

The logistics education paradox

A brief review of any of the logistics and transport departments in the leading academic institutions in the UK will tell you just how highly rated they are by overseas students. You will find that the vast majority of students on most, if not all the courses, both at undergraduate and post-graduate level are from outside the UK and there is fierce competition for places. For the institutions themselves it is welcomed and brings much needed income, but for UK plc it is not such good news. The conclusion is that very few young people in the UK consider logistics and supply chain management to be an attractive career choice. Why is this?

For practicing logisticians and supply chain managers this lack of interest is paradoxical. On the one hand the UK has led the world in the development of effective supply chains and yet on the other it appears not to be attractive to those considering higher education. Is it perhaps that the problem is with those of us who work in the profession? And profession is the word. Much too often there is talk of the "logistics industry" when what we should be talking about is the logistics profession - a vocation that involves advanced learning and some science. Logistics and the management of effective supply chains are much more than operating lorries and sheds. They are fast moving and intellectually stimulating, they involves complex processes and advanced IT systems. They can involve detailed analysis at a micro-management level and they can involve strategic thinking on a global level.

Our overseas competitors seem to recognise the significance of supply chain management and they understand the importance to their economies. Hence many overseas students are being funded by their Governments. At the moment we are not getting the message home in the UK and as long as we fail to do so we risk falling behind. THE LOGISTICS BUSINESS has long standing relationships with the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport and with a number of the foremost departments of logistics and supply chain management in UK Universities. We are actively working to promote the highest standards of professional development including support for a number of UK students working on projects at masters degree level.