

come from a different side of the business, such as marketing or finance. More and more of these professionals are being attracted to positions like head of logistics or supply chain department, or fleet manager or similar, and may need additional education to get them up to speed on the fine points of global and domestic supply chain management.

The millennial generation is another good candidate for additional education, experience and networking the supply chain education provides. Not always eager to register for a master of science in supply chain management degree or an MBA programme, these younger professionals lean more towards bite-sized educational offerings that hit on specific, supply chain-related topics.

“As a result, CILT started offering certification. From experience, students take away specific knowledge and training on topics like global supply chain management, green logistics, inventory control, and purchasing. So instead of taking 18 courses over an 18- to 24-month period, students take three courses and earn a certificate in specific logistics areas,” Borg adds.

Key people in the research and education sector in the UK say they arrived at the simple conclusion about quality training, education and certification: if your employer values it, then it’s probably worth pursuing. But if the company does not put an emphasis on such education – or the value this can bring to the organisation – then it’s purely a personal investment.

Some employers do value it and some don’t. Certification can be an especially tricky area, because these programmes focus on technical expertise and rarely on bigger topics like leadership and strategy.

Perhaps one cannot really develop and educate people on leadership and strategy through a correspondence course. So where certifications may work for a tenured employee with less than seven years of experience, once one starts getting up into the higher levels, that type of education does not add that much value. The value of supply chain education also extends to the companies themselves, which can use it to retain their top supply chain employees.

A firm that sponsors executives who attend a masters in supply chain programme, for example, may ask for a minimum, post-



The growth of the logistics sector depends on quality training and education.

graduation time commitment (usually three years), thus ensuring they do not jump ship once the diploma is in hand. The hope, of course, is that the person will stay long after those three years are up.

Companies, especially those that do value ongoing education, tend to cast a more favourable light on executives who have made the effort to increase their knowledge in a structured manner.

“If one is working for a large organisation, a series of certifications or even a master’s degree could both be differentiators, particularly when it comes to a better salary package. However, I think it’s rare to find a company today that would hand out a promotion to someone simply because that person completed an educational programme,” Borg says.

To help clear up any ambiguity in this area, employers should be very clear about whether they do, or don’t, value quality training and education, including certifications, degrees, and advanced degrees.

Companies should have a stated strategy and policy about what education as part of the professional-

sation process means within their organisation, and communicate it clearly to their employees. This helps with employee retention and ensures that aspiring professionals are not left guessing as to whether they should put the time and effort into executive education.

As supply chain itself becomes more and more intertwined with other disciplines, industry expects the related executive educational offerings to follow suit. Anyone involved in making a product, buying a product, moving a product or storing a product is, in reality, involved with supply chain.

Demand for quality training and education is being driven by the fact that neither organisations nor their supply chain practitioners can operate in vacuums any longer.

“Supply chain executives have to be aware of the bigger picture. While they don’t necessarily have to become experts at everything, they have to see, at least, how their part fits into the rest of their own companies, and with their suppliers and customers,” he says.

Be it via a degree, a certificate programme or a workshop, it is a

“If one is working for a large organisation, a series of certifications or even a master’s degree could both be differentiators, particularly when it comes to a better salary package”

good way for supply chain managers to gain more of that big-picturing thinking, and then use it in their own careers.

As an example, when a warehouse manager learns exactly how their activities affect distribution, manufacturing and transportation, the opportunities to gain efficiencies and make continuous improvements across the organisation grow exponentially.

Transport and logistics organisations seeking improvements must be willing to carry the executive education torch or else, in many cases, employees will not see its value.

“But that does not mean enterprising executives cannot use education to improve their own knowledge banks and skill-sets while enhancing their chances of getting a raise, a promotion, or a new job.

“If one is going to invest money, time and effort in executive education, one has to ensure of the return on investment calculations. No education is bad. As with anything, there is a trade off between time and money invested in the paycheck one gets out of the education.”