

The added value of international student mobility in the recruitment and selection processes of young academics in the labour market



Bachelor Thesis European Public Administration

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Abstract

This study will focus on the added value of international experiences of young academics in the recruitment and selection processes of new employees in the labour market. On the basis of theory on recruitment and selection processes in human resource management, and the role of internationalisation in employability, a theoretical framework will be established. Following the theory, several assumptions can be made which will be investigated throughout the study. The study will further consist of a literature review, job database analysis and company interviews in order to see to which extent the assumptions can be verified.

The literature review will focus on previous scholarly work on employability, globalisation and internationalisation in higher education, the role of the EU in higher education, and general personal and skill development of students. The job database analysis includes the analysis of two major Dutch job vacancy websites. Vacancies aimed at recent graduates at starter's level are compared to see how often and under which circumstances international experiences are explicitly requested by employers. The study finishes with three company interviews on the value of international experiences when looking at the selection of candidates for a job position. At the end of the study reflections can be made on the assumptions which have been generated from the theory.

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Abbreviations

DG EAC:	Directorate General for Education and Culture
EHEA:	European Higher Education Area
EILC:	Erasmus Intensive Language Course
ERA:	European Research Area
ERASMUS:	European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students
ESN:	Erasmus Student Network
EU:	European Union
HE:	Higher education
HEI:	Higher education institutions
HR:	Human resources
HRM:	Human resource management
Nuffic:	Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education
OMC:	Open Method of Coordination

1. Introduction

This aim of this thesis will be to find out whether internationalisation in higher education (HE) will contribute to the employability of recent graduates. Therefore this thesis will include theories on the role of internationalisation and its relevancy for employability, and employer recruitment and selection processes. Following this, a literature review on the perceived benefits of internationalisation will be included. Following this empirical evidence will include a database analysis of job vacancy websites and interviews with companies in order to see to what extent internationalisation in higher education is valued when it comes to the selection of new employees.

The implementation of the Erasmus Programme for student mobility and the Bologna Process show the European Union (EU) sees the value in the aspect of internationalisation of higher education. Through action plans the EU aims to harmonise academic systems within Europe in order to promote mobility and strengthen the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The EU stresses the importance of the EHEA as a competitive actor in the increasing globalising world. Member states include aspects of the Bologna Process when reviewing national law on higher education.

“Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees with the aim of promoting European citizens employability and the international competitiveness of the European higher education system is among the core action lines of the Bologna Declaration itself.” (European Commission, 2012, p. 29)

One of the main aims of the Bologna Process is the promotion of European citizen’s employability. One important question is therefore whether the programmes set up by the EU to promote student mobility improves the chances of employability. Therefore it is relevant to study whether the programmes set up by the EU which promote mobility also increase the employability of individuals after they have graduated.

1.1. The European Union and higher education

Traditionally speaking, the European Union has no authority in the area of higher education (HE) in the form of mandatory policy reforms since the principle of subsidiarity applies (Trondal, 2002). However, the physical area of the European Union is considered to be an area for higher education and research. More recently it is also referred to as ‘the European Research Area (ERA) and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). In this ERA and EHEA cooperation is seen as a way to strengthen the global competitiveness of the EU (M. Van der Wende, 2007). Cooperation in the area of higher

education is also identified by an EU agenda which is mainly based on an economic argument. However, more specific higher education actions also aspire academic and cultural values, and the creation of a higher education community which stimulate cooperation between higher education institutions (HEI) in various member states. (M. C. Van der Wende, 2003)

Through the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), the EU can stimulate action plans regarding higher education policy in member states since the principle of subsidiarity applies. With the implementation of ERASMUS, the EU funds a mobility program for European students to study or work in another European country for a period of time during their studies (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Each year, the Erasmus Programme enables 200 000 students to work and study abroad. It has become the ‘flagship’ of the European Union in terms of educational programmes. Erasmus has aimed to promote cooperation and mobility, strengthen the European dimension in education, to increase innovation, and to improve language knowledge (Vossensteyn, Soo, Cremonini, Antonowitsch, & Epping, 2007).

The Bologna Process consists of agreements signed by the Ministers of Education of 47 European countries based on voluntary will. The Bologna Process set up the EHEA in 1999, “the EHEA was meant to ensure more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in Europe (The Romanian Bologna Secretariat, 2010)”. The main goal was to increase the attractiveness of European higher education and “to foster student mobility and employability through the introduction of a system based on undergraduate and postgraduate studies with easily readable programmes and degrees (The Romanian Bologna Secretariat, 2010)”. It included a focus on setting up a 2-cycle system, national qualifications framework for transparency, recognition of qualifications, and quality assurance. Later the social dimension of the Bologna Process became increasingly important, e.g. including the participation in higher education of individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds, better access to higher education and debates on tuition fees and student financial support (European Commission, 2012). In 2001, the European Commission became an official member of the Bologna Process, giving it a legal basis to fund projects of the Bologna Process. Although there is no binding nature in the Bologna Process it is seen to be a success in terms of implementation. When members renew their national law, Bologna goals and motives are taken into account (The Romanian Bologna Secretariat, 2010).

1.2. Research question and thesis outline

The topic of this bachelor thesis is ‘the added value of international experiences of young academics in the recruitment and selection processes of new employees in the labour market’. The expectation of this thesis is that employers value international experiences during studies among recent graduates

when recruiting and selecting new employees. The research question will be answered with the use of both a literature review and empirical data. The literature review will consist of the perceived benefits of internationalisation in higher education, and show the actors of employability relevant for the empirical data. The empirical data will be used to support the literature review. Data will be collected from job vacancy websites and different companies. Important factors will be to see how they let international experience influence their recruitment and selection, and how they see the importance of internationalisation in terms of additional skills. The relevance of the study lies with universities, current students as well as employees and companies. The study will be valuable to universities due to the increasing internationalisation taking place at universities. It will also be interesting for the EU since they have tried to promote student mobility since the 1980s with the aim of better employability and labour market chances. The aim of the research is to see whether previous established goals of the EU with regard to mobility programmes within universities seem to influence employers when selecting recent graduates.

In order to generate a conclusion on the hypothesis of whether international experiences during higher education contribute to employability, a research question is necessary. The research question of this thesis will be:

To what extent does an international experience generate an added value in the recruitment and selection processes of young academics by employers?

This thesis consists of multiple sub-questions throughout the study in order to conclude an answer for the research question. The five sub-questions included in this thesis are:

1. What can the theory on recruitment and selection processes tell about the needs in the labour market?
2. How is the role of internationalisation in higher education linked to employability?
3. What are the possible benefits of internationalisation in higher education for students and employers?
4. How often and under which circumstances do companies explicitly request international experience in job vacancies?
5. To what extent do a few case study companies indicate that international experiences are valuable when recruiting young academics?

This thesis will start with elaborating on the recruitment and selection theory and the necessary skills needed to find employment and the role of international experiences with regard to employability. Once the theoretical framework has been established the study will focus on a literature review, a database analysis and interviews.

2. Theoretical framework

The aim of this thesis is to study the added value of international experiences of young academics in the recruitment and selection processes of new employees in the labour market. The theoretical framework will provide a basis for the expected outcome of the study. It will conceptualise the recruitment and selection processes, and the role of internationalisation in employability. The chapter will conclude with relevant assumptions for the study based on the theory.

2.1. The recruitment and selection processes in organisations

In order to establish a theoretical framework for the study it is important to elaborate on the recruitment and selection processes in organisations. This will include recruitment and selection processes which companies use according to human resource management (HRM) in order to fill job vacancies and attract new employees.

2.1.1 Recruitment and selection

The recruitment process is one of the core activities of human resource management (HRM) (Taylor, 2014). Compton, Morrissey and Nankervis (2009) define the recruitment process as:

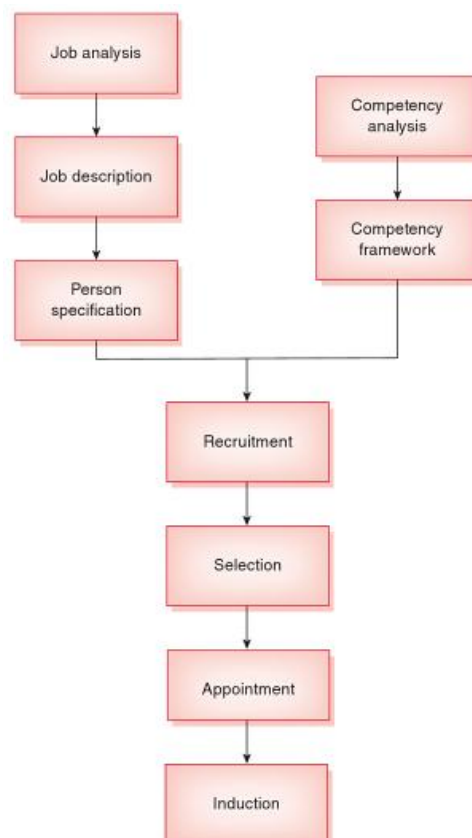
“the process of attempting to locate and encourage potential applicants to apply for existing or anticipated job openings (Compton, Morrissey, Nankervis, & Morrissey, 2009, p. 15)”.

Recruitment and selection are controversial topics in HRM since there are many approaches available in literature which state the different techniques that are supposed to be the best practice in order to recruit and select the most suitable candidates (Taylor, 2014). However, when companies apply recruitment strategies, their main goal is always to create a group of candidates for a job opening that is appropriately qualified and skilled enough to be suitable for the job. The recruitment process is necessary before the selection process, in order to undertake this last process most effectively. The aim of recruitment is to attract appropriate candidates to apply for an employment vacancy. Recruitment has to make sure that the appropriate people are aware of the fact that these vacancies exist. Therefore the recruitment process precedes the selection process in the sense that the correct people are matched with the job (Compton, et al., 2009). In normal cases the recruitment process starts with “a formal written request or proposal for the additional person, that is, the formal advice that a new employee is required and/or vacancy exists” (Compton, et al., 2009). When the recruitment and selection processes are finished it means that an appropriate candidate has been found and the vacancy has been

filled. Selection is executed by the organisation when they decide to select individuals from the pool of recruited candidates. This could be in the form of a interview or other acquaintance with selected candidates (Taylor, 2014).

The following figure shows the stages in recruitment and selection processes. Recruitment and selection starts with 'job analysis', 'job description' and 'person specification' which will be explained in Chapter 2.1.2. Alongside these stages it is important for the company to analyse competencies and set up a competency framework. Once these necessary conditions for recruitment have been set up, recruitment will be possible in the form of the creation a pool of appropriate candidates for a job opening. Candidates will have 'self-selected' themselves into this pool. The selection will take place within the organisation according to the job analysis, job description, person specification and the competency framework. An interview/appointment can follow the positive selection of candidates, following the placement of one (or more) appropriate applicants in the vacant job position.

Figure 2.1: Stages in human resource management (Taylor, 2014, p. 142)



This study concentrates on the recruitment and selection stages within human resource management. Both recruitment and selection are important stages in human resource management. Recruitment is important in order to create a pool of candidates which are suitable for the position that is offered. This

means that after a job description has been set out, a pool of respondent candidates will be available for the company that has the job opening. After the recruitment, the selection of candidates takes place. On the basis of the available respondents, which have responded to the job description (in the form of a vacancy), the organisation in search of the new employee will select a group of possible candidates, which they believe are most suitable for the job position. The organisation will (most likely) invite this group of candidates for a (personal) appointment, or multiple rounds of appointments. Once the organisation has narrowed down the group of candidates and the suitable candidate has been found, the organisation places this person on the job position, completing the process of finding a new employee.

2.1.2. Job analysis and competency profiling

There are a few aspects of the model in figure 2.1 that are relevant for recruitment and selection processes. Job analysis is a technique in human resource management that effect employee performance and organisational effectiveness. This techniques should be responsive to changes in ‘organisational structures and strategies’, ‘employee skills’, competencies and abilities’, ‘employment relations’ and the ‘economic situation’ (Compton, et al., 2009). Job analysis is a process that influences recruitment and selection. It identifies the main tasks, responsibilities and preferred outcomes of the job, but also the knowledge, skills, competencies and abilities necessary for this job. Job descriptions are practical outcomes of the job analysis which has been transferred into written statements including the tasks and responsibilities of the job. A personal profile is usually attached to a job description, describing personal abilities, personal skills and competencies and specific knowledge which are necessary, or desired for the job. These job descriptions, and therefore the process of job analysis are vital for finding suitable candidates for job vacancies since selection of candidates will come forth out of this pool of candidates which ‘self select’ them as appropriate for a specific job.

In order to create a relevant job description and person specification, a competency analysis has to be established. A competency can be defined as:

“an underlying characteristic that results in effective or superior performance on the job.
(Compton, et al., 2009)”

Competencies can be seen as dimensions that are able to affect the job performance. This can include motives, skills, self-image or attitude. Competency profiling is a technique for recruitment which is used in order to define a unique set of competencies corresponding with effective job performance in a specific organisation.

A competency model according to Compton, Morrissey and Nankervis (2009) includes:

- A list of characteristics, behaviours or dimensions associated with effective or superior performance in the organisation.
- Detailed behavioural descriptions of what the competency means in the organisation.
- The definition of how competencies are related to major tasks and functions in various jobs in the organisation.

Competency profiling will influence both the processes of recruitment and selection within the human resource management. Competency profiling can clarify the recruitment process for companies as they are more aware of the necessary competencies of a candidate for a specific job opening. Competencies are seen as ‘future-oriented’, they play a role in human resource planning and can support organisation culture (Compton, et al., 2009). The established competency framework set a basis for the job descriptions which influence the recruitment and selection processes directly.

Both recruitment and selection focus on the competencies as described above. However, recruitment is aimed at finding suitable candidates applying for a job vacancy, whereas selection covers the possibility of the company to select from a pool of suitable candidates with regard to competencies and further abilities which the company has established within the job description. All in all, recruitment of new employees will become apparent through job descriptions on job vacancy websites when keeping in mind the aim of this study. The selection of candidates is reserved for the organisations which have set out the job vacancy, which could be either the HR manager or other local level managers in a company.

When reflecting on the recruitment and selection processes of human resource management, it is clear that competency analysis is important for both processes. Without competency analysis employers cannot recruit a pool of candidates, or select candidates for further meetings.

2.2. The role of internationalisation in employability

In order to study the added value of international experiences of young academics in the recruitment and selection processes of new employees in the labour market it is important to highlight the different aspects in international experiences from which students could benefit from after graduation, specifically in the labour market. This sub-chapter will start out by explaining which dimensions of internationalisation in higher education are relevant for this study. Later in this sub-chapter, the perceived benefits of international experiences with a direct link to employability will be explained in order to establish a framework on which the research methodology can be based.

2.2.1. Internationalisation and globalisation

Higher education has become part of the globalisation process. This means that higher education can no longer be studied from a national perspective. The internationalisation of higher education is on the one hand a response to globalisation. National borders are disappearing when it comes to the accessibility and mobility of students, on the other hand, national identity and culture in different countries is what drives the mobility of students. Therefore we cannot say internationalisation harmonizes higher education in general. The EU does try to harmonize academic systems to a certain extent in order to promote and encourage mobility, but cultural diversity is the main force behind the trend that is student mobility (Qiang, 2003). Internationalisation and globalisation in the context of higher education can have multiple definitions. The following figure shows definitions of these concepts derived from scholars that have written about higher education.

Figure 2.2 shows different definitions of internationalisation and globalisation in the context of higher education by different scholars, and how they see the relation between internationalisation and globalisation. Overall, internationalisation in higher education is seen as a response to globalisation. The EU promotes internationalisation within higher education of member states in order to become a competitive actor in a globalising world. The internationalisation in higher education is promoted by the EU as a result of globalisation..

Figure 2.2: Definitions of internationalisation and globalisation in the context of higher education, and the relation between the two by scholars.

	Knight, J.	Marginson, S.	Van der Wende, M.
Internationalisation	“Internationalisation at the national, sector, institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating any international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education”(Knight, 2003, p. 2)	“ ‘internationalisation’ describes the growth of relations between nations and between national cultures (in that sense internationalisation has a long history)”(Marginson, 2000, p. 24)	“internationalisation of higher education itself also needed to be addressed in terms of governmental policy. The general aim became to move beyond the existing schemes for academic mobility to policies that encourage higher education institutions to internationalise their core functions of teaching, research and services.”(M. Van der Wende, 2001, p. 432)
Globalisation	“Globalization is defined as “the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, [and] ideas . . . across borders”(Knight, 2004, p. 8)	“the term ‘globalisation’ is reserved here for the growing role of world systems. These world systems are situated outside and beyond the nation state, even while bearing the marks of dominant national cultures, particularly American culture.”(Marginson, 2000, p. 24)	“In a networked environment in which every HEI is visible to every other, and the weight of the global dimension is increasing, it is no longer possible for nations or for individual HEIs to seal themselves off from global effects.”(M. Van der Wende, 2007, p. 275)
Internationalisation and globalisation	“Internationalization is changing the world of higher education, and globalization is changing the world of internationalization.”(Knight, 2004, p. 5)	“the term ‘globalisation’ does not refer to the growing importance of ‘international’ relations, relations between nations, <i>per se</i> . The term ‘internationalisation’ describes the growth of relations between nations and between national cultures.”(Marginson, 2000, p. 24)	“internationalization is a process more readily steerable by governments than is globalization”(M. Van der Wende, 2007, p. 275) “Internationalization of higher education is often seen as a possible response to globalization (i.e., as a way to make HEIs more effective in response to the globalization of societies”(M. Van der Wende, 2007, p. 275)

It is clear from figure 2.1 that the definition of internationalisation in the context of higher education is not limited to a specific area of higher education. For the study it is important to define internationalisation in higher education more specifically since the main definitions are too broad.

In this study the internationalisation of higher education, usually shortened as ‘international experiences’ will be defined as:

- students gaining international experiences abroad in the form of obtaining an entire higher education degree from a country abroad
- students gaining international experiences abroad in the form of student mobility (obtaining part of a higher education program abroad e.g. credit mobility via ERASMUS)
- international work experience within the framework of a national degree (having an internship abroad during enrolment in higher education e.g. within the ERASMUS programme)

2.2.2. Employability

Employability as defined by scholars:

“Employability can be defined as having the skills and abilities to find employment or remain in employment (Crossman & Clarke, 2010).”

Employability can specifically be seen as the individual characteristics in adaptive behaviour necessary to maintain employment within a rapidly changing context. From an employer point of view, employability mainly suggests that graduate can contribute to “economic competitiveness in a global context (Crossman & Clarke, 2010, p. 602)”.

In ‘Education at Glance 2013’, the OECD defines employability as:

“ensuring that all young people achieve both a good level of foundation skills and “soft” skills, such as teamwork, communication and negotiation, that will give them the resilience they need to succeed in an ever-changing labour market; reducing school dropout rates and making sure that as many young people as possible complete at least an upper secondary education (if necessary, through second-chance education opportunities); making secondary education relevant to the skill needs of the labour market; developing vocational education and training, and bridging education to the world of work by including work-based learning; securing flexible pathways into tertiary education; and providing good study and career guidance services so that young people can make sound, informed career decisions (OECD, 2013)”.

Both definitions by Crossman and Clarke (2010), and the OECD (2013) include that the attainment into employment should be secured by skills. Crossman and Clarke (2010) state that these skills and abilities have influence in whether individuals either find employment or stay in employment. The

OECD (2013) implies ‘employability’ covers “young people” and the decisions they make in school, as well as the possibilities that are present to develop personally during their time enrolled in education. Both Crossman and Clark (2010), and the OECD (2013) mention “skills” in their definition of ‘employability’ in order to succeed in the labour market. Concluding from these two definitions we can say a set of skills obtained by an individual during education can influence the way in which this individual has access to employment. All in all, skills seem to be important in the definition of employability.

Recent literature has focused on the graduate labour market and the transition from university into work. Researchers have emphasized the importance for students to distinguish themselves from other graduates that have a university degree. Students can do this by looking at the status of a university, engaging in relevant extra-curricular activities and pursuing more than one degree (Brooks, Waters, & Pimlott-Wilson, 2012). Researchers that have performed studies in Asia have stressed the importance of studying abroad for students as a strategy to distinguish themselves from other students. Besides this, the researcher also argues that useful “attributes and abilities are developed abroad” (Brooks, et al., 2012).

“with increased mobility across national borders, there is a growing need for a model of generic skills that is recognised internationally (Cranmer, 2006, p. 170)”.

Research by multiple scholars include that employers that are satisfied with their recent graduates as employees are more likely to recruit in the so-called ‘graduate elite’ (Cranmer, 2006). Brooks, et al (2012) also include the notion of an ‘elite group identity’ when explaining ways in which graduates can distinguish themselves in the labour market and elaborating on different abilities and attributes developed during their study time.

2.2.3. The perceived benefits of international experiences on employability

International experiences

During the last few decades higher education has become an issue of importance to governments (Waters, 2009). This view meets the position of the EU in trying to influence higher education. While trying to influence higher education, governments try to strengthen national economies. According to Waters (2009) higher education can be linked to the ‘knowledge-based economy’, in which the population of a nation benefits the economy (Waters, 2009).

When looking at the previously established definition of internationalisation in higher education which will be used in this study, ‘student mobility’ as defined in literature can be used in order to elaborate on the perceived benefits of internationalisation with connections with future life. First of all, Janson

et. al (2009) state that studying abroad or spending time abroad is expected to have a valuable impact on the personal development of students. With the establishment of ERASMUS, the EU expected student mobility “to have a positive impact on the former students’ life after graduation, notably on their employment and work (Janson, Schomburg, & Teichler, 2009, p. 25)”. The EU has stated that student mobility will increase the chances of employability for students, making it easier for them to find work in the labour market after graduation.

Crossman and Clarke define international experiences as:

“international student exchange (also known as student ‘mobility’ or ‘study abroad’), international volunteer work, internships and personal travel combined with casual employment”.

Student mobility and international student experiences have been promoted by universities and governments as a way to increase knowledge transfer and to develop graduate ‘competencies’ or ‘skills’ especially required by twenty-first century organisations (Crossman & Clarke, 2010). The concept ‘twenty-first century organisations’ again implies the influence of globalisation and internationalisation in organisations. Organisations that operate in a globalised world seek individuals that have gained knowledge from an international curriculum and international experiences (Crossman & Clarke, 2010).

In literature, positions that require specific skills with a university level degree prerequisite emphasize the importance of: “intercultural adaptability, global competency, thought to encompass, empathy, open-mindedness, initiative, flexibility, intercultural sensitivity, communication, extraversion, agreeableness, cooperation, openness, inquisitiveness, tolerance and self-awareness” (Crossman & Clarke, 2010).

A period of work or study abroad can give benefits to individuals in several ways. Benefits can be both personal and professional in the sense that one can enhance personal understanding, increase confidence and self-reliance, but also develop skills and competencies that employers seek (Brooks, et al., 2012). The gaining of language skills is one important benefit when it comes to spending a period abroad. This gaining of language skills can include both English language skills and obtaining foreign language skills. The spread of English as a teaching language in higher education has been influenced by the process of globalisation (Coleman, 2006). Due to globalisation and student mobility many degrees in universities are taught in English. Obtaining higher education degrees in English award certain proficiency to the English command. The EU promotes Erasmus Intensive Language Courses (EILC) for students studying or working abroad under the Erasmus program (Nuffic, 2014). With these courses the EU tries to promote proficiency within the language of the country of the period abroad.

As mentioned in the introduction, the European Union has promoted student mobility for the last few decades. Universities play a large role in educating individuals in a world of changing needs (Crossman & Clarke, 2010). Employers based in an international environment will value international experiences of graduates since this can be a necessary skill within this globalised company. However, due to the globalisation and internationalisation in higher education, all employers can value international experiences from graduates. Within the last decades of globalisation, employers can value these international experiences within a nationally based company.

The European Commission has made the following statement on the importance of student mobility in Europe:

“Mobility is important for personal development and employability; it fosters respect for diversity and a capacity to deal with other cultures. It encourages linguistic pluralism, thus underpinning the multilingual tradition of the European Higher Education Area and it increases cooperation and competition between higher education institutions. Therefore, mobility shall be the hallmark of the European Higher Education Area (European Commission, 2009).”

One of the most important aims of the creation of the European Higher Education area was to encourage the free movement of people and ideas.

‘Second type of skills’

The Directorate General for Education and Culture states that the role of the EU in the development of skills is important (European Commission, 2014a). They claim individuals have to be equipped with skills competencies and qualifications that are flexible and are able to change over time when necessary. The DG for Education and Culture acknowledges ‘transversal skills’ and ‘entrepreneurial skills’, which are supposed to be communicated better between the labour market and education institutions in order to diminish a gap between these two sectors.

“In an increasingly globalised and knowledge-based economy, Europe is in need of a well-skilled workforce to compete in terms of productivity, quality, and innovation (European Commission, 2014b).”

The DG for Education and Culture stresses the importance of the knowledge-based economy in the terms of European competition. In order to achieve this they stress the importance of education within Europe. While education is a national affair within member states of the EU, working groups do try to promote changes in education systems in order to raise the competitiveness of the EU as a whole.

Student mobility is seen as beneficial for students by Janson, et. al (2009) because of the growth of competencies in various aspects namely:

- the acquisition of academic knowledge in areas of expertise which are not taught in the home country at all or only on a substantially lower level
- the gathering and experiencing field knowledge of the economy, society and culture of the host country of study
- learning internationally comparative approaches
- the acquisition of international/inter-cultural communication techniques, e.g. foreign languages, inter-cultural communication styles, etc.
- broadening the mind and improving reflection through contrasting experiences of different countries, different academic cultures, etc., and

When looking back at the definition of employability, it can be acknowledged that multiple scholars include the so-called ‘second set of skills’ which are claimed to be important for employers when they select new employees. These kinds of skills can cover different competencies. The following figure includes both the general and international competencies that are expected to increase due to international experiences.

Table 2.1: Competencies related to international experiences

General competencies	International competencies
Adaptability	Foreign language proficiency
Initiative	Intercultural competencies (knowledge and understanding of international differences in culture and society)
Assertiveness, decisiveness, persistence	Ability to work with people from different cultural backgrounds
Planning, coordinating, organising	Professional economic, sociological and legal knowledge of other countries

Table 2.1 shows international competencies, but also general competencies that can be developed due to international experiences, or general competencies that have a clear connection with the development of the international competencies. International experiences can contribute to the development of general competencies such as adaptability, initiative, assertiveness, decisiveness, and persistence, but also the planning, coordinating and organising skills of students. Scholars believe that international experiences can contribute to the development of general competencies (Janson, et al., 2009). Next to these general competencies there are also a number of international competencies, as

defined by the European Commission, which are expected to develop due to international experiences of students (e.g. student mobility in the framework of ERASMUS). These international competencies are more clearly linked with the characteristics of international experiences. International competencies include foreign language proficiency, intercultural understanding, and professional knowledge of other countries. The European Commission states, when explaining the motives for promoting mobility, that these international competencies are important reasons to fund mobility projects in the EU.

In recent decades all kinds of organizations have been influenced by both globalisation and internationalisation. This is no different for the higher education area. Therefore international competencies become more and more important according to the EU. Organisations have been influenced by globalisation and internationalisation. With this in mind, the EU claims employers have increased the importance of recruiting personnel with knowledge of cultural issues, the capacity to manage international relations and adaption to cultural issues. Even companies that seem to be nationally based have to deal with increasing levels of globalisation, for example customers or suppliers are based outside of the country the organisation is based in. One aim for the EU to fund and promote mobility programmes is that it is necessary in order to prepare individuals to work abroad in other European countries after obtaining a degree.

2.3. Assumptions

Following the theoretical framework it is possible to make some assumptions regarding the added value of international experience of young academics when it comes to recruiting and selecting new employees. As mentioned before the expectation of this thesis is that employers value international experiences during studies among recent graduates when recruiting and selecting new employees.

Regarding the expectation and the theoretical framework it is possible to make some assumptions on competencies and general skills development derived from international experiences:

- (1) *“Young academics with international experiences are expected to have better developed general competencies as compared to young academics without these experiences.”*
- (2) *“Young academics with international experiences are expected to be more attractive for employers than young academics without these experiences since organisations are expected to value the obtained international competencies in the recruitment and selection of new employees.”*

Next to the clear development of competencies, abilities and general skills, the theory assumes that companies will request international experience when it is visible in a resume:

(3) *“Companies will express to prefer candidates with international experiences in the job descriptions on job vacancy websites.”*

The first assumption can be answered on the basis of both the literature review on internationalisation and employability, and the company interviews on the selection of recent graduates for job vacancies. The third assumption can be answered with the database analysis of job vacancy websites in Chapter 5. The second can be answered according to reflections on all three research methods. Chapter 7 will reflect on the assumptions on the basis of the information gathered in the study. When reflecting on the assumptions an answer to the research question can be generated.

3. Methodology

The methodologies taken into consideration in this study have been mentioned in ‘The Practice of Social Research’ (Babbie, 2010), and ‘Social Science Methodology’ (Gerring, 2011). Babbie (2010) and Gerring (2011) have both written about the basics regarding social science research.

3.1. Research design

Three main research methods will be used in this study in order to answer the descriptive research question. The research question will be answered based on a literature review, a database analysis and company interviews.

The literature review indicates the conclusions on the importance of international experiences on employability according to current studies. Supporting the literature review, a database analysis of job vacancy websites is included. This database analysis includes two different job vacancy websites and will investigate the value of international experiences in job descriptions. Different company interviews are also included in the study to elaborate on the importance of international experiences of recent graduates. Within the company interviews, conclusions will be made for the employer, in the form of a qualitative case study (Babbie, 2010, pp. 90-96) . Three companies in different sectors will be interviewed to see how they value international experiences of candidates applying for positions in the company.

3.2. Data collection and data analysis

The study includes three research methods:

- A literature review
- A database analysis of two major Dutch job vacancy websites
- Interviews with three companies on their value of international experiences for recruiting and selecting employees.

The literature review will include information on previous studies on the importance of internationalisation on employability. The literature review will be established on the basis of different studies and their conclusions on the benefits of international experiences and employability.

The analysis of the job vacancy websites will include an analysis of how international experiences are valued among different sectors. A comparative table will show how many companies seem to value

internationalisation in higher education. Further analysis of these vacancies will show under which specific circumstances this is important.

In the case selection for the interviews, companies are selected which are based in the Netherlands and which focus on recruitment among recent higher education graduates in the form of graduate starting jobs. As stated on websites of major employment agencies in the Netherlands, the most recent degrees and activities are most relevant in the selection of jobs. Therefore it is most logic to include employers that focus on recent higher education graduates. The employers included in the interviews will not only include companies that operate internationally, but also companies that operate nationally to a big extent. These companies can be analysed in the sense of how they value internationalisation in higher education to contribute to personal development, as literature suggests, and how the value can arise from globalisation.

Interview questions cover two different areas, the first part consists of question on the importance of internationalisation in the recruitment process, and the second part consists of questions in the area of the perceived obtained skills during international experiences. In general, the answers will give the perception of a specific company on the importance of internationalisation in higher education. In the interview it is specified that the questions cover recent graduates, which have graduated within the last two years, because study related activities are most relevant among this group. Multiple employers will have a case study on how they view the importance of internationalisation in higher education. Conclusions will be drawn on the basis of a cross-case analysis which is a part of a qualitative data analysis. The cross-case analysis will look for patterns appearing across several observations represented in different cases (Babbie, 2010). The different company respondents will be my cases from which to look for a pattern.

Following the literature review, the database analysis of job vacancy websites and the company interviews, a reflection can be made on the established assumptions. A conclusion can be generated on how international experiences obtained during studies can contribute to the employability of higher education graduates and also under which circumstances this is perceived as most important.

3.3. Limitations of the study

Ideally it would be best for the study to select a large group of companies based in the Netherlands in order to generate general conclusions. A large number of companies should be selected and interviewed. Companies could be selected in the field of management, consultancy, production, chemistry, biology, health etc. Different companies would be selected in the commercial sector, the public sector and the research sector. It would also be interesting to compare small, medium and large

sized companies, companies that clearly operate international and companies that operate mainly local. With a large variation in the response group of companies, the study would give reliable data and generate an extensive answer for the research question. In this study it would become clear under which circumstances international experience would be requested so students would be able to see if their preferred job position or company would request this.

However, it would take too much time to interview such a large number of companies and include this in the thesis. In practice it also became clear that a lot of companies which have been approached with regard to this study were not eager to participate in an interview. This means that the ideal study to answer the research question is too complex for the purpose of this thesis. Therefore this study alternatively focuses on a literature review, job vacancy websites and recruitment departments of companies. On the basis of this research methodology, the research question will be answered. Limitations of the study will be that the study objects are not ideal for answering the research question and generating a general conclusion. Conclusions can be made within the limits of the research, meaning within the investigated types of companies. Within the reflection it will be important to keep in mind the limitations of the study.

4. Literature review

The first part of the methodology of this study covers a literature review. Various scholars have written about the benefits of internationalisation in higher education for students after graduation. Many articles include the benefits for graduates when they seek employment. Many scholars claim that the employability of an individual increases when students have had international experiences during their studies. The benefits of internationalisation in higher education included in existing literature will be used to create factors in the empirical research which can be measured. This literature review will include the recurring aspects of the perceived benefits of internationalisation in higher education as seen in existing scientific literature.

4.1. ERASMUS skills and European identity study

Jacobone and Moro (2014) have conducted a research on the impact of the ERASMUS programme with regard to skills and the European identity. The study tries to focus on three main levels of effects of the ERASMUS programme; ‘self-experience’, ‘acquisition of language, intercultural, self-efficacy and employability skills’ and ‘European and national identity’. For this study a longitudinal survey was conducted among 505 students and included an experimental group (former ERASMUS students) and a control group (non-ERASMUS students) in order to investigate the real impact of international experiences.

The survey has shown that students are motivated to participate in student mobility due to the desire to engage in new cultural relationships and linguistic development. It was also seen as an opportunity for leisure and cultural activities. Academic growth is seen as one of the least important reasons to spend time abroad.

Figure 4.1: Most appreciated aspects of mobility (in %) (Jacobone & Moro, 2014, p. 9)



Figure 4.1 shows that students rate the professional academic motives as less important compared to personal skills. The most important aspects of student mobility were: exercising a foreign language (95.3%), the European experience (75.3%), making friends abroad (74.7%) and acquiring cultural skills (74.2%).

Mobility in the framework of ERASMUS promotes the European identity, individual employability, development of skills demanded by the European labour market and also encourages international understanding (Jacobone & Moro, 2014). In the study the most appreciated skills by former ERASMUS students were always non-academic and mostly oriented towards personal development and skills.

4.2. The VALERA study

The following three figures presented in this chapter are from the VALERA study which was conducted between 2004 and 2006 with regard to the professional impact of mobility. The study was commissioned by the Directorate General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) in order to assess the impact of mobility on “student’s access to employment and career development” (Janson, et al., 2009, p. 10). The relevant parts of the VALERA study for this study include surveys among former mobile students (N= 4,589), and the surveys among ERASMUS experts (N=67).

Figure 4.2: Competences at time of graduation – Self-assessed by former ERASMUS students (Janson, et al., 2009, p. 35)

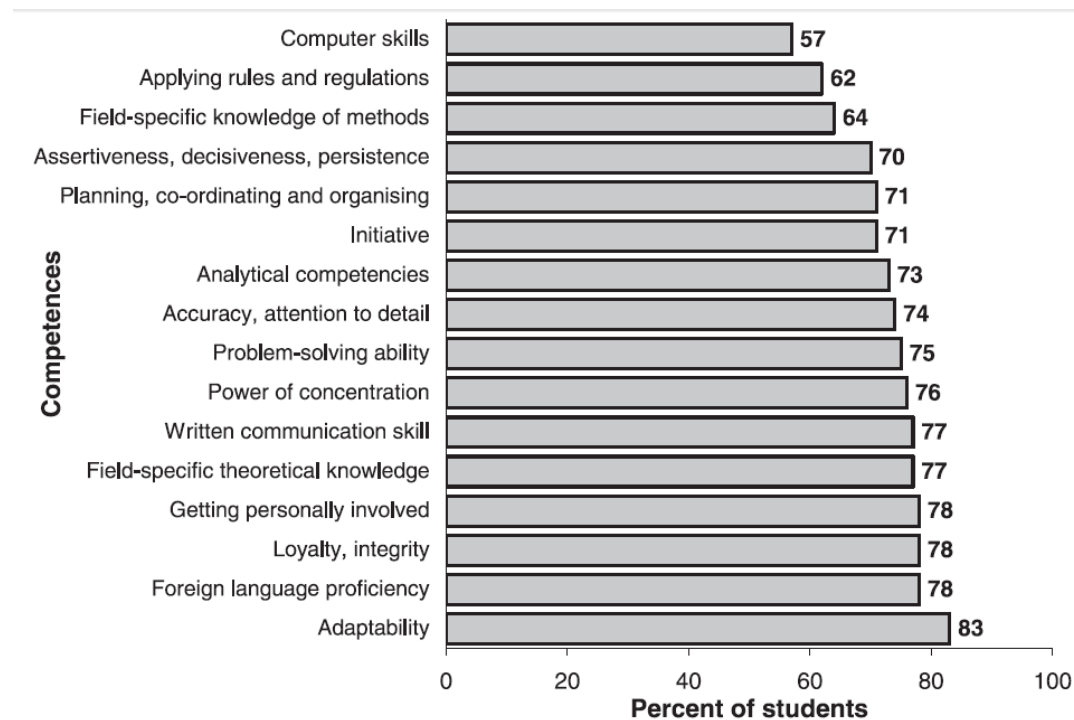


Figure 4.2 shows the self-assessment of former ERASMUS students with regard to competencies. Two of the competencies that score highest among the former ERASMUS students are ‘foreign

language proficiency’ and ‘adaptability’. Both skills seem to be relevantly obtained during the study period abroad. As compared to none-mobile students, former ERASMUS students assess themselves superiorly with respect to knowledge of other countries, foreign language and intercultural understanding in over 90% of the time (Janson, et al., 2009).

The following figure from the study of ‘The professional value of ERASMUS mobility’ (Janson, et al., 2009) shows the competences of former ERASMUS students upon graduation as compared to those of ‘non-mobile students’ from the view of ERASMUS experts. The figure shows how many percent of ERASMUS experts believe ERASMUS makes no difference on the development a specific competency, or if ERASMUS shows a better development of a competency. The ERASMUS experts consider the formerly mobile students superior as compared to non-mobile students with respect to socio-communicative competences, intercultural competences, foreign language competences. The majority of the ERASMUS experts also consider former mobile students superior regarding all the competencies. In none of the competencies do more than 44% of ERASMUS experts believe mobility makes no difference of the developed competency.

Figure 4.3: Competencies of former ERASMUS students upon graduation as compared to those of ‘non-mobile students’ from the view of ERASMUS experts (Janson, et al., 2009, p. 36)

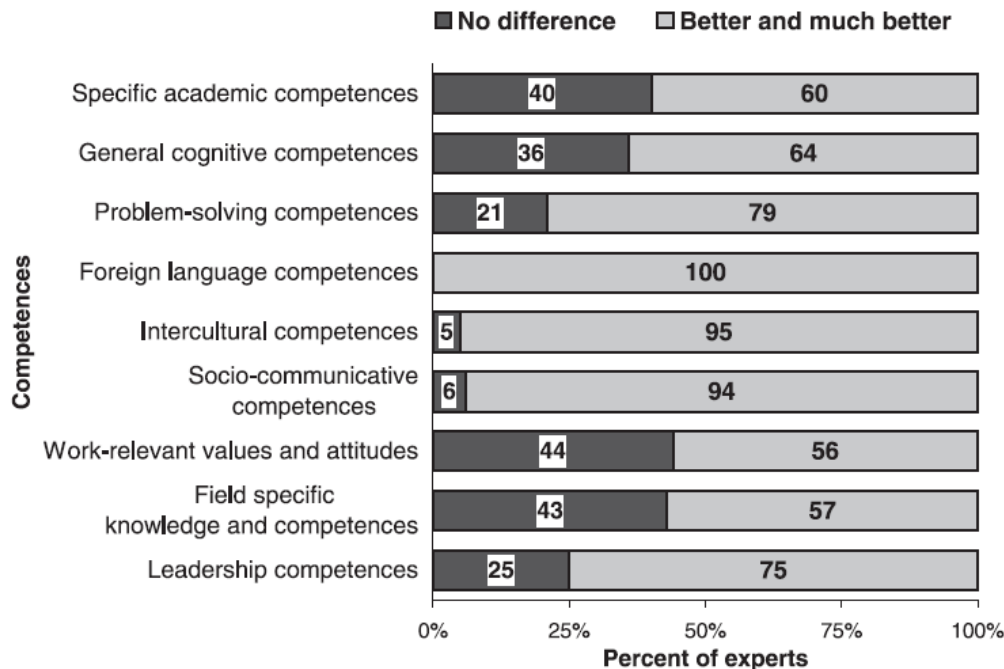


Figure 4.3 especially notes the contrast in foreign language competences which 100% of the experts believe former ERASMUS students have better. Also, intercultural competences and socio-communicative competences seem to be better developed among mobile students by respectively 95%

and 94% of the experts. In all competencies experts believe mobile students are better developed with the mentioned competences, even the ones which are not specifically recognized as international.

Both within the self-assessment by former mobile students, as well as the assessment by ERASMUS experts of former mobile and non-mobile students, competencies seem to score high within the first group. Following the theory and survey outcomes from the study ‘The Professional Value of ERASMUS Mobility’ (Janson, et al., 2009) there is evidence to assume that students that have had international experiences, or as defined in the study, ‘mobility’ during studies have both general and international competencies that are better developed as compared to students without these experiences.

Figure 4.4 shows the results of a survey among employers and their value of international experiences within a group of young employees. In the survey they were asked to evaluate their young employees that recently graduated with a distinction between employees that have had international experiences during their studies as compared to similar young employees without this experience.

Figure 4.4: Competencies of young graduates with or without international experience according to employers (Janson, et al., 2009, p. 39)

	Young graduates	
	with international experience	without international experience
<i>International competences</i>		
Foreign language proficiency	88	48
Knowledge/understanding of international differences in culture and society, modes of behaviour, life styles, etc.	76	28
Ability to work with people from different cultural backgrounds	76	40
Professional knowledge of other countries (e.g. economical, sociological, legal knowledge)	59	16
<i>Knowledge and methods</i>		
Computer skills	69	66
Field-specific knowledge of methods	64	54
Field-specific theoretical knowledge	62	58
<i>General competences</i>		
Adaptability	81	57
Initiative	79	62
Getting personally involved	79	67
Assertiveness, decisiveness, persistence	75	57
Analytical competences	70	59
Problem-solving ability	70	58
Written communication skills	70	58
Planning, co-ordinating and organising	67	50
Loyalty, integrity	66	62
Power of concentration	63	59
Accuracy, attention to detail	59	57
Applying rules and regulations	58	52

Figure 4.4 shows how employers assess the competences of young graduates in their company with regard to international experiences. The table includes multiple types of competencies; international

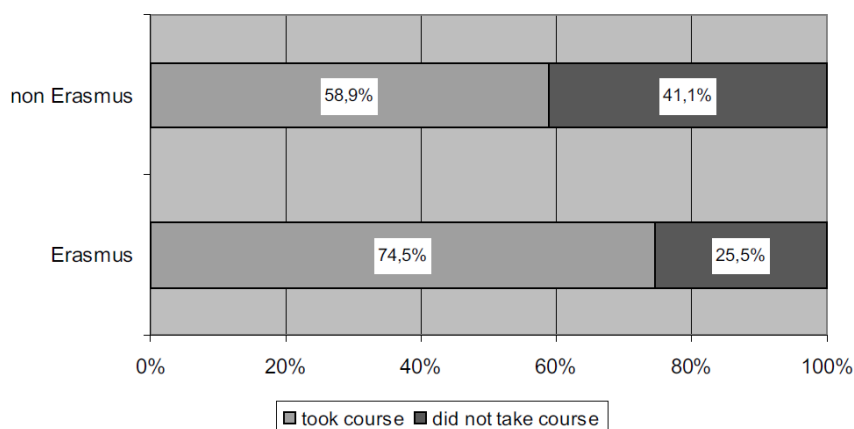
competences, knowledge and methods and general competences. From the figure it is immediately clear that young graduates with international experience score higher in the international competencies than young graduates without international experience according to the employers. Employers rate foreign language proficiency, understanding of international differences and the ability to work with different cultural background of young employees with international experiences significantly higher than young employees without these experiences. The most notable differences with regard to competences other than the international competences are the general competences, specifically the competence of adaptability (81% versus 57%). Other noteworthy differences are in the area of initiative (79% versus 62%) and assertiveness, decisiveness and persistence (75% versus 57%). In all competencies (general, international and knowledge and methods) formerly mobile students never score lower in competencies assessment when compared to non-mobile students.

4.3. The Erasmus Student Network study

The Erasmus Student Network (ESN) has conducted a study on ‘The experience of studying abroad for exchange students in Europe’. The aim of the study was to evaluate the experience of studying abroad in Europe and how students rate ESN support. The research was in cooperation with local ESN branches and consisted of surveys among 7754 students from European universities that have been on an exchange period in Europe.

The following figure shows the percentages of both ERASMUS and non-ERASMUS students that went on abroad in Europe and whether they followed a language course or not.

Figure 4.5: Participation in language courses by ERASMUS and non-ERASMUS students (Erasmus Student Network, 2005)



The figure shows more ERASMUS students (74,5%) took a language course while abroad than students that went abroad through other mobility programmes (58,9%). Overall, an average of 73% of students participated in a language courses while staying abroad. Students who enrolled in a language

course abroad showed a higher progress of language acquisition progress compared to those that did not enrol in a course abroad (Erasmus Student Network, 2005).

In the survey the students were asked what the most important things were that they learned when they were abroad. The different responses have been categorised to the following groups: acquiring cultural skills and knowledge, maturity and self development, social networks, academic enrichment and the value of discovery and exploring new possibilities. Within the category of ‘acquiring cultural skills and knowledge’ most replies covered: communication and work in international environment, knowledge about host country, how to survive in a foreign country, open-mindedness, tolerance and language. For ‘maturity and self development the replies consisted of: being independent, determination in solving problems, self confidence, flexibility and personal growth. In the category ‘social networks’, most responses were: the creation of friendships and communication skills. When talking about ‘academic enrichment’ students responded that adaptation to different systems and planning career paths were most important in this category. Openness to new and grabbing opportunities seem to be most important in the value of discovery and exploring new possibilities.

The most important motives for students in the survey to go abroad were: to practice a foreign language (60% for Erasmus, 41% for non Erasmus), to have new experiences (53%, 49%), to enhance future career prospects (41%, 40%) and to learn about different cultures (32%, 33%).

4.4. Conclusions following the literature review

The most important findings following the literature review of the first study is that employers and universities distinguish between two main types of skills. The first covers relevant academic skills that are necessary for a specific job position within an organisation, whereas the second covers ‘non-traditional’, ‘soft skills’, which can also be defined as competencies and general personal development. The next two studies also include the different skills and competencies that are previously mentioned by the first study.

The European Commission has stressed the importance of student mobility for several decades. Language courses have been developed in the framework of mobility programmes in order to increase foreign language skills among European students and to increase the overall competitiveness of the European Union in the economy. However, the Commission also aims at increasing the employability of students with the established mobility programmes. As a result of a globalised world, the EU had to respond to this in the form of increasing the internationalisation in higher education, as explained in chapter 2.2.1.

The literature review also suggests that for all kinds of companies international experience can be beneficial. International experience will develop the desired ‘second type’ of skills such as general competencies which are valued by employers. Internationally oriented companies will value foreign language skills and international competencies of young employees, next to this ‘second type’ of skills.

Overall, students seem to highly value their experiences abroad, whether it has to do with skills that will improve a student’s academic knowledge, or skills for personal development. In the survey the students indicate that they have extended their overall skills.

5. Database analysis

The second methodology of this study includes a database analysis of job vacancy websites. From the analysis of the job vacancy websites it is envisaged to become clear to what extent and under what kind of circumstances companies seem to value internationalisation in HE. The analysis includes how often international experience as previously defined, is explicitly requested by companies in the vacancies on large job vacancy websites. The database is also analysed on how often companies request different language skills in their vacancies.

5.1. Job vacancy website analysis

The following table shows an analysis of two job vacancy websites ‘www.intermediair.nl’ on 25 May 2014 and ‘www.monsterboard.nl’ on 26 May 2014. This means most vacancies are from the last 2-3 weeks. However, some vacancies for larger companies seem to be posted permanently on the job vacancy websites. The database analysis includes a count of all relevant job vacancies with regard to international competencies. The international competencies include: the request for international experience (intercultural competences), demonstrable English language skills and demonstrable language skills other than English, which can include German, Spanish, Italian etc.

A selection has been made for job vacancies on certain criteria in order keep in line with the operationalisation of the graduates as defined earlier. Vacancies have been selected on two criteria namely:

- jobs that require a university level bachelor/master degree
- jobs at ‘starters level’ or with no explicit necessary job experience as described in the vacancy

All vacancies included in Table 5.1 have already undergone this selection.

Table 5.1 includes vacancies divided by operational sector. The vacancies have been divided by operational sector to see if some sectors stand out in requests for international competencies. Each individual count in the table is equal to one vacancy in this sector. Multiple individual vacancies can come from the same company.

All relevant vacancies have been analysed with regard to the job requirements, focussing specifically on explicitly requested international experience and different language skills of the applicant. International experience within the job requirement descriptions covers a number of specifics, namely: internships abroad, the demand for experience in an international environment and evidence of adaptability in an international setting. Language skills cover both the request for English language proficiency and demand for language skills other than English.

The job vacancy websites ‘www.intermediair.nl’ and ‘www.monsterboard.nl’ include thousands of vacancies for all levels and sectors. When selecting vacancies regarding the criteria mentioned above, the number of relevant vacancies has declined. It is difficult to reflect on different types of companies that include three or less vacancies, since outcomes may be incidental, however, overall outcomes can be mentioned for these cases.

Operational sector/ types of companies

Among the different sectors it becomes apparent that some sectors hardly ever explicitly request international experience. However, vacancies that specifically recruit recent graduates, in other words, companies that explicitly do not want their applicants to have more than two years experience value international experience the most. There are a large number of vacancies on ‘www.intermediair.nl’ and ‘www.monsterboard.nl’ which specifically recruit recent graduates in some kind of junior trainee position; these companies are distributed among multiple sectors. However, these junior trainee positions mostly seem to be present among positions regarding management. Companies that have vacancies that do not necessarily require experience, without focussing on recruiting recent graduates seem to value international experiences less.

In the sector of Sales, Technology and Engineering, Logistics and Procurement and the Financial Sector and Business Services, the total number of requests in vacancies related to international competencies seem to be the highest, ranging between 31.3% and 48.9% (the sectors with $N \leq 2$ have not been taken into account).

Number of requested international experiences

In 11.8% of the analysed vacancies the company requested international experience from a candidate. International experience as defined by the companies in the vacancies, mostly cover internships abroad. Internships abroad are mostly requested in the engineering sector. In other vacancies, companies ask for evidence that an employee can adapt easily in an international environment; this is the case for companies that operate in a multinational setting.

Number of requested English language skills

In 37.6% of the analysed vacancies the company requested demonstrable English language proficiency. Compared to the other two types of international competencies which have been investigated, English language skills are requested the most.

Number of requested language skills other than English

In 5.4% of the analysed vacancies the company requested language proficiency in a language other than English. This does not include the first language used in the company, but a language next to

English and the spoken language in the company. Most requests in this area indicated the preference for German; however, some companies stated in general the request for proficiency in ‘another European language such as Spanish or Italian’.

Total amount of vacancies with requests related to international competencies

The next column in the table includes ‘total amount of vacancies with requests related to international competencies’. This column shows a count of the total number of vacancies which have been analysed, which include some kind of request related to international competencies, meaning, the total amount of vacancies which include either the request for international experience, English language proficiency, or language proficiency other than the English language.

In total 38.2% of all the 186 relevant analysed vacancies include some kind of request related to international competencies as described above.

Table 5.1: International competencies as seen in job vacancies on websites: 'www.intermediar.nl' and 'www.monsterboard.nl'

	Number of requested International Experiences	Number of requested English language skills	Number of requested language skills other than English	Total amount of vacancies with requests related to international competencies	Total vacancies
Sales	2 (15.4%)	6 (46.2%)	3 (23.1%)	6 (46.2%)	13 (100%)
Logistics/Procurement	4 (18.2%)	7 (31.8%)	3 (13.6%)	7 (31.8%)	22 (100%)
Administrative/secretarial	0 (0%)	2 (66.7%)	0 (0%)	2 (66.7%)	3 (100%)
Technology/Engineering	4 (8.9%)	22 (48.9%)	3 (6.7%)	22 (48.9%)	45 (100%)
Accountancy	0 (0%)	1 (33.3%)	0 (0%)	1 (33.3%)	3 (100%)
Consultancy	1 (10%)	3 (30%)	0 (0%)	3 (30%)	10 (100%)
Environmental sector	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)
Financial sector/Business services	8 (26.7%)	13 (43.3%)	0 (0%)	13 (43.3%)	30 (100%)
Construction	0 (0%)	2 (50%)	0 (0%)	2 (50%)	4 (100%)
Energy sector	1 (16.7%)	4 (66.7)	0 (0%)	4 (66.7)	6 (100%)
Consumer goods sector	0 (0%)	2 (100%)	0 (0%)	2 (100%)	2 (100%)
ICT Sector	0 (0%)	5 (20.8%)	0 (0%)	5 (20.8%)	24 (100%)
Legal services	0 (0%)	1 (25%)	0 (0%)	1 (25%)	4 (100%)
Government/Non-profit	2 (66.7%)	1 (33.3%)	0 (0%)	2 (66.7%)	3 (100%)
Health sector	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	18 (100%)
Chemical sector	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)
Total:	22 (11.8%)	70 (37.6%)	10 (5.4%)	71 (38.2%)	N=186 (100%)

5.2. Reflection on ‘www.intermediair.nl’ and ‘www.monsterboard.nl’

From the relevant sample of N=186 from both databases, the number of vacancies that explicitly requested international experience, or explicitly expressed the value of international experiences was 22. This results in $22 \cdot 100 / 186 = 11.8\%$. In **11.8%** of the vacancies for positions for recent graduates with a higher education degree, international experience explicitly was requested. When looking at the average percentage for all sectors, the logistics and procurement sector (18.2%) and the financial sector and banking services (26.7%) seem to request international experiences the most in their vacancies. The government sector is N=3, therefore it is difficult to make clear assumptions about this sector, even though this sector seems to require international experiences the most (66.7%).

In $70 \cdot 100 / 186 = 37.6\%$ of the vacancies English language proficiency was requested by employers. In most cases this was due to the fact that the company operates in an international setting. English language proficiency was requested in order to communicate either internally or with companies associates. In $10 \cdot 100 / 186 = 5.4\%$ of the vacancies language proficiency other than Dutch or English was requested. In most cases the request was for German proficiency (9) indicating Dutch-German economic or political cooperation, following ‘any other European languages such as Spanish, French and Italian (1). In this last case no specific language was requested, indicating an appreciation of international competencies in general.

On both websites the Sales sector seems to highly require language skills. This is the case in English language proficiency (46.2%) as well as the command of a second foreign language, in most cases German. The ICT sector values both international experiences (0%) and language skills the least.

Companies that operate internationally often ask for a good command of the English language, this is similar among multiple sectors. The companies that ask for English proficiency usually state that this is necessary because the company works in an international setting. Among these companies it is mostly requested that candidates should have a willingness to travel abroad for the position. It is noteworthy to say that these companies usually do not explicitly ask for previous international experience even though they mention a candidate should be willing to travel abroad for the position.

In management junior trainee positions for companies in all sectors international experience, listed as a competency, is requested most often. Positions that ask for international experience of the candidate ask this among other extra-curricular activities or in the list of competency requirements. It also seems that companies that recruit multiple graduates for a listed position value international experience more than vacancies that are looking for one candidate.

In vacancies in the area of engineering/technology, internships abroad are valued the most when looking at the type of international experience which is requested. Especially for employers that

specifically recruit among recent graduates without work experience, companies ask for internship experience and specifically if this internship took place abroad.

In all the 186 analysed vacancies, **38.2%** of these vacancies included either one or more requests of international competencies. This included intercultural understanding (international experiences), and English and other than English language proficiency.

It is noteworthy to mention that the international experiences of young academics have been identified as part of international competencies during this analysis. However, during the analysis of the vacancy databases, it became clear that some companies described their request for international experiences as more of a general competency instead of an international competency, so more as a characteristic of adaptability and initiative instead of intercultural competencies and understanding. This became clear when companies included their request for international experience among the requests for extracurricular activities such as board years or relevant part-time jobs. In this analysis international experiences have been included in international competencies (the knowledge and understanding of differences in culture and society), even though some companies place this in the area of general competencies.

6. Company interviews

Following the website review of ‘www.intermediar.nl’ and ‘www.monsterboard.nl’, three companies have been selected for an interview with the topic of value international experience among recent graduates. The companies include: Unique, Rijkswaterstaat and Randstad.. Rijkswaterstaat is a Dutch organisation operating in the public sector with no explicit international ties, recruiting in the sectors of ICT, engineering and procurement (finance). Randstad Nederland and Unique are Dutch employment agencies. They are both commercial companies which recruit graduates for junior management positions within Randstad and Unique and for other companies. However, due to the nature of the interviews with the specific representatives of Randstad and Unique, this chapter will focus on the job positions within Randstad and Unique itself.

6.1. Unique Nederland

For the first interview Unique Nederland has been selected. The interview has been conducted with the Business Team Manager from Unique in Enschede.

Unique Nederland is a firm which is the HR specialist for small and medium sized enterprises, and large companies. Unique is part of USG People and has over 100 offices around the Netherlands (Unique, 2014). The interview mainly focuses on recruitment of candidates for management positions within Unique itself.

The role of international study related international experience during the selection of new employees

The most important points that Unique looks for when they are recruiting candidates for new management positions are the amount of time a candidate has spent obtaining their degree from the university and if they have had any work experience in the form of a part-time job during their studies. International experiences obtained during studies are not relevant for Unique in the recruitment process of selecting new employees. If international experiences are visible on a resume it will be seen as a positive point, however, this is not expected. There is no difference whether a candidate has spent a short period of time (three months/one semester) abroad or whether a candidate has an entire degree from abroad. An important possible advantage of international experiences for Unique are that graduates that have spent time abroad can become fluent in a language.

The added value of international study related international experience for the knowledge and skills of new employees

Candidates that have had international experiences get a broader view of the world. When looking back at employees that have had these experiences, Unique sees that these employees often value the Dutch way of work more than candidates without international experience. It is positive that they have

experienced cultural differences. These experiences influence development of an individual which can have positive effects later on in the position. Unique does not believe international experiences can contribute to the specific knowledge of an employee that can later be applicable in specific activities in a position.

6.2. Rijkswaterstaat

For the second interview Rijkswaterstaat has been selected. The interview has been conducted with the Project Leader for Corporate Mobility from Rijkswaterstaat in Utrecht.

“Rijkswaterstaat is part of the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment and responsible for the design, construction, management and maintenance of the main infrastructure facilities in the Netherlands. This includes: the main road network, the main waterway network and the main water systems.” (Rijkswaterstaat, 2014a)

In the Netherlands Rijkswaterstaat manages the Dutch main highway network and main water way network. Rijkswaterstaat has 9000 employees that are spread out over 200 locations in the Netherlands (Rijkswaterstaat, 2014b). According to the website ‘www.werkenvoornederland.nl’, Rijkswaterstaat recruits recent graduates on a large scale. These recruits include graduates with a university level degree, and cover the sectors of ICT, (civil) engineering, procurement, and finance. The candidates should not have more than three years of work experience to be eligible for the positions, making Rijkswaterstaat a case study which includes large scale recruiters for graduate jobs. Within the job positions in the different sectors, the organisation is looking for university level graduates to train while they are employed at the organisation in order to develop themselves further within this organisation.

The role of international study-related international experience during the selection of new employees

Rijkswaterstaat recruits recent graduates in the sectors of ICT, (civil) engineering, procurement and finance. Within recruiting employees for these sectors, educational background is most important for the first selection of appropriate candidates. Next to the relevant educational background any work experience obtained during studies that can be relevant for working at Rijkswaterstaat can contribute to the selection of candidates. If a candidate has demonstrable affinity with the working field this can be positive. Next to these general requirements, Rijkswaterstaat values activities of graduates which could demonstrate a certain level of ambition. These activities can cover content related committees, volunteering work, or substantive participation in focus groups or projects. Overall, these are the main points on which Rijkswaterstaat selects candidates for the positions with regard to their resume.

For the selection of candidates for the afore mentioned positions, having international experiences which are clear on a resume is not a must. However, this can be a positive point when Rijkswaterstaat is evaluating a candidate's resume. For Rijkswaterstaat it is more important to see how someone has reached for example an internship abroad. If a candidate has gone through demonstrable effort in order to achieve this international experience, or if they had to have a network in order to reach this, it is valued the most. Rijkswaterstaat does not value international experiences during studies on its own. The most important thing about international experiences is that it demonstrates the competencies of a candidate in order to arrange all of this. For each individual case this can be evaluated differently, therefore it really depends on the candidate, sector and international experience in order to value the specific benefits of the international experience. For the engineering and ICT positions within Rijkswaterstaat content related knowledge is most important when looking at resumes. In the other areas like procurement and finance, competencies are more relevant and therefore valued more.

Rijkswaterstaat does not distinguish in the value of international experience for candidates that have obtained an entire degree abroad and candidates that have had three months to a semester of international experience. Rijkswaterstaat is part of the Dutch national government and even though they have international cooperation and EU funded projects, proficiency in English is not explicitly demanded.

Within the overall recruitment process for the positions for university level graduates ambition seems to be the most important factor next to educational background. Ambition is seen through participation in committees during studies, part-time jobs next to studies, volunteer work and other kinds of extra projects that candidates have participated in during their studies. International experience obtained during studies will definitely be seen as a positive point, but only next to the other dimensions of ambition.

The added value of international study-related international experience for the knowledge and skills of new employees

When candidates apply for a position international experience can be valued at Rijkswaterstaat. This means it is a positive point when selecting candidates on the basis of their resume. They assume that positive points for resumes will show the capacities that a candidate has. These capacities can be of value for the positions to which a candidate applies. First of all it is important for recruiting new employees, but Rijkswaterstaat does not expect applicants with international experience to be better suitable for a position when looking at the content of a position. International experience merely shows a level of ambition, which is valued by Rijkswaterstaat.

6.3. Randstad Nederland

For the third interview Randstad Nederland has been selected. The interview has been conducted with the Corporate Recruiter/Project Coordinator from Randstad in Diemen.

Randstad is a multinational human resource consulting firm based in the Netherlands. The firm has more than 28 000 employees worldwide working at Randstad itself. Randstad is a company that operates in human resource services and can provide companies with flexible solutions in the labour market (Randstad, 2014). According to Randstad (2014), the HR firm recruits own employees that have a university level masters degree for certain positions including management positions. Randstad aims this position at 'young talents'. It can be concluded that Randstad mainly aims at recent graduates without work experience with these management positions. There are 6 rounds of recruitment for the management positions at Randstad every year. The recruitment for university level graduates takes place in an organised way, year round, on a large scale.

The role of international study-related international experience during the selection of new employees

Randstad itself recruits graduates in the area of management. Randstad would prefer graduates with a commercial degree, however, the specific degree does not have to be relevant. As long as candidates have a higher education degree and demonstrable affinity with commercialism, candidates are welcome to apply for management positions. When first selecting candidates for a position, Randstad looks at the commercialism of a candidate which can become apparent from commercial or sales experience from a student job or competencies. Also, entrepreneurship of a candidate is an important selective criterion; this can be seen through different extra-curricular activities that demonstrate a general development. Overall, the diversity of a resume is valued very much. A diverse resume shows Randstad something about life experience and entrepreneurship of a candidate. International experiences are not per se requested when recruiting new employees. However, international experiences on a resume can show something about the general development of a candidate and will therefore be valued positively. Randstad does not distinguish in the different international experiences, for example whether a candidate has spent a short time during their studies abroad or whether they have obtained an entire degree from abroad. All international experiences are valuable for Randstad. The international experiences are valuable because going abroad, making arrangements to go abroad and also having the courage to take this step shows something about general development, which is of great value when recruiting new employees. Candidates that have had international experiences have gained in the area of personal development, which is valuable among graduates. International experiences have contributed to life experience which can benefit a employee's career in the future.

The added value of international study related international experience for the knowledge and skills of new employees

Randstad is a firm which operates internationally. Therefore international experience for employees can contribute to the knowledge of these employees once they work for Randstad. These employees can have the benefit that they can communicate in a different language, but also in a different culture. These employees will have a broader view on the world of labour and the world in general. Therefore international experiences obtained during studies can be positive once this person has found employment. This international experience is mostly present within social and communicative skills, which are of course important skills in the commercial sector. Randstad also operates across borders, therefore they value international competencies, however they do not believe this has to be directly linked to international experiences. Overall these experiences will be most valuable for multinational companies according to Randstad.

Randstad believes higher education institutions should stimulate students to undertake many different activities next to their studies. This will be positive for further personal development. This will give a student the experience which companies are looking for. Personal development is possible in different ways; part-time/student jobs next to studying, internships, a board year, travelling or studying abroad. A combination of these experiences will eventually make the profile of a graduate. This profile will determine the suitability as a starting employee for an organisation.

6.4. Conclusions following the company interviews

For the interviews three companies have been selected. As mentioned in the research methodology part, this was not the ideal situation. However, on the basis of these interviews it is possible to make several conclusions with regard to the importance of international experiences.

In all interviews the companies mention that international experiences are not explicitly requested when selecting candidates for an open job position. Similar among all three companies is also that one important part of the selection of candidates is that of personal development, motivation and competencies which are visible in a resume. Especially Randstad believes international experiences can be seen as evidence of developed competencies. Also a diverse resume is valued when selecting candidates, the companies agree that international experience is a positive point on a resume. However, more activities on a resume can show the development of competencies that are desired for a position.

International experience can therefore be evident for motivation and competency development, which are important selection criteria for employers. When selecting candidates for a position these international experiences can be seen as a method to show the employer that the desired competencies have been developed. However, this can also be apparent from other activities present on a resume.

7. Conclusions and Reflection

7.1. Reality of assumptions

Following the literature review, database analysis of job vacancy websites and company interviews several conclusions can be made. In chapter 2 several assumptions have been made following the theoretical framework which has been established. This chapter will focus on answering the assumptions. Since the assumptions and the sub-questions can both be answered in the same kind of way, they have been combined in this chapter in order to reduce repetition of conclusions.

Five sub-questions were generated in order to answer the main research question, namely:

1. What can the theory on recruitment and selection processes tell about the needs in the labour market?
2. How is the role of internationalisation in higher education linked to employability?
3. What are the possible benefits of internationalisation in higher education for students and employers?
4. How often and under which circumstances do companies explicitly request international experience in job vacancies?
5. To what extent do a few case study companies indicate that international experiences are valuable when recruiting young academics?

The five sub-questions are answered throughout the different chapters of the thesis and can also be identified in the answers of the assumptions.

Assumption (1):) *“Young academics with international experiences are expected to have better developed general competencies as compared to young academics without these experiences.”*

The theory chapter on recruitment and selection processes shows that setting up a competency framework is very important in human resource management. The competency framework has to be set up in order to create a suitable pool of applicants in the recruitment process. The competency framework is also important in order to select appropriate candidates for further reference. The theory does not focus on the specific necessary skills, but on how candidates should be recruited and selected in order to generate the most suitable pool of candidates for the employer.

In Chapter 4.1. the literature review defines two sets of skills that are important in relation to conceptualisation of employability. The two sets of skills that are defined are: traditional academic knowledge needed for a specific job positions, and soft skills including general personal and

competency development. Scholars elaborate on the fact that these ‘second set’ of skills cannot be obtained from merely academic knowledge. International experiences during studies are suggested to contribute to the development of these general and international competencies that employers value when selecting candidates for a job position. The literature review in Chapter 4 states that employers rate both international and general competencies higher for young employees with international experiences as compared to their young employees without this kind of experience.

In all three interviews, the companies claim that competencies and ambition are very important in the selection process of new employees. When the relevance of international experience in the selection process was asked it became clear that this was not a necessary prerequisite in any of the cases. However, when asked in context with general competency development the reactions on international experiences were more positive. Employers do believe that international experiences can contribute to personal development and competencies of an individual. Keeping in mind that more aspects can contribute to competency development, the study can conclude international experiences contribute to the improvement of general competencies which are requested by employers for a job position. However, most interviewed representatives of companies kept acknowledging that there are more ways to develop general competencies, and that international experiences could only be one way to acquire these.

According to the literature review and specifically figure 4.1., employers rate the development of general and international competencies higher among young employees with international experiences as compared to young employees without this international experience. Reflecting back on the theory on recruitment and selection, companies will select candidates with the best developed competencies necessary to execute a job.

The results of the company interviews show that international experiences are valued if this means that they show a higher level of personal competency development. However, the interviewees of the companies stress that there are multiple factors that could increase competencies and personal development. Therefore it would depend on the different circumstances of the international experience whether this is valued. Within the vacancies the percentage that seems to value international experiences is 11.8%, however, the job vacancies always include general competencies in the personal profile. When reflecting on the interviews, the companies believe international experiences can contribute to the development of general competencies. So even if it is not explicitly stated in the job vacancies, companies might still see it as evidence of general competency development. To conclude, companies will look for evidence of the development of general competencies on a resume, and they will prefer candidates with the best developed general competencies according to them.

Assumption (2): *“Young academics with international experiences are expected to be more attractive for employers than young academics without these experiences since organisations are expected to value the obtained international competencies in the recruitment and selection of new employees.”*

Assumption (3): *“Companies will express to prefer candidates with international experiences in the job descriptions on job vacancy websites.”*

With current increasing mobility numbers due to programmes such as ERASMUS and globalisation in general, many universities have established degrees in English. International experiences put students into contact with different languages and cultures. Also, with the establishment of ERASMUS Intensive Language Courses, the EU has taken initiatives in order to promote the learning of foreign languages. Scholars agree on the fact that international experiences of young academics contribute to the development of foreign language skills, intercultural development and the ability to work with people from a different cultural background as compared to young academics without international language and cultural experience.

From the company interviews it became apparent that international experiences are valued more when these experiences clearly result in better foreign language skills. This was especially important for Randstad which also operates multinational. Candidates' cultural experiences were also expected to be able to contribute to the selection for a job position if one could demonstrate that they have benefitted from the knowledge of a foreign language. Looking back at the literature review and the ERASMUS Intensive Language Courses, the EU has created a way to acknowledge the extent to which a student masters a foreign language. When combining these two aspects of the study, student mobility and evidence of knowledge of a foreign language and intercultural competencies, the conclusion can be made that to a certain recognisable extent, international experiences can improve language skills, which can result in a better employability.

A contrast was found between the goals of the EU and companies in the labour market when looking at student mobility in the literature review and the interviews. The EU has always stressed the importance of the free movement of people and skills, also after obtaining a degree. Most companies stated in their interviews that international competencies, apart from incidental language requirements, are not really required, even for Randstad which does operate multinational. The literature review suggests that the EU and mobile students acknowledge the development of international skills. The employers, however, clearly state that they value international experiences for the reasons of general competency development and not so much the development of international competencies.

From the job database analysis it became clear that, after selecting only the relevant vacancies, 11.8% of the vacancies included an explicit request for an international experience, either in the form of an internship or study abroad. Overall, the companies that requested this specifically aimed at young

academics without experience, indicating this through an extensive profile for the young academic. The companies that did not specifically aim at recent graduates, but did not exclude this group, usually did not ask for any international experiences. In most vacancies where the companies elaborated most extensively on the required competencies and requirements, the vacancies requested international experiences. These companies already included a more extensive personal profile in which many companies included prior international experiences in the job description. So to conclude, in 11.8% of the vacancies appropriate for recent graduates/young academics did the employer explicitly request international experience. Currently, about 10% of students enrolled in higher education in Europe study or train abroad in the framework of ERASMUS (European Commission, 2013). Therefore the requested amount of international experiences by companies reflects the actual amount of student mobility within ERASMUS. In almost all of the cases the employers gave a clear connection with international experiences and general or international competencies. When looking at the requests for international competencies this was the case in over 38% of the vacancies. The database analysis shows that employers do value international competencies which can be attained through international experiences; in contrast the companies in the interviews state that this is not valued as much, more about this point in the sub-chapter of the reflections of the study.

7.2. Conclusions

This study focussed on the added value of international experiences of young academics in the recruitment and selection processes of new employees in the labour market. The study was conducted with a literature review, a database analysis and company interviews. These different areas were studied in order to try to generate an answer to the research question.

The research question of this study is:

To what extent does an international experience generate an added value in the recruitment and selection processes of young academics by employers?

The different chapters in this thesis and the three assumptions have tried to answer the sub-questions. On the basis of these sub-questions the main research question of this thesis can be answered.

Main research question: *To what extent does an international experience generate an added value in the recruitment and selection processes of young academics by employers?*

Following this study an overall conclusion can be generated in order to answer the main research question. The outcomes of the study include the conclusions and reflections made on the chapters on

the literature review, job vacancy database analysis and company interviews. When looking at the sub-questions, international experiences are valued positively overall in the recruitment and selection processes of new employees in the labour market. The assumptions made following the established theoretical framework can be verified to a great extent. The main reason why international experiences are an added value for young academics in the recruitment and selection of new employees are the development of international, but mostly general competencies which organisations seem to value. Therefore international experiences are valued by employers to the extent to which it can be evidence for general competency development.

It becomes clear from the literature review and the company interviews that the EU and employers value student mobility differently. Where the EU focuses on the European identity, creating cultural awareness and promoting future movement of people and skills, the companies, even multinational ones, seem to value the development of general competencies of employees following international experiences more. The company interviews show little evidence of valuing international competencies as suggested by the EU. The Council has set a target for increasing the number of mobile students via ERASMUS to at least 20% by 2020 (European Commission, 2013). When looking at the database analysis we can see that only 11.8% of companies express to prefer candidates with international experiences. Also, in the interviews, companies have acknowledged the importance of general competencies over international competencies when valuing international experiences. Employers merely ask for evidence of general competency development. Therefore it can be discussed why the EU has set such high mobility goals for students claiming this will enhance their individual employability.

Of course the EU will always stress the importance of the European identity and European intercultural awareness. As a contrast, future employers do not see the direct value of these issues. Therefore student mobility can increase the employability of a young graduate according to employers, but it should be clear that this is not for the same reasons the EU tries to promote student mobility via programmes as ERASMUS, since the competencies that are sought by companies can be developed in many different ways.

7.3. Reflections

As mentioned in the Methodology chapter, this study has some limitations. Ideally detailed interviews should be conducted with companies in all disciplines, small and large companies, and companies in the private and public sector. On the basis of these outcomes clear conclusions could be made for a large number of categories. Unfortunately due to the time limits of the study and disappointing company responses, this was not possible. Alternatively, three company interviews were conducted and a job vacancy database has been analysed. Together with a literature review on three previous

studies which are also related to the added value of international student mobility programmes; this study can still make some conclusions on how students with international experience have benefits in employability.

It also became clear that international experiences are seen as part of both international and general competencies. In the database analysis, international experiences were included in the category of international competencies. However, due to wording, some employers implied that international experiences belong to the category of general competencies. But since the companies explicitly mentioned international experiences, meaning spending time abroad, in their vacancies they have been handled as part of international competencies, thus international understanding and intercultural awareness.

Going back to the first mentioned limitations of this study, it could be interesting to conduct a study in the future with more ideal circumstances. In this way students could use the study to see how important international experiences could be in an area or discipline in which they would like to find employment.

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Annex

Annex A: Original interviews in Dutch

1. ORIGINAL INTERVIEW RIJKSWATERSTAAT 13 MAY 2014

Interview met de Projectleider Corporate Mobiliteit van Rijkswaterstaat

Rijkswaterstaat werft voornamelijk in de volgende vakgebieden: (bouw)technologie, ICT, Inkoop (finance)

De vragen gaan in het specifiek over recent afgestudeerde, aangezien hier studie ervaring het meest relevant is.

De vragen gaan in het specifiek over kandidaten met universitaire masteropleiding.

A: De rol van internationale studie-ervaring bij de selectie van nieuwe werknemers.

1. Wat zijn in een CV in het algemeen de doorslaggevende factoren voor selectie van kandidaten, vooral als het gaat om kandidaten die recent een universitaire masteropleiding hebben afgerond?

Opleidingsachtergrond/richting, eventuele relevante werkervaring, aantoonbare affiniteit met het werkveld, zaken die een bepaald ambitieniveau uitstralen. Denk bij dit laatste aan inhoudelijke commissies, vrijwilligerswerk, deelname aan inhoudelijke klankbordgroepen of projecten.

2. In hoeverre speelt internationale studie-ervaring opgedaan tijdens de studie, zoals studie of stage in het buitenland, mee bij de eerste selectie van kandidaten?

Geen must. Is een plus op iemands CV, maar met name de manier waarop er naar deze buitenlandervaring is toegewerkt kan doorslaggevend zijn. Heeft men bv hard moeten werken voor sponsoring of het netwerk in moeten zetten om de buitenlandervaring voor elkaar te krijgen. De buitenlandervaring op zich is dus geen grote toegevoegde waarde, meer de competenties die er voor nodig zijn om het voor elkaar te krijgen. En die verschillen wel per buitenland ervaring en persoon.

3. Zijn er verschillen tussen vakgebieden, bijvoorbeeld tussen afgestudeerden met een technische of sociaal wetenschappelijke opleiding?

Ja, op technische vakgebieden zie je dat inhoud een grote rol speelt en op sociaal de persoon en wordt er meer naar competenties gekeken. Buitenlandervaring zie je meer bij de technische variant. Is daar logischer (stages)

4. Is er verschil of men een periode in het buitenland heeft gestudeerd (bijvoorbeeld 3 maanden of een semester) of dat men een volledige opleiding in het buitenland heeft gestudeerd?

Voor ons wervingsproces niet. Echter speelt taal wel een rol: Wij zijn NL'se overheid en dat moet dan ook vloeiend gesproken en geschreven worden. Indien iemand een volledige studie in het buitenland heeft gedaan is NL's vaak niet de eerste taal. Als taal geen rol speelt maakt het op voor ons interessante vakgebieden niet uit of de studie in binnen- of buitenland is gevolgd.

5. Is er verschil tussen kandidaten die een buitenlandse stage hebben gedaan en kandidaten die een aantal vakken in het buitenland hebben gevolgd?

Nee.

6. Wat bepaalt volgens u het eventuele voordeel van kandidaten met internationale studie-ervaring ten opzichte van sollicitanten zonder dergelijke ervaring?

Het laat mogelijk iets over ambitieniveau zien. Maar dat ambitieniveau kan net zo goed spreken uit andere zaken: commissies, bijbanen, vrijwilligerswerk, extra projecten ed. Dit kan op hetzelfde niveau in het selectieproces staan als buitenlandervaring.

B. De toegevoegde waarde van internationale studie-ervaring voor de kennis en vaardigheden van (nieuwe) werknemers

7. Op welke manier voegt internationale studie-ervaring , iets toe aan de kennis van een medewerker die van belang is voor de uit te voeren werkzaamheden?

Dit speelt voornamelijk een rol in de werving en capaciteiten die nodig lijken te zijn voor een kandidaat.

8. Gaat het dan vooral om praktische/inhoudelijke kennis of gaat het meer om sociale- en communicatieve vaardigheden?

Vooral om ambitie.

2. ORIGINAL INTERVIEW RANDSTAD 30 MAY 2014

Interview met Corporate Recruiter/Project Coordinator bij Randstad

Randstad Nederland werft voornamelijk in de volgende vakgebieden:

- *Commercieel (Zakelijke dienstverlening)*
- *Achtergrond in studie is voor Randstad minder van belang. Bij voorkeur een commerciële opleiding.*
- *Alle achtergronden / vakgebieden zijn bij Randstad terug te vinden.*

De vragen gaan in het specifiek over recent afgestudeerde, aangezien hier studie ervaring het meest relevant is.

De vragen gaan in het specifiek over kandidaten met universitaire masteropleiding.

A: De rol van internationale studie-ervaring bij de selectie van nieuwe werknemers.

1. Wat zijn in een CV in het algemeen de doorslaggevende factoren voor selectie van kandidaten, vooral als het gaat om kandidaten die recent een universitaire masteropleiding hebben afgerond?

-Commercialiteit: commerciële- of saleservaring vanuit bijbaan en of competenties

-Ondernemerschap, algemene ontwikkeling vanuit nevenactiviteiten

Voor het management traineeship zijn we daarnaast op zoek naar kandidaten die leidinggevende ervaring hebben of competenties bezitten die ze in de toekomst een goede leidinggevende kunnen maken.

2. In hoeverre speelt internationale studie-ervaring opgedaan tijdens de studie, zoals studie of stage in het buitenland, mee bij de eerste selectie van kandidaten?

Hoe meer divers het CV des te interessanter voor ons. Dit zegt ook iets over de algemene ontwikkeling, levenservaring en ondernemerschap van een kandidaat. Een internationale ervaring kan dus positief worden gewaardeerd.

3. Zijn er verschillen tussen bedrijven, bijvoorbeeld tussen bedrijven die afgestudeerden aannemen met een technische of sociaal wetenschappelijke opleiding?

Ja, specialistische/ technische organisaties vragen om specialistische kennis. Randstad is een commerciële zakelijke dienstverlener. Dit vraagt minder om specifieke kennis maar wel om specifieke competenties. Opleiding is daarom minder relevant.

4. Is er verschil of men een periode in het buitenland heeft gestudeerd (bijvoorbeeld 3 maanden of een semester) of dat men een volledige opleiding in het buitenland heeft gestudeerd?

Nee, geen verschil. Zien bij beide als waardevolle ervaring.

5. Is er verschil tussen kandidaten die een buitenlandse stage hebben gedaan en kandidaten die een aantal vakken in het buitenland hebben gevolgd?

Nee geen verschil voor Randstad. Naar het buitenland gaan, hiervoor alles regelen en ook het lef hebben om deze stap te zetten is voor ons wat waard. Vakken, stage of bijbaan in het buitenland is minder relevant.

6. Wat bepaalt volgens u het eventuele voordeel van kandidaten met internationale studie-ervaring ten opzichte van sollicitanten zonder dergelijke ervaring?

Deze kandidaten hebben hierdoor aan persoonlijke ontwikkeling gedaan. Dit levert je bagage en levenservaring op waar je later in je carrière wat aan hebt.

B. De toegevoegde waarde van internationale studie-ervaring voor de kennis en vaardigheden van (nieuwe) werknemers

7. Op welke manier voegt internationale studie-ervaring, , iets toe aan de kennis van een medewerker die van belang is voor de uit te voeren werkzaamheden?

Communiceren in andere taal en cultuur. Bredere kijk op de wereld (van werk).

8. Gaat het dan vooral om praktische/inhoudelijke kennis of gaat het meer om sociale- en communicatieve vaardigheden?

sociale- en communicatieve vaardigheden

9. Op welke manier zou een bedrijf voordeel kunnen hebben van een medewerker die internationale ervaring heeft opgedaan tijdens zijn of haar studie? Kunnen hoger onderwijsopleidingen iets doen om internationale studie-ervaring meer relevant te maken voor de dagelijkse praktijk in de arbeidsmarkt?

Met name voor multinationals is deze ervaring wat waard. Bij Randstad wordt er vaak land - overstijgend samengewerkt. Internationale ervaring helpt je hierbij.

Hoger onderwijs instellingen moeten studenten met name stimuleren om veel naast hun studie te doen. Dit ontwikkeld je als student en geeft je bagage mee waar je als starter weer profijt van hebt. Ontwikkelen kan op verschillende manieren; bijbaan, stages, studentenbesturen, reizen of studeren in het buitenland. Een combinatie van deze ervaringen maakt uiteindelijk je profiel en je geschiktheid als starter voor een organisatie.

3. ORIGINAL INTERVIEW UNIQUE 26 MAY 2014

Interview met Business Team Manager van Unique Enschede

Unique Enschede werft voornamelijk in de volgende vakgebieden: Office, managementfuncties

De vragen gaan in het specifiek over recent afgestudeerde, aangezien hier studie ervaring het meest relevant is.

De vragen gaan in het specifiek over kandidaten met universitaire masteropleiding.

A: De rol van internationale studie-ervaring bij de selectie van nieuwe werknemers.

1. Wat zijn in een CV in het algemeen de doorslaggevende factoren voor selectie van kandidaten, vooral als het gaat om kandidaten die recent een universitaire masteropleiding hebben afgerond?

- de belangrijkste punten waar wij naar kijken op een CV als wij kandidaten selecteren voor onze management functies zijn: hoe lang hebben ze over de opleiding gedaan, en of ze tussendoor al werkervaring opgedaan naast de studie.

2. In hoeverre speelt internationale studie-ervaring opgedaan tijdens de studie, zoals studie of stage in het buitenland, mee bij de eerste selectie van kandidaten?

- voor ons niet relevant, het is een pluspunt op het CV, maar het wordt absoluut niet verwacht.

3. Is er verschil of men een periode in het buitenland heeft gestudeerd (bijvoorbeeld 3 maanden of een semester) of dat men een volledige opleiding in het buitenland heeft gestudeerd?

- geen verschil

4. Is er verschil tussen kandidaten die een buitenlandse stage hebben gedaan en kandidaten die een aantal vakken in het buitenland hebben gevolgd?

- alleen als ze hierdoor de taal vloeiend zijn gaan spreken.

5. Wat bepaalt volgens u het eventuele voordeel van kandidaten met internationale studie-ervaring ten opzichte van sollicitanten zonder dergelijke ervaring?

- door internationale ervaring krijgen studenten een breder beeld van de wereld. Vaak hebben deze sollicitanten dan meer waardering van de Nederlandse manier van werken. Ook is het positief dat het cultuurverschil zichtbaar is geworden, dit kan later positieve effecten hebben in een functie.

- B. De toegevoegde waarde van internationale studie-ervaring voor de kennis en vaardigheden van (nieuwe) werknemers. nvt

6. Op welke manier voegt internationale studie-ervaring, iets toe aan de kennis van een medewerker die van belang is voor de uit te voeren werkzaamheden?

Meestal geen toegevoegde waarde.

7. Gaat het dan vooral om praktische/inhoudelijke kennis of gaat het meer om sociale- en communicatieve vaardigheden? Zie 7

8. Op welke manier zou een bedrijf voordeel kunnen hebben van een medewerker die internationale ervaring heeft opgedaan tijdens zijn of haar studie? Kunnen hoger onderwijsopleidingen iets doen om

internationale studie-ervaring meer relevant te maken voor de dagelijkse praktijk in de arbeidsmarkt? Kies internationale organisaties uit en zorg voor een duo opdracht. Eerst 3 maanden op een vestiging van bijvoorbeeld Thales in Frankrijk werken en dan 3 maanden op de vestiging van Thales in Nederland. In de eindconclusie kan er dan een goede vergelijking gemaakt worden. (het beste van 2 werelden. Dit geldt ook voor Siemens, Shell, Zetron, etc.

Annex B: Translation of interviews

1. TRANSLATION INTERVIEW RIJKSWATERSTAAT 13 MAY 2014

Rijkswaterstaat: Interview with Project Leader Corporate mobility of Rijkswaterstaat

Rijkswaterstaat mainly recruits in the following areas: (civil) engineering, ICT and procurement (finance).

The questions are specifically about recent graduate, since study related experience is most relevant here.

The questions are specifically about candidates with a university level masters degree.

A: The role of study related international experience during the selection of new employees.

1. What are the decisive criteria for the selection of candidates when looking at their resume, specifically for candidates with a university level masters degree?

Educational background, if applicable any work experience which might be relevant, demonstrable affinity with our working field, and specific activities which could demonstrate a certain level of ambitions. With this last point you can think about content related committees, volunteering work, or substantive participation in focus groups or projects.

2. To what extent does international experience obtained during study time, for example a study period abroad or an internship abroad contribute to the first selection of candidates?

This is not a must. It is a positive point on someone's resume, however, the way in which international experience has been reached is more important. For example, if someone has gone through effort to obtain this experience, or whether a network was necessary to arrange this international internship. The international experience in itself is not a large added value, but the competencies that are needed to succeed in arranging this are. This differs for each international experience and per person.

3. Are there differences between sectors, for example between graduates with an engineering background and graduates with a social science background?

Yes, in the engineering positions content plays a much larger role and within the other areas competencies seem to be more relevant. International experience is most important within engineering, when looking at internships etc.

4. Is there a difference between candidates that have studied abroad for a small period of time (for example 3 months or a semester) or if candidates have obtained an entire degree abroad?

Not for the recruitment process. However, language is an issue: Rijkswaterstaat is part of the Dutch government, it is important for our employees to speak and write in Dutch fluently. If someone has obtained a degree abroad Dutch might not be a first language. If language is not an issue there is no difference in relevant sectors whether a degree has been obtained abroad or not.

5. Is there a difference between candidates that have had an internship abroad and candidates that have studies abroad?

No.

6. What are the benefits for candidates that have had international experiences during their studies as compared to candidates that do not have these experiences?

It could show us something about their level of ambition. However, this level of ambition can also be seen in other activities: committees, part-time jobs, volunteer work, extra projects etc. This can contribute the same as international experience during the selection process.

B. The added value of international study related international experience for the knowledge and skills of new employees

7. In which way does international study experience contribute to the knowledge of an employee which can be important for specific activities?

International experience only plays a role in the recruitment process for the capacities that seem to be necessary for a candidate.

8. Does this play a role in practical/content related knowledge or social and communicative skills?

Mostly about ambition.

2. TRANSLATION INTERVIEW RANDSTAD 30 MAY 2014

Interview with Corporate Recruiter/Project Coordinator at Randstad

Randstad mainly recruits in the following areas:

- Commercial sector (business services)
- Background in degree is of less importance for Randstad. Preference goes out to candidates with a commercial degree.
- All backgrounds can be found at Randstad

The questions are specifically about recent graduate, since study related experience is most relevant here.

The questions are specifically about candidates with a university level masters degree.

A: The role of study related international experience during the selection of new employees.

1. What are the decisive criteria for the selection of candidates when looking at their resume, specifically for candidates with a university level masters degree?

- Commercialism: commercial or sales experience from a student job and/or competencies

- Entrepreneurship, general development from extra-curricular activities

2. To what extent does international experience obtained during study time, for example a study period abroad or an internship abroad contribute to the first selection of candidates?

A more diverse resume is more interesting for us. This also says something about general development, life experience and entrepreneurship of a candidate. An international experience is seen as general development and thus valued.

3. Is there a difference between candidates that have studied abroad for a small period of time (for example 3 months or a semester) or if candidates have obtained an entire degree abroad?

No, there is no difference. Both are a valuable experience.

4. Is there a difference between candidates that have had an internship abroad and candidates that have studied abroad?

No difference for Randstad. Going abroad, making arrangements for this and also having the courage to take this step is valuable for us. Whether these are courses, internships or jobs abroad is less relevant.

5. What are the benefits for candidates that have had international experiences during their studies as compared to candidates that do not have these experiences?

These candidates have gained personal development. This will contribute to life experience from which you can benefit further in your career.

B. The added value of international study related international experience for the knowledge and skills of new employees

6. In which way does international study experience contribute to the knowledge of an employee which can be important for specific activities?

Communicating in a different language and culture. Broader view on the world (of labour).

7. Does this play a role in practical/content related knowledge or social and communicative skills?

Social and communicative skills

8. In which way can a company benefit from an employee that has had international experience during study time? Can higher education institutions do something to make international study experience more relevant for the daily practice in the labour market?

For multinational companies this is most valuable. Randstad works in across country borders. International experience can help you with this.

Higher education institutions should stimulate students to undertake activities next to their studies. This will further develop the student and give you experience that a graduate looking for a job can benefit from. Developing yourself is possible in different ways; part-time jobs next to studying, internships, board year, travelling or studying abroad. A combination of these experiences will eventually make your profile and suitability as a starting employee for an organisation.

3. TRANSLATION INTERVIEW UNIQUE 26 MAY 2014

Unique: Interview with Business Team Manager of Unique Enschede

Unique mainly recruits in the following areas: management positions

The questions are specifically about recent graduate, since study related experience is most relevant here.

The questions are specifically about candidates with a university level masters degree.

A: The role of study related international experience during the selection of new employees.

1. What are the decisive criteria for the selection of candidates when looking at their resume, specifically for candidates with a university level masters degree?

The most important point that we look for on a resume when we select candidates for our management positions are: the amount of time they have spent obtaining their degree, and if they have had any work experience during their studies.

2. To what extent does international experience obtained during study time, for example a study period abroad or an internship abroad contribute to the first selection of candidates?

Is not relevant for us, it can be a positive point on a resume, but it is not expected.

3. Is there a difference between candidates that have studied abroad for a small period of time (for example 3 months or a semester) or if candidates have obtained an entire degree abroad?

No difference for us.

4. Is there a difference between candidates that have had an internship abroad and candidates that have studies abroad?

Only if they have become fluent in the language.

5. What are the benefits for candidates that have had international experiences during their studies as compared to candidates that do not have these experiences?

With international experiences students get a broader view of the world. These candidates often value the Dutch way to work more than candidates without international experience. It is also positive that they have experienced cultural differences, this can have positive effects later on in a position.

B. The added value of international study related international experience for the knowledge and skills of new employees

6. In which way does international study experience contribute to the knowledge of an employee which can be important for specific activities?

There is not really an added value.

7. Does this play a role in practical/content related knowledge or social and communicative skills?

See question 7.

8. In which way can a company benefit from an employee that has had international experience during study time? Can higher education institutions do something to make international study experience more relevant for the daily practice in the labour market?

Higher education institutions can choose international organisations and arrange a double assignment. First students can spend 3 months on location in France, for example at Thales. After this students can spend 3 months on location in the Netherlands. In a final conclusion students can make a comparison. This is also applicable for Siemens, Shell, Zeton, etc.