

# E-DEHEMS

## Insights of first conference of DEHEMS Network held in Vienna, Austria in September 2011

International conference on 'Employability of Graduates and Higher Education Management Systems' of the Network for the Development of Higher Education Management Systems (DEHEMS) was held at Vienna University of Economics and Business, Vienna (Austria), on 22-23 September 2011.

Concluding observations of the conference were provided by *Ulrich Teichler* from International Centre for Higher Education Research of the University of Kassel (INCHER-Kassel):

Altogether, the Vienna conference had about 130 participants from 26 countries (mostly from Europe, but some from other parts of the world), and about 50 presentations were made. Vienna conference covered three thematic areas:

- a) What are the determinants of early career success?
- b) How do higher education institutions handle information on graduate employment and work?
- c) How could higher education management be more strongly evidence-driven?

The papers presented at the Vienna conference can be divided into four groups:

- About 20 contributions explore the potentials of graduate surveys and various other data sources to identify the employment and work success of graduates and its major determinants.
- About 20 contributions report about various existing conceptual and methodological approaches for identifying more in-depth the relationships between learning environment/teaching and learning/curricula/students' behaviour, competences and work.

- A few contributions look at the ways the higher education institutions absorb information on graduate and employment and work and take action.
- A few contributions are spread over various other themes.

The DEHEMS Vienna conference was a forum for the exchange of information and for discussion on the state of research the relationships between higher education and the world of work with an emphasis on select thematic areas in this domain.

The conference provided interesting information for the DEHEMS research to widen their knowledge on the state of research and their horizon for own approaches within the DEHEMS Network.

The Vienna conference was part of efforts by many scholars to ensure regular cooperation and exchange of information among scholars active in graduate surveys and related studies. It served the purposes of the INTGRADNET which was established in autumn 2010 in Berlin (coordinator: Harald Schomburg, INCHER-Kassel).

There are also activities underway to promote an Asian-European dialogue in this domain. Participants of the DEHEMS Vienna conference 2011 will be informed, if such a conference – as currently envisaged – will be realized in autumn 2012.

The coordinator of the DEHEMS Network will provide information for the participants of the Vienna conferences about envisaged activities of electronic dissemination of the conference papers as well as possible select publication activities.

## Abstracts of Conference Contributions

### More information

on DEHEMS Network and International Conference “Employability of graduates and Higher Education Management Systems” is available at [www.dehems-project.org](http://www.dehems-project.org) or [dehems@fdv.uni-lj.si](mailto:dehems@fdv.uni-lj.si)

Conference contributions and presentations were divided into seven different sections, each of them covering specific section of employability of graduates and higher education management system.

This volume of E-DEHEMS contains first part of abstracts covering the following themes:

- Career success and employability of young professionals
- Higher education management systems, quality assurance and career centre developments
- Supply of Competences: Higher Education Perspectives
- Demand for Professional Competences: Employers’ Perspectives
- Skills and Education Match: Comparative Perspectives on Supply and Demand
- Policy Development

## **Competencies Obtained During Studies and Professional Success of Higher Education Graduates in Czech Republic**

*Martin Zelenka and Radim Ryska (Charels University Prague, Czech Republic)*

The topic of transition from higher education to the labour market is becoming an increasingly important as rapidly growing numbers of graduates are leaving higher education in Czech Republic. In 2010 a national survey called REFELX 2010 was conducted. More than 8.5 thousand of electronically completed questionnaires were collected from those who graduated in years 2005 and 2006. It builds on similar international project REFLEX that was conducted in 2005 and 2006. It touches many subjects such as evaluation of study, transition period, first job and professional succeed. It is important to understand how school leavers value their school and education attained and how that translates in the labour market. The focus of the paper will be to analyse the relationship between different characteristics of education (types, fields) and professional success which will be expressed by several objective and subjective measures. The paper will also try to answer what competencies have graduates obtained during their higher education studies, how are they useful in their jobs and what kind of competencies are expected in their jobs?

## **Development of Competencies: Mind the Gap and Mind the Step! Empirical Evidence for Italy**

*Riccardo Leoni (University of Bergamo, Italy)*

European policy makers are focusing on the gap between the competencies required of graduates by the modern production context and the knowledge that university systems traditionally transfer to students. Their objective is to significantly transform the higher education system so that it adheres more closely to the new needs generated by the vigorous technological and organizational innovations in production and work. For the time being, the so-called Bologna Process and the Dublin Descriptors, relating to the educational objectives expressed by the expected learning results, constitute the outcome. These policy decisions attempt to change the university's mission and unit of measure: seeking to move from the transfer of knowledge from the teacher to that of learning by the student, and from disciplinary knowledge to competencies.

The European project "Tuning Educational Structures in Europe" (2006), in addition to a survey in the field, indicated to European universities the opportunity to make a distinction between generic (or transversal) competencies and specific competencies (in the personal area of discipline), also suggesting methodological indications to design degree courses and to adopt 'constructivist' pedagogy.

Economic analysis has long shown that the considerable gaps between competencies required and those held on entering the labour market have serious consequences both in the short and long term. A recent survey, carried out on a sample of entrepreneurs and/or recruiters working in the Lombardy region in Italy, shows that the biggest gaps are to be found not within the remit of disciplinary knowledge as such, but in the competencies themselves:

i) application of knowledge, ii) cognitive abilities, iii) management and iv) relational. These gaps force firms to sustain higher new-graduate entry costs with respect to a counterfactual constituted by the equilibrium between supply and demand of competencies.

In this paper, it is argued that these gaps are not only responsible for the medium-low positioning of the competency profile that develops during the working life of a graduate with respect to a counterfactual constituted by a graduate with a good match between the competencies required and those held. They also tend to affect the growth path of the competencies themselves: the bigger the gap, the smaller the steps in competency growth. Moreover, the competencies that are developed most during the course of a working life tend to be those that at the time of entry into the labour market had the largest gaps. In this regard, it is argued that education is not the only mechanism that promotes and develops workers' professional competencies, as literature has shown that the development of a worker's 'key' competencies also depends on the organizational design of the workplace and the work practices that are „practised“. The paper also documents, through an econometric analysis controlling for a number of factors, that the level of „expressed“ competencies significantly influences graduate remuneration, while the cultural background of the family of origin tends to assume greater importance than the formal educational level acquired. The results are confirmed by controlling for endogeneity of schooling as well as of competencies. The paper concludes with a series of policy indications.

### **Early Career Exploration in the Context of Thwarted Career Ambition**

*Ashly Pinnington (The British University in Dubai, United Arab Emirates)*

The literature on careers is replete with examples of changes in direction and people studying fields and topics that are under-utilised in their subsequent working lives. This paper focuses on the thwarted career plans of young Indian men and women living in the UAE who embarked on undergraduate studies in a variety of chosen subject disciplines, but since graduation have felt under pressure to seek, accept and remain in employment working in a job that is definitely not their first priority of choice.

The paper reports the findings from an interview study of young people who graduated over the last two years and are not employed in a job specialising in their area of undergraduate study. These individuals may be described as somewhat unhappy with their current job or jobless situation, and are generally de-motivated with the work they are doing. Moreover, they feel under pressure from their families who often expect them to be doing better than they currently are.

The interview research methods focus on narrative and episodic approaches, seeking to characterise interviewees' life stories and emergent career narratives in the contexts of disappointment and unfulfilled, early ambitions. The reported interviews consist of three meetings held over a period of two months. We conclude this paper with a schematic analysis of the past and present coping strategies deployed by the participants, as expressed through their interview accounts.

### **Graduate Employability: A Twilight Zone of Higher Education and Early Success of Graduate Nurses**

*Meeta Bhardway (Queensland University of Technology, Australia)*

The paper explores the relation between the teaching at universities and success at the workplace. An early success is essential in medical profession where there is a constant fight to save people's life. There is discontent in some registered nurses about the fact that university education is unable to build the skills and competences in the student nurses which are needed to work as a competent

registered nurse. This paper focuses on the survey of university mechanisms which are designing curriculums in the nursing courses and the extent to which these are helping the students to be successful when they join the graduate entry programs for nurses. This survey looks at the feedback mechanisms of both the sides and their usefulness in continuous improvement of curriculums as well as graduate entry programs.

## **Factors Influencing the Employability of International Graduates**

*Yuhhuo Cai and Yulia Shumilova (University of Tampere, Finland)*

Currently there is a global tendency that the employability of graduates is used as a benchmark to measure the quality of higher education, hence the concept gaining importance in higher education policies and strategies (Teichler, 2009, p. 15, 16). —In general terms, employability is defined as having the skills and abilities to find employment, remain in employment or obtain new employment as, and when, required (Crossman & Clarke, 2010, p. 602). We follow Harvey (2001) who states that graduate employability cannot be a purely institutional achievement, it is rather contingent on a number of variables such as —students' previous experience, their extracurricular activities, their career intentions and networks, and the peculiarities of the recruitment procedures used by the employer (Harvey, 2001, p. 102).

However, despite an increasing number of studies dealing with the various aspects of employability, the transition of the *international* graduates to the world of work has not been properly researched. This paper represents an attempt to draw a preliminary theoretical framework to explore the factors affecting the employability of international graduates from the point of view of multiple stakeholders. Furthermore, the review of relevant literature and examples drawn from previous research (based on the case of Finland) are used to suggest a few tentative hypotheses for further research.

## **Determinants of the Labour Market Success of Graduates—The Cse of Life Science Domain**

*Leszek Wincenciak, Gabriela Grotkowska, Tomasz Gajderowicz (University of Warsaw, Poland)*

The article studies the problem of success in the labour market entry of higher education graduates in the European perspective. The core of the analysis is the study of determinants of widely defined labour market success. Differences between countries and study domains are analysed in the aspects of the influence of various socio-demographic characteristics as well as market environment and process of learning, modes of teaching and study programmes characteristics. Specifically, the Science domain is taken under focus.

Data used in the analysis comes from two special surveys of European research projects REFLEX and HEGESCO. The research shows important role of factors related to study programmes modes and processes as well as individual graduates' study and early work-related experience.

## **The Demand for Specific Competences in Teachers after Graduation from University—First Results from a Specialised Teacher Questionnaire Implemented in Graduate Tracer Studies in Germany**

*Mareike Junghanns (University of Cologne, Germany)*

In the course of the KOAB-Project (Cooperation Project for Graduate Tracer Studies, INCHER Kassel) the universities' need for specific information on professional demands encountered and addressed by graduates training to become teachers emerged. After all, students studying to become a teacher are prepared for a specific profession – often in contrast to their fellow students in higher education, who have more choices when it comes to deciding on their place in the world of labour. This question of specific professional demands has led to the development of a specialized teacher module in the graduate questionnaire tackling the issue of which demands students should be prepared for in the course of their teaching studies and how well they are able to meet these demands today. To test validity of the first version of the 40-items-strong scale on the professional demands of teachers, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA, AMOS) was conducted. On the foundation of these results the scale was adjusted leading to a second version, which again is subject to validation by the means of CFA. Analyses are based on a sample of 937 teachers in training who graduated from the universities Cologne and Münster, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany, between 1st October 2007 and 30th September 2008. The implications of the CFA for the scale will be presented alongside first results on the professional demands in the areas 'teaching', 'moral education', 'student evaluation', 'school development' and 'subject areas' encountered by teachers in training in Germany and their ability to cope with these demands.

## **Political Scientists': A Profession in Decline? Factors Co-Determining the Employability and Career Success of Political Science Graduates**

*Tomaž Deželan and Danica Fink Hafner (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia)*

Political science has established itself as a relatively autonomous academic discipline as well as a viable profession, especially in the context of the professionalisation of politics and policymaking. Political scientists play an important role in democratic society, acting as experts and consultants for policymakers, for professionally trained advisers, or for career politicians. The recent transition to democracy has only accentuated this trend. The political science profession has recently faced a series of challenges. The first is its public image, which has suffered as a result of the negative perception of politics combined with the public's lack of comprehension of the difference between politics and political science. Another challenge is the Bologna education reform, which, contrary to initial expectations, compromised several of political science's comparative advantages when competing with compatible profiles from the field of law and economics. In addition, the state's regulation of social sciences and humanities research as well as the tertiary education sector has both revealed and impacted on the weak points of political science development.

Our proposed research focuses on the factors co-determining the employability and career success of political science graduates primarily the following: a) the employability of graduates and the position they occupy; b) the strengths and weaknesses of political science education as perceived by political science graduates in their work place; c) the position of political science as a profession compared to other competing profiles; d) the response to this feedback by the educational system.

Our research is based on a range of surveys of political science graduates carried out from the beginning of the 1980s onwards. The latest set, incorporating the first generation of Bologna graduates, is analysed and compared to the 2005 survey (Fink Hafner et al., 2005), the 2002 survey data (Fink Hafner and Boh, 2002) and the survey of alumni in the early 1980s (Bibič, 1982). Since the data was gathered in several waves over nearly thirty years it reveals the impacts of the modernisation, democratisation and Europeanisation processes on the development of political science as a profession and on political science as an academic discipline in tertiary education in Slovenia.

## **A Survey of the Relationship between Quality Assurance and Employability for Graduates of Japanese Engineering Programs**

*Minoru Nakayama (Tokyo Institute of Technology, Japan)*

Engineering Faculties at Japanese universities augment the high level of economic development in Japan. Though the capacity of these faculties and the ratio of advancement to Master's courses are growing, Bachelors of Engineering comprise 15.7% of all Bachelor students, and Master's of Engineering comprise 41.5% of all Master's students, currently.

Several financial crises have resulted in recessions and reduced levels of employment. Recently, many new employees have been hired without the use of conventional networks such as referrals by alumni. Also, structural changes in industry and the globalization of the economy have upset university students' conventional career development paths, making it difficult for them to make suitable choices. Employment rates for Engineers are currently 78.7% for Bachelors and 92.7% for Masters.

These changes have been observed in various spheres of higher education, and the University Council of Japan has begun promoting the introduction of "career education", which consists of courses designed in collaboration with companies, short term internships at companies, and support services. These have been introduced as a part of university education to help students get jobs.

As the Japanese custom is for graduation from university and employment at a company to occur simultaneously, students have to look for the most appropriate jobs before they graduate. These job searches require from six months to a year, often causing faculty members to question whether this contributes to or detracts from academic activities, and whether this is consistent with the calibre of higher education in the rest of the world.

## **Implementation and Evaluation of an Internship Program in Relation to Academic Department's Quality Assurance System and Goals**

*Antigoni Papadimitriou and Dimitris Mardas (Aristotle University, Greece)*

Internship Programs (IP) function as a bridge of the "classroom" to "action". The aim of this paper is to present the evaluation of the IP, which took place from 2005 until 2007 and its connection with the Department of Economics, Aristotle University, Greece self-assessment report. The evaluation consisted of the opinion of more than 300 participant students, 110 employers, and 15 faculty professors and staff participated in its IP. Data collected by using questionnaires and used to inform the department self-assessment report. The evaluation of IP operated as a measure of the capacity of the market to absorb the graduates. In addition, it used as a compass for possible revision of the

curriculum. The department will make decisions in judging the quality of its program of studies and the results of IP project. Specifically, students' and employers' perceptions were part of Department's self-assessment report which was recently adopted by the department as part of its quality assurance system. The authors will also present the new evaluation version that will take place for the 2010-2013, supported by blackboard, included electronic surveys. In our future IP (2010-2013), we plan to administrate another survey in order to have our students' expectations from their internship and their final satisfaction towards internship (in progress). Thus, this technique will help us to define gaps, deficiencies, or problems (if any) and the data provided will suggest room for improvement in order to develop and implement IP successfully in relation to our quality assurance system and Department's goals.

## **Recognizing New Challenges: Curriculums Addressing New European Priorities**

*Istvan Szilard (University of Pécs, Hungary)*

Global economic crisis, migration, unfavorable demographic trends – mentioning only some of them – is raising new challenges the European Union has to face with. Recently developed strategies like the Lisbon treaty are designating those directions where with unified efforts the Union hopes to find a long-term solution. One of the most significant factors whether member states can work out and implement a rapid response is the availability of specifically trained human workforce capable to cope with the new tasks and fulfill the expectations. Employability of freshly graduated students significantly depends on whether their newly acquired knowledge and skills are matching those fields where there is a rapidly growing need for human resource capacity building. There is significant shortage of formal higher education programs in Europe aiming to build the human resource capacity that will address the new challenge: the rapidly growing migration and its health aspects. It has also a significant impact on the workforce market of EU where – as a result of the demographic developments – a serious shortage could be well forecasted. The smooth and successful integration of the migrants – where health is an essential issue – is a clear economic interest of the majority societies. University of Pécs as initiator and leader of a consortium of six EU academic institutions within the frame of ERASMUS curriculum development programs is going to develop and implement an EU level MA curriculum on migration health. During the evaluation process this project has received 100% of the scores in the item: European added value.

## **Transition from University to Working Life — The Case of Finland**

*Juhani Rautopuro (University of Jyväskylä, Finland)*

According to a nationwide survey (n = 6 692) the employability of Finnish University master level graduates is on a high level. The survey was administrated in 2008 to those who graduated from Finnish universities in 2003, so five years after their graduation. Well over half (56 %) of the graduates responded. Even one out of three of the graduates had been unemployed for a short period, five years after graduation 84 % of respondents were employed and only 2 % of them were unemployed. Majority (73 %) of those in working life considered that their occupation corresponds with their academic education. The results of the survey show that the most important work-related

skills that the respondents claimed to need in their work included problem-solving skills, team working skills, communication skills, information acquisition skills and organisation skills. These skills and competencies are transferable and enable them to be employed in jobs of many kind. Instead of celebrating the successful transition from university to working life of the Finnish master graduates the Finnish Education Evaluation Council suggested in their report in 2010 that bachelor degree should be the intended degree in Finnish universities and the amount of Master's degree student should be limited. The results of the survey do not support this kind of policy. For example, the proportion of clearly over-educated master graduates in Finland is very small (3 %). Moreover, many bachelor graduates in working life have completed Master's degree - to improve their competitiveness in labour markets.

### **The Skill Match of Young Graduate Employees: An Empirical Analysis Based on REFLEX Data**

*Francesca Sgobbi (University of Brescia, Italy )*

The match between required and provided skills plays a crucial role for economic growth. However, the growing diversification of both educational and career paths typical of post-industrial economies increases the chance that also at the early stages of an employee's career his/her actual human capital diverges from the standard human capital corresponding to his/her educational qualification. Not surprisingly, recent empirical analyses devote significant effort to understanding the relationship between educational mismatch and skill mismatch, with a special emphasis on graduate employees. Several studies have questioned the "genuine" nature of education-based measures of skill mismatch. An apparent mismatch could result from a different distribution of either skills or individual preferences among employees with the same educational qualification (Robst, 2008). Information on schooling should be consequently complemented by additional measures of the effectiveness of the labour effort provided by employees, such as information on skill shortages and over-skilling (Allen and van der Velden, 2001; Green and McIntosh, 2007) or information on employees' satisfaction (Lindley and Chevalier, 2009; McGuinness and Sloane, 2011). Building on the above literature, this paper proposes an approach to discriminate between "genuine" and "apparent" skill mismatch for young graduates and argues that only "genuine" skill mismatch is associated with significant lower employability or poor employment conditions (i.e. overeducation or employment in a different area from tertiary education). The empirical analysis is based on REFLEX data, which provide rich information on the education and the early careers of young graduates from 13 EU countries and Japan.

### **Graduate Recruitment and Graduate Attributes in an Integrated Labour Market: A Study of Four European Countries**

*Mohamed Branine (University of Abertay Dundee, United Kingdom )*

Recent studies have concluded that there is a gap between the demand for and supply of graduates in the EU (European Union) labour markets (CEP 2004; CIPD 2007a; Eurostat 2007; Weitzel et al. 2008). Therefore, it seems paradoxical that many European graduates are finding it increasingly difficult to gain appropriate employment at a time when they have freedom of movement and a

choice of jobs in over twenty countries. The challenges they face in a large and highly competitive labour market partly arise because there are different higher education (HE) systems. On the supply side, the European labour market reflects a wide variety of educational systems, qualifications and academic disciplines, but the graduate jobs that are available - the demand side - are relatively homogeneous, and increasingly competitive. Recent studies have attempted to explore this phenomenon (Anderson and Witvliet 2008; Sackett and Lievens 2008) but have mainly concentrated on the relationship between the applicant (person) and the recruiter (organization), and have overlooked the role of HE institutions (HEIs) that prepare the person for work in the organization. The person-organization fit analysis that has dominated the literature has restricted the scope for analysing and, hence, understanding the process of graduate recruitment because it excludes the role that HE can play in the transition from study to workplace. Moreover, there is limited information about the type of methods organizations throughout Europe use to select graduates from different countries, or about the successfulness of such methods. This study aims to go beyond the person-organization fit perspective by exploring the organization (university)-graduate (person)-organization (employer)-relationship.

### **Typologies of Lifelong Learners in Professional Higher Education**

*Stefan Humpl, Sigrid Nindl and Klaas Vanstenheuse (3s Research Laboratory, Austria )*

In an EU-funded project (FLLLEX) focusing on the Impact of Life Long Learning Strategies on Professional HE, (2010–2012) 3s undertook an online survey with non-traditional students in 8 European countries: Belgium, Finland, France, Ireland, Lithuania, Netherlands, Turkey, UK. Approximately 2000 students took part, results will be presented following a multidimensional typology of lifelong learners in HE, firstly designed by Markowitsch/Hefler. This typology goes beyond usual descriptions of student typologies (e.g. formal/non-formal education, admission criteria, mode of attendance, target award, student profiles, duration/ECTS, purpose/motivation, learning location, funding source, pedagogic style), and uses a life cycle approach with focus on education and work. The following types of lifelong learners with focus on education are identified: \_ Completing ("finishing": working while completing formal education without particular connection of work and education; "entering": being hired in late phases by an employer in need of graduates) \_ Re-entering HE and revising a temporary transition from learning to work \_ Significant transformation of existing career pathway and/or individual development Types of lifelong learners with focus on work are: \_ Reinforcing an existing career pathway (use offers of formal HE to solve developmental issues or to support progress within the chosen line of occupational/professional development) \_ Compensating for shortcomings of an existing career pathway The results of the online survey will be measured and analysed against this typology of lifelong learners and situated within the preliminary results of the entire project.

## **Is Soviet Legacy a Hindrance? Advancement of Bologna Process in Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine**

*Nino Javakhishvili (Tbilisi State University, Georgia )*

Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine share the same Soviet legacy. Today, all three are developing in dependent countries with free market and high level of unemployment, their higher education systems under the reform. Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine joined Bologna process in 2005, thus expressing their wish to belong to European educational space. However, the reforms in the higher education system develop differently in these three countries. Georgia and Armenia share the same three cycle education with each other and with Europe, while Ukraine has combination of European and Soviet styles: three cycles and an integrated 5 year master degree program is maintained from Soviet times. The analysis of these systems, based on document review, shows that Ukrainian model of higher education is the closest to that of the former Soviet Union, followed by Armenia. Georgia's model is closest to the European understanding of how higher education has to be organized: minimum involvement and regulations from the state, relative freedom of universities. Despite differences, lack of interest in job market and student employability is shared by universities in these three countries. Lack of initiative from universities as well as employers in Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine can be explained by shared Soviet legacy with highly centralized system of decision making and no space for individual initiatives.

## **The relationship between Graduates' Professional Identity Development, First Career Choice and Early Career Success**

*Ans De Vos (Vlerick Management School, Belgium )*

In this project we study how graduates (Masters in Management) from a business school located in Flanders form their professional identity during their final year of graduation, how this results in a first career choice after graduation and is related to career success afterwards. We are working on the design and roll out of a survey to study these relationships departing from our earlier studies among the population of graduates (e.g. De Vos, De Wilde & De Clippeleer, 2009; De Vos & De Hauw, 2010). We depart from the observation in these earlier surveys that graduates often have unrealistically high expectations about their future career, which is reflected in an anticipatory psychological contract including high expectations about a wide range of employer inducements that is in kind of an imbalance with their own intended loyalty. This is often a reason for early deceptions once starting to work. Also, the extent to which graduates take charge of their career differs widely but at the same time this has a strong influence on their early feelings of career success. We therefore propose that the process of professional identity development that takes place during the final year before graduation is an important factor in affecting graduates' first career choice and their early feelings of career success. In turn, we believe that career support – both in terms of stimulating self-reflection and learning the necessary career self-management behaviors - offered by their institution is an important factor in facilitating this professional identity development.

## **How the Academic and Social Backgrounds of Catalan University Graduates Influence their Occupational Insertion?**

*Sandra Fachelli and Jordi Planas (Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain )*

Our goal is to analyze the influence of the academic and social background on the employment insertion of university graduates in 2008 and 2011. The analysis will be done through the use of two proxy's employability: a) the monthly income of graduates and b) the occupational quality of their work in order to observe the change with the economic crisis. Previous results show that overall social origin has not been an obstacle in the occupational insertion of the graduates. Taking into consideration as a whole all of those who graduated from university in 2004 and who were working full-time in 2008 and by applying the abovementioned methodology, it turns out that the explanatory power of the model used was only 9% . This means that the relationship is weak between university graduates' earnings and the other variables analysed. This low level influence of 9% can basically be explained by gender, due to the fact that males receive higher earnings than females and, to a very slight degree, because the children of people who are either professionally qualified or in management have higher earnings than the children of skilled workers and those with a higher entrance grade and better transcript of records earn slightly more than the rest. In the case of occupational quality of graduates we find that the explanatory power of the model used was 2%, that is, that when considering all of the variables overall there is practically no relationship between the occupational quality of university graduates and the variables analysed (academic background, academic achievement and family status) Finally, the database used is the survey of graduates of Catalonia, undertaken by the Agency for the University Quality of Catalunya (AQU).

## **Closing the Gap – The Benefits and Challenges of Embedding Work-related Learning in the University Curriculum**

*Sabine McKinnon (Glasgow Caledonian University, United Kingdom)*

The presentation focuses on the findings of five pilot studies carried out as part of the Real WoRLD project at Glasgow Caledonian University. Given the confusion surrounding the terminology, the project team devised a set of five key 'principles of work-related learning' (McKinnon and Margaryan, 2008 ) which are based on the latest research findings in learning design to make them credible and universally applicable. To test their feasibility in different subjects and years of study five pilot studies were carried out. All of them embedded work-related learning activities such as client-based projects, accredited internships and assessed teamwork in the taught curriculum. A mixed-method research design included quantitative surveys with students (n=386) supplemented by focus groups with students (n=81) and qualitative interviews with academics (n=5) and employers (n=5). Students were asked to assess how confident they felt in their own employability skills in questionnaires at the beginning and the end of the pilots. Interviews with staff and employers focused on their perceptions of the benefits and challenges involved in embedding work-related learning. The findings reveal wide-spread agreement on the benefits. 89% of students reported that their learning on the pilots had improved their employability skills. Academics saw their students' confidence levels increase and welcomed their enhanced independent learning skills. Employers appreciated the knowledge transfer opportunity and valued their work with the students as a useful

recruitment tool. The challenges included raised anxiety levels amongst students who are not used to such a teaching approach and an increased workload for academics.

## **Graduates' Competencies for Successful Job Matching and Professional Career**

*Darka Podmenik (Institut IRSA, Slovenia )*

During the 1990s the theoretical concepts and empirical approaches on higher education have to turn focus from long lasting statement that education level is key for obtaining suitable employment and successful professional career to the problem of the gap between higher education outputs and (youth) labour markets' demands, since the economic crises, rationalization of working places and changed employers' demands pushed to the margins of unemployment also some of the higher educated job seekers and the mismatch of proper job has increased. Employers have been increasingly on the lookout for staff that have more than merely formal education and are equipped with the added value of profitable skills and equipment. New problems for the high educated first job seekers have been opened, like: the un-adequate equipment with additional skills and competencies; the changing career paths – from linear to multiple. From the viewpoint of the theoretical approach the concepts of interrelatedness between investments in higher education and their results have gained the importance. Prevailing concepts try to capture the inter-dependencies among different education subjects, demands for working force on labour market, indicators of economic development and human capital as individual job seekers resource. Human capital approach has gained the importance during the last decade since it highlights the problem of employability from the viewpoint of effectiveness of the individual investments in education. In presented paper besides some changes in higher education inputs and outputs; changes on (youth) labour market (Podmenik at all, 2006; Ivančič, 2008), also the investments in human and social capital are exposed. The main goal of the paper is: try to answer the question if the social capital (besides the human capital) could be defined for one of the crucial personal resources, which enable highly educated young (first) job seekers for smoother and successful enter into labour market and proper (career enabling) job. Paper introduces the results of the the explorative study on the inter-relatedness between human and social capital, conveying on the sample of Slovene students and graduates in the years 2003-2004 and again during the years 2011-2012.

## Main topics of the conference

*Similarities and differences of Professional Success among HE Study Fields*

*How HE institutions perceive and take into account the future professional activities of their graduates in their own development?*

*Do HE institutions successfully help graduates to make the transition to work (short term) and their professional career (long term)?*

*Who and how decides on implementation of HE programs in terms of (re)accreditation of programs, teaching and learning modes and practical training?*

*Developments in HE Institutional Management*

*Role of Career Centers*

*Accreditaions of Progammes and financial aspects*

# Announcement on international conference on Employability of Graduates and Higher Education Management Systems

Ljubljana, Slovenia, 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> September, 2012

DEHEMS Network is announcing the second international conference on Employability of Graduates and Higher Education Management Systems which will be held from 27th-28th September, 2012 at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia.

The main topics of the conference will cover different higher education study fields, namely Business and Economy, Engineering, Teaching and Education, and Medicine.

General proposals on the programme, ideas and invited speakers should be submitted to [dehems@fdv.uni-lj.si](mailto:dehems@fdv.uni-lj.si). Supporting documents and internet links are highly desired!