MAPPING
ENGAGED EDUCATOR
CAREER PATHWAYS

Executive Summary of Discovery report

MAPPING ENGAGED EDUCATORS CAREER PATHWAYS

Amsterdam – Bucharest – Cork – Evry – Jönköping – April 2024

Engaged educators are the future of education.

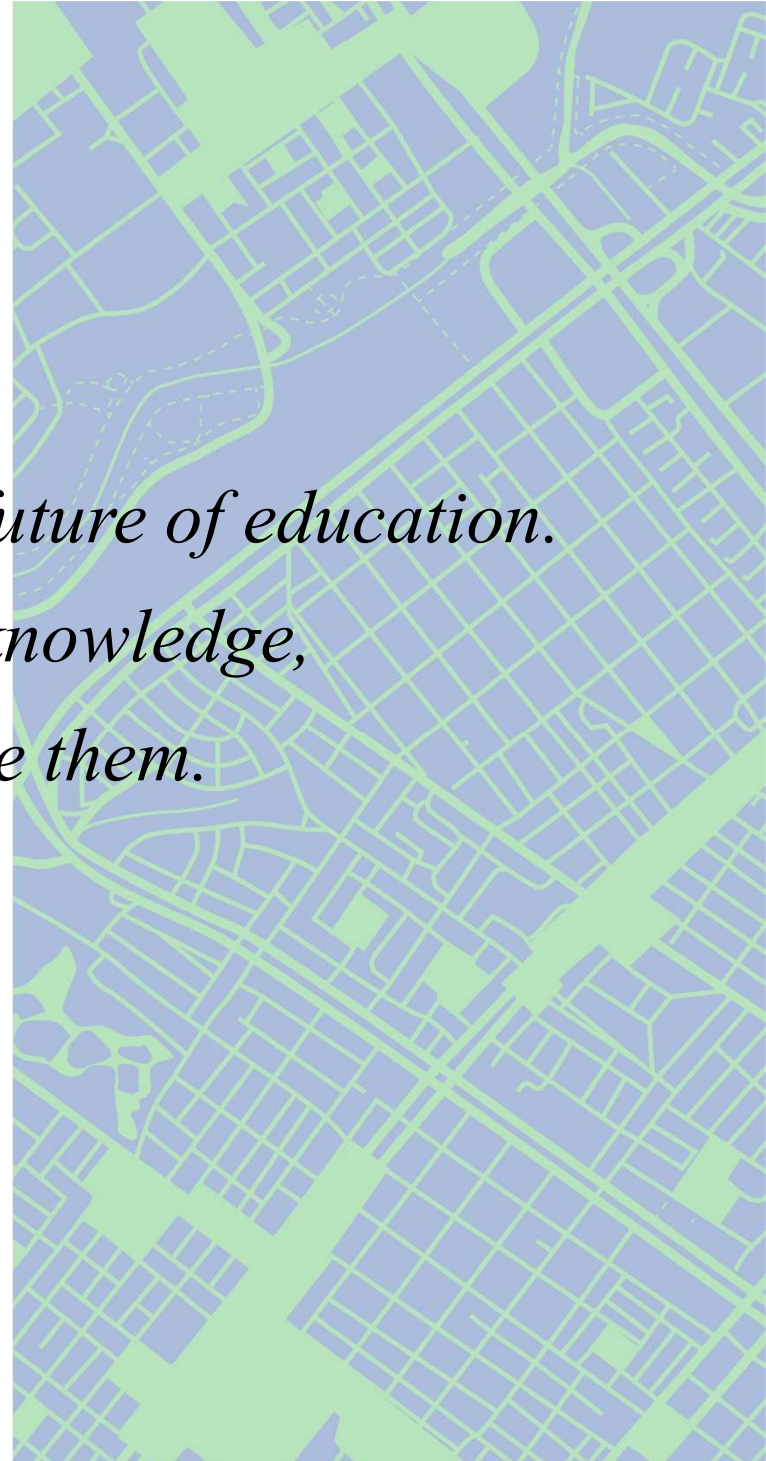*We search for ways to acknowledge,*

support and incentivize them.

TABLE OF CONTENT:

1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, research quality assessment and rethinking of academic careers have been on the agenda across various EU working groups (e.g. Working group on Open Science, Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment), and in relation to different cross-sectorial activities, like Open Science, Universities' Third Mission. From there, stems the need for diversification of Academic Career Pathways and it strongly links to the topic of recognizing the diversity of contributions in research careers.

The more specific issued in this report and related project is the insufficient recognition of engagement in teaching academic careers. The general lack of engagement activities in education is a known challenge, even though the benefits and importance of those activities have been outlined by practice and policies. The motivation of educators to innovate and engage with both their colleagues and external stakeholders could be boosted by creating recognition and incentive systems. That would have a direct impact on the education that students receive and their employability, and it would create more favorable conditions for educational innovations.

Taking the previously outlined reasons into account, the project "Mapping Engaged Educator Career Pathways" (Map EEC) aims to support universities with designing and implementing transferable strategies to recognize and incentivize engaged educators, as well as contribute to designing as support structures that would embed these strategies within HEIs across European regions.

To achieve this aim, we set the following objectives:

▶ Contribute to a better understanding of the institutional change towards the recognition of the engaged educator in academia, by conducting research on the status quo and the needs of educators and HEIs.

▶ Support HEIs in fostering teaching academics' professional advancement by co-creating and testing an Engaged Educator Recognition and Promotion Matrix, a teaching assessment framework that will support HEIs in fostering teaching academics' professional advancement, by recognising and promoting a variety of engagement activities.

▶ Equip HEIs professional staff and leadership with strategies to recognise and incentivise engaged educators, by codeveloping and testing a roadmap for engaged educators' recognition and promotion.

▶ Contribute to EC priority to develop and implement strategies and quality culture to reward and incentivise excellence in teaching, by providing policy recommendations.

This executive summary will focus on the findings from the first work package in the project that focused on investigating the current situation regarding engaged educators.
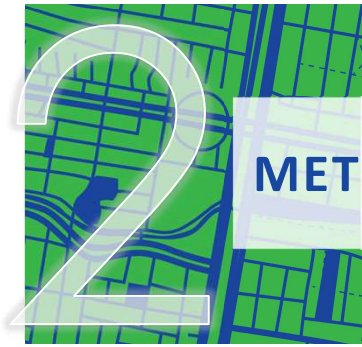
2 METHODOLOGY

The methods used in this study were based on both literature reviews and empirical data. First, a literature review of scientific and grey literature as well as national/European policies and strategies for HEI were conducted.

Thereafter empirical data was collected with interviews and at workshops. In total 24 interviews were conducted with experts in the topic as well as external stakeholders. 4 workshops with over 40 participants were also conducted. The data was transcribed and analyzed by the project team.
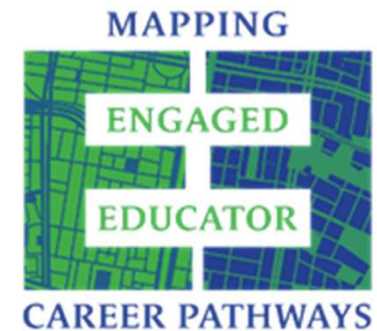
3. FINDINGS

The main findings from the study are described shortly below

3.1 DEFINING ENGAGED EDUCATOR

Engagement can take many different forms, for example, research, academic entrepreneurship, knowledge exchange/co-creation, resource sharing, etc.

However, in our context, we focus on the engagement instrumental to achieving educational outcomes and connected to performing the role of educator. Due to this, the proposed definition of an engaged educator is:

An engaged educator is an educator who invests time and effort to connect the students (at campus) and external non-campus stakeholders for the purpose of creating the best possible educational experience and beneficial outcomes for all parties involved by using real-life issues and/or cases as a base for learning and interaction.

a) Educators' engagement as an active choice and commitment to teaching/learning.

b) EE bridges the academic community (theory, campus) with the external environment (non-campus, real-word, practice) – requires overcoming the divide between the two (Purcell, Pearl, & Schyndel 2020).

c) EE makes continuous efforts to build and maintain networks with the environment.

d) EE uses pedagogical/andragogical approaches that are based on: experiential learning, community-based learning, service learning, project-based learning, and real-client projects, thus pursuing a student-centered education.

e) EE by working on real-life issues and cases secures relevant and contemporary (up to date) education.

f) EE by working on real-life issues and cases performs significant service to the community (society).

3.2 ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES FOR EDUCATORS

3.2.1 Personal/Professional Engagement and Collaboration with external partners

The literature identifies two main types of engagement: personal/professional engagement and collaboration with external partners. The findings from the interviews with external stakeholders are also included in this part.

Personal/professional engagement

Personal engagement activities focus on helping educators reflect on their experiences, set goals, and identify what motivates them
- **Documenting experiences** in journals helps educators reflect on positive moments.
- **Setting career goals** provides direction and motivation.
- **Identifying motivating factors** strengthens intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction.
- Community-engaged teaching is highlighted as a valuable strategy that benefits universities, faculty, students, and communities by connecting academic work with societal needs.

Collaboration with external partners

The Interviews revealed four key benefits:

- **Shaping future talent**: Partners influence curricula to align with industry needs.
- **Greater societal benefits:** Engagement supports local development and innovation.
- **Personal benefits**: Many partners are driven by a desire to give back.
- **Organizational benefits**: Partnerships enhance learning, ROI, and brand visibility.

3.2.2 Motivators and benefits for engaged educators

Based on the literature and data from the four discovery workshops, three categories of motivators and benefits were identified:

Intrinsic Motivation: Intrinsic motivation refers to the drive to engage in an activity for its inherent satisfaction and personal rewards, rather than for some separable consequence or external reward. Educators are driven by the positive impact on student learning and personal satisfaction from practical engagement.

Benefits from being recognized by students: A benefit that was emphasized during the workshops as well as in the literature review was student recognition. However, the recognition from students was mainly informal and verbal.

Professional benefits: One professional benefit from being engaged is that the educators are updated on industry trends and the educators are likely to share these trends with the students. Another benefit is that engaged educators can foster professional networks and are opening for new collaborations. One example is an engaged educator from JU that involves many industry leaders in the region in the educator's course that runs once every year. In this way the educators have developed a long-lasting network with industry leaders in the region.

3.4   CHALLENGES FOR ENGAGED EDUCATORS

Many educators face significant challenges in adapting to the evolving demands of engagement while balancing other responsibilities. An emphasis on engagement activities requires educators to invest time and effort in building and maintaining networks with external partners, such as businesses, non-profit organizations, and community groups. This often involves organizing community events, advocating for social justice, and integrating real-world issues into their teaching practices.

However, the lack of formal recognition and support for these activities can be demotivating. Educators frequently find that their engagement efforts are not adequately acknowledged in career progression frameworks, which tend to prioritize traditional research outputs. This discrepancy can lead to frustration and a sense of inequality, as the crucial contributions of engaged educators to student development and community impact are undervalued compared to more conventional academic activities.

Moreover, the additional workload associated with engagement activities can lead to burnout. Educators must manage their teaching responsibilities, research commitments, and engagement initiatives simultaneously, often without sufficient institutional support. This can result in significant stress and reduced time for personal and professional development. This was for example discussed at the discovery workshops and mentioned as a risk of being engaged without being recognized for it.

3.5   SUPPORT AND INCENTIVES

Existing support for engaged educators is largely informal, often relying on individual initiative and the goodwill of colleagues. While some HEIs offer mentorship and flexibility, these efforts are typically ad hoc and lack the consistency needed to build and maintain long-term engagement. To address this, there is a pressing need for structured and consistent support mechanisms that can provide a stable foundation for educators' engagement activities.

Financial Support for Engagement Activities: Financial incentives are crucial for motivating and sustaining engagement. HEIs could for example allocate specific funds to support engagement activities, such as organizing community events, developing partnerships with local businesses, and integrating real-world issues into the curriculum. This financial support can take the form of grants, stipends, or dedicated budget lines for engagement projects, ensuring that educators have the necessary resources to carry out their initiatives effectively.

Career Progression Criteria that Value Engaged Education: Traditional academic career progression frameworks often prioritize research output over other forms of academic contribution. To recognize the value of engaged education, institutions should revise their promotion and tenure criteria to include engagement activities. This could involve creating clear metrics for evaluating the impact of engagement on student learning, community development, and institutional reputation. By explicitly valuing engaged education alongside traditional research, institutions can encourage more educators to invest in these activities without fearing negative impacts on their career advancement.

Institutional Policies to Promote Collaboration: Effective engagement often requires collaboration across departments and with external partners. Institutions should develop policies that promote interdisciplinary collaboration and reduce redundancy in engagement efforts. This could include establishing centralized offices or committees dedicated to coordinating engagement activities, facilitating communication between departments, and providing administrative support. By fostering a collaborative culture, institutions can enhance the efficiency and impact of engagement initiatives

3.6   RECOGNITION AND REWARDS

Recognition for engaged education activities is often informal, typically relying on verbal acknowledgments or positive feedback from students and colleagues. While these forms of recognition are appreciated, they lack the formal structure needed to significantly impact career progression and professional development.

To address this issue, HEIs need to develop more structured recognition mechanisms. This could include:

a) **Workload Adjustments:** Securing adjustments to the workload to accommodate the time and effort required for engagement activities. This could involve reducing teaching loads or administrative responsibilities to allow educators to focus on their engagement initiatives.

b) **Structured Time for Engagement:** Allocating time within the academic schedule dedicated to engagement activities. This ensures that educators have the necessary time to plan, execute, and reflect on their engagement efforts without compromising their other duties.

c) **Explicit Career Advancement:** Revising promotion and tenure criteria to explicitly include engagement activities. This could involve creating clear metrics for evaluating the impact of engagement on student learning, community development, and HEIs reputation. By recognizing and rewarding engagement in career progression frameworks, institutions can encourage more educators to invest in these activities.

3.7   POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

Policies and strategies to support engaged educators at international, European, and national levels were identified in the literature review. Key findings include:

▶ **International Policies:** UNESCO's emphasis on universities' social responsibility and the launch of the UNESCO Chair in Community-based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education.

▶ **European Union Initiatives:** The Lisbon Strategy and the Renewed Agenda for Higher Education prioritize broader societal engagement by universities.

▶ **National Policies:** Various national strategies emphasize the importance of engagement, such as the UK's Teaching Excellence Framework and Ireland's National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030, and Technological Universities Act (2018)

4 CONCLUSIONS

This report has analyzed data collected from literature review, interviews and workshops concerning engaged educators. This research has discovered many areas that are essential for both the engaged educators as well as policy and decision makers at HEIs.

Based on literature review and the project's purpose, we define an engaged educator (EE) as an educator who invests time and effort to connect the students (campus) and community (non-campus) stakeholders for the purpose of creating educational experience and beneficial outcomes for all parties involved by using real-life issues and/or cases as a base for learning and interaction.

In both literature and in the empirical data collection it was found that engagement in education is, in general, not considered instrumental to a career path(s) in academia. However, it was revealed at the workshops that engaged educators continue to engage driven by their own motivation.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

To better support and recognize engaged education, the following recommendations are proposed:

Formal Recognition
Establish formal recognition mechanisms for engagement activities within academic promotion criteria. This includes explicitly valuing the impact of these activities on student learning, community development, and institutional reputation. By integrating engagement into promotion and tenure guidelines, institutions can ensure that educators' efforts in this area are acknowledged and rewarded.

Ensuring Structured Support
This can include career progression opportunities and financial support for extracurricular activities. We recommended that HEIs can develop structured support processes, including dedicated time allocations and administrative assistance for engagement activities. This could involve creating specific roles or units within departments responsible for coordinating and supporting engagement efforts. Providing clear guidelines and resources can help educators manage their engagement activities more effectively.

Coordination
Enhance coordination across departments to streamline engagement efforts and share best practices. This could involve regular meetings or workshops where educators can exchange ideas, discuss challenges, and collaborate on joint projects. Establishing centralized offices or committees dedicated to coordinating engagement activities can also facilitate communication and reduce redundancy.

Feedback Mechanisms
Implement regular feedback mechanisms external partners to continuously improve engagement activities. This could include formal evaluations, surveys, and feedback sessions with representatives of external partners. By gathering and acting on feedback, institutions can ensure that engagement activities remain relevant and effective.

Flexibility in Assessment
Consider more flexible assessment methods for engagement activities to ensure fair evaluation. This could involve using pass/fail options for placements or developing specific metrics to evaluate the impact of engagement on student learning and community outcomes. Flexible assessment methods can help recognize the diverse nature of engagement activities and their varying impacts.

Resource Allocation
Allocate specific resources for engagement activities to reduce the financial burden on educators. This could include funding for travel, materials, and administrative support. By providing financial support, institutions can ensure that educators have the necessary tools to carry out effective engagement activities.

Professional Development
Offer professional development opportunities focused on engaged education. This could include workshops, training programs, and conferences that help educators develop the skills and knowledge needed to effectively engage with industry partners and integrate real-world experiences into their teaching. Professional development can also help educators stay updated on best practices and emerging trends in engaged education.

Institutional Culture
Foster a culture at the HEI that values and promotes engaged education. This could involve highlighting successful engagement projects, celebrating achievements through awards and recognition events, and encouraging a collaborative approach to teaching and

learning. By creating a supportive environment, institutions can motivate more educators to participate in engagement activities.

Student Involvement

Actively involve students in the planning and execution of engagement activities. This can help ensure that these activities are relevant and beneficial to students, while also providing valuable feedback for continuous improvement. Involving students can also enhance their learning experience and foster a sense of ownership and responsibility.

Long-term Partnerships

Develop long-term partnerships with external partners to ensure sustained engagement and deeper collaboration. These partnerships can provide ongoing opportunities for student placements, joint research projects, and curriculum development. By building strong relationships with external partners, institutions can enhance the impact and sustainability of their engagement activities.

By implementing these recommendations, institutions can create a more supportive and rewarding environment for engaged education, ultimately benefiting students, educators, and the broader community.

UNIVERSITY INDUSTRY INNOVATION NETWORK BV
Amsterdam, Netherlands / www.uiin.org

MUNSTER TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY
Cork. Ireland / www.mtu.ie

INSTITUT MINES TELECOM BUSINESS SCHOOL
Evry, France / www.imt-bs.eu

UNIVERSITATEA DIN BUCURESTI
Bucharest, Romania / www.unibuc.ro

STIFTELSEN HOGSKOLAN I JÖNKÖPING
Jönköping, Sweden / www.hj.se