GRADUATES ARE FROM VENUS, EMPLOYERS ARE FROM MARS: A CROATIAN STUDY ON EMPLOYABILITY *

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Summary

Growing demand for higher education and the increasing difficulty graduates' face when looking for and securing appropriate work upon graduation, place heavy emphasis on the importance of an enhanced understanding of what constitutes employability. Interest in graduate employability produces benefits for all stakeholders, including universities, employers and graduates themselves. This comparative study aims to investigate graduates' perceptions of competences and attributes important for employability, and compare these with employers' expectations, for the purpose of raising awareness about the differences. It also aims to understand the extent to which employers are satisfied with HE to train work-ready graduates. This investigation reports on findings from 206 graduate students and 134 employers. Evidence indicates that there is a modest degree of alignment between graduates and employers regarding competences and attributes important for employability. Both groups value willingness to learn and problem-solving skills highly, and agree that practical experience, subject knowledge and use of social networks are not significant for employability. Employers appreciate learning skills, enthusiasm and motivation and intelligence more than graduates do. On the other hand, graduates believe that positive attitude towards change, written communication and public speaking skills substantially contribute

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to future labor market outcomes. In order to stand apart and gain positional advantage in the labor market, graduates need to be aware of this mismatch and take steps to acquire these competences and attributes outside university, and it is essential that universities adjust their curriculum, assessment methods and pedagogy in partnership with employers in order to minimize the gap between what is expected from and what is delivered through higher education.

Key words: *perceptions of employability, university, competences, attributes, graduateness.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In a volatile, uncertain, complex and rapidly changing environment, the knowledge of an academic subject is no longer sufficient, and graduates need to gain skills which will enhance their employability outcomes. There are few official statements about what graduates are supposed to learn at universities, the perceptions of graduates have been under-investigated, and are rarely compared to those of employers. In order to broaden the understanding of what graduate competences and attributes are critical for employability from both graduates' and employers' perceptions, this comparative study was conducted with the following hypotheses:

H1: Graduates in Croatia recognize competences and attributes important for employability

H2: There is a high degree of agreement between the perceptions of employers and graduates regarding employability competences and attributes.

H3: Employers in Croatia are satisfied with how universities educate work-ready graduates

This paper begins with an overview of the literature on graduate employability with particular reference to the distinction between graduateness and employability, which is very often overlooked. The paper then draws on to explore the views of graduates and employers regarding competences and attributes that promote employability. In the next section, the research highlights the level of satisfaction in regard to universities' contribution to the acquisition of these competences and attributes, from employers' and graduates' perspectives. In the final part, conclusions and recommendations are made and a direction for further research is suggested.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In general terms, employability is defined as having the skills and abilities to find employment, remain in employment or obtain new employment (Hillage and Pollard, 1998; Rothwell and Arnold 2007; Thijssen et al. 2008). The term often comprises a range of individual characteristics that facilitate adaptive behaviors (Fugate et al., 2004,). Yorke and Knight (2006) understand employability as a set of achievements, skills, understandings and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain

employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy. Alternatively, it can be seen as a function of the labor market context with labor supply and demand determining an individual's employability at any given time (Forrier and Sels, 2003). Contemporary definitions have moved towards a more complex understanding of graduate employability, and emphasize the acquisition of inter-related attributes, skills and competencies that allow the individual to secure and perform well in the workplace.

Graduates' vs. Employers' Views on Employability. Previous research shows that students seek graduateness for the purpose of employability and see their learning as an investment that will give them direct benefits in the labor market (Tomlinson, 2008). Earlier investigations show that although a degree is still seen as significant for employability, university graduates are seeking a much broader range of skills and competencies than those confirmed within the bounds of subject knowledge, i.e. development of skills related to future employment, information technology, research skills, problem-solving skills, and study skills (Glover, Law and Youngman, 2006). This study also indicates that original hopes for the university experience are not being met for the majority of graduates.

From an employer perspective, employability is mainly concerned with ensuring that graduates are capable of contributing to economic competitiveness in a global context (Cranmer, 2006), whereby, employers particularly value generic skills and analytic abilities that promote flexibility and adaptation (Lowden et al., 2011). Literature indicates that employers want graduates who can adapt to the workplace culture, use their abilities and skills to evolve the organization and participate in innovative teamwork. Employers expect graduates to have technical and discipline competences from their degrees but require graduates also to demonstrate a range of broader skills and attributes that include team-working, communication, leadership, critical thinking, problem solving and managerial abilities. (Lowden et al., 2011). Literature shows that employers give high priority to key skills of problem solving, communication, team work, information technology, and self-management (Glover, Law and Youngman, 2002). Along the same lines, Walker (1995) additionally proposes self-awareness as what might be expected from a graduate. Furthermore, Archer and Davison (2008) found that regardless of the size of the company, 'soft skills' were perceived to have more weight than technical skills with employers.

To achieve this, degree programs now tend to focus on the acquisition of two types of skills: critical subject specific knowledge and skills, and transferable knowledge, skills and attitudes (Leckey and McGuigan, 1997; Cox and King, 2006). Transferable skills include oral communication, high level learning skills, problem solving, decision making, and affective skills and traits such as responsibility, a positive attitude, interpersonal skills and the ability to work both in a team and independently (Cassidy, 2006).

By shifting the focus towards graduate employability rather than knowledge acquisition, universities acknowledge their critical role in promoting employability.

Modern Universities and Employability. With the shift towards mass higher education and large numbers of graduates with similar educational profiles competing for

employment, the purpose and process of HE have changed, as well as the expectations of graduates and employers. The role and the status of higher education qualifications in maximizing one's labor market potential is also changing, since in a congested and increasingly competitive labor market, academic qualifications have a declining role in shaping the employment outcomes of graduates. In part, HE has been predicted upon the value of education for its own sake, but researchers such as Ashton & Green (1996), Barber & Sebba (1999) and Robinson (2000) see participation in (higher) education as an investment that yields social and private gains. On the other hand, others challenge the supply-side focus and argue that the rise in university qualifications does not reflect a genuine economic demand for more highly qualified labor and adds little to individuals' human capital, generating growing pressures for individuals to acquire degrees to access employment, thus increasing the number of overqualified graduates for the type of employment they get (Tomlinson, 2008). In such a situation it is not surprising that employers are attributing less importance to HE degrees and placing more importance on personal attributes and skills.

Modern universities need to change further as claims have increasingly been made that academic curriculum should be a vehicle through which competences and attributes are delivered (Fallows & Steven, 2000). For graduates to be self-reliant and able to take responsibility for their own careers, outcomes of university programs should, apart from knowledge and understanding, include key skills (communication, numeracy, the use of IT and learning how to learn), cognitive skills (such as critical analysis), and subject specific skills (Dearing Committee, 1997, cited in Fallows & Steven, 2000).

Graduates need to be flexible and prepared for a lifetime of change and development. European Commission has long ago recognized the need to establish a "learning society" which takes account of the rapid changes due to the internationalization of trade, the move towards an information society and developments in science and technology, and which utilizes education and training to provide solutions through a mix of formal qualifications and personal skills. It is university education in particular which has to provide graduates with the skills to be able to operate professionally within the environment required for the "learning society". As a result, several researchers (Lowden et al., 2011; McMurray, 2014; Andrews and Higson, 2008) identify work experience, work placements, internships as the key resource for the development of soft skills and wider employability, it has been shown that work experience increases confidence, produces more rounded individuals and improves graduates' connections to the labor market.

3. METHODOLOGY

The main objective of the empirical research was to investigate graduates' perceptions of competences and attributes important for employability, and compare these with employers' expectations, for the purpose of raising the awareness about the differences. It also aims to understand the extent to which employers are satisfied with HE to train work-ready graduates and thus meet their requirements. For this purpose, online

Graduate Employability Survey was used, which employed open and closed questions, as well as 7-point Likert scales, to indicate the importance participants in the survey place on 36 employability competences and attributes, as well as to determine the extent to which HE contributes to their acquisition, for two shareholder groups: graduates and employers. The list of competences and attributes was comprised based on the surveys conducted previously in Europe by the European Commission (Eurobarometer, 2010) and Winterbotham et al. (2014). T-test was used for determining statistically significant differences.

In total 206 responses by graduate students at Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Croatia were received. Most students attended the Faculty of Economics (117). Others were from Faculty for Educational Sciences (28) and Faculty of Civil Engineering (23), Faculty of Electrical Engineering (4) and the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering (6) while 12 students attended the Department of Physics and 16 students studied at the Faculty of Law. 91.3% of students studied full-time, while 8.7% were part-time students. In the sample, 68.4% were women and 31.6% are men. The grade point average (GPA) of students in this survey was 3.81.

Total of 1,647 questionnaires was sent to employers, targeting a broad spectrum of industries and businesses. 134 employers responded (response rate of 8.14%). Of the companies surveyed, 34% were micro companies, 36% small, 13% came from medium companies, and 17% were large organizations. Hence, the research captures the views of employers from both large and small companies. Although the sample is not representative of all enterprises employing graduates in Croatia, it does cover a wide range of branches of economic activity and different sizes (by number of employees) of enterprises. Subsequently, semi-structured interviews with five employers and five graduates were conducted to enquire further into their opinion and needs. The instrument, therefore, provides useful information that can be used for taking action to improve graduate employability in Croatia.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Interviews conducted with graduates, let us conclude that the distinction between graduateness and employability is only poorly understood by Croatian graduates. Their expectations are that a degree will ensure them a secure and profitable future and that the degree itself guarantees immediate employability. Graduates are rarely aware that they need to develop and refine their competences and attributes in order to adapt to the world of work. Nonetheless, both graduates and employers indicated the importance of a range of competences and attributes that help graduates to be employable (Table 1).

Table 1: Assessment of Graduates' and Employers' Importance of Employability Skills

Competences and attributes	Average Importance for Employers	St. dev. Importance for Employers	Average Importance for Graduates	St.dev. Importance for Graduates	t - test
Learning skills	6.11	1.250	5.95	1.168	t = -1.304 df = 336 p =0.193
Teamwork	6.11	0.963	5.92	1.150	t = -1.496 df = 336 p =0.136
IT usage	6.11	1.072	6.10	0.995	t = -0.314 df = 336 p = 0.894
Subject knowledge	5.11	1.405	5.17	1.302	t = 0.615 df = 337 p = 0.539
IQ	6.08	1.016	5.86	1.113	t = -1.999 df = 337 p = 0.046*
Problem solving	6.27	1.014	6.14	1.041	t = -1.229 df = 338 p = 0.220
Enthusiasm and motivation	6.25	1.014	5.91	1.114	t = -2.909 df = 336 p = 0.004*
Willingness to learn	6.15	0.984	6.20	0.966	t = 0.633 df = 337 p =0.527
Strong orientation to achievement	5.30	1.194	5.36	1.223	t = 0.449 df = 335 p = 0.654
Practical experience	5.17	1.555	5.53	1.543	t = 2.268 df = 331 p = 0.024*
Public speaking	5.16	1.346	5.97	1.181	t = 5.848 df = 338 p = 0.000*
Application of acquired knowledge	6.05	1.168	6.09	1.275	t = 0.292 df = 338 p = 0.770
Foreign language knowledge	6.05	1.069	6.11	1.130	t = 0.384 df = 338 p = 0.701
Achievement in sport	3.16	1.627	2.98	1.480	t = -0.871 df = 262.947 p = 0.385
Establishing and maintaining interpersonal contact	6.03	0.949	5.88	1.114	t = -1.432 df = 314.038 p = 0.153
Diligence	6.02	0.972	6.12	1.017	t = 0.893 df = 338 p = 0.372
Desire for achievement	5.98	1.088	6.01	1.183	t = 0.254 df = 332 p =0.800
Thinking „outside the box" and innovativeness	5.94	1.051	5.92	1.259	t = -0.194 df = 338 p =0.846
Positive attitude towards change	5.94	1.021	6.13	0.928	t = 1.878 df = 338 p = 0.061
Written communication	5.92	0.954	5.96	1.099	t = 0.180 df = 338 p =0.857
Work ethics	5.90	1.374	5.23	1.365	t = -4.358 df = 335 p = 0.000*

Table 1. Continued

Competences and attributes	Average Importance for Employers	St. dev. Importance for Employers	Average Importance for Graduates	St.dev. Importance for Graduates	t - test
Self-confidence	5.79	1.013	5.96	1.033	t = 1.458 df = 337 p = 0.146
Discipline	5.79	1.019	5.69	1.113	t = -0.746 df = 338 p = 0.456
Opportunity recognition	5.70	1.313	5.71	1.226	t = 0.090 df = 321 p = 0.928
Usage of social networks	4.68	1.608	4.89	1.481	t = 1.468 df = 338 p = 1.43
Taking initiative	5.66	1.154	5.48	1.151	t = -1.514 df = 337 p =0.131
Independence	5.64	1.106	5.66	1.105	t = -0.011 df = 338 p = 0.991
Negotiation skills	5.57	1.326	5.89	0.994	t = 2.293 df = 228.631 p = 0.023*
Work under pressure	5.57	1.226	5.53	1.313	t = -0.351 df = 337 p = 0.726
Aggression	2.56	1.453	2.89	1.637	t = 1.889 df = 337 p = 0.060
Sense of humor	4.53	1.438	4.12	1.457	t = -2.526 df = 338 p = 0.012*
Making judgments on basis of limited information	5.46	1.356	5.60	1.147	t = 0.985 df = 338 p = 0.352
Critical thinking	5.38	1.233	5.36	1.191	t = -0.035 df = 337 p = 0.972
Persuasion	5.32	1.201	5.73	1.088	t = 3.086 df = 337 p = 0.002*

*p-value is given for T-test on a significance level of 0.05

Employers and graduates agree that willingness to learn and problem solving skills contribute significantly to graduate employability, and this is consistent with previous findings (Rayner and Papakonstantinou, 2015; Prinsley and Baranyai, 2015). In addition to these skills, employers also highlighted the application of relevant knowledge, which is consistent with other/previous findings (Rayner and Papakonstantinou, 2015; Jones, 2009; Nagarajan & Edwards, 2014; Rae, 2007). This is not surprising, given its connection with higher order thinking skills, such as critical thinking and the likely correlation between these skills and workplace productivity. As expected, both subgroups attributed the lowest values in promoting employability to good looks, achievement in sport and aggressiveness. Apart from that, neither employers nor graduates value the use of social networks, GPA or subject-matter knowledge as particularly important for employability. Interestingly, in the interviews, graduates expressed their belief that a degree in itself enhances employability.

Although subject-matter knowledge was agreed as an important attribute, a combination of transferable skills, such as team work and good interpersonal and communication skills, was deemed particularly relevant for promoting graduate employability. This is in line with previous research (Andrews and Higson, 2010, Lowden et al., 2011, Ferns, 2012). Willingness to learn ($\bar{x}$ 6.14) and learning skills ($\bar{x}$ 6.12) were ranked higher in importance by employers than the application of relevant knowledge ($\bar{x}$ 6.05) and were given significantly higher values than both subject knowledge ($\bar{x}$ 5.08) and GPA ($\bar{x}$ 4.03). Furthermore, as many as 98.5% of employers in our sample would hire the candidate who has had a lower GPA during his studies provided they have acquired good communication skills, show a desire for achievement, possess a high IQ, discipline and work ethics. The low ranking for practical experience in this research is contrary to the broader view, and does not align with previous research (Andrews and Higson, 2010; Prinsley and Baranyai, 2015). Croatian employers value willingness to learn (on the job) as much more important for doing well in the labor market, although in job applications candidates are usually asked to document some work experience.

On the other hand, a t-test has shown several significant differences at the significance level of 0.05 in the perception of importance of certain competences and attributes. For example: practical experience, public speaking and persuasion are considered more important by graduates than by employers. More importantly, significant differences have been detected regarding IQ, work ethics as well as with enthusiasm and motivation, which employers regard as more important than graduates. It is interesting to notice that employers regard the use of humor as more important than graduates do. In conclusion, Hypothesis 1 has been proven as graduates recognize competences and attributes important for employability, but there is little synergy between the perceptions of employers and graduates regarding the value of employability competences and attributes, and thus Hypothesis 2 has been rejected.

Employers and graduates agree that HE contributes the least to humor, aggressiveness and achievement in sports (Table 2).

Table 2: Comparison of Graduates' and Employers' Satisfaction with the Contribution of HE to the Development of Entrepreneurial Skills

Competences and attributes	Average Contribution for Employers	Stan. Dev. Contribution for Employers	Average Contribution for Graduates	St Dev. Contribution for Graduates	T - Test
Learning skills	4.08	1.719	4.26	1.711	t = 0.937 df = 336 p = 0.349
Establishing and maintaining interpersonal contact	4.08	1.729	4.77	1.363	t = 3.409 df = 232.808 p = 0.001*
Work under pressure	4.18	1.677	4.92	1.757	t = 3.780 df = 333 p = 0.000
Problem solving	4.02	1.638	4.68	1.476	t = 3.813 df = 335 p = 0.000*

Table 2. Continued

Competences and attributes	Average Contribution for Employers	Stan. Dev. Contribution for Employers	Average Contribution for Graduates	St Dev. Contribution for Graduates	T - Test
Positive attitude towards change	3.89	1.746	4.98	1.569	t = 5.782 df = 255.73 p = 0.000*
Usage of social networks	3.86	1.755	4.38	1.654	t = 2.752 df = 336 p = 0.006*
Independence	3.84	1.747	4.54	1.500	t = 3.810 df = 248.563 p = 0.000*
Subject knowledge	4.81	1.589	4.99	1.363	t = 0.998 df = 248.727 p = 0.319
Desire for achievement	3.81	1.724	4.66	1.600	t = 4.701 df = 334 p = 0.000*
Self-confidence	3.73	1.667	4.28	1.540	t = 3.183 df = 333 p = 0.002*
Work ethics	3.72	1.774	4.15	1.706	t = 2.215 df = 334 p = 0.027*
Critical thinking	3.70	1.615	4.31	1.572	t = 3.405 df = 334 p = 0.001*
Strong orientation to achievement	3.66	1.685	4.24	1.543	t = 3.277 df = 336 p = 0.001*
IT usage	4.64	1.603	5.08	1.424	t = 2.650 df = 255.503 p = 0.009*
Negotiation skills	3.64	1.686	4.17	1.629	t = 2.900 df = 335 p = 0.004*
Sense of humor	2.61	1.532	2.63	1.629	t = 0.114 df = 336 p = 0.910
Enthusiasm and motivation	3.60	1.696	4.21	1.667	t = 3.279 df = 333 p = 0.001*
Persuasion	3.58	1.534	3.99	1.470	t = 2.471 df = 335 p = 0.014*
Teamwork	4.56	1.627	5.28	1.416	t = 4.264 df = 250.116 p = 0.000*
Foreign language knowledge	4.55	1.584	4.16	1.733	t = -2.016 df = 336 p = 0.040*
Application of acquired knowledge	3.54	1.530	3.84	1.685	t = 1.665 df = 336 p = 0.097
Aggression	2.54	1.565	2.38	1.645	t = -0.874 df = 335 p = 0.383
Achievement in sport	2.54	1.469	2.36	1.506	t = -1.088 df = 333 p =0.278
Practical experience	3.52	1.777	3.86	2.051	t = 3.003 df = 256.624 p = 0.003*
Thinking „outside the box" and innovativeness	3.49	1.790	4.14	1.697	t = 3.341 df = 335 p = 0.001*
Public speaking	4.47	1.566	5.50	1.430	t = 6.219 df = 335 p = 0.000*

Table 2. Continued

Competences and attributes	Average Contribution for Employers	Stan. Dev. Contribution for Employers	Average Contribution for Graduates	St Dev. Contribution for Graduates	T - Test
Making judgments on basis of limited information	3.45	1.646	4.31	1.448	t = 4.049 df = 237.84 p = 0.000*
Taking initiative	3.45	1.604	4.06	1.475	t = 3.580 df = 336 p = 0.000*
Opportunity recognition	3.43	1.612	4.24	1.584	t = 4.479 df = 322 p = 0.000*
Written communication	4.39	1.679	4.88	1.549	t = 2.731 df = 263.116 p = 0.007*
IQ	3.39	1.743	4.17	1.668	t = 4.089 df = 335 p = 0.000*
Discipline	4.37	1.555	4.51	1.634	t = 0.802 df = 336 p = 0.423
Willingness to learn	4.37	1.744	4.95	1.573	t = 3.003 df = 256.624 p = 0.003*
Diligence	4.34	1.639	4.63	1.611	t = 1.644 df = 334 p = 0.101

*p-value is given for T-test on a significance level of 0.05

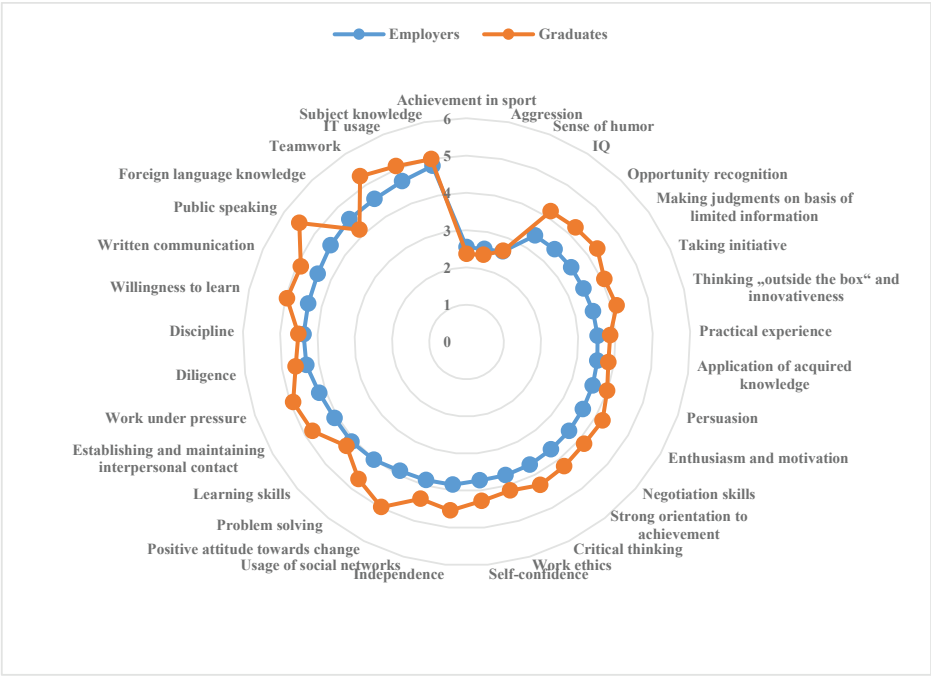
The two subgroups express similar levels of satisfaction regarding subject knowledge, diligence, learning skills, practical experience and application of required knowledge. Otherwise, little agreement is observed in the satisfaction of employers and graduates with the contribution of HE to the development of competences and attributes that promote employability (Figure 1).

Employers are most satisfied with university contribution to subject knowledge and use of IT, and graduates value the contribution to public speaking skills and team work the most. Values for satisfaction in case of employers are lower than those expressed by graduates for all competences and attributes, except for foreign language skills – employers seem to be more satisfied than graduates regarding the acquisition of these skills. Employers' satisfaction with the extent to which education at universities contribute to development of employability competences and attributes is in general moderate ($\bar{x}$ 3.84, on the scale of 7), and a significant mismatch between competences and attributes required and the ones developed during HE has been observed. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 can be only partially confirmed. Between the importance in promoting employability and satisfaction with HE contribution to the development of these competences, statistically significant differences have been observed for all employability competences and attributes, with the only exception of subject knowledge.

In general, no significant differences in mean values for the importance of employability competences and attributes (given by employers and graduates) have been perceived ($\bar{x}$ 5.54 and $\bar{x}$ 5.56, respectively). But the differences in mean values are signif-

icant regarding the satisfaction with HE contribution, as employers, overall, expressed significantly lower levels of satisfaction ($\overline{x}$ 3.84) than graduates ($\overline{x}$ 4.34). It is also interesting that values for importance are significantly higher than values for satisfaction: 5.54 and 3.84, respectively (for employers); and 5.56 and 4.34, respectively (for graduates). These findings are in line with what has been previously reported (Ferns, 2012).

Figure 1: Differences regarding HE contribution to development of employability competences and attributes



5. CONCLUSION

This research has shown that graduates and employers differ in their priorities regarding employability competences and attributes, and universities need to understand that and take it into account when designing courses.

Employers in this research expect graduates to have a degree along with technical and discipline competences, but require a range of transferable competences and attributes that include problem solving skills, enthusiasm and motivation, willingness to learn and learning skills, team work and use of IT, general intelligence, foreign languages and application of knowledge and skills. Although job related competences continue to form the basis of a strong academic education, universities need to develop graduates' transferable skills. These findings pose questions around curriculum design, teaching strategies and assessment processes.

The results highlight the mismatch between what employers expect and what graduates believe promotes their employability. Clearly, an effort has to be made to minimize the discrepancy. Graduates have to be informed about what employers expect from future employees, about the emphasis on life-long skills rather than short term job readiness, as well as about high quality work placements. There are several approaches that could be adopted by universities to improve employability, among others improvement in curriculum, change in university pedagogy, designing valid means of assessing student employability upon graduation, as well as making sure that qualification and assessment methods recognize a wide range of appropriate learning outcomes. Some other recommendations can be read from the interviews with employers, such as: placing employability at the center of universities' strategic planning, widening access to work placements as an effective way of providing graduates with relevant employability competences and attributes, and promoting real partnership between universities and employers to develop measures that contribute to graduate employability.

In order to increase employability, graduates need to assume primary responsibility for acquiring competences and attributes valued by current and prospective employers (Van Buren III 2003; Fugate et al., 2004; McQuaid and Lindsay 2005), but opinion is also expressed in favor of a partnership between employers and graduates regarding boosting employability competences and attributes. Of course, competences can be fostered by further training and coaching (Glover, Law and Youngman, 2002), but, as the interviews with the employers revealed, employers prefer to employ work-ready graduates. If graduates take into account the employers preferences, a balance can be achieved to ensure that employers will have a competent workforce, and graduates will have the necessary competences and attributes to respond to the needs of the world of work. Support through both formal and informal education is needed to meet the needs of students. Universities should ensure that competences and attributes valuable for employability are embedded within the curriculum for all disciplines but it is too optimistic to expect that each graduate develops these competences and attributes during the course of studies. Therefore, extracurricular activities have to be acknowledged. University is not the only place where students nowadays acquire knowledge and skills for life. Students now learn in many different contexts, outside university. For most students, university is part-time experience and there are many other opportunities for learning, for example through work placement, volunteering, participating in student clubs and organizations, personal development. This paper challenges students to assume a holistic view of education by recognizing that education extends far beyond a classroom.

This is an exploratory study and is designed as a foundation for future research into the assessment processes, models of partnerships between employers and universities, and extracurricular activities.

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DIPLOMCI SU S VENERE, POSLODAVCI S MARSA: HRVATSKA STUDIJA ZAPOŠLJIVOSTI*

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Sažetak

Sve veća potražnja za visokim obrazovanjem i sve veće poteškoće diplomaca prilikom traženja posla i zapošljavanja nakon diplome stavile su veliki naglasak na važnost boljeg razumijevanja sastavnih dijelova zapošljivosti. Bavljenje zapošljivošću ima koristi za sve dionike, kako za sveučilišta, tako i za poslodavce i same diplomce. Ova komparativna studija ima za cilj istražiti percepciju diplomaca o kompetencijama i kvalitetama važnim za zapošljivost, te usporediti ih s očekivanjima poslodavaca, kako bi se podigla svijest o razlikama. Također se želi *istražiti koliko su poslodavci zadovoljni visokim obrazovanjem diplomanata spremnih za tržište rada. Ovo istraživanje predstavlja odgovore 206 apsolvenata i 134 poslodavca. Rezultati istraživanja pokazuju kako postoji skroman stupanj slaganja između diplomaca i poslodavaca oko kompetencija i kvaliteta važnih za zapošljivost. Obje grupe jako cijene spremnost za učenje i rješavanje problema te se slažu kako praktično iskustvo, znanje o određenoj temi i korištenje društvenih mreža nisu značajni za zapošljivost. Poslodavci više od diplomaca cijene vještine učenja, entuzijazam, motivaciju i inteligenciju. S druge strane, diplomci vjeruju kako na buduće rezultate na tržištu rada značajno utječu otvorenost prema promjeni, pisana komunikacija i vještine javnog govorenja. Kako bi se istaknuli i bili u prednosti na tržištu rada, diplomci moraju biti svjesni ovog nerazmjera te poduzeti korake kako bi izvan sveučilišta stekli tražene kompetencije i kvalitete. Također je potrebno da sveučilišta u suradnji s poslodavcima prilagode svoj kurikulum, metode ocjenjivanja te pedagoški pristup, kako bi se smanjio raskorak između onog* što *se od diplomaca očekuje na tržištu rada i onog* što *dobivaju kroz visoko obrazovanje.*

Ključne riječi: *percepcija zapošljivosti, sveučilište, kompetencije, kvalitete, diplomiranost (graduateness)*

JEL klasifikacija: J21, A22

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