.

*Table 1. The match between recruitment practices, methods and experienced dilemmas from employers and non-traditional graduates' strategies and dilemmas for finding a job*

<b>Recruitment practices</b>	<b>Recruitment methods</b>	<b>Graduate strategies</b>
Informal recruitment practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal recruitment</li> <li>• Recruiting someone you know</li> <li>• Recruitment from social contacts</li> </ul>	Get informal contacts through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• building networks,</li> <li>• work experience</li> <li>• mentor and references;</li> <li>• internship course</li> </ul>
Pragmatic recruitment practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding someone that fits the needs at the moment.</li> <li>• Using suitable techniques i.e. interviews and referee-taking, complementing with tests and other methods depending on the situation</li> </ul>	Different strategies for how to be selected: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get references,</li> <li>• Go through the interviews.</li> </ul>
Standardised recruitment practice	A process in five steps: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Analysing job requirements, identifying key competencies and personal profiles</li> <li>2. Personal test in accordance with personal profiles</li> <li>3. CV review in accordance with key competencies</li> <li>4. Referee-taking from two sources</li> <li>5. Interview of candidates</li> </ol>	CV and references;
Strategic recruitment practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with changing organisational values, recruiting certain groups for change</li> <li>• Finding new ways of attracting and finding candidates</li> </ul>	None of the graduates' have strategies in relation to this practice

As shown in table 1, the informal, pragmatic and standardised recruitment practices also seem to be related to the discourse of employability while the strategic is not. The graduates do not use strategies for that one, either. The strategic recruitment practice seems to be related to deliberately enhancing the diversity on the labour market related to another discourse, probably the discourse of equality.

Turning back to the strategies used by the three graduates, Emma describes her way of becoming employable by following the main stream and learning the game of working life. Already during her last year, she was thinking about how to get a part time job in the HR sector for gaining the right work experience for future employment. This is something that she learnt from other students in the PAO-programme. Clare and Lars do not take the main stream because of their family responsibilities. The possibility of following the main stream and learning the game thereby differs. It seems like a best part, a game to learn for being employable is quite narrow.

Age also seems to be a crucial issue when it comes to being employable. Both Clare and Lars suffer from discrimination in relation to age, both lacking relevant social networks and having too old references. The employers have different views and experiences whether age is a problem in the recruitment process or not, especially as it is a ground for discrimination and against the law. From the results from both employers and graduates, age seems to be an important issue to further study in relation to employability. As Clarke (2007) suggests, demographic variables such as age, gender, material status, ethnicity and family responsibilities or physical characteristics are paid little attention in the discourse of employability on the organisational level. This is therefore needed to be discussed further.

Finally, one could ask, if Clare also suffers from having another ethnical background and/or for being overqualified by her previous education and work experience. She is critical towards the recruitment processes where her CV and references are in English and considered being too old and at the same time she is seen as too qualified for HR work. She is also critical towards the methods used in the recruitment processes, such as psychological tests and interviews.

What consequences do the recruitment practices have for non-traditional graduates' opportunities to get employed? One conclusion in this paper is that there is a contradiction between employers' views of enhancing diversity on the labour market on the one hand and following the discourse of employability on the other. Three of the recruitment practices relates to the discourse of employability, while one of them explicitly is directed towards enhancing diversity. Graduates that learn to play the game and follow the right path by getting the right work experiences during their studies, using strategies related to recruitment practices supporting the discourse of employability, seem to get employment.

Furthermore, this paper indicates that it is a disadvantage to be a mature student with family responsibilities, not following the path, but this is further to be studied as it is also seen as a dilemma for employers in their wish to enhance diversity. An interesting consequence with studying HR graduates and the recruitment practices is that most of the HE graduates start their working career with recruitment. This means that the "right" path of an HR employee is upheld through the recruitment practices as ongoing processes of choosing people who follow the right path (Czarniawska 2014). Even this is to be further studied and critically examined.

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