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Adaption challenges faced by recent graduates in South African multinational organisations

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Adaptation Challenges Faced by Recent Graduates in South African Multinational Organisations



By

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A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Humanities in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

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Declaration

A research project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree MA by coursework and Research Report in the field of Organisational Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 26 May 2015

I declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at this point or any other university

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Date

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Abstract

Multidisciplinary research has focused primarily on the recruitment and development of graduates in the workplace, particularly in South Africa where exorbitant rates of youth unemployment and the shortage of skills are of great concern. To contribute to the extensive body of research exploring aspects which impact graduates as new members in the labour force, the aim of this study was to investigate adaptation challenges faced by recent graduates in multinational organisations in South Africa. Twenty four participants were recruited from four industries; Human Resource consulting, Engineering and Product Development, Banking and Accounting/Auditing. To gain comprehensive insights into the factors which facilitate or impede graduate adaptation, the final sample comprised of nineteen recent graduates who were employed for a period of one to two years, and five training and development managers.

The study design was qualitative; the instruments used to collect data were two self-developed interview schedules of twelve questions each, which elicited the nuanced perspectives of recent graduates and training and development managers. Data were analysed and emergent themes were acquired through the use of thematic content analysis. The results showed that factors which hinder successful graduate adaptation in organisations included four main themes, two of which had subthemes. The main themes were generational gap differences, insufficient collaboration between tertiary institutions and employers, organisational attributes and graduate attributes. Subthemes of organisational attributes included; the neglect of succession planning, managerial styles and unstructured induction. Findings showed that undesired graduate attributes such as; entitlement, overdependence on managers, unrealistic ambition and perceived lack of emotional intelligence.

On the other hand, desired graduate attributes which aided adaptation into the workplace comprised of; resilience, initiative and openness to learning. Directions for future

studies could focus on a regulatory framework for stakeholder collaborations to ameliorate graduates' adaptation and transition into the working environment.

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CHAPTER ONE –BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Twenty years of democracy is a period worth considerable celebration countrywide, however it is unquestionable that South Africa has a long journey ahead as far as workforce development, as well as societal and organisational transformation are concerned. Pedagogical research highlighted in the 2013 annual statistics report of the Department of Higher Education and Training reports that less than 15% of students admitted to tertiary institutions complete their studies and graduate. Furthermore, an even smaller percentage becomes employed and then retained by organisations of their first entry. This is particularly the situation as graduate unemployment is of immense concern in South Africa, taking into consideration that it occupies 18% of the national unemployment rate of 25.5% (Stats South Africa, Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 2012). An equally concerning statistic is that of the World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Risk 2014, which reported that an estimated 50% of South African are unemployment.

Such a situation is disconcerting considering reports published by Statistics South Africa (Census 2001) regarding the labour market high rate of unemployment in the country. It is reported that a large proportion of the country's workforce is employed as "blue collar" or casual labour. It is apparent that the labour market has a huge demand for an educated and technically skilled workforce to maintain the innovative flair matching the economic demands of South Africa's vast economy. Consequently, issues regarding graduate recruitment, high potential identification and retention have been widely researched; however, successful graduate adaptation and the challenges which hinder organisational integration as a precursor to the growth of this desired skilled workforce seems to have received less attention.

Managing graduates as the next generation in the workforce is essential to meet the demands of the rapidly moving, dynamic and highly competitive nature of the South African market (Coetzee &Schreder, 2010; Farley, 2005; Ulrich et al., 2008; van Dijk, 2008). In a study reporting on the intensifying competition amongst South African organisations for the best talent, Chambers, Foulon, Handfield-Jones, Hankin and Michaels (2007) refer to the 'war for talent' and how hiring managers and decision-makers are constantly cognisant of their competitors' pursuit to attract and retain emerging talent; and in so doing, aiming to solidify organisational competitive advantage and build strong leadership pipelines.

Consequently, research about contemporary graduates and the challenges they encounter is vital for organisations to plan for and ensure that the future of their workforce is accounted for. It can be argued that the 'war for talent' in the South African job market is primarily perpetuated by the skills shortage and lack of technical expertise. The transition from apartheid to democracy needed people with skills to drive the economy. Even though universities and colleges in the country are producing graduates to alleviate the skills shortage, the prevailing and concerning high rate of unemployment in South Africa reported at an exorbitant 25.5% and particularly amongst the youth, fuels the competition amongst organisations to employ and retain the best graduates (Hattingh & Coetzee, 2005; Kahn & Louw, 2010; Vermuelen, 2007).

Kerr-Phillips and Thomas (2009) pointed out that since the mid-1990's; South Africa struggled immensely with talent retention on both the micro and macro levels. That is, the disbanding of the apartheid regime led to a 'brain drain' in which educated and technically skilled talent emigrated to countries such as New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom, to flee the new political climate of independence in the country. Additionally, Du Preez (2002) emphasizes that the consequences of the 'brain drain', although seeming to gradually decrease in post-apartheid, has resulted in such "depletion of intellectual and

technical personnel, with negative outcomes that impact the social and economic growth of the country" (p.82). Hence, research on talent management and especially with regard to the future talent of the South African workforce is of paramount importance. Furthermore, as South Africa continues to undergo various stages of transformation, the general skills shortage and factors which affect sustainable talent management (such as failed retention and succession planning strategies), exacerbate the increasing demand for formal skills on a national level, and it also impacts on the country's capability to compete on a global scale (Griesel & Parker, 2009; Makiwane & Kwizera, 2009; Bussin & van Rooy, 2014). Therefore, from a talent management perspective and in addition to the widely published research reporting on concerns regarding senior level attrition, research on the effective management of emerging graduates and the contemporary challenges they encounter in organisations situated in post-apartheid South Africa, have become all the more important to pursue.

Additionally, the current changes in the job market in South Africa require the evaluation of graduates' challenges in the workplace in the context of multicultural integration in organisations. As such, organisational issues cannot be adequately evaluated in isolation from the political context in which they are situated. Racial identities have been formed based on the impact of the past, resulting in continued intergenerational residual effects in post-apartheid South Africa. This is evident in South African studies which indicate that social inequalities are transmitted over generations and are thus, involuntarily inherited by the youth (Tomison, 1996; Kraaykamp & Nieuwbeerta, 2000; Walker, 2005; Schindlmayr, 2006; Neeves, 2008; Seekings, 2008).

As such, redressing inequalities of the past has been of great focus in post-apartheid South Africa to ensure that there is compliance with fairness and equity as outlined in Labour and Employment Equity legislation, particularly in organisational settings which largely reflected racial segregation and marginalisation. Hence, the diversification of South African

organisations in terms of culture and ethnicity is of due consideration when evaluating factors which may impact on graduates' adaptation in the workplace.

A plethora of research identifies the value of the contributions made by graduates to organisational performance and effectiveness, diversification, innovation capacity and the subsequent impact on national and global competitive advantage (Connor & Brown, 2009; Rubin & Dierdoff, 2009; Vlachakis, Siakas, Belidis &Naaranoja; 2014). As such, it is important to probe into inhibiting factors graduates may encounter in organisations, particularly during the delicate period between school and work, that is, the transitional phase**.** Hagan (2004) claims that although graduates are generally deficient in some areas upon entering and transitioning into the workplace, the identification of graduates' valuable contributions from an employer's perspective provides insight to the desired attributes required for graduates to overcome challenges and meet organisational expectations.

Although the focus of this research was on the adaptation challenges experienced by graduates who had been employed for a period of one to two years in multinational organisations and as such were still experiencing adjustment problems that are associated with the transition from university life to work life, the value of graduates as next generation workers has also been identified in their commercial contribution to organisations where succession planning is critical for organisational continuance (Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Vlachakis et al., 2014).

Particularly, changes in management style and practices, decision-making processes, technological resources and overall organisational culture evolve when the next generation employees have been retained long enough in organisations to assume leadership roles (Cardon & Stevens, 2004, van Zyl, 2011;Vlachakis et al., 2014; Mokoena, 2012). However, Espinoza (2012) draws attention to the notion that there exists a high resistance among the

older and experienced members of organisations to transfer knowledge and pass it on to the leadership reins of the incoming high potential graduates of the young generation. Whilst the term 'graduate' certainly does not refer only to members of a younger generation, generational conflicts pose as a significant challenge for graduates to integrate and make meaningful contributions in organisations.

Graduate contributions have also been recognised in the ethnic diversification of organisations in South Africa where transformation is a national priority (Barrie, 2004; Griesel & Parker, 2009; Ngetich & Moll, 2013). From a political perspective, this is potent considering the redress South African society is undergoing to account for the systematised injustices of apartheid. Diversification is also important for the generational synthesis between seasoned professionals and contemporary youth, particularly as generational differences pose as a challenge to graduate adaptation and integration (Taveggia & Ross, 1978; Smola & Sutton, 2002; Espinoza, 2007). In addition, research has also concentrated on the various ways graduates use coping strategies to acclimatize to the dynamic and often daunting work environment, particularly in the highly competitive milieu of the contemporary market (Coetzee & Esterhuizen, 2010; Jackson, Firtko & Edenborough, 2007)

For these reasons, in evaluating the challenges encountered by graduates from an employer perspective, the factors which impede graduate adaptation and integration can be understood holistically, particularly as Connor and Brown (2009) posit, employers recruit graduates for the purpose of long-term, sustainable and mutually beneficial growth. As such, closer attention to graduate adaptation challenges may highlight and to some extent alleviate human resource problems such as a high rates of employee turnover, which presents considerable cost implications for employers, especially amongst recent graduate employees who have been identified to exit organisations within a short period of time after being

invested in by organisations (Roodt & Kotze2005; Muteswa & Ortlepp, 2011, Martins & Martins, 2014).

Graduate retention problems and 'revolving door phenomenon' are commonly associated with newly qualified graduates' early exit from organisations and particularly from professions such teaching (Brill & McCartney, 2008; Miller, 2010). Mokoena (2012) states that in South Africa alone, 75% of graduates within the millennial age group born between the years 1977-1997, left organisations of their first-entry within a period of three years. High rates of turnover in the new generation labour force has been reported as a great issue of concern globally, considering that retention issues are not experienced only in work environments which are high impact and low reward (such as those commonly associated with the IT, call centre and hospitality settings) and are therefore more susceptible to the revolving door, a multitude of industries are affected by the tendencies of recent graduates to display a high level of dissatisfaction and impatience with their work (Mokoena, 2012; Regina & Hechanova, 2013; Zwane, Du Plessis & Slabbert, 2014). In a report published in 2008 by business consulting organisation Managing Mentors, there is an indication that the cost of an early exit of a graduate is equivalent to the cost of replacing an employee in the organisation. Furthermore, it is argued that,

"Every employer who hires a new entry-level employee has hopes that this person is going to stay with their organisation for a long time; paradoxically few employers have analysed exactly why this is so important and what it costs their organisation - in terms of time, resources, productivity and revenue – to lose that employee, particularly in the first year" (p. 3)

Adaptation challenges experienced by graduates have in part played a significant role on the rate of early exits within the first two years of employment. The revolving door and

unfavourable trends of this kind highlight the shortcomings of graduates; as employers who have spent monetary, time and human resources in recruiting, training and developing graduates in the aim of retaining them incur great costs. Salopek (2006) is of the view that while employers are aware of this tendency, there is hope that after a cycle of entering and leaving organisations within a relatively short period of time, the nature of the revolving door would return graduates back to the organisations of their first entry, in which they can make meaningful and long-standing contributions.

It has been two decades since Holton (1995) claimed that organisations experiencing graduate issues, would often assert that graduates "…don't know what they don't know…", or comments such as graduates 'don't know how to work' (p.76). It was from this perspective that this study was inspired to investigate the adaptation challenges faced by recent graduates employed for a period of one to two years and are therefore adjusting to the world of work in South African multinational organisations; and to probe not only into the perspectives of graduates, but the training and development managers well positioned to provide informed opinions about graduates' transitioning into the workplace.

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

This study adopted a symbiotic approach with the view to contribute to an existing body of research on talent management and the extensive dialogue regarding the role and challenges of graduates, as well as the implications for contemporary organisational success. However, as many studies focus on the perspectives of graduates and employers disjointedly, this study aimed to provide a comprehensive synthesis by evaluating both the views of graduates and the managers tasked with developing and integrating them into the world of work.

By so doing, this study emphasises the notion that graduate adaptation is a process which involves combined efforts and synergetic relationships (Holton, 1995; James, Lefoe and Hadi, 2004; Ong, Bergeman, Bisconi & Wallace; 2006; Wilson, 2011). This study aimed to benefit, in addition to graduates and organisations as a whole, other stakeholders such as career managers, tertiary students, hiring managers and talent acquisition specialists, mentors and coaches, tertiary institutions organisational development consultants and organisational policymakers.

A bidirectional approach provided multifaceted issues regarding the organisational expectations versus the expectations of graduates which could be used as a trajectory to identify and discuss existing gaps which hinder successful adaptation. From this regard, organisational and graduate attributes were evaluated in relation to one another, particularly referring to the effect of graduate offerings on the reception and rejection activities of organisations.

Challenges faced by graduates in the student to employee process, have been reported to have an effect on an emotional, physical, socio-cultural and socio-developmental level (Duscher, 2008; Ong et al., 2006; Vaastra & de Vries, 2007). This has become an increasingly concerning issue as graduates are tasked to deal with the emerging demands of highly dynamic and stress-laden working environments, whilst making the transition from theoretical understanding to organisational application. Experiences in the transition phase can induce feelings of frustration, ambiguity and self-doubt, which may contribute to unsuccessful adaptation and integration into the workplace (Kamer, 1974; Feldman & Brett, 1983; Bauer & Green, 1994; Lavoie-Tremblay, Wright, Desforges, G´elinas, Marchionni, Ulrika Drevniok, 2008). As such it is necessitated that organisational and graduate attributes which facilitate, but also impede graduate adaptation be evaluated.

An ecological approach is adopted to evaluate the organisational reception activities and systems such as effective induction, formalized graduate programs and training, informal arrangements for mentoring and coaching, as well as managerial support systems in place to aid adaptation were discussed. Similarly rejection activities were evaluated with regards to how they impact on graduates' opportunity for acclimatizing and then thriving in the dynamic milieu of large-scale organisations in South Africa.

Graduate attributes were investigated with regard to their offerings (skills, competences and knowledge and personal characteristics) to organisations, as well as their resourcefulness and coping strategies in dealing with and overcoming obstacles in the transition phase. Toward achieving these aims, the study sought to explore potential solutions which could contribute to improved and sustained graduate adaptation and integration within organisations embedded in the cultural and political multiplicity of South African society.

The chapters to follow give a detailed account of the literature which delineates the challenges experienced by graduates in organisations; that is, the factors which impede and influence successful adaptation and integration. Also, the literature review covers the various strategies employed by graduates and training and development managers to facilitate and aid the transition process. Thereafter, the third chapter is a comprehensive outline of the methods used for the research, of which convenient samples of graduates and training and development managers in four industries (Accounting and Auditing, Engineering and Electronic Development, Human Resource Consulting and Banking) were acquired. The procedural steps that were taken to gather the data and the approach to thematic content analysis are outlined. Chapter four presents the emergent themes drawn from the data and through the use of the triangulation technique; evidence is presented in the form of participants' direct quotations from the copious raw data. Finally, chapter five provides a detailed discussion of the results in relation to the argument presented in literature, to which

then implications of the study and recommendations for future research are delineated, as well as the limitations of the study to be taken into consideration.

CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews literature pertaining to the factors which affect graduate adaptation in both ways which are impeding and aiding. It highlights past and current studies on graduate attributes and the challenges experienced, as well as the suggested coping strategies which could alleviate negative experiences. Theoretical and conceptual frameworks underpinning the subject are reviewed in this section. Adaption, ecological and symbiotic approaches are defined as pertinent terms in this study.

Defining Adaptation

There is a clear indication that although the concept of adaptation is widely used across various disciplines, it is often vaguely defined (Lints, 2010; Packard, Leach, Ruiz & Dicocco, 2012). Adaptation is an important notion to operationalise towards understanding the mechanisms involved in the process which graduates go through when navigating an organisation. In taking a multi-disciplinary approach to defining adaptation, it is evident that the foundational definition is derived from biological and evolution theory, which primarily links adaptation to the survival and fitness of an organism in its situated environment (Brock, 2000; Tammaru, 2000). This Darwinian definition is extended by these researchers as not just a matter about survival, but about the capacity of and ability for organisms to perform a specific function in accordance with the interactions and requirements of the external environment. From a psychological perspective the definition of adaptation alludes to achievement of goals, which Harvey (1966) refers to as the capacity to behave appropriately towards the achievement of ends.

In line with this conceptualisation is the organisational definitions of adaptation, which pertain to a range of an individual's attributes, namely; abilities, skills, competencies, willingness and motivations to fit into and when necessary, change aspects of an environment

toward succeeding in all encountered situations (Avraamova and Verpakhovskaia, 2007; Bresciani, Griffiths & Rust, 2009; Ployhart & Bliese; 2006). In contrast, Ong et al. (2006) allude to a different notion and define adaptation as that which involves the emotional capacity of individuals, in terms of tenacity and resilience, as well as managing stress related affect by maintaining a healthy balance between negative and positive emotional states throughout the presence of difficulty. Evidently, there is a divergence of accepted definitions of adaptation, albeit each paradigm gives great insight to the nature of adaptation as not a singular event, but as a complex and multifaceted process.

For the purpose of this study and particularly in the organisational context in which graduates had been recently employed, adaptation encompasses the mutually interactive relationship between the graduate attributes with regard to the various offerings of graduates to organisations and the organisations' attributes in terms of the resources offered to effectively facilitate the school to work transition in the period of first to second year employment. Scott (1966) as cited in Lints (2010) asserts that a bilateral interaction is required for the process of adaptation to take place in which modification is required from both the environment and the subject. That is, "the matching between the requirements of an organism and the resources of its environment, and also the matching between the requirements of the environment and the resources of its inhabitants" facilitates successful adaptation (p.114). It is also then important to consider adaptation in terms of the diversified nature of organisations in South Africa, as graduates are required to function in culturally varied work settings. Pulakos, Arad, Donovan and Plamondon (2000) affirm the importance of cultural adaptability in organisations especially with consideration to the globalisation of the contemporary work environment.

Pulakos et al. (2000) assert that the ability to perform in diverse environments require individuals to be open to learning the jargon or dialect specific to the environment, goals,

values, history and politics within the organisation, however in relation to the greater societal context. Hence, both an ecological and symbiotic approach to the investigation of graduate adaptation was explored in this study. The perspective focuses on graduates and training and development managers in an organisational context. The model illustrates the relationship between the individual and the organisation in the same way it represents the relationship between organisms or plants and the environment. This approach tends to provide a holistic view of the challenges experienced by graduates in the South African workplace.

In contrast to complexity theories, Bresciani et al. (2009) refer to Work Adaptation Theory which was conceptualised in the mid-1980's. The assertion is that adaptation is an individual's ability to balance his/her needs, as well as the requirements of the job despite the turbulences which occur in the workplace. As an extension of this line of thought, Reality Shock Theory postulates that disturbances in the workplace when severe or occurring in the early transition phase of the individuals' journey into the world of work, could induce feelings of resistance, anxiety, frustration and instability (Kramer, 1960, 1974; Duscher, 2008; Morrow, 2009). As such, it is the individual's ability to maintain equilibrium and persist through difficulties which demonstrates successful adaptation.

The concept of adaptation has evolved to consider not only individuals' capability to survive, but modification within the frame of reference in which individuals' capabilities are required. As such, a view of organisations from an ecological perspective - as the environment in which graduates are compelled to adapt - is imperative to investigate in relation to graduate attributes. Training and development managers are well positioned to provide this view.

Ecological and symbiotic approaches

Bronfenbrenner (1994) in the investigation of ecological and symbiotic models of human development provides insight into the different environments as context for development, in which the distinction between microsystems and mesosystems are conceptualised. Bronfenbrenner (1994) defines microsystems as the social roles and interpersonal relationships experienced by individuals when encountering complex interactions in the immediate environment and mesosystems entail the "linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person, such as the relations between school and workplace" (p.40).

In relation to this study, ecological approach refers to the factors which facilitate or impede graduate adaptation by viewing the systems and processes of the organisation, as well as how individuals and the environment mutually affect one another. A symbiotic approach is adopted to understand the relationship of mutual dependence between the perspectives of graduates and training and development managers in determining graduates' adaptation and integration challenges in the workplace, particularly through the collaborations of tertiary institutions, employers and stakeholder alliances (Boeker, 1991; Schumate and O'Connor, 2010; Thoms, Parmar & Williamson, 2013).

The literature review evaluated in detail the conceptual complexities of contemporary graduates' challenges in the workplace. With consideration to the various implications of unsuccessful graduate adaptation and integration into organisations, such as organisations' loss of resources on recruitment, induction and training costs, this research aimed to investigate the challenges of recent graduates in multinational organisations in South Africa. Factors which influence the experience of transition such as generational gap differences, approaches to managerial support, cultural integration from a South African transformation

point of view, as well as the strategies and graduate attributes which facilitate and impede adaptation are discussed. Graduate challenges were evaluated in a general global context, but also within the unique multicultural and diverse environment of multinational organisations in South Africa.

Additionally, examples of previous research are provided to critically discuss and demystify the quality of evidence of the factors which impede and facilitate the school to work transition of graduates during the first and second year of employment in multinational organisations, additionally; details of the setting, participants and measures are discussed to demonstrate the strengths and weaknesses of previous research. Reality Shock Theory, Work Adaptation Theory and Generational Theory serve as a backdrop to making sense of and contextualising the effects of the various impediments of successful workplace adaptation on recent graduates.

Reality Shock Theory

Reality shock is a concept coined by Kramer (1960) which in the 1970's became interchangeably understood as transition shock. It refers to how graduates respond to their realities in the workplace when there is a gap between what they were taught in their tertiary education and what they experience in the work environment. Transition reality shock builds on theory of cultural and acculturation shock, professional role adaptation as well as of growth and development (Kramer, 1974; Duscher, 2008). Espinoza (2012) referring to the culture shock experienced by graduates in their shift from college life to work and that "while in school they eagerly anticipate making a transition into a career, but when they finally get there it is not entirely what they expected" (p. 140). The transition from the stable and predictable academic environment to the demanding nature of work life requires substantial peer and management support for graduates. Adaptation to the professional space and the loss

of academic related support has been shown to yield feelings of anxiety, insecurity, confusion and inadequacy (Duscher, 2008; Packard et al., 2012; Wilson, 2011).

Studies in the nursing professional in particular emphasize that the journey of graduates into the professional space is descriptive of a transition which is often frustrating, discouraging and disillusioning, highlighting the need for the understanding of challenges faced by graduates not just in the nursing environment, but in all industries in South African organisations (Chang and Hancock; 2003; Duscher, 2008; Morrow, 2009).

Morrow (2009) claims that stress in graduates arises when capabilities do not meet expectations and there is a lack of support in the workplace, especially from managerial figures. This leads to experiences of reality shock, increased anxiety and an increased fear to operate independently. In four qualitative studies which contemplate the implications and intensity of the transition experience, Ducsher (2008) demonstrates how transition shock affects the manner in which graduates are physically, emotionally, socio-culturally, developmentally and intellectually affected in their adaptation process to the workplace. Furthermore, how the process of adjustment is impacted by graduates' role, responsibilities, relationships and the knowledge which facilitate the intensity of the transition experience. Transition shock can be associated with culture shock and acculturation in that they are recognised as normal parts of adaptation challenges faced in a new environment; however, when severe, can lead to graduates' early exit from organisations and even the industries for which they had studied (Duscher, 2008; Winkelman, 1994 as cited in Wilson, 2011).

In an earlier study, Duscher (2001) found that interactions between graduates and colleagues have a substantial impact on graduate adaptation as failure to establish supportive relationships becomes a source of immense stress, particularly when the relationships are characterised by alienation, criticism and distrust with allocation of tasks. Furthermore, Morrow (2009) claims that ineffective relationships can be caused by a hostile organisational

culture, differences in generational values, insufficient managerial support and unrealistic expectations from management, particularly when "not knowing is perceived as a weakness, rather than an expected state of professional orientation" (p.280).

Understanding transition shock provides clarity about the severity of unsuccessful adaptation on graduates' overall wellbeing and the extent of their capabilities in the workplace. It can be argued that graduate adaptation is a responsibility which should be shared and managed effectively by graduates, employers and tertiary institutions. It was against this background that this study sought to investigate adaptation challenges relating to graduate and organisational attributes, as well as additional factors which impact on the transitioning of recent graduates in the South African workplace.

Generational gap differences as a challenge for graduate adaptation

The interactions of multiple generations in the workplace have drawn attention to how this influences contemporary graduates' ability to assimilate in the world of work. Taylor and Keeter (2010) claim that scholars and society as a whole should be cognizant of the notion that "there are many differences in attitudes, values, behaviors and lifestyles within a generation as there are between generations" (p. 5). Espinoza (2012) shares the view that generational analysis is a significant contributor to understanding graduate integration and states that "while all generations have similarities, it is simplistic to say they are the same" (p. 2). These sentiments highlight the importance of considering generational differences between the recent graduates and their predecessors in the workplace, especially to ensure rapport and interactions which could aid next generation workers to adapt successfully into the workplace.

Espinoza (2012) claims that whilst anecdotal perspectives have persisted for years regarding the impact of interactions between different generations in the workplace, evidence is lacking, hence it is important to continue research which brings to light the challenges

experienced by graduates in the workplace. This realization was first asserted by Bengston (1970) that "very few thorough studies have yet been made to illuminate the nature and extent of continuity or differences between age groups today, all too often the discussion has been impressionistic, speculative and even apolyptic" (p.7). Similarly, Taveggia and Ross (1978) indicated that there existed two opposing views regarding generational differences in the workplace, where on the one hand scholars vehemently believed that workers of different generations interpreted and experienced the workplace differently, the contrary as found in studies conducted by Brixtton and Thomas (1973), Anderson (1974) and Steininger and Lesser (1974) proposed that generational differences in the workplace were organised fictions and that the work values and orientations of different generations were actually rather similar.

Notwithstanding, research conducted in later years presents compelling evidence of genuine generational differences in the workplace. Kupperschimdt (2000) highlighted that members of the same generation, having experienced similar contexts, have shared life experiences and as such develop attitudes and values which are similar. Meriac, Woehr and Banister (2010) postulate that as a result of different events being experienced by individuals of different generations, the development of distinct group differences is inevitable, particularly with regards to work ethic.

Additionally, in their investigation of generational impacts in the South African workplace, Moss and Martin (2014) found that generational sub-groups were formed in organisations based on the perceptions of organisational culture of cohorts who belonged in the same groups. This is substantiated with the assertions by Dittman (2005) and again a year later by Drago (2006) that generational interactions indicate that the last three generations (Baby Boomers, Generation X and Millennials) are present in the workplace and that generational differences impact on the communication, relationships and work dynamics of colleagues, as well as the effectiveness of organisations to provide services. A multitude of

research on the impact of generational differences on graduate integration unanimously indicate that differences in values, attitudes, worldview and work-related perspectives affect the extent to which graduates from the younger generations interact with members in the organisations belonging to antecedent generations. A brief synopsis is necessary to evaluate generational differences in context to their initial delineations.

Coined by William Strauss and Neil Howe in the early 1990's and in the American context, Generational Theory highlights that there are generational differences in terms of individuals' values and beliefs, characteristics, work-related perspectives and general worldview (Wilder, 1996; van der Walt & du Plessis, 2010; Espinoza, 2012, Moss & Martins, 2014). Strauss and Howe were revered for identifying recurring generational cycles and archetypes which were recognized to occur every two decades. In the critically acclaimed book *The Fourth Turning*, Strauss and Howe (1997) distinguished between four generations evident since the 1800's, in brief these were; the Lost Generation (born 1883-1900) who were described as cautionary in their approach to building society, GI Generation born between the years 1901-1924 progressed society toward materialism, thereafter the Silent Generation of 1925-1942 applied increasingly advanced expertise to launch society into innovation. They were then succeeded by the Boom Generation born 1943-1960 who were found to be more indulgent and narcissistic and emphasised the importance of the self and lastly, the 13 Generation, more commonly known as Generation X and born in 1961-1981 were culturally diverse in their approach to establishing societies.

There were slight differences in generational classifications in the South African context, of which Reynold, Bush and Geist (2008) as cited in Espinoza (2012) classified that Baby Boomers were born between 1946-1964, Generation X between 1965- 1981 and Millennials between the years 1982-2000. Of particular interest to this study are the interactions of the last three aforementioned generations, namely, Baby Boomers and

Generation X with recent graduates, who for the most part belong to Generation Y and are commonly, known as Millennials.

In investigating the impact of generational differences on graduates in the workplace, Espinoza (2012) used Participatory Action Research (PAR) to establish the views and challenges of young graduates in the workplace. Espinoza (2012) conducted eleven intervention groups with a total of 473 individuals who were classified as millennials and were involved in corporate development programs. The findings showed that individuals who belonged to different generational groups were likely to differ in terms of attitudes, values and behaviors and that this contributed to tensions in the workplace. Furthermore, that negative perceptions of Millennials by members in the older generational groups, impacted adversely on their ability to integrate into the workplace.

The aim of Espinoza's research was to determine the challenges experienced by millennial graduates in assimilating into the workplace, particularly owing to the impact of generational interactions on graduates' school to work adaptation. The study highlights that the discourse amongst hiring managers and training specialists had shifted toward the design and implementation of strategies to ensure an environment in which graduates can adapt and thrive, particularly as integrating into the workplace is associated with experiencing anxiety and conflict. As such, identifying challenges experienced by graduates in the workplace in the context of generational gap differences provides scope for "developing training content which can be used to help millennials with skills that will allow them to successfully integrate in the workforce" (p.13). In so doing, training and development managers and other professionals who operate in a similar scope, as custodians for graduates' induction and development in the workplace, may create strategies appropriate for graduates to ensure that organisations benefit from the offerings of graduates.

Espinoza (2012) found nine challenges experienced by graduates in the adaptation to the workplace owing to the presence of and their interactions with colleagues classified as Baby Boomers and the less matured Generation X. These challenges summarise similar findings of previous studies conducted by Taveggia and Ross (1978) who investigated generational differences in work orientations, Smola and Sutton (2002) whose focus was on the work values of generations in the millennium and Dulin (2005) who evaluated the leadership preferences and behaviors of different generations in the workplace. Graduates' challenges included those which were a result of the graduates' characteristics, namely; a lack of experience, lack of patience and difficulty with proving their value in the organisation

Espinoza (2012) identified that other experienced challenges were owing to the graduates' colleagues in the organisations whose response to the graduates inhibited adaptation; such as, not being taken seriously or being treated with respect, others' perception of them as having an attitude of entitlement, not receiving helpful feedback from their direct managers, rigid processes of the organisation, miscommunication with older workers and not having clarity and understanding of expectations from managers.

On the other hand, differences in generational characteristics fuel the challenges experienced by graduates transitioning into the workplace, especially as the younger generation seems to be repeatedly shown in an unfavorable light in comparison to its predecessors; Baby Boomers are perceived as hardworking, conformists and consensus seekers, they value security and stable working environments, Generation X are described as self-reliant, strong with entrepreneurial approaches and problem solving, whereas Millennials are perceived to be technologically savvy, however, difficult to work with, entitled and having no appreciation for authority (Smola and Sutton, 2002; Dittman, 2005; Meria et al.,

2010; Twenge, 2010; Coats, 2011). This illuminates that the reception of graduates in the workplace is a process neither easy for the graduates nor for cohorts of the other generations.

Moss and Martin (2014) cite Real, Mitnick and Maloney (2010) and state that research which seeks to provide light on the differences of generations is "relevant to the field of industrial psychology because each generation is said to have social, economic political and other contextual factors that shaped their values and beliefs about work" (p.149). Furthermore, the overwhelming evidence of the impact of generational differences on the people dynamics, organisational culture and how these influence the integration and adaptation of next generation workers in the workplace, suggests that work values, attributes and experiences of generation cohorts are genuine. Hence, this research affirms the stance that recent graduates experience challenges owing to generational gap differences in the workplace, which are inherent to the characteristic of the workforce; as such, combined and consistent efforts are required to alleviate difficulties.

Tertiary institution and employer responsibilities

The aim of this study was to investigate adaptation challenges of recent graduates in multinational organisations and in so doing, it was important to establish the various stakeholders responsible for ensuring that graduates are prepared well enough for the world of work in order to adapt to the demands of organisations. Employers' perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of tertiary institutions in adequately preparing graduates for integration in the workforce have been an issue of contention, particularly as employers have in the past expressed dissatisfaction with the relevance of curriculum to organisational needs (Butler, 2003; Mason, Williams & Cranmer, 2006; Ting & Ying, 2012; Tanner, 2014).

In measuring the impact of tertiary institutions on outcomes required in the labour market, Wright (2012) posits that amongst a variety of other concerns, "institutions of higher

education have come under increased scrutiny because of the concerns over their effectiveness in ensuring student retention, timely graduation and the preparedness of graduates for the workforce" and as a result this has led to vigorous dialogue between policymakers to endorse open lines of communication regarding graduate effectiveness and adaptation into the workplace (p. 2).

In the aim to provide comprehensive insights regarding employers' perspectives of graduates in South Africa and in collaboration with Higher Education South Africa (HESA) and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), Griesel and Parker (2009) claim that while for years it has been common for employers to express frustration about the gap between outcomes of higher education and the preparedness of graduates to adapt and thrive in the workplace, "employers sometimes voice concerns over the quality of graduates exiting from universities while higher education feels that employers are not fully appreciative of what qualities and skills these graduates do possess" (p. 3). Furthermore, Griesel and Parker (2009) posit are equally discontented with views of this kind because the mandate of higher education is not to provide job-related skills, but rather to perform the distinct role of preparing graduates with generic skills they can apply in the changing contexts of the work environment.

Hence, some light needs to be shed with regards to the conflicting perspectives of tertiary education and employers because the conflict and lack of alignment affects the extent to which graduates are prepared to enter and successfully adapt into the labour market. Furthermore, by determining the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders and the subsequent strategies for effective collaborations, the school to work adaptation process can be ameliorated, particularly with regards to the competencies graduates require to transition well into the workplace.

Lie et.al (2009) delineated the various competencies (also referred to as literacies) which tertiary institutions and employers should collaboratively ensure that graduates are adequately equipped with for increased integration into the workplace. Investigations were divided into three sections in which employers had to firstly; report the importance of the literacy for the organisation, secondly, to what extent tertiary education prepared graduates with each competency and thirdly, to what degree managers have the willingness to train graduates on competencies they may not have been equipped with during tertiary studies.

The outlined literacies were emphasised primarily for the awareness of tertiary institutions and employers to bridge the communication gap and to mitigate expectations regarding roles and responsibilities. Findings indicated that language proficiency was considered to be the most important of all the literacies as it evaluated the graduates' oral and written communication abilities. Importantly, employers were of the view that if graduates lacked in this competency, then they would not be willing to invest by spending time and funds to train graduates, as language proficiency was viewed to be the role of the university to impart. This sentiment was shared with regards to content literacy, which refers to the ability for graduates to apply their theoretical knowledge in ways which could yield return on investment for employers. This competency was ranked as the second most important in organisations and employers asserted that graduates who could adapt successfully into the organisation were those who had the rare ability to contextualise and apply generic skills in the setting of the workplace. Studies indicate that managers were of the view that often graduates are unable to achieve this owing to the perception that the theoretical principles taught in university were irrelevant (Butler, 2003; Mason, Williams, Cranmer, 2006; Lie et al., 2009; Lowden, Hall, Elliot, Lewin, 2011).

Another emphasised competency was critical literacy which entails the graduates' capacity for generating ideas and applying critical thinking when required to analyse and

synthesise information. Unanimously, managers were of the view that universities had not prepared graduates adequately, but were willing to train graduates to critically evaluate information and in so doing, be able to meet role expectations (Lie et al., 2009). Furthermore, the importance of critical thinking was highlighted Griesel and Parker (2009) with the assertion that learning effectively involves more than content and task instructions, but also how individuals interact with the diversity of their environment. As such, in order for graduates to successfully adapt, openness and a readiness for the highly culturally diversified nature of multinationals in South Africa are necessary.

Gyhoot (2000) emphasizes that multiple cultures in the South African workplace beckon for employees to be attuned to the cultural manifestations which impact on organisational functioning. Kupperschmidt (2000) suggests that being able to integrate in culturally diverse environments increases graduates' opportunity to acclimatize to the working environment, particularly with regard to building systems of support, communication and networking. As such their opportunity of emotionally connecting with others is enhanced. Lang et al. as cited in Lie at al. (2009) state that "The ability to understand and negotiate differences in terms of cultural practice, values, norms, beliefs and perceptions, is crucial to workplace interactions to build networks, and to prevent conflicts and misunderstanding" (p. 8). This is substantiated by Tucker, Sojka, Barone and McCarthy (2010) who in their investigation of business graduates in the workplace, concluded that emotional intelligence contributed to positive interactions between graduates and their environment, which is essential for organisational integration and career success.

There were however, literacies which managers regarded as essential for graduate adaptation and organisational integration which they were willing to equip graduates with through their school to work transition phase (Avraamova & Verpakhovskaia, 2007). These literacies included, computing skills, which constitutes the ability for graduates to use

Microsoft applications such Word, Excel and PowerPoint, expansion of research skills and organisation specific technical skills. Lastly, Lie et al. (2009) attitude and mindset as aspects of competencies were considered by employers to be essential as the graduate would have the capacity to "learn beyond the university, to adapt to new situations, interpersonal skills, leadership, ability to work independently and the will to succeed" (p.9). This provides insight to the responsibility graduates bear to ensure their own transition into working life.

Additionally, attitude and mindset were aligned to graduates' display of emotional intelligence in the workplace, which Bar-On (1997) defined as "an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures (p.16). Therefore, emotional intelligence as an awareness and management of one's own and others' emotions was recognised as crucial for novice employees' ability to integrate into diverse environments (Ziedner, Matthews & Roberts, 2004). Whilst collaborations between employers and higher education are essential regarding their roles and responsibilities to align skills required for the labour market, graduates carry a great part of the responsibility to transition successfully into the workplace.

Lie et al. (2009) provided great insight into the graduate competencies (also referred to as literacies) attained in higher education in relation to employers' and economic labour market needs and make the argument that generic literacies are applicable across all industries and occupations and should therefore aid graduates with transitioning into the workplace, however, Griesel and Parker (2009) claim that these skills should be in line with the economic needs of the labour market and therefore, to ensure successful graduate integration "higher education institutions (HEI) need to establish and develop links through knowledge and research exchanges, collaboration and cooperation with employers in the private and public sector, it seems imperative that such links are established so that there is synergistic development of graduates in higher education (HE) and in industry" (p. 13). By

so doing, work integrated learning strategies can be developed to ensure that graduates are better prepared and can adapt easier with the demands of the working world.

Work integrated learning and the combined efforts of tertiary institutions and organisations

Multidisciplinary research from economics, organisational and research psychology and social studies, highlights the importance of graduates for organisational performance and competitive advantage (Connor & Brown, 2009; Short & Harris, 2010). Of particular interest for this research are studies which demonstrate how graduates have been studied from a workplace learning integration perspective; with reference to the effective trajectories training personnel adopt to equip graduates with the necessary organisation specific skills and knowledge to produce optimal performance in their designated roles (Miller & Blackman, 2005; Willment, 2006; Martin &Hughes, 2009). Castelli (2011) provides insight to the theoretical models which have contributed to the evolution of reflective adult learning programs implemented in organisations as a way to continue the transformation graduates experience from higher education to the workplace.

Particularly, emphasised are techniques which instructors in the workplace such as supervisors, line managers and training and development managers can utilize to influence the learning process and up skilling of graduates in the workplace. The benefits of adult learning techniques have been extensively reported regarding its contributions in alleviating challenges and creating a healthy and stimulating environment that enhances graduates' organisational adaptation from a technical content, personal growth and social integration perspective (Scandura, 1992; Bartel, 2000).

The concept of adult learning is interrelated to workplace learning integration as it delineates the process through which adults enhance knowledge, skills and technical ability in

an environment which promotes confident problem-solving and self-direction (Swanson, 2005; Castelli, 2008). However, evaluations of graduates' perspectives within the first few years of attaining work experience indicate that there exists a high degree of discontent owing to graduates perceiving their employers to be apprehensive in allowing for work independence in the workplace (Butler, 2003; Espinoza, 2007). This is an area of concern considering that the effectiveness of adult learning in the workplace rests on producing a satisfying practical learning experience so that workplace integration takes place in an easier way (Butler, 2003; Castelli, 2011). As such, work integrated learning as a resource to equip graduates with the expectations of the working environment should be of high priority for all custodians involved with the training and development of graduates as novice employees.

Work integrated learning has also highlighted aspects which address graduate adaptation challenges through encouraging enthusiastic participation, inclusion in professional networks and emphasis of self-sufficiency when executing tasks (Martin & Hughes, 2009). Martin and Hughes (2009) claim that "there is an increasing emphasis on work based learning, as it aims to integrate academic study and practical experience providing a point of difference for graduates that employers value" and as such, graduate preparation is a multifaceted process for which multiple stakeholders are responsible, the collaborative efforts of tertiary education and organisations, toward the aim of optimizing graduates' capabilities (p. 7). This sentiment has been emphasised in cross-disciplinary research.

Importantly, this view is echoed by the Council of Higher Education, which is an independent South African statutory body established by the Higher Education Act no. 101 of 1997, that partnerships amongst higher education, private and public sectors are necessary for the effective implementation of work integrated learning, especially for minimizing some of the challenges identified to prevalent in the school to work transition phase. Similarly, Hagan

(2004), referring to the adequate preparation and long-term development of graduates entering the world of work, states that "universities should cultivate closer links with industry representatives, in order to improve their chances of finding the right balance" (p.122). As previously identified, the communication gaps between tertiary education and organisations were identified to be essential to ensure integrated efforts for holistic and ameliorated facilitation of graduate adaptation and integration in the workplace setting.

Morrow (2009) asserts that adequate communication between employers and educational institutions is fundamental for graduate transition into the work space and has great implications not just on an organisation level, but on a societal level as well; furthermore that "salient actions are required to resolve the discourse of new graduate transition into the workplace" (p.278). Ngetich and Moll (2013) state that to achieve work integrated learning "placing a responsibility on both the industry and universities may ensure that students learn what is relevant and useful for job performance and development" and as such, tertiary institutions, graduates and employers may benefit from these collaborations (p. 127).

James et al. (2004) claim that graduate characteristics which lead to success in the workplace are a measure of the quality of educators and subsequently, the quality of the tertiary institution. This preposition suggests that graduates' industry and discipline specific knowledge, the ability to contextualise and apply it which then demonstrates capabilities in the workplace, are reflections of the graduates and educational institutions; however, organisations have a responsibility to extend the graduate attributes imparted by tertiary education in this regard and become actively involved in work integrated learning strategies.

Holton (1995) affirms that "academics must hold themselves accountable for successful organisational entry and not just job placement" and that professionals within the

organisation and in educational institutions should give priority to workplace integration and adaptation (p.76). Disconnect between employer expectations and the learning outcomes of graduates in educational settings, may contribute to the long-standing challenges experienced by graduates in adapting to the demands of the workplace.

Similarly, Vaastra and de Vries (2007) posit that while employers may have an expectation that the primary role of higher education is to "provide students with competences that enable them to maintain their position in a changing professional environment", as such educators also need to know precisely what these industry-related competences are, and it is furthermore the responsibility of professional members in industry to communicate this information (p.335). In the aim to create awareness of the adjustment issues experienced by recent graduates and the consequent reality shock, Duscher (2008) asserts that a great part of the problem is that there is a lack of synergy amongst key stakeholders which leads to graduates' misconception of the realities of the workplace. Therefore, to minimise idealistic expectations and issues relating to poor workplace adaptation, increased dialogue and work integrated learning techniques and combined strategies between organisations and tertiary institutions countrywide during and after graduates complete their studies is a matter of urgency to ensure better integration of graduates in the increasingly demanding multinational environment (Everwijn, Bomers & Knubben, 1993; Holton, 1995; Avraamova and Verpakhovskaia, 2007; Duscher, 2008).

Internationally, James et al. (2004) demonstrate that the necessity for collaboration is recognised by committees such as the Australian Business/Higher Education Round Table (B-HERT) described as "a forum where leaders of Australia's business, research, professional and academic communities can address important issues of common interest, to improve the interaction between Australian business and higher education institutions" can foster much needed dialogue and debate and substantially aid convergence of expectations, which in turn

may provide graduates with adequate and specific knowledge about what's expected them when entering the work space (p. 40). Integrative platforms of this nature are a necessity in South Africa to aid graduates with not only adapting to the demands of their roles, but also with integration into the highly diversified nature of organisations.

There is consensus from a wide variety of research that educators and seasoned practitioners should develop preparatory programs prior to graduates entering the workforce as this could allow sufficient time for graduates to acclimatise to workplace realities (Avraamova & Verpakhovskaia, 2007; Everwijn, Bomers & Knubben, 1993; Griesel & Parker, 2009; Ngetich & Moll, 2013). As such to prepare graduates holistically, it would follow that programs should generically be inclusive of both theoretical knowledge and skills practice so that in the early years of graduates' school to work transition, knowledge is applied contextually.

Griesel and Parker (2009) emphasize that although employers do to some extent recognize and appreciate the theoretical knowledge and critical intellectual approach to tasks of graduates imparted by South African tertiary institutions, the quality of graduates should not be viewed in and determined within the academic context, but in relation to the industry trends, requirements of employers and the competitive labour force. Furthermore, that all custodians should be cognisant that South Africa as a country in a relatively young democracy still faces, on a national and societal level, many challenges from which organisational adaptation forms a part of; hence engagement between industries within the public and private sectors and higher education is imperative to aid integration and mold the future workforce into global competitors.

Graduate attributes and coping strategies

In an investigation of graduate attitudes, expectations and adaptation mechanisms conducted by Holton (1995), results showed that organisational entry and transition was an underemphasised matter. More importantly, that organisations should be concerned with the attitudes of recent graduates as they present to be vulnerable members of the workforce and are at risk of inflating organisational costs if not well managed. As such, the challenges encountered by graduates in the school to work process are necessary to investigate from an individual graduate perspective. This is in terms of challenges experienced, attitudes and expectations, as well as the coping strategies graduates employ to deal with the demands of the dynamic work environment.

The concept of graduate attributes has evolved to wide-spread definitions which allude to generic and contextualised characteristics. Jones (2002) provides a knowledge-based definition of graduate attributes as "the acquisition of a body of disciplinary knowledge, the critical understanding which comes from the communication, application and evaluation of a body of knowledge, the commitment to ethical action and social responsibility, and a capacity for employment and lifelong learning" (p. 3). Barrie (2004) takes it a step further by making a distinction between knowledge-based and ability-based attributes; of which the former entails abstract discipline knowledge and the latter refers to the specialised and distinguished forms of capabilities developed for the purpose of meeting specific needs of a field of knowledge. Graduate attributes are not only representative of capabilities, disciplinary knowledge and critical reasoning skills; they encapsulate the attitudes, values and sense of commitment (Barrie, 2004, Vaaster & de Vries, 2007).

Smith and Pilling (2007) further describe graduate attributes as an amalgamation of acquired knowledge, skills and the desirable qualities which attract potential employers. The

complexity and vigorous quality of the work environment has made it essential to define graduate attributes as this informs the ways in which graduates will manage the challenges they encounter in the workplace. Furthermore, whether attributes are generic in nature or technical for specific environments, they provide a basis for which hiring managers and those involved in training and development can determine criteria of performance and workplace adaptation (Avraamova & Verpakhovskaia, 2007; Coetzee & Esterhuizen, 2010; Parker, 2009; Smith & Pilling, 2007).

However, research on graduate attributes echoes indecisiveness about what these desirable qualities entail; specifically, whether they encompass nuanced and specialised knowledge and skills, or involve generic abilities which have been found to be common and useful across a wide variety of organisations. James et al. (2004) argue that the key role of tertiary institutions is to develop graduate generic skills, which are dispositions considered valuable in entry level professionals within the first few years in any field of knowledge. Further, as the labour market is an environment constantly undergoing change, the benefit of generic competencies, as compared to occupation specific competencies, is that they are less affected by changes and are therefore arguably more beneficial for graduates in the long-run for consistently successful adaptation (Jones, 2002; Vaaster & de Vries, 2007). Generic skills include qualities such as the ability to communicate effectively, build interpersonal relationships, have a teamwork spirit, as well as have the ability to be flexible and adaptable to a changing environment (Lie et al., 2009).

This assertion is however, in direct contradiction to the later views of Griesel and Parker (2009) who claim that contemporary research on employers' needs indicate a preference for specific and context-dependent technical skills, which are foundational for expertise in highly dynamic, competitive and innovative South African organisations. It appears that this shift from generic to contextualised skills and the lack of consensus on

which of the two is more important to determine successful role and organisational integration, furthers the fission between the attributes tertiary institutions aim to impart on graduates and the actual attributes required in the work context.

In reporting specifically about graduate workplace readiness, Vaastra and de Vries (2007) report results which demonstrate that generic competences such as learning aptitude, analytic ability, independent working style and positive teamwork contribution are prized attributes for employers because of their high correlations with the ability to adapt quickly and integrate successfully in organisations. Notwithstanding, the standard seems to be that the manner in which graduates package themselves to not only become employable, but retainable in organisations is dependent on the offerings they present with regard to their qualifications, knowledge, values, cognitive and technical skills; areas which in varying degrees aid graduates to adapt to and become successful in organisations. With this in mind, an integrated identification of generic and contextual occupation-specific skills may prepare graduates holistically for the strains of the workplace; a responsibility to which the expectations of employers should be closely followed by sufficient induction and on-boarding, training, mentorship and continuous managerial support.

The following section describes in detail the studies which have contributed significantly towards understanding of graduate adaptation in organisations. They have provided insight into the circumstances surrounding graduate adaptation and integration challenges in the workplace, as well as the strategies which graduates employ to adjust. Simply put, as in ecological models, these adaptation strategies are evolutionary survival tactics that are common to living organisms and plants alike. Although not all the studies focused on the South African context, a holistic view may put into context obstacles which are encountered for graduates in general in the first or second year on the job.

Coetzee and Esterhuizen (2010) investigated the relationship between the psychological attributes and career resources graduates use as coping strategies to acclimatise to the world of work in the South African context. The findings of this study contributes to the interventions career counselors, organisational coaches and professionals in similar capacities can structure interventions to ensure challenges experienced in the workplace are overcome and school to work graduate transition is successful. Participants in the study represented all nine provinces. Findings were useful for understanding the mechanisms recent graduates use to manage and overcome encountered challenges in organisations in South Africa.

There are antecedents to graduate adaptation in the workplace which influence the extent to which graduates are equipped for the challenges encountered. Marock (2008) claims that youth unemployment is prevalent within the 20-24 year age group in South Africa, which impacts directly and detrimentally on the government's plans to transform the face of the labour market to reflect the integration of post-apartheid society. Coetzee and Esterhuizen (2010) postulate that graduate challenges not only include integrating into the workplace, but finding work is in itself a hurdle a great enough as "young people entering the world of work for the first time are faced with many challenges, such as dealing with unemployment after qualifying or, upon finding employment, coping with the transition from student to employee, adjusting to their new environment and navigating the many global career challenges of the 21st century" (p.1).

Hence, having insight into the issues graduates face before they find work is arguably just as important as knowing the challenges that they face upon entering and transitioning into the workplace. This may contribute to the dialogue of the ways in which they are and can in the future engage with the work environment in minimally distressing ways. Coetzee and Esterhuizen (2010) further claim that some of these interrelated challenges include

"decreased employment opportunities, diminished job security, fast-paced technology and increasing personal responsibility for constant up-skilling, employability and lifelong learning" demonstrating once again the string which links pre and post-employment challenges for graduates (p.3).

Programs such as the Work Readiness Programme are alluding to the numerous interventions government, tertiary institutions and professionals in the private sector are developing to address this burning issue of successful graduate adaptation and integration. Coetzee and Esterhuizen (2010) assert that these kind of intervention strategies aid previously disadvantaged youth with achieving entry into the labour market, particularly as the residual effects and legacy of apartheid have exacerbated the challenges graduates, whether previously disadvantaged or not, encounter in the transition from university to the working environment (Department of Labour, 2008).

The concept of employability is important to define as it determines criteria to which graduates are compared in hiring decision-making. Coetzee and Esterhuizen (2010) define employability as the "proactive career behaviors and abilities, which includes people's ability to gain access to the workplace, adjust to the workplace, be productive in the workplace, as well as to the continuous ability to fulfill, acquire or create work through the optimal use of both occupational-related and career meta-competencies" (p.2). Furthermore, Coetzee and Esterhuizen (2010) posit that desired graduate attributes, all which contribute to the extent to which graduates are considered employable, include flexibility, a positive approach to dealing with stress and openness to the transition which takes place in the first years of employment.

Other attributes such as the ability to handle situations of uncertainty and ambiguity, openness to learning both theoretically and practically, as well as openness to constructive criticism have been identified as essential for graduates to adjust to the demands of

conglomerate organisations (Butler, 2003; Martin, Maytham, Case & Fraser, 2005; Bauer & Erdogan, 2007). Notwithstanding, it is the responsibility of the organisations to train and develop graduates on attributes they may not have had exposure to prior to being employed, such as professional etiquette, orientation on organisational norms and culture, as well as organisation specific technical knowledge (Lie et al., 2009; Ezzo, 2013).

Coetzee and Esterhuizen (2010) emphasise that the purpose of their research was to determine the psychological career and coping resources graduates use to effectively manage the challenges encountered during the transition from tertiary education to the world of work, as such they defined psychological resources are defined as "a set of career-related preferences, values, attitudes, abilities, attributes that lead to self-empowering, proactive career behaviour that promotes general employability" (p. 2). Therefore, psychological resources are the inherent strategies individuals use to interact with novice environments in ways which are constructive and beneficial to their growth and development.

Coetzee and Esterhuizen (2010) refer to enablers, which are defined as the practical and creative skills and abilities which individuals can employ to excel in their careers. Hence, career enablers in this sense are important as graduate attributes for long-term integration and adaptation in the workplace. Furthermore, career drivers are described as the attributes which give individuals a sense of career direction and purpose which lead to motivated actions for career progression. It is these attributes which could encourage graduates to approach the world of work with the willingness to venture into unknown situations, manage and aim to exceed the expectations of their employers, as well as acclimatize and progress in the novice environment of formal employment. On the other hand, coping resources are different to psychological career resources in that they refer specifically to the psychological ways in which individuals manage stressors from their environment and are able not only to recover, but to flourish in that environment (Hammer, 1988 as cited in Coetzee & Esterhuizen, 2010).

There are various domains which constitute coping resources, which include, but not limited to the use of resilience in managing student to employee transitioning: cognitive resources refer to how individuals are able to maintain a positive outlook when faced with difficulty, as well as how their sense of worth is upheld in situations of doubt (Moore, 2006; Coetzee & Esterhuizen, 2010; Morrow, 2009). Where cognitive resources are concerned with the intrapersonal aspects of how individuals cope with their environment, social resources focus on the support system individuals are able to source when dealing with stress, particularly how they employ networking skills to establish a circle of support to aid with stressors (Vaasta & De Vries, 2007; Stare, Pezdir & Boštjančič, 2013). Thirdly, emotional resources refer to how individuals are able to use emotional responses in a way which alleviate stressful and negative feelings, whilst philosophical/spiritual resources emerge from religious, cultural and traditional value systems. The distinction of these strategies provide context on the various ways graduates can use internal resources to adjust to and cope with the working environment throughout their transition.

In addition to graduates' internal resources, external support in the form of coaching and mentoring, support from managers or supervisors, induction and career planning have been identified to be important as they provide graduates with a sense of guidance to deal with issues arising as challenges in the workplace. Not only is this valuable for the graduates' personal and professional progression, but for the synergy and functioning of the organisation in the long-term (Defillippi & Cameron, 2007; Hattingh et. al., 2005; van Dikj, 2008). Strengthened professional and supportive relationships have the potential to stimulate adaptive career behaviour which is explicated as the ability for individuals to maintain curiosity about their future aspirations and career goals (Pulakos et al., 2000; Pulakos, Dorsey, White, 2006). Coetzee and Esterhuizen (2010) maintain that similarities of coping strategies do not make them synonymous, but rather they highlight the identification of these

resources and how they can be used effectively to aid transition (Lees, 2002; Buchner, 2007; Sheldon, 2009). Additionally, establishing and maintaining relationships provides a community in which ideas, grievances and daily pressures can be shared with others who are or may have experienced a similar path. Allegiances with others who have a higher level expertise not only aids graduates with acclimatisaton, but also with the technical and organisation specific knowledge required for successful adaptation.

The aforementioned studies provided valuable guidelines for graduates, both employed and unemployed on the specific psychological, emotional, cognitive and interpersonal strategies they may adopt to acclimatise to and overcome challenges in the early transition years. Coetzee and Esterhuizen (2010) have captured the importance of a framework that identifies and makes use of all available resources which benefit graduate adaptation with the claim that "it facilitates important outcomes such as proactive career exploration and decision-making during the school-to-work transition phase, optimal work and career adjustment, and a sustained sense of self-efficacy and career maturity in the young adult" (p.9). The achievement thereof benefits stakeholders who are well positioned to aid graduate adaptation such as career counselors, training and development managers and organisational consultants and specialists, as they gain insight into the resources they may stimulate during graduates' integration into the world of work.

Workplace adversity and resilience

Although directed particularly to the nursing population, research by Jackson et al. (2007) showed that resilience for graduates is a mechanism to adjust to and flourish in the working environment. Workplace adversity is described as an environment which could present elements of "excessive workload, lack of autonomy, bullying and organisational issues such as restructuring", all which could be encountered by graduates upon their entering

the workplace (p.2). As such, resilience is necessary for graduates to acclimatise and adapt successfully within the first few years of their working experience, particularly as unsuccessful integration and adaptation has been seen to contribute to high turnover due to lack of retention, leading to retention risks (Holton & Russel, 1999; van Zyl, 2011).

Jackson et al. (2007) define resilience as "the ability of an individual to positively adjust to adversity and be applied to building personal strengths such as building positive and nurturing professional relationships, maintaining positivity, developing emotional insight, achieving life balance and spirituality and becoming more reflective" (p.1). Jackson et al. (2007) assert that whilst the concept of resilience has changed over time, from being defined as a route to survival, a continuum with vulnerability on the opposite end, a process and lastly as a trait, it has become clear that resilience is "a combination of physical and psychological characteristics, including body chemistry and personality factors" which ensure that individuals persevere through difficulties (p.3). Whilst the physiological conceptualisations allude to human body's ability to survive natural hard elements, the psychological perspective is of particular interest to this research as it alludes to individual's capacity to remain positive and progressive in stressful environments.

For these reasons, building resilience is an essential aspect for successful graduate adaptation into the workplace, particularly when situated in environments with potentially high stressors, such as for example in the nursing environment. Jackson et al. (2007) claim that whilst some graduates may face workplace challenges so extreme that some leave the discipline completely, others remain in the profession and even flourish and it is owing to resilience that they are able to do so. Gordiano (1997) posits that resilience is characterised by qualities such as resourcefulness, self-confidence and self-discipline, curiousness, emotional steadiness and the ability to be flexible and adaptable. As it appears, resilience in graduates would encapsulate a kind of steadiness to withstand strain and the challenges that

come with having to integrate and adjust to a demanding environment. This notion is substantiated by Coleman and Ganong (2001) with the claim that resilience is interrelated with hardship; hence for one to display resilience, he/she would have done so under circumstances of adversity.

To develop resilience, the following factors have been identified: optimism, autonomy, empowerment, emotional awareness and self-care (Bright, 1997; Gordiano, 2001; Tugade & Frederickson, 2004). Positivity helps individuals overcome negative environments and stimuli, additionally Jackson et al. (2007) claim that "we each need a network of people who can be called upon for guidance and support when needed", particularly for graduates whose acclimatization on various levels of difficulty in the organisation is progressing (p.6). From this view, personal resilience is not only influenced by one's own psychological and emotional capacity, but also on a social level through aspects such as managerial, peer and mentorship support.

Managerial support: Perspectives of graduates and managers

In an investigation which aimed to highlight the issues experienced by working students in formal organisational settings, Patton et al. (2009) assert that the exploitation and disuse of graduates in organisations is often ignored because their work and contributions are perceived as being meaningless and not worthy of high regard. As such, the problems experienced by young workers are not adequately addressed leading to increased difficulties in adapting to the work environment.

Smith and Green (2001) claim that for individuals who have been newly introduced to the workplace, learning occurs mostly through work, however Tannock (2001) states that the general misconception about novice employees is that they don't possess adequate skills and therefore make minimal contribution and impact. Despite the negativity, hiring managers

have conceded that young workers bring an opportunity to the workplace for retention to increase the organisational leadership pipeline and to avoid a potentially ageing workforce (Canny, 2002; Smith & Comyn, 2003). This is particularly important in the South African context because of the high national unemployment rate, indicated as one of the highest in the world; therefore it's crucial for academics and professionals in industry to understand how best to make use of the capabilities of emerging professionals and aid them to successfully adapt into the increasingly demanding settings of multinational organisations.

Based on this research, it emerged that newly appointed workers tend to exhibit certain characteristics which are prone to create conflict with direct line managers or supervisors; for instance, graduates were described as being egocentric and have a sense of entitlement that everything in their immediate working environment should revolve around them (Santrock, 2007; Patton et al, 2009). Further, this led line managers and supervisors to the perception that new appointees where closed to constructive criticism and may not always have an appreciation of how their role fits in to the larger scheme of the organisation.

Patton et al. (2009) further asserts that managers often referred to graduates' lack of maturity in dealing with issues of conflict with colleagues and clients alike. This view is substantiated by Smith (2004) in the investigation of employer's views of graduates, that although employers acknowledge that graduates enter the workforce with a lack of well-developed organisational skills, a supportive managerial style is unlikely when graduates are not open to being managed and supervised and also do not prioritise tasks which are essential for success in their designated roles. It is worthy to note, however, that employers emphasised the organisations' accommodation of graduates by putting into place systems of support to ensure smooth integration and adaptation, especially as it is expected from managers and supervisors that graduate are likely to lack the required organisational skills and etiquette during the first years of their integration (Smith, 2001).

Organisations have different approaches to inducting new employees and this is highlighted in the study conducted by Patton et al. (2009), which illustrates the manner in which some organisations can accommodate graduates' gaps, but also how others are less flexible in this regard as communicated by one of the participants:

"Student comments indicated that some managers appeared to make strenuous efforts to be inclusive while others were more haphazard in their approach. In some workplaces there were organised social events aimed at integrating the workers with managers and each other, while in others there were not" (p.5). It is owing to these differences in managerial styles that there are organisations which successfully induct, develop and strategically retain their graduates, whilst others incur great costs and are unable to aid their graduates to adapt. In addition, the studies highlighted that facilitation and managerial styles were also encompassed in the identities and values managers used to build rapport and relationships with their subordinates (Wofford, 1971; Das, 1982; Sinclair, 1993; Fiezel & D'Itri, 1997; Mayer & Louw, 2013).

Patton et al. (2009) propose that even in organisations which have structured policies and induction systems in place for graduates, they still carry risks which may hamper retention plans as evidence from the current research showed that comprehensive human resource management policies and practices included in-depth induction, training and buddying systems which included "…written training materials, procedural manuals and visual training aids assisted workers with integration into workplaces…" (p. 7). For instance, the induction programs in two franchise multinationals were evaluated and it emerged that expectations and areas of responsibility were clearly communicated to the graduates; numerous challenges were still experienced especially in the first year of employment. Furthermore, a system for general complaints was introduced to the graduates should they have grievances or concerns, they had a platform to which they could actively report directly

to the Head Offices of the organisations, where their line managers or supervisors did not have influence. This highlights that even with processes in place, it is advisable for employers to evaluate the systems and interventions of the organisation ecologically in terms of the interaction and effect on graduates' propensity to adapt and be retained.

Although graduates report a general sense of stress encountered in the workplace, the study conducted by Patton et al. (2009) shows that in the first year of employment, graduates do not yet have an understanding of task completion in relation to deadlines, which is surprising for managers considering the structured nature of the tertiary institution environment. Patton et al. (2009) affirm that managers reported graduates to having a more casual approach to their work, even in situations where senior members in the organisation placed pressure on them to perform with urgency. This emphasises that effective workplace adaptation requires as much if not more of graduates' effort as it does for the collaborations of organisations and tertiary institutions.

Furthermore, frustration seems to lie mainly on the power balances experienced with their immediate supervisors, with particular reference to negotiating terms about their work as equal counterparts to their supervisors (Patton et al., 2009). This is in part because induction programs are structured to encompass all necessary elements required for graduates to become fully competent and independent contributors of the organisation. However, from a managerial perspective, graduates lack the appreciation for organisational hierarchy, acceptance of authority and have entitlement to prestige without having earned it. These differences are also highlighted though studies which focus on the approaches of different generations coexisting and interacting in the workplace (Espinoza, 2007).

Although the focus of this study was to evaluate challenges which occur in multinational organisations, Patton et al. (2009) state that it is important to identify and to

"address the problems that may occur in smaller and less well-managed workplaces, action is likely to be needed at a national level rather than hoping that all employers might follow the example of the larger and more enlightened organisations" (p.13). As illustrated, challenges from the perspectives of graduates, managers and employers, as well as educators, highlights the importance of evaluating organisational adaptation and integration of graduates in a holistic and synergetic approach.

The literature review has presented studies which identified the challenges contemporary graduates experience while transitioning from tertiary institutions to the world of work. Researches on factors which facilitate or impede successful adaptation were outlined, as well the various coping strategies graduates and managers may employ in the early years of integration. The roles and responsibilities of tertiary institutions and employers were delineated and arguments presented regarding the graduate attributes, in terms of skills, competencies and the personal characteristics nurtured in the tertiary education environment; these were evaluated in relation to the reported requirements of employers and the demands of the modern, dynamic work environment.

In view of the evaluated literature and purpose of the study, two main research questions were presented.

Aim of the study

The aim of the study was to investigate the adaptation challenges experienced by recent graduates in multinational organisations in South Africa.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the adaptation challenges faced by recent graduates in multinational organisations in South Africa?

2. What are the perceptions of training and development managers on the organisational adaptation of recent graduates in multinational organisations in South Africa?

CHAPTER THREE - METHODS

Research Design: Qualitative research method

A qualitative design was chosen for this study as the fundamental aim was to find meaning in and to make sense of people's experiences and perceptions. A qualitative method provided an in-depth understanding of the motives, attitudes and experiences of the issues under investigation; it also allowed for an appreciation of the social context in which the meaning was situated (Braun & Clark, 2006). Marshall (1996) claims that quantitative methods aim to answer research questions formulated from a set of predetermined hypotheses and specifically for the purpose of attaining results that can be generalised to the broader population; whilst on the other hand, the aim of qualitative research studies are "to provide illumination and understanding of complex psychosocial issues and are most useful for answering humanistic 'why?' and 'how?' questions" (p. 522).

This notion is further substantiated by Bogdan and Biklen (2007) that the goal of qualitative researchers "is to know where, when, how and under what circumstances behavior comes into being" and that the historical context from which these circumstances arise is integral to understanding the data (p. 11). Although it may be argued that themes emergent from qualitative data are not prone to objective interpretation, it is not an impediment to the study as the aim of the study was to understand the subjective experiences of individuals. It is from this perspective that a phenomenological approach was assumed to gain insight into the perspectives of graduates and training and development managers.

Participants

Marshall (1996) emphasizes that the appropriateness of a sample size is determined by how it adequately it answers the research questions. With this in mind a total of twenty four participants were approached for this study.

The study recruited nineteen recent graduates who had been employed in multinational organisations for a period of one to two years and were therefore undergoing the school to work transition phase, and five training and development managers to participate in the study. Although training and development managers were well positioned to provide informed opinions regarding graduate adaptation, the study's main focus was on the graduates' lived experiences. As such, the proportion of graduate participants in relation to the training and development managers was to ensure that there were sufficient participants of the latter to provide an organisational perspective; hence, five training and development managers' interviews were adequate to triangulate perspectives and to identify relevant emergent themes. A convenient sampling approach adopted to obtain the current lived experiences of the participants. The study focused on graduates working as interns, management trainees and those involved in graduate development programs.

Recent graduates in substantive appointments after six months' probation were also considered. In order to appropriately compare the transition experiences of graduates, only the individuals who had obtained a minimum degree of three years were considered for the study. At the time of the interviews, some of the graduates had recently completed induction into the organisations, whilst others were immersed in the induction program within the academy or training space of the organisation.

Training and development managers were approached to give insight into the adaptation challenges faced by recent graduates in multinational organisations from their perspectives as custodians tasked with ensuring the integration and development of newly appointed graduates. Training and development managers who were employed within the organization for a minimum period of three years were considered for the study, as they were likely to be familiar and have in-depth knowledge on the issues facing graduates in the workplace.

Table 1 indicates the participants' demographics. Of the five training and development managers, three were female and two were male. The nineteen graduate participants consisted of twelve females and seven males. The age range of the graduate participants was 23- 28 years, with an average of 24 years old. In terms of race demographics, participants who were classified as White constituted 34%, Black were 45% and Indian constituted of 21% of the sample. Participants were recruited from four industries, namely; engineering and electronic development, Human Resource consulting services, banking and the accounting/auditing fields; companies approached were in Central Johannesburg, Randburg and Pretoria. Table 3.1 illustrates the participants' demographic details.

Table 3.1: Participant Demographics

Participant	Age	Gender	Race	Highest Qualification
Graduate 1	26	Female	White	Masters
Graduate 2	27	Male	Black	Degree
Graduate 3	24	Female	White	Degree
Graduate 4	28	Male	White	Honours
Graduate 5	25	Male	Black	Degree
Graduate 6	24	Female	Black	Degree
Graduate 7	24	Female	White	Honours
Graduate 8	24	Female	Indian	Degree
Graduate 9	25	Female	Black	Honours
Graduate 10	26	Male	Indian	Degree
Graduate 11	25	Female	Black	Honours
Graduate 12	25	Female	Black	Honours
Graduate 13	27	Male	Black	Honours
Graduate 14	25	Female	Black	Honours
Graduate 15	24	Male	Black	Degree
Graduate 16	23	Female	White	Honours
Graduate 17	25	Female	White	Masters
Graduate 18	24	Female	Black	Degree
Graduate 19	26	Male	Black	Degree
T & D Manager 1	50	Male	White	Masters
T & D Manager 2	40	Female	White	Masters
T & D Manager 3	31	Female	Black	Masters
T & D Manager 4	42	Female	Indian	Honours
T & D Manager 5	54	Male	White	Matric

Total Number of Participants= 24

Research Instruments

A demographic questionnaire was designed to capture the basic personal information of participants such as gender, age, race, place of birth, that is, the rural, small city or big city and university attended (See Appendix F). The questionnaire was to create brief profiles of the participants and to have additional information on hand to evaluate if there were trends between the participants' responses and the demographic information.

Two interview schedules were developed for this study.

(a) Interview schedule for recent graduates

This interview schedule consisted of questions which focused on adaptation challenges the graduates face in organisations, with particular reference to the perceived organisational and personal factors which facilitate and impede adaptation and integration. Issues such as their expectations prior to entering the world of work versus actual experience, as well as descriptions of the emotional states which could be associated to their adaptation and transition process in the organisation were considered (See Appendix G).

(b) Interview schedule for the training and development managers

The purpose of the interview schedule was to obtain the views of training and development managers regarding the observed experiences of graduates in the workplace through the school to work transition phase. Items focused on the expectations of training and development managers and organisational factors from an ecological point of view which facilitated or hindered graduate integration in the workplace (See Appendix H).

The two semi-structured interview schedules consisted of twelve questions each and were designed to elicit deep and nuanced responses to the questions. An audio tape recorder, with a cellular phone and tablet as back-up were used as devices to record the interviews. Participants were informed of note taking, on which a notepad was used to capture additional information.

Data Gathering Procedure

Before participants were approached, permission for access into organisations was obtained. The first line of communication was contact through emails sent to the head of departments of the organisations that were approached. The emails provided a detailed

summary of the study and requesting permission to approach graduates and training and development managers within the organisation. The purpose and aims of the study were detailed in the Permission for Access Form (See Appendix A) and any questions from the heads of department addressed before proceeding. Thereafter, an introductory meeting with the graduates and training and development managers of the organisations took place to provide a detailed description and context of the study, as well as to request participation from those who were interested.

To maintain anonymity from the other potential participants and the rest of the organisation, individuals who were interested were requested not to volunteer in the introductory meeting, but rather to contact the researcher individually. Participants' details were then recorded in an excel spreadsheet and saved as a participant tracker, which was then password protected to ensure that there was no risk of anyone accessing the participants' names and contact details.

Upon scheduling dates and location arrangements which were suitable and convenient for the participants, participants were presented with their own copies of the Participation information sheet (see Appendix B), the consent form to participate (see Appendix C), consent form to be interviewed (see Appendix D) and lastly, consent form to be tape recorded and responses transcribed (see Appendix E). The Participant Information sheet and all the other appendices were read to the participants while they followed on their copies, to which questions or concerns were addressed prior to the interview proceeding. Thereafter, once all relevant forms were signed indicating consent, participants were requested to complete a demographic questionnaire for a general profile (see Appendix F). On average, the interviews lasted for half an hour; participants were thanked for their contribution and informed that a summary report would be made available to them once the research was completed to which then interviews concluded.

Data Analysis

Thematic content analysis is a useful and flexible approach to analyzing qualitative data in psychology. It is a qualitative analytic method used as a way to search for themes and emerging patterns in research data. Braun and Clarke (2006) recommend that researchers acquaint themselves with this method of analysis as it is the overarching method of analysis that serves as a backdrop to other more complex qualitative methods of analysis. Holloway and Todres (2003) identify 'thematizing meanings' as one of a few shared generic skills across qualitative analysis" (p.347). The identified main advantage of this kind of analysis is that it can be applied variably and provides a well-rounded, detailed and yet substantially complex account of data, whilst also describing and organising the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic content analysis also allows for researcher interpretations and so is useful when unpacking the implicit logic of the text as well as the outlining of inter-related themes.

However, thematic content analysis, as with other forms of analyses, is not exempt from having flaws. Braun and Clarke (2006) postulate that the challenge of using thematic content analysis is that its flexibility can lead to an absence of clear and succinct guidelines regarding the critique of qualitative research.

On the other hand, Attride-Stirling (2001) claim that thematic content analysis is constituent of thematic networks, which are "web-like illustrations that summarise the main *themes* constituting a piece of text" and these aid the researcher to discover underlying patterns in the data that may not have otherwise been addressed in the research questions, thus providing an insightful and discerning body of data (p. 386). Rubin and Rubin (1995) echo this sentiment with the claim that thematic content analysis is exciting because "you discover themes and concepts embedded throughout your interviews" (p. 226). The use of data triangulation as a technique to ensure that research findings were supported by evidence, also corroborates the use of thematic content analysis to determine consistency across data

(Guion, Diehl & McDonald; 2011). However, Taylor and Ussher as cited in Braun and Clarke (2006) assert that this method of analysis is somewhat of a passive method because the researcher does not actively select themes according to what he/she considers to be relevant and important, but rather the themes become apparent only after the data has been collected.

Ely, Vinz, Downing and Anzul (1997) highlight that one should not make the error of presuming that themes reside in the data, but rather that patterns and themes emerge from the researcher's interpretation of the data as well as the connections the researcher creates whilst making sense of the raw data. With these arguments in mind, the phases of thematic content analysis were used to organise the data into meaningful groups of semantic or latent themes; that is, explicit and underlying interpretive meanings of data toward providing evidence relevant to the study.

Reflexivity

As data was analyzed, the researcher was aware to detach emotionally from the participants' ventilations, whilst maintaining professionalism and empathy. The researcher acknowledged the position of participant observer in the study, especially as a contemporary graduate also undergoing organisational integration and adaptation; the researcher was closely aware of experiences and perceptions which may influence the interpretation of the data. However, it is precisely because of this that the researcher was well placed to pursue this study. A reflection journal was kept to make a note of points which were intriguing or of concern throughout the research process, particularly throughout the interview stage.

Ethical Considerations

Internal ethics within the Humanities Faculty of the University of the Witwatersrand was applied for and granted for the research to proceed (see Appendix I). As previously mentioned, the participants were presented with three formal consent forms; the first of which

requested permission for the participants to partake in the study (see Appendix C), the second was a request for the participant to be interviewed (see Appendix D) and the last was to request permission from participants to be tape recorded during the interview (see Appendix E).

The anonymity of volunteers was maintained under all circumstances, in which pseudonyms were allocated in all direct quotations in the report. Confidentiality was specified in all consent forms and was consistently maintained. Participants were given the right to withdraw from the study without penalties and the right to not respond to questions they may have experienced discomfort answering. Participants were informed that there were no perceived benefits or penalties with participation in the study. Furthermore, that all recordings were guaranteed to be kept in a safe place where only the researcher would have access, all interviews would be personally transcribed by the researcher and transcriptions would be kept under a password protected folder until after completion of the study.

Participants were also informed that the research findings may be presented at conferences and submitted for publication in a journal. Participants were advised that a summary of the research report would be made available to them on request and that the final research report would be at the University of the Witwatersrand Library upon completion. In the case of emotional distress being experienced, there was a referral system in place for counseling.

The following chapter presents results that were obtained in the study. The themes obtained from the collected data are discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR – RESULTS

This chapter outlines the emergent themes obtained from the transcriptions in the data analysis phase. The themes explicate the various ways in which graduate adaptation is affected. The themes highlight the issues which contribute to the challenges experienced by graduates in the school to work transition process. Factors which alleviate graduate adaptation in organisations were also identified.

This chapter indicates the views of five training and development managers who in their roles had worked closely with graduates during the first two years of transitioning into the workplace. There were nineteen graduates who participated in the study. In line with the triangulation technique, concepts which emerged three times and more in the graduates' and training and development managers' perspectives were considered to be emergent themes.

An interesting dimension of the term 'graduates' in the workplace, in which two distinct meanings and types of graduates were offered; the 'fresh-out-of-university graduate refers to an individual who has acquired qualifications without engaging in any work experience. Whereas, the work experienced graduate has engaged with the professional working environment while studying.

This study aimed to investigate the adaptation challenges of recent graduates in multinational organisations in South Africa. In particular, graduates who had been employed for period of one to two years, as this was a stage in which integration and acclimatization to the world of work was fairly new.

The main themes on graduate adaptation are outlined as follows:

Generational gap differences as a source of graduate challenges

It has been ascertained that differences in values and ways of thinking between generations has been a widely researched phenomenon. The traditional and conventional approach of the Baby Boomers and Generation X has been found to often clash with the technologically savvy and fast-paced stance of Gen Y, particularly in the working environment where the former is primarily occupying the senior levels of organisations.

Generational differences impact on graduates' ability to integrate and adapt into the workplace owing to these differences in work philosophies, as mentioned in the words of Manager 1:

"You can't send the old dogs; send them back to university to learn how to accept this young, vibrant, energetic person. I mean you're getting a piece of dynamite that's ready to explode and then what happens is that the moment that they come out from university; they are told "there's your cupboard, you sit there, you shut up and listen and I will lock you up" and that's what gets graduates very confused and disengaged. So it's a generation X and Y issue because there's that attitude that "no it's never been done like that before". The generation Y is simply far too advanced in thinking in comparison to the previous generation".

Similar evidence of this perspective was captured in the opinion of Manager 2 who reflected:

"I've had conversations with my colleagues about how the younger generation will walk in and expect to be CEO in two years and they've got to realize that it doesn't work like that, even if you're a bright spark. I mean just looking at the people from Google to

Facebook, it is young people who have gotten to be entrepreneurs and have become successful, but it's not everyone who's going to have that".

Manager 2 also proposed the notion that graduates' parental figures have a role to play in teaching graduates about the world of work. Although, this view was expressed with hesitance and with the acknowledgement that not all graduates' parental figures would have the kind of work-related experiences to teach graduates how to work in the context they would need. Even so, the perspective is that work ethic is imparted first within the home environment by the preceding generation in the household, nurtured in tertiary education, thereafter sharpened on an organisational level:

"I'd also say their parents, but you can't really say that kind of thing because what if their parents don't work in corporate, but it's something that you should be taught when you're younger by people who are older and know better and for me the work ethic does come from home and then is nurtured in university and then is required at work level".

The dispositions of younger graduates in comparison to those deemed as acceptable by older members in the workplace is further highlighted by Manager 3, particularly as the graduates' approach is important to harnessing the relationship with employees they encounter in the workplace:

"An awareness of others is also necessary, whether others means your colleagues or the clients, being more aware of others' needs better equips you to either manage your relationship with that person or even work well with them, especially when dealing with the different perspectives of the more older and one can say conservative generation".

For these reasons, the interactions between the older and contemporary generations are vital toward the integration and adaptation of graduates in the workplace. As such, more

effort should be invested in harnessing and enhancing graduates' relationships with members in their organisations who have a generationally informed perspective on requirements needed for success in the organisation, especially considering that those members are most likely to be in senior top-tier levels of organisations.

However, it is pertinent to bear in mind that chronological age is not the only factor which impacts on the 'we versus them' divide. This is evident from the perspective of Manager 1 who at the time of the interview was an experienced, middle-aged employee, but also a recent graduate through furthered tertiary education:

"I'm continuously a new graduate and I understand what you as a young graduate are experiencing because not only are you young, you've got these qualifications, the potential and now you're sitting with these ou toppies who say to your brilliant ideas "no that's not how we do things around here".

Differences in organisational philosophies and values created by those in top-tier management positions and the effects of decisions- which seem to often be informed by traditional, tried-and-tested, conventional approaches- have a bearing on the extent to which graduates, whether experienced or not, encounter the transition process in organisations. Manager 4 drew to attention the positive aspect of working with a different generation; however it was once again met with warning:

"Graduates are not yet critical thinkers, they're still very young and they don't think about the implications of things, they don't look further than what they've been told. Sometimes they don't accept the status quo so that's interesting, they move away from traditional approaches which brings something new to the older members of the team to think about, but it can pose as a challenge if they go at a pace too fast for us the conservative, it just simply won't be accepted because they get lost in their youth idealism"

Perspectives from several of the graduates also reflected the issue of generational differences as a hindrance in their adaptation process, particularly with regards to being distrusted to meet task objectives in their roles; this was captured in the view from Graduate 2:

"It takes time for you to adapt because I find that the people who have been there for decades just have the view that you're taken as someone who's just to learn and not give value input then it frustrates me and then delays my adaptation to the real world, so I think that was the problem; the lack of trust because remember now you've just come in and those people have been there".

Graduate 2 further explicates how the unwillingness of colleagues belonging to precursor generations to allow for change in the organisation poses as a barrier for graduates to effectively integrate into organisations:

"Another thing, people don't like change most of the time, the issue of change is very much serious because if you check it very well, when you came in most people thought things were going to be done differently in their own way or even stay the same. So now you're perceived to be someone who's not really coming up with good stuff. They look like they want change, but when change is being implemented then they really don't like it".

This was echoed by Graduate 4:

"In everyday working environment there's usually this resistance to change because we work in an innovative space and we're always trying to do new things and we always have people who are resistant to change. So I think that is probably my biggest challenge is today, is that the resistance to change, but it's part of any organisation I think

because there will always be much older and more conservative people I guess and it's part of getting buy-in for your projects, just makes things more difficult".

Table 2 highlights from the information provided in the evidence, a summary of the main points which participants considered to pose as significant challenges to graduate adaptation in the workplace owing to generational differences.

Table 4.1: Generational gap differences – Managers' and Graduates' Perspectives

Challenge	Description
Lack of Trust	Perception that recent graduates are too young and inexperienced to make meaningful contributions
Unwillingness to accept change	Experienced generation not prepared to move away from traditional and tried-and-tested methods, stifles tech savvy and innovation driven graduates' approach
Unwillingness to accept authority	Graduates inability to accept authority clashes with predecessors' high respect for hierarchy
Work Ethic	Graduates' perceived as not willing to work hard for the rewards, unrealistic expectations to succeed at an exceptional rate owing to fast-paced generational approach and successes of age group role models.

Insufficient Collaboration of tertiary institutions and employers

A plethora of research regarding employer and graduate perceptions of university education in relation to the needs and requirements of the labour market and specifically, with regard to the capabilities necessary to aid graduate adaptation in the workplace, indicates that there is a great deal of frustration and dissatisfaction from employers, educators and graduates.

Whilst there is consensus that communication lines should be enhanced and emphasised between tertiary institutions and industries, the participants' perspectives have

emphasised that the misalignment between higher education and the expectation of employers exacerbates graduates' difficulty to shift into the world of work. When asked what would prepare them better for successful adaptation into the workplace, all graduates (except those in the auditing/accounting field who interestingly, were of the view that nothing could have prepared them better as their university curriculum prepared them adequately), conceded that an earlier introduction of the workplace during their studies would have aided their integration and adaptation process. Evidence is shown in Graduate 15's perspective:

"A person moving from one point to another, there has to be a shift, it has to be there. Regardless of how hard you try to map out or to gradually increase the slope of that shift, there will always be that shift. To make it better though I would say that for industry companies to interact with students while they're still studying, that for me is the best possible way to bridge that gap. It might not be giving them a position or the internship model, but it could be something to show interest or to have an impact, or to even help with the curriculum, it's one thing to isolate curriculum to what we think an engineer should do to what an engineer actually does so such things should actually also be included in that. I think that would've maybe prepared me better, university interactions with companies while we're still students".

Manager 3 shared a similar view:

"there could be a space for creating some sort of forum, some of platform where both organisations and graduates can meet, but facilitated by the university because tertiary institutions would have a better awareness that from our graduates, from what they're learning from the alumni network and from the university having these strong connections with different organisations, these are the needs of graduates".

Exposure to the working environment prior to entering the workplace also negotiates graduates' expectations to minimise naivety and idealistic outlooks. Graduate 4 states:

"The degree is technical, but that's the only thing. So that practical experience that you need to get is in the field, where if you got a bit more business experience or kind of real-life experience in your university practicals then the exposure would prepare you for your expectations and to manage those expectations of what it is like in the real world".

Similarly, a lack of synchronisation leads to graduates' feelings of utter unpreparedness, this was evident in the view shared by Graduate 8:

"I don't think anything prepared me for my role to be honest. It's very strange because often they say, you studied accounting or IT in undergrad so you'll be ready, then when you actually get into that role, what you studied is not even relevant; maybe ten percent, maybe five percent,, but apart from that it's not relevant."

Graduate 3 was slightly more positive in response to being asked what contributed to preparedness; acknowledging that the theory learnt was valuable, even though it was vastly different from practice:

"Education wise, my tertiary learning, but the theory is much different from the actual practical experience. So yes you have the basic knowledge, but you learn more in practice than in theory".

As such, participants indicated that collaborations between higher education and organisations could also prepare graduates by giving them a glimpse into every day working life, Graduate 10 claims:

"Coming from campus to work, I don't know if I'm the only one, but a lot of people don't know what they want and what expectations they have. Nobody really knows that

they want to be sitting behind a computer, not working with people until you like experience different things, so that could've helped maybe, if it could be included at varsity to experience these things and also having more seminars and workshops from industry professionals and things like that".

This was echoed by Graduate 2:

"Exposure to the industry and maybe exposure to the environment before I came on board would have maybe given me a clear view of what is happening". After a short pause Graduate 2 added:

"So varsity prepares you about relevant subjects to your role, but it has a limit. There's no way you can say I've done this and that at school and then I can understand it better at work. At school you do more theory".

On the contrary, three of the graduates shared the view that their university education is what prepared them the most as it provided them with generic skills they can apply in their current workplace and in the future as well, simply said by Graduate 4:

"My degree helped me quite a bit in the sense that it gave me the analysing, problem solving skills I needed for my current job"

Notwithstanding, the majority of the graduates voiced that through workplace practical learning, they could be aided with applying the theoretical knowledge attained in tertiary education in the contexts of their organisations, a quality which has been found to lack in recent graduates and which impedes their ability to have a smoother adaptation experience, Graduate 10 highlighted this notion:

"I think what helped me a lot, which I would've struggled without, is that I started to do temporary work and internships while studying, because when you're studying all

you can see is what's inside the textbook and you can't really apply it and what I found to be really helpful in my role is that while I was studying I could take the learning into the organisation".

On the opposite side, Graduate 2 emphasises the consequence of the perception that tertiary capabilities are far removed from organisational requirements, which perpetuates a lack of trust and confidence from colleagues:

"There's one problem with university actually because when you get there nobody trusts you. That's the first thing, nobody trusts you because you don't know anything actually; you just know the theory and you don't know how and understand how to apply it. I mean you're just from varsity, you don't know anything you just have…yes you know something, only academically, but now we're in the real world".

However, Manager 1 opposes this view and that the problem is rather with employers have gotten used to a one-dimensional method of reaching organisational objectives and that top management often comprises of members who do not want to deviate from this. The misconception is on the employers' part regarding the value of the skills and knowledge attained by graduates. Hence, the issue is that employers do not know how to receive contemporary graduates into the workplace and how to optimally use what they offer:

"If you hear employers saying that they're not getting what they want, it means that they often actually want "yes men and yes women". It's got nothing to do with the university and not giving the companies what they want. What the companies want are little soldiers to jump up and down and say yes ma'am, yes sir, the companies don't know what they're getting and they don't know how to use it".

As a consequence of non-collaboration, employers may tend to believe that graduates' qualifications are of minimal for their organisations. Underutilisation of qualifications may lead to the great frustration and eventually early resignation of graduates. It presents a significant problem to graduates when they have attained qualifications through several years of tertiary studying and yet organisations, owing to perceptions of the relevance and/or value of tertiary education, do not recognize or put them to appropriate use. This results in significant discontent and increased difficulty in transitioning successfully into organisations. From a training and development manager's perspective, Manager 1 states:

"We had one guy here who had done his Master's, his MBA. He had done it through the company, we had paid for him and everything and we got to a plateau point, where actually someone said to him form a very high position in the company that you know what, there's nowhere else for you, there's no way for you to go higher and he then got a position outside the company because this company could not see him as someone with a Master's in Business Administration. They saw him as the storeman and he then moved up to a supervisor and they didn't see his value".

This was echoed by Graduate 16, whose frustration is evident in the quote below:

"My colleague we started working at the same time and she also came from sales, she's not only earning a bit more than me and she's got no HR qualification and no HR experience and that's when my expectations sort of started coming up and I felt personally that it was unfair on my end because I put in all the money, I put in all the years and all the hours of studying for five years, just to be on the same level as someone who hasn't got the experience, who hasn't got the qualification, then you can't help but think well, then what was the point?"

Table 3 indicates a summation of the adaptation challenges experienced by graduates owing to lack of collaborations between tertiary institutions and employers

Table 4.2- Graduates' challenges owing to insufficient tertiary institution and employer collaborations

Challenge	Description
Difficulty in adjusting to demands of work environment	Difficult adjustment to work rules and expectations
Inability to bridge theory with practice- Generic versus Technical Capabilities	Not knowing how to apply knowledge and skills attained from tertiary education leads to colleagues distrust of capabilities and potential
Uninformed anticipations	Lack of exposure about specifications and requirements of the role leads to disappointment and disillusionment
Employers' underutilisation of qualifications owing to perception of tertiary education	Employers' perceptions and unmet expectations lead to disregarding value of graduates' degree attainments.

Graduates' undesired attributes

There were several challenges associated with graduates' displayed personal characteristics in the workplace. Although graduates and training and development managers likewise report on positive characteristics such as proactivity and initiative, openness to learning, inquisitiveness, and willingness to go the extra mile, the negative graduate attributes which impede successful adaptation into the workplace were identified.

Entitlement

The most prominent of the undesired graduate attributes which was viewed as a significant hindrance on graduate adaptation into the workplace was the graduates' tendency to have a sense of entitlement. When asked about the characteristics which contribute to unsuccessful graduate adaptation, Manager 2 stated:

"It's that laziness, sense of entitlement that the organisation owes me something".

This was evident in the graduates' initial perspectives about the organisation and the benefits they would receive, Graduate 6 candidly explains:

"I thought that the organisation for example would give us things like free funeral cover, free advice on how to invest in the stock market. I thought the medical aid we're getting would be better than what we're getting now. I guess I could've felt a bit entitled to have those things".

The financial aspect was voiced quite strongly by the graduates regarding what they believed they deserved as compensation, Graduate 19 stated:

"Honestly, I was very disappointed salary-wise, it's just too low not only in the organisation, but I'm talking market-related as well. I mean I have all of this knowledge and struggled through dozens of modules in university for what? To continue counting cents?"

On the other hand, Graduate 2 cautioned against entitlement as it could result in being alienated in the workplace:

"You see if you come in with a soft attitude and just relax, it's easy for you to ask a question, but then if you come with pride or kind of you know it all, you can't really make it and that's a problem because people are not really there to help".

Additionally, Manager 5 shared the view that entitlement was a result of being uninformed about the nature of and etiquette required in the workplace, especially since most graduates do not acquire work exposure throughout the years of studying:

"Usually it's these kinds who will come in and feel like the world should be at their feet, you know; they've studied for years, they have one, two, three degrees and now they enter the workplace and think I'm just going to assign the biggest accounts to them to manage. Now what they don't know until they here is that with me they're going to start right at the bottom and earn their way up".

Graduate views affirmed this perspective, for instance the scenario from Graduate 2:

"Initially you come in with your own expectations; that's the problem because your expectations are not really in line, they're more and then at a later stage you realize that they were just unrealistic. Let's say you come in today, you expect everything to be in order, you expect everybody to know you as if they expected you to come and then you're going to change some things".

Manager 2 also articulated discontent with the arrogant ambition graduates had upon entering the workplace which was also observed by other managers within the organisation:

"I've had conversations with my colleagues about how the younger generation will walk in and expect to be CEO in two years and they've got to realize that it doesn't work like that, even if you're a bright spark. I mean just looking at the people from Google to Facebook, it is young people who have gotten to be entrepreneurs and have become successful, but it's not everyone who's going to have that".

From these perspectives, having a sense of entitlement hinders graduates' capability to enter and transition into the workplace, as unrealistic, unmet expectations translate into disappointment and frustration from both their own and the managers' experiences.

Overdependence on managers

An interesting finding was that despite an emphasis on initiative, drive and ambition as positive graduate attributes, graduates had the tendency to over rely on others during their early transition into the workplace, particularly owing to the fear of failure; this is illustrated in Graduate 15's view:

"Managers must remember that graduates come from an environment where a 49% is a fail and a 50% is a pass, so according to them their measure of success has a line, where that line lies is up to the individual, so but sometimes we can depend too much on our managers because we are still very afraid of failing".

From the training and development manager's perspective, Manager 3 said:

"Qualities that could hinder someone's growth, development or even just applying themselves confidently as a graduate, firstly I'd say being overly dependent because that could stem from a need to establish yourself or find a place for yourself within the market place, but at the same time, they may end up wanting high achievement, but never being sure that they're ready for it".

Perceived lack of emotional intelligence

The ability for graduates to apply themselves appropriately by using their discretion based on the situations they encounter in the workplace, has been reiterated by the Managers in the study, especially taking into consideration the newness of the workplace dynamics when compared to those of the university environment. Emotional intelligence was emphasised as quality necessary for managing oneself effectively when faced with challenges and anxieties, as well as with establishing and maintaining amicable, professional relationships with others in the workplace.

Although the participants' views from a managerial perspective differentiate between inexperienced graduate employee and organisational proficient graduates, the emphasis of emotional intelligence was an attribute alluded to the novice graduate employee whose limited exposure of the dynamics in the working context requires a discretion and apt situational awareness. Furthermore, this suggests that graduates, who may have had previous work experience and interacted with requirements in the world of work, may have attuned emotional intelligence drawn from their professional experiences in the workplace.

Manager 1 places emphasis on graduates' ability to know when and how to go about interactions with others in the work environment as an individual resource for adjusting to the daunting and at times unexpected situations in the workplace:

"What emotional intelligence will do is to teach them the basics of psychology and their way of dealing and reacting to people in an organisation. Unfortunately we have to drive emotional intelligence for the young people who come out of university because they need to learn how do I go to my boss, the owner of this company, who has run this organisation for twenty three years, how do I relate to that person so I don't come over as offensive, I don't come over as know-it-all, I don't come over as too ambitious".

Consensus was articulated by Manager 2, who also considers a willingness and humility to accept authority as part of emotional intelligence:

"There are one or two incidences where personal issues have been a problem in the programme and that is why when they're going through life events they have decreased productivity. So it's a lack of emotional intelligence and resilience that's I've seen as well and that determines if they can meet expectations or not".

Graduate participants also consider emotional intelligence as crucial for their adjustment in the workplace, especially with regards to encountering and managing different personalities in a professional manner, Graduate 1 asserted:

"So you will get some people that take everything very sensitively so you learn how to phrase your words in a way to accommodate them and to make them understand that what you're doing is not necessarily to hurt them or to prove them wrong, it's about having that emotional intelligence to know how and when to do things".

Similarly, Graduate 17 shared:

"I was very fascinated when I had to do emotional intelligence testing because when I got my feedback I realised how important it was for me to have that as a high quality, especially because you're constantly working around people you know. I don't think I'd be coping at work it as much I am now without applying and I can see that the people who struggle through the program are also the ones who lack it quite a bit in my view".

To conclude on the matter of emotional intelligence, Manager 1 provided a metaphor:

"That's why I say emotional intelligence as a subject will help the young graduates to come in and not just explode into organisation, but rather to come in and ease in gradually. Don't shake the champagne before you open it, slowly but surely open the champagne and you as young graduates need to learn and let the older generation smell your champagne first and then you pour them a little sip to taste and you as graduates need to learn the skills on how to market yourselves so that the company can see the potential that you have".

As a summary of the participants' views, the table below indicates the main undesired graduate attributes which have been found in this study contribute to unsuccessful adaptation in the workplace.

Table 4.3- Summary of graduates' personal attributes as hindrance to transition and adaptation

Challenge	Description
Entitlement	The perspective that graduates deserve recognition, status and organisational benefits
Arrogant Ambition	The desire to progress at exceptional rates without acclimatising to and meeting managerial and role requirements. Aiming to achieve high standards and disregarding realistic process to reach accomplishments
Lack of Emotional Intelligence	Inability to use discretion to apply judgment, and respond appropriately based on context and the situation in the workplace, particularly with regard to relationships with colleagues.
Overdependence on Managers	Although lack of self-confidence in capabilities may have had an influence, graduates display a lack of autonomy.

Desired Graduate Attributes

Graduate attributes have been thoroughly evaluated in terms of those which are desired and undesired by decision-makers in organisations. Outlined below are the various types of graduate attributes training and development managers believe contribute to successful adaptation and integration into the workplace.

Attributes which have been experienced as having a negative impact on graduates' ability to adapt are thereafter outlined, succeeded by evidence from the Manager's views:

The concept of the "go-getter" and resilience

As a graduate attribute the notion of being a "go-getter" is omnipresent in the manager-participant's views. It suggests an ability to tenacity, perseverance and even resilience against all odds to achieve one's goals. The following quote from Manager 1 substantiated:

"It means no matter what the conditions are that person works through, that person is a go-getter and the foundation is laid".

This was also echoed by Manager 2:

"I've had some really good interns; a few interns that I have supervised have actually been kept permanently because I've requested that they be. There have been ones which they don't have a problem, but they just don't stick out from the crowd, so the go-getters have stayed on, the people-oriented striving ones also, they just have that unique client-service and they work well with clients. Then on the other side I've just seen a disinterest".

Manager 3 shared similar sentiments about the pertinence of resilience and tenacity:

"I suppose resilience to a large degree is necessary because there probably will be disappointing situations or the outcomes aren't as desirable when it comes to you applying yourself and thinking that maybe you were equipped for it, or you think you could've done better. You find that with graduates you tend to have a lot of that. Resilience is one of the things that help them to bounce back and keep going".

The concept of being a go-getter is one also adopted by the graduates in describing the attributes they believe aid them with adapting in the dynamic environment of multinational organisations,

Initiative

This is another ubiquitous concept from the manager-participants; the requirement for graduates to meet their managers halfway by showing enthusiasm and proactivity for what they want to achieve, not just wait for opportunities to come to them.

Manager 1 emphasised this notion with an example about a graduate within the organisation whose aim was to study further to have access to better opportunities within the organisation:

" What I do here is that a person will come to me and say "I want to study further", then I'll say "give me your matric certificate" and I'll look at that as a basis for making a decision then I say this person has the potential or if they can't show me a matric certificate, I say to them "give me whatever you've done, then I look at their CV and I say you know what, this guy is a go-getter; he's done this diploma, that diploma", there's potential there you can see it.

This sentiment about the role of graduates taking initiative in order to meet manager and organisational expectations and successfully adapt to the working environment was echoed by Manager 2, who also asserted the notion of displaying initiative within boundaries:

"It's really the interns that put in the extra effort that ask questions, show initiative and are proactive. Obviously when I say initiative, I'm realizing that they need to show age-appropriate initiative. If they start to show that they want to run the company, no not that kind of initiative. It's more about "Oh I see that there's something happening, I'd like to be exposed to that, can I come with you, and can I help you with that project". So it's that proactivity, that initiative to get involved, but within boundaries".

Although Manager 2 cautions that graduate should convey initiative appropriately by being aware of their role in relation to the roles of others in the organisation, initiative as a personal characteristic was highly regarded amongst the participants.

Manager 3 stated:

"The kind of qualities that contribute flourishing as a graduate and really growing, whether into a specific goal or area of expertise I'd say firstly would be openness to learning. That only doesn't only include the willingness to learn but also the willingness to be challenged; how challenging are the learning opportunities that you're seeking out. I tend to find that those who tend to seek out the more challenging things tend to grow that much faster which I think is taking initiative through and through for your own growth and development".

Manager 5 affirmed:

"In terms of met expectations, I would say definitely their ability to work with different people and being able to work within a team, to function well within a team, contribute in a team and take initiative as a team member".

Initiative is not only recognised as a quality applicable for the individual alone, but also for the benefit of teams and others who interact with the graduate on a daily basis. Participants also placed emphasis on graduates' willingness and openness to learning as a significant contributor to an ameliorated transition into the workplace. Manager 3 asserted:

"The kind of qualities that contribute flourishing as a graduate and really growing, whether into a specific goal or area of expertise I'd say firstly would be openness to learning. That only doesn't only include the willingness to learn but also the willingness to be challenged; how challenging are the learning opportunities that you're seeking out."

Similarly, Manager 2 stated:

"***Willingness to learn, willingness to go the extra mile are important, graduates that succeed in the organisation are those which ask a lot of questions".***

The table below provides a synopsis of the participants' views regarding the desired graduate attributes which aid adaptation

Table 4.4 Desired graduate attributes

Attribute	**Description**
Being a "Go-getter" and resilient	Taking charge of opportunities and persevering through difficulties
Initiative	Seeking challenging tasks and going the extra mile even when not required to
Openness to learning	Displaying a willingness to continuously learn new information

Organisational Attributes

Neglect of succession planning

In a country affected by lack of skills and in which skills development is a continuous area of focus, graduates who have scarce skills have an increased opportunity of integrating successfully as they are to receive more support and attention from management in the organisation. Retention of scarce skills is crucial for organisational success and effectiveness for the long-term, especially when acquired from a younger generation who have the potential to continue the legacy and fulfil leadership roles in the future. This is evident in the views of Manager 1, a training and development manager who considers himself an educational and training specialist in a conglomerate engineering organisation:

"We're looking at mostly the engineering faculty, so those guys from the engineering faculty are very very scarce. So they're looked after very well at our company and they integrate very well and they are paid very well so that they stay".

On the other hand, graduates with less scarce skills in the organisation are not provided with a career path. As such integration remains at levels in which they started working in the organisation

This poses as a challenge for graduates because after studying for and receiving qualifications, their development is stifled and restricted within the boundaries of their often administrative roles. This potentially increases retention issues, as graduates are then likely to seek opportunities in line with their newly gained knowledge and qualifications. As expressed by Manager 1, this poses as a great challenge for not only retention, but also for succession planning with talent identification of the most suitable graduates to fulfil the next level roles:

"the problem that I'm facing is that we've got these people that are graduates that they've got Bcom degrees, they move their way up from being clerks into graduates, but they're now still in that same role because there's been no succession planning for them We supported them; we did the nice thing of paying for their studies, helping them through it". Manager 1 further ads: "Then what happens next is that the company just leaves them to just carry on with what they used to do".

This contributes to the frustrations experienced by both the training and development managers in that there is a lack of support for graduates from an organisational structure point of view, as well as ascending dissatisfaction from the graduates:

"For a period of time it was ok for them to be in that role because they hadn't yet upped their skills or gained experience and then after a while now it happens that they can't utilize what they've gained".

This challenge was reiterated by Graduate 4, who as an individual who studied further whilst working at the organisation, was aware of the lack of impact which attaining additional qualifications had on employers:

"This is my first job, so I think being a graduate has helped me to get in the workplace, but it hasn't helped me to go further. I don't feel that my graduate status has enabled me to further my career".

Additionally, although Graduate 1 admits that the skills and knowledge gained through work experience at the organisation have assisted with greater understanding of the tertiary studies. However, it remains a challenge to have acquired multiple high level credentials as a young and capable person in the early twenties, and not be given an opportunity for growth:

"Well, because I've gone up until Master's degree I thought I would've been able to move quicker, whereas I'm not moving, I'm staying on the same level. Although my performance has improved drastically from when I started and I am above the other people on the same level, but I'm still stuck at that level".

From these perspectives, disregarding graduates' qualifications results in ill-fitting roles where there is minimal opportunity for graduates to apply the theoretical knowledge gained from the efforts during tertiary studies. Furthermore, mismatched roles are often on an administrative level and therefore not pitched at a level appropriate to challenge, stimulate and engage the graduates, which is concerning issue for a younger generation who have been

found to have high aspirations and take a fast-paced approach in their learning, development and success.

Some organisations value work experience as opposed to the graduate`s potential to learn, develop and positively contribute to the success of the organisation. There is a prevailing dialogue about the need to consider graduates' potential and how they are likely to contribute to the organisation in the future. The core assertion is that evaluating work experience or attained qualifications without assessing for future potential provides a limited view which impacts succession planning decisions detrimentally. This affects graduates' chances of entering organisations and then thriving into leadership roles. There is the other perspective which contends that graduates should be valued by organisations on the basis of their qualifications even if they do not have the work experience. Experience is gained over time and eventually given the opportunity that young graduates seek, they would ultimately gain the experience as well.

As such, the value of using psychometric testing to determine graduates' potential in terms of aptitude, cognitive reasoning and behavioural attributes is incalculable for decision-making in organisations' succession planning processes. Making future predictions not only provides information which can be used for graduate talent management processes such as career path development and succession planning, it informs hiring managers and decision-makers about the extent of the risk and benefit the organisation stands to incur should they invest in graduates.

In the voice of Manager 1 this elucidated how a lack of focus on graduates' potential can lead to increased challenges faced with integrating and adapting well in organisations:

"The missing link in organisations is that we don't see the potential of people, we are focusing more on the manual labour, skills-based piece of paper, what they have done.

So we never give people the opportunities to show us what they can do, that's the problem I think".

Manager 1 stressed:

"Why is it that the old school managerial way of thinking cannot look beyond the work only and that thinking that if you don't have the experience then we're not taking you on board? But it must be considered that you have the potential to learn; you're not just looking at what they've achieved, you're looking at future potential, using past information for future predictions".

Furthermore, stringently adhering to a tangible results-based approach and not considering graduates' future potential creates a rigid and routine environment in which graduates cannot explore the idea of long-term employment in organisations. Manager 4 stated that this concern was a problem across many organisations:

"Unfortunately what I've experienced in industry and with the people in different places that I've seen is that it's often very limited to simply can you do what we want you to do, what we're paying you to do and please don't do anything more".

A lack of potential identification causes negative feelings of frustration and restlessness for graduates, its asphyxiating effect was asserted by Graduate 17 whose purpose of studying further was to be recognized for a more fulfilling role and in so doing, climb higher on the organisation's proverbial ladder:

"So there is frustration on that part and then I do think that people that do study and do go further, they have ambition, they want to move faster, they want to get to the top levels quicker and being in my role for as long as I've been, it does give you a lot of…you feel demotivated by it."

Furthermore, Manager 1 alluded to the importance of developing career paths for graduates in such a way that there is structure and clarity for not only the graduate, but for the career manager or training and development manager responsible for guiding the graduate in the first two years of employment*:*

"If they're fresh and they're straight out of university, look at their potential and create a pathway because there aren't pathways in organisations. You get some situations where people in management will tell you straight that "leave them, don't do training, leave them so that they must clean. I don't want them to move anywhere, they must clean. So the paradigm shifts in organisations are not that visual yet".

This conflict between the role of training and development managers to aid graduates with flourishing in the workplace

Managerial Styles (Supportive versus rigid outcome-based)

The participants distinguished between the managerial styles which affect graduate adaptation and transition. Supportive managerial styles were reported as having a positive impact on graduates and contributing to lessened anxiety and negative emotions which cause difficulty during the transition phase.

On the other hand, a purely outcome-based managerial style, in which the managers' only concern was the graduates' measurable outputs, placed significant additional pressure and stressors on graduates. This then contributes to the difficulties graduates encounter as new members in the workplace endeavouring to integrate and adapt to the demands of the work environment.

Manager 2 referred to adopting a 'mothering' style of managing and guiding graduates through their early years in the organisation. By providing a guidance role,

graduates are likely to perform their duties in ways expected of them as they would have clarity and understanding of tasks. Manager 2 stated:

"I have to make sure that the graduates don't get off track. It's very much mothering in some aspects and it's also trying to teach them exactly how they should do things. It's from how to write an email, how to deal with clients, how to write a report, so everything in the day to day and make sure that they meet the requirements of their internship and their projects. So it's a buddy-type of supervising. My manager would be the "the manager-manager" and only hear about their outputs whereas I supervise the interns on the daily".

On the contrary, Graduate 1 expressively noted that:

"I think the biggest thing is that you've got this idea of how things at work should be and how your managers should be supporting you and should be with and I think when you come face to face with that you realize that your managers aren't always going to sit and wait for you when have a question, you know they're also busy and things like that so you have to learn to diversify a lot, innovate a lot to be able to get on with your work on your own because your manager isn't always available."

In line with this, Manager 1 also offered opinions about the role of the training and development managers as one of a mentor and in comparison to the role of senior management in the organisation whose primary aim is to gain as much outputs from the graduates as possible:

"My expectations versus the organisation's expectations are totally different. For me as an education specialist, as a training person, I would like to see people reach their

full potential so for me, I'm almost a thorn in the flesh of the organisation where people expect you to just get the job done".

Sharing the experience of an unsupportive manager, Graduate 8 stated:

"I think for me in my experience, if you're in a crap environment and people are criticizing every single thing you do wrong instead of also acknowledging the things you do right, you're not going to be happy, you're not going to want to try".

Managerial styles impact the extent to which challenges experienced by graduates are manageable or too overwhelming to handle. As graduates are expected by managers and at times their own training and development managers in the organisation to work within the set parameters, they may not aspire towards optimally utilizing themselves in ways most mutually beneficial for their growth and the organisations.

Unstructured induction

Manager 2 shared the view that ultimately it is the responsibility of the tertiary institutions to ensure that graduates understand what will be expected of them upon entering the world of work. Also, that it is the responsibilities of educators to impart skills and knowledge that will aid graduates' organisational integration. However at the same time, the organisations' contributions are important to make sure that induction programmes are comprehensive and adequately planned for the appropriate orientation of the graduates:

"I mean I was also once there, you get into an organisation, you think this you think that, it's definitely an induction to the working world. It's either going to be an awareness made at varsities where they discuss that this is the company, have you looked at the company values, what they're probably going to expect from you, this is how the world of work works, but also it's very much that the organisation has to do a good induction

from the very first day and it needs to be more than one day. It's the realisation that they haven't had previous experience, they need to be told, so it's guidance in the organisation as well, failure to do in a structured, formal way has its consequences".

Additionally, the role of training and development managers was viewed to be essential in taking accountability for and being the custodian of imparting organisation specific information to the graduates, Manager 4 outlined some of the key elements graduates have to be guided on once entering the organisation:

"We have to explain to them the values of the company which is essential because people who are happy are those who buy into the values. We do talk about disciplinary action; we have to let them know about disciplinary hearings if you don't perform and so they have an awareness of them. Induction is very functional and it also talks about the policies and procedures, introduces what those are. The organisation has to be open, open its doors and it has to be trusting. So the organisation has to be a special animal, it has to believe in development".

Manager 3 stated:

"I would say that there are quite a few hurdles considering that onboarding of graduates tends to be quite a generic thing, whether it's someone who has a lot of work experience or you as a graduate coming in and you find that the onboarding process is still the same, or induction is the same for all of you. So you find that sometimes it takes even longer for your manager to really understand your needs."

From these views, unsupportive managerial styles do not only pose as a hindrance to identifying graduates' potential, which has been shown to be a crucial factor in alleviating graduates' adaptation challenges, a lack of guidance leads to feelings of isolation, anxiety and

discomfort. Additionally, a misalignment of managerial approaches within the organisation creates a conflicting environment for graduates to transition in. Participants emphasised the importance of structured induction programs to ensure that graduates' are adequately orientated into the organisation and the expectations of the working world. From the identified themes it was evident that graduate adaptation and integration into organisations is a shared responsibility and is dependent on the combined efforts of the graduates, training and development managers, organisational decision-makers and tertiary institutions.

The table below illustrates the organisational attributes which impact on graduates' ability to integrate and transition successfully into organisations.

Table 4.5 Summary of organisational attributes which affect adaptation of graduates into the workplace

Challenge	**Description**
Neglect of succession planning	Lack of focus on graduates' career paths and development opportunities provokes frustration, disinterest and ultimately early exits
Managerial styles	Supportive managerial style aids graduate integration, rigid managerial style exacerbates challenges experienced by graduates
Unstructured induction	Informal induction leads to ambiguity for training and development managers regarding tasks and ways to best orientate graduates into the workplace; results in generic allocation of work

The next chapter provides a comprehensive discussion of the results in relation to the outlined literature. Practical implications of the study are provided in terms of what the findings mean for practice and recommendations for future research are delineated, as well as limitations of the study to be taken into consideration. Conclusions are outlined for the study.

CHAPTER FIVE - DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the findings in relation to the research questions and evaluates whether they are similar to previous findings or depart from what is commonly known. Four main emergent themes were obtained from the graduates and training and development managers perspectives; generational gap differences, insufficient collaborations of tertiary institutions and employers, graduates' attributes (which comprised of desired and undesired) and organisational attributes.

Three subthemes described the undesired graduate attributes which contributed to difficult adaptation into organisations, these were: entitlement and arrogant ambition, overdependence on managers and perceived lack of emotional intelligence. Desired graduate attributes were: resilience, initiative and openness to learning. The subthemes of organisational attributes which influenced graduates' adaptation included: neglect of succession planning, unstructured induction and managerial styles.

The results of this study showed that recent graduates grapple with the issue of settling in smoothly in organisations in the first two years of employment. The theme of generational gap differences showed that interactions between recent graduates, of which majority were Millennials, and cohorts from the predecessor Baby Boomers and Generation X pose as a challenge for graduate adaptation and integration in organisations. Of the nineteen graduates, fifteen reported experiencing difficulties with establishing and maintaining relationships with colleagues belonging to the antecedent generations; constituting a total of 79% of the graduate participants. Previous research supports that differences between generations in the workplace are genuine and reflect the values, attitudes and attributes of shared lived experiences (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Drago, 2006; van der Walt & du Plessis, 2010; Meriac et al., 2010, Espinoza, 2012).

Main challenges were with regard to a lack of acceptance from colleagues, others' perceptions of graduates being entitled. Graduates voiced an inability to express their views and share innovative ideas which challenged established traditional approaches and experienced a strong resistance for change, particularly with the implementation of new processes or systems. Smola and Sutton (2002) identified that employees in the Baby Boomer generation tended to be sturdy conformists and preferred steady and invariable environments, which clashes with the tendency for the younger generations' tendency to challenge the status quo. Similarly, Meriac et al. (2010) affirmed that influences on generations' distinct development include prominent events and popular culture, both of which in the millennial generation are irrevocably influenced by the use of advanced and rapidly changing technology.

Therefore, the desires of graduates to contribute to departmental and organisational changes in ways which are innovative and technologically advanced provoked great conflict from the much older Baby Boomer generation, however less from Generation X which have are less conventional and adopt more of an entrepreneurial approach. Baby Boomers were also found to rarely question or deviate from the prescriptions from authority, which posed as a challenge to Millennial graduates, whose disposition is to question authority and seek to be treated as equals, regardless of others' status in the organisations (Dittman, 2005, Espinoza, 2012). Marshall and Bonner (2003) cited in Coetzee and Schreuder (2008) highlighted that contemporary studies showed that younger employees in the workforce have a strong preference for lateral paths, rather than traditional hierarchical organisational structures.

Graduates also reported a sense of great distrust, not only from their managers, but from older members within their teams. The distrust came more from the Baby Boomers than from Generation X, whom the graduates felt displayed more confidence and reliance on them despite also having worked for the organisations for very long periods of time. Distrust with

the execution of tasks and involvement with problem solving was likely to disengage graduates in the workplace; furthermore, graduates were of the view that their managers had to learn ways to accommodate them better. These results are slightly different to the findings by Espinoza (2012) who asserted that the individuals who bear the most responsibility have to adapt first, as such graduates had to- with the assistance from their managers- take responsibility and learn to adapt first to the requirements of the working environment.

Graduates also reported experiencing social exclusion from the preceding generations, which impacted on their opportunity to network and gain organisational and industry insights. Research recently conducted by Moss and Martins (2014) on the prevalence of generational sub-cultures in organisations supports the finding that the antecedent generations' negative perceptions of graduates during the school to work transition influenced their exclusion of graduates on a social level.

The theme of the misalignment between tertiary education and employers' expectations showed that the gap between higher education and the requirements resulted in graduates' difficulty with transitioning into the workplace. From the organisational perspectives, there was clear consensus from the training and development managers that there is disconnect between the skills, knowledge and attributes graduates obtain from tertiary institutions as compared to those which are required for successful adaptation in their organisations. Similarly, graduates were of the view that although acquiring university qualifications was necessary for their chosen careers, the required skills in the work environment were vastly different to those they had obtained throughout their studies. The findings confirm what was found more than two decades ago by Whitfield (1988) in the investigation of career preparation transition of graduates. Whitfield asserted that "to make a successful transition from the educational to the occupational world, students must be encouraged and required to develop and demonstrate competencies that are essential for this

stage in their career development (p.16). Similarly, research by Lie et al. (2009) found that employers' perceptions of graduate literacies were insufficient to enable them to integrate easier into the workplace. Although generic attributes acquired from the university environment such as analytical and research ability, written and verbal communication and problem solving skills were acknowledged by participants, the lack of exposure of the work environment while at a university level made the adaptation and transition process difficult. Consequently, research findings were supported by the views of Griesel and Parker (2009) who in the South African context emphasised the importance of collaborations between higher education and industries, to ensure mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities, as well as alignment of labour market needs.

Studies on graduate attributes in relation to workplace preparation highlight that generic skills have been found to be more valuable than organisational specific technical ability (Butler, 2003; Lowden et al., 2011). This is particularly because the demands and requirements of the environment are dynamic and variable and as such, the capability to apply a generic set of skills allows for flexibility to meet demands and to operate at a pace aligned with that of the changes of the external environment (Martin, Maytham, Case & Fraser, 2005; Lie et al., 2009; Ezzo, 2013). In the context of this study, the results refuted the aforementioned propositions as the incapacity of graduates to apply the knowledge learnt in university affected their self-confidence and their perceptions of the relevance of tertiary studies. This was a perspective shared by both the graduate participants and training and development managers.

Research by Griesel and Parker (2009) which specifically evaluated strategies which could bridge the communication gaps between tertiary institutions and employers, points out that inconsistencies in employers' unmet expectations of graduates is fuelled by the lack of consensus between universities and organisations, as well as misconceptions of one another's

roles and responsibilities. Lie et al (2009) also highlighted that the literacies which employers expect graduates to have obtained from tertiary education and therefore upon entering organisations, should not require an investment from the organisations' resources. In relation to this study, this shows that communication and collaborative relationships are necessary to narrow the skills gap of graduates in the workplace.

On the other hand, research supports that employers and graduates' managers have expectations that during the school to work transitioning, graduates could show deficiencies in skills for which the managers have the responsibility to impart and grow (Butler, 2003; Lowden et al., 2011). As such, to account for the differences of knowledge and skills attained in tertiary level education versus the requirements of the dynamic workplace, training and development managers highlighted the need for preparedness to hone the skills of graduates that are necessary for successful integration and workplace transitioning.

The theme of graduate attributes not only encompassed the competencies and knowledge graduates had to offer to employers, the personal characteristics which influence adaptation in the workplace were considered. Participants identified undesired graduate attributes which were detrimental to the transition process, these were; entitlement, arrogant ambition and perceived lack of emotional intelligence. Overwhelming responses highlighted that graduates had the tendency of having the notion that they should be entitled to benefits without having proven their worth in the workplace. They tended to carry themselves with a sense of entitlement in the early years of their organisational transition. Particularly, they had the misconception that completing tertiary education and acquiring credentials enabled them to high compensation and benefits, respectable organisational titles, as well as status and recognition. Previous research showed that perceptions of graduates in the workplace are often unfavourable owing to the self-entitled attitudes managers experience from graduates (Dittman, 2005; Taylor & Keeting, 2010). As individuals who were tasked with orientating

the graduates upon entering the organisation and throughout the first to second year of integration, training and development managers were appropriately situated to witness the gaps between the graduates' characteristics and the employers' preferred qualities.

Espinoza (2012) highlighted that graduates were surprisingly aware of their behaviour and that others' perceptions of them were of entitlement, however their strong desires for attaining success, hindered their ability to make good impressions on colleagues in the workplace. This was also fuelled by the perceived arrogant ambition which entailed the unrealistic expectations of graduates to enter the workforce and progress at exceptional rates without due consideration of the efforts required. Espinoza's research supported the findings that participants from both groups were aware that onus was on graduates to be cognisant of these attributes in order to manage their own expectations and work collaboratively with employers to successfully adapt into the workplace.

Also, graduates tended to desire exceeding the accomplishments of what had taken others many years to attain and have a fast-tracked career upon entering the workforce, for instance being appointed as managers within a year of tenure. Despite the eagerness to learn and show of initiative, graduates seemed to want to skip necessary stages to acquire the skills and expertise which lead to individual and organisational success. Findings were supported by research conducted by van der Walt and du Plessis (2010) that the negative attitudes by graduates to employers hindered their integration into organisations which in the broader sense contributed to the advanced unemployment rate of graduates. Training and development managers observed a lack of patience from graduates to engage with tasks they believed to be menial. Graduates reported high expectations to experience the glamour of the working environment rather than to gradually learn the finer details of their roles. Consequently, this led to an increased disinterest and conclusions made regarding the unsuitability of work environments to meet the graduates' expectations and standards.

Explicated in research concerned with high rates of new employee turnover, this contributed to the tendency to exit the department and at times the organisation completely (Holton and Russel, 1999; Salopek, 2006; van Zyl, 2011).

The training and development managers placed emphasis on emotional intelligence as an essential quality graduates require firstly, to acclimatize to the working environment which is substantially different to the university setting and secondly, to be able to use their judgement to evaluate situations in the workplace and appropriately respond. Emphasis was places specifically on the ability of graduates to integrate into the culturally diverse environment of organisations situated in South Africa and be able to appreciate others' personalities and different backgrounds. Consistent with findings in this research that the political climate of a society has the potential to influence adaptation in the workplace, Pulakos et al. (2000) placed emphasis on the notion that cultural adaptability in the workplace transcends learning how to interact with a new environment and others of different cultural backgrounds in the workplace, but also accepting the rules, norms and structures required to operate within it. This is supported in the research of business graduates' emotional intelligence in the workplace, in which Tucker et al. (2010) found that emphasis on emotional intelligence, rather than IQ presented graduates with the opportunity to integrate into highly diversified working environments.

Although graduates were found to be generally naïve, a perceived lack of emotional intelligence impeded their ability to accept the realities of the workplace and cope with demands and employers' high expectations. Participants from both groups reported difficulty of graduates to establish and maintain professional and amicable relationships with colleagues, even in times of disagreement. In determining the characteristics of generational cohorts, Espinoza's (2012) research found that emotional intelligence was linked to chronological age and lack of work experience. Furthermore, a critical view of emotional

intelligence in the workplace by Zeidner et al. (2004) supports the findings that graduates' youth and lack of experience impacted on their ability to manage workplace dynamics effectively. Training and development managers encountered, although not in all cases, higher emotional intelligence from graduates who had work experience and were older than the typically mid-twenties millennial.

Organisational attributes play a significant role in both aiding and hindering graduate adaptation. Systems and processes implemented in the organisation provided the context of the training and development managers' perspectives in their role to assist graduates in the transition phase. An ecological perspective of the organisation demonstrates where the drawbacks lay and the strategies employers may develop to overcome inconsistencies in the systems and processes meant to aid graduates to adapt into the workplace. Literature on socioecological and symbiotic models indicate that there are dynamic interdependencies between the reactions of individuals and the environmental factors and occurrences with which they interact (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, 1994, Scumate and O'Connor, 2010, Thoms et al., 2013). As graduates' shift from the tertiary education environment requires them to engage with increasingly complex tasks, relationships and organisational, systems, the nature of their development is determined by the dynamic forces of the workplace environment.

Training and development managers, having served substantial tenure in organisations, were well situated to provide in-depth information about the formal and informal structures implemented in the organisation for the purpose of graduate transition; three of the five training and development managers reported a lack of structured induction programmes, which in their view hindered graduate adaptation in the school to work transition phase. This supports the point raised by Klein and Weaver (2000) who demonstrated that organisational-level learning through induction and training programs is essential for the socialisation of new hires, more especially when there is complete

unfamiliarity with the working environment. Similarly, research on the impact of induction programs on high retention risk employees found that the process of induction allows for a crucial exchange of knowledge between inexperienced employees and seasoned professionals and the opportunity to establish mentorship relationships (Conway, 2006, Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Without the induction process, graduates and training and development managers were of the view that adaptation and integration became hampered, which resulted in graduates being overwhelmed and unsupported. Specifically, not having a formally structured approach to orientating graduates in the workplace, results in a lack of clarity on how to ensure that graduates are equipped optimally (Quinn, 1994).

From the participants' perspectives, this then led to the perceptions that the organisations' cultures where those in which employers were not concerned about succession planning, implementation of mentoring and coaching programs, development of career paths, all of which were perceived to aid graduate adaptation in the workplace and ensure successful retention. Participants were of the view that these organisational processes were of last priority to employers and this resulted in graduates' urge to seek opportunities elsewhere. This is especially common in organisations which were oriented toward new employee development and were more concerned with target and bottom line achievements (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007). Furthermore, that outcome based managerial styles resulted in graduates feeling like they were thrown in the 'deep-end' and not aided by managers toward achieving competence. Literature supporting this find suggests that mentorship, supportive and communicative managerial styles increase subordinate performance (Eisenberger et al., 1990; Fizel & D'Itri, 1997; Smith and Pilling, 2007). Although some of the organisations had detailed graduate programmes, in which courses on soft skills, emotional awareness, professional etiquette and presentation skills amongst others were provided for graduates, training and development managers and graduates likewise were

of the view that these did not translate to the day-to-day requirements of the role. Hence inadequate organisational attributes in terms of the ineffective or lack of systems, processes and supportive approaches, led to substantial adaptation challenges and hampered transitioning for graduates in conglomerate organisations.

Limitations of the study

Although evidence has been provided about the challenges faced by recent graduates in the workplace, there were limitations and critiques of the study which should be considered. The graduate participants were employed for a period between one and two years, which could have influenced the precision of their responses, as they were not embedded in the organisation for a period sufficient enough to form accurate opinions. Although the sample size of twenty four participants, nineteen graduates and five training and development managers, was sufficient for a qualitative approach, a study with a larger sample size and using a multi-method research approach may yield findings which could be generalisable to a larger population of contemporary graduates. A larger study is recommended in which the number of training and development managers is increased so that adaptation challenges can be viewed, compared and contrasted equally from the managers' and graduates' perspectives.

The use of interviews yielded comprehensive data and elicited participants' meaningful experiences, however, participants could have responded in ways which they believed were acceptable and presented them in the best possible light, of which social desirability is a limitation to self-report data. Graduates' self-reported experiences may also not be an accurate reflection of the actual occurrences in the organisation. The graduates had been working in the organisations for a short period of time so their views and experiences could be skewed.

The study focused specifically on graduates who had attained university qualifications of a three-year degree or and higher degrees; the challenges experienced by graduates from Further Education and Training (FET) colleges, Technical Institutions and other tertiary institutes may be different to the challenges reported by the participants in this study. Also, unemployed graduates were not included in the study, the challenges they experience may differ from those experienced by the graduates employed and transitioning into the workplace.

Implications of the study

Taking into the account the recognised contributions of recent graduates in the workforce, there are multiple practical implications to be considered.

Firstly, the cognisance of the challenges faced by recent graduates in the workplace is essential for numerous stakeholders to meet their role specific objectives and these include; tertiary institutions, employers, graduate career managers and career counsellors, training and development managers, line managers and/or supervisors, hiring managers and talent acquisition specialists as well as custodians of organisational policy development. The extent to which graduates adapt successfully into the conglomerate workplace determines the challenges and strategies of the stakeholders aforementioned, as graduate employees undergoing the school to work transition phase have the potential to fulfil leadership roles and continue organisational effectiveness.

Secondly, in order to for organisations to retain recent graduates and avoid incurring costs without return on investment, graduates' adaptation challenges need to be monitored closely as failure to address challenges timeously leads to high rates of graduate turnover and early exit from organisations. Employers' perceptions of graduates being an investment risk for recruitment and especially training, is primarily owing to the unawareness of the factors

which affect unsuccessful adaptation. Employers have the potential to lose monetary investments in hiring processes, training and development, graduates' remunerations and benefits, as well as the costs of replacement employees upon early exits. Time and human resource costs are also incurred in the 'revolving door' tendency of the graduates whose adaptation and integration into the workplace was too hampered to remain in the organisations.

Thirdly, to alleviate graduates' challenges, employers should focus on supportive and attentive managerial styles and guide graduates toward desired outcomes; this will prove to be more effective rather than continue with the prevalent authoritative and draconian approach. By building rapport and interacting with graduates in ways which ameliorate their involvement and contributions in the organisation, graduates are less likely to seek opportunities perceived to be better suited for their offerings in terms of skills, knowledge and attributes.

Lastly, generational integration is essential for graduates to effectively interact with have the opportunity to establish relationships of trust and mutual understanding with cohorts of different generations, particularly for the transfer of knowledge and expertise of Baby Boomers prior to their retirement. Synthesis from this perspective also provides the opportunity for graduates to adapt easier by building strong networks with experienced professionals who are well positioned to provide mentorship and industry specific insights. The reception of graduates by their predecessors would also allow for room to question assumptions and traditional approaches, thereby accommodating the unconventional and innovative approaches of recent graduates and creating an environment where there is openness to change. As this cannot be divorced from the culture of technological advancement, by so doing organisational effectiveness and performance may be enhanced.

Recommendations for future research

Considering the importance of the necessity for tertiary institutions to collaborate with employers regarding the knowledge, skills and attributes required to fulfil the needs of the labour market and to aid graduate adaptation, it is recommended that future research should focus on governmental processes to regulate this relationship. As it has been identified that combined efforts aid graduate adaptation into the workplace, regulatory processes and procedures would ensure that communication lines and efforts are consistent.

More research on the coping mechanisms graduates use to acclimatise to the dynamic work environment is necessary to continue the development strategies graduates and managers may use to overcome the challenges. Also, additional insight on the desired graduate attributes is important to elucidate the qualities which make graduates attractive to employers and aid with adjusting to the work environment. Lastly, of the nineteen graduates in this study, twelve mentioned that a flattened organisational structure as compared to the traditional hierarchical model, aided their transition as they had more access to individuals in the organisations who could aid them in ways their direct managers couldn't. This was particularly helpful as graduates, who predominantly belong to the millennial generation, have difficulty adjusting to highly controlled and authoritarian environments.

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study was to investigate the adaptation challenges of recent graduates in multinational organisations in South Africa. The perspectives of graduates and training and development managers were explored for a comprehensive view of the factors which facilitate or impede graduates' successful transition into the working environment within the first two years of employment. The effect of the shift from the tertiary education environment to the dynamic and competitive setting of organisations in South Africa on graduates was

considered in relation to stakeholder collaborative efforts. The study found that adaptation challenges were in part created and then fuelled by the lack of communication between tertiary institutions and employers. Insufficient collaborations subsequently impacted on employers' negative reactions to graduates and their offerings. Results showed that owing to the misalignment of and lack of clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities of tertiary institutions and employers in equipping graduates with the skills required in the labour market, graduates experienced the school to work transition as daunting, ambiguous and frustrating.

It was found that negative experiences of adaptation in the workplace within the first two years of employment resulted in the graduates' urge to make early exits from organisations of their first-entry. Consequently, unsuccessful retention of graduates caused huge losses for employers in terms of recruitment and training costs, human resources and time spent on replacing employees. This all translates to a missed opportunity for return on investment on the costs incurred by employers. Hence, in addition to the perspectives of recent graduates, obtaining the views of training and development managers was important as the professionals well positioned to give insight into the factors which could be avoided to ensure successful graduate adaptation.

Emergent themes established that generational gap differences, employer and tertiary institution insufficient collaboration, organisational attributes and graduates attributes as the main factors which contributed to adaptation challenges in the workplace. These findings were supported by literature. Subthemes which emerged from organisational and graduate attributes were discussed. This study found that factors which impede or facilitate graduates' capacity to adapt and transition successfully in organisations, were influenced by multiple stakeholders. Recommendations were outlined for future research, which emphasised a framework to regulate stakeholders' active participations with graduates' workplace

adaptation. Implications for the study highlighted the practical benefit for career counsellors, hiring managers, talent acquisition specialists, policymakers, higher education and the South African labour market as a whole to investigate the adaptation challenges of new generation workers.

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Appendices



- **Appendix A-** Permission for Access letter
- **Appendix B-** Participant information sheet
- **Appendix C**- Participant consent for participating
- **Appendix D-** Participant consent for being interviewed
- **Appendix E-** Participant consent forms for audio-recording and transcription
- **Appendix F-** Demographic Questionnaire
- **Appendix G-** Interview Schedule for graduates
- **Appendix H-** Interview Schedule for training and development managers
- **Appendix I-** Ethics Clearance Certificate

Appendix A- Permission for Access Letter

Psychology
School of Human & Community Development

University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050

Tel: (011) 717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

Good day

My name is Thato Valencia Mmatli and I am a Master students studying towards a degree in Industrial/Organisational Psychology. I am conducting research on adaptation challenges experienced by contemporary graduates in multinational organisations. In particular, I am interested in understanding the graduate and organisational attributes which facilitate or impede graduates' successful integration and adaptation into the world of work. I request permission to carry out the study in your offices, making use of responses from training managers and graduates interested participating in the study.

Participation in this research will involve employees being interviewed for approximately one hour. The interviews will be semi-structured and will allow participants to share their views on issues such as organisational expectations of graduates, systems in place which aid graduate adaptation, as well as graduates' own experiences and challenges throughout the transition and integration process in to the world of work. Please note that participation will be completely voluntary and will not advantage or disadvantage employees in any way if they choose to participate in the study.

No identifying information, such as employees' names or identity numbers, will be requested. Employees will therefore remain anonymous and be allocated a pseudonym. Participants will be given adequate information about the research objectives, various consent forms and any subsequent questions prior to the interviews. All consent forms specify confidentiality and collected data will be analysed by only the researcher and supervisor.

If employees choose to participate in the study, they will be asked to take part in the interview in their free time outside of working hour parameters. Interviews will be arranged at a suitable location and time most convenient to the participants and feedback in the form of a summary of results will be made available to participants upon request.

Furthermore, there are no particular risks or benefits involved in this research and should participants find themselves distressed, I have included at the end of this appendix three free counseling services available for their use.

Should you grant permission for the study to be conducted in your organisation and for a volunteer sample to be approached, it would be appreciated. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor at the contact details provided below.

Kind Regards

Thato Valencia Mmatli, Tel: 0725508894/ thatovalencia8@gmail.com
Dr. Calvin Gwandure, Tel: 011-717-4519/ calvin.gwandure@wits.ac.za

Free counseling services:

Life-Line Johannesburg: (011) 728- 1347

Emtongeni Center at Wits University: (011) 717-4513

South African Depression and Anxiety Group: (011) 262-6396

Signed_____ Date_____

Signed_____ Date_____

Appendix B- Participant Information Sheet

Psychology
School of Human & Community Development

University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050

Tel: (011) 717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

Good day

My name is Thato Valencia Mmatli and I am an Industrial/Organisational Master student at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am currently doing research based on adaptation challenges faced by contemporary graduates in a South African multinational organization.

Specifically, the aim of my research is to better understand the views and experiences of graduates who have been employed within a period of one to two years regarding the ways in which they have transitioned from theoretical understanding to practical application. The study is concerned with gaining an understanding of both the graduate and organisational attributes which aid or impede the adaptation process for recently appointed graduates. In the quest to fulfill these aims I request to interview you regarding your own experiences, expectations and challenges in the world of work. The interview will last approximately one hour and will take place at a suitable location and a time that is most convenient for you.

I assure you confidentiality and anonymity, that is, your real name will not be included in the study unless you wish it to be included. Should you wish to withdraw from the study, there will be no consequence whatsoever for you. Furthermore, there are no particular risks or benefits involved in participating in this research, but should you do find yourself distressed, I have included at the end of this appendix, three free counseling services available for your use.

Please note that my supervisor and I will be the only people to listen to the recordings of the interview and will keep the recordings in a place that we alone will have access to; once the

interview has been transcribed the tape recordings will be destroyed. Further, should you like a summary of the research results then I am happy to send you a copy. When the research concludes, I will write up a report that will be available at the library at Wits University and I may also publish the report in journal articles.

If you have any questions regarding the project or wish to discuss the research before you consent to participate, please feel free to contact either me or my supervisor at the telephone numbers or e-mail addresses provided below.

Thank you and kindest regards.

Miss Thato Valencia Mmatli, Tel: 0725508894/ thatovalencia8@gmail.com

Dr. Calvin Gwandure, Tel: 011-717-4519/ calvin.gwandure@wits.ac.za

Free counseling services:

Life-Line Johannesburg: (011) 728- 1347

Emtongeni Center at Wits University: (011) 717-4513

South African Depression and Anxiety Group: (011) 262-6396

Signed_____ Date_____

Signed_____ Date_____

Appendix C- Consent to Participate

Psychology
School of Human & Community Development

University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050

Tel: (011) 717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

I, _____, the undersigned have read the participant information sheet about the study and consent to participate in the research study. In so doing, I understand that:

a. My participation in the study is completely voluntary.

b. I may choose to withdraw from the study at any time by informing the researcher of this study or her supervisor.

c. Any information that I divulge will be anonymous unless I stipulate otherwise.

d. The data gathered from my participation will be included in a final research report.

Signed: _____ **Date: _____**

Appendix D- Consent to be interviewed

Psychology
School of Human & Community Development

University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050

Tel: (011) 717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

I, _____, the undersigned consent to being interviewed by Thato Mmatli for her study and I understand that:

a. Participation in this interview is voluntary.

b. I may refuse to answer any questions I would prefer not to.

c. I may withdraw from the study at any time.

d. My responses will remain confidential and anonymous to protect my identity unless I request otherwise.

e. Please cross out the incorrect statement:

   I wish to remain anonymous.

   I do not wish to remain anonymous.

f. There are no risks or benefits associated with being involved in the study.

g. Direct quotations from my interview will be used in the researcher's report, but will be sanitized so that it will not be traceable to any participant.

Signed _____ **Date** _____

Appendix E- Consent for Recording and Transcription of Interview

Psychology
School of Human & Community Development

University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050

Tel: (011) 717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

I, _____, the undersigned having read and signed the participation information sheet of the study, have consented to my interview with Thato Mmatli for her study and grant permission for the interview to be recorded and transcribed. I understand that

a. The data will be processed by the researcher and her supervisor.

b. My identity will be protected and no identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report unless I request otherwise.

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix F- Demographic Questionnaire

Psychology
School of Human & Community Development

University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050

Tel: (011) 717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

This demographic questionnaire is to capture information about you to create a general participant profile. Please indicate your response by providing a cross (X)

1. **Please specify your age: ___**

2. **Please indicate your gender:**

   ☐ Male ☐ Female

3. **Please indicate your race:**

   ☐ Black ☐ Coloured ☐ White

   ☐ Indian ☐ Asian ☐ Other, please specify _____

4. **Please indicate your marital status**

   ☐ Married ☐ Widowed ☐ Divorced

   ☐ Separated ☐ Cohabiting ☐ Single

5. **Please indicate your level of education**

   ☐ Undergraduate Degree ☐ Honours Degree ☐ Master Degree

   University Attended_____

6. **What kind of area were you raised in?**

   ☐ Rural ☐ Small Town ☐ Suburban ☐ Urban

7. **Please indicate your job industry i.e. marketing, insurance, banking** _____

Appendix G- Interview Schedule - Graduates

Psychology
School of Human & Community Development

University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050

Tel: (011) 717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

1. How would you describe your role as a graduate within the organization?
2. What expectations did you have about your role prior to being employed?
3. Have your expectations been met? In what ways have they or have they not been met?
4. What has prepared you for your role?
5. What do you propose would have prepared you more?
6. What kind of emotions would you associate with your adaptation to the organization and why?
7. What do you view as having aided you in your adaptation process?
8. What do you view as having hindered you in your adaptation process?
9. What have you found to be most challenging with integrating into the organisation?
10. In what ways have you learned to overcome these challenges?
11. How has the organisation aided you with overcoming these challenges?
12. What could additionally or differently be done to alleviate these challenges?

Appendix H- Interview Schedule - Training and Development Managers

Psychology
School of Human & Community Development

University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050

Tel: (011) 717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

1. What is your role as a graduate manager?
2. What expectations does the organization and you as a manager have of graduates?
3. In what ways have your expectations been met and how have they not been met?
4. What has contributed to or is responsible for unmet expectations?
5. From an organisational point of view, what do you propose could best prepare graduates prior to their entry into the world of work?
6. What characteristics make graduates more and least successful to flourish in the workplace?
7. How have graduates adapted to the workplace?
8. Describe what the role of the organization is in the successful adaptation of graduates
9. What formal and informal systems exist within the organization which contribute to or assist graduate adaptation?
10. In addition to the above, what has aided and/ or hindered graduate adaptation process?
11. What impact does unsuccessful graduate adaptation have on the organization?
12. What could be done additionally to ensure successful adaptation in the future?