

Bologna and the Labour Market: The View (not only) of the Employers

Henning Dettleff

Education | Vocational Training

BDA | Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände

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Employability in the Context of Bologna

- „We underline the **importance of improving graduate employability**, whilst noting that data gathering on this issue needs to be developed further. [...] „We urge institutions to further **develop partnerships and cooperation with employers** in the ongoing process of curriculum innovation based on learning outcomes.“ (London 2007)
- „With labour markets increasingly relying on higher skill levels and transversal competences, higher education should equip students with the advanced knowledge, skills and competences they need throughout their professional lives. **Employability empowers the individual to fully seize the opportunities in changing labour markets.** [...] This will allow institutions to be more responsive to employers needs and employers to better understand the educational perspective.“ (Leuven 2009)

Employability: Why?

Improved graduate employability is an aim by itself of the Bologna Process.

At the same time, it is linked to other overall aims:

- Competitive advantage for learners and higher education institutions in an increasingly competitive environment
- Outcome orientation as imperative in educational policy
- Questioning Bologna: new degrees, new jobs?
- Lifelong Learning: the demands of adult learners
- Diversification of the student population : the demands of non-traditional students
- The Social Dimension: Employability as a responsibility of higher education institutions

Employability: The Students' View

- Student protests: the revival of Humboldt?
- Pronounced and unpronounced fears:
 - „Higher education is instrumentalised for purely economic purposes and becomes a commodity.“
 - „The influence of business is the end of higher education institutions' autonomy.“
 - „A strong voice of the employers is louder than the students' voice.“
 - „Bachelor graduates don't find good jobs.“
- Multiple expectations of students: personal development *plus* employability *plus* altruistic motives *plus* ...
- Show advantages of employers' involvement in higher education
- Create participation and ownership: students in dialogue with higher education institutions and employers

Employability: The Employers' View

- Extremely diverse view on employability in different countries, different sectors, in SME or big companies
- Employability does NOT mean:
 - matching educational and labour markets
 - companies defining contents and teaching methods
 - training the routines of everyday work
 - a clear and fixed concept
 - pure life experience
- Instead, employable graduates
 - have a scientific qualification with knowledge of the theories and methods of the discipline
 - are able to apply their knowledge on the job in order to assess and solve problems
 - are able to develop new knowledge, skills and competence
 - have acquired relevant soft skills

Furthering the Debate: Next Steps

- Ensure employability of graduates in the reaccreditation of study programmes
- Improve reporting about the situation of graduates on the labour market
- Improve forecasts of long-term developments on the labour market
- Strengthen transparency tools
- Continue communication and cooperation between HEI and employers – and try more innovative forms
- Create ownership: involvement of students in the debate
- Create confidence: dialogue between students and employers
- Implement Bologna in HR policies of companies

Thank you for your attention!

Education | Vocational Training

bildung@arbeitgeber.de

T +49 30 2033-1503

F +49 30 2033-1505

BDA | Bundesvereinigung der
Deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände

Member of BUSINESSEUROPE

Address:

Haus der Deutschen Wirtschaft
Breite Straße 29, 10178 Berlin

www.arbeitgeber.de