ADVANCES IN HIGHER EDUCATION
learning by sharing: strengthen the links between higher education, applied research and practice
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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Journal of Advances in Higher Education which is for passionate educators, whether in strategic, operational or teaching and learning roles who want to make a difference in the lives of their students. In a time of continued recession higher education institutions in Europe are struggling with, on the one hand, cutting back on costs and on the other hand, needing to become more competitive through innovation and focussing on providing an excellent education and learning experience (and wider experience) for students. There are a variety of league tables and reputational metrics which can determine whether students choose a particular organisation in which to base their studies. This journal often includes papers that speak about these but is particularly interesting in critiquing them and other measurements which the Higher Education professional is involved in. Of particular interest is the emphasis on what the education professional, be they tutors, lecturers, librarians, international support staff, recruiters etc are passionately working on (sometimes despite the metrics) in order to provide and enable a life changing experience to students. Often the aspects that provide the life-changing experience are not those that are easily measured. This journal publishes the stories of those who are passionately working towards providing an excellent higher education and the thinking and conceptualising around what a responsible excellent higher education is.

In this volume we have selected papers which have provided some real food for thought and also some practical ways in which students’ lives are being enhanced.

New methods of teaching are always being developed. For example Michelle Blackburn, Lynne Booth and Simon Warwick have written a paper around their use of cloud computing. Human Resource students created their own websites and how they were supported in doing this is given in detail which provides academics with a useful model to follow. Discussion follows regarding the benefits and pitfalls of the project. Aleksandra Peciuriene writes the next paper which brings to life the topic of accounting and helps us to understand how we can assist business studies students in getting the most out of this ‘dry’ topic. As accounting is often a requirement of more general courses not aimed at producing accountants this paper gives helpful insights. Anna-Stiina Myllymäki’s paper discusses the use of the ‘activating teaching method’ and how this teaching method has been developed in her own teaching. This comes from a desire to be less didactive and more facilitative, to get away from powerpoint and enable more interactive involvement of the students. There are suggestions of particular approaches for those wanting to move more into facilitation of learning. Iwi Ugiagbe-Green’s paper is about how she has set up an internship in order to enable students to gain accreditation towards their professional qualifications in order to enable them to gain access to their profession’s employers. In the paper she shows the challenges she faced and what can be achieved through this type of project.
New questions are always being asked. For example, Christine Daley and Shakiya Nisa who had found that professional students who engaged with formative assessment were more likely to perform better in summative assessment were asking why students might not avail themselves of the formative assessment opportunities. Hilde Hoefnagels and Øivind Strand’s paper asks important questions around the drivers and barriers for female entrepreneurship. In their paper they compare responses from Belgium, Italy and Norway and also find some common themes.

New market research on employability is always being sought. For example, Dori Pavloska-Gjorgjieska’s work focusses on Kosovo where despite its challenges a high quality education is possible and can open up employability opportunities. The papers looks at what is important to employers in Kosovo and the sort of opportunities that Higher Education graduates can expect. Domagoja Buljan Barbača’s paper explores what EU competencies employers are looking for. António Melo and Manuela Gonçalves have done research on the matching up of the skills that employers in the hospitality profession need in employees and those provided by higher education in hospitality management.

New thinking and conceptualisations keep us fresh and relevant. It’s good to challenge some of the popular notions and my paper challenges some of our ideas about student engagement. I look at student engagement using a lens of the more established ‘pure engagement’ and ‘employee engagement’ literature rather than the more narrow student engagement literature with its metrics which are nearly always behaviourally focussed. Engagement is about positive emotions, about winning heart mind and soul and yet we measure only behavioural engagement because it is easy to do. For example, a student is deemed to engage when they log onto the learning platform for their course - this becomes a measure of engagement but it is actually just a measure for how many times they log onto the learning platform. The paper suggests a model that has been developed in order to design-in student engagement in learning.

I would like to thank all the authors for their hard work and I hope you will enjoy reading the thinking expressed here and the ideas, both theoretical and practical, which I hope will spur you on in the quest for responsible excellent teaching and learning.

Dr Julia Claxton
Editor-in-Chief
EVALUATING A STUDENT CENTRED APPROACH TO TEACHING AND LEARNING ON A POST-GRADUATE PROFESSIONAL MODULE

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ABSTRACT
The paper explores the impact of embedding a student centred approach to teaching and learning on a post-graduate professional module with a mixed cohort in terms of previous academic experience and cultural background. It was the first module on the programme and student performance was assessed by summative examination. The student-centred approach was characterised by interactive discussion based delivery, group work and formative assessment and feedback on a weekly basis. In addition students were invited to undertake a mock exam as independent study and formative audio feedback was provided. Student views on the process were surveyed and responses were highly positive. As assessment data suggests that students who engage with the formative process do better at summative assessment, the next step for the tutors will be to explore ways of engaging the students who do not currently participate.

KEYWORDS
student-centred learning, formative assessment, formative feedback

INTRODUCTION
Leading, Managing and Developing People (LMDP) was the first module for students embarking on two courses accredited by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD); the Post-Graduate Certificate in HRM (PDHRM) and the Masters in HRM (MAHRM). The module provided students with an introduction to some of the key concepts involved in HRM and was designed into sixteen three hour sessions delivered over eight weeks with the last week (sessions 15 and 16) dedicated to revision and exam preparation. The examination was closed book with questions based on a pre-seen case study (issued in the first teaching session) and it took place approximately five weeks after delivery of the final teaching session.

BACKGROUND
The aim of this student centred approach to delivery of LMDP was four fold. First, as the course was at post-graduate level, tutors were anxious to provide opportunities for students to initiate and develop critical thinking skills, termed here as ‘the ability to think deeply about an issue, consider evidence for and against a proposition, and apply reasoning skills and logical inquiry to arrive at possible conclusions’ (Nargundkar, Samaddar and Mukhopadhyay, 2014, p.92).
Second, creating the appropriate environment for learning to take place was very important; for LMDP the tutors wanted to create an authentic learning experience. The tutors were aware of their pivotal role in this process as suggested by Baharudin, Munira and Mat, (2013) who identified teaching methodologies and the role of lecturer as crucial in making the class an inclusive forum for discussion and participation.

Third, it was intended that the approach would foster a community of experiential learning as defined by Kolb (1984, p.21) as ‘a holistic integrative perspective on learning that combines experience, perception, cognition and behaviour’ where students and tutors (all tutors were previous or current HR practitioners as well as academics) could benefit from shared knowledge and experience.

Finally, students on a predecessor module People Management and Development (PMD) had requested more opportunity for practice and formative feedback prior to examination. The CIPD insisted on students taking an unseen element of assessment (examination) and therefore whilst tutors might focus on broader concepts of education and learning, ‘assessment is the curriculum, as far as the students are concerned. They’ll learn what they think they’ll be assessed on not what’s in the curriculum, or what’s been covered in class’ (Ramsden, 1992, quoted in Biggs, 2003, p4).

Activities and feedback focusing on the session topic and the exam case study formed a major part of every session, but in the last week students were presented with a mock exam in class. Working in tutor allocated groups they were assigned exam questions and allocated time in which to prepare detailed essay plans. Students were able to critique all of the plans and detailed constructive formative feedback was then provided directly by tutors. This group element was constructively aligned to the next stage of the preparation process when students were invited to do the mock exam in their own time under exam type conditions. Students would then upload the exam into an assignment drop box, so that their tutors could provide formative, individual, audio feedback to aid further exam preparation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

WHAT IS STUDENT CENTRED LEARNING?

One outcome of the Bologna process was to shift the pedagogical focus of European higher education towards a more student-centred approach, (Hyland, Kennedy, and Ryan, 2006, cited in Nordruma, Evans, and Gustafsson, 2013). Turner (2006, p.6) defines student-centred learning (SCL) as a broad teaching approach that encompasses replacing lectures with active learning, integrating self-paced learning programs and/or cooperative group situations, ultimately holding the student responsible for his own advances in education’.

The SCL approach on LMDP was underpinned by the concept of constructive alignment ‘a principle used for devising teaching and learning activities, and assessment tasks, that directly addresses the learning outcomes intended in a way not typically achieved in traditional lectures, tutorial classes and examinations’ (Biggs and Tang, 2007, p105). Methods used were structured and exemplified the scaffolding approach to learning defined as ‘providing appropriate support during the learning so that the learners are better able to bridge the gap between what they bring to the learning task, and where they need to be to achieve a deep level of learning’ (Sadler, 2007, p6).
Tutors relied on particular techniques including classroom activities, formative assessment and feedback. Formative assessments comprising previous exam questions (undertaken weekly with written feedback by email) and a mock exam (at module end with audio feedback by email) were devised with the intention of using assessment for learning rather than assessment of learning (Hounsell et al. 2008). The tutors had already used audio feedback successfully on other modules and published research suggested students rated it highly for being effective for recollection and understanding thus impacting positively on future performance. (Blackburn, Stroud and Taylor, 2014).

COHORT CHARACTERISTICS

Cross (1981) identified three main inhibitors to adult participation in formal learning, named accordingly as situational, institutional and dispositional barriers. With respect to the cohort on LMDP, dispositional barriers which relate to relative attitudes and self-perceptions about oneself as a learner are the most relevant. Thus the tutors’ intention in planning and developing the module was to divert focus from any negative attitudes and self-perceptions (barriers to learning) by creating a learning environment that facilitated the development of positive attitude and self-perceptions (enablers to learning).

MacKeracher, Stuart & Potter, (2006 cited in Baharudin, S., Munira, M. & Mat, N. (2013).p.775) suggested that adult learners (PDHRM) required a SCL environment which meets needs for relevancy in content, recognition of prior learning and respect from others. Using and sharing experiences in problem analysis were of particular importance to this cohort, (McKeachie and Svinicki, 2006, cited in O’Connor and Cordova, 2010).

Anderson et al (1998) stated that tutors should produce clear information on assessment for international students to help them understand what was expected of them. This was important for all cohorts but as students on MAHRM were predominantly non-native English speakers this was a key consideration.

Unfamiliarity with approach might also be coupled with different conceptual understanding, for example the notion of critical thinking is mainly featured in Western higher education and international students often struggle with this concept. Turner (2006) argues that definitions of critical thinking are often unclear, and ‘emerge from cultural knowledge traditions rather than universal measures of higher learning’ (Turner, 2006, p6). Therefore at the outset it is important to determine student understanding of this and other important concepts.

AN AUTHENTIC AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE

SCL activities including essay planning, critiquing each other’s work, group work and group and individualised feed-forward with formative feedback were designed to create an authentic learning experience with a focus on ‘real-world, complex problems and their solutions, using role-playing exercises, problem-based activities, case studies, and participation in virtual communities of practice.’ (Herrington et al, 2003, p.60).
Herrington et al (2003, p.62) suggest this approach to be valid in that ‘students involved in authentic learning are motivated to persevere despite initial disorientation or frustration, as long as the exercise simulates what really counts—the social structure and culture that gives the discipline its meaning and relevance’. The learning experience was further authenticated by making it experienced based. For those students with prior work experience in HR, classroom activities provided an opportunity to share subject based knowledge, expertise and experience that would then supplement and add grounding in reality to the discussion on the topic introduced by the tutor. For all students, the outcome of this approach with its focus on discussion and group activity coupled with on-going formative assessment and feedback was that students were able to recognise and reflect on individual areas of weakness, in order to identify areas for learning and revision (including exam practice). This is consistent with Kolb’s Learning Cycle (1984) with its elements of concrete experience, observation and reflection, leading to the forming of new abstract concepts and the ability to test those in new situations.

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this exploratory study was ‘to discover what participants think is important about the research topic’ (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p476); to provide insights and understanding into some of the key issues the SCL approach adopted on the module. The collection of qualitative data was required in this study ‘to uncover prevalent trends in thought and opinion’ (Bryman & Bell, 2007, 212). Therefore the on-line Survey Monkey tool was chosen as a means of gaining more detailed insight into the students’ thoughts and opinions of the learning experience. The researchers hoped that the accessibility and guaranteed anonymity of respondent of this instrument would encourage a large number of students to participate in the survey. In addition, a quantitative data collection method was used in the form of a paper-based module evaluation survey ‘to quantify data and generalise results from a sample to the population of interest’ (Saunders et al, 2009, p598).

RESULTS

ON-LINE SURVEY

Forty students were enrolled on the module and 22 responded to the online survey. This response rate of 55% compares favourably with the average response rate to online student surveys of 33% suggested by Nulty (2008) and suggests that data of meaning to the context might be extrapolated from the responses. The survey was completed by a cross-section of module students with 5 of the participants not possessing an undergraduate degree, 14 having completed an undergraduate degree and three having completed a Master’s level qualification.
THE IMPACT OF PARTICIPATING IN FORMATIVE ACTIVITIES ON ENGAGEMENT

Students were questioned on the impact of participating in module activities and formative feedback on their engagement with the module. Responses were almost universally positive with comments such as ‘invaluable’ ground-breaking and ‘confidence-boosting’. Typical responses commented on the feedback enabling ‘you to benchmark where you were in relation to your critical analysis’ and providing ‘reassurance that you are on the right tracks.’

THE PERSPECTIVES OF STUDENTS NOT PARTICIPATING IN FORMATIVE ACTIVITIES

Students who did not participate in the optional exam-type activities and mock exam were asked what changes they would like to see in order to encourage participation in future. Only two respondents answered this question but both requested that the mock exam be undertaken in exam conditions in a class-room scenario rather than in the students’ own time.

THE EFFECT OF UNDERTAKING THE MOCK EXAM ON LEARNING

Writing a mock exam is an intellectually demanding and time consuming process for the tutor, therefore in order to determine worth, students were asked for their views on its impact on learning. Responses were universally positive with remarks focusing on the how the experience of mock exam and feedback helped improve time management, understanding of questions and level of response attained. As one respondent remarked ‘it validated my learning.’

SIMULATING EXAM CONDITIONS

Students differed in their views of the appropriateness of undertaking the mock exam in their own time. Some were happy to simulate their own version of exam conditions and were keen to establish how much and of what quality they could write in three hours. Others adopted a semi-open book approach by referring to a couple of sources during their attempt and/or being more flexible with the timing. One small group of four students even initiated their own student centred approach to undertaking the mock exam by booking a library study room and communally planning responses to the exam questions before separating and completing the mock exam individually.

VIEWS ON AUDIO FEEDBACK

Two questions asked if students felt audio feedback had been a useful tool in learning and exam preparation and whether it should be used for the same purpose on other modules. Enthusiastic adjectives such as ‘tremendous’, ‘fantastic’ ‘excellent’ along with more prosaic terms such as ‘concise’, ‘clear’, ‘pragmatic’ ‘constructive’ and ‘personal’ peppered the responses. A typical comment was ‘the audio feedback was a great touch! It felt more personal and meant the feedback had a bigger impact as I could hear the tutors’ thoughts and their tone of voice. It meant that I knew I was along the right track for the exam. I would like to see this type of feedback more.’

Most respondents affirmed that they would welcome audio feedback on future modules with only one exception: ‘I still prefer the written feedback as you can print and refer back to it which isn’t possible with audio feedback (not without logging on and having the tablet or laptop to play it on)’. 
PAPER-BASED SURVEY

Thirty-five of 40 students on the module completed the module evaluation survey. This higher completion rate than for the on-line survey was accounted for by the fact that according to university regulations, module evaluations are undertaken in the last teaching session for the module and as this was a revision session, attendance was particularly high.

Thirty-three respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the module’s purpose had been clear, that module content was relevant and appropriate and the module well organised. A similar majority responded in the same positive manner to questions on staff knowledge, communication and guidance. All respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they were satisfied with the module. Responses to the general comments question on the module were complimentary and focused on the positive impact of the module experience and the formative feedback in particular.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Students’ positive views on the impact on their learning of participation in formative feedback were a gratifying payback to tutors. Effort spent in planning, preparation and feedback provision was effective and appreciated and thus worthwhile. Student perceptions were consistent with the view of feedback as ‘one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement.’ (Hattie and Timperley, 2007).

The positive commentaries on the formative feedback process provided by the students who had engaged with it add validity and ensure its continuation for future cohorts, but what of the others? Despite reports from tutors on the previous positive impact of undertaking formative assessment on summative performance for the module, a minority of students on both cohorts did not participate in the weekly exam questions or the mock exam. Of the nine students who failed the summative examination, only two had undertaken the mock exam.

This suggests a need to further investigate reasons for non-participation in formative activities and gives rise to the wider issue of the student as autonomous learner with autonomous learning described as ‘the learner’s ability to acquire knowledge or skills of value independently by processes that he/she determines (Chene, 1983 cited in MacCaskell and Taylor, 2010, p.351. A student’s cultural background and previous educational experiences and the extent to which the situational, institutional, dispositional barriers (Cross, 1981) may inhibit learning have not been the focus of this study but this issue now commands further investigation.

One means of improving participation in the mock exam at least, would be to accede to the request of a small minority of students on the online survey and bring it into a class-room context. Talking this step would involve rearrangement of delivery schedule by tutors, but more significantly would it decrease the possibilities for not just student centred learning, but self-directed learning, as demonstrated by the group who on their own initiative worked collectively on their mock exam response?

Responses from LMDP students were consistent with research, in that audio feedback was valued for being ‘primarily rooted in detail, clarity and affected influence’ (Blackburn, Stroud
and Taylor, 2014, p.266). Tutors, who additionally valued its advantages of speed and relative ease of interpretation, were therefore encouraged to continue with the process. Although a small minority of students preferred written feedback to audio or wanted both, given time and other resource constraints it is likely that the tutors will take a utilitarian perspective and persist with the current approach.

Responses to the paper-based module evaluation survey suggest that students are more than satisfied with content, teaching and organisation for the module and other factors within the control of the tutor. One hundred per cent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they were satisfied with their experience of the module. Although the research instrument is crude in that allows for only rudimentary quantitative analysis, the results are undoubtedly encouraging.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Although the tutors need to be utilitarian not just in their choice of feedback tool but also in the SCL learning strategy, their role in improving student performance commands a more differentiated approach. The data suggests that students who engage with the formative process do better at summative assessment, so why do some students not participate? Of the PDHRM students without previous higher education experience who failed the summative examination, only one had undertaken the weekly exam activities and mock exam. Further investigation is needed in to the barriers preventing engagement and thus learning amongst this group. Additionally, Frambach et al (2012) suggested that with exposure and cultural sensitivity from tutors, techniques embodied in SCL can be accepted and employed successfully by students from non-Western cultures, so is it a matter will be worthwhile to survey the perspectives of the international students in more detail on the methods employed in this module and on others on their course.

REFERENCES


EVALUATING A STUDENT CENTRED APPROACH TO TEACHING AND LEARNING ON A POST-GRADUATE PROFESSIONAL MODULE


ARE THERE ANY ROLE MODELS FOR FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS?

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ABSTRACT
This article shows preliminary results obtained studying both drivers and barriers for female entrepreneurs based on semi structural interviews with a small group of respondents from Norway, Belgium and Italy. Moreover, based on the country fiches of the statistical data on women entrepreneurship in Europe, this article will give an insight in the cross cultural context in which the interviewed female entrepreneurs currently are working, thus looking for similarities and/or differences. Our main findings can be summarized as follows:

• The female entrepreneurs didn’t report any entrepreneurial role models, with exception of one respondent pointing to her self-employed parents.

• Belgian respondents report a combination of external (market conditions), and internal drivers (family matters and self-realization) for setting up their own business.

• Italian respondents are mainly driven by dissatisfaction with their current work situation (internal motivation).

• Norwegian respondents report a combination of external (resources, market conditions) and internal factors (self-realization).

Based on a literature review and a small scale qualitative study we identify several important areas for further research on this highly relevant area. Our initial research question regarding role models for female entrepreneurs should be reformulated and we should answer ourselves the question whether they really do exist or not, and why or why not?

INTRODUCTION
Steve Jobs (Apple), Bill Gates (Microsoft,) and Richard Brandson (Virgin) are idols and role model for numerous young entrepreneurs all over the world. Adele, Beyoncé and Rihanna are idols for young girls in the worldwide music industry, but do female entrepreneurs in Europe have similar role models? In trying to answer this, and other questions related to the conditions for women entrepreneurs in Europe, we have conducted a range of interviews with female entrepreneurs in three European countries. The interviews shed light on various aspects and themes relevant for women setting up their own businesses in Europe today.
Factors influencing entrepreneurial activities are numerous and widely investigated in different countries and from different theoretical angles. Various studies have shown that gender has a negative impact on the decision to become an entrepreneur. Some studies found that females are less likely to enter self-employment (Noorderhaven et al., 2004; Wagner and Sternberg, 2002). Some survey data showed that women are more risk averse and put less emphasis on monetary gains than men (Maire et al., 2004). Some studies’ conclusions are that females are more family-oriented and are less keen for setting up a business and less keen in perusing expansion related goals.

In recent years, the number of female-run enterprises gradually has grown worldwide and in Europe, even if the number of women involved in entrepreneurial activity remains significantly lower than that of men. Different are the reasons that encourage females to start up their own business. According to the European Business Review (de Beaufort, 2014) they can be synthesized in: employment opportunity, moving on in their career and/or gaining more independence, and juggling between their family lives. On the other hand, there are reasons to dissuade them, which make them hindered by a form of ‘glass ceiling’: internal and external barriers which keep them from exploiting their possibilities to the fullest. This multifaceted problem requires a deep analysis to be carried out, in order to pick out the main obstacles and individuate the actions to perform for increasing women’s entrepreneurship and facilitate their potential economic contribution within Europe (Traavik and Richardson, 2004; Welter et al., 2014; Alsos et al., 2010). However there are great variations between European countries when it comes to the level of woman entrepreneurial activities (EU, 2014). We will in this study first review the research literature on the field of gender and entrepreneurship with emphasis on factors influencing the choices of women to start their own business. Secondly we will compare the findings from the literature with findings from the aforementioned interviews. The aim of this study is to shed new light on conditions for female entrepreneurs in Europe, to identify drivers and barriers, but also to identify areas for further research into this highly relevant area.

We have chosen to view entrepreneurial activities through the lens of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977), where the foundations for entrepreneurship are knowledge, skills and attitude that are acquired and learned in a social context. The theory states that when people observe a person (model) performing a behaviour (and the subsequent consequences), then the observer uses this in information to guide their own subsequent behaviour in similar, or related situations. The paper will be organized with a theoretical section with a literature review, statistical facts regarding female entrepreneurship in the home country of the respondents, and a brief description of our theoretical angle. This section is followed by the findings from the interviews, which are described in greater details in an appendix. Discussion, conclusions and suggestions for further research ends the paper.
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Entrepreneurs are defined as persons aged 15 years and older who work in their own business, farm or professional practice to make a profit, and spend time on the operation of a business, or are in the process of setting up a business. These entrepreneurs consider the running of their enterprises to be their main activity. This definition is the one that is used for a self-employed person in the Labour Force Survey (LSF) database of Eurostat.

RESEARCH LITERATURE ON GENDER AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Schwartz began to study the main subjects regarding entrepreneurial women in 1976 (Schwartz, 1976). She mainly analyzed the: i) features and motivations of women when confronting an entrepreneurship, ii) leadership style, iii) decision taking regarding the strategic choice when starting up a business, iv) obstacles found and financing standards adopted, and, finally, v) performance and results obtained through their initiatives.

Entrepreneurial activity is a result of human actions, consequently, personal motivations, perceptions and characteristics play a critical role in the decision to act entrepreneurially. The main personal characteristics important in the process of establishing a new venture are, according to Naffziger et al., (1994) the need of achievement (human desire to accomplish something significant); the locus of control (perception of control over the circumstances); the risk-taking propensity. In addition other characteristics that can be mentioned are energy level, conformity, the need for autonomy, persistence and dominance, the desire for personal control and the desire to build something on one’s own. Personal intentions, goals and vision are also important. An entrepreneur does not exist on his/her own, but rather operates in interaction with other actors and under the influence of external elements; consequently, environmental conditions are important. The economic conditions, societal attitudes toward entrepreneurship and business, and access to financing are the main significant environmental conditions. Besides, participation in entrepreneurship networks has also been found as influential.

In last years different research activities tried to understand women’s behaviors in entrepreneurial activity and to establish the differences compared to men. Although some discrepancies do exist, generally the main topics analyzed show similar findings: features and motivations, leadership style, strategic choice, obstacles and results. Although with some discrepancies, academic research as a whole agrees with the fact that there are differences between entrepreneurial men and women regarding the aforementioned topics. Personal features of entrepreneurial woman are very varied. Where some are highly qualified or professionals, even having experience in business management, others have as their only previous experience that obtained through unpaid work in household management and maternity (Pablo-Marti, et al., 2009).

In their systematic literature review of the research on gender and entrepreneurship Henry et al. (2015) find that most research is ‘large-scale empirical studies focused on male/female comparison, often with little detail provided on industry sector or sampling methods and with either weak, or no feminist critique whatsoever’. They call for a radical move towards more innovative, in-depth qualitative methods such as life histories, case studies and discourse.
analysis. An analysis of research on gender and entrepreneur networks has been performed by Foss (2010). She finds, using discourse analysis, a number of hegemonic statements like: ‘weak ties are the sources of men’s success; strong ties are woman’s drawback’. She calls for research on the variation within gender groups when it comes to network activities. Bogren et al. (2013) follow up some of the suggestions from Foss and investigate networking women entrepreneurs. They find that the willingness to network is important for business growth. By dividing women entrepreneurs into three subgroups, based on willingness to network, they are able to show what type of network activities that are associated with growth of business. They also investigate various supportive assets for women entrepreneurs and find that personal networks are more important than mentors and business network for women with a high willingness to network. On the other hand mentor programs were more important for those unwilling to network.

Saridakis et al. (2014) challenge the traditional view that factors associated with self-employment choices to be different for men and women. Based on statistical data from United Kingdom’s Labour Force Survey over a period of 30 years they report that gender-based explanations have exaggerated the importance of social factors in the self-employment choices made by women. Klyver et al. (2013) draw on symbolic interactionism to argue that employment choices emerge from in interactive conversation between individual and social institutional processes. They find, using data from 61 countries, that gender equality is associated with the gender gap in men’s and women’s self-employment choices and that this also depends on the country’s development stage and type of industries.

The influence of national policies (in Sweden and the United States) for enhancing women entrepreneurship is analysed by Ahl and Nelson (2015). From a feministic perspective they analyse entrepreneurship policy discourses. They find that these policies don’t take full account of the conditions shaping women’s work experiences and that women are treated as exceptions, extraordinariness and ‘others’ compared to men. The stereotype of an entrepreneur is still a male person, this has been documented by the scholars on many areas: in media (Ahtenhage and Welter, 2011), in business periodicals (Gill, 2013), and in teaching material (Jones, 2011). The expectations that a Scandinavian family friendly welfare state would position women entrepreneurship policy differently compared to the United States were not met.

Another new branch of research which opens new possibilities for entrepreneurship research is genetics. Zhang et al. (2009) have investigated gender differences in the genetic influence on the tendency of people to become entrepreneurs. This work relies on databases of identical and fraternal twins with and without zero shared-environment. The moderating effect of the personal traits extraversion and neuroticism has also been included in the study. They find that extraversion (positive) and neuroticism (negative) mediates the genetic influences on women’s tendency to become entrepreneurs. Extraversion mediates shared-environment influences on men’s tendency to become entrepreneurs.

Gender differences in evaluation of new business opportunities have been investigated by Gupta et al. (2014). They find, drawing on controlled experiments and stereotype threat theory that men reported higher opportunity evaluation than women when no gender stereotypical information
was presented. When using gender neutral information, the outcome was equal for both genders evaluation. Using feminine stereotypical information enhances opportunity recognition by women (more than men). Using masculine stereotypical information enhances opportunity recognition by men (more than women).

Few studies have been investigating the full range of factors influencing women entrepreneurship. One exception is Lerner et al. (1997) who examined individual factors influencing business performance of Israeli women owned businesses. They explain performance from five theoretical perspectives:

- Social Learning: In the individual’s socialization process, social norms, educational aspirations and career preferences are shaped through observational learning and modelling (Bandura 1977)

- Network affiliation: Johannisson (1991) argues that the personal network of the entrepreneur is the most important resource of a firm. Carsrud et al. (1986) found that the limited use of mentors by women entrepreneurs was found to be a significant inhibitor to successful business development.

- Human capital: Level of education, previous entrepreneurial experience and previous business experiences and skills.

- Individual motivation and goals: Achievements, economic necessity and independence.

- Environmental influence: Industry sector activity, availability of government assistance and a favourable entrepreneurial sub-culture (Bruno and Tybjee 1982)

Entrepreneurial behavior (or performance) is defined by the actions taken by the entrepreneur to reach desired goals. These are the tasks that are under control of the entrepreneur, such as the organization, decision making, and goals and strategies. These aspects are determined by the individual capacity and will, such as ability and motivation, self-judgment.

An analysis of American venture capital investment in woman entrepreneurs (2011 to 2013) is performed by Brush et al. (2014). They find that there is a strong gender bias against women entrepreneurs when it comes to attracting venture capital.

Statistics on gender and entrepreneurship for the countries where the respondents come from.

Statistical data on women entrepreneurs for various European countries are given by EU (2014). We will focus on data from the three countries Belgium, Italy, and Norway, where our respondents come from. The data for these countries are given in Table 1. Belgium is characterised by a medium level of female entrepreneurs, low level of part time and a low level of entrepreneurs with a second job. Italy is characterized by a high level of female entrepreneurs, a moderate level of part time entrepreneurs and a low level of female entrepreneurs with a second job. In Norway the percentage of female entrepreneurs of the total labour force is low (4%), part time is high (36%) and a second job is common compared to Italy and Belgium.
Table 1. Data on women entrepreneurs in 3 European countries, 2012 data, EU 2014.

Data from the Global entrepreneurship monitor’s women report (2012) can be found in Table 2. From the data we see that Norwegian women entrepreneurs report good opportunities as the main motivation for starting a new business. Almost 30% of Norwegian female entrepreneurs know an entrepreneur; this is high compared to Italy, but also higher than in Belgium. The percentage of entrepreneurs fearing failure is high in Italy and Belgium and somewhat lower in Norway.

Table 2. Findings from GEM 2012 women’s report for the actual countries.

In the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor global report (GEM, 2014) we find the % of the population aged 18-64 and their perceptions of social values regarding entrepreneurship (Table 3).

Table 3. Findings from the GEM 2014 report.

The cultural differences between the countries can be measured using Hofstede’s cultural dimensions (Power distance, Individuality, Masculinity, Uncertainty avoidance, Long term orientation and Indulgence) in Table 4, below (Hofstede, 2001). As can be seen from the table, Norway scores very low on masculinity, indicating a culture not focused on competition, achievements and success, but rather on quality of life. They also score low on long term orientation, indicating a normative rather than pragmatic culture viewing societal changes with suspicion.
SOCIAL COGNITIVE THEORY AND ENTREPRENEURIAL SELF-EFFICACY

According to Bandura (1977, 1986) human behavior is a result of interaction between personal, behavioral, and environmental factors. These three factors are constantly influencing each other. Bandura noted that self-referent thoughts intervene between knowledge and behavior and that individuals may convince themselves, despite having the necessary knowledge that they lack the ability to perform a specific task or behavior. This cognitive mechanism is referred to as self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; McStay, 2008). In the absence of self-efficacy, individuals make self-limiting decisions despite having the necessary skills to pursue a path of action. The role of self-efficacy, whether it is general or task specific, such as entrepreneurial self-efficacy, is a central theme in pedagogy. Bandura (1986; 1997) describes four predictors of self-efficacy: actual performance; vicarious experience; social encouragement, and overcoming anxiety for performing tasks in a new environment (Zhao et al., 2005). Based on these arguments we expect ‘vicarious experience’ to be related to entrepreneurial role models. Education and training in entrepreneurship are related to ‘actual performing’ and ‘overcoming anxiety for performing tasks in a new environment’. Mentoring and support from social network is related to ‘social encouragement’.

Based on social cognitive theory we expect that role models are important for entrepreneurial self-efficacy.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA

Semi structured interviews were performed by the authors recruiting respondents in Belgium, Italy and Norway. Details on the various respondents can be found in Appendix A. Questions related to motivation, drivers, barriers, role models, mentors, networks and business advisors.

WHAT DRIVES WOMEN TO SET UP A BUSINESS OF THEIR OWN?

An interesting feature authors noticed with the small group of respondents is that, although in literature we find more information on obstacles to set up a business, in other words reasons why not to set up a business; the respondents interviewed do not describe a struggle with these obstacles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PD</th>
<th>IND</th>
<th>MA</th>
<th>UA</th>
<th>LTO</th>
<th>IND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BELGIUM</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITALY</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORWAY</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Hofstede dimensions for the actual countries
A study was undertaken by the Commission on women innovators and entrepreneurship. The aim of the study was to perform a literature review for informing new policies and actions in the promotion of women’s innovators/inventors’ entrepreneurship. In addition, the study provided policy recommendations with a view to promote entrepreneurship of women innovators/inventors as a way to reach the goals of the Lisbon Agenda. The study shows that women’s obstacles to innovative entrepreneurship are of 3 types:

1. Contextual obstacles: educational choices, traditional views and stereotypes about women, science and innovation;
2. Economic obstacles: innovation sector requiring substantial investment and women being seen less credible financially than men;
3. Soft obstacles: lack of access to technical scientific and general business networks, lack of business training, role models and entrepreneurship skills.

Our 15 respondents give contextual and soft obstacles as difficulties to set up their business. They don’t mention being considered financially less credibly than their male colleagues.

The EU Statistical Data on female entrepreneurship mention that females are, amongst others, driven by the ongoing economic crisis to set up a business. Nevertheless, amongst the factors influencing entrepreneurship the statistical analysis shows the strong positive relationship between the level of women unemployment and the percentage of women entrepreneurs of women in the active labor force.

**Table 5. Obstacles for starting up a business, reported by the respondents.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obstacles Mentioned by the 15 Respondents</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Belgium</th>
<th>Italy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not being taken seriously</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty about income</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home situation (children)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High costs and taxes Business set up</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of role model</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureaucracy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences Glass Ceiling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ARE THERE ANY ROLE MODELS FOR FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS?
MOTIVATION

From our small-scaled research we see that 2 of 5 female entrepreneurs in Belgium are led by a strong sensitivity for what is currently going on in the market, a current need they understand is living in a certain target group for which they want to find and offer a creative answer. Therefore they are led by external motivation. The other 3 are driven by family matters, or the realization of a dream - which is an internal motivation.

The Italian respondents are driven by a different sensitivity. 3 of the women interviewed acted upon a feeling of dissatisfaction with the actual work situation. The other 2 wanted to continue or take over their parents’ business. Therefore all are driven by an internal motivation.

The Norwegian respondents, it seems, would like to/try to realize a dream, something that they are passionate about and try to combine that with ‘the rest of their lives’. Some report that lack of interesting work ‘forces’ them to become self-employed. So it is a combination of internal and external factors.

From the motivation, whether internal or external, a number of questions arise for which the entrepreneur needs to find an answer, resulting thus in the new product or service the entrepreneur wants to offer.

Motivation can also be interpreted from the view point of Bandura’s social cognitive theory’s (SCT) in which he identified human behavior as an interaction of: personal factors; behavioral factors, and environmental factors. These three factors are constantly influencing each other. The self-referent thoughts intervene between knowledge and behavior and that individuals may convince themselves, despite having the necessary knowledge that they lack the ability to perform a specific task or behavior. This cognitive mechanism is previously referred to as self-efficacy. In the absence of self-efficacy, individuals make self-limiting decisions despite having the necessary skills to pursue a path of action. Bandura describes four predictors of self-efficacy: actual performance; vicarious experience; social encouragement, and overcoming anxiety for performing tasks in a new environment.

SELF-EFFICACY IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

For this paper we interviewed the 15 respondents on their level of self-efficacy. The three factors referred to are:

1. Environmental factors with as indicators: regional context, physical recourses, family support, observing other entrepreneurs succeed;
2. Personal factors with as indicators: desirable outcome, more control, flexibility, better work/life balance, income;
The authors coded the respondents' scores on these indicators on a scale between 1 (low) and 5 (high). The results are presented in Table 1 and in Figure 1 to 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONDENTS</th>
<th>PERSONAL FACTORS</th>
<th>BEHAVIORAL FACTORS</th>
<th>ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NORWAY A</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORWAY B</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORWAY C</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORWAY D</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORWAY E</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BELGIUM A</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BELGIUM B</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BELGIUM C</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BELGIUM D</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BELGIUM E</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITALY A</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITALY B</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITALY C</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITALY D</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITALY E</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Estimation of the self-efficacy based on indicators from the interviews.

Overall, we see that the personal factors score very high, and behavioral factors score low. In other words: factors as desirable outcome, more control, flexibility, better work/life balance and income score high; and factors as seeking knowledge, seeking networks, seeking customers, doing marketing score low. Graphically, we can represent these figures as follows:

Figs 1 - 3 below give a graphical representation of these factors for all respondents ranged per personal factors (Fig 1), Environmental factors (Fig 2) and Behavioral factors (Fig 3)
MENTORS, NETWORKS AND BUSINESS ADVISORS

As far as mentors, networks and business advisors are concerned, there are huge differences between the three participating countries. All interviewed Norwegian entrepreneurs mention the local business incubator (and its network) as a very important advisor/support when setting up their businesses. In the other two countries there is no mentioning of mentors or business advisors. One Belgian respondent mentions clearly how important the support of her family was, and also one Italian says the support of her family was really important. But that is all as far as mentoring is concerned.
Very striking is the opposition to one Norwegian saying she benefitted from free courses, offered by the local incubator; while a Belgian interviewed states she follows free courses on the web because the courses offered by the Belgian agencies that help starting entrepreneurs are too expensive.

It is remarkable that in the country that is considered to be the most innovative, the role of the business incubator is so strongly present and so highly appreciated.

HIGHER EDUCATION

In the EC statistical report it is mentioned that female entrepreneurs overall have some degree of higher education and differ in this from their male colleagues. In 2012, women entrepreneurs in EU-28 and EU-37 tended to be better educated than men entrepreneurs. While the second largest group of men entrepreneurs were in the low education level, the second largest group of women entrepreneurs were in the high education level.

For our reference group we can state the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONDENTS</th>
<th>SECONDARY SCHOOL</th>
<th>BACHELOR DEGREE</th>
<th>MASTER DEGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NORWAY A</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORWAY B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORWAY C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORWAY D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORWAY E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BELGIUM A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BELGIUM B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BELGIUM C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BELGIUM D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BELGIUM E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITALY A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITALY B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITALY C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITALY D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITALY E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. Educational level for the respondents in the study.

The results in Table 7 indicate a high level of formal education for the respondents in this study.
DISCUSSION

In this part of our paper, we will explain the links and correlations apparent in the gathered data, in order to interpret and describe the significance thereof. We started this small scaled research from the basic question whether female entrepreneurs have role models. And, consequently: what drives and hinders them in setting up a business.

From the theoretical framework offered by literature we find that a lot is being published about the obstacles and barriers female entrepreneurs encounter. Reasons why not to set up a business. They go from social and economic conditions, to networking (in)capacities, human and financial capital and even national politics. However, far less barriers were mentioned by the interviewed female entrepreneurs.

From the statistical data we know that huge differences are to be noted in the 3 countries. For instance values related to entrepreneurship differ a lot. In all 3 countries a high status is given to successful entrepreneurs but in Italy entrepreneurship as a good career choice scores higher than in the 2 other countries, although the status given to successful entrepreneurs is the highest in Norway, not in Italy.

Statistics mention that female employment in Italy is by far the lowest of the 3 countries participating (even lower than the EU average) and consequently we read from the interviews that females do experience a glass ceiling in Italy, which is not mentioned in any of the 2 other countries. 3 Italian respondents claim the Italian business culture is still mainly a masculine world.

EU statistics state that female entrepreneurs generally have had some degree of higher education and indeed in our reference group we see that 8 entrepreneurs have a Bachelor Degree, 6 have a Master Degree (one of which a double Master Degree) and 1 a secondary school diploma. This gives the interviewed female entrepreneurs a clear profile of an entrepreneur with a general theoretical background, not necessarily in line with the business they want to start up.

From the results after the interviews we detect a strong internal motivation in the majority of respondents. All interviewed however, express a strong will to come to self-realization, be it either through the actual realization of a dream or the realization of their skills and qualifications (maybe gained in previous jobs as an employee, maybe discovered in comparison with the skills and qualities of the superiors they knew in previous jobs as an employee). They have the strong desire to find a balance between a career and a family and want to be their own time manager.

Summarizing these findings we can conclude that the interviewed female entrepreneurs show more similarities than differences, although they come from different countries with a different social culture. They all have a diploma or higher degree and they all look for self-realization in a business of their own, where they can be their own boss, combining both professional and business life the best they can.
CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

From our respondents it seems that the female entrepreneurs try to use their “entrepreneurial project” to take active control over their work/life balance. It seems that they try to combine the flexibility of self-employment with self-realization, family life, and a “sufficient” income. They try to minimize the financial risk through various strategies. Some combine available resources such as living or owning a firm with competences, business skills and the families’ need for someone to take main responsibility for the children. Others use the new possibilities available by low cost ICT and broadband solutions to run their businesses from home. It is also a pattern that some of the respondents use their experiences, competences, and market insight to set up a company on and of their own.

It seems that our hypotheses that women entrepreneurs have role models and idols is wrong. The respondents have different life situations and they use self-employment as a tool for self-realization at the stage in life where they are.

These interviewed female entrepreneurs have a clear view of their goal which is to come to self-realization in their business. In order to get there, they don't follow any example, and don't copy anyone else. Nor do they feel they have to compromise and choose between family life and career: they can have both.

Based on the preliminary findings in this paper there are several interesting possibilities for further research.

• Study self-employment using “a family with an entrepreneur” as the unit of analysis
• Study national policies for female entrepreneurship (self-employments vs. employees)
• Study the family of the female entrepreneur, since they play a crucial role in the drivers/barriers for the starting up female entrepreneur.
• Study more respondents from more European countries, in order to get a wider overview of data.
• Study the conditions per nation of employees and self-employed people: countries that offer a higher quality of life tend to have less entrepreneurs, since the benefits in the society / economic life are developed for the employees.
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ACHIEVING EMPLOYABILITY OF STUDENTS IN A CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

According to the World Bank, Kosovo is one of the poorest countries in Europe with a per-capita GDP of about 2,600 EUR. More than one third of the population lives below the poverty line, and 60% of those are young people. One fifth of the population in Kosovo is between the ages of 15 and 25, and the unemployment within that group is 76%. The poor quality of the education system, coupled with limited employment opportunities, makes it difficult for young people to access and retain jobs. In such an environment it is very challenging for a higher education institution to come up with a successful strategy that would result in producing highly qualified professionals that would get suitable employment. This paper’s objective is to verify the hypothesis that despite the challenging environment, it is possible to develop a high quality higher education institution in Kosovo that will produce qualified labour force, which will find suitable employment and thus contribute towards the economic development of Kosovo. In order to do that, research is conducted using several methods: labour market research, analysing job advertisements from Kosovo and three more Western Balkan countries; focus groups of stakeholders, mainly potential employers to identify their needs for human labour; and survey questionnaire with the first generation graduates from the International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM), from Mitrovica, Kosovo. The analysis shows that in order to be more employable in Kosovo and the Western Balkan region the students need:

- Theoretical concepts, and in the case of Marketing and Management students that is in the areas of: trading, sales, management, business administration, marketing, finance, internationalization, law, economics, statistics, entrepreneurship, project management, market research;
- Skills: IT, English language, communication, teamwork, organization, analysis, innovativeness, interpersonal skills, negotiation, project writing skills;
- Experience: ability to solve real life problems

The paper further elaborates a learning model used by IBCM which ensures that these needs of the potential employers for specific knowledge, skills and competencies are satisfied. The model combines explicit and tacit knowledge, as well as theory and practice. The case of IBCM using this model and giving positive results, finally confirms the hypothesis. The recommendations of this paper can be applicable for other similar schools in complex environments, such is Kosovo.

Keywords: Employability, skills, stakeholders, pedagogy, labour
INTRODUCTION
Kosovo is one of the poorest countries in Europe with a per-capita GDP of about 2,600 EUR, and an unemployment rate of 45%. More than one third of the population lives below the poverty line, and 60% of those are young people. One fifth of the population in Kosovo is between the ages of 15 and 25, and the unemployment within that group is 76%. The correlation between education and poverty is negative, with those having secondary or higher education much less likely to be poor. The number of unemployed university educated labour force doubled from 2003 to 2012. The poor quality of the education system, coupled with limited employment opportunities, makes it difficult for young people to access and retain jobs. Those who do find employment are typically hired into low-skilled, low-productivity positions, often in the informal sector. According to a survey by the World Bank, about 20% of employed youth did not have an employment contract, 37% were not entitled to paid leave, and 73% were not registered in the social security system. In such an environment it is very challenging for a higher education institution to come up with a successful strategy that would result in producing highly qualified professionals that would get suitable employment (World Bank, 2012).

This paper is verifying the hypothesis: despite the challenging environment, it is possible to develop a high quality higher education institution in Kosovo that will produce qualified labour force, which will find suitable employment and thus contribute towards the economic development of Kosovo.

The analysis should provide answers to the following questions:

- Which knowledge, skills and competencies are required in the Kosovo’s labour market?
- Is it possible that the higher educational institutions adjust their pedagogical concepts in order to bridge the gap between the requirements of the labour market and the supply of human resources by the Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in Kosovo?
- If yes, how should they do that?

METHODOLOGY
Several techniques were used to conduct this research. They are described below.

LABOUR MARKET RESEARCH
Labour market research was conducted in the period February - April 2012 (pilot) and again in January - June 2013 using web-sites where job openings for the Balkan region are advertised: www.ofertapune.com (Kosovo), http://duapune.com/ (Albania), www.najdirabota.com.mk (Macedonia), www.nadjiposao.rs (Serbia). In the pilot phase from 2012 a database of job advertisements relevant for graduates with marketing and management background was developed and 28 advertisements were randomly selected in order to analyze the specific skills and competencies required by the employers. In the research from 2013 a new database with 1237 regionally advertised job positions was developed from which special focus was given to 500 advertisements relevant for the marketing and management graduates.
STAKEHOLDERS MEETINGS (FOCUS GROUPS)
Focus groups were held with potential employers on 10 - 11 June 2010 and 17 - 18 November 2011. The groups consisted of around 20 participants holding important positions in their organizations: owners, financial, HR and marketing managers of production as well as trade companies and nongovernmental organizations. The purpose of the groups was to identify the skills and competencies employers require from their future employees.

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE
A survey questionnaire was distributed to the first generation graduates of the International Business College Mitrovica (attached in Annex 1) to learn about their experience with searching for employment. The questionnaire especially focused on what skills students discovered were required by their future employers and in which ways their school could help them in improving their employability.

ANALYSIS
FINDINGS FROM THE LABOUR MARKET RESEARCH
The Labour Market Research showed that from the relevant job advertisements for the marketing and management students the most advertised positions in the region are in the areas of trading and sales and then in management and consulting.

Great majority of the advertisements in the region require Bachelor’s degree. Some require Master's, while the least required is the AP degree.
Regional labour market seeks for graduates with knowledge in the business sector, marketing and sales, financial statements, international environment, legislation, market economy, statistical packages.

Experience is very important for the regional employers. 75% of the analyzed job advertisements require previous experience.
57% of the employers require IT skills from the candidates, primarily MS office and Internet knowledge. Especially good IT skills are required for the jobs in management consulting, banking and finance and HR.

Great majority (86%) of the employers require knowledge of the English language.
Most of them require fluent spoken and written English. Communication, teamwork, organization, analysis, innovativeness, interpersonal skills, negotiations etc. are the skills required in the regional labour market.
FOCUS GROUPS FINDINGS

The focus groups with potential employers resulted in the following findings:

• Entrepreneurship should be a compulsory part of the curriculum;
• IT skills should be an important learning objectives of the study programs;
• Other skills required by employers are: project writing, project management, raising funds, innovativeness etc.;
• Working on real life cases should be part of the class work, focusing both on production and service industry;
• Study visits to companies should be regularly organized for students;
• Companies should be involved in the implementation of the study program via their representatives as guest speakers in classes;
• Students should get practical experience during their studies in a form of internships under the mentorship of both, the college and the internship company;
• The way towards an entrepreneurial mindset should not go too fast for the students. They live in an environment where student-oriented, problem solving education is not common. Therefore the pedagogical approach should be adjusted to give sufficient time to the students to reach the entrepreneurial mindset;
• Educating future employees using European education standards will contribute in the development process of Kosovo;
• Offering part-time courses to working professionals could be an opportunity for market expansion and establishing cooperation with stakeholders;

FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

21% of all first generation graduates responded to the survey questionnaire. 33% of them already got their employment, and that happened during their final semester before graduation. These are some of the general findings from the survey:

• The employment is related to the graduates’ field of study;
• The graduates most often get their employment by their internship companies and sometimes they establish their own companies;
• The study at IBCM has helped the graduates mostly in the way that it required from them to have obligatory internships, which provided an opportunity to the students to apply and gain additional knowledge, skills and competences needed by the employers and finally transform their internship into a full-time employment;
• The skills that graduates think have been most useful in making them employed are: project management, English language, communication and organizational skills, sales, marketing, promotion, teamwork, market research;
• The graduates think that in order to help their students increase their employability the HEIs should have a strong Career office which should establish and maintain relationships with local companies and organizations;
• HEIs should maintain good quality standards and in that way gain positive reputation and trust and loyalty by the employers;
• The promotional tools used by the HEIs should also correspond to the image of a high quality, high value and trusted HEIs.

DISCUSSION
The general conclusion of the conducted analysis is that the economy in Kosovo is underdeveloped, which leads to a high degree of poverty and unemployment. However, employers exist that seek for qualified labour in order to grow their businesses/organizations. If HEIs can provide human resources with the knowledge, skills and competencies required by these emerging employers, and if those human resources are used by the employers in a proper way, economic growth may be initiated, which would then trigger a multiplying effect of more economic growth, less poverty and more employment.

The analysis shows that in order to be more employable in Kosovo and the Western Balkan region the students need:
• Bachelor’s degree
• Theoretical concepts, and in the case of Marketing and Management students that is in the areas of: trading, sales, management, business administration, marketing, finance, internationalization, law, economics, statistics, entrepreneurship, project management, market research;
• Skills: IT, English language, communication, teamwork, organization, analysis, innovativeness, interpersonal skills, negotiation, project writing skills;
• Experience: ability to solve real life problems

These findings suggest that in order to be successful the HEIs in Kosovo and its neighbouring region should provide to their students the above-mentioned degree, theoretical concepts, skills and experience. That means that the HEIs need a learning process model that will ensure this is in place.

One model of the learning process that is supposed to produce these results is the one suggested by Raelin (1997).

The model combines explicit and tacit forms of knowledge and theory and practice modes of learning. Tacit knowledge is the knowledge possessed by an individual, which is difficult to explain and articulate to others. Explicit knowledge can be explained in manuals, handbooks etc. and thus made accessible to others. Theory explains how processes are ideally executed, while practice presents how processes are in a fact executed (Ivergard, T., Hunt, B. 2008)
The resulting 2x2 matrix has four cells. “Conceptualization” is explicit knowledge processed through theory. In "experimentation", the conceptual knowledge becomes grounded. "Experience" is the practical application of tacit knowledge, and is required to reinforce the tacit knowledge acquired in experimentation. "Reflection" is required to bring the inherent tacit knowledge to the surface, to actually understand the meaning and gain the competence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explicit knowledge</th>
<th>Tacit knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>Conceptualization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IBCM adapted the model to its needs and circumstances and identified activities that would ensure the combination of explicit and tacit knowledge, as well as theoretical and practical learning:

1) CONCEPTUALIZATION- IN - CLASS LEARNING
   - Lessons provided by teachers
   - Students teaching on pre-defined topic
   - Exercises with theoretical concepts in every class
   - Real life examples provided by students in every subject
   - Guest speakers
   - Field trips

2) EXPERIMENTATION - IN - LAB LEARNING
   - Real life cases as exercises in all teaching
   - Compulsory assignments related to real cases in each compulsory course element
   - Group work and individual oral presentations

3) EXPERIENCE - IN - FIELD LEARNING
   - Guest speakers presenting real life problems for which students should propose solutions
   - Field work and research as part of compulsory assignments
   - Semester projects where students in groups visit companies and work to solve real companies’ problems
4) REFLECTION - COMPETENCE GAINING

- In-class reflection exercises
- Pre-exam tutorials
- Peer tutorial and review
- Evaluation and self assessment

Although Raelin (1997) states that this model should be used for learning at work, IBCM has been applying it as its pedagogical model and it has provided positive results having in consideration that around 30% of the first generation graduates found their employment even before the end of their studies. This is especially striking having in consideration the complex environment with low economic growth, high poverty and extremely high unemployment among the youth.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusion is that despite the challenging environment, it is possible to develop a high quality international higher education institution in Kosovo that will produce qualified labour force, which will find suitable employment and thus contribute towards the economic development of Kosovo.

The knowledge, skills and competencies required in the Kosovo’s labour market are:

- Knowledge, and in the case of Marketing and Management students that is in the areas of: trading, sales, management, business administration, marketing, finance, internationalization, law, economics, statistics, entrepreneurship, project management, market research;
- Skills: IT, English language, communication, teamwork, organization, analysis, innovativeness, interpersonal skills, negotiation, project writing skills;
- Competences: ability to solve real life problems

It is recommended that the HEIs in Kosovo and its neighbouring region use a pedagogical model that combines explicit and tacit knowledge, as well as theory and practice through different activities and teaching methods. The model and the methods should be based on continuously following the labour market needs and frequent meetings with stakeholders to keep up-to-date with their needs for human resources. Those findings should always provide a clear picture of the necessary theoretical concepts, but also the skills and competencies that should be provided by the HEIs though combined usage of conceptualization, experimentation, experience and reflection. HEIs should focus on establishing strong career offices which should establish and maintain relationships with local companies and organizations. They should maintain good quality standards and in that way gain positive reputation and trust and loyalty by the employers. The promotional tools used by the HEIs should also correspond to the image of a high quality, high value and trusted HEIs.
By following the above-mentioned recommendations the HEIs will be able to provide human resources with knowledge, skills and competencies needed by the current employers. Those at the moment are not many and are not very developed, but the human resources produced in this way can provide an impetus for the future development and multiplier for more economic growth, less poverty and more employment in the future.

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DESIGNING-IN STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT
This paper explores the construct of student engagement and how it can be designed into higher education modules. It considers the meaning of engagement and considers how the construct has developed and is still developing. The research approach is inductive and has the purpose of capturing emerging themes from the voice of the data. The methodology is grounded theory which allows for some theoretical framework but allows maximum freedom for the data to be the overriding voice. Data was coded and categorised; conceptual memos were produced and an iterative process was used to broaden and refine categories. Data collection methods were focus groups and conversations with groups of students based on an appreciative inquiry approach. A model emerged from the data and this is presented in the paper.

INTRODUCTION
Higher Education, across the world, is trying to grasp what student engagement means but to date the surveys and research that has been done has been in isolation to the rich research in engagement (including employee engagement) where debates between the differences in satisfaction, commitment, participation, involvement and engagement are better explored.

For instance, the currently piloted UK Student Experience Survey (Buckley 2014) explores participation rather than engagement and is based on a behavioural US model of engagement that if you are ‘doing’ something then you are engaged. The survey asks a student how many hours a week he or she works in groups and if this is high it is an indicator of engagement. However, it does not take into account whether this student learns anything from working in a groups and whether they enjoy working in a group. They are doing so because they are required to and they may be completely disengaged, mentally and emotionally, when doing so. This is said to be measuring engagement, the ‘doing’ of a task. However, this paper suggests that we need to consider engagement as much more than this if we are to make a difference to their lives and their education possibilities.

This paper considers it important to learn from the work on engagement from a social science perspective and also the work on engaging employees to help us understand what engages students as well. It is a different approach that from looking at students and the teaching setting and brings us outside of the confines of the classroom. We purport that there is benefit from looking at the broadest views of engagement and by so doing we bring those broader views into our work with students. Many students are already working and so employee engagement research is applicable and they have experience of how business tries to engage them. If they do not already work then we are preparing them for the world of work so again employee engagement research is helpful for us to prepare them.
Engagement literature considers the emotional aspects of engagement and focuses around bringing the ‘whole self’ including emotions into the work. The construct of engagement was first put forward by Kahn which he described as; “the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances.” (Kahn 1990, p. 694). Schaufeli et al define engagement “as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption.” The idea is that the individual is so absorbed in what they are doing that time flies. (Schaufeli et al, 2002, p. 74). To be engaged is to be in a positive state of mind and to provide effort willingly, “being positively present during the performance of work by -willingly contributing intellectual effort, experiencing positive emotions and meaningful connections to others.” (Truss et al., 2006). So engagement is both a ‘state’ and an ‘outcome’ and it is important to recognise both of these. Engagement is also related to meaningfulness of the work that the student or employee is doing. Employees today spend a good deal of time at work and are more aware of the contribution they make and the choices they have. Students are also more aware of how their studies are contributing to their futures. Psychological meaningfulness is an important construct that is related to engagement. It is defined as the ‘the value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to an individual’s own ideals or standards’ (May, Gilson & Harter, 2004, p. 14).

Students in higher education study voluntarily (Robert Pace 1982) and therefore whether they engage or not is voluntary. Some universities have attendance policies and this may help students to engage, after all, if they are absent they will find it difficult to understand what is going on in the course – even if they look at materials remotely and make attempts to engage. However, if students are forced to attend then it does not mean they will engaged with others in the classroom or even if made to through group exercises this does not mean they engage their mind or emotions.

So how can we measure student engagement in a meaningful way that is not just looking at when students attend, when they are put in groups, when they hand in work and other behavioural aspects that may not relate to cognitive and emotional engagement?

This is qualitative research as qualitative data is preferred as the aim is to gain understanding of perceptions and evidence of what constitutes engagement. Grounded theory methodology (Glaser 1967, 1992 and 1998) is used for data analysis as this aims to discover and this is an area of discovery.

Important questions are:
- “What is engagement, really?
- “What measures supposedly exist and how good are they at measuring engagement?
- “How do we ensure we are not, in fact, measuring other factors?”
- “Are there different levels of engagement, eg fully engaged, part engaged, disengaged, to consider?
- “How do we make a judgement of a different level?”
- “How effective is the two-way process of engagement?”
• “What are the different spheres of engagement eg the School: their programme, their tutors, their fellow students etc”.

The methodology for answering these questions must include engagement with students. After all, to research into engagement without engagement would be a contradiction of purpose.

One definition of student engagement is a student who exhibits three characteristics: (1) they are attracted to their work, (2) they persist in their work despite challenges and obstacles, and (3) they take visible delight in accomplishing their work (Schlecty 1994). This definition is helpful in that there is an emotional and intellectual aspect to the engagement. This definition is considering the outcome of being engaged so how do we design a programme that brings these outcomes.

**METHODOLOGY**

Evidence is at its clearest when students provide clear feedback about their experience of a learning programme/module/course. Evidence was collected through conversations with several different groups of students. The data was therefore qualitative statements. These statements were coded

And then focussed coding compared codes to each other and amalgamated, reduced and filtered them to develop substantive categories/themes. Throughout the process of coding and developing categories theoretical memos (reflective notes) were written after each discussion. "Memos are the theorizing write-up of ideas about substantive codes and their theoretically coded relationships as they emerge during coding, collecting and analyzing data, and during memoing" (Glaser 1998). These were used to name concepts, record ideas linking concepts, reflections on theoretical connections and recall particular statements that seemed to carry particular weight.

As part of this process the precipitated abstract categories were evaluated to decide what further sampling might be needed, eg different types of students, to get the fullest range possible. This process of theoretical sampling led to seeking conversations with other student groups and particularly looked for national cultural differences to make the findings more widely useable. This meant that from quite a lot of categories/themes, 6 key categories/themes emerged which sat at the heart of the data.

These factors were then designed into a master level module to see what students felt about the combination of these factors. The module that was used was a 48 hour contact time module which took place over 8 days and was run identically for two classes which consisted of four different groupings of students. All the students were working towards a master degree level qualification in Human Resource Management (HRM)

Class One:
• 9 Part-Time recently graduated Management Trainees working for the NHS
with
• 9 Human Resource Staff working for the NHS.
The management trainees were on a scheme where they worked in different placements in the NHS whilst attending block study.

Class Two:

- 8 International Full-Time Students (on a variety of Master Degree programmes)
- 8 Human Resource Staff from a variety of fairly local organisations attending one day a week.

**FINDINGS**

**RELATIONSHIP BUILDING**

This is where activities, particularly in the first sessions of a course, help students to build relationships with each other. Simply rotating students into 3s or 4s and getting them to answer a set question so that by the end of the class they have worked with, ideally, all the other students in the class is very effective. It increases a sense of belonging to a group and having a sense of responsibility towards each other’s learning and experience in the class. Because both of these classes were made up of groupings that already exist (which is often the case) it was interesting to see how integrating exercises impacted engagement. In class one there was no deliberate attempt on the part of the tutors to integrate the classes. Students were allowed to choose their own groupings. In class two the exercises mentioned above were rigorously used. When the two modules were compared there was a big difference in the way the students related to each other. Class one continued as two separate groups, always wanting to work with those they knew best whereas class two no longer had any dividing mechanisms in use. In class two there was also, as part of the integration exercise, an exercise in getting to know names. Each person was asked to
stick a label on themselves with their name as they like to be called, (often a shortened version of the name on the register), and then photographs were taken of them, as they were working in their 3s and 4s, and a powerpoint created which went on the virtual learning environment (VLE) for them all (including tutors) to access. It was easy to upload this onto phones so that students could check each other’s names and feel more confident with each other.

Four key aspects were important here:

• that the tutor must mix up the students because if the tutor lets them self-select their groups they will, for ease and comfort and in order not to offend, always select friends, even though they know that for learning purposes it would be good to meet other people
• photos are a really good way to get to know each other’s names
• that if integration work is not done early on when the class first meets it is very difficult to instigate afterwards.
• the benefits of mixing cultures and work experiences were evidence by the students.

RELEVANT & REWARDING ASSESSMENT

The first assessment for this module, the Boardroom Assessment, developed by Claxton and Rodgers in 2010 was developed in response to students saying that they did not have the confidence to speak out their views in a boardroom or senior meeting setting and it was holding up their job prospects and their career development. The assessment involves students in a group to discuss what they would do to save a failing organisation that was about to close making 5,000 redundant. They were to become experts in their field and show a funding body that they were the best team to save this organisation. The discussion is watched by the ‘funding body’ and professionally filmed, once as a practice and then after some time to reflect and watch their film, once to be assessed. Therefore, this assessment develops skills as well as knowledge and skills that the students can immediately put to use. The second assessment is the next stage in that individually they write an essay on what they would implement and how they would measure success. This design of assessment values all the effort that the student has put into the first assessment, not only by grading the first assessment, but enabling the student to use all that they have learned for the first to inform the second. This module, when reviewed for quality assurance purposes was highlighted as having a heavy assessment workload but this was contended and no student has ever complained of having too much to do because they can use all their hard work in a different way. Of course, this also links back to the factor of enforced reading because all the reading enables good performance for both assessments. This is what we refer to as constructive alignment in a module – there is a clear alignment of the work and the assessment.
An example of the filming of the assessment is in Figure 2 below.

![Figure 2: Professional Filming of Boardroom Assessment](image)

CRUCIALITY OF ATTENDANCE

The module, through the assessment process, was able to emphasise the importance of attendance because groups were selected early on in the module with an assessment half-way through. This meant there was peer pressure for group members to be committed to coming to class and to take note of the learning in the class so that they could be properly prepared for their group assessment. An early assessment has many benefits in that it helps the students to see a reason for working hard at the beginning of the module, it focusses really quickly on a clear purpose for their work and helps them to ‘gel’ in their groupings. With the acquiring of key knowledge early on in the module this provides a strong building block for later work in the module and an assessment at the end. Peer pressure is a powerful aid when it comes to attendance.

MULTI-SOURCE EXPERTISE

The module was designed so that different tutors were involved each for a particular reason. The module ran over 8 days – for class one this was in 2 or 3 days blocks and for class two this was one day a week. Being a management topic there needed to be the academic approach and also the practitioner approach. Some of the students were employees currently working in HRM so having up-to-date practitioners involved was key. Two guest speakers who were prominent leaders in the field took a half-day slot each – presenting their work and also engaging the students in case studies. Added to this, one of the team of tutors was a consultant so brought through the module the practitioner ‘real world’ emphasis. For the academic side there were two tutors who came from different disciplines which gave a richness to the academic input. There were some issues
around having so many tutors as there had to be care taken that repetition did not occur and that, being an academic programme, that the practitioner models etc, although valued as they were being used in industry, were not appearing in written work without due academic backup.

EMBEDDED ENFORCED READING
Feedback from a group of students, when they were presenting their critique of an article they were asked to review in a class exercise, was “this article was so hard to read that if you had not asked us to read it as a group and present it back we would never have persevered – it would have gone straight in the bin”. Students find reading really hard to do and especially academic articles, and yet this is what they need to do. By enforcing reading in class, by providing an article that none of the students have read before, and asking them to review it as a group using a critique template provided (which can then be used for all their reading) and present back a summary to the rest of the class, benefits abound. For the student they ‘push through’ with an article in a group when on their own they may have given up, they have to persevere because they have to present a review of the article, by the end of the class they have in their possession (and photos of the flipchart reviews are posted up on the VLE) a summary of five or six key articles for their subject, they have listened to a critique of those articles which they can now include in their assessment and so there is great purpose in this task. By repeating this exercise with articles grouped into topics and with the easier read articles first moving into more difficult articles later the reading and critiquing skills of the students develops and for them they are building a strong bank of resource ready for their assessments.

ENABLING HIGH QUALITY PROFESSIONALISM
Students who are employees, and some already managers and leaders, want their studying work to be equally as professional as their workplace. Students who aspire to work want to aspire to that level of professionalism and so enabling them to either keep up with the professionalism they are used to or experience it for the first time was important. This was not about professionalism from tutors in the way they managed the teaching and the professional presentations but this was about enabling students to be professional. The Boardroom Discussion practice (where students had a practice discussion at least two weeks before their actual, assessed discussion) was helpful in this respect. The Boardroom Discussion was filmed in professional studio and immediately after it was completed the students were given a DVD of themselves on film. This meant the students could watch themselves on film, in a very professional format, to help them prepare for their assessed discussion (which was also filmed). Even the way they were prepared for their filming by the technician who explained the prompts he would give them, gave them a feeling of being professional and of being important. This of course requires a particular resource but there are other ways that this can be accomplished. Another way could be for the students to present to local businesses on their premises etc as this would achieve the goal of enabling their professionalism.
RECOMMENDATIONS

QUESTIONS FOR TUTORS

The students in both of these classes, in all four groupings, reported this was the best module that they had experienced. It was designed around the 6 factors that had emerged from the feedback from students and the next stage is to create a detailed monitoring form to ensure that different groupings of students also respond to this model.

In order to do this tutors can look for evidence of engagement by asking themselves a set of questions. Using Kahn’s 1990 original definition of engagement; when “people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances,” the tutors can ask themselves what specific evidence would tell them that their students are:

• Employing and expressing themselves physically
• Employing and expressing themselves cognitively
• Employing and expressing themselves emotionally

Using the Truss et al (2006) definition of engagement which is “being positively present during the performance of work by willingly contributing intellectual effort, experiencing positive emotions and meaningful connections to others” the tutors can ask themselves what specific evidence would tell them that their students are:

• Positively present in the performance of the work?
• Willingly contributing intellectual effort?
• Experiencing positive emotions?
• Making meaningful connections to others?

Using Schlecty (1994) as a guide the questions the tutors can ask themselves what specific evidence would tell them that their students are:

• attracted to their work?
• persistent in their work despite challenges and obstacles?
• taking visible delight in accomplishing their work?

Using the May et al definition for psychological meaningfulness as ‘the value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to an individual’s own ideals or standards’ the tutors can ask themselves what specific evidence would tell them that their students can see:

• the value of their study goal?
• how the study goal relates to their own goals?
SUMMARY

There is much work to do in the area of student engagement. This paper urges us to consider engagement in its widest terms and learn from the work that has been done on employee engagement as students are either already employees or seek to become employees and in particular are likely to take up leadership roles and therefore will need to know how to engage the staff they lead. The model suggested here, creating by engaging students in the research, is a starting point for designing-in engagement. Once the model is in place it is important to have an ongoing conversation with students using the models and questions provided here and others that are appropriate. Each group of students in different and have their unique factors so it is about understanding what is meaningful for them.

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ENHANCING UNDERGRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY BY USING CLOUD COMPUTING TO DEVELOP AN AUTHENTIC LEARNING EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

Heightened undergraduate student expectations of their teaching (UK Universities, 2013) and a desire to embed employability skills in the curriculum calls for innovation in assessment (Barlow, 2008). This paper considers the benefits and challenges of using a cloud-based wiki/portfolio tool (Google Sites) as part of an innovative assessment for first year undergraduates studying a Business and Human Resource Management Degree in a UK university. The paper captures how professional body requirements and pedagogical drivers related to student engagement influenced the design of the assessment. Additionally it considers the role of support resources, levels of student engagement in pre-work, their reactions to the assessment and their attainment as well as pedagogical factors related to formative feedback and marking complexity.

KEYWORDS

Cloud Computing, Employability, Authentic Learning, Student Engagement

INTRODUCTION

This paper evaluates the development, teaching and assessment of a first year subject within an undergraduate BA Business and Human Resource Management (HRM) degree programme at Sheffield Business School (part of Sheffield Hallam University). It outlines how a new module team of two academics and a learning technologist developed an employability related assessment using Google Sites technology.

Initially, it is important to contextualise the UK universities sector which has seen significant changes in recent years. Student fees were introduced in 1998, and were followed by a series of small but incremental rises to £3290 per annum by 2010/11. The Higher Education sector then experienced the withdrawal of significant levels of public funding. This led to universities being given Government permission to charge up to £9,000 per annum for student fees to fill funding...
gaps. A consequent concern for universities was a belief that students would have increased expectations when it comes to their university teaching and learning experience as a result of these higher fee rates: "Higher tuition fees mean higher student expectations across all aspects of the teaching and learning experience" Universities UK (2013, p12).

A second factor driving enhancement in pedagogical practice within the UK is the National Student's Survey (NSS). All UK universities take part in the survey, the results of which are published nationally and are used by students to help them select the institution they would like to attend for their degree. Factors evaluated within the survey include 'assessment and feedback' (Unistats, n.d.). One approach to enhancing student feedback (ranking) is suggested by Barlow (2008) who believes that using Web 2.0 tools allows the learning to take place independent of location and time, the implication being that students can access their learning at a time that is convenient to them and not their institution, a view supported by Ladner et al. (2004).

A third factor that students evaluate when considering their university and degree choice is future employability. A UK Government body, the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) produces the ‘Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey’ (HESA, n.d.). The survey asks students to identify (six months after they have completed their degree) whether they are employed, studying, both or neither. This information, freely available via the HESA website, is seen by students entering Higher Education as a barometer of their future employability and as a consequence may impact upon course and institution selection.

One final factor is that in the UK, fewer university students are working alongside studying for their degrees (in 2002 the employment rate for students was 45%, in 2011 it was a little over 30% (Thompson, 2013)) and as a consequence they are less 'work-ready' when applying for graduate roles post qualification. Our university recognises this and consequently has a strong focus on employability, its vision for 2015 is to be "known for the quality of our teaching and learning, with a particular commitment to education for employment" Sheffield Hallam University (n.d.).

A series of focus groups run with second and final year students studying this degree found that students felt unprepared for getting a placement in HR. They did not recognise the HR components within the business subjects they were studying as they were not specifically labelled as HR subjects. As a consequence of this we were tasked with creating and teaching an engaging HRM subject to first year students that would help them to develop their employability skills in advance of their second year when they would be making applications for year-long placement (paid work) opportunities which would take place between their second and final year of study.

We were aware that many entry level Human Resource (HR) vacancies required the ability to utilise IT systems, whether to process employee data, or to provide employees with web-based information and e-learning. Indeed the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), the HRM professional body in the UK, suggests that for Band One, the entry level of their 'Profession Map', HR professionals would spend their time 'Providing information, managing data, process delivery' (CIPD, n.d.). This suggested to us that to enhance student employability there was a role for the development of students’ digital literacy within this module.
We needed to be assured however that using technology would also help us to deliver our learning outcomes. This concern was addressed by Carini et al (2006) who consider online tools to be one of the best predictors of learning and personal development outcomes. The work of Lohr (2010) also suggested to us that enhanced use of technology in the classroom could act as a positive influence upon student engagement.

As we had clear professional body and pedagogical drivers for the use of technology, we then needed to decide upon our overall approach to the module. Our module design was heavily influenced by a desire to enhance student employability through ‘authentic learning’ (eg Renzulli et al, 2004 and Herrington et al, 2007). This is supported by Salas et al (2009) who suggest that SBT [Simulation Based Training] would enable the development of employability related skills by giving “students the hands-on practice they need before they enter the corporate world” (Salas, 2009 p559). We also recognised that we needed to design an appropriate assessment as Lombardi (2007) suggests, authentic learning needs to be accompanied by appropriate assessments.

Our approach was not without concern, indeed Craig (2007 p153) states that “a substantial percentage of faculty remain sceptical of the value of technology in the learning process”. However, we took the view of Bull et al (2008) who suggested this lack of confidence may be due to a lack of knowledge and appropriate research recommendations around the use of alternative media which may limit academics’ engagement with online learning. This paper therefore seeks to address this gap in knowledge identified by Bull et al (2008) by examining our experience of using a cloud-based wiki/portfolio tool (Google sites) for undergraduate student assessment. We explore in the next section, how we developed, taught and assessed our subject during the first year of its delivery.

**METHODOLOGY**

From the very beginning we wanted to signpost to the students that our subject was there to develop their future employability and so we named the subject ‘People Management’ which is the name of the magazine published by their future professional body (the CIPD). We told them that we had designed the teaching and assessment to help them develop the skills necessary for entry-level professional roles. This approach is supported by Yorke & Knight (2006) who suggest that undergraduate courses need to reflect the job market in a more coherent manner.

The subject assessment required teams of students to develop a HR intranet site (for use by Line Managers) in a simulated company of their own creation. Students were asked to work together to clearly brand their website and create a HR ‘voice’ for their company making sure that it was an authentic representation of the vision, mission and values of the company that they had created. More specifically, students were required to independently create 3,000 words for their own specialist content area (eg recruitment and selection), while maintaining brand consistency with, and reference to, the specialist content areas of others. We believed this design offered us a number of benefits. First, it prevented social loafing (eg Latané et al 1979), as students were only assessed on their own content, not on the content of others. Second, it enhanced employability
skills as students were working in teams to resolve a problem while at the same time using a range of IT skills. Additionally, students developed specialist HR knowledge of their own content area. When developing links to the content of team colleagues, they gained an awareness of other specialist areas and could better identify the requirements for effective vertical and horizontal integration of HR operations. They also gained a more nuanced awareness of the importance of contextualising their work to the needs of specific line managers and organisations. To maintain an appropriate level of academic rigour - students were also asked to produce a 1,000 word 'academic rationale' were they used appropriate academic research to support their design decisions, their approach to online learning and finally their selection of specialist HR content.

While confident of the pedagogical vision for the assessment design and associated employability skills development, the academics within the team were concerned about their own technological skills and whether they would be able to adequately design and support the technological infrastructure needed for the assessment. Fortunately, Sheffield Business School has recognised that pedagogical innovation sometimes requires expert support and as a consequence employs a team of learning technologists to support academics and encourage innovation. It was this joint team of academics and learning technologists that took these ideas forward.

It was with the help of the learning technologist that we selected a free Google App [Software 'application'] called Google Sites as the technological basis for our assessment. This is a free cloud-based wiki/portfolio tool, that enables the user to create simple websites in collaboration with others. We had permission to trial this approach from our institution as Sheffield Hallam University were seeking to pilot the use of Google Apps for Education as part of their desire to offer a leading edge learning experience to their students.

One of the decisions for us was how far to 'scaffold' (Vygotsky, 1978) the students use of the technology. Our options were to simply point the student to the technology, point them to a website template within the technology, or create a template that would support their assessment. We elected to create a template that would support their assessment - so students were able to focus more on content and e-learning approaches than website infrastructure. We did this because our students are not IT students, but Business and HR students who may well be working a long way outside of their existing capability/comfort zone and we wanted to assess their performance against their learning objectives, not against aspects of technological mastery.

The subject was delivered over a full academic year comprising two semesters of equal length. Students were given an hour lecture every two weeks on specialist content areas. The lectures were either delivered by the academic team or by guest lecturers brought in to add a practitioner perspective to the academic discourse. Seminars were also delivered bi-weekly, so the students experienced a lecture in week 1, seminar in week 2, lecture in week 3, seminar in week 4 and so on. Lectures were delivered to the whole course (27 individuals) made up from two seminar groups with 13 and 14 students respectively. To support the assessment we embedded guidance throughout the programme and developed a range of resources (available via the University's
Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) aimed at guiding students through the technology. They included:

- Screencasts of aspects of the technology being used.
- Short written ‘How to?’ guides
- A discussion forum with themed areas relating to different aspects of the technology.

The first year students were introduced to the subject and their assessment during their first lecture. We attempted to explain, via their subject guide, that the IT skills they would be developing would help them to gain a paid year-long placement with an employer between their second and final year of study. Additionally, we framed the assessment as an authentic task. Instead of an assessment question, students were given two emails. The first email was from the HR Director to the Head of HR requesting the building of a HR intranet site. The second, was from the Head of HR (the student’s ‘line manager’) to the students (as new members of the company’s graduate scheme) tasking them with this project. The subject guide also offered extensive supporting advice that indicated to the students how they should approach the task, but not what they should do. Feedback during this session suggested that students were really excited at the prospect of doing something different from their school-based assessments.

The second seminar with the students involved selection of work teams. Students were given a choice of their own team mates as long as there was mixed gender and cultural representation. We felt that the need to specify group composition requirements was important because without it students’ self selected groups tend to be overly-homogenous (Jalajas & Sutton, 1984) and consequently not representative of the workplace. Of course we had the option of simply allocating students to groups, but given expected unfamiliarity with the assessment we wanted to encourage student to engage with the assessment and Mello (1993) suggests self selection encourages ownership of the problem. Students were then asked to read around the specialist areas to identify subject preference(s) before the next seminar.

Seminar three required students to agree with their group colleagues which specialist areas each person would cover. There was no duplication of specialist areas within each group; just as there would not be two sections on diversity management, for example, in a single company’s intranet portal. We also saw this as a simple way to avoid collusion. Students were also tasked with starting to create their company and its brand and to finalise this before the subsequent seminar (and IT lab).

The next two seminars comprised IT lab sessions, both of two hours duration, based in a computer room. The first lab had students working in their teams on their website infrastructure. Students were required to bring along their company brand to this session so they could embed it into their website. The second IT lab session had students working on their own content area. The session was focussed on the use of external ‘apps’ to support website interactivity. For the second lab session, students were required to bring 2 pages of their own content ready to upload. Both lab
sessions had accompanying worksheets to support student learning and act as a reference guide. They were co-delivered by an academic and a learning technologist working together to ensure clear and consistent subject-matter and technical advice regarding the assessment.

The last seminar of the first semester was a formative feedback session. We integrated formative feedback into our curriculum as we wanted to use it ‘to shape and improve the students’ competence by short-circuiting the randomness and inefficiency of trial and error learning’ (Sadler, 1989, p. 120). Students were required as a team to demonstrate their initial site and personal content areas to the academic team, learning technologist and other groups in their class. Race (2007) suggests that lecturers should consider providing feedback in a group format so that students can learn from the strengths and challenges of others, and that it also makes them feel less isolated when making mistakes. Consequently, this formed the basis of our approach. Indeed, Ashford and Tsui (1991) concurs with this view and suggests that formative feedback helps weaker students to understand their own progress and receive support to improve their submission. We were very open and honest with our feedback both on the content (academics) and design (learning technologist). It was important to us to provide formative feedback because of the novelty of the assessment and, as Song and Keller (2001) suggest, we wanted to motivate our students to higher levels of effort and application by showing them the gap between where they were at that point in time (half way through the academic year) and where they needed to be for their final submission.

Seminars in the second semester guided the students through application of HR content, their own Continuing Professional Development requirements as future HR practitioners and the approach required for the assessed academic rationale. We held a second formative feedback session prior to submission, when we expected most students to have developed their content. We felt this was essential as they had much of the second semester to become distracted from the purpose of the assessment, indeed we hoped that our approach to formative assessment would produce the “significant and often substantial learning gains” suggested by Black and Wiliam (1998 p144). We deliberately arranged this second formative session rather differently to the first. Groups were given a specific time slot and asked to present their sites to just the academics and learning technologist. We did this to remove any temptation to plagiarise the work of others, which may have happened if students had been able to look at the finalised content area of others with the same specialist subject area.

Assessment submission was two pronged. Students were asked to copy and paste the information from their websites and put it into a ‘Word’ document alongside their academic rationale. We asked the students to do this for two reasons. Firstly, so that we had a hard copy of their final website at submission deadline and therefore if there were any technical issues, or if students continued to ‘play’ with their sites beyond the deadline we had a fixed point in time that we could identify as assessment completed. Secondly, to control for plagiarism. We were concerned that it might be a little too tempting for first year students to just copy from someone else’s website to their own, so we asked students to submit their Word documents via turnitin which is an online plagiarism checking device.
FINDINGS

DELIVERY

There were low levels of utilisation of the range of support resources we had developed for students. The discussion board was not used at all, instead the students emailed appropriate members of the teaching team directly. Academics were emailed about content decisions, the learning technologist on points of technical difficulty. We were surprised by this as it was a longer process than using the available screencasts which clearly demonstrated solutions to their problems.

Despite requests to work between seminars on elements of the assessment, particularly in advance of and between the IT seminars the vast majority of students attended without having undertaken any of the required preparatory work. This had an impact upon the amount of technical input that was covered during the sessions. For example, students were still discussing elements of company approach and branding rather than arriving with this completed and planned, which meant that they were unable to start immediately upon their site build.

Neither formative feedback session was particularly well attended, nor well prepared for. Additionally, some students did not act upon key elements of formative feedback offered before submission of their final summative assessment.

Additionally we were surprised when some of the feedback we had given at the mid-way point of the academic year had not been acted upon for the final submission.

Marking the assessment was complicated. We were continually flicking between the students' website, 'Word' submission and their individual feedback forms, all on the same screen at the same time. We have identified a solution for our next delivery, and this will be outlined in the discussion section.

STUDENT FEEDBACK

Student feedback was obtained via formal university processes (a module [subject] evaluation questionnaire). The students are asked to rank the following 8 statements:

STATEMENTS (MODULE = TAUGHT SUBJECT):
1. In this module the lectures helped me understand the subject
2. In this module the seminars / lab sessions were interactive
3. In this module I have developed new skills that will be relevant to my future career/employability
4. In this module digital technologies have been used to support my learning
5. In this module I felt well prepared to tackle the assessment tasks that were set
6. In this module the feedback I received on assessed tasks was helpful to my learning
7. The staff on this module were enthusiastic about what they were teaching
8. In this module I have been able to access the library resources I required to support my study (e.g. books, journals, audio visual, online resources)
The outcome of student ranking can be found in Figure 1. A range below 1 is strongly disagree with the statement, between 1 and 2 is disagree, between 2 and 3 is agree and between 3 and 4 is strongly agree with the statement. Thirteen students completed the questionnaire, just under half the students studying the subject.

![Figure 1: Student responses to evaluation questionnaire](image)

Students were also able to provide written feedback to support their evaluations. Comments related to the learning support were entirely positive, for example when the students were asked to identify the most positive aspect of the learning experience, their comments included:

"The teachers, they are enthusiastic and engaging, that had a dramatic effect on my learning compared to other modules. The module is taught well and the teachers are able to keep me interested and enjoying the subject."

"Having the support of my lecturers throughout the whole of the first year which make it easier to understand the module and also enjoy it"

Comments on the assessment varied. When asked for the most positive aspect of their learning experience responses included:

"Using Google sites to write about my subject"

"This module has improved my communication skills working in groups"

"The way the module was taught was straight forward, to the point and clear instruction of what needs to be done for the assessment"

"The structure of the assignment (website) plan is well organised. Step-by-step process helped me learn"
However, three students wanted greater assessment clarity:

"Clearer assessment"

"More help with the assessment, explanation of what to do"

"More milestone tests - this would make the assessment more clear"

Two students indicated the 'stretch' that was involved in undertaking a new form of assessment:

"In all honesty having to create a website make it a little less easier (sic) and required more creativity."

"Creating our own intranet has been very tricky"

One individual questioned the relevance of the assessment:

"Change what we are assessed on eg write an essay rather than a website. I don’t get the connection. We are not IT STUDENTS!!!"

We hope to evaluate the impact this module has had on student's ability to secure a placement. As yet it is too early to tell as they are only part way through their second year and are still applying for placement positions. However, one student gained a summer internship just 4 weeks of completing his first year. He told us that his future employer had offered him the role due to his HR website building experience!

RESULTS

The subject names in Table 1 have been changed to make the content clearer to readers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECTS:</th>
<th>PEOPLE MANAGEMENT</th>
<th>STATISTICS</th>
<th>EMPLOYABILITY AND ORGANISATIONAL BEHAVIOUR</th>
<th>MARKETING</th>
<th>ECONOMICS</th>
<th>FINANCE AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASSESSMENT TYPE:</td>
<td>WEBSITE &amp; WRITTEN ASSESSMENT (ACADEMIC RATIONALE)</td>
<td>GROUP PRESENTATION, WRITTEN ASSESSMENT (REPORT) &amp; EXAMINATION</td>
<td>GROUP PRESENTATION, WRITTEN ASSESSMENT (PORTFOLIO) &amp; EXAMINATION</td>
<td>GROUP PRESENTATION, WRITTEN ASSESSMENT (REPORT) &amp; EXAMINATION</td>
<td>WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT (REPORT) &amp; EXAMINATION</td>
<td>WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT (REPORT) &amp; EXAMINATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARK 70% +</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 - 69%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>48.5%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 - 59%</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 49%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LESS THAN 40%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Breakdown of student attainment for all first year subjects
People Management ranked 2nd for the highest number of students achieving a first class award (+70%) for a subject. Conversely it had the greatest number of students in the lowest pass category (40-49%) by some significant margin.

The marks that students gained within their individual groups was extremely varied, with some groups seeing a 40% swing in marks.

**DISCUSSION**

Within this section we attempt to address all of the themes highlighted in our results section. We also highlighted changes we have made between the first year and our current cohort of students (who are half way through their academic year) to offer some additional suggestions for academics and learning technologists considering using this approach.

**SUPPORT RESOURCES**

There was a distinct lack of utilisation of the support resources that we had provided. Consequently, we found the ranking of 3.31 out of 4 (see Figure 1) for digital technologies used to support learning somewhat surprising. We imagined the Facebook generation taking to the discussion board (situated in the VLE) to resolve their issues and share good ideas. Frankola (2001) suggests that we were wrong in this assumption; why would students use the VLE if other services are either more innovative or easier to access? Indeed students found it easier to contact us directly via email with questions than watch recordings, search through guides or share ideas and approaches via the discussion board. We see this as having both positive and negative dimensions, positive as it demonstrates students were very happy to contact us for support (we saw this as a sign that we had developed positive rapport with the students and this is supported by the illustrative comments in 3.3 above). However there were negative resource implications. While this was manageable with a small cohort of students this would not be feasible with significantly larger numbers.

As a consequence of our learning, for our second year of teaching we are using a survey tool (a Google Form) that exists on the VLE and captures student queries. This form enables us to identify themes and then we are able to create bespoke responses (often via screencasts) that are signposted to the all students and hosted on the VLE. We are hoping this will help them to engage with the VLE resources that already exist and reduce the volume of emails.

**ENGAGEMENT IN PREPARATORARY WORK**

We were disappointed by the lack of required preparation for the IT lab sessions. Some of it we put down to the transition from formal school education in the UK to the university environment. In school 'homework' is graded and not team based. We were asking our students (within the first few weeks of their university career) to come together to generate agreement and content when there was no clear 'How to..' and no mark attached.

As we enter our second year of delivery, we have formalised the creation of the Company brand into a 'Company Philosophy' document that students are required to complete before they
are given permission to begin creating their websites during the IT lab. This has generated an increased level of preparation amongst the students. We also hope that it will encourage the few students who saw the assessment as technology exercise to recognise that it is the application and contextualisation of the technology and the content that we are marking.

FORMATIVE FEEDBACK

Neither of the formative feedback sessions were particularly well attended. We believe one issue was timing. The initial formative session was immediately before Christmas holidays at the end of the first semester and many students went home early. The second (and final) formative feedback session was during a period when students had multiple assessment submissions and we suggest that they were more focused on submission deadlines in other subjects than obtaining formative feedback in our subject.

Again we were puzzled by students' evaluation of feedback, it received 3.46 out of 4 in review questionnaires (see Figure 1). This must have related to formative feedback as the students had not completed their final assessment when the survey was undertaken. Rust (2002) suggests that lack of engagement in formative feedback should not be surprising and Higgins et al (2002) suggest that this might be because although students see the feedback as important they are not really sure how they are supposed to 'use' it. We wonder whether our first year students fell into this category and whether we should consider the recommendations of Osmond et al (2005) who suggest that encouraging students to explore the role of feedback through classroom discussions is particularly useful in helping them to recognise the benefit of formative feedback.

Attendance for formative feedback remains an issue. The second year is currently in progress and we have again seen poor attendance for formative feedback at the end of the first semester but this time in just in one of the two classes. The first class is delivered earlier in the day than the second class on the final day before annual holidays. We anonymously surveyed students to find out if this made a difference. Within the well attended class, 9 of 11 when asked why they attended wrote 'to receive feedback' and 4 out of 11 wrote 'responsibility to others the group'. The few who attended from the other class gave similar reasons for their attendance. Of the 10 responses from non-attenders in the second class, seven of them cited travel arrangements as reasons for non attendance, followed equally by absence of other group members, or the fact that they had not done the work beforehand. It seems that we need to consider moving this session away from the week before annual holidays because while a few may fail to see the benefit, a more considerable issue seems to be domestic arrangements.

MARKING COMPLEXITY

We had not really thought about how we were going to practically mark the assessment when we designed it and as a consequence were challenged in navigating between a number of screens to review the assessment and produce written feedback. We have decided as a module team to use screencasts to capture our feedback for this second delivery. Screencasts record computer
screen activity and can be accompanied by real-time audio commentary. Research by Oblinger (2008) suggests that students often use images to interpret meaning when reviewing web pages, and we are hoping that by being able to actually see our experience as a 'user' of their websites, students will be better equipped to engage with the feedback.

One point remains a concern for us. We are offering feedback on both the website component of the assessment and the academic rationale. Within the current curriculum our feedback on the academic rationale will be useful for further assessments. However, we wonder whether students will actually benefit from our website feedback as part of their continued university studies. Lea and Street (2000) suggest that there is little benefit to feedback if it only relates to a single piece of work. While we see the feedback as enhancing future work-based experiences there is no link to further course content. We believe that this is a fundamental challenge for any pedagogical innovation that is not programme-wide. Why would students actively work hard to engage in developing a skill, and use their feedback to further enhance their capabilities, if they have no further opportunity to apply them?

STUDENT REACTIONS

Student feedback on the module was positive, which is pleasing to see. However, there were a number of strong messages related in particular to the assessment. While some students clearly enjoyed it and were engaged, others were less engaged with the experience.

Students were asked in their module [subject] evaluations if they were well prepared to tackle the assessment tasks that were set. This achieved a ranking of 3 out of 4 (the borderline between agree and strongly agree), the lowest ranking of any statement. This is of some concern. As a consequence of this we have changed our approach in the second year. For the first seminar the new students were given lecture content and demonstrations by students who had achieved high grades from the year before. Being able to visualise the potential outcome of the assessment, and to hear about the challenges involved in personal organisation, preparation and team working seems to have strongly resonated with the new cohort. Indeed one of them has already approached the module team to ask if he can demonstrate his site next year. We have said yes as long as he gets a great mark!

It was also possible for us to see from the statistical feedback that while students tended to strongly agree with the module's relevance to their future employability (3.23 out of 4), in the narrative feedback some students more clearly indicated an inability to see the relevance of the module. The assessment design and purpose had been explained by their lecturer at the beginning of the academic year however it clearly did not resonate for some students. For us this was a major concern, as our experience agrees with the research of Hidi & Renninger (2006) which suggests that interest can be created and maintained if the students are able to see the value of what they are learning. So, for the second year of delivery we have included entry level HR job advertisements into the subject guide that accompanies the teaching. This provides hard evidence from high profile employers of the need to have the skills we are aiming to develop amongst our students. We have also had support from a global nutrition, health and wellness
company with food and beverage brands very familiar to our students. Two members of their HR team came in and demonstrated their HR intranet site. We elected to do this as Cox & King (2006) suggest that the use of a guest speaker can embed employability as part of the student’s learning experiences. The guest lecturers positioned the strategic role of their HR intranet in the delivery of HR support to line managers and also provided our students with very clear indicators that the skills they were developing during their assessment were fundamentally important to entry level HR professionals. Additionally, the organisational representatives were around 4 - 5 years into their HR career so were able to talk the student’s language. We are hoping that this time around it is really clear to students why they are undertaking this assessment.

STUDENT ATTAINMENT

While we were pleased that students were able to achieve the highest classification for their work, we were really concerned that our subject (when compared to other first year subjects) had, by some significant margin, the greatest number of students in the lowest pass category (40-49%). This could relate to two factors, the first, assessment unfamiliarity, the second that joint group work improved the marks of weaker performers. A review of the assessment types for all of the other modules illustrates assessment approaches that students would be familiar with from school. Indeed in the student feedback one student asks ‘why can’t we write an essay?’ Graham Gibbs (n.d.) suggests that students need to experience an assessment type more than once if they are to become good at it.

One aspect of the assessment that we are particularly pleased about however is the spread of marks within individual student groups. This means that students have not been limited, or disproportionally supported, by the work of their team colleagues. We had students within the same team achieve a first class pass and fail their assessment at first sit. We had found a way to overcome an unfair distribution of marks due to social loafing, an issue identified by Dyrud (2001).

We hope that levels of attainment will be higher in the second year of delivery given the work we have done to engage the students in the assessment including a revised subject guide containing job adverts; student and employer guest speakers; and, our revised approach to learning resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

While we have embedded many recommendations within our discussions section there remains a concern. We are currently running this programme for 47 students across two seminar groups. We also work very closely as a team. We are not sure at this stage how scalable our approach is to major subjects within a Business School. We therefore recommend that anyone undertaking this approach for the first time consider the size of the cohort that they are teaching.

The academics within the team were (and to some extent still are) unfamiliar with the technology. There is a real need to have expertise within the team for the module to run successfully and this has resource implications. As Mariani (1997) suggests the bigger the challenge for the learner, the more support and scaffolding is needed to extend learners’ capability.
Within the UK university system, assessments from the first year do not count towards overall university classification. This also offered us the comfort that we needed to introduce this change. We recommend where possible innovators look for a low-stakes opportunity for their first venture for both themselves and their students into this new and really exciting challenge. We would also encourage its continued use into further years of study to enable students to demonstrate their continued skill development.

REFERENCES


FOSTERING OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT STUDENTS LEARNING IN ACCOUNTING COURSES

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ABSTRACT
Students capable of continuous learning for development of skills necessary for professional competence in length of time become professionals able to flexibly adapt to the society and business progress. The study focuses on fostering professional bachelor’s Business and Management study programmes students’ learning and assessment in basic Accounting courses. Thus the paper examines educational theoretic implications in the students learning process. Besides the coherent analysis implemented on the population of the students who have recently taken scheduled Accounting courses at Business Management Faculty of Vilniaus Kolegija/ University of Applied Sciences is presented. The paper as well provides insights for further research in the study area.

KEYWORDS
accounting, assessment, competence, learning, skills, students

INTRODUCTION
Following the strategies of education in European Union creation of a “second” higher education sector, composed by higher education institutions (hereafter HEIs) oriented towards professional education, was mainly motivated by educational concerns to improve the quality of professional tertiary education (Lepori, 2008). In line with the Republic of Lithuania Law on Higher Education and Research (2014) provisions in Lithuania same as in other European Union countries non-university HEIs have been granted the right of primary educating future business professionals within the pale of professional bachelor’s business and management study programmes. Certain basic accounting (hereafter accounting) courses mostly hold a relevant place in the former.

Accounting courses commonly have been marked as a dry” study subject, stuffed with structured definitions of technical terms, complex rules and standards, uninteresting “number crunching”, and the “knowing” of concepts (Springer&Borthick, 2004). Variety of surveys conducted in accounting learning/teaching in HEIs had shown that quite a few students from all majors begin their accounting courses with great trepidation, having heard about its difficulty along with high demand in possession of mathematical skills. Students’ evaluations of these courses happen to be lower than for those more related to their chosen study majors (Rahman, 2006). Accordingly, accounting courses are often considered a challenge to teach to any major students, especially in pursuance of ensuring an effective environment for their learning (Springer et al., 2004; Struyven et al., 2010; Watty et al., 2010; Stivers et al., 2011; Turner, 2011).
The study focuses on fostering professional bachelor's business and management study programmes students’ learning and assessment in basic accounting courses. Thus the paper examines educational theoretic implications in the students learning process, especially within the accounting study area. Besides the coherent analysis implemented on the population of the students who have recently taken scheduled accounting courses at Business Management Faculty of Vilniaus Kolegija/ University of Applied Sciences is presented. The paper as well provides insights for further research in the study area.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Sound researches, that have been conducted in learning theory and in particular allowed to recognise learning styles diversity among students, supposed to facilitate changes in accounting courses aimed at balancing the conventional content teaching with constructivism learning, turning the passive learning environment into the livelier one, finally, preparing various major graduates for the challenging working environment.

Initial interest in learners’ differences impelled the rise of scholarly studies in learning and/or cognitive styles. In the latter decades learning styles have being more and more seriously considered in the teaching and training world. According to Adetunji (2004) “learning style” seems to emerge fairly as a common term or a replacement for cognitive style term in the 1970s. Indeed, the impression that is formulated in the usage of these terms is that those working on “learning style,” take cognitive style into consideration but would describe themselves as interested in more practical, educational, or training applications and thus are more “action-orientated,” while the term cognitive style has been reserved for theoretical and academic descriptions.

B.B. Fischer and L. Fischer in the article “Styles in Teaching and Learning”, published in 1978 in journal “Educational Leadership”, defined the style as hypothetical constructs which help to explain the teaching-learning process. It refers to a pervasive quality in the behaviour of an individual, a quality that persists though the content may change. In every field of endeavour, people can be identified with distinctive qualities of behaviour that are consistent through time and carry over from situation to situation (Adetunji, 2004). Among the scholars who have seen the practical educational, both in teaching and in learning, or training, application of learning styles one of the most significant is David A. Kolb, the creator of the Experiential Learning Theory (hereafter ELT).

ELT, introduced by Kolb in 1984, is constructed to develop a holistic model of the experiential learning process and a multi-linear model of adult development. According to Kolb, ELT is based on the works of prominent scholars who gave experience the central role in their theories of human learning and development, especially: John Dewey, William James, Carl Jung, Paulo Freire, Kurt Lewin, Jean Piaget, Carl Rogers. ELT is built on six propositions shared by the above-named scholars.
In short:

1. Learning is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes.
2. All learning is relearning.
3. Learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world - reflection and action and feeling and thinking.
4. Learning is a holistic process of adaptation to the world [that] involves the integrated functioning of the total person - thinking, feeling, perceiving, and behaving.
5. Learning results from synergetic transactions between the person and the environment.
6. Learning is the process ...where social knowledge is created and recreated in the personal knowledge of the learner (Kolb & Kolb, 2005).

Kolb defines learning as the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience. Two dialectically related learning modes of grasping experience – Concrete Experience (hereafter CE) and Abstract Conceptualization (hereafter AC) - and two dialectically related learning modes of transforming experience – Reflective Observation (hereafter RO) and Active Experimentation (hereafter AE) - are delineated in ELT. Thereby experiential learning is a process of constructing knowledge that involves a creative tension among CE, RO, AC and AE learning modes that is responsive to contextual demands. This process is portrayed as an idealized learning cycle or spiral where the learner according to Kolb “touches all the bases” - experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting - in a recursive process that is responsive to the learning situation and what is being learned. Immediate or concrete experiences are the basis for observations and reflections. These reflections are assimilated and distilled into abstract concepts from which new implications for action can be drawn. These implications can be actively tested and serve as guides in creating new experiences. ELT anticipates that the described “idealized” learning cycle will vary by persons' learning style and learning context.

ELT developmental model defines three stages: (1) acquisition, from birth to adolescence, where basic abilities and cognitive structures develop; (2) specialization, from formal schooling through the early work and personal experiences of adulthood, where social, educational, and organizational socialization forces shape the development of a particular, specialized learning style; (3) integration in midcareer and later life, where non-dominant modes of learning are expressed in work and personal life. Development through these stages is characterized by increasing complexity and relativism in adapting to the world and by increased integration of the dialectic conflicts between AC and CE and AE and RO. Development is conceived as multi-linear process based on a person's particular learning style and life path - development of CE increases affective complexity, of RO - perceptual complexity, of AC - symbolic complexity, and of AE - behavioural complexity. Because of particular life experiences and the demands of an environment, learners develop a preferred personally patterned way of choosing among the four learning modes and resolve the conflict between being concrete or abstract and between being active or reflective.
Much of the Kolb’s research on ELT has been focused on assessing individual learning styles, using the Learning Style Inventory (hereafter LSI) which originated in 1969. The continuous research and observation of the patterns of LSI scores enabled Kolb to identify four learning styles that are associated with different approaches to learning - Diverging, Assimilating, Converging, and Accommodating (Kolb & Kolb, 2005).

People with CE and RO as dominant learning abilities have Diverging style. In formal learning situations they prefer to work in groups, listening with an open mind to different points of view and receiving personalized feedback. People with AC and RO as dominant learning abilities have Assimilating style. In formal learning situations, they prefer readings, lectures, exploring analytical models, and having time to think things through. People with AC and AE as dominant learning abilities have Converging style. In formal learning situations, they prefer to experiment with simulations, laboratory assignments, and practical applications. People with CE and AE as dominant learning abilities have Accommodating style. In formal learning situations, they prefer to work with others to get assignments done, to set goals, to do field work, and to test out different approaches to completing a project.

The abovementioned four basic learning styles are shaped by transactions between people and their environment at five different behaviour levels – personality types (hereafter PT), educational specialization (hereafter ES), professional career (hereafter PC), job type (hereafter JT), and adaptive competencies (hereafter AdC). Therefore, ELT defines the learning style as a social psychological concept that is only partially determined by PT, but is influenced by specific demands of ES, PC, JT and AdC.

Learners’ specialization in the realms of higher education studies influences their orientations toward learning, resulting in particular relations between learning styles and early professional education. While studying in HEIs under a certain study programme students are induced by faculty to adjust inherent learning styles through developing suitable AdC or skills. As it was identified by Kolb, the Diverging style is associated with Valuing skills: relationship, helping others, and sense making. The Assimilating style is related to Thinking skills: information gathering, information analysis, and theory building. The Converging style is associated with Decision skills: quantitative analysis, use of technology, and goal setting. Finally, the Accommodating style encompasses a set of competencies that can best be termed as Action skills: leadership, initiative, and action. Figure 1 summarizes relationship of learning modes, learning styles and some behaviour levels. Please note that all illustrations in the paper are composed by the author.
LSI mainly fulfils two purposes: (1) to provide a research tool for investigating ELT and the characteristics of personal learning styles; (2) to increase understanding of the process of learning. The latter has been nominated by the author as the primary purpose. Increasing learners’ awareness of how they learn, or their capacity for meta-cognitive control of personal learning process, enable learners to monitor and select learning approaches that work best for them in different long-life learning situations. Moreover, by providing a language for talking about learning styles and the learning process, LSI can foster conversation among learners and educators about how to create the most effective learning environment for those involved.

Having grew up in constructivism ELT has been widely accepted as an expedient framework for learning-centred educational process development and life-long learning. Since its appearance there have been many studies on ELT and LSI especially. By 2005 a bibliography of research on Kolb’s ELT/LSI included over one thousand entries. Although classification by field is not easy as many studies are interdisciplinary, addressing learning and educational issues in several fields, around 43% of studies were conducted in Education (including higher education and adult learning); 21% in Management; 10% each in Computer/Information Science and Psychology; 7% in Medicine; 6% in Nursing, 2% in Accounting, and 1% in Law (Kolb & Kolb, 2005).

There have been many studies that applied ELT/LSI to understand and manage differences between student learning and faculty teaching styles in order to improve the educational process in HEIs. Jointly these studies suggest that educators need to adapt their teaching styles and instructional methods to facilitate the learning process by offering a variety of learning opportunities appropriate to different student learning styles and to different subject matters. Faced with a situation in which the learning styles of the faculty and the students differ, educators should use instructional methods valuable to the students but not necessarily appealing or intellectually rewarding to themselves. Herewith faculty should foster students’ adaptive flexibility to alter their learning styles in response to the learning demand of a specific learning situation.
To the extent that the students’ learning preferences are respected, it is also important for the students to develop their abilities to shift their learning strategies to match the demands of a particular study subject or area.

Mainly there have been two streams in ELT/LSI research activity in accounting education. One has been focused on using ELT/LSI to design instruction in accounting and studying relationships between the learning style and performance in accounting courses. Studies in the stream enabled scholars to stress that for the experiential learning to be effective both for faculty and students, the instructors need to be properly trained in the design and delivery of the experiential curricula. Special research concluded that students in the experiential learning accounting classroom may have formed a better understanding of the concepts, thus successfully retaining knowledge better than in the lecture class. Studies as well showed that sensitivity to differences in learning styles in instructional design may be warranted, even though assessment of an individual’s learning style is problematic.

Developed in constructivism by Howard Gardner, the Multiple Intelligence Theory (hereafter MIT) has been widely accepted and implemented in the educational practice. Gardner (1983) proposed the eight intelligence modalities: logical-mathematical; visual-spatial; interpersonal; intrapersonal; naturalist; verbal-linguistic; bodily-kinesthetic; musical-rhythmic and harmonic. Withal he strongly opposed the idea of labelling learners to a specific intelligence. Any learner usually possesses all eight intelligences, although has his own particular mix of intelligences, with some dominating over others.

ANALYSIS ASSUMPTION, METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

Actually not only the “number smart” students, in virtue of MIT the learners with dominating logical-mathematical intelligence or agreeably to ELT/LSI the learners with dominant AC mode or Thinking skills, can make headway in accounting studies. Thus it seems reliable that in a duly operated accounting course students’ achievements are not substantially related to possession of mathematical skills. To verify the given assumption frequency and correlation analyses have been prosecuted using SPSS Statistics and Microsoft Excel software on total population of 135 students. The students completed scheduled accounting courses at Business Management Faculty of Vilniaus Kolegija/ University of Applied Sciences in the autumn term 2014-2015, having passed mathematics courses formerly. Therein 83% of the population were studying at business and 17% - at management study programmes. More data on the students grouped by study programmes and gender is given in Figure 2.

![Figure 2. Students having completed accounting courses by study programmes & gender](image-url)
Usually in HEIs of Lithuania students are evaluated using ten-point grading scale (SKVC). The pass grades for a single course are: 5 (sufficient), 6 (satisfactory), 7 (highly satisfactory), 8 (good), 9 (very good), and 10 (excellent). Thus, the range for the analyzed data lies between minimum grade of 5 and maximum grade of 10.

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Table 1. Frequency analysis indicators of students performance in Mathematics and Accounting courses assessment

The frequency analysis data is submitted in Table 1 and Figure 3. Overall student’s achievements in mathematics were low with 38% in grade 5 and 24% in grade 6 of total grades units. This enables to point out that majority of the population are not learners with dominating mathematical skills or agreeably to ELT/LSI learners with dominant AC mode. The same students’ accounting grades in general were higher with 36% in grade 7, 34% in grade 8, 12% in grade 9, 6% each in grades 5, 6 and 10 of total grades units. Thus the accounting grades’ histogram is about normally distributed, while the Mathematics grades’ histogram is positively skewed.
The correlation analysis data are provided in Table 2. Considering that calculated Significance level (2-tailed) value of 0.01 is below the determined 0.05 level, it can be stated that there is a statistically significant correlation between tested variables of accounting and mathematics grades. Based on the calculated 0.22 level of the Pearson correlation coefficient, it could be concluded that accounting and mathematics grades are positively correlated. Herewith according to Guilford (1956) relationship between the studied variables should be considered as indicating small but definite.

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<td>SIGNIFICANCE LEVEL (2-TAILED)</td>
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</table>

*- Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 2. Correlation analysis indicators of students performance assessment in mathematics and accounting courses

Although students with possession of mathematical skills inherently more receptive to the knowledge of accounting, in a properly operated accounting course students’ achievements are not substantially related to mathematical skills. In such a difficult course of business and management professional tertiary education like accounting, it stands reasonable that faculty need to ensure for students with diverse dominant learning styles (frequently learners with non-dominating mathematical skills) a benefitting learning environment to maintain their concernment in the subject and the perception that solid performance is achievable despite personal “number crunching” abilities.

CONCLUSIONS

Present-day accounting educators need to adapt their teaching styles and instructional methods to facilitate the process of Business and Management students’ learning of Accounting by offering a variety of appropriate experiential learning opportunities to the students with diverse dominant learning styles (frequently learners with non-dominating mathematical skills as it is shown in the implemented coherent analysis).

For the teaching/learning to be effective the instructors need to be aware of recognising students learning styles and to be qualified in the design and delivery of the experiential curricula. It will from one side warrant sensitivity to differences in students learning styles on instructional level and from the other side foster students’ adaptive flexibility to alter their learning styles in response to the learning demand of accounting specificity. Benefitting learning environment in turn will maintain students’ concernment in the subject and the perception that solid performance in accounting learning is achievable.
REFERENCES


ACTIVATING TEACHING METHODS

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ABSTRACT
The modern university world and continually developing technology bring challenges in teaching. The atmosphere is changing, and teachers should be more like instructors than traditional lecturers. In order to support and facilitate students’ learning, teachers are encouraged to use activating teaching methods. At the same time students become more and more independent in their studies. Interaction is the modernity, and therefore also activating and innovative teaching methods should be used instead of traditional lecturing.

Universities of applied sciences also have the responsibility to make sure that students not only gain sufficient theoretical information but also sufficient practical skills for working life. A large amount of work is interaction between people, so this should be taken into consideration already during studies and students should be encouraged for group work and communication. Activating teaching methods enable different learners to communicate in different ways, spur group work and interaction.

The objective of this paper is to illustrate the role of activating teaching methods by presenting some examples of them. In the theoretical part, the teaching-studying-learning-process at a university of applied sciences level is illustrated.

KEYWORDS
activating teaching methods, pedagogy in university of applied sciences studies, innovating teaching

INTRODUCTION
In my short history in teaching I have noticed a change in atmosphere and teaching methods. Technology brings its own challenges for today’s teaching, but there is also a wind of change blowing for methods used for teaching.

When I started as a teacher in 2009, I had no idea what were “activating teaching methods”. I was used to traditional lecturing. When I started my teacher studies, I was surprised to learn new methods like brainstorming or a learning café. I realized that these methods were not only interesting but also extremely educative. I started to use them in my own teaching. Slowly I started to adapt some new methods and today my mission is to make all my lectures activating and not to use PowerPoint-slides.

Experience has showed that different styles of teaching help different learners. Activating methods help students to process information and in best cases combine theory into practice. Students are also more motivated and enthusiastic when they can do something instead of just listening. While listening, they can easily loose their interest. Activating methods also allow students share
their opinions in class and make them participate in discussions. Almost always students also remember better these lectures, during which something “happens”. In my article I will present several different methods how to make teaching more activating and reflect these methods into the pedagogical theory. In the end conclusions are presented.

**PEDAGOGY IN UNIVERSITY TEACHING**

The Finnish Act of Universities of Applied Sciences (A352/2003 §24) defines the role of teacher as follows: besides teaching the teacher must 1) develop teaching of his field and take into consideration the development and requirements of working life; 2) take part in creating curriculum and student selection; 3) take care of R&D tasks as ordered by the university of applied science; 4) take part in training and education required by the university of applied science and be involved in working life; 5) take care of administrative assignments.

Teachers are encouraged to use a more open and interactive teaching styles besides traditional lecturing. The focus in teaching has indeed changed from traditional lecturing to more interactive methods. Studying becomes all the time more and more independent, while the student himself is deciding the pace and amount of work. Therefore a teacher must give the opportunity for different learning events and guide independent studying besides expert-driven teaching, and also support the learning process of the student (Laakkonen 2003, 276). The most basic feature in the teaching-studying-learning process is interaction. Along with studying, the active role of the student is emphasized (Kansanen et al. 2000, 11).

An increasing and important amount of graduate time is spent in interaction with other people. We appreciate the need to train effective listeners, negotiators, collaborators and investigators. These abilities need to should be included in our curricula, learning and teaching methods. (Cowan 2006, 137)

Based on Kansanen et al. (2000), teaching does not necessarily lead to learning. So teaching can be teaching without learning or there can also be learning without teaching. There is always some factor that is steering thinking and processing information, also in self-studies. Learning by nature is unconscious. We learn and make remarks all the time without means of willpower or decision. This should be taken into consideration while planning lectures. Interaction between a teacher and a student aims at learning, but doesn’t necessarily lead into it. A learning process can only be steered to the right direction. Learning always requires some activity, some form of studying. It is doing something, exercising, practicing, thinking, but at school this occurs in the realm of the curriculum.

Putting students into the center of the curriculum and enabling them as soon as possible to take responsibility for what happens in class means putting to the side a whole host of sentimental and well-loved conceptions of teaching. A curriculum centered on student learning rather than on imparting information changes the environment, changes the idea and the job of teaching, and ultimately changes the kind of people who teach in universities. If you think about your best teachers, they were the ones who created the occasions for you to do it yourself. (Muscatine 2009, 11-12)
According to Muscatine (2009) bringing off the new job of teaching will require widespread faculty acceptance and learning of a new pedagogy that replaces “telling” students with empowering them to think. This is what activating teaching methods aim to do.

People tend to learn most efficiently when
- they are trying to solve problems that they find intriguing, beautiful or important
- they are able to do so in a challenging yet supportive environment in which they can feel a sense of control over their own education
- they can work collaboratively with other learners to deal with problems
- they believe that their work will be considered fairly and honestly
- they can try, fail, and receive feedback. (Muscatine 2009, 13)

In activating methods learning happens often with the help of discussions. The teacher gives some subject and by making questions keeps the focus on the subject. Everything happens so that students are the ones talking and thinking teacher just keeps the conversation in the right track. In a way teacher is teaching with his mouth shut. John Dewey (in Muscatine 2009, 17) thinks that students learn, not by being told, but by having experiences and then reflecting on them.

The demand for interaction at a working environment is increasing at all fields, also in engineering, so it shouldn’t be seen important only in social sciences or humanities. Universities of applied sciences have the responsibility of educating their students. In traditional lecturing sometimes we give everything too “ready chewed”, while in activating teaching methods students are encouraged to make discoveries and their own conclusions and innovations. As said above, this might lead to learning even with better results than in traditional lecturing. In the next chapter some examples of activating teaching methods will be presented.

**ACTIVATING TEACHING METHODS IN MY OWN TEACHING**

The first methods I used were the ones I learned during my teacher studies. Little by little I have adopted some new methods and have started to use more and more activating methods in all of my classes. First methods that I used were silent brainstorming and a learning café, which are both fairly easy to use. Other methods I use are e.g. mind mapping, excursions, puzzles, games, films and the loop. I also have some very good experiences from learning diaries which I have used as a part of the evaluation process at some courses.

When starting to plan lectures in a new way, it requires time and effort from the teacher. First the basic work has to be done as before, but then also one must figure out which method would work in this case, with this class and with this theory. Naturally there are always some subjects that you just have to teach with traditional lecturing, activating methods are not automatically suitable in every situation. It might also be difficult and time consuming to use these methods in the beginning. Therefore it might be good to start with something easy like a learning café. Based on the feedback from students, it is a very effective and liked method. Not all students love these
methods, some resistance to change might appear. Sometimes it is also not clear why this precise method is used, so the teacher must use time and effort while planning lectures and methods to be used. It must be clear what the goal and purpose are.

DIFFERENT METHODS

The more one uses these methods, the easier it becomes to use them and to learn new techniques. It is also fairly easy to use activating methods while teaching such a subject that is familiar to the teacher. Although there are dozens of different methods and only the sky or the creativity of the teacher are the limits, I have decided to present here only some of my favorites.

LEARNING CAFÉ

Students are divided into small groups, and each group is given a question to be answered. They will discuss this subject and write down their thoughts. After some time, teacher shouts “switch” and the groups switch places so that everyone gets a new questions. This method is good for such a subject which students are supposed to have a lot of empiric experience. When each and every group has answered to each question, all the questions and answers will be discussed with the guidance of the teacher. At this point the teacher has the opportunity to underline some issues or add some important information. This method takes about 45-60 minutes depending on the group size and the amount of questions. It is easy to share the information to students e.g. via Moodle or some other internet based learning environment with the help of modern technology. This method can be a bit challenging for the students in the beginning, but soon they become talkative and active. I have received a lot of positive feedback about this method.

THE LOOP

The loop is an excellent way to teach almost any theory. This a little bit demanding for the teacher and requires a lot of work beforehand, since the subject of lectures is divided into questions and answers. The teacher must plan carefully all questions and then the answers so that it is not too easy to guess which are a pair, but also not too demanding for the students since it is a new subject and they are not supposed to have any knowledge about it beforehand. Questions and answers are printed on cardboard and handed out to students in the classroom. It is the students’ task to find correct pairs and put them up to the board. If something goes wrong, they must try again. When all pairs are found, it is easy for the teacher to start a discussion about each pair. Other notes are not necessarily needed. It is very difficult to plan how much time the loop will take, since the same subject for different groups might take different time. Other groups are fast, others slow. Among students, this method is also very much liked.

GAMES

I use a lot of games at my lectures, usually at the end of the course as a kind of a summary from everything that has been discussed during the lectures. My favorites are the beer game, Lego Serious Play and “enterprise game”. The beer game is probably quite familiar to those who
are involved in supply chain management and logistics. The main idea of the game is to make students understand the bullwhip effect that happens when not enough information is shared among the participants of the supply chain. The game requires some preparations beforehand and the group size has to be small, since there is a chaos in the classroom while playing, and the teacher needs to run here and there to assist players.

Lego Serious Play is extremely good for problem solving. In this game all participants get their own lego blocks, and they need to make different kinds of constructions based on the teacher’s instructions. Everyone has to plan their own solutions, and every solution will be discussed. So also the silent information will be heard with the help of lego blocks. Usually all students like playing games, but Legos divide opinions. Some love them, others hate.

SILENT BRAINSTORM

I use silent brainstorm mainly as guidance to the subject. It is easy to give some question that students silently start to think about and write down their thoughts. Then papers are switched, and they can see what others have thought. I have noticed that this method doesn’t open up for students. They don’t understand why this task is done and what is the objective.

MINDMAP

This is very easy method and can be used for teaching almost any theory. First the key word is written to the board, and then during the discussion subparagraphs are written so that they branch from the key word (see picture 1). Then from these subparagraphs other subparagraphs are written down and finally the board is full of information about the lecture. Mindmapping is a very easy way also for the students to make notes during lectures, and therefore I like to teach this method for them at an early stage of studies.

![Picture 1. Example of a mind map that handles well-being at work. Picture: Anna-Stiina Myllymäki](image)
GALLERY PROMENADE

This method is fairly new for me. In the gallery promenade students are divided into small groups (the aim is that there are as many students in a group as there are questions). Each group is given some subject, maybe even a ready-made theory that they need to learn. They have some specific time to do this. Then they are divided into new groups, and they need to walk around in the classroom and answer some questions. The idea is that in every group there should be only one student who knows the subject of the question and is able to answer this particular question. This student must teach the subject for all the other students in his group since they know nothing about it. When the group has walked around the entire class and answered all the questions, all members of the group should have been both students and teachers, and everyone should have comprehensive knowledge about the theory of the day. This method is quite demanding for students, and almost always they would require more time for internalizing all new information to be able to teach it properly for others, and to remember all the new things they heard from others.

SUMMARY

Teachers are supposed to develop their teaching. This development also includes the usage of different methods. Teaching becomes all the time more and more interactive and requires not only inputs from students but also adaption from teachers.

While getting more experience in teaching, I have started to use more and more activating methods. I also try to find and test new methods every now and then. Sometimes everything goes wrong and nothing works, but mainly I have only positive experiences and the feedback from students has also been positive and encouraging. It helps when the ground work and planning are well done. Still one must remember that what suits one doesn’t necessarily suit another. The teacher must have an eye for situations and students to know which methods can be used and when. Sometimes it is better to use traditional lecturing and PowerPoint-slides. Activating methods bring some change for students’ and teachers’ day, and often these lectures seem to run out of time. Nevertheless they are also best remembered and encourage students for independent work.

REFERENCES


WORK INTEGRATED PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTING EDUCATION - DEVELOPMENT OF A PROFESSIONAL INTERNSHIP MODEL

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INTRODUCTION

Changes to professional accounting labour and work roles have created new intersections between professional accounting bodies, Universities and employers. Johnson (1972) asserts that there is an increasing dependence on large organisations to provide professions with work (p.85). With rising numbers of people obtaining a degree, the value of a degree is reduced in social terms (Mayhew et al, 2004).

Therefore, in order for graduates to access opportunities of graduate work, employers must feel that graduate labour is enhancing the human capital value of their organisation. The knowledge gained at university by graduates is separate and distinct from the knowledge gained during a professional education (Annisette and Kirkham, 2007). Employers are looking for graduate employability (Boden and Nedeva, 2010). Those “aspiring accountants” that either possess prior experience of working within the firm they are applying to, or those that demonstrate the most potential for a seamless ‘fit’ (Chatman, 1991) are most likely to be recruited to professional work roles.

The model of professional competency assessment implemented adopts Biggs (1996) principle of constructive alignment to map learning outcomes of the BA (Hons) Accounting and Finance course with the performance objectives of the professional accounting bodies. A work programme has been developed with Financial Services that is to be undertaken by the students on the internship. Importantly students receive professional accreditation on their work experience, prior to entry into the graduate labour market. They will also develop a portfolio of re-usable, re-purposeful evidence of their professional practice and competency to help them access future professional work opportunities.

RESEARCH AIM

This paper outlines the process through which the author has gone about developing the model of work integrated assessment to be piloted in September 2015.

Rather than just creating work opportunities for students, the author is focused on providing internal professional work opportunities in which students will achieve professional credit for the work that is undertaken. Principally this approach means that tasks undertaken in the workplace can be used to design learning objects and other course related tasks.
The author is researching in the area of the assessment of professional competency of aspiring professional accountants. One of the propositions determined by the literature review and ongoing interviews with key social actors associated with professional accounting is that professional competency is too narrowly defined and should incorporate the assessment of professional capital (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012). “Capital relates to one’s own or group worth, particularly concerning assets that can be leveraged to accomplish desired goals.” (2012, p.1).

The internship model that I will present is scoped using the current professional competency assessment frameworks used by the professional accounting bodies that our undergraduate degree is most aligned to; namely Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), (although there is some overlap with ICAEW/CIMA). This forms part of the human capital aspect of professional competency and it is within this context that the paper is presented. Human capital is associated with the development and application of professional skills and competencies.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

Social structures and labour roles in professional accounting have changed dramatically in recent times, leading to fewer accounting and finance undergraduate students accessing professional accounting work roles.

CHANGES IN PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTING INCLUDE;

1) Occupational control - 85% of all ICAEW contracts in 2014/15 were offered by Big 4

2) The government is once again being vociferous in their championing of apprenticeships and vocational training. The leading vocational accounting body AAT states on their website that the “government is committed to recruiting 75,000 new apprentices by 2014.” (AAT website)

3) The increasing marketization of higher education has led to an increase in numbers of school-leavers entering the profession via the training route rather than the graduate route. Alvesson and Wilmott (2002) explain as school leavers are easier to train and control, they are more likely to give increased opportunities to impress identity work. They can undergo specialised tasks as part of their initial period of development (professional socialisation) and in doing so go through the development process and become a qualified professional

4) Growth in professional body sponsored degree programmes – “traditional Universities,” (Newcastle University, Lancaster University, Durham University, and Birmingham University) offer accounting and finance programmes in partnership with professional bodies.

5) Accounting professions and organisations within the profession recognised the value of graduates as a source of high quality trainees. Gammie and Kirkham (2008) have explained that accounting firms frequently use degree classification as a means of selection purposes. However, the balance of influence between employers and universities has changed. The knowledge gained at University by graduates is separate and distinct from that gained in a professional qualification (Annisette and Kirkham, 2007). Sikka et al (2007) explains that nowadays accounting courses offered by Universities overlap with professional exams that trainees are required to take in order to become a chartered accountant.
Students who are already professionally socialised through placements and sponsored degree programmes are accessing professional work more readily. Organisations are hiring talented people of the right ‘fit’ (Chillas, 2010). 30% of aspiring professional accountants employed on ICAEW contracts, already worked for that employer (Graduate Market 2014 High Fliers Report).

The government are seemingly keen to promote the growth of graduates,’ stating that the role of the university in developing a “highly skilled and entrepreneurial workforce” (BIS, 2012, p.7). Yet they are undoubtedly championing and promoting the vocational route into professional work and have been mentioned already - incentivising the taking on of apprentices and lower skilled staff to undertake professional tasks. As a result, new pay scales have been created and it is event that there is a degradation of graduate work in professional accounting firms.

**THE CHALLENGE**

One of the factors which ensures students within the talent pipeline being sought out by organisations is the degree to which they have been professionally socialised prior to accessing those work opportunities.

**B.A. (HONS) ACCOUNTANCY & FINANCE**

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*Figure 1: BA (Hons) Accounting and Finance students’ conversion rates for placements*

The research informs us that notwithstanding the preference for non-graduates (vocational route) and graduates from other disciplines (Hunt, 2007); that a large proportion of aspiring professional accountants recruited to do professional work in accounting firms will have already worked for them on a placement or internship. In addition to this, is the increasing number of school-leavers recruited to do work historically undertaken by graduates.

So – we need to look at alternatives. That is other organisations in which professional work can be accessed prior to graduation. We do not have to look much further than our own University. It is a learning organisation (Senge, 1990), employing 3,500 staff, many of whom work in centralised professional services such as Financial Services, Marketing, HR, Computing Services to name but a few. Yet as an institution, although historically we have offered placements and graduate positions across our centralised services, this practice is very ad hoc and intermittent. As a learning organisation, it is important that knowledge is created and transferred through internal networks of which our students are the most integral part. The interactions that students have with professionals within the University should be framed in way that shapes effectively and enhances the professional socialisation and development of professional identity of our students.
THE MODEL

It is principles based model, in order to have a degree of flexibility which enables it to be used across a range of integrated activities such as short term placements, internships, annual placements and graduate scheme.

1) Define terms and associated benefits

You need to be able to articulate and market what is being offered. It is really important to align it to a corporate objective, feature of the institutional strategic plan or current initiative. However, I had to be very clear that this proposal was not part of the institutional implementation and was a different offering but that some of the same benefits would accrue.

Examples (taken from December 2014, SMT briefing paper);

“Designed to improve Employability pathways for Leeds Beckett Students, generate reputational benefits for our University and drive institutional cost-efficiencies.”

“This scheme will produce substantive pre-employment experience for students within University support functions and provide structured, cost-effective resourcing to University Departments, many of which currently draw on significant amounts of ad hoc temporary human resource.”

“This scheme complements and aligns closely with the recently approved Leeds Beckett Management Training Scheme by providing a future talent pipeline for the University’s professional support staff.”

2) Provide a clear rationale and evidence base to support the benefits for the institution.

1) It was recently highlighted to CMT in the Management Trainee Scheme proposal; analysis of our workforce profile indicates that just 4.4 % of staff is currently in the age range 16-25 with 31.4 % of our workforce over 50 years of age. So, as well as harnessing the potential of young people within the Institution there is an opportunity to demonstrate employer best-practice in our Employment age profile.

2) This analysis suggests that:

- there is a high level of demand for resource across several departments, sufficient to warrant planned schemes which could incorporate structured internships
- there is scope to drive efficiency through better coordination of this resource utilisation
- University departments have capacity to deploy student internships without on-costs, given the existing costs incurred in implementing temporary resources.
- Internships could be paid at market rates – with consequent positive reputational effects
- the following departments have particular opportunity based on current usage patterns:
  - Financial Services
  - Human Resources
  - Estates
This was followed up with an analysis of pay spent on casual work, agency staff etc. across the areas - this formed the basis of the business case – I provided evidence to support the business case.

Below is a snapshot of the temporary rather than contractual hours being used in different Faculty functions.

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<td>878.25</td>
<td>685.00</td>
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<td>CARES</td>
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<td>70.00</td>
<td>73.00</td>
<td>119.00</td>
<td>334.50</td>
<td>387.00</td>
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<td>142.00</td>
<td>209.50</td>
<td>550.50</td>
<td>530.75</td>
<td>324.00</td>
<td>145.00</td>
<td>59.25</td>
<td>122.00</td>
<td>297.75</td>
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<td>ESTATES</td>
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<td>864.50</td>
<td>85.00</td>
<td>459.00</td>
<td>461.00</td>
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<td>76.50</td>
<td>146.00</td>
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<td>FBL</td>
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<td>464.50</td>
<td>217.25</td>
<td>115.75</td>
<td>130.50</td>
<td>167.50</td>
<td>95.50</td>
<td>35.50</td>
<td>190.00</td>
<td>153.50</td>
<td>162.50</td>
<td>147.00</td>
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<td>FINANCE</td>
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<td>0.00</td>
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<td>347.50</td>
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<td>HSS</td>
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<td>230.00</td>
<td>648.50</td>
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<td>774.75</td>
<td>1459.00</td>
<td>1346.75</td>
<td>511.25</td>
<td>2764.00</td>
<td>2547.75</td>
<td>849.25</td>
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<td>OTHER</td>
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<td>1347.25</td>
<td>902.00</td>
<td>1566.25</td>
<td>1116.00</td>
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<td>1446.50</td>
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<td>TOTAL for Month</td>
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<td>5202.5</td>
<td>3532.75</td>
<td>6476.25</td>
<td>7468.50</td>
<td>4610.00</td>
<td>4685.00</td>
<td>6394.00</td>
<td>7213.75</td>
<td>8099.50</td>
<td>8202.75</td>
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<td>Annual Total</td>
<td>8284.75</td>
<td>10.99%</td>
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<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Taking these factors into account it is proposed that an Internship Programme (part of a wider, Integrated Work Programme) should be introduced (with a phased implementation) leading to the following benefits:

- Further positive adjustment of our workforce age-profile, promoting diversity.
- Clear and structured opportunities for Student acquisition of valuable work experience, leading to improved Employability levels.
- Departmental efficiencies by reducing reliance on ad hoc temporary resourcing.
- Reputational benefits from a communicable programme of fairly-paid Internships.
- Student opportunity to acquire formal accreditation from certain Professional Bodies.
- Providing Interns with an introduction to working within certain professional specialisms and disciplines.
- Providing Interns with an introduction to Higher Education working in a non-academic setting.
- Identification of potential high achievers for University talent acquisition in Administration.
- Generating synergies with our Graduate Management Trainee Programme.
All of these were cited as benefits of proposed professional work based internships.

3) Other activities;

1) Scope out the offering - this was done via conversations and negotiations with Financial Services - need to be prepared to compromise. We are looking to offer 10 work integrated opportunities over the next 18 months in Financial Services. However, we are piloting with 2 placements from September to see what works and what does not.

2) Set a clear budget and associated cost savings for each work integrated activity - this should be agreed beforehand - seek advice from University accountants if needed to or use the institutional costing tool - I was very clear that this should not be treated as “cheap labour.”

Anticipated costs:

• £5,100 per intern (net) would be required to deliver this scheme based on a pay rate of £11.50 per hour for a proposed 12-week Internship at 37 hours per week.

• Additional setup and administrative costs of £500 per intern would be required to cover training, supervision and administration in each department.

• Additional communication and marketing costs of £2,000 for the scheme.

• Recruitment/Appointment costs of £500 per individual.

3) Clearly map workflow/activities and work products against professional body competence framework over the timeframe of the work based activity.

4) Clearly identify a process by which assessment will be undertaken - diarise meetings with supervisors, set clear agendas for discussion, share assessment briefings or requirements with them before the start of the work integrated activities.

5) Clearly identify who will have responsibility to monitor the health and well-being of the students during the work period - given that this is an integrated activity. This is supported by a contract specific to the internship roles has been drafted by central HR and incorporates well-being service provision (open to all staff and students). In addition, provisions such as Data Protection additions have been made.

6) Clearly identify and confirm arrangements for employment contractual obligations, health and safety - start dates, role expectations, probationary period etc. - all aligned to existing staff recruitment practices.

7) Monitor the impact on the student in terms of development e.g. through objective testing, interview (We have an experienced researcher who will undertake analysis before, during and after the work integrated activity)
8) Clearly map course learning outcomes/professional body competencies with work based activities – with a clear timeline and schedule of activities. This required extensive planning and liaison with Associate Director of Finance and Chief Management Accountant.

9) There is a clear separation of mentoring (work owned) and assessment (course owned) duties. However, feedback from mentoring and validation of work undertaken forms part of the assessment evidence.

HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

BE CLEAR, FORTHRIGHT, INFORMED & TENACIOUS!

There is a clear opportunity cost in not developing students and developing succession planning for talent pipelines within the University. I ensured that this could be quantified in terms of money and that this was also done as a time series, showing seasonal changes and fluctuations in labour over a period of 3 years.

I cannot understate the need to have open, continuous dialogue in which both sides have an opportunity to negotiate and put forward concerns. Planning is absolutely crucial, as well as having support from members of the University with positional power.

TEAM

I ensured that a team of “can do” people were actively involved and consulted in to move things forward with the support of the senior team. Can do means knowledge, ideas, capabilities, resources and influential/positional power.

ASSESSMENT

Students will provide verified evidence of their work in a secure, institutionally approved electronic personalised learning system. The restricted Gateway will be only accessed by their workplace mentor and me as their course leader. I will review the artefacts and associated student reflections and mentor feedback. In addition, I will have a professional conversation with the students and their workplace mentor to determine whether the professional competencies being assessed have been met. I will then sign off competencies (in the capacity of assessor) that I am assured have been met by the student.

CONCLUSION

This is the first pilot of a succession of work integrated models to be rolled out across Faculties and central services within the University. Although this model focuses on the development of human capital (skills, knowledge and experience) within the context of professional development, it is important to recognise that students will develop their social capital (building relationships, ideas and understandings that improve performance over time) as well as their decisional capital (ability to exercise professional judgment). The author’s PhD research to date suggests that these are imperative elements of learning and development to achieve successful accomplishment of performance as a professional accountant.
This paper reflects an important contribution to this research. The author hopes that her research will inform accounting education pedagogy. It is hoped that in adopting a work integrated model that integrates both technical knowledge and practical experience, students will engage in an opportunity to develop their professional capital and excel in their contribution to wider society in the future.

REFERENCES


REDESIGN OF STUDY PROGRAM
ACCOUNTING & FINANCE

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dobuljan@oss.unist.hr

ABSTRACT
This paper aims to display methodology of making changes in Study Program Accounting & Finance taking in consideration two, very important, contemporary, concepts: Triple Helix and Quality Management. Maine reasons for taking such action are:

• Although we live in world that, thanks to great technological evolution, is connected in a way that pieces of information are shared in glance, we still don’t have sufficient rate of exchange of relevant information.

• Unemployment rate in Croatia is grooving and as a responsible institution we want to make sure that our students don’t become a part of “black” statistics.

• Teaching staff needs more opportunity for interaction true mutual activities with different groups of stakeholders.

Since the process of changes is continues one in this paper we will present results of preliminary research preformed on limited number of representatives coming from real business world. Upon the results we will propose some corrective and preventive measures.

INTRODUCTION
Common goal of all teaching processes should be transfer of knowledge and skills to students or other target groups. Globalization, deregulation and all other similar processes that took place in last two decades increased a dynamic of changes in almost all field of studies. (Buljan Barbača, 2014)

Strategy EUROPE 2020 underlines as one of the main goals Europe with unemployment rate 75%. (European Commission, 2014). If we take in consideration that Croatia has one of biggest rates of unemployment in Europe. Rate of youth unemployment in Croatia is 46,4% and average rate for EU 28 is 21.1% (EUROSTAT, 2015) This facts gave as, teachers from Department of Accounting and Finance, great motivation to create some changes in our study program in order to increase employability of our output-students who finish our study programs. How we should do it?
Prerogative for the teachers and trainers becomes a overcoming the gap between useful and necessary knowledge and skills demanded by labour market and traditional package of knowledge and skills considered necessary in certain field of study. Problem has to be sold on several levels and some new processes of revision of educational programs should be considered in order to achieve efficiency in contemporary teaching process. (Buljan Barbača, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

There are some theoretical considerations which we kept in mind when we started this process. Some elements from model proposed by Biggs have been most useful. Basic model can be shown true the following steps:

- Define the learning outcomes.
- Select learning and teaching activities likely to enable the students to attain the outcomes.
- Assess the students’ outcomes and
- Grade the students’ learning. (Biggs J., 2003)

Majority of authors from this field of study made some corrections and four step model was converted to 3 step model with 3rd stage representing booth assess to students' outcomes and grading students' learning. (Houghton W., 2004)

Brother model puts defining learning outcomes in much wider prospective where defining learning outcomes becomes only the first step orientated to high quality learning process. Theoretical approach developed by Biggs puts in correlation all other processes necessary for successful learning. (Biggs J., 2003)

Since we are focused on first steps of the proposed model we will be more concentrated on establishing better connections with representatives of real sector. The author of this paper explored this possibilities working with different coauthors: for adjustments in the program of the course Commercial Banking (Buljan Barbača D., Rimac Smiljanić A., 2007), for the purpose of establishing the gap between, the students perception (of importance of certain skills and knowledge) and perception of potential employers (Buljan Barbača D., Miletić M., 2008), also the audit of course Insurance and Reinsurance (Buljan Barbača D., Laća J., 2012), and considerations about the transfer of knowledge in transitional economies such as Croatian economy was. (Baran D., Buljan Barbača D., Rimac Smiljanić A., 2008)

Based on this readings and experience the plan for action has been made.

The plan of activities is presented in Figure 1.
Department of Accounting and Finance took the decision to organize round table named “Let us build together a study Accounting and Finance”. The deadlines are defined for each activity presented in Figure 1. and roles of responsibility have been delegated. In order to collect and analyse outcomes of round table questioner has been created.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In order to collect relevant information on contemporary needs of labour market we have, beside teachers from our Department, invited three groups of stakeholders that we found relevant: potential employers, representatives of local government units (LGU) and our former students just recently employed. When we started planning the event we thought that it would be very good
to involve LGUs and that in collaboration with them prerequisite for Triple Helix model would be provided. Unfortunately the LGUs didn’t find this activity interesting, so we continued without theirs participation. We must underline that they all responded and expressed support for activity. All the other representatives of two target groups have accepted the invitation and we had 10 teachers, 10 former students and 14 potential employers present. Discussions took place in two different sessions and lasted for hour and half. Afterwards we distributed questionnaires. There are two types of questionnaires that we created. In Figure 2. the analytical tool for employers and in Figure 3. questionnaire for former students.

![Diagram](image.png)

*Figure 2. Questionnaire for employers*
The purpose of distributing questionnaire was not only to collect the data in organized and systematic way, but it was also to test its performances as analytical tool. For all questions beginning with word “evaluate” we offered 10 responses in form of different skills or knowledge, but we also gave respondents possibility to add more elements in each category. Evaluation consisted of determining relevance using Likert scale from 1 to 5 (not relevant to very relevant).
DATA ANALYSIS

Since we collected lot of data in this paper we are going to present only the most relevant data on which we have taken immediate actions. In Table 1. we are presenting results for EU competences evaluation from prospective of employers and in Table 2. we are presenting results for EU competences evaluation from prospective of former students.

Table 1. Evaluation of EU competences evaluated by employers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competence</th>
<th>Average Grade</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication in the mother tongue</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>0.61</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication in foreign languages</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital competence</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning to learn</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and civic competences</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural awareness and expression</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Evaluation of EU competences evaluated by former students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competence</th>
<th>Average Grade</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication in the mother tongue</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication in foreign languages</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital competence</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning to learn</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and civic competences</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>0.81</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural awareness and expression</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>0.80</td>
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</table>

REDESIGN OF STUDY PROGRAM ACCOUNTING & FINANCE
In Table 3 we present skills evaluated by employers and in Table 4, skills evaluated by former students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Description</th>
<th>Average Grade</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The ability to produce financial statements</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.69</td>
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<tr>
<td>Application of financial mathematics</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>0.78</td>
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<tr>
<td>Application of the methods for evaluating investments</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation of proposals for withdrawing money from the EU funds</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Excel tools in solving various problems</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop an optimal model of cost management</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to analyse business events</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ability to optimize portfolio</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The application of techniques of financial analysis in certain business situations</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ability of the determination of the risk of financial products / services</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Evaluation of proposed skills evaluated by employers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Description</th>
<th>Average Grade</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The ability to produce financial statements</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application of financial mathematics</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application of the methods for evaluating investments</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation of proposals for withdrawing money from the EU funds</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Excel tools in solving various problems</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop an optimal model of cost management</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to analyse business events</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ability to optimize portfolio</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The application of techniques of financial analysis in certain business situations</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ability of the determination of the risk of financial products / services</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Evaluation of proposed skills evaluated by former students
Beside numbers presented in the tables 3 and 4 both target groups stated that it is very important to increase level of English language competences, specifying lack of professional terminology vocabulary.

In Table 5. and Table 6. we will present responses regarding modalities of collaboration that employers and former students are willing to participate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation in the Workshops of the HE Institution</th>
<th>Average Grade</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With a aim of proposing new programs</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint development of additional training for recently employed</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint development of additional LLP</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional practice for our students</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally hosting of your employees in lectures for students</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships for students</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal employment of students</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation on projects</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Evaluation of proposed modalities of collaboration evaluated by employers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation in the Workshops of the HE Institution</th>
<th>Average Grade</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With a aim of proposing new programs</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional training for recently employed</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional training in the Centre for lifelong learning</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in teaching as visiting lecturers</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation on projects</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Evaluation of proposed modalities of collaboration evaluated by former students

**CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

It is necessary to underline that decision to organize round table has been taken on 3rd March 2015, and we are presenting results obtained until 3rd April 2015.

We have presented only few of the findings that are represent outputs of round table but what we can say that it made as create some immediate changes in our study program. First thing that we did is increase of number of lessons of English language and suggested the content of these additional hours. We are also about to implement increase of engagement of students in
specialized training from 3 ECTS (80 hours) to 9 ECTS (240 hours). These are only immediate actions but based on the preliminary findings we are considering several possibilities for further research and activities:

- In order to make this research more relevant we will send tested questionnaire to 200 potential employers.
- In order to disseminate results of round table we are going to organize meeting with current students and inform them of findings.
- With collaboration with Centre for LLLP just established at our institution we will create programs to offer, booth, to former students and employers.
- Encouraged by participants we are going to organize more round tables with more specific topics.

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FROM TRAINING TO PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE IN HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT: THE VISION OF INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS

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ABSTRACT
The matching between skills promoted in individuals by the educational system and those required by the employment/work system is a relevant issue nowadays but still not well explored by scientific research in Portugal, concerning the specific case of professional activities within Hospitality Management.

The present study aims to expose and discuss the points of view of a group of Hotel Managers about i) Hospitality Management training in the Portuguese polytechnic higher education, ii) the skills required for professional performance in this sector and iii) the articulation between training and work.

With an exploratory and qualitative methodology, the study relies on semi-structured interviews and content analysis of the information. Results show that the interviewed professionals hold an essential position about Hospitality Management training and therefore present some suggestions to promote a closer adjustment between skills and the needs and characteristics of the work in this sector.

Keywords: Skills, Higher Education, Hospitality Management

INTRODUCTION
Being considered by the World Tourism Organization as the peace industry, tourism in general and the hotel business, in particular, necessarily have to promote the relationship between individuals. So, the quality and the level of qualification and training of human resources play a decisive role.

Indeed, "the development of skills to meet the needs of various stakeholders in hospitality is frequently seen as a partnership between the industry and the educational / training providers, with each playing a complementary role (...) higher-level education and training for hospitality and tourism generally maintains a clear commitment to the development of skills designed to complement more generic educational and business development objectives " (Baum, 2002, p. 356).
The issue in this study focuses on understanding how Hotel managers view training in hospitality management, in Portuguese higher education, specifically, trying to understand their perceptions on which nuclear skills should be developed during the process of training and those that are most valued by employers. It also aims to understand the relevance of curricular skills gained to enter the labour market in this economic activity.

Several organizations and economic activities are an integral part of the tourism sector, some of these being considered as main or essential, such as accommodation, catering, transport, tour operators and travel agencies, without which tourism activities would not exist. All these sub-sectors require skilled human resources to meet the existing competitiveness, which must have increasing level of training, expertise and quality in service delivery.

In their longitudinal study, Rodriguez-Antón, Alonso-Almeida, Rubio de Andrada & Celemín Pedroche (2013), state that since tourism activities have a growing importance and a very strong global competitiveness, this requires adequately trained professionals to meet the challenges that they present. These are a result of changes in society over the last twenty years, in particular the change in the needs and choices of tourists, the impact of technological change, concerns about the quality and the environment, new types of tourists, the "breaking" with the traditional distribution chain and tourist intermediation and the internationalisation of tourism companies and organizations.

Given this scenario, this whole process is the responsibility of human resources from tourism organizations. "Inconceivably, nevertheless, the industry has been deficient in defining development strategies focused on human resources to meet its specific needs" (Rodríguez-Antón, Alonso-Almeida, Rubio Andrada, & Celemín Pedroche, 2013). At the same time, according to Baum (2002), tourism schools, traditionally focused on ministering technical knowledge, neglect other skills needed to respond to current challenges.

According to Henriques (2005), tourism is a labor-intensive activity and, as such, training plays a decisive role in the preparation and qualification of the people involved in it and on the quality of the tourist offer. Therefore, "higher education institutions play an important role in the formation of the tourism industry and specifically in hotel management, establishing curricula that contribute to develop adequate profiles and skills to the present and future needs of the market" (Henriques, 2005, p. 88).

In Portugal, higher education institutions providing this scientific area belong to the Polytechnic higher education system, which differs from the University higher education by assigning a greater emphasis on the application of theoretical and practical knowledge in real situations during training.

However, as Lopes (2011) warns about, despite living in a knowledge society constantly changing and filled by unpredictability, in which "the labor market moves from contingency to contingency," the "Education machine" is heavy and slow and (...) there isn’t an articulated education / employment strategy, individuals are increasingly left to their fate " (Lopes, 2011).
Thus, the issue we have been discussing refers to the need to clearly understand what skills a graduate, specifically in hospitality management should develop, and presupposes a brief discussion about the concept of skills.

SPECIFICS OF THE CONCEPT OF SKILL

As referred to in Le Boterf, (2002), Edwards (2009) and Parente, (2004), the concept of skill is susceptible to multiple forms of definition according to different disciplinary approaches, which have contributed to different interpretations and refinements.

In fact, the concept of skill has been used in "multiple meanings, reflecting different perspectives and areas such as psychology, education, politics, management, among others" (Cabral-Cardoso, Estevão, & Silva, 2006).

In the context of education, the concept of skill is related to learning, teacher training and vocational training in general, "assuming contents and meanings not necessarily identical in these different areas" (Esteves, 2009, p. 38). To the author, there is a difference between the concept in the singular, the 'skill', and the concept used in the plural, i.e. 'skills'. "In the singular, the concept refers to the quality of being professionally competent or in opposition, to be incompetent, i.e."meaning that the concept is taken as a global feature inherent to the action of the individual or professional group, feature over which it is possible to issue a value judgment " (Esteves, 2009, p. 39). In turn, the plural term refers to a set of specific features disclosed in action, which can be observed and described without being necessary to assign it a value.

For Le Boterf (2000), a skill is much more than an addition of capabilities, knowledge, skills, attitudes and know-how and know-how to be. All these elements with different combinations, may give rise to a variety of configurations because skill is "organized" as a system. Corroborating this perspective, Ratti (2002, 2003) considers that skill constitutes knowledge in use that requires integration and mobilization of knowledge, processes and predispositions that, by becoming a part of each other, will allow the individual to do, think and enjoy it (Ratti, 2002). Thus, the skill emerges when, faced with a situation, the individual is able to adequately mobilize the various previous knowledge, select them and integrate them adjusting them to the situation in question.

Also for Perrenoud (1999), a skill is reflected in the ability to act effectively in a particular type of situation, supported by knowledge, but not be limited to it. Thus and how it is pointed out (Bolívar, 2009), in general, skills can be distinguished between the body of knowledge (knowledge), skills (know how) and attitudes (know how to be) in relation to its own methods and techniques and relevant to a particular job.

On the other hand, Le Boterf (2000) stresses the need to be aware that there are significant differences between the required skills, i.e. those that are seen in the referencials and the actual skills, i.e. those which are enhanced by each individual. For this author, the real skill is difficult to identify, since it is "invisible" and only "shows" when the individual is active, which means there is a willingness to act in a number of situations and that willingness for action is private and belongs solely to each person.
Le Boterf (2001) says that, although they belong to each person, skills have two inseparable dimensions, the individual and the collective, for different reasons. Indeed, on the one hand, skills are not separable since a person does not match and act solely on the basis of its own resources (one also combines with their environment, their networking, their colleagues, etc.) and, on the other hand, context in professional situations in which the individual acts, either by the rules and regulations of their team, either by the problematic situations in their work environment where sometimes one does not have all the necessary information. It can be said, then, according to Le Boterf (2001) that the individual skill always involves a collective dimension, in other words, it can be defined as a "know-how to act and interact" in professional situations. In addition, Parente (2004), argues that skills are, "the result of the relationship between the practices and the cognitive abilities of the individuals and their recognition in a given work situation, determined by constraints of organizational and managerial order" (Parente, 2004, p. 302).

In addition, Le Boterf (2001), also reinforces two more features in the concept of skill. First, returning to the question of professional quality of being competent, for no one will be truly recognized as competent, if they are successful only by acting without having understood the "why" and "how" of that same action. The other, is that one is deemed competent, those who act independently and are able to self-regulate their actions, seeking other resources beyond those that they already own, in addition to being able to re-use their skills in different contexts.

Being skilled, to Le Boterf (2000), is not only being able to do or act, but also to analyze and explain their choices of doing or acting, which means, in the line of thought of Parente (2004), whose concept of skill in the plural relates to the concept of skill in the singular. "The latter is synonymous with professionalism towards recognition by companies, of the involvement and implication that workers put in work performance" (Parente, 2004, p. 302).

After a brief approach to the concept of skill, it is important, now, to understand what are the special features that arise in the professional area of hotel management.

SKILLS FOR HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT

Higher education institutions have been strengthening the adequacy of their degrees to the labor market, not only regarding know-how, but also other know-how such as know-how to be and others, which are increasingly more important in a more demanding and changing society (Cabral-Cardoso, Estevão & Silva, 2006).

So this seems to be the underlying spirit of the Decree Law 74/2006, which mentions that future graduates should be able to "apply the acquired knowledge and understanding ability in order to highlight the professional approach to work; of knowing how to solve problems within their area of training and to build and support their own arguments; to collect, select and interpret relevant information, particularly in their area of training; to mobilize skills to communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions; to mobilize learning skills to enable them to learn throughout life with a high degree of autonomy " (Decreto Lei n° 74/2006, 2006, p. 2245).
In accordance with the previously mentioned, the holistic act that the concept of skill possesses in itself, promotes interaction and need for action in a professional environment that influences the individual. To this end, as being understood by Villa & Poblete (2008), a double positioning emerges, in other words, the skills can be learned both in the professional market as well as on the other hand, they can be developed during the academic path before moving on the labour market.

Specifically with regard to the skills in order to work in the hospitality sector, the Group Working for Tourism (2005) states that the profile of a graduate in hotel management should have scientific, technical and interpersonal skills, to propose and evaluate theoretical and practical solutions to the complex problems that the various areas within Hotel Management must currently face.

Hotel managers thus need a wide range of knowledge and skills, not only in the management of basic services of establishments in this area, i.e., need to have technical skills, but also in finance, marketing and management of different human and physical resources. They are required to have leadership skills, particularly in terms of making quick and creative decisions, as well as organizational skills and analysis of situations, due to the variety of services to be managed in a coordinated way. Given the constant contact with people (customers, employees, suppliers and others), these managers must have also excellent communication skills. A good presentation, mastering mother language and the ability to speak foreign languages is useful as well as knowledge in social sciences. The energy, enthusiasm, creativity and the ability to act on psychological pressure situations are thus important qualities and soft skills for those who want to come to this profession, as referred by (Grupo Trabalho para o Turismo, 2005).

In his study, Baum (2002), argues that historically, skills in hospitality were seen almost exclusively in terms of their technical requirements, and this formed the basis of the training agenda pursued by colleges in Europe and, subsequently, almost worldwide in the developing world through funded aid programs, for much of the twentieth century. However, “changes in the nature of work, the impact of technology and customer expectations have forced a fundamental re-evaluation of the relative roles of technical and generic skills in hospitality work (…) Skill shortages in hospitality are increasingly seen in terms of generic rather than specific technical skills” (Baum, 2002, p. 351).

Nevertheless, in the perspective of Van der Klink, Boon, & Schlusmans (2007), work nowadays is characterized by an increasing unpredictability in terms of future and by the uncertainty associated with it in terms of the relevant skills. The authors further state that “these changes in work have repercussions in higher education. It is expected that graduates, in addition to professional skills, also have learning skills, social skills and career skills in order to secure a wide employability in the long term as well.” (Van der Klink, Boon, & Schlusmans, 2007, p. 74). In line with this, Chimutingiza, Mwando, & Kazembe consider the industry expectations of skills highlighted that hospitality and tourism graduates need a range of skills such as decision making and problem solving ability, teamwork, initiative and interpersonal skills to enable them perform effectively at the work place. “This highlights gaps between the industry and higher education institutions and such a phenomenon indicates a waste of human and educational resources” (Chimutingiza, Mwando, & Kazembe, 2012, p. 14).
In our view, and in line with Esteves (2009), all situations and all working contexts are essential if one wants to understand the origins and the nature of skills required for the integration of hotel management school graduates in an increasingly more competitive labor market.

Currently, in the opinion of Alves (2010), diplomas are deemed as necessary, but not enough to access and maintain professionals in the labor market. It is increasingly evident that the need to complement initial training with diverse experiences will make the profile of these professionals more attractive to potential employers, referring to the academic path of students in higher education, pointing out that the experience gained in internships, professional experience during the undergraduate period and extracurricular activities then developed, can promote the integration in the labour market. Indeed, these "experiences are generating learning, while creating networks of personal and professional knowledge which are then mobilized while looking for a job" (Alves, 2010, p. 45).

Traditional models of education and training for hospitality place considerable responsibility for skills development and the consolidation of learning on vocational work experience or internship. (...) By education, because the trainees were getting an opportunity to learn more about the structure of the industry in a more formal way; by the tourism industry because trainees proved to be a useful source of inexpensive skilled or semi-skilled labour on a regular basis; and by the trainees themselves because the work experience has resolved a vicious circle (cannot get a job without experience, cannot get experience without a job) into a career opportunity (Baum, 2002).

METHODOLOGY

This study, framed in a wider research that we are developing in our PhD thesis in Education, has an exploratory character and was based on a qualitative research methodology. Three semi-structured interviews with privileged interlocutors, both hotel managers and board members of a Portuguese professional association in the hospitality sector, in which they hold positions of President, Vice-President and Member of the board for the liaison with education and training institutions. These respondents are male, between 49 and 59 years old and all hold a degree in Hotel Management, as well as professional experience in the sector, which varies between 27 and 40 years (cf. Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONDENT</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>EDUCATION</th>
<th>LENGTH OF PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>HOTEL MANAGEMENT</td>
<td>40 YEARS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>HOTEL MANAGEMENT</td>
<td>34 YEARS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>HOTEL MANAGEMENT</td>
<td>27 YEARS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 - Characterization of respondents
After the interviews and their transcription, we proceeded to the attentive and active reading that is a fluctuating reading as Bardin (1977) suggests, for further analysis of content, we proceeded to categorize them and make their referral. The software WebQDA - a specific application for treatment and analysis of qualitative data, and in which the encodings of the text that helped in investigative work were held - was also used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As it was initially explained, the problem under study has focused on understanding the way Hotel managers in office view higher education training in the role of hotel manager, which skills are relevant to this role, the existing articulation between training and the requirements of the sector, as well as how the accomplishment of traineeships acts as facilitator for the integration into the labour market of the future graduates.

Based on this object of analysis and through the performed content analysis we will now look at each of these aspects in detail.

A first aspect, namely how respondents perspective the evolution that occurred in higher education in hotel management, since the 1990s of the 20th century respondents express agreement by identifying that effectively there was a significant change, since that time until the present day, starting with the change in the Portuguese tourism organizational structure and dimension, in particular on the amount of hotel units and their provision of services. They also considered that this evolution entailed changes in the profile of managers and hoteliers on the demands placed on them.

IN THIS RESPECT, RESPONDENT A SAID THAT

"if we compare the hotel number or hotel offer 20 years ago, they are two completely different realities [...] if the management of hotels sympathised professionals available on the market at that time, today that would be unthinkable".

In the opinion of respondents, these developments also caused changes in the way units are managed, as well as in the skills that hotel managers should hold:

"Nowadays, hotel management is viewed in a more rigorous manner since the demands of knowledge in hotel management are different and people don’t sympathised with hotel managers that advance only and simply by experience" (respondent A) and yet, "in this profession, knowledge is increasingly necessary, therefore it is necessary to train professionals in the sector with capacity to meet the challenges that arise nowadays " (respondent C).

In an attempt to meet the needs of the sector and looking for qualified human resources, a wide range of HEIS – higher education institutions began to train students in this area of knowledge, as
as others that extended their portfolio of training offer to the tourism sector in general and to hotel management, in particular. However, in the opinion of respondent C, this increase in the training offer has led to a situation in which the labour market is not able to absorb the amount of students that graduate every year and consequently an investment that turns out to be thrown into the trash. Students get a degree in hospitality and eventually move on to working in other activities, other than tourism, itself".

This situation occurs because, in the understanding of another of those interviewed, "the labour market is open and naturally competitive, and what usually eventually happens, is to select the best and the less good will fall by the wayside" (respondent B).

It seems to us that, from the perspective of the respondent, there is an imbalance between the amount of graduates available to integrate the labour market and those who are effectively recruited by the sector, because "companies don't care even if the market is able to absorb the amount of graduates that the IES will train" (respondent B), making a suggestion, "I think there should be fewer and better schools. This can only be achieved with some will and joint efforts among all stakeholders" (respondent B).

In addition to this imbalance in relation to the number of graduates who are available to join the labour market, the interlocutors also felt some dissatisfaction with regard to the level of existing articulation between the training provided and the requirements of the labour market, which is one of the issues under study.

One can highlight that, for the respondents, some of the content taught in education / training is not suited to the requirements of the labour market and it is the responsibility of the educational institutions to try to make this adjustment. "I think it's a serious problem, a total divorce, I say, between what is the practical world and the theory from schools [...] the contents are totally inadequate, [...] the fundamental is not passed to the students " (respondent C). Another of the respondents suggests that there is a considerable amount of work to be done in terms of articulation between the two systems, the education/training and employment/Job, because "it would be the best way to have a connection between what is intended that trainees know, [...] it should be closer to what the market needs" (respondent B), because it is up to the IES "to prepare the graduate with technical and theoretical skills so that they can take advantage of them and use them for the activities' benefit". (Respondent B).

On the question about hotel manager skills valued by these hotel managers, we understand that for these agents, within the labour market, a great importance is given to the need of graduates possessing either, technical skills and transversal skills, to facilitate their integration into the labour market. According to the analysis carried out, we realized that, on the one hand, in addition to the skills at the management level, the capacity to act at an operational level and know-how are considered crucial in this professional area. On the other hand, the fact that those educational institutions are endowed with specific and technical laboratories, combined with a theoretical-practical training approach are aspects that enhance technical skills, in addition,
are also valued by the labour market. Indeed, respondent B states that "we are talking about an intensive labour activity, requiring technical recognition and human resources, and it is obvious that the hotel manager has to understand these technical tools and processes" and respondent A considers that, in addition to the issue of "operational management, it is essential to know about administrative and financial management, nowadays owners don't mind any of this, they want results, they want suggestions!" Respondent A: In summary, they consider the role of the school and of the skills it must empower, i.e. that "certain skills and abilities which are characterized on two levels [...] at a technical level, the hotel manager must have a technical skill, know-how, even though people say they are Managers, which I actually agree with, it is crucial that they also know how to do things, go through the various situations that an job in a hotel requires, and hence the school obviously has to be prepared to have the equipment and conditions so they can obtain this knowledge and, on the other hand, a hotel manager must have the skill, the attitude and the spirit of service" (interviewed C). Their experience and contact with the various institutions of higher education, claim "that the trainees or graduates coming out with better tools and who are more competent are those who are trained in schools that have some technical equipment in terms of the practical component, in the area of hospitality" (respondent B), i.e. emphasize the enhancement of operations and knowledge of technical and operational issues developed during the training in this area, so for respondent C, "hospitality is know-how, and a lot of "hands-on" and know how to perform".

However, technical skills are not the only ones which are fundamental, as considered by hotel managers that should be part of the portfolio of a graduate. As mentioned by one of the interlocutors, "it is part of the quality of service in the hotel tradition, the great concern with the behavioural component. The behavioural component is of course essential to professional success in this activity " (respondent B). This view is reinforced by another of the interlocutors, considering that "this attitude is probably not transmitted, behaviour, the hotelier spirit, knowing how to be in a hotel is not transmitted in schools", (respondent A), denouncing some concern with that fact and reinforcing the disarticulation between education/training systems and the employment/job.

Respondents emphasize, yet, in addition to the technical and operational skills, the importance that graduates have some practical experience, gained during their educational path and that indicate the curricular internships as moments of learning that promote both gaining skills and promoting future integration into the labour market. However, they do not fail to mention that there is, in this area, some disarticulation between the reality as well and what would be desirable, in their point of view. Thus, in the opinion of respondent B, "if a graduate doesn't have any experience, evidently one won't be a good manager, and I am not saying that those who do not know how to do do, do not know how to manage, that's not what I'm saying, but we say that those who have no experience, that hasn't had somehow a practical component, has less conditions to better manage, no doubt about it. Obviously that can be somehow compensated with internships" (respondent B). With some critical sense regarding the reality that they observe, respondents report that the internship must be a professional reality replicator of the functional
activity of a hotel manager, since "an internship is to work in shifts, is to work on weekends. I think it’s this attitude that must be real! Unfortunately this attitude is not passed at school! (Respondent C)." In turn, respondent B complements this reasoning and strengthens the role of the internships in the acquisition of vital skills to future integration in the labour market, because in his opinion, "an intern, a senior or a graduate needs to know what is the normal daily activity of hospitality, that this terminology, which is basic, isn’t unfamiliar to them. They need to know the terminology used, the basic processes applied to each of the departments and their standards of service ", stressing that during the internship the student should develop "activities, either on the accommodation area, either in the food and beverage service, and also in other important areas, meeting some of the demands of the activity, in short there are a number of things [...] you really have to know when entering the labour market" (respondent B).

Through the analysis of these interviews the importance that is given to transversal skills such as the spirit of service and professional attitude required in service businesses like hotels, that sometimes, in their opinion, educational institutions fail to develop, also appears clearly to these hotel managers. "The hospitality is to know that a person who goes to a hotel, even if it goes to the" back of the house" that is, even if they don't have direct contact with customers, they must have the notion of what it is to serve the customer" (respondent C). This manager also reinforces that "hospitality is very easy to characterize. Hospitality is to serve and we have to have the humility to assume we are in a profession and chose to serve others [...]. This concept of service, I think, must be well ingrained in the mentality of students [...] the person may be born with a vocation to serve and be at the service of others, but in the hospitality industry, this has to be developed and the school is the space to develop this vocation. [...] Hotel management has a critical part which is the issue of attitude, for example at the level of a school that has to be passed within the culture of the school" (Respondent C). Hence, one of the respondents stresses that students "have to be alerted to this attitude, it must be transmitted to them because this obviously will help them to be better, and better manage that behavior, their attitude towards their employer, the customer, their colleagues, themselves." (Respondent B). Another of the interviewed managers reinforces the importance of professional attitude, stating, "the attitude is to be able to speak with the customer, afterwards knowing how to speak with the employee from the chef to the Accomodation manager or the pantry worker and know how to speak with suppliers. Knowing how to speak with these three, I would say four interlocutors, the fourth is the boss" (respondent A).

In addition to the already presented inferences, content analysis of the interviews, allows also to realize that for these hotel managers, there are skills that educational institutions are unable to develop in students from this professional area, specifically those that are learnt by doing and with professional experience and maturity, but warn that the training institution must always play its role as a reference to the student and future graduate. "I think that what the school can never transmit is the direct contact with the customer," (respondent A), reinforcing as well that "the school will never be able to reproduce the experiments and the experiences and also the evolution that the professional activity allows" (respondent B). In this line of argument, other managers said, "I think that what we feel in school is essential, you can teach a lot about technique, about attitudes, about
management, about how to behave, with the help of the internships that can even improve a lot more, but of course nothing replaces it, or it is hard to replace the practical part and experience of practical life. For example, at the level of leadership and direction of the hotels, we’re talking about people who will decide, will make decisions, so often this teaching of how to make the right decision at the right time is difficult, which you you can't teach.” (Respondent C). “Other respondent, however, reinforces the importance of the educational institution as a source of teaching, "the school turns out to be" the example", the more rigorous it is, the more knowledge it transmits, the more demanding it is, of course that the graduate is going to come more prepared for the labour market." (Respondent B).

In addition to the above, the interviews allow us also to say that this profession consists of specific features, where success is determined by personal features too, despite it’s being difficult to achieve in a demanding and competitive labour market, in which, as mentioned, the graduate wants to be integrated, but at the same "has to work beyond normal labour hours, they don't have their holidays at the right time, because they have to sacrifice their own personal life to be at the service of the career they chose. Therefore the spirit of sacrifice is fundamental, the humility of the person, is the trait that everyone should have, in my personal opinion, and in hospitality that humility should serve as an example for those who work with people" (Respondent C). To achieve success, according to one of the managers "there are no more than two features, (the graduate) will have to have the determination and the ability to work, there has to be much commitment and a lot of willingness to work" (Respondent B).

Therefore, there seem to be some issues to improve the level of higher education in hotel management, namely in respect of any disarticulation between the education/training system and the labour/work system, where the technical and transversal skills are of a large preponderance and the practical training will help to enhance the acquisition of those skills and understand the specificity of the profession of Hotel manager.

CONCLUSIONS

In this study it was possible to notice that, for these three hotel managers, although there has been, since the 1990s of the 20th century, a considerable and positive evolution in training being conducted in the area of hotel management, both in the number of students and graduates of educational institutions, as well as in the skills and knowledge taught, this training is still falling short of the demands that the labour market has. In their opinion, there is still a lot to be done to ensure the linkage between the actual skills provided to graduates and those that the market desires.

These improvements may come to be established at the level of technique and know-how, as necessary and essential skills, but much more at the level of transversal skills, because training should promote the attitude, the spirit of service and flexibility and dynamism necessary for the professional integration in a demanding labour-intensive activity and that is active without interruption for 365 days during the year. The results show that, for the respondents, the
Internships can function as transitions in training, because they allow students to experience the practical context of the previously acquired knowledge, boosting the development of individual skills in a collective context. These results meet the perspective of Le Boterf (2001), for whom skills are knowledge in use that are mobilized, which they constitute more than to know how to act, incorporating also, to know how to interact. They also support, what Parente (2004) advocates, it is in the professional context that skills can be synonymous of professionalism and recognized by organizations and peers.

In a society in constant development and dynamism, it is important that graduates in hospitality management, feel capable and competent to integrate the labour market and aspire to a professional performances in accordance with their expectations and those of their employers, much more in an industry like tourism, in which contact between people is a constant need.

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