

BETWEEN EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY: CRITICAL REFLECTIONS BASED ON THE PERCEPTIONS OF NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS

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STRUCTURE

The EMPLOY Project: aims and methods

Characterisation of the participants

Results and discussion

Conclusions

Considerations for the future

EMPLOY

Enhancing the Employability of Non-Traditional Students in
Higher Education (HE)

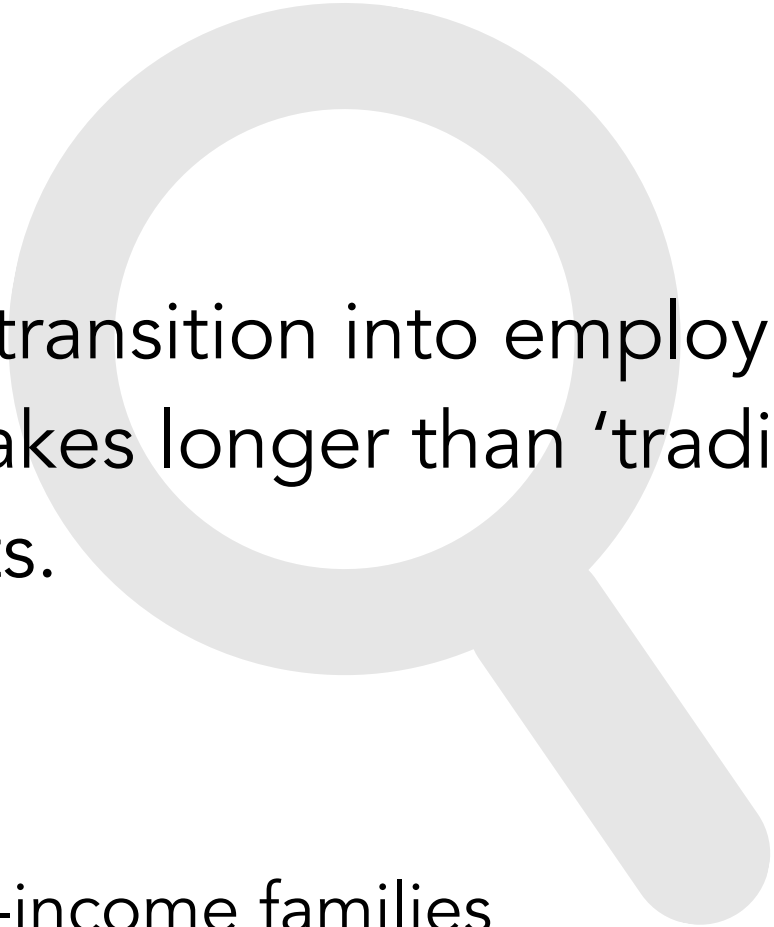
No. 2014-1-UK01-KA203-001842-TP

Funded by Erasmus Plus

Project duration: 36 months (01/11/14 to 01/10/17)

For non-traditional students the transition into employment and to get a graduate job often takes longer than 'traditional' students.

Non-traditional students



- Low-income families
- Mature students
- Migrant background
- First generation into HE
- With disabilities

What are the perceptions of non-traditional students about employability





QUALITATIVE APPROACH

Biographical narrative approach

Non-traditional students

Employers (public, private and third sector)

University Staff

Graduates

CONTENT ANALYSIS

SOCIAL-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISATION

	Male	Female	Total
Participants	9	11	20
Average age	37	34	36
Over 25	9	10	19
Low social-economic background	5	7	12
Parents with low level of educational	7	6	13
First generation student in HE	6	7	13
Left HE and later returned	2	5	7



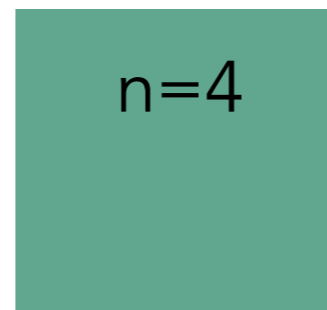
ABOUT THE CONCEPT OF EMPLOYABILITY

Hesitated



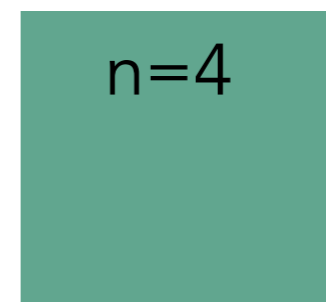
n=12

No hesitations



n=4

Unanswered



n=4

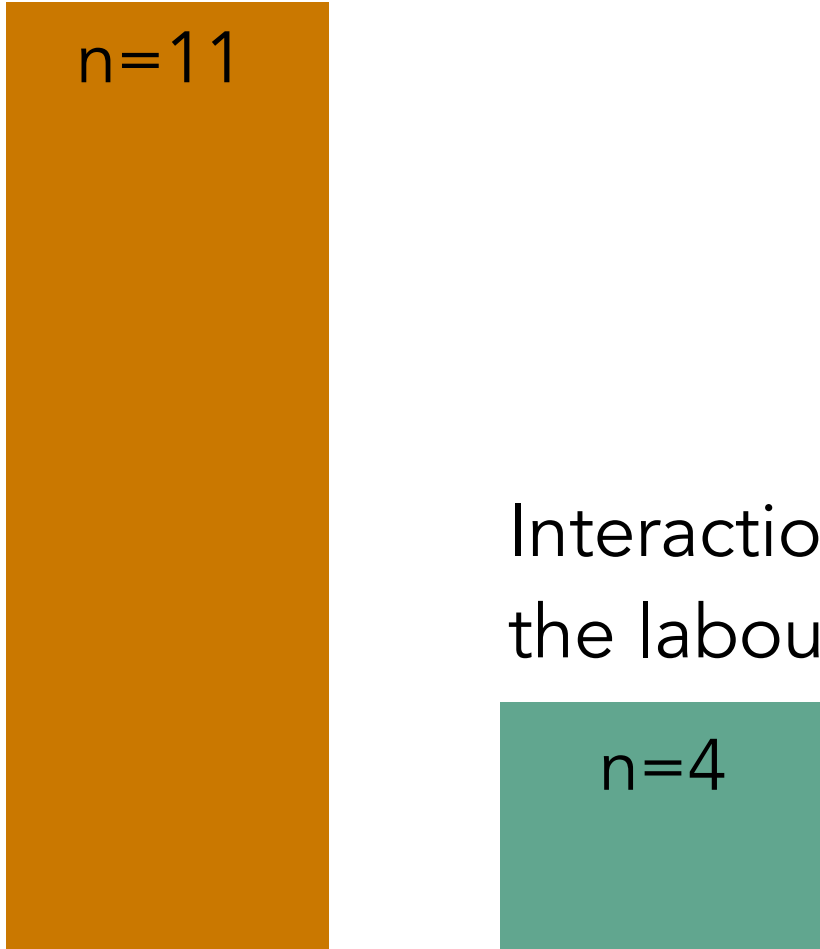
ABOUT HESITATIONS

“Employment and employability? (hesitation) Aaa!!! I don't think so, but the problem here... employment and employability!! I don't know what employability means. What is employability? (...) Does employability exists for everyone? Does employment exists for everyone? I don't know the definition of employability.”

(Male, 33, Marine Biology)

ABOUT THE CONCEPT OF EMPLOYABILITY

Characteristics that can facilitate
a graduate to get a job



n=11

Interaction between individual and
the labour market

n=4



FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE EMPLOYABILITY

Conferences,
Seminars and Workshops



Internships



Continuous education / training



ABOUT INTERNSHIPS

“When I did my internship I was for 2 months in an advertising agency, in Lisbon, (...) and I felt completely comfortable to do anything. (...) I was treated like a professional since the beginning (...). All the knowledge acquired during the course was valid for work experience in the internship.”

(Male, 39, Design of Communication)



FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE EMPLOYABILITY

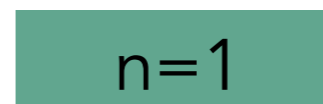
Professional experience
outside the training area



Professional experience
inside the training area



Professional Internships

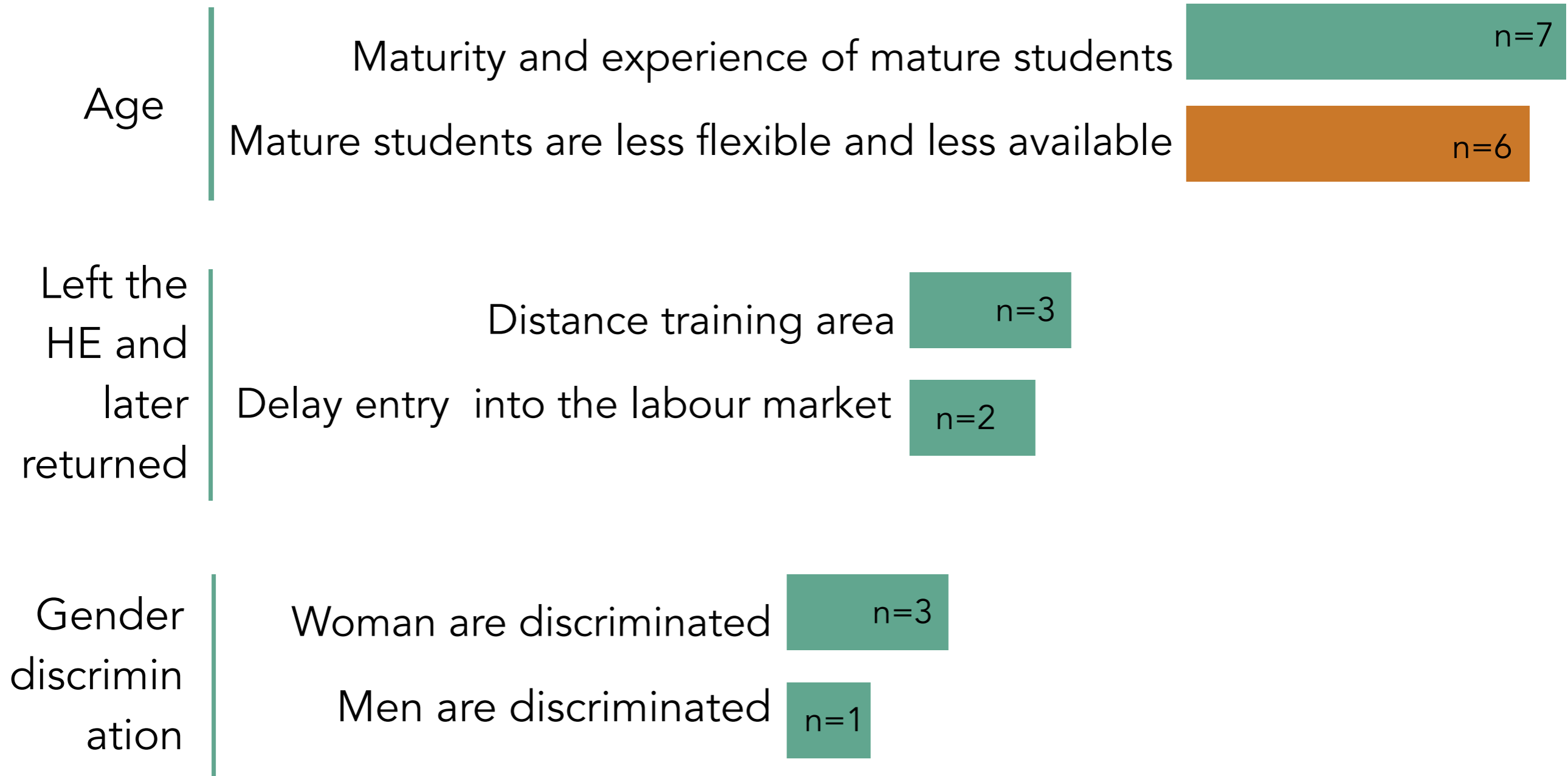


ABOUT PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

“I started work in the orchards of my parents since my 14 years old. (...) I think that a non-traditional student with professional experience in the training area get a job easier in Agronomy area. At least, among my colleagues with experience all have job proposals and have work and so do I. (...) Sometimes, the colleagues without familiar experience have more difficult to get a job in Agronomy.”

(Male, 27, Agronomy)

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE EMPLOYABILITY



THE CONCEPT OF EMPLOYABILITY

Depends on the individual's capacity to mobilize actions to develop skills and acquire new knowledge in order to respond to the needs of the labour market.

A set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that makes graduates more likely to get employed and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy (Yorke, 2006).

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE EMPLOYABILITY

Readiness to: learn, perform an extensive set of tasks, be pro-active, be flexible, be able to get-off their "comfort zone", work in teams...

For some employers generic skills (such as communication skills and team-working) and personal attributes (such as resilience and commitment) are more important than professional discipline, mastery of specialised knowledge or even of expertise (Scott, 1995; Purcell et al, 2002)

NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS' EMPLOYABILITY

Mature students are less flexible and less available than traditional students because they have to manage their family and career.

Some employers assume that mature students have a lack of flexibility, mobility, speed and confidence, coupled with higher salary expectations (Purcell, Wilton & Elias, 2007; Redmond, 2006).



EMPLOYMENT

Before 1990

BETWEEN

EMPLOYABILITY

After 1990

State

Individuals

Employer

Graduates

Economy

Higher Education

SHIFT

Final considerations

Owing to the need to manage unemployment and the incapacity to create employment, governments' field of action was reduced to employment policies or educational and training policies. (Alves, 2007; 2009).

Final considerations

Is employability an ability, a process, a tendency, or a competence? Should it be studied as a trait, a process, or an orientation? (Guilbert, Bernaud, Gouvernet & Rossier, 2015)

Final considerations

Employability corresponds to the possibility of accessing a suitable job or to remain employed in a social, economic, cultural, and technological context. And this possibility result from interactions between the individual, organisational strategies, governmental and educational policies (Guilbert et al, 2015)

OUR FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Interviews with employers and university staff.

To analyse the concept of employability from three different perspectives: students, employers and higher education institution.



Acknowledgements

This study was funded by:

Erasmus Plus – No. 2014-1-UK01-KA203-001842-TP

National Funds provided by FCT – Foundation for Science and Technology – UID/SOC/04020/2013

