

Indexing sustainability-oriented employment opportunities in the Irish recruitment market

Technical note
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Introduction

A significant part of my current research activity is concerned with the emergence of *sustainability* as a viable discourse within responsible management education. As a research active management educator I am undertaking a year-long project which aims to capture recruitment information openly released in indicative public fora such as online recruitment market databases and national newspapers. Such efforts can never claim to be entirely comprehensive as many positions, particularly in the private sector, simply are not advertised and companies who are keen to win the ‘war for talent’ (Michaels, Handfield-Jones, & Axelrod, 2001) often do not make their plans to create new employment vacancies obvious for reasons of competitive intelligence (Cullen, 2003).

However, this project aims to create a picture of the type of sustainability-related positions that are becoming available in the Republic of Ireland. The aims for this are threefold.

1. It aims to assist the preparation and delivery of sustainability-oriented, responsible management education that can provide real skills for students who will soon enter the recruitment marketplace.
2. Secondly, the project aims to provide evidence for the *type* of qualifications, knowledge, skills, capabilities and experiences required to obtain sustainability-oriented employment.
3. Finally, the project aims to foster the development of sustainable models of business, by developing the forms of work that are becoming available as a result of the business community’s interest in the more general growth of concern with sustainability (Starik & Kanashiro, 2013).

This project is primarily exploratory and receives no public funding. In the first instance the beneficiaries of my findings (whatever they may turn out to be!) will be my students at the School of Business and other departments at NUI Maynooth, and the academic community to whom I hope to present the main findings of this survey for peer-review and publication after the 12 months of data collection have been completed. However, I am anxious to share as much of the findings as possible to ensure that any benefits to be had from it are shared as widely as possible. With this in mind I will share raw data through my blog, such as the findings outlined in the *Pilot Findings* section below, and will answer all reasonable questions from interested parties (as best as I can!). Contact details are provided on the cover page of this technical note.

Background

For the last number of years, the National University of Ireland Maynooth has run a programme known as 'SPUR' (Summer Programme for Undergraduate Researchers). SPUR participants work on research projects relevant to academic units within the university, and gain experience of scholarly research. The programme is usually very competitive, and in Summer 2013 I was fortunate to mentor a very talented undergraduate student, Frances Bell, who collected data for a project on the relationship between recruitment markets and sustainability-oriented management education in Ireland. As part of her work on this project, Frances had utilized a 'top ten' listing of online recruitment sites (Fawcett, 2013) and found 62 job postings for positions which had 'sustainability' or 'sustain' advertised in the Republic of Ireland. The sites which had identified the most 'hits' over the six-week time period that she had collected data are listed in the *Method* section below, and these have been employed as part of this project.

Method

Past research I have conducted on recruitment markets proven useful in identifying the central skills, qualifications and capabilities most sought after by employers. The utility for this information goes beyond that which it offers to students preparing to enter the recruitment market: it also allows management educators opportunities to ensure that their teaching can be designed in a way which is based on real evidence, rather than anecdote. One of the most important steps in this process is to ensure that the sources used are appropriate and adequate, but academic research in this area has been somewhat lacking. Building on the SPUR project work mentioned above, I have used the following websites to capture recruitment data on all positions advertised with the search terms 'sustain', 'sustainability' or 'sustainable' in their job descriptions (and not just titles). Although sustainability in the management context is often discussed solely in terms of environmental issues, it is important to recognise that this is not the whole story. Sustainability 'takes into account every dimension of the business environment: social, economic, and cultural, as well as natural' (Werbach, 2009 p. 8). Werbach posits that sustainability is made up of four central 'co-equal' components: the social; the economic; the cultural, and; the natural environment. To be sustainable, businesses and managers must succeed on all four, and must never prioritise one over another.

All of following sites have returned hits that are appropriate to the aims of this project. Those that have not returned hits at the SPUR stage (June-July 2013) or during the initial month of the project (January 2014) are not included. The websites used, in alphabetical order, are:

- GreenCareersIreland.com
- Indeed.ie
- IrishJobs.ie
- Jobs.ie
- RecruitIreland.com.

I also reviewed the weekly appointments section in the two most comprehensive weekly business sections of the most widely-read broadsheet daily newspapers in Ireland; the *Irish Independent* and *the Irish Times*. Finally, two important parameters for this research is that I only collected data within the timeframe of the project (that is that I only collected information on positions advertised *after* January 1st 2014, which means that ‘live’ recruitment processes which had begun before then, were not included), and I only collected information for positions advertised for within the Republic of Ireland.

All textual data collected is stored in a database for a subsequent analysis which will take place following the conclusion of the data collection stage on December 31st 2014. Where a recruitment notice advertised more than one position, but did not stipulate exactly how many would be available, these were listed as a solitary position in the section below. In the section below, I outline some of the headline messages obtained from the ‘raw’ data secured by the project over the first month of data collection (January 2014).

Pilot findings (January 2014).

Between January 1st and 31st 2014, 5 general and specialist Irish recruitment websites, and the appointments sections of the two most widely-read daily broadsheet newspapers advertised **62** positions which had the terms ‘sustainability’ or ‘sustainable’ as significant parts of the description of the role. Of these most positions were for **graduate trainees** of various descriptions (9 roles) or for **design and/or engineering** roles. These were followed by **research/scientific** positions and professional **environmental/ecological** positions (7 roles for each category). **Training / education** roles and **operations management** positions accounted for 5 advertisements each, and **planning, business development/communications /marketing, planning** and **environmental health & safety** roles all accounted for 4 positions. **Administrative / Other** roles accounted for 2 positions and **project management** for 2.

Nearly 2/3rds of positions were advertised for roles in the private sector, commercial companies. 12 positions were advertised in the public sector and 10 for the not-for-profit sector, which demonstrates a wide range of employment opportunities for working in the sustainability field. 26 positions were for a variety of roles within the **sustainability sector**, and 27 for specifically

identified as roles for **sustainability professionals** of various types. **17 positions advertised were senior management positions.**

Most (24) positions were advertised for Dublin, with the capitals nearest competitor being Galway (7), but there was a wide variety of geographical locations identified, with sustainability-related roles being available in 16 of the 26 counties in January 2014.

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