

Thank you to the IET for sponsorship towards the cost of this seminar

Transitions Stakeholders' Advisory Network Meeting #10
Exploring UK Professional Bodies, Sector Skills, Training and Trade Organisations' engagement with refugee engineering professionals

Date: Thursday 12th June 2014 Time: 14.00-17.00

Venue: Stockwell Resource Centre, 1 Studley Road, Stockwell, SW4 6RA

Attendees

Facilitator: Sheila Heard, Transitions. Danielle Neal, Administration & Marketing assistant.

Purple: Transitions Candidates

Blue: Organisations

First Name	Surname	Organisation/Profession/Job title
Dick	Bacon	The IET, Professional Development Manager
Thomas	Dempster	UK Naric Business Development Co-ordinator
Mooud	Hajiabadi	Transitions candidate, experienced graduate Petroleum Engineer Member: Energy Institute
Mahamat	Lbrahim Kale	Transitions candidate, experienced graduate Civil Engineer, UK MSc Civil Engineering, BSc Architectural Engineering Member: Institution of Structural Engineers
Carl	Licorish	Construction Industry Training Board (CITB), National Construction College, Business Development Manager
Abdalla	Mubasher	Transitions candidate, experienced graduate geoscientist, petroleum & mining Member: Petroleum Exploration of GB. Fellow of the Geological Society of London
Haroun	Nassir	Transitions Candidate, experienced graduate Architect
Neil	Robertson	EU Skills (Power & Energy) CEO (Guest Speaker)
Tracey	Shelley	BCECA Trade Association, Director
Mudher	Takialdeen	Transitions candidate, experienced graduate Electrical Engineer. Employed as Engineering Administrator (Guest Speaker) Member: IET.

Apologies received

Reem	Dawood	Transitions candidate, experienced graduate Electrical Engineer
Ahmed	Enayet	Transitions candidate, experienced graduate Civil Engineer, UK Masters
Bola	Fatimilehin	Royal Academy of Engineering, Diversity Manager
Mustafa	Gibril	Transitions candidate, experienced graduate Petroleum Engineer
Ali	Hamza	Transitions candidate, experienced graduate Electrical Engineer
H	Khan	Transitions candidate, experienced graduate Architect
Alan	Palmer	Jobcentre Plus, south London Partnership Manager
Craig	Smith	UK Academy Manager, National Grid
Jenny	Tyler	Membership Officer, Energy Institute

Introduction

The overall aim of the workshop was to exchange experiences of engagement by skills-focused organisations and candidates and to gain advice from both organisations and candidates on how Transitions can enhance their services. A key objective was to understand and discuss mutual challenges for stakeholders when transferring overseas qualifications and experience to the UK. The following document contains a summary of the main issues, suggestions and recommendations.

Presentation Summaries

A summary of all three presentations are captured below. Please also see attached presentations in full if required. They are on the Transitions website in the Advisory Network section.

First Presentation: Short Powerpoint presentation by Sheila Heard on Transitions

- An outline of the objectives for the current advisory network
- Previous themes of Transitions advisory network seminars
- Outline of Transitions structure and objectives:
 - Transitions is a social enterprise. Income after costs all put back into organisation to sustain future services
 - Objectives are jobs, candidate empowerment, collaborative good practice and sustainable social enterprise
 - Seeking to build more partnerships in recruitment sector, for mutual business outcomes.
 - No integration services provided in UK for refugees
 - No jobcentre plus services
 - 70% unemployment - 6 times national average
 - Refugees not named in Equality Act 2010 as having a protected characteristic
 - 25% of refugees are highly skilled
 - Transitions achieved 45% skilled job outcomes since 2011 (39 out of 85)
 - 200 on database. c 5,000 individuals given refugee status each year in UK, including children and older people - not flooded with refugees in the UK.
 - Success is result of collaborative partnership building, quality advice, internships service and niche employment agency services.

Second Presentation: Mudher Takialdeen, graduate Electrical Engineer, currently working for National Grid as an engineering administrator

- Qualified as an Electrical Engineer at Bagdad University in 1991
- Graduate training obtained various roles to learn all aspects of Electrical Engineering
- Gained over five years overseas experience for large corporations, managing other engineers whilst fulfilling engineering duties
- When relocated to the UK due to security issues, found Transitions to help recognise transferable skills, experience and qualifications, cross-cultural labour market expectations.
- Many unsuccessful experienced hire applications to agencies and employers
- Eventual success via Transitions information, advice and training about effective self-marketing in the UK.
- Eventually gained employment with National Grid in 2013 via Transitions as an engineering administrator.

Questions/Comments by range of participants

Several organisations recommended that Transitions ensure candidates are aware of the Naric opinion and include it in their job/work placement applications.

Discussion that sometimes Naric opinion is equivalent to UK Honours Degree and quick/easy to access (in the case of Mudher Takialdeen, speaker). However, sometimes the level is seen as lower and candidate may not agree. However, many employers and professional bodies often use Naric's opinion and therefore, if candidates are unhappy with Naric's opinion, they may use strategies such as including Professional Body membership and registration and active involvement in professional activities with those Professional Bodies as additional information to employers about professional capabilities.

IET and Engineering Council are currently focussing on addressing a CPD objective around engineers who are 'overskilled' yet under-employed or unemployed.

Action: Transitions to ask for more information about this

Question of cost : Thomas Dempster, Naric, clarified that candidates may telephone for a free phone opinion. Perhaps better to do that via Transitions. That phone opinion can be used on applications/ CV's and later verified by employers, at employers' cost.

Action: Transitions and Naric can discuss the best way to communicate this information to candidates. Perhaps via a Naric statement on the Transitions' website or a letter to pass to candidates.

Third Presentation: Neil Robertson, Chief Executive of Energy and Utility Skills Group (EU Skills)

- Discussed organisation's objectives and visions (please see attached presentation for full description)
- Outlined the Priority areas for EUSkills to include youth employment, high quality apprenticeships, flexibility in delivery, enhancing procurement practice and growth through skills
- Discussed the targeted sectors:
Energy Supply/ Efficiency, Energy Production/ Distribution/ Transmission, Environmental Sustainability
- Summarised the organisation's three year targets; 5500 - Apprenticeships, 7730 - Traineeships / Youth Entrant Programmes, 6573 - Up-skilling / Reskilling
- Indicated the organisation's goals such as providing work experience for at least 6,000 young people and offer career support to at least 64,000.
- Considered the upcoming challenges for Energy & Utility Skills Group in reaching diversity targets and which groups to focus on.

Questions/comments by range of participants

Neil - The way to access the skills of Transitions' candidates, seems to be to open up more pathways for skilled unemployed adults with engineering skills and qualifications. For example, for adult ethnic minority graduate engineers, including refugee engineers (Please see <http://www.transitions-london.co.uk/index.php/advisory-network-thanks> notes from Royal Academy of Engineering presentation at Transitions Seminar January 2014, evidencing lower employment rates of BAME graduate engineers compared to white graduate engineers. **Slide 8 : 20% engineering undergraduates from BME backgrounds**
9% of Level 3 engineering qualifications in FE are achieved by BME learners
4% of engineering apprentices are from BME groups
6% professional engineers are BME

Also to open up pathways for more women and for adults with disabilities

Neil - a way forward may be to score employers on how well they achieve targets in this.
Comment - Including scoring can be included in procurement. Rather than leaving it to optional good practice.

Action: Transitions to discuss this with EUSkills

Mudher Refugees are almost invisible and overlooked in the market. Hidden skills. They do not need to be 'poached' from overseas. They are in the UK, trying to access jobs and make use of their skills. The transferability of refugee engineering skills is far higher than employers realise. Anyway, most requalify in the UK, with Degrees and Masters but still can't find engineering jobs.

Small group discussions. Key points

Qu 1: What are the mutual challenges, in your experience, around transferring qualifications and experience in the UK?

- Refugees unsure of what skills based organisations to approach for assessment/engagement and how much/little to engage with them
- Refugees often not sure about the existence or difference between Naric and Professional Bodies and Sector Skills Councils and other skills bodies.
- Refugees face major difficulties in persuading employers to even interview them without UK professional employment record. Having UK qualifications (Degrees, Masters) and/or Naric opinion and/or membership of Professional Body doesn't seem to make much difference for most refugee engineers. This is where Transitions communications must focus. Of the 39 successes, how many had used a NARIC opinion or a professional body membership?
- Employers rarely engage with refugee professionals to provide 'bridges'. Eg Providing positive action work placements, mutual orientation workshops for refugee candidates and staff. Instead, employers usually expect refugees to create those bridges themselves. Eg finding UK work experience, becoming familiar with UK engineering graduate/experienced hire interview and assessment centre systems/expectations by themselves.

Qu 2: What can be done to improve things?

- Gaining opinion of equivalence of qualifications with NARIC
- Explaining gap in employment and refugee status in a covering letter
- Explaining lower level jobs as means of financial stability, whilst looking for appropriate and relevant employment.
- Highlighting all sources of continued education, training & development to maintain and build knowledge in the sector
- Registering with range of relevant websites and create an online profile.
- Corporates can identify refugee status as a form of diversity
- Employers to be made more aware of NARIC

Other Key Issues discussed

- Dick Bacon, Professional Development Manager IET, commented on the array of benefits for engineers joining a professional body whilst seeking employment. Upon becoming a member, the candidate automatically has access to many free and local events and workshops which enable candidates to network and build relationships with other individuals and organisations. Membership also enables access to discussions and forums which can ensure the candidate is aware on all the sectors latest news and technical advancement, which can be mentioned when applying for jobs to show up to date interest and knowledge.
- NARIC is not always recognised by potential employers and can be costly for unemployed candidates to use. Thomas Dempster, business development co-ordinator at NARIC, suggested that Transitions could partner with other similar organisations and gain a subscription with NARIC, thus reducing the cost for candidates seeking work. Tracey, Director of BCECA Trade Association suggested gaining NARIC approval from the employer before the candidate applies.
- Candidate confusion with the difference between becoming a member of a professional body and a registered engineer. Dick Bacon briefly outlined the main differences and has offered future support in explaining directly to candidates (please see below)
- Discussed Neil Robertson, CEO EU Skills, diversity targets and how these could be made to applicable to assist in gaining employment for Transitions candidates. Mudher Takialdeen, Transitions candidate, commented that diversity appears to be based more on age/sex and gender rather than focusing on refugees
- Tracey, Director of BCECA Trade Association, mentioned Transitions working with specific agencies aimed at supporting diversity.
- Candidate - many refugees, once they have UK citizenship, would not like to be seen as 'refugees' but as 'ex refugees'

Summary of Advice & Recommendations for Transitions/candidates

**Transitions to actively assist candidates to access a Naric opinion (Most candidates have already done this before contacting Transitions, especially early career graduates with UK Degrees who joined as students.)
Approaching Naric can be done without the candidate having to pay.**

Transitions also to actively assist candidates engage with their professional bodies. (Less candidates have already done this before contacting Transitions. ie joining and applying for professional registration) and other skills organisations. Including for example the IET, ICE, IMechE, Energy Institute and with the Engineering Council.

This is so that employers can be presented with a fuller picture, accredited by several sources, of the person's professional profile and development activities.

Transitions to continue to connect Electrical Engineers on a 1-1 basis with IET colleagues to increase mutual engagement. Dick Bacon, Professional Development Manager of IET, has offered to explain directly to candidates the difference between becoming a

member of a professional body and the advantages to becoming Registered Technician, Incorporated or Chartered Engineer.

Transitions to continue to build relationships with other specific skills based organisations who are seeking to enhance diversity delivery in their organisations and sectors.

Eg EUSkills (Sector Skills Council), Construction Industry Training Board (including Crossrail Training and Underground Construction Academy), Talent Retention Solution and Royal Academy of Engineering.

Notes kindly taken by Danielle Neal and written up by Danielle Neal and Sheila Heard, Transitions.