

Bridging Higher Education and the Labour Market: The UPSCALE Approach to Dual Education and Graduate Employability

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Abstract. The alignment between higher education outputs and labour market requirements continues to be a significant concern in modern information economies. As employment increasingly demands adaptive, transdisciplinary, and work-ready graduates, conventional higher education models—primarily focused on theoretical knowledge—are being reevaluated in favour of more integrated and practice-oriented methodologies. Within this context, dual education has arisen as a crucial pedagogical and structural solution, integrating academic instruction with strategically incorporated workplace experience.

Dual education methods are based on the notion that theoretical knowledge is most effectively reinforced through practical application. These approaches enhance study curricula by including internships, project-based learning, and industry engagement, thereby fostering the acquisition of disciplinary competence and transversal competencies such as communication, problem-solving, and organisational skills. Evidence indicates that experiential learning environments augment students' ability to transition into employment and promote the congruence between acquired competencies and labour market demands.

At the same time, graduate employability is becoming recognised as a multifaceted concept that encompasses not only employment rates but also job quality, skills relevance, and career advancement. Modern frameworks emphasise the necessity of overseeing education–employment alignment, satisfaction, and competency utilisation, exposing ongoing issues such as overqualification, skills misalignment, and deficiencies in essential transferable skills, notably in communication, leadership, and coordination. These findings emphasise the necessity for higher education systems to implement evidence-based methodologies that consistently guide curriculum development and pedagogical advancement.

From a theoretical perspective, the amalgamation of dual education and employability tracking signifies a wider transition towards outcome-focused and socially accountable higher education. It emphasises the collaborative generation of knowledge between academia and business, the significance of learning ecosystems that transcend institutional confines, and the function of higher education in facilitating

individual career paths and greater socio-economic advancement. In this context, initiatives like the Erasmus+ project UPSCALE exemplify how these ideas can be implemented through organised partnership between higher education institutions and the employment market.

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