

Delegate's Report on the ESCalate Student Conference on Employability and Enterprise in Education 2011

Megan David, BA Student, University of Worcester

The ESCalate Student Conference in Enterprise and Education on the 11th April 2011 was an extremely enjoyable and beneficial experience. Each talk that I attended gave me a real insight into an aspect of future employment that I will find extremely useful for my own development. Considering that I am going to be a future graduate, the opening plenary and keynote address by Dr Wendy Bignold and Dr Paul Redmond were my two highlights of the day. Dr Bignold in particular focused on what employers really want from graduates and what higher education can offer graduates to make themselves more employable. It was particularly inspiring and thought-provoking and gave a real insight into what you can gain from engaging with higher education. Dr Redmond's keynote address was extremely engaging. His thoughts and research into how the graduate market has changed threw up some extremely interesting and almost shocking statistics. It truly helped me consider what I can do in order to make myself more employable in today's society.

The 6 other sessions I attended during the day offered research and insights into various aspects of enterprise and employability within education. The morning sessions particularly coincided with my university course and my interests.

The first session I attended presented research into students' well being on school placements. This is something that rung true with me very recently so was extremely enjoyable to listen to what the researchers had discovered. Overall, they found that the mentor and student relationship was crucial and could affect students' well being. The timing and relevance of the curriculum at the university with what students actually needed was also a contributing factor.

The second session focused on how volunteering can help us to become more employable and a specific example was provided which was currently running in Liverpool. Gaining an insight from current students was extremely interesting and beneficial to see the impact that such a model of learning could have. A real sense of enterprise was displayed here as the community and school worked together to raise money and develop awareness of core values such as racism and bullying. The third session concentrated on whether trainee teachers are being given/taught the skills for an entire world of work. This was an early insight into the research but initial results highlight that students feel there is too much focus on some areas and too little in others. Discussions will take place with tutors as a result of such research. It was lovely to see the impact of research such as this to help both future students and improve university courses.

The afternoon sessions focused on some other interesting areas such as how doctoral study can improve employability and your CV and also, how employers are now often more interested in what challenges you've faced and overcome rather than a degree classification. These current and modern aspects of employability highlight the importance and relevance of such a conference to raise these issues.

Overall, I have benefitted greatly from this conference. It has made me consider just how employable I am and what exactly I can do to improve it. In other aspects, attending this conference has boosted my CV as I have discussed with professionals their views on current and important issues within society, illustrating exactly how doing more than purely my degree will benefit my employability. I would recommend this conference to anybody interested in improving themselves and learning more about what the future may hold for many future graduates, like myself.