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STAKEHOLDERS PERCEPTION OF RECRUITMENT CRITERIA: A RÉGNIER'S ABACUS APPROACH OF MARKET VALUED SKILLS

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Stakeholders perception of recruitment criteria: a Régnier's abacus approach of market valued skills.

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Abstract

Together with the emphasis on the technical skills acquisition, higher education institutions have been making an effort on developing and updating undergraduate transferable competences in order to diminish the gap between academic training and working world entrance. In other words, to recognize market needs, teachers and students representations about human resources requirements, and combine them to boost employability in business professions, must be a priority in today's knowledge based economy.

Taking into account the new teaching realities brought by Bologna agreement, as well as the exertion universities have been done in order to tune in enterprises and curricula, this activity intended to accede the way recruiters, alumni and college teachers from Catholic University [CU; Porto Regional Center (PRC), Economics and Management Faculty (MEF)] positioned themselves relatively to some recruitment and selection criteria for management and economics professions. Using a reflection activity based upon Régnier's Abacus, participants were asked to positioned individually as experts (in their roles as recruiters, teachers or former CU alumni) in identifying market value skills, and afterwards to build a group debated conclusion to present to a larger audience. Results

pointed out only one total consensual factor, that is, flexibility and adjustment skills as the most important factors when recruiting, followed by entrepreneur capabilities and valorization of work experiences in the candidates curricula. Discrepancies were found by group of experts when college of origin was the discussion subject, although there was consensus about the hierarchical place order in the three groups.

Key-words: Market valued skills, Management and Economics College Teachers and Graduates, Employers, Régnier's Abacus based activity

Introduction

One of the topical themes in the global economy we all share is the matching between Higher Education (HE) graduates knowledge (at the end of their education degree), employers' expectations concerning the first, and HE teacher's apprehension about the dichotomy between specializations *versus* general knowledge. In fact, for the former, we can say that the division no longer exists. The graduates' workplace integration requires solid technical expertise and a broad range of transferable skills (Evers, Rush & Berdrow, 1998; Harvey, 2000; Holmes, 2001).

Accordingly to Boyer (2004), in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OCDE) countries, the (old) new knowledge based economy had its beginning in the 90's. This economy is characterized by a productivity significant growth, information and communication technologies production sector restructuring, and of course, for integrating flexibility, both in labour network and on the professionals' mobility. The author suggests a triangular typology to characterize this economic juncture, in which Scandinavian countries are fully knowledge based, a second configuration where we can find Australia and Ireland, which differs from the former at the educational

investment level, and a last formation which Portugal is the example. Portugal was characterized by having high employees' protection, low knowledge investment and not a high productivity height, although increased after a long period of mass production.

In order to overcome its state of accelerated convergence to become a knowledge based economy, one of the main goals is the investment enhance on knowledge creation and dissemination. This introduces us the necessity to debate on educational and vocational politics, taking into account the competences regime formation approach, introduced by Capitalism Varieties School (Busemeyer, 2009, Emmenegger, 2009). In its framework Estevez-Abe, Iversen and Soskice (2001) consider a tripartite system of competences where there are work acquired competences, less transferable, professional specific/technical competences, traditionally acquired in school contexts, and transferable skills, whose applicability is independent from companies, institutions, organizations and type of professional activity. The future Economics and Management graduates development, at either one skills level, imply the fundamental intervention of two kinds of organizations: Universities and Companies.

As McQuaid and Linsay (2005) pointed out, employability implies specific types of demands, very variable trough space and time. Employers', employees' and other social actors can have radical different approaches and opinions about what employability is. In this paper we approach the construct rather narrowly, i.e., mainly from employability skills and attributes valued by different stakeholders.

Three facets on employability competences

The Bologna declaration implied profound economic and politic transformations, one of which involves directly the European educational system. The restructure appeals to the higher education system not only to look for vocational knowledge, but to integrate in

its programs instruments that promote students transversal competences development. Technical knowledge and transversal skills are European Community prescribed paths for meeting goals of citizens' circulation, employment opportunities and global development of the European Continent (Bologna Declaration, 1999).

As Emmenergger (2009) points out, general or transferable skills are highly valued in global economy, on the contrary, the particular ones (work place specific) are valuable only in a particular business industry or company. So the employees' point of view is that investing in specific competences is too risky, since if he/she gets unemployed, the investment was redundant. There is yet another supporting argument on the former, the Goldthorpe's argument, i.e., the less specific skills equipped employees are, the higher the replacement probability. These arguments are more valid when talking about less differentiated occupations, nevertheless with present fragile social policies for employment protection, another reason rises for equipping graduates with both types of skills.

For mirrored reasons, employers, specially the small business ones (Connor & Shaw, 2008) are reluctant in investing too much in soft or transferable skills training, although they need their employees to possess it in order to a rapid integration and a successful job performance. But they also realise that the invested capital can be totally lost if the employee leaves the company.

In a recent study about graduates recruitment and selection (Branine, 2008), found surveyed recruiters majority hoped that graduates had already purchased high-quality transferable skills at the degree's moment; more, they preferred proponents assessed has having those competences than others with excellent academic averages (although the academic average was also considered as an important criterion).

Employers also referred (60%) the total lack of experience on the "real life of work" and the limited exhibition of transversal skills on job candidates' part. The most

valued competencies were the desire for achievement/motivation (87%), IT skills (85%), team work (82%), willingness to learn (76%), commitment (66%), oral communication skills (62%), problem solving abilities (57%), drive/energy (43%), confidence/assertiveness (36%). All were soft skills, exception made to tenth place which was grade average.

We suggest that one way to promote the match between graduates' employability attractiveness and company employees' job performance expectations', is precisely to work robust technical skills as well as transferable ones trough Higher Education Curricula. In other words, if competences acquired trough education complements those obtain specifically in job performance, the risk and costs on selecting a graduate are lowered (Thurow, 1982).

For HE teachers, the question is much more complex. Bologna' brought them the requirement to be a "competences strongbox", updated whenever is needed. They must provide students' several different competences: investigation, lifelong learning, communication, presentation, teamwork, problems resolution, mobility, employability... In fact, they are dealing with a profound professional revolution their selves. For this professional group it must be given space to update transversal competences directly linked to their scientific domain (Santos, 2005), but also to provide them supplementary tools, university institution provided. For example, to have students coaching services or build partnerships with companies or organizations in order to equip students with working competences, but, at the same time, to monitor both their teaching efforts as well as their graduates performance. In a near future, the accreditation or the quality warranty given to HE students, parents and general society of a particular HE institution, will assure the economical survival of the former. The European discussion tends to follow the HE accreditation path, and some countries are already accomplishment it (Campos, 2005). In

sum, for them it is also a necessity to know profoundly what the market expects of their graduates.

For Portuguese families an HE degree is still a good investment. Santos and Oliveira (2002), in a prospective analyse on the mismatch between market required skills and school as worker's qualifications provider in Portugal, found that the investment return in formal education was clearly attractive, although they found significant evidence on the refereed mismatch. In fact an overeducating effect can be happening. We suggest that the phenomena can be explain by the former formal curricula, focused only on technical skills, undermining the transversal skills role, that allows the future employee a more adapted and realistic performance on the job.

This mismatch brings alumni dissatisfaction. In an U.K. investigation Nabi (2003) intended to study the underemployability, i.e., features of those employees that are not applying their degree knowledge to the job post. The findings suggest that negative effects of this situation extend their selves to job, career and life satisfaction. The author proposed HE institutions to try to fight the problem, offering to under-skilled graduates' curriculum development, personal tutoring systems, add-on modules or individual skills units.

The need for working transversal skills seams pressing economics and management futures employees. An interesting study by Westhead and Matlay (2005), found that Management graduates were more probable than others to get jobs in small private firms, whose bosses were, in turn, more probable not to provide them additional training for business sense, computer literacy, practical business skills and project management skills. This finding reinforces the need for HE institutions to work these skills in order their graduates have those "tools" available when initiating their professional lives.

But future students must also be alert and help their own future, helping universities with a more balance sense of reality. A study carried out with Engineering Higher

Education Japanese students, attending third or fourth degree year, found evidence that students believed that friends and part-time work experiences developed higher their core skills (similar to Carneval conceptualization, *see* Carnevale, Gainer & Meltzer, 1990) than from family or university teachers (Nguyen, Yoshinari & Shigeji, 2005).

All stakeholders' interests must be taken into account. Heijke and Meng (2006) drew attention to the high probability on the mismatch between employers' expectations and employees' performance. Their cross-sectional study, with data from nine European countries, concluded that HE programs either highly directed to learning, reflexive thinking, problems resolution, analytic and ideas documentation using information skills, or highly vocational programs (technical and academic skills mainly oriented), could place their graduates in the education area of expertise labour market. On the contrary, institutions trying to combine equally both programs, were more probable to have graduates that were neither technical knowledge nor competences valued, having the situation a negative reflection upon wages. Another major conclusion was that the programs focus shouldn't be exclusively of technical or competences based, because neither is sufficient for employability market needs. However, they drew attention on the standardization need of each kind of directed programs, so each type of program will favour candidates more committed within a certain technical area, and others in their educational degree different area. University institutions could benefit on reflecting on these findings because as we can conclude a good balance is very hard to get.

Transversal skills focus

Researchers have been underling requirements of formal systems for acquire employability competences (Fugiero, 2006; Moss & Tyler, 2001), engaging in coaching processes, specific curricular units (Bauer & Przygodda, 2003; Laubeova & Klimova-

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Alexander, 2006), and intentionalizing the curricula vitae construction. On the last, Luton University is an example, rebuilding its programs by bringing employability skills into formal curricula in all offered disciplines (Fallows and Stevens, 2000).

Heijke, Meng and Ramaekers (2002) are between those that consider that universities can provide one of two kinds of competences: the direct or technical ones, or instead, the competences that will facilitate the acquisition of new ones needed. They surveyed longitudinally 36.000 European (from eleven countries) post-graduates, trying to find which skills they considered to have at the graduation moment, but also the extension in which those skills were required in the present job. Their results suggest that the most well paid jobs are the ones that require methodological (foreigner languages, economical perception, problems resolution, etc.) and organizational ones (learning, work under pressure, time management, independency). The jobs where the specialized competences are needed are very requested, although they are less compensatory in wage terms. In general the work satisfaction rate was higher whenever the competences exigency level was elevated. Raybould and Sheedy (2005) analysed the match between graduate skills and employability requirements, indicating that in selection processes, competence based questions have become increasingly important. The focal point is on what they called "the round skills" (team work, leadership, problem solving and technical competences).

One of employers' major complaints still is that HE institutions can't provide graduates competences to go to their expectations encounter, especially in what concerns transferable competences and work attitudes (Connor & Shaw, 2008). For example, Archer and Davinson (2008) found that employers assessed communication skills as very important (85%), but most of them were dissatisfied with the way their graduates' employees performed them. Another major conclusion was that in recruiters' top ten skills

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for selecting graduates to their companies, soft skills clearly exceeded the hard or technical skills.

The *décalage* question between work market requirements and the education strongly appears, creating the requirement for a common language for university and employers. This language can result on the model of four strategies for the transversal competences needed for employability: Management of self, Management of people and tasks, Communication and e, Mobilization for innovation and change (Evers, Rush & Berdrow, 1998), being multiplied each one in transversal capacities common to all professions, that allow the career development and serve as base for learning throughout life. This is in fact the model that is being implanted in CU, PRC graduations in Management and Economics coaching team.

Empirical study

Goals

The main goal of this study was to reveal possible recruiters, teachers and alumni from CU, PRC, Economics and Management Faculty opinion concerning the theme "Soft skills: Stakeholders identification and valorisation", taking into account only the CU, PRC graduations in Management and Economics.

The underlying proposal is to gather relevant information to improve CU, PRC Management and Economics students teaching involvement, as well as confirming or infirming the importance of some CU, PRC Management and Economics faculty institutional interventions, namely the development of a coaching service and a curriculum integration of a mandatory unity, where technical knowledge and transversal skills are applied and assessed: Multidisciplinary Project I, II and III (first cycle years).

A subsidiary objective was to observe if each group of experts[4], in this case recruiters, teachers and alumni, had different opinions and representations about ten statements, reflecting the main theme in analysis. In other words, which are alumni, teachers and recruiters perceptions of the labor market entrance predictors'.

It was expected some variance between representations of the three different proficiency participant groups, and some consensus among individuals of the same expertise area, although the final group activity proposed was to reach and present a consensual group position.

Finally, debate's main conclusions were presented to a large group constituted by general public, CU, PRC students, Economics and Management faculty Director and teachers, and Portuguese Business Association (AEP) representatives.

Methodology

Participants

The study invited three groups of expert participants (N=24, exception made to the moderation team and observers) specifically, six alumni from CU, PRC, that have been at the professional market as managers or economists for at least two years, eight senior teachers, also from CU, PRC, Economics and Management faculty, schooling Sociology, International Economy, Management and Economics Ethic, Multidisciplinary Project Development, International Accounting, Operations Management and Optimization Models, and finally, ten possible CU, PRC, Economics and Management faculty alumni recruiters from various areas, namely Human Resources (selection and recruitment), Knowledge Share (non profitable organization), Computer Consulting, Engineering and

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[4] In the study sense, "expert" is synonymous of continued practice as Economic and Management recruiter, higher education teacher or graduate professional.

Management, Waste Management Consulting, Sales Consulting, Health and Tourism and Large Trade Supermarkets. Each group had a moderator (the Service Director and the Technical responsible (Psychologist) of the CU, PRC, "Student Support and Career", CU, PRC, and the Macroeconomic taught regent teacher from Economics and Management faculty); every group had also a support element, a student's soft skills coacher's at CU, PRC, Economics and Management faculty project "Individual Skills Portfolio-PIC".

Although not intervening in the proposed activity as fully participants, but in an observer role, each group featured one or two first Bologna cycle students from CU, PRC, Economics and Management faculty in order to boost general discussion in the large group/plenary.

Each one of the three groups was constituted by eight elements (not including the moderation team and observers): (Group I) two alumni, three teachers and three recruiters; (Group II) two alumni, two teachers and four recruiters; and (Group III) two alumni, three teachers and three recruiters.

Instrument

We chose for reflection instrument a strategic prospective tool based upon the Régnier's Abacus, since it is a real time experts consultation method, allowing the consciousness on the richness of opinions in a group of experts. The method also allows confrontation of several different expert groups' points of view on a same subject. "Is difficult to convince decision makers to use it, because it modifies the usual group functioning: the chief of a group can find itself isolated, because the method obliges each participant to graphically express an opinion before presents it to the large group. It is a technique that contradicts the normal reflection modes used in businesses companies. Instead, it is applied particularly in ex-post evaluation training seminars, when in fact

strategic choices are out of order." (*adapt.* Godet, Monti, Meunier & Roubelat, 2004, chapter VI, datasheet 10).

The technique's logic is comparable to traffic semaphore employ, i.e., it is used in a parallel way of significance of each one of its three colors: Green for go on/agreeing, yellow for careful/neutral and red for stop/not agreeing at all. As it is a strategic method for groups, it also has a range of other intermediate colors so that participant's opinions can be graded. Accordingly, the palette includes light green and pink (respectively, agreeing and disagreeing but not entirely) and also, if the group participant considers abstention or blank vote, respectively black and white colors. This nomenclature is presented at an individual questionnaire, described below.

The classical Régnier's formulation intended to detect expert's (in the same area of knowledge) attitudes and opinions, including the validity of the opinions of those who disagree with the majority. In a first moment, the debate theme must be decomposed between ten and twelve items. These items must be carefully formulated, that is, the criteria are clarity, accuracy and tangibility in order to facilitate the expert's judgments (Francisco, 1991; Godet, *et al.*, 2004; Régnier, 1989). This first stage results are based upon an individual questionnaire, in which each participant is invited to position itself in accordance with the scale of colors available. The questionnaire is built according to a design in which items are at the left of the double entrance table sheet, therefore in rows, and the colors are placed at the top of each column. In this fashion the participant can put a cross under the color that better mirrors his/her opinion.

The conventional individual questionnaire also has a decision tree that functions as an original way of giving fulfilling instructions. First question is as follows: "Do you want to answer?", then, if the response is a negative one the color to be chose is black; instead, if the reply is positive the respondent is carried to another question: "In affirmative case, do

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you have an opinion?" This issue has also two possible opposite answers. If the response is "No", the expert must chose the white color, but is he/she responds positively the remaining question is: "In affirmative case, which is your opinion?", expressed by putting a cross following the item row and under one of the remaining colored columns.

After this procedure, it begins the second technique stage. Here individual results are aggregated in another frame, double entry also, using paper exhibitors and pens or, alternatively, computer programs designed for the purpose. In the left side of the double entrance frame are the formulated questions in the same order as in the individual survey, in columns there are letters or numbers corresponding to each of the group members invited. In sum, data collection builds a colorful mosaic, allowing to take a glance both on the qualitative information as on the individual position of each participant (for graphic examples on both stages, *consult* Francisco, 1991, p.23-24).

At the third and last stage of the technique, each expert observe the final color montage and the debate is initiated, taking into account that all participants must verbalize it's color choice, therefore indicating the criteria that lead him/her to the given response. At this point everybody may, at any moment change his/her's vote, providing that justifies his/her attitude.

Finally, the data processing, if it is done by computer process, can be explored in two different ways. The first, if the process is done using data obtain in rows, it can be understood the relative importance of each item for the matter under debate, since computer programs' can layer colors in importance order. If the data processing is done by columns, it can be requested to order the experts answers by number of color chosen, so in fact, conclusions about a higher or lower propensity to be favorable or unfavorable to the general theme (or several themes if the same group is repeatedly invited to several Régnier Abacus's activities) can be establish through the technique.

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Procedures

Teachers, students, alumni, moderators and potential recruiter's were invited to participate in the activity by mail, followed by a telephone contact, using UC, PRC, Individual Skills Portfolio project at Economics and Management faculty data base, explaining the activity with some detail, and also confirming their participation.

For the moderators it was send by mail several Régnier Abacus documentation, as well as the instructions dossier and individual questionnaires, attendance sheets and informatics documents for the third stage of the procedure (using the PowerPoint application, Windows XP). At this point it was referred the PIC's team responsible contact if there were any doubts to clarify.

All three support elements were submitted to two training 45' sessions, in order to be familiar with summarization data tasks, construction of the final tables of each group and the ultimate compilation of all the elements used in the respective session. These participants were also responsible to pass the final group information to a mobile team, responsible for the information transformation into expert results for PowerPoint presentation. It was also this support team elements responsibility to transmit the mobile team the name of the group member elected to present the group conclusions on the final plenary session.

For the final results presentation, plenary session, Catholic University, PRC, Economics and Management faculty invited, advertising on the campus website and with posters, resident and general population, and effort complemented by AEP which invited its members to join the final action.

In building the ten items (*see* Table 1, for items formulation) for the individual questionnaire, all the Individual Skills Portfolio project team participated in the items' construction, Abacus' modified rules, and objectives pursuit by the general theme. The

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PIC team has two Economics and Management Teachers (both Doctored Professors, one at the Economical Sociology area and the other at Human Resources Management), the already three named coaches (two Psychologists and one Psycho-pedagogical expert), and a Psychology researcher.

First all participants were received in an auditorium by the first cycle Director of the of Economics and Management faculty of the Portuguese Catholic University, PRC. The activity was them presented, along with results from an AEP's study, concerning the benchmark and the kind of competences their associates valued when hiring new collaborators in the business area. This stage lasted for 01h.15'. Afterwards activity participants were conducted by group to three separate rooms, preventing results contamination. The rooms had a squared stetting and at each seating place, participants found name and expert quality area identifying card. There was also a dossier containing the first survey, and annexed imprinted sheets of paper were they could justify summarily their option by item.

The moderators presented him/herself to the group, and gave the necessary instructions about the Abacus activity, namely the fulfilment survey strategy, the necessity of the individual justification, as well as the directions about the debate and the final consensus to be presented to the plenary. More specifically, (i) that students attending the session must contribute for the group's justification, although their opinion is recorded merely as a comment; (ii) each respondent had to share his/her opinion with the rest of the group, item per item; and the group will only move to the following item once every participant had made his/her judgement known to the rest of the group; (iii) finally, the moderator assistant filled in the first frame of results. The procedure was repeated trough all the ten items.

The moderator's role was to facilitate and animate the group along the tasks to be performed, but also to lead the debate. During the session he/she had to: (i) write down the different opinions; (ii) sum up all the justifications, and, (iii) impel the group members to justify the items ordering after group discussion, so to clarify topics where it was possible to reach a consensus and those where the opinions were divergent. The Régnier's Abacus activity lasted for 01h.30'for each group.

The mobile team had to be present in the rooms at times, so some eventual doubts could be clarified and at the end for collecting the colored data from all groups. Lastly it had to aggregate the collected information by expert's opinions to be presented in the plenary slide show (15' minutes to produce the three PowerPoint slides).

The final plenary had also a moderator; in this case was one of the moderators in the small group session. The auditorium plenary lasted for 01h.30'.

Régnier Abacus transformation

Although it was maintained the classical structure of the Régnier Abacus activity, there were some innovations introduced by this working session. In fact, to enrich the first stage debate, the Individual Skills Portfolio project team chose to mix the three types of experts in each of the three groups. The goals were to put together three of the main stakeholders involved either in the outcome of the Bologna educational process, but also, more externally, interested in the evolution of European Union's policy guidelines for employment. Both goals are related in education and training systems improvement as well as other policies levels, namely employment development for new necessities satisfaction (Lopes, 2007). Of course that, for all three kinds of experts, the debate concerning the new forms of career, yo-yo structure of the personal transitions in the young adulthood (EGRIS, 2001) are also implied in the discussion: the ones who teach, not only technical

competences but also transversal or global ones (Fallows & Steven, 2000) – teachers; the ones who need those first two competences for integrating the working market –students and alumni (Knight & Yorke, 2000, 2004); and at last, the ones who need technical knowledge to boost their companies, but also collaborators and employers able to adapt themselves rapidly to new job situations (Evers, Rush, & Evers, 1998) with little diminished costs for to the respective new employers (*for a deeper analysis on entrepreneurial skills from employers and employees point of view see*, Thurow, 1999, p.82-98) – business companies as employers and human resources/selection and recruitment organizations. Another obvious procedure consequence was the surprise obtained when the three results grids, grouped by expert answers and not by members of each group, was presented at the final plenary (*see* Results section for a deeper analysis).

As far as individual instructions concern, moderators were given information for indicating the impossibility of using the black color, and to encourage group members to avoid the white option.

Another transformation respects the compulsory instruction for each group to present orally the consensual position, as well as the main disagreements observed during stage three in the plenary period. This last presentation was carried out by a group member, voted for the matter, but not necessarily the moderator agent.

Results

Data analysis strategy

Data analysis had two different strands. A more immediate or quantitative, to observe group session as well as expert groups results (teachers, alumni and recruiters). It permits a glance on the consensus between each kind of group (session and area experts).

These results will be presented in table forms, although transforming the original colours into identified black and white patterns. We also give descriptive statistics, means and stand deviations of each item response. It was also performed a univariated analysis of variance (UNIANOVA's) for each item (as dependent variable), having the expert category as independent variable. The procedure was possible since the sort of response can be likert type processed (a five points likert, using the white colour responses as missing values; SPSS, version 13.). We use for between subjects' significance criteria the Pillai's trace ($\leq$.05); for the multiple comparisons, the significance criteria was the Scheffé test ($\leq$.05).

The second analysis is of a qualitative nature. It reflects the debate made by each group, and it will be presented as a content analysis. The plenary session mirrored some richness of the group sessions, but we opted for a content presentation based in the summarization of each participant's expertise responses, in all three groups.

Quantitative results

Total results

Taking into account the above data analysis strategy, for all participants (N=24) it was found that item 9. "For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever she/he shows flexibility and adaptability" was the most consensual criteria for job selection as well as the one that more importance was given to (M=4.78, SD=.42). On the contrary, item 6., "For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever his/her CV presents voluntary work experiences", was quoted as the less important when selecting a candidate, although in comparison to item 9., there was a lower consensus (M=3.52, SD=.79). Finally, the less consensual items among the ten proposed, were, by importance and variation order, item 1. "The school that the candidate attended is a decisive factor in

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the recruitment process" (M=4.04, SD=.86) and item 10. (M=3.78, SD=.85) "For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever she/he shows a feasible perspective over her/his career". Table 1 summarizes the results.

TABLE 1. *Means and standard deviations for each item, total sample without expertise area accounted for (N=24)*

		Statistics	
Item formulation		M	SD
1. The school that the candidate attended is a decisive factor in the recruitment process.		4.04	.86
2. For the recruitment process, having an average grade $\geq$ 14 (out of 20) indicates that the person is technically skilled.		3.75	.61
3. People graduated in Economics find it easy to use quantitative instruments in problem solving.		3.73	.63
4. People graduated in Management find it easy to use quantitative instruments in problem solving.		3.64	.66
5. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever his/her CV presents working experiences.		4.43	.59
6. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever his/her CV presents voluntary work experiences.		3.52	.79
7. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever his/her CV presents international training experiences (e.g. ERASMUS).		4.35	.83
8. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever she/he presents entrepreneurship abilities.		4.43	.79
9. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever she/he shows flexibility and adaptability.		4.78	.42
10. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever she/he shows a feasible perspective over her/his career.		3.78	.85

Note. Scale maximum value equals 5.

Group results

We start this section by presenting each group graphic results obtained in the classical Régnier's Abacus format, first in a row reading approach and lastly with the columns reading method.

For Group I, the most valued item was nº.9. (M=5, SD=.00), followed by items 7. and 8. (M=4.71, SD=.49). In third came placed item 5. (M=4.57, SD=.53), followed by items 1. and 2. (respectively, M=4.37, SD=.52; M=3.87, SD=.83). For the sixth place there were two tied items, but with different means dispersion values, namely, item 3. (M=3.71,

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SD=.75) and item 6. (M=3.71, SD=.95). In the same condition were in seventh place items 4. (M=3.57, SD=.79) and 10. (M=3.57, SD=.97). Table 2 present these results.

TABLE 2. *Row reading table: Group I results by item mean's importance order (n=8)*

Item formulation	Abacus' correspondence							Ordered results
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	
1. The school that the candidate attended is a decisive factor in the recruitment process.								4th.
2. For the recruitment process, having an average grade ≥ 14 (out of 20) indicates that the person is technically skilled.								5th.
3. People graduated in Economics find it easy to use quantitative instruments in problem solving.								6th.
4. People graduated in Management find it easy to use quantitative instruments in problem solving.								7th.
5. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever his/her CV presents working experiences.								3rd.
6. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever his/her CV presents voluntary work experiences.								6th.
7. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever his/her CV presents international training experiences (e.g. ERASMUS).								2nd.
8. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever she/he presents entrepreneurship abilities.								2nd.
9. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever she/he shows flexibility and adaptability.								1st.
10. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever she/he shows a feasible perspective over her/his career.								7th.

Note. The tier is presented by the means obtained in the likert type approach.
(a) Dark green; (b) Light green; (c) Yellow; (d) Pink; (e) Red; (f) White; (g) Black.

When Group I was analysed by experts area, we found complete agreement between alumni in items 1., 5., 6. and 9. (SD=.00), followed by all other items, exception made to item 10., the one that presented the highest standard deviation (SD=1.41).

The most undifferentiated participant, from the ones that fully responded, seems to be alumni, because the voting was 70% (n=7) the highest, and the remaining three, the second higher.

For teachers as experts, items 7. trough 10., presented also a full consensus since the standard deviation equals zero. Itens 5. and 6., were the most dispersed in terms of teachers voting (SD=.71), followed by items between 1. and 4. (SD=.58).

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The group with the highest values of dispersion was the recruiter's one. They agreed fully when voting item 1., 4. and 9. (SD=.00), followed by partial agreement on items 5., 7., 8. (SD=.58) and 3. (SD=.71). The higher dispersions came when voting item 6. (SD=1.53) and items 2. and 10. (1.15). Table 3 presents the results.

TABLE 3. *Column reading table: Group I item results by type of experts (n=8)*

	Abacus' correspondence								
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g		
	Experts								
Item formulation	A	A	T	T	T	R	R	R

1. The school that the candidate attended is a decisive factor in the recruitment process.
2. For the recruitment process, having an average grade ≥ 14 (out of 20) indicates that the person is technically skilled.
3. People graduated in Economics find it easy to use quantitative instruments in problem solving.
4. People graduated in Management find it easy to use quantitative instruments in problem solving.
5. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever his/her CV presents working experiences.
6. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever his/her CV presents voluntary work experiences.
7. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever his/her CV presents international training experiences (e.g. ERASMUS).
8. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever she/he presents entrepreneurship abilities.
9. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever she/he shows flexibility and adaptability.
10. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever she/he shows a feasible perspective over her/his career.

Note. Each expert is always the same in each column.
(a) Dark green; (b) Light green; (c) Yellow; (d) Pink; (e) Red; (f) White; (g) Black.
(A) Alumni; (T) Teacher; (R) Recruiter.

In Group II again the highest score was to item 9. (M=4.62, SD.52), followed by two *exequo* second place of importance, namely items 5. and 7. (M=4.25, SD=.71). At third place in importance order, came item 8. (M=4.12, SD=.99), followed by item 1. (M=4.00, SD=.53) and at fifth item 3. (M=3.86, SD=.38). The sixth selection entry by importance belongs to item 4. (M=3.71, SD=.49) and at seventh place, again *exequo*, items

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2. and 10. (respectively, M=3.62, SD=.52; M=3.62, SD=.92). Finally, for the lowest importance criteria in a selection process, this group elected item 6. (M=3.37, SD=.74). See Table 4, bellow.

TABLE 4. *Row reading table: Group II results by item mean's importance order (n=8)*

Item formulation	Abacus' correspondence							Ordered results
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	
1. The school that the candidate attended is a decisive factor in the recruitment process.								4th.
2. For the recruitment process, having an average grade ≥ 14 (out of 20) indicates that the person is technically skilled.								7th.
3. People graduated in Economics find it easy to use quantitative instruments in problem solving.								5th.
4. People graduated in Management find it easy to use quantitative instruments in problem solving.								6th.
5. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever his/her CV presents working experiences.								2nd.
6. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever his/her CV presents voluntary work experiences.								8th.
7. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever his/her CV presents international training experiences (e.g. ERASMUS).								2nd.
8. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever she/he presents entrepreneurship abilities.								3rd.
9. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever she/he shows flexibility and adaptability.								1st.
10. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever she/he shows a feasible perspective over her/his career.								7th.

Note. The tier is presented by the means obtained in the likert type approach.
(b) Dark green; (b) Light green; (c) Yellow; (d) Pink; (e) Red; (f) White; (g) Black.

In the expert's area analysis, alumni fully agreed in their voting procedure from item 7. to item 10. (SD=.00). Item 1. trough item 5., former students were not consensual in their evaluation (SD=.71); where the disagreeing was higher was in item 6. (SD=1.41).

Teachers total agreement concerned the first three formulated items (1., 2., 3.), with a standard deviation of zero. Item 4. to item 9. presented some answer dispersion (SD=.58), while item 10. scored the highest dispersion value (SD=1.15). In this group it is a teacher the less differentiated response expert, giving 90% (9) of responses with the 4 value (color Light green/Pattern b), and one neutral answer (Yellow/Pattern c).

This second recruiter's group agreed in three of the proposed items, namely, item 3., 4. and 9. (SD=.00). There were four items with the same dispersion value (SD=.58), respectively, 1., 2., 5. and 6., followed by items 10. (SD=1.00), 7. (SD=1.15) and 8. (SD=1.73), presented by dispersion order from the lowest to the highest. See Table 5 bellow.

TABLE 5. *Column reading table: Group II item results by type of experts (n=8)*

	Abacus' correspondence								
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g		
	Experts								
	A	A	T	T	T	R	R	R	
Item formulation									
1. The school that the candidate attended is a decisive factor in the recruitment process.									
2. For the recruitment process, having an average grade ≥ 14 (out of 20) indicates that the person is technically skilled.									
3. People graduated in Economics find it easy to use quantitative instruments in problem solving.									
4. People graduated in Management find it easy to use quantitative instruments in problem solving.									
5. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever his/her CV presents working experiences.									
6. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever his/her CV presents voluntary work experiences.									
7. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever his/her CV presents international training experiences (e.g. ERASMUS).									
8. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever she/he presents entrepreneurship abilities.									
9. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever she/he shows flexibility and adaptability.									
10. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever she/he shows a feasible perspective over her/his career.									

Note. Each expert is always the same in each column.
(c) Dark green; (b) Light green; (c) Yellow; (d) Pink; (e) Red; (f) White; (g) Black.
(B) Alumni; (T) Teacher; (R) Recruiter.

The third group (III) also considered item 9. as the most valuable criteria when selecting a candidate (M=4.75, SD=.46). Item 8. appears in second place in the factor's ranking (M=4.50, SD=.75), while items 7. (M=4.12, SD=1.12) and 10. (M=4.12, SD=.64) engage both the third position. In addition, items 1. and 2. are at the fourth position

(respectively, M=3.75,SD=1.28; M=3.75, SD=.46), whilst the two subsequent items (3. and 4.) stay ordered at fifth (M=3.62, SD=.74). Isolated in the last place of the group ranking appears item 6. (M=3.5, SD=.75). Table 6 combine all these results.

TABLE 6. *Row reading table: Group III results by item mean's importance order (n=8)*

Item formulation	Abacus' correspondence (a b c d e f g) / Ordered results	
1. The school that the candidate attended is a decisive factor in the recruitment process.		4th.
2. For the recruitment process, having an average grade ≥ 14 (out of 20) indicates that the person is technically skilled.		4th.
3. People graduated in Economics find it easy to use quantitative instruments in problem solving.		5th.
4. People graduated in Management find it easy to use quantitative instruments in problem solving.		5th.
5. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever his/her CV presents working experiences.		2nd.
6. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever his/her CV presents voluntary work experiences.		6th.
7. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever his/her CV presents international training experiences (e.g. ERASMUS).		3rd.
8. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever she/he presents entrepreneurship abilities.		2nd.
9. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever she/he shows flexibility and adaptability.		1st.
10. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever she/he shows a feasible perspective over her/his career.		3rd.

Note. The tier is presented by the means obtained in the likert type approach.
(d) Dark green; (b) Light green; (c) Yellow; (d) Pink; (e) Red; (f) White; (g) Black.

At the Group III, alumni had a full vote consensus in items 3., 4., 7. and 10. (SD=.00). For all remaining surveyed items there was the same dispersion value (.71).

Teachers in the third group agreed fully only when speaking about the school of origin (item 1., SD=.00). These experts hadn't agreed in all other items, starting from with items 2., 3., 4., 5., 9. and 10. (SD=.71), followed by items 6. and 8. (SD=1.41) and ending with a high value on item 7. (2.12).

On the other hand, recruiters were the most agreeing cluster of experts on Group III. Items 2., 3., 4. and 9. Are in fully agreement (SD=.00); items 6. and 8. although with

dispersion, the value is medium (SD=.50), the same happening with items 5. and 10., only a slightly higher (SD=.58). The highest values of answer dispersion happened for item 7. (SD=.82) and item 1. (SD=1.71). The less discriminative experts were, in this case, three recruiters. See Table 7. for a complete graphical perspective.

TABLE 7. *Column reading table: Group III item results by type of experts (n=8)*

	Abacus' correspondence						
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g
	Experts						
	A	A	T	T	R	R	R
Item formulation							
1. The school that the candidate attended is a decisive factor in the recruitment process.							
2. For the recruitment process, having an average grade ≥ 14 (out of 20) indicates that the person is technically skilled.							
3. People graduated in Economics find it easy to use quantitative instruments in problem solving.							
4. People graduated in Management find it easy to use quantitative instruments in problem solving.							
5. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever his/her CV presents working experiences.							
6. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever his/her CV presents voluntary work experiences.							
7. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever his/her CV presents international training experiences (e.g. ERASMUS).							
8. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever she/he presents entrepreneurship abilities.							
9. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever she/he shows flexibility and adaptability.							
10. For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever she/he shows a feasible perspective over her/his career.							

Note. Each expert is always the same in each column.
(e) Dark green; (b) Light green; (c) Yellow; (d) Pink; (e) Red; (f) White; (g) Black.
(A) Alumni; (T) Teacher; (R) Recruiter.

Plenary comparison between area expert's groups results

For the final plenary, we built three tables, aggregating the results by expert's area, (*see* Procedures section). As can be observed in Table 8, alumni representations is that the school provenience is most valuing criteria when in a selection process, while the realism demonstrated about her/his career development is the is the last to be taken into account.

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For teachers as well as recruiters, the most valuing criteria in a selection are flexibility and adjustment capacity that each candidate is able to demonstrate. Nonetheless, the two types of experts disagree on the least important criteria. The first value work experiences held by candidates, while the seconds value in last the most appreciated criteria for students, school provenience.

For a more accurate perspective, we performed ten UNIANOVA's, in order to find if the evaluations means were significantly different by type of expert. The results evidenced that there were significant differences only for item 1. "The school that the candidate attended is a decisive factor in the recruitment process" [$F(2, 21)=3.623$, $p.=.045$, $\eta^2=1.00$]. *Post hoc* analysis revealed that the differences were between alumni (M=4.67, SD=.52) and recruiters (M=3.60, SD=1.07), the first giving the criteria a higher importance. See Table 9 for groups and total results.

TABLE 8. *Ordered comparison between aggregated experts (N=24)*

Note. Each expert is always the same in each column and the order follows the three group constitution.
(f) Dark green; (b) Light green; (c) Yellow; (d) Pink; (e) Red; (f) White; (g) Black.
(B) Alumni; (T) Teacher; (R) Recruiter.

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TABLE 9. *Means and standard deviations for each item, total sample with expertise area accounted for (N=24)*

	Type of experts							
	Alumni		Teachers		Recruiters		Total	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Items								
1.	**4.67** [1]	.52	4.12 [5]	.35	*3.60* [8]	1.07	4.04 [4]	.86
2.	3.50 [6]	.55	4.00 [6]	.53	3.70 [7]	.68	3.75 [6]	.61
3.	4.00 [5]	.63	3.37 [8]	.74	3.87 [5]	.35	3.73 [7]	.63
4.	4.00 [5]	.63	*3.25* [10]	.71	3.75 [6]	.46	3.64 [8]	.66
5.	4.33 [4]	.82	4.43 [2]	.53	4.50 [2]	.53	4.43 [2]	.59
6.	3.50 [6]	.84	3.28 [9]	.75	3.70 [7]	.82	*3.52* [9]	.79
7.	4.50 [3]	.55	4.28 [4]	1.11	4.30 [3]	.82	4.35 [3]	.83
8.	4.33 [4]	.52	4.42 [3]	.79	4.50 [2]	.97	4.43 [2]	.79
9.	4.50 [2]	.55	**4.71** [1]	.49	**5.00** [1]	.00	**4.78** [1]	.42
10.	*3.33* [7]	.82	3.71 [7]	.75	4.10 [4]	.87	3.78 [5]	.85

Note. Scale maximum value equals 5. In bold the maximum mean, in italic the minimum mean.
(M) Mean; (SD) Standard deviation. In brackets the relative position of each item.

Qualitative results

"The school that the candidate attended is a decisive factor in the recruitment process."

Group I considered this criterion as a non absolute one, although secures recruiters and also graduates. The group found also important that recruiters have better knowledge of the kind of curricula and pedagogic methods are use in different Economics and Management colleges, so it can be a higher weight selection criterion.

Group II, discussed that the attendance of low quoted colleges can exclude immediately a candidate, and also, contrary to first group, that recruiters have some knowledge about the kind of educational preparation Economics and Management different colleges offer. On the other hand, it was considered a good selection criterion, if the candidate hasn't nothing else to present, as it is most of the cases for recent graduates.

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In Group III, the majority considered the criterion as synonym of screening and selection time savings; they recognize also that there are minimum thresholds for Economics and Management colleges.

This item reached the fifth relative position in the total ranking (See Table 9).

"For the recruitment process, having an average grade ≥ 14 (out of 20) indicates that the person is technically skilled."

In Group I debate, it was considered that this average threshold has limitations in a selection process, since it doesn't express nor the soft skills acquisition, neither the real world of work candidate's knowledge.

For Group II the given threshold can assess the work capability of the graduate candidate, even though there are other criteria much higher in importance. It can be assumed that it is an indicator of technical competences, although the criterion is more clarifying in some recruitment processes if given by some curricular unit's average.

Group III believes that this is a good indicator, although not decisive in process. It is important try to understand which were the curricular units that contributed the most to the average, because by itself is not a meter that the candidate has in fact the technical competences required for the job.

This item reached the eighth relative position in the total ranking (See Table 9).

"People graduated in Economics find it easy to use quantitative instruments in problem solving." and "People graduated in Management find it easy to use quantitative instruments in problem solving."

Items 3. and 4. are presented together, because only Group III made the analysis separately.

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The debate in Group I considered no differences between both formal training, although economists could have a better statistical easiness.

Even so, they considered the necessity of having in the group recruiter's experts only in Economics and Management.

Group II also agreed on the lack of large differences in both type of graduates, including the criterion in analysis. In this group, curiously, recruiters could differentiate between the two, although they consider that the higher level of practical behavior of Management graduates can be exceeded easily by economists work experience.

Group III position was that Economists have a deficit in interpersonal skills, while Managers have a debit in the quantitative skills, but it results from the curricular plan of both courses. The labor market is satisfied, and although academic preparation is important it is not a definite requirement.

Although items' qualitative results are grouped, in global ranking item 3. reached the sixtieth relative position and item 4. the eighth (See Table 9).

"For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever his/her CV presents working experiences."

Group I had a curious position, affirming that contrary to other European recruiters, for Portuguese recruiters this is considered as a risk, since they believe that former experiences can format the candidate in such a way he/she may not adjust themselves to the new job.

As far as Group II concern, work experiences can be good or bad depending on the quality they had. If of high developmental quality, they should indicate soft skills as well as organizational ways of working competences acquisition. One other advantage, when

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the graduate candidate is a recent one, it can also tell the recruiter he/she is a dynamic person, since he/she sought to gain experience.

For Group III, it is a differentiator candidate criterion in the selection proceedings with two components: the positive, that can show candidate's greater responsibility, will to work, versatility and flexibility, and the negative, already referred: it can represents a candidate that has predisposition for doing things not within the company expectations; the word "addiction" with a *bad habits* sense was applied in the debate.

This item reached the third relative position in the total ranking (See Table 9).

"For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever his/her CV presents voluntary work experiences."

There was agreement between groups in evaluating this criterion. For Group I, it is one of is one of the factors least valued on the candidate's CV. For once because it can reveal that lack of completion and unstructured work practices, since the group considered these two features as characteristic of voluntary work experiences candidate's present. Although this negative aspect, all participants agreed in the intrinsically value of deliverance spirit and involvement with other people that these kind of activities provide.

Again in Group II, the value given to the criteria is one of ethical and personal fulfillment, which has no or very little importance in a recruitment process. It was also referred the abuse which has been committed, in many curricula, describing participation in mere food collection activities as volunteer work experiences.

For Group III, this criterion gives added value to a candidate, although it is less valued than work experiences. The group reflected also upon the developmental increment at network communication, teamwork and communication competence's level.

This item reached the ninth relative position in the total ranking (See Table 9).

"For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever his/her CV presents international training experiences (e.g. ERASMUS)."

Group I considered that ERASMUS or ERASMUS like experiences have a developmental value on personal empowerment, flexibility to adapt to different contexts and confrontation with adversity competences. It was a criterion extremely valued as it also demonstrates the candidate's initiative and proactivity.

As for Group II, teachers and recruiters valued and discussed the criterion in terms of the indirect assessment on autonomy, adjustment, flexibility and risk taking competences it allows. Alumni did not have a very active intervenient position on the matter.

Finally, Group III drew attention on the potential of these experiences for language learning, interpersonal skills and greater behavioral discipline. They also stressed that the candidate's decision to take these experiences shows predisposition to change, spirit of mobility and outlook.

This item reached the fourth relative position in the total ranking (See Table 9).

"For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever she/he presents entrepreneurship abilities."

In Group I, alumni emphasized this capacity importance on the "making desire" in order to resolve problems. For teachers, it implies to demonstrate capabilities for innovation, complex problems resolution and leadership. Given the existing constant change context is an essential skill. It requires proactivity and facing business problems as if it were their personal ones. Recruiters have different positions between themselves. On one side, it was considered not indispensable, although it may reveal dynamism in the entrepreneurial activity. Another expert of the same area, found that it is very important to

the companies renovation process if the new ideas are leading to "healthy ways" of questioning the company current modes of operation. The last recruiters on this group talked about the importance of observing and assess the candidate's innovation will as well as the creative process he/she presents in the selection process.

For alumni in group II, this competence demonstration is done trough the candidate's confidence and courage in embracing new projects. Teachers introduce into debate the necessity that all candidates have to demonstrate they will not be waiting for something to happen, they make it happen instead. It was also referred that this skill can be of the highest value for some recruiters (having ideas and the will to implement them), but everything depends on the job, because if one is applying for a routine job, to demonstrate entrepreneurship is not advisable. For two of the three recruiters it was found an extreme important criterion in a constant social and economical changing world, although for the last one that this is not an important feature at all.

As far as Group III concerns, it is a fundamental feature, and implies to defend the "company's flag". To take risks can be, however, the skill's negative aspect since it may collide with the company interests. The group concluded that there is not a real concept on entrepreneurship, so it is not possible to discuss the matter objectively. However it was consensual that it tends to be an added value, but it can represents sometimes a risk.

This item reached the second relative position in the total ranking (See Table 9).

"For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever she/he shows flexibility and adaptability."

Alumni in Group I perspective are that most of an economist or manager career is based upon this criterion. The changing speed of business conditions is so high that companies should have human resources capable of reacting rapidly to changes, so no or

less market can be lost. For teachers it is very important to problems resolution, taking into account the constant change climate, either in the market, either in the company itself. On the other hand, recruiters focused that the competences in debate could guarantee higher profitability levels, particularly in small-scale enterprises. They are essential features in the rapid current framework of change. Alternatively, a recruiter pointed out that these competences can be observed from a strong connection to the company culture point of view, allowing an easier collaborator's insertion in companies whose kind of organizational structure is a more "smooth" one.

In Group II the conclusion was that flexibility as well as adaptability contributes to professionals as well as companies survival. They are inherent to the business world, and it is important not only for economists and managers, but in all professions. These are a candidate's qualities recruiter's appreciate the most.

Group III reported the higher importance of these competences, because professionals have to be able to adjust themselves to companies' day-to-day mutations. In sum, it is the capability to monitor both market and company.

This item reached the first relative position in the total ranking (See Table 9).

"For the selection process, the candidate has an advantage whenever she/he shows a feasible perspective over her/his career."

An alumnus in Group I pointed out that in initial career stages this is not an observable competence. In their opinion it is built along the way, so, in selection processes with recent graduates, is not to be valued. On the contrary, the remaining alumnus considered that having a realistic career plan can demonstrate personal organization and motivations that helps the recruiter to evaluate better the candidate. Teachers reflected upon the quality of the criterion allowing the staying compromise, responsibility, personal

candidate's organization assessment. Based upon the last, the recruiter can have a greater security sense towards his/her future employee. Although the criterion allows a high subjectivity level, it can demonstrate slightly the professional candidate's balance. One of the teachers considered that at present times it is not possible to perspective a career, whatever the candidate's training base is. By their side, recruiters assessed the criterion as not being the most important, but they found preferable that candidates' presented their selves with a realistic perspective on the career, because they consider it can prevent future estrangements and disappointments. If a realistic career plan candidate is recruited it permits mostly eventual conflict cushion in the company's existent labor matrix.

Group II alumni considered that job candidates' should be bold in their career foreseeing, although is difficult since careers are being more and more underprivileged. For teachers is important to present this criterion with common sense and realistically, i.e., accordingly with the candidates ambitions but also with the engaging position. Recruiters' opinion is that rarely candidates present a realistic career perspective, although they consider it is a very important criterion.

Finally, for Group III, when the candidate is assessed on this matter he/she must present him/herself with some substantial references. At the interview stage, although it is difficult to recognize, it can reveal if the candidate is a dreamer or is mature when facing his/her professional future. The realism the career perspective must not be confounded with conformism or lack of ambition.

This item reached the seventh relative position in the total ranking (See Table 9).

Results discussion

The main results on this work were in fact the debate's richness between participants, and although the qualitative results don´t demonstrate appropriately the

between group opinion´s differences, the content analysis give another perspective on the participants sense of vote.

Quantitative results infirmed the expected result concerning between groups variance, but partially confirmed the formulated hypothesis for the importance of the education institution attendance. Alumni give higher importance to this criterion when compared to recruiters. Similar to these results were Rothwell, Herbert and Rothwell findings (1998), although using an undergraduate sample, they also found institution attendance to be one of self-perceive employability factors more valued in hierarchy they proposed. We think this could be a group effect that can be explained by membership sense, since they were in their own HE degrees' institution with some of their former teachers. But it can also represent an institutional attachment that is well rooted in CU, PRC Management and Economics faculty culture. Either way it was rated in fifth place in the total participants' hierarchy, mostly because of alumni vote.

Although faced from a descriptive point of view, since there wasn´t found significant differences in the other means, there was some agreement between all three experts' groups when assessing the most valued criterion, flexibility and adaptability competences, and the least valued, the voluntary work experiences. Other less variable opinions were found concerning the importance of working experiences (general third place), the ERASMUS type experiences (general fourth place) and the entrepreneurship abilities (general second place). Those were not unexpected results, since extracurricular activities have been referred as facilitating transversal competences acquisitions (Griffits, 2003; Griffits & Guile, 2003), specifically associative experiences (Romão, 2005), volunteering (Fortin, 2006, Thomas, 2001), education on foreigner countries/ERASMUS (Bracht, Engel, Janson, Over, Schomburg & Teichler, 2006) and work experiences (Knight & Yorke, 2000, 2004).

Finding that flexibility and adaptability are one of the most valuable skills was not at all a surprise (Branine, 2008; Evers *et al.*, 1998; Heijke *et al.*, 2002; Raybould & Sheedy, 2005), but the justifications richness, in all experts' groups was remarkable (see Qualitative results for a review).

For working experiences the content analysis brought attention to the fact that Portuguese stakeholders, especially recruiters, can perspective this criterion from a negative point of view. They believe that those experiences can format the candidate in such a way that plasticity and flexibility competences are compromised.

Global economy carried with it international recruitment phenomena (Connor & Shaw, 2008), which brought universities' a space to encourage their students into ERASMUS type projects, to receive also foreigner students, therefore to increase mobility, interpersonal relationship and cross-cultural integration skills (Fielden, Midlehurst & Woodfield, 2007).

But the lowest score value given to voluntary work, has its explanation on the content analysis. All groups find it as an intrinsic personal feature, commendable, but that doesn't tell anything about a candidate's employability capacities. Some referred the lack of structure and completion of some of the so called voluntary experiences. So it seems possible that there is some discredit associated to this criterion. There is some confusion about quality voluntary work experiences, where network communication, teamwork, communication and leadership skills, among others are requested and updated, and voluntary experiences where only physical abilities are at stake (for example food collection campaigns).

Finally, in the least variable criteria we found at eighth place a medium to high grade average. Heijke and collaborators (2002) main conclusions can help in discussing the former results. Their findings were in the sense of an alteration in the graduates' labour

market, where once were valued theoretical and technical skills, now, due mostly to Higher Education social expansion, in a market that values the general and socio-emotional skills. We fully endorse the opinion that HE faculties work must turn on the active learning and cooperation and relational stimulation with multidisciplinary approaches to transferable skills.

The career feasibility criterion was positioned at penultimate place of the general ranking, although with total agreement between teachers and alumni (both giving the seventh place) and a curious fourth place given by recruiters. We think that recruiters made an item interpretation from the realism point of view; instead, teachers and alumni face the item from the Thurow's approach, i.e., there are no careers from the twentieth century perspective. The way is continuing to learn, to pursuit new trainings and inovative ways of updating and "advertise" our competences.

Limitations and Concluding remarks

This work brought an interesting data approach to the needs' assessment on Higher Education curricula in Catholic University, Porto Regional Centre (in this case, Economics and Management courses). Although carefully prepared, we think more time should be given to all method stages, in order to allow less pressure on each group and to give supporting teams the chance to organize accurately the debate final quantitative results. Another limitation, we found to be pointed out, is the need to have more than one moderator supporter per *group*, and if possible, that sessions could be recorded.

An additional raised question concerns the previous AEP results' presentation, which could eventually influence the active participants' opinions, since it reflected entrepreneurs' association opinions. Even if we think this limitation must be reported, and in future initiatives controlled, results don´t support a contamination hypothesis because of

the qualitative variance observed, as well as the quantitative relative position by experts' group.

When a success rate is higher in a HE institution, in most cases it is attributed to differences in intrinsic education quality between concurrent faculties or colleges (Garcia-Avacil, Mora & Vila, 2004). Thurow (1999) sees the problem in an alternative way. He considers that there are the working post specific features that allow the success rates, although there is an important need to show demonstrable competences in the selection and recruitment processes. His tenth rule tells it all "The biggest unknown for the individual in a Knowledge based economy is how to have a career, in a system where there are no careers" (Thurow, 1999, p. 142). We all know that companies invest modestly in specific work post competences development, and even less when it concerns knowledge-workers, because the last have a greater probability of a "bouncing" career type, so the chance of losing the initial investment is high. So in fact, what solution do HE graduates have? Obviously, to have a well sustained initial competences platform. The question to be raised is to know which competences are more relevant, although our aprioristic position regarding Higher Education institutions is that they must continue the path of equipping graduates with robust technical skills, nevertheless watchful on the necessary transferable base skills for their "clients" to maintain their selves in the professional scenario, no matter the picture presented.

This work represents another Catholic University, Porto Regional Center, Economics and Management Faculty effort to respond to the legitimate aspirations of their students as well as employers ' needs for better equipped collaborators. We totally agree with Garcia-Avacil and collaborators point of view (2004), that human capital concept (that includes search for better health care job conditions, base education and training, active employment search competences, information search competences, mobility

availability, and on job training) must be viewed as an investment and not as a mere consumption. Amaral (2005) has also a similar opinion, when reflecting upon Bolognas' challenger at HE level, that we also subscribe. Formal educational, beyond being found to be related to business decision making success, the higher the educational stages, the higher the job income and the lower unemployment time. We agree completely with this point of view, although there are educational paths that must be corrected for a more balanced offer on transferable competences, and not only at the Higher Education level, but in previous educational stages.

One of the activity main conclusions rests in the impossibility to build a new educational offer without taking into account all intervenient opinions and concerns. Not only for sharing responsibility on a mutual cause, but essentially to make the match between all stakeholders needs and expectations. We hope this work can bring some insight to other HE institutions, to other entrepreneurs' responsible councils and most of all to political decision-makers.

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