

New Perspectives for Learning - Briefing Paper 50

Students as “Journeymen” between communities of Higher Education and Work

This is an Interim Briefing Paper of the project that started in September 2001

Context of the Research

Most governments across Europe have policies in place to increase the number of students entering higher education. This is based on the assumption that higher education can supply the skills and qualifications in terms of “human capital” required for a more complex and technological working life. In addition, European policy is also focused upon increasing workforce mobility between European countries.

However, underlying these broad policies are factors at play that might determine how successful such policies might be for preparing students for working life within different institutions, educational systems and cultures. One determining issue is what people make of education as well as how education moulds people. This would be through the mutual interplay between institutions of higher education, and the students and teachers that populate them. Another issue is that the same educational initiatives might bring different results in different cultures. Other factors will determine the possibilities and hindrances for increased work force mobility between European countries.

This project is aiming to enhance the understanding of learning strategies, values and “worldviews” that students and novices apply within and across different learning environments - both in education and in working life. It aims to gain an understanding of students’ experiences of transitions from higher education to professional life in different European countries. In particular it is focusing on the cultural diversity of academic and work institutions in Europe. A multilevel and critical analysis of the relationship between the formulated policies for higher education and the way higher education is experienced by students and professional novices is also being conducted.

In this project, students in higher education are viewed as “journeymen” between the cultures of higher education and working life. By studying students as individuals and as members of a culture it is aimed to gain a better understanding of the relationships between cultural, educational and working life contexts.

Comparative studies are being conducted in Sweden, Norway, Poland and Germany using freshmen and seniors studying psychology, political science and other subjects. The senior students are also being interviewed after their first year of working life experience.

Key Issues

The project is addressing: -

1. How students from different countries and study programmes understand their university culture, envisaged work and the relationship between study and work.
2. How students and novices conceive of themselves as professionals
3. How newly graduated view their university education, particularly related to their future jobs.
4. To enhance better understanding of what contextual factors in the work place and at the university seem crucial in influencing the students.
5. To discern a "European dimension" – as regards the relationship between higher learning and professional work.

Further Information

The full title of the project is "Students as "Journeymen" between communities of Higher Education and Work". Final report is due September 2004.

[Partners Details](#)

Key Publications

Higher Education and Working Life: A state of the art report. Project Students as Journeymen between communities of Higher education and work. European Commission project HPSE CT 2001-00068. November 2002

Freshmen Students on Education and Work. National analyses. Project Students as Journeymen between communities of Higher education and work. European Commission project HPSE 2001-00068 December 2002

National comparison of Freshmen and Senior Students. Project Students as Journeymen between communities of Higher education and work. European Commission project HPSE CT 2001-00068. April 2003.

An international comparison of Freshmen and Senior Students. Project Students as journeymen between communities of Higher Education and Work. European Commission project HPSE CT-2001-00068. June 2003.

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