THE ROLE OF WORK INTEGRATED e-LEARNING IN ENHANCING THE EMPLOYABILITY OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT GRADUATES IN SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES.

BY

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DECLARATION

I Deborah Madge Madimabe declare that the dissertation for Masters in commerce and administration titled 'The role of work- integrated e-learning in enhancing the employability of Human Resource Management graduates in South African universities' has not previously been submitted by me for the degree at this or any other institutions. I further declare that this is my own work and that all material used herein is acknowledged.

DM Madimabe

Signature

17 APRIL 2015

Date:

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Abstract

Background and Aim:

Work-integrated e-Learning has become an important topic of discussion in South African Higher Learning Institutions. With the rapid unemployment rate, graduate skills development is needed to close the gap of unemployment. Higher Education Institutions are faced with the responsibility of producing quality students with relevant knowledge on current affairs and talented individuals. For the employers, it has become more difficult to attract and retain highly qualified, skilled and talented employees. As a result there is a great need for higher education institutions (HEIs) to develop approaches to address the issue of graduate employability skills. The main aim of this study is to investigate the role which eWIL plays in enhancing graduate employability of graduates in South African Universities.

Method:

A qualitative research approach was followed with data collected from Academics in Higher Educational Institutions (N=4) and part-time Graduates studying through HEI (N=3). A thematic analysis was used to analyse the collected data.

Results:

The research findings indicated that graduate employability is significantly dependent on the soft and technical skills required in the workplace and that the university does provide some of the skills as part of its eWIL programmes. The following specific results were obtained:

- The results showed that in general all the participants perceived that the higher education institutions are responsible for enhancing graduate employability.

- The findings indicated that the skills which graduate perceive to be the most important are similar to those of academics especially skills such as computer skills, communication, interpersonal skill and the ability to solve problems.

- The findings reflected a significant gap between current soft skills training and the desirable soft skills

- Based on the study findings, the graduates agreed that they are well equipped with regards to one common technical skill (computer literacy) which they gained throughout their studies as open and distance learners.

- The respondent's results from chapter 5 indicated that there is a great need for HEIs to provide a curriculum relevant to Human Resource Management that will help graduates to be prepared for the workplace

- Based on the study findings from chapter 5, the results showed a high need for eWIL programme to be part of the undergraduate student's curriculum.

Practice Relevance:

Studies in the related field of graduate employability skills have been previously conducted by different researchers globally. Most studies have been done on Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) and e-Learning. There are however limited studies which have been done on both concepts. Since the study focuses on open and distant learners, eWIL is more appropriate method of leaning due to the lack of face-to-face communication. The study attempts to identify if Higher Education Institutions provide graduates with the necessary soft and technical skills required to enhance their employability and the role which eWIL plays. This study adds to the literature where the benefits of conducting it can be knowledgeable by students, HEIs, employers and the country in general through determining what skills are required for being employable.

Keywords:

- Work-Integrated Learning
- E-Learning
- Work-Integrated e-Learning
- Graduate employability
- Soft skills and Hard or technical skills

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

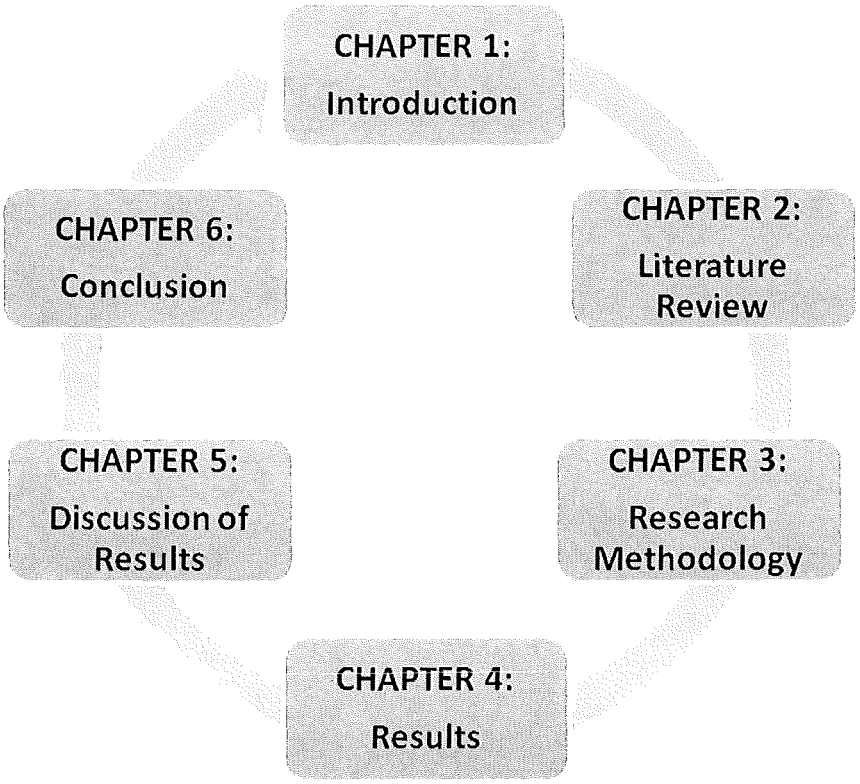


Figure 1-1: Chapter 1 in Context

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves as a basis for the entire research project on the role of work-integrated e-learning programmes and how it enhances graduate employability in the South African context. It is investigative in nature and focuses on determining whether South African graduates possess the desired workplace skills that can enhance their employability. A problem statement is provided which gives a brief discussion on graduate workplace skills and the role of universities and what can be done to address the problem. This is followed by the research questions which led to the development of the research objectives. The expected contribution of the study is also given which highlights the benefits which the study. The chapter further offers an overview of the research design, ethical considerations and the layout of the whole research project.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Lwoga (2012), states that going to university is about more than just a degree. It has the potential to be life changing. Knowledge is today a critical element for South Africa to prosper and compete with more developed countries. Priority is therefore placed on the quality and application of education. This education has to ensure that graduates have the required knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that industries need.

Since 1990, South African universities have been confronted with various changes both in their external and internal environments. They have been forced to respond to developing challenges such as the rapid continual developments in Information and Communication Technology (ICT). With this change in technology, universities offering Open and Distance Learning (ODL) are faced with a shift in learner expectations with regards to Work Integrated eLearning (eWIL) programmes in enhancing the employability of students and devise new educational and training models which can enhance access to employment for graduates (Lwago, 2012).

Work-integrated learning (WIL) programs are fast becoming popular with not only students, but with government, employers, and universities. A major benefit of a WIL program is the increased employability of students. This type of learning matches well with the present trend whereby students have a higher expectation from their investment in education (Ashworth & Saxton, 1992).

1.2.1 Work Integrated Learning

According to Ashworth and Saxton (1992), Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is a powerful method of learning. Work integrated learning is a strategy applied in learning institutions which integrates the strictness of an accredited academic program with periods of supervised and relevant experience in the workplace. WIL was first introduced 113 years ago, and since then work integrated learning programs have received an outstanding benefit to students in many universities across the world.

Work integrated learning provides a context of learning for graduates. It is also evident that through WIL programs, students are able to engage in different forms of learning even after their first work placement. This is due to the fact that the WIL program educates students and informs them in understanding the workplace and their future role in it. The students are able to appreciate the critical importance of generic skills such as teamwork and communication (Ashworth & Saxton, 1992).

Work integrated learning programmes in university courses are nothing new in South African education. Traditionally, these programmes have been expected in vocationally oriented qualifications that lead to professional accreditation and generally are regarded as an employable skill (Orrell, Cooper & Jones, 1999).Work placements are supported by employers who are recruiting, valued by students who wish to be work ready and commenced by academics who want students to experience theory in practice. As a result, many attempts have been made by universities to increase the dominance of work placements as either a requirement or as electives in more generalist programmes. For WIL to succeed, effective programmes implemented by universities require access to quality learning environments, preparation and support for supervisory staff and establishment of appropriate risk management to enhance the employability of graduates (Orrell, Cooper & Jones, 1999).

The current interest in WIL in higher education is closely related to governments' and industries' concern with lifting workplace participation and productivity, addressing skills and labour shortages and keeping pace with increasing demand and intensifying international competition (McLennan & Keating, 2008). South Africa is currently facing major labour and skills shortages but has near to full employment with record low unemployment. In addition, an aging workforce means that there is an increasing need to keep the skills of employees current and relevant while they continue working. Past research has indicated that from the last decade concerns have been raised about the work-readiness of graduates not in terms of graduates lack of disciplinary knowledge but in terms of their generic employability skills (McLennan & Keating, 2008).

1.2.2 E-learning

Generally defined, e-learning can be described as an on-line learning that takes place in a formal context with the usage of a range of multimedia technologies. E-learning is an open system. This means that the power of the internet, the teaching and learning process is exposed to unfathomable and profound amounts of information. This type of learning is currently a tremendously powerful attraction to both teachers and learners. E-learning is not only another technology or add-on that will be gently integrated or ultimately rejected but e-learning represents a very different category and mode of communication (Honarmand, 2006).

E-learning is a structured learning which presents many opportunities mediated through the use of digital resources (usually combinations of text, audio and visual or video files) and with the aid of software applications. E-learning may be offered on-line and synchronously (e.g. real-time conference), on-line and asynchronously (e.g. text-based discussion forum) or off-line (e.g. interactive CD/DVD/flash drive). E-learning can be employed in both contact and distance programs (Department of Higher Education and Training in South Africa, 2012).

E-learning is become popular in terms of making open and distance learning a success (Logan, 2001). It has contributed to the better understanding of study materials and at the same time understanding the use of the technology from an educational perspective. The value of e-learning however has to be implemented in the correct manner in order to be successful and enable learners, faster access to information to facilitate communication and thinking and thereby construct meaning and knowledge in open and distance learning (Singh & Singh, 2008).

In the growth and experimentation phase of e-learning in the 1990s, universities, public and corporate institutions were encouraged by the growing technology and new learning systems (McLennan & Keating, 2008).This growth then lead the institutions to base their e-learning initiatives on e-learning models comprising three elements namely: service to the customer (learner), content and technology. The focus is mainly on the use of technology to create

appropriate and convenient virtual learning environments for learners to access anywhere, any time (McLennan & Keating, 2008).

Ehlers (2009), describes e-learning as having the following characteristics:

- It is the learning which takes place at anytime and anywhere, not only in the classroom.
- Learners have the ability take on the role of being organizers. Instructors serve as both the distributors of educational content and facilitators of the learning process.
- Learning is a lifelong process and thus it is not merely linked to educational institutions.
- Learning takes place in communities of learning or communities of practice. Learners participate in formal as well as informal communities.
- Learning is informal and non-formal and also takes place at home, in the workplace and during leisure time. Therefore learning and is no longer cantered on teachers or institutions.

Many researchers are of the opinion that e-learning is as good as; if not better than, traditional instructor-led methods such as having the lecturer standing in front of the students and delivering to demonstrated learning (Lwoga, 2012). Furthermore researchers have shown that e-learning can result in significant cost saving benefits for those students who cannot afford to be full-time students. A survey of the e-learning experiences of students was conducted in two universities in Ghana. The results revealed that e-learning programs are more effective in comparison to other methods of learning (Adanu et al., 2010).

The results also indicated that prior learning experiences, conceptions of learning, and study approaches reinforce the quality of the learner's learning outcomes. E-learning can thus improve teaching and learning practices in higher education if appropriately used, taking into consideration the pedagogical issues (Lwoga, 2012).

1.2.3 Open and Distance Learning (ODL) in South Africa

With regards to the South African education,it is clear that ODL is a developing mode of delivery of education which is motivated by the dual imperatives of technologies and increased access. Open and distance learning is a multi- dimensional concept which is used to bridge the time, geographical, economic, social, educational and communication distance between academics and institution, students and academics, students and courseware, and student and peers (University of South Africa, 2008).

When the new democratic government came into power in 1994, the government signaled the beginning of important policy changes in education and emphasis was made on open distance education. Distance education was then identified as being a key instrument for facilitating access, participation and redress, especially in higher education (Glennie, 2007).

The term distance learning has been applied interchangeably by many researchers. It can be defined as is a set of teaching and learning strategies (or educational methods) used to overcome as a separation between educators and students. (Perraton, 1988). However, distance learning is not a single mode of delivery but it is a collection of methods for the provision of structured learning. It eliminates the need for students to learn the curriculum by attending classes frequently and for long periods. Rather, distance learning aims to create a quality learning environment using an appropriate combination of different media, tutorial support, peer group discussion, and practical sessions (Department of Higher Education and Training in South Africa, 2012).

Reid (2010), defines distance learning as courses which can be done at home for those students working from home. This type of learning has little or no face-to- face contact with teachers and material is primarily provided by means of e-mails, CDs, television, or correspondence materials printed and sent by post. With distance learning, courses are offered entirely or partly online making use of a variety of technological elements.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Open distance learning is not a new concept. The term "open" is vague phrase which is used to describe the educational provision where the limitations on the learners are minimized and the decisions about learning are taken by the academics themselves. Open and distance learning captures the evolutionary changes to distance education provision shaped by technology and other related systems. Open distance learning strives to accomplish the same aims as traditional education while acknowledging the fact that students are not on a specified campus or location (Renau & Biljon, 2009).

According to Glennie (2007), distance education plays a significant role in South Africa, particularly in finding a university which offers programs designed for success. It affords millions of people access to a large and diverse student population, of both mature students and school leavers, whose education needs might otherwise go unmet.

The most significant distance education provision in South Africa has been in the public higher education institutions and all these institutions. The key provider of distance learning in South Africa is currently the University of South Africa (Unisa). Unisa was established in 1946 as the first dedicated correspondence university in the world. As a result of the combination over several years of the various dedicated distance teacher education institutions, and the merger in 2004 with Technikon Southern Africa, Unisa is now the only dedicated distance education public provider in higher education (Glennie, 2007).

From 1994, the former combined Ministry of Education encouraged the development of distance education and its related approaches to teaching and learning at universities. For decades, the provision of distance higher education programs has afforded access to education to students in South Africa. The creation of distance learning has therefore served the role of bringing higher education within the reach of students who would not otherwise have been able to study at this level (Department of Higher Education and Training in South Africa, 2012).

1.2.4 Employability

South Africa is currently faced with a high rate of unemployment. This is evident especially among the youth who have the necessary qualifications and yet no job (Holtzhausen & Du Toit, 2009). Universities therefore have the responsibility to improve the leaning programs offered to eliminate the high levels of unemployment among young graduates. Students want to ensure their degree and time at university will help set them up for a rewarding and fulfilling career in a rapidly changing world. Employability is a term in increasingly common use, especially in relation to students and graduates (Holtzhausen & Du Toit, 2009).

In the past, graduates only needed to complete Higher Education (HE) with a degree certificate and it was widely accepted that this certificate was enough for a graduate to start the job-hunting. However, in recent years the job market is changing and it is becoming increasingly competitive and has a knowledge-driven economy (Smith, 2003). Employability can also be described as a set of achievements, understandings and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations which benefit themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy (University Alliance, 2012).

According to the University Alliance (2012), one may then ask why it is important for universities to enhance employability of students. Employability matters for individuals in general. It is evident that there are rapid technological advances, shifts in consumer demand and demographic changes which are having a major impact on global labour markets. Therefore the ratio of the working people at graduate-level influences a nation's productivity, pattern of economic growth and the ability to meet the needs of organisations. Jobs in many industries are changing rapidly, affecting countries in different ways across the world. This trend is predicted to continue. Graduates need to be able to constantly adjust and build on their skills and knowledge which they acquire so as to be effective and prosper in a rapidly changing world (University Alliance, 2012).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

South Africa is facing a concern that current graduates who are studying through open and distance learning do not match the needs and expectations of employers in organizations. The employers require higher education institutions to develop technical and soft skills of graduates combined with personal skills and the knowledge which they should be able to apply to the world of work (Holtzhausen & Du Toit, 2009).

One of the main issues which employers point out is that universities are unable to identify the skills that truly prepare the individual to enter the labour market. The South African public sector has the opinion that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) do not prepare students enough for employment. University lecturers need to understand that they have the obligation and role to offer students sufficient knowledge and skills through appropriate open and distance and work integrated e-learning programs, which meet the requirements of employers. These programs also need to enable students to achieve their full potential (Holtzhausen & du Toit, 2009). Many higher educational institutions are therefore responsible for answering this challenge by developing educational programs which will enable graduates to be employable (Erasmus, 2007; Willis, 1993) and to develop globally competitive graduates (Lwoga, 2012). Educational institutions are as a result under intense pressure to prepare students with more than just the academic knowledge but also the skills to be employable (Singh & Singh, 2008).

It is evident that there is a rapid technological change and a shift in the market conditions. With this change, the higher education system is challenged with providing increased educational opportunities. Even though employability depends on several factors which make it complex to accurately define the interventions needed by universities, higher education institutions are looking for new ways and methods on how new technology can support open and distance learning for their existing students and for their potential new employers (Yorke, 2006).

The main problem is the fact that in distance learning, educators and students do not establish a face to face communication. As a result alternative media sources have to be adopted and implemented in order to provide knowledge (Debaj, 2011). Students in distance learning must therefore demonstrate that they have the necessary drive, resilience, and inter-cultural sensitivities, as well as the ability to identify and create opportunities for themselves, either within or outside organizations that will enable them to compete in the labor market (Watson, 2011).

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research question of the study is:

To what extent do Work Integrated e-Learning (eWIL) programmes enhance the employability of Human Resource Management (HRM) graduates?

Sub-research questions

- How can graduate employability be conceptualised?
- What are the most important graduate employability skills?
- How can work integrated learning be conceptualised?
- What are the challenges and benefits associated with the implementation of Work Integrated eLearning?
- To what extent do students and academics perceive that work-integrated e-learning programmes equip (HRM) graduates with the desirable graduate skills needed for the workplace?
- To what extent do students and academics view the need to have a work integrated e-learning component as part of open and distance learning in their undergraduate studies?

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Objectives are used in researches to gain familiarity with a phenomenon or to achieve new insights into it. The general objective of this study is to determine the extent to which (eWIL) programmes enhance the employability of Human Resource Management graduates.

The specific objectives of this research are:

- To conceptualise graduate employability.
- To determine the most important graduate employability skills.
- To conceptualise work integrated learning.
- To determine the challenges and benefits associated with the implementation of Work Integrated eLearning.
- To measure the extent to which students and academics perceive that work-integrated e-learning programmes equip (HRM) graduates with the desirable graduate skills needed for the workplace.
- To measure the extent to which students and academics view the need to have a work integrated e-learning component as part of open and distance learning in their undergraduate studies.

1.6 EXPECTED CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The contribution of the study will be to further examine the role of eWIL in open and distance learning in South African universities especially with the current technological changes. Universities will also be made aware of the role they have to play in producing students who meet the requirements of being able to be competitive in a technologically advanced market. The universities will be made aware of the fact that the programs which they offer through open and distance learning have to make students employable by enhancing their skills and knowledge. These programmes must address the wide range of skills required and it should contain a comprehensive set of resources.

This research is also expected to guide universities across South Africa on using WIL programmes and e-Learning to enhance employability of graduates. As a result, there will be a better understanding of the role of academic and industry supervisors in work integrated learning, the skills they require to perform their roles effectively and the type of training required to develop these skills.

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN

The next section of the Chapter focuses on the research design employed for the present study.

1.7.1 Research Approach

A research design is the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure. A research design in studies is used to structure the research to show how the major parts of the study and the methods of the study work together. This is done to address the research questions stated (Gummesson, 2002).

Research design is a work plan, which states the work that has to be completed to ensure that evidence is obtained and enables the researcher to answer the initial questions. The research design's advantage is that evidence obtained is relevant to the study and it assists to answer research questions, test the theory and evaluate the programme accurately (Gummesson, 2002). The main function of doing a research design is to ensure that all the evidence which is obtained enables the researcher to answer the initial questions of the study as unambiguously as possible.

For the purpose of this study, the primary interviews method will be used. The approach used will be qualitative technique.Qualitative interview technique which involves non- numerical, thematic statistical analysis contained in the data collected. When conducting a research, a structure is needed before data can be collected.

1.7.2 Research Method

1.7.2.1 Literature review

With regards to the research method, an empirical study will be conducted by following a qualitative approach. The literature review for the purpose of this study will focus mainly on the EWIL and open and distance learning. An overview will then be given on these concepts. Theories and models will be used to describe eWIL and open distance learning. These concepts will also be measured, investigated and determined. The following sources will be used for the purpose of the literature review:

Primary sources: this is the primary data whereby the researcher collects data by means of individual interviews and focus groups as a technique.

Secondary sources: secondary sources are data which are recorded by other scholars or researchers from the past. These scholars and researchers' data is published in the following:

- Journals
- Library catalogues
- Internet
- Newsletters
- Newspaper articles
- Conference reports
- Policies, acts and legislation

All the relevant sources will be further explored in Chapter two of the research. An analysis of past and previous views of different authors will be done.

1.7.2.2 Research Participants

The targeted population for this study was the Human Resources Management university graduates studying through open and distance learning and Academics of Higher Education Institutions in the Department of HR in South Africa. Because population is too large for

conducting a research in such a short period, a sample will be used. A sample is representative of the targeted population (Kitchenham & Pfleeger, 2002). The targeted sample for the purpose of this study consisted of three students and four academics from a South African Higher education institutions.

1.7.2.3. Data Collection Method

The data collection method used for this study is qualitative in nature. In qualitative research, data is collected by means of either observations, interviews and document reviews. The advantage of using this method is the fact that the data smaller and richer and it describes the phenomenon which the researcher is studying (Wiersma , 1995).

An interview method was used for this study to collect data. These interviews were done with the higher education institutions offering open and distance education through work integrated e-learning, graduates and academics. A set of relevant questions will be formulated so as to gather primary information on the relevant topic and this will be done by way of:

- Using a multifaceted approach and well-thought-out questions.
- Gathering the parts of the respondents in one place at once, giving oral instruction, and letting the respondent know that they have freedom to respond from a variety of perspectives.
- Encourage discussion and expression of different points of view.

1.7.2.4. Data Analyses

Data collection was done through a qualitative method. The collected data was then analysed and interpreted using the thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is easy and helpful instrument, which helps researchers to uncover and systematically analyse complex phenomena hidden in unstructured data such as text and multimedia. It also provides tools that allow the researcher to locate information relevant for findings in primary data material, in order to weigh and evaluate their importance, and find relations. Thematic analysis combines large volumes of information and keeps track of all notes, annotations, codes and memos in all fields that

require close study and analysis of primary material consisting of text, images, audio, video, and geo data (Lewins & Silver, 2007).

1.7.2.5. Ethical considerations

Research ethics involve requirements on daily work, the protection of dignity of subjects and the publication of the information in the research. It is considered unethical in every discipline for a researcher to collect information without the knowledge of the participants and their expressed willingness and also consent. Respondents are therefore made aware of the type of information needed, why the information is needed, what purpose it will serve and how they should participate in the study. The information gained from the distributed questionnaires will be treated with confidentiality. The researcher will state on the questionnaire that perception is voluntary (Dawson , 2002).

1.8 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

The definitions of key terms are presented in Table 1-1 below.

Table 1-1: Definition of Key Terms

Term	Definition
Employability	Employability is a synergic combination of an individual's personal qualities, skills and the understanding of a particular subject or field (Yorke 2001).
Graduate skills	Employability skills are those basic skills which are necessary for the graduate to be able to find employment and keeping that job. These skills are also refered to as key skills, core skills, life skills, essential skills, key competencies, generic skills, and 21st century skills, necessary skills, and transferable skills (DEST 2002a).
E-Learning	E-Learning can be defined as the use of internet or wireless

	technologies in order to deliver a broad range of training solutions. The learner is independent from the facilitator and the other learners (Rosenberg, 2001, p. 28).
eWIL	Work-integrated e-learning is a concept which merges theory with practice and acknowledges the intersection of explicit and tacit forms of knowing at both individual and collective levels. (Raelin, 1998, p. 280).
Open Distance Learning (ODL)	Open and Distance, Learning is learning which intends to meet the fundamentals of the individual student and to facilitate access to learning for disadvantaged groups (Bourn & Bootle, 2005).

1.9 CHAPTER DIVISION

The chapters in this dissertation are presented as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provides the structure of the research. It serves the purpose of introducing the role of eWIL in enhancing the employability of graduates in South African universities. This chapter also provided the motivation for the study by highlighting the research problem statement and research objectives. An indication of the expected contribution of the study was given discussing the benefits that will gained on the enhancement of graduate employability.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to outline literature review of all concepts and theoretical aspects of the individual concepts of the study. Under each concept, certain characteristics which make up the concepts will be discussed. The chapter ended with a summary of the literature. The following concepts were discussed with regards to this study:

- Graduate employability
- Soft and hard skills
- Work-integrated learning
- E-learning

Chapter 3: Research Method

This chapter provided a detailed discussion on the research methods and designs selected as the main framework through which the research questions of the study were answered. The chapter first looked at the research paradigm or the philosophy of the study. A description of inquiry was then discussed and a broad research design was then given. A discussion on sampling and population was given.

Chapter 4: Findings

In this chapter, the findings of the study presented and analysed are indicated by using the Thematic Analysis. The chapter begins by identifying the general themes which are important for the data analysis. The next phase of the chapter was to discuss the findings in relation to the research questions. The results were presented by using tables and quotes from the participants.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings

The discussion of the findings analysed are presented in this chapter. The discussions are based on the research results of the data analysis. The findings also show similarities in the responses of the participants. The discussions were based on the research questions stated in this chapter.

Chapter 6: Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations

Conclusions will be reached in this chapter based on the entire study. The discussion of the significance and limitations will be highlighted and recommendations and suggestions for future research areas will be made in this chapter.

1.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter has given a brief introduction to the concepts of open and distance learning, employability e-Learning and Work Integrated Learning (WIL) in higher education institutions. An indication is also given on the expectations of employers in having well equipped graduates with the necessary skills and knowledge to be employable. An outline of the study is also indicated and will guide the reader as to what to expect in this study.

The following chapter (chapter 2) will outline the literature review of concepts aligned to the study.

Chapter 2:LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

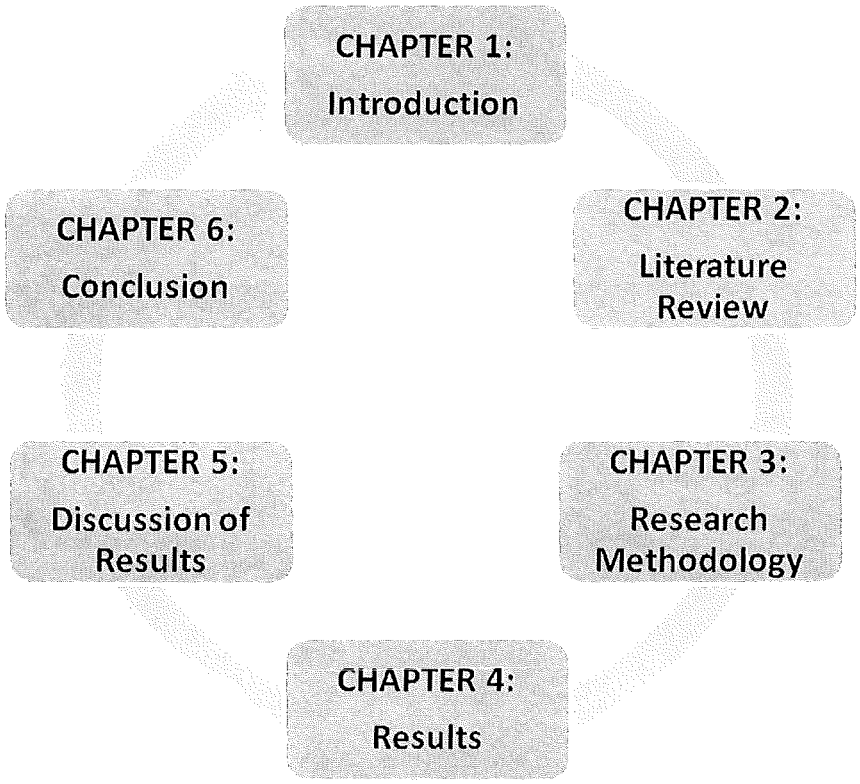


Figure 2-1: Chapter 2 in Context

This chapter presents a review of literature regarding the employability skills of graduates. A further exploration of concepts such as graduate employability, graduate employability in South Africa, work- integrated learning, e-learning, Open Distance Learning (ODL) soft skills, hard or technical skills and specific HR competencies will be discussed in detail.

2.2 GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY DEFINED

In this study, a graduate can be described as someone who holds a bachelor's or higher degree from a higher educational institution (university or former technikons).Those students with a non-degree, post-secondary certificates and/or diplomas, for the purpose of this study are not graduates. It should also be kept in mind that employability is different from employment. Employment refers to

having a job whilst employability is a term which refers to the qualities which a student needs in order to maintain employment and progress in the workforce (Lees, 2002).

According to Glover , Law and Youngman (2002), employability is the capacity and the ability of a graduate to enter both the national and international workforce. In order for this students to be employable, he or she needs to be capable of making priorities and be goal-setting oriented. The student also needs to be proactive in the management of change, have the necessary skills for self-advocacy and networking. These attributes are needed by the graduate in order to cope with the changing environment and maintain a constant learning ability to work in changing teams.

Employability is a learning process. It is important to look at a graduate's achievement during undergraduate studies and the student's potential to acquire a job. The concept employability is derived from complex learning. It is a concept of a wider range than those 'core' and 'key' skills that the workforce sees fit in a highly interdependent environment (Frederiksen & Vuksanovic, 2013).

Graduate employability is becoming a popular term. However Hillage and Pollard (1998, p. 3), argue that graduate employability is all about possessing the capacity to gain initial employment, maintain that employment and obtain any new employment if required. These authors futher state that for a graduate to be employable it all depentds on the following:

- Having the necessary assets in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes
- The manner in which these assets are used and deployed
- The manner in which the graduates presents the assets to potential employers
- The context which the graduate's work has to be done

Yorke (2001), suggests that employability is a difficult concept to define due to the fact that there is a need to distinguish the factors of a graduate obtaining a job and the factors which influence the

preparation for the workforce. Employability is a synergic combination of an individual's personal qualities, skills and the understanding of a particular subject or field.

According to Yorke and Knight (2001), there are two main concepts of employability. These are:

- The educational development relating to the ability of graduates to tackle 'graduate' jobs. These are the capabilities and competencies of a student.
- It is the ability to get a job

Yorke and Knight (2004), further adds that graduate employability not only considers the skills that a student possesses. It also considers having a deeper understanding of one or more subject discipline to the soft skills such as being able to work effectively with other employees. It is therefore important that universities should encompass the curriculum and the associated pedagogy needed for a specific subject or field of study.

The Higher Education Council (1992), defines graduate employability as the necessary skills, personal attributes and the values needed by all graduates in their different disciplines or a particular field of study. It is about representing the centre achievements of a higher learning institution as a process. South African higher institutions of learning are currently going through a great deal of pressure to enhance graduate employability. The offered curricula must contribute to the enhancement of the knowledge, skills and attributes that will enable graduates to perform successfully in the world of work.

2.3 GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

With the worlds' rapid growth in the economy, South Africa's human capital needs to be available along with physical capital. Higher Education Institutions (HEI) is currently faced with the issue of the employability requirements for their graduates especially those studying through open and distant learning. This is due to the fact that South Africa has a rapidly growing number of unemployed graduates and this issue always goes back to the effectiveness of higher education institutions in respect to providing the educational programmes which equip students with the

necessary knowledge, skills and abilities and experience which will enable them to become productive members of the workforce (Burger & von Fintel, 2006).

In the 21st century, on-campus systems of education are not always the option due to lack of infrastructural facilities and some constraints embodied in it. Distance and open learning (ODL) system therefore play an important role to make-up this gap. In addition, ODL allows more students from different backgrounds and environments to get a qualification. (Burger & von Fintel, 2006).

In 1994, South Africa went through a political transition and as a result it experienced a large increase in its unemployment rate (Burger & von Fintel, 2006). The open distance learning teaching context poses exceptional challenges and opportunities for refining students' graduateness. In open and distance learning context, the skills and attributes are the most crucial factors that constitute the graduateness of a university graduate. These skills are in most cases considered to be the most important outcome of university-level learning experiences (Coetzee & Potgieter, 2010).

With the end of the apartheid era, there has been a strong rise in unemployment rates among graduates. From 1995, graduate unemployment rates have risen abruptly and as a result, South Africa is now faced with graduate unemployment crisis. Currently there is an increasing reference made by the media on the high and rising graduate unemployment. This has therefore sparked public discussions and raised many questions and concerns about the functionality of the higher education system and the employability of its graduates (van Broekhuizen & van der Berg, 2013).

When talking about graduate employability in South Africa, it implies that apart from the student's degree-specific understanding and technical skills, the students are expected to display generic transferable Meta skills and personal traits or characteristics which are regarded as significant to the employability and work readiness of a student. ODL students tend to need more encouragement and motivation in order to embrace self-management activities and programmes such as eWIL. This will then enhance their skills needed in the workforce (Coetzee & Potgieter, 2010).

Universities are instrumental in the development of any country. It serves the purpose of offering skills to students and knowledge production. There is a great need for universities to develop innovative responses to address the employability and entrepreneurship education. With the high skills shortage, graduate unemployment is a labour market paradox. There is high skills deficit among graduates due to the fact that universities do not align their curricular with the required skills for the workplace (Govender, 2008).

Figure 2-2: Unemployment rates by van Broekhuizen and van der Berg (2013)

This figure illustrates that, despite the current graduate unemployment level, South Africa's supply of graduates has grown over the past 15 years. In 1995 there were roughly 463 000 graduates in the labour force. By 2012 the number has doubled to about 1.1 million. This influx of graduates into the domestic labour market has not made much of a contribution due to the fact that, the broad unemployment rate for graduates remains below 6%. Every year approximately 1.1 million students graduate and yet only about 66 000 of these students are unemployed (van Broekhuizen & van der Berg, 2013).

According to Archer and Davison (2008), almost a third of employers in south africa (30%) have problems when it comes to the generic (soft) skills such as teamwork, communication and problem solving abilities of the graduates. Employers view this statistic as a dissapointment due to the fact that most graduates in South Africa are unable to compete with foreighn countries, therefore they need graduates with experience in different cultures and different working environments so as to enable them to deal with overseas customers and clients.

2.4 GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY MODELS

In recent years a number of models of employability have been proposed to further give an understanding of the concept employability.

2.4.1 The career edge model of employment

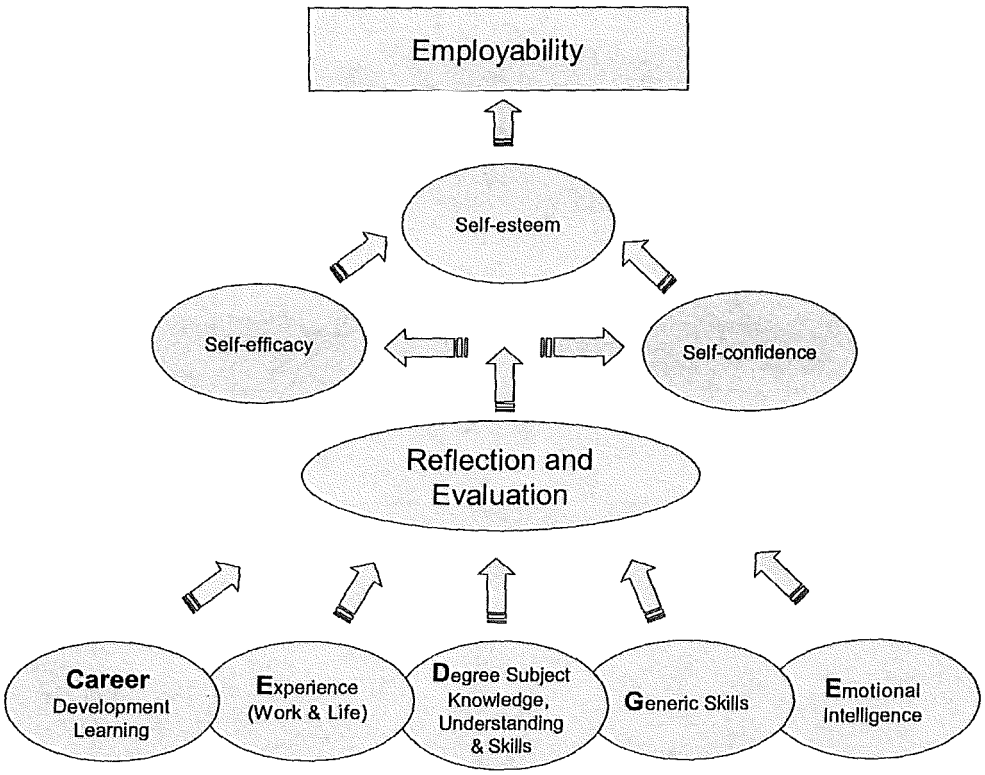


Figure 2-3: The essential components of employability model : Pool and Sewell (2007, p. 280)

This model reflects an allegation that each component is absolutely necessary in the concept of employability and that one missing element will considerably reduce a graduate's employability. The model further illustrates the essential components of employability and also suggests the direction of interaction between the various elements. According to Pool and Sewell (2007), the model is comprised of five essential components which form employability and they are the following:

Degree subject knowledge, understanding and skills

This is the central concept of the career edge model. The aim of this concept is to study a specific discipline or field in depth, in order to gain a degree or obtain a higher qualification and thus get a good or better job. It is about a graduate's understanding and skills that are important. It is essential to recognise that employers will judge graduates on the basis of how successfully they have completed their degree course (Pool & Sewell, 2007).

Generic skills

In the model, the generic skills component is used to represent the skills which can support a learner study in any discipline or field of study. It looks at the skills which have the ability to be transferred to a range of contexts, in higher education or the workplace. Employers thus want graduates with relevant subject specific skills, knowledge and understanding of a particular field. In addition employers are looking for well developed generic skills in a number of areas and these skills are also referred to as core skills, key skills or transferable skills (Pool & Sewell, 2007).

Emotional intelligence

As with all the components in the model, in order to accomplish true employability potential, a graduate needs to be equipped with well developed emotional intelligence competencies. Emotional intelligence is defined as the capacity for an individual to reason about emotions, in order to enhance thinking. It further includes the abilities to accurately observe emotions, access emotions and create emotions to assist thought, and to have an understanding of emotions and emotional knowledge. Emotional intelligence also allows an individual to regulate his or her emotions in order to promote intellectual growth (Pool & Sewell, 2007).

Pool and Sewell (2007, p. 281), further suggest that people with high levels of emotional intelligence motivate themselves and others to achieve more. They also enjoy more career success, build stronger personal relationships and enjoy better health than those with low levels of emotional intelligence.

Career development learning

Career development includes the activities that help students to become more self-aware. This enables them to give proper consideration to the things they enjoy doing and interested in. This helps to motivate the students as the career selected will better suit their personalities. They will further need to research the job markets to see opportunities available and, how to present themselves effectively to prospective employers, and make considered decisions about their careers (Pool & Sewell, 2007).

Experience (work and life)

The final component of the model suggests that, it is widely agreed that graduates with work experience are more likely to secure some type of employment than graduates without any prior experience. It is imperative to consider the wider life experiences that many students have more especially those in distance learning who are mature as they will bring in some new knowledge into Higher Education Institutions. There is a need, therefore, for students to be given relevant information and be provided with guidance as to how their life experience and work-related experience, arranged as part of a course, carried out on a voluntary basis or gained through part-time work which can be used to enhance their levels of employability (Pool & Sewell, 2007).

The model further suggests that, it is important to equip students with the necessary knowledge, skills, attributes and competencies so as to develop self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem and this will enhance the employability of a graduate. The model provides clarity of information about what needs to be considered and included in the curricular of students. The model allows the lecturers, personal tutors, career advisors and anybody else concerned with the promotion of employability within higher education from clouding the issues of complexity. It further gives guidance to employers on how the roles of HEIs and business can both contribute to graduate

employability. Finally, the career edge model can be adapted and used with different groups other than students and new graduates to enhance employability (Pool & Sewell, 2007).

2.4.2 The USEM employability model

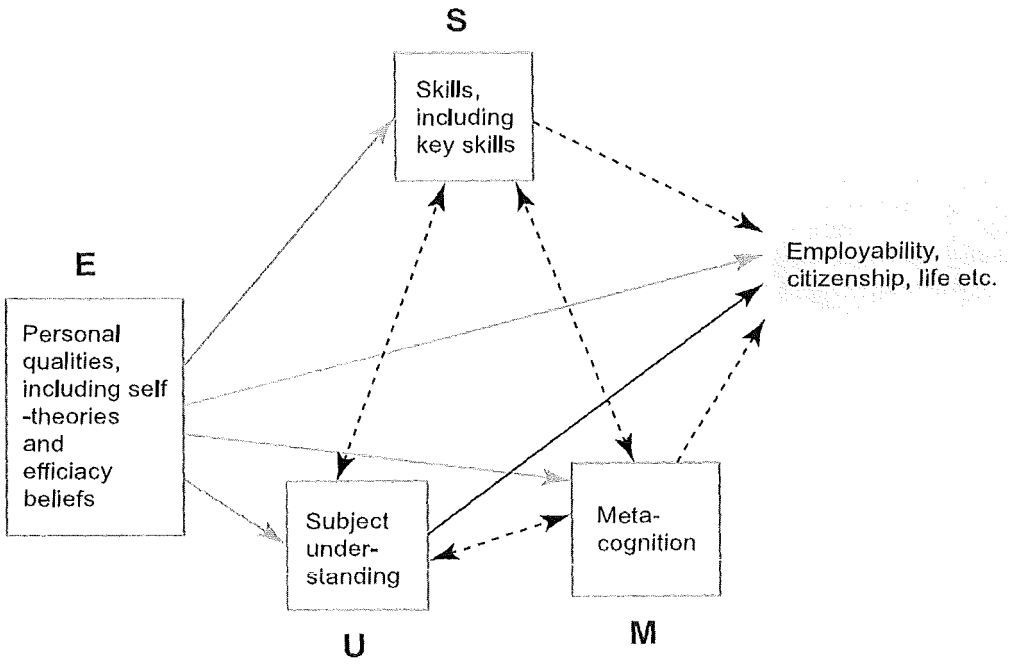


Figure 2-4: The USEM employability model: Knight and Yorke (2004)

The USEM model is the most well known and respected model in the field of employability of graduates. USEM is an acronym for four inter-related components of employability namely:

- Understanding;
- Skills;
- Efficacy beliefs; and
- Metacognition

The USEM model attempts to position employability on a more scientific basis. This is because there is a need to appeal to the academic staff by referring to research and theory. The model forms part of the research-based scholarly work on the concept of employability.

On the model, the "E" is the most important component as it describes the personal qualities including self-theories and efficacy which is believed to be something that covers every aspect that the student and subsequent graduate needs to perform. It could also be suggested that any activity the student does during in their studies at university will to some extent impact on self-esteem, and it is through the development of high global self-esteem that employability is achieved (Knight & Yorke, 2004, p. 34).

According to Knight and Yorke (2006), Reid and Fitzgerald (2011) and the Pedagogy of Employment Group (2006), the USEM model provides a clear framework for thinking about how to insert the concept of employability into the higher learning curriculum. Employability from a higher education perspective needs to take into account the needs of students and employers. High-quality curriculum design needs to take priority as this will provide learners with the opportunity to develop their understandings of the subject field whilst developing both context specific and generic skills. Adopting the USEM model will mean facilitating the development of the link between assessment and employability by focussing attention on the way curricula includes assessment that develops the student's efficacy and metacognition and relating this to the development of subject knowledge and professional skills transferable to the practice context.

2.4.3 Heuristic model of employability

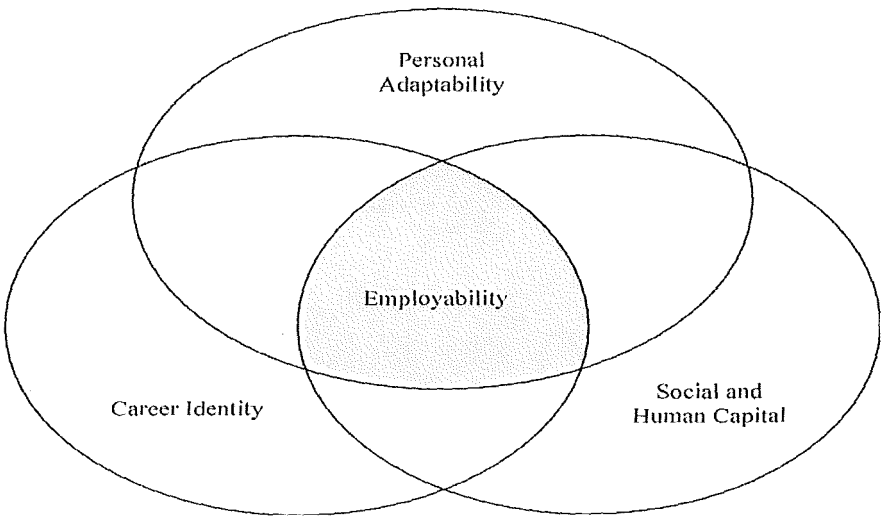


Figure 2-5: Heuristic model of employability: Fugate, Kinicki and Ashforth (2004, p. 19)

Fugate, Kinicki and Ashforth (2004, p.19), are of the opinion that employability serves to encompass the conceptual commonalities of career identity, personal adaptability, social and human capital. These concepts are important for the graduate as they influence active adaptability in the workplace. The three dimensions provide the cognitive momentum and individual characteristics that influence adaptive behaviours at work. It should also be noted that the conceptual foundation of each dimension is discussed, at a molar level, and relations to employability are explicated. According to Fugate et al. (2004, p. 19-25), the three dimensions are as follows:

The career identification dimension

This dimension resembles concepts such as role identity, occupational identity, and organisational identity in which all refer to the manner in which people define themselves in a particular work context. It is the incorporation of the expected experiences expected from a graduate to be transformed into meaningful or useful structure. Career identities provide a direction for the students thus offering a motivational component to employability.

The personal adaptability dimension

This dimension discusses the adaptability and the willingness of an individual to change knowledge, skills, abilities, type of behaviour and disposition in order to meet the demands of the situation. Personal adaptability is a major contributing factor to the organisational performance and the success of the employees 'careers. It allows individuals to remain productive and attractive to employers and major stakeholders in a forever changing workforce.

Social and human capital dimension

The social and human capital is incorporated into career identities which are imbedded into the creation of employability. Social capital is the goodwill inherent in social networks and it contributes to an openly social and interpersonal element to employability. It assists in combining the individuals and organisations in order make investments in social and human capital for future returns in the workplace. The benefits of social capital and its influence on employability are illustrated in the job search behaviours of individuals. Human capital refers to a host of factors that influence a person's career advancement variables such as age and education. Therefore human

capital represents the individual's ability to meet the performance and expectations of an occupation presented.

2.5 GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

'The phenomenon of unemployed graduates, who are without abilities to self-employ and self-determine, after spending three to four years of post secondary education is an indication to all of us of the challenge in our education at a tertiary level, the curriculum developers are not paying enough attention to issues of relevance and ensuring that we all pay attention to the skills and competencies learners require when they come out of higher education, we need a skills revolution in the curriculum of tertiary education'(Mlambo-Ngcuka, 2006).

The South African government declared its support for the development of skills in order to address the unemployment problem. The Skills Development Act (1998) and the Skills Development Levy Act (1999) are both used to provide a framework for promoting skills development in the country. Employability skills are those basic skills necessary for getting, keeping and doing well on a job. These are the skills, attitudes and actions that enable workers to get along with their peers and supervisors or to make good, critical decisions. Employability skills are general skills that apply to all industries, businesses and job levels (Fugate et al., 2004). According to Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AACI) (2002, p. 3), employability skills are those "skills" which are required not only to gain employment after a student has completed their studies, but also to progress within an enterprise so as to achieve one's potential and contribute successfully to enterprise strategic directions.

It has become obvious that workers' employability is obtained through the attainment of knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics deemed necessary and valued by current and prospective employers and thus encompasses an individual's career potential (Fugate et al.,2004). The concept of employability depends on continuous learning, being adaptable to new job demands or shifts in expertise, and the ability to acquire the correct skills to suit the organisation (De Vos,De Hauw & van der Heijden, 2011, p. 439).

According to DEST (2002a), employability skills include communication,teamwork,problem solving,self-management, planning, organising, technology, life-long learning and enterorise skills. The basic skills are necessary for the graduate to be able to find employment and keeping that job. These skills are also refered to as key skills, core skills, life skills, essential skills, key competencies, generic skills, and 21st century skills, necessary skills, and transferable skills. However, for the purpose of this study the preferred term is employability skills. Employability skills assist employees to adjust themselves towards environmental and organisational changes and to increase working abilities which will suit the working needs (Kazilan, Hamzah & Baker, 2009).

Graduate employability skills must indicate characters that have the ability to make an individual attractive to potential employers. The skills and competencies are linked to the needs of the labour market and the compulsary inclusion of employability skills in the higher education institutions. Since it has been proven that these employability skills and competencies promote performance in the workplace, it is suggested that they also enhance academic performance, such as publications and journal writing (Pana & Leeb, 2011, p. 92).

Hard skills and soft skills are the two types of skills which employers are seeking for graduate employability.One way of separating hard and soft skills is to consider that hard skills are those skills which require a mastery and practice of a body of knowledge. Soft skills require development of largely inter- (and intra-) personal skills (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills [BIS], 2011:61).

2.5.1 Soft Skills

According to Knight and Yorke (2004), soft skills are personal qualities (self-assessment, independence, adaptability, initiative and willingness to learn). These 'soft skills' (also known as employability skills) are the foundation skills that apply across the board, no matter what job the employee is performing (Lawrence, 2002). If an individual posesses soft skills, it means that the person is more effective and that individual has the ability to adapt to the changing needs of an organisation. It is also the ability for an individual to have an influence on on a situatin and work with others through creative thinking (Pop & Barkhuizen, 2010).

According to BIS (2011, p. 60), the following are soft skills:

- Career identification and planning
- Interview practice
- Understanding of career and how it works
- Communication skills
- Decision-making skills
- Presentation skills
- Team working skills

There are three main employability skills that according to Guzman and Ok Choi (2013, p. 200), seem as most appropriate to be employable. According to Guzman and Ok Choi (2013, p. 201), these three skills have been widely identified by employers as being most important when they recruiting new graduates. These skills are also referred to as 'soft skills' they also consider the foundational employability skills needed in order to meet the demands of the workplace.

Communication skills

The communication skills comprise specific skills like being able to speak clearly and directly, listening and understanding, empathizing, sharing information, using numeracy effectively, writing to the needs of the audience and engaging in non-verbal communication (Guzman & Ok Choi 2013).

Problem solving skills

This involves the ability to identify problems and gathering realistic information to help in developing practical solutions which can contribute to community problem solving. (Guzman & Ok Choi 2013).

Team work skills

These skills include the abilities of a graduate in working cooperatively with individuals who have different backgrounds, working both as individual and as part of the team. It is also the ability of knowing how to define roles as part of the team and career adaptability. (Guzman & Ok Choi 2013).

2.5.2 Hard Skills

Hard skills are described as those skills which are associated with subject-specific knowledge. Hard skills can be taught (Allan, 2006). Hard skills are specific, teachable abilities that may be required in a given context, such as a job application and learned behaviours. The hard skills are those which are specific and teachable abilities that can be defined and measured. By contrast, when looking at the soft skills, they are less tangible and harder to quantify. Examples of hard skills include job skills like typing, writing, math, reading and the ability to use software programs (BIS, 2011).

Individuals use their technical knowledge and skills to carry out their job responsibilities. Technical skills and job skills should be in support of the organisation's core competencies and capabilities. Technical skills provide a logical way for an organisation to maintain and extend its core competencies and capabilities (BIS, 2011).

According to BIS (2011, p. 60), the following are hard skills:

- Job searching techniques
- Providing help with job search
- CV writing
- Contacts with employers
- Help with finding and securing work placements/internships
- Careers events and fairs
- Computer skills
- Research skills
- Time management
- Literacy
- Provision of temporary and vacation work

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) and the Business Council of Australia (BCA) have conducted a study whereby they reported on what the employer really looks for in their employees. An exercise was carried out to discover the future skills needed and they reached the conclusion that today, employers want graduates with not just hard skills but soft skill too.

Employers nowadays select staff that can demonstrate a variety of social and personal attributes as well as the ability to learn technical skills (ACCI & BCA, 2002).

An Employability Skills Framework has been developed by ACCI and BCA. This framework uses all the education levels namely: school, vocational education and training (VET) and tertiary. The framework is mainly used by educators and trainees as a guide, by job seekers as a self- assessment tool, by employees to improve their career potential, and by recruiters and Human Resource professionals. The framework also suggests that educators need to review and redevelop their curriculum and change the type delivery methodology in order to support the development of these skills and attributes. Greater emphasis should also be given to looking at ways of measuring and recording the attainment of these attributes (ACCI & BCA, 2002). The following table illustrates the ACCI/BCA employability skills framework:

Table 2-1: ACCI/BCA employability skills framework (2002)

Skill	Element – aspects of the skill that employers think is important.
Communication … that contributes to productive and harmonious relations across employees and customers	• Listening and understanding • Speaking clearly and directly • Writing to the needs of the audience • Negotiating responsively • Reading independently • Empathising • Speaking and writing in languages other than English • Using numeracy • Understanding the needs of customers • Persuading effectively • Establishing and using networks • Being assertive • Sharing information

Team work … that contributes to productive working relationships and outcomes	• Working across different ages irrespective of gender, race, religion or political persuasion • Working as an individual and as a member of a team • Knowing how to define a role as part of the team • Applying team work to a range of situations problem solving • Identifying the strengths of the team members • Coaching and mentoring skills including giving feedback
Problem solving … that contributes to productive outcomes	• Developing creative, innovative solutions • Developing practical solutions • Showing independence and initiative in identifying problems and solving them • Solving problems within the teams • Applying a range of strategies to problem solving • Using mathematics including budgeting and financial management to solve problems • Applying problem solving strategies across a range of areas • Testing assumptions taking the context of data and circumstances into account. • Resolving customer concerns in relation to complex projects issues
Initiative and enterprise … that contribute to innovative outcomes	• Adapting to new situations within the workplace • Developing a planned, creative and long term vision • Being imaginative • Recognising opportunities not obvious to others • Interpreting ideas into action • Generating a variety of possible options • Initiating ground-breaking solutions
Planning and organising … that contributes to long and short term strategic	• The ability to manage time and priorities • Being resourceful and practical • Taking initiative of any situation and making decisions • Adapting to a resource allocations initiative in order to cope with contingencies • Establishing clear project goals which can be delivered

planning	• Allocating the right people and other resources to specific tasks • Planning how to maximise resources such as time management • Participating in a constant improvement and planning processes • Developing a clear vision and a proactive plan • Predicting and weighing up risk, evaluating alternatives and applying the necessary evaluation criteria • Gathering, analysing and categorising information • Having an understanding of basic business systems and how they relate to each other
Self management ... that contributes to employee satisfaction & growth	• Having a individual vision and goals set • Evaluating and observing one's own performance • Having the necessary knowledge and confidence in own ideas and visions • Expressing own ideas and visions • Taking responsibility of own life
Learning ... that contributes to ongoing improvement and expansion in employee and company operations and outcomes	• Managing individual learning • Contributing to the learning of all employees at the workplace • Using a range of means or tools to learn such as mentoring, peer support and networking, Information Technology courses • Applying knowledge and learning to 'technical' issues • Having interest and the necessary passion for ongoing learning • Being willing to learn in any environmental learning, whether it be on-the-job learning or off-the-job learning • Being exposed to new ideas and new innovative techniques • Being ready and willing to invest time and effort in skills development • Recognising the need to learn so that the individual will be able to accommodate change
Technology ... that contributes to effective execution of tasks	• Having a range of basic Information Technology (IT) skills • Applying IT as a management and administrative tool • Using IT to be able to organise and interpret data • The individual must be willing to learn new IT skills • The individual further needs to have the necessary knowledge to

	apply technology • Having the physical capacity to apply technology dexterity

2.5.3 Specific skills for Human Resource Management Graduates

In order for the Human Resource professionals to respond to changing business conditions, they must demonstrate new competencies or skills (Ulrich, Brockbank, Johnson,& Younger, 2007, p. 2). In Human Resource Management the most widely accepted skills are leadership skills, customer focus, result oriented, problem solver, communication skills and team worker skills (Abrahams, Karns, Shaw & Mena, 2001, p. 847).

The skills needed by an HR distance graduate in the workplace are dynamic. In response to globalization and the ever changing information and technology in the workplace, organizations are responsible for finding new ways to reduce costs and improve services. This then results in redefinitions of job skills and the competencies needed to succeed in them. Although emphasis still needs to be placed on the basic skills for employability, this study focuses on core competencies of entry- and low level workers, rather than those needed by more skilled and experienced workers (Carlier, Ally, Zhao, Bairstow & Khoury, 2006, p. 26).

According to Armstrong (2009, p. 203), the Human Resource Management graduate is expected to demonstrate behavioural competencies and technical competencies. The behavioural competency outlines the type of behaviour required in order to deliver the results needed by the employer. These results are also refered to as soft skills. The technical competency, is the ability to do, which means having the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out roles effectively.

Meyer (2012, p. 2), the CEO of SABPP suggests that there are certain competencies which are necessary for the HR personnel to have when entering the organisation. An HR competency model was as a result designed. This model sets out the five core competencies which constitute the different layers of bricks or building blocks of the house. These competencies are the basic competencies all HR professionals need to plan and execute, in order for specialised HR professional work to be effective in the workplace.

There are five core competencies needed by HR professionals to do high quality HR functional work and according to Meyer (2012, p. 2) these are the following:

Figure 2-6: South African HR Competence Model: Meyers (2012, p. 1)

- ***Leadership and personal credibility***

HR graduates should possess leadership skills to succeed in their profession. Personal credibility in organisations also displays a high level of competence in executing professional HR work.

- ***Organisational capability***

The graduate must be able to understand the needs of the organisation. He or she must have the knowledge of how organisations function for the basis of organisational capability.

- ***Solution creation and implementation***

It is important to have the ability and skill to create, plan and implement HR solutions.

- ***Interpersonal and communication skills***

To be successful in HR, successful relationships need to be created. Team-building and conflict resolution skills are also other bonus competencies to possess.

- ***Citizenship for the future***

The graduate must be able to drive innovation, be technologically advanced and contribute towards creating sustainability. It is necessary to have the ability to be a change agent thus one must become a citizen of the future that has the ability to contribute to sustainability of the community and the environment.

2.6 METHODS TO ENHANCE GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY: WORK-INTEGRATED E-LEARNING

2.6.1 Work Integrated E-learning (eWIL) Defined

Work-integrated Learning (WIL) is an experiential pedagogy that requires students to be able to reflect on their experiences in the workplace if they are to have a deep learning experience (Bates, 2011, p. 118). Work-integrated Learning (WIL) also referred to as Cooperative Education is a form of learning whereby the amount of time spent in a higher learning institution is interchanged with the related work within a business, industry or a governmental agency. The students are given the opportunity to effectively integrate the theory of the classroom with the practice and the responsibility of the workplace (Nica & Popescu, 2010).

WIL is a strategy of applied learning that incorporates the rigor of an accredited academic program with periods of supervised and relevant experience in the workplace. WIL provides a context for learning, even after a graduates' first work placement. The graduate engages in a different form of learning which is informed by their understanding of the work place and of their future role in it (Nica & Popescu, 2010).

Coll and Eames (2004), describe Work Integrated Learning (WIL) as a structured educational strategy, which aims to incorporate theoretical knowledge gained during a student's academic

studies to the workplace experiences. This is done by developing relevant professional skills in preparation for future career opportunities. It is a connection for the students between the academic present and their professional future.

According to the (Council on Higher Education, 2011, p. 81), WIL is the umbrella phrase used to describe curricular, pedagogic and assessment practices, across a variety of academic disciplines. WIL seeks to integrate the formal or theoretical learning and industry concerns designed into the educational curriculum. WIL forms linkages between workplace knowledge and the academic curriculum. It helps the students to transfer their knowledge to workplace situations. Therefore WIL cannot be implemented without partners who represent the diverse knowledge fields. Even thou the definitions of WIL may vary, they are all based on the general understanding of the importance of enabling the student to incoporate theory into the work (Dimenas , 2011, p. 230).

E-Learning is the intentional use of networked information and communications technology in teaching and learning. It is a mode of teaching which includes online learning, virtual learning, distributed learning, network and web-based learning. All these concepts refer to educational processes that utilize information and communications technology to mediate asynchronous as well as synchronous learning and teaching activities (Romiszowski, 2004, p. 5).

E-Learning can also be defined as the use of internet or wireless technologies to deliver a broad array of training solutions. Students using this learning access the learning from a computer via the internet or an intranet, or through a hand held device like a palm pilot, tablet or PDA. E-learning can include independent, facilitated, or collaborative approaches to learning. With independent learning, the learner must complete a series of learning activities or modules on their own, in their own environment and on their own schedule. The learner is independent of a facilitator and the other learners (Rosenberg 2001, p. 28).

E-Learning encompasses two categories namely: asynchronous and synchronous. If it is asynchronous, it means that learners are experiencing the learning at different times (Rosenberg, 2001, p. 2). The students and the instructor are logged on at the same time and communicate

directly and virtually (Itmazi, 2010). If it synchronous, then it means that learners are experiencing the learning at the same time. Communication does not occur simultaneously. It can also incorporate both categories drawing on the strengths of each. Independent learning is, by definition, asynchronous. Facilitated and collaborative can be either asynchronous or synchronous (Rosenberg, 2001, p. 2).

It is important to remember that e-learning is not intended to replace conventional methods of training such as face-to-face, classroom teaching. It aims to create an augmented learning environment especialy for distant students who cannot afford to stay near the institutions. Technology is then used to deliver a range of teaching techniques aimed at maximising the learning process. The advantages of using e-learning are flexibility, reducing time and costs, convenience and accesibility (Itmazi,2010, p. 1). The growth of e-learning relates to the increasing access to information and communications technology. It is the capacity to support multimedia resource-based learning and the teaching is also relevant to the growing interest in e-learning. Growing numbers of universities are increasingly using information and communications technology to support their teaching (Naidu, 2006).

Work-integrated e-learning (eWIL) is a new research field, focussing on learning processes concerning both employees and organisations, using e-learning as a way of gaining new knowledge relevant for the work process. Most research in the field of e-learning is focussed on different e-learning systems in school teaching or at universities. Learning at work is more of a multi-dimensional learning compared to traditional educational institutions. Looking back on the last decades of development within the field of distance education, a rich spectrum of initiatives have been implemented and evaluated in educational as well as organisational settings (Boud & Garrick, 1999).

Work-integrated e-learning can be defined as a concept which deliberately merges theory with practice and acknowledges the intersection of explicit and tacit forms of knowing at both individual and collective levels. It intends to recognise that learning is acquired in the midst of practice and can occur while working on the tasks and relationships at hand (Raelin, 1998, p. 280).

e-WIL aims at assisting and accommodating knowledge workers in advancing their skills, competencies, abilities directly within their 'real' work tasks instead of in dedicated (artificial) learning situations. Work-integrated e-learning focuses on integrating the practices of the workplace and e-learning. It is relatively brief and unstructured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time, or learning support), and its main aim mostly is to enhance task performance (Lindstaedt, Ley & Mayer, 2005).

The concept of e-WIL is developed for supporting continuous competence development for the workplace. It assumes that students have the basic knowledge of the learning domain in question and the ability to guide their own learning processes through to the workplace (Eraut & Hirsh, 2007) . It is designed and used in more flexible traditional courses, in order to adapt to different work situations especially for those students in open distance learning. Different learners can work with courses at different times, and at different geographical locations. Learners can also work in groups or individually. The courses are self-directed the only challenge of the design of the e-learning part, is that it should be considered relevant for the learners, both in content and in its form (Grunden, 2003).

Since South Africa has been going through technological changes, distance education institutions use work-integrated e-learning as a popular alternative. This is because of the potential advantages it has such as independence of place, substantial cost savings due to the elimination of travel expenses, timely access to information and a greater flexibility in the workplace and methods that can increase learners' interest in the subject at hand (Park & Wentling, 2007, p. 311).

2.6.2 The Need for Work-Integrated E-Learning

WIL plays an important role in the service learning of a student (Abeysekera, 2006). Work integrated learning is one example of experiential learning whereby the experience of work provides students with the opportunity to gain and apply knowledge, skills and feelings in an immediate and relevant setting (Resnick, 1988, p. 19). Work Integrated Learning as a lifelong learning experience (Bandaranaike & Willison, 2010,p. 19). Not only does WIL expose students to a concrete experience, but it also introduces students to reliable practices through a cognitive

learning environment. WIL provides students with not just a one-off source of learning and knowing, but it constitutes environments in which learning is constructed through a reciprocal learning (Resnick, 1988, p. 19).

A key purpose of WIL is the perception of ensuring that graduates are equipped with a comprehensive skill-set which in reality is desired by potential employers .Work integrated learning has demonstrated the need for a curriculum which shows support in the development of behavioural competencies. It has been frequently reported that universities do not sufficiently emphasise the development of behavioural skills to prepare graduates for professional life. Therefore this is where WIL makes the most impact. A strong knowledge base alone does not always guarantee the employability of a new graduate. Personal attributes and capabilities of the graduate are also considered to have a greater influence on success of that graduate in the workplace (Martin & Hughes, 2009).

WIL programs provide students with the opportunity to enrich or learn both generic and specific skills which are relevant to professional practice. Interpersonal and communication skills, teamwork skills, research skills and project design provide students with first-hand experience of the day-to-day operations of a real business. Students have access to resources which may not be available on campus, this then creates an establishment of a work history and enhances a graduates employment opportunities. Through WIL, the students have access to an employer's reference, the establishment of a network of professional contacts and the possibility of ongoing employment (Harvey, Geall & Moon,1998).

Universities need to recognise the importance for a workplace involvement in WIL programs. This will benefit the organisations by affording them the opportunity to monitor student performance with a view to longer term employment, train students with specific skills suited to the organisation, have access to resources and facilities of the university, and be able to communicate with academic staff through WIL networking events. WIL is important as it provides employment flexibility. It establishes working relationships between the employer and the university and as a result produces

focussed young people with new ideas to boost creativity and innovation in the workplace (Harvey et.al, 1998).

There is a great need for WIL programs as they offer a number of benefits to the university. These include making their degree programs more attractive to prospective students and providing a relatively straightforward mechanism to form new partnerships with industry. These benefits in most cases improve graduate employability and student motivation for lifelong learning (Harvey et.al,1998). WIL has been deemed to beneficial in the development of non-technical skills. The leaner is therefore able to maximise WIL experience by program administrators, the learners themselves, academic supervisors and workplace supervisors (Coll et al., 2008).

E-Learning is needed as it provides a collaborative, interactive, network systems, and multimedia contents, that are used to improve learners' problem-solving capabilities and thinking skills (Passerini & Granger, 2000, p. 2). E-Learning is a revolutionary concept which makes education more accessible and therefore e-learning is a critical issue in learning and training. E-Learning extends traditional learning paradigms into new dynamic learning models through computer and Web technologies (Liaw, 2002:30).

In e-learning, synchronous or asynchronous interaction creates a high-level of communicative environment. It allows learners to not only share information, but it determines how to retrieve useful information and be more technologically advanced. Students therefore as a result will have environmental satisfaction which enhances learners' perceptions of technology that might promote their participation in the work environment. Learning activities in e-learning provide a great chance for learners and instructors to share their knowledge and experience (Liaw & Huang, 2007).

One of the benefits of e-learning is the fact that it makes learning more exciting and part-time students are able to have better engagement satisfaction. The modules which are challenging and difficult can be made easier and more interesting and appealing with e-learning. e-Learning empowers learners to manage their own learning. It helps to embed learning within work processes,

as most organisations begin to recognise that learning is not something that only takes place in a classroom (Knight, 2003).

E-Learning has helped organisations with their bottom line. These organisations have reported that students who enter with some knowledge on e-learning contribute to less wasted time to competency and faster time to market and a reduction in having to train the student. Students with skills in e-learning increase customer and staff satisfaction which has led to higher customer and staff retention rates. For organisations, e-learning is playing a major part in helping keeping them agile and competitive in their market (Knight, 2003).

Work-integrated e-Learning (eWIL) offers the student the opportunity to apply theory, computer skills and practice. The purpose of eWIL is to enhance the student's understanding, analysis and the ability to think critically and evaluate the theory through offered application. It encourages students to use the concepts and models from theory and apply in a technologically changing organisational environment (Rowley, 2003, p. 131).

According to Donata (2011), it is importnant to have knowledge and an understanding of work-integrated e-learning. The following are the reasons why there is a need for eWIL:

- Convenient for the employers and employees
- Flexibility- training can be scheduled around employees' work schedule
- Allows employees to remain within the company in a designated area free from distraction to learn valuable knowledge and skills
- Because training is done on company premises, employees can be easily located if needed to address important job issues
- Keeps employees from being away from the office for extended periods
- Competitive advantage in using web-based teaching/training
- Individuals will experience self-pace hands-on learning
- Increased productivity
- Improves basic computer skills and internet navigation
- Employees will be able to apply learning to current job
- Self-pace learning allows individuals to grasp and retain information better
- Builds self-confidence in the learners

- Improves employee retention and job satisfaction rate
- No need to hire an instructor to teach classes
- In the absence of an instructor, employees are able to use online support, such as: chat rooms, bulletin boards, chat rooms, live messaging support, and forums.
- Company can eliminate costly overhead expenses for traditional learning programs

2.6.3 The Application of Work-Integrated e-Learning in the Higher Educational Context

Employability challenges traditional concepts of higher educational institutions. It raises the question of their existence subject to the concept of the type of learning offered. Academics also feel that this agenda is in most cases driven by the government policy and the employers rather than the academy itself. This leads to unrest amongst the academics that are expected to educate students on employability skills and attributes needed for the workplace. This in the long run will mean that existing undergraduate programmes will have to be amended so that institutions will produce graduates who possess lifelong learning skills and professional skills needed for career success (De la Harpe, Radloff & Wyber, 2000).

It is important for the universities to embrace a curriculum that delivers technical skills and soft skills and knowledge that can develop graduates of critical and inquisitive minds sets (Wagner & Childs,2000, p. 2). Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) are tackling the issue of enhancing the employability of graduates. They now offer work-based learning solutions and they have created an environment that enables them to respond to the needs of the the employers. Furthermore, institutions have developed pedagogical approaches that work. These approaches are distinctive in that they put more emphasis on a process of apply eWIL rather than content-driven curriculum which is strongly student-centred (Nixon, Smith, Stafford & Camm, 2006).

Work-integrated eLearning outcomes should be identified and agreed upon by the learner, employer and academic institution. These outcomes should form the basis of the development of a fitting curriculum. The HEI have the role of ensuring that the learning outcomes emphasise the need for the learners to broaden their knowledge and understanding, apply theories and constructs in a workplace setting in order to make sense of complex situations and enhance skills development through practical experiences and e-learning skills (Nixon, Smith, Stafford & Camm 2006, p. 15).

Incorporating e-learning and work-integrated learning means that students have better opportunities with the potential of leading to a successful employment outcome. Real world life experiences and using internet provides students with an opportunity to develop not only work skills, but also an understanding of the workplace. Varied and multiple exposures to the internet and technology can help to shape future work goals and habits. Work-based e-learning experiences are part of the career preparation that allows students to achieve their desired goals. EWIL experiences contribute to successful transition, and ultimately, success in adult employment (Gramlich, 1999a).

HEI have the task of increasing support for the workforce development. They have the responsibility of overcoming cultural differences and language barriers to establish education which will benefit the students. Adopting a holistic approach to their curriculum enables the students to get a vision and an understanding of what the employers expect of them. In addition applying eWIL supports the ongoing development of non-traditional students who are technologically advanced and have technical skills (Nixon, Smith, Stafford & Camm 2006,p. 15).

Students and academics alike have high expectations of work- integrated eLearning courses. The courses have to be designed in such a way that they are attractive, effective and efficient. In applying eWIL, students want user-friendly multimedia courses. This then means that they expect a fair measure of flexibility to organize their studies. They seek for courses which can be adapted to their own learning needs. To meet all these expectations, the application of work- integrated eLearning courses by HEI must not only meet high educational standards but also several technical requirements needed in the workforce (Jochems, van Merrienboer & Koper, 2003).

The most important programmes concern the manner in which the courses are described and the way in which they are stored. When it comes to learning content, not only are technical standards such as graphics and interchange formats required. These formats are important for the way in which the packaging, sequencing, and other management of the software are handled in order for it to be transferred between platforms and environments. To make work-integrated eLearning courses

re-usable and compatible with different systems, it is necessary to use a formal language that describes the course methodically (Jochems et.al, 2003).

Open Distance Learning today is currently experiencing an immense growth in new applications of interactive technologies. This technological advancement greatly influences the delivery of ODL initiatives, and the technology aids in producing the intended results. Universities and other higher educational institutions offer ODL programmes with the help of interactive media-printed material, audio-video conferencing, internet, academic counselling, assignments, discussion classes, project work, practical work and much more. However, these technologies may influence learning in unexpected ways if used without understanding their repercussion for student learning (Muchengetwa & Ssekuma, 2012).

Different divisions in higher learning institution are now responsible for supporting certain parts of the learning experience for different learners. Effective student support in ODL can be achieved through the competent and strategic integration of the various initiatives employed to equip academics with the necessary skills. The universities therefore have the role to act as support staff responsible for creating a welcoming and barrier-free teaching and learning in ODL environments. This is achieved by accommodating the diversity of students that may enrol at the institutions

(Heydenrych, 2010).

2.6.4 The Application of of Work-Integrated e-Learning in Open and Distance Education

Distance learning is a subset or a division of open learning. This is a process whereby the teacher and learner are in separate locations and where the method of teaching includes a more formal style of teaching. Distance education is a set of methods or processes for educating a diverse and multiple groups of learners who are located at different places and physically separated from their learning institution, their lecturers as well as other learners (University of South Africa, 2008).

According Dzakira and Idrus (2003), distance learning involves the state of being apart, separateness or remoteness in the delivery of education between learners and the lecturers and other learners. Ravhudzulo (2003), further defines distance education as an official teaching system

designed to be carried out distantly. The teaching methods are separated in time and space from the learning acts.

It also refers to the forms of study without having a face-to-face communication with the teacher present as in a traditional classroom situation, but the method is supported by tutors with the aid of technology and an organization at a distance from the learner. Distance education is any method of learning which delivers instruction that does not need the instructor to be present, therefore the most popular method of delivery is by means of mail, video and television and this method of learning is referred to as e-learning (Ellison, 2000).

Distance learning refers to all those forms of organized work- based learning based on overcoming the physical separation of students and all those involved in the organization of the learning. This separation applies to the learning process at certain stages. Face-to-face contact occurs but distance education reinforces the distance interaction through internet interaction (Bell & Tight, 1993).

Keegan (1990), however gives a different definition, and he suggests that distance learning is delinated by five main points namely:

- It is the separation of teacher and learner throughout the learning process (which distinguishes from conventional face-to-face learning) without the occasional meetings.
- The separation of learners from each other throughout the learning process, so the learn as individuals and not in groups.
- It is the activity of an educational system in the planning of learning. It is also the preparation of the materials and the support of the other learners.
- It is the use of appropriate technical media, in order to allow the students to carry out the content of the course and allow contact between the teacher and learner.
- Lastly, it is the provision of a two-way communication so that the learner can communicate in a form of a dialogue with the lecturer and other learners.

According to Lockwood (1995), distance education entails a serious planning method with a larger open infrastructure costs and more compound student and administrative support systems in order to be successful. Well-designed support systems assist in the delivery of distance education courses of comparable quality of the courses offered by the university.

Open learning is the type of learning that gives learners a sense of flexibility and choice over their studies. It should be noted that the concept open learning includes distance education, resource-based learning, e-learning, correspondence learning, flexi-study and self-paced study (University of South Africa, 2008). Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the concept of open learning and distance learning will be used together as one. Open learning is an educational philosophy, which gives greater emphasis to choices of the learner about the type of delivery of education to use. It also assists the learner on the choice of media, place of study, support mechanisms and the entry and exit points (The Commonwealth of Learning, 2000).

Open learning is designed to meet individual needs and requirements for the workforce. It removes barriers, which prevent attendance to a more traditional way of offering course, and suggests a learner centred philosophy based on the advancement use of technology and software programs (Lewis & Spencer, 1986). Open learning is an advanced learning method, which uses the principles of learner centeredness, lifelong learning, flexibility of learning provision, the removal of barriers and challenges in order to access the level of learning, the recognition for credit of prior learning experience, the provision of learner support, and the construction of learning. These programmes are used in the expectation that learners will succeed in their studies, and that the maintenance of accurate quality assurance will be achieved over the design of learning materials and support systems (Department of Higher Education & Training, 2012).

According to Bell, Bowden and Trott (1997), open learning is the extended and developed access to leaning with difficulties removed and the philosophy of learner-centred condition whereby the learner is given the choice of the learning environment. The term "open" intends to show the main features of the theory and the practice of distance learning. Open and distance learning was first known as "distance learning" before it became known as "open and distance learning" (University of South Africa, 2008).

Distance learning emerged from the idea of learning through a correspondence method and later, open learning emerged from the inability of numerous qualified learners, being able to access tertiary education in regular higher learning institutions. (Biao, 2012). Work-integrated e-learning is rather popular in ODL. It is a method of study which uses the Web and CD-ROMs. Involvement ir

e-learning is intended to be work-based or work-related. Students are given the technical skills required by employers (Harun, 2002).For the purpose of this study, the term "distance learning" and "open learning" are used synonymously (Gammie,Gammie & Duncan, 2002).

Open learning and distance learning symbolize approaches that focus on opening access to education and training provision. It is about freeing learners from the limitations of time and place, and offering flexibility and autonomy to the learning opportunities. The term ODL has become the internationally preferred label for innovative non-traditional modes of delivery whose defining purpose is to prevail over barriers to access of information (UNISA, 2008). It is important for ODL to embrace e-learning by organisations. It is a necessity which supports the needs to attract and retain the best employees (Harun, 2002).

Open and distance learning refers to all the strategies designed to enable wider contribution in higher learning education, at whatever level (Smith, 2010). These concepts have in the past caused a confussion, however open learning is much more general and encompasses all concepts of learning, distance learning represents only one way through an important and prevalent way of enabling greater openness (Bell & Tight, 1993).

According to Bourn and Bootle (2005), open and distance, learning is learning which intends to meet the fundamentals of the individual student and to facilitate access to learning for disadvantaged groups. An online method of teaching is used and is readily accessible to the students (UNECSO, 2002). Open Distance Learning is not a new concept. It came in practice since the 19th century. Many changes and improvements have been made in the last two centuries. The term "open" describes the educational provision whereby the limitations are minimized for the learner. The learner has the freedom to make decisions about learning environment .Open and distance learning strives to achieve the same aims as the traditional educational system, while acknowledging that the students are not on a specified campus (Van Biljon & Renaud, 2009).

According to Heydenrych (2010), ODL is a way of bridging the time, geographical, economic, social, educational, and epistemological and communication distances. It is a form of education that combines the world of work with work integrated e-learning and with mutual benefit. ODL uses

Work-based learning programs that give students an experience to learn by having their studies incorporated on a more hands-on and technical training (e-learning) that will prepare them for the future. There are different types, elements, structuring, involvement, and how to ensure high quality learning that would benefit any student In other words, it is possible to receive early benefits as the learner progresses with their studies (UNISA, 2008).

It is a technologically mediated method of learning, using print, video, audio and computer-mediated technology. The exploration of the types and quality of learning interactions is important in open and distant learning for the learner to effectively create the learning environments necessary to encourage meaning making from learning (Hawkridge, 2005)

2.6.5 The Effectiveness of Work-Integrated e-Learning in Enhancing Graduate Employability

The effectiveness of the work integrated learning depends greatly on the partnerships created with employers, students, academic lecturers, education managers, broker agencies and professional bodies. If students are to be employable, recognition of all the parties involved needs to be made a priority (Harvey, Moon, Geall & Bower,1997). The most effective placement of graduates takes place as soon as the organisation or the university becomes committed to the learning of the student. If students are given information on the training and skills needed for the workplace, then the students will gain insight into the pressures of the work environment within various organisations. Integrating graduate employability into the curriculum has developed the learning culture of teaching work-integrated learning, e-learning, work-based skills and discipline-based learning. These methods of learning complement and enhance each other (Orrell, 2004).

According to Orrell (2004), a graduate needs to have a development of generic resources that can be adapted to meet specific requirements. These generic resources include online programmes (e-learning) which assist students to become workplace literate before their placements. WIL programmes need to be audited on a regular basis so that they keep up with the effective educational practices.

With e-learning, it is significant that the programmes are designed in such a way that they offer knowledge management for the workplace. With the rapid change of different types of working environments, there is a constant need to train and retain people in the new technological advancements within the working environments. There is a need to have appropriate management and leveraging of knowledge base so that learning is accessible within the workplace. In formal distance learning, electronic courses are delivered online. Packaged learning modules are designed to maintain competence and for the graduate to excel in relevant knowledge and skills (Harun, 2002).

The effectiveness of eWIL in enhancing the employability of graduates depends on the programme implemented. It has many benefits for the student, HEI and the employer. These efforts are made to develop human resource that is sufficient, relevant and of quality. This effectiveness therefore requires a close and well-orchestrated interaction among the three major players in this human resource growth triangle. The cooperation would ensure that the benefits so derived are equally shared to achieve case of 'win-win' for all concerned (Datuk & Fadzil, 2003).

2.7 CONCLUSION

Soft skills and hard skills are by far the most recognised skills needed to make a graduate employable. These skills increase employment opportunities for many South African graduates therefore it is the responsibility of the Higher Education Institutions to ensure that they implement Work-integrated e-Learning programmes which are recommended by industries, especially for open and distance learners. It therefore goes without saying that cooperation between institutions of higher learning and potential employers should be continuously upgraded to meet the current needs of employers. This relationship will result in partnerships that will match the needs of organisations.

Chapter 3:RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

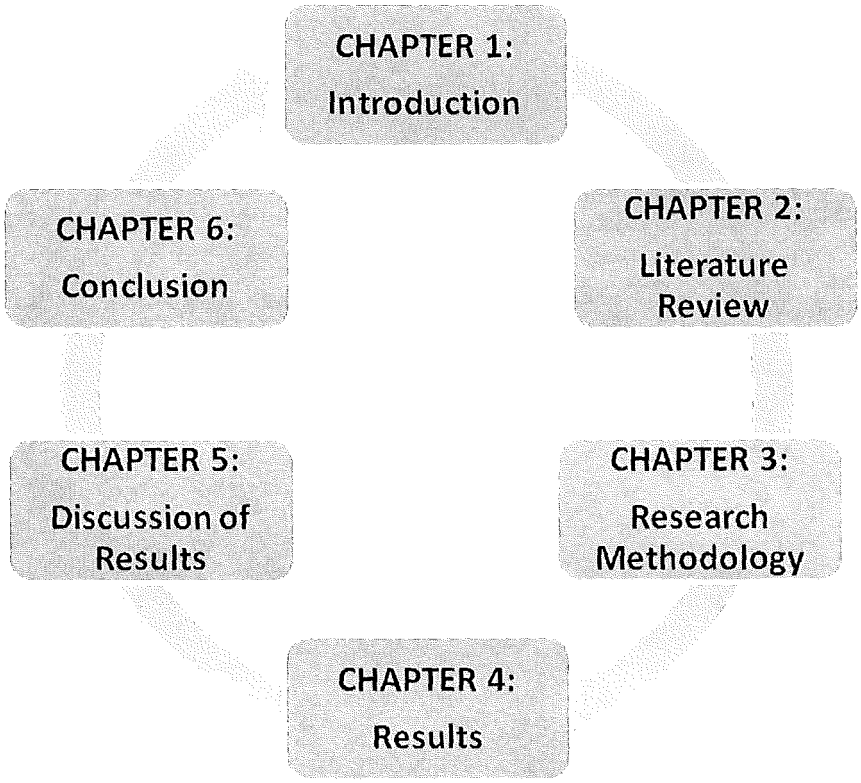


Figure 3-1: Chapter 3 in Context

The purpose of chapter three is to outline the method and design used in this study. The researcher will further explain the rationale behind the methodology employed and how data will be collected with the aid of interviews. It focuses on the qualitative method as a tool for collecting data. The use of interviews was seen by the researcher as most appropriate and practical technique in reaching the aims of the study. The research paradigm and research design, which is a work plan, will be done to ensure that the evidence obtained will enable the researcher to answer the initial questions and objectives as unambiguously as possible. The population and sample will be discussed followed by data collection used for the purpose of the study. Data analysis will be mentioned and the assessing and demonstration of quality and rigour of the proposed research design. Ethical considerations will then follow.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM / THE PHILOSOPHY

A research paradigm is a perspective about research held by a group of researchers, based on a set of shared hypothesis, concepts, importance, and practices. It is an approach to the type of method; the researcher will use to collect relevant information and data. In research, there are three major research paradigms or approaches namely: quantitative research, qualitative research, and mixed research (Guba & Lincoln,1998). The research paradigm is a way of dealing with a specific phenomenon that allows the researcher to gain more knowledge and understanding of the aims and objectives regarding that specific phenomenon (Nkatini, 2005). For the purpose of this study, the researcher used the qualitativie approach.

The qualitative paradigm begins with the selection of topic which will give a worldwide view of beliefs, valeus and methods within which the research will take place. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), the paradigm framework is made up of the following:

- Ontology, which is the branch of philosophy, that deals with the nature of realism and truth
- Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that deals with knowledge and validation
- Methodology is the recognition, study, and validation of research methods
- Axiology is that branch of philosophy dealing with values and ethics
- Rhetoric is the ability or knowledge of language and oral and written communication

3.2.1 Ontology

Ontology is the nature of the knowable. It is the nature of the reality which is assumed to exist in order to be imperfectly captured by an individual. It is a human intellectual mechanism used to unfold the difficulty and nature of specific phenomena. The ontology is labelled as a critical realism because of the position it holds on the idea that claims about realism must be subjected to the widest possible significant examination in order for the researcher to make possible reality as closely as possible. Realities are apprehend able in the form of several, intangible mental constructions, socially and experiential nature. These concepts are dependent on the individual or group, holding the constructions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

3.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is a term used for the philosophy of knowledge or how and individual come to know certain information. Epistemology in research creates the questions of what is the relationship between the individual who knows certain information and what that individual knows, how do we know what we know and lastly what counts as knowledge. The epistemology focuses on addressing how people come to know about realism, despite the fact that methodology identifies the particular practices used to attain knowledge of it. It can therefore be said that epistemology is strongly related to ontology (the philosophy of reality) and methodology (Trochim, 2000).

3.2.3 Axiology

The Axiology paradigm asks the question of what is the role of values in the inquiry process. (Barks, 1995). According to Mingers (2003), axiology is the knowledge or the actual information in action. It is therefore applied to a specific situation. There has to be a thorough understanding in the study by the researcher or else there is no point in doing the research. It is important that knowlegde be purposeful.

3.2.4 Rhetoric

The rhetoric paradigm asks the question of what kind of language and communication skills should be used in research (Barks, 1995). Philosophically, when a study is made, researchers need to focus mainly on what is knowledge (ontology), how individuals know it (epistemology), what standards or values go into it (axiology), how researchers write about it (rhetoric), and the processes for studying it (methodology) (Creswell, 1994).

3.2.5 Modernistic approach

The modernistic paradigm is suitable for this study. This is because the quantity of the data and the complexity of the data are suitable to allow the researcher to obtain valid knowledge and reliable information into the phenomenon of the study. In this paradigm, qualitative researchers build on the work done traditionally by other researchers. The aim is to enhance the rigour of qualitative enquiries and reflect on the nature of the craft (Brymanand & Bell, 2007). This paradigm is also suitable for this study because it uses primary source of data collection.

3.3 DESCRIPTION OF INQUIRY STRATEGY AND BROAD RESEARCH DESIGN

3.3.1 Description of inquiry strategy

Strategies of inquiry are described as the types of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods designs or models that provide specific direction for procedures in a research design. They are also known as approaches to inquiry or research methodologies (Creswell, 2009). This study is aimed at identifying the Work- Integrated eLearning (eWIL) programmes used by universities in South Africa to make graduates employable. The main focus however is on the role which eWIL plays for open and distance learners. There are various methods used in open distance learning to equip graduates with the necessary skills and competencies. Employability is not only about developing relevant attributes, techniques or experience just to enable a student to get a job, or to advance within a current career. In essence, the emphasis is on developing critical, reflective abilities, with a view to empowering and enhancing open and distant learning.

The research approach of this study is qualitative in nature. The researcher chose the approach because it allows a person to accomplish the overall aim of the study (Snape & Spencer, 2003). Qualitative research is naturalistic and interpretative approach concerned with the understanding of the meaning people give to the phenomena within their overall social setting. It provides a deeper understanding of the social world, it is based on a small-scale sample, and lastly it uses a common interactive data collection method, i.e. interviews which allow new issues and concepts to be explored (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). This study is a phenomenology type of qualitative research. The researcher attempts to recognise and identify how one or more individuals experience a certain phenomenon.

Case study is another method used by the researcher. A case study in research addresses the exploratory and descriptive nature of the research questions. Case studies are often seen as prime examples of qualitative research whereby the researcher adopts an interpretive approach to data collection. The researcher further studies `things' within their context and considers the subjective significance that people bring to their situation. When using the case study approach, a single person, plan, occurrence, development, institution, organisation, social group or phenomenon is

investigated within a specified time frame, using a combination of appropriate data collection devices to come up with the conclusion (Creswell, 1994). The purpose of case studies is to describe, explain, or assess and evaluate a phenomenon. The researcher interacts with people involved in the data. Data is primarily collected by fieldwork (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996).

It is to the advantage of the researcher to adopt the case study approach. This is because conclusions and findings are based on data collected. The approach of case studies is very relevant if the researcher wants different sources of information not the single sources of information used to carry out the research (Yin, 2008).

3.3.2 Characteristics of qualitative research

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), qualitative research is a positioned activity, which allows the researcher to locate and observe what is taking place around the world. It is a set of interpretive, material practices, which makes the world visible, and these practices in turn make the world into a series of representations including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos for the data analysis.

It is a multi-method, which involves interpretive and naturalistic approach to be subject matter. Natural settings are studied in an attempt to make sense of what a certain phenomenon in terms of the meanings which people present (Joubish, Khurram, Fatima, & Haider, 2011). Qualitative research involves the collection of emperical materials, case studies, personal experiences,life stories, interviews and observations in individual lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Qualitative research therefore involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world and attempts to make sense and interpret the phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research describes what is seen locally and sometimes to come up with or generate new hypotheses and theories (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Qualitative research involves observations that are transformed into records based on the observer's judgment. The major advantage of qualitative research is that it provides a very rich description of a phenomenon, including not only details of the phenomenon but also extensive detail about the context in which the phenomenon was observed. This is because qualitative research takes a broader perspective to describe a particular phenomenon. The major disadvantage of qualitative research is that, it is rather difficult to determine reliability falsify and imitate (Altermatt, 2010). According to Brown (2005), the following are characteristics of qualitative research:

Dependability - this involves being able to account for all the changing conditions in whatever is being studied at that moment and changes in the design of the study needed to get a better understanding of the context. Dependability is enhanced by using an overlapping method, stepwise replication, and inquiry audits. The overlapping method uses carefully planned methodological triangulation. This is a multiple data gathering procedure (example observations, interviews, and questionnaires). Stepwise replications involve time triangulation. This is when the researcher gathers data on multiple occasions. This method helps in examining the reliability of the data and interpretations over time. Lastly, inquiry audits involve enlisting an outside expert "auditor" to confirm the reliability of agreement among data, research methods, interpretations and conclusions.

Credibility – qualitative research requires demonstration to readers that the research is designed to maximize the accuracy of identifying and describing whatever is being studied, especially as judged by the groups of people being studied. Credibility is improved by using one or more of the following strategies: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and member checking.

Confirmability – in qualitative research, confirmability refers to the full disclosure of the data upon which all interpretations are based upon. The reader of the research should therefore as a result be able to examine the data to confirm the results and interpretations. Confirmability is enhanced by using audit trails. This involves the use of written field notes, memos, a field diary, process and personal notes, and a reflexive journal.

Transferability – this involves demonstrating the applicability of the results of the study in one context to other contexts. Transferability is improved by providing what is often referred to as thick description (i.e., giving enough detail so the readers can decide for themselves if the results are transferable to their own contexts). Thick description also involves the description that includes the participants' interpretations and other social and or cultural information. It is the responsibility of the researcher to apply the results of the study to a new context. In this way, sufficient descriptive data can be formulated to make similarity judgments possible for readers.

According to Joubish, Khurram, Fatima and Haider (2011), they describe the characteristics of qualitative research as the following:

- **Purpose :** to understand the interpretations of people in the world
- **Reality :** the reality is dynamic in nature due to the changes in the perceptions and beliefs of individuals
- **Viewpoint:** reality is what people perceive it to be
- **Values:** values influence people and these values need to be understood and taken into account when research is conducted and reported.
- **Focus:** a holistic approach on the overall view
- **Orientation:** this is about discovering theories and hypotheses which have to be solved by data collected
- **Data:** data collected reflects the perceptions of the people in the environment and their subjectivity
- **Instrumentation:** The person is the primary collection instrument
- **Conditions:** investigations are conducted under natural conditions
- **Results:** the focus has to be on the research design and procedures the researcher uses in order to real and rich data

3.3.3 A classification of the proposed study's overall research design

The term research design is widely used in education, yet it takes on different meanings in different studies. In order to conduct a research, a design is needed. It is a work plan of what has to be done in order to complete a project. The function of a research design is to ensure that the evidence obtains enables the researcher to answer the research questions as unambiguously as possible (Mark & Peter, 2001). Phenomenological research study was conducted for this research. The term phenomenology refers to a person's perception of the meaning of an event, as opposed to the event as it exists externally to an individual (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005).

A phenomenological research is a strategy whereby the researcher recognizes the fundamental nature of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by particular participants. It is about understanding the human experiences marking phenomenology as a philosophy as well as a method. It also involves studying a small number of people through a broad and prolonged engagement and investigation to develop patterns and relationships of meaning (Moustakas, 1994). The following are descriptors have become clearly visible in the 21st century that describes the study's general research design:

Empirical research – looks at peoples' experience in order to obtain complete descriptions. These descriptions provide the basis for a philosophical structural analysis, which portrays the essence of individual experience. Data is comprised of descriptions obtained through open-ended questions and dialogue in an interview. Then the researcher describes the composition of the individual's experience based on the interpretation of the research participant's story. The aim of the empirical research is to determine what the experience means for the people who have had that experience (Moustakas, 1994). For the purpose of this study, an empirical approach is used because primary data is collected from participants.

Cross-sectional research – the focus is the study of a certain phenomenon at a particular time (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007). The respondents in this study will be interviewed once this procedure is complete it will represent data with a complete picture of the phenomenon.

Basic research – the basic research expands the knowledge of the study field, which the researcher is conducting. The study is carried out to give respondents a better and clearer understanding of processes and their outcomes in the study (Saunders et al., 2007). The research conducted in this study seeks to improve the challenges associated with the employability of Human Resource Management Graduates.

Primary data – according to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009), the primary data is collected for a specific proposed research project. In this study,emperical data is collected to address the objectives of the project.

Qualitative data - qualitative data consists of words and observations, not numbers. This means that the data analysis and the interpretation brings the understanding of the study in a non-numerical approach (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003). In this study, qualitative data is applied in the form of in-depth interviews.

Exploratory research – this is a characteristic of evolving in to a totally new and different direction with the emerging of new knowledge gained by the researcher. It aims to explore the research aims and study in detail what has not been discovered. Exploratory research is also a means of establishing what is happening in the world and as a result, insight into the phenomena is gained (Saunders et al., 2007).

3.4 SAMPLING

Sampling is a process of choosing a small group of participants from a defined population. The majority of individuals are stakeholders in establishing a brief conclusion about a large number of people (population) in a scientific research (Shank, 2002). According to Marshall and Rossman(1999), sample is the primary method used to collect data. The reasoning behind sampling is associated with the purpose of the research as well as the research problem studied. Sampling is therefore the process of selecting observations, drawing conclusions, applying results and comparing one investigation with another (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, Poggenpoel, Shrunik & Shrunik, 1998).

3.4.1 Unit of analysis

Unit of analysis is the study which refers to the organisation or persons. Cole (1995), defines an organisation as an entity which exists when there is more than one individual who agrees to work together with another individual over a certain period of time in order to achieve certain common goals. The research is carried out at South African Universities which offer open and distance learning through eWIL programmes.

3.4.2 Target population

Population is the study of individuals, groups or organisations (Welman & Kruger, 2001). A population is the total of persons, events, organization units, case records, or other sampling units, with which the research problem is concerned. A population is therefore the target of all the people in the world with the same characteristics to which the researcher would like to apply conclusions from a certain study (UNISA, 2002). According to Parahoo (1997), population refers to the total number of units which data is collected, such as individuals,artifacts and events. For the purpose of this study, the target population will be graduates and academies in South African universities who have open and distant learning and offer this learning through eWIL programmes.

The data source will be the selected academies and post graduate students. The data will be collected by means of interviews. The data which is collected will be supported by the literature review to further develop insight of the study and further interpret the data.

3.4.3 Sample size

Sample size does not influence the importance or the quality of the study conducted in a qualitative research. To determining the sufficient sample size in qualitative research, it is ultimately a matter of judgment and experience in evaluating the quality of the information collected by the researcher (Sadelowski, 2007). An appropriate sample size for a qualitative study is one that sufficiently answers the relevant research questions and the research objectives (Marshall, 1996).

In a qualitative research, interviews are often used as a way to go through the social life beyond appearance and obvious meanings. In research, interview-based studies involving a small number of respondents are fast becoming more common in data collection. Justification of small-sample

studies focus on phenomenological assumptions which underwrite investigations of personal experience in a largely subjectivist framework (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006).

Qualitative samples are smaller in nature and have a better ability to provide a deeper and richer description of the specific topic, phenomenon or experiences and gather more information about the field studied (Maree & Pietersen, 2007). For sufficient data to be collected, relevant information has to be in line with the hypotheses of the study. Smaller data will therefore be more advantageous because it will not conflict with logistical and ethical considerations concerning data acquisition. In such cases, sample sizes need to be satisfactory in order to provide adequate tests of important experimental effects (Congdon & Dunham, 1999). For the purpose of this study, the researcher will collect the necessary information through open-ended questions. An amount of eight participants and a focus group will be interviewed.

3.4.4 Sampling Technique

The advantage of using random sampling is the fact that the probabilities of the sample estimator will be within a given number of units from the population and limitation estimates will be determined. The most important distinction, which needs to be made about the sampling technique, is whether it is a probability (random) or a non-probability (non-random) sampling method. Random or probability sampling allows the researcher to know what will be selected for the sample. It relies on chance, which is, in principle, the same as flipping a coin. Sampling techniques that do not let the researcher know in advance the likelihood of selecting each element is known as non-random or non-probability sampling methods (Schutt, 2008).

In this research, random sampling is considered for the investigation. This type of sampling was chosen because each member of the population has an equal and known chance of being selected. This is also the purest form of probability sampling (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Due to the cost and time limitations of the research, the investigation will be limited to open distance learning, post-graduate students and academies in selected universities, who are part, of the Human Resource Management Department. It was important to ensure that the leaders selected were operating at the same level, had sufficient experience at a strategic level and had an understanding of the broader

environment associated with their company. The demographic breakdown of these corporate leaders is provided in Table 1.

Table 2: Characteristics of leaders in the academic environment (n7)

Characteristics	Category	Frequency
Gender	**Male**	**2**
	Female	**5**
Race	**African**	**3**
	White	**3**
	Indian	**1**
Marital Status	**Single**	**4**
	Married	**2**
	Divorced	**1**
Highest Qualifications	**Honours**	**3**
	Masters	**1**
	Doctorate	**3**

As can be seen from Table 1, two of the participants are male while five are females. Three participants are African, three White and one Indian. Four are single, two are married and one is divorced. All participants have tertiary qualifications therefore they are all graduates.

3.5 PARTICIPANT PROFILE

All the participants were very open and helpful about their feelings and their experiences in the higher learning institutions. Following the interviews, it became very clear that the academics and graduates shared similar views, opinions and characteristics with regards to the questions which were asked. They were all willing to put in the extra time and effort. The tables below will provide

a brief background discussion of each participant and the way in which I experienced their interaction. The researcher will first give the background of individuals and the focus group participants will follow.

3.5.1 Background Characteristics of the Interview Participants

PARTICIPANTS	BACKGROUND
P1	Participant 1 is a 54 year old South African white female academic. She has been working for one of the top universities in South Africa for the past three and a half years. She is currently married and holds a Doctorate in Human Resource Management. She is currently the Executive Dean of the faculty of Commerce and Administration and has been in the field of HR since 1977.
P2	Participant 2 is 57 year old white south African female who is married. Her highest qualification Doctorate. She is currently a university Professor in the Graduate School and she has been in the position for three weeks. However, she has been in the field of HR for the past 30 years.
P3	Participant 3 is a 42 year old South African, Indian male. He is currently divorced and holds an MBA. He is now employed by a higher learning institution in Namibia. He is a Director in the department of HR and has been in the current position for three years but has been in the field of HR for the past 15 years.
P4	Participant 4 is a 33 year old white, South African female. She is currently single and she is an Associate Professor- Programme Director in the Department of Industrial Psychology and has been in this position for two years. She has however been in the field of HR for a period of 10 years

3.5.2 Background Characteristics of the Focus Group

PARTICIPANTS	BACKGROUND
P1	Participant 1 is a 22 year old, African female from Botswana. She is single and currently a graduate in the Department of Industrial Psychology and Human Resource Management.
P2	Participant 2 is a 23 year old, African male from South Africa. He is single and a graduate in the Department of Industrial Psychology and Human Resource Management.
P3	Participant 3 is a 27 year old, African male who resides in South Africa. He is currently single and is also a graduate from the Department of Industrial Psychology and Human Resource Management.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION

A researcher can gather data in various ways. This can be through primary or secondary sources. The research is qualitative in nature therefore the main source of data gathering will be through interviews. For the purpose of this research, a semi-structured and in-depth open-ended style of questioning was selected as a research tool for the collection of data and primary sources were used. Data collection is employed when the researcher needs to explore deeply into the various circumstances and understand the human motivations involved (Parahoo, 1997).

The processes of collecting data used in qualitative research come from a range of collection methods. These methods include interviews with individuals, observations of people and their actions, the analysis of media, content and guided conversations with a group of individuals (focus groups) (Tewksbury, 2009).

Interviews are carefully structured conversations which researchers have with participants. Questions regarding the study are asked from people who are knowledgeable about the relevant topic. Interviews are used to solicit information from people. When a qualitative researcher asks questions, they are interested in understanding how the person being interviewed understands, experiences or views the topic (Tewksbury, 2009).

The quantitative researcher inquires about if and how a person knows something, and how that knowledge can be translated into a numeric value. Using qualitative method is advantageous as data is "richer" than quantitative data. This is because the researcher not only learns how the interviewee sees and knows something, but also gets an explanation of that observation or knowledge. As a result, interview data provides unlimited range of possibilities (Tewksbury, 2009). For the purpose of this study, semi-structured and in-depth interviews were used.

Semi-structured interviews are non-standardised and are frequently used in qualitative analysis. In this interview, the researcher does not focus on testing a specific hypothesis but has a list of key themes, issues, and questions which need to be covered. The order of the questions can also be changed depending on the direction of the interview. An interview guide is used, but additional questions can be asked to have a clear understanding of the study (Gray, 2004). The researcher also has the ability to ask additional questions. Questions that the researcher may have not anticipated in the beginning of the interview can also be asked. Note taking or tape recording documents are used in the interview. This type of interview gives the researcher opportunities to investigate for views and opinions of the interviewee (Corbetta, 2003).

In in-depth interviews, the procedure is more like a conversation than having a formal predetermined response from the participant. The researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant's views about the field. The main focus is how the participant frames and structures the responses (Wengraf, 2001). This method is based on an assumption of the participant and the perspective with regards to the phenomenon of interest. With in-depth interviews, the most important aspect is the approach of the interview by the researcher with the aim of conveying the

attitude that the participant's views and inputs are valuable and useful. The interviews also involve personal interaction so it is important to cover the ethical issues beforehand (Patton, 2002).

Focus groups were also used to collect data from post- graduates studying through open and distance learning. These participants were selected because they have certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic and the field of study (Greeff, 2002). Parahoo (1997), describes a focus group as having an interaction between more than one participants for the purpose of collecting data. This type of data collection has the folowing advantages:

- It is less costly and a faster way to obtain valuable and relevant data
- The participants are a lot more free and relaxed in voicing their opinions in each other's company.
- The participants have the opportunity to reflect on their own opinions about the particular phenomenon.

In a focus group, questions are asked to encourage discussion and expression of differing opinions and points of view from each participant. In most cases, the researcher conducts these interviews several times with different individuals so as to identify trends in the perceptions and opinions expressed (Krueger & Casey, 2002).

3.6.1 Primary Data Collection Procedure

In this study, the researcher used the primary data collection procedure as the instrument. This is because the data from the participants is in the form of word in the research problem. This approach allows greater latitude in providing answers and in-depth information regarding the phenomenon. The primary data is collected by the researcher for the specific purpose of answering the main problem or objectives. This then means that the data observed or collected is directly from first-hand experience (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002). Data was collected by means of individual interviews and focus groups. The researcher sent e-mails and made follow-ups by telephone to set up appointments with all participants. Appointments were made and convenient times were scheduled.

When conducting interviews, it is important for the researcher to schedule meetings with prospective participants so as to establish a rapport, this is because the role of the researcher is to elicit as much information as possible. During the meetings, the researcher explained to the participants the objectives and relevance of the study. Before proceeding to the interview, participants signed consent forms and confidentiality was ensured. The interviews were approximately 60 minutes long.

3.6.2 Data Collection and Storing of Data

The data in the study was collected from individual and focus group interviews. The interviews were both semi-structured and in- depth in nature, therefore the questions were open-ended. It is also very important for the researcher to ensure that the data gathered is not misplaced. Audio recording and note taking was therefore used simultaneously.

When it comes to note taking, there is an increased risk of interviewer being bias towards the responses. This is because the interviewer is likely to make notes and comments which make immediate sense or that he or she deems as relevant or interesting (Mathers, Fox & Hunn, 2002). To avoid this risk, the researcher made use of tape recording. Tape recording ensures that the whole interview is captured and presents complete data for analysis. The cues that were missed or left out the first time can be recognized when analysis of the data needs to done (Mathers, Fox & Hunn 2002).

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Statistical analysis is when a certain statistical technique is used in conducting the enquiry of a certain occurrence or phenomenon. When conducting a data analysis, all the statistical methods beginning from the collection of data until interpretation are utilised. Statistical data not only involves the collection and analysis of primary and secondary data but it also involves the testing of the hypothesis (Vineethan, 2011).

According to Creswell (2003), steps that are used in the analysis of data are as follows:

- There is an organisation of details regarding the study. The facts are arranged in a logical order.
- There is a categorisation of data. These categories are recognised so that they can assist with the clustering of data into meaningful groups.
- The interpretation of single instances then takes place. The researcher then looks at all the incidents and other parts of data. These are then examined for specific meanings they might have in relation to the study.
- The researcher then draws an identification of similar patterns. The interpretations of the data is then scrutinised for fundamental themes and any other patterns that may characterise the study broadly than a single piece of information.
- Lastly synthesis and generalisation of concepts is done. An overall representation of the study is constructed. The researcher can now draw conclusions that may have other implications beyond the specific study researched.

In this study, the researcher collected data in the form of open-ended interview questions with the primary intent of developing themes from the data.

Thematic analysis is an introductory method for qualitative analysis. It is the first qualitative method of analysis that researchers must have knowledge of, as it provides the necessary skills that are useful for conducting qualitative analysis. One of the main benefits of using thematic analysis is its flexibility (Holloway & Todres, 2003). Thematic analysis is the simplest method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within collected data. It simply organises and describes collected data in rich detail. It further interprets various aspects of the research topic (Tuckett, 2005).

Braun and Clarke (2006), describe thematic analysis as a rather straight-forward form of qualitative analysis, and it does not require the same detailed theoretical and technical knowledge that other approaches use. Thematic analysis is not just a collection of different data put together with little or no analytic description. Nor is it a collection of information with analytic comments made that simply or primarily paraphrases the particular researcher's content. The information extracted in

thematic analysis is illustrative of the analytic points the researcher makes about the data collected from different participants. This data should therefore be used to demonstrate or support an analysis that goes beyond specific content, to make sense of the statistics, and tell the reader what it does or might mean with regards to the study.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the advantages of thematic analysis are the following:

- Flexibility.
- Easy and quick method for the researcher to learn.
- Accessible to other researchers with little or no experience of conducting qualitative research.
- Results are accessible to the general public.
- It is a useful method for working within participatory research paradigm, with participants as collaborators.
- Can usefully summarise key features of a large body of data and offer a rich description of the data set.
- It highlights similarities and the differences across the data collected.
- Can generate unanticipated insights into the phenomenon.
- It has the ability to allow for social as well as psychological interpretations of data.
- Lastly thematic analysis can be used for producing qualitative analyses suitable to informing policy development.

3.8 DATA VERIFICATION

In ensuring the validity of the interviews, certain strategies were employed by the researcher. Member checking was done after interviews which served the purpose of verifying data throughout the analysis process. This strategy was employed by taking the analysed copies of the face-to-face interviews back to the participants in order to check the truthfulness of the contents and the meanings attached to the contents and to provide an opportunity for further elaboration (Creswell, 2009). A copy of the research findings was presented as a hard copy to the participants in order to clarify the meanings and interpretation in the report. This will ensure the true value of the data collected.

3.9 ASSESSING AND DEMONSTRATING THE QUALITY AND RIGOUR OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN

In this study, meanings formulated from sampling, data collection and statistical analysis methods used are described in this section. The participants were consulted to ensure validity, reliability and rigour.

3.9.1 Validity

Validity refers to the degree to which the explanations of phenomena match the authenticity of the world (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). Validity has three major requirements namely: a clear definition of the actions and behavioural aspects covered in the measuring instrument of a research, validity shows a clear evaluation of the items and lastly, it shows an analysis of the actions and behavioural aspects in the parts that represent it (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2006).

In a research, the validity of the study is supported by the fact that the research took place in a real-life setting. This can be seen to be more valid in the sense that it yields results with broader applicability to other real-world contexts (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). According to Bogdan and Bicklen (1998), validity is applied to ensure that information includes everything it should and that it does not include anything that should not be included. It is a way of discovering a true and precise picture of what is claimed to be described.

In order for the researcher to obtain validity, standards must be followed which have a meaningful link to the research questions. Therefore, with data analysis, a valid argument will be created leading to good results and findings. The questions posed in the interviews must therefore be of such a nature that ambiguity will not occur in response (Creswell, 2003).

3.9.2 Reliability

Reliability deals with the consistency with which an instrument evaluates. It is closely linked to the concept of validity (Creswell, 2003). Reliability refers to the trustworthiness of measurement to the extent with which the results taken from that measurement are similar over different forms of the

same instrument or occasions of data collecting. This means that, the same results are obtained each time the researcher uses various techniques for assessing the collected data (Flick, 1998).

Therefore, in simple terms, reliability means dependability or credibility. The percentage, to which a test constantly measures what it is intended to measure, is referred to as the reliability. This is whereby data is re-administered and the scores or the results obtained would essentially reveal similar scores the second time (Flick, 1998). According to Merriam (1998), reliability is the consistency of scores aquired from a certain data. These scores have to be consistant in order to provide useful and valid information.

3.9.3 Rigour

Rigour is the means by which the researcher shows intergrity and competence (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002). Rigour is the openess which takes place during the study. It is the scrupulous adherence to the philosophical perspective. There is a great deal of thoroughness in the collection of data and consideration is made to the subjective theory developments. According to (Burns & Grove, 2003) the researcher can use one of the followinf strategies to ensure rigour:

- Member checking- this involves giving participants feedback on the preliminary findings and interpretations.
- Searching for negative cases or alternative explanations- case analysis involves addressing and considering alternative methods of interpreting the data. This strategy enhanses the validity of the research if the researcher is able to identify data that does not fit into the theory of the study.
- Peer review- collegues are involved in the research procedure to re-analyse raw data.
- The descriptions- this is rich description of the research setting observed during the strategy inquiry. The researcher uses narrative or themes to record the views of the participants.
- Reflexibility- this is the continuous process where the researcher reflects on the conceived values of participants.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In conducting interviews, ethical issues are one of the main concerns. Confidentiality must be given. Participants should also be assured that the collection of information will not harm or

damage their integrity in any way by the research (Gray, 2004). The researcher has the responsibility of respecting the rights, needs, values, and desires of the participants when collecting data (Creswell, 2003).

Obtaining informed consent from participants enables them to make informed and voluntary decisions, which is largely based on the explanation of all relevant information given during the interview, as to whether or not to participate in the study. By ensuring anonymity and confidentiality and managing information in a confidential manner. The privacy also creates a safe setting for the participants where they are able to share their experiences and the meanings ascribed to them (Swanepoel & de Beer, 2006).

According to Patton (2000), the following ethical considerations should be adhered to in a qualitative study:

- **Explain purpose**- Explain the purpose of the inquiry to the participant just before the interview takes place.
- **Promises and reciprocity**-The researcher needs to state what the participant will gain from the data.
- **Risk assessment**- The researcher must consider in which ways the interview will put the participant at risk in terms of stress, legal liabilities, ostracism or political repercussion.
- **Confidentiality**- Reflects on the degree to which promises of confidentiality can be met. Confidentiality means that the researcher will not reveal the information given during the interview. Anonymity will be adhered to.
- **Inform consent**- The researcher will have to determine what kind of consent is necessary, if any.
- **Data access and ownership**-There will be an evaluation of who has the right to access data and for what purpose.
- **Mental health**- the researcher might have to consider how interviewer and interviewee's mental health may be affected by conducting the interview.
- **Advice**- during the research process, it is advisable for the researcher to appoint an adviser on ethical issues during the course of the study.

- **Data collection boundaries**- it is up to the researcher to determine how hard to push for data, what lengths will be used in trying to gain access to data needed.

3.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the research paradigm used by the researcher. This was then followed by the strategies of inquiry, research design, sampling, data collection and the primary procedure used to collect the necessary data. The method used to store the collected data was discussed in detail outlining those individual interviews and focus groups were used as the primary source of data. The statistical analysis of data then follows and discusses thematic analysis as a tool for interpreting the data. The data verification was then outlined and the quality of research design was discussed followed by ethical considerations.

Chapter 4:FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

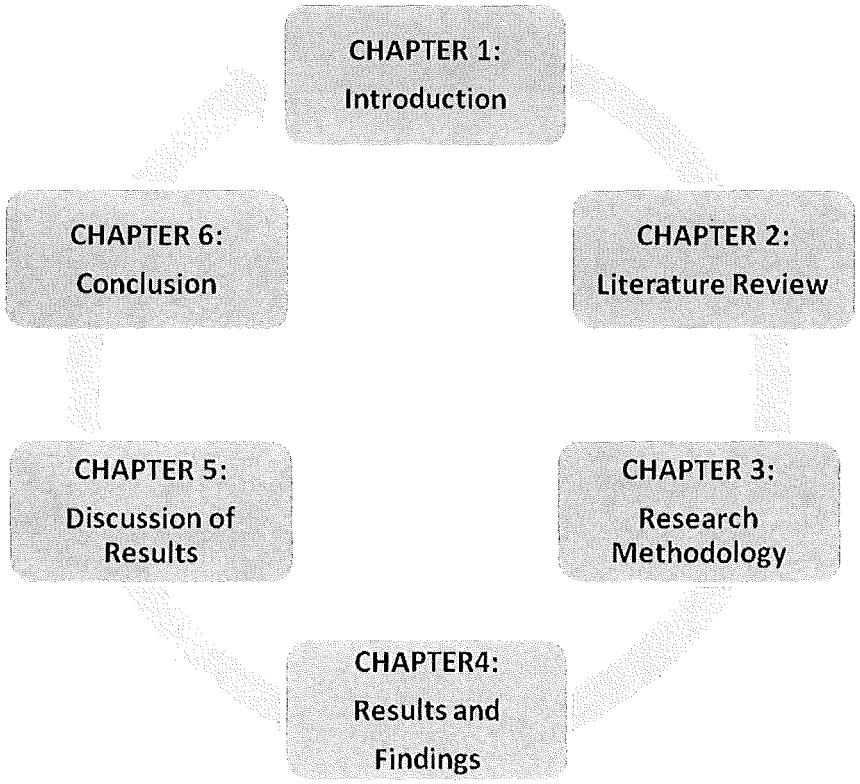


Figure 4-1: Chapter 4 in Context

The previous chapter presented the research design of the study and included the methods, measuring instruments, research procedures and data analysis methods. This chapter outlines the results and findings of the various analyses methods applied. The researcher will first discuss responses from individual interviews and focus group responses will follow.

4.2 IDENTIFYING STATEMENTS RELATING TO THE TOPIC

Identifying the general themes in data is the most crucial part of data analysis. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the collected data. In this study, the data is analysed using the thematic data analysis method. A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and it represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During the process of codyfying the transcripts, relevent information was separated from all the irrelevant information. General themes were therefore identified.

Table 4-1: Initial Codes Identified from the Data

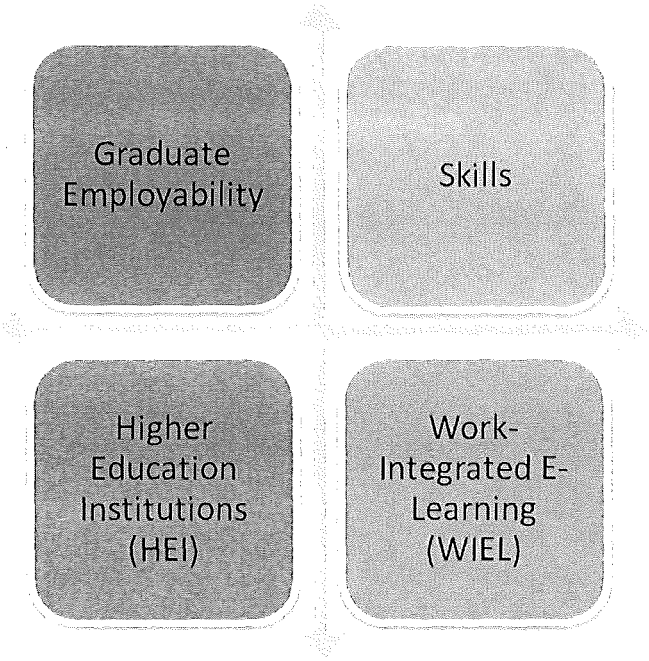
Initial Codes	Categories	Description
• Having the knowledge to do a job • Having interpersonal competencies • Technical and basic knowledge competency skills • Being ready for a job. "readiness" • The ability to move with the changing environment • The application of theory • Having the basic skills to get a job • Being able to have the required experience • The level of marketability • The relevant qualifications • Understanding how organisations operate	Graduate Employability	This category explores the views of participants on the meaning of graduate employability.
• Problem-solving skills	Desirable soft skills	This category explores the

• Cognitive and lateral skills • Communication • Self-motivated • Self-discipline • Self-starters • Self-regulated • Interpersonal skills • Positive attitude • Self-awareness • Resilience • Consistent • Emotionally and psychologically prepared • Ability to adapt to changing careers • Cultural intelligence • Conflict management • Work ethics • Ability to conduct interviews • Open-minded • Time management skills • Flexibility • Leadership skills • Self –confidence		views of participants on the desirable soft skills needed for the workplace
• Computer skills • Using the internet • Administrative aspects • Technology wise	Desirable technical skills	This category explores the views of participants on the desirable technical skills needed for the workplace
• Ability to apply HR knowledge • Knowing the core HR functions	Attributes expected from an HR graduate	This category explores the views of participants on the attributes desired from HR graduate

• The ability to learn organisational environment • Soft skills • Hard skills • Flexibility • Life-long learning • Communication skills • Problem-solving skills • Leadership skills • Interviewing skills • Multi-task • Carry orders		
• Some do and some do not • They do not • It is difficult to say • Each HEI has its own methods • There is no balance between theory and practictical • Not sufficiently enough • To some extent	The perceived gap between current graduates soft skills and desirable soft skills	This category explores the views of participants on the extent to which HEI prepares students for the workplace
• Doing practical work • Being assessed by projects • Doing simulation work • Giving organisational experience to students • Application of theory • Preparing students for work	Work-integrated e-learning	This category explores the views of participants on the meaning of EWIL
• Expensive to implement • HEI and businesses do not have collaborations	Challenges of eWIL	This category explores the views of participants on the challenges of eWIL

with each other • Lack of resources • No mentoring • Slows down progress		
• Practical application of knowledge is gained • Allows the graduate have an idea of real-life situations • Students are able to pick up the skills quicker in the workplace • Saves time for employer to train new entrants • Teaches students to be computer literate and technologically advanced • Leaning is done at own pace • Creates jobs for graduates	Benefits of eWIL	This category explores the views of participants on the benefits of Ewil
• It depends on how it is managed • To some extent it does • EWIL enhances employability • Competitive advantage	Extent to which eWIL enhances graduate employability	This category explores the views of participants on the extent to which eWIL enhances employability

Figure 4-2: Themes identified to describe the phenomenon



The findings are reported in three phases. First the findings relating to the interviews of the academic staff members are reported. This is followed by the findings of the focus groups. The final phase reports on the integration of the findings of phases one and two.

4.3. PHASE 1: FINDINGS RELATING TO THE ACADEMIC PARTICIPANTS

4.3.1. Themes relating to the employability of graduates

In order to determine the necessary skills, attributes and competencies needed for the workplace by a graduate, it is important to first define graduate employability.

4.3.1.1. Themes relating to the conceptualising graduate employability

This category includes factors relating to the meaning of being a potential candidate for employers, meaning being employable.

Table 4-2: Responses relating to the definition of graduate employability

Graduate employability	Participants
Having the knowledge to do a job	P1 P2 P4
Having interpersonal competencies	P1 P2 P3 P4
Technical and basic knowledge competency skills	P1 P4
Being ready for a job. "readiness"	P1 P2 P3
The ability to move with the changing environment	P2 P3 P4
The application of theory	P2 P3

Some of the quotes by the participants include:

"Graduate employability is about getting along with people, working together with people and communicating with people ..." and

(P1)

"... It's about having the necessary skills, abilities and attitudes and knowledge required from graduates in order to do the job..." and

(P3)

"... You need to be able to equip yourself with the necessary skills to make yourself employable..."and

(P4)

"... It is the application of theory in the real world environment. Whether this environment is a stimulated environment, whether the environment is in a community context, in a Government context, in a form of Private sector employer context, really doesn't matter".

(P3)

4.3.2. Desirable graduate employability skills

The soft skills and technical skills are considered to be necessary for employment. This category includes the perceptions of participants on the desirable soft skills needed for the workplace.

4.3.2.1. Themes relating to soft skills

This category includes the perceptions of participants on the desirable technical or sfot skills needed for the workplace.

Table 4-3: Responses relating to the desirable soft skills needed for entering the workforce

Desirable soft skills	Participants
Problem-solving skills	P1 P3 P4
Cognitive and lateral skills	P1 P3 P4
Communication	P1 P2 P3 P4
Self-motivated	P1 P2 P3 P4
Self-discipline	P1 P3 P4
Self-starters	P1 P3 P4
Self-regulated	P1 P2
Interpersonal skills	P1 P2 P3 P4
Positive attitude	P1 P2 P3 P4
Self-awareness	P2 P3 P4
Resilience	P2
Consistent	P2 P3
Emotionally and psychologically prepared	P3 P4
Ability to adapt to changing careers	P3 P4

Cultural intelligence	P4
Conflict management	P2 P3
Work ethics	P1 P2 P3 P4
Ability to conduct interviews	P1 P2 P3
Open-minded	P1 P2 P3 P4

Some of the quotes by the participants are the following:

"... Give me a student with the right attitude and I will teach him..." and

(P3)

"... Be a people's person not a people's pleaser, then you are going to be a push over..." and

(P2)

"...People need to learn to be adaptable and adjust to situations because you go into an organization and you got your pre-occupied personality and you can't just do what you want to do. You need to adjust to situations and also need to be emotionally and culturally intelligent ..." and

(P4)

"...They say that attitude has 3 elements:

1. *What you think*
2. *What you feel*
3. *What you do*

So it is cognitive, affective and behaviour. The key to attitude is what you do. How do you act towards other people who are different? In an organization you must mould your behaviour. Once the behaviour changes than the attitude changes".

(P1)

4.3.2.2. Themes relating to the desirable technical skills needed for the workplace

This category includes the perceptions of participants on the desirable technical or hard skills needed for the workplace.

Table 4-4: Responses relating to the desirable technical or hard skills needed upon entering the workforce for an HR graduate

Desirable technical (hard) skills	Participants
Technology wise	P1 P2 P3 P4
Ability to use the internet	P1 P2
Have basic computer skills	P1 P2 P4
The ability to deal with administrative aspects	P1 P2

Some of the quotes from the participants include:

"... You see I would say they must be technology wise. They must be able to work with the internet, they must have access to computers, because if they don't have or lacking in that, because most of your open and distant graduates, either going to do it on their cell phones via internet, but mostly at this stage internet..."and

(P1)

"... The student must be Tech able..."and

(P3)

"... Yes in our kind if work it is critical to enhance those technical skills through EWIL. We are working with people who are the assets of the organization. They must be able to deal with the administrative aspects..." and

(P2)

"... They need to have technical skills, computer skills, something here at the university is that we don't equip students sufficiently in computer skills and so on and they come into the organizations and most organizations are technology driven".

(P4)

4.3.2.3. Themes relating to the attributes and competencies that an employer expects from an HR graduate

This category focuses mainly on the specific attributes or skills needed from an HR graduate upon entering the workplace.

Table 4-5: Responses relating to the Human Resource competencies needed by employees

HR competencies	Participants
Ability to apply HR knowledge	P1 P2 P3
Knowing the core HR functions	P1 P2 P4
The ability to learn organisational environment	P1 P2 P3 P4
Soft skills	P1 P2 P3 P4
Hard skills	P1 P2 P3 P4
Flexibility	P3 P4
Life-long learning	P2 P3 P4
Communication skills	P1 P2 P3 P4
Problem-solving skills	P1 P2 P3 P4
Leadership skills	P1 P2 P3 P4
Interviewing skills	P1 P2 P4

Some of the quotes from the participants include:

"... They must understand the system, the basic system. They must understand how recruitment fit in the business strategy. They must know how to deal with difficult people (business management). They must know how HR fits into the business..." and

(P2)

"...Specific skills that HR students should have, is generic skills and the basic knowledge of HR functions such as Performance Management, Training and Development. The most important one is compensation management because I think in terms of HR people that have this idea that it is a staff

function and admin function and you know it's not that. Many organizations are going down because HR people are not allowed to play a bigger role, a strategic role. , HR people they need to know what talent is and how we do talent management. It is a strategic practice in organizations, and also this whole thing of HR metrics, measuring HR functions in organizations, that for me is very important and we need to equip our graduates with this..."and

(P4)

"...So I would say that good knowledge and then application of knowledge and then application of knowledge is extremely important".

(P1)

4.3.3. Themes relating to the Higher Education Institutions (HEI) role in equipping students with the desired skills

The universities play a very important role in ensuring that they offer their students with the soft and technical skills needed by employers. It is therefore important that they constantly review their curriculum to fit in with the changing environment. It is therefore important to determine if they play an active role in equipping students with the skills.

This category focuses mainly on the role played by Higher Education Institutions in preparing stududents for employment.

Table 4-6: Responses relating to the role in terms of equipping students with desired skills

Preparation by HEI	Participants
Some do and some do not	P1 P3
No, they do not	P4
It is difficult to say	P1 P2
Each HEI has its own methods	P1 P2 P3
There is no balance between theory and practictical	P2 P3

Some of the quotes by the participants are the following:

"...No. I'm very honest with you, because I have worked at previous institutions and I also know what is going on in other universities in South Africa. I'm sorry to have to say the answer is no, because we have 60 000 graduates with degrees and they are unemployed, then you know you are wasting their money. The truth is we have a situation in universities that we have unequal distribution of lecturers.

For example, we have lecturers who have been here for forty years, they come from a different generation and that's how they were taught, and they for example are not willing to change for example many of them have never been in corporate and many of them are not even interested to know what is going on in corporate. There are people who are put in academic positions who should not be there..."and

(P4)

"...It is difficult to say. In the three years period of a degree, there is not enough time to give practical..."and

(P2)

"... Some do and some don't. I think it's very difficult to generalize. One of the things is the size in a class. If you have bigger classes that it is more difficult. You can do better training in smaller groups. That has been proven all over. So it is very difficult to answer that for you..."and

(P1)

"... Lecturers should change the way how they look at the eWIL and lecturers are going to asses and design the portfolio of evidence. Some institutions run a will without credits and no one worries because there are no credits. These inconsistencies need to be addressed. No program can go to our tenets or qualification sorority without industry having input into the curriculum".

(P3)

4.3.4. The role of Work-Integrated e-Learning (eWIL)

eWIL comprises of a combination of work-integrated learning and e-learning. These two concepts are integrated to show the relationship of implementing work related skills and using e-learning as a method of teaching.

4.3.4.1. Themes relating to the conceptualising of eWIL

This category focuses on defining eWIL in the views of the participants.

Table 4.6: Responses relating to the meaning of eWIL by participants

Meaning of eWIL	Participants
Doing practical work	P1 P2 P4
Being assessed by projects	P1 P3
Doing simulation work	P1 P2 P3
Giving organisational experience to students	P1 P3
Application of theory	P3 P4
Preparing students for work	P3 P4

The results indicate that participants mostly agreed on defining eWIL as doing practical or simulation work. Some of the quotes by the participants include:

"...First of all work integrated e learning is the application of theory..."and

(P3)

"...Integration learning is vital whereby theory and practical differs. This is because of the kind of organization that they are working for. They differ in their application..."and

(P2)

"...Work integrated learning means that you go and do some practical's somewhere so you will have to do certain things like a project where we can say you go do an analysis of organizational structure or what is the ideal balance between line & support in an organization".

(P1)

4.3.4.2. Themes relating to the challenges relating to eWIL

With the implementation of every programme, there are certain challenges faced by either the stakeholders who design the programme or by the parties who apply the programme. This category therefore focuses on the challenges of eWIL programmes.

Table 4-7: Responses relating to the challenges of eWIL

Challenges of eWIL	Participants
Expensive to implement	P1 P4
HEI and businesses do not have collaborations with each other	P2
Lack of resources	P2 P3 P4
No mentoring	P2 P3

Some of the quotes include the following:

"...When you speak about challenges for eWIL, it is everything from the portfolio of evidence designs, work readiness to employer to student mobility..."and

(P3)

"...Another problem in developing countries is that not all people have access to computers and that's a huge challenge, it's a resource problem..."and

(P4)

"...It is expensive. It is an expensive model. You also have to go and accredit organizations. Training must be done on mentoring. It is expensive but it can be done..."and

(P1)

"...Higher learning institutions and businesses must move nearer to each other. They must start talking to each other on open forums and job creation forums. They must have a program to mentor graduates. Resources must be put in place by universities to enhance employability of the graduates. It's a plan that must be put into place *(P2)*

4.3.4.3. Themes relating to the benefits of eWIL

This category focuses on the benefits of using eWIL in universities.

Table 4-8: Responses relating to eWIL

Benefits of eWIL	Participants
Practical application of knowledge is gained	P1 P2 P3
Lets the graduate have an idea of real-life situations	P1 P2
Students are able to pick up the skills quicker in the workplace	P1
Saves time for employer to train new entrants	P3
Teaches students to be computer literate and technologically advanced	P3 P4
Leaning is done at own pace	P4
Creates jobs for graduates	P1 P2

Some of the quotes from the participants include:

"...It is vital for job creation in the sense that the organization will see that people are vital and important and that they need them..."and

(P2)

"...Practical application. It gives you an idea of the real world works and that is a good benefit. After you graduate and work, you will pick up administrative skills in two months. If you are trained well than you will pick it up like that..."and

(P1)

"...The benefit is that my student has more up to date practice information and therefore they will be more employable..."and

(P3)

"...In terms of benefits what is nice about that is we teach the students to be more computer literate and technology advance. Also what is nice about e learning, you get to learn on your own pace. You are not always pressured for example if you do the eWIL in the workplace you got somebody watching over your shoulder".

(P4)

4.3.4.4. Themes relating to the extent to which eWIL enhances the employability of graduates

This category looks at weather eWIL enhances graduate employability.

Table 4-9: Responses relating to the extent to which eWIL enhances employability

Extent of eWIL in enhancing employability	Participants
It depends on how it is managed	P1
To some extent it does	P1
eWIL enhances employability	P2 P4 P3

Some of the participant's quotes are the following:

"...It should be the course that develops the graduate attributes, cultural integration, and business etiquette..."and

(P3)

"...I think from my side eWIL is definitely the way to go at this point in time in South Africa..."and

(P4)

"...Yes in our kind if work it is critical to enhance those technical skills through eWIL. We are working with people who are the assets of the organization..."and

(P2)

"...It all depends on how you do it. I think that it is how you manage it. I don't think that work integrated learning is the alpha and omega of employability. I don't think so. I think that you can do through simulations and through case studies and there are a lot of other ways that you can do it just as well and prepare students. I think that it can work, and it also cannot".

(P1)

4.3.5. PHASE 2: FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

The focus group consisted of three post-graduate students. The interview questions asked were similar to those of the academics.

4.3.5.1. Themes relating to the conceptualising of graduate employability

In order to determine the necessary skills, attributes and competencies needed for the workplace by a graduate, it is important to first define graduate employability. This category looks at the definition of graduate employability according to the views of the graduates.

Table 4-10: Responses relating to the conceptualising of graduate employability

Meaning of graduate employability	Participants
Having the basic skills to get a job	P1 P2 P3
Being able to have the required experience	P1
The level of marketability	P2 P3
The relevant qualifications	P1 P2 P3
Understanding how organisations operate	P2 P3

Some of the quotes by the participants include:

"...Graduate employability is when a person who leaves an educational institution has the basic skills to go out into the world and get a job..."and

(P1)

"...It refers to the level of marketability of a graduate after completing their studies. You start being employable after you have completes your post graduate level because we do cases which I think are practical, so you have a better picture and understanding of how the organization works or operates. The graduates must investigate on the company and what qualities they want from the graduate. The culture of the organization is also important so that you can make yourself suitable and marketable for that specific organization..."and

(P2)

"...You being marketable and you having the qualifications to do the job, but these qualifications do not guarantee you the job because you need to have the necessary skills. Most organizations prefer students with learned skills but those with skills, regardless of where you get them, are employable".

(P3)

4.3.6. Desirable graduate employability skills

4.3.6.1. Themes relating to soft skills

This category describes the soft skills needed by graduates to increase their chances of getting employed.

Table 4-11: Responses relating to the desirable soft skills needed upon entering the workforce for an HR Graduate

Desirable soft skills	Participants
Basic knowledge relating to HR	P1 P3
Communication	P2 P3
Time management skills	P2
Discipline	P1 P2
Flexibility	P3
Self-confidence	P1 P3

Leadership skills	P3
Ability to work in a group	P3
Self-awareness	P2

The results indicate that the graduates agreed that the graduate should be able to display knowledge of the core HR concepts, be able to communicate and be self- confident. Some of the quotes of the participants include:

"...But also having the qualifications is not the only thing you need. Other factors to consider are being presentable and possess qualities expected by the organization. Self-awareness must be done. Time management. Being able to meet deadlines and not allowing your personal life to interfere with your studies. Being able to balance your life and work..."and

(P2)

"...Being able to communicate is very important. We do not have the luxury to sit in class with a lecturer so then this means that we must have discipline and this is an important attribute for the organizations to consider because we do not have to be told when to work..."and

(P1)

"...It is important for the graduate to be able to work well in a team, therefore that student needs to be motivated enough and this also brings out the leadership of the graduate".

(P3)

4.3.6.2. Themes relating to technical skills

This category describes the technical skills needed by graduates to increase their chances of getting employed.

Table 4-12: Responses relating to the desirable technical skills needed

Desirable technical skills	Participants
Computer skills	P1 P2 P3

Using the internet	P1 P2 P3

The participants all agree that the technical or hard skills needed by the graduate in open distance learning are the ability to use computers and the internet. Some of the quotes of the participants include:

"...Computer skills are needed and they are most important because we are not able to have a daily communication with our lecturers..."and.

(P1)

"...When you are a post graduate student, it is important to be computer literate. Therefore we use internet as our way of communicating with our lecturers..."and

(P2)

"...I think that being able to use the computer is very important. The computer skills allow a student to adapt quicker in the workplace. Because of the ever changing technologies, programmes are created daily to make work more efficient and easier; we are therefore able to download programmes that can assist".

(P3)

4.3.6.3. Themes relating to attributes or competencies which an employer expects from an HR graduate

This category focuses mainly on the specific attributes or skills needed from an HR graduate upon entering the workplace.

Table 4-13: Responses relating to the Human Resource competencies needed by employers

Attributes needed by employer	Participants
Ability to work well with others	P1 P2 P3
Team work	P1 P3
Carry orders	P1

Basic soft skills	P2 P3
Leadership	P1 P2 P3
Global competence	P2 P3
Practical skills	P1 P2 P3
Knowledge application	P1 P2 P3
System thinker	P2
Problem –solver	P2 P3
Conventional and traditional approach to organisations	P2
Multi-task	P3

The results clearly state that the ability to apply knowledge is essential. An HR graduate should be able to work well with others. Some of the quotes from the participants include:

"...Organizations require a person who is a system thinker, to be able to have solutions. Be conventional and traditional in you approach. Know globalization. Be able to do the basic skills that we learnt in first year of our studies which is being able to work at the entry level. Deal with the basics of HR such as interviewing new employee..."and

(P2)

"...Be able to work well with others. The graduate is expected to work well in a team. This shows that the graduate is able to carry out orders. We should be given practical skills in HR. That is the most important attribute..."and

(P1)

"...To multi-task. If an employee comes by and wants to know about the training and development, I should be able to give them the information and the basics. Companies want to compete globally so know HR and know what influence HR".

(P3)

4.3.7. Themese relating to Higher Education Institutions (HEI) role in eqquipping students with desired skills.

As already discissed above, universities play an very important role in ensuring that they offer their students with the soft and technical skills needed by employers. This category focuses mainly on the role played by Higher Education Institutions in preparing stududents for employment.

Table 4-14: Responses relating to the role which HEI play in preparing students in terms of skills development

Role of HEI	Participants
To some extent	P2
Not suffiently enough	P1 P3

The results indicate that universities do not prepare the students sufficietly enough. Graduates are not completely satisfied with the way in which the universities prepare them for the workplace. Some of the quotes include the following:

"...We have programs that we use in here at the university which also give us some experience of working with people. But this is not enough. Programmes are implemented which help with skills development, but the problem is that when that programme gets old or out-dated, then we don't have funds to get upgrades..."and

(P1)

"...They give us theory which is important for when we work. The theory is applied in assessments what we do. This allows the students to have an advantage over a student. So to some extent, the university does play an important role in development for the workplace..."and

(P2)

"...Well you have different universities in South Africa and the challenge is that not all of them have the same financial advantage. You have universities which have sponsors coming in because of the "name" so with some of us, we go to universities who lack resources and so it becomes more difficult to excel in our work. Therefore our university does contribute but it's not enough".

(P3)

4.3.8. Themes relating to the role of Work-Integrated e-Learning (eWIL)

EWIL comprises of a combination of work-integrated learning and e-learning. These two concepts are integrated to show the relationship of implementing work related skills and using e-learning as a method of teaching.

4.3.8.1. Themes relating to the conceptualising of eWIL

Table 4-15: Responses relating to the conceptualisation of eWIL by participants

Meaning of eWIL	Participants
Incorporating computer systems into the learning	P1 P2 P3
Develop computer literacy skills ,theory and working skills	P2 P3
Putting theory and practical together	P1 P3

The results indicate that graduates describe eWIL as a method of teaching that combines computer systems into the learning. It is about developing technical skills, theory and work skills. Some of the quotes from participants are the following:

"...When you incorporate computer systems into the learning, you develop computer literacy skills..."and

(P2)

"...It is being able to incorporate work expectations into the curriculum. This then allows the student to know what is expected of them..."and *(P1)*

"...It is about putting theory and practical together, it's the integration of work-integrated learning combined with e-learning. It's a delivery method which is used to assist distance students who do not have face-to-face classes".

(P3)

The findings indicate that the graduates understand that eWIL is the integration of work-integrated learning and e-learning. Work-integrated e-learning (eWIL) is a new research field, focussing on learning processes concerning both employees and organisations, using e-learning as a way of gaining new knowledge relevant for the work process (Boud & Garrick,1999).

4.3.8.2. Themes relating to the challenges of eWIL

This category therefore focuses on the challenges of eWIL programmes.

Table 4-16: Responses relating the challenges of eWIL

Challenges of eWIL	Participants
Slow down progress if the students do not have the basic skills	P1 P2
Difficult to adapt especially if the programmes keep change	P2 P3

The results indicate that when a new programme is implemented, it takes a while to adjust especialy if the computer is a new concept to the student. Some of the quotes are the following:

"...eWIL can cause a problem if a student does not have the basic knowledge of computers. It can come across as a challenge because it will slow down the progress of the student..."and

(P1)

"...The changing of programmes are not user friendly, so being able to learn and be familiar with these changes can be a challenge for someone with limited resources. Therefore universities should teach students on computer programmes and given better information..."and

(P2)

"...Some people are not familiar with using the internet. They find it difficult to adapt to the system of learning. They are unable to cope with technology. If the system is down, we are not able to work and this causes a delay".

(P3)

4.3.8.3. Themes relating to the benefits of eWIL

This category focuses on the benefits of using eWIL in universities.

Table 4-17: Responses relating to the benefits of eWIL

Benefits of eWIL	Participants
Improves computer skills	P1 P3
Ability to work effectively and efficiently and deliver better results	P1 P2
Enables the student to know current information	P2 P3

Some of the quotes of participants include:

"...A student who can use the computer can work effectively and deliver better work than a person who cannot use the computer..."and

(P1)

"...and enables the student to search for information and become updated with the latest news..."and

(P2)

"...You get to know different programmes therefore develop computer skills".

(P3)

4.3.9. Themes relating to the extent to which eWIL enhances the employability of graduates.

This category looks at weather eWIL enhances graduate employability.

Table 4-18: Responses relating to the extent to which eWIL enhances employability

Extent of employability	Participants
Competitive advantage	P1
Greater advantage due to the use of the internet	P1 P2 P3
Innovative delivery method	P1 P2 P3

The results indicate that all the students agree that eWIL programmes can enhance employability to a great extent. Some of the quotes are the following:

"...EWIL can be the future, innovative delivery method of education. It is all about the technology and being able to be computer savvy. eWIL will give a graduate the advantage of having computer based knowledge over others and this knowledge also allows the graduate to have competitive advantages. It does enhance employability because at the workplace you are expected to use and understand the systems put in place. They expect you at times to submit your work via emails, so you have to be familiar with using the computer. It is important to have those skills..."and

(P2)

"...If lecturers can move away from reading text books to students, and equipping them with technological methods of doing their work, they will be giving them an advantage over other students. The work we do is all about computers so eWIL enhances employability to a great deal..."and

(P1)

"...Yes eWIL can enhance employability because it allows us to be technologically advance for the competitive advantage of organizations. We are able to master and grasp internet concepts quicker because it is what we do on a daily basis..."and

(P3)

4.3.10. PHASE 3: INTEGRATION OF ALL FINDINGS

The table below summarises the responses of all the participants.

Table 4-19: Summary of responses of participants

THEME	RESPONSE
EMPLOYABILITY	The ability to understand organisations
	Having the skills to do a job
	Having the knowledge to do a job
HEI	The HEI does not prepare students enough for the workplace
	Some do and some do not prepare students
SOFT SKILLS	Leadership skills
	Communication
	Problem-Solving
	Self-discipline
	Self-motivated
	Interpersonal skills
	Self-awareness /self-confidence
	Work ethics
	Basic knowledge of HR
	Ability to work well in an organisation
	Flexibility
TECHNICAL SKILLS	Having basic computer skills
	Technology wise
	The ability to use the internet
eWIL	Doing practical work
	Applying theory into practice
CHALLENGES OF eWIL	Difficulties in adapting to the software
	Slows down progress due to lack of mentoring
	Lack or resources
	Expensive to implement
	HEI and businesses do not have collaboration with each other
BENEFITS OF eWIL	Teaches the ability to use computers and be technologically advanced
	Practical application of knowledge is enhanced
	The student is more effective in the workplace
Extent of employability	eWIL enhances the employability of graduates
	There is greater advantage due to the use of the internet
	Innovative delivery method
	There graduates have a competitive advantage upon entering
	The success depends on how it is managed

4.3.11. Summary of results

To conclude the information presented above, the results of the data analysis on the extent to which eWIL enhances the employability of graduates can be summarised as follows:

- Employability is about having the soft and hard skills in order to have a better chance of finding employment
- In this study, the focus is based on students who are studying through open and distant learning. These students use telecommunications as a method of completing their studies. Therefore these students have technical skills as a result.
- The challenge however is the fact that in universities, eWIL programmes are not properly implemented due to lack of knowledge and training of academics. The HEI's also find it expensive to implement eWIL into the curriculum.
- The universities do not make an effort to find out more about the attributes and competencies which are needed by employers.
- The academics and students all agree that eWIL does enhance employability of graduates, however it is up to the universities to manage it properly and apply a curriculum which is relevant.
- It is therefore the responsibility of the HEIs to ensure that they constantly keep up with technological advances.

4.4. CONCLUSION

The South African universities clearly need to take a closer look at the eWIL programmes and how they can best improve the system. Academics and graduates experience the difficulties of lack of resources and this make it hard to give students the quality education they need. Thou there is a lack of resources, the participants agree that eWIL enhances employability through the technical or hard skills which is one of the attributes needed by employers.

Chapter 5:DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

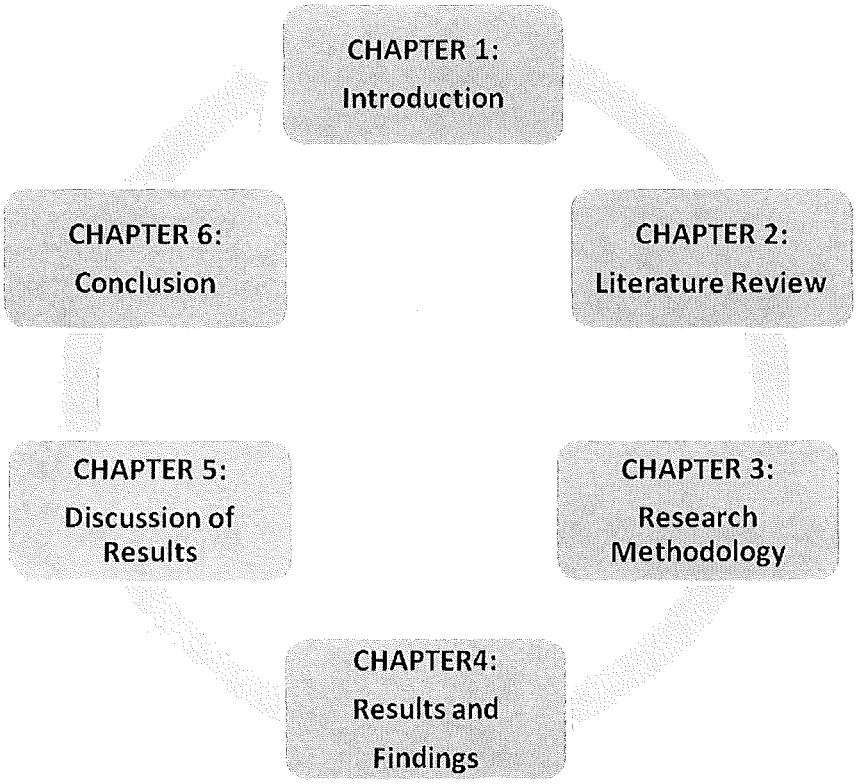


Figure 5-1: Chapter 5 in Context

This chapter focuses on discussing and interpreting the results of the statistical analysis presented in Chapter 4. The main results of this study are then outlined and discussed in relation to the research questions. The results are then supported by the existing literature concerning the employability of graduates, eWIL, HEI and skills development. For purposes of this study the following research questions were discussed:

- How can graduate employability be conceptualised?
- What are the most important graduate employability skills?
- How can work integrated learning be conceptualised?
- What are the challenges and benefits associated with the implementation of Work Integrated eLearning?

- To what extent do students and academics perceive that work-integrated e-learning programmes equip (HRM) graduates with the desirable graduate skills needed for the workplace?
- To what extent do students and academics view the need to have a work integrated e-learning component as part of open and distance learning in their undergraduate studies?

In what follows next the results of the research are discussed per research questions and a brief explanation will be given where applicable.

5.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In what follows next the results of the research are discussed per research questions.

5.2.1 Research Question 1: How can graduate employability be conceptualised?

The results indicate that the primary factor that graduate employability entails is the ability to have the basic knowledge and necessary competencies to do a certain job. It is the ability of the graduate to adapt to environmental changes happening in organisations. The findings in relation to the definition of graduate employability are similar to the findings contained in the literature review. The main factors of graduate employability are having the necessary skills and abilities and knowledge to be able to carry out a given task.

Hillage and Pollard (1998, p. 3), state that graduate employability is all about possessing the capacity to gain initial employment, maintain that employment and obtain any new employment if required. These authors futher state that for a graduate to be employable it all depentds on having the necessary assets in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes, the manner in which these assets are used and deployed, the manner in which the graduates presents the assets to potential employers and lastly the context which the graduate's work has to be done.

The academics indicated that employability is greatly influenced by being ready for the job, "readiness". According to Yorke and Knight (2001), there are two main concepts of employability namely: the capabilities and competencies of a student and the ability of graduate to get a job.

In order for a graduate to be employable, interpersonal competencies need to exist. The results of the graduates indicate that they all agree that in order to be employable, it is necessary for the student to have relevant qualifications complemented with basic skills. The findings also indicate that the graduates are well aware of the concept of graduate employability and have the basic idea of how to be employable. These findings are also similar to those of academics with regards to having the necessary skills.

5.2.2 Research Question 2: What are the most important graduate employability skills?

The most important graduate skills according to the participants have been classified into two groups namely soft skills and hard/technical skills. The results of the soft skills will be discussed first and then technical skills will follow.

The results showed that participants had a strong opinion of the ability for a graduate to be able to communicate and have interpersonal skills. Interpersonal skills involve the ability to create and maintain open and constructive relationships with others (Armstrong, 2009). According to Guzman de and Ok Choi (2013, p. 201), the communication skills encompass specific skills like the ability to speak clearly and directly, listening and understanding, empathising, sharing information, using numeracy effectively, writing to the needs of the audience and engaging in non-verbal communication.

The results also indicate that problem-solving is another desirable soft skill. As indicated in the literature, According to de Guzman and Ok Choi (2013, p. 201), this involves the ability to identify problems and gathering realistic information to help in developing practical solutions which can contribute to community problem solving.

Open Distance Learning students do not have the face-to-face communication with their lecturers. They need to develop a positive attitude to successfully complete their studies. The findings in relation to the research question show that the most desirable skills are those which are generic in nature. As indicated in the literature, Knight and Yorke (2004) refer to soft skills as personal

qualities (self-confidence, independence, adaptability, initiative, willingness to learn), core skills (information retrieval, self-management, creativity) and process skills (problem-solving). Soft skills complement hard skills which are the technical requirements of the job. They are "people skills" and are typically hard to observe, quantify and measure. They have to do with how people relate to each other.

The results of technical skills clearly show that the two main technical skills needed by a graduate is the ability to use the computer and be technologically wise. The benefits of having computer skills are the fact that the graduate has the ability to apply practical situations to the knowledge gained. In distance learning, technology is important for the delivery of education. Student using telecommunications equipment to develop technical skills have been viewed as having the ability to close skills gaps (Nixon & Helms, 1997). The results of the study conducted by Pop and Barkhuizen (2010) also showed that the majority of graduate interns and their mentors believe that technical skills training contributed to a large extent in the employability of graduate interns.

5.2.3 Research Question 3: How can work integrated e-learning (eWIL) be conceptualised?

The results indicate that academics agreed that eWIL is doing practical or simulation work. It is about applying the theoretical knowledge into practice and being assessed by means of projects. The results of the graduates indicate that eWIL is about incorporating computer systems into the learning. It is about developing computer skills and combining theory with practical work.Therefore to be more specific, eWIL is about getting the practical side of work by using e-learning, and a computer based method of delivery.

According to Dimenas (2011, p. 230), WIL forms linkages between workplace knowledge and the academic curriculum while e-Learning is the intentional use of networked information and communications technology in teaching and learning. It is a mode of teaching which includes online learning, virtual learning, distributed learning, network and web-based learning (Romiszowski, 2004:5).

The literature aslo indicates that work-integrated e-learning can be defined as a concept which intentionally merges theory with practice and acknowledges the intersection of explicit and tacit

forms of knowing at both individual and collective levels. Learning is acquired in the midst of practice and can occur while working on the tasks and relationships at hand. (Raelin, 1998, p. 280).

5.2.4 Research Question 4: What are the challenges and benefits associated with the implementation of Work Integrated eLearning?

The findings indicate that certain challenges and benefits are faced by both academics and graduates with regards to using eWIL programmes. The results indicate that the challenges faced by universities are the lack of resources for eWIL to be successful. The HEI also do not have collaboration with employers and government institutions. This therefore creates a gap in the sense that, HEI's are not aware of the skills needed for employability. This also goes back to the education system in South Africa which indicates that not much attention is placed on the skills development of tertiary students.

The participants also complained about the fact that in order to implement eWIL in the university, it is an expensive programme and the universities lack the resources to keep the programme in existence. Graduates also indicated that they struggle with the fact that is difficult to adapt to the changing programmes implemented and there is no mentoring to assist them.

With regards to the benefits, the results indicate that most of the participants agree on the fact that eWIL enhances the practical application of theory and all the knowledge gained during a graduate's studies. The main benefit of eWIL is the creation of jobs for graduates. If eWIL is implemented in the open distance learning programmes, it will enable the students to pick up the basic skills quicker and the technical skills are also enhanced.

Since South Africa has been going through technological changes, distance education institutions use work-integrated e-learning as a popular alternative. This is because of the potential advantages it has such as independence of place, substantial cost savings due to the elimination of travel expenses, timely access to information and a greater flexibility in the workplace and methods that can increase learners' interest in the subject at hand (Park & Wentling, 2007, p. 311). The participants also

pointed out the fact that eWIL saves employers the expenses and time of training graduate entrants. The students are able to pick up the skills quicker in the workplace. It is therefore important for HEI's to manage eWIL appropriately. In the view of Rowley (2003, p. 131), eWIL encourages students to use the concepts and models from theory and apply in a technologically changing organisational environment.

5.2.5 Research Question 5: To what extent do students and academics perceive that work integrated e-learning programmes equip (HRM) graduates with the desirable graduate skills needed for the workplace?

The results from the analysis indicate that the participants have a strong view on similar attributes needed by an HR graduate. Having the basic knowledge of HR and knowing the core functions of HR is very important especially in the administrative level. The ability for a graduate to have knowledge means that the students are able to improve on the organisational effectiveness. Not only that, but the students shapes their behaviour and outlook into the real life of work.

The participants also indicate that life-long learning is an essential competency. Through eWIL, the life-long learning can be achieved by constant use of the internet. Since most of the training is done through work-based learning in organisations, eWIL knowledge meets the needs of employment and life in order to develop and adapt learning strategies. According to Harvey, Geall, and Moon (1998), the benefits of eWIL is the fact that it improves graduate employability and student motivation for lifelong learning.

Soft and technical skills are important. As indicated by Armstrong (2009, p. 203) in the literature, the Human Resource Management graduate is expected to demonstrate behavioural competencies and technical competencies. The behavioural competency outlines the type of behaviour required in order to deliver the results needed by the employer. These results are also refered to as soft skills. The technical competency, is the ability to do, which means having the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out roles effectively and then using the knowledge to apply in practice.

The technical and soft skills are enhanced by eWIL, in order to use eWIL, it is necessary that the graduate should display knowledge of the coursework and the knowledge comes from the behaviour of the graduate, this knowledge is a soft skill. In Human Resource Management the most widely accepted skills are leadership skills, customer focus, result oriented, problem-solver, communication skills and team worker skills (Abrahams, Karns, Shaw & Mena, 2001, p. 847). Armstrong (2009), also mentions these atributes as being essential.

The graduates all agree that technical skills are important in enhancing their employability. Technical skills enable a person to use specialized knowledge to solve problems. It is the ability to effectively function and contribute to a team, and the conceptual skills as the integration of activities toward a common goal (Northouse, 2010). According to Meyers (2012), further states that the ability for a student to be technologically advanced enhances the drive for innovation. Being technologically advanced contributes towards creating sustainability. An HR graduate must reflect the ability to be a change agent.

With all these skill or attributes and competencies needed from an HRM graduate, the question now that one needs to ask is what role do HEIs play in ensuring that students have these skills in order to be employable. The results therefore indicate that participants feel that universities do not prepare students enough. The HEI have the role of ensuring that the learning outcomes emphasise the need for the learners to broaden their knowledge. The relevant theories and constructs of the working environment need to be reviewed in order to make sense of complex situations and enhance skills development through practical experiences (Nixon, Smith, Stafford & Camm, 2006, p. 15). In order to enhance graduate employability skills it is important that HEI's integrate employability into the curriculum successfully, it is imperative that they give full support to the programmes through adequate staff resources, corporate policies and cultural support.

Participants raised the issue of the fact that Higher Education Institutions need to focus more on the curricula needs of Human Resource Management graduates in order to support the development of intellectual graduates with critical thinking skills, soft skills and technical skills that will enable them to fulfill a specific role, rather than merely possessing the immediate task-related skills to perform a specific job.

The results also show that there is no balance between the theory and the practical. The HEIs do not apply eWIL the way that it should be. In most universities, lecturers are at the age where they are not keen on life-long learning. It is therefore a challenge for them to get new training on new programmes. When considering the gap between the current skills and the desirable skills, the notion of employability challenges traditional concepts of HEIs.

Academics feel that the agenda is too driven by the government policies and the employers rather than having the academics being involved in the process. Existing undergraduate programmes are not producing graduates with life-long learning skills to be successful. HEIs do not focus on key skills and importance of work experience. The literature also indicates that Students and academics alike have high expectations of work- integrated eLearning courses. In applying eWIL, students want user-friendly multimedia courses. They expect a fair measure of flexibility to organize their studies. To meet all these expectations, the application of work- integrated eLearning courses by HEI must not only meet high educational standards but also several technical requirements needed in the workforce (Jochems, van Merrienboer & Koper, 2003).

5.2.6 Research Question 6: To what extent do students and academics view the need to have a work integrated e-learning component as part of open and distance learning in their undergraduate studies?

The analysis revealed that the main aspect of eWIL is being able to have practical work incorporated into the curriculum. EWIL has a great impact on preparing the students for the workforce in terms of technical skill. The programmes have to play a significant role for ODL students to ensure their employability. Biao (2012), indicated that work-integrated e-learning is rather popular in ODL. It is a method of study which uses the Web and CD-ROMs and the involvement in e-learning is intended to be work-based or work-related.

According Dzakira and Idrus (2003) distance learning involves the state of being apart, separateness or remoteness in the delivery of education between learners and the lecturers and other learners.As a result, ODL is one of the most rapidly growing educational delivery methods in South Africa. The

results indicate that ODL is greatly influenced the delivery systems of learning emphasized through the development of internet-based information technologies.

According to the participants, the extent to which eWIL is needed as a component of ODL in undergraduate studies is therefore crucial. The results also indicated that eWIL indeed enhances the employability of graduate. Students are given technical skills from the practical work done and soft skills which are developed from the discipline and management skills which employers are looking for. The participant's responses clearly show that eWIL enhances graduate employability. The literature review also highlighted that integrating graduate employability into the educational curriculum will definitely develop the learning culture of teaching work-integrated learning, e-learning, work-based skills and discipline-based learning. These methods of learning complement and enhance each other (Orrell, 2004).

5.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a detailed discussion of the five research questions which were formulated based on the research objective. Furthermore the research questions were supported by the available literature. The five research hypotheses were empirically tested using the statistical data analysis techniques presented in Chapter 4.

Chapter 6:CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

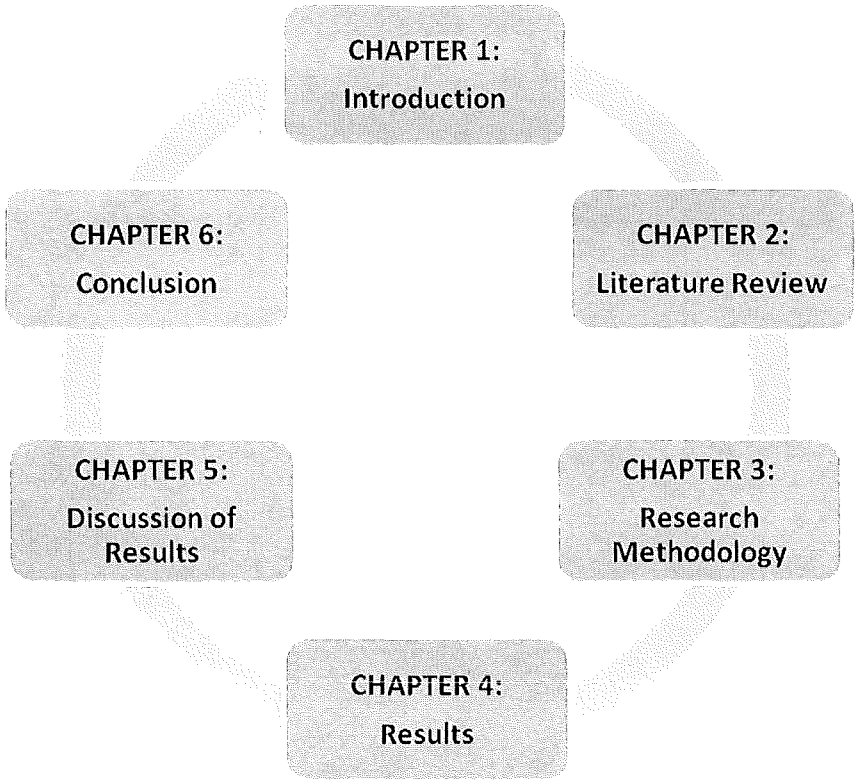


Figure 6-1: Chapter 6 in Context

This final chapter presents a synopsis of the entire study. The most significant findings gathered from the literature are offered, as well as a summary of the empirical results. The limitations of the study are discussed and selected recommendations for further study in the field of work-integrated e –learning are made.

6.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The following section will discuss the purpose of the study, the main research objectives in the study, the research design, and the expected contributions and finally it will give an overview of the contents of the study.

6.2.1 Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which Work-Integrated e-learning programmes enhance the employability of Human Resource Management graduates?

6.2.2 Research objectives

The objectives of the study were:

- To measure the extent to which students, academies and employers perceive that open and distance learning programmes equip HRM graduates with the desirable soft skills needed for the workplace.
- To determine which graduate soft skills do students, academies and employers view as most important in the workplace.
- To determine the perceived gap between the current graduate soft skills offering of the open and distance education programmes and the desirable soft skills.
- To measure the extent to which students, academics and employers perceive that Work Integrated eLearning programmes equip graduates with the desirable technical skills needed for the workplace.
- To investigate the extent to which students, academics and employers view the need to have a work integrated e-learning components as part of open and distance learning in their undergraduate studies.

6.3 CONTENT OF THE STUDY

The following section summarises the contents provided in the study. It further highlights the chapters discussed in this document.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter introduces the concepts of work-integrated e-learning and graduate employability. This chapter also provides a discussion of the problem statement and the research objectives. This chapter guided the researcher throughout the study with its research objectives.

Chapter 2: Literature review

This is the literature review chapter. It gives an overview of the main concepts and aspects related to the study. The chapter focused on the skills needed by graduates in order to employable. It further discussed WIL, e-Learning and employability of graduates. Under each concept, definitions were given which make up the concepts. Models were discussed describing the concept of employability. The final section focused on the effectiveness of eWIL in enhancing the employability of graduates studying Human Resource Management.

Chapter 3: Research method and design

This chapter involved a detailed discussion of the research methods and designs selected as the framework through which the research questions of the study were answered. The chapter began with an overview discussion on the paradigms of the study. The description of the strategy of inquiry and broad research design was given followed by the sampling techniques employed in the study. The data collection method was presented. Issues which affect the reliability, validity and rigour were considered and thereafter ethical considerations relating to the study were contemplated.

Chapter 4: Findings

This is the chapter where the findings obtained from statistical analysis were presented. It starts by a discussion on the biographical information collected during the data collection phase of the study. The next phase of the chapter is the detailed discussion of the statistical analysis of the different concepts of the study. The final section (better known as phase 3) of this chapter discusses the different responses from the participants.

Chapter 5: Discussion of findings

Chapter 5 gives the discussion of the findings presented in chapter 4. Each of the five hypotheses of the research study was presented and was either accepted or rejected based on the evidence achieved from the research study.

Chapter 6: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations

Chapter six consists of an overview of the research findings of the study in relation to the literature reviewed in chapter 2 and the statistical analysis undertaken. This chapter puts everything together

and the limitations of the study are addressed, and selected recommendations for further studies are made.

6.4 CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE STUDY

The conclusions drawn from this study are presented in this section with emphases on those drawn from the literature study and empirical results.

6.4.1 Conclusions drawn from the Literature

From the literature review, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Graduate employability is defined as the capacity which an individual has to enter into the workforce. It is important for a graduate to be able to have set priorities and long-term life goals in order to choose the correct career path which will make them employable it is about having the right skills for self-advocacy and networking (Glover, Law & Youngman, 2002).

- Graduate employability is about having the capacity to be able to get employment and maintain that employment. Graduates are employable if they have the necessary assets, know how to use these assets, present the assets to potential employers and lastly be able to perform the work that has to be done (Hillage & Pollard, 1998, p. 3).

- South Africa has been through a political transition and unemployment became the results of this transition (Burger and von Fintel, 2006). Since 1995, graduate unemployment rates have risen and as a result, South Africa now faces a crisis (van Broekhuizen & van der Berg, 2013).

- The students now are expected to display generic transferable Meta skills and personal traits or characteristics which are regarded as significant to the employability and work readiness of a student. Part time students tend to need more encouragement and motivation in order to embrace self-management activities and programmes such as eWIL. This will then enhance their skills needed in the workforce (Coetzee & Potgieter, 2010).

- Employability skills are the key skills and personal attributes a graduate needs to enter, operate and thrive in the new world of work. These are the transferable skills that are taken with from one work situation to another.
- There are two skills which the graduate needs to have in order to be employable. These are hard skills and soft skills. Employers seek for these skills when hiring a graduate. One way of separating hard and soft skills is to consider that hard skills are those skills which require a mastery and practice of a body of knowledge. Soft skills require development of largely inter- (and intra-) personal skills (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills [BIS], 2011, p. 61).

- This then raises the question of what role do universities or higher education institutions play in enhancing skill of graduates? Universities serve the purpose of offering skills to students and knowledge production. Universities need to align their curricular with the required skills for the workplace (Govender, 2008).

- At this point, work- integrated learning and e-learning come in as methods which universities can use, especially for part-time students to improve hard and soft skill required by employers.

- The purpose of work-integrated learning is to for a link between the workplace knowledge and the academic curricular (Dimenas, 2011).

- E-learning is about using the internet as a form of communication between the students and the lecturers. Since the study focuses on open and distance learners, e-learning is most appropriate as learning can be experienced at different times. Technology is therefore used to deliver a range of techniques which will maximise the learning process (Itmazi, 2010).

- When combining the two concepts, work-integrated e-learning is created. This is the ability of the student to be able to apply theory into computer skills and practices (Rowley, 2003).

- According to Orrell (2004), a graduate needs to have a development of generic resources that can be adapted to meet specific requirements. These generic resources include online programmes (e-learning) which assist students to become workplace literate before their placements. WIL programmes need to be audited on a regular basis so that they keep up with the effective educational practices.

- EWIL enhances the employability of a part-time graduate more than a theory based learner. ODL learners do not have the opportunity to have a face-to-face communication with a lecturer. This then means that they have to rely on using technology to communicate with lecturers. Their course work is done through the internet. As a result this form of learning gives the learners a better understanding of technical skills which is a must have skill that employers are looking for.

6.4.2 Conclusions drawn from findings

From the statistical analysis conducted in the study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- The overall results of the analysis proved that the participants all agree on the fact that in order for a graduate to be employable, soft skills and technical skills needs to be developed. The graduate needs to have a basic understanding of the particular field and knowledge of organisations.

- The soft skills are the desirable skills which a graduate should possess. These soft skills include the ability to work independently, ability and willingness to learn, teamwork and cooperation, self-control and self-confidence. The participants from the focus group indicated that their studies contributed mostly to training on the skills for team work and cooperation, ability and willingness to learn, independence, problem solving and self-confidence. On average, academics indicated that the studies on skills training contributed most to interpersonal skills, teamwork and communication, flexibility, self-control and independence and ability and willingness to learn.

- The technical skills include the ability to use the computer and the internet. These skills are desirable for the workplace and in chapter four, both the academics and graduates agreed that it is important for the graduate to have basic computer skills.

- The analysis demonstrated that the academics and graduates feel that HEIs do not prepare students sufficiently for the workplace. The HEIs do not follow the same methods therefore as a result; the theory and the practical do not complement each other.

- Through eWIL, the employability of graduates can be enhanced. This is due to the fact that the graduates do simulation work and they are able to combine work-integrated learning and e-learning. All the academics and graduates agree that eWIL programmes can enhance the employability of HR graduates and that the programmes also develop technical (hard) skills. They also agreed that the graduates who have eWIL background are more attractive in the sense that the employers view these students as a means of saving costs of training. The benefit which the participants highlighted is the fact that graduates are able to pick up on tasks quicker due to their influence of eWIL. The biggest challenges faced however with will is the fact that there is no collaboration between the HEIs and businesses.

6.5 LIMITATIONS

The following section discusses the limitations of the study.

6.5.1 Limitations as a result of the research design

A qualitative research design was used for this study. Qualitative research is a positioned activity, which allows the researcher to locate and observe what is taking place around the world. It is a set of interpretive, material practices, which makes the world visible, and these practices in turn make the world into a series of representations including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos for the data analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). In qualitative research, the researcher makes observations that are transformed into records based on the observer's judgment. The advantage of qualitative research is that it provides a very rich description of a phenomenon and it includes not only details of the phenomenon but also extensive detail about the context in which

the phenomenon was observed. This is because qualitative research takes a broader perspective to describe a particular phenomenon. The major disadvantage of qualitative research is that, it is rather difficult to determine reliability falsify and imitate (Altermatt, 2010).

6.5.2 Limitations as a result of the data collection method

The data collection method used in this study was done by means of interviews. The processes of collecting data used in qualitative research come from a range of collection methods. These methods include interviews with individuals, observations of people and their actions, the analysis of media, content and guided conversations with a group of individuals (focus groups). The advantage of using interviews in a qualitative research is the fact that data is "richer" than quantitative data. This is because the researcher not only learns how the interviewee sees and knows something, but also gets an explanation of that observation or knowledge. As a result, interview data provides unlimited range of possibilities (Tewksbury, 2009).

6.5.3 Limitations as a result of the sampling method

In order for the researcher to determine the sufficient sample size in qualitative research, it is ultimately a matter of judgment and experience in evaluating the quality of the information collected (Sadelowski, 2007). It is advisable in sampling to use a small group to collect the necessary data. Justification of small-sample studies focus on phenomenological assumptions which underwrite investigations of personal experience in a largely subjectivist framework (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). Qualitative samples are smaller in nature and have a better ability to provide a deeper and richer description of the specific topic, phenomenon or experiences and gather more information about the field studied (Maree & Pietersen, 2007).

6.5.4 Limitations as a result of sample size and characteristics

As mentioned above, sample size is an important factor to consider due to the use of factor analysis. Three academics and a focus group of three postgraduates were interviewed. It is therefore important to remember that sampling was not controlled in terms of language and race groups but only in

programme of the study and occupation. Precarious results were achieved with regards to the characteristics of the sample.

6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.6.1 Recommendations for Practice

From the South African perspective, it is clear that more research is needed to determine the extent to which graduate employability can be enhanced, by the skills development implemented in universities through the learning method of eWIL programmes. The data gathered, analysed and interpreted for the purpose of this study provides the following recommendations:

- Skills development should be implemented at an undergraduate level. This allows sufficient time for the student to grasp the practices of organisational environments. Because the students study through open and distant learning, e-Portfolios need to be used as an assessment tool to regularly check the progress and understanding of the graduate's knowledge and competencies. This will therefore identify gaps in the skills which need to be developed and those which are desirable by employers.

- The HEIs needs to have an informed dialogue and engagement with not only corporate employers but also with government institutions to enhance the curriculum responsiveness. Government is the largest employer in South Africa and most of internships are offered at these institutions each year. Therefore an additional effort needs to be placed by the HEI on regularly bringing employers from local and regional sectors and inform both academics and students on the core activities and work placement criteria needed for employability.

- The HEIs also need to regularly conduct comparative analysis of South African educational systems and other African developing countries who have encompassed graduate skills course into their curriculum.

- An emphasis needs to placed on experiential learning whereby students work with practical projects and further enhance technical skills. With regards to developing soft skills, HEIs need to emphasise work ethics into their learning programmes.

- Central support for students is needed in the form of career services especialy for ODL graduates. This service will emphasise the importance of skills development. And these career services can also serve as consultancies for HR graduates.

- Graduate Feedback System can be developed by universities in South Africa whereby graduates who are placed in organisatios can assist with work-based projects which can be implemented in the form of case studies

6.6.2 Recommendations for Future Research

Since this study was limited to only one department (Human Resource Management), recommendations can be made to include other departments and faculties. Secondly the HEI should start with the implementtations of soft and hard skills from the first year of a student's acamedic period. Lastly the study sample consited of only academics and pestgraduate students. The sample can also be extended to include employers in determining the skills needed for employability.

6.7 CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this study was to find out the role of eWIL programmes in enhancing the employobility of graduates. The HEIs and the labour markets are changing rapidly. The population of students is growing and becoming more diverse. The nature of graduate employability is also changing.

Organisational environments are evolving due to the globilisation of products, technology, sectoral shifs and competition. Employers are therefore searching for competent students with high levels of knowlegde and skills. The literature and findings presented in the study indicated the importance of skills to enhance employability. It was therefore vital to gather the views of the academics and postgraduates on the importance of soft and hard skills. This study needs to serve as a guide for HEIs

to encourage them to form collaborations with employers and any other stakeholders that can provide students with workplace readiness.

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