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Problematising Employability: Power and Powerlessness

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Problematizing employability –  
Power and Responsibility



A presentation to  
SRHE Network Seminar  
Friday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2013.

Jim Reid

Inspiring tomorrow's professionals



# 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?