

GRADCORE CONFERENCE

Brussels (19-5-2016) - British Ambassador's Residence

- **Format:** plenary presentations followed by themed discussion groups (attended 2 out of 4).
- **Participants**
Attendance by mostly British IHE's + 3 representatives from EIAE Emploi (Conference partner) + 2 Belgian universities + number of international companies: including Airbus Group, Allan & Overy, Accenture, KPMG, GSK, Fortis Paris Bas, Imperial Tobacco, ... etc. (also refer to list of participants).

INTRODUCTION

- Welcome by **Alison Rose, UK Ambassador**

Among other things, she talked about the role of traineeships as a lever to employability, and about traineeships as a means of social mobility (a chance to show what you are worth, even when you are not able to provide a degree from a top university). Alison comes from a modest family background herself. She also underlined the importance of dialogue between the labourmarket and Institutions for Higher Education (IHE).

- **Martin Edmonson, CEO Gradcore**

Initiator Gradcore is a relatively young consultancy company founded by career experts from a university in the UK; they found that many universities dealt with the same problems and challenges in terms of employability and development of career services. Martin Edmonson, current CEO, decided to make his expertise available to the IHE world and formed a team around him that takes on assignments in the field at the request of IHE Consulting. It also focuses on graduate recruitment /talent recruitment.

'Field of employability is changing >> need for interconnectivity' (refer to mission statement Gradcore) between eg. the education world (also: graduates) and the industry; hence the reason for this (first) conference to be held in Brussels; as a hub. Gradcore likes to focus on the mainland as well in the future.

<http://www.gradcore.co.uk/>

GRADUATE RECRUITMENT KEYNOTE

- **David Bear, EPSO**

EPSO European recruitment office (HR) for staff at EU institutions. Traditionally, taking on major challenges; all kinds of jobs on very different levels, in 24 languages in 24 countries. Outlines how EPSO managed to reform former cumbersome and time consuming European recruitment (24-30 months) into a modern HR management policy with faster and more efficient recruitment procedures (5-9 months).

Number of challenges:

Public sector: active in modified, dynamic context. Traditionally struggling with the image of being a less desirable sector of employment, while they need to attract the best profiles to meet today's challenges and to solve current social problems. Global economy requires 'global leadership'.

However, EPSO is also facing so-called 'War for Talent' partly because of declining birth rates, thus shrinking the talent pool; it becomes more and more difficult to attract the right profiles. It is also not easy to pick talent from elsewhere; to persuade people to work in other countries.

Generation Shift; Baby Boomers, about generation X, Y, and now generation Z >> more pronounced problems of job retention; Many search for a job elsewhere within 5 years.

There are also problems to find people who are internationally mobile. In some countries nationals appear to be more firmly based than others (eg. Sweden, Germany) and some other profiles tend to have a larger deficit than others what leads to EPSO facing specific challenges.

A number of trends and shifts can be identified within staff recruitment:

- importance of rapid recruitment procedures "less cost for more value" and a faster response regarding the need for certain profiles, improved coordination
- from paper-based tests for CBT and IBT; from knowledge based testing to identification of competencies, strengths and values -> value based testing;
- test for attitude, train for skills (for some a controversial statement) i.e. using adapted methods of detection to test motivation and inner motives of the candidates, and consequently finding the best matches for the job.
- More attention to gender balance and social diversity; focus on personality against an intercultural background

EPSO has been forced to take on a different road in recent years; initiated another strategic approach. Nowadays seen as an example for the public sector (No. 1 in Randstad Awards). Works with pre-testing for some generic skills (numerical skills, verbal reasoning, abstract reasoning, situational judgment).

EPSO competency framework; i.e. importance of analytical skills and problem solving abilities. Furthermore, specific to the European jobs: importance of language skills (testing 2nd language), experience (academic) education. Candidates will each receive a competency passport, which they can use as a tool for possible reorientation.

Handling new approach resulted in higher success rate; finally, 90% of new recruits meet the expectations. However, European differences; 6% of the candidates come from Germany but take 20% of the jobs. Candidates from the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark also score very well (low-volume, high quality).

Declining impact of study results and graduation institution; less important in the selection procedures. Study results are internationally difficult to compare, and appear, according to the speaker, in an international context to be unjustifiably overrated. More important are skills and test scores. Traditionally, it was very important where you graduated in the UK ('social class' is a typical UK issue; little of an issue on the mainland). Both are for EPSO less important than for the UK; social mobility has been a topic in the EU for a long time.

HEI RECRUITMENT KEYNOTE

- **Alan Usher, HESA**

Massification of higher education > new challenges for the government.

Also new phenomena: including partnerships between the field of higher education and the industry; and organisations (cf. Gradcore) who settle in the niche between.

Employability of graduates in the labor market is more and more, part of 'university outcome'. In the US the rise of competence-based educational programmes knows great success. But this approach is not deemed useful in all educational domains.

The IHE world understands that governmental support is being threatened; need to redraw curricula, more focused on outcomes; also at traditional universities there is more willingness for change.

Speaker suggests that the effectiveness of the higher education career services is related to the degree of involvement with the labor market. One of the roles of career services is to encourage students starting from their first year in Higher Education to think about their own competence and further career path (creating awareness). It is sensible to also systematically translate curriculum assignments to their relevance in the professional field (eg. teamwork). Advocates integrating more 'real life & work reality' in the curriculum; allows students to think about real problems and real deadlines ("Make careers part of the curriculum"). The speaker also calls for shorter training programs (so-called 'nano degrees' of 3 to 4 months.); rapidly deployable to meet the needs of the labor market. Even suggests professional bootcamps, 12 to 24 weeks. ("Why invest in a four year study if you can get the skills in a few months?").

IHE's give different meaning to skills, sometimes far from the industry; do not speak the same language, also not what is meant by certain skills.

Ex. critical thinking, academic interpretation gives some substance, but actually to the business world it comes down to "Can you take a decision without bothering your boss?". The speaker is not advocating that industries should determine the outcomes, but for more dialogue between IHE-world and the business world. IHE should offer education that allows students to also practice their skills 'in between the lines' by putting in maximum effort; 'Learning by doing' + integration of soft skills training.

BUSINESS CONTRIBUTION

Apart from EPSO, three international companies share their own stories about 'cross-border recruitment strategies':

- **Airbus Group** (Rachel Schroeder)
- **Fortis Paris Bas** (Terrence Perrin)
- **Glaxo Smith Kline** (GSK; Alison Heron)

These three companies share (separately) actually a similar story: 'War for Talent' because of the declining fertility and the transformation of Generation Z; no longer focused on a lifelong career in the same company or organization. These companies are facing problems of job retention of younger workers; it is a challenge to keep them more than 5 years on board (refer to EPSO story). These companies invest in various forms of 'graduation recruitment' (how to get the hearts and the minds of students and graduates). They set up specific programs for students to get acquainted with the company in various ways; they approach students at HEI's (regular classroom contact + seeking partnerships with HEI's), and more specifically with the graduates to build a kind of connection through traineeships (work experience placements / job shadowing). Traineeships within the company constitute a major pillar of graduate recruitment programmes.

Goal: afterwards to engage the most motivated job seekers and, if that is not possible, it has still been a valuable investment in the broader external corporate image. These companies see traineeship also as a kind of trial recruitment. The underlying idea is: the more motivated the young employee, the longer he/she will stay on.

However, international companies face different educational systems, different national priorities, several interchangeable timeframes, ... etc. It is a challenge to deal with these in harmony, it requires a lot of flexibility.

In regard to recruitment itself; importance of skills and competences prevails. Online testing is widely used as a selection agent. Importance of big data: screening larger numerical quantities.

- **GSK:** 57 markets, recruiting 500 people/year worldwide; talent spotting through the network, regional and global. Has differentiated recruitment programs: for apprentices, future leaders, etc.
- **Airbus Group:** traditionally UK, FR and D, but also active in the US, Asia. Known for aviation but still active in various sectors: besides aircrafts also helicopters, satellites, trans hospitals, border security, security at major events.
Many societal challenges.
Recruitment also evolved in recent years. 2 recruitment programmes: 1 for UK and 1 internationally.
Engage annually 5,000 trainees (3m - 2y), usually paid.
Also a French funded recruitment program.
Importance of (technical) skills -> importance of cooperation with (technical) universities. Prediction and definition of (future) required skills.
- **Fortis Paris Bas:** various recruitment programs (early career recruitment); include summer traineeships, introduction activities, kick-off conferences, global market academy modules, mentoring programs. Obtain a lot of useful feedback from it. Motto: Employees are responsible for their own careers; the company provides the necessary tools available.
Relationship with IHE's is not so important because of the 'branding' but FPB is always looking for relationship support. Attention for the needs of local markets vs. global competences; is reflected in the training programs they offer.
Importance of diversity, networking (also in function of attracting the right people), raising professionalism in their own ranks. For all the above 'patience' is the keyword.

FROM ATTENDED THEME GROUPS (2):

PRIORITIES OF CAREER SERVICES WORLDWIDE

Companies unanimously endorse the importance of traineeships: work-based learning. Challenge to facilitate traineeships more a.o. by the EU; need for transparent framework. Increasing number of companies are looking for ways to attract more trainees; demand grows. HEI's often have influence concerning content of placements; but this does not always tally with the needs of apprenticeships > importance of dialogue. Companies and IHE's also need diversified traineeship programs; from short (but more intense), to longer ones; taking into account the tasks & skills and purpose of the traineeship.

Importance of investing in relationships with IHE's; Some big multinationals have partnerships with > 150 IHE's, depending on budgets available.

Role and interpretation of career services can now and then be very different on a local scale. Career services are sometimes held "responsible" for the degree of employability of graduates. On the other hand students make little use of career services support; failure to be proactive, or because of inadequate professional organization of such services; or degree of 'branding' / visibility of career services within the institution.

Extent of use of intermediary services offered by career services by companies is locally very different. Attending companies witness how career services of some universities indeed support them; importance of sharing each

other's views and dialogue. In other universities the contact with career services is more fragmented, through departments, educational programmes... etc. A single point of contact for companies -> facilitates companies -> easier to establish a bond / create partnerships.

A NEW BREED OF GLOBAL GRADUATES?

Growing importance of the online world. What kind of graduates do we have within, say, 10 years? How to recruit them? How will IHE's evolve?

According to participants, future graduates will be more entrepreneurial in spirit, they will create their own job if they do not find an appropriate one; employment through their own start-ups. Even more freelancing.

In Scandinavia great support for start-up companies; investment in incubation centers by calculated risk takers.

Success in future may be more determined by risk takers (risk taking attitude).

On the other hand "the factories will remain where the cotton is made".

Transnational education with branch campuses possibly at risk in the future.

Theme Leader Alex Usher sees a challenge in less classroom 'teaching' in higher education and less massification. Important to bring students more into contact with different learning styles; other opportunities and ways to practice various skills; improved employability in the labor market.

Indicates the great potential with example of Africa; government lacks money, many privately sponsored universities; fuel for debate on private providers vs. government providers; Extent of which the business world wants to invest in "growth areas".

CONCLUSION

- New social challenges, including for IHE; massification of education vs. Mortgaging of state aid. Need for customized curricula and creating more opportunities for practicing skills during the educational programme. Impact of the (supporting or facilitating) role of career services at the extent of 'employability' of graduates.
- From the perspective of companies:
War for talent > shrinking talent pool + problems of jobretention (Generation Z). In recruitment shift to skill- and competency identification, importance of personal motives as well as an eye for diversity, social mobility. Shift to customized, rapid and effective recruitment methods. Investing in connection with IHE / graduates, traineeships are an important pillar in this; increasing demand. Business World at IHE asking for clear IHE contact-points; in direction of government; demand for uniform, preferably cross-border, framework for traineeship. More diversification in terms of traineeships and forms of education (short, intensive and targeted vs. more spread out in time).
- Need for dialogue between IHE-world and labor market / business world.

Final comment

Gradcore invites participants to take part in discussion groups that will meet on a regularly basis to discuss specific topics. Wants to do this to keep in contact with their worksphere as a consultant, between IHE's and businesses; looking for some more foothold: strengthening of the Gradcore profile as a facilitator.