Recruiting new graduates: What success profile are organizations looking for?

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Author biography

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Abstract

In today's competitive business world, even though young adults strive to be employed by well-known corporations, having a degree does not guarantee an employment opportunity. Employers prefer candidates not only with qualifications, but also with a 'success profile' comprised of competencies, personal attributes, experience and knowledge that portray a holistic view of success (DDI, 2009). This study aims to shed light on the 'success profile' organizations are looking for from new graduates regardless of the positions they are being recruited for. As part of the study, 205 participants (predominantly recruitment professionals) from both multinational and local companies based in Istanbul, took part in an on-line survey. According to the results, the criteria identified in order of importance were; working as part of a team, written communication skills, analysing and gathering information (competencies); knowledge of advanced English, degree course and prestige of university (knowledge); internship experience, taking part in extracurricular activities, volunteer work (experience) and; highly responsible, continuous learner and good communicator (personal attributes). Personal attributes were followed by competencies, knowledge and experience in terms of priority rankings. The findings and their implications will be discussed as to how these criteria can be fostered during educational years and beyond.

Keywords: new graduate recruitment, success profile, personal attributes, competencies

Introduction

According to the OECD's Future of Work and Skills Report (2017), the three on-going trends of globalisation, technological progress and demographic change have the potential of significantly altering the nature of work. As stated by the report, these trends are likely to affect the quantity and quality of jobs available, as well as how and by whom they will be carried out. Against this ever changing background, a major challenge seems to be the implementation of policies which will prepare young people for the jobs of the future by equipping them with the right type of skill sets (OECD, 2017).

On a global scale, youth are three times as likely as adults to be unemployed (ILO, Global Employment Trends for Youth, 2017) and over the last twenty years, the proportion of youth actively engaged in the labour market, either by working or looking for work declined from 55% to 45%. This trend seems to be driven by various factors such as young people remaining longer in education, lack of sufficient labour market opportunities and young people lacking the skills and competencies demanded by potential employers.

Transitions can entail tough times and moving into professional life is an especially complex and vulnerable period for young adults. Graduating from college involves leaving the educational comfort zone where there are clear rules and set expectations. Work life, on the other hand, involves various uncertainties, and challenges for new graduates (Ryan, 2001). In order to respond to these changing and complex needs of the contemporary workplace, universities are increasingly required to produce highly skilled graduates (Possa, 2006). This study is conducted in Turkey, where the the main teaching method in universities is didactic lecturing (European University Association Report, 2008) accompanied by a teacher-centred directive approach and similar passive learning methods utilised during secondary education years. This leads to the common belief that in many Turkish universities, students are not adequately equipped with the competencies needed to enter the job market. Thus, in Turkey transitions from school to work are especially challenging for students and discrepancies exist between expectations of the job market and the capabilities of graduates (Kılıç, Işık, Tuncer, Özbek & Özgen, 2015).

In a workplace context, a competency can be defined as a combination of cognitive skills (knowledge and abilities) and personal or behavioural characteristics (attitudes, values & motives), which are a function of an individual's personal attributes (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). Recent literature examining generic competencies required of graduates points to increasing emphasis on personal attributes, rather than technical or 'hard' skills (Liston, 1998). Research findings point to a number of competencies expected of graduates such as oral communication, problem-solving skills and self-motivation (Maes, Weldy & Icenogle, 1997), as well as teamwork, communication skills and personal qualities (Stasz, 1997). Similarly, in a recent survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE, 2016), the top five soft skills employers look for on a candidate's resume were described as; leadership, teamwork, written communication, problem-solving and verbal communication. In a similar vein, Hart Research Associates (2015) found that employers believe verbal communication, teamwork, written communication, ethical judgment, decision-making and critical/analytical thinking/reasoning to be the top five crucial skills when hiring college graduates. Even though these two studies share many commonalities, the NACE (2016) study adds a general leadership competency which encompasses people management skills, whereas the Hart Research Associates survey findings (2015) emphasise the ethical aspect of decision-making by drawing attention to a crucial personal attribute; honesty. In the literature, the Five-Factor Model (FFM) provides a comprehensive structure for the study of personality (Wiggins & Trapnell, 1997), namely; Openness to experience (imaginative, curious, broad-minded), Conscientiousness (dependable, responsible, organised, planful), Extraversion (sociable, assertive, active), Agreeableness (trusting, good-natured, cooperative) and Neuroticism (anxious, depressed, emotional). In their meta-analytic study, Barrick and Mount (1991) found Conscientiousness and Extraversion to be valid predictors of job performance.

In a study conducted by the global human resources consultancy firm DDI (Development Dimensions International) and the Economist Intelligence Unit in 2008, 36% of respondents said the greatest barrier to effective strategy execution was placing the wrong person in a key role (Cosentino, Erker &Tefft, 2009). In line with this view, DDI has coined the term 'success profile' and has created a holistic view of success. Success profiles fully capture the requirements of job success – what

knowledge, experience, competencies, and personal attributes are critical to perform any job. More specifically, the success profile encompasses what employees need to 'know' (technical and/or professional information needed to perform job activities successfully such as a specific programming technique), 'what they have done' (educational and work achievements needed to perform job activities successfully such as leading a team), 'what they can do' (competencies performed while carrying out a job such as decision-making) and 'who they are' (personal dispositions and motivations that relate to job satisfaction, success or failure such as arrogant) (Cosentino, Erker & Thefft, 2009). Figure 1 presents the four components of the success profile.

Figure 1
The Success Profile (DDI, 2009)

What people KNOW
technical and/or professional information needed to perform job activities

Examples:
- C++ Programming
- Client Acquisition Strategies
- Cross-Cultural Differences

What people HAVE DONE
Educational and work achievements needed to perform job activities successfully

Examples:
- Led a Sales Team
- Started up an Operation
- Launched a New Product

KNOWLEDGE

COMPETENCIES

SUCCESS PROFILES 5M

EXPERIENCES

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

What people CAN DO
A cluster of behaviors performed on a job

Examples:
- Devicion Making
- Planning and Organizing
- Coaching

Who people ARE
Personal dispositions and motivations that relate to job satisfaction, job success, or failure

Examples:
- Leadership Disposition
- Cognitive Ability
- Risk Averse

Research results reveal that, accuracy in defining success regarding the four components of the model are the cornerstone of an effective talent management system (Byham, Smith & Paese, 2002). Therefore, it is crucial that organizations have a designated success profile in mind when recruiting new staff who will form the driving force towards their company's vision.

Previous literature findings point out the importance of both 'hard' and 'soft' skills and concentrate mostly on the lists of skill sets and competencies deemed important for professional life. This study aims to advance the current literature by holistically defining what 'sucess' means for employers not only in terms of the desired competencies/skills, but also in terms of the experience, knowledge and personal disposition factors that are crucial to make success possible in a position. The study also aims to add value to the current literature by showing how these four factors compare to each other in terms of perceived importance as depicted by employers.

Method

Procedure

The study was conducted on-line with 205 Turkish professionals. Convenience sampling was employed and an on-line questionnaire was sent to the e-mails and LinkedIn accounts of the researcher's network of both human resources and other professionals who had active recruitment roles. Participants were asked to think about and define what specifically constitutes success for a new graduate they would like to recruit for their organization.

Measures

A 14-item online questionnaire was created by the researcher including demographic, Likert-type scale and open-ended questions. The competency, experience and knowledge quadrants of the success profile were measured by questions developed by the researcher using the Hart Research Associates' Survey (2015) and NACE Survey (2016) as a guide. Response choices were arranged on a five point Likert-type scale ranging from *'Not Important At All'* (1) to *'Very Important'* (5).

To assess the four components of the success profile, the participants were first asked to rate the importance of new graduates being equipped with the following list of competencies at the time of recruitment; written communication skills, verbal communication skills, working as part of a team, analysing information, decision-making, planning and organising, influencing others and technical knowledge. Next, the participants were provided with list of six items pertaining to knowledge (having an advanced level of English, degree course, prestige of university, having an

advanced degree, prestige of high school and having a high Grade Point Average (GPA, in the Turkish university context a 'high' GPA that is a 3 or more out of a possible of 4 points is equal to 80% or higher out of 100) and asked to rate each in terms of its importance for recruitment to their company. A third question introduced five items pertaining to experience (volunteer work, exchange, leadership, and internship experience and taking part in extracurricular activities) and similarly asked the respondents to rate each in terms of its importance for recruitment. The personal attributes component of the success profile was assessed by the open-ended question: *"The new graduate I would like to recruit for my company is someone who is………"* and the participants were asked to fill in this blank by sharing the personal attributes they believed to be crucial for new graduate success. Finally, the last question asked the participants to rank the four quadrants of the success profile in terms of their priority of importance. To do this, the participants were instructed to rank each component by attributing a numerical rank to it from 1 to 4, with the highest prioritised component receiving rank 1, followed by the rest on priority. The participants were also instructed not to provide the same rank to any two or more components.

Analyses

The results of the questions measured by the five point Lickert type scale were depicted in terms of estimated means. For all of these items, the respondents' ratings were first summed and then divided by the total number of respondents thus yielding their mean values. The responses to the open-ended question were analysed via thematic analysis to identify patterns or themes within the qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each participant provided more than one characteristic to describe their ideal graduate and responses were coded according to their content to arrive at the main personal attribute themes. The emerging themes were then depicted as frequencies reflecting the numbers of participants who endorsed each theme. Priority rankings of the four components of the success profile were also reported in mean values, whereby the lowest value represents the highest priority ranking.
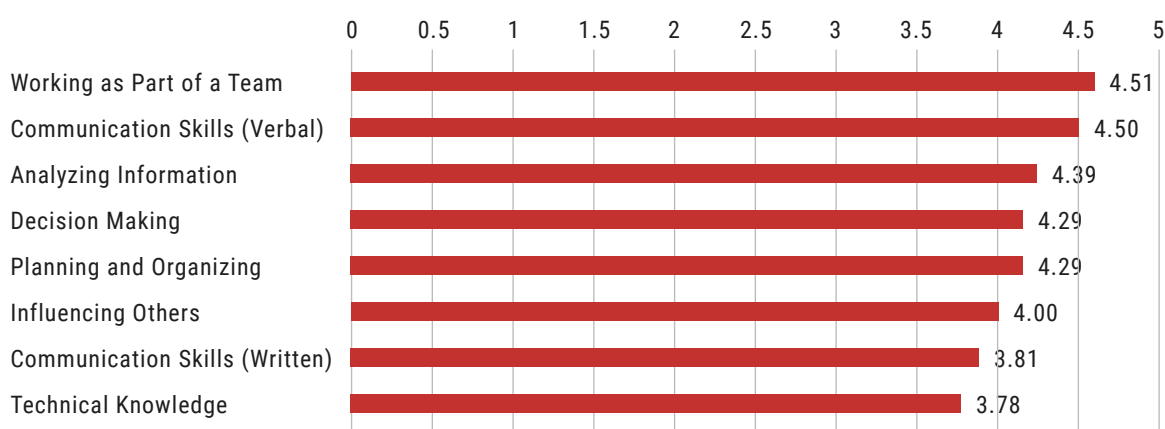
Results

Study participants were mostly female (71%) and 94% were aged between 20 to 50 years. Respondents with a bachelor degree or higher made up 96% of the sample.

53% of the participants worked in locally owned companies, 44% in multinational corporations and 3% worked in public institutions. The participants represented a heterogeneous sample in terms of sector of work; ranging from health services (22%), manufacturing (21%), professional services (20%), consumer goods (15%) and various others including transportation, energy, education and technology (22%).

Competencies quadrant of the success profile

As can be seen on Table 1, the means of competencies were rated quite highly; ranging between 3.71 and 4.51 out of a possible of 5 points. Working as Part of a Team, Verbal Communication Skills and Analyzing Information were the top three competencies identified as crucial for new graduate success. These competencies were followed by Decision Making and Planning and Organizing at a tie in terms of mean ratings and the last three competencies were identified as Influencing Others, Written Communication and Technical Knowledge respectively. The competency of Influencing Others comes reflects biggest drop in mean values which is understandable since influencing others is a leadership competency not to be expected of new graduates early in their careers. Written Communication follows Influencing Others, which is also a competency endorsed as crucial for new graduate success mostly following verbal communication skills (e.g., Hart Research Associates, 2013) as is the case in this study. The competency that has received the lowest rating among the eight factors is Technical Skills, yet it is still evaluated as close to the 'important' level by employers.

Table 1
Ratings of the Importance of Graduate Competencies

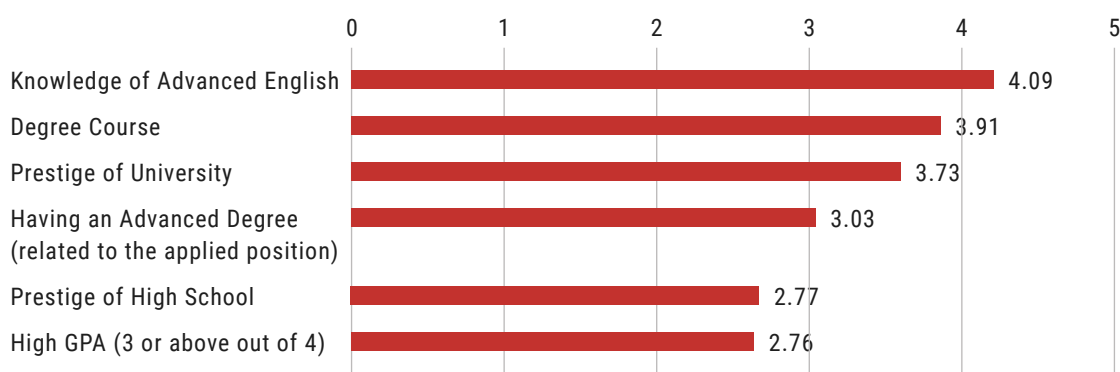| Competency	Rating
Working as Part of a Team	4.51
Communication Skills (Verbal)	4.50
Analyzing Information	4.39
Decision Making	4.29
Planning and Organizing	4.29
Influencing Others	4.00
Communication Skills (Written)	3.81
Technical Knowledge	3.78

Knowledge quadrant of the success profile

The top three factors in terms importance regarding the knowledge quadrant were: knowledge of advanced English, the degree course completed and the prestige of university (see Table 2). These criteria were followed by having an advanced degree related to the applied position, the prestige of high school and having a high GPA. Having an advanced degree follows the ranking of a prestige of university with a sharp decline in mean value which could reflect the view that, for new graduates, having an advanced degree is a *'Nice to have'* instead of a *'Must have'*. Finally, for this quadrant of the success profile, having a high GPA takes the lowest ranking with an evaluation between *'Not really important'* and *'Somewhat important'*. As can be seen form these results, the mean values of the six knowledge factors reflect a lower range of ratings compared to the competency factors (between the range of 4.09 and 2.67).
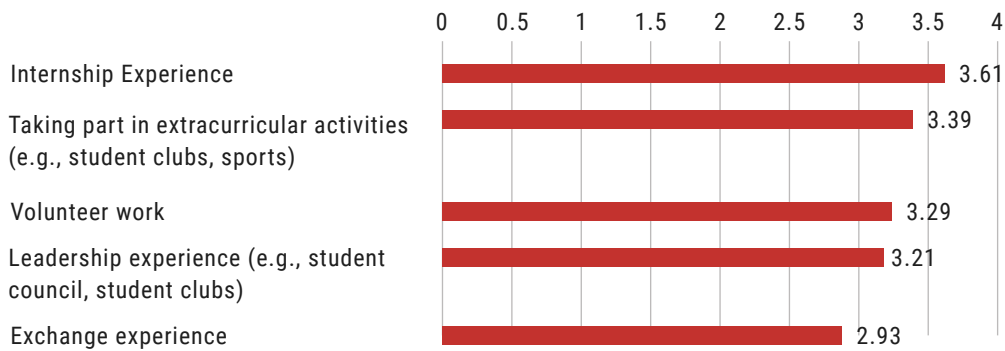
Table 2
Ratings of the Importance of Graduate Knowledge Factors

Factor	Rating
Knowledge of Advanced English	4.09
Degree Course	3.91
Prestige of University	3.73
Having an Advanced Degree (related to the applied position)	3.03
Prestige of High School	2.77
High GPA (3 or above out of 4)	2.76

Experience quadrant of the success profile

The top three criteria identified for the experience quadrant were: internship experience, taking part in extracurricular activities and volunteer work (see Table 3). These were followed closely by leadership experience and rather less closely by exchange experience. For this quadrant of the success profile, the data is distributed more evenly compared to the knowledge quadrant, especially among the first four criteria. While exchange experience was rated as the lowest factor, it was still close to the *'Somewhat important rating'*.
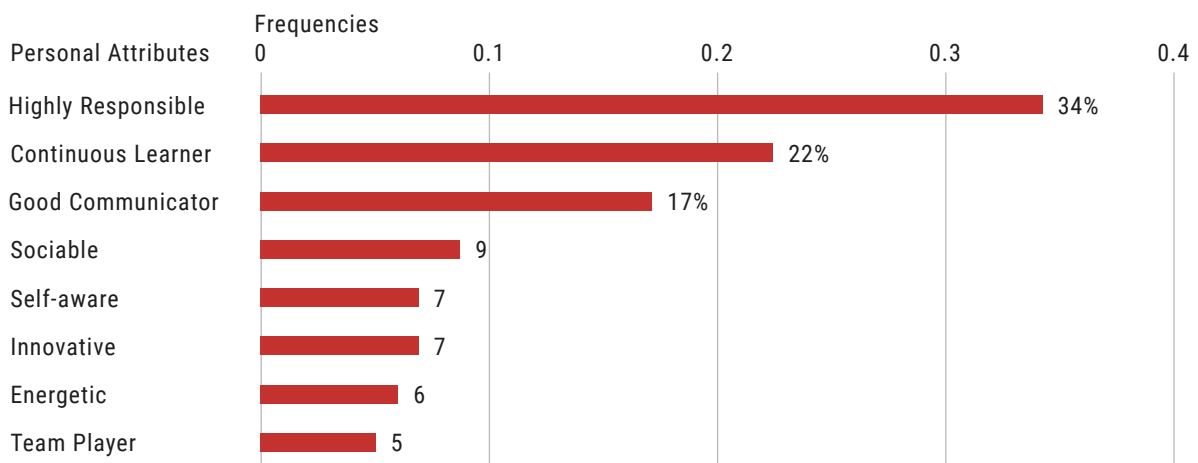
Table 3
Ratings of the Importance of Graduate Experience Factors

	0	0.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	
Internship Experience										3.61
Taking part in extracurricular activities (e.g., student clubs, sports)										3.39
Volunteer work										3.29
Leadership experience (e.g., student council, student clubs)										3.21
Exchange experience										2.93

Ideal graduate

As can be seen in Table 4 (below) the top three ideal graduate personality attributes identified by the respondents were: *'highly responsible'*, *'continuous learner'* and *'good communicator'*. The remaining five characteristics, which were *'sociable'*, *'self-aware'*, *'innovative'*, *'energetic'* and *'team player'* received less than 10% of the respondent ratings.

Table 4
Perceptions of the Ideal Graduate in terms of Personal Dispositions

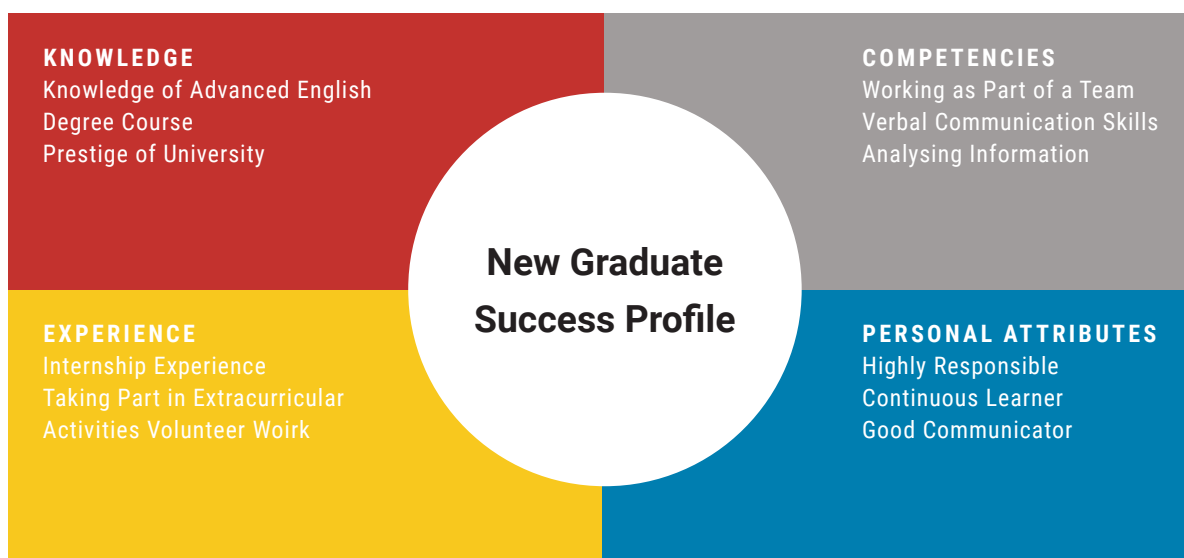| Personal Attributes	Frequencies 0	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.4
Highly Responsible					34%
Continuous Learner				22%	
Good Communicator			17%		
Sociable		9			
Self-aware		7			
Innovative		7			
Energetic		6			
Team Player		5			

After the success profile data were identified, respondents were asked to rank these four quadrants in terms of their priority of importance. Among the four criteria; personal attributes received the highest average ranking (mean=1.89), since the highest prioritised component received rank 1, followed by competencies (mean=2.11), knowledge (mean=2.61) and experience (mean=3.37). These rankings are in line

with the trends regarding the mean values assigned to the competency, knowledge and experience quadrants as previously mentioned. According to these results, the personal attributes quadrant of the success profile emerges as the most crucial criteria pertaining to the perception of new graduate success followed by competencies.

Figure 2 summarises the final profile for success identified by the participants in terms of the top three criteria defined for each quadrant of the success profile. The implications of these findings are discussed in the next section.

Figure 2
The Success Profile Identified by Study Participants (adapted from DDI, 2009)

KNOWLEDGE
Knowledge of Advanced English
Degree Course
Prestige of University

COMPETENCIES
Working as Part of a Team
Verbal Communication Skills
Analysing Information

New Graduate Success Profile

EXPERIENCE
Internship Experience
Taking Part in Extracurricular
Activities Volunteer Woirk

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES
Highly Responsible
Continuous Learner
Good Communicator

Discussion

This paper aimed to shed light on the factors that constitute new graduate success from the point of view of recruitment professionals. To achieve this aim, a 'success profile' that captures the requirements of job success – what knowledge, experience, competencies, and personal attributes are critical to perform any job (DDI, 2009) was used as a guide.

As can be seen from Figure 2, employers seem to have quite high expectations from new graduates; especially in terms of competencies since most of the competencies are rated as between the 'Important' and 'Very important' range. These high expectations are also shared by other studies conducted in western nations mentioned previously

(e.g.; NACE, 2016; Hart Research Associates, 2015, Hodges & Burchell, 2003). However, as previously mentioned, this study has been conducted in a developing country with a didactic and teacher-centered educational context – making it even harder to foster the various components of the success profile. Thus, it seems feasible to think that other partners including organizations, professionals and labour policies are needed to join forces to make this success profile possible.

The results showed that, Working as Part of a Team, Verbal Communication Skills and Analyzing Information were the top three competencies identified as crucial for new graduate success. These findings are in line with the NACE (2016) survey, whereby out of the 38 attributes employers' seek on a candidate's resume, Ability to Work in Teams was ranked number one, Communication Skills (verbal) was ranked number five and Analytical Skills was ranked number eight. Similarly, research results of an on-line survey carried out by Hart Research Associates (2015) revealed that, employers think most emphasis should be placed on: Analytical Thinking and Communication. The lower rating assigned to Influencing Others is understandable since this is not an *'Urgent'* competency to be expected of new hires, yet will gain in importance as the new graduate starts to assume leadership roles. Written Communication is a competency endorsed as crucial for new graduate success mostly following verbal communication skills in previous studies, (e.g., Hart Research Associates, 2013) as is the case in this study. The competency that has received the lowest rating among the eight factors is Technical Skills. This finding is in line with previous studies of employer views on graduate competencies (Hodges & Burchell, 2003; Burchell, Hodges & Rainsbury, 2001) and can result from the preference of employees who expect new graduates to acquire these technical „Knowledge" skills once recruited in their firms and not necessarily possess these as a given at the time of recruitment.

Out of the six factors related to the knowledge quadrant of the success profile, knowledge of advanced English is depicted as the number one to secure a decent position in the job market. Hence, in Turkey, getting into multinational corporations which have attractive career prospects and compensation benefits is extremely competitive and knowledge of advanced English is a must to achieve this. This criteria is closely followed by degree course and the prestige of university. The degree course denotes the foundation of knowledge a new graduate has regarding the position

applied for and this criteria is closely tied to where this degree has been gained. Hence, in Turkey, each year, there is a nationwide central placement examination administered by the National Measurement, Selection and Placement Center and gaining entry into the few „Best" selective universities is very competitive (Kılıç et al., 2015). Moreover, having an advanced degree and a high GPA seem to be 'nice to have' not 'must have' factors for recrutiment professionals. In line with this finding, having an advanced degree is not considered among the criteria of decision attributes during the recruitment of graduates in similar studies (e.g., NACE, 2016). The GPA criteria has received the lowest rating which could reflect the doubts of potential employers' regarding the uneven selectivity levels of certain degree programmes as well as students' abilities to transfer their know how into practice, since having a high GPA doesn't necessarily translate to workplace success.

Regarding the experience quadrant of the success profile, the top three criteria for success identified by the respondents were; having an internship experience, taking part in extracurricular activities and having carried out volunteer work. Previous studies also point out that it is important for graduates to have some kind of work experience prior to completing their studies (Hodges & Burchell, 2003). Except for the criteria of having an exchange experience, the participants' ratings for the remaining four criteria were between the *'Somewhat important'* and *'Important'* evaluation range, demonstrating that employees prefer graduates who have spent time applying their skills in various contexts. In a study carried out by Andrews and Higson (2008), work-based learning in a business type environment was identified as particularly valuable since it enhanced students' learning experiences meanwhile providing them with the opportunity to acquire and polish various work-related skills. Similarly, having a leadership role in a student club, sports team or at a student council provide students a well-suited opportunity to strengthen the experience quadrant of their success profile. Previous research results also convey that when deciding among several candidates, recruiters considered 'Having held a leadership position', 'Being involved in extracurricular activities' and 'Having carried out volunteer work' to be among the top six attributes influencing their decision-making (NACE, 2016). However, in the same study, 'Having studied abroad' had the eighth ranking with an evaluation of *'Not much influence'* on recruiter decisions, similar to the low rated significance of this criteria found in this study.

According to the findings, the top three personal attributes professionals expect from new graduates emerged as; being 'Highly responsible', 'A continuous learner' and 'A good communicator'. In their meta-analytic study, Barrick and Mount (1991) found a positive relationship between the personality dimension of Conscientiousness and job performance. The finding that 'Highly responsible' is the number one personal attribute desired in new graduates is in line with this result. The three factors of 'Self-aware', 'Continuous learner' and 'Innovative' identified in this study could be part of the *Openness to experience* personality dimension since individuals high on this trait are described as creative, inquisitive, introspective, and attentive to inner feelings (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Previous research results regarding employees' perceptions point out that, staying capable in a world of continuous change requires the ability to effectively manage one's own learning (Stephenson, 1997). The importance of this attribute is reflected in the findings since it has gained the second priority in terms of importance. Extraverts are generally positive, social, energetic, and interested in other people (Watson & Clark, 1997); thus, the attributes of good communicator, sociable and energetic could be a part of the personality factor of *Extraversion*. In Barrick and Mount's (1991) meta analytic study, extraversion was found to be a valid predictor of job performance for occupations such as, managers and sales where interaction with others is a significant portion of the job. Overall, these findings suggest that the new graduates who exhibit higher levels of concientiousness, extraversion and openness to experience could be at an advantage in terms of demonstrating the personal attributes sought after by recruitment professionals.

It is interesting to note the overlaps of these personal attributes with the competencies identified as crucial such as the attribute of 'Good communicator' with the Communication Skills competency and the attribute of 'Team player' with the Working as Part of a Team competency. These overlaps highlight the importance given to these two criteria since they are identified to be crucial for new graduate success in more than one quadrant of the success profile. Moreover, these two attributes are 'More able to be developed' since they are more behavioural in nature as opposed to the personal dispositions of 'Highly responsible', 'Continuous learner' and 'Self-aware' which are less able to be developed since they represent dispositional tendencies. Thus, it is crucial to address the presence of these attributes that are 'Less able to be developed'

in a potential employee during the selection and recruitment process especially if they are a 'Must for success' at the required position. However, even though a candidate may not efficiently demonstrate a competency at the time of recruitment, if this competency is on the 'More able to be developed' side, the hiring managers can recruit this person and then make a developmental plan to improve that competency once the new graduate is on board. Hence, it is crucial that hiring professionals have a clear understanding of these nuances regarding the different components of the success profile.

Moving on to recruiters' rankings of the success factors in terms of priority of importance, it can be seen that the highest ranking is given to the personal attributes followed by competencies. This crucial finding points out that, employers focus predominantly on personal attributes and skills compared to knowledge and experience. Indeed, out of the four quadrants of the success profile, 'Who people are' emerges as the most important component taking precedence over 'What people know', 'What people have done' and 'What people can do'. This priority ranking is in fact understandable, since this quadrant entails many personal dispositions that are 'Not able to be developed' unlike various competencies which are 'More able to be developed'. Similar findings can be found in previous studies (Strebler, 1997; Sweeney & Twomey, 1997) where results convey that 'Soft skills' (personal attributes and competencies) are gaining more importance compared to 'Hard skills' (e.g., technical knowledge). The rankings could also signal the possibility that employers increasingly prefer to employ people with the 'Right attitude and potential' and then help them fully develop their knowledge and provide them with experiential opportunities to put their skills into practice. Thus, it can be inferred from these results that, if new graduates are equipped with attributes such as conscientiousness, high learning orientation and interpersonal skills (i.e., good communication and ability to work in teams), they have a solid foundation for success on a job.

In comparison to the lists of most skill sets and competencies identified in previous studies, this study provides a holistic picture of success by sumarising the main components of a new graduate success profile, and focuses the attention of both recruiters and potential employees on a specific set of criteria that can be prioritised in terms of importance. The findings also make it possible to compare these four

quadrants in terms of importance and provide valuable insight for potential employees regarding where to concentrate their developmental efforts.

Practical Implications

This research offers practical value by shedding light on a holistic view of success as captured by the success profile. The results previously discussed convey that, regarding the four quadrants of the success profile, employers have high expectations from graduates. However, such high expectations presents a big challenge to educational institutions and it seems necessary that joint effort on the part of educational institutions, organizations and governmental policies is needed to achieve such a challenging goal.

In order to address the gap between the demands of the job market and students' level of preparedness for work life, it seems crucial to establish certain strategies to strengthen these success profile components during the higher education years. Since skill acquisition is solidified by experience, the tools of experiential learning can be extensively utilised throughout the courses (Kolb, 1984) in higher education to develop various competencies. The experiential learning model entails a holistic learning process that encompasses four components; namely concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation (Smith, 2001). These experiential learning activities also include useful feedback on student performance which is a valuable method to enhance student awareness regarding strengths and developmental areas and get a chance to work on them. To illustrate, in Turkey, such a course entitled 'Academic and Life Skills: Transition to Professional Life' is conducted at Koç University aims to assist students in discovering their potential before they graduate and provide them with the skills that are needed in academic and professional life such as; relationship management, teamwork, conflict resolution, creative thinking and problem solving (Kılıç et al., 2015). Moreover, educational institutions can also foster the development of competencies through maintaining physical environments such as interior designs for group, team and individual learning that will support the teaching and learning of skill outcomes in demand by organizations. These could entail conducting courses in classrooms that have U-shaped seating arrangements encouraging interaction among participants or flexible seating layouts where conducting groupwork is possible.

Another strategy could be encouraging activities such as volunteer internships, exchange experiences and community involvement projects during the college years to strengthen the experience component of the 'success profile'. To enable this, the higher education institutions can plan the work week of the students by leaving adequate time for internship and apprenticeship experiences. Professionals could also assist this process by creating flexible long and short-term internship opportunities at their companies. Since it's very tough for most students to work three days a week at an internship during the school term, there needs to be more feasible options to acquire work experience during the higher education years with the joint support of educational institutions and hiring organizations.

The responsibility to nurture and develop the four quadrants of the success profile does not remain solely with higher education institutions. It is also essential for employers to form a joint alliance with these institutions during the process and create a supportive culture and environment which fosters the emergence and continued development of these aspects of employability after recruitment takes place. Thus, employers can help themselves achieve this aim by getting actively involved in the higher education years of their potential hires. To achieve this aim, higher education institutions and industry professionals can collaborate on curricula development and include courses that foster skills and competencies crucial for working life. Professionals could also play an active part in teaching by acting as guest lecturers and using experiential methods (such as role plays, cases and simulations) to help students develop the crucial competencies required at work. During class visits, professionals could provide realistic job previews of the positions offered at their workplace and share information regarding the success profile they're looking for. Information about the organization's culture also needs to be shared with the students during these visits. Another valuable contribution professionals could make for student development would be mentoring and coaching; on a regular and long-term basis, about worklife and how they can best students can prepare themselves as potential hires.

Finally, recruiters also need to be realistic in terms of the success profile components they expect from new graduates. It is important to keep in mind that, competencies under the domains of 'Managing Work' (such as Analyzing Information) and

'Managing Relationships' (such as Teamwork) have more opportunity to be developed during the higher educational years. However, those competencies related to 'Managing People' (such as Delegation), need experience and a suitable context to develop. Thus, recruiters can aim to assess the potential of these type of competencies in new hires, yet not be discouraged if they are lacking and aim to foster them once the new graduate is on board.

Throughout the world, youth unemployment is increasing alongside education levels (ILO, 2017) and the failure to tap into this enormous potential will create long-term developmental and societal consequences. Young people need strong support through the transition from education to employment so that they are integrated into labour markets and become active members of their societies. Thus, goverments also need to team up with higher education institutions and organizations to support young people's transitions to the world of work. To achieve this, governments could promote access and participation in lifelong learning for young people as well as those not in employment, education or training to ensure their social inclusion (ILO, 2017).

Governments could also increase their investment in public employment services whereby offering personal counselling and placement services and improving labour market information to support young people's decision-making during their transition into employment. During this process, governments could collaborate with partner organizations in the private sector. Hence, in some countries, public employment services reach out to young people through the apps they develop and maintain. Belgium, for example, offers the Mycoach app which provides users on-line coaching on job applications whereas the Mentor app matches school-leavers with professional mentors (ILO, 2017). Thus, if well managed, new technology can aid young peoples' actions to make smoother trainsitions from school to work. These applications will be especially important in the eastern and southeastern rural regions of Turkey. Here it is much harder to find decent work opportunities; and the presence of private sector employment support services are rare compared to the bigger cities in other regions. Thus, the relatively low cost of such digital services could also assist the school to work transition for young people in the more disadvantaged rural regions in Turkey.

Limitations

In this study, the respondents were provided with competency names and asked to rate their importance for graduate recruitment when assessing the competency quadrant of the success profile. Thus, the respondents compared and rated these skills based on their own interpretation of the assigned skill term. Future studies can overcome this limitation by providing competency definitions in the survey instrument so that all participants are at the same page regarding competency meanings. Moreover, in addition to providing competency definitions, the key actions that define the competencies could also be provided to participants so that they can prioritise them by being better aware of the crucial nuances they entail. This in turn could facilitate more valid and reliable conclusions regarding the ratings. In addition to this, the present findings reflect the characteristics of Turkish employers which might present a generalisability issue. Even though results from other studies representing western nations (United States, New Zealand, Slovenia, Romania, Austria and United Kingdom) show similar trends in employer preferences (Andrews & Higson, 2008; Hodges & Burchell, 2003; Stewart, Wall & Marciniec, 2016) it would be interesting to look at other similar cultures and see to what extent these findings regarding the components of the success profile are generalisable.

Conclusions

Whereas the possession of detailed facts and figures was once a passport to a professional job, there is now much more emphasis on what people can do with the knowledge they can access (Silva, 2009) as well as their interpersonal skills. Thus, to cope with the demands of the changing workplace, organizations need and aim to recruit the most qualified new graduates they can reach. This study's value lies in its attempt to shed light on what those factors are that render new graduates 'most qualified' for the recruitment process (Figure 2).

The transition from school to work is a challenging time for young people, and thus demands a collective response on the part of higher education institutions, organizations and governments to develop curricula, classroom and workplace training and development methods as well as various other mutual strategies that ensure long-term employment gains for young people. This is a crucial collaboration

since enhanced graduate employability benefits all stakeholders: graduates through a smoother transition to workplace and further career advancement opportunities, industry through added value and enhanced competitiveness and governments through a greater economic return on public investment (ILO, 2017).

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