

Employability Development in the Context of PhD Studies

The past few decades have seen a period of constant transformation of doctoral education. This transformation has included greater emphasis on employability and the development of work-related skills, knowledge, attitudes and experiences by doctoral candidates during their PhD studies.

Research questions

This PhD study was guided by the following key research questions:

1. How is the concept of employability understood by social science doctoral candidates and key stakeholders (supervisors, researcher developers)?
2. What are the activities that contribute to development of employability of doctoral candidates?
3. How does the external environment (rules, community and task division within it) influence development of employability of social science doctoral researchers?
4. What are the views of key stakeholders and doctoral researchers on the ways development of employability can be enhanced during candidature?

Method and participants

This thesis addresses the issue of employability development during candidature through exploration of the views of doctoral candidates supervisors and researcher developers, using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

A socio-cultural perspective and Cultural Historical Activity Theory were adopted for this study in order to explore the key components of the employability development process and the interaction between them.

Research Findings

The main findings of this study are as follows:

1. there are key mismatches between the perceptions of the participants and the requirements of the labour market as well

as highlighting the impact of previous experience, motivation and disciplinary orientation on their understanding of employability.

2. while policy-led initiatives focus on provision of formal support for employability development, there is a need for a more nuanced approach to the employability development process: shaped by a range of formal, non-formal and workplace learning activities.
3. environment plays an important role: the community that is involved in supporting the employability development process and the rules and regulations mediating the relations between the community members.
4. the study identifies and discusses key tensions that inhibit but also stimulate the processes of employability development during candidature.

The study develops our understanding of employability development during candidature as a set of complex interacting processes, and sheds light on the perceptions of doctoral candidates and key stakeholders whose views are poorly represented in the existing research literature

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