

HOW MOBILITY PROGRAMS AND UNIVERSITY-ENTERPRISE COOPERATION CAN HELP SKILL MATCH?

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The labour market is constantly evolving. The specific occupations, skills, competences and qualifications that people need change over time. To cope with this, effective communication and dialogue between the labour market and the education/ training sector is vital.

The universities are aware of the fact that the skills/competences needed in the economic sector are changing rapidly, new fields of activity are emerging, and they require new competences.

Sometimes the changing are so rapid that to follow the needs of the labour market means not only reacting to the demands but also anticipating future developments and training the students accordingly. To do this the cooperation between universities and companies it's really important.

The cooperation with the companies can be done in various ways:

- 1) Involving companies in curriculum design**
- 2) Better construct the practical placement and increase the role in student's training**
- 3) Bringing specialists from companies into universities**

1) Involving companies in the curriculum design

Universities are paying much more attention when they design new courses taking into account the needs and signs coming from employers. In fact the new courses are design with a multi-disciplinary approaches for developing the needed competences required from the job market.

I think the necessary changes that should be brought to the curricula and on teaching methods to better acquire skills are:

- developing practical projects with professionals from enterprises using real company problems,

- problem solving and case-studies involving companies and older employees into this practice-oriented teaching

could be a solution for improving the link between theory and practice, so that students can gain more practical experiences and much more skills.

There are already in many universities technical tables with companies representatives but they must be enhanced.

2) Better construct the practical placement and increase the role in student's training

Professional internship is the first step to improve skills and prepare for employment. Each student should work at least 6 months in a company to see the real working life and to gain soft skills that enable them to work immediately after hiring. But these periods of training must be better organized from both sides: universities and companies.

The universities should prepare their students before entering in practical placement with workshops, cases studies etc. and organize more tailored practical placement.

On the other hand companies during the period of training should provide the right guidance, give the students autonomy and involve them in decision making process in order to develop the skills that the market is looking for.

The Career Services can contribute in networking with the companies to the preparation of the students to develop the needed skills, mainly by developing the network of enterprises hosting practical placement and by centralizing the internships of students.

Career services should organize more events, career days , make marketing researches concerning competences needed on the job market, and in cooperation with companies, advice students on the changes and contents of professions.

3) Bringing specialists from companies into universities

The contribution of the enterprises to the skills education can be done also either by inviting specialists to lecture on the day-to-day business issues, or by giving the

students the opportunity to have a comprehensive view of how business works by shadowing a manager (mentoring).

In Padova we have a coaching programme organized with companies.

The impact of mobility programs (and Erasmus actions) on employability

In 2016, the European Commission has therefore adopted a new Skills Agenda for Europe (COM 382/22016/0179) in order to give a new "impetus to employment, growth and investment" by addressing three challenges of modern economies: (I) the lack of relevant expertise to meet the needs of the labor market; (II) lack of transparency in skills and qualifications; and (III) difficulty anticipating and anticipating skills.

The new Erasmus+ programme for the period 2014-2020, as seen a significant increase funding by the EU. The focus on employability in the Erasmus+ programme is strong, and one of its main objectives is to improve the level of competences and skills, with particular regard to their relevance to the labour market.

An increasing number of studies pointed out that the experiences gained from study, work and volunteering abroad, can be linked to transferable and employability skills.

Brooks and Waters (2011, 11) claimed that —there is substantial evidence that, an overseas mobility enrich students of professional and soft skills that often lead to substantial labour market rewards.

Indeed In some employment contexts, the subject discipline was relatively unimportant, while the possession of the so-called soft skills' was valued higher when recruiting graduates.

As indicated by the ESN Survey 2011 (Alfranseder et al. 2012), a student questionnaire focusing on the skills and attitudes of students that seem to be important for the labour market.

The survey compared students with academic or working experience abroad to those without such experience.

According to the survey findings, staying abroad enhanced students' career opportunities. The greatest benefit of studying abroad was seen to be the improvement of one or more **foreign languages** while many students also felt that they enhanced **their practical skills** and received better education abroad. **Personal and soft skills, such as self-confidence, an open mind, intercultural understanding or knowledge about another culture and market, adaptability, flexibility,**

innovativeness, productivity, motivation, endurance, problemsolving abilities and being able to work productively in a team, were also found to have developed among the students surveyed.

Erasmus+ aims to support not only the mobility but also to promote transnational cooperation programmes like the Strategic Partnerships, Knowledge Alliances and Sector Skills Alliances with the aim to bridge the gap between academia and the world of work.

This increased cooperation with companies is fundamental to enhancing quality and innovation in teaching and learning, developing entrepreneurial attitudes and mind-sets, not just in students, but also in staff, and bringing about institutional change to support HEIs in achieving their modernisation objectives.