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Recruiter perceptions and expectations of desirable graduate attributes and fit

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Recruiter perceptions and expectations of desirable graduate attributes and fit

One increasingly important aspect for graduates to demonstrate in the context of graduate recruitment is their potential fit to the job and organisation. Using an opportunity sample of 43 recruiters at two career fairs in Ireland, we explored the extent to which graduate attributes incorporate fit, which categories of fit were mentioned, and the importance of fit across recruiters overall. The results showed that fit to the job, teams and organisational values are indeed aspects of increasing importance to graduate recruiters. In addition to credentials and skills, graduates were required to show continuous commitment to learning, resilience and mobility. The proactive engagement of students with employers at fairs may be fostered by pre-fair preparation and employer research.
Keywords: attributes; employer branding; person-job fit, recruitment

Introduction

Graduate fairs continue to be an essential recruitment method for many organisations. While recruiters get a sense of the candidates' calibre, the candidates may also gain a sense of the personality of the organisation that seeks to hire graduates. This enables candidates to get a sense of the characteristics and potential fit with a prospective employer (Russell & Brannan, 2016). Recruiters (and employers themselves) often communicate perceptions and expectations in ways that may not be intuitive for many graduates (Uffindell, 2017). It is our experience that the concept of fit, and particularly fit with values, is underexplored in most career services preparing graduates for recruitment. In addition, many organisations still struggle to identify their own fit requirements and values and may fail to distinguish themselves from other competitors in their sectors. The arrival of employer branding has changed this situation for the better as more employers seek to share their organisational values and symbols, which are linked to human resource practices (Russell & Brannan, 2016). However, the education of graduates in this regard still lags behind as they may not recognise employer branding as an opportunity in recruitment settings such as fairs. It is imperative for graduates, therefore, to be proactive in preparation for career fairs and similar events. Recruiters and other representatives of organisations often form the basis for person-organisation fit beliefs (Rynes & Cable, 2003). This means many graduates rely on their interactions with others, rather than engaging in proactive fact-finding missions. Recruiters are not as reluctant to make use of job seekers' online information to assess person-job and person-organisation fit and subsequent hiring recommendations (Chiang & Suen, 2015).

In line with these trends, in this current paper we explore values and the fit of values considered during graduate recruitment by analysing the qualitative feedback of a group of recruiters. In the next two sections, we introduce the notions of fit in the context of recruitment and specify our research questions.

Recruiting graduates

Recruitment has mostly focused on identifying candidates with the right attributes. In the context of this article, we define attributes as the general knowledge and qualities of graduates that recruiters perceive are required for the roles offered by their organisations broadly. In using this definition, hence, we presume that attributes extend beyond disciplinary expertise and skills as such. Attributes are therefore the outcome of the core learning outcomes of a graduate's education (Hughes & Barrie, 2010) as well as work experience gained during or before university (Muldoon, 2009) that increase the graduate's employability prospects after graduation.

In order to assess the extent to which graduates have the right attributes and requirements for potential jobs, they often seek information from online sources (e.g., Lyons & Marler, 2011). Recruitment events help potential applicants to learn about potential opportunities within these organisations. At these events, recruiters operate as official ambassadors for the organisation as they are responsible for communicating organisational expectations to candidates (Herriot, 1988). In addition to learning about jobs and career opportunities, interested graduates can learn more about the organisational culture as well as the organisations' ethos, values and mission statements. These aspects reflect the importance of fit in many different domains: The notion that individuals will perform and be committed more so when they exhibit and share values that align with those of the organisation (Kristof, 1996). The present research provides more insight as to why discussions and assessments of fit may generate benefits to recruitment, expanding the traditional focus on graduate attributes. A highly qualified candidate may easily turn out to be a poor fit for the team or company they work in, unless both types of fit are considered early on. This paper thus addresses the research gap around graduate attributes and fit in the context of graduate recruitment.

Person-organisation, person-job and person-environment fit have been examined by a number of researchers (Arthur et al., 2006; Edwards et al. 2006; Kristof, 1996). Person-environment is often considered as encompassing person-job, and person-organisation fit as well (Lewis & Zibarras, 2013). This research emphasises the role of a match between the person and the job (specifically the tasks) they apply for, the work environment and the organisation overall. A key feature then is compatibility (Kristof, 1996). Russell and Brannan (2016) also proposed person-brand fit which is defined as the extent to which individuals share the same values of the brand(s) that the employer represents. Research conducted in USA has shown that fit such as person-job and person-organisation fit predicts turnover as well as job satisfaction, with person-organisation fit also predicting contextual performance such as extra-role behaviours (Lauver & Kristof-Brown, 2001). Fit may also lead to organisational identification, which has been shown to predict job performance (Astakhova & Porter, 2015). The fit to the business reflects the need for better person-environment fit (Caplan, 1987).

These different considerations of fit are complemented by the importance of shared values in the workplace (Russell & Brannan, 2015). Values reflect fundamental convictions regarding conduct within organisations (Robbins, Judge, & Campbell, 2010). These values may then also direct behaviour in organisations, but also the expectations of new hires about pay and conduct. In the context of recruitment, individuals tend to be attracted to organisations when they share the same values. In addition, they are more likely to stay rather than leave an employer. This is also in line with the suggestion by Schneider (1987). He emphasised that organisations themselves contribute to the attraction, selection and attrition of employees through the culture and values that are shared among the members of the organisation. The importance of values has also resonated in work on values in recruitment and among incumbents (Russell & Brannan, 2016). While graduates may not be aware of all the values of relevance to an organisation, they will often know which aspects they value themselves.

Learning about employer branding can be of considerable help here. Employer branding in this space can be considered as a means to proactively manage the perceptions of various stakeholders (including current and potential job incumbents such as graduates) to make them aware of a particular organisation, their goals and targets (see also Sullivan, 2004). While promotion-oriented in terms of recruitment, employer branding activities aim to raise awareness among professionals and prospective candidates about the different or desirable characteristics that represent an employer

(Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). However, not every employer is known for their brand(s) or engages in branding (Russell & Brannan, 2016). Where this information is not readily available, it will be up to the graduates to take the initiative and obtain this information from recruiters. For example, details about a company's investment in training of employees may make a learning-intensive role more interesting to a graduate (Uffindell, 2017).

However, the question arises whether or not graduates are able to effectively use this information in recruitment settings and can express their own values. Only if both recruiters and graduates discuss values and fit expectations can a potential (mis)match be determined. Furthermore, the extent to which graduates are aware and prepared to self-assess their degree of fit to the job, but equally to the work environment and the organisation, is relatively uncertain. While recent research conducted with participants from several European countries (such as UK, France, Germany, Spain, Czech Republic, Italy, Poland, the Netherlands and Sweden) and USA has predominantly focused on the perspective of students and employers (Branine & Avramenko, 2015; Humburg & van der Velden, 2015; McMurray et al., 2016) and faculty (Woods, Richards, & Ayers, 2016), we wish to add to the work on recruiters' perspectives in higher education (Fulgence, 2015; Walker & Fongwa, 2017).

Knowledge gap and research questions

As noted in the literature review, the role of fit to a job, team or organisation has received increasing attention over the last 20 years. It is worth noting that numerous tools are available to assess fit – and could be used for online assessments of graduates and in career development planning once they are hired. A number of researchers have created tools and approaches that can help organisations identify which features make them attractive employers among their target samples of potential graduates (Berthon et al., 2005; Cable & Judge, 1996; Lauver & Kristof-Brown, 2001). In the context of employer branding, one particular example comes to mind. Berthon et al. (2005) created an employer attractiveness scale that enables organisations to assess the perceived benefits that potential employees would expect. The scale was tested with Australian university students and aims to identify which aspects such as a social environment, financial rewards, or developmental opportunities these potential graduates may value in an employer.

Yet little is known about what graduate recruiters consider fit. Learning about their perception of fit and which particular aspects come to mind (e.g., person-job fit) provides an important insight for graduates and counsellors. This is particularly the case as both groups tend to focus on disciplinary expertise and skills in their career preparations and activities. The ability to demonstrate fit often is not recognized as an additional requirement for many recruiters.

In the context of graduate recruitment, two research questions are explored:

RQ1: Which general attributes and requirements are common to most recruiters of graduates?

RQ2: To what extent does 'fit' play a role in graduate recruitment?

Methods

Procedure

In the first step, we obtained ethical consent for the study and sought approval from Career Services to approach recruiters at two career fairs on university premises at University College Cork, Ireland. In the next step, two research assistants spent five hours in total at the two fairs in Spring 2018 to collect feedback on a paper questionnaire. All participants received an information sheet and a consent form as well as the questionnaire at the beginning of the fair. The information sheet outlined the purpose and the confidentiality of the research. Participants completed the questionnaires during the fair, which were collected at the end of each fair. Upon completion of the survey participants were thanked for their co-operation and if they had any further inquiries or questions they were asked to contact us (contact details were provided on the information sheet).

Participants

The final sample comprised 43 sets of responses of which 27 were collected at the first fair and 16 at the second fair. The sample included 19 males and 22 female recruiters between 22 to 55 years of age. Two participants did not disclose their gender. A third of the recruiters were aged between 22 and 25 years, another between 26 and 32 years, and the remaining recruiters aged 33 to 55 years old (M = 30.79, SD = 7.82). The largest group of participants were recruiters in the education sector (16), finances and accounting services (11), nutrition (5), construction / engineering and manufacturing (5), biopharmaceutical companies (4), retail (1) and one unknown company. Thirty-nine employers operated for profit, with 3 representing not-for-profit organisations such as public sector organisations. The companies ranged from small organisations (with less than 50 employees, n = 7), medium-sized organisations with more than 50 employees (n = 10), to large organisations with more than 500 employees (n = 17) (with nine missing values). A number of employers were located either in Ireland only (n = 2), in the UK (n = 13), or in more than two countries simultaneously (n = 28). Two thirds (66.7%) of all employers had attended up to 5 career fairs, with another third reporting that they had attended up to 20 career fairs . Recruitment experience ranged from a few months to 20 years (M = 3.04, SD = 4.17), with a third not reporting the amount of time they had not worked in recruitment (n = 16, 37.2%). This suggests quite limited experience among some recruiters. Tenure in organisations varied in line with recruitment experience (M = 4.22, SD = 5.25), with just over a third (35.3%) having been with their current organisation for a little over one year, another third up to five years (35.3%), and only a third had more than six years of experience, with the record being 24 years' work experience in recruitment (along with 7 missing values).

Measures

The paper questionnaire included a number of questions using an existing questionnaire (job fit items, see below) and several open-ended questions

Perceived person-job fit. We used the five items created by Lauver and Kristof-Brown (2001) to assess job fit. An example of a question asked includes: "The graduate has the right skills and abilities for doing the job" (see also Figure 1 in the Results section). The original five items had a 7-point Likert response scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". In order to identify priorities rather than agreement, we added additional instructions for our participants and changed the response scale to a 3-point scale. Specifically, we asked recruiters the following: "Please tell us

what is most important to your company when recruiting new talent. Please pick one of three answers: (1) Not important, (2) Somewhat important, and (3) Very important."

Person-organisation fit. We created one additional item to assess person-organisation fit: "The graduate's values have to match or fit the values of my organization." We used the same three response options as for job fit priorities.

Open-ended questions. In order to identify what employers are looking for in new graduates, we posed five open-ended questions to fair attendees. All principally considered the question of fit and attributes such as: What does graduate-job fit mean to your organisation with regards to graduate recruitment? Are there attributes a candidate should have to be the right 'fit' for your organisation? What are you looking for in a graduate skills/personality wise? What are you expecting your graduates to know about your organisation when they apply? What do they need to know in order for you to see them as suitable 'fitting' candidates?

Demographics. We also asked participants about their age, gender, tenure, and experience with recruitment to date.

Qualitative analysis

In the absence of previous research on graduate fit, a qualitative approach was selected for data collection and analysis in order to build the foundation for further research. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the responses to the open-ended questions because it allows for the identification and interpretation of qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2016). This method also allows for the quantification of qualitative information to gain a sense of reliability of new codes and theme development (Clarke & Braun, 2016). This was particularly useful as many answers were identical and overlapped in response to certain questions.

The analysis proceeded in two steps. The first involved data familiarisation (Clarke & Braun, 2016). This involved the identification of general attributes and requirements which were common to most recruiters of graduates. Using an approach based on thematic analyses, three research assistants (all graduate students in psychology) were asked to identify the common themes connecting recruiter statements. As the answers overlapped for several questions, all items were analysed simultaneously. The research assistants generated overarching themes such as requirements (broken down into qualification, attitudes towards learning, skills, and personality traits), work ethic (captured by commitment, motivation, passion, and goal orientation), and fit (differentiated in terms of the job, the team, the company). Each fit theme was further broken down (e.g., in terms of training, skill levels, business values, and mobility).

In the next step, the outcome of the sorting tasks was evaluated first by the first author and then re-evaluated by the second author in line with existing literature on job recruitment, values and fit, as also with thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Core themes included role requirements (including professionalism) and skills (such as communication, interpersonal/team skills), graduate attributes (goal-orientation, motivation, passion, continuous learning, and conscientiousness), and business-related requirements (values, mobility, and resilience). After a review of how themes overlapped and complemented each other, this secondary review of the evaluation resulted in an overview of themes which is presented next. The final selection of themes was guided by the research questions, in order to retain some focus.

Results

Themes extracted from answers to the open-ended questions

With regard to RQ1, as a result of 56 comments, two of the major themes at the first step of analysis focused on the formal and skill requirements for graduate jobs (see Figure 1). Thus, formal qualifications in terms of certain degrees were mentioned by six recruiters. The formal and skill requirements focused on qualifications (such as degree, academics, core knowledge) and specific skills required in education or STEM jobs (science, technology, engineering and maths), which were the jobs for which recruiters were looking for candidates. A number of skills could be differentiated: technical (mentioned 11 times), organisational skills (mentioned 7 times by recruiters) as well as interpersonal, but also communication and presentation skills (these latter two requirements were mentioned 16 times each by the recruiters). For example, recruiters wanted graduates to have "skills in data analysis" (n = 6), exhibit "good/strong communication skills" (n = 12), show "soft/interpersonal skills" (n = 5). As shared by recruiters, graduates needed to be "technically skilled", "able to converse", "well-organised" and have the "ability to build rapport and be part of a team". There were no patterns specific to an industry that were particularly noteworthy; therefore, the focus of subsequent analyses was on identifying generally relevant graduate attributes.

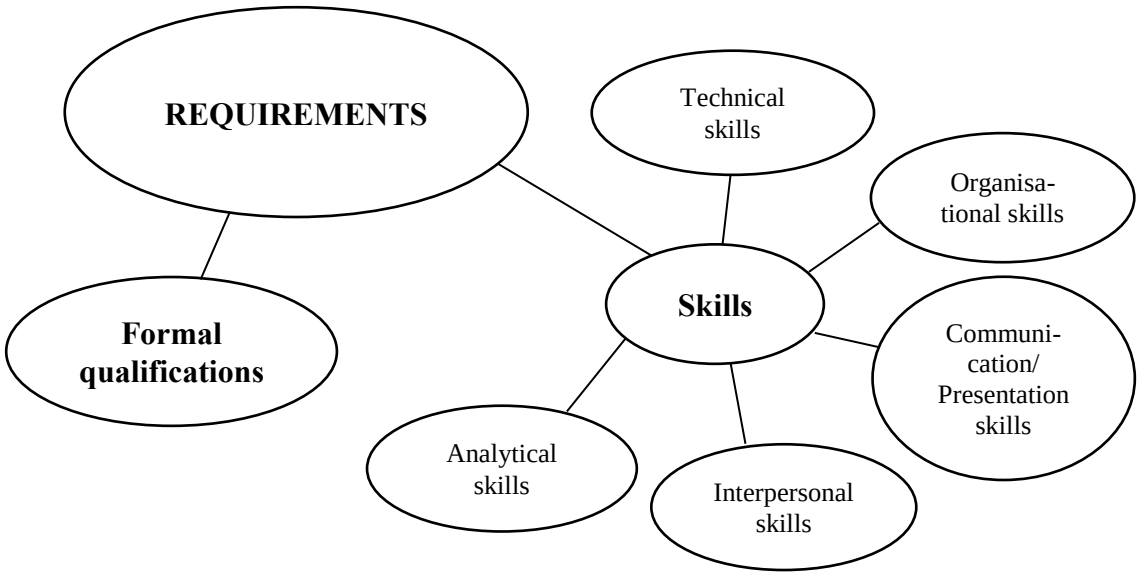


Figure 1. Overview of themes that emerged from open-ended questions in relation to common requirements

The importance of fit as viewed by graduate recruiters was explored as part of RQ2. Our thematic evaluation identified 48 comments that were relevant here. Fit emerged in various forms in the shape of themes (see Figure 2). Fit to job was noted by 11 recruiters, many of whom sought graduates who had experience and were problem solvers. Being "competent to take on a position immediately with a certain level of support" and being "flexible to role requirements" were both individual quotes from recruiters in our sample. The fit to existing teams came up in 16 answers, as a third of recruiters wanted "team players" and two thirds wanted graduates who will "work well in a team". The importance of fit to the business emerged in 19 answers. This resulted in new codes for the sharing of values of the company, company ethos, and the need to respond to the flexibility needs of the company. Recruiters expected graduates to be mobile as the vast majority were located within Ireland, the United Kingdom and other international locations. For example, recruiters wanted graduates who "understand how

we operate", show "interest and in belief in the company", share "ethos and values", and will "fit to the business".

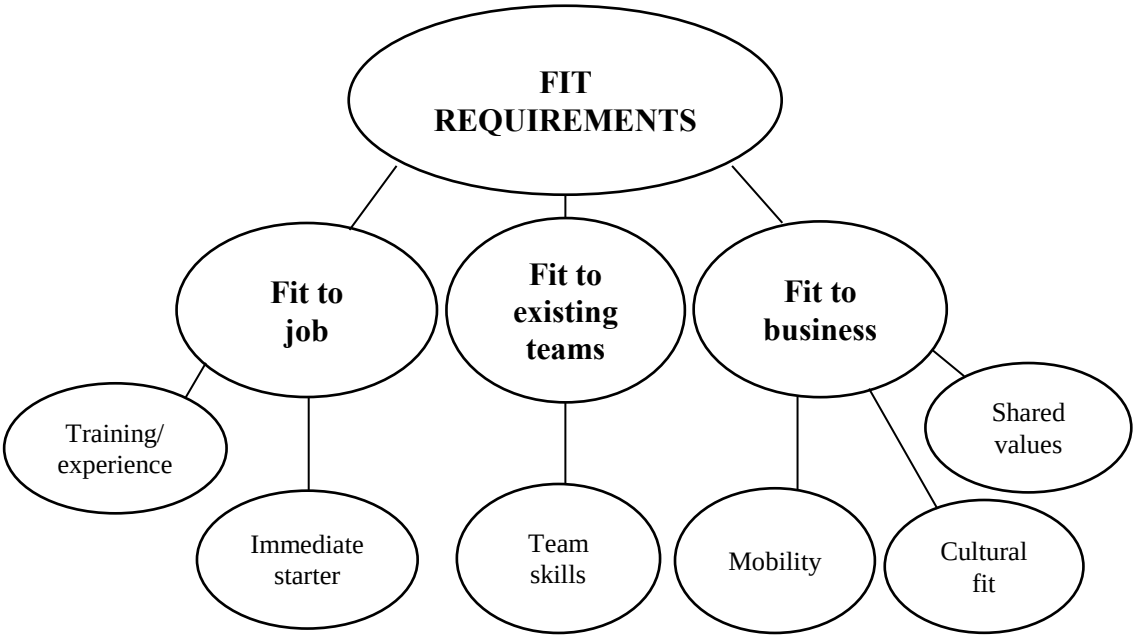


Figure 2. Overview of themes that emerged from open-ended questions pertaining to fit

The discussion around fit and attributes also led us to the identification of a number of candidate-specific characteristics, characteristics that were not related to any requirements, skills or fit; these characteristics were captured in 109 answers. This means that the recruiters were particularly talkative and described multiple graduate characteristics. The majority of answers were finally allocated to four themes related to candidate-specific characteristics: commitment, motivation, passion, and goal-orientation. Another two codes captured the importance of openness to learning and resilience.

First, commitment was addressed in 24 answers. Recruiters wanted graduates who showed "work ethic", were "hard-working", "good workers" and "professional". Second, motivation was mentioned 18 times. Recruiters wanted graduates to "show initiatives", "take direction", and be "self-motivated". Third, passion was also an important code as recruiters mentioned it 24 times. Graduates who were "dynamic", "outgoing", "enthusiastic" and had a "positive attitude" were particularly frequently wanted. And fourth, goal-orientation was mentioned 21 times. Here recruiters looked for graduates who were "driven", "ambitious", and "someone who can articulate what they want from their career". The fifth theme represented openness to learning (as a result of 16 answers) and the sixth theme reflected the need for resilience among graduates (noted 6 times). Recruiters wanted graduates who showed "willingness to take feedback", were "actively seeking to learn", and showed "adaptability". For example, recruiters sought candidates who had the "ability to work in a fast-paced environment", were "not daunted by roles" and would "work well under pressure".

Findings relating to the rating scale

The importance of fit (to job and organisational values, RQ2) was also captured in the responses of recruiters to the six questions on job-fit and person-to-job-fit. As can

be seen in Figure 3, the majority of recruiters rated fit as very important in terms of fit to job requirements (personality, skills, abilities, demands) and organisational values. The importance to fit to job did not appear to depend on company size (recruiters from small and large organisations gave similar answers).

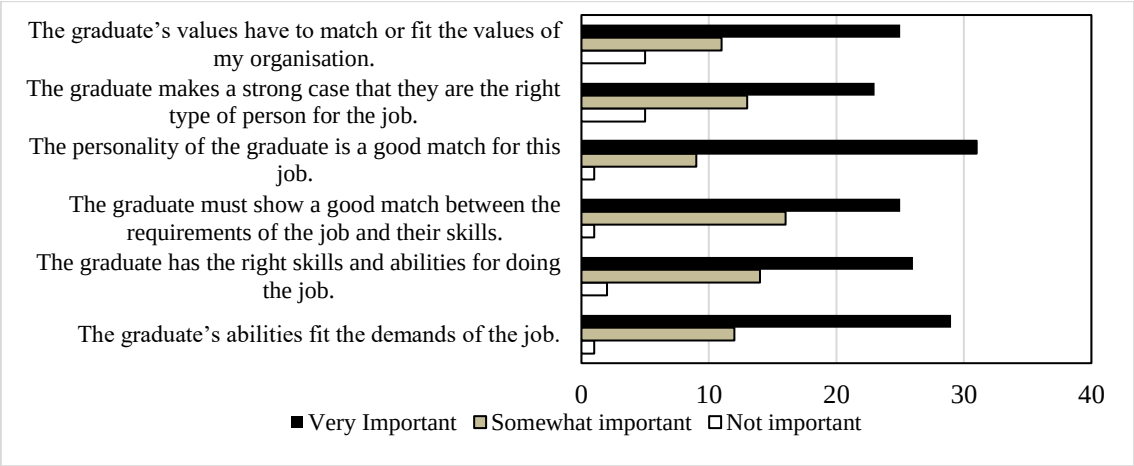


Figure 3. Recruiter ratings of importance of fit

Second Level of Analysis and Summary

At the second level of analysis, four themes were found to represent all of the findings pertaining to what recruiters look for while hiring graduates: formal requirements, skill requirements, candidate characteristics, and fit requirements. Thus, an overview of all themes generated is presented in Figure 4.

FORMAL REQUIREMENTS for graduate jobs
- Qualifications of candidate

SKILL REQUIREMENTS for graduate jobs
- Technical skills
- Analytical skills
- Communication/ Presentation skills
- Organisational skills
- Interpersonal skills

CANDIDATE CHARACTERISTICS for graduate jobs
- Conscientiousness
- Commitment
- Motivation
- Passion
- Goal-orientation (work and personal development)

AND

Openness to continuous learning
Resilient under pressure in changing role and environment

FIT REQUIREMENTS for graduate jobs
- Fit to job:
  - Training and experience
  - Immediate starter
- Fit to existing teams:
  - Team skills
- Fit to business (features/needs):
  - Cultural fit
  - Shared values
  - Mobility

Figure 4. Overview of key requirements and characteristics for graduate jobs

Discussion

The results obtained illustrate that in relation to the general attributes and requirements (RQ1), there is a connection to the existing research on recruitment and selection of graduates. Sarkar et al. (2015) in Australia also noted the importance of initiative, problem solving and adaptability. Brown, Hesketh and Williams (2004) equally mentioned the importance of resilience and drive among UK graduates. Russell and Brannan (2015) also noted the expectation of continuous commitment to development in the UK. This reflects previous findings that graduates need to make an impact very quickly as noted by Yorke and Harvey (2005) in their comparative work (they examined graduate attributes and their development in relation to international trends, focusing specifically on the developments in the USA and the UK). In other words, graduates may be given little adjustment time, but may instead be asked to engage in anticipatory socialisation according to a UK study conducted by Handley (2018). This would include the expectation that graduates engage with a company's online information and videos showing their missions, values, and human resource practices pre-recruitment.

Specifically, the expectation to learn continuously (adaptable) and be resilient under changing circumstances within the job and organisation is captured in the expectation that graduates will be self-starters, be mobile when required, and already have both the experience and training to be effective from the start. This suggests accommodations for a learning curve are unlikely to be presented, and graduates need to be able to show proficiency from the outset (Brown et al., 2004). Whether or not this is an unrealistic expectation to ask of graduates may depend on their role within the organisation. Yet communication to such effect could be potentially optimised to ensure only the most suitable students submit applications, reducing the number of applications to prepare and review and reducing the pre-selection burden for many graduate recruiters in the UK (Herriot & Wingrove, 1984). Better communication about role fit, values and expectations may also reduce the number of abandoned online applications according to a more recent UK study (Uffindell, 2017).

The role of fit emerged as part of both the themes extracted from the responses to open-ended questions as well as the importance ratings. Overall, there also seems to be an understanding that graduates should be an immediate match to, not just the job but also the team and organisation. This suggests they need to demonstrate fit on several levels, which may not be necessarily clear to graduates unless it is readily communicated by the recruiters. These findings highlight the increasing role of fit perceived by recruiters, a concept that many graduates may not be prepared to address adequately in their applications. Both fit and graduate attributes also appeared to be linked. Our results suggest that recruiters overall expect graduates to fit 'in': Recruiters look for graduates who are (a) able to meet existing and emerging needs by fitting in with (existing) teams, and (b) are flexible and open to learning new skills in order to keep up with changing needs while on the job. Being ready for change appears to be the key requirement here, which raises the importance of fit in line with what we have suggested. The emphasis on fit may also, however, mean that recruiters are looking for one type of graduate alone. As a result, the emphasis on fit needs to go hand-in-hand with the concern for heterogeneity. Fit at all costs may not be a guarantee of a successful hire, unless the fit supports complementary expertise, skills and characteristics as well. This may also be an important step to prevent impact leading to discrimination of certain graduate applicant groups. New employer branding campaigns could enable organisations to regularly examine and identify their own values and notions of fit as organisations also shift and change over time. If the results of these internal discussions and campaigns are then also considered in the recruitment efforts, recruiters for these organisations may also improve the long-term success of graduate recruitment efforts.

While the responses of our 43 recruiters to the questions emphasise the importance of fit overall, it raises the question of how graduates may prepare themselves so as to match the job requirements, expectations of fit and the organisational values of a potential employer. As a result, we formulate a number of recommendations for future graduates and career advisors tasked with supporting their transition into work after graduation.

Recommendations for career advisors

Career advisors can play an essential role in helping students to develop their career self-efficacy, and via this, also encourage more networking and career planning (see U.S. study conducted by Renn et al., 2014). Career self-efficacy in this context refers to the belief that one is able to successfully manage one's career (Kossek et al., 1998). Career support may come in the form of mentoring and career planning activities according to a US study by Murdock, Stipanovic and Lucas (2013). These may also include exercises that requires graduates to recognise organisational and brand values, while also outlining how their behaviours and attitudes are in line with these values (Russell & Brannan, 2016). Their role in preparing graduates to become proactive information seekers about employers is crucial as the goal posts for recruiters also continue to shift (e.g., fit to values and organisation), a trend that was already noted in the 1980s in the UK (Herriot & Wingrove, 1984). Developing the ability to assess the credibility of online employer profiles, the use of employee review sites and seeking information from current and former employees are all aspects that will be essential for graduates seeking employment.

Career advisors may also be critical to raising students' (self)awareness (Stewart & Knowles, 2000). They can help graduates to become aware of the need for continuous professional development and raise awareness among graduates regarding the potential mobility expectations - before graduates meet recruiters and start applying for jobs. Many recruiters recognise the importance of matching candidates to jobs but also organisations, many of which are subject to ongoing change according (Robbins et al., 2010; Stewart & Knowles, 2000). Hiring individuals who are personality-wise comfortable with continuous change, aware and responsive to uncertainty and are able to move between locations and teams, may also enable better results for organisations. Rather than being taken by surprise, graduates need to demonstrate their commitment to learning and mobility (i.e. willingness to relocate to other locations or even countries) on a continuous basis. This also requires graduates to reflect on their own values and work preferences, mainly when mobility is expected by organisations.

Limitations

Recruitment fairs are busy and noisy settings, where recruiters are repeatedly distracted and interrupted. Their answers were very succinct and often included short descriptors alone. More in-depth data could have been obtained with interviews; however, it would have been very time consuming to interview rather than survey 43 recruiters. Future research in this area may benefit from the use of thematic analysis applied to more detailed interviews with recruiters.

Another limitation concerns the nature of our chosen sample. The recruiters may represent the organisation, but not be human resource professionals involved in the actual selection and training of graduates. More research with the various professionals involved in the recruitment and selection of graduates may further help to clarify the assumptions underlying fit, and the origins of these. A comparative study on graduates' perceptions of fit would further provide insight into the factors that lead to their (mis)perceptions of employers, intentionally or unintentionally. An important qualification regards the

experience of our sample – some of whom had relatively little prior knowledge in recruitment. Tenure and familiarity with an organisation's value system and fit expectations may also call for the more careful selection of staff chosen to represent an organisation at career fairs. Cross-cultural differences (the sample of recruiters hired for Irish and UK companies) may also play a role in terms of the amount of information recruiters would share and how they rate fit.

Conclusion

At fairs, recruiters simultaneously represent the interests of the organisation while also seeking to find the best possible candidates for the organisation to hire. Who these candidates may be depends on the job requirements, cultural and diversity needs. The results of the current survey with 43 recruiters suggested several key findings. First, the expected formal (degree requirements) and skill requirements were mentioned. Second, many recruiters' shared about desirable graduate characteristics along the lines of commitment, motivation, passion, and goal orientation. Third, graduate characteristics of openness to learning and resilience emphasised the importance of readiness for change among future graduates. This also brings us to our fourth point. Fit to teams, jobs and the organisation overall (in terms of values and ethos) were all confirmed as relevant by our graduate recruiters. Fit comes in many forms and may capture current as well as changing needs of the business (e.g., continuous learning and mobility). Ensuring that graduates not only meet formal requirements but are also a good fit for the team and organisation they join may reduce costly, early and stressful turnover among new hires. However, it is our impression from the fairs we attended that graduates and recruiters may struggle to identify these fit indicators. Recruiters in our sample did acknowledge that both values and fit were increasingly relevant in the context of graduate recruitment. That said, more research may be necessary to help identify primarily implicit candidate and fit attributes in order to enable recruiters as well as graduates to understand the explicit requirements when applying for graduate roles.

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Debora Jeske is a work and organisational psychologist in Berlin, Germany. In addition, she is an adjunct senior lecturer in the School of Applied Psychology at University College Cork, Ireland. She has published extensively on topics such as internships, training and development at work.

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