

CAREER ASPIRATIONS AND EMPLOYABILITY: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Keywords: Career aspirations; employability; professional identity; extracurricular activities.

Objectives: The development of employability has been argued (Haasler, 2013) as the responsibility of the individual, even in the context in which the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) emphasizes the role of government (Tholen, 2014) as a promoter of the development of skills needed for the labor market. Notably, professional identity is attributed as an individual self-concept, and thus is strictly related to feelings of self-satisfaction (Vasile, 2015). Decisions related to career aspirations may be influenced by a variety of personal factors, including family factors, and by factors related to part-time work experiences, which ultimately enhance such aspirations (Gbadamosi, Evans, Richardson, & Ridolfo, 2015). This study seeks to better understand and explain students' perceptions of experiences in extracurricular activities during academic training (Rabe and Human-Vogel, 2015) and their impact on the development of competencies in order to help them enter the market of work.

Relevance of the topic: Given that one of the main sources of anxiety among students is the future of their profession (Richițeanu-Năstase & Stăiculescu, 2015), it is fundamental to identify relevant dimensions that affect the development of students' professional identity, improving the effectiveness of students' institutional practices. universities that promote employability.

Identification of the problem and methodology: Ensuring that the career problem is treated as a central phenomenon for the analysis of employability issues in which the development of the arguments takes into account the different levels of approach (ie, individual, organizational and social) implies the multidisciplinary (Iellatchitch, Mayrhofer, & Meyer, 2003) and comprehensive study. Thus, using the method of analysis of grounded theory (Bryman, 2004) with the support of MAXQDA, 10 semi-structured interviews with finalist students of a prestigious European university chosen at random were analyzed based on a code system elaborated according to the review literature on career aspirations, professional identity and employability.

Results: The results indicate that the participation in extracurricular activities reinforces the content presented in the classroom, contributing to the development of confidence and safety to the student who is entering the job market.

Theoretical and / or practical contributions: Exploratory study on how to manage higher education institutions for the development of career aspirations of finalist students, translating into institutional actions that will integrate management strategies and policies for the sustainability of employability.

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