



**An exploratory study of the role of Professional
Apprenticeships in the developing of a sustainable
pipeline of talent for the Recruitment Industry in Ireland.**

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An exploratory study of the role of Professional Apprenticeships in the developing of a sustainable pipeline of talent for the Recruitment Industry in Ireland.

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Abstract

Purpose- The purpose of the research is to explore the role of a Higher Apprenticeship (HA) as a mechanism to attract high potential individuals to the recruitment industry in Ireland.

This paper will investigate and expand on research carried out by The World Employment Confederation (WEC), the Global body for recruitment agencies, the National Recruitment Federation (NRF) the body for recruitment agencies in Ireland, the Recruitment Employment Confederation (REC) the United Kingdom Federation and the American Staffing Association (ASA). Common amongst all these professional bodies is the identification of a shortage of recruitment consultants, thus affecting the day to day business of agencies. The research is exploratory with the researcher adapting an inductive approach based on the findings of semi-structured interviews with personnel from the Recruitment Industry, and leadership and academic experts who operate in the skills shortages arena.

In addition, the data available by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) will also be considered. The investigation will include in-depth insights into countries that have a history of success with apprenticeships programmes, notably the UK, Germany, Switzerland and the USA will be examined to inform the decision. The research will present on what is available in the fore mentioned countries for HA's, the structures that are in place in each of these countries and why the success of these apprenticeship models, most notably the Swedish and German model, can be mirrored to inform on the structure of a HA for the Irish recruitment industry. The research will showcase how the most successful apprenticeship models are those

that are linked to the Country education system, are fluid and agile to manoeuvre from vocational to academic institutions and have industry buy-in from employers.

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KeyWords: Higher Apprenticeship, Apprenticeships, Work- Based Learning, On - The Job Learning, Recruitment Industry, Recruitment Consultant, Talent Shortages.

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

National College of Ireland

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List of Abbreviations

ASA American Staffing Association

AVET Apprenticeship Vocational Education Training

CIPD Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

CPD Continuous Professional Development

EI Enterprise Ireland

EDEFOP European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

EU European Union

HA Higher Apprenticeship

HE Higher Education

HR Human Resources

HRM Human Resource Management

IDA Ireland Direct Foreign Investment Agency

ILM Institute of Leadership and Management

ILO International Labour Organisation

NFQ National Framework of Qualifications

NRF National Recruitment Federation

OECD Organisation for Cooperation and Development

OJT On The Job Training

PRES Private Recruitment Employment Services

RC Recruitment Consultant

REC Recruitment Employment Confederation

RO Research objectives

WBL Work Based Learning

WBT Work Based Training

WEC World Employment Confederation

WRC Workplace Relations Commission

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.

The area of research for this dissertation is **Higher Apprenticeships** (hereafter referred to as HA).

In 2017, the introduction of HA's in Ireland by the Department of Education and Skills gave new opportunities to white collar industries to explore this option as a means to attract individuals to industries and sectors where none previously existed.

To expedite this notion, a case study of a new HA for the Recruitment Industry in Ireland will be carried out. In order to provide a broader understanding of this possibility, the author has engaged with focus groups from the global recruitment industry and formed collaborative alliances with credible academic personnel and experts, to explore this as a possible means and solution to addressing the talent shortages in this industry. The data will be collected from various regions of Ireland, different sectors of the global industry, leadership and academic experts and key stakeholders from Ireland and around the globe.

Working in Ireland has changed over the past two decades, with unemployment at an all-time low; and the growth of new jobs, especially in the service sector, have grown dramatically (Heffernan 2017). Workers now can reinvent their identity in new workplaces and sectors which was not possible before, thus lending the ability to easy transition from one industry to another (Boucher and Collins, 2015).

In the past two decades, Work Based Learning (WBL), or On the Job Learning (OJL), has attracted a lot of interest with numerous studies by both employers and governments (Cabral, 2018; Cheney, 2017; Wyman, 2015; Bowen and Tracey, 2017). Youth unemployment and labour market changes have presented opportunities for accredited apprenticeships, creating a platform to encourage participants to engage and participate in this route, hence, making it a more attractive method for employees who want to learn, but also want to earn an income as they do so (Hollist, 2012; Markowitsch and Hefler 2018). According to Crouch et al. (1998), while knowledge and skills are viewed as positive opportunities to secure

work, individuals who combine skills and knowledge with advanced levels of education are more likely to have prosperous and secure careers.

Bowen (2017), using the groundworks researched by Quinones et al. (1995) and Tesluk and Jacobs (1998), further developed the theory of work experience. Proposing two levels of specificity labour groups and professions to measure methods and proposing the measures and timing of the experience were based on the solidity, or the strength of the experience, as to how it impacted on the level of learning and the achievement of the individual when the experience occurred.

Globally, the Recruitment Industry is growing at a very fast pace (Pennel, 2018; Muntz, 2018; Dayang et al., 2013). According to the WEC economic report of 2018, the industry had a global revenue turnover of €491billion. It placed 56 million job seekers into roles and internal staff numbers amounted to 1.9 million workers.

According to NRF (2017), the Irish Recruitment Industry has an annual turnover of €3billion and placed over 180,000 people into roles in a variety of industries. Internally, it employs up to 7,000 people nationally (CSO, 2017). As a very significant employer it contributes annually to the exchequer a large monetary sum on tax, it also supports the skills agenda, the Regional Fora and is a contributor to better functioning labour markets.

At present, there is no specific HA or academic degree qualifications for this industry in Ireland that is accredited through the National Framework of Education or the equivalent in any country. This is one of the reasons it does not typically attract individuals from other industries, or, school or college leavers to choose this career path, due to the lack of visibility on the academic prospectus. This is causing concern and preventing long term succession planning for the agencies.

According to Collings (2019), providing opportunities for individuals to improve their capabilities and upskill that is correlated to a specific programme should increase probability of the attraction of new individuals to that area. While Collings (2019) sees great value in apprenticeships, he also believes it has been devalued in the Irish education system due to a culture of intellectual snobbery, believing career

choices of school leavers are influenced by parents and career guidance and down to luck and circumstance of when opportunities present themselves as to what career path you choose. Having a buy-in from the main stakeholder (in this case the agency) will significantly influence the success or failure of the programme, alongside branding of the industry, to showcase this as a profession and to create awareness of the role of the recruiter.

Previous research by WEC, REC, NRF, and the ASA has indicated the route to the recruitment industry by a large proportion of recruiters is typically those with a specialist skillset in another industry who have entered the industry by chance. These personnel are typically from high skilled sectors or industries, that due to the technology or automation have experienced a downturn, or the individual sees an opportunity to change career paths while still using the knowledge and skills experience in that field. While this is beneficial to agencies to obtain specialists that understand the terminology and the skillset needed to recruit personnel in the sector (especially in high skilled sectors), it is not sustainable long- term (NRF, REC, WEC). While this route is welcomed and the individuals who enter by this route typically have long and successful careers, it still needs to attract school and college leavers to fulfil what the industry predicts as an extreme growth of jobs for consultants into the future (Penel,2018. Muntz, 2018. WEC 2018, NRF 2018, REC 2018).

Recruitment Consultants play a vital link between candidates and clients (Toms, 2012). Exceptional recruiters have much in common, and anecdotal evidence from WEC global suggests most can adapt to the demands of rapidly changing markets. Pennel (2019) believes soft skills will become more important for the future because as an industry, we need to make sure that recruiters are well qualified and as skilled as possible. Apprenticeships should be promoted, combining theoretical and OJL at the same time, which allows people to make money while still being educated (Penell, 2019)

According to Frank Farrelly, President of NRF and COO of Sigmar Recruitment, shortages of skills in several industry sectors, along with internal staff shortages of experienced recruiters, is the biggest challenges recruiters face to enable them to do their jobs.

Recruiters work daily to key performance indicators (KPI's), a term that is used to measure and/or compare performance and sales success. They must also be familiar with employment law, have strong interviewing skills, be a good communicator and have empathy and resilience. David Head is the Director of Talint International, the global magazine for the Recruitment Industry and he believes, as recruiters are not dealing with a commodity but rather with life changing experiences, they are subjected to the highest level of scrutiny, therefore, the ability to attract and retain staff on behalf of a third party is a real talent that deserves accreditation.

Recruiting has become far more multi-faceted and complex, traditional recruitment models like the 360 degrees consulting (where a recruiter does the full cycle of the job from candidate sourcing/candidate matching and job sourcing) cannot be relied on for the fast-moving new world of work (Pennel, 2018). While this 360-degree model is still very popular, it is not appropriate or sustainable for the future (REC, 2017, NRF 2019).

With rapid market changes, technology advancement, where automation will replace some of the administrative tasks, recruiters will also have to upskill to inform on skill sets for roles that do not even exist yet. Continuous accredited education and training, and being able to adapt to rapid market changes, will be key for success. Frank Farrelly believes recruitment will become more specialist and recruitment consultants will have to constantly reflect and reskill to service the client needs with recruiters of the future required to be more consultative. The 360degree model will become more of a 190degree position with the role divided into 2 or more consultants who specialise in a skillset, therefore streamlining the role to utilise what the consultant excels at the most.

The HA would offer a brand-new career route for school leavers in a sector that was not previously available. It will also offer an opportunity for individuals who are employed in another sector to transfer to an alternative industry with a structured career path and still earn a wage, while obtaining a degree. David Head believes that for many people, their route to a full-time career is best served with an apprenticeship, so adding an accredited qualification for people working in the recruitment industry should be a pre-requisite.

The author aims to explore if a HA as a first step of a formal accredited academic career path, will not only attract new talent to this industry but will also help in the perception of professionalising it, assist in upskilling already embedded employees in the sector, and highlight the career opportunities of this industry.

1.1 Research Design/approach

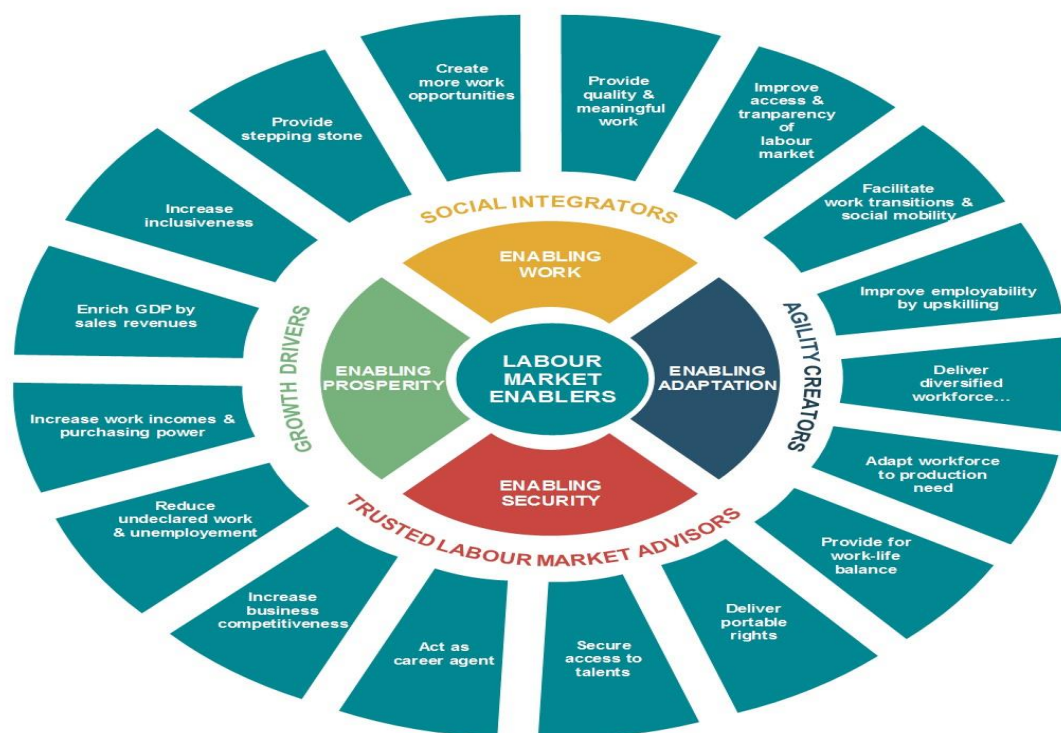
The research is exploratory and will adopt a qualitative approach in line with previous research of this area, notably research that is available from NRF, REC, WEC, ASA, OECD and the ILO. A case study methodology will be adopted, with input and insights from key stakeholders and leadership and academic experts from across Ireland and the global recruitment industry. A conceptual model derived from literature will be presented and tested amongst the research participants.

The research will be conducted by face to face meetings with focus groups from the global and Irish recruitment industry. Interviews will be held with experts from the wider Global recruitment community, global leadership and academic experts, and public sector education and skills bodies to meet the study objectives.

Research has shown the positive impact employment agencies can make to the social and economic structure of Europe, most notably by reducing levels of unemployment through aiding the supply and deployment of workers (CIETT, 2000; Toms, 2012). Toms (2012) identified that one of the key objectives in his research was to monitor the speed of the agency to effectively match the right person to the right job. With the War for Talent globally, the speed of this activity has increased in recent years as agencies compete to find that hidden gem and remain competitive. According to Toms (2012) and NRF (2017), this only can be achieved if there are trained and experienced personnel in the employment agencies. The creation of an alternative talent pipeline via a HA as a source of finding suitable candidates that are specifically trained for this sector, will permit agencies to forecast manpower more accurately and enable strategic succession plans.

1.2 The Global Recruitment Industry.

The recruitment industry has been at the forefront for designing and delivering new diverse and integrated workforce solutions for many years, which can be seen in Figure 1.



1.2.1 Figure1. Labour Market Enablers.

According to Pennel (2018), the recruitment industry has never been more in demand. Acting as labour **Market Enablers**, **Social Integrators**, **Agility Creators**, **trusted Labour Market Advisors** and **Growth Drivers**, the recruitment industry drives economy and stabilises the job markets. As previously mentioned, the recruitment industry has helped 56 million people globally access the labour markets (WEC, 2018).

Agency work is described as a tripartite relationship; the jobseeker registers with an agency who finds them a job with a user (client) organisation (Van-Haasteren, 2017). Acting as career agents, providing steppingstones to employment in all sectors, the agencies play a key part in up-skilling and improving employability of individuals. This can be seen in Figure 1, which

explains how agencies act as career agents for candidates, help create more work opportunities, increase inclusiveness, and provide them with quality and meaningful work (WEC 2018). From the user (client) perspective, agencies act as strategic employment partners, providing legislation updates, aiding in workforce planning, writing job specifications, updating on market conditions, sourcing and interviewing candidates and on many occasions assist in the selection of candidates (this is very common for contingency assignments). The recruitment industry will play an important part in assisting companies worldwide to fill their job vacancies in the future in the new “World of Work” (Pennel, 2018; Muntz, 2018; Dayang et al, 2013; Florea, 2014; Alter, 2015).

WEC Global Economic Report 2018 illustrates the global recruitment industry is continuing to expand with agency work increasing in many countries. Dayang et al. (2013) believes this is due to a number of factors, most likely, a lack of resources and budgets for a recruitment function in smaller organisations, easier access by agencies to global talent, experienced and specialised recruiters who can do the job faster, and that by outsourcing to the agency, they can concentrate on their own core activities. According to the REC, while recruitment is about the here and now, there is a growing acknowledgement amongst recruiters of the need to be aware of the rapidly changing jobs market. The “Future of Jobs- Recruitment 2025” White Paper number 1 (REC 2018), lists pre-empting the jobs market changes will be a number one priority for the recruitment industry, stating a big onus will be on recruiters to identify the skills and competencies required to service market needs and to assist clients in developing the job descriptions for these new roles.

The Netherlands, France, Germany, Italy and Spain have all experienced significant growth in 2017, while Japan continues to experience accelerated growth moving to 8%, compared to 7% the year before. According to WEC (2018), this reflects the positive role that recruitment services companies play for economies, individuals and enterprises.

1.3 Recruitment as a career.

Recruitment offers a very attractive career path and organisations hiring staff are continuing to undergo massive change in their quest to be competitive and profitable. Professionalism and technical competency are the hallmarks of successful recruiters (Dayang et al. 2013). Recruitment is still a people's business, with the recruitment consultant as the most important person in the recruitment agency. They should have the necessary skillset to satisfy client and candidate requirements to fill the job. Even with evolving technology, an agency still needs to provide training for their people. If not, they will never be successful in the business (Dayang et al. 2013). Author and leadership expert Fons Trompenaars believes that recruitment is a difficult process and needs a professional approach combining different disciplines. Trompenaars cites in his interview with the author "it is the key differentiator in the war for talent recognised in its own right as an industry outside of the HR discipline".

1.4 Overview of the Study Structure.

1.4.1 Chapter one

Gives an overview and insight of the Recruitment industry and an introduction to the study.

1.4.2 Chapter Two

Affords the reader an overview of the most up-to-date literature of what is available on both Ireland and globally. It identifies gaps and informs on the development and presentation of the conceptual model. It will also give an overview of the War for Talent and how this will impact on the Recruitment Industry and will explore the rationale of providing a HA for this Industry.

The reader will get an insight into Apprenticeships both in Ireland and a selection of Countries from around the Globe where successful Apprenticeships already exist.

It will give an overview of what the HA will look like based on the results of the feedback from the research groups and provide insight as to why a HA should be developed for the Recruitment Industry.

1.4.3 Chapter Three

Includes the research methodology section. It also outlines the ethical considerations.

1.4.4 Chapter Four

Showcases and analyses the results of the research.

1.4.5 Chapter Five

Discusses the findings of the research and the limitations to the study

1.4.6 Chapter Six

Concludes the study.

CHAPTER TWO. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction to the Literature Review

This chapter begins with an overview of the key literature in this area with a focus on talent shortages in the global recruitment industry. The literature review was developed in a response to the critical skill shortage of recruitment consultants. It will look at the evolving landscape of the recruitment sector and why there is a lack of talented personnel entering the industry as a career option. It will give insights into other apprenticeships both in Ireland and gold standard models from other countries, and finally, it will draw conclusions on the gaps in the literature on a HA for the Irish recruitment industry providing a solution in developing a pipeline for the future.

Several definitions are advanced which lead to the development of a conceptual model and finally an overview of why a HA could potentially be the solution to developing a pipeline of talent for the recruitment industry which is the prime focus for the study. As pointed out by Jesson and Lacey (2006), a robust literature review will tell the story and help advance on what we already know.

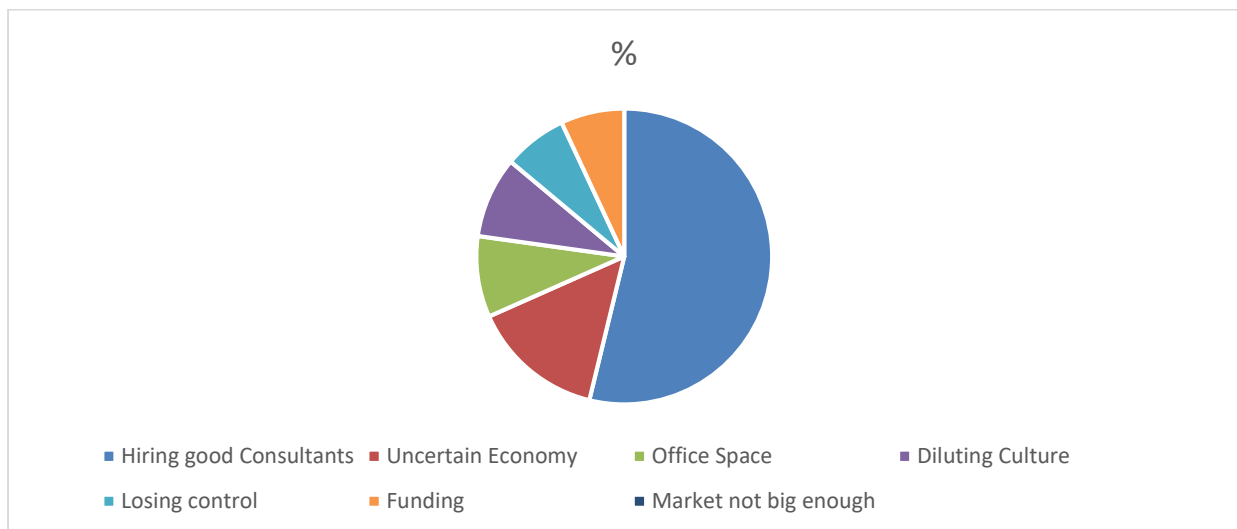
2.1.1 Talent shortages and challenges.

The biodiversity of the jobs market today is creating new challenges for companies in terms of sourcing the right talents; this is no different for the recruitment industry. The lack of experienced recruiters is a major challenge daily for recruitment agency managers (NRF 2017, REC 2018, ASA 2018, WEC 2018/2019). According to research by the experts at REC, NRF, ASA and WEC who believe, in the absence of a strategic learning and developing framework it will not be sustainable long-term (Gold, Holden, Iles, Stewart, and Beardwell, 2010 and Garavan, Hogan and O' Donnell, 2009). The future focus must be more on developing strategic learning and developing models aligned and amalgamated to the business needs (in this case the recruitment industry), that will assist in attracting and retaining high potential talented people for the future (George, 2015 and Gold et al., 2010).

2.1.2 Shortage of Recruitment Consultants.

Two surveys conducted by the NRF (2017) identified shortages of recruiters in their own sector as one of the major challenges agencies will face over the next five years. These results can be seen in Figure 2 and Figure 3. One survey, as seen in Figure 2, reveals 85 percent of respondents identified this shortage as the number one threat to the business.

NRF members also voiced concerns of the continued poaching of experienced recruiters by in-house recruitment divisions leading to even more shortages, as seen in Figure 3. As the recruiters are trained by private agencies to source and find talented people, this skillset is much in demand with multinational organisations who have a need to recruit on a regular basis. They generally offer larger salaries making the role very attractive to recruiters from the recruitment industry.



2.1.1.2 Figure 2. Survey - Biggest threat to the Industry 2017

What do you feel is the biggest challenges the RI will face in 2017? Q.10 Answers from 42 Agencies	Ranked in preference
Candidate availability	1
Uncertain Economy (Brexit)	2
Talent attraction	3
Talent Shortages in the RI	4
Lack of experienced consultants	5
Recruitment consultant poaching	6
Recruitment consultant going in-house	7
Recruitment consultants not genuine experts (promoted too fast due to shortages in the sector)	8

2.1.2.2 Figure 3. Biggest Challenges for NRF Members – Survey 2017

2.1.3 Attracting Talent

Careers are no longer defined by skills and jobs but more commonly through learning agility and skills (Deloitte, 2018). The ability to attract external talent is dependent on how potential employees view the industry or sector in which it operates (CIPD, 2018). Another important component to ensuring employee retention is the implementation of an internal talent marketplace that is accredited (Ulrich, 2015). Continuous professional development is a must for an industry like this, where markets are subject to rapid changes. According to Darcy (2018), to be taken seriously as credible business partners, the industry needs to demonstrate its ability to help its clients on building capability and capacity.

According to Erickson (2018), Gratton (2010), and Ulrich (2012), where there is an opportunity for continuous professional development (CPD) and accredited programmes available, it is more likely to attract and retain talent people. Erickson (2018) also found employees are more likely to leave if they do not see a career path. Research by Liesel et al. (2015) shows that Generation Y will be hard to retain, unless they see a career path with ongoing development, while Ulrich (2015) argues talent on its own is not enough that companies need to leverage the collective activities. Hannigan et al. (2015) also found a company's ability to develop and harvest key resources in tight markets would contribute to success, and especially for companies operating in niche markets, while a study by Falola et al. (2014) found

that for companies to gain competitive edge and increase standards, they must ensure to increase on employees' competencies, their capabilities, and their skills, by implementing suitable training strategies. The McKinsey report on the 'War for Talent' proved successful businesses have talent management systems and processes that are integrated and strategic (Oladapo, 2014).

A study published by PWC (2015) on 1,250 CEO's from 60 countries around the world revealed creating a skilled workforce was the number one priority recognising that employers need to look beyond the traditional models for recruitment and development, and now need to offer a wider range of entry routes to enable them to attract and recruit from a broader pool of talent.

2.1.4 Developing Talent.

Experts such as Gratton (2016), Taylor (2010), Gold et al. (2010) and Ulrich (2015), have demonstrated that high-performance working connects to high skills and links to developmental humanism, challenging managers to become more aware of how empowering employees through learning and development will help in attracting and retaining for the future. When developing talent, it should be connected to other learning and development initiatives that includes both informal and formal learning interventions (CIPD, 2018) hence why the apprenticeship route is explored as being the one most applicable to start the academic career path for recruiters.

According to Gratton (2016), the war for talent, alongside rapidly changing markets and technologies, will challenge organisations in their pursuit to attract and retain. Gratton (2016) predicts shaping positive futures will be experimental, due to the societal change as people navigate their way through what she describes as a "highly volatile environment". The continuing revolution of work, the shortage of key people and the need for organisations to upgrade and develop capability is challenging leaders (Deloitte, 2018). Garavan et al., (2012), based on their study identified, implementing development strategies alongside strategic planning and selection will be crucial to organisations to ensure a future supply of talent to meet organisations objectives. Rezaei and Beyerlein (2018), found in their study of talent development that Garavan et al. (2012) described it best by dividing it into the following four areas:

- (1) Formal programs to include conceptual and skill-based development, and the personal growth of the individual.
- (2) Relationship based development, where the individual benefits from mentoring and coaching, career advice and psychosocial support.
- (3) Job based, where the individual gets to experience job design and performance-based tasks.
- (4) Informal and formal experiential learning opportunities.

While Garavan et al. (2012) have broken it down into these four areas, according to Rezaei and Beyerlein (2018), there are informal and formal learnings with very few research-based frameworks available showing the successful outcome from the organisation.

2.2. Why develop a HA for Recruiters?

An investigation was undertaken by the NRF to identify the need for a HA and to develop the occupational profile in meaningful consultation with the employers and employee representatives. An apprenticeship programme for the Irish Recruitment Industry was discussed and approved for exploration at the NRF conferences, surveys and questionnaires to members and key stakeholders, and subsequently a steering group has been formed. The steering committee chose to form a partnership with the National College of Ireland as the education providers to form the industry consortium. A smaller cross-section group was selected to develop the occupational profile of the apprenticeship degree.

International comparisons have been considered, most notably, the data available from the REC, who have 1000 apprentices in place in the recruitment industry in the UK. Even though these apprenticeships are not accredited to a third level institution, but rather to the trade body, the REC 2018 reports increased productivity, increased quality, boost in earnings, job satisfaction and career progression. The Richard Review (2012) disclosed apprenticeships are held in very high regard in Europe and beyond. The (2018) cross-nation overview report by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) on Apprenticeship schemes in EU countries revealed, that EU members states have made great progress to increase the quality of apprenticeships and the diverse range of sectors they are offered in.

The report also recognises the impressive work that has been achieved by a lot of countries but notes there is still much more potential to expose to move apprenticeships a step further to make it them more appealing to candidates and employers. A paper for OECD by Kuzera, M (2017) on 'Incentives for Apprenticeships', found that providing apprenticeships are a higher level of education is more likely to attract good candidates. However, it is important to mention the OECD (2017) paper also disclosed it was more challenging to develop an apprenticeship in a sector where the employer has to build up the expertise in how to run a successful apprenticeship, and sometimes need to be convinced it is a worthwhile investment.

The NRF and WEC are cognizant that they must play an active role for the sustainable flow of manpower pipeline for the recruitment industry. They must lead the way for education and development of skills (Pennel, 2018; Muntz, 2018).

In 2012, NRF introduced a certificate in Recruitment Practice to the Irish Recruitment Industry in partnership with the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM). This certificate is positioned at level 3 on the ILM framework and is generally used by recruiters who are already employed by agencies, or by an internal recruiter in a large company. 850 students have now completed the programme (NRF, 2018). The challenge is, it is not commonly known outside of the recruitment sector; therefore, it does not organically attract new talent to the programme or to the industry. This is due to the fact it is only advertised internally for the sector and paid for by the employers of the recruiters who have already been selected for employment. As outlined above, talent shortages in this industry is a big issue and will only get worse in the future (WEC, NRF, ASA, REC). By having a HA as an option on the National Framework of Education, highlighting it as a career path will give visibility of the sector and assist in the attraction of school leavers and other industries personnel.

The overall aim of the researcher is to discover if, an academic career path via a HA for recruiters will assist in the attraction of high potential individuals for the PRES. As outlined by Garavan et al. (2009), Gold et al. (2010) and Gratton (2016), companies that have structured career development plans in place have higher organisational success, better retention rates and higher ability to attract new personnel.

2.3. Apprenticeships.

The biggest deficit in the education system in Ireland is the lack of transversal skills (National Skills Strategy Ireland, 2017). Apprenticeships are viewed as a great way forward. While there is a European framework (albeit a complex one), Ireland lags behind other countries in this space for higher learning participation by adult learners (Keese, 2018). Since the government in Ireland put higher education (HE) as one of the focuses for economic recovery, HA's are now an option in professional sectors such as Financial, Insurance, Retail and Health, alongside the traditional trade and craft ones (Loxley & Seery, 2012).

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) believes that one fundamental benefit from an effective apprenticeship system is establishment of a skilled and productive employee base (Mangle and Trendle, 2017). According to WEC (2016), apprenticeships should be endorsed and are an excellent way to combine academic qualifications with solid practical experience.

Apprenticeships are not a new form of work or education; they have been around since the Bronze age. In the 13th- 14th century period, apprenticeships were either considered traditional, or industry, while in the 16th and 18th centuries, countries in Europe regulated apprenticeships in order to alleviate social conflicts (Hongwe, 2018). The Richards review (2012) cited that while they are a great way forward, they must be equal and balanced to be successful. Several studies by Steinke & Hogan (2019), Koller (2018), Hongwei (2018) and Wenchao (2018) suggest apprenticeships will play a big part in many employment sectors in the future of work. Lowe and Graves (2016) in their study of Canadian workers found training and cross skilling was very high on the work agenda. Lowe and Graves (2016) believe apprenticeships will contribute to the upskilling to new roles as old roles become obsolete in the future and that apprenticeships could provide a one step up, or, a move sideways from one industry to another leveraging on the on the job learning scenario.

Apprenticeships are typically industry led, combining a structured programme of work-based learning (WBL) or on the job training (OJT), partnered with a training or

education provider (Cabral, 2018; Cheney, 2017; Wyman, 2015). The apprentice earns as they learn and achieves the ability to build the skills they need in their chosen occupation. Apprenticeships are also a proven way for employers to develop their own talent (Crawford, 2016; CIPD, 2017, Gunderson and (Krashinsky, 2015; Mangle & Trendle, 2017). The millennial workforce is known for their appetite to continuously learn and develop while working. They consider continuous professional development as the cornerstones to career progression (Gratton 2016, Clifton 2016, Guys & Pentz 2017).

Today's apprenticeships are formed from the consequence of shared compromise between social forces and the product shared understanding of social factors (Hall, 2011). Countries like Germany, Switzerland and the UK view apprenticeships as a collection of collaboratives of the joining of various sectors such as economy, education, society etc. (Wenchao, 2018). Today's apprenticeship programmes are increasingly gaining momentum. A study in the USA by Gaal (2018) revealed that where there was collaboration with a consortium and a training/ education institution, the commitment and success rate was so much better. The ILO (2017) report on 'Addressing skills mismatch and youth unemployment' states that good apprenticeship programmes provide stable and reliable pipelines of specifically trained and qualified workers who are committed and more likely to remain with the employer. The benefits far outweigh the initial investment, thus by allowing the industries to influence the design of the programme in collaboration with a training institution, it greatly assists in the effectiveness and quality of the delivery of the training, (ILO, 2017).

According to the deputy director of the EU Commission for employment and skills Moira McKerracher, a good apprenticeship needs to be a robust and meaty experience with clear progression routes. McKerracher believes there needs to be a balance of on and off the job training, delivering tangible skills and mentoring leading to a return on investment for the employer with full competence for the apprentice. McKerracher recognises, it is most likely smaller companies who find apprenticeships challenging and who worry the most about their ability to support the apprentice. To address this challenge, group training can provide effective support and arm the apprentice with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed and learn.

An example of this is where organisations with skill needs in similar occupations engage with a specialist to deliver the training, thus ensuring the apprentice gets the training they need (Fuller et al. 2015). The ILO 'Skills for Employment' policy brief (2017)

It is important to recognise that many of the previous studies conducted on apprenticeships worldwide heavily focused on the trade and craft ones. There is little known research available on the professional options, hence why this research seeks to fill this gap. Anecdotal evidence suggests this is the case in many countries, even the ones who have successful apprenticeship models in place in several sectors, are still lacking in the quest to provide solid professional apprenticeships.

Author and leadership expert Fons Tromenaars who has great experience with apprentice approaches views apprenticeships as a very smart way to combine the needs of an organisation with the needs of an individual, believing we should do more of it. Tromenaars (2019) believes the young generations can bring so many benefits to established organisations, citing it a win-win situation for all sides. As previously mentioned, this is also the view of Steinke & Hogan (2019), Koller (2018), Hongwei (2018) and Wenchao (2018) who believe apprenticeships will play a big part in the future of work.

According to Fuller et al. (2016), apprenticeships that are supported well in an organisation give a good insight into the culture of the company. Fuller et al. (2016) maintain it is a good indication there is a solid training and development plan in place in the organisation, with the goals of the company aligned to career progression of employees, contributing greatly to the retention of the employee when the apprenticeship programme is complete. A CIPD study in 2017 discovered that 80 percent of employers who took apprentices have retained or improved on future skills for the good of the business.

In Ireland, the government call out in 2016 to increase the portfolio of sectors to be included in apprenticeship programmes has been greatly received, resulting in sectors who would not have engaged in the past now looking at this avenue as a

means of attraction for talent for the future. Apprentices find a job quicker, keep it longer and consider it a smart way to commence your career (EU Europa, 2015). Earn while learning makes people more employable and finding a job in a specific trade as an apprentice is better than a bachelor's degree in that area (ASA Workforce monitor 2017; Harris Poll, 2017). According to Ingo Fritschi (managing director of the Learning Institute for Apprenticeships in Switzerland), good apprenticeships provide forward- looking practical and attractive training, in order to ensure sufficient junior employees with superior qualifications are entering the workforce on a regular basis apprenticeship must be considered in all areas for the future.

2.4 Contrasting different national approaches to Apprenticeships.

The EU promotes apprenticeships through the European Alliance for Apprenticeships and encourages WBL or OJT as an alternative to the traditional college route to learn a trade (EU Commission, 2018). There is an increased growing interest with the introduction of new professional options. Examples of these new professional options is the new financial sector apprenticeship, which was introduced in the Financial Services Sector in Ireland in 2016. The apprentice can choose from a specialist role at level 6 or an associate role at level 8. Both apprenticeships are recognised on the National Framework of Education

2.4.1 Overview of Apprentices in the UK

Apprentices in the UK date back to medieval times. They expanded exponentially until exploitation brought them into disrepute (Wilson, 1965).

Today's UK apprenticeships differ greatly from ones in the past of which were designed to only deliver training at low levels on the education framework. The reason for the introduction of HA's in the UK was due to the lack of progression of apprentices (Gambin and Hogart, 2016). In the past, apprenticeships were only available to young adults under the age of 24 years (Fuller, 2016). Fuller looked at the growth of apprenticeships in the UK and found that since the age limit was

removed in 2008, it expanded the offering to over 25s who were already in the workforce, and 70 percent of apprentices were conversions from other industries. The new apprenticeship standards require that they have a focus on the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to be competent in a particular occupation. This has facilitated the expansion of apprenticeships at the higher, and now, at degree level. Higher Apprenticeships were not introduced until 2009. Price Water Coopers (PWC) is one of the largest graduate recruiters in the UK. Priding themselves on playing an active role in the education and skills development space, introduced the first HA for the professional services in the UK in 2015.

The UK government describes an apprenticeship as “a job, in a skilled occupation, that requires substantial and sustained training, leading to the achievement of an apprenticeship standard and the development of transferable skills to progress careers” (Crawford, 2016). Crawford found having degree apprenticeships are of utmost importance to meet the future needs of industry, illustrating the skills and behaviours needed to be competent in a chosen field.

While HA's are an attractive option, especially as student debt is an issue in the UK, the level of uptake has been slow (Mulkeen et al., 2017). According to a survey by CIPD (2017), in a report to BBC business journalist Lora Jones, this is due to the levy imposed on employers that has caused confusion and misunderstanding, therefore, employers are not as willing to participate in the apprenticeship scheme (the levy is means tested based on the company's payroll bill exceeding £3million per annum). Criticism of the levy was also quoted by the UK Institute of Directors who stated many businesses did not know how it worked, with one in ten employers writing it off in tax. The CIPD report (2019) reported, the government in the UK justified the levy in 2017 to replace a training levy, because of the low level of apprentice participation compared to other countries, as well as to address the skill gaps. On the writing of this study, today the target set by the UK government on the introduction of the levy to have 3 million apprenticeships in place by 20/20 looks set to fail (CIPD, 2019). According to the CIPD (2019) report, one of the key ambitions of the government was to introduce HA's to mirror the offering in Switzerland, Austria and Germany where all apprenticeships are advanced or at a higher level with expectation of increasing the footfall. The results to date indicate, there is still

concerns on how the employers are using the levy for training and it is not being spent in the intended way (CIPD 2019).

2.4.2 Overview of Apprentices in Germany

Germany has a long tradition of a successful vocational and training system aligned to apprenticeship (AVET) that is crucial for the qualification of the German workforce (Riphahn and Zibrowius, 2016). Ripanhn et al, (2016) explored the association of apprenticeships with vocational training and the success of the individual to the labour market. They focused on three outcomes - unemployment, stable fulltime employment, and hourly pay rates. Looking at these three areas, their findings indicate that vocational training creates strong positive returns on early entry to the labour market, and that individuals with AVET have a lower probability of being unemployed or out of work. The study also found these individuals have a higher chance of gaining permanent fulltime employment, earn higher wages than their peers who entered the labour market without participating in vocational skills.

Germany operates a dual apprenticeship system where the apprenticeship programme can last between two and four years. A structured blended model of vocational 'on-the-job training' with formal education in vocational schools provides three options to the individual of how they can enter an apprenticeship programme. The first track is organised based 'on-the job' training. This must meet formal, occupation-specific standards, and employers announce their vacancies in the vocational schools where the apprentices attend. The second track is predominantly full time educational focussed (Schulberufssystem/school system). The employer fills open apprenticeship positions based on their business interests. Track one and two both lead to nationally recognised vocational qualifications. Typically, the choice between track one and track two is tied to the choice of an occupation; in most cases any given occupation is taught exclusively in track one or two. The tracks differ, in that first-track students spend more time in firms and on-the-job, whereas the second-track training focuses on school-based education. This implies different levels of relevant hands-on experience, occupational networks, and exposure to the needs and interests of potential employers. Most importantly, the second-track is school based training, ends with students starting a job search, and first-track

apprenticeship training ends with job offer decisions by employers. This likely affects both opportunities and behaviour of trainees.

A third track consists of programs that meet excess demand for vocational training and improve applicants' qualifications but do not grant vocational degrees (U" bergangssystem/transition program) This track has three major tasks. It offers general schooling for those not yet qualified for apprenticeships in a 'vocational preparation year' (Berufsvorbereitungsjahr) but can be used to complete a basic school degree. Students may learn occupation-specific skills which can allow them to shorten a later apprenticeship. Most students who complete the third track continue their training with an apprenticeship (Franz et al. 2000). The dropout rate from AVET remains at below 20% and is highest in the first year (AB, 2012).

Germany is also internationally recognised for its low youth unemployment (Riphahn et al 2016). The structured apprenticeship models in place facilitate all levels of school leavers whether they complete the full academic cycle or not. As noted above, track three allows for the apprentice to return to the classroom hence keeping the person off the live register of unemployed, (Riphahn et al 2016).

2.4.3 Overview of Apprentices in the USA.

Results of a recent study (Harris Poll, 2018) of 2,000 working adults by the American Staffing Association (ASA), the largest Federation in the World for recruiters, 62 percent of those surveyed agree that apprenticeships or "earn as you learn" make people more employable than going to college. Of these adults surveyed, 70 percent believe that learning a specific trade is better to finding a job and 90 percent believe that apprenticeships are helpful in finding a new career. As mentioned earlier, the study on Canadians by Lowe and Graves (2016) confirm this that apprenticeships could be the solution to providing the one step up to another industry for individuals whose trade or sector has become obsolete. At the time of writing this report, there are 7 million vacant jobs in the USA.

A 2019 report by IWSI America revealed businesses in the USA must become more creative to attract and develop new talent. The school to work and post-secondary

options need to be reconsidered by students and parents, and there is a need to reimagine the next steps towards modern apprenticeships. The report describes modern apprenticeships as an enlightened 21st century career pathway, blending the classroom with WBL preparing people of any age to meet the talent needs of the organisation - using “modern” as the way to build the pipeline of qualified workers in a broad range of sectors and industries for future business needs. The study for the report looked at large global companies such as Adobe, LinkedIn, Mailchimp, Siemens, JP Morgan and CVS Health providing evidence and dispelling the historic myth that it is only trade or craft that are embarking on the WBL agenda. With a mix of high school graduates, college, graduates, military veterans, and mid-career adults the study identified 200,000 joined apprenticeship programmes in the USA contributing to a new pool of talent.

2.4.4 Overview of Apprenticeships in Switzerland.

The majority of Swiss apprenticeships are dual-tracked with vocational training an integral part of the Swiss education system. One of the defining factors of the Swiss education model is its parallel positioning to the demands of the labour markets where programmes are geared towards job vacancies (Hoffman 2015). According to the HomeRoom (2018) report by the USA education department, who are using the Swiss model as an example to look at as a “Gold Standard” model, 1% of GDP of Swiss companies is attributed to apprenticeships with the companies who have engaged stating a 60/80% retention rate. Swiss school leavers sign a contract with the training firm at the beginning of the apprenticeship, this contract defines the salary of the apprentice and obligations are binding on both sides. Each state oversees monitoring the training activities and quality standards and if violation is proven the training firm is denied the right to train any more apprentices (Muehleemann, 2016).

Because of the recognition of excellence and acceptance of apprenticeships, a high majority of young people choose to pursue a vocational programme that has an apprenticeship opportunity attached, with the most popular programs attracting individuals to the health care, electrical, hospitality, banking and IT. Federal legislation relating to apprenticeships guarantees the apprentice recognition of a higher education degree nationally sectors (Marti 2017, Field 2016, Hoffman 2015).

The apprentice has the choice to either go to work full time or onto higher education. There is a choice of 250 programmes with duration ranging from two to four years which secondary school leavers can choose from, and all lead to a recognised certificate or diploma. The education system is positioned on a three-pillar framework, University, Professional College and Apprenticeships. Operating on a credit system means you can move from one pillar to another making it easy to transition from one career choice to another. The portability this provides means the apprentice can move easily across the three pillars and, if needed can change career paths along the way.

One of the successes of Swiss apprenticeships is the partnerships formed with the apprenticeship provider and the individual organisations. Hoffman (2015) describes the system as an inspiration, with this buy in the apprentice is secure that they get a job at the end of the apprenticeship programme.

2.4.5. Overview of Apprenticeships in Ireland.

As stated earlier, historically the approach in Ireland to higher education leaned more to the vocational nature (Clancy, 1989). The National Apprenticeship System is governed by legislation, principally, the 1967 Industrial Training Act. The legislation sets out the overall responsibilities of employers, apprentices and the education/training provider. In 2013, a large project was commissioned by the government to reviews standards of 25 existing craft apprenticeships. The review was to be two-fold; one to ensure the apprenticeships currently in place were fit for purpose, and secondly to embark on the development of new apprenticeships in other sectors. Stakeholders from the education authority, Unions, employer representatives, and the quality standards authority (QQI) worked together to develop occupational and awards standards to revise the curricula. Following the review provision was made for apprenticeships to be repositioned at either a higher or a lower level on the Framework, paving the way for new sectors and industries to develop apprenticeships whereby none previously existed.

The new apprenticeship council was formed in 2014 followed by a call out by the government in 2016 for the new professional sectors to be included. This call out saw Ireland move from the concept of traditional apprenticeships (trade and

construction etc) into new professional areas, to include International Financial services, Retail, Health, and the Insurance sector. According to the Apprenticeship Council report 2019, there are now 81 programmes to choose from, ranging from levels 5-10 on the National Framework of Education.

Dr Mary Liz Trant, Executive Director at Solas Ireland, believes the new call out for professional apprenticeships will change the landscape in the education system in Ireland. She believes it will give great opportunities, and the reputation of apprenticeships are improving due to the introduction of the new professional apprenticeships. According to Dr Trant, there is increased support for HA's in Ireland, but she thinks there is still a way to go. While there is no shortage of applicants, it is the employers in Ireland who are slow to engage, except for the Technical sector, where many companies have taken on apprentices (Dr Trant 2019). There is also a new HA in place for the Financial services and the Insurance sectors, and so far, the attraction of applicants to these two industries has increased due to a HA being in place.

2.4.6 Attraction and Retention

Using apprentices to attract and retain in an industry still creates many challenges (Held, 2018). According to Held (2018), that while they create a positive outlook for the next couple of years; it is not sustainable long term. Held (2018) believes the war for talent across all sectors may attract the apprentices to other industries that have healthier monetary benefits before they complete the program. This will be challenging for any industry hence why it is imperative salary bands are generous enough to keep the apprentice long term.

2.4.7 Recruiting for Apprentices

Held (2018) suggests recruiting apprentices may differ from the usual recruitment procedure in organisations and more so if the candidate is particularly young (16-18) with no prior work experience. He recommends that alternative methods need to be considered for young apprentices. A report on apprentices by CIPD (2017) declared for apprentices to be successful, they need to be embedded in a workforce planning approach with clear business benefits, and part of the long-term strategy on

workforce growth and skills development. Lessons can be learned from the Swiss model where the apprentice has a structured career plan and the vision of their career map. Recruiting for apprentices that are not school leavers should have the same criteria a company uses if they were recruiting for staff.

According to Frank Farrelly, culture and a can-do attitude is very important for a role like this which is subject to changing so frequently. Farrelly believes, recruiting apprentices from other industries into the recruitment sector is a huge plus for the industry because they bring with them a diverse range of skill sets that can be incorporated into the role, especially those individuals who come from specialist or niche sectors.

2.5 Chapter Summary

The review of the literature found, while there was good research available on apprenticeships in general, there was no research to draw from of a HA for recruiters from anywhere in the World.

Having examined the fore mentioned countries that have successful apprenticeships in place -Germany, Switzerland, UK, and Ireland - Switzerland could be viewed as the country that has a gold standard model in place. The approach is at national level, with buy in from industry prior to the individual embarking on the apprenticeship, therefore, the apprentice is guaranteed a place on the programme of choice. While the UK has two apprenticeships in place for the recruitment industry, the absence of them on the National Framework of Education is not the model Irish recruitment employers are asking for, however, the HA for Ireland could draw some ideas from the content and modules of these UK two programmes. The Swiss model could be the one to explore more in depth and to mirror for the HA for the recruitment industry in Ireland. As stated earlier by Fons Tromenaars (2019) with the joining of the employer body and the academic institution to develop the HA it should be a win-win situation.

The result of the literature review has led the researcher to derive a conceptual model for testing as seen here in Figure 4. This model is presented and discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

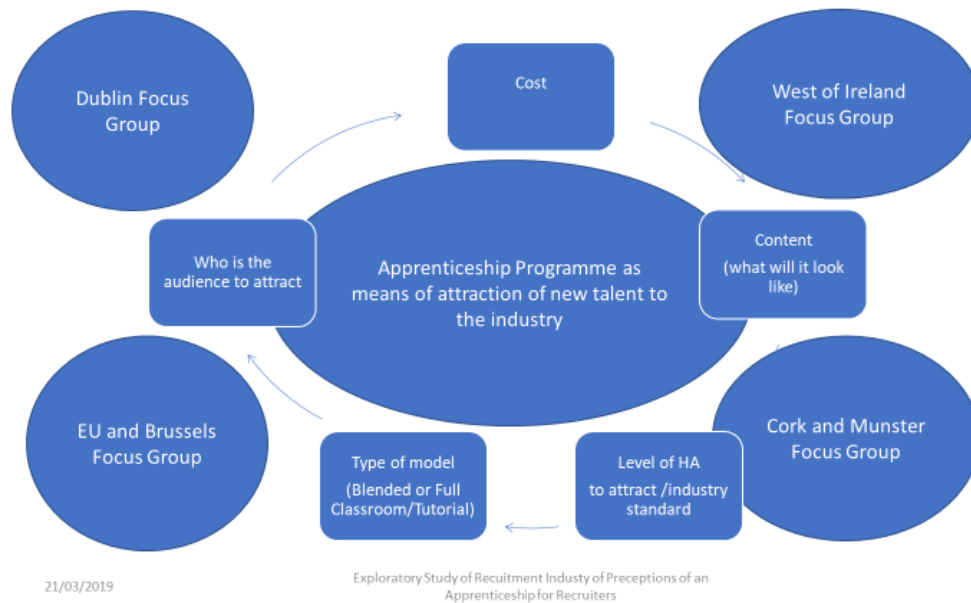


Figure 4. Conceptual model- (Exploratory study of industry perception).

CHAPTER THREE. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the approach and the chosen methods for the research study. It will provide context into the research approach and the strategy used for analysing the problem of the talent shortages in the recruitment industry. It will also provide rationale and justification for using the chosen research methods. The areas covered in this section are; the population selected and why, how the data was gathered, how the data was analysed, the confines of the research, as well as any ethical decisions that must be taken into consideration.

The reader will be provided with insights into how the data was collected and analysed, by using conceptual frameworks, focus groups, questionnaires and interviews with key experts and stakeholders. The hypothesis the author has presented is “Would a HA provide a solution to the talent shortages in the Recruitment Industry”?

3.1.1 Research Objectives

- To investigate whether a HA can provide a solution to attract new talented individuals to the recruitment industry and, would it also assist in the perception of professionalising the industry.
- To ascertain what is currently available elsewhere and the perceived success of these initiatives in other jurisdictions.

The key question explored by the research is whether the introduction of a HA on the National Framework of Education would lessen the talent shortages that agencies are experiencing now and will into the future? While exploring the key research a sub question explored will be if a HA was available for the recruitment industry would it help it in the perception of professionalising it.

3.2 Research Philosophy

Quinlan and Zikmund (2015) advocate the philosophy of any research framework should always provide a holistic view. Research philosophy explores existing knowledge and is described by Bryman and Bell (2015) as the nature of reality.

Positivism and interpretivism are the two main research philosophies according to Saunders et al. (2016), where positivism recognizes there can only be one external objective, one reality that clarifies human behaviour (Goodwin, 2010). Dissimilarity, interpretivism is subjective that is socially created (Saunders et al., 2016). This research assumes the positivism philosophy because it gives the author the ability to remain as objective as possible as suggested by Quinlan and Zikmund, (2015) and provide a more holistic approach. While the researcher tries very hard to be objective and balanced in their enquiries, Greener (2008) believes there is no such thing as totally impersonal objective research. The researcher is employed and fully involved in this sector and works with the focus groups and experts on a regular basis. Because of these relationships, the problem is known to the researcher. She will be mindful at all stages though that her position does not influence any of the respondent's opinions or answers.

3.3 Research Approach.

The two most common fields of research are Quantitative and Qualitative methods (Adams et al., 2014). For this study, the author has chosen qualitative methods. The author adopted this method to be the most appropriate approach to answer the research question. As qualitative research allows for the research to remain flexible, some of the interviews may provide new issues to arise, therefore with flexibility, these can be added in. As qualitative research is a form of social science based on a holistic world view, it focuses on what the persons understanding of how they view the world, and their interpretation of their experiences, it is about the subjective world we live in where several constructed realities exist (Awasthy and Gupta, 2015).

According to Ruge and Petre (2007), who believe research is conducted to find something new that can be divided into two understandings, (A) primary research which is "new" to everyone or, (B) secondary research which is only new to you the researcher. Ruge and Petre (2007) believe secondary research is vital when doing the preparatory work prior to the primary research. They believe secondary research gives a good insight into what has been achieved in the past in the area or topic you are researching but will rarely give a breakthrough. The secondary research will be most important in this study, with the findings providing a lens if a HA will be the

solution to attracting new individuals to the recruitment industry to address the talent shortages.

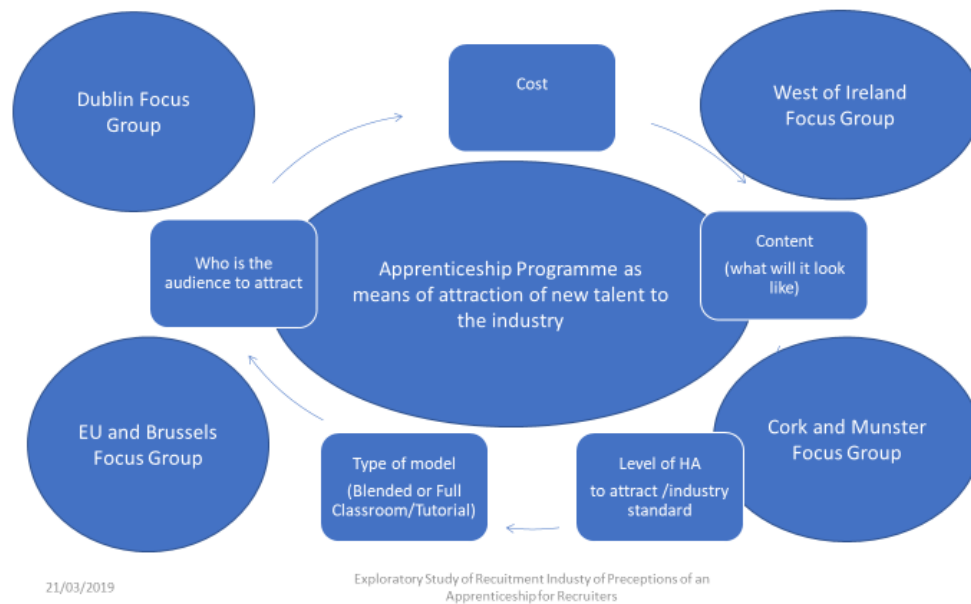
The semi structured interviews, even though the questions and theme will be the same, the interviewee can discuss the subject freely and give their interpretation of what is being asked of them on the Topic. Described by Awasthy and Gupta (2015), while the qualitative approach supports insights into the area topic being researched, it also has its problems. Participants can be cautious of the information, they are sharing, and the author must be aware of this assuring them of complete confidentiality if appropriate (Awasthy and Gupta, 2015).

Previous research on this topic by REC (2015, 2016), NRF (2017), WEC (2018) has similarly adopted qualitative methods.

The author also sought the views of leadership experts who have a vested interest in the recruitment industry to ensure a holistic view of the subject matter to triangulate the findings. The author believes all of the selected participants combined would provide a good rounded contribution to the study, of, what is actually the problem, and their position and expert knowledge would help identify if the HA would be the solution.

3.3.1 The Research Framework.

The author opted to use the following methods for the research. Having already conducted a pilot study, which can be seen in Figure 5, the researcher used a conceptual framework as seen in Figure 4, which she felt would provide the best insights to conceptualise the research and to direct the focus around the core issues. According to Wee and Banister (2016), conceptual models provide an unambiguous structure on how the independent and the dependent variables are connected. A preliminary conceptual model was used in the initial exploratory stage to establish what were the key factors causing the talent shortage and the lack of attraction, and if a HA would be a possible solution. This can be seen in Figure 6. In addition to the conceptual framework, semi-structured interviews were conducted, and focus groups were developed.



3.3.1.1 Figure 4. Conceptual model- (Exploratory study of industry perception of HA all groups)

Using the conceptual framework, the author identified various themes drawn from the literature that would be vital to the outcome of the question that is being researched. The questions presented were based on the previous result of data already available from the surveys conducted by the NRF to its members on what they viewed as the biggest challenges to affect their businesses, as seen previously in Figure 1 and Figure 2. The themes discussed were;

1. What are the barriers to attracting new talent to the industry?
2. How do we make the industry more visible hence making it an option for career selection?
3. How do we bridge the gap of talent?
4. Would an HA be the solution?
5. What level of a HA on the national framework would be the most attractive?
6. Who could be the academic partner/training provider?
7. How would we facilitate all regional members?
8. What costs would be involved?
9. What content would be the most appropriate and duration of programme?

10. What if anything is already available in this space in another Country?

According to Brenner et al (1985), when using conceptual frameworks in research, you must be aware of the subjectivisms when asking questions. Brenner et al (1985) refer to the study by Shepard and Watson who argue, for a framework to be authentic it must be intensive rather than extensive in its approach when collecting the data. Brenner et al (1985) believe using conceptual frameworks means you work with individuals directly and in contrast to standard questionnaires or structured interview processes where the researcher has views, this approach allows the researcher to check the extent of which the individual being researched will endorse the researchers assumptions.

Research was also collected by interviewing, academic and leadership experts, stakeholders and members of the global recruitment industry for their views and recommendations. The interviews with these stakeholders and industry experts provided more in-depth and unbiased views because, while they had an insight into the industry and were familiar with the operational mechanisms, they were not directly involved or would be future employers of the apprentice. This was to ascertain the outside lens was addressed and to ensure there was support for a HA outside of the Recruitment Industry.

As stated earlier, the people selected for interview were chosen because of their interest in the sector, are already involved in discussions on talent shortages and their opinions coming from an external lens outside the sector would give a rounded unbiased view if the HA was the solution to attraction of new key talented individuals.

3.3.2 Population and Sample Size.

The areas covered in this section are; the population selected, how the data was gathered, how the data was analysed, the limitations of such a research project, as well as any ethical decisions that must be taken into consideration.

The population selected is referred to as Convenience Sampling. According to Greener (2008), it is beneficial if a researcher has access and/or contacts in the population they tend on researching. This helps in the response rate and turnaround timeframe. Therefore, convenience sampling was the best choice for the author,

given the access the author has to the population that are identified as experts and the strong established relationships from working in the sector.

Initially, the researcher conducted an internal lens of the recruitment industry, taking a broad and global approach, conscious that input from all geographical regions, both in Ireland and Globally, was needed to ensure all information already available was captured, before making a selection of who to approach to participate in the study. The focus was to ensure those that will be interviewed/surveyed would be equipped to provide insights and the essential knowledge needed to identify the need for HA and had experience with the problems facing day-to-day business and were impacted by shortages. Therefore, the population for the focus groups were approached due to their expertise of the sector, but also on the basis that they, or their members, were experiencing these shortages first-hand in their daily working in the sector. The focus groups and experts were selected to impart their knowledge, insights and opinions on whether a HA could be the solution to attract new talent to the industry and assist in the professionalisation of the sector. Participants were drawn from NRF council members nationally, WEC members globally, and global academics and leadership experts. To ensure all geographical areas, both in Ireland and global were captured for their views and opinions, the groups were selected to ensure that potential differences in regional approaches and/or issues would be fully captured. The individuals in these groups were, NRF council members, from both Dublin and the regions, the public affairs committee from Brussels capturing EU countries, Australia, and New Zealand.

In addition, the researcher also conducted a field study to Zurich to meet with the Swiss Recruitment Federation SwissStaffing and also attended a visit to one of the popular academic institutions renowned for their success in training apprentices. This was to give the author insight into what a gold standard model looks like and the opportunity to clarify unanswered questions for the remainder of the research. An additional field trip to the REC in the UK was conducted to gain knowledge and understanding of how the two recruitment apprenticeships in the UK were performing. Even though both of these apprenticeships are accredited through the REC and are not part of any framework of country's education system, the content of

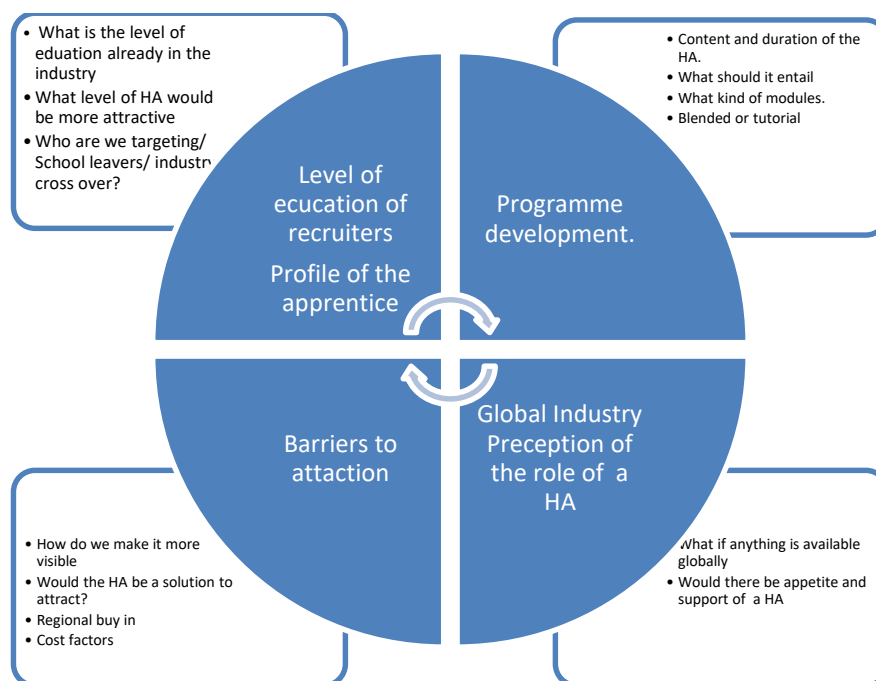
the programme could be viewed as a means of mirroring and implementing for the HA in Ireland if deemed appropriate.

3.3.3 Sampling procedures

Preliminary meetings took place nationally with initial conversations inviting participants from the focus groups to participate in the study. As mentioned earlier, the participants approached were already involved as council members of the NRF, members of the WEC PA committee and all were senior members of their organisation's management teams, and as such had significant experience and could speak to the issues under consideration with authority.

A survey was issued to NRF members to explore the profile of education of the consultants already in their business. The rationale behind the survey was to ensure the academic level of the HA would match the industry standard and ensure buy in from the agencies.

The researcher also asked what level would be of the most interest to them as employers to engage in the HA Programme. Interestingly, even though some respondents had outlined they had employees in their business with no undergraduate or post graduate qualifications, they all agreed the level of the HA should be at level 8 on the Higher Framework of Qualifications. The rationale presented in the results was a level 8 degree would be more attractive to school leavers and to enticing applicants from other industries. Their view would be it would also showcase the industry as a professional career if there is a higher education qualification attached to it. The results of this preliminary research can be seen here in Figure 5.



3.3.3.1 Figure 5. Initial Pilot Review of the Industry

The first of these focus groups in Ireland were already involved in preliminary past discussions on shortages of the sector as seen in Figure 5. As many of them were NRF council members this item had also come up many times in the past year on the council meeting agenda.

The WEC focus group was chosen to impart their views of what is the position of shortages of recruiters in their own country and to establish and to gain insights into what is already (if anything), available for recruiters in their residing country. The researcher posed 5 questions for this group that would give an insight into what, if anything is available at a HA level for recruiters in their residing country. These questions are seen in Appendix 3.

Finally, a steering committee was set up with members from the three focus groups in Ireland, individuals from a multinational HR department and learning and development experts to ensure all areas of recruitment was captured including internal recruiters. This group (now known as the steering committee) was to investigate on the findings of all focus groups and the feedback from the leadership experts and academics, to explore if a HA would be the solution. The researcher acted as a moderator in this group, taking notes and recommendations to report back via this study.

3.3.4 Selection of Leadership Experts and Academics for Interview.

As mentioned earlier, the academic and leadership experts that were selected for interviews and questioning, were drawn from various geographical locations both in Ireland and around the Globe.

The group participants were informed they would be not individually named but rather referred to by the geographical area they represented and individual anonymity would be maintained throughout the study. For the purpose of the reader, these groups can be seen in Figure 6 and are referred to as Dublin, West of Ireland, Cork and Munster, and the EU and Brussels. By capturing such a wide spread of insights at national and Global level, it gives more weight to the study and the research, informing on what if anything is available for this sector.

All those interviewed and mentioned in this study have given their authorisation for their views and insights to be disseminated.

3.3.5 Interviews with Leadership and Academic Experts

For this group, the researcher opted to use a combination of semi-structured interviews as described by Saunders et al. (2007), as respondent interview by style. This allows the interview to flow and open into more In-depth opinions and sometimes lean towards another question/topic. By using semi-structured interviews, the researcher hopes to gain insights on HA's in general and this groups thoughts and opinions on solutions. The results of these interviews can be viewed in Appendix 4.

3.4 Data Collection Methods.

The researcher considered the most appropriate methods to collecting the data would be to approach it from three different formats. While considering the data collection process, it was vital that a rounded view from all levels of the industry in Ireland and globally was captured.

Correspondence was sent by email to the WEC and leadership and experts participants, inviting them to take part in the study. The interviews were carried out over a sixteen week period from March to July 2019.

The Focus groups had already been involved in the pilot study and gave their agreement at the first meeting which took place at the end of October 2018.

The researcher acted as the moderator and took notes at the focus group meetings. For the WEC group, email responses were collected. The Interviews with industry and academic experts were a combination of, recorded face to face interviews and email responses and are discussed in more detail further on in this chapter.

Different questions were asked of each population to ensure a full picture of the problem and possible solution was captured. All responses from all participants can be seen in Appendix three and Four.

3.4.1 Collection of Data - Focus group – Ireland.

The Focus groups in Ireland met face to face and deliberated on the problem and the possible solution of the HA being the answer. By meeting face to face, it allowed the group to delve further and discuss at length the core issue and the challenges and barriers to a HA. Panel discussion style was opted for to allow the conversation to flow freely. Individuals from this group were then selected to form the main steering group. The main steering group would take the data from all contributors and explore the solutions. As previously stated, the author acted as a moderator during the discussions at all focus group meetings and took notes to capture the data.

3.4.2 Collection of Data -Focus Group WEC

The WEC group was asked to participate to establish how the recruitment industry was viewed in their country and to find out if there was any HA in place for recruiters. For geographical reasons the participants in the WEC group were contacted by email and had five questions to answer. They were all informed they could have access to the final paper when all research and the study was completed. Following on from the findings in the literature review, the author designed the following questions and issued to the WEC public affairs committee members as seen here in Figure 7. There was a total of responses from 12 Countries from the WEC group. The combined answers can be seen in appendix 3

Q.1 Is the PRES recognised as a separate profession from HR in your Country?
Q.2 Do you have an accredited programme for recruitment consultants on your national framework of education. If so, what level does it sit at? If not, what do you have?
Q.3 Do you agree an apprenticeship approach is the right one to take (due to the shortage of recruiters we get to have the person on the job learning from day one hence contributing to the team)?
Q.4 what is your biggest barrier to attracting individuals to enter the recruitment industry as a professional career choice?
Q.5 How bad is the talent shortage for experienced recruiters in your Country? If you do not know a guestimate would be enough.

3.4.2.1 Figure 6. Questions to the WEC group

3.4.3 Collection of Data – Leaders and Experts - Group.

As previously mentioned, the interviews were semi-structured of style and in some cases because of the expertise of the subject with the interviewee and the insight the researcher was trying to obtain, there was predetermined questions for the email respondents but no predetermined questions with the face to face participants. According to Awasthy and Gupta (2015), semi-structured interviews allows for fluidity and permits the interviewee to present their views and opinions with no barriers.

The interviews were held depending on the availability of the interviewee. Interviews were a combination of voice recording and/or note taking by the researcher. In the case of overseas interviewees who had previously agreed to participate in the research, the questions were posed and answered by email.

The themes derived from those discussions as seen in Figure 6, identified possible samples, interviews (of which are transcribed in the Appendices) were held with those listed below.

3.4.5 The Leaders and Experts interviewed for the study.

The participants in this group as named below were selected from WEC:

Government Bodies, Academic Professors, Authors and leadership experts. The interviews can be seen in the appendices section of this research. Each interview has been transcribed and forms the appendices of this study. These interviews can be viewed in Appendix 4.

DR. Mary Liz Trant. Executive Director for Skills Development in the further education and training authority SOLAS. SOLAS is The Further Education Authority of Ireland.

Bettina Schaller. President of WEC Europe, Vice Chair of OECD, Director of Group Public Affairs Adecco Group. Adecco are the World's largest recruitment agency.

Professor David Collings. Full Professor of Human Resource Management. Associate Dean for Research DCU Business School. Dublin City University, Ireland. Author and contributing author to several HR publications.

Fons Trompenaars. Organizational theorist, management consultant, and author in the field of cross-cultural communication. Known for the development of Trompenaars' model of national culture differences. Co-founder of the seven dimensions of culture.

AnneMarie Muntz. Lobbyist and labour market influencer. Regular contributor to media, keynote speaker at world conferences to include the ILO and OECD. President of WEC Global, Managing Director of Public and Global affairs Ranstad. Ranstad are a large global recruitment agency with headquarters in the Netherlands.

Brendan McGinty. Managing Partner of Stratis Consulting. Chairperson of Skillnet. Skillnet is the national agency for workforce learning in Ireland. Deputy Chairman of the Governing Body of the National College of Ireland and expert policy advisor to the National Recruitment Federation. Brendan is an expert in people strategy employee relations, communications, change management, dispute resolution and employment policy.

James Osborne. Chairman of the Recruitment Network UK. CEO of Innergy.Co .UK. Specialties: Training, Consultancy, Strategy Development, HR, NED, Business Development, Sales, Leadership, Conference Facilitation, Staffing and Recruitment, Motivational Speaking, E-Learning, HTML Product Design, Learning Management Systems.

Denis Pennel. Managing Director of WEC. Author and leadership expert in “The New World of Work. Labour market analyst, Influencer and keynote speaker. Regular contributor to ILO, OECD and world conferences that address the employment issues.

David Head. Director and co- owner of Talint International. Talint International is the world-renowned publication for the Recruitment industry. David is a regular contributor and speaker at Global conferences and an adjudicator of recruitment industry awards around the globe.

Neil Carberry. CEO of the REC UK, Commissioner at the Low Pay Commission. Council member of ACAS UK. Neil is a regular contributor to media on employment matters, lobbyist and contributor to employment affairs in the UK.

Frank Farrelly. President of the NRF, Chief Operating Officer and co-owner of Sigmar. Sigmar is one of the biggest recruitment agencies in Ireland and are founders of the Gateway to Europe initiative. Gateway to Europe is an annual tour of experts made up of several industries who travel to the United States of America to encourage Foreign Direct Investment to Ireland.

Peter Cosgrove. Founder of the Future of Work Institute. Author, influencer and keynote speaker. Peter is a regular contributor to media on recruitment and employment matters. Expert on diversity and inclusion and a regular contributor to the 30% club.

Siobhan Kinsella. Director of Operations at The Noel Group and President of Chambers Ireland. Siobhan is a regular contributor to Skills, and Learning and Development Forums.

3.4.6 Analysing the Data.

The researcher collated all the responses from the WEC group onto a spreadsheet as shown in Appendix 3. These results were then compared and added to the interviewee's answers from the expert and leadership group as seen in Appendix Four. In addition, the topics that derived from the pilot review study for the Irish focus groups as seen in Figure 5 were added to complete the full findings of the study. Finally, all the audio and face to face interviews are transcribed and can be viewed in Appendix 4.

An in-depth analysis of the collection of all this data can be seen in the next section of chapter four.

3.4.8 Data Storage and Destruction.

All participants who responded by email gave their consent to the researcher via email and this consent data is stored on an encrypted PC with only the researcher having access to.

The face to face interviewees gave audio consent. These interviews and consent are stored on the recording device which is the property of the researcher and kept in a locked cabinet.

All data will be destroyed on completion of the study.

3.4.7 Transparency and Credibility.

As qualitative research is judged by dependability and credibility it is important the research is transparent and the Hypothesis is understood from the onset (Guba,1981). Clear language was always used during the sessions with the focus groups and all participants had the opportunity to get clarification on any question if needed. All participants were informed of the study prior to the invitation email to engage and were provided with contact details of the researcher should they have any questions.

According to (Lincoln and Guba 1985) quality is more important than quantity therefore the credibility lies not in the number of responses gained but rather the

amount of information that is achieved. As mentioned earlier the qualitative approach can provide challenges because you are dependent on the views of people and how they see the topic, therefore, the researcher was aware throughout the study, and the questions were structured to achieve the most information that was available to the individual at the time the research was conducted.

3.4.9 Ethical Considerations.

While undertaking this research, the author approached all questions and interviews ethically, with transparency and validity, and most of all to ensure there will be no harm to any participant. Research ethics determines the responsibility is with the researcher to be open and honest to all participants during the study and when processing the results (Gravetter and Forzano, 2012; Saunders et al, 2016). All participants that took part in the focus groups, interviews and questionnaires had a clear understanding of what was being asked of them, why they were selected, what the data will be used for and, what the aim of the study is for. Gaining permission from industry experts and academics to interview was agreed prior to the study and only participants who agreed to be named are referred to in the study.

The General data Protection Regulation (GDPR) was adhered to throughout the study. Each stage of the research also adhered to the ethical considerations and standards as set out by The National College of Ireland. All data received was stored on the author's personal computer which is encrypted.

The author advised all participants they could have access to the study papers once the research was completed and all information received would be disposed of confidentially once the study was completed.

3.5 Chapter Summary.

A conceptual framework from the pilot study (Figure 4) was introduced at the end of chapter two. This framework provided the researcher with direction and guidance to discuss the topics that had derived from the pilot study and subsequently formed the hypothesis.

The chapter informed on how the sampling procedure was carried out and the selection of the participants was justified as being subject experts on the matter and deemed suitable as best candidates for the study.

The chapter provided insight into how the data was collected from each group, collated and stored.

CHAPTER FOUR. RESEARCH FINDINGS.

4.1 Introduction

The primary research objective of this study was to determine if a HA would be the solution to attract key talented individuals to the recruitment industry. The sub objective was to determine if there was a HA in place would it help in the professionalization of the industry.

This chapter defines the findings and the results of the research. Its objective is to connect the literature to the research questions. The findings of each group are broken down separately as seen below.

4.2 Findings of the Research from Focus Groups.

The steering group reflected on the research from all the focus groups. They discussed the profile of the learner versus the suitability of what programme design would be best for this HA, which can be seen in Figure 5. They also discussed the concerns expressed by the regional member group of the costs of travel should the tutorials take place in Dublin only. In order to address this hurdle, the group discussed the viability of group learning. As outlined above by Toms (2012), it is mainly SME's who are challenged when it comes to learning recommending that group sessions should be explored to facilitate regional participants.

Discussions around the design of a blended model took place by all the groups. This model is defined by Lothridge, Fox and Fynan (2013) as a practice where more than 2 delivery methods of learning are used. Garavan et al. (2009) demonstrate this is the best fit approach for organisations with a wide geographical spread. According to Ulrich (2002), in an interview with Finnie and Early, Ulrich cited that blended learning methods work well when trying to make an industry more performance focused. This method would be a good fit for the recruitment industry because it is driven by KPI's.

The study revealed that the level of the HA would be the driver to attract individuals already in the industry to change career paths to embark on the HA route. This led the steering group to believe a level 8, three-year degree programme to be the only

solution if it was to provide the footfall for the sector and the buy-in from the agencies to participate.

Finally, the steering group then met with academic provider and presented the findings of the study. The focus of the meeting was to report on the needs of the industry to attract new talent, to address the attraction of a pipeline of recruitment consultants for the future. The topics for the discussion can be seen in Figure 4.



4.2.1 Figure 7. Apprenticeship Career Planning.

In-depth discussions also took place around the mentor for the apprentice in-house alongside the commitment needed from employers to ensure full support is given to all apprentices. The topics of this discussion can be seen in Figure 5. The CIPD (2019) case study on the company OFSTED in the UK revealed to have a successful apprenticeship programme managers and mentors must be on board from the very start.



4.2.2 Figure 8. Responsibility of Mentors

4.3 Findings from the interviews from the Experts and Academic Group

Interestingly, the responses from the leadership and expert group supported the hypothesis, but several expressed concerns of removing it completely from the “HR” space to form its own “Profession”.

According to Bettina Schaller, any work readiness programme that combines the learning and the working experience will lead to success for all. This echoes what we have already seen in the literature review by Gratton (2016), Taylor (2010), Gold et al, (2010) and Ulrich (2015). Schaller advises the following three things to any country taking on a new apprenticeship, go learn from those who already have successful programmes, partner with an expert provider, and make provision for technology to aid the best form of delivery. Brendan McGinty believes a HA for the industry will show the sector cares about career progression and it will assist in retention for the longer term as mentioned earlier by (Gold et al. (2010), and Hannigan & O'Donnell (2019). McGinty also believes when workers are exposed to OJL, combined with CPD, it creates new ideas thus leading to better productivity. Denis Pennel commented, "Companies are now outsourcing many activities to allow them to focus on the core activities, this is where the recruitment industry will be in demand and will play a key role in supporting business development". As mentioned earlier, this supports the views of Muntz (2018), Dayang et al. (2013), Florea (2014) Alter (2015), Oosthuizen et al. (2005) and Chun et al (2005). Pennel (2019), believes as a consequence, the recruitment industry should be able to develop its own quality and certification schemes, stating "dual learning is one of the best solutions to create talents that are in demand because the programmes will be results driven to meet the needs of the market*.

As pointed out by Denis Pennel (who in his position as WEC MD can confirm) there is no HA degree for recruiters anywhere in the World. With this knowledge now confirmed Frank Farrelly believes having a HA for the Irish recruitment industry will be a landmark for Ireland. Farrelly commented 'as a Country, the industry is still relatively young therefore, having an accredited programme will help the industry to become a global thought leader in recruitment'. Farrelly believes having a HA will set the Irish industry up for success by taking best practice from other countries, and by learning from their mistakes, will enable the Irish HA to commence from the right place to ensure success. Frank also commented, "Picking the right academic partner and gaining the support from the industry has proved the power of collaboration". Supporting Franks view, James Osborne commented, "A HA will play a pivotal role for the industry to move forward and should not be bundled into a HR suite". Osborne believes recruitment is at the core of the talent cycle and if done wrong can

impact on the whole business, therefore recruitment should be viewed as strategic partner and should not be a linear career but a structured roadmap of a development.

Professor of Business at Dublin City University, David Collings, feels that due to a snobbery by some academic institutions, apprenticeships in Ireland have not got a good reputation. Professor Collings believes the landscape in Ireland must change to address the talent shortages which we will encounter in several sectors and industries in the future be a win-win situation. Supporting the snobbery argument Siobhan Kinsella believes while there is still a snobbery attached to apprenticeships in Ireland, she feels the new HA offerings will change the landscape like never before. Commenting from her position of Chair of Chambers Ireland Kinsella said, 'to introduce a HA for recruiters has never been timelier with CPD being the key to the wealth of the future workforce'. Believing we need to have access to a talented pool of people for productivity and sustainability, Kinsella believes a HA will retain the talent when supported with a CPD structure.

Peter Cosgrove commented 'most college courses of three or four year courses are out of date before the person graduates, therefore, the apprenticeship route is a great way forward, but adds caution that the word Apprenticeship in Ireland needs to be addressed to remove the perception it is only for the trade and craft sectors', again echoing what was mentioned earlier by Collings (2019).

Neil Carberry believes as recruitment becomes more of a professional service, we need people building careers in it and the development of a HA would attract not only top graduates but also choosing the industry as a career of choice. Carberry believes apprenticeships are a good route to do that and if led by the sector the quality is also so much better as noted earlier by Cabral (2018), Cheney (2017) and Wyman (2015).

Anne Marie Muntz has a strong view that the brand of the recruitment sector needs to have more investment, and this will enable higher levels of engagement. This was also previously mentioned by David Collings. Muntz believes a HA is the model for the future, referring to the Netherlands system where most recruiters have a third

level qualification but still have to learn the trade of recruitment outside of the space of the qualification they possess.

As mentioned earlier, while all the leaders and experts group supported apprenticeships, there were concerns from a few about removing the sector from the HR space. Because of the divide of in-house recruiters versus agency recruiters, Peter Cosgrove is not sure if it needs to be a profession. This is echoed by David Collings who believes a “profession” is subjective so who decides when it becomes one. However, while both experts expressed this concern, they fully support the hypothesis presented by the researcher, also believing accreditation will help professionalise the sector and attract a better calibre of people to join it.

4.4 Findings from the research of the Sub Objective.

The sub objective of the research investigated if a HA would not only future proof the talent pipeline for the Recruitment Industry but also to gauge if it would professionalise the sector. All respondents to the study from WEC, the Focus groups and the interviewees were unanimous in agreement this would be the case with Brendan McGinty stating “a provision of professional development allows staff to build confidence and credibility in the work they do, allows for succession planning by building a talent base”.

4.5 Chapter Summary.

This chapter looked at the findings from all the groups and the participants to the study. The findings are broken down by population of how they were engaged to participate, and the results are disseminated separately to allow the reader to gain insight into how the people embedded in the industry i.e. the focus groups, differed in some of their opinions, as opposed to the expert and leadership group who view it from a different angle.

The chapter also reported on the recommendations from the steering group in relation to how the HA should be structured to ensure buy-in is achieved. As mentioned above the findings were strongly swayed in favour of a blended model as defined by Lothridge et al, (2013) and Garavan et al, (2009) as the best approach to a programme with a geographical spread.

Echoing what we have seen previously in the literature review by Gratton (2016) Taylor (2010) Gold et al, (2010) and Ulrich (2015) when workers are exposed to a combined programme of OJL and CPD the experts interviewed agreed this would lead to better retention, increased productivity, and support the research hypothesis of attracting new individuals to the sector.

CHAPTER FIVE. DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the findings of the results of the research and connects the literature to the research question and the sub- objective.

The purpose of this study was to explore if a HA for the recruitment industry would assist in the attraction of new individuals to join the sector as a chosen career to address the shortages of recruitment consultants. The shortages of recruitment consultants have been expressed as a problem by several countries with the lack of visibility of the sector, impacting the attraction of new talent to the sector.

This research is timely and is supported by WEC and the NRF, as a means to unveil what, if anything, is available in HA's worldwide that could be mirrored to present a solution to this problem. The research bridges a gap in the literature but also provides a window of opportunity for further research on this topic.

In addition to the hypothesis, the author was also exploring if by having a HA it would also help in the professionalisation of the sector.

5.2 Findings of the study.

The findings of the study indicate that a HA would provide a pivotal role for the industry to move forward and be understood as an entity in its own right. Neil Carberry believes as the recruitment sector becomes more of a professional service, we need people building careers in it, believing a HA would attract higher graduates to choose the sector as a career path.

As the research showed and was confirmed by Denis Pennel, there is no HA of this calibre in the World for recruiters, therefore, for Ireland to implement the first one as pointed out by Frank Farrelly, this would be a landmark for Ireland to lead the way positioning them as thought leaders. As advised by Farrelly, it would be geared towards success, if you take the learnings and best practices from the countries mentioned earlier in the literature review, that already have successful models in place.

With a HA in place, it would showcase the industry as a professional sector, giving it much needed visibility to be chosen as a career path. As pointed out by Brendan

McGinty, backing up what Gold et al (2010) and Hannigan & O Donnell (2019) support, it also shows the industry cares about career progression and CPD.

As James Osborne pointed out, that if recruitment is done wrong can it have a negative impact on any business believing that if a HA was available then the individual is trained by the sector to a standard that is professional and specific to the needs of the role. This is backed up by Denis Pennel who also states the industry should have its own certification schemes.

Similarly, to findings from the expert and leadership participants, the WEC focus group and Irish focus groups support the proposal of a HA, as a means of attraction, and also to gain visibility as career path to choose. As pointed out by eleven out of the twelve respondents from the WEC group who agree it was the route they would support in their own country if it was available, which can be seen in Appendix 3.

Considering some of the answers from the expert and leadership group aired on the side of caution that apprenticeships still having a snobbery attached to them in Ireland, Dr Mary Liz Trant confirmed there was no lack of candidates but rather a lack of employers to support the apprenticeship programmes. This is not to say this would be the case for the recruitment sector where buy- in is supported as seen earlier in the findings chapter.

5.3 Findings of the Study of the Sub- Objective

While Siobhan Kinsella, Frank Farrelly, Anne Marie Muntz and David Collings believe the brand of the recruitment sector needs to have more investment stating if it did, this will assist in the professionalisation of the sector and will enable higher levels of engagement to it. Bettina Schaller believes to have a “ seal of approval” through an accredited programme is a passport for employability and for professionalising the sector. The focus groups agreed with the statement from the expert and leaders, that the sector with a HA will substantially improve the brand hence, making it more attractive to individuals to choose this sector as a career path.

5.4 AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.

As mentioned earlier, the motivators for the study was two-fold. The main research objective was to determine if a HA for recruiters in Ireland would assist in attracting new key talent to the sector to alleviate the manpower shortage. The sub objective was to find if it would also help in professionalising the sector.

The research aim was to bridge the gap of exploring what, if anything is available for recruiters that could be mirrored in Ireland.

Considering that research has shown there is no HA for recruiters anywhere in the world that is connected to a National Framework this could see Ireland leading the way as thought leaders in this space as mentioned previously by Frank Farrelly.

The results of the questions that were proposed to all groups, the interviews that were conducted, gave good insight into how the recruitment industry is viewed. The findings confirmed how the HA would assist in attracting new talented individuals to the sector, while at the same time give visibility as an option of a career path of choice, and at the same time help in the professionalisation of the sector.

5.6 Limitations

According to Malhotra (2010), it is a complex process when determining a sample size for research with time constraints and lack of resources contributing to the challenge.

While the research is an accurate account of what the respondents are experiencing in their countries for the shortage of recruitment consultants and the external perception of the recruitment industry it is limited due to several issues.

The sample size from the WEC group respondents was from 12 countries made up of a combination of EU, Australia and New Zealand. Due to time constraints the study did not allow for the author to visit all these countries to conduct a field trip therefore the data presented on the field trips is confined to just two countries, the

UK and Switzerland. In addition, the research questions were not fully answered by all WEC countries that it was issued to. From the twelve countries that did respond two of them did not complete the full question, this limits the study but also provides an opportunity for more research in this area.

Limitations exist also in the methodology. Using focus groups can affect the answering of the questions especially if there are strong personalities that dictate the sessions.

In addition to the aforementioned limitations the research is conducted as a requirement as part of a 'Masters in Human Resources', therefore due to time restrictions it is also limited.

5.7 Future Research Opportunities

There were several areas in the research that showed more opportunity to delve further into this area.

As previously mentioned, more field trips are recommended to view best practice in operation, especially in Germany and the Netherlands who have structured HA's in other sectors in place and would be beneficial.

The research provided the driver for a HA in the recruitment industry in Ireland to be for a level 8 undergraduate degree. The author suggests there is opportunity to investigate further a full academic career path outside of the HA on the National Framework of Education. This would open the opportunity to attract another population to engage in part time study of this sector with a view to joining it later on in their career.

5.8 Conclusion

The chapter presented and discussed the findings from all participants and groups who took part in the study. It also looked at the limitations of a study like this. As the researcher I wanted to explore if a HA would be the solution to attracting new talented individuals to the recruitment industry.

The research suggests the global recruitment industry is in favour of seeing an accredited career path and the introduction of a HA would be the starting point to achieve this.

My second focus was to explore if a HA was in place, would it professionalise the sector. The result of the research suggests there is unanimous support from all who participated in the study that this would be the case.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUDES THE STUDY

6.1 Conclusion

To conclude, it is clear from the research and the study that there is no HA for the recruitment industry anywhere in the world that is accredited at undergraduate degree level and attached to a National Education Framework, however the study permitted the researcher to view best practice models in Switzerland, Germany and the Netherlands, which are in place for other sectors which can be drawn from if implementing a HA here in Ireland.

The findings from the focus groups have shown there is genuine excitement and enthusiasm for the development of a HA for recruiters in Ireland with agency employers viewing it as having huge potential to fill the talent gaps and create new career opportunities. The benefits of having the HA would assist in the creation of a new alternative talent pipeline source for the industry that has been educated specifically to the needs of the industry, it would attract a more diverse pool of talent, increase the professionalism of the sector at entry level while contributing to the retention of individuals who have been trained specifically in this sector.

Gaal (2018) believes the ultimate measure of success will be the placements in the registered apprenticeship program, establishing trusting relationships with a longterm view, and keeping the student first in mind. Gaal (2018) advises to anticipate failures and be ready to act and learn from them. Pointed out by Marti (2017), Field (2016) and Hoffman (2015), the Swiss model is working very well, with the buy in from industry and government and can be one to mirror and adopt from in the development of a HA in Ireland.

The research also disclosed CPD will be crucial for an industry like this to attract and retain professionals for the future. As mentioned earlier, Ulrich (2015), Gratton (2010) and Erickson (2018) believe when there is an opportunity for CPD it is more like to attract key talent. Hannigan et al. (2015) pointed out to develop resources in tight markets you must have CPD and Falola et al. (2014) states it gives a competitive edge.

As a result of the opinions expressed in the literature and the research study, it is therefore reasonable to conclude a HA would be a possible solution to the attraction of individuals to the recruitment industry. A HA has the potential to provide a structured, yet flexible, workforce training solution to address the shortage of recruiters and attract new talent. Apprenticeship is one potential strategy to achieve those collective goals (Pennel, 2019).

6.2 Recommendations for future Research.

Although previous research investigations by Grollmann & Rauner (2017), Aspoy & Nyen (2017), Awasthy & Gupta (2015) and several other experts into the role and the success of apprenticeships, there is a need for continued research on the professional ones. The research has also revealed there is a high opportunity for more whitecollar/professional apprenticeships that other industries experiencing the same shortage as the recruitment industry can mirror and adopt, as pointed out by Loxley & Seery (2012).

One could argue that lessons could be learned from other HA's, this encouraged the author to view two new accredited HA's which were introduced to the Financial and Insurance sectors in Ireland, both of which were developed as industry specific HA's to attract new talent to the sector. As mentioned earlier by George (2015) and Gold et al. (2010), developing models that are aligned to industry are more successful and Ulrich (2015) believing if it is accredited retention rates would be higher.

There is real belief in the recruitment industry that a HA will also highlight the industry as a professional career path and pave the way for expansion of additional accredited programmes contributing to a critical extension of the structured career path for recruiters. With a career path in place it would showcase this profession as a career of choice, attracting not only school leavers, but also individuals from other industries who would see it as a new career path with an accredited award. Further investigations should be carried out on more white collar/professional apprenticeships.

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APPENDICES.

Appendix 1. Personal Learning Statement.

Producing this dissertation has been the most challenging and self- fulfilling project I have experienced. I thoroughly enjoyed the research and methodology sections.

Having worked in the recruitment sector for eighteen years I have consistently witnessed the quote “I did not choose this sector as a career I fell into it by chance” and this also applies to me. With no visibility of the sector and this is mainly due to the fact there is not a recognised academic career path that is on the National Framework of Qualifications, it does not automatically attract school and College leavers or people from other industries to choose recruitment as a career. I wanted to highlight the sector with the hope it will attract talented individuals and to showcase it as a professional and satisfying career. I also wanted to explore what was in place in other countries for the recruitment profession.

From the first meeting with my Supervisor Dr Colette Darcy we discussed the industry need of the shortage of recruitment consultants and how the sector does not automatically attract personnel. We also discussed the sometimes-negative reputation the industry gets labelled with. We discussed what I was looking to achieve from the research.

Because my job gave me access to influential experts globally, both from in and outside the industry, I was able to obtain good in-depth data and information of the problem. I feel the results of the research has given me great insight and knowledge into what we need to do to future proof the talent pipeline of recruiters.

Appendix 2. Email to WEC Participants

Dear WEC Colleague,

I hope this email finds you well. I would be very grateful to get your views and expert advice on the below questions. It will only take you a couple of minutes.

Intro.

Talent shortages in the Recruitment industry in Ireland has led NRF to believe that in order to develop a sustainable pipeline of recruiters for the future we must develop our own. This we feel is best served by having an accredited degree (undergraduate level) on the National Framework of Education. We have applied to the department of education and the apprenticeship council and have been awarded a three year undergraduate degree. We are in the process of developing the content and modules in partnership with a third level institution.

This new accreditation gives visibility to us as an industry, it will also assist in the perception of professionalising it, and we feel it will enable us to attract key individuals to the industry whereby in the past they would not have known existed as a profession.

The option will be to enter both from leaving school and or transferring from another industry but most importantly it will be become a career you can choose on the prospectus of third level education, up there with the accountants, HR and legal professions.

This earn as you learn, or, on the job learning, means as an industry we get to train a new cohort of individuals ourselves specific to the skills we know they will need, 4 days on the job and one day in college.

In Ireland we already have a certificate in recruitment practice programme in place which is aimed at new entrants and or consultants with up to 3 years' experience.

While it is accredited through Institute of leadership and management (ILM) it is not recognised on the National Framework of Education. So, we are really excited about the new Higher Apprenticeship programme.

I would be delighted to find out what is going on in this space for recruiters in other countries and therefore would value your input to the 5 short questions.

Q.1 Is the PRES recognised as a separate profession from HR in your Country?

Q.2 Do you have an accredited programme for recruitment consultants on your national framework of education. If so, what level does it sit at? If not, what do you have?

Q.3 Do you agree an apprenticeship approach is the right one to take (due to the shortage of recruiters we get to have the person on the job learning from day one hence contributing to the team)?

Q.4 what is your biggest barrier to attracting individuals to enter the recruitment industry as a professional career choice?

Q.5 How bad is the talent shortage for experienced recruiters in your Country? If you do not know a guesstimate would be enough.

Thank you sincerely to everyone for your contribution to these questions. I will share the findings when the thesis is complete.

Kindest regards

Geraldine

Appendix 3. Responses From WEC

World Employment Group- Position of Country on Recruitment Shortages

Country Question 1 Question 2 Question 3 Question 4 Question 5 Comments

Country	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5	Comments
	Is the PRES recognised outside of the HR industry	Do you have an accredited programme on your national Education Framework	Would you agree a HA is the right approach to address the talent shortage	What is the biggest barrier to attracting personnel to enter the recruitment industry	How bad is the talent shortages for recruitment consultants in your Country?	Any other comments or opinions you would like to contribute
Germany	Yes	Yes	Yes	Shortage of recruits	Shortage expanding	
Netherlands	Answer not clear.	Yes – Vocational	Could not say	Could not say	Could not answer	
Italy	No	No	Yes	No Shortage		
Poland	No	No	Yes	Fear of Responsibility for others careers	Big shortage	Please share the findings to help us to develop
Norway	Yes	No	Yes	No Visibility of sector to attract	Lack of skilled recruiters	
Denmark	Yes	No	Yes	No knowledge of industry	No stats to back up	
Romania	Informal	No	Yes	Lack of suitable candidates	Answer not clear	
Switzerland	Yes	Yes Vocational	Yes	Lack of visibility	Big	
UK	Yes	No-trade body accredited	Yes	Lack of visibility of sector	Big	
New Zealand	No	No	Yes	Lack of visibility	Big	
Australia	No	No	Yes	Lack of visibility	Big	
Czech Republic	No	No	Yes	HR considered more attractive	Lowest Unemployment rate in EU therefore no candidates	

Appendix Four. Interview notes from Participants.

DR. Mary Liz Trant. Executive Director for Skills Development in the further education and training authority SOLAS. SOLAS is The Further Education Authority of Ireland.

Q1. The world of work is evolving very fast due to technological advancement and will continue to do so at a very fast rate. As organisations are recognising human capital as the most valuable human asset to the organisation how do you see apprenticeships being utilised more as a means to attracting and retaining talent?

With the new professional apprenticeships there is now more than ever a wide range of sectors where the individual can start a career and earn as they learn, or can transfer from another industry to take on a new career without having to go the college route and can in most cases still get an accredited qualification.

Q2. Are apprenticeships gaining momentum quick enough here in Ireland?

There is no lack of apprentices here in Ireland. Last year there (2018) there was a big increase in applications from previous years, but the employers are slow to get on board. It is getting better but there is still a lot of education to do in this respect.

Q3. As a nation we see for 3rd level education accreditation, in your view will apprenticeships gain the same recognition here as they receive in Switzerland and Germany?

I see it getting more popular especially with the introduction of the new HA's. Indeed, we will have a level 10 PHD apprenticeship in the market very soon.

Q4. The Swiss model seems to be the “Gold Standard Model” with recognition of it being a full part of the education system, a recognised career path and is agile to allow the individual to jump from the college system to the apprenticeship system. What do we need to do to get the same or similar mindset in place in Ireland?

Cooperation between government and private sector has to happen for this to be successful.

Q5. A past US secretary for State Tom Perez described apprenticeships as College without the financial debt. How do we get this message across to parents, students and the career guidance Counsellors?

I do not feel there is an issue here. The parents and the counsellors are well clued in here. As mentioned earlier, student uptake is very high, it is the lack of employers that is inhibiting a higher success rate.

Bettina Schaller. President of WEC Europe, Vice Chair of OECD, Director of Group Public Affairs Adecco Group. Adecco are the World's largest recruitment agency.

Q1. In your view should the Recruitment industry be recognised outside of the HR industry as a profession in its own right?

Absolutely! Let me point out two arguments that drive my strong conviction:

Topics related to anything "Human" require a professionalised approach, because of that exact nature. Recruiters and HR Professionals have tools and competencies that cater specifically to dealing with People & Talent. The emergence of "Chief Happiness Officers", "Chief People Officers", "Chief Energizers" exemplifies the recognition that people management requires special skills, which is an entire "science" and thus Profession of its own.

The World of Work has evolved dramatically over the past years and will continue to transform, notably due to the effects of technology. As we point out the necessity to bring forward the "human side" – almost to counterbalance all things linked to digital -, Organisations are recognizing that their most valuable "asset" is their Human Capital. And that Capital needs professional, expert handling.

Q2. Do you feel that to have an accredited programme for recruitment consultants on the national framework of education as a means of attraction of key personnel will also help professionalise the industry?

There is no doubt to that. In our times we still seek for Certifications, as recruiters we know that best. So, to have a "seal of approval" through an accredited programme

which is part of a national framework for education is a passport to employability for each individual holding such a certificate. From the Profession's perspective, the existence of such an accredited programme is also a seal of approval.

With my international visibility, I also see the opportunity to enter into exchange programs in comparable fields which is given once it is part of a framework, which will both increase the interest towards the programme and have a positive effect on its development.

As a Member and Representative of the Sector, I seek to work with the best Professionals in the field. Such accredited & certified Programs cater towards attracting top Talent.

Q3. What is your thoughts on apprenticeships and would you agree an apprenticeship approach is the right one to take for this profession (due to the shortage of recruiters we get to have the person on the job learning from day one hence contributing to the team)?

Being a Swiss National and thus witnessing the positive effects of that Model, I am a fervent believer and promoter of Apprenticeships. Interestingly enough, that way of combining demand-driven training with the dual education component is more "innovative" than ever, even though Apprenticeships are tainted to come from the past. About 74% of **Swiss GDP** is generated by the **service sector**, meaning that $\frac{3}{4}$ of apprenticeships in Switzerland are in the services sector. Many recruiters in Switzerland thus started as apprentices – in the broader trade & commerce field. The Swiss Staffing Federation has recently introduced an Apprenticeship pathway for Recruiters, which in my view says it all...

With that said: A Recruiter Apprenticeship should not be the only development & training path at the disposal of Recruiters & HR Experts. That Profession should be taught at every level, in a modular approach. I personally have long ago sketched the ideal "Development Architecture" which would include the Apprenticeship Model, a Bachelor and Master in Recruitment / HR "pipeline", a vast bouquet of HR-specific Courses to further educate & complement a Recruiter's / HR Professional's CV (as

for example Payrolling), and last but not least: Executive Courses for CHROs. One day we will get there – watch this space...

Q4. Is there any recommendations you would give to an industry /profession who is embarking on developing a new career path whereby one did not previously exist?

In our days I would advise on considering 3 angles: first, go learn from those countries that have such programmes / career paths in place. Second: always partner up, with peers and ideally in a public-private partnership framework, including also the Social Partners. And third, as a sign of our times: consider how technology / digital tools can be integrated in the set-up of that career path, by applying for example alternative learning methods, and notably by taking into consideration flexible forms of working when building the career path portfolio.

Q5. What is your view of on the job learning/ apprenticeship programmes that allow the employee to earn and they learn.

Any work-readiness programs that combine the learning and working experience will lead to success for all involved. I always stress that an Apprenticeship Contract is a Work Contract, not a Training or Learning Contract. The implicit payment of a wage implies the engagement of the Worker and ties the Parties in the Contract into the set of Rights & Obligations linked to the Contract. In other words: The Employer will receive “work” as counterpart for the training. And often that also translates into “Innovation for free”, since young apprentices bring in “fresh perspectives”, critical thinking and often a command of all things digital that may lead to a new way of interpreting existing tools & methods. On the other hand, the apprentice “commits” by entering a program that implies sticking to a path, showcasing discipline, often teamwork, and working towards a concrete output / goal.

US Secretary of Labor Tom Perez of the previous US Administration stated 3 years ago that “*Apprenticeships are like College without a debt*”. That crucial feature of Apprenticeship Programs speaks for itself.

Professor David Collings. Full Professor of Human Resource Management. Associate Dean for Research DCU Business School. Dublin City University, Ireland. Author and contributing author to several HR publications.

Q1. In your view should the Recruitment industry be recognised outside of the HR industry as a profession in its own right?

This is a good question and to be honest not one I had given a lot of thought to. My question here would be recognition by whom? I guess lots of these things are subjective so who decides that something is a profession? I think there is no doubt that there are a large body of individuals who would consider themselves to work in the recruitment industry and would view it as a career. Likewise, there are a number of people who join particularly in-house recruitment teams as a stepping-stone into HR roles. So again, this comes down to a question of who determines whether something is a profession. Although I am not particularly familiar with it I know there is an academic literature which sets out the criteria for something to be considered a profession. I wonder if the average recruiter is that reflective on whether it is a profession or not. I would have thought the same about most areas people work in though.

Q2. Do you feel that to have an accredited programme for recruitment consultants on the national framework of education as a means of attraction of key personnel will help professionalise the industry?

There is no doubt that providing an opportunity for individuals to develop their capabilities in the context of a specific programme of study linked to a particular activity should at least offer the potential to attract individuals into that area. I am less and less convinced that individuals are as strategic and deliberate in their career choices as one would expect based on reading some of the academic literature. I believe career choices are hugely influenced by parents, family and career guidance. Unfortunately, the latter leaves a lot to be desired in many instances. However, beyond that no more than HR or Marketing or any non-vocational career really, how many people when they are in second level would have a clear vision of working in any of these areas. For so many of us careers are as much down to luck or circumstance when an opportunity comes up and one follows that. So, while I can

see the value of an accredited programme, I am less sure that would shift the dial in terms of attracting people to the industry. It may of course be part of a wider branding initiative to create awareness of roles in recruitment and to showcase the industry but only as part of that wider branding initiative.

As for professionalising the industry, my sense is yes it should certainly offer good potential here. An initial grounding in the key tools and techniques and underlying theory should raise the bar in terms of practice. That said my sense of the trends is that continuing professional development and life-long learning are only going to increase in importance and how the industry ensures that skills and capabilities continue to evolve to match external trends is every bit as important. Right now, a key question for recruitment include the use of AI and how this can reproduce bias in selection decisions, this was barely on the radar 5 or certainly 10 years ago. So, ensuring the industry keeps up with these trends is just as important.

Q3. What is your thoughts on apprenticeships and would you agree an apprenticeship approach is the right one to take for this profession (due to the shortage of recruiters we get to have the person on the job learning from day one hence contributing to the team)?

I see huge value in the apprenticeship model and think it has become devalued in the Irish system. One has only to look at some of our most highly skilled neighbours such as Germany to see the value of more vocational approaches to education. There is no doubt to me that as a culture a huge amount of intellectual snobbery has become the norm in Ireland. There is an exception that everyone must go to third level to study a degree (in a traditional sense) and the balance of skill development is falling by the wayside. The drive for the Institutes of Technology to be "upgraded" to University status is a clear example of this trend which I think is reflective of serious mission drift in the sector and ill-advised in my opinion.

I think apprentice style schemes are potentially hugely valuable and should also attract some highly capable candidates for whom the tradition route through full time education is not perceived to be an option.

Q4. Is there any recommendations you would give to an industry who is embarking on developing a new career path whereby one did not previously exist?

Obviously, the substance of the career path is the most important. However, it seems to me that two things will significantly influence the potential success or failure. One is buy-in from stakeholder. Here the agencies themselves are really key. To what extent can in effect competing agencies work together to get this off the ground. How can they pool their investments to support the initiatives? Going back to somewhere like Germany which we mentioned earlier. A key reason Germany is so successful in developing skills is the level of coordination that happens within sectors or industries. Of course, companies compete but they also work to co-create a context where skills and competencies are developed for the betterment of their industries. The Quack et al paper (reference below) shows some examples in banking but you could also look at Hall and Soskice's work on varieties of capitalism. So that buy in and coordination is key.

The second priority for me would be about branding the initiative. As I alluded to above a key question for me is who influences career decisions and I firmly believe parents, family and career guidance are the three biggest influences here. So, it becomes really important to get a coherent message out around the industry and the career and why someone would want to pursue a career in recruitment. I saw an employer branding expert speak recently and his key message for anyone thinking about branding in this context was that success would be determined by clear and consistent candidates's answer to the question Why would I want to do what I do here as opposed to somewhere else would be in the context of your firm/industry. Personally, I think meaning and purpose are key to that so how the industry can help potential candidates answer those questions are likely to impact on their buy-in to recruitment as a career.

Q5. What is your view of on the job learning/ apprenticeship programmes that allow the employee to earn and they learn.

I am more and more convinced of the value. If you look at the universities with the best outcomes in terms of employment (not employability which also includes

further study), the two best performing are UL and DCU. Why? I am convinced it is because of the work experience which really helps in integrating the theory and application and producing work ready graduates. Even leadership development in organisations is increasingly biased to the on-the-job learning element of development (I am thinking in terms of the 70:20:10 idea). Overall the integration of work and learning is much more likely to result in higher level learning outcomes. Additionally, the attraction of earning while you learn also opens the opportunity to folks who may perceive that they cannot afford full time education which has a significant social good attached to it.

Fons Trompenaars. Organizational theorist, management consultant, and author in the field of cross-cultural communication. Known for the development of Trompenaars' model of national culture differences. Co-founder of the seven dimensions of culture.

Q1. in your view should the Recruitment industry be recognised outside of the HR industry as a profession in its own right?

Yes, recruitment is a difficult process and needs a professional approach combining different disciplines. It is a key differentiator in the war for talent.

Q2. Do you feel that to have an accredited programme for recruitment consultants on the national framework of education as a means of attraction of key personnel will help professionalise the industry?

Yes, it may help.

Q3. Do you agree an apprenticeship approach is the right one to take (due to the shortage of recruiters we get to have the person on the job learning from day one hence contributing to the team)?

I have great experiences with apprenticeship approaches. It combines selection with learning a trade. A pure win-win.

Q4. Is there any recommendations you would give to a country who is embarking on developing a new career path whereby one did not previously exist.

Recruit on a combination of values and competences.

Q5. What is your view of on the job learning/ apprenticeship programmes that allow the employee to earn and they learn.

It is a very smart way to combine the needs of an organization with the needs of the apprentice. We should do much more of it since the young generation bring so much good to established organizations.

AnneMarie Muntz. Lobbyist and labour market influencer. Regular contributor to media, keynote speaker at world conferences to include the ILO and OECD. President of WEC Global, Managing Director of Public and Global affairs Ranstad. Ranstad are a large global recruitment agency with headquarters in the Netherlands.

Q1. 66 in your view should the Recruitment industry be recognised outside of the HR industry as a profession in its own right?

Yes absolutely! The HR services industry (employment & recruitment industry) which organises private employment agencies, i.e. companies offering HR services as recruitment, agency work, outplacement/career management and BtB services as RPO and MSP, is a very large sector. Certainly, in more development and mature labour markets (OECD countries mainly). Globally the market size is estimated at 457bn Euro (2017 data, WEC Economic Report). As of 2017 there were close to 165,000 private employment agencies; they employed 2,7million internal staff who all worked to place 53 million people in work at a lot of client companies (private and public businesses and organisations). In quite a few countries this industry is recognised as an important, separate sector. I.e. Netherlands, Belgium, France...It is also recognised as an 'indicative sector' for the economy.

Q2. Do you feel that to have an accredited programme for recruitment consultants on the national framework of education as a means of attraction of key personnel will also help professionalise the industry?

It certainly supports professionalisation of the industry. There are quite some examples to prove the point (Netherlands, UK, US, Belgium). Whether it is also is an instrument to attract key personnel would be kind of logical, but not sure if this has ever been researched. I would actually venture that other elements might be of higher 'engagement value'. For more on employment branding, you might have a look at the Randstad Employer Branding researches on our website: randstad.com (workforce insights).

Q3. What is your thoughts on apprenticeships and would you agree an apprenticeship approach is the right one to take for this profession (due to the shortage of recruiters we get to have the person on the job learning from day one hence contributing to the team)?

This is actually the way it has been organised in most mature markets. The consultant function is typically a starter (or second job) role. In the Netherlands most consultants will have followed a higher education, often even have a masters degree. One starts with a supportive role to 'learn the trade' under supervision of a more senior colleague. The external accredited program (if in place) is part of a much more extensive internal onboarding training program (focussing on sales, strategy, tools, processes etc etc).

Q4. Is there any recommendations you would give to an industry /profession who is embarking on developing a new career path whereby one did not previously exist?

We don't really get the question. Apologies....But it seems like I would look at adjacent industries and get in touch with the central employers' organisation.

Q5. What is your view of on the job learning/ apprenticeship programmes that allow the employee to earn and they learn.

It's the model of the future. In labour markets where life-long learning is the norm the employee should also has a responsibility in this. But (as society) we should guarantee the person an income during work and training periods. This is what we feel is a part of the broader Social Innovation agenda. (See WEC website). Putting in place a holistic agenda on work, income and education. In the meantime, this holistic model has been put forward in several recommendations (not only WEC), but also ILO, OECD and G7/20, all often under the 'Future of Work agenda'. You could also have a look at the recent Randstad report on the Future of Work (Flexibility@Work), also to be found on www.randstad.com

Brendan McGinty. Managing Partner of Stratis Consulting. Chairperson of Skillnet. Skillnet is the national agency for workforce learning in Ireland. Deputy Chairman of the Governing Body of the National College of Ireland and expert policy advisor to the National Recruitment Federation. Brendan is an expert in people strategy employee relations, communications, change management, dispute resolution and employment policy.

Q1. in your view should the Recruitment industry be recognised outside of the HR industry as a profession in its own right?

I agree that this is increasingly a requirement for the industry such that rather than waiting for the ideal employee to come along, the industry utilises a route to 'professional' status to build the skills it needs.

In my view this will increase retention such that the sector can be a market leader by offering and promoting its career and professional development options. This will show that the sector cares about their career progression and are interested in keeping workers for the longer term. Even at a more basic level, it can reenergise creativity and innovation by opening up greater awareness and approaches to work in the sector. It also allows workers opportunities to learn from others and to appreciate new ideas thus creating pathways to better productivity.

A professionalising of the industry and the provision of professional development pathway with opportunities allows staff to build confidence and credibility in the work they do. Indeed, for the businesses within the sector it contributes to succession planning by building a talent base within an organisation from which people can be promoted and thus shapes the development of future leaders.

Q2. Do you feel that to have an accredited programme for recruitment consultants on the national framework of education as a means of attraction of key personnel will help professionalise the industry?

I think this will add to the variety of measures that will attract people to the profession. The fact that such a programme exists, shows that the industry and profession takes itself seriously and is committed to what it preaches in terms of learning and talent development and helping those who wish to join the profession and those who may already be within the sector but in non 'recruitment' roles, the

opportunity to transition. Indeed, for in house recruiters, it also adds to their credibility and standing (as for other professions) within their organisation where they are accredited or are pursuing such accreditation as part of their own development or as part of a career path.

It should also be worth noting that that the accreditation as part of the NQF is significant as it allows individuals and employers greater transparency and affords the ability to assess the relative level of a persons qualifications by reference to the framework. This is important both from the perspective of career and learning progression within the industry but also for those who may want to transition away from the sector to other roles whether in Ireland or abroad.

Q3. What is your thoughts on apprenticeships and would you agree an apprenticeship approach is the right one to take for this profession (due to the shortage of recruiters we get to have the person on the job learning from day one hence contributing to the team)?

It is only right that there be a greater emphasis in the education system on the increased range of apprenticeships available, particularly with regard to young women, people with disabilities, the travelling community and other groups that are generally underrepresented in apprenticeships. Increasingly, we see that apprenticeships are being seen as an equally viable option to third level education especially for school leavers. There remain concerns however that for the system to work, the opportunities and benefits must be more effectively marketed when secondary students are deciding on the career they wish to embark on. The value of apprenticeships for apprentices in terms of earnings, not only during the apprenticeship (similar to the graduate premium) should be further promoted.

It therefore makes absolute sense for the profession to have this as an option for those who want to enter the sector and for those who may wish to transition from within the sector from non-recruitment roles. It is important too that the industry is clear on what problem it is seeking to fix such that the issue is not is not one of an insufficient supply of recruiters for the sector but is more one of skill shortage issue where there is a lack of supply of people with the specific 'recruiter' skill set. It may also be a possibility to consider the value in having a pilot pre-apprenticeship

programme (similar to that being undertaken by DIT) at level 6 to give young people (16-24) the necessary skills, confidence, and connections to progress on to an apprenticeship, by providing training and hands-on experience in the sector? Ideally this should operate on the basis that participants can maintain a social welfare payment or receive a training allowance while participating in the programme.

In setting expectations for the number of apprentices which the industry can credibly support there is a need to recognise that for the most part the industry is made up of SMEs and owner managers who are a difficult business segment to address in terms of expanding take-up of apprenticeships generally. They tend to be time poor, have limited numbers of staff to support apprentices and may not even be aware of how the potential talent delivered by the apprenticeship system could improve their business.

It is worth mentioning the Government's "Skills for Growth" which is a package of supports for employers to help them understand and plan for their skill needs. Each employer who participates in the programme is given access to a new skills audit tool to capture data on the skill needs of their business; one on one assistance from a Regional Skills Forum Manager to use this tool and plan for the future; and once skill needs have been identified, Regional Skills Fora link companies with the education and training providers best suited to responding to their skills needs. I would argue that where relevant, apprenticeships should be a central focus of this solution.

Q4. Is there any recommendations you would give to an industry who is embarking on developing a new career path whereby one did not previously exist?

To foster the productive capacity of apprentices during their training and to achieve a smooth transition into employment at the end of the training, in my view at least half of the training time should be spent in the workplace. Quality apprenticeships should be understood as not only enhancing a person's employability and employment prospects through the acquisition of skills and competencies that are needed on the labour market, but also through supporting personal development and leading to a recognised qualification.

In considering the position and value of an apprenticeship for the recruitment industry, there is also the need to consider where this should fit in terms of career pathways for those in the industry and to continue education, to level 8 and above, following the completion of an apprenticeship. This may need to be considered over the medium term but for those who may participate in an apprenticeship, the industry could face further challenges in retaining those who successfully complete, where in the absence of continuing education pathways some will seek such pathways outside of the industry. The industry should therefore liaise with stakeholders to explore opportunities for further educational and professional pathways for apprentice's post apprenticeship. This has been done successfully in other sectors such as through the work of the Retail Ireland Skillnet to change the narrative about the retail sector for workers from 'a job in a shop' to a career in retailing'.

Q5. What is your view of on the job learning/ apprenticeship programmes that allow the employee to earn and they learn.

This is an attractive aspect of apprenticeships. However, the provision of State funding for the 'off-the job training' part of apprenticeships has changed. For pre-2016 apprenticeship programmes, the State pays the apprentice during their 'off-the-job training' periods. However, for post-2016 apprenticeship programmes, the employer continues to pay the apprentice when they are on 'off-the-job training'. It is my sense that the cost to the employer remains a challenge for new apprenticeships. For example, an apprenticeship with a salary of €24,000 and a 15-week block of 'off-the-job training' leads to a cost of €7,500 for the employer while the apprentice is on their training block. This is a problem for apprenticeships that include a block release component, compared to those that involve one day a week of off-site training. Where the former exists in particular, it gives rise to issues for employers in backfilling positions, and to pay the salary and subsistence when the apprentices are on block release, which is not an issue when training blocks are one day a week. These challenges are more acute for SME's and needs to be carefully considered as an issue in the design and implementation of any apprenticeship programme. Compensation that apprentices receive should always be set at a rate that makes it cost-effective for an enterprise, particularly SMEs, enabling a return on the investment, which encourages and fosters the supply of apprenticeship places.

James Osborne. Chairman of the Recruitment Network UK. CEO of Innergy. Co .UK. Specialties: Training, Consultancy, Strategy Development, HR, NED, Business Development, Sales, Leadership, Conference Facilitation, Staffing and Recruitment, Motivational Speaking, E-Learning, HTML Product Design, Learning Management Systems.

Q1. in your view should the Recruitment industry be recognised outside of the HR industry as a profession in its own right?

The impact the recruitment sector can have on both people's lives as well organisational success cannot be understated. The industry plays a pivotal role in the ability for an economy to move forward and so needs to be understood as an entity in itself, not bundled (and potentially lost) into an entire HR function.

Recruitment, whilst impacting everything to do with the entire talent lifecycle, is in itself the core of everything to do with people. It is where the talent lifecycle begins and if done wrong, can negatively impact the evolution of that entire cycle moving forward (from performance, to retention and so on...). In the same way, finance touches everything operationally in a business but is always a separate, stand-alone entity, so too should recruitment enjoy that privilege.

Measurements and success metrics in recruitment can often be very different to typical HR metrics and so too can the skills of recruitment – recognising the industry as a profession in its own right will create more opportunity for there to be a greater focus on recruiting, developing and monitoring the right skills across the industry which can only improve the success of that as a job function and help further improve that talent lifecycle.

Q2. Do you feel that to have an accredited programme for recruitment consultants on the national framework of education as a means of attraction of key personnel will help professionalise the industry?

This will do two things, actually...

No. 1 – it will elevate the industry as a profession of choice so there is a greater pool of talent choosing (rather than falling in to) recruitment as a credible career option for school leavers and those looking to move into different professions. With such an increase in demand for recruiters, coupled with an ever increasing shortage of talent, this will be critical for the success of the industry moving forward.

No. 2 – any form of accreditation and structure framework for the industry will go a longway to further professionalise the industry, providing it doesn't stifle the entrepreneurialism and dynamism of what is a very fast paced and ever evolving sector. This in turn will enable recruitment organisations and recruiters themselves to be deemed more as a strategic partner to their clients and candidates and less of a supplier, which is very much not what we should be about.

Q3. What is your thoughts on apprenticeships and would you agree an apprenticeship approach is the right one to take for this profession (due to the shortage of recruiters we get to have the person on the job learning from day one hence contributing to the team)?

In short, and in principal, yes BUT on the proviso that the apprenticeship programmes work for the businesses who take them on, as much as the apprentices themselves. This means simplifying the paperwork, supporting the training (especially for SMEs who have little capacity / budget / resource for this) and ensuring that employers can see a return on investment early to justify the investment (in time predominantly).

Without doubt, the way recruitment functions, the ability to learn on the job whilst in the job is the best way to experience and learn what the job is all about (and the very many nuances within).

Q4. Is there any recommendations you would give to an industry who is embarking on developing a new career path whereby one did not previously exist?

The career path should not be linear – it needs to create a roadmap of development that both understands the various routes one can take in recruitment (not everyone wants to be a 360 recruiter, having to sell and source) but also that can flex to the evolution of the industry as we know it – that means developing skills around technology usage, productisation of service offerings as well as the critical soft skills around negotiation and influencing.

Similarly, the role of a recruiter is highly practical and sometimes theory just doesn't equate to the reality, especially when we deal with people so much. Any developmental programmes and career paths need to embrace that.

Q5. What is your view of on the job learning/ apprenticeship programmes that allow the employee to earn and they learn.

In principal, it just makes sense as it is good for the apprentice as it is good for the employer! It ensures real life learning, and for SMEs in particular enables them to fund the development of new staff which will make it a far more attractive proposition and therefore create a greater appetite for employers to do more of it.

Any other comments and or opinion on talent shortages and apprenticeships would be greatly received.

Denis Pennel. Managing Director of WEC. Author and leadership expert in "The New World of Work. Labour market analyst, Influencer and keynote speaker. Regular contributor to ILO, OECD and world conferences that address the employment issues.

Q1. in your view should the Recruitment industry be recognised outside of the HR industry as a profession in its own right?

Absolutely, The employment & recruitment industry should be recognised as being part of the Professional/Business Services sector, alongside Audit & Consulting, Marketing & Communications, Legal or Facilities Management. In a period of time when companies are outsourcing key activities to focus on their core business, the use of Professional/Business Services sector is increasing, and the employment &

recruitment industry definitely plays a key role here in supporting business development. As a consequence, the employment & recruitment industry should be able to develop its own quality and certification schemes, put in place compliance mechanism and be able to negotiate collective labour agreements on behalf of the full industry (if relevant)

Q2. Do you feel that to have an accredited programme for recruitment consultants on the national framework of education as a means of attraction of key personnel will also help professionalise the industry?

Absolutely yes again! In order to improve the image of the employment & recruitment industry and to strengthen the quality it delivers, making sure that the consultants working in branches are top-qualified will be a great asset. While in future the matching of supply & demand of work will become more automated, the difference in terms of quality services will lie in the human touch and the capacity to keep a human-centered approach to recruitment. Soft skills will become more important for HR consultants: empathy, being able to solve complex & unpredictable problems, learnability etc. So, as an industry we need to make sure that our staff is as well qualified and skilled as possible. This is key to maintain/improve the image of our industry.

Q3. What is your thoughts on apprenticeships and would you agree an apprenticeship approach is the right one to take for this profession (due to the shortage of recruiters we get to have the person on the job learning from day one hence contributing to the team)?

Dual learning is one of the best solutions to create the talents that are in demand, because these training courses are result-driven and very close to the (local) needs of the labour markets. So, indeed apprenticeships should be promoted and employment & recruitment agencies should be allowed to provide this kind on labour contractual arrangement anywhere around the world (this is not yet the case), for their own purpose or to train people for user-companies. Combining theoretical and on-the-field education at the same time is perfect: it also allows young people to make some money while still being in education!

David Head. Director and co- owner of Talint International. Talint International is the world-renowned publication for the Recruitment industry. David is a regular contributor and speaker at Global conferences and an adjudicator of recruitment industry awards around the globe.

Q1. In your view should the Recruitment industry be recognised outside of the HR industry as a profession in its own right?

Yes. The role of an in-house recruiter versus a traditional recruitment agency recruiter is vastly different and demands its own particular skills set. The ability to attract and place candidates on behalf of a third party and often in very large numbers is a real talent.

Q2. Do you feel that to have an accredited programme for recruitment consultants on the national framework of education as a means of attraction of key personnel will help professionalise the industry?

Yes. Recruitment consultants are not dealing with a commodity, they deal directly with life changing experiences. Finding a person the one role that perfectly suits them should be subjected to the highest possible scrutiny and an accreditation would drive up standards.

Q3. What is your thoughts on apprenticeships and would you agree an apprenticeship approach is the right one to take for this profession (due to the shortage of recruiters we get to have the person on the job learning from day one hence contributing to the team)?

An apprenticeship is an ideal way for a recruiter to learn their profession. Hands on work experience alongside recognised and accredited colleagues can only further raise standards and therefore make it a win/win situation for everyone involved in the recruitment cycle.

Q4. Is there any recommendations you would give to an industry who is embarking on developing a new career path whereby one did not previously exist?

I would suggest that the recruitment industry looks at what is working in other professions, how do recognised sectors such as Accountancy or legal structure their apprenticeship programs.

Q5. What is your view of on the job learning/ apprenticeship programmes that allow the employee to earn and they learn.

Apprenticeships are a brilliant way for people to learn a profession. Nothing can replace on the job learning especially if there is a well thought out and constructed programme in place. Buddying and mentoring can also be introduced. For many people their route into a full-time career is best served with an apprenticeship.

Any other comments and or opinion on talent shortages and apprenticeships would be greatly received.

Talent shortages are set to be the biggest factor in the expansion and development for companies in many countries. There is already an acute shortage of suitable candidates across a wide range of industries, due to ageing populations, talent migration and changes in skill sets. Never before has there been such a pull on finding talent – adding an accredited qualification for people working in this sector is a pre-requisite.

Frank Farrelly. President of the NRF, Chief Operating Officer and co-owner of Sigmar. Sigmar is one of the biggest recruitment agencies in Ireland and are founders of the Gateway to Europe initiative. Gateway to Europe is an annual tour of experts made up of several industries who travel to the United States of America to encourage Foreign Direct Investment to Ireland.

Wearing two hats- President of the Irish Recruitment Federation Body and Chief Operations Officer of one of the largest Agencies in Ireland you have been heavily involved in the development and the operational side of the Apprenticeship Undergraduate award for the recruitment Federation in partnership with NCI.

From your NRF hat perspective why do you think this is an important milestone for the profession?

I believe this is a landmark for the industry. Due to the emigration & high unemployment, recruitment only became a big industry in the 1990's. It does not have the same history as a profession here as it does in the UK & the USA. We have done a lot of catching up and with this level 8 Apprenticeship we can surpass their achievements and help our industry become a global thought leader in recruitment.

It has set us up for success. As a small, outward looking and open Federation we were able to 1/ take best practice from other countries 2/ learn from their mistakes & 3/ Start from the right place.

We picked a great partner in the NCI and got great support from the industry. It has shown our members the power of collaboration, it is important that we use this to amplify the Recruitment Industries voice on the national stage.

Do you believe it will professionalise the recruitment sector and do you believe it will attract new blood?

There is no doubt that it will do both. I remember having a coffee one morning in Liverpool Street station in London with a recruiter friend of mine. Train after train arrived and thousands of mainly young people, poured out suited and booted. My friend commented that many of them were recruiters, fresh out of school. He said by the age of 20 many would have 3-4 years recruitment under their belt, which would not happen in Ireland. I agreed with him.

Now with the Apprenticeship, not only will it happen but as graduates, they will be ahead in terms of professionalism than their peers in the UK. They will have learned from the best, from a variety of specialists, they will have formed networks while showing the discipline needed to complete a degree.

We will also be able to attract many others across all demographics from career changers to returning parents. Changing careers and reskilling throughout your working life is becoming the norm. We now have a vehicle where anyone who wants a level 8 qualification while earning can do so in recruitment.

From your COO hat how do you think this will affect your business? Do you think it is all positive? Are there any negative sides you anticipate?

No negative sides but it will have some challenges. I think we will have to be big enough to change quickly if things are not working, we will have to ensure that the internal mentors for the apprentices are supported and that their voices are heard. I do think achieving uniformity across the sector is impossible and that there may be some discontent of the 'faraway green hills variety!

The research has provided us with the assurance this would be the first in the World- can I have some comments re this.

Ireland's recruitment industry is relatively young but many of the original Irish recruiters were before their time when seeking to collaborate with competitors. As a country we have always prioritised education and have always shown the right blend of openness & curiosity to enable us to learn fast. While it has been far from an overnight success it is no surprise to me that Geraldine King was able to unite the industry, suppliers and elicit the international support which has resulted in Ireland having the first ever Degree level Recruitment Apprenticeship in the world.

Any other comments you would like to say?

- This will help the Recruitment industry brand itself better in Ireland. Ireland is one of the only countries where the big international Brands are smaller than the indigenous companies.
- Further it will give the industry a platform where we can innovate.

Peter Cosgrove. Founder of the Future of Work Institute. Author, influencer and keynote speaker. Peter is a regular contributor to media on recruitment and employment matters. Expert on diversity and inclusion and a regular contributor to the 30% club.

Q1. In your view should the Recruitment industry be recognised outside of the HR industry as a profession in its own right?

I have some concerns about the recruitment profession being seen as its own profession but that would not mean that I do not believe in apprenticeships. My concern would be recruitment is part HR, part marketing, part selling and part data analytics but it has changed over the past 10 years and may change again, If recruitment has its own profession you still really need to split it into agency recruitment and inhouse recruitment as there are definite difference given one is a cost centre and one a profit centre. I think the future shoes us that people are going to be harder to find and resource and talent is going to become an even more critical factor in success so I see it as incredibly important but I am not sure if it needs to be its own specific profession, but that said I would see the merits if it was

Q2. Do you feel that to have an accredited programme for recruitment consultants on the national framework of education as a means of attraction of key personnel will help professionalise the industry?

An accreditation will absolutely help professionalise the industry. Learning has become even more critical today as skills are becoming obsolete quicker and learning is accentuated when there is an accreditation behind it as it generally will mean it is more robust and had had professional challenge before it has been allowed to go forward. With CEOs regularly citing that their biggest challenge is finding the right people we need to ensure the area of recruitment is seen in the same light as many other professions to attract the best calibre of candidate.

Q3. What is your thoughts on apprenticeships and would you agree an apprenticeship approach is the right one to take for this profession (due to the shortage of recruiters we get to have the person on the job learning from day one hence contributing to the team)?

If you look at how work is going you see that many three or four year university courses are almost out dated by the end of the course. Secondly you see many organisations who don't want fresh graduates as they want them to have had some work / industry experience before they join them. With those trends in mind it is clear that an apprenticeship will support these trends. Learning and earning

simultaneously will make a huge difference and a great step forward for the industry, Also, as the industry can be as much about motivation and resilience the apprenticeship can be opened up to school leavers also to improve the pool. Unlike mainland Europe we still struggle with the word apprenticeship as for so many years it was linked with the trades and not the professions so I do think we may need to address the word or re-educate society on it.

Q4. Is there any recommendations you would give to an industry who is embarking on developing a new career path whereby one did not previously exist?

When developing a new career path it is more important to look at where the industry is going not where it has come from. However, you also need to be mindful not to focus too much on the “new and shiny thing” that may be popular today and not tomorrow. So while you need to future proof it the main focus will still be on the key areas that have always made up the career. Secondly – you need to look at how the next generation want to learn - shorter courses, video, online and make changes accordingly.

Q5. What is your view of on the job learning/ apprenticeship programmes that allow the employee to earn and they learn.

There is no doubt that some jobs are not open to people as they cannot afford to get the qualification and without the qualification they cannot enter the sector. Therefore I am a huge believer in earning and learning. It can also give much greater perspective to the learning part as there is real life examples not just case studies which may feel a little theoretical to the student. It is what most companies want so I think it is a huge plus for both companies but also to widen the pool of candidates, not just in Ireland but abroad

Any other comments?

When we have an issue like talent shortages people often look at technology to solve the problem however it is never the technology that solves the problem but the person who understands the customer challenge first. Airbnb was created as there was too few affordable places to stay in big cities, Spotify was there firstly because

people wanted to buy singles and not albums. So firstly you need to understand the customer challenge and then you can look at a technology solution.

With translation software about 5 years away from me being able to speak in one language and someone else being able to understand you simultaneously in another language – this will open up billions of new potential recruits as long as we begin to get more comfortable with being able to have remote workers work for us.

Many will also argue that with the speed of artificial intelligence and robotics we will have a talent surplus not shortage within 20 years with technology taking over most jobs!

Neil Carberry. CEO of the REC UK, Commissioner at the Low Pay Commission.

Council member of ACAS UK. Neil is a regular contributor to media on employment matters, lobbyist and contributor to employment affairs in the UK.

Neil Carberry, Chief Executive of the REC in the UK

Q1. The REC already has 2 apprenticeship programmes in place for recruiters in the UK, one is a resource, which is a one-year programme and the other is for a recruitment consultant. So, Neil, obviously the REC is experiencing the same talent shortages as the rest of the world in our own industry, which is recruiters. With the Apprenticeship programme in place, can you tell me a little bit about how successful that has been, if it has been, and any of the challenges that you have experienced in relation to having the apprentices go into the agencies and earn as they learn?

Neil: 'So I think Apprenticeships more broadly, particularly if we think the English system first of all had a real renaissance over the last 4 or 5 years with a lot of both public policy support and employer interest in apprenticeships as a framework is increasing common and I think it was attractive to us at the REC because what we were seeing was people buying fits and starts of training and support but not really progressing and we absolutely have the same concerns as lots of sister federations around the world that as recruitment becomes more of a professional service, we need people building careers the apprenticeship is a good route to do that and the

public policy framework gave us the ability to write with a group of recruiters, so written by the industry a standard for those 2 apprenticeships that were running and the support to get that up and running. So, I think broadly in terms of quality in the curriculum, it was led by the sector and that really ties it down into the things that are most relevant. We are just coming to the end of the first cohorts who are doing the Apprenticeship now, we are starting to get the first ones coming in for end point assessment this month and last month, our role I should explain is we as the industry body to the end point of the assessment, apprentices most often are enrolled in Apprenticeship providers who partner with individual recruiters to run the course, broadly we have had reasonably good start rates. I think the big challenge that we see as is a cultural one which is clearly recruitment is a very transactional industry, the expectation on apprentices the English system is that they take 20% time off the job, that can prove challenging so we have seen some drop outs and we are watching that very carefully, but certainly we are starting to see the first recruiters come through to end point assessment now and what I am hoping for is that word of mouth, that once people come through that and demonstrate stickability with the firm that has supported them through an apprenticeship and demonstrate the value that that added to their profession, that more and more companies and individual recruiters will see that apprenticeships is a really good way of building up a career in what is a fantastic industry'

Q2. Part 1. Obviously you have the cohort coming out, so do you think the REC recruitment consultant apprenticeship, (leaving the resourcer one aside for the minute), with 20% off the job, the challenge is more to the employer, rather than the student, because the employer is missing the person for one day effectively from the job?

Part 2, if you are the employer would your mindset not be in the frame of, the day or the 20% they spend in the college is more beneficial that when they come back into the workforce, because they are learning a best practice approach from an academic point of view as well as the on the job learning side.

Neil: 'So the answer to the first part is yes' I think this is where there is a cultural challenge, you know I as chief executive of the REC we back our members to the

hilt, but if members are coming to us and saying we cannot get the talent, they cannot grow the consultants we need, and make or buy is a decision all companies have to make but you should make that in proportion and the truth is if the entire market is trying to buy talent, there isn't going to be enough talent to go around because nobody is making it, so in many ways it is that sense of there needs to be this investment though thing like the apprenticeship to grow people who will deliver for years and years in the market and of course the challenge to that is often, well I will train them and they will go somewhere else, all the evidence in England shows that apprentices are more likely to stay than people you bring in and train in an adhoc way because their view then is they gave me some adhoc training to help me do the job, apprentices tend to view their employer having invested in their career, so there is a real challenge there is trying to change that mindset and I think particularly getting to the managers of the apprentices, now you are often only a small owner operated agency, that's easy because you are the owner operator you have decided to go into the apprenticeship and you are also the manager of the apprentice, but often that's not the case and one of the areas where we do see a potential risk is where the company is really backing apprenticeships but maybe the manager is short target on Thursday night and the apprentice is meant to be in college on Friday what happens? So, there is a cultural thing about managing the managers of the apprentice which we have to get across to really make it work because we know long term most people stay, and they generate more'

Q3. The REC are the accreditors of the recruitment consultant and the Resourcer programmes in the UK, but knowing what you do now as you are nearly 2 years into your role as Chief Executive of the REC in the recruitment industry, would you agree as an industry we have a right to have a full academic career path for recruiters in their own right and industry specific? For instance, as you know Ireland is in the process of developing a higher apprenticeship as an undergraduate degree, making it the start of the official academic career path. It will be on the college perspectives for next year, do you think that the REC or the UK for that matter, would welcome an accredited academic career path for recruiters.

Q3. 2. Do you think it would help us to attract more key individuals because it will be a chosen career path rather than something they fell into to? Long winded sorry!

Neil: I mean you finished on “falling into a career” and I don’t know about you Geraldine, but I fell into recruitment.

Geraldine: I fell into it too, everybody did.

Neil: I am delighted to be back in it these days with the REC, but that sense of recruitment as a professional service, look at the way the professional development is handled in other professional services, other professional vocations who have that pathway up which is a vocationally lead but academic accredited pathway. I think that’s essential to building up the standing of the industry, the performance of the industry but also the attraction of high quality talent, where we are with our system at the moment is, it is very recruiter lead so while we were on the group that set the standard, most of the group were recruitment businesses, that group has the potential to reconvene, what we are trying to do now is to get that level 2 and level 3 working and working really well and then I think there is appetite for us to then go on an look at 5 and 6 and potentially 7.

Would that be on, accredited on the national framework of education?

Neil: Yes that would be accredited against the Ofqual framework, so level 7 would be master’s level and level 6 would be a full degree equivalent.

Neil thank you very much indeed

Q4. Is there any recommendations you would give to an industry /profession who is embarking on developing a new career path whereby

Too often, young graduates do not choose the employment & recruitment sector as a first/preferred choice in terms of career. This is what the industry should be able to change, making this sector a preferred option for highly qualified people. Within the employment & recruitment industry we now have well-known, highly reputable brands that should help to attract the best talents. At the same time, people who have entered this industry as a default choice can still end up spending their full career, enjoying themselves and progressing in an industry that keeps changing (for

the better). Seniority of 15 to 20 years is very common within the employment & recruitment industry. This is also why maintaining a fair level of margins for this industry is key, as wages for HR consultants should be high enough to attract the best talents!

Siobhan Kinsella. Director of Operations at The Noel Group and President of Chambers Ireland.

Siobhan has given permission given to use this transcript from the interview in all media interviews/ NRF library for context of thesis and anywhere there will be communication of this HA discussed. Siobhan has given unrestricted access.

Question – Geraldine

Siobhan- From director of Noel Group and from being heavily involved in NRF and steering group. Can you tell me what you feel the impact will be on talent shortages for recruitment consultants on the recruitment industry for the future of Noel Recruitment? Noel Recruitment is one of the larger agencies in Ireland and we struggle for recruitment consultants at the moment.

Answer Siobhan.

Absolutely in context of productivity, profitability and also the sustainability of our business, creating a pathway for recruitment consultants with a defined career path, the prestige associated with it, the professional aspect, a greater understanding of the capabilities, and the recruitment industry competencies developed, the displays developed and honed in ones work as a recruitment consultant is hugely important, but for Noel Recruitment attracting the calibre of staff necessary for sustaining our operations in the innovation side we try to deliver for our clients, the value we try to add, having access to a pool of candidates who actually understand the complexity of what you do and find that as a learning curve and as a developmental curve, a learning pathway and as a profession is vitally important for the future. I think the industry each business in profitability and productivity would be massively impacted if we were not developing the pathway of professionalisation and credentialization of the profession.

Question- Obviously because you are involved at board level and steering committee of what we are exploring of the HA, what do you think the impact on your business will be, and your thoughts of HA's for all of the sectors going forward?

Answer- Siobhan.

I will take the second part first. In the context of the Education system in Ireland there has been for quite a period of time a learner centred approach, when it comes to education you will find there is a complete and other disconnects between FET and higher ed so further education is limited to level 6 and higher ed commences at level 7 and 8 although level 7 is elite of each of the qualification levels in Ireland. In terms of the apprenticeships I congratulate Solas and the higher ed authority and the apprenticeship council categorically for the development of the apprenticeships post 2016 to include level 6-10 I think that is an inspired move that had a two fold impact- 1 it professionalises different careers and doesn't limit them so therefore you can someone who has a qual in recruitment that is the very same as someone with an engineering qual that was never possible previously. In you look at someone with a professional qualification the maximum it could map to on the national framework was level 6 and there was a snobbery attached to the development and the proposing to our children the option of higher education only. Higher ed is generally level 8 for undergrad then 9 for masters and 10 for PHD so the options of new HA from 2016 from food to cyber security all of those things are doing more for the education landscape in Ireland that we have seen done I would advocate in the past 15-20 years for us and Irelands productivity and skills we have already in a EU context what would be considered as an over qualified workforce and that is not necessarily true maybe we over qualify in disciplines that are not valid anymore. So for someone to take a route a second choice route of apprenticeship to earn and learn means organisation gets the benefit for holding on to skillsets for longer, business apprenticeships is 3-4 years but in addition to that the learning, the transversal skills are more so in an apprenticeship than in a higher education where there is a workplace attached to businesses to give a solution to a problem and analytical skills and most importantly to apply their learnings. So to take that any

different of sub qualifications is hugely important to Ireland and our future investment of productivity has been transformed in that regard.

In the context of recruitment in Ireland this is not just at just at country level, it maps on to the EU framework of qualifications and with the recognition of the EU qualification framework, QQI are seen as leaders in quality assurance, and the integrity of the qualifications means that our HA would have Worldwide standing, therefore for the professionalization and credentialization of the recruitment industry, desirability to be part of and grow in our industry, this qualification will be transformative.

From my perspective as an employer it increases retention and attractiveness as an employer brand to be associated with it because of the quality that an apprentices host is required to have, it puts learning and development and life long learning at the front of the agenda so from the department of education and Solas perspective to increase the participation of life long learning in business this will not only help the learners of the future or the industry in question, it will also help sustainability and productivity in the long term of our sector so for me I am absolutely thrilled to participate in it commercially.

Geraldine- Thank you very much Siobhan. Wearing now your Chambers Ireland hat and bearing in mind that Chambers Ireland work very closely with the IDA, you would be privy to a lot of exposure of FDI coming in to Ireland, the skills and talent shortages that we have, not only in our own sector, which is what this HA is All about but, how if we are short as an industry of staff ourselves be able to facilitate and find the hard to find staff for clients. From the Chambers Ireland point of view how relevant or not do you think a HA could contribute to Ireland.

Answer- Siobhan

From an FDI investment the agenda of our workforce we have more PHD's per capita than other countries in Europe and that is the single driver for FDI in this state.

One of the things we always need to mindful of is CPD and never more so than what we are seen demonstrated in our ed system and that would be a major selling point as a location for FDI than our counterparts. If you look at the quality of our workforce,

the reason we do not have the civil unrest in other EU countries and in other states around the world is that the majority of our population have qualifications, but during the course of obtaining those qualifications they develop skills, they develop critical analyses and innovation skills that they can distil information that we are less susceptible to propaganda or false narratives and fake news but from an innovation perspective Ireland concentrated in recent times on R&D very much supported by the government. You need a certain calibre of workforce in order to be able to sustain innovation that leads to investment and new products, and new revenue streams for business and that is the reason we are home to so many of the worlds high calibre pharma companies, we are one of the top tech capitals of the world particularly if you look at the presence of advent into Ireland. You are also seeing now the Chinese advent into Ireland and this would not happen if we did not have the quality of the workforce from an education point of view and if our system was not evolving at the pace it currently is. Apprenticeships are bringing innovation and qualifications and providing route ways up to level 10 and are associated mapping on the qualification EU system. This cannot be understated in the context of attracting FDI to Ireland.