

# Workforce2010

What's on the mind of global graduate students soon to enter the workforce? **Christine Robers** reports on what they revealed at a round table for chief learning officers convened by LSE's joint venture partner, Duke Corporate Education.

**W**est Sussex, England, was the venue for a fascinating forum last autumn. Fifteen LSE students from Brazil, Russia, India, China and Europe were questioned by senior learning and development professionals about their expectations as they seek employment.

This so-called Generation Y is accomplished, high on ambition and small in number, and the learning officer's role is to train and retain them to deliver their organisations' missions, strategies and goals.

With Duke Corporate Education (Duke CE) executive director Liz Mellon leading the debate, students answered the critical questions that corporate leaders consider as they think about how to develop and motivate new employees.

**Employers are finding it increasingly more difficult to retain young employees than to recruit them. Can you describe what you are looking for in a job?**

**Darya Arkhincheyeva (Russia):** I expect a lot of responsibility. I'm really ready to work hard, and I know that when you're going to work for a huge corporation they invest a lot in you, and you have to pay back. I have worked for different organisations and my dream was to work for a huge international corporation. This year I went to the business challenge with the Royal Dutch Shell Company. During this event I found out that when you're working for an international company you work with huge projects and a lot of money. A lot of people are involved but your input really matters because you are a representative of one part of the world.

**Preeti Jha (India):** I just completed a postgraduate course at LSE in international health policy. I've been in the health domain for a long time and am looking for international work experience. I'm taking baby steps into pharmaceutical or other multilateral organisations. At the moment I'm like a sponge, and I want to absorb more and more knowledge before I can really feel confident enough to take on bigger responsibilities and challenges. So at this stage the best job for me would offer different learning experiences and development stages.



**Fabio Marques (Brazil) (pictured):** I think the most important thing in a job is certainly how challenging it is. Also it must be something connected with what I believe in. I think it's very important that one fits oneself into the mission of a given organisation and understands its purpose.

**What do you expect from a boss?**

**Yiran Tao (China):** I would like the boss to make sure I'm on the right track for my career development. I would like a boss to be open and willing to pass on their skills and expertise to me and to provide greater responsibilities from the early stages of my career. I want the boss to correct me immediately and, if I make good progress, I want the boss to encourage me to go further and try my best.

**Fabio Marques (Brazil):** Someone who is willing to listen, to make sure that we're engaged in the decisions and we understand the reasons why certain decisions are taken, and to make sure that we really understand the strategic purposes of the organisation.

**Preeti Jha (India):** A boss should be contributing something new every day, challenging you and encouraging you to feel that there are good things to look forward to. It is important to look up to someone at work, otherwise it will become very drab and you won't really know where you might want to be ten years down the line. There are certain things, definitely, that you learn from your colleagues and boss and you embrace.



**Knut Magnus Koren (Norway) (pictured):** I expect my leaders and my boss to want to be honest with me both when I do well and when I don't perform as well. I think it's important for the boss and for me to both know what we're best at, so that she or he can teach me what they are particularly good at. And in the areas where I might have expertise, then in those cases I should perhaps be allowed to take a lead.

**Generation Y broadly has never known a recession or a world war. Your generation is seen to be carefully nurtured by increasingly affluent parents. That may be what you're used to, but how do you expect to be developed at work?**

**Preeti Jha (India):** It's like when somebody throws you in the water and you learn to swim. You need a coach initially, or you might drown. I look up to a boss initially as a mentor and as a coach. I definitely believe that you learn the most when you're actually working and that personal development matters more than anything else.

**Fernanda Gusmão (Brazil):** I would expect a boss to talk to me and to try to understand what my expectations are and my plans for the future. I think it's really important for the employee to have a boss with whom they can set a personal development plan for the next five years.

**Hong Ma (China):** Basically I don't need the boss to look after me. I think the best way is for them to give me some direction and advice on how to manage my work well. But also I want some space to put my ideas into action. If a company can provide a development opportunity, it would be fantastic. I feel when people start working they suddenly stop studying and don't have new knowledge. If a company can provide a challenge and train people to do a new job or to get more information, it's very good for personal development.

**What does globalisation mean to you?**

**YuanYuan Wu (China):** I find it a very enriching experience to interact with people from different backgrounds and I'm very used to the global working environment. I need to take time to understand not just different skill sets but also different cultures in different regions of the same corporation. I worked as an intern in UBS and I observed that the employees usually return to their homes after working. But in China, the company actually organises a lot of corporate retreats or employee centred activities to foster the bonds of the teams. So I think that Chinese companies have a high level of personal attention to their employees.

**Hong Ma (China):** I like the kind of international company that can see the importance of a local culture.

**Preeti Jha (India):** Everything is happening at a global scale, be it in the pharmaceutical business or in worldwide disease epidemics. So when you get a one country perspective you know that there are limitations, and you would like to move out and know something more.

**Fabio Marques (Brazil):** Well, I think a global company allows one to see the world from a broader perspective. We can be in touch with the realities of different cultures and overall we can see what works best and what is different in each culture. We can gather this sort of social information to improve our own organisation by learning with others.

**What did you learn from interacting with the executives today?**

**Knut Magnus Koren (Norway):** They confirmed that they were willing to listen to the opinions of their employees, which I think is really good. After today, I'm really positive about my future employment. I think they were surprisingly conscious of our needs and desires.

**Ravi Komatireddy (India):** It's not every day that I meet people in such high level positions. And it felt good because now I know there are people in the company who really care about being fair to new employees. When I go into a company now, I would trust the people at the top. The day definitely exceeded my expectations, because I was a little

sceptical about how successful such an interaction would be. But when I saw the amount of knowledge that I gained, and how much they appreciated our input, it was great. ■



**Christine Robers**

is associate director of marketing for Duke CE. She coordinates and delivers conferences, including the annual chief learning officer round table for senior learning and development professionals.

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