

Title: Perspectives of non-traditional graduates about the economic crisis and skills for employability.

Author: Isabel María Muñoz-García

University of Seville, Spain

Key words: Non-traditional graduates, skills, employability, economic crisis, inequality.

Congress Theme / Line: Congress Employ Project / Social Sciences and Law.

Abstract:

1. INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

Non-traditional university graduates constitute a diverse group, but they suffer from similar disadvantages and inequalities. This communication is part of a European Erasmus + project involving six European countries on the improvement of the employability of non-traditional students and graduates. The main objective of the project is to study the European situation of training, experiences and good practices on the employability, offering a guidance to manage more successfully the transition from the university to the labor market for this disadvantaged group.

This communication deals specifically with the voices of the non-traditional graduates from Social and Juridical Sciences of various Andalusian universities, around the economic crisis and skills for employability.

2. METHODS

The methodology used for this project has been qualitative, through the use of biographical-narrative interview (Wengraf, 2001; Alheit, 2007). We have analyzed the interview transcripts from fifteen non-traditional graduates of Social and Juridical Sciences, belonging to a larger sample, obtained by non-probabilistic and by "snowball" sampling formed by men and women between 23-30 years, which complies with one or several characteristics associated with the "non-traditional" profile: first-generation college students; working class profile, low incomes, financial problems, work-study combination; disability; migrants or persons belonging to ethnic minorities; gender inequality.

3. RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The results obtained from the analysis identified four main categories related to the economic crisis and its consequences:

a) *Inequality and exclusion.* The students reflect in their narratives many obstacles, including precariousness, garbage contracts, poverty and unemployment. Young people from excluded or low-income households have lower education levels, because they have more difficulties in accessing higher education.

b) *Lack of work experience.* Lack of professional experience is considered as another major problem for employability for non-traditional graduates (Martínez Martín, 2003).

Thirteen of the fifteen interviewed graduates have stated that, once the career is over, there are hardly any job opportunities in their professional field.

c) Role and limitations of the university to improve employability and access to the labor market. University does not teach professional skills to be able to work in the different professional sectors. Ten of the fifteen interviewees think that they did not have in their degree specific subjects to explain their future job duties.

d) Gender inequalities. Gender inequality still exists in the labor market, which negatively affects women (indirect labor discrimination, wage gap, sexual harassment and increased job insecurity). These inequalities are increasingly affecting young women (Torns and Recio, 2012).

We believe that to listen and understand these non-traditional graduate's voices, who call themselves unanimously as a "lost generation", can help us to improve university education and to establish more and better connections between the university and the world of work.