

EURASHE ROUNDTABLE ON EMPLOYABILITY

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BRIEF WRITTEN INPUT

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1. What is your definition/concept of Employability?

- a. Employability is the ability of an individual to gain sustainable employment according to one's qualification level (Hillage & Pollard, 1998; Rothwell et al., 2008).
- b. At an individual level a distinction can be made between different phases of employability (Berntson et al., 2006; Fugate, 2001; Kluytmans and Ott, 1999):
 - i. Getting a job: In the first phase individuals without a job endeavour to get a job and enter the labour market. Thus, research emphasizes on how individuals
 - ii. Maintaining a job: In the second phase employability concerns individuals aiming at maintaining their work (Garsten & Jacobsson, 2004).
 - iii. Finding a new job: The third phase focuses on individual's wanting to change employment, due to reasons such as career, income, family situation, organizational changes and work environment (Berntson & Marklund, 2007).

2. Could you name up to 3 crucial elements for Employability?

- a. I would put the individual in the centre of employability and define the elements as competences that a person can learn or be supported by a (higher education) institution: perceived ability to attain sustainable employment appropriate to one's qualification level which consists of beliefs about the external labour market, one's university, respective field of study, and self-belief (Rotwell et al., 2008).
- b. Yet, the majority of approaches see employability rather as an individual trait or characteristic, e.g. Fugate et al. (2005) understand it as psycho-social construct that embodies individual characteristics, being 1) adaptability (i.e. the willingness and ability to change behaviours, feelings, and thoughts in response to the environment); 2) career identity (i.e. the way a person defines themselves in the career context,

including attributes such as career motivation, personal meaning and individual values); and 3) human and social capital (i.e. personal capital such as education, work experience, trainings, skills and knowledge and network capital in terms of formal and informal career-related networks).

3. Could you link your understanding of Employability to specifics of Professional Higher Education (PHE)? Are there any specific approaches in comparison to the overall higher education?

- a. My answer is specific to the Austrian higher education context in which we have both traditional universities and universities of applied sciences (UAS). Main differences in the universities of applied sciences are:
- i. The strategic orientation of UAS is a market-oriented view (, i.e. labour market seen as customer)
 - ii. The strategic objective of UAS is the employability of graduates (, i.e. the main purpose of education is the employability of students and not the transformation of the students etc.)
 - iii. The development of new curricula is based on an accreditation process. This accreditation process is done by a development team which consists of an obligatory number of labour market representatives. The main point for accreditation is the proof that there is a clear labour market need for graduates, thus that graduates will be absorbed by the labour market after graduation. This assessment is valid only for a limited number of years (usually 3 years) and then needs to be re-done in order to re-accredit the programme.
 - iv. The curricula foresees are strong labour market focus by including mandatory internship/placement phases and student projects in collaboration with companies.
 - v. Job announcements clearly state that each lecturer requires work field experience .
 - vi. Job application trainings, coaching and entrepreneurship trainings are foreseen in many curricula.

4. How would you recommend us to measure Employability? Through which actions would you raise Employability of PHE graduates in practice?

- a. I would measure it as a combination of subjective and objective measures. Thus, measuring both the perceived employability of a graduate as well as the perceived employability by a direct supervisor. I would then contrast these measures and couple it with an objective measure of employment – thus, time from graduation to job, income and job status.