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Title	Models of employability and their relevance for part-time learners
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SRHE Annual Research Conference

Individual Presentation Submission

Title

Models of employability and their relevance for part-time learners

Presentation Track

Employability, enterprise and graduate careers (EE)

Proposal Type

Individual presentation and poster

Part 1 Abstract (150 words)

This presentation will provide a critique of key models of employability developed since the beginning of the 21st Century, which have been further conceptualised to provide frameworks for enhancing the employability of graduates. The critique will focus on models such as the USEM Model of Employability offered by Knight and Yorke (2003) and Dacre, Pool and Sewell's (2007) Career Edge Model of Graduate Employability.

The critique will be based on a review and analysis of extant literature and evaluate the relevance of such models with the emphasis being on part-time learners who are currently employed but seeking to further their education. This presentation will therefore consider if employability models and frameworks are equally relevant for part-time learners or if such students are lost in the midst of conceptualisations more aligned to full time students. This

evaluation will contribute to the development of a research strategy and will form part of a wider study and a professional doctorate.

Part 2 Outline (1000 words)

The presentation will offer an insight into the emergent theoretical findings from a study exploring models of employability, with a particular focus on their relevance for part-time learners. The author of this paper is in the second year of a professional doctorate. The review of employability models forms part of the study in terms of investigating an approach to employability for part-time learners who are already in employment.

The author will share and outline her theoretical framework at the time of the presentation and will use extracts from her literature review.

Employability

Employability is of importance to the economy due it contribution to "growth and competitiveness" (Poon 2011, p. 417). The Higher Education Academy (HEA) offer toolkits for education providers to utilise when thinking about developing approaches to employability whilst also recognising it is a university-wide responsibility (Cole and Tibby, 2012). As identified by Knight and Yorke (2003, p.2) "The complexity of employability and the variety that exists in curricula in UK higher education mean that no single, ideal, prescription for embedding of employability can provided. Embedding has to be undertaken with reference to curricular context". This statement thereby supporting the need to consider part-time learners, particularly as their curricular requirements are likely to differ to their full-time counterparts.

Employability is not a new concept and has had a presence in literature for some time but during the last decade in particular has "commanded a central place in labour market policies" (McQuaid, Green and Danson, 2005 p. 191). Vanhercke, De Cuyper, Peters and De Witte (2014, p. 592) posit that the words "employment" and "ability" are aligned with the "ability to be employed". But, what about those students who are already employed? How do employability models such as the USEM Model of Employability presented by Knight and

Yorke in 2003 relate to part-time students who are already employed? As recognised by Cole and Tibby (2013) the definition of employability being "A set of achievement – skills, understandings and personal attributes, that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy" (Knight and Yorke, 2003, p.5) is widely used and cited within academic literature. However, when deconstructing this definition, the words "more likely to gain employment" stand out in terms of the context of part-time learners who are already employed but looking to further their education, the motivations for study taking various forms. This relates back to the work of McQuaid et al (2005, p.191) who also highlighted that "employability relates to both unemployed people seeking work and those in employment seeking better jobs with their current or a different employer".

Part-time Learners – are they important?

BIS (2009) highlight the importance of curriculum context for part-time students and state, "it is important that part-time provision is not seen by universities as something to be bolted on to a core model of full-time teaching". There is however, a lack of research generally in terms of part-time learners. This is supported by Callendar and Wilkinson (2012) who also identify that there is a lack of research in terms of the benefits of part-time learners in Higher Education. Bennion, Scesa and Williams (2011, p.150) also identify that "research on the impact of part-time study on graduates and any benefits that accrue to the individual or society is rare". The author aims to address some of these gaps within her research with an emphasis on the relevance of employability models and frameworks.

Conceptualisations, Models and Frameworks

Numerous conceptualisations of employability exist in extant literature as supported by Williams, Dodd, Steele and Randall (2015). However, it is not viable to evaluate the 16 conceptualisations offered by Williams et al (2015) or all the models, which exist. The presentation will therefore focus on a selection of key models and framework as identified in the work of Cole and Tibby (2013). Two of these models form part of the initial evaluation below.

The USEM model put forward by Knight and Yorke (2003) considers how to embed employability within the curriculum in order to meet the needs of stakeholders. How do

part-time learners relate to the components of this model, particularly in terms of 'understanding' subject matter and the 'functions of organisations'? Arguably, they will have some knowledge of these components due to being within a work environment and perhaps relate to the 'efficacy' belief more in terms of reflecting on their development and self-improvement.

Although Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007) recognise the strengths of USEM, they posit that parents and students may have difficulties in defining what is meant by employability and thereby offer the alternative model known as The CareerEDGE model of Graduate Employability. Cole and Tibby (2013, p.8) recognise the benefits of this model with "different groups of people" and arguably this model could therefore have benefits for part-time learners particularly as this model has been linked to supporting HEI's in terms of their strategies and processes.

The presentation will consider these two models in particular but will also discuss the models put forward by Bridgestock and the CBI and Universities UK in 2009 along with the CBI/NUS model in 2011.

Methodology

The approach taken in terms of the presentation of this paper will be a systematic theoretical analysis and critique of extant literature in terms of the five key employability models and frameworks recognised in the work of Cole and Tibby (2013).

The aim of undertaking this analysis is to develop a theoretical framework for evaluating further the relevance of employability, models and frameworks for part-time learners. This will contribute to the creation of a conceptual framework to further analyse and reconceptualise employability for part-time learners.

A New Theoretical Framework of Employability for Part-time Learners

At the conference, the author will an outline her theoretical framework in terms of the relevance of employability frameworks for part-time learners, which emerges from the critique and evaluation of existing literature. The aim of the presentation is to engage fellow delegates in a critical discussion about the need to consider part-time learners within the conceptualisations of employability. This being particularly relevant for Higher Educations

providers as they continue to consider their employability agendas and development of frameworks. Whilst there has been a dip in the number of part-time learners in recent years (Butcher, 2015)the introduction of degree apprenticeship will potentially lead to a shift in approaches to learning and an increase the number of part-time learners. This is therefore an opportune time to examine the context of their employability.

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