

Chapter 10

A Sustainable Career Ecosystem Perspective of Talent Flow and Acquisition: The Interface Between Higher Education and Industry

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ABSTRACT

This chapter frames university graduates as the talent that flows between higher education institutions and industry. Higher education institutions aim to produce employable graduates, university graduates aim to secure graduate-level employment as part of a sustainable career, and organizations seek to secure graduates as part of the global war for talent and organizational sustainability. The purpose of this chapter is to present an overview of a sustainable career ecosystem through the lens of talent flow and acquisition at the interface between higher education and industry. Future research directions are also provided for bridging the vocational behavior and HRM literature streams, and for practical and policy agendas, via the exploration of existing challenges and associated opportunities.

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INTRODUCTION

Section one of this book, authored by William Donald and Denise Jackson, introduced sustainable career ecosystems and set the scene (Chapter 1). Subsequently, Section 2 was introduced by Maria Jakubik, Judit Beke, and Yuliya Shtaltovna, focusing on the role of universities within a sustainable career ecosystem (Chapter 2). Our chapter advances the discussion by introducing Section 3 of the book, which focuses on graduates and employers. The purpose of this chapter is to present an overview of a sustainable career ecosystem through the lens of talent flow and acquisition at the interface between higher education (HE) and industry.

Individuals and organizations represent the key players within the labor market whereby organizations seek to build a sustainable workforce (Ybema et al., 2020). However, research focusing on graduates entering the global workforce, and opportunities for developing competitive advantage at the individual and organizational levels, remains scant (De Vos et al., 2020). Students and graduates shoulder significant responsibility for their own careers since the development of forms of human capital, career ownership, and seeking career guidance can enhance self-perceived employability (Clarke, 2018; Donald et al., 2019; Tomlinson, 2017). We posit that sustainable career ecosystems can provide a bridge for understanding the intersection between the multiple stakeholders throughout the process of transition, flow, and development of talent between HE and industry. We also bring a global perspective to manifest that talent flow can occur either within a country or across international borders (Baruch et al., 2016) in the context of the location of the university that the individual graduates from and the location where they take up employment or self-employment (Carr et al., 2005).

It is also apparent that other actors play essential roles in preparing and transitioning graduate talent from HE into the labor market (Donald et al., 2018; 2022). These actors include university career advisors, subject or faculty-specific career advisors, and graduate recruiters collectively referred to as meso-level actors (Holmes, 2013). Unfortunately, the collaboration between career advisors as agents of the university and graduate recruiters as agents of an organization often lacks strategic direction, whereby missing feedback loops hinder the opportunities for identifying the respective needs and resources (Buckholtz & Donald, 2022).

Moving forward, however, it is essential for organizations and universities to collaboratively identify the expectations of organizations and investigate talent identification and graduate talent pools from an individual and organizational perspective. This shift in developing a more flexible mindset between the labor market and HE institutions, including regional job opportunities, is vital in achieving organizational talent management goals for successful business practices and sustainable careers for those entering the labor market. (Clarke-Ambrosini et al., 2022; Jooss et al., 2021). We believe that sustainable career ecosystems can help to address this need.

The rest of our chapter is structured as follows. We introduce career ecosystems theory before exploring sustainable career ecosystems from the perspectives of (i) higher education institutions, (ii) preparing individuals for sustainable careers, (iii) sustainable organizations, and (iv) multiple actor new psychological contracts. Our chapter concludes with a discussion of future research directions for bridging the vocational behavior and HRM literature streams, incorporating practical and policy agendas via the exploration of existing challenges and associated opportunities.

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