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Student Employment Within Services: A UK, Central and Eastern European Perspective

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Abstract

Characterised by long operating hours, very competitive markets, labour-intensity, and highly variable, often unpredictable demand patterns, many service sector employers pursue 'hard' HRM policies, relying upon cheap, flexible labour in order to remain viable. In developed western economies student labour has become the bedrock of many such services, most notably in the fast food, hospitality / tourism and retail industries. Over the last decade, the economic transformation of Central and Eastern Europe has created more jobs in a developing hospitality and tourism sector. This paper conducts a preliminary assessment of the extent to which Central and Eastern European students make themselves available and are used as a labour resource. The findings are compared to the results of a similar study conducted four years earlier in the UK. In this way, the extent to which Central and Eastern European students emulate their Western counterparts is examined and some consequences of the "westernisation" of Central and Eastern European economies on the use of student labour are assessed.

Introduction

Since the 1970s, young people and women have increasingly entered the job market in low wage, service sector jobs in western economies such as the United States, Canada, Australia and the UK (Leidner, 1993; Reiter, 1996; Royle, 2000; Schlosser, 2001). As these authors observe many young people have been drawn into work by the global expansion of fast food outlets which are often their first job, and many are students having to finance their way through college (Felstead et al, 1999). Around 60 percent of Pizza Hut's 10,000 strong restaurant crew in the UK are students in fulltime education (Incomes Data Services, 1997). While 70 percent of McDonald's UK workforce is under 20, in Germany mainly foreign guest workers and economic migrants and relatively few young people are employed (Royle, 2000).

In practice, student employment is more diverse, although concentrated in the hospitality and retail industries (Lucas & Ralston, 1996; Lucas & Lammont, 1999), such that it is now considered to be structural rather than casual (Incomes Data Services, 1999). Student employment has been driven from its traditional domain of vacation work into regular term-time working, or both (Harvey et al, 1998). In the UK, students account for 15.3 percent of the total labour force, the number having increased by 20,000 between 1998 and 1999. Over 70 percent of all teenagers working in hospitality are teenage students (Labour Force Survey, 1999), and many hospitality firms could not function without them (Lucas & Langlois, 2000).

Characterised by long opening hours, very competitive markets, labour intensity, and highly variable, often unpredictable demand patterns, many services rely upon cheap, flexible labour in order to remain viable. Indeed, the approach that underpins employers' use of students is essentially the 'hard' variant of human resource management (HRM) (Hendry & Pettigrew, 1986; Storey, 1992). The utilisation of young 'contingent' labour in hospitality exemplifies the 'retaining control/cost control' approach to management, and provides a graphic illustration of very 'hard' HRM in practice (Lucas, 2002). It is, perhaps then, ironic that others argue that hospitality and tourism industries reflect those services for which the attraction and retention of well educated, well trained, skilled, enthusiastic and committed workers is paramount. Within the developed world this human resource issue is regarded as a chronic problem, and it is becoming a primary concern for those countries seeking to develop their tourism potential. Young, educated people are seen as an obvious recruitment target if firms are to attract the best possible workforce (Airey & Frontistis, 1997).

Students have inherent advantages to employers because they bring particular attributes to the job, such as

intelligence, being articulate, and the ability to communicate (Lucas & Ralston, 1996). Youthful inexperience makes them easier to control (Schlosser, 2001), as employers are recruiting 'acquiescent' workers (Reiter, 1996; Royle, 2000). A young workforce may be popular with establishments seeking to portray a youthful corporate image and wanting to attract a youth market. Such establishments are also able to intensify the pace of work through the use of willing youth.

The factors that influence employers' demand for students are complex. Curtis & Lucas (2001) identify three sets of factors: cost control, maximising flexibility and control through age, intelligence and appearance. Cost control is effected through a combination of lower labour costs including wages, ineligibility to employment protection rights, and lower training costs. Maximum flexibility is achieved through the students' desire for flexible work, often during unsociable hours, particularly in the evening or in vacations. Furthermore, employers need not actively seek student recruits because most students obtain employment at their own instigation, often through a network of personal contacts. More finely tuned flexibility is also related to employers' ability to increase or decrease students' hours and to recruit and lay them off at short notice (Lucas & Ralston, 1996). The third factor - control through age, intelligence and appearance - is where students can be more clearly differentiated from the more 'traditional' flexible labour source of 'older' part time females. As Lammont & Lucas (1999) observed, using a more highly qualified workforce may be a screening device for likely ability to be motivated, responsible or reliable.

For the students, working can produce contrasting consequences. The nature of the work that they undertake may be regarded as exploitative (Lucas, 1997; Schlosser, 2001), and working excessive hours may impact negatively on academic performance (Kelly, 1999). Yet "the experience of working is valuable in itself as it helps to provide a mature work orientation, increase self-reliance and provides a better understanding of business, economics and consumer affairs" (Curtis & Lucas, 2001:43). Positive effects of part time employment on the acquisition of 'transferable skills' including social adjustment, team working, and handling awkward customers with presence of mind, tact and diplomacy have been identified (Steinberg et al, 1982; Lucas & Lammont, 1998; Lammont & Lucas, 1999). If the work is directly related to a student's vocational course of study, the experience may enhance academic knowledge and skills, motivation, career development and employment prospects (Lucas, 1997; McKechnie et al, 1999).

This paper examines how students in service industry specific vocational degree programmes in hospitality and tourism make themselves available and are used as a labour resource. It compares and contrasts the UK, where part time working in services is well established in mature markets and a buoyant economy, with Slovakia, Bulgaria and Hungary, where recent economic transformation has created more flexible jobs in a developing hospitality and tourism sector. By comparing data drawn from empirical studies of hospitality, and tourism students working part-time in the UK (1995) and Slovakia, Bulgaria and Hungary (1999), the extent to which Central and Eastern European students experience work in ways that mirror UK patterns can be examined. In the absence of any substantive literature, either about HRM or student employment in these countries, the aim is twofold. Firstly to uncover the students' experience of work and secondly to conduct a preliminary examination of the impact of the "westernisation" of these Central and Eastern European economies on the use of student labour. Trends and developments in the use of student labour could indicate that the structural problems characterising free market economies, and their labour markets, are beginning to emerge in Central and Eastern Europe.

Recent economic change in Central and Eastern Europe

According to Lubyova et al (1999), unemployment in Central and Eastern Europe has been slowly, but persistently, increasing since the end of communism. A socialist legacy is strict employment protection legislation for full time workers. However, the outputs from vocational education and training are only loosely linked to labour market needs. Under these conditions, flexibility in the labour market is achieved by using fixed term contracts and short term work, a situation that student labour can effectively exploit. In addition, the hidden economy continues to grow, especially in the hotel and restaurant sectors. Whilst the volume of 'envelope salaries' has yet to be estimated, the phenomenon of informal employment is believed to be widespread.

In spite of the growing presence of multinational corporations (MNCs) like McDonald's, KFC and Pizza Hut in capital cities, resorts and on motorways, part time employment is still relatively rare.

Bulgaria

Ever since political and economic changes commenced in 1990, Bulgaria has been in turmoil. There has been, on average, one new government per year in the first decade since the fall of Communism. Political and economic instability have created a downward spiral. Under Communism, some 80 percent of Bulgaria's trade took place within the communist "bloc" and this has been difficult to replace with other sources (Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 1999). The changes commenced in 1990, largely as a response to developments in neighbouring countries, not as a result of internal dynamism. Consequently, the progress of privatisation has been somewhat spasmodic and the lethargic pace did little to encourage inward investment (Bulgarian National Bank, [Online] Available: <http://www.europeanforum.net> 2000). Yet by 2000, approximately 70 percent of Gross Domestic Product was generated by the private sector, which also employed some 70 percent of the labour force (National Statistical Institute, 2001). However, the pace of privatisation still lags behind the rate favoured by the International Monetary Fund (Commission of the European Communities, 2000).

In an effort to control rampant inflation, which at times reached 70-80 percent per annum (National Statistical Institute, 2000), a brake has been placed on government spending. In many state organisations wages have been frozen. As a result, many employees supplement their incomes by keeping two or three jobs, growing their own food or relying on relatives. The “black market” is also substantial with 36 percent of GDP estimated to emanate from the unofficial economy (www.europeanforum.net).

The state system of higher education is symptomatic of the economic regime. The Ministry of Education seeks to curb public expenditure by limiting student numbers; many university staff “moonlight” and all students in state universities now pay to finance their studies. In consequence, many students now work in their “free” time, unlike their counterparts prior to 1990. However, there are no official statistics that examine the extent of student employment. Most universities consider it to be part of the student’s private life and consequently ignore it unless it interferes with academic progress.

Bulgaria has enjoyed a thriving tourism industry for some time. The strategic significance of tourism, for the economy as a whole, is widely recognised, particularly since Western Europe provides the largest incoming market. Despite reservations, privatisation of the industry began in February 1993. Since then the number of registered accommodation units have fallen, mainly through failure to come up to acceptable (Western) European standards. In 2000, a total of 1178 companies were registered as either tour operators or travel agents or some combination of the two (National Statistical Institute, 2001). Recent legislative changes have attempted to raise standards by specifying the level of education required for various job categories. Whilst this legislation lacks reliable enforcement, the new entrepreneurs do see the advantage of having educated, trained and skilled personnel and are actively seeking to employ such people. Hence, employment opportunities are increasing, particularly for those with good education, such as students.

Hungary

Following elections held in March 1990, a right-of-centre coalition headed by the Hungarian Democratic Forum initiated the restoration of the country’s Western European orientation and a market economy.

Communism never completely eradicated private enterprise from within Hungary. Small scale private enterprise, forbidden by other Communist regimes, was tolerated. Not surprisingly, given this advantageous starting position, Hungary’s transition to democracy and market forces has been one of the smoothest of all the eastern bloc nations. For example, in the period 1990-97 approximately one quarter of all western investment into former Communist countries went to Hungary. Similarly, by 1993, some 70 percent of Hungarian exports went to the West and the reopened Budapest stock exchange consistently outperforms its counterparts in other ex Communist countries (www.europeanforum.net). By 1998, the privatisation programme had successfully transferred the bulk of the country’s industrial and trading enterprises from state to private ownership. Within the economy there has been an increase in the service sector in general and the hospitality / tourism industries in particular. In 2000, some 6.4 percent of GDP was expected to be produced by tourism and travel industries and approximately 471,000 employees, representing almost 12.3 percent of the working population, were estimated to have worked in this field (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2001). Whilst official statistics are hard to find, within the industry there is a tendency to employ more and more part time workers.

Higher education numbers have increased without a corresponding increase in the share of the total national budget. This has put pressure on the higher education system, staff and students alike. One way in which students have attempted to cope with these pressures, particularly those of a financial nature, is to undertake part time work alongside their studies. Student working is encouraged by higher education institutions, some of which have established formal means of assisting students to find employment.

Slovakia

Following on from the end of Communist control in 1989, the independent Republic of Slovakia was formed on the first of January 1993. Since then, three waves of privatisation have gradually restructured the economy to a point where more than 70 percent of state property has been transferred to private ownership and in 1998 the private sector represented 85 percent of the economic activity (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2000). Privatisation of some sectors has become even more widespread. For example 95 percent of all tourism property is in private ownership and 90 percent of the industry is composed of small and medium sized businesses (Kucerova & Malachovsky, 2000). These figures represent one of the highest rates of privatisation in the whole of the former eastern bloc.

Service industries account for some 45 percent of GDP. Slovakia has recognised the potential contribution to economic growth that can be made by the tourism and hospitality industries. Considerable effort has gone into improving the tourist “product” in order to make it attractive to the major tourist generating areas of Northern and Western Europe. As a consequence, employment in the tourism and hospitality increased to the point where it was expected to account for 10 percent of the total employment in 2001 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2001). Slovakian students are in a position to undertake many of these jobs since they are offered on a part-time and/or casual basis.

In all three of these countries the work opportunities for hospitality/tourism students are particularly strong due to the building of new hotels, an expanding fast food sector and the growth of tourism related businesses. For such

students there is the added benefit that working could add vocational relevance to their studies as well as providing an entry to full time work after graduation. In short, the skills, experiences and career aspirations of hospitality/tourism students are likely to combine in a way that encourages them to take advantage of the growing opportunities provided by flexible employment. In the absence of official data, the aim of this paper is to conduct a preliminary analysis of the extent to which hospitality/tourism students are taking up these job opportunities.

Methodology

The Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management at Manchester Metropolitan University has established partnerships with a number of institutions of higher education in a variety of Central European Countries, including Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia. These partner institutions are:

- Sofia University (the Faculty of Geology & Geography), Bulgaria
- KVIF in Budapest, Hungary
- Matej Bel University at Banska Bystrica (the Faculty of Economics), Slovakia.

It was decided to extend the cooperation between partners into the field of research. Lucas & Lammont (1998) had already produced data concerning the employment conditions and working experiences of students from the Manchester Metropolitan University in 1995. In 1999 it was decided to apply the same method of data collection to students from each of these partner institutions. Comparable data was sought, so that the results from Central and Eastern Europe could be legitimately compared to those from the 1995 survey. The wording of the original questionnaire was modified, to take account of the fact that English was the students' second language. It was also deemed appropriate to ask students about vacation employment because, like many of their UK counterparts in the past, this might have been their only mode of employment. We therefore have a more varied profile of the European students' employment experiences over time, whereas the UK study had concentrated on students' work experiences at a particular point during semester.

The questionnaire was administered, in English to students in all years of study, completing courses in hospitality and tourism at each institution. As questionnaires were administered during class contact time, some potential respondents are absent because they were not in attendance at the time of sampling. Nil responses in Bulgaria and Hungary denote students who were abroad on industrial placement. The UK survey also excluded students who were absent on a year's industrial placement. The vast majority of UK students were aged 18 to 24 (93 percent), with females accounting for 68 percent of the sample and males 32 percent. Only two respondents (1 percent) in the Central and Eastern European survey fell outside the 18 to 26 age range and 77 percent were female.

Table 1 gives details of the sample breakdown. Table 2 gives the same data for the original survey.

Table 1
Year of study for respondents in Central & Eastern Europe

	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four	Year Five	Total
Total	43 (26%)	38 (23%)	24 (14%)	37 (22%)	24 (14%)	166* (100%)
Bulgaria	12 (37.5%)	0	10 (31%)	10 (31%)		32 (100%)
Hungary	11 (24%)	20 (44%)	0	14 (31%)		45* (100%)
Slovakia	20 (23%)	18 (20%)	14 (16%)	13 (15%)	24 (27%)	89 (100%)

Notes: Row percentages do not sum to 100 due to rounding. The percentage is based on identifiable responses as a percentage of all cases.

* One respondent did not identify her year of study so the total response was 167.

Table 2
Year of study for respondents in the UK survey.

	Year One	Other Year*	Final Year*	Total
Total number	134 (38%)	98 (28%)	123 (35%)	355 (100%)

Source: 1995 survey.

Notes: Row percentages do not sum to 100 due to rounding. * Students were studying for either a 3 year higher national diploma or 4 year degree, and were on a one year industrial placement in year 2.

Findings

Obtaining work

The route to semester and vacation employment was informal, more so in Central and Eastern Europe than in the UK. The majority of students used personal networks and contacts to obtain work. The use of applications forms was not widespread, although an interview was the dominant selection method. In the whole of the Central and Eastern European survey only one or two respondents, in each location, either responded to an advertisement or

used an employment agency. In Bulgaria, one respondent used the Internet to find vacation work.

Employment Patterns

As work experience is a compulsory element of the school curriculum and paid part time work is widespread among pre university students, it would be relatively unusual to find some UK students entering university who have not worked. The extent of prior work experience amongst Central and Eastern European students is more varied. In Bulgaria, prior work experience is common with a clear majority of students (69 percent) having such experience, while students with prior experience in Hungary and Slovakia are in a minority. In all three locations, this prior experience is of less than twelve months' duration, except for a small number of "mature" students who have considerable work experience.

Work undertaken prior to the course was varied but was, in the main, of direct relevance to the course of study. Food and beverage service, housekeeping and reception and tour/travel agency work accounted for between 52 percent and 66 percent of this prior experience, depending on location. In contrast only three students, one in each country, had worked in fast food. Unrelated work included au pairing, shop work secretarial and general office work. In Bulgaria, English language teaching and translating were also found.

Irrespective of the industry in which the students worked, the split between full and part-time prior experience was practically identical in Bulgaria and Hungary with proportions approaching 2/3rds:1/3rd. In Slovakia the ratio was closer to 50:50 with full time experience just in the majority.

Central and Eastern European students with prior work experience show considerable variation in the extent to which they continue to add to this experience during the course of their studies. Most Bulgarian and Slovakian students continue to work, but only 38 percent of Hungarian students do so. This aspect of Hungarian student life is noteworthy since it shows that the majority of students cease to make themselves available as a source of flexible labour once they enter university. The two main reasons for not continuing to work were that it would interfere with study and that a suitable job could not be found.

Where work continued alongside study, in all three locations, a combination of both semester-time and vacation work was used in the majority of cases (56 percent). Employment during vacations was the next most popular (24 percent) and semester time work was slightly less frequent (20 percent).

Sizeable numbers of students in Central and Eastern Europe (28 percent, 58 percent and 36 percent respectively), including both those with and without prior work experience, do no work for the duration of their course. Job seeking was not an active pursuit amongst these students. They were not consciously seeking work but might have taken a job if something suitable became available. They indicated that their studies would be disrupted, there was a lack of suitable jobs and that much work was too lowly paid. This may indicate that the wider job opportunities available to their UK counterparts are not, as yet, as openly available to students in Central and Eastern Europe.

Since most Bulgarian students already have experience, entry to work at university was essentially a Hungarian and Slovakian experience. In these two locations the introduction to the world of work was gradual. For example, a sizeable minority (Hungary-45 percent, Slovakia-29 percent) did not work at all in their first year of study. Of those that did combine study and work in the first year, sizeable numbers (Hungary-36 percent, Slovakia-63 percent) did so by only working in the vacations.

In the later years of study, the respondents' pattern of employment altered. Semester time work became more popular and the combination of vacation and semester time employment was the most popular pattern of all. Vacation work provided a platform from which a number of students entered semester time employment. Such students did not, in the main, relinquish their vacation work. Hence the pattern which emerged was one of work experience "spreading" into semester time from its stronghold during vacations.

As work spread into semester time its nature altered. Whilst related employment (that is in hotels, restaurants, bars and travel agents) remained popular a wide variety of employment opportunities, unrelated to the course, began to be exploited. This diversity embraced computer work, magazine production, nursery work, accountancy, the lottery, youth centres and schools, a logging company and a dance club. Some erosion of the direct vocational relevance of the work undertaken resulted from the simultaneous combination of work and study.

Bulgarian students (59 percent) and UK students (37 percent) were most likely to be actually working at the point of the survey, trying simultaneously to combine work and study. In fact this is an underestimation of the work/study "juggling" undertaken by Bulgarian students since four of these nineteen students (21 percent) were actually holding down two semester time jobs simultaneously. Although a sizeable minority (26 percent) of UK students held two or more jobs, their average hours of work were significantly below those of the Bulgarian students. Whilst combining work and study was not that widespread in Slovakia (24 percent) and Hungary (15 percent), one of the seven Hungarian students had a "portfolio" of three simultaneous semester time jobs.

Hours of work

Table 3
Average weekly hours of work in semester time

	Bulgaria	Hungary	Slovakia	UK
Total	18	13	27	127
Less than 10	4 (22%)	3 (23%)	6 (22%)	37 (29%)
10-19	2 (11%)	0	4 (15%)	54 (43%)
20-39	7 (39%)	4 (31%)	11 (41%)	36 (28%)
40 and above	5 (28%)	6 (46%)	6 (22%)	0

Source: Surveys 1995 and 1999.

Notes: Table excludes missing cases.

Table 3 shows that, if 40 or more hours per week is considered to be a “full time” job, then a significant percentage of Central and Eastern European students were trying to combine full time work and full time study. The position of Bulgarian students was extreme in that semester time work was both widespread and involved long hours, and in one case a Bulgarian student was working 78 hours per week as well as studying! Similarly in Hungary, the hours of work were long although the numbers involved were small. UK students work lower average hours and this may explain why more UK students were able to balance work with study.

Remuneration and reward

Since a significant level of semester time employment, particularly in Bulgaria and Slovakia, was unrelated to the hospitality and tourism industries this was reflected in respect to tipping. A majority of respondents in these locations (81 percent & 82 percent respectively) did not receive tips in addition to their pay. Those in receipt of tips estimated their value to be between 10-20 percent of their total pay. In the UK and Hungary tips were more important since they were more commonly received and had greater estimated value to the recipients. In the UK the average student might earn around £38 a week without tips, but students in receipt of tips could expect to boost their low pay by an additional £6.22 a day or £14.04 a week on average. In Hungary some 41 percent of students received tips and their estimated value was evenly distributed across a range from 1-80 percent of total pay.

In all three Central and Eastern European locations it was rare for respondents to be paid at an enhanced rate for any overtime worked during either their vacation or semester time employment. Payment at the normal hourly rate was the most common response although sizeable minorities in all three locations obtained no extra payment whatsoever. Similarly, in these locations, a small number of cases of time off in lieu of payment were recorded. Holiday pay was also rare. For example, most students (90% in Bulgaria, 57% in Hungary, 83% in Slovakia and 79% in the UK) were not entitled to paid holidays. The provision of other fringe benefits initially seemed quite extensive, particularly in Bulgaria, with large numbers of respondents receiving such items. Closer inspection revealed the range of benefit provision was narrow. Benefits traditionally associated with hospitality and tourism such as meals, accommodation, free travel/transport and discounted purchase of company products/facilities, were dominant.

Reasons for working

Table 4
Why students work (weighted* responses in order of priority)

	Bulgaria vactn	Bulgaria sem	Hungary vactn	Hungary sem	Slovakia vacation	Slovakia semester	UK term
Work experience	11 (2)	29 (1)	15 (1)	21 (1)	52 (1)	47 (1)	63 (4)
Financial need	12 (1)	21 (2)	2 (6=)	5 (4=)	41 (2)	24 (2)	281 (1)
Financial independence	9 (3)	13 (3)	9 (2=)	14 (2)	33 (3)	14 (4)	82 (3)
Enjoy work	1 (6=)	5 (7)	9 (2=)	7 (3)	21 (4)	23 (3)	36 (6)
Independence	0 (8=)	2 (8)	0 (8=)	2 (7=)	21 (4)	8 (6)	33 (7)
Personal money	8 (4)	12 (4)	4 (4)	4 (6)	12 (5)	12 (5)	127 (2)
Fund education	0 (8=)	0 (9)	3 (5)	2 (7=)	5 (6)	6 (8)	52 (5)
Socialising	1 (6=)	7 (5)	2 (6=)	5 (4=)	4 (7)	7 (7)	25 (9)
Save for item	4 (5)	6 (6)	0 (8=)	0 (9)	3 (8)	2 (9)	27 (8)

Source: Survey 1995 and 1999.

Notes: The weighted score is the sum of the three most important reasons given. 1st = 3 points, 2nd = 2 points and 3rd = 1 point. The figures in brackets represent the rank order of that reason i.e. 1 = most popular reason.

Students were asked to give the three most important reasons for working and their responses have been weighted and recorded in Table 4. Gaining work experience was clearly the dominant reason for working during both semester time and in vacations for Central and Eastern European students. Financial considerations were also significant. Enjoyment from working was also evident, particularly amongst Hungarian students. By contrast, the UK students clearly had a more pressing financial need for working during the term. When all the financial reasons are combined, this factor exceeds all others by a considerable margin. Gaining work experience was much less

important to UK students than to their Central and Eastern European counterparts, presumably because they had already gained this prior to their semester-time employment.

Conclusions

The findings presented above, from mainly female students at different stages of their hospitality and tourism courses, enable us to draw some contrasts and comparisons between students in the UK and Central and Eastern Europe. These findings cannot be generalised because there was a tendency, indeed motivation, for students to be working in jobs that were directly related to their course of study. Even so the combination of work and study was a dynamic and complex process in all locations. Students are not a homogenous group across Central and Eastern Europe and the UK. They show considerable variation in their prior experience, availability for work and reasons for working.

For employers, the utilisation of young 'contingent' student labour in hospitality exemplifies on the one hand the 'retaining control/cost control' approach to management, and a graphic illustration of very 'hard' HRM. On the other hand by choosing to study hospitality and tourism management, these particular students have more 'added-value' than most, which can benefit them as well as their employers.

Curtis & Lucas (2001) have shown that in the UK, employers make the assumption that the student employees are not knowledgeable about the world of work, a point supported by Hort & Rimmington (2000). This is often a false assumption, especially in the UK, where very many students have prior paid work experience. It is also becoming increasingly false in Central and Eastern Europe as nearly half of the students overall had some form of prior experience. Irrespective of location, which may determine job availability, at least 1 in 3 students know something about employment, in the sense that they have already worked.

Employers do not have to mount recruitment and selections campaigns as in all locations, including the UK, students tend to find employment by informal means. In doing so, they develop skills, particularly those of using initiative, networking and negotiation. Hence, in these circumstances, the act of job seeking is itself a process of skills acquisition and development, as well as a cost-benefit to employers.

A further benefit to employers derives from students' flexibility, and from their ability to intensify the pace of work through the use of willing youth. UK students are the most flexible 'dipping' in and out of work over time, and seem better able to "manage" their work commitments by restricting the hours that they work. In Hungary and Slovakia, there are smaller proportions of working students, but they are not able to restrict their involvement in the same way. Consequently, they end up working excessive hours, at least in comparison to their UK counterparts. Bulgarian students have the worst of both worlds in that the combination of work and study is both widespread and the hours of work are excessive. Thus all working students are engaged in some form of work/study "juggling". In all locations a minority of students was unpaid for working extra time. In these circumstances being forced to work excessive hours, in some cases unpaid, may be regarded as exploitative employment and have negative consequences for the students' studies.

Additionally students provide employers with a low paid, readily available source of labour. While UK students seek work overwhelmingly for financial reasons, their rewards are not rich ones, and not all are able to boost their low basic pay with tips. Work experience and financial reasons are jointly important in Central and Eastern Europe, with the former being a particular source of satisfaction. Hungarian students in particular seem to wish to gain experience from their work, and are more likely to restrict their employment to that which is directly relevant to their studies. They are more likely to report enjoyment at work and satisfaction from work experience. This might be a consequence of their more selective approach to employment, because there are more job opportunities to select from. This survey did not attempt to directly assess the extent of job opportunity in each labour market, but this aspect could be usefully explored at some future point in time. Yet students can also derive social satisfaction from working in spite of the exploitative nature of their employment.

The UK "may be in the process of moving to the US model of part time employment, where the rates of part-time employment are highest amongst the young who are in full time education" (Dex & McCulloch, 1995:136-137). It would seem that the adoption of a market led economy in Central and Eastern Europe entails the adoption of western patterns of part time and vacation employment amongst full time students. Hence Central and Eastern Europe would also seem to be moving, along with the UK, in the direction of the US model. Although this is at an early stage of development, increasing job opportunities and a growing desire to work, to gain both experience and money, combine to move these countries along this trajectory.

Students are not like "traditional" employees, in the sense that a triadic process, which involves the student, the employer and the university, regulates their availability for work. Universities vary considerably in their willingness to become directly involved in this process. Nonetheless, they directly influence the student, and therefore indirectly influence their work availability, through the academic workloads that their curricula impose. Students are caught in the crossfire as both university and employer make simultaneous, but independent, demands on their time. Students are left to "juggle" since it is rare for employer and university to directly engage with each other in this process. Employers need to be aware of the demands that universities place on students and the consequences this will have on their availability for work. Thus more effective industry/education liaison remains an important consideration.

In HRM terms the reality is perhaps more stark. As service sector employers seek to drive down costs in

increasingly competitive markets, it is difficult to envisage them practising other than 'hard' HRM, especially when there are increasing numbers of contingent labour such as students who need to work. They can continue to have the best of both worlds using educated, trainable, skilled and, often, enthusiastic workers at minimal cost as core workers.

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- Colleagues in the partner institutions also supplied data concerning the economic backgrounds of the three Central and Eastern European countries which was combined with data obtained from:
<http://www.business-europa.co.uk> and
<http://www.europeanforum.net/>
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