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Adaption challenges faced by recent graduates in South African multinational organisations

Mmatli, Thato Valencia

2015-08-19
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/18272

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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.