

Monitoring of the plans of insertion of non-traditional students of the University of Seville during its first year of access to the labor market

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ABSTRACT

The economic crisis has contributed to increase the access and the return of students to the university in order to improve their employability. However, unemployment figures for graduates remain high. For this reason, our study aims to analyze the contents and modes of transitions of nontraditional students from the university to the labor market, focusing on the following two dimensions: a) strategies and actions to be inserted in the labor market; B) barriers they perceive to enter the labor market. However, we have worked on other dimensions: work experience, job applications and selection processes, career guidance services and job information and expectations of the future.

For this purpose, 8 interviews (3 men and 1 woman, four of them of first generation and three of them have low incomes) have been carried out individual biographies to non-traditional students belonging to different areas of knowledge of the University of Seville: Health (Pharmacy), Arts and Humanities (History) and Social and Legal Sciences (Finance and Accounting and Journalism). The interviews have a longitudinal approach and have been carried out in two phases. The first interview was held during the last year of the degree. The second interview took place a year later.

According to the second interview, the results show that only one student of the four interviewees had completed the university degree and was finishing a master's degree. The strategies and actions to favor their insertion in the labor market remain, surprisingly, inconclusive and diffuse. Students have not developed strategies or resources to facilitate their access to the labor market. On the other hand, the participants consider it important to acquire complementary training, mainly in languages and new technologies. As for the obstacles they perceive, all point to the scarcity of employment as a result of the economic crisis. To this factor must be added the limitations derived from their personal circumstances, more significant in the cases of students with disabilities.

Keywords: Non-traditional students, employability, labor market, work insertion, higher education, obstacles.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, employability has become a crucial debate, since ensuring and guaranteeing access to graduate employment is central to the modern mission of higher education institutions (Harvey, Andrewartha, Edwards, Clarke and Reyes, 2017, P. 6) and for the proper functioning of the State in the broadest sense of the word. However, it seems that reality differs from theory. In fact, the situation that has characterized the country in the last decade is a weak socio-economic structure. This has been due to the following factors: increase in the unemployment rate, a significant drop in employment, a reduction in investment in education and other social services, precarious working conditions resulting from labor reform, and the gender pay gap, mismatch between training and labor demand, and the need for regulation of employment policies. All this has caused difficulties in the transit of the graduates superior to the labor market. These obstacles are accentuated in the group of non-traditional students, due to the sum of structural problems and disadvantaged individual profiles.

In this context, some of the European Union's core objectives are to improve employability, adapt to new technologies and equal opportunities, including gender equality and the social inclusion of people with disabilities. The objective is to improve and promote the employability of graduates, with a special interest in the group of non-traditional students (adults, workers, first generation, disabled, low incomes or educational capital, migrants and ethnic minorities, women with situations of inequality). In summary, improving employability involves promoting and expanding access to higher education, improving the efficiency of the transition processes of graduates to the labor market, and maintaining a balance between training and the labor market to ensure the success of transitions.

Research on the employability of graduates has focused mainly on employability in specific areas: socio-occupational guidance (CEDEFOP, 2011, Suárez Lantarón, 2012, Chisvert, 2014), professional practices as a factor to promote inclusion (ANECA, 2009, Marhuenda, Bernard and Navas 2010) and employability as a way to facilitate access to quality work (Gamboa Navarro, 2013). With regard to the transitions and labor insertion of university students, we find the work of Alvarez, Bethencourt and Cabrera (2000) focused on the specialty of Psychopedagogy and the contribution of Pastor and Peraita (2014). The approaches developed so far could be classified as generalist, because they usually provide information of a general nature, without contemplating an increasingly large group as the "non-traditional". Therefore, it is necessary to approach it from a holistic and integrating perspective that helps to understand the global meaning of the life experiences of the different profiles of graduates and to promote strategic lines that facilitate the obtaining of quality employment, positively in society as a means to revive the economy.

There is also a deficit in employment policies aimed at promoting the employment of non-traditional students. However, we can find some specific measures in the Spanish Labor Reform of 2012. In fact, several provisions of this standard refer to vulnerable groups that have been severely punished by the economic crisis (women, people with disabilities, long-term unemployed). However, these measures are not a solution to tackle

the problem, since their duration is very limited and once the term is over, a climate of uncertainty and labor instability is again generated. Thus, Muñoz Cantero and Rebollo Quintela (2016, p.91), evaluating participation in training programs, conclude that this participation has an initial positive effect to overcome unemployment, although in the long run this positive effect tends to disappear.

This study explores the strategies and actions that non-traditional students put in place to enter the labor market, as well as the obstacles and difficulties that graduates find in transitions to the labor market, during the first year after completing University studies.

This study¹ is part of the European project EMPLOY (Enhancing the Employability of Non-traditional Students in Higher Education, Erasmus + program), whose objective is to deepen the understanding of the issues surrounding the employability of students. A central focus is to study the efficiency of transitions from the university to the labor market, taking into account the perspectives and voices of non-traditional students.

However, the lack of responses to this situation leads us to an increasingly diversified and more demanding labor market, which demands competencies and adaptability at a dizzying pace and which is less tolerant of the particular situations of workers. The job market assigns opportunities based on certain factors, such as academic results, the university in which the studies have been studied, the age and sex of the graduates. These factors seem to be decisive in reducing or increasing the likelihood of graduates experiencing unemployment, gaining access to a skilled job or even pursuing postgraduate training (Purcell, Elias, Luchinskaya and Tzanakou, 2012). In this regard, Amarante, Filardo, Lasida and Operetti (2011, p.14) consider:

"Obviously, professional careers and itineraries ... are determined by conditions of departure, among which are the characteristics and positioning in the social structure of the home of origin, which is a nodal factor, are also marked by individual events of their biographies (achievements, accidents, events, or congenital conditions), and thirdly, the standardization of the conditions of social protection - public policies - as well as normalizations - at least intended - that come from the State "

Employability strategies must be evidence-based and explicitly designed to correct student inequality (Harvey, Andrewartha, Edwards, Clarke and Reyes, 2017, p.7). Therefore, a central objective is to combat the precariousness and job insecurity of the graduates, mainly of those underrepresented groups, whose personal conditions make them more vulnerable with respect to the population as a whole. In addition, active employment policies in our country require a re-conceptualization, as more investment in training is needed. This is understood as a tool for change and socio-labor transformation, which provides people with skills and job skills. Employment policies, to a large extent,

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are aimed at the granting of economic aid and incentives to favor access to employment or self-employment for the unemployed (Malo and Cueto, 2012). However, these measures have not been sufficiently effective in the medium and long term for people in situations of unemployment.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of our study are: to know, from the perspective of the students, the professional career and itinerary they have followed during their first year of access to the labor market; to identify the degree of knowledge and to describe the experiences related to the career guidance service that work to favor the insertion in the job market. According to these objectives, we have analyzed these two dimensions:

- A) Strategies and actions to be inserted in the labor market.
- B) Obstacles that students perceive to enter the labor market.

METHOD

The methodology used in this study follows the line of the biographical-narrative approach, whose objective is to analyze in depth the cross-cutting issues that we have previously raised.

The collection of data was carried out by conducting eight individual biographical interviews to four non-traditional students. In the interviews the interviewer has been interested in the vital and academic trajectory of the students, gathering, especially, information on those aspects related to the processes of transition to the labor market. The interviews followed a longitudinal approach, taking place in two phases and with a year difference between the two. In this way, we intend to know the trajectory of the non-traditional students during their first year of access to the labor market.

We have worked with a sample of 3 men and 1 woman with different profiles and characteristics (immigrants, disabled, first generation and with low economic and cultural capital), to balance the presence of the various profiles that characterize non-traditional students. The qualifications that the participants represent the different areas of knowledge: Health Sciences (Pharmacy), Humanities (History) and Social Sciences (Finance and Accounting and Journalism).

After the data collection process, the interviews were transcribed and their content analyzed through a categories system defined previously.

RESULTS

The results for the two categories are presented below: strategies and actions to be inserted in the labor market and obstacles that they perceive to enter the labor market. With regard to strategies and actions to be inserted in the labor market we must indicate that only one of the four people interviewed has completed the studies of degree; and therefore, remains active in the job search. Although two other students have not yet completed their studies, they are engaged in activities such as paid internships and voluntary collaborations. This allows them to acquire work experience in their professional field and thus, have a first contact with the labor market, necessary to opt for future job offers.

Nevertheless, the strategies and actions that the students manifest to launch to promote their labor insertion are inconclusive, diffuse and oriented to the short or medium term. These actions consist of locating internships, doing postgraduate studies and sending the CV to web portals.

"Eh ... if I'm honest, when I'm studying, I'm not really interested in the work [...] and now that I'm going to start the master's degree, I'm not looking for any work either [...] It has practices [...] that BBVA has taken me [...] to pay me during the internship period (6 months) ... I want to be in Lindkedin and try to update my profile, uh ... in Icarus [...] I am in Icarus [...] I did an English course and I did a French course. I introduced myself to B2 but I did not get over it and they gave me the B "(Juan)

"[...] To see, right now, fundamentally, I'm looking for work that I've studied [...] I got the B1 [...]] And I began to study a mater related to archives and libraries. I know several pages in which they publish all related offers with nothing more than files and libraries. And also, I am looking at the page of the faculty, anything that is I'm waiting to do some courses, I'm waiting for some courses ... and I start a few days related to archives, libraries and preservation of documentation "(Amarillo)

"Now I'm going to collaborate on Betis television, as a practice in the face of a job future is pretty good ... I'm also doing a web page and I'm going to do the portal and interviews and all that, a little like that , Practices and all that ... to give me a little to know [...] I have thought of also making a channel on youtube to do video interviews [...] I want to do is a course of editing videos and designs of Web pages [...] I would also like to do some courses on topics of early speech and [...] make a master's degree and take the B1 "(Rafa)

Another important point is the reference to the management of the emotions and how these processes can influence positively or negatively in the decision making and in the capacity to face unexpected situations and surprises in the relation between the people and the educative or labor context.

"Being a bit up-to-date in computing, keeping up with social networks, being up-to-date on ... I think whoever has more than two languages wins [...] And stay up to date on how he moves Also the labor field [...] is also up-to-date emotionally "(Cristina)

Finally, all the students interviewed agree on the importance of acquiring additional training, especially language training and new technologies.

The obstacles and difficulties perceived by the students are of a different nature, although they usually depend on their personal circumstances, mainly in the student of immigrant origin and in the two students with disabilities. However, they all point out the importance of the employment shortage as a result of the economic recession.

An added factor in the case of students of immigrant origin is the difficulty in regularizing their documentation, since they can not obtain residence permits if they do not get into a work contract. In turn, it is also not possible to have a contract of employment if you do not have a residence permit. This complex legal situation could drastically reduce his chances of getting a job in Spain, so he does not rule out the possibility of returning to his country of origin once the studies are completed.

"Apart from the crisis, which complicates our access to the labor market. The factor that would complicate me here would be the documentation because I am here as a student, I have a valid student residence for a year and I have to renew Annually, and does not allow me to do any paid work. Then I have as a condition in the NIE that I cannot work [...] it would be a pretty fat mess and I see it almost impossible because to work here legally, the company has you To make a contract while I was from Guinea "(Juan)

"With the crisis there is less work ..." (Amarillo)

One of the students says that limiting work experience to the area of knowledge complicates the possibilities of presenting an attractive candidacy to the employers, because he / she understands that to have another type of professional experiences has favored him to acquire a series of competences and abilities that are transversal and Required in most jobs. This idea is reflected in the following phrase: working with other colleagues, being every day at your time in the job, having responsibility ...

Thus, this student considers that the impossibility of proving other experiences can reduce his chances of obtaining a new job, although it differs in scope and form.

"I spent 4 years working before starting my studies in electricity that has little or nothing to do with archives and libraries. So, in many of the offers I'm starting to see it puts: work experience, put it only if it is related to the object of The job offer. Then in that case, I do not put it and what I fear is that the person who sees it, see my CV and say: to see, age: 28. Ah, a degree in History and a master Buah, 28 years old and has not worked, this guy has been studying the degree all his life ..." (Amarillo)

Also, due to the lack of employment as a side effect of the economic situation, it would be necessary to add the personal limitations and peculiarities derived from their disability,

which complicates their insertion in labor conditions on an equal basis with the rest of the active population.

"The world of work I see a little complex ... Maybe the disease could be for the issues that ... maybe I'm fine, but if I catch a cold, because I can take two weeks at home and That ... "(Rafa)

"Eh ... the very barriers of the disease [...] in my work I can not be nitrous gases, I can not be exposed to so much noise ... [...] The competition, I did not realize That as I did not have that self-esteem, that eagerness to compete, then I feel with barriers that, that there are people who, without doing anything, get a lot, do not ... [...] the "favoritism" ... "(Cristina)

On the other hand, one of the students points to "favoritism" as a barrier in their professional development, since some people consider themselves to be advantageous because they are known to others, regardless of the fact that other people are better able to perform the job offered.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Based on the data collected and analyzed in this study, we can conclude that - after one year after the first interview and having been interviewed on a second occasion - only one of the four students interviewed has completed undergraduate studies (and also Postgraduate-master's degree); and is immersed in the active pursuit of employment and while he is preparing for a public competition. However, two other students are initiating a first contact with the labor market through external practices and voluntary collaborations in companies belonging to their area of knowledge. In both cases, the people interviewed are doing their undergraduate and postgraduate studies (master's degree). We understand, therefore, that these actions are implemented with the aim of acquiring work experience in their area of knowledge and, in turn, entering into contact with the labor market. In this sense, work practices could be a key factor in facilitating the insertion and job performance of graduates. This perspective is collected both by the students interviewed as well as by Marhuenda, Bernard and Navas (2010).

However, the strategies and actions expressed by the students do not go beyond the performance of work practices, the creation of an attractive curriculum vitae (CV) or telematic registration in platforms and job portals. The actions do not follow a previous planning or a personalized itinerary. They are also established in the short term, and therefore have no longitudinal character. The graduates do not distinguish between some actions and others, so that they all encompass them under the paradigm of strategies of work insertion, which on the other hand causes them to be imprecise, vague and scarcely defined. It is significant that after one year of the first interview, and practically immersed in the initiation of the process of transit to the labor market, students who have already completed graduate training or are completing postgraduate training (masters) have not

yet defined a strategic line that promotes and facilitates their access to the labor market, thus initiating their professional career.

In the case of one of the students, this indicates their intention to develop their own digital channel, as a way to publicize their work and thus promote their insertion in the work, as this would show employers their skills and professional performance. In short, and following Climent and Navarro (2010), the intention is to create their own brand of reference, in order to increase their professional visibility. However, it does not offer a clear and concrete idea of the work that it wants to present or how it will spread, considerations that, on the contrary, also collect those authors.

However, one of the points in which they place special emphasis is the provision of training courses, both for the acquisition of new knowledge and for retraining, as they understand it as an added value to the initial qualification.

This perspective is confirmed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, which stated in 2015 that a high qualification is associated with higher employment rates and a wage increase, as well as being a protection factor for graduates against loss of Employment, even in times of socio-economic instability. Also, the data provided by the Labor Force Survey for the second quarter of 2017 verify this version.

Likewise, three of the four students interviewed highlight their intention to seek job offers directly related to their area of knowledge, discarded, a priori, offers referring to other sectors and areas. This behavior seems to highlight the selective idea of students in the short and medium term, since they recognize that they would accept jobs not related to their initial training, after having spent a period of time without having obtained a job related to their professional profile.

On the other hand, the difficulties and barriers perceived by students in the process of transition to the labor market are diverse and different. The difficulties mentioned by the students are the imbalance between academic training and labor market demand, the reduction of jobs as a direct consequence of the economic crisis, the overqualification of labor, precarious working conditions, the high rate of temporality, the overvaluation of work experience, professional intrusiveness and plumbing. In the case of students with disabilities, the obstacles and barriers differ because they attribute the difficulties to their own personal circumstances, stating that their professional performance is highly conditioned by their personal limitations. In addition, in the case of students of immigrant origin, it is necessary to bear in mind the possible difficulties arising from the international agreements for the obtaining of the residence permit and for the performance of the professional work. In this sense, Pastor and Peraita (2014) point out that the effectiveness of labor insertion processes depends on multiple factors, including personal characteristics. These obstacles condition and limit work performance and destroy the sense of career.

To conclude, we must point out that, according to the ANECA Report (2009), university graduates in our country have greater difficulties in gaining access to employment, this gap being more significant in the group of non-traditional students, especially in the case of students with disabilities.

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