Skills Mismatch pilot inquiry

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Annica Isacsson, Henna Heinilä, Camilla Wikström-Grotell

Nordyrk 2019 abstract:

- Evidence shows that recent graduates in higher education (HE) often perceive that their competences and skills are not aligned with demands of the world of work.

- **Skill mismatch can occur in situations where there is a discrepancy between the competences at work and those achieved in HE.**

- Generic skills, can be obtained through a number of ways, e.g. by increased community and working life engagement, curriculum with applied content, project work, entrepreneurial efforts, internships, or simply said, by applying work-based pedagogy.

- Many studies have shown that generic skills are as important as hard skills when recruiting, while at school and at work.

- Still they are not recognized nor assessed systematically in HE

- The aim is to find out if there is a mismatch between skills. **We are sending out a pilot survey to supervisors with the specific aim to find out how generic skills of interns or recent bachelor graduates in the fields of business and tourism are aligned with the needs of work.**

- We were interested in how well the skills at working life match with competences acquired in professional higher education (HE)
- Four companies were interested in participating in our inquiry
- We exploited our own networks in contacting the companies (phone calls, emails)
- We sent, through the companies, the inquiry to supervisors with experience of both hospitality and business graduates and interns
- The webropol inquiry was open for 2-3 weeks in april 2019
- We encouraged the respondents to reply with a feed forward attitude and to keep one or two newly graduated professionals or interns in mind when responding
- The inquiry had nine open questions and three background questions
- We received extensive replies, from10 supervisors (8 hospitality, 2 business)
- 60 % of the respondents have acted as supervisors for over 10 years and 40 % of the respondents have 21-30 subordinates
- The data we acquired was qualitative to its nature and the questions on how working life /uas competences match, were categorized into 1) Theory & practice integrated skills 2) Collaborative skills 3) Problem solving 4) Aptitude for independent work 5) Situational skills 6) Networking 7) Branch related 8) Career skills (Nykänen & Tynjälä, The models for working life skills. Aikuiskasvatus 1/2012). The data was analysed through content narrative analysis.

"I want it all and I want it now" - discourse

The data among the newly graduates and interns revealed impatience, rush, unrealistic career anticipations, selfishness, unmatureness ……

"The working life skills are not always quite realistic. Many imagine, that they can take a leave whenever and dictate the work shifts as wanted"

Upon graduation *"ordinary work is no longer good enough – expert, specialist or management work is anticipated"*. According to the supervisors *"There might be possibilities for that in the long run, but the newly graduates have no patience to first profoundly immerse themselves in ordinary work"*.

"The biggest problem is in lack of patience"

"What do they teach you at school" – discourse

In the respondents replies some criticism towards the competences learned at school can be detected…and some wrong assumptions that e.g. collaborative skills cannot be learned or trained at school

"Management and collaborative skills are innate. Those are harder to study"

"Experience and attitude are more important than skills learned at school"

"A newly graduate is often young. Life experience, and"wisdom" & situational abilities are still in development"

"The skills learned at school are not directly applicable at work"

"Management skills may be there on a theoretical level, but have yet to be validated"

"There is potential in youth" – discourse

However, some supervisors have noted that many young graduates /interns have good digital- and collaborative skills, analytical- and knowledge application skills.

"They learn the systems fast and digital skills are often better than those of older colleagues. They have a good attitude and gladly guide others in these issues"

"The newly graduates are well in touch with international actions/activities"

" Substance (branch related) skills and the understanding of dependencies is often good"

"Those who have studied are more analytical and able to base their decisions on numbers" The students are skillful, both verbally and in making contact"

"Knowledge aquiring and knowledge application skills are good"

" Collaborative skills are often good. Most have good language skills, at least in English" Better knowledge in Swedish was called for

"Learning through mistakes" - discourse

The data revealed the need for the ability to make decisions, to learn and to show creativeness and initiative.

"Initiative taking and daring to make mistakes is needed. The supervisors cannot think of solutions to every single case"

There seem to be two extremes: *"those who boldly take action and those who ask about EVERYTHING. And, on the other hand there are those who make mistakes, but do not know how to cope in different situations. The mistakes are hidden and only get worse in the process."*

A question is raised*"Do present culture (education) teach that mistakes cannot be made?"*

Supervisors´controversial responses and myths

Some supervisors maintain a myth that certain things can only be taught in school.*"Work teaches the worker. Customer service and attitude are hard to teach, those are learned through experience"*

Supervisors, however, felt that *" university of applied sciences graduates are almost without exception more ready for work life than those with a basic educational background"*

In the following future working life skills (results of our inquiry) are presented in a table format, interestingly enough empathy, resilience (how to tolerate insecurity) and humbleness are also mentioned

Academic knowledge creation and scientific thinking	Knowledge integration	Social skills and communication	Self-regulation	Management and networking
Profound understanding of the foundation of the profession	Multiple skills, and ability to deduce and combine information from different professional fields	Interaction and cooperation	Flexibility, self-direction, and diversity	Self-management
Expertise that cannot be automated is of value -human to human work	The ability to cope with different kind of jobs	Customer service skills	The resilience of uncertainty and change	Ability to reflect and communicate one's own weaknesses and competences
		Out of the box thinking and getting into the position of another person	Attitude, humility and empathy	Creativity and ability to take risks
		Digital skills	Understanding the effects and consequences of one's own actions	Spontaneity
		Teamwork skills	Self-knowledge	
			Continuous learning	

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