

Social Capital and Models of Employability

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In the field of employment, as well as in the people's beliefs, social capital mostly represents access to social connections that help transmit important information that, among others, help faster transition to employment and thus contribute to a more stable employability of a person. Thus, it is not unusual that not only the research interest, but also employment practices are aimed at improving employability. The search for career-related information is integrated into the interpersonal aspect of employability through social capital which is anchored to the individual's social environment. As a consequence, the quality of relationships and network structure thus impacts the speed and the way of transition to employment as well as to other benefits during the course of a career.

The aim of the theoretical review is to find out how the models of employability take into account the role of social capital, and consequently assess their validity. The theory clearly highlights the link between social capital and employability. By systematically reviewing the social capital role in the 78 selected employability models of different scope and range, the attention has been focused on the inclusion of the social capital factor through its various dimensions.

The literature review shows that social capital as an employability model factor is only explicitly present in one (!) of 78 identified employability models. The further literature search with additional search terms of "network", "informal ties" and "social skills" aimed to identify whether there may be employability models that include only certain aspects (or dimensions) of social capital. This expanded search identified additional 30 employability models that included one or more social capital dimensions as the employability factors. However, this means that social capital is being included in less than half of the identified employability models.

The results of a systematic review of the role of social capital in employability models lead to several findings. Firstly, the direct role of social capital in the employability models is evidently neglected, with the exception of one model (Fugate, Kinicki, and Ashforth 2004), which includes the social capital concept with all of its three dimensions. Secondly, in 30 models, which is less than half of the identified employability models, only certain selected dimensions and forms of social capital are taken into account. This leads to a third set of conclusions relevant to future research. First, taking into account different research approaches and aspects, the validity of the majority of identified models of employability is questioned in terms of non-compliance with the concept of social capital. Second, in relation to empirical research, the update or revision of employability models is called for with a comprehensive consideration of social capital. Third, the theoretical review appeals to the establishment of a more direct role of social capital within the employability models, and to the development of appropriate measurement instruments. This means, in particular, the inclusion of different patterns of network characteristics that lead to different employment opportunities and, consequently, the related measures in maintaining a more stable employability.

Keywords: social capital, model of employability, employability.

References:

Fugate, M., A. J. Kinicki, and B. E. Ashforth. 2004. 'Employability: A psycho-social construct, its dimensions, and applications'. *YJVBE Journal of Vocational Behavior* 65 (1): 14–38.