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**Graduate Recruitment and Graduate Attributes in
European Labour Markets: a comparative study of four
countries**

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Graduate Recruitment and Graduate Attributes in European Labour Markets: a comparative study of four countries

- **Introduction**
- **The Problem**
- **Research Questions**
- **Graduate Labour Market Trends in Europe**
- **Higher Education in Europe: Changes & Challenges**
- **The Study**
- **The Findings**
- **Discussion**
- **Questions**



Introduction

- **The purpose of this paper is to provide a comparative analysis of graduate recruitment practices in four European countries in order to establish the extent to which the current institutions of higher education are producing graduates with the attributes and skills that are required to meet the needs of their economies.**
- **This is work in progress and the paper is going to present only some preliminary findings.**
- **The study starts from the assumption that there is a mismatch between the demand for and the supply of graduates in the European labour markets.**



The Problem

- **There are more graduates from a wider range of HEIs in different disciplines than before but many employers are still unable to recruit the employees they really need.**
- **Graduate recruitment has become a challenging task for many employers and a daunting experience for many graduates because of socio-economic, political, technological, national and international changes.**
- **More and more employers have had to cope with high volumes of applications in order to fill in very limited vacancies (eg. in 2004 Lloyds Bank had 3,800 applications and employed only 102 graduates).**



The Research Questions

- H. *Since more students are graduating from universities of other countries and are likely to be employed in their home or third countries within the European Union (EU), it will be possible to have a common qualifications structure and similar graduate recruitment procedures.*
1. **Have the methods of graduate recruitment and selection changed as a result of economic, social, educational, and technological changes over the 20 years (1990-2010)? And How and Why?**
 2. **What do employers expect from graduates and what do graduates expect from their potential employers?**
 3. **What is the role of Higher Education institutions? Has it changed in response to labour market demands?**
(this paper attempts to answer questions 1&2)



Graduate Labour Market Trends in Europe

- **Recent studies confirm that there is a mismatch between the demand for and the supply of graduates in European labour markets (CIPD 2007a; Eurostat 2007; Weitzel et al. 2008; Hurrell et al., 2011; Wilton, 2011).**
- **Many graduates are finding it increasingly difficult to gain access to graduate level employment at a time when they have freedom of movement and a choice of jobs in over twenty countries.**
- **Graduate underemployment has become a real problem, as many graduates are unable to utilize their graduate knowledge and skills (Brown and Hesketh, 2004; Hurrell et al., 2011).**
- **The person-organization fit analysis restricted the scope for understanding the process of graduate recruitment because it excludes the role that HEIs can play in the transition from the classroom to the workplace.**



Graduate Labour Market Trends in Europe

- **European labour markets differ in size and composition but they have common trends such as:**
 - **The increase in the services sector and the decline in the manufacturing and industrial sectors.**
 - **The growth of small and medium size enterprises (SMEs).**
 - **Increasing levels of investment by non-European multinational companies (MNCs)**
 - **The use of flexible working practices,**
 - **The increasing participation of women,**
 - **The increasing employment of migrant workers, and**
 - **An ageing working population.**



Graduate Labour Market Trends in Europe

Recruitment Methods	Selection Methods
Milk-round	Application form
Recruitment brochures	Interviews
Recruitment fairs	References
Recruitment Directories	Tests
Newspapers & Magazines	Assessment centres
Recruitment Agencies	
Internet	
Word of mouth	
Interventions	



Higher Education in Europe: Changes & Challenges

- What is the role of higher education?!!
- Has the policy of widening participation in higher education, giving wider access to universities, reduced differences between classes in society and provided employment opportunities for all?
- The move from elite to mass high education over the last twenty years has created a surplus of highly qualified (degree holders) people but not necessary talented and skilled graduates.
- HE systems differ in their reputation in relation to their age, location and size. Hence graduate employment prospects are very often affected by where rather than by what the graduate studied.
- It is too early to assess the extent to which the objectives of the Bologna declaration have been met by individual EU member states but it seems there is a long way to go.



The Study

Table 1. Questionnaires distributed by country

Questionnaire	France	Germany	Spain	UK	Total
Employers	100	70	50	500	720
Students	254	186	152	908	1500



The Study

Table 2. Questionnaires received and response rate

Questionnaire	France	Germany	Spain	UK	Total
Employers	46(46%)	40 (58%)	10 (20%)	156 (30%)	252 (35%)
Students	214 (84%)	136 (73%)	95 (62%)	740 (81%)	1185 (79%)



THE STUDY

Table 3. Distribution of the respondents (employers) by sector

Sector	No	%
Retail	43	17
Finance	48	19
Transport	15	6
Automobile	13	5
Petrochemicals	3	1
Engineering	27	11
Information Technology	26	10
Pharmaceuticals	19	8
Building and construction	16	6
Electronics	28	11
Local Authority	12	5
Others	2	1
TOTAL	252	100



The Study

■ **Table 4. Distribution of the respondents by size**

Size	No	%
0-50 employees	8	3
51-100 employees	14	13
101-500 employees	46	18
501-1000 employees	85	32
1001 + employees	102	34
TOTAL	326	100



The Findings

- **The findings are presented under:**
 - **Recruitment methods,**
 - **Selection methods,**
 - **Reasons for the methods used,**
 - **Employers' expectations, and**
 - **Graduates' expectations and experiences.**

The Findings: Recruitment Methods

Table 5. Methods of Graduate Recruitment by Organization Size

Sector	Size of Organization					
	0-50	51-100	101-500	501-1000	1000+	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Newspapers	50	60	64	80	97	85
Career fairs	0	2	30	65	83	55
Careers centres	18	20	76	53	27	43
Milk-round	0	0	5	60	75	45
Brochures	0	10	33	74	100	64
Presentations	0	12	25	65	87	56
Careers literature	60	76	83	96	95	89
Recruitment Agencies	30	25	15	10	15	15
Internet	35	58	97	100	100	91
Other	68	75	100	65	72	75

The Findings: Selection Methods

Table 6. Methods of Graduate Selection by Organization Size

Sector	Size of Organization					
	0-50	51-100	101-500	501-1000	1000+	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
CV & Letter	100	100	73	80	53	73
Employer application	25	34	91	86	78	76
Standard application	17	32	76	56	81	63
Interview	100	100	100	100	100	100
Aptitude tests	25	50	45	80	92	72
Assessment centres	0	12	32	56	74	50
Work placement	25	30	50	76	65	60
Other	25	40	25	20	13	21



The Findings: Reasons for using selection methods

Table 7. Reasons for using each selection method

Method	Cost	Accuracy	Fairness	All three	Other
	%	%	%	%	%
CV & Letter	80	42	56	63	25
Employer application	72	68	65	56	10
Standard application	70	63	65	56	13
Interview	40	22	78	63	10
Aptitude tests	56	82	89	67	15
Assessment centres	10	72	95	67	12
Work placement	15	52	63	55	12

The Findings: Employers' Expectations.

Table 8. Skills and qualities employers look for

Skill/Quality	%
Desire to achieve/motivation	87
IT Skills	85
Team work	82
Willingness to learn	76
Commitment	66
Oral communication skills	62
Problem-solving ability	57
Drive/energy	43
Confidence/assertiveness	36
Degree classification	35
Written communication skills	26
Dependability/reliability	22
Presentation skills	19
Time management	11
Other (commercial awareness, critical thinking, decisiveness, potential, etc.)	10



Findings: Graduates' Expectations and Experiences

- **Career development and training opportunities, and good rewards and benefits were among the most expected features but the respondents differed in their ratings of the level of importance.**
- **In terms of graduate recruitment experience, the majority of the respondents found the use of the Internet a convenient way of finding graduate jobs but they differed in their experiences of other methods.**
- **Most of the respondents knew what graduate employers were looking for in terms of skills, degree classifications and personal attributes but they differed in the level confidence in meeting employers' needs.**
- **They also differed in their perceptions of whether higher education had prepared them for the world of work.**



Discussion

- **Graduate recruitment practices are socially and culturally biased.**
- **Graduate recruitment is influenced by a cost and benefit analysis.**
- **There are different perceptions of the relationship between degree and career.**
- **There is a need for stronger links between employers and higher education institutions.**



Questions

- **THANK YOU!!**