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Bridging the gap between HE & Employers through WIL

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Outline

Context

Employability - what’s new and why

Challenges facing HE in leading SEE towards integration with the rest of Europe (and the World)

Cooperation between industry and HE in SEE - past experience & future steps
48 countries, 46 languages (3 main group), 5 major religions

2% Earth surface, 6.8% Land area, 12% population

Austria

Serbia (SEE "Wester Balkans")
Europe - the center of the world

European path to Knowledge-based society

Lisbon Agenda (EU): to become by 2010 the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion

Action plan: e-Europe 2010

EHEA - European Higher Education Area (Bologna Process)
ERA - European Research Area
Copenhagen Process - VET (secondary & tertiary education)
"Radical processes which include not only round-the-clock, round-the-globe markets and new information technologies, but revolutionary conceptions of time and space"

Peter Scott, The Globalization and Higher Education

**What's new? ⇒ Globalisation**

**Changing paradigms and attitudes**

- **Market**
- **State**
- **Individuals**
- **Job** (labour competencies)
- **University** - The most serious challenge ever?
University in the middle ages faced humanism and scientific revolution

18th century university faced revolutionary Europe and creation of national states

19th and 20th century university faced industrial revolution, massification and totalitarianism

21st century university faces globalization

Reactions - society (states) v.s. academics?

Throughout the entire history of European universities one controversial issue can be tracked

Study programs and methodology - university as a “temple of knowledge” or as a service to society

Up to the end of the 19th century university successfully resisted to give in, while the society reacted by establishing alternative educational institutions (academies, polytechnics, ...)

End of the 19th and the 20th century: period of “cohabitation” or “agreed dependence” - Serving professional and ideological needs of the national states, in every other sense university is autonomous and untouchable

At that point universities in SEE emerged
The Bologna process is first attempt in the history of European universities to impose changes instead of creating alternative institutions.

On June 18th 1999, 29 countries signed Bologna Declaration.

The most intriguing fact about the Bologna Declaration is that it is a rather “empty” paper, pointing out:
- Governments dissatisfaction with the undergraduate HE system
- Absence of clear concept what should be done (and how)

Yet, even a cursory glance at the Bologna Declaration reveals:

Upheaval of protests from the united academic community around Europe.
Declares that the change taking place in universities' mission and funding structure is systemic, shaking up the institution to its core.
Serbian (European) Academic Community (established by state or papal decrees)

Confused and deeply offended,

Convinced that they have been doing decent job over the years

Tendency to seemingly comply (perfunctory changes)
Paradox

Instigators and perpetuators of major changes
Classes and seminars throughout Europe on

Globalization
ICT
Biotechnology

Genetics
Economy

Redefining time-space, and other paradigms
Deeply convinced that the university should not change
They perceive university as:

A community of teachers and taught, accorded certain rights

- a degree of administrative autonomy
- determination upon curricula and methodology of its realization
- award publicly recognized degrees
- free choice of the objectives of research

Unchanged from the beginning of European universities (12th century)

Added at the end of the 19th century (Humboldt university model)
Selective (different) focuses?

Original Bologna (1999) declaration keyword: UNDERGRADUATE

Massification especially at the undergraduate level combined with the excessively long average study time ⇒

2 cycle system, with request for clear competencies (employability) after the first one

Employability within the enlarging EU ⇒

ECTS as the common currency, transparency of the degrees

Prague (2001) keywords: EHEA – BACHELOR & MASTER

• Extensive discussions on Master degree
• No mention of research (!) - Was it really forgotten or the existing university system in Europe was not perceived as transforming (as a whole) to the "research university system"?

Berlin (2003) keywords: DOCTORAL DEGREE (3<sup>RD</sup> LEVEL), QA, QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK
Quality assessment - the latest obsession

Quality is measured as a “fitness for purpose”

• Numerous ranking lists and methods worldwide mostly (or exclusively) based on scientific achievement, each university is trying to place itself on the list

Bologna process - defining standards and thresholds quality is viewed as efficiency in meeting the given standards

There is an urgent need to question the quality of “purpose” “fitness of purpose”
Fitness for purpose (but which one?)

What is HE for?

- **Aristotel posed this question some 2000 years ago**
  - To produce learned man
  - To educate in virtue
  - To satisfy the material needs of society

The history of European universities can be traced through the changes in emphasis that society (and academics) put to each of these issues

- **Prevalent contemporary understanding**
  - Pursuit of knowledge and intellectual skills for their own sake
(Perfunctory) complying with the Bologna requirements

3 levels of competencies - implementation through traditional optics

Outcomes in terms of employability were never discussed (at least in Serbia)
Contemporary requirements

- Each individual gets capacity to be effective in its personal, social and working life
- Flexible expert -
  - professional expertise tied with creativity and innovation,
  - flexible functionality - responsive to diverse challenges and acquire new knowledge
  - knowledge management
  - mobilisation of human resources - take responsibility for change

Looks more like Bill Gates than Albert Einstein
Employability - basic contemporary requirements

Integration of knowledge, skills, personal qualities and understanding used appropriately and effectively - not just in familiar and highly focused specialist context, but in response to new and changing circumstances.

Knowledge, skills, abilities and personal attributes (intellect, willingness to learn, self-motivation, develop ideas, take initiative and responsibility) are much more important than subject knowledge.

Stephenson, J. “The Concept of Capability and its Importance in HE” [http://www.lmu.ac.uk/hec/].
If students are to develop “justified confidence” in their abilities they need real experience:

• need to develop skills through main-stream curriculum activities
• at odds with a content delivery model which specifies what is to be learned and how it is to be learnt
• move from a model “teaching knowledge” ("sage on the stage") to one of “enabling learning” ("guide on the side")

Cannot be obtained from applying a curriculum,

but rather from applying knowledge under critical circumstances.

Real experience and real critical circumstances can be obtained solely through work experience

“The future of the region is going to depend on our teaching our young people how to go out and create companies”

D.Senor, S.Singer, Start-up Nation - The Story of Irael's Economic Miracle, Twelve, Hachette Book Group, NY, 2009
Employers have to believe that they can actually induce the change (instead of turning towards corporate universities).
Most (all?) educators like their ivory tower (freedom and solitude)

They worry that the very values they hold dear - respect for the theoretical, academic intensity, autonomy - will be undermined - it is certainly premature to assume that the skills that employers want are antithetic to a thoughtful educational enterprise

Some fear that they will be providing personal nurturing and menial job training in lieu of rigorous academics - obviously, not every class can teach every skill that every employer wants. Nor should it

Many would rebel (and are rebelling) at the notion of "outsiders" (stakeholders) interfering with what goes on in the classroom - if a graduating student is unemployable, or needs extensive training, then the educational institution has failed

Some faculty members also worry about whether they have the know-how to teach what might be demanded of them in a new environment (!)
Motivate (or force!) universities to introduce serious changes

Evolution has taught us that none of the species changed out of its own volition, or determination, but rather due to the environmental pressure

Ministers conference, Berlin 2003. Dinosaurs were mighty animals, but they failed to realize that the environment was changing …
Possible strategies

• Strict QA regulations with clear distinction between professional (vocational) and research academic institution, and strong emphasis on employability ⇒

  **IMPLIES GOVERNMENT DETERMINATION TO IMPOSE RULES**

• Competition with alternative institutions - corporate universities, ... ⇒

  **IMPLIES DEVELOPED MARKET AND ECONOMY**

• Instigate direct stakeholders (employers and students) involvement ... ⇒

  **IMPLIES MOTIVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY**
Rather busy inventing ad-hoc survival strategies

Viewing HE effects as far fetched (having a cycle much longer then the term between consecutive elections)
No European country had strength to establish something similar to Carnegie Classification

Serbia - completely renounced its natural role in shaping the HE, delegating to the academic community drafting of the relevant legislation

Serbia - extremely sensitive to students demands

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, [http://www.carnegiefoundation.org](http://www.carnegiefoundation.org)
Set (comfortably) in its ways, claiming that it cannot move before the state defines main lines of action (but did not abstain of drafting the legislation) –

**Mirror, mirror on the wall ...**

Cables unplugged towards the external world

"who better than us can know what should be taught"

Western Balkans invention - disintegrated university (autonomous faculties) with disciplines established at the time of industrial revolution

Huge number of monodisciplinary degrees
Employers - 3 categories

• Tycoons - not motivated
  o as parents - educate their children abroad
  o as businessmen - require different (“non-standard”) competencies

• Public Companies - huge, overemployment, in the process of transformation

• Small and medium business - turned into displeased customers ⇒ highly motivated, yet
  o cannot afford to become seriously involved without external help

• Students (another group of unsatisfied customers) starting to look around for different options
Past experience

While the industry was rather developed separate offices were established within each of the relevant faculties dealing with students scholarships, internship placements, or assisting its own part time students

Students actively competed to become involved fully aware that they can profit not only in terms of immediate employment, but also in respect to overall employability

Faculties and employers became natural partners
Possible actions

SMC business cannot afford to become seriously engaged in sustaining integration of work and learning.

Governmental (or non-governmental) agency has to act as the mediator between the related SMC and the universities. Instead of subsidizing the first employment, the government should subsidize integration of work and learning.

Funds coming through different project proposals should not be aimed at universities to self-perpetuate reform, but rather to SMC group who can establish partnership with the university.
Students, which are currently implementing significant effort to gain practical experience through some internship in foreign companies, will immediately recognize the opportunity and grab the chance to become involved.

Pressured by the students (and the state supporting students) the universities will start to comply.

Given the diversity among employers and the wide-ranging jobs into which graduates have to be placed, as well as the mindset of the contemporary university, this is no small task, but it is feasible.
Thank you for your attention!

Questions, comments, ...