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Problematising Employability: Power and Powerlessness

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Problematising employability –
Power and Responsibility

A presentation to
SRHE Network Seminar

Friday 8th November 2013.

Jim Reid
The Study

• HEA funded
• 3 x groups of six students:
  – Team, working on a change project
  – 6 individuals in a single setting
  – Individual work placements.

• Findings
• ‘treason of the clerks’
• ‘docile citizens’ (Baltodano 2012)
• Quality of work is constructed on the basis of pupil outcomes
• An individualist discourse of responsibility
• ‘individual fault’ and ‘private worry’ (Bauman 2008).
Power and ethics

• Responsibility – Privileged irresponsibility (Walker 1998, Tronto 1993)
• Theoretical juridical approaches
• Theoretical virtues approaches
• An expressive collaborative-model
  – “An expressive collaborative model looks at moral life as a continuing negotiation among people, a practice of mutually allotting, assuming, or deflecting responsibilities of important kind, and understanding the implications of doing so” (Walker 1998, 69)
Responsibility

- Relationship – Power
- Inclusion and exclusion
- Needs

Those attentive to the need for a skilled, qualified workforce
Those with responsibility to ensure a skilled, qualified workforce
AND
Those required to demonstrating competence
Those required to be responsive to the needs of the market.
Questions

• Who is putting people and their responsibilities in their rightful places?

• Ethics?

• How do we as universities care about our students employability?