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Internships in public service interpreting and translating training as a contribution to the construction of a multilingual European identity

The professionalization of Translating and interpreting, in general, but specifically in the Public Service Sector (PSIT) passes through the existence of competent professionals, but in order to create these professionals education and training are necessary. The considerable increase in spaces dedicated to the field of Public Service Interpreting and Translation also helps the design and implementation of academic programs and activities to help the coexistence and development of multicultural societies where minority languages add new challenges.

The University of Alcalá, Madrid, offers a 1-year language specific master's degree in Public Service Interpreting and Translation (PSIT) in nine language pairs. The teaching methodology includes both on-line, and on-site classes, a Master's thesis and non-remunerated internships. The curriculum design is based in the principle of cross-fertilization of the three main parameters of training, research and practice. Fulfillment of this end means alliances and cooperation with all the agents that somehow (might) intervene in the translation and interpreting (T&I) working environment. Thus, achieving the final goal requires paying special attention to job market, and to the real recruitment conditions and requirements for professional translators and interpreters. It is my intention to concentrate in on one of the main parameters: practice in training or internships. Internships are considered as an introduction to the workplace. They have two main objectives: on the one hand, to help complete the ideal circle of productive development for all of the individuals and organizations involved through cooperation between the academic institutions and the workplace; and, on the other hand, to fulfil one of the methodological pillars upon which the training course is established. I will discuss the pros and cons from various points of view: trainers, institutions and students. The information obtained on behalf of the three parties has revealed both strong and weak points, but above all it has been the only way of knowing what is happening both outside and inside the classroom for both sides -PSIT students and trainers, on one side, and providers of public services, on the other side. Conclusions serve as feedback and are taken into account when trying to improve educational aspects.