

Emerging modes of cooperation between the private sector, organisations and universities.

The EMCOSU project – some reflections

The EMCOSU project is coming to an end. It includes 700 contacts between enterprises and other higher education stakeholders. This work enlightens the process of cooperation between universities, organisations and the private sector. This relationship *“is currently one of the key strategic challenges facing higher education in Europe. It holds implications for support for graduates’ career success, international mobility modernisation of curricula and the more practical orientation of higher education in general”*. This importance is undeniable.

This primary research, and the interviewing of main actors in the field looking for emerging modes and results of cooperation bring interesting findings in terms of where the drivers of and barriers to this cooperation are and how a number of forces can really push it forward. This is the case with common goals, commitment of the people involved and communication and a shared understanding of the challenges. These findings are very revealing since they take us to the root of every fruitful interaction. They also underline the importance of unity in the purpose of all actors in this strive for education. The conclusion that mutual trust and commitment lie at the core of such an important relationship and that shared motives, interests and values represent the main drivers of university-business cooperation is important and worth being followed up.

In fact, the work undertaken is relevant in different ways. It may contribute to making the road to building employment easier and therefore contribute to one of the main social problems of today: unemployment with economic, social and particularly strong human consequences. It can also improve the conditions of employment with clearer, commonly maintained goals and objectives for which to work, invest and engage. This share of accepted motives can bring added value to the present conditions and the desire, on the part of employers, to invest in new projects and new engagements when they are backed by common perspectives and values.

There is, however, another reason to continue in this search. Beyond this lies the relationship between the frameworks of work and reflection, the analysis of how human beings learn and grow in one of the dimensions of learning which is more repeated as one of the key elements of learning: the relationship between knowing and doing, understanding and acting or what we have agreed to measure at the end of a period of study what he or she is able to do. It is well accepted that this is not the only dimension, because there is also the knowing/understanding, communicating and that of being, the key to everything. Although it is not the only one, it is one of the pillars and it is important to continue the reflection and this pillar represents the centrality of practical learning and it works to balance out an inclination towards academic endeavour which, in too many cases, could be dissociated with experimenting and contrasted with reality.

A number of follow-up routes come to the forefront – such as the question of how these modes of cooperation will evolve in the future or how they can contribute to creating new contexts and socioeconomic settings which can foster employment – will be two evident and fruitful roads. As the conclusions reveal, it is seen in the search for *“an integral approach to training the young”* and this search will always need to be revisited.

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