

Conference paper:

The role of higher education in the process of professionalisation of adult educators

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Employers as adult educators in Polish HEI's. Enhancing employability for non- traditional students in Polish HE based on EMPLOY project ¹

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Non-traditional students and the labor market Research shows that: non-traditional students are particularly affected in terms of being successful at the labor market; the transition into employment often takes longer than 'traditional students'; there is the likelihood of entering employment which is below degree level and, therefore, less meaningful. There is also a mismatch between graduate credentials and employers' expectations, The EMPLOY project's impact for this area of cooperation between HE and Employers is defined as:

- developing two European toolkits that presents best practice by HEIs and offers guidance to students on improving their employability. to identify best practices, policies and guidelines to be used in two handbooks.
- based on the voices, experiences and perceptions of participants (students, university staff and employers) through biographical approaches and in-depth interviews
- One handbook will be aimed at non-traditional students in higher education while the other will be aimed at employers and university staff.

¹ Erasmus + project: EMPLOY: European project involving six partners and co-ordinated by Dr Barbara Merrill, University of Warwick. University of Warwick (co-ordinator), UK, National University of Ireland, Ireland, University of the Algarve, Portugal, University of Seville, Spain, University of Lower Silesia, Poland, Stockholm University, Sweden

- The website and the use of social media will promote dialogue among all stakeholders and support dissemination and exploitation strategy to ensure a wide European impact

The research project

The context of our research is one of the non-state university: University of Lower Silesia. Majority of the student body comprises of part time, young and mature adult, already on the labor market, seeking in HE and academic degree a skills improvement, job security or promotion, sometimes new career path. mismatch in Polish context is often seen as a:

- lack of proper curriculum design,
- lack of communication with employers while designing , delivering and assessing learning outcomes in HE
- and lack of proper teaching skills among academic teachers.

Reform of Higher Education in Poland, (2011 and continued in 2014) was focused on many challenges, inappropriate structure of study programmes run at the Polish HEIs, and weak linkages between HEIs and the labour market were one of the key issue.

Many aspects of the reform was design and is currently implemented based on the guidelines of Bucharest Communique (2012). Cooperation between employers and higher education institutions as an important means to enhance the employability of higher education graduates. Key message of Bucharest communique on market- HE relations:

- consulting or involving employers, employers' organizations and business representatives in developing, delivering and evaluating higher education study programmes is a direct mechanism through which labor market information can be included in higher education.
- Employers and business representatives do know what skills graduates need when entering the labor market.
- Higher education institutions can use this knowledge when designing degree programmes.

As a result, new legal framework create a formal role for employers as a teachers in HE a new “practice-oriented” profile, with stronger ‘market – oriented programme and non-academic specialists in a field as a teacher (so called ‘practitioners’). Practitioners not only involved (reform of 2011), but also approved to be declared as a ‘key- staff’ while applying for permit to open a new curriculum to the QA national board and ministry (reform of 2014). Next is an involvement of employers in shaping curricula, in teaching, and in assessing its outcomes and dual education model (half of the study programme is being delivered in the workplace). Higher Schools of Professional Education obligated to create special councils with representatives of the regional authorities and the regional business community.

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