



Exploring talent indicators in internship programmes for human resource management graduates



K.M. Paadi

Orcid.org/0000-0002-7366-6474

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Promoter: Prof N. Barkhuizen

Co-promoter: Prof S. Swanepoel

Graduation: 12 April 2019

Student number: 16256824

<http://dspace.nwu.ac.za/>

DECLARATION

I, **Kelebogile Mary Paadi**, hereby declare that the study **exploring talent indicators in internship programmes for human resource management graduates** in article format (4 articles) is my own original work and has never been submitted by me or anyone else before or at any other institution. The study was submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the completion of a degree Doctor of Philosophy in Labour Relations Management at the North-West University 2019.

I declare that all participants consented to participation in the study and there was no harm or deception. This study was done under my study promoter and co-promoter's guidance and assistance. All resources and materials used are captured in the reference list at the end of the document using the APA referencing style and all ethical considerations were observed throughout the study.

Signature: -----

Student Number: 16256824

Date: 12 April 2019

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- My family offered continuous motivation and encouragement, both the Paadis and the Smouses. I want to give special thanks to my mother, Mannuku. She gave me money to save for my graduation regalia while I was still collecting data. I love you all.
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Philippians 4:13. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my husband, Jerry Paadi, and my two wonderful boys, Amantle and Tirotsoane. This is a result of your prayers. May the righteous hand of the Good Lord continually be upon you.

To all the HR practitioners and HR lecturers: Keep doing a great job. Your services are in great demand in the work place and contribute immensely to the well-being of the working population.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

COIDA – Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act

DPSA – Department of Public Service Administration

EVP – Employment value proposition

FET – Further education and training

GVP – Graduate value proposition

HRD – Human resource development

HRM - Human resource management

INSETA – Insurance Sector Education and Training Authority

KPA – Key performance areas

NDP – National Development Plan

PMDS- Performance Management and Development System

RBH – Royal Bafokeng Holdings

SDLA – Skills Development Levies Act

SPSS – Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

TVET – Technical and vocational education and training

UIF – Unemployment Insurance Fund

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ABSTRACT

The landscape of the labour force is changing fast all over the world as we have more employees who belong to Generation Y entering the workplace and older employees are retiring. The most common entry point is through graduate development programmes such as internships. Many organizations use these programmes as talent management tools to develop and retain employees for their future human capital needs. For many, an internship is the first contact with the workplace, so their experiences and how they are managed can influence their work-related attitudes.

The main objective of the study was to explore the perspectives of human resource managers on talent indicators for human resource management graduates, and to explore the role of the HR function in managing graduate interns, while also looking into the antecedents and outcomes of a graduate internship programme.

The study followed a mixed method approach. Data were collected from human resource management professionals (n=25) by means of semi-structured interviews. This was followed by a focus group with graduate interns (n=10). The participants (n=101) completed the following measures: a talent management measure, a questionnaire on aspects of the graduate internship programme, the Employee Value Proposition Questionnaire, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, the Job Satisfaction Questionnaire, and the Career Satisfaction and Life Satisfaction Questionnaires. Most graduates experienced the internship programme as positive.

This study makes important theoretical and practical contributions. From a theoretical point of view, this research adds to the limited body of empirical knowledge on the role of talent management in the establishment of graduate internship programmes. A conceptual model of talent indicators was also developed. Managers can use internships as a basis to conceptualize their understanding of Generation Y employees and develop relevant strategies to manage them effectively and to get a clearer understanding of the causes of Generation Y behaviours and attitudes.

CHAPTER 1:

1.1 TITLE

Exploring talent indicators in internship programmes for human resource management graduates.

KEYWORDS

Employee engagement, employee value proposition, internships, job satisfaction, talent management, work engagement.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

Since the economic meltdown of 2008 many economies around the world, especially those of third world countries, have not been growing at rates conducive to the creation of sustainable jobs. This has made unemployment a global problem, including among the youth and graduates.

The bulk of the South African population is made up of youths ranging from the ages of 15 to 34 years. They are a big part of the working population according to Statistics South Africa's Quarterly Labour Force Survey, Quarter 4, 2014 (Stats SA, 2014).

Statistics South Africa (2014) reports that youths in South Africa have a hard time penetrating the labour market compared to adults, even though their level of education has improved from 2008 to 2014. The reason behind their difficulty is the mismatch between the available jobs, the skills young people offer, and what the market demands. They are also compromised by their lack of skills, work experience, financial constraints and job search abilities (ILO, 2006).

In the first quarter of 2017, Statistics South Africa reported an unemployment rate of 27.7%, the highest rate since 2003, with graduate unemployment standing at 7.3% (Quarterly Labour Force Survey – QLFS Q1, 2017).

In his speech at the Public Service Sector Education and Training Authority's (PSETA) second skills colloquium (2015), the then national minister of higher education, Dr Blade Ndzimande, confirmed that South Africa has one of the highest youth unemployment rates of all developing countries and that it can be difficult for young South Africans to find employment for several months (if not longer) after they graduate.

Internships help to reduce graduate unemployment. Graduates who complete these programmes and who have a higher education qualification have a better chance of finding employment compared to those who did not (Moleke, 2006; Knouse & Fontenot, 2008). Employers prefer them because they have gained some of the knowledge and skills they need to meet real workplace demands. Meintjes and Niemann-Struweg (2011) agree that the value of internships lies in the ability of graduates to assimilate theory and practice while learning skills. Employers are more interested in graduates who can become productive in a shorter space of time.

A study by Van der Berg and Van Broekhuizen (2012) suggests that graduate unemployment in South Africa is exaggerated. Some of their arguments are based on the broad and inadequate definitions of who would count as a graduate. Subsequently, graduates are defined for the purpose of this study as all individuals with tertiary qualifications (Kraak, 2010). The researcher decided on this definition as the sample for the study was made up of human resource management graduates in possession of either a diploma or advanced diploma from a TVET college, or a bachelor's degree from a comprehensive university or a university of technology.

1.3 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Williams (2011:57) states that university qualifications do open up opportunities, but if they are not complemented by proper learning experiences, they do not really have the potential to change lives and release potential that can change societies. Learning opportunities are presented in work-integrated learning programmes (WIL). It can take the form of internships, learnerships and apprenticeships offered by private and public organisations for qualified graduates in various disciplines.

This study considers an internship as any carefully monitored work or service experience during which a student pursues intentional learning goals and reflects actively on what he or she is learning during the experience (Inkster & Ross, 1998; Sattler, 2011). An internship differs from other types of programmes in that it has an intentional learning agenda (Gault, Leach & Duey, 2010).

Bringing new talent into departments and organisations encourages new ideas that can take organisations forward and increase performance. This talent can be introduced as graduates who come in for their internship programmes. HRM managers and line managers in mentorship positions can ensure that graduates who show potential talent in the field can be

retained and developed. Talent management policies and programmes must be implemented properly if an organisation wants to retain this new talent.

Traditionally, talent management was directed at developing senior executives in organisations as part of succession planning. However, all employees should be afforded an opportunity to develop those skills and competencies that assist the organisations in achieving their strategic objectives, because senior executives need support from other employees in the organisation. Therefore, including graduate interns in these programmes can help the organisation identify hidden talents that can be of benefit in the future, while getting a return on their investment.

We have to keep in mind that people who come in for internships are mostly young (15–34 years). These are the generation Y employees born between 1980 and 1990 (Crawshaw, Budhwar & Davis, 2017). There should be attraction and retention factors that can keep them satisfied and engaged in the organisations, even if they are only there for the internship. Generation Y possesses some of the leadership abilities needed for the future, like an ability to embrace diversity and relentless reliance on technology (Nel et al., 2014).

Generation Y is more entrepreneurial in nature and enjoy a reasonable amount of independence in their work. They would not hesitate to leave for better opportunities elsewhere (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2013). What they value is different from what other older generations (Baby boomers and Generation X) valued, so organisations have to come up with employment value propositions (EVPs) that would excite them and keep them engaged in their jobs, which could eventually have an impact on their work-related attitudes.

1.3.1 Overview of the internship programmes

Internships can be paid or unpaid. Paid internships are often used when a person has already graduated from university or college and they do an internship to gain work experience and to develop their skills. Unpaid internships often contribute or count towards academic credits or a person would do such an internship when work experience is needed for a qualification. Lain et al. (2014) define these two forms of internships as educational and non-educational.

Educational internships take place within the learning environment of either universities or colleges and are necessary for a qualification to be awarded at the end of a programme. Non-educational internships entail that the intern voluntarily develops their skills according to their formal qualification and the duration can differ from organisation to organisation. Tepper and Holtf (2015) state that the most common characteristics of internship programmes is that they expose graduates to a practical part of their discipline by providing relevant work experience.

Internships are valuable to a country as this practice could address graduate and youth unemployment, especially among graduates or persons with other tertiary qualifications by providing them with work experience (INSETA, 2014). These opportunities enhance their employability.

Internships offer graduates knowledge and understanding of how organisations work (Tovey, 2001). Some get access to career opportunities and learn ethical professional behaviour. This increases their chances of securing a professional formal job by 54%. Businesses and government departments can identify potentially talented full-time employees from among the interns (Rose, 2013). They also gain an extra set of hands at a fraction of the real cost of employing permanent employees and bring new life into the organisation in the form of fresh ideas and the latest trends in technology (Inkster & Ross, 1998).

1.3.2 Internship programmes for human resource management graduates

The human factor remains a big part of the human resource management profession. Human resources are the only organisational resource that can use other resources in the organisation to achieve its goals and objectives (Kahn & Louw, 2010). Certain skills and abilities are necessary to work with people. Many organisational problems have been associated with the HR department not doing its work properly, or just not doing enough to manage people right. Human resource management graduates (hereafter referred to as HR graduates) should receive a well-rounded integrated programme that includes a wide variety of skills and knowledge to enable them to practise HRM successfully after they have completed their internship programmes. The duration of internships is normally between 12 and 18 months. Does this give interns sufficient time to acquire all skills needed to perform effectively in their roles or give mentors and supervisors sufficient time to identify talent among the graduates?

In terms of competitiveness, South Africa has moved up from 56th position in 2015 to 47th out of 138 countries in 2017 (Africa Competitiveness Report, 2017). One of the positive indicators in the labour market is efficiency, which includes elements like talent attraction and retention capabilities and employer–employee relations. Business success depends on employers who treat their employees as valuable resources. This has a significant bearing on the behaviour of the employees and the well-being of the organisation (Warnich, Carrell, Elbert & Hatfield, 2018).

The behaviour of HR managers directs the behaviour of their subordinates (behaviour breeds behaviour). In some instances, managers are the causes of the problems they observe and

complain about. Managers and supervisors are responsible for creating an environment that enables work accomplishment (Amos, Ristow, Ristow, & Pearse, 2012). The HR profession is very demanding and requires talented and capable individuals who execute their roles competently. It is no longer about just administration, the job has evolved into a much more complex role. The right people are a source of competitive advantage (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014).

An earlier study done among executives by Kaufmann (1994) indicates that most companies want the following in HRM graduates: excellent leadership and management skills, HRM generalists that are functional in most areas of HRM, technological skills, knowledge of international HRM issues and knowledge of business basics. The South African Board for People Practices (SABPP, 2012) which is a recognised standards body for human resource management in South Africa, has developed a competency model for HR professionals. Competency models often outline all the competencies needed in a specific role. The five core competencies essential to the successful execution of HR roles are leadership and personal credibility, organisational capability, solution creation and implementation, interpersonal and communication ability and innovation, technology and sustainability. These concur with what Kaufmann identified.

Other academics concur that these competencies underlie the behavioural characteristics that can result in effective and successful job performance. They can be measured and strategically developed through various human resource management systems within an organisation to improve overall organisational performance (DuBois, 1993, Shin & Park, 2009, Ulrich, 2013).

Entry-level HRM graduates have to be shaped until they excel in their work. Interns are future practitioners, and they must be taught whatever would bring out the best in their abilities. Employers have to think about the future when they take interns; there should be a plan for what comes next. The management of such a programme should suit the particular group to ensure the proper development of competencies mentioned above. The theory of competence states that people can move from unconscious to conscious competence when they go through training and are shown how to do things (Clifford & Thorpe, 2007). This is what should be done during an internship.

Preparing graduates for work roles should not include only disciplinary knowledge and technical skills, but also behavioural competencies like working in teams, communicating with others, learning tacit ways of observing and socializing into workplace cultures to develop professional mannerisms and identity (Trede, 2012). HR work requires a high level of

professionalism and ethical practice and the earlier a graduate can master this, the more it shows exceptional ability. This translates into a talent indicator. Internship programmes are designed to meet two objectives: firstly, to offer students an understanding of organizational structures within a professional working environment, and secondly to provide students with an opportunity for professional development (Abeysekera, 2006).

1.3.3 Exploring talent indicators in internship programmes

The global demand for talent (talented employees) has increased over the years as a result of changing and growing markets, demographics and the high demand for skilled labour or employees (Truss, Mankin & Kelliher, 2012). It is a challenge for organisations to manage their employees efficiently and to develop their talents, especially in senior management positions. Who or what is a talented employee, how do we find out if an employee is talented? There are many definitions of talent, and most of them have one factor in common, namely that talent is innate (people are born with it) and leads to an ability to perform exceptionally well when channelled in the right direction by means of the right human resource development (HRD) activities. This strengthens the relationship between talent management and HRD. The two are not entirely the same: HRD focuses on all employees (peanut butter approach), while talent management only shows an interest in key employees (cherry picking approach) who show exceptional potential in their specific tasks.

Originally, talent management focused on addressing skills shortages in senior management positions (Truss et al., 2012). It later evolved into looking at 'key employees' or high-potential employees who can advance to higher positions in organisations (Greenhaus, Callanan & Godshalk, 2010). This takes us back to the question of how we can identify these individuals. Normally these individuals would already be in the service of the organisation with a proven record of their competencies and abilities. What about an intern graduate who is in the organisation for only 12 months? How can an organization gauge their potential within such limited time? Another problem is that when interns know that the organisation normally selects some of them for permanent employment after the internship, they may perform to the best of their abilities for that time and then revert to their normal ways after.

Greenhaus et al., (2010) identify the following abilities as high-potential characteristics:

- The ability to learn from mistakes and develop new skills
- Interpersonal competencies, openness to new ideas and the ability to take initiative
- The ability to lead change and drive change
- Integrity and ethics and the ability to take responsibility

Most of these characteristics are about an ability to do something. Abilities can be either learned or innate. They are intellectual or physical capacities that enable one to perform tasks with various mental or physical requirements (Amos et al., 2012). They are different from skills (task-orientated competencies), but both are essential for optimal performance and job satisfaction. All of these abilities are represented in the SABPP competency model discussed earlier. In this study, the competency model serves as a basis for developing key talent indicators for HR graduates.

Key performance areas (KPA's) are the most crucial tasks and duties in an employee's job description where success is paramount. Graduates who can competently achieve these within shorter periods show exceptional ability, indicating talent. Key result areas are elements of a role that can be used to define outputs and outcomes that contribute to achieving the overall purpose of the role. They can be described as the accountability aspects of a role (Armstrong, 2012). Key result areas should resemble the task definition in the job description. Interns sign contracts when they join organisations. These agreements contain an outline of their job description, including key result areas.

The discussion now turns to defining talent to find out if the factors discussed above could indicate talent in intern graduates. Armstrong (2012) defines talent as "what people have when they possess skills, abilities and aptitudes that enable them to perform effectively in their roles and make a difference in organisational performance," whereas Truss et al. (2012) say that it is "innate, genetically coded predispositions that create natural strengths and abilities within an individual and it is different from skills which are tools, techniques and procedures that can be learned through instruction or experience."

There is no one definition of talent, some are even conflicting. The argument is that we cannot leave talent at some individuals just being born with a special gift that allows exceptional performance, especially in an organisational context. A person can learn certain behaviours, knowledge and skills that allow him or her to do exceptionally well in the chosen field and to perform well in that area.

Original definitions of talent saw it as a measure of something, a unit, weight or currency. Other dictionaries define talent as a special natural ability or aptitude. All these give weight to the fact that talent is partly innate and each individual has a certain strength. HR professionals and line managers should have the ability to identify talent, develop and retain it at all levels in the organisation, not only in key positions. An organisation needs talented capable people in all areas because they complement each other.

Talent audits would be appropriate tools to use for identifying talent. Such audits ensure that talented employees have the knowledge, skills and abilities they need to equip them to take on more demanding roles in the future through coaching, mentoring and learning and development programmes. It is through talent audits that potential is identified using performance management assessments (Armstrong, 2012). Performance management outcomes are used mainly to make administrative and developmental decisions. Employee performance is measured against the set standards; inability to meet those standards represents a gap. Each and every individual has potential. It could be defined as the possibility that people could become more than they are today. People can learn and develop traits that will enable them to reach a higher level (Erasmus, Loedolf, Mda & Nel, 2015). Potential can be divided into two parts, namely the traits and competencies that an individual possesses, and the ability to learn new competencies and to develop.

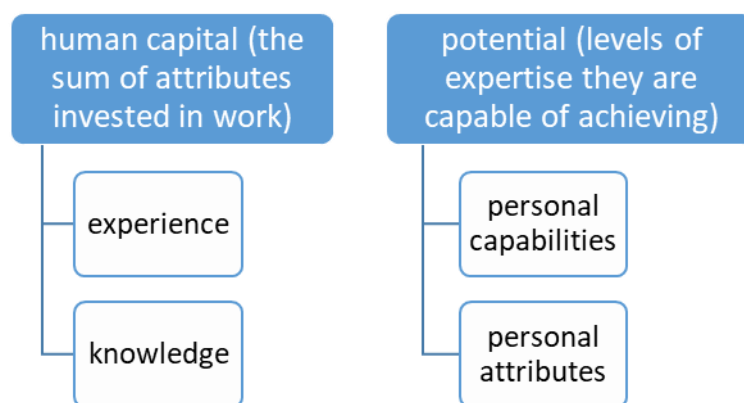


Figure 2.1: *Individual Concepts of Potential and Talent (Source: Erasmus et al., 2015)*

The above model serves a basis for conceptualizing the exploration of talent indicators in internship programmes. Conceptualization is the process of categorizing and labelling the information that people receive every day (de Vos et al., 2011).

If a graduate's natural abilities or competencies enable the person to produce key results at a better standard than expected, it indicates high performance and talent that can be developed further. Gerson (2006) defines high performance as significantly above average. High performers are people with talent and a set of competencies that result in performance exceeding the expected norm. Talent and competencies together determine the person's capabilities. According to Tansley (2011), early signs of talent can be used to predict future success. Early talent and potential detection in interns can help them carve a clear career path

for themselves. Their supervisors can motivate them to develop further, and this could increase their employability prospects. This in turn may reduce graduate unemployment.

Talent indicators would be: achieving the results within shorter periods; producing them with minimal mistakes; the ability to come up with innovative ways of doing things; professionalism; and positive visibility. Talent indicators will be explored further in the first article of this study.

1.3.4 Employment value propositions

The growing demand and competition for talent is forcing organisations to rethink their recruitment practices and how they take care of their employees. Monetary compensation is no longer the only deciding factor when people consider joining organizations. Good financial status, sterling corporate images and reputations do not do it anymore. In the current labour market it takes more than that to attract skilled people who contribute to organisational success. Organisational success is not measured in monetary terms only in these tough competitive times. People are a great source of competitive advantage. Consumers are interested in shorter turnaround times on goods and services and employees want an employer who takes care of them. A study on 42 South African companies reveals that other than the remuneration package, employees are also interested in factors like relationships, good leadership, trust and job satisfaction (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011).

EVPs have become effective tools to attract and retain talented employees (Campanaro, 2007). They are more than just benefit packages. They sell the employer to potential employees and keep existing employees committed. EVPs are often used in conjunction with employer brands. EVPs are defined as a collection of programmes that an organisation offers in exchange for employee knowledge, skills and abilities. Employer brand is about giving an identity, image and distinctiveness to the organisation as an employer to attract employees and to motivate, engage and retain its current employees (Srivastava & Bhatnagar, 2010). An EVP's main focus is on the total package offered to employees. It includes core benefits (pension and medical insurance) and other benefits (working environment, development opportunities and well-being initiatives) to make a total reward package desirable to existing employees and potential employees (Barton, 2014). EVPs provide an opportunity for companies to differentiate themselves from their competitors. Although they are used, they are often not intelligently packaged and not clearly communicated to employees.

The private and public sectors have been competing for talent for a long time. Previous studies reveal that some employees prefer the public sector, citing job security as a reason. Some do not favour it due to a lack of growth and developmental opportunities. The private sector is

favoured for its ability to grow and develop its employees and their attractive benefits packages. As far back as 1967, Soelberg studied what was called the un-programmed decision-making process among master's and doctorate students. The finding was that they have a mental picture of the type of organisation for whom they want to work. They eliminate less desirable factors that do not meet their criteria.

According to the social comparison theory (Louw & Edwards as cited in Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011), people are likely to compare themselves to those they consider similar to them in terms of gender, age, culture, education and status. Graduates are more likely to form perceptions about organisations from what they hear from other people and from various media sources. Perceptions will actually be strengthened by their experiences in the organisation during their internship stay. Some start out with the perception that working for a private organisation is more of a status symbol compared to working in the public service. They think that the most successful people work for the private sector.

Ko and Sidhu (2012) state that the media and some academic articles describe the public service with words such as corrupt, lazy, rigid, inefficient, irresponsible, unresponsive and unaccountable. This gives the public service a negative image that undermines its authority, making it difficult to recruit the best employees or graduates. Award winning companies, most of them private, work with institutions of higher learning, they organise career exhibitions to make young people aware of employment opportunities, they send scouts to source outstanding talents they can recruit (Joubert, 2007). What is the government doing to ensure that they remain in the running for attracting key talent that will bring in much needed new, fresh and innovative ways of ensuring efficiency and effectiveness?

Talent in this study refers to young graduates who are serving in internship programmes. Public institutions and government departments can use internship programmes to attract talent into the public service, in the process improving their corporate image. Institutions of higher education should work with the public service to monitor the administration of internships. This would make it easier to identify why some graduates are satisfied or dissatisfied with the programme. In their study, Ko and Sidhu (2012) discovered that a negative experience in the course of an internship programme changes a graduate's perception about the public sector and influences the decision on where to pursue employment.

Demographic factors contribute greatly to workforce composition. It has changed over the years in terms of gender, age, lifestyle and different generations working together (Erasmus et al., 2015). This study is concerned with the graduate intern's choice between the public and

private sector. What influences their choice? Research has shown that Generation Y perceive work differently, have different values and career expectations than the older generations and some studies have shown that they are an entitled generation (Ng, Lyons & Schweitzer, 2012). Successful EVPs address the needs of the target group. Diversity management is an issue of consideration for most organisations. Needs differ from baby boomers to Generation Y. Different groups value different things. Individuals have various reasons why they would join a certain organisation, be it private or public. Some of the factors are starting salary, promotion opportunities, recognition, leadership, reputation, communication, development and corporate culture and other informal sources of information.

1.3.5 Impact of internships on work-related attitudes

Work engagement is defined as a positive and fulfilling state of mind that is related to one's work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Macey & Schneider, 2008). It is the ability and willingness to contribute to organisational success. Engaged employees put in extra effort and extra time, doing things different and beyond what is expected (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011).

People differ, and this diversity means that there are various things that could affect their work engagement. Previously people were moved by monetary rewards, then it changed to challenging work, and now there are other elements like work/life family balance and growth opportunities. Each individual has his or her own unique engagement factors.

Schreuder and Coetzee (2011) identify three psychological conditions that influence an individual's engagement, namely psychological meaningfulness, safety and availability.

Psychological meaningfulness refers to the degree to which an individual feels they get something in return for the physical, cognitive and emotional energy they put in. Absence of this meaningfulness leads to disengagement. Two factors that contribute to meaningfulness are work role fit and good work relations (Kahn, 1990).

Psychological safety occurs when employees can showcase their abilities without fear of receiving negative responses that could impact on their status, career and self-image. Trustworthy and supportive supervisory and co-worker relations lead to a feeling of psychological safety.

Psychological availability indicates whether an individual is ready and confident to engage in a given role, because people are engaged in many other areas of their lives.

Uncertainty is one of the main characteristics of graduate interns. They have just graduated from colleges or universities, they are not certain of what lies ahead, they are filled with

expectations, and to a certain extent, fear. One of the challenges identified in internships was lack of relevant work and proper supervision for the intern (Paadi, 2014). This can leave the intern feeling that the programme is not very beneficial for their development and can lead to disengagement and feelings of being neglected by the employer.

For most graduates, internships are their first contact with the real world of work. The experience they get during this period with the organisation contributes to how they perceive the realities of the world of work for some time before they really get settled.

People are not always satisfied with everything about their work. There will always be areas they are satisfied with and areas that cause dissatisfaction. In instances where the factors that satisfy are more than those that dissatisfy, there is a positive attitude towards one's work. This translates into job satisfaction (Botha, Kiley & Werner, 2014). Many factors can lead to dissatisfaction, some directly and some indirectly related to the job. An employee may be competent in their role and always achieve their key result areas, but at the same time not have good working relations with their supervisor or colleagues. Job satisfaction has an impact on life satisfaction and vice versa. A positive attitude to work fulfils people in their personal lives as well (Botha et al., 2014).

1.3.6 The role of HR professionals in ensuring effective implementation of internships

There is a need for human resource management (HRM) practitioners who specialize in various fields to help government and private organisations use their people to reach their full potential. This would entail meeting strategic organisational goals and objectives through HR practices (Murphy & Southey, 2003). This ensures that the right people are put in the right places at the right times (Armstrong, 2012). With the help of HRM professionals, line managers can make better decisions regarding staffing, training and development, performance management and labour issues. HR professionals must not only be tied to administrative work, they have to relate to the business and tie their process to strategy to build effective organisations with the help of line managers. HR professionals, line managers and top executives each make unique contribution to the development of talented personnel and organisations (Lawler III, 2008).

The South African public sector has been accused of maladministration and corruption on many occasions. As a result, many projects have been put on hold. Officials have been suspended or fired. Many officials are in acting positions as they are surrounded by

speculation on corruption. The public sector is suffering and many things are not being done the way they should be done.

Many policies are not being implemented properly and some are abandoned, as acting officials cannot really take final and binding decisions. This gives way to even more corruption and delayed processes. Policies in the South African government are determined by legislators and implemented by public officials. In most instances, there are internal and external influences that lead to corrupt practices, bias and unreasonable conduct (van der Walt & Du Toit, 1999). This affects work performance and service delivery in the public service.

The National Development Plan (NDP) advocates for a 'capable state' where state departments are coordinated properly and they employ skilled and competent public servants who are patriotic and committed to good quality service delivery in service of South Africa's development goals and objectives (NDP, 2012). One of the main challenges in the South African public service is the inability to sustain human resources, which is essential for the provision of good quality service to its stakeholders (Kahn & Louw, 2010). The success of most public service institutions depends on its people (human resources). Thus, to gain a competitive edge, state departments are turning to HR to set the agenda for employee engagement and commitment.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Talented individuals have become a competitive advantage in many organisations, and employers are now being strictly selective in their hiring practices. Research has shown that internships are not only learning programmes, but another strategy that can be used to bring in new talent. Do organisations see internship programmes as talent pools? How do they identify graduates that they eventually employ in their organisations? What indicates to them that these graduates can contribute positively and productively to their organisation?

This research study investigates the possible problems with the administration of internships and whether internships serve their purpose. Do these programmes equip graduates with the skills and knowledge necessary to gain employment, whether in the public or the private sector, while developing their work-related attitudes? Are the services of HR professionals valued in either sector, and to what extent?

What employee value propositions exist in the two sectors to retain the services of talented interns? Why would a graduate choose to work in one sector and not the other? Will they be more engaged in their work and gain job and life satisfaction after completing an internship programme? The study explores the key talent indicators that will help employers identify

potential future employees. Talent indicators can also ensure that graduates find employment at the end of their internship contracts. Four research problems have been identified and are presented below:

Research problem 1: Exploring talent indicators in internship programmes for HRM graduates

High profile organisations look at their future business growth plans, attrition and turnover and set targets for the human capital they will need in the short, medium and long term. To counter the effects of attrition and turnover, they run learnership training, graduate training programmes and internships, and in doing so they are managing knowledge and creating talent pools (Joubert, 2007). What criteria do they use to choose among the graduates and to label some as talented and others as not? What serves as an indication that a graduate has talent that can be developed? Buhlungu and Metcalfe (2001) explain that internship programmes are an opportunity for employers to bring bright and energetic individuals into the organisation, injecting much-desired new talent.

Research problem 2: EVPs that lead to retention of talented interns

Most leading companies want a positive answer to the question, “Why should a great person want to work here” (Joubert, 2007). South Africa is currently facing a fierce ‘*war for talent*’ (Chambers: 1998) between the private and public sector. Almost every graduate will tell you that they want to work in the private sector as opposed to government (public sector). Why is this? What does the one sector have to offer that the other doesn’t? Engagement should not be one-sided (from the employee’s side only). Employers must also have something unique to offer that is guaranteed to inspire engagement and satisfaction from employees. This is mostly achieved through EVPs. They are a key part of what attracts talent to a company. EVPs should speak to what individuals can expect when they join the organisation (Lawler III, 2008).

In most government departments, graduate interns are not offered permanent jobs on completion of the internship contract, whereas in the private sector, even if they do not absorb all the interns, they find those exceptional graduates and retain them.

Research problem 3: The role of the HR professional in ensuring successful implementation of programmes in organisations (in this instance successful administration of internships)

Do HR professionals get enough space to do their work? Do they have enough authority, resources and support from top management and other line managers? The function of HRM

in organisations is planning, designing and implementing systems and procedures to improve the effectiveness of the workforce and success of the organisation.

Research problem 4: Contribution of internships to work-related attitudes

Many young people leave school or higher education with a poor sense of worth about their own potential and talent. They have limited dreams for the future and just hop from one job to another to meet their financial obligations (Joubert, 2007). This could easily dampen one's future aspirations. These youths end up in unsatisfying jobs where they are underemployed and their true potential is not recognised and cannot be developed further. For many young people, internships are a start and a tool to shape their careers.

Dissatisfaction with the job at internship level can have many negative consequences. Inability to meet performance standards and disengagement are examples of what happens to employees who are not happy in their jobs. Generally, engaged employees offer more and they are more productive and financially pleasing to the employer (Macey, Schneider, Barbera & Young, 2009). The type of experience and treatment an intern receives in the programme can either make or break them.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The **main research question** the study wants to answer is: What are the key talent indicators for success in HRM internship programmes?

The main research question gives rise to four sub-questions:

- How can talent be identified among graduate interns based on the perspectives of HRM practitioners?
- What are the determinants of an EVP for graduate interns?
- What is the role of the HR function in managing graduate interns?
- What are the antecedents and outcomes of a graduate internship programme?

1.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

According to Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005), the purpose of doing research is to describe how things are, why they are that way and to predict phenomena. Research objectives express the reasons for doing research. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delpont (2011) define them as what you plan to do or achieve.

The **general objective** of the study is to explore talent indicators in internship programmes for HR graduates.

The general objective can be reached by pursuing four specific objectives:

- To identify talent indicators among HR graduate interns based on the perspectives of HRM practitioners;
- To establish the determinants of an effective EVP for graduate interns;
- To determine the role of the HR function in managing graduate interns;
- To understand the antecedents and outcomes of a graduate internship programme.

1.7 EXPECTED CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The contribution of a research study can be described by looking at the methodological, theoretical and practical contributions.

1.7.1 Theoretical contribution

This study contributes new information to the body of knowledge on HR graduate internships. Internships have been researched before; but this study focuses specifically on making the HRM graduate intern an HRM professional. It looks at what interns need in their programme to ensure that the bridge between the classroom and the workplace is smooth. The study highlights what elements should be included in their programmes to cover the scope of the HR work. Existing literature and theories are used to expand and form new knowledge.

1.7.2 Methodological contribution

This is a mixed method study combining the qualitative and the quantitative design. This enables the researcher to reach as many stakeholders as possible and to gather more data. This means that the researcher could explore talent indicators in a broader sense by examining the different perceptions of the respondents or participants. Analysing data using content thematic analysis and statistics (SPSS) allows for data transformation, correlation and integration to form one coherent whole. Furthermore, key performance/result areas together with competencies were used to develop key talent indicators.

1.7.3 Practical contribution

Although the study does not develop a measuring tool, the method used to extract talent indicators can assist employers in identifying their future key employees from entry-level jobs like internships and early in their time within the organisation. It can be difficult to identify talent

in interns because they are not with the organisation for a long time like permanent employees; they are there for duration of 12 to 24 months depending on the type of organisation. It can be very easy or convenient for to miss or recognise talent in them. This study explores elements that will help to speed up the talent identification process. There are different stakeholders in these programmes, and at least one should be able to see something in an intern. It is not possible that all stakeholders could miss that special talent if it is there.

1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN

1.8.1 Research approach

“There are two main approaches to research; on the one hand we have the positivist approach which is based on a philosophical approach known as logical positivism and it is also known as the quantitative approach. The positivist approach is opposed by the anti-positivists who share a resistance to upholding the natural scientific method as the norm in human behavioural research and this approach is also known as the qualitative approach” (Welman et al., 2005:6).

Positivism stresses the importance of empiricism as a method of enquiry (Goddard & Melville, 2001). Empirical research is based on observed and measured phenomena and derives knowledge from actual experience rather than from theory or belief (Field, 2009).

This study was conducted using a mixed method, which is a combination of the qualitative and quantitative research methods. Tashakkori and Creswell (2007) describes a mixed method study as research where the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates all findings and draws conclusions using both qualitative and quantitative methods in one study. There are four popular mixed methods that researchers use: exploratory research, explanatory research, triangulation and embedded designs (De Vos et al., 2011).

This study followed the exploratory design in two phases. Interviews were used for qualitative data collection and quantitative data were collected using questionnaires.

“An exploratory study seeks to explore what is happening and to ask questions about it; it is particularly useful when not enough is known about a phenomenon. It can be conducted by a search of literature, talking to experts in the field, conducting focus group interviews” (Gray, 2009, p. 35).

1.8.2 Sample

There is no single sampling method for mixed method studies, so the sampling is often a combination of any of the well-known qualitative and quantitative techniques. It should enable the researcher to answer research questions (de Vos et al., 2011). Samples are drawn from big groups (that are the focus of the research question) and they are known as populations. Populations are very large groups and samples are chosen to reduce the size, save time and resources. The sample for this study was made up of HRM graduates who have completed internships before, those currently in the programme, employers/supervisors and the HR personnel responsible for internships.

Choosing a sample from a large population enables the researcher to get appropriate answers for the research questions (Plowright, 2011). Graduate interns could help the researcher find out more about their experiences in the programmes, how internships contributed to their employability, career success and job satisfaction. Other stakeholders in internship programmes also offered insight into their experiences managing the programmes, what challenges or complications they have come across and how they overcame them.

1.8.3 Data collection

In qualitative studies, data are collected using interviews, observation and surveys, while quantitative research uses closed-ended surveys, measurement instruments, and structured interviews (de Vos et al., 2011). The researcher used both methods to collect data. Data were collected from managers, supervisors and HRM graduates from different universities and colleges in South Africa. The sample included graduates who have completed their internship programmes and those in internship programmes at the time of the study.

1.8.3.1 Qualitative data collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with different stakeholders in internship programmes in different organisations. An interview guide with open-ended questions on specific themes or topics was compiled. Interview guides contain a list of topics that the interviewer can address during interviews, but no specific questions. They schedule may differ slightly from one organisation to the next (Welman et al., 2005).

1.8.3.2 Quantitative data collection

Questionnaires are the most popularly used instruments of data collection in quantitative research. Questionnaires generally contain statements or questions that could help the researcher determine the attitudes or perspectives of respondents with regard to a particular

issue (Babbie & Mouton as cited in de Vos et al., 2011). There are six types of questionnaires: mailed questionnaires, telephonic questionnaires, hand-delivered questionnaires, individually self-administered, group administered and electronic questionnaires. The researcher used hand-delivered self-administered questionnaires and electronic questionnaires. The Rensis Likert scale was used to get answers, which ranged from strongly agree to agree, disagree and strongly disagree.

1.8.4 Data analysis

In a mixed method study, data analysis involves a combination of qualitative and quantitative data analysis strategies. The quantitative data were analysed using quantitative data analysis methods (the researcher used the SPSS software) and the qualitative data were analysed using qualitative data analysis methods (manual thematic analysis) (de Vos et al., 2011).

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) mention seven data analysis steps that must be followed when analysing data in a mixed method study (de Vos et al., 2011).

1. **Data reduction** – the qualitative data are reduced using either thematic analysis or memoing, and quantitative data reduction is done through descriptive statistics.
2. **Data display** – qualitative data can be displayed in charts, lists and rubrics and quantitative data in tables and graphs.
3. **Data transformation** – quantitative data are converted into data that can be analysed qualitatively and qualitative data are converted into numerical codes that can be represented statistically.
4. **Data correlation** – qualitative data are correlated with quantified data.
5. **Data consolidation** – this involves combining qualitative and quantitative data to create new consolidated variables or data sets.
6. **Data comparison** – comparing data from both qualitative and quantitative data sets.
7. **Data integration** – qualitative and quantitative data are integrated into a coherent whole or two separate wholes.

1.8.5 Recording and storing the data

Some of the data were collected through interviews. The researcher made sure the participants consented and felt comfortable with the interviews being recorded. A recording device was used and the interviews were transcribed afterwards. All material is stored on the researcher's computer and external storage devices for backup and safekeeping. All self-administered questionnaires are stored in a safe place for a certain amount of time in case the data are needed at a later stage.

1.8.6 Strategies employed to ensure quality data

The researcher followed the codes of good practice throughout the whole study as suggested by Bryman and Bell (2014) to ensure credibility. All data collected were kept safe for respondent validation and the findings will be made available to the participants on request to improve credibility. The researcher's experience and the supervisor's guidance also contributed to the quality and the integrity of the research process.

1.8.7 Research procedure

Ethics clearance was sought and obtained from the university's ethics committee. Permission was sought from the different government departments. Participants signed a consent letter before they participated in the study. They were not required to provide their names to ensure confidentiality. The study is solely for academic purposes and the results will be made available to interested parties upon request.

1.8.8 Ethics considerations

Ethics could be defined as general moral principles that determine attitudes, beliefs and relations between people and specific moral principles that are aligned with certain professions, like doctors and social workers (Plowright, 2011). The university has ethics guidelines that the researcher must follow. The researcher must ensure that all participants participate on a voluntary basis and must disclose all relevant information to them so they know what they are getting into. Every participant must agree to sign a consent form so that there could be no deception, harm or invasion of privacy (Welman et al., 2005).

1.9 CHAPTER DIVISION

The study adhered to the article format and is presented as follows:

Chapter 1

This chapter serves as an introduction to the whole study and provides the background to the study.

Chapter 2

Article 1 – Exploring the perspectives of HR managers on talent indicators for HRM graduate interns.

Chapter 3

Article 2 – Exploring the determinants of an employee value proposition for graduate interns.

Chapter 4

Article 3 – The role of the HR function in managing graduate interns.

Chapter 5

Article 4 – Exploring the antecedents and outcomes of a graduate internship programme.

Chapter 6

Conclusions, limitations and recommendations

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CHAPTER 2:

ARTICLE 1

EXPLORING HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGERS' PERSPECTIVES ON TALENT INDICATORS FOR HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT GRADUATE INTERNS

ABSTRACT

Orientation – Graduates have the ability and potential to contribute to the success of organisations. Once their potential has been identified, managers and supervisors can accommodate them in talent development pools.

Research Purpose – The researcher aims to explore human resource managers' perspectives on talent indicators for HRM graduate interns.

Motivation for the study – Talent management practices at internship level afford talented graduates an opportunity to participate and contribute positively to the country's unstable economy with their much needed skills and talents.

Research Method - A qualitative approach was followed. A sample of 25 HRM practitioners, managers and supervisors representing different organisations was selected for this study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and data were thematically analysed using codes and themes.

Main Findings – Two main themes emerged from the study, namely performance management and transferable skills. Most findings concur with literature that performance outcomes are essential in determining talent. Most of the respondents used characteristics of high-potential employees and outcomes of the performance standards that have been set for interns to identify talent in graduate interns. Mention was made of the application of transferable skills to enhance performance.

Contribution/value add – The findings of this study can inform HR and line managers on how to manage graduate interns properly and how to accommodate them in talent development pools. This would enable organizations or state departments to build excellent human capital from the start of an intern's career, possibly reducing graduate unemployment by at least half a percentage.

Key Words – High performance, internships, potential, talent indicators, talent management, talent

INTRODUCTION

The global economic recession that started in 2008 came with many uncertainties for governments across the globe, and South Africa is no exception. Many countries are still struggling to recover from the economic recession, making sustainable job creation difficult. Many economies are unable to employ large numbers of youths coming into the labour market (Reddy, Bhorat, Powell, Visser & Arends, 2016). This has resulted in some organisations having to lay off some of their employees (skilled and unskilled) and cutting wages to stay operational (Warnich, Carrell, Elbert & Hatfield, 2015). This has a negative effect on economic growth and gives birth to other social problems like crime and unemployment, including graduate and youth unemployment (Kingdon & Knight, 2003). The National Treasury (2011) reported that high rates of youth and graduate unemployment are still a problem in South Africa. It is slowly becoming an even more serious problem as employers still look for work experience from graduates and they perceive new graduates as risky investments.

Work-integrated learning programmes like the internship programmes are designed to help graduates acquire the workplace skills employers' desire so much. This would ultimately reduce graduate unemployment (Sattler, 2011). However, if they are not administered properly, these programmes cannot produce the expected or desired results. According to the Insurance Sector Education and Training Authority (INSETA, (2011), internship programmes are aimed at giving students and graduates an opportunity to gain workplace experience and to practice the skills they studied in theory for their future chosen occupations. This enables them to acquire a broad range of skills (both soft and hard skills), which would make them desirable to potential employers. McCracken, Currie and Harrison (2015) view graduates as a main source of talent for organisations and believe that their recruitment, development and retention should be seen as one of the talent management strategies.

This study explores talent management practices at internship level to uncover what managers and supervisors see as indicators that a graduate has the potential to perform better than the expected standards. The study focuses on HRM graduates specifically, since HRM is not classified as a scarce skill, but a critical skill. It is a profession in high demand in many countries and is important as part of the successful functioning of organisations worldwide.

In the Framework for Identifying and Monitoring Scarce and Critical Skills (2005, p. 6), scarce skills are described as occupations for which qualified and experienced people are scarce (difficult to find) or are available, but do not meet the employment criteria. In most cases it is anticipated that there will be a short supply of these individuals in the future as well. This is supported by Marock, Yeowart, Gewer and Singizi (2012) in the Alignment of Sector Skills Planning to the NGP, where they expand further on the definition of critical skills as those occupations for which employers can find and retain qualified and experienced people who require some additional training or up-skilling to attain appropriate occupational competence. HRM is on the List of Occupations in High Demand (Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), 2016). The occupations on the list should show the following indicators:

- Relatively strong employment growth over the past 5 years; relatively strong current employment growth; and signs that there will strong employment growth in the future.
- Identified as being in shortage in the labour market and expected to emerge in the future as a result of innovation, technological advancements and the development of new industries.

It is the researcher's position that HRM might not necessarily be a scarce skill, but it is definitely critical because it appears on the list of occupations in high demand (List of Occupations in High Demand, 2016). Between the years 2009 to 2015, 273 828 students registered with public universities for business and management qualifications, one being HRM (DHET, 2015).

Hundreds of students are studying towards a qualification that would provide entry into this profession. The demand for HR jobs does not match the supply, as reported by Reddy, Bhorat, Powell, Visser and Arends (2016). There has been a decline in the demand for professional jobs in the economic and management sciences. Employers want the best of the best, raising the question of who is the best. What talent indicators are used? How do employers identify the best potential employees from their graduate intern pool? Employers are faced with the difficult task of identifying who deserves the opportunities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualizing talent

Michaels, Jones and Axelrod, (2001) define talent as the sum of a person's abilities, their intrinsic gifts, skills, knowledge, experience, intelligence, judgement, attitude, character and drive, including their ability to learn and grow. Armstrong (2011) simply defines talented people

as “those with skills and abilities to do something well” (p. 238). According to Tansley (2011, p. 270), talent means different things or is defined differently in different organisations depending on their nature, for example:

“At Gordon Ramsay Holdings, talent is essentially viewed as the creative flair of chefs, at Google, those regarded as talented are referred to as being a “Googler”, which is described as being confident, an “ideas person” and “a challenger who thinks outside the box” and at Price Water House Coopers talented individuals are those who possess “drive, energy, an applied intelligence, a willingness to take on challenges and demonstrate the ability to make a distinctive difference to the business”

These definitions are summarized by Ulrich (2008) as he defines talent as a mixture of competence, commitment and an individual’s contribution. Talented individuals are competent and committed to their tasks. This in turn makes a positive contribution to the organisation’s success. Talent may have different definitions in each industry, but common characteristics include reference to high-potential individuals, creativity, confidence, energy, drive and most importantly, willingness.

Gladwell (2010, cited in Prais, 2011) defines talent as “equal to ten years or 10 000 hours invested in a specific field” (p. 207). Graduate interns do not have ten years or 10 000 hours to enable them to prove to their mentors or supervisors that they have talent. They have between 12 and 24 months. Can organisations be missing out on potential talent because of the duration of internship programmes? Boudreau and Ramstad (2007) say that talent is:

“The resource that includes the potential and realised capacities of individuals and groups and how they are organised, including within the organisation and those who might join the organisation” (p. 2).

It is difficult to identify talent and researchers have suggested different ways to identify talent, but they each inevitably leave out some essential aspects. Meyers, Woerkom, and Dries (2013) for instance point out that in some corporations, talent identification depends on an individual’s leadership abilities and their competence levels, while other studies focus more on performance appraisal scores. Stahl, Björkman, Farndale, Morris, Paauwe, Stiles, Trevor & Wright (2012) have developed six principles to identify talent and among them is the use cultural fit and employees’ values to identify talent, they are of the notion that not only skills can help employers identify talent hence. That is why the conceptual model aims to integrate all the factors that can be used to identify talent, for example an employee can show great

leadership abilities and not be competent in the technical aspects of the job, which will influence their performance appraisal ratings.

Talent management

Davies and Davies (2010) give a more general definition of talent management as a systematic attraction, identification, development, engagement/retention and deployment of individuals with high potential who can add value to the organisation. Effective and successful talent management practices include the integration of different HRM functions like recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management, employee compensation and retention (Dessler, 2011). The main aim of talent management is to attract and retain the best employees so that they can bring their creativity and innovative ways to contribute to the organisation's success.

One of the ways of bringing new and fresh ideas into an organisation is through graduate interns. Armstrong and Taylor (2014) concur by stating that education establishments like universities and colleges are major sources of future talent. They are eager to work and they will go beyond what is expected just to get affirmation from their supervisors and maybe a possibility of permanent employment after completion of the internship programme. Another essential purpose of talent management is to ensure that an organisation has a steady supply of talented individuals throughout the whole organisation. Organisation should have the right people in the right jobs at appropriate times based on the strategic objectives of the organisation (Iles, Chuaib, & Preecec, 2010). Graduate interns can help to achieve this purpose.

Talent management can be applied in one of two ways, the inclusive perspective (where everyone is considered talented) or the exclusive perspective (only key people with high performance or potential) (Armstrong & Taylor (2014). If organisations want to have a steady supply of talent throughout, they have to adopt the inclusive perspective as it states that everyone in the organisation could potentially be talented, they just have to be managed properly for them to be able to perform (Iles et al., 2010, Tansley & Tietze, 2013). Stainton (2005) states that talent management should be based on a broad approach that recognizes that almost everyone has potential and is capable of displaying talent. Everyone should therefore be included in the same talent management and identification, attraction and development process. Employees who feel left out of the talent development programmes are more likely to become demoralized, so it is a risky move for employers (Cole:2016).

Adopting the inclusive perspective means valuing diversity. One way of effectively managing diversity in organisations is to realize that today's workforce is diverse and made up of different generations. Talent pools have become segmented (McCracken et al., 2015). McCracken et al. (2015) continue to state that there are greater numbers of "millennials" or "generation Y" (born after 1982) and there is fierce competition among organisations to attract and recruit these young talents. Talent management practices must address this generation's particular circumstances, values, interests and must also keep in mind the makeup of their psychological contracts and expectations (Festing & Schafer, 2014).

In many organisations, talent management is a component of strategic resourcing to make sure that they have talented people to meet their business needs (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). Collings & Mellahi (2009, p. 2) present and define strategic talent management as:

"...activities and processes that involve the systematic identification of key positions which differentially contribute to the organisation's sustainable competitive advantage, the development of a talent pool of high potential and high performing incumbents to fill these roles, and the development of a differentiated human resource architecture to facilitate filling these positions with competent incumbents and to ensure their continued commitment to the organisation. In this regard, it is important to note that key positions are not necessarily restricted to the top management team (TMT) but also include key positions at levels lower than the TMT and may vary between operating units and indeed over time."

Talent management practices during internships

Talent management incorporates all aspects of an employee's career. It may differ based on the person's age, gender, experience and personalities (Löf, Virta, & Westpahl, 2011). Since the study focused on interns, age is relevant. A study by AON Hewitt (2013) revealed that many baby boomers would be turning 65 in the next two decades and will be leaving the world of work. This will create a gap in the talent market and many organisations globally (34%) are reported to already be experiencing problems to fill vacancies due to talent shortages (Passel & Cohn, 2008).

It is stated in the *Final Draft: Guidelines on Implementing an Internship Programme Policy in the Public Service* (DPSA, 2015) that internships should be positioned as a strategy for establishing skills and talent supply pipelines, especially in occupations or areas that require scarce and critical skills. In South Africa internships are targeted at youths under the age of 35 putting them in the category of Generation Y: defined below:

Generation Y is defined as those born after 1994, currently age 26 and younger. This group goes by many names, including nex-ters, millennials, echo boomers, net generation, the recession generation, the entitled generation (Ng, Lyons & Schweitzer, 2012, Lieber, 2010). This being the case, McCracken et al., (2015) reiterate that there is less focus on incorporating graduates into the organisation's talent management strategy. More research should be done on how to incorporate graduates and make them part of an organisation's talent management strategy.

Talent management is aimed at enhancing performance at all levels in the workforce, allowing everyone to reach his or her potential, no matter what that might be (Ashton & Morton, 2005, p. 30). Opportunities are essential, as talent requires an opportunity to be displayed. There should be regular opportunities for everyone to learn, grow and strive to fulfil their potential. Internships provide that much desired opportunity for graduates to showcase their potential. Potential is defined as the assessment of an employee's ability to rise to and succeed in a more senior or expanded role, the possibility for one to become more than they are today, learning and developing traits that will enable them to reach a higher level (Erasmus, Loedolf, Mda & Nel, 2013). Inclusive talent management approaches are more ethical and enable employees to realise their own level of potential (Cole, 2016). This works best for interns in cases where they would not be selected into talent development pools. Being included in the talent pool increases an employee's bond and loyalty to the organisation. The reverse will happen to those not included, resulting in negative consequences (Swailes & Blackburn, 2016).

For talent management to be implemented effectively at internship level, it must be integrated with knowledge management (Ruhanen, Breakey, & Robinson, 2012; Löf, Virta, & Westpahl, 2011). The main purpose of knowledge management is to transfer knowledge from those who have it to those who need it (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014).

Tacit knowledge mostly serves as a source of competitive advantage. It is personal and it is rooted in a person's experiences and feelings, making it a bit complicated to share. The best way to acquire or share tacit knowledge is through sharing thoughts, feelings and experiences (Ruhanen et al., 2012) and this can be achieved as part of a mentor–mentee relationship. Such relationships help the mentors and the interns to demonstrate and share their knowledge and to learn from each other (Wasonga & Murphy, 2006). A best-case scenario would be for the mentor and mentee to share experiences. The mentee can relate to the mentor what they learned in the lecture room and what the textbook says about a particular subject, and the mentor can share their experiences about how it is actually done in the workplace.

The fame model developed by Damon Virta, Gustav Westpahl and Marcus Löff serves as the foundation of an attempt to explain talent management for graduate interns in this study. This model was considered to be suitable and relevant as its main aim was to illustrate how students perceive talent management. The model is a life cycle of four roles within an organisation, namely the prospect, employee, senior and the company. The roles are explained in this manner:

- **The prospect** – Prospects are not yet employed by the organisation, they can be anyone with potential talent, ranging from young graduates to people looking to change career paths. These people can add value to the organisation by bringing in new fresh objective minds, creativity and innovation. Graduate interns fit this profile well and they will be the prospects for this study.
- **The employee** - These people are already in the employ of the organisation because of their talents and experiences. They have the potential to develop into very skilled professionals.
- **The senior** - They are key employees who have been with the organisation for a long time, most are near retirement. They have valuable experience and tacit knowledge. For the purpose of this study the seniors are the mentors.
- **The company** - It is an entity made up of its structures and its human capital.

The organisation must find prospects to mentor during the internship programme with the objective of later attracting them to become their employees based on their performance. The company should develop and manage until they become senior employees with enhanced performance. They can then create and share knowledge and extract knowledge from organisational structures to become self-actualised.

There are many sources of prospects. For this study the prospect is the graduate intern. Armstrong (2012) states that most entry-level jobs are filled by university and college graduates and they are a major source of future talent. This makes internships are a good source of prospects. Once an organisation has found its prospects in the form of graduate interns, the prospect and the organisation have a joint responsibility to turn the prospect into a talented and productive employee. This can be done by senior employees providing proper mentoring and knowledge management and prospects being willing to learn.

The role of mentorship in talent management during internships

Mentors are senior employees who are considered to be experts in their field. Their role is to guide and advise junior employees throughout their career development journey (Armstrong,

2014). A mentor takes a special interest in a mentee, and this puts them in a better position to identify potential in an intern (mentee). New employees and interns are allocated mentors who they can shadow and learn from and mentors are held in high regard as experienced and trusted advisors and teachers (Erasmus et al., 2015). Mentors should be informed on the purpose of the programme and what role they will play so that there is a shared vision. Mentor commitment is vital to this process. Some mentors have been unwilling participants.

Internship programmes are structured with set goals and performance standards that graduates must achieve at the end of their programme with proper guidance from their mentors and supervisors. In some instances, this limits their ability to go beyond what is expected of them. Proper mentoring is vital for the employability and retention of graduate interns (Eigsti, 2009; Henson, 2006; Lo & Ramayah, 2011). Tacit work-related knowledge dissemination is easier in a mentoring relationship where it is transferred from an experienced employee to a protégé (Whelan & Carcary, 2011). A well-structured and supported mentoring scheme increases and encourages individual potential, improves staff morale and is a tool used in learning programmes.

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR TALENT INDICATORS

Key performance outputs as building blocks of talent indicators

Key performance indicators (KPI) are described by Mayhew (2016) as factors that help employers determine whether their employees' performance meets the job expectations and standards, Srimannarayana (2010) says they are defined tools to measure human capital. Internship jobs are entry-level jobs in most organisations. For the purpose of this study the researcher used the KPI of an HR assistant entry-level position, equating this to an intern position as identified by Mayhew (2016).

Many organisations are set apart by their customer service practices and it has become a great source of competitive advantage (Warnich et al., 2015). HR personnel internally serve the organisation's employees and externally clients in the form of job applicants. They have to provide a good service. Skills associated with excellent customer service are active listening and ability to timeously and resourcefully resolve customers' needs and issues.

Functional knowledge is also a key indicator. Graduates have to have knowledge of employment practices, policies, rules and regulations governing their line of work. They would have acquired most of their functional knowledge from their higher education. Technology also plays a big part in human resource information systems (HRIS) and these systems have

become instrumental for HR departments today (Warnich et al., 2015). Much information, like employee records detailing their leave and payroll records, are automated on an HRIS, making business operations easier and more efficient (Meyer & Kirsten, 2005, Dessler, 2011). Technological literacy is key in intern performance as many employers now use professional networking sites to recruit candidates and use applicant tracking systems and documentation for current employees.

Competency models are useful for grouping skills, behaviours and attitudes that can affect how people do their work and the quality they produce (Noonan, 2012). Competency models enable talent management practices to find and keep talent. The SABPP HR competency model does exactly that as it describes what an HR practitioner should be able to offer in terms of knowledge, skills and abilities to implement HR functions (SABPP, 2012). The model has many components, but for the purpose of this study emphasis is on the competencies outlined in the model. They include among other things leadership, interpersonal and communication skills, technology and innovation.

If an intern is able to incorporate some of these competencies in what they already possess, they can produce an excellent quality of work. Because of their entry-level positions and their job description, interns cannot access all areas of an HR practitioners' work. They are not expected to show all the competencies on the model, but their supervisors can use it as a guide to be on the lookout to see what the interns can do based on the model. It also showcases dedication and commitment on the side of a graduate if they have knowledge about their occupation's professional bodies and become registered members.

Potential as a building block of talent indicators

The AON Hewitt model (2013) uses four components to define potential. Firstly, there is performance, which means that standards must be exceeded and be consistent. The second component is character, and behaviours associated with good character include adaptability, high business interest and confidence. Thirdly, the model looks at capabilities, which involve ability to learn fast, ability to function outside the scope of your work, and to be flexible to changing conditions. Lastly, individuals should be self-motivated and continually be looking for growth opportunities.

Greenhaus, Callanan, and Godshalk (2010) identify the ability to learn from mistakes and develop new skills, openness to new ideas and the ability to take initiative and responsibility, drive and lead change as high-potential characteristics.

Ready, Conger, Hill, and Stecker (2010) report the following four criteria for high-potential employees: a strong drive to excel, they are very active and involved learners, possess high enterprising spirit and have the ability to sense opportunities and changes. Schumacher (2009) says high-potential employees are quick learners, risk takers, consistent high performers, have growth potentials and positive energy. Snipes (2005) shares these views when he says that they have the ability to maintain a high level of competence in technical or functional discipline and they consistently produce results above expectations.

Transferable skills as a building block of talent indicators

Soft skills are not discipline-specific; they are subsequently also known as transferable skills. Graduates leave higher education with discipline-specific theoretical and technical knowledge and studies have shown that they lack the soft skills needed in the work environment. Huq and Gilbert, (2013) and Jackson (2013) identify soft skills as team working, communication, adaptability and problem solving, analytical and critical thinking.

The findings of a study by Watts and Watts (2008) indicate that hard/technical skills contribute to only 15% of one's success, while the remaining 85% relies on soft skills. These results almost mimic a study conducted at Harvard University, which revealed that 80% of success and achievement in careers is owed to soft skills and 20% to hard skills (Sharma, 2009, p. 21). Klaus found in 2010 that 75% of long-term job success depends on people skills, while only 25% is depends on technical knowledge (Robles, 2012, p. 454). This has resulted in many employers shifting their focus to soft transferrable skills. These skills are essential for graduate success.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design

A research design outlines the steps that researchers take to achieve their outcomes (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delport as cited in Babbie & Mouton, 2006). They are the blueprints, roadmaps or plans of how one intends to conduct research. There are various possible research designs, but each design is tailored to meet the demands of a specific kind of research problem.

Research approach

The research topic in most instances determines the research approach. In this case, the research was done using a qualitative approach. Qualitative research focuses mainly on interpreting and understanding people's experiences in different settings (Merriam, 2009). This study focuses on gaining an emic understanding (Tracy, 2013) of the HR professional's perspective on graduate talent indicators from their experience or their point of view as mentors to graduate interns. A small group of HR managers and supervisors (who also serve as mentors to graduate interns) from private and public organisations was selected for the study. A case study strategy was employed to explore the experiences of the people involved to form a description (Maree, 2016). Talent indicators are explored from the view of HR managers, supervisors and mentors. These role players are responsible for graduate interns every year and they spend a lot of time with them. They can give a more detailed assessment and evaluation based on their experiences and observations.

Research strategy

Qualitative research normally requires a thorough exploration of a phenomenon using multiple sources (Mills & Birks, 2014). Case study research is best suited to achieve this purpose. This strategy can be used to describe phenomena like current events and issues or programmes in communities where people live so that there can be a detailed explanation and understanding of things unfolding or happening (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2012). The case for this research is an internship programme where talent indicators can be explored.

Research setting

A total of 25 HR managers and supervisors participated in the study. Some of them completed e-mail interviews and some face-to-face interviews with the researcher. Participants were called or e-mailed to secure appointments before interviews could be conducted. Most interviews were done in the participants' offices for their own convenience.

Sampling

A research sample is a group drawn from a population as a representative group. To make generalisation possible and to avoid bias, the sample must be fully representative of the population (Welman, Kruger, & Mitchell, 2005). The sample for this paper was HRM practitioners who serve as mentors and who supervise graduate interns. The participants were

purposively selected for their expertise and experience as this could aid efforts to answer the research questions. Table 2.1 below displays the sample demographics.

Table 2.1: Sample demographics

Participants	Gender	Race	Job Title	Qualification	Years in Practice	Sector
1	Male	African	HR Admin Clerk	N. Dip in Public Man	05	Public
2	Female	African	HR Manager	Masters LR	10	Public/ Municipality
3	Female	White	HR Manager	Masters in HRM	11	Private
4	Female	White	Senior HR Training Coordinator	Honours in HRM	11	Public
5	Male	African	Senior Personnel Practitioner	National Diploma in HRM	9	Public
6	Male	African	Deputy Director Human Capital	Masters in HRM	13	Public
7	Female	African	Assistant Director HR	Advanced Diploma in HRD	24	Public
8	Female	African	Senior Personnel Practitioner	N. Dip. Public Management	9	Public
9	Female	African	Assistant Director Labour Relations	N. Dip. Labour Relations	10	Public
10	Female	African	Assistant Director: PMDS	Post-Graduate Diploma HRM	12	Public
11	Female	African	Chief Personnel Officer	BTech: HR Development	10	Public
12	Female	African	Training Manager	Degree HR	10	Private
13	Female	African	Assistant Director: HRD & PMDS	B.Admin Hons	15	Public
14	Male	African	Chief Personnel Officer	N.Dip HRM	11	Public
15	Male	African	Assistant Director HR	National Diploma	5	Public
16	Female	African	Assistant Director HR	Hons Degree HRM	6	Public
17	Male	African	Assistant Director HR	Diploma in HRM	20	Public

Participants	Gender	Race	Job Title	Qualification	Years in Practice	Sector
18	Male	African	Personnel Officer	Grade 12	22	Public
19	Male	African	Organisational Development Practitioner	N.Dip HRM	7	Public
20	Female	African	Assistant Director HRM	Hons HRM	20	Public
21	Male	African	Assistant Director HRM	Hons HRM	3	Public
22	Female	African	HR Practitioner	Degree HRM	12	Public
23	Male	Indian	Assistant Director HRM	Hons HRM	5	Public
24	Female	African	Personnel Practitioner	Diploma in HRM	17	Public
25	Male	African	Communication s Officer	Degree in Communicati on	3	Public

Note: participants were not required to reveal the names of their organisations or departments. They only had to state the sector.

Most of the participants in the study were from the public sector (92%). There were more females at 56% than males at 44%. More participants were of black origin (88%), with only two being white (8%) and one being Indian (4%).

Most interviews were done in the North West province. The biggest employer in this province is the government of the Republic of South Africa, which explains the majority of public sector participants. The longest that the participants have served in the HRM field was 24 years and the shortest was three. Most participants had national diplomas, advanced national diplomas, bachelor's degrees and certificates in HRM. Five had honours degrees and three had master's degrees in HRM. One participant had Grade 12 and has served for 22 years. One participant had a degree in communications, but has been working in the HR department for the last three years.

Research procedure

Prior to commencing the study, the researcher applied for ethics clearance from the relevant university faculty and it was granted. The ethics clearance certificate is attached as an annexure. Case study research involves permission from those called gatekeepers, normally

senior staff from the department where the research would be conducted (Mills & Birks, 2014). Letters to request permission were drafted and signed by the school director and the study promoter and sent out to departmental directors where access was required. Permission was granted in the form of letters. These are also attached as annexures. The researcher then contacted each of the participants selected to form part of the sample to make appointments for interviews at convenient times and venues. All the participants participated voluntarily.

Data collection method

Data were collected using interviews with HR practitioners, managers and supervisors from various organisations and government departments. An interview schedule was designed to avoid digression from the topic and to save time. The target sample was initially larger than 25, but the researcher stopped at 25 as data saturation had been reached. There were initially 23 questions on the interview schedule, and after four interviews the questions were reduced to ten. This was done for the sake of time and because some questions yielded similar responses. The study follows the article format, so questions were designed to answer the questions of each article.

Data recording

Interviews were recorded on an electronic audio-recorder and on a mobile phone as back-up. The recordings were later transcribed and saved as Word documents on multiple storage devices for safekeeping. All the e-mail interviews were saved on multiple devices for back-up and safekeeping.

Data analysis

The researcher used manual content thematic analysis, which entails reading through transcripts and identifying codes, which are later grouped into themes (Bryman & Bell, 2014; Lapan et al., 2012). Qualitative data analysis starts when the researcher transcribes recorded interviews and studies them (Tracy: 2013).

Ensuring the quality and rigour of the research

Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson and Spiers (2002) say that, “*without rigor, research is worthless, it becomes fiction, and loses its utility*” (p. 14). Validity and reliability were originally rooted in quantitative research, but the quality of qualitative research should be equally ensured.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Guba and Lincoln (1994) came up with criteria for rigour in qualitative research. They propose that it is necessary to specify terms and ways of establishing and assessing the quality of qualitative research that provide an alternative to reliability and validity. They propose two primary criteria for assessing a qualitative study: trustworthiness and authenticity (Bryman, 2012, p. 390).

Credibility and authenticity

- Credibility – interview transcripts have been safely stored and are true reflections of the verbatim recordings. Every sound (laughs and sighs) have been transcribed as they represent participants emotions. Findings will be made available to interested parties.
- Authenticity - some interview schedules were completed by the participants in their own handwriting. This serves as evidence that their responses are authentic and that the researcher did not add anything.

Reporting

Mills and Birks (2014) state that there is not really a method or system to report qualitative results, but qualitative researchers commonly use verbatim quotes from participants. For this study, direct quotes are presented in italics and information such as the sample's demographics appear in table format.

FINDINGS

Two main themes emerged from participant responses, namely performance management and transferable skills. Table 2.2 below shows the themes and subthemes.

Table 2.2: Frequency of themes

Theme and subthemes		Frequency
Theme	Performance Management	16
Subthemes	Performance standards and outcomes	10
	Feedback from mentors	6
Theme	Transferable skills	15
Subthemes	Commitment	2
	Attitude towards work	6
	Innovation	3
	Adaptability and flexibility	4

Theme: Performance management

One of the participants mentioned that there is no formal performance management tool for graduate interns as compared to permanent employees. The contents of the intern contract (job description) serves as the only basis for performance management. Mentors use this to determine key performance outputs and to set standards against which they can measure interns. Most participants felt that performance outcomes are important for determining an intern's potential. The discussion of the theme gave rise to the two subthemes discussed below.

Subtheme: Performance standards and outcomes

One of the main objectives of performance management is to ensure that organisations attract and retain talented employees (Dessler, 2000). The process allows managers and supervisors to monitor employee performance to check if performance standards are being met so that interventions can be put in place. Most participants agreed that they use performance outcomes to determine talent levels among graduate interns. Some of the participants had the following to say:

“Standards given to them assist as they have targets allocated, so if he/she performs above the given standard it can be seen as talent” (Participant 7 – black, female, assistant director HR in the public sector).

“You just rate them according to the set standards or targets” (Participant 8 – black, female, senior personnel practitioner in the public sector).

“Quality of work produced” (Participant 10 – female, black, Assistant Director: PMDS in the public sector).

“By the outcomes of their performance” (Participant 17 – black, male, Assistant Director: HR in the public sector).

“The department has no tool available to assess interns” (Participant 20 – male, black, organisational development practitioner in the public sector).

Participants suggested the following solutions:

“The performance outcome determines the potential as there is no performance tool outside the expected outcome” (Participant 2 – black, female, HR Manager in the public sector).

“There always has to be a development plan and if it is followed well it can help the intern to develop their skills and improve their performance” (Participant 10 – female, black, Assistant Director: PMDS in the public sector)

“Mentors have a chance to see intern performance through continued assessment” (Participant 21 – female, black, Assistant Director in the public sector).

“Through practical work application, graduates that can show an ability that what they have learned in university can be done in practice, you can tell there is something there” (Participant 6 – Male, Black, Deputy Director: HR in the public sector).

“Through school results and their academic records. Through interviews conducted during the selection process” (Participant 12 – female, black, training manager in the private sector).

Subtheme: Feedback

Feedback is one of the core components of performance management. Seven of the respondents agreed that it helps to know what mentors say about interns when they give feedback because it reveals levels and quality of performance. Feedback is also essential for correcting deficiencies and reinforcing strengths. This is how the participants responded:

“Thorough feedback sessions and discussions with their managers or supervisors on their performance is helpful, it gives different perspectives from both the intern and their mentor” (Participant 3 – white, female, HR Manager in the private sector).

“Departmental meetings where all line managers’ report on their sections status can reveal some information about the intern’s performance, positive feedback from two or three supervisors about one intern says a lot and as managers we can be able to make further recommendations” (Participant 10 – black, female, Assistant Director: PMDS in the public sector).

“We have quarterly assessments and then give feedback that both supervisor and intern sign off on, through this a lot can be seen from an intern’s work abilities” (Participant 7 – black, female, assistant director in the public sector).

“Based on the reports from their supervisors” (Participant 1 – male, black, HR admin clerk in the public sector).

“Feedback from mentors is useful in determining talent of an intern, you will know their capabilities, their strong areas and their development areas” (Participant 6 – male, black, deputy director in the public service).

“Mentoring interns gives you a chance to see how they perform, if they are meeting standards or not and you assess them throughout and give them feedback” (Participant 21 – female, black, assistant director in the public service).

“Mentor feedback enables us to determine potential” (Participant 12 – female, black, training manager in the private sector).

Theme: Transferable skills

Most participants expressed the view that success does not come about in isolation, so interpersonal skills are important for determining if a graduate shows talent and potential. Previous research studies have shown that generic skills contribute to almost 80% of success in the workplace. They are vehicles to bring technical skills to the fore. These are what some of the participants had to say on the subthemes of this theme:

Subtheme: Commitment

“Commitment to work ethic, reliability and accountability. Fast learning graduates who can comprehend everyday duties show that talent is there as opposed to some who are absent a lot and drag their feet when given tasks to do” (Participant 11 – female, black, chief personnel officer in the public service).

“Graduates who show commitment to their work and avail themselves to assist at all times show that they want to learn more and are more dependable” (Participant 6 – male, black, Deputy Director: HR in the public sector).

Subtheme: Attitude towards work

“A good attitude demonstrates how a graduate will approach work, when always positive and open to learning you achieve a lot rather than always complaining” (Participant 3 – female, white, HR manager in the private service).

“Develop a work plan and observe them when they execute their duties, their attitude usually tells the supervisor something” (Participant 5 – male, black, senior personnel practitioner in the public sector).

The following comment was made as a follow-up to the comment above and in answer to the question – “What does attitude reveal?”

“As you know they say your attitude determines your altitude, many graduates do not like taking instructions, especially when they think they know more than us or are more qualified, if you cannot take instructions you cannot do the job well, same as you do not read a manual for a new gadget you will not be able to operate it properly” (Participant 5 – male, black, senior personnel practitioner in the public sector).

“A competitive spirit may or may not be good at times, but a student that wants to be the best will make sure that they give their best performance, so yes competitiveness can indicate that there talent somewhere” (Participant 9 – female, black, Assistant Director: Labour Relations in the public sector)

“A graduate who takes initiative, I had one if do not give her anything to do, she will come and ask if she can help me with anything and if said I will show her something she will always remind me and then I had one who was very passive that I would even forget her at times and guess which one we employed in the end” (Participant 10 – female, black, Assistant Director: PMDS in the public sector).

“They have a lot to learn as they only having theory from tertiary. There are graduate interns who are playful because they do not pay attention to details or taking work given to them lightly. Some interns, especially females are lazy, have attitudes and the mentality of being overworked.” (Participant 22 – male, black, assistant director in the public service).

“A graduate that shows passion for their work and displays leadership, problem solving and people skills are normally the talented ones or have potential” (Participant 4 – female, white, senior HR training coordinator in the public service).

Subtheme: Innovation

“Innovative graduates who are always willing to try out new things and willing to learn and are open to criticism, it allows them to grow in the chosen career” (Participant 16 – female, black, Assistant Director: HR in the public sector).

“One of the interns that I had liked asking me why we don’t we do this or that or try that, at first I thought here comes trouble, but as time went on I realised that doing things differently makes a big difference on the outcomes” (Participant 9 – female, black, Assistant Director: Labour Relations in the public sector).

“I once asked an intern to help me with a report document that was due in a short space of time, I tell you within a few hours she gave me a good document with a table of contents which I had not done and she showed me how to do it automatically from word which I use every day but did not know that function, I was impressed so the quality of work and ability to meet deadlines. Their knowledge of technology makes them innovative and efficient in their work so they who actually apply those skills show signs of more capabilities” (Participant 9 – female, black, Assistant Director: Labour Relations in the public sector).

Subtheme: Adaptability and flexibility

“Sectional rotation helps identify hard working interns, they have to do different functions and acquire new skills” (Participant 18 – male, black, personnel officer in the public sector).

“Ability to acquire relevant skills and qualifications, in different settings” (Participant 13 – black, female, Assistant Director: HR & PMDS in the public service).

“Rotation programmes to test them in different environments and skills” (Participant 12 – female, black, training manager in the private sector).

“Ability to acquire different and relevant skills in different tasks” (Participant 13 – female, black, Assistant Director: HR & PMDS in the public sector).

“It is difficult for some graduate interns to do presentations and to participate in some activities for the first three months on internship programme because the interns believe that they have lack of workplace confidence, skills and knowledge. Secondly some graduate interns spend more time doing one activity or task over and over again and still making the same mistakes, those who manage at the first or second try I consider them potentially skilled” (Participants 24 – male, Indian, assistant director in the public service).

DISCUSSION

The objective of the study was to explore talent indicators to identify individuals with potential and talent at internship level by listening to managers, supervisors and HR practitioners' perspectives. According to Mellahi and Collings (2010) and Vaiman, Scullion & Collings (2012), it is not an easy task to identify talented performers because talent is a “tacit resource” that involves an individual's potential and not their performance only. The implication is that talent cannot be measured or identified based on an individual's performance only. Other elements should be included.

Performance standards were the most mentioned and they became the main theme. The performance management process includes managers and subordinates setting and agreeing on performance standards (Dessler, 2011). Inability to meet standards in most instances is perceived as a performance gap (Erasmus et al., 2015) that can be remedied through different interventions like training and wellness programmes.

Continuously exceeding standards could indicate potential or talent, and this is often developed further to maximise potential. Most participants agreed that graduates who continuously meet and exceed performance targets are potentially talented. This affirms the AON Hewitt (2013) potential model, which states that performance must be above the standards and consistent. Such performers can be given first preference when it comes to employment in the organisations after the internship programme has been completed, provided there are vacancies available. One should keep in mind that employers are under no obligation to absorb interns after a programme.

Feedback emerged as a subtheme of performance management. It is one of the core components of performance management. During performance appraisals, supervisors and managers give employees feedback on their performance. Most participants agreed that they have both monthly or quarterly assessments and meetings to give graduates feedback. Regular feedback enables one to correct their errors and to improve on performance. Generation Y employees thrive on feedback. They want regular updates on their performance so they can devise means to improve and emerge victorious in their tasks. It is in their nature to want to be on top at all times, and organisations that wish to retain these new talents should adapt to their needs,

Transferable skills came out strong and were mentioned by many participants. The AON Hewitt potential model (2013) encompasses many transferable skills that were mentioned by participants as ways of determining talent. Among them was motivation. Participant 10 mentioned that her intern always asked her for work to do and asked to be taught new things. Willingness to learn was also prevalent in conjunction with the ability to grasp concepts quickly and to learn new tasks during rotation programmes.

Competition is another characteristic of generation Y employees. One participant mentioned that although competition is not always good, it could be healthy and have a positive effect on performance. Graduates who compete learn new things faster and come up with different ideas on how to do things, which maximises their work outputs.

Attitude and commitment to work builds one's character. Participant 5 mentioned that some graduates do not want to take instructions from mentors and supervisors and their attitude is that they are more qualified than their mentors are. It is true that some graduates are more qualified than their mentors and supervisors, but they are in the programme to learn workplace skills and bridge the theory–practice divide. If they do not have a willing attitude, they will not achieve the objectives of the internship programme. Talented people are always open to learning and further improving their talents.

Ability to adapt to changing work demands is important, as mentioned by Participant 24. This participant mentioned that some graduates do one task for almost three months and still do not get it right. In today's changing work environment, employees have to be highly flexible and able to adapt to global changes to sustain themselves in the labour market.

Based on the responses of the participants and the insights gained from the available literature, the researcher drafted a model for talent indicators in HRM graduates. The model includes components like potential, transferable skills and performance outputs. The factors that could be regarded talent indicators are subsequently discussed.

GRADUATE TALENT INDICATORS

Strong presence and utilisation of transferable soft skills

Soft skills enhance performance and contribute more than 50% to successful outcomes on performance. Communication is one skill that is key to achieving good results in the workplace. Communication between supervisors, mentors and graduate interns means that information can be exchanged about company policies and about how things should be done. It is also essential for giving feedback in both directions (Bambacas & Patrickson, 2008). Graduates who cannot communicate find it difficult to take instructions and seek clarity. They find it difficult to relay their needs clearly to their mentors and supervisors, thus hindering their learning process.

Strong presence of the key elements of potential

Potential consists of performance, character, capability and motivation. Highly motivated employees are passionate about their work and want to keep learning to achieve better results.

Observable innate talents

Some people are naturally good with numbers and technology. This innate talent can be developed and nurtured to produce excellent results on performance.

Knowledge and ability to apply HRM functions

Ability of a graduate to incorporate theory and practice.

Key performance outcomes

The quality and accuracy of work is a key determinant of talent. An ability to achieve this within shorter lead times with fewer errors is also an indicator. The HR competencies as per the South African Board for People Practices (SABPP) are mostly used for professionals, but if a graduate can display some of them, it is clear sign of great potential.

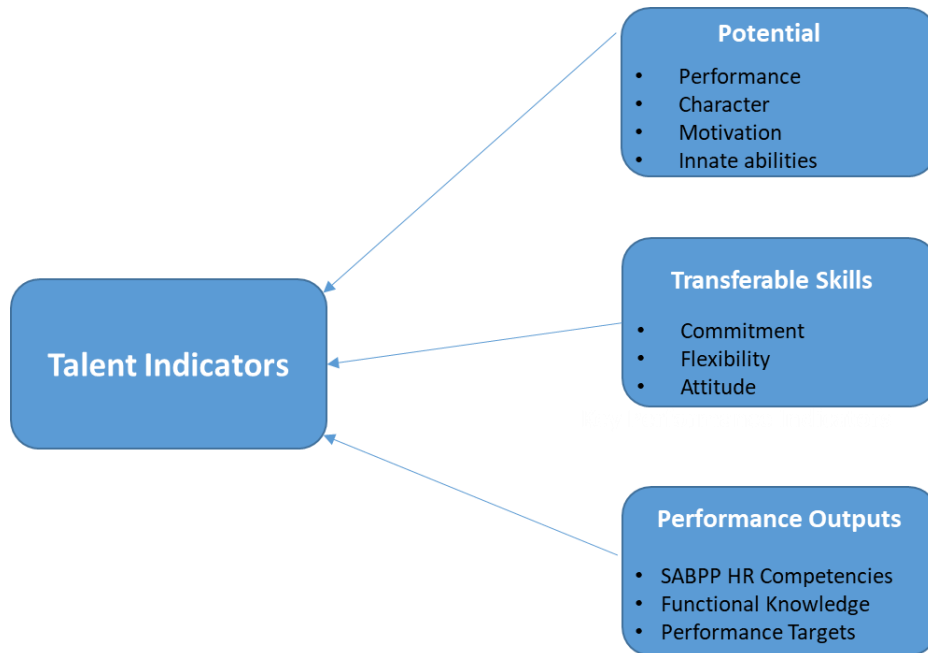


Figure 2.1: *Conceptual Model for Talent Indicators*

If a person wants to excel, the quality of work, the behaviours and the level of motivation cannot be same as those of average performers. When most of these are present in an intern, their performance will be outstanding. One can ask if these indicators can be used for employees who have been with the organisation for longer periods. The researcher's response is yes. Length of service plays a key role as some employees only realise their potential after being in one position for a long time, but graduate interns have only a limited time to make their mark, which can be anything between 6 and 24 months.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The research proposes a practical conceptual model with talent indicators. HR and talent management practitioners may be able to put this model to use as a basis to identify talented graduate interns early on. Talent indicators will serve as a measurement tool for organisations that use graduates to develop their talent pools. This can encourage and improve the quality

of mentorship, knowledge and talent management practices during internship programmes. Steady talent pools can be created and maintained with a steady flow of graduate interns. In the beginning interns start off as affordable labour, as many researchers point out, but later on they are moulded into skilled and knowledgeable employees with potential to grow further in or outside the host organisation.

There can perhaps be slight generalisation of results when KPI for HR graduates and the HR competency model are replaced by those of another discipline. Researchers will be able to come up with talent indicators for interns from that specific discipline.

LIMITATIONS

This research had some limitations. Not much literature is available on talent indicators, and the little that is available focus on the arts and sporting fields. This meant that the researcher had to draw conclusions from existing literature and similar previous studies on identifying talent. This study focused mainly on HR graduate interns, but the study can be expanded to graduates in other disciplines as well. Such generalisation could be a bit skew and must be exercised with great care and caution. Since business changes all the time, generalisation might not be key.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for host organisations

- Talent management practices should include not only the organisation's permanent employees. Internships should be included in strategic planning and processes should be put in place to include them in the talent development pool. Of course this can be supported by budgeting for retention after programme completion, thereby using the internship programme as a talent recruitment tool.
- Programmes should be taken a little more seriously than is currently the case. If this is done such programmes could certainly achieve the objective of reducing graduate unemployment. Managers and supervisors should be encouraged to avail themselves and participate in mentor training programmes.
- Apart from the formal internship employment contract, a contract should be signed with the mentor to ensure that both are committed to the success of the programme. A checklist should be developed with a portfolio of evidence like in the learnerships programme to evaluate the relationship at the end of the programme. Interns can use these documents during future job searches.

- Calculations should be made on how much one intern costs the organisation acknowledging all resource, human, financial, efforts and time. This will make employers aware of how much they lose if they do not utilise interns optimally, calculating also the return on investment made.

Recommendations for graduate interns

- Graduate interns should open themselves up for learning from mature employees, even if they possess higher qualifications than their mentors do.
- It is important to develop an inquisitive culture during any learning process. Graduate should continually and consistently complete their tasks to meet their set targets. If they have more time they should ask for additional work and rotation so that they expose themselves to different areas of work.
- Development programmes encompass many aspects that graduates should learn, the sooner graduates stop complaining about not being given tasks that are job-related, the more they will learn to apply themselves in different settings. They should allow for a broad acquisition of skills, making them flexible and adaptive to most working environments.

CONCLUSION

Talent management is mainly about identifying, developing and retaining talent. Initially, this was applied to senior permanent employees of the organisation as a tool to improve on succession planning. Evidence from literature proves that there is a need for talented and competent employees at all levels in the organisation to support top and middle managers and to achieve organisational initiatives.

Talent indicators for graduate interns are a necessary tool to help managers and supervisor identify these graduates from the rest. Ever since its origin in the nineties, the concept of talent management has become key in the HR arena. HR practitioners in most organisations use it as a talent resourcing strategy. This new strategy should be used across various talent pools in organisations to fully capture real talent and enhance performance.

There should be more focus on establishing graduate talent development pools as it has been proven that graduate intake is one of the best ways to bring in new innovative talent to help businesses achieve their objectives. Adopting the inclusive talent management approach will enable organisations to identify potentially talented future employees at entry levels like the internship phase. The study produced talent indicators made up of different elements of

potential, soft and hard skills and performance outcomes. A combination of these elements will positively enhance a graduate's capabilities and improve their employability prospects.

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CHAPTER 3:

ARTICLE 2

EXPLORING THE DETERMINANTS OF AN EMPLOYEE VALUE PROPOSITION FOR GRADUATE INTERNS

ABSTRACT

Research orientation and purpose

Organisations invest a lot on graduate training programmes and unless they plan for their retention (graduate interns), they lose them to their competitors. The purpose of this paper is to investigate if existing EVPs can influence graduate interns to remain with the organisation and what determines the contents of a graduate EVP.

Motivation for the study

Most graduate interns fall within the category of Generation Y employees so that the law of individual differences applies. Organisations have to tailor their practices to accommodate the quest to maximise their potential and retain them.

Research approach, method and design

The paper followed a qualitative research approach with a sample of 25 HR practitioners, mentors and supervisors and a focus group of ten graduate interns.

Main findings

Three themes emerged, namely functional components (non-monetary components can include development opportunities), financial components and psychological components (looking at things like mentorship) that combine to create an EVP for graduates.

Contribution/Value add

The study outlines a predictive graduate EVP that can influence employers to develop an informed graduate value proposition. This can be used to pacify graduate interns and improve the internship experience while cultivating excellent future employees.

Key Words

Employment value proposition, Generation Y, graduate value proposition, mentorship, talent management.

INTRODUCTION

The new players in the labour market are the Generation Y employees. They are steadily replacing the retiring baby boomers, creating various challenges for organisations, both private and public. They have to tailor their HRM practices to meet the demands of different generations in the workplace (Kultalahti & Viitala, 2015). Fifty per cent of the global workforce after 2020 will be people born after 1980 (Generation Y), according to Price Water House Cooper's research (2011). Graduate interns are mostly between the ages of 25 and 35. They fall within the category of millennials or Generation Y, born after 1981 to 2000 according to Bolton, Parasuraman, Hoefnagels, Migchels, Kabadayi & Gruber (2013) and Miller (2011).

This is a generation of visionaries who do things differently compared to the generations before them. They are no longer attracted by higher salaries, there are other elements they value more, like work-life balance and speedy upward movement on the corporate ladder. They are more likely to pursue modern career patterns like the protean and careers without boundaries. They do not want to stagnate in one place as they are highly mobile and flexible beings. As bluntly stated by Browning (cited in Heaton, McCracken & Harrison, 2008) those graduates that have managed to enter the labour market in graduate level positions are planning their next career move even before their basic induction has been completed.

The most agreed upon trait of Generation Y is their early exposure to technology. Some authors term them digital natives with different cognitive, emotional and social outcomes. Immordino-Yang, Christodoulou, and Singh (2012) explain that they "rely heavily on technology for entertainment, social interaction with others and emotional regulation." This is no fault of their own, they were born in the technology era. Georg Hegel's theory of *Zeitsgeist* (the spirit of the time) states that people cannot leap out of their time. Their actions and

behaviours are bound to be influenced by the period in which they live. Magee (as cited in Bolton et al. 2013, p. 245) says the following about Generation Y:

“They are the first generation to have spent their entire lives in the digital environment; information technology profoundly affects how they live and work”

Any work environment that does not uphold the use of technology to advance its operations becomes less desirable to Generation Y, because they tend to rely on their technological insight to enhance their work, yielding excellent results (Behrstock-Sherratt & Coggshall, 2010).

Potential recruits are more likely to apply for a job at an organisation that has a certain brand or an existing positive company reputation. It is general knowledge that firms with good social reputations and well-designed reward and benefit packages attract more and higher quality candidates (Turban & Cable, 2003). The greater a company's rewards and reputation, the more attractive it tends to be to potential recruits. Attracting talented individuals has become a challenge for employers. This is where the EVP comes into play, it has to compel and influence the talented graduate's organisational choice.

An employee value proposition is an effective instrument to attract and retain desirable employees who add value to the organisation and contribute to its bottom line. This paper aimed to uncover out what determines a compelling employee value proposition for graduate interns and what essential elements should be considered for inclusion when designing this tool. What will make people remain with an organisation when approached with an employment offer after the internship placement has ended?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualising the employment value proposition

EVPs are not a brand new attraction and retention tool for organisations, they are just a little more than the normal traditional reward packages employees are used to. Most employees today are looking for organisations that offer or have the potential to offer access to growth opportunities, work-life balance and sometimes even international exposure. Generally, employees regard EVPs as the answer to the question, “What's in it for me if I work here?” (Erickson, 2009) “Why do I want to work here?” (McLean-Conner, 2015). It is how employers communicate their promises to potential employees.

Hein (2015) defines the EVP as the summation of all the characteristics and contents of a job, the employment characteristics that can attract, retain and motivate employees. Employees look at the job as a whole and not only the pay and rewards. The value of these propositions differs from one employee to the next as we function in a diverse labour market. Organisations that value and embrace diversity and understand generational differences create inclusive value propositions that serve all employees, elevate the organization's competitive advantage and their social standing within the communities in which they operate and that they serve.

Hill & Tande (2006) sees EVP a function of why the total work experience at an organisation is superior to that at other organisations. The value proposition should identify the unique people policies, processes and programmes that demonstrate the organisation's commitment to employee growth, management development, ongoing employee recognition and community service. They give employees reasons to choose one organisation over the other. Employees who perceive their own organisation's EVP to be less competitive than that of other organisations are likely to disengage from their own either by reducing their contributions or by leaving the organisation altogether (Heger, 2007), thus making EVPs competitive advantage tools.

According to (Campanaro, 2007, pp. 16):

“a company without an Employment Value Proposition (EVP) is like a person devoid of a personality – it does not exist”

Several authors have highlighted the reasons why EVPs are becoming the lifelines of many organisations (Bussin, 2011; McLean-Conner, 2015). These authors point out among other things that EVPs enable employers to create winning organisation by differentiating themselves from competitors. EVPs furthermore explain the type of support that an organisation can offer to employees through benefits and the career prospects and opportunities that can be expected. Finally, the EVP also describes the company's culture to employees and prospective employees. It describes the types of work, the environment and the people, tools and processes.

EVPs will differ according to the nature of the organisation and the mix of their employees. They should contain detailed information about compensation, benefits, affiliation and career pathing and work content, enough to attract and retain talented employees (Erickson, 2009). Although there is a distinction between the employer brand and the employee value proposition, studies have shown that EVPs should contain functional, economical, and

psychological benefits, just like the employer brand (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Huselid, 1995; Chan et al., 2004). The different components of an EVP are explained below:

Compensation – Compensation refers to the financial and non-financial rewards given to employees in return for their skills, efforts and time invested to help the organisation achieve its strategic objectives (Dessler, 2011, Meyer & Kirsten, 2005). It can take the form of salary or pay and there are incentives for exceeding performance standards. Graduates receive a monthly stipend as their monetary pay component.

Affiliation – Affiliation can be explained using Maslow's hierarchy of needs. It simply means the relationships formed at work with colleagues and when working in teams increase an employee's sense of belonging (Mello et al., 2014). Graduates, as Generation Y employees, are interested in work place relations that will boost their performance in some way. Mentorship can be used to meet this need.

Work content – The job characteristics model of Hackman and Oldham suggests five components to a job. They are of the opinion that there should be a variety of skills that one can acquire in a job. There must also be task identity and significance. The last two are what Generation Y value most as part of their job identity. They believe in autonomy in the job and regular feedback. Every employee that has a desire to acquire new skills and grow in their career want challenging work (Robbins, Judge, Odendaal & Roodt, 2017). It is also a way of proving to superiors that you are capable of doing more and contributing significantly to achieving organisational goals. Graduate interns will often complain about the type of work they are given, sometimes labelling it as meaningless within the context of their workplace skills acquisition process. They want to be challenged and are very eager to prove themselves with the hope of attracting a job offer after the programme. They consider their work content key for this purpose.

Benefits – Organisations offer some benefits mandated by the law and some voluntarily to motivate employees. Graduates, like any other employee, should receive a contribution to the unemployment insurance fund (UIF) and compensation for occupational injuries and diseases (COIDA). Other benefits like health and insurance are the prerogative of the employer.

Career Growth – Training and development form a big part of advancing employee career growth. This is addressed as the internship programme is a training and development programme meant for interns to enhance their employability.

The components discussed above can be grouped into three components:

Functional components – *Benefits* – healthcare, retirement, insurance, and recognition programmes, *Career* – advancement opportunities, personal growth and development, training, job security

Economic components – *Compensation* - salary, incentives, cash recognition, pay process

Psychological components – *Affiliation* – work environment, trust, transparency, organizational commitment

These three components form the basis for developing a compelling graduate value proposition. They show what elements have to be represented in an EVP. For the simple reason that graduates are contract employees, they do not qualify for many benefits. It is the researcher's view though that employers can apply their minds and come up with a value proposition for graduates to differentiate themselves from competing organisations in terms of attracting the right graduates for the internship programme. If this is done earlier and correctly, the organisation is set apart and it gains a competitive edge over others.

If employers hope to attract their share of this new talent, their EVP must meet the latest requirements. Generation Y are known to strive for great careers with feedback and professional development, but they also want time to focus on family and friends.

Work environments that demand excessive hours and long periods of travel away from home will be less appealing to them (Coleman, 2014). Below we look at what graduates look for in the employment experience. From there, a graduate value proposition (GVP) can be proposed.

Towards building a graduate employment value proposition

According to Bersin (2016, p.1):

“The war for talent is over, and the talent won. Those who have been declared high-performing employees are taking control, able to cherry pick positions they like, according to a range of company differentiators.”

Many EVPs address the needs of employees and potential employees. The implication here is that graduates are potential employees so the EVP should also talk to them. The following is a breakdown according to Hein (2015) of what new graduates look at before making a decision to pursue the available opportunities at different organisations:

Identify with the vision of the organisation: New graduates and interns as potential future candidates within an organisation want to be able to identify with the vision, mission, values and objectives of an organisation. They look at what competencies those organisations value on and how they can identify with them based on their academic history and the skills they possess (Hein: 2015). They want their work to be valued and recognised as contributing to the objectives of the organisation (Behrstock-Sherratt & Coggshall, 2010). Companies that do not recognise the individual inputs of its employees are less likely to attract these new young creative talents. Wigham (2007) says that graduates are inspired when they feel that their skills and abilities are contributing to the bigger picture of the organisation, not just the department.

Investment in employees: Interns want to know if an organisation invests in its employees and how they do it. Investment in human capital can be done through ongoing training programmes, as well as relying strongly on internal recruiting for higher-level jobs within the company. This makes Generation Y employees loyal to employers who value their career aspirations (Behrstock-Sherratt & Coggshall, 2010). A good example will be the Royal Bafokeng Holdings (RBH) with the establishment of their "Class of ..." programme in 2010, which showcases how they invest in their employees and potential employees, targeting new graduates.

The programme creates learning opportunities for high academic performers to gain practical work experience and they facilitate the creation of possible employment opportunities for the graduates upon completion of their internship within host companies (RBH Integrated Review, 2016). Employee investment can also be achieved through non-monetary recognition and appreciation of an employee for outstanding performance in a project or an assignment (Hein, 2015).

"Training is one of the biggest parts of the 'what's in it for me' factor when graduates are choosing an organisation," (Wigham, 2007, p. 16). Graduates are more interested in companies that will help them grow their careers as individuals. Training is becoming a key differentiator in leading companies. The Talent Management Report Survey of 2006 stated that it is important for organizations to communicate to their employees that they have a future and a career within the organization and to have a system in place that specifically tells employees what they need to do to succeed. One indication that an organization is serious about developing employees is the existence of a formal budget for training and development.

Building relationships: Good relationships between interns and their mentors or supervisors have proven to increase performance and commitment to the job. This can be achieved

through open and honest communication channels, thus establishing professional relationships. Graduates need constant advice, guidance and feedback from their mentors and supervisors so they can identify their weak and strong areas.

They place value on social relationships, being in a dynamic team and on their relationships with their supervisors (Behrstock-Sherratt & Coggshall, 2010). Treuren and Anderson (2010) say they have a wish for social interaction in the workplace.

Commitment to social responsibility: Barea and Vasudeva (2015) reveals that most graduates want to work for an organisation that is committed to not destroying the environment and takes into consideration the social impact of their products and services. Generation Y employees will be attracted to an organisation that has an up-to-date corporate social responsibility policy that clearly reflects the values and ethics of the company (Weyland, 2011).

Positive work environment: According Barea and Vasudeva (2015) 59% of graduates would rather work for an organisation that has a positive work atmosphere than for a large organisation that has not created a positive atmosphere. In the Universum Study (2016), graduates looked for organisation with a good corporate culture. They look at management styles, office layout, team dynamics and diversity management.

Digital Experience: Many recent graduates are Generation Y and rely heavily on technology to get things done. Most of them search for job opportunities online. Organisations that have an employment section on their website that allows online applications makes it easier and more interesting for Generation Y's to apply for those jobs. Such organisations have an opportunity to attract Generation Y talented employees (Warmerdam, Lewis, & Banks, 2015). Companies like Google and Apple have introduced online and mobile gamification platforms for employee development, and as Generation Y's are tech savvy, they prefer online learning methods.

Technology strongly influences how Generation Y employees interact in the workplace. They prefer e-mail, instant and text message communication to traditional face-to-face communication, which might be slightly problematic for their baby boomer colleagues (Luscombe, Lewis, & Biggs, 2013). They are likely to get frustrated if an organisation's systems are not up-to-date and not operating effectively because they use technology to drive their work and to achieve instant results (Weyland, 2011).

Current offering in the South African public service internship programme

The *First Draft: Revised Guidelines on Implementing Internships in the Public Service* (2009) explains that interns are appointed on a fixed-term contract with no vacancy or funding, and that they have the same conditions of service like contract employees. They do not receive a salary, but a monthly stipend that is guided by the *Determination on interns and learners* of the Minister of Public Service and Administration on 1 June 2006.

Interns are entitled to the same leave benefits as per provision 27 of the 2008 *Determination on Leave of Absence in the Public Service*. Interns should be encouraged to use up all the leave allocation indicated in their contracts, as any accrual does not entitle them to a leave cash pay-out. Instead they will forfeit their leave days.

According *The Public Service Internship Programme Step-by-Step Guide* (DPSA, 2006), graduate interns are also entitled to benefits such as overtime payment, travel and subsistence, a night shift allowance, a danger and special danger allowance, a standby allowance and clothing for work.

Rewards are given to motivate employees to improve and enhance performance. Vroom's expectancy theory states that for an individual to be motivated there should be expectancy, instrumentality and valence. Employees believe that their efforts will lead to improved performance. Instrumentality is when a connection can be established between the expected performance and rewards. Employees have to value the rewards that are being offered known as valence (Mello et al., 2014). The formula is depicted as follows $Motivation = Expectancy \times Instrumentality \times Valence$. If any of these is zero, there is no motivation (Dessler, 2013).

However, sometimes rewards fail. Many recommendations have been made to make rewards work for both employer and employee. Aguinis (2013) mentions that "*rewards should be visible, make sure all employees are legible, use only rewards that are available, make rewards timely and use non-financial rewards*" (p. 273). Timely and non-financial rewards work best for graduates to induce performance. Graduate interns come from an entitled generation who will not work for anything that they think is beneath them. If they do not value the rewards given, they are less likely to be motivated.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research designs are meant to help researchers to make decisions on how they are going to carry out their research projects. Then research problems become the deciding factor on what approach is to be used. The research problem necessitated a qualitative design as qualitative researchers are after meaning and exploring experiences of different individuals (Hesse-Biber, 2017; Maxwell, 2005).

Research approach

The advantage of using this approach is the ability to capture the perspectives of participants in their own voices (Creswell, 2015). A qualitative exploratory inquiry was undertaken into the views of HR practitioners, mentors and supervisors on the current reward offerings in the internship programme. This allows for a comparison with the results obtained from graduate interns in a real world setting of internship programmes and how they deal with challenges and cope in the whole setting. A qualitative inquiry allows researchers to thoroughly explore different people's experiences on a particular phenomenon (Yin, 2011).

Research strategy

The study follows a case study research strategy. It is investigative in nature and describes phenomena like recent events, important issues or programmes and how people interact with them (Lapan, Quartaroli & Riemer, 2012). The case in hand is the EVP as a retention tool for graduate interns.

Research setting

An electronic interview schedule was designed and the link e-mailed to participants. This constituted what is known as an e-mail interview. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, and Delport (2011) mention that they are less costly and have ability to reach many participants over dispersed geographic locations. Live semi-structured interviews were conducted with those participants within reach of the researcher at secured environments suitable for the participants.

Research procedure

The researcher applied for ethics clearance at the beginning of the project and it was approved by the relevant faculty of the institution. Permission letters were obtained from the university

to request permission to conduct research in participating entities. Some organisations issued permission letters. They are attached as annexures.

Data collection method

Interviews were conducted with HR practitioners, mentors and supervisors. Semi-structured interviews were chosen and a standard set of questions on a certain theme were posed to all participants. This type of interview allowed the researcher to observe participants' responses to questions and to compare their responses because participants have the freedom of approaching questions any way they want (Aurini, Heath, & Howells, 2016). Ten graduate interns participated in a focus group where a group of people are interviewed together at the same time. Focus groups involve a group of people who share common experiences (Yin, 2011), and a total of nine questions were asked and discussed. Focus groups have been used according to Hesse-Biber (2017, p. 150):

“[w]hen a program needs to be evaluated in order to measure its success, strengths, and weaknesses and also to help qualitatively explain the nature of what is and not working.”

The programme under evaluation in this study is the graduate internship programme.

Sampling

One of the important verification strategies in qualitative research is sampling adequacy, which explains that the sample is representative and appropriate and consists of people who have accurate knowledge of the research interest (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson & Spiers, 2002). Participants in this study were purposively selected and included HR practitioners in government and private entities. A total of 25 HR practitioners were interviewed and a focus group with ten graduate interns was conducted.

Table 3.1: Sample demographics for graduate interns

FG Participant	Gender	Race	Age	Year of internship	Highest qualification	Employment status
1	Male	Coloured	25-27	2015	Degree	Fixed-Term Contract
2	Female	Black	37-39	2014	Degree	Permanent Employment
3	Female	Black	25-27	2012	Degree	Permanent employment
4	Male	Black	22-24	2016	Hons Degree	Job Seeker
5	Female	Black	25-27	2016	Diploma	Job seeker
6	Female	Black	28-30	2012	Hons Degree	Permanent employment
7	Female	White	25-27	2016	Diploma	Job seeker
8	Female	Black	34-36	2016	Certificate	Job seeker
9	Male	Black	22-24	2016	Certificate	Job seeker
10	Female	Black	31-33	2012	Diploma	Permanent employment

There were three male participants and seven females. Eight of them were black and only one white and one coloured. Four of them were between the ages of 25 and 27, two were between 22 and 24, one between 28 and 30, one between 31 and 33, one between 34 and 36 and the oldest was between the ages of 37 and 39. Three of them had completed a bachelor's degree in HRM, two of them had an honours degree in HRM, three had diplomas and two had certificates in HRM. Four out of the ten were permanently employed, one was on a fixed-term contract and the rest were still job seekers.

Table 3.2: Sample Demographics – HR practitioners, supervisors and mentors

Participants	Gender	Race	Job Title	Qualification	Years in Practice	Sector
1	Male	African	HR Admin Clerk	N. Dip in Public Man	05	Public
2	Female	African	HR Manager	Masters LR	10	Public/ Municipality
3	Female	White	HR Manager	Masters in HRM	11	Private
4	Female	White	Senior HR Training Coordinator	Honours in HRM	11	Public

Participants	Gender	Race	Job Title	Qualification	Years in Practice	Sector
5	Male	African	Senior Personnel Practitioner	National Diploma in HRM	9	Public
6	Male	African	Deputy Director Human Capital	Masters in HRM	13	Public
7	Female	African	Assistant Director HR	Advanced Diploma in HRD	24	Public
8	Female	African	Senior Personnel Practitioner	N. Dip. Public Management	9	Public
9	Female	African	Assistant Director Labour Relations	N. Dip. Labour Relations	10	Public
10	Female	African	Assistant Director:PMDS	Post-Graduate Diploma HRM	12	Public
11	Female	African	Chief Personnel Officer	BTech: HR Development	10	Public
12	Female	African	Training Manager	Degree HR	10	Private
13	Female	African	Assistant Director: HRD & PMDS	B.Admin Hons	15	Public
14	Male	African	Chief Personnel Officer	N.Dip HRM	11	Public
15	Male	African	Assistant Director HR	National Diploma	5	Public
16	Female	African	Assistant Director HR	Hons Degree HRM	6	Public
17	Male	African	Assistant Director HR	Diploma in HRM	20	Public
18	Male	African	Personnel Officer	Grade 12	22	Public
19	Male	African	Organisational Development Practitioner	N.Dip HRM	7	Public
20	Female	African	Assistant Director HRM	Hons HRM	20	Public

Participants	Gender	Race	Job Title	Qualification	Years in Practice	Sector
21	Male	African	Assistant Director HRM	Hons HRM	3	Public
22	Female	African	HR Practitioner	Degree HRM	12	Public
23	Male	Indian	Assistant Director HRM	Hons HRM	5	Public
24	Female	African	Personnel Practitioner	Diploma in HRM	17	Public
25	Male	African	Communications Officer	Degree in Communication	3	Public

Note: participants were not required to reveal the names of their organisations or departments, they only stated the sector

Most of the participants in the study were from the public sector, with more females than males. More participants were of black origin, only two were white and one was Indian. Most interviews were done in the North West province. The biggest employer is the government of the Republic of South Africa. The longest that the participants had served in the HRM field was 24 years, and the shortest was three. Most participants had national diplomas, advanced national diplomas, bachelor's degrees and certificates in HRM. Five had honours degrees and three had master's degrees in HRM. One participant had Grade 12 and had served for 22 years. One had a degree in communications, but had been working in the HR section doing HR work for the last three years because of a shortage of staff in the HR section.

Qualitative findings

Open codes were derived from words and phrases that participants used repeatedly to answer questions. These codes were grouped into categories. The themes that emerged from the codes were economic, psychological and functional components, which according to existing literature are some of the main components of an EVP.

Table 3.3: Frequency of themes and subthemes

Theme and subthemes		Frequency
Theme	Functional components of the EVP for graduates	22
Subthemes	Training and development	11
	Leave and insurance	5
	Mentorship guidance	6
Theme	Financial components of the EVP for graduates	16
Subthemes	Stipend	13
	Travel allowance	3
	Subsistence	
	Overtime	
Theme	Psychological components of the EVP for graduates	7
Subthemes	Interpersonal relationships with mentors	5
	Wellness	2

Theme: Functional components of the EVP for graduates

Functional components are non-monetary in nature and they include among other things health care, retirement, insurances, recognition programmes, feedback, career advancement opportunities, personal growth and development, training. Factors like health care and retirement benefits do not apply to interns due to the contractual nature of their appointments, but they do have access to growth and development opportunities.

Subtheme - Training and development

The most prevalent subtheme was training opportunities. This is what the participants had to say concerning functional benefits:

“They are covered under the Skills Development Levies Act (SDL), they have to be trained in different areas in accordance with their individual development plans and the current needs and objectives of the department”
(Participant 3 –, white female, HR manager in the private sector).

“We offer assistance to graduate interns so they acquire professional work ethics and help them to gain insight into their respective field. As mentors we train, guide and direct interns accordingly to ensure that they achieve their tasks and organisational goals” (Participant 24 – male, Indian, assistant director in the public service).

“They are provided with training courses in the required areas, the main reason for the internship is indeed development” (Participant 12 – female, black, training manager in the Private Sector)

“I share or transfer knowledge to graduate interns by ensuring that interns participate in any training that organisation has offered them to gain workplace skills, and knowledge. In addition, graduate interns must be trained to create a solution to the problem and generate new ideas to the department or organisation” (Participant 23 – female, black, HR practitioner in the public service).

“there is internal training opportunities organised for them in house according to the gaps identified, but we do not normally send them out to external training, it is expensive sometimes even permanent employees do not attend it” (Participant 4 – female, white, senior HR training coordinator in the public service).

“The importance of mentoring graduate is to train them in whatever job they have been hired for in order for them to be better employees and to know how to do and meet challenges that they might come across in future” (Participant 4 – female, black, personnel practitioner in the public service).

“the nature of the internship is development, so the biggest benefit I would say are development opportunities, if they do not get anything out of the programme at least they would have acquired work and office skills” (Participant 14 – male, black, chief personnel officer in the public service).

“The importance of the programme is to guide the interns in the correct path with regard to the occupation they want to develop and to ensure that graduate interns are trained to gain workplace skills, knowledge and experience” (Participant 23 – female, black, HR practitioner in the public service).

Graduates who participated in the focus group were asked whether they received training and development opportunities.

In the public service, most interns receive standard training known as *Breaking Barriers to Entry* (BBE2) and advanced Excel training. The rest of the training will be specific to each department and mostly on the job, where the mentor gives the intern instructions on how to complete a task. They commented as follows:

“Breaking barriers to entry (BBE2) – This is the training for the graduate interns orientation programme. In this training the facilitator train graduate interns to apply a code of conduct for public service and to understand the concepts of public office systems. Furthermore, at the end of course or training interns are given certificate of completion by National Senior Certificate” (Participant 1 – coloured, female, 2015 and now on a fixed-term contract).

“I was trained in advanced excel, this training took place the North West University, it was nice to receive training out of the office for once. There was also Breaking barriers to entry (BBE2) this is a training that improve graduate interns to apply code of conduct for the public service, demonstrate knowledge of recruitment, selection and appointment in the public service and describe how performance mentoring and evaluation system in government work” (Participant 5 – female, black, 2016 currently a job seeker).

“We were given Batho Pele principles training and advanced excel training” (Participant 7 – female, white, 2016 and currently a job seeker)

Subtheme - Leave and insurance

Another prevalent functional component was the different types of leave that are provided. According to the HR practitioners, mentors and supervisors, there are:

“The Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) covers them, and sometimes additional insurance from the employer depending on the nature and environment of the job” (Participant 4 – white female, senior training coordinator in the public sector).

“They are entitled to leave, travel and accommodation as well as access to employee wellness programmes” (Participant 8 – black female, senior personnel practitioner in the public sector).

“They have sick leave and sometimes maternity leave should the need arise, those who work shifts are offered meals and some company discounts where applicable” (Participant 12 – female, black, training manager in the private sector).

“We also offer funeral cover, which is not deducted from their salaries so should anything happen we are able to assist the parents of the student” (Participant 4 – white female, senior training coordinator in the public sector).

“they have one day annual and sick leave per month, special leave when writing exams or attending interviews, 5 days family responsibility leave for the death of a parent or spouse and 3 family responsibility days when a child is ill” (Participant 11 – black female. chief personnel officer in the public sector).

Subtheme – Mentorship Guidance

Having a mentor to help guide interns enhances career growth and development. This is how the HR practitioners, mentors and supervisors responded when discussing this theme:

“They do have mentors, and the mentors’ duty is to compile their work plans and monitor their everyday activities” (Participant 11 – black, female. chief personnel officer in the public sector).

“There are dedicated supervisors for interns. In the previous organisation I worked for they were allocated a buddy as well” (Participant 3 – white female, HR manager in the private sector).

Generation Y employees thrive on feedback. Focus group participants commented as follows:

“My relationship with my mentor was good because I was able to approach her to assist me, if I struggled with my work and we worked as a team” (Participant 2 – female, black, 2014, permanently employed).

“My relation with my mentor was good because she helped me to avoid certain failure, learn from mistake and accelerate toward their department goals. I am grateful to had mentor because she encourage, helped and advised in organisation and personal” (Participant 1 – male, coloured, 2015, currently on a fixed-term contract).

“My relationship with my mentor is good because she guide and lead me in the workplace correctly. In addition I can refer my mentor as honest person because she is willing to provide honest feedback based on my performance and other interns” (Participant 8 – female, black, 2016 and currently a job seeker).

“My relationship with my mentor was good because he was understanding, supportive, patient, motivating, trustworthy and ethical and there was harmony working environment. In addition, he helped me with my career planning” (Participant 3 – female, black, 2012, permanently employed).

Theme: Economic components of a graduate value proposition

Economic components are monetary in nature, with the salary being the most common primary economic benefit. Graduate interns do not receive a salary like other employees, but are given what is called a stipend. The way the stipend is determined differs slightly between the two sectors. The public sector depends mostly on the DPSA, Department of Labour and other sources of youth programme funding. In the private sector, organizations conduct market surveys to determine their stipends. There are not many economic benefits for graduate interns. The most prevalent was the stipend. The participants gave the following responses:

Subtheme - Stipend

“There is a booklet that we use from the DPSA, it stipulates how the interns have to be paid and it varies according to their qualifications. There are different amounts if one has a junior degree, an honours degree, masters and doctoral degrees” (Participant 10 – black, female, assistant director in the public sector).

“their stipend is determined by their qualifications for example if you have a degree or a diploma from a university or technikon your stipend will be in the range of the R5000 per month and if it is a diploma from an FET college it will be in R3900 range” (Participant 8 – black, female, senior personnel practitioner in the public sector).

“Their main reward is the stipend” (Participant 6 – black, male, deputy director in the public sector).

“They have their basic salary, UIF and SDL, and in my previous company they had travel allowance as well” (Participant 3 – white, female, HR manager in the private sector).

“The stipend increases annually. It also differs depending on the length of the internship. Interns on a 12 month contract earn more than those on an 18 moth contract” (Participant 11 – black, female, chief personnel officer in the public sector)

“the ones we have currently are appointed in line with the municipal finance grant and it has conditions that include also how much they should be paid” (Participant 2 – black, female, HR manager in the public sector)

“The stipend is determined using comparative market data” (Participant 3 – white, female, HR manager in the private sector)

It seems most graduates were not very happy about the amount they received. They had the following to say about the stipend:

“Internship programme should increase the stipend of interns and the department should train interns more frequently and place them correctly in the field of their qualification they have acquired in tertiary level” (Participant 10 – female, black, 2012, permanently employed).

“Increase the stipend because cost of living is too high, we have to buy professional clothes and pay for transport as well” (Participant 4 – male, black, 2016, job seeker).

“The organisation should increase stipend and give interns bonus because they work hard and some interns do their mentors work” (Participant 1 – male, coloured, 2015, on a fixed-term contract).

Subtheme – overtime, travel and subsistence

“They qualify for, overtime, travel and subsistence claims” (Participant 7 – lack female, assistant director in the public sector).

“They can claim for travel costs when travelling for work with their mentors” (Participant 3 – female, white, HR manager in the private service).

“If we have targets to meet and have to work overtime they qualify to claim for that like permanent employees” (Participant 14 – male, black, chief personnel officer in the public service).

Theme: Psychological components of the EVP programme

This element was not mentioned much, but it includes elements like wellness, resources and mentorship. This category creates a sense of affiliation, like the working environment and resources made available for people to execute their duties.

Subtheme – wellness programmes

“They have access to employee wellness programmes” (Participant 8 – black, female, senior personnel practitioner in the public sector).

“Wednesdays are sports days in government, we normally arrange fun walks and sporting activities and we include them, they seem to really enjoy this I think it is because they are still young and energetic” (Participant 17 – male, black, assistant director in the public service).

Subtheme – Interpersonal relationships with mentors

Mentorship are both functional and psychological components of an EVP. Having a mentor creates a sense of affiliation in the workplace and graduate interns as Generation Y learn best in social settings. They were asked how the relationship with their mentors was.

“My relationship with my mentor was good because he was understanding, supportive, patient, motivating, trustworthy and ethical and there was harmony working environment. In addition, he helped me with my career planning, always asking what I am more interested in and why and advice to do more research” (Participant 3 – female, black, 2012, permanently employed)

“It was very interesting and life time opportunity and experience and I learned a lot of things such as communication skills, analysis and research methods of the workplace. In addition, there was harmony environment and team work spirit” (Participant 4 – male, black, 2016, job seeker).

“My relationship with my mentor was very professional, working as a team and learning new things every day” (Participant 10 – female, black, 2012, permanently employed).

Mentorship relationships do not always have good results. This is what two of the graduates had to say:

“My relationship with my mentor was bad because she cannot tell me what to do or direct me regarding my day to day work and she is also not available in the office most of the time” (Participant 5 – female, black, 2016, job seeker).

“My relationship with my mentor is bad because there is lack of communication, directing ad supportive genuine on mentoring” (Participant 9 – male, black, 2016, job seeker)

DISCUSSION

The study aimed to explore the determinants of an employee value proposition for graduate interns and to establish its effectiveness in retaining graduate interns. An investigation was done to explore the current offerings regarding rewards and benefits for graduate interns. EVPs are meant to set one organisation apart from the next and to give a competitive advantage. The findings of the study suggest that the most common offering is training **and** development. This is greatly valued by most generation Y employees, graduate interns in this instance. This correlates with Wigham, who said in 2007 that *“Training is one of the biggest parts of the 'what's in it for me' factor when graduates are choosing an organisation.”*

Internships are development programmes meant to help graduates acquire workplace skills. It does not only involve the technical aspects directly related to the job, but generic traits that help them adapt and be flexible in the workplace. Their training should not be limited or concentrate on the discipline-specific tasks only. Career management or career advice can be included in the programme as most graduates walk into the workplace with what they have learned at university or college, but once they get exposure to the workplace, they become interested in other areas of work not related to their studies and want to pursue that instead. There should be career management and advice on how to carve a proper path without totally turning away from their careers.

Mentors can give career advice and guidance. Mentorship is a great component of training and development. It creates an environment that allows for two-way development as both mentors and mentees walk away with something from the relationship. Generation Y employees learn best in social settings (Treuren & Anderson, 2010) and this relationship enables this type of learning. Generation Y employees place value on their relationships with their mentors and supervisors (Behrstock-Sherratt & Coggshall, 2010).

A study by Alexander Forbes (Cameron, 2013) suggests that employees who are deep in debt are less likely to be productive. They therefore suggest that employees be trained on how to

budget and save and manage their personal finances. If someone cannot manage their personal affairs, how can they manage a public office? Graduates should be trained early on to manage something as small as their stipend in preparation for managing bigger things in their future careers. This can potentially reduce financial corruption. Professional and ethical conduct is key in the workplace. Most mentors mentioned that some graduates do not dress appropriately for the workplace and they have to sit them down in their own personal capacities and give advice. Some are receptive and some are not. Most workplaces are moving away from formal dress codes, but employees still have to look decent and professional.

Immordino-Yang, Christodoulou, and Singh (2012) mention that Generation Y employees are more digitally inclined and as we are in the 21st century, training interventions are following a more technical route. Employees can develop their skills long distance. Organisations that offer this opportunity to graduates position themselves in first place to attract this generation. Generation Y has been predicted to be the most productive of all generations, and well trained employees are productive. Positive career moves are most welcome, even if they are not upward. The important thing is the meaningfulness and growth (Heaton, McCracken & Harrison: 2008).

The only monetary compensation graduate interns get is the stipend, which is determined in accordance to the DPSA in the public service. In the private sector organisations rely mostly on comparative market analysis to help them create proper packages for their interns. The stipend in the government sector varies according to an intern's qualifications. There are annual increases that are in line with cost of living.

Graduate interns do not have pay progression, but the cost of living adjustment applies to them as well. It is intended to preserve the buying power of employees and ensure that their salaries are not severely affected by inflation. Some graduates believe the stipend is not enough and should be increased to meet their needs. They mentioned that when they are employed they have to dress differently from how they dressed at university and this requires money. The stipend does not always cover it. Some mentioned that transport also takes up much of their stipend. Graduates are also registered for UIF and the COIDA.

Job design determines an employee's state of mind and feelings about the job. It is a determinant of meaningful work experiences. Based on the graduates' responses, three of the components of the job design model by Hackman and Oldham (Robbins et al., 2017) make more sense for graduate interns. The first is that they want to learn a variety of skills. Findings show that some graduates felt that their work content did not allow them to acquire different skills. Tasks were either repetitive or not meaningful enough. The second component is that

the graduates want to feel part of the bigger picture. Wigham (2007) says that graduates are more encouraged when they feel that their skills and abilities are contributing to the bigger picture of the organisation, not just in the department.

The other component is autonomy. Generation Y employees are very independent by nature. They do need guidance, but do not want to be micromanaged. They also need feedback, they want to know if they are contributing, want their efforts recognised, and how they can improve. This can be achieved as part of a graduate EVP through job rotation, autonomy and regular monitoring and feedback.

Interns receive limited leave benefits. It is not the same as those for permanent employees, but it is adequate for their type of employment contract. However, the *Final Draft: Guidelines on Implementing Internship Programme Policy in the Public Service* (DPSA, 2015) stipulate that should an intern not utilise all their leave days, they should be encouraged to do so by their mentors because they will not be eligible to claim for those days. They in actual fact forfeit them.

Research by Alexander Forbes reveals that organisations should redesign their rewards and move away from just providing retirements and death benefits and include educational benefits so they can meet the demands of different employees. They suggest that organisations should put together a GVP to keep graduates motivated and engaged in their work. Benefits and incentive packages often fail because there is little communication and consultation between employers and employees. Organisations end up with rewards and benefits that employees do not value (Cameron, 2013). Knowing what graduates want makes it easier for employers to manage them properly.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

When graduates feel that they add value during the internship programme, they are more likely to apply for internships where they can make a valuable contribution. Organisations that do not put together proper propositions lose out on talented employees.

Putting together a GVP can help an organisation recruit and retain the best interns. These interns can add value in future if they receive assistance and are motivated to perform to their full potential. Knowing that an organisation takes one serious enough to put together a rewards package, encourages hard work and dedication.

LIMITATIONS

The small sample numbers used in qualitative research is one of the limitations of this method. In this instance, the sample for the study included HRM graduate interns and their mentors, managers and supervisors. It was limited to one province, which may make generalisation complicated. Most respondents were from the public sector. Private sector participants were limited, which might also limit the conclusions of the study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The communication between organizations and graduates should be improved by means of more consultation with graduate interns. Knowing what people want makes it easier to cater to their needs and to give them what they need instead of what you think they need. The focus of the internship programmes must change. Many more elements should be included to create a more valuable experience that will improve not only work place skills, but produce well-rounded citizens who want to contribute to the country's economy by using their knowledge and skills.

The programmes must be designed to cover a wider range of aspects that are essential to cultivating employable and productive employees. Graduates should be given career and financial management training as part of the programme. It is essential for all areas of one's life and can improve job satisfaction.

Recommendations for future research

The study can be extended to a larger sample that includes graduate interns from different disciplines, organisations and provinces to get a broader perspective.

CONCLUSION

With technology changing every minute, business has to reinvent their organisational systems to keep up with changes. They should maintain a favourable competitive advantage. Research has proven that Generation Y employees will soon make up more than half of the labour market. These employees are more technology inclined and function efficiently when the necessary resources are made available to them. Creating a GVP will benefit organisations that offer internships. Not only will they save on recruitment costs, they will also be able to attract and retain new talent.

Most organisations realise that one size does not fit all. Employees come in variations: gender, age, race, cultural and financial backgrounds. EVPs have to be specified to reach each target group.

The study aimed to explore the elements that should be included in a graduate EVP. Salaries came up, but interns only receive a stipend. They expressed that it covers only some of their expenses and that it would be good if it could be adjusted to meet cost of living and inflation. Value propositions are promises of great work experiences, so work content should also be allocated meaningfully. The internship on its own is a development programme and it will be wise to redesign it so that graduates can develop desirable attributes. At the moment it seems they are not being fully developed.

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CHAPTER 4:

ARTICLE 3

THE ROLE OF THE HR FUNCTION IN MANAGING GRADUATE INTERNS

ABSTRACT

Research orientation

There have been significant shifts in the workforce worldwide as more Generation Y employees enter the labour market.

Research motivation

Generation Y employees have unique traits that distinguish them from generations before them. HRM practices should be adjusted in an inclusive manner to manage graduate interns effectively.

Research purpose

The study aims to examine the role of the HR function in managing graduate interns. As such, it looks at how HR functions can be applied to meet the demands of Generation Y employees and to retain them as productive employees during internships.

Research method

A semi-structured interview was utilised to gather data from HR professionals and a questionnaire was administered to graduate interns. Twenty-five HR professionals responded to interview questions, 101 graduate interns completed a questionnaire and ten graduates participated in a focus group.

Main findings

Generation Y employees experience technologically advanced organisational systems as friendlier than older systems. The graduate interns who participated in this study and most of the literature reviewed suggest that HR professionals have to fully embrace technology to

improve the HR function and deliver quality service to employees. Mentorship and a shortage of resources seemed to be the most prevalent challenges experienced during the internship programme.

Contribution/Value add

More knowledge on Generation Y employees' preferences reveals to practitioners modern ways of managing them and turning them into productive members of the organisation and society.

Key words

Generation Y, internship programme, recruitment, talent management, training and development

INTRODUCTION

It has been estimated that with changes in the population, South Africa has just over 55 million people (Stats SA, 2017), of which the majority are younger people (Nel et al., 2014). The implication is that most South African employees will soon be from the younger generation as the older generation (baby boomers) would have mostly left by 2025 (Erasmus, Loedolff, Mda & Nel, 2015). The rest of the world will have a diverse workforce with a mix of employees in terms of gender, age, ethnicity and sexual orientation. This will require HRM practitioners to revisit their practices so they better manage these new market entrants and incorporate them in the existing workforce to create good working relations and spaces.

Diversity management in the workplace is all about not discriminating against people based on traits that have no immediate effect on their day-to-day duties (Armstrong, 2011, Warnich, Carell, Elbert & Hatfield, 2015). Age as a primary dimension of diversity (Mello et al., 2014) cannot be avoided when dealing with Generation Y employees as they are distinguished by their age. They were born between the years 1980 and 1994 and live in the digital age (Luscombe, Lewis, & Biggs, 2013) where most activities from kindergarten to university are technologically supported and their independent nature has been known to create problems for their supervisors and mentors. They tend to think they can manage their own careers and all other aspects of their lives (Luscombe et al., 2013).

HR managers should learn to understand Generation Y employees because employees from older generations will have to manage or supervise Generation Y employees. The generations have different traits that can affect the work experience of both parties (Burke & Ng, 2006). Older generations are inflexible to a certain extent and resistant to change, not to mention technologically challenged compared to Generation Y. They are technically inclined, very mobile and flexible, so organisations should revisit their practices to ensure successful knowledge management between the two generations to benefit organisations.

The paper looks at how HRM practices have to evolve to accommodate the new diverse workforce of the 21st century. The focus is mainly on the Generation Y employees. This paper aims to explore the role of the HR function in managing graduate interns and how HRM practices can be redesigned and improved to accommodate and satisfy Generation Y employees to ensure their retention.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The graduate internship programme

Internships are tools designed to facilitate skills development among unemployed and qualifying graduates to help them transition from graduate students into productive employees (Narayanan, Olk & Fukami, 2010). The behaviours and expectations of Generation Y challenge the present HRM practices. This means that new employment approaches should be put into place to meet their demands (Treuren & Anderson, 2010). Changes in the workforce require HR professionals to change their approaches and practices so they appeal to the new entrants in the labour market, namely Generation Y employees. Well-designed internship programmes assist in shaping and improving careers and developing good work ethics. Employers create a steady source of potential employees with needed skills and abilities, should the need arise (SABPP, 2014). HRM practices should support the creation of an environment that allows for this to happen.

Internships last up to a maximum of 24 months depending on the host organisation. This gives graduates enough time to reflect on their experiences and form perceptions about the organisation based on the knowledge they have acquired during the programme. They make decisions on whether they would like to work for that organisation in the future based on their experiences (Hurst, Good & Gardner, 2012).

In some organisations the focus is on welcoming graduate interns as a source of cheap labour. The attention tends to shift away from the developmental aspect of the programme, limiting

the graduates' success rates (Holyoak, 2013). A study by Cupps and Olmosk (2008) revealed that many public service managers are not eager to welcome interns and when they do have them, they are not sure exactly how to develop them to unleash their full potential. This leads to interns receiving menial tasks, proving most graduates' perceptions that internships are better managed in the private sector than the public service. Skilled mentors and supervisors are able to offer constant supervision and guidance, giving feedback, be it positive or negative, where the intern can know their strengths and shortcomings (Fei-Chuan, Ku, Yi-Hwan, Fei-Hung, & Shuo-Shiung, 2009).

A study by Holyoak (2013) briefly concludes that:

“Characteristics of the intern and their supervisor may impact on the learning that takes place” (p. 583).

In support of these conclusions, the researcher takes the stance that the HR function must provide for and support mentor and supervisor development programmes to properly equip them to work well with Generation Y employees.

Internship practices in the public and private sector

The Royal Bafokeng Graduate Development Programme of Royal Bafokeng Holdings (RBH) was used as a case study alongside the government internship programme to identify differences and similarities between public and private sector internships.

The Royal Bafokeng Graduate Development Programme is between 12 and 24 months, which is the same as the government internship. They both can be extended depending on the organisational need and funding at that time. Participants have to have a recognised higher education qualification.

RBH mainly uses the programme to create a talent pipeline after assessing their anticipated future human capital needs, while the government internship is mostly aimed at addressing skills shortages and youth/graduate unemployment. There is no guarantee of employment after the programme as opposed to RBH, whose absorption is impressive. Between 2010 and 2016, they successfully placed 72 out of 131 graduates in the programme within the company. The rest got fixed-term contracts or extensions. In the public service, there is no strategy. Departments just follow normal recruitment procedures should there be an available vacancy. The intern has to apply and contend with other candidates for the position (DPSA, 2015).

RBH ensures that their teams are fully developed and their talents enhanced and they provide rewards to individuals who add value to the organisation and continuously achieve their objectives. These are all the properties that Generation Y employees are after. In 2008 the government internship programme was reviewed to measure its effectiveness. The report highlighted that there was no significant impact as graduates were not offered structured skills and development opportunities. Recruitment strategies were reported to be inadequate and not focused on scarce and critical skills as mandated. The main issue was that the programmes were not aligned with the human resource needs of different departments (SAGDA, 2013).

From the cases above we can cautiously conclude that both sectors have similar objectives of equipping unemployed graduates with workplace skills while eradicating youth unemployment. Entry requirements are the same, except that in the public service, one is allowed to participate in an internship programme only once to give other graduates a chance. In both cases, applicants have to have completed a tertiary qualification. Internship intake in the private sector is mostly aligned with their human capital needs and training is rigorous because they use internships as talent recruitment pools. They want interns to be almost fully developed when they absorb them into their permanent structures.

HRM practices that support the Generation Y employment relationship

The HRM function has shifted from just transactional day-to-day operations. According to Fegly (2006), it now includes many organisational needs like employee training and development, diversity and reward management. HRM professionals are now also included in the execution of the overall organisational strategy. The new HRM function is made up of recruitment and selection, training and development, employee relations, performance management, compensation and benefits, and organisational development, among many other things (Meyer & Kirsten, 2005, Dessler, 2011, Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). In smaller organisations, the human resource function is carried out by line managers, whereas in big corporations they have specialised human resource departments that assist and advise line managers and top management on HRM issues (Dessler, 2011).

Potential employees form perceptions about organisations before they even join them. They develop expectations that are influenced by professional and social media. An earlier study (1993) by Gatewood, Gowan, & Lautenschlager proved that students and graduates are easily influenced by negative images of public organizations created by the mass media, family members, and peers. This is still the case as many recent studies also show similar results. One must not forget that at that age one is still very impressionable and will most likely want

to pursue employment within the private sector rather than in the public sector. This is based solely on perceptions created by the media and other sources. Moroko and Uncles (2008) suggest that employers should send positive signals about employment conditions. HRM practices should positively influence the perceptions of potential employees, especially among Generation Y (App, Merk, & Büttgen, 2012).

Many studies have proven that key HRM functions and how they are carried out have a significant impact on employee commitment, retention and satisfaction. Recruitment, orientation, development and performance appraisal are some of these functions (Anon., 2017). Employees are human assets. Their skills, knowledge and experiences are considered as the capital of a country. Therefore, HR practitioners should manage this vital resource extremely well so that it contributes positively to the economy of the country. The human capital theory emphasises the importance of education to acquire skills for one to be happy and successful (Yuzhuo, 2013). Internships also form part of human resource activities that contribute to the economy and a country's employment status in terms of capacity development. HR practitioners should really consider their impact on the prosperity of the organisation and how it will impact society as a whole (Zidan as cited in Lain et al., 2014).

According to Strohmeier and Diederichsen (2010), organisations that move towards e-HRM could manage to build solid organisational relations with these employees as e-HRM provides flexibility and could even possibly increase job satisfaction. As good as e-HRM sounds to improve the HR function, Ruël, Bondarouk, and Looise (2004) remind us that for it to be effective, the organisation must provide computers and connectivity throughout all the departments and employees must have access and sufficient computer skills. This could work well with this generation, as technological orientation is one of the key distinguishing features of Generation Y employees.

The e-HRM system promises to create good working relations, not only with Generation Y employees, but with all other employees within an organisation. It is a direct communication tool with employees. e-HRM comes with technological possibilities like online career management systems, web-based performance evaluations and online recruitment. A more exciting workplace can be created through mobile and distance work arrangements (Strohmeier & Diederichsen, 2010).

Current research studies have shown that Generation Y employees value development opportunities and rewards the most. This article focuses on how HRM practices can be redesigned to accommodate this new generation of employees. Studies show that appropriate use of information technology can improve the function of the HR department and satisfy their

customers. The success of most new developments in organisations is determined by top management perceptions of the new idea. If a project enjoys top management support, employees are more likely to be receptive (Stirpe, Bonache & Trullen: 2015). Following is a discussion of HR activities that can be revamped to meet Generation Y employee needs.

Recruiting Generation Y employees

Organisations that want to recruit Generation Y employees have to be transparent and fair about all promises made during the recruitment process and actually follow through on their promises (Luscombe, Lewis & Biggs: 2013). This is because the life span of most Generation Y employees in organisations is said to be up to a year, and if their expectations are not met or promises are not kept, they are more likely to look at other organisations that will meet their expectations. This position is supported by Parris and Saville (2011).

In 2008, the implementation of the public service internship programme was reviewed. The results showed that proper recruitment processes were not followed and critical and scarce occupations among unemployed graduates were not identified (DPSA, 2009). A baseline study conducted by the South Africa Graduate Development Agency (SAGDA) in 2013 recommended that measures be put in place to recruit more interns with disability issues and from the rural areas. HR practitioners should consider digital means of recruitment to attract more Generation Y employees. Companies that advertise online are able to attract more of this talented breed of employees.

Socializing or inducting Generation Y employees

The first contact for many employees upon joining an organisation is with the human resource department as they are the ones responsible for the orientation programme, among other HRM functions (Warnich, Carrell, Elbert, & Hatfield, 2015). Human resource management practitioners are therefore faced with the challenge of rendering good service that will impress the new employees (their internal customers) and encourage them to stay with the organisation. As early as 2005, Meyer and Kirsten defined HRM as,

“the process of getting people into the organisation and then developing and keeping them satisfied so that they want to stay with the organisation and contribute to productivity” (p. 1).

Orientation is one of the most essential HRM functions and is aimed at familiarizing new recruits with the organisation to foster quicker productivity and increase job satisfaction (Armstrong, 2015). The programme should include aspects like communicating the vision and

mission of the organisation, facilities and equipment, benefits and rewards available, policies and procedures and what the job itself entails, introduction to colleagues and supervisors (Cotner-Klinger & Amy, 2013). In their study they also discovered that the absence of a well-structured orientation programme in the workplace could potentially lead to new employees developing negative work-related attitudes. Orientation is another way of organisational communication where the employer can detail to new recruits what is expected of them.

Training and developing Generation Y employees

Training and development of employees should also start moving towards electronic HRM systems to increase and improve the learning process. Speed and innovation is how business is conducted in the technological era. In the next five years, most learning might be done electronically (Nel et al., 2014). Electronic learning gives the learner control of their learning process, and given the fact that Generation Y employees like to feel that they are in charge of their development and they are great fans of technology, this type of learning will best serve their needs. Organisations that move towards mobile technology have the advantage of improving training as it can take place anywhere. Generation Y employees welcome this move as they can utilise smartphones, portable computers and other mobile devices for their training interventions (Noe & Winkler, 2009).

However, this move does not come without its challenges. In South Africa, telecommunications costs are higher compared to other developed countries. There is most likely a lack of coverage in some rural areas and a lack of communication infrastructure for electronic teaching and learning (Nel, Ngambu, & Williams, 2004). There are limitations on the availability of bandwidth, which influences the speed of data processing.

Generation Y employees also value team work and are more likely to trust their colleagues than earlier generations. In his study, Twenge (2010) concluded that Generation Y employees are more likely to learn in a collaborative environment and creating team learning opportunities can improve learning efforts.

Talent management for Generation Y employees

Talented employees are a source of competitive advantage for many employers. Lately, more emphasis has been put on the attraction and retention of talented graduates. A study conducted in Portugal found that big organisations are more likely to want to employ top graduates from prestigious universities and colleges (Anon. 2017). Another study by Gerken, Rienties, Giesbers, and Könings (2012) produced the same results. The human resource

department is the primary facilitator of talent management. It shares this function with other line managers. HR practitioners are the ones who must come up with strategies that would ensure that organisational culture supports talent management. Talent management fosters a culture of continuous development for potential high performers (Armstrong, 2011), which is one of the characteristics of Generation Y employees.

However, organisation-wide career management programmes play a major role as they are structured systems that involve management plans and career goals for employees (Warnich et al., 2015). Systems are put in place to satisfy workforce needs and employee career goals to satisfy their individual career needs. Individuals can manage their own careers, but they need organisational structures to achieve that. This benefits organisations positively as they would satisfy their staffing needs, keeping a steady flow of talent and increasing employee satisfaction.

Generation Y employees are more career development driven and they enjoy quality work environments with adequate resources with more emphasis on technology.

According to Crumpacker and Crumpacker (as cited in Kong, Wang, & Fu, 2015), Generation Y is not entirely driven or satisfied by money. They place more value on their career growth opportunities. The implication of this is that organisations with career management or talent management programmes are in a better position to satisfy this yearning and are more likely to satisfy and appeal to the younger workforce.

Appraising and rewarding Generation Y employees

Generation Y employees are characterised by a sense of entitlement, especially when it comes to rewards, even when at times the rewards expected do not meet the performance standards required (Rani & Samuel, 2016). This causes problems and conflict with other employees. It is the responsibility of HR managers to be more creative and design all-inclusive rewards packages that will satisfy and retain Generation Y employees. Graduate interns do not receive a salary, but get a stipend that is predetermined given the organisation's financial standing. In the South African public service context the stipend is determined by the DPSA according to the qualifications that a graduate has.

Knowing what Generation Y employees value will make it easier for managers to give them other benefits in addition to monetary rewards that will keep them motivated, make an impact, and improve their engagement and satisfaction. According to Kultalahti and Viitala (2015), Generation Y employees are very flexible and HR practices must provide flexibility where time

and space are concerned. Flexible working hours are precious to these employees and they might also not want to spend most of their time working from an office.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research approach

The approach was determined by the objective of the paper. A mixed method approach was deemed most suitable given the research objectives, and both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used. The study aimed to gain insight from both graduate interns and their mentors (HR managers and supervisors).

Research strategy

A case study design suited the study as the research objectives necessitated a more intensive analysis of a single case (Bryman & Bell, 2014). The phenomena explored in the study were two internship programmes and the experiences of those involved in the programmes. The participants were asked for their experiences so that the researcher could form a description (Maree, 2016). Graduate interns can best give an account of how HR professionals manage the internship programme from their own personal experiences and the HR professionals themselves can best describe their role and contribution to the programme.

Research Procedure

As per ethics requirements, there are always procedures to be followed when conducting any kind of research. In this instance, the university issued a letter on behalf of the researcher to seek permission to conduct the research. It was distributed to different government departments. The letter assured participants of their anonymity and the confidentiality of the information shared (Creswell, 2013). After permission was granted, the researcher contacted the participants to arrange interview times and venues and to distribute the questionnaire to graduate interns. Questionnaires were self-administered.

Sampling

The best choice for this study was purposive sampling. HR practitioners who mentor and supervise graduate interns were selected to give an account of how they manage the internship programme through various HRM functions. Graduate interns related their own personal experiences about the programme. The sample consisted of $n = 25$ HR practitioners, $n = 101$ graduate interns and $n = 10$ focus group participants.

Table 4.1: Sample Demographics HR practitioners

Participants	Gender	Race	Job Title	Qualification	Years in Practice	Sector
1	Male	African	HR Admin Clerk	N. Dip in Public Man	05	Public
2	Female	African	HR Manager	Masters LR	10	Public/ Municipality
3	Female	White	HR Manager	Masters in HRM	11	Private
4	Female	White	Senior HR Training Coordinator	Honours in HRM	11	Public
5	Male	African	Senior Personnel Practitioner	National Diploma in HRM	9	Public
6	Male	African	Deputy Director Human Capital	Masters in HRM	13	Public
7	Female	African	Assistant Director HR	Advanced Diploma in HRD	24	Public
8	Female	African	Senior Personnel Practitioner	N. Dip. Public Management	9	Public
9	Female	African	Assistant Director Labour Relations	N. Dip. Labour Relations	10	Public
10	Female	African	Assistant Director: PMDS	Post-Graduate Diploma HRM	12	Public
11	Female	African	Chief Personnel Officer	BTech: HR Development	10	Public
12	Female	African	Training Manager	Degree HR	10	Private
13	Female	African	Assistant Director: HRD & PMDS	B.Admin Hons	15	Public
14	Male	African	Chief Personnel Officer	N.Dip HRM	11	Public
15	Male	African	Assistant Director HR	National Diploma	5	Public
16	Female	African	Assistant Director HR	Hons Degree HRM	6	Public
17	Male	African	Assistant Director HR	Diploma in HRM	20	Public

Participants	Gender	Race	Job Title	Qualification	Years in Practice	Sector
18	Male	African	Personnel Officer	Grade 12	22	Public
19	Male	African	Organisational Development Practitioner	N.Dip HRM	7	Public
20	Female	African	Assistant Director HRM	Hons HRM	20	Public
21	Male	African	Assistant Director HRM	Hons HRM	3	Public
22	Female	African	HR Practitioner	Degree HRM	12	Public
23	Male	Indian	Assistant Director HRM	Hons HRM	5	Public
24	Female	African	Personnel Practitioner	Diploma in HRM	17	Public
25	Male	African	Communications Officer	Degree in Communication	3	Public

Most of the participants in the study were from the public sector. There were also more females than males. More participants were black, with only two whites and one Indian participating.

Most interviews were done in the North West province, where the government as biggest employer. The longest that the participants had served in the HRM field was 24 years and the shortest was three. Most participants had national diplomas, advanced national diplomas, bachelor's degrees and certificates in HRM. Five had honours degrees and three had master's degrees in HRM. One participant had Grade 12 and had been serving for 22 years. One participant had a degree in communications, but had been working in the HR section doing HR work for the last three years because of shortage of staff in the HR section.

Table 4.2: Sample demographics focus group participants

FG Participant	Gender	Race	Age	Year of internship	Highest qualification	Employment status
1	Male	Coloured	25-27	2015	Degree	Fixed-Term Contract
2	Female	Black	37-39	2014	Degree	Permanent Employment
3	Female	Black	25-27	2012	Degree	Permanent employment
4	Male	Black	22-24	2016	Hons Degree	Job Seeker
5	Female	Black	25-27	2016	Diploma	Job seeker
6	Female	Black	28-30	2012	Hons Degree	Permanent employment
7	Female	White	25-27	2016	Diploma	Job seeker
8	Female	Black	34-36	2016	Certificate	Job seeker
9	Male	Black	22-24	2016	Certificate	Job seeker
10	Female	Black	31-33	2012	Diploma	Permanent employment

In the focus group, three out of ten were males and seven were females. Eight were black, one white and one coloured. Four were between the ages of 25 and 27, two were between 22 and 24, one between 28 and 30, only one between 31 and 33, one between 34 and 36, and the oldest was between the ages of 37 and 39. Three of them had completed a bachelor's degree in HRM, two had an honours degree in HRM, three had diplomas and two had certificates in HRM. Four out of the ten were permanently employed at the time, one was on a fixed-term contract and the rest were still job seekers.

The sample also included graduate interns enrolled in graduate internship programmes from 2012 to 2016 (N=101). Most of the participants were female (74, 3%), black (83,2%), aged between 25 and 27 years (48,5%). Most of the participants were in possession of a bachelor's degree (39,6%) and did their internship in 2015 (27,7%). A few did it in 2016 (22,8%). Most of the participants obtained their qualification from a university (64,4%) and had HRM as their core field of study (94,1%). Most of the participants were doing one internship (87,1%) in the government sector (79,2%). The respondents were primarily employed on fixed-term contracts (45,5%) and found employment within one year after their internship (60,4%).

Data collection

Qualitative Data Collection: Semi-structured were conducted interviews with HR managers from different government departments. The target sample was initially larger than 25, but interviews were stopped when data saturation was reached. There were initially 23 questions on the interview schedule, and after four interviews the questions were reduced to ten since some of the questions overlapped. The study follows the article format, so questions were designed to meet the demands of each of the articles. A focus group interview was conducted with ten graduate interns. The focus group interview schedule consisted of nine questions.

Quantitative Data Collection: *The Aspects of Graduate Internship Questionnaire* measured the participants' experience of the graduate internship programme. The questionnaire consisted of 16 items. Responses could be ranked on a 6-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (6).

FINDINGS

During the coding process, many themes that emerged represented different HRM functions.

Seven key themes emerged from the interviews with HR practitioners and the focus group with graduate interns. The themes are HRM activities, recruitment criteria, orientation, work allocation, and training and development, the risks and challenges all the stakeholders have to face, and lastly how the programme benefits them. The results are presented in Table 4.3 below:

Table 4.3: Themes

Themes		Frequency
Themes	HRM activities	5
	Recruitment criteria	11
	Orientation	10
	Work allocation (tasks and duties)	13
	Training and development (mentorship)	13
	Risks and challenges to be dealt with	15
	Benefits of the internship programme	11

Human resource management activities

The proper implementation of HRM activities greatly affect whether organisations can achieve their desired outcomes. When key functions like recruitment, orientation, development and reward management are not fulfilled properly, it can affect business outcomes negatively. The functions each have different bearings on employee wellness.

“HR manages the internship programme from start to finish, most of the work is done by HR from advertising, recruitment, placement and induction, contracts and evaluation, we have to make sure they have the resources necessary and sometimes in difficult times when there is shortage even for permanent employees, we have to deal with their complaints also and there is a lot, they want laptops, own office space and so forth so you can imagine (sigh from participant)” (Participant 21 – female, black, assistant director in the public service).

“The learning and development division in HR plans and prepares for interns every year and for the absorption of those completing the programme into existing vacancies if there are any, it is our responsibility in HRD we do not take care of HR graduates only but all other graduates in different sections like finance or supply chain” (Participant 12 – female, black, training manager in the private service).

“Interns have rights and benefits like other employees, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act also covers them so HR has to make sure that the basic conditions of service are good when they encounter problems they come back to HR, and also we plan their yearly induction programme.” (Participant 11 – female, black, chief personnel officer in the public service).

“HR has to make certain that they have all the necessary resources needed to carry out the job successfully” (Participant 10 – female, black, Assistant Director: PMDS in the public service).

“HR is responsible for training and assigning mentors to interns and requesting progress reports” (Participant 2 – female, black, HR manager in the public service).

Recruitment criteria

Very often when adverts for internships come out, departments are looking for ten graduates with financial, economic or science qualifications. Few ask for interns with HR qualifications.

It was necessary to find out the selection criteria as the demand supply ratios do not balance. So who do they choose and why, and who do they leave out? These were some of the responses from the HR practitioners:

“One of the first things that we look at is if the graduate has not participated in an internship programme before, we receive a lot of applications and you find that the department has only two or three posts for interns, so our head of department introduced academic results as a requirement, those who perform exceptionally well in their studies are given a chance to come to the interview, and it has really helped us because we would receive more than a thousand applications for only two posts so at least it helps to narrow down and shortlist potential candidates” (Participant 1 – male, black, administration clerk in the public sector).

“After a needs analysis is done indicating which skills are needed a submission is made to the HRD head for approval and then an advert is put in the local papers to advertise the vacancies with minimum requirements needed” (Participant 21 – female, black, assistant director in the public service).

“We check if the graduate meets the requirements in terms of the qualifications needed, the age group, available funding because some of the programmes are financed by different entities and we also focus on the geographic area, local graduates or those from nearby universities and colleges are given first preference” (Participant 4 – female, white, Senior HR Training Coordinator in the public sector).

“The internship programme is a youth support programme meant to develop unemployed youth with qualifications but no work experience and relates to youth classification in South Africa” (Participant 6 – male, black, deputy director in the public service).

Another participant added:

“The age group is taken into consideration as youth in South Africa has been declared as those between the ages 18 and 35” (Participant 5 – male, African, senior personnel practitioner in the public service).

Age seems to play a major role, as another participant added:

“We mostly take graduates below 35 years of age, beyond age 35 graduates are no longer in the youth category and do not meet the youth requirement,” (Participant 7 – female, black, assistant director in the public service).

“Our head office requires interns between the ages of 18 and 35 who are in possession of a registered degree or a diploma and in need of practical work experience to complete their qualification” (Participant 11 – female, black, chief personnel officer in the public service).

“Graduates are considered between the ages of 18 and 35 as they are strong enough to deal with workplace challenges and gain experience in preparation for formal employment” (Participant 8 – female, black, senior personnel practitioner in the public service).

“In other instances nearby higher education institutions are consulted to recommend graduates for the internship programme” (Participant 7 – female, black, assistant director in the public service).

“The intake depends on the identified business need or gap, critical and scarce skills, vacancies that are difficult to fill and BBBEE targets” (Participant 12 – female, training manager in the private service).

“Qualifications, location, representation in terms of gender, race and disability is looked at and the graduate must not have taken part in a government internships before” (Participant 16 – female, black, assistant director in the public service).

Orientation

Socializing new employees into the organisation is one of the ways to communicate the employer's expectations and to settle employees smoothly into their roles. All ten graduates who participated in the focus group agreed to receiving orientation and they responded almost the same (*only one quote is presented below*). They received a structured programme called *Breaking Barriers to Entry* (BB2E).

This is what one participant said about the programme:

“We attended an orientation programme for graduate interns called Breaking barriers to entry (BB2E). Facilitators trained interns on how to apply the public service code of conduct and to understand the concepts of public office systems, it is a really nice course because also at the end we were given a National Senior Certificate for completion” (Participant 1 – coloured male in a fixed-term contract).

Work allocation

Graduates commonly complain that the tasks allocated to them during the internship programme are not discipline-specific and do not contribute to their development. HR practitioners were asked to respond to the question *“Are graduates given meaningful tasks related to their discipline that enables proper skills acquisition and development?”*

Most participants responded with a brief yes. This is what the other participants had to say:

“Yes they are given meaningful duties as well as other tasks like photocopying and filing. They cannot however work on your persal, walker or bas networks due to the confidential nature of the information on these systems” (Participant 11 – female, black, chief personnel officer in the public service).

“The most important thing is to place interns according to their field of study and assign a mentor or supervisor this helps to reduce idling graduates who do not know who they report to and anyone can just give them tasks to do, this is what opens them up to being used careless by other employees in senior positions and giving them what they call lowly tasks” (Participant 8 – female, black, senior personnel practitioner in the public service).

“Graduates have a development plan and duties that are allocated are in line with that plan together with their work contract and the objectives of the programme” (Participant 4 – female, white, senior HR training coordinator in the public sector).

Some mentors and supervisors did voice that there are other duties that graduates will be required to do that will not be completely out of their development plan:

“It has always been a mixture of both wherever possible. All interns need to be prepared to do office administration and other unrelated duties of a professional nature but not all tasks will be degree related” (Participant 3 – female, white, HR manager in the private service).

She also added:

“Graduates are told during induction that they must expect to do junior work and that their degrees do not qualify them to go straight into the core activities of the job, we all have to start somewhere”

“There are instances where graduates will be asked to perform duties that are not related to their studies but they will be developmental” (Participant 1 – male, black, HR admin clerk in the public service).

“It depends on who is coordinating the programme, if you just leave the graduates and put them in any section with no proper development plan they will end up boiling kettles” (Participant 4 – female, white, senior HR training coordinator in the public service).

Following the responses of mentors and supervisors, graduates responded in this manner:

“Yes my duties matched my job description and my mentor had set clear expectations and he ensured that I knew my rights and responsibilities for my duties. But sometimes I was doing my mentors work when he is not available in the office, so I was quite okay with what I had to do and I learned a lot” (Participant 6 – black female and now permanently employed).

“I was in the training section of HR and part of my job description was to ensure that employees who lack certain skills are given or offered training and development to acquire skills and knowledge” (Participant 5 – black female a job seeker).

“My mentor gave me relevant work and if there was a change she would tell me” (Participant 2 – black female, permanently employed).

Although the work allocation matched the graduates’ job descriptions, the problem was the availability of mentors to guide them. This is what they had to say:

“My mentor is not always in the office to direct, lead and guide us accordingly. Therefore if I don’t understand what am supposed to do on my task, I ask other employees in the same section of Human resource because my mentor is not active enough and willing to assist me, I do this because I just want to gain more experience and skills” (Participant 5 – black female currently looking for a job).

The participant also added:

“There is a lack of mentoring support because my mentor is always not available in the office to guide or direct me correctly. Therefore I always learned things on my own and my mentor will give me too much of work without explaining to me what I am supposed to do and it will frustrate and stress me”

“There is no adequate knowledge transfer or sharing from my mentor because she is not supportive really on mentoring and she is always not available in the office and therefore I had to figure some of the things out by learning from the mistakes I make” (Participant 9 – black male, looking for a job).

Training and development

Mentorship is the most frequent training approach used during internships. A knowledgeable and experienced employee is allocated two or three graduates to work with closely so that they learn and acquire relevant work place experience. As the HR practitioners have already stated, it is their responsibility to make sure that mentors are allocated and that development can continue without any problems.

Some of the responses from the focus group:

“My mentor allowed me to rotate to different units to acquire more knowledge and skills” (Participant 2 – black female now permanently employed).

“My mentor used to take me along to some of his meetings, trainings and workshops which gave me exposure to different fields and I also learned the procurement of supply chain above all my mentor helped and advised me with my career planning” (Participant 3 – black, female now permanently employed).

“I learned a lot of things such as communication skills, analysis and research methods, presentation skills, policy writing in the workplace, team work, we also learnt on how to deal with socio economic issues such as crime, poverty and unemployment and how they affect HR in organisations, there was harmony and team work spirit” (Participant 4 – black, male currently looking for a job).

“Studying from the text book was different, you think you know but you really don’t until you have to do it at work, I gained knowledge of recruitment, selection and appointment in the public service and describe how performance mentoring and evaluation system in government work” (Participant 5 – black, female still looking for job).

“I now know how to manage resilience in the workplace such as being kind to others and express gratitude and appreciation. Secondly I was able to collaborate and look for ways to support other interns and thirdly I was able to create the solutions to problems rather than wasting time blaming my mentor or other employees” (Participant 6 – black, female permanently employed).

The participant went on to add:

“I had an opportunity to go for a three month training in India and this was for those who were interested in website design, in addition, at the end of the training we were given international certificates. It was exciting and I learnt a lot.”

Challenges associated with the programme

Every programme has its challenges. HR professionals have their set of challenges, and graduate interns in turn experience challenges. These are outlined below:

“Graduates encounter problems when they are assigned non competent mentors. It will be a problem to impart knowledge if you yourself as a mentor still need to be guided” (Participant 2 – female, black, HR manager in the public service).

“The internship programme is a good initiative that needs to be supported by all those involved, In HR we do our part to make sure the programme runs smoothly but sometimes application is not always consistent on the part of line managers, we assign them interns and they come back to us in a month to ask us if they can help out with something” (Participant 6 – male, black, deputy director in the public service).

“You risk spending time and effort training them only for them to leave you for a competitor, that happened to us once we had invested so much in the graduate because we saw potential, sending her to training workshops and yeah it was sad to see her go, so budget restrictions are a huge challenge” (Participant 3 – female, white, HR manager in the private service).

“Interns are required to rotate and I have seen some mentors who will not want them to rotate due to the fact that they don’t have time to retrain another intern and also create more work responsibilities for themselves” (Participant 21 – female, black, assistant director in the public service).

“There are confidential issues in the workplace, I will make an example we had a case of misconduct against one of the employees, the intern was allowed to sit in on the hearing and she told her friends in another section about the proceedings, so we had to discipline her as well it becomes risky allowing them in all areas of work” (Participant 9 – female, black, Assistant Director: Labour Relations in the public service).

“They have a lot to learn as they only having theory from tertiary. Graduate interns still have a mentality of doing things theoretical not practical. Interns don’t get accustomed to working environment and some of them do not take instructions from their mentors” There are graduate interns who are playful because they do not pay attention to details or not taking work given to them seriously. Some interns, especially females are lazy, have attitudes and the mentality of being overworked” (Participant 1 – black, male, assistant director in the public service).

As much as HR practitioners have their challenges, graduates voiced their challenges as follows:

“The first three months there was no enough work assigned to me and I got bored and tempted to pursue Facebook or twitter and I was afraid to ask my mentor to give me more work to do” (focus group participant 1 – coloured, male on a fixed-term contract).

“The challenge that I faced during the internship programme was information confidential in the work and I was not allowed to access everything” (focus group participant 2 – black female now permanently employed).

Participant 4 shared similar problems:

“Lack of exposure in different units to gain more knowledge and skills and lack of workplace equipment tools in the organisation” (focus group participant 4 – black male still looking for a job).

“Because of my physical disability I experienced some negative attitudes from employees who thought that I cannot work and be productivity judging on my physical disability. Secondly there was poor communication between senior employees and interns because some of the employees used to undermine interns based on level of position and qualifications in the organisation” (focus group participant 3 – black female now permanently employed).

“The first challenge I faced during internship programme is lack of office resource: this challenge affected my production and performance because there was delay on my work and I couldn’t submit my task on time. The second challenge I had during internship was lack of space because it was difficult for me and other employees to concentrate and work in the environment where there was high level of noise” (focus group participant 6 – black, female permanently employed).

“Reducing working hours because interns are allocated small task of work and the spent the whole day wasting government resource such as using workplace internet for personal use” (focus group participant 5 – black female still looking for a job).

“The challenges I faced during internship was lack of access to appropriate technology because most of time there was no network cable to connect into laptop and it was delay my work because I was not able to do my work at time and end emails. Secondly there was no enough resource in the office” (focus group participant 7 – white, female still looking for a job).

“There is lack of equipment and stationery in the office and this affect us because our productivity is delayed and there is no enough space because I share office with five people in the organisation” (focus group participant 8 – black female looking for a job).

“Adopting to the new working environment was a major challenge it took some time to get used to and cope with the working environment. In addition it was difficult for me to adapt new culture and society in the department” (focus group participant 10 – black, female permanently employed).

Benefits

The programme does not only present challenges. There is a positive side to it as well. Participants responded by stating that:

“There is serious shortage of human resources in government, so graduates assist us in pushing the backlog” (Participant 21 – female, black, assistant director in the public service).

“Somehow intern service addresses shortage of manpower, at times there will be vacant posts for a long time without being filled so in this instance they ease the shortage of human resources” (Participant 16 – female, black, assistant director in the public service).

Participant 20 shared the same experience and expanded by stating that this helps them with quicker service delivery:

“We have the opportunity to retrain willing graduates and turn them into permanent employees especially for scarce skills that have been identified in our department” (Participant 13 – female, black, assistant director in the public service).

“We are able to increase production levels” (Participant 17 – male, black, assistant director in the public service).

“They are good as successors to employees going on retirement, we get fresh ideas and energy to the business and most importantly we are able to solidify relationships with the community and local institutions of higher education” (Participant 12 – black, female, training manager in the private service).

“We have increased staff and work can be done within expected time frames and also we gain knowledge of recent issues as compared to staff that has been in the service for too long and do not want to improve their skills” (Participant 7 – black, female assistant director in the public service).

“Our interns have been a massive help when our department struggled with filling vacancies, they helped with the shortage of staffing” (Participant 11 – black, female, chief personnel officer in the public service).

“Besides gaining low cost employees for a short period of time, graduates are usually more engaged and motivated, they have new and different perspectives of doing things, they are creative and bonus you can try before you buy” (Participant 3 – white, female in the private sector).

“In my division there are only two of us and we have to service 720 government officials, so I allow them to do our work under supervision of course then we are able to deliver on time” (Participant 10 – black, female, assistant director in the public service).

“They reduce workload and depending on their creativity and innovativeness they sometimes come up with faster and better ways of resolving challenges” (Participant 2 – black female, HR manager in the public service).

“Truth be told, we are able to complete more projects on time when graduate interns are available” (Participant 6 – black, male deputy director in the public service).

Quantitative findings

The results from the questionnaire are presented below. The results are from section two of the questionnaire only, which was titled Internship Programme. The aim was to get a picture of the intern’s experiences in the programme and to compare it to what the HR practitioners had to say. The descriptive statistics are displayed in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4: Quantitative Findings

Items	Statements	Mean	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	Tasks relevant to my study area	4.99		2.0	4.0	11.9	57.4	24.8
3	I know who I report to	5.03	2.0	2.0	2.0	15.8	41.6	36.6
6	I had/have clear programme outcomes	4.51	2.0	5.0	10.9	23.8	38.6	19.8
7	I had a mentor	4.72	2.0	1.0	6.9	20.8	51.5	17.8
8	Communication channels were open	5.03		1.0	3.0	18.8	46.5	30.7
9	Other staff members expected me to carry out their tasks	5.02		1.0	3.0	16.8	51.5	27.7
11	Job autonomy/freedom	4.83		2.0	7.9	19.8	45.5	24.8

12	My work contributes to organisation's bottom line	4.60	4.0	10.9	23.8	43.6	17.8	
13	Some theory could be applied in practice	4.82	2.0	4.0	21.8	54.5	17.8	
14	Class theory different from real workplace practices	4.60	3.0	3.0	10.9	15.8	48.5	18.8
15	KSA's were utilised	4.31	4.0	5.0	10.9	26.7	43.6	9.9
16	Resistance from permanent employees	4.59	2.0	2.0	12.9	16.8	50.5	15.8

Besides having a mentor, 51.5% of graduates agreed that they were expected to carry out tasks of staff members who were not their mentors. This could be why only 38.6% agreed to having clear programme outcomes. If there are no clear programme outcomes, graduates can be used in areas where they are not supposed to be. This is not a total derailment as such, but depends on the attitude of the graduate. If a graduate chooses to use these tasks as learning opportunities to develop a broader set of skills, they can benefit. However, at the same time, if people are always allocating duties, it can derail your progress, even if you do have a mentor. Government have specified that mentors should be identified and trained to guide skills facilitation during the programme (DPSA, 2009).

Only 9.9% of the participants in the study agreed that their knowledge, skills and abilities were utilised. Only 17.8% fully agreed to having a mentor. Many could not agree since their mentors were not always available. As a result, they are utilised by any other senior employee who might not have a clear understanding of what that particular graduate has to achieve. One of the highlights was that 54.5% agreed that some of the theory learned in the lecture room could be applied in practice, while 48.5% claimed that the theory is somewhat different from real work practice.

It is evident that those graduates who had mentors felt that their efforts contributed to the organisation's bottom line (17.8%). It is the responsibility of the mentor to facilitate the graduate's development so that both the employer and employee could benefit positively from the relationship.

The policy clearly states that interns cannot be used to fill in for staff shortages in departments. This might be the case as 51.5% of graduates agreed that staff members always wanted them to fill in for them and 50.5% met some sort of resistance from permanent employees.

It is the responsibility of HR to make sure that roles are clarified and every employee knows who they report to and their job descriptions. This makes it easier for employees to perform well. There will be not uncertainties and confusion.

DISCUSSION

The objective of the study was to explore the role and responsibilities of HR practitioners in the internship programme and how they can effectively use HRM activities to manage Generation Y employees. Organisations that embrace diversity should respond to the call in the Employment Equity Act (55 of 1998) that there should be equity in the workplace. Employment and HR policies should be fair and non-discriminatory and not contradict the Act itself. Organization that do this stand a better chance at success than those that do not. They are exposed to bigger talent pools, more and new innovative ideas from different types of employees (Armstrong, 2015). The age dimension is what sets Generation Y employees apart from others in the workplace and society as a whole. HR practitioners have to understand this generation better. That will make it easier for them to create good working spaces for them and other employees that interact with them as a measure to improve and increase productivity and profits.

Since the rest of the globe is moving towards technological business operations, it is only wise for HR practitioners to follow suite and utilise technology to make their activities better. It has reduced costs and enables organisations to meet and adapt to the demands of the external environment (Nel et al., 2014). Many scholars have termed Generation Y employees (those between the ages of 25 and 35), digital beings, techno savvy or cyber kids. Research has proven that HR practitioners who shift towards electronic HRM activities are able to better employee relations.

The findings of the study makes it clear that more still has to be done by different stakeholders of the internship programmes, graduates included. HR processes was the main theme identified with five subthemes. The results are discussed per subtheme.

Recruitment

Age plays a major role when recruiting for internship positions as the programme itself is a youth initiative to attempt a reduction in youth and graduate unemployment. Bukaliya (2012) states that internships are training and development programmes aimed at the youth to improve their employability status. Most participants supported this. The participants almost all mentioned the age factor when recruiting interns. One can therefore safely conclude that

they are Generation Y employees, therefore the recruitment strategies used should be directed at attracting youths. However, organisations must ensure that they do not discriminate against graduates based on gender and ethnicity during the recruitment process (Abbott, 2015). Technology will have to play a big role as Generation Y employees are technologically inclined. Geographic locations are also a focus area, local graduates are often given first preference especially, those from rural areas.

Work allocation

Most of the work given to graduates would be developmental because they need well-rounded exposure to all office systems. Exposure would therefore not be limited to what they studied at university or college. Mentors and supervisors agreed that some tasks will not be discipline-specific, but rather skills that would enable graduates to develop teamwork, research and analytical skills and other types of soft skills that are necessary for office work. The *Final Report on the Internship Baseline Study* (2013) by SAGDA stated that:

“Interns are in entry-level positions, many end up doing more general office administration activities instead of meaningful work”.

Participant 1 and 3 mentioned that interns must be prepared to do things like general office work or junior work, as their qualifications do not automatically enable them to go into the core activities of the job. They have to work their way up.

Orientation

Socializing new employees into the organisation also came up as a strong theme as most graduates agreed that it helped them understand how the public service operates. The public service has an induction programme called *Breaking Barriers to Entry* (BB2E), designed especially for graduates. The only setback is that some graduates claimed that they only received this orientation training after six months. Orientation is important for interns because, unlike other employees, they are first-time entrants into the labour market and they come with various expectations that should be addressed by means of orientation.

Internship challenges

The programme does not continue without any challenges. This theme emerged from both sets of participants, confirming that there are different challenges when participating in the programme. Graduates mostly singled out a lack of resources, especially the internet, and the availability of mentors as. Mentors and supervisors mentioned that they first have to deal with

graduates' expectations before they can get to the purpose of the programme. They do not understand why they do not get their own offices and issues of professionalism have to be dealt with, especially dress codes. Stage three (titled *Reconciling expectations with reality*) of the *Inkster and Ross Internship Stage Model* (1998) supports this. Interns realise during this phase that their expectations differ from what they imagined the workplace to be. In the actual workplace you have to be responsible for your actions and realise that they may affect you and your co-workers, and most importantly, that there might be consequences (Diambra, Cole-Zakrzewski, & Booher, 2004).

Benefits

From the responses the HR practitioners gave, it is evident that there is a serious lack or shortage of human resources in the public service. Departments use interns to ease labour shortages. Interns help departments deliver and meet targets. However, according to the (DPSA) *Internship Guidelines*, the public service (2013) it is not permitted to use interns as added labour. This is supported by the *INSETA Guidelines for Running Internships* (2010).

“Interns should not be recruited to replace permanent employees” (p.3)

The *Final Report on the Internship Baseline Study* (SAGDA, 2013) states that because of the high levels of graduate unemployment, some organisations hire graduates for jobs that could easily be done by people with no qualifications just to get an extra set of hands. One can conclude that because of these shortages, organisations overlook other benefits of the programme. The private service often sees internships as a try-before-you-buy, as an opportunity to improve relations with institutions of higher learning and to serve their communities.

Though public service officials see internship labour as a benefit as it curbs their labour shortages, according to the International Labour Organisation (2012), this is a risk as this exposes interns to abuse while they are just starting their careers. The DPSA Annual Report (2013/2014) reported that government generally takes a little over nine months to fill positions that should be filled within three months. A delivery agreement was signed in 2010 that the vacancy rate would be reduced to between four and five months. Honouring this agreement will reduce the above-mentioned labour shortages in the public service, allowing graduates to be mentored correctly and not be abused and treated as cheap labour.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Practical key elements and concerns have been uncovered that can contribute significantly to how internships are managed. The insights offered in this study may contribute to making internship a positive experience for graduates that serve their original purpose. Managers, policy makers and heads of department can take this into consideration when revising their strategies and making new policies regarding training interns and their mentors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Many departments have monitoring and evaluation plans, but they mostly focus on the core business of the department. It is recommended that each department should have a plan to evaluate the programme at least every three years so they can assess its effectiveness. This is supported by Erasmus, Loedolf, Mda, and Nel (2015), who suggests that there should be an evaluation on completion of each training programme to measure the success of the programme and to forge a way forward after finding out the successes and the shortcomings.

Hands-on learning interventions like job rotation, personal coaching, mentoring and teamwork work well with this generation as they prefer their personal development plans to be tailored to meet their individual career growth needs and they favour constant feedback. The internship programme might not provide this because of the nature of their employment contract, but organisations can ensure that they provide interns with well-trained mentors and supervisors who understand the purpose of the internship and who share the vision of the organisation concerning the development programme. Organisation should get creative in trying to offer interns things that would enhance their development journey. Creative supervisors can create the best environments even in the face of tough economic times where resources are limited.

CONCLUSION

Internships are a good initiative in both public and private sectors. Although there are challenges related to the availability of resources, mentorship and sometimes support from top management, HR practitioners can still come up with winning ways to enhance the programme and improve the prospects of graduates in securing permanent or even contract jobs. Not only will they become employable, some of them can actually become employers. Technology can be a good friend of HR practitioners, not only in managing Generation Y but also to other employees in the organisations. HRIS improve the HR function and increase the speed of sharing information. E-learning methods and other online portals help HR to communicate with employees better, delivering quality service in the process.

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CHAPTER 5:

ARTICLE 4

EXPLORING THE ANTECEDENTS AND OUTCOMES OF A GRADUATE INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

ABSTRACT

Generation Y employees are rapidly entering the workplace. Organisations are facing great challenges as many of these individuals, although talented, are not adequately prepared for a job. As a result, many organisations are implementing graduate internship programmes as a talent management tool to enhance the employability skills of younger generation employees. Currently, a holistic perspective on the role of talent management in graduate internship programmes and the outcomes is still lacking.

The main objective of this research was to explore the antecedents and outcomes of a graduate internship programme for graduate interns. The study used a quantitative research approach by administering the following questionnaires to a sample of graduate interns (N=101): *A Talent Management Measure, Aspects of Graduate Internship Programme, Employee Value Proposition Questionnaire, Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, Job Satisfaction Questionnaire, Career Satisfaction* and *Life Satisfaction Questionnaire*.

On average, it appeared that most of the participants experienced the graduate internship programme as positive. Most of the participants also displayed high levels of work engagement (i.e. vigour, dedication and absorption) job satisfaction, career satisfaction and life satisfaction. The participants agreed that talent attraction, talent development and talent retention practices are available. Talent management was a significant positive predictor of the effectiveness of the graduate internship programme. The graduate internship programme had a significant positive influence on the work engagement, job satisfaction, career satisfaction and life satisfaction of graduate interns. From the results, we can conclude that talent management is an important antecedent of effective graduate internship programmes. The extent to which graduate interns experience the graduate internship programme, in turn, will yield positive work-related outcomes. Recommendations are made.

Keywords: Career satisfaction, graduate internships, job satisfaction, talent management, work engagement

INTRODUCTION

Talent management as a human resources (HR) function is becoming increasingly important for organisations (Nillson & Ellström, 2012). HR practitioners should be strategic in implementing talent management strategies by focusing on the entire workforce rather than on selected employees (Swales, Downs & Orr, 2014). Organisations could lose out on talented people who they exclude from talent pools, such as graduate interns, who are mostly contract workers. Some employers tend to think of graduate interns as unimportant and, as a result, they are excluded from key talent management activities (Farndale, Scullion & Sparrow, 2010).

The talent investment of graduate interns (also referred to as Generation Y employees) is imperative, as these individuals are destined to become the highest performing generation in history (Weyland, 2011). According to Poole (2017), organisations would be able to obtain top millennial talent and beat their closest competitors if they incorporate millennial requirements into future business strategies. Organisations and talent managers are therefore challenged to create meaningful work environments that will allow these individuals to flourish (De Crom & Rothmann, 2018) and contribute to the competitiveness and sustainability of organisations with their technological background (Gitonga, 2016; Kampf, Lorincová, Hitka & Stopka, 2017). Graduate internship programmes can aid as a talent development strategy where novice employees are given the opportunity to combine the theory learned as part of their tertiary qualifications with practical corporate experience to enhance their employability in a preferred career (Mellors-Bourne & Day, 2011). Rose (2013) concurs that internships are the preferred pathway for graduates into entry-level professional positions.

The main objective of this article is to determine the role of talent management as a key enabler of graduate internship programmes. The research further explores the extent to which talent management practices and graduate internship programmes contribute to positive work-related outcomes for graduate interns, such as work engagement, job satisfaction, career satisfaction and life satisfaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Antecedents of effective graduate internship programmes

For the purpose of this study, talent management has been identified as a key enabler for the effectiveness of graduate internship programmes.

Talent management

Talent management is an integrated strategic process that involves the attraction, development and retention of key and competent individuals from the start of their careers to the finish. A talented individual can be defined as a person who possesses the “smart skill” that can contribute to the success of the workplace in the new world of work. Typically, the smart skills that serve as indicators of talent and competence will include, among others, business acumen, technological savviness and the ability to craft and redevelop their jobs in demanding workplaces.

A study by Barkhuizen (2013) showed that employees aged between 20 and 29 years valued talent management practices such as talent review processes, workforce planning, staffing and talent acquisition as more important compared to other age groups. Ohlrich (2015) found that the corporate social responsibility of the organisation is not a significant talent attraction method for potential younger generation employees. In this study, Generation Y employees were rather attracted to the values of the organisation.

Poole (2017) furthermore found that the top attracting factors for Generation Y employees included salary, career development opportunities and flexible working hours. In line with other studies (see Du Plessis, Barkhuizen, Stanz & Schutte, 2015), Poole (2017) also found that management support and communication from HR directors are important for the retention of millennials.

Outcomes of graduate internship programmes

In this study, we identified the outcomes of graduate internship programmes as work engagement, job satisfaction, career satisfaction and life satisfaction. A brief discussion of each of these outcomes and how it relates to Generation Y and graduates is presented below.

Work engagement

Work engagement is a positive psychological construct that emerged in the 1960s to denote a positive work-related state of mind characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption (Bakker & Leiter, 2010). Vigour is characterised by high levels of energy and perseverance, irrespective of the work circumstances. Dedication involves a sense of meaning, pride and purpose derived from work. Absorbed individuals are fully focused on their work and unaware that time is passing. Rai (2012) is of the opinion that an engaged employee demonstrates awareness of the business context and is highly motivated and committed to perform for the

benefit of the organisation. Kopertyńska and Kmiotek (2015) caution that supervisors and human resource departments are tasked to find new organisational solutions and ways of improving work conditions to develop the work engagement of Generation Y employees. Anitha and Aruna (2016) found that mentoring, work style and teamwork are significant contributors for engaging Generation Y employees.

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is experienced when employees are satisfied with most aspects of their work, evoking a positive attitude towards work (Bergh, Botha, Kiley & Werner, 2011). According to Josh, Simun and Chong (2011), many graduates come into the world of work with high expectations, and when those expectations are not met, it influences their job satisfaction and commitment to the organisation. Organisations face the challenge of improving the job satisfaction of Generation Y employees, as this generation demands more individual treatment and flexibility in training and work tasks (Sharkawi, Kayani & Zayadah, 2014). Beebe, Blaylock and Sweetser (2009) found that graduates ranked learning opportunities and good working relationships with supervisors and colleagues as more important for their job satisfaction than compensation. A study by Daud (2016) showed that factors such as maturity level, the size of the organisation, salary and opportunities for growth are significant predictors of the job satisfaction of the younger generation and new employees.

Career satisfaction

Limited research currently exists on the concept of career satisfaction in the workplace. In the absence of a clear-cut definition for this concept, the authors are of the opinion that career satisfaction is a positive emotion displayed by employees with respect to the relative success attached to the various stages of their career lifecycle. According to Hillman and McMillan (2005), the career satisfaction of graduates can include happiness with career prospects, the future, the money they receive and the work they do. Internships give graduates an opportunity to have more insight into and knowledge about their work interests and careers within a specific industry than non-interns have (Maertz, Stoeberl & Marks, 2014). According to Martin (2005), Generation Y believes that collaboration with experienced colleagues in the workplace is important for career growth and success. A study by Joo and Lee (2017) showed that perceived organisational support from management enhanced the career satisfaction and subjective well-being of younger generation employees.

Life satisfaction

Life satisfaction is the extent to which an individual feels satisfied with the state of his/her life at a particular period in his/her life and can be measured by aspects such as physical and mental health, wealth associated with accomplishments and social relationships (Ye, Yu & Li, 2012). Satisfaction with life is also viewed as a complementary assessment to psychopathology and emotional well-being (Pavot & Diener, 1993). A study by Oladipo, Adenaike, Adejumo and Ojewumi (2013) showed that students who had a high internal locus of control and a high need for achievement displayed low levels of life satisfaction, whereas those who had high levels of external locus of control and a low need for achievement showed high levels life satisfaction. Oladipo et al. (2013) further highlight the importance of orienting those with a low life satisfaction with adjustment and coping strategies to prevent psychological breakdown. Stanojević, Tomanović and Ljubičić (2016) found that satisfaction with occupation is a significant contributor to the general life satisfaction of young adults, combined with satisfaction with the personal (intimate) domain and satisfaction with family life.

Based on the preceding section, the following hypotheses have been developed:

H 1: The availability of talent management practices is a significant positive enhancer of a graduate internship programme.

H 2: The graduate internship programme is a significant positive predictor of the following work-related outcomes (H 2.1: Work engagement; H 2.2: Job satisfaction; H 2.3, Career satisfaction; H 2.4: Life satisfaction),

H 3: The availability of talent management practices is a significant positive predictor of the following work-related outcomes (H 3.1: Work engagement; H 3.2: Job satisfaction; H 3.3, Career satisfaction; H 3.4: Life satisfaction).

RESEARCH DESIGN

A quantitative research approach was followed to achieve the research objectives of this study. This research was cross-sectional in nature, allowing for data to be collected at one point in time. Cross-sectional research is ideally suited to test for predictive relationships between variables over a short period of time (Field, 2018).

Sampling

The sample included graduate interns enrolled in a graduate internship programme from 2012 to 2016 (N=101). Most of the respondents were female (74.3%), black (83.2%), and aged between 25 and 27 years (48.5%). The respondents were primarily in possession of a bachelor's degree (39.6%), or obtained their qualification from a university (64.4%) with HRM as their core field of study (94.1%). Most of the respondents had done only one internship (87.1%) in the government sector (79.2%). The majority of the respondents were employed on a fixed-term contract (45.5%) at the time of the research and found employment within one year of their internship (60.4%).

Measuring instruments

The following measuring instruments were used: Talent management (self-developed), Aspects of a Graduate Internship Programme (self-developed), Employee Value Proposition (self-developed), the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003), Job Satisfaction (self-developed), Career Satisfaction (self-developed) and Life Satisfaction (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffen, 1985). All items were ranked on a six-point Likert scale from *Strongly Disagree* (1) to *Strongly Agree* (6).

- The **talent management** measure consisted of 10 items and measured three factors: talent attraction, talent development and talent retention.
- The **aspects of a graduate internship questionnaire** measured the participants' experience of the graduate internship programme. The questionnaire consisted of 16 items.
- An adapted version of the **UWES** (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003) was used to measure the work engagement of the participations. The UWES consisted of 13 items and measured three factors: vigour, dedication and absorption.
- The **job satisfaction questionnaire** consisted of 12 items and measured the extent to which graduate interns were satisfied with certain aspects of their current job, such as getting praise for their job and the implementation of company policies.
- The **career satisfaction questionnaire** consisted of four items and measured the extent to which graduate interns were satisfied with their career.
- The **satisfaction with life questionnaire** (Diener et al., 1985) consisted of five items and measured the extent to which the participants were satisfied with certain aspects of their life in general.

Data analysis

The data was analysed using SPSS.25 (2018). Descriptive statistics were applied (i.e. frequencies, means, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis). Exploratory factor analyses were used to uncover the factor structure of the measurements. Linear regression analyses were applied to test for the predictive relationships between the variables in this study.

RESULTS

Exploratory factor analysis using the principal component extraction method was applied to all the measuring instruments. The results of the factor analyses and descriptive statistics of the measurements are reported in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1: Descriptive statistics of the measurements

	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	α	Variance explained
Talent management						
Talent attraction	4.4884	0.82673	-0.505	0.357	0.799	71.871%
Talent development	4.0990	0.93408	-0.286	-0.234	0.876	
Talent retention	4.5149	0.97071	-0.712	0.678	0.620	
Graduate internship programme	4.7558	0.64789	-1.122	3.063	0.869	42.142%
Work engagement						
Vigour	4.6997	0.84130	-1.047	2.778	0.856	78.426%
Dedication	4.9728	0.81386	-0.790	0.507	0.932	
Absorption	4.6799	0.76583	-0.327	-0.276	0.776	
Job satisfaction	4.5410	0.72104	-0.374	0.693	0.903	52.169%
Career satisfaction	4.8837	0.91349	-1.416	2.510	0.889	76.083%
Life satisfaction	4.3960	1.04038	-0.886	0.721	0.890	69.580%

The results in Table 5.1 show acceptable to excellent reliabilities for all the factors. On average, it appeared as though most of the participants experienced the graduate internship programme as positive. Most of the participants also displayed high levels of work engagement (i.e. vigour, dedication and absorption) and job satisfaction, career satisfaction

and life satisfaction. The participants were in agreement that talent attraction, talent development and talent retention practices are available.

Next, linear regression analyses were performed to determine the predictive relationship between talent management and the graduate internship programme. The results are reported in Table 5.2 below.

Table 5.2: Linear regression between talent management and the graduate internship programme

Model	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	T	P (Sig)	R	R ²	ΔR ²
	B	SE	Beta					
Talent attraction and internship programme						.540 ^a	0.292	0.285
(Constant)	2.855	0.302		9.441	0.000			
Talent attraction	0.423	0.066	0.540	6.388	0.000			
Talent development and internship programme						.453 ^a	0.206	0.198
(Constant)	3.467	0.261		13.274	0.000			
Talent development	0.315	0.062	0.453	5.062	0.000			
Talent retention and internship programme						.603 ^a	0.364	0.358
(Constant)	2.937	0.247		11.894	0.000			
Talent retention	0.403	0.053	0.603	7.529	0.000			

* Statistically significant: $p \leq 0.01$

+ Practically significant correlation (medium effect): $r \geq 0.30$

++ Practically significant correlation (large effect): $r \geq 0.50$

Table 5.2 shows that all the results are significant, in other words that the extent to which graduates experience the internship programme is a significant predictor of the outcome variables. More specifically, the results in Table 5.2 show that:

- *Talent attraction* is a significant positive predictor of a graduate internship programme: $F(1, 99) = 40.805$, and accounted for approximately 54% of the variance in a graduate internship programme ($R^2 = .292$, adjusted $R^2 = .285$). The effect was large.
- *Internship* is a significant positive predictor of a graduate internship programme: $F(1, 99) = 25.626$, and accounted for approximately 45.3% of the variance in the graduate internship programme ($R^2 = .206$, adjusted $R^2 = .198$). The effect was medium.

- *Internship* is a significant positive predictor of the graduate internship programme: $F(1, 99) = 56.688$, and accounted for approximately 60.3% of the variance in the graduate internship programme ($R^2 = .364$, adjusted $R^2 = .358$). The effect was large.

Based on the above results, Hypothesis 1, that *the availability of talent management practices is a significant enhancer of graduate internship programmes*, is accepted. Next, linear regression analyses were performed to determine the outcomes relating to the graduate internship programme. The results are reported in Table 5.3 below.

Table 5.3 Linear regression between graduate internship programme and outcome variables

Model	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	T	P (Sig)	R	R ²	ΔR ²
	B	SE	Beta					
Internship and vigour						.328 ^a	0.108	0.099
(Constant)	2.672	0.592		4.516	0.000			
Internship	0.426	0.123	0.328	3.459	0.001			
Internship and dedication						.527 ^a	0.278	0.270
(Constant)	1.825	0.515		3.543	0.001			
Internship	0.662	0.107	0.527	6.169	0.000			
Internship and absorption						.417 ^a	0.174	0.165
(Constant)	2.336	0.518		4.508	0.000			
Internship	0.493	0.108	0.417	4.564	0.000			
Internship and job satisfaction						.688 ^a	0.473	0.468
(Constant)	0.901	0.390		2.311	0.023			
Internship	0.765	0.081	0.688	9.428	0.000			
Internship and career satisfaction						.316 ^a	0.100	0.091
(Constant)	2.763	0.645		4.283	0.000			
Internship	0.446	0.134	0.316	3.316	0.001			
Internship and life satisfaction						.299 ^a	0.090	0.080
(Constant)	2.111	0.739		2.856	0.005			
Internship	0.480	0.154	0.299	3.120	0.002			

* Statistically significant: $p \leq 0.01$

+ Practically significant correlation (medium effect): $r \geq 0.30$

++ Practically significant correlation (large effect): $r \geq 0.50$

Table 5.3 shows that all the results are significant, in other words that the extent to which graduates experience the internship programme positively is a significant predictor of the outcome variables. More specifically, the results in Table 5.3 show that:

- *Internship* is a significant positive predictor of vigour: $F(1, 99) = 11.963$, and accounted for approximately 32.8% of the variance in vigour ($R^2 = .108$, adjusted $R^2 = .099$). The effect was medium.
- *Internship* is a significant positive predictor of dedication: $F(1, 99) = 38.062$, and accounted for approximately 52.7% of the variance in dedication ($R^2 = .278$, adjusted $R^2 = .270$). The effect was large.
- *Internship* is a significant positive predictor of absorption: $F(1, 99) = 20.830$, and accounted for approximately 41.7% of the variance in absorption ($R^2 = .174$, adjusted $R^2 = .165$). The effect was medium.
- *Internship* is a significant positive predictor of job satisfaction: $F(1, 99) = 88.888$, and accounted for approximately 68.8% of the variance in job satisfaction ($R^2 = .473$, adjusted $R^2 = .468$). The effect was large.
- *Internship* is a significant positive predictor of career satisfaction: $F(1, 99) = 88.888$, and accounted for approximately 31.6% of the variance in job satisfaction ($R^2 = .100$, adjusted $R^2 = .091$). The effect was medium.
- *Internship* is a significant positive predictor of life satisfaction: $F(1, 99) = 9.736$, and accounted for approximately 29.9% of the variance in job satisfaction ($R^2 = .090$, adjusted $R^2 = .080$). The effect was small.

Based on the above results, Hypothesis 2, that *graduate internships programmes are a significant enhancer of positive work-related outcomes*, is accepted. Next, the regression analyses between talent management and the graduate internship programme are reported in Table 5.4 below.

Table 5.4: Linear regression between talent management and outcome variables

	Df	F	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Beta	P
Talent attraction							
Vigour	1	22.290	.429 ^a	0.184	0.176	0.429	0.000
Dedication	1	38.972	.531 ^a	0.282	0.275	0.531	0.000
Absorption	1	22.260	.428 ^a	0.184	0.175	0.428	0.000
Job satisfaction	1	56.586	.603 ^a	0.364	0.357	0.603	0.000
Career satisfaction	1	9.020	.289 ^a	0.084	0.074	0.289	0.003
Life satisfaction	1	7.959	.273 ^a	0.074	0.065	0.273	0.006
Talent development							
Vigour	1	14.717	.360 ^a	0.129	0.121	0.360	0.000
Dedication	1	17.234	.385 ^a	0.148	0.140	0.385	0.000
Absorption	1	19.796	.408 ^a	0.167	0.158	0.408	0.000
Job satisfaction	1	42.223	.547 ^a	0.299	0.292	0.547	0.000
Career satisfaction	1	6.327	.245 ^a	0.060	0.051	0.245	0.013
Life satisfaction	1	11.280	.320 ^a	0.102	0.093	0.320	0.001
Talent retention							
Vigour	1	14.993	.363 ^a	0.132	0.123	0.363	0.000
Dedication	1	29.882	.482 ^a	0.232	0.224	0.482	0.000
Absorption	1	21.913	.426 ^a	0.181	0.173	0.426	0.000
Job satisfaction	1	58.441	.609 ^a	0.371	0.365	0.609	0.000
Career satisfaction	1	6.684	.251 ^a	0.063	0.054	0.251	0.011
Life satisfaction	1	9.377	.294 ^a	0.087	0.077	0.294	0.003

Table 5.4 shows that all the results are significant, meaning that the extent to which graduates experienced the internship programme as positive is a significant predictor of the outcome variables. More specifically, the results in Table 3 show that:

- *Talent attraction* [$F(1, 99) = 22.290$], *talent development* [$F(1, 99) = 14.717$], and *talent retention* [$F(1, 99) = 14.993$] are significant positive predictors of vigour. Talent attraction explained approximately 42.9% ($R^2 = 0.184$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.176$) of the variance in vigour, whereas talent development explained 36% ($R^2 = 0.129$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.121$) of the variance in vigour, and talent retention explained 36.3% ($R^2 = 0.132$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.123$). The effects were medium.

- *Talent attraction* [$F(1, 99) = 38.972$], *talent development* [$F(1, 99) = 17.234$], and *talent retention* [$F(1, 99) = 29.882$] are significant positive predictors of dedication. Talent attraction explained approximately 53.1% ($R^2 = 0.282$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.275$) of the variance in dedication, whereas talent development explained 38.5% ($R^2 = 0.148$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.140$) of the variance in dedication, and talent retention explained 48.2% ($R^2 = 0.232$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.224$). The effects of talent attraction were large and for talent development and talent retention, medium.
- *Talent attraction* [$F(1, 99) = 22.260$], *talent development* [$F(1, 99) = 19.796$], and *talent retention* [$F(1, 99) = 21.913$] are significant positive predictors of absorption. Talent attraction explained approximately 42.8% ($R^2 = 0.184$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.175$) of the variance in absorption, whereas talent development explained 40.8% ($R^2 = 0.167$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.158$) of the variance in absorption, and talent retention explained 42.6% ($R^2 = 0.232$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.173$). The effects were medium.
- *Talent attraction* [$F(1, 99) = 56.586$], *talent development* [$F(1, 99) = 42.223$], and *talent retention* [$F(1, 99) = 58.441$] are significant positive predictors of job satisfaction. Talent attraction explained approximately 60.3% ($R^2 = 0.364$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.357$) of the variance in job satisfaction, whereas talent development explained 54.7% ($R^2 = 0.299$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.292$) of the variance in job satisfaction, and talent retention explained 60.9% ($R^2 = 0.371$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.365$). The effects were large.
- *Talent attraction* [$F(1, 99) = 56.586$], *talent development* [$F(1, 99) = 42.223$], and *talent retention* [$F(1, 99) = 58.441$] are significant positive predictors of career satisfaction. Talent attraction explained approximately 28.9% ($R^2 = 0.084$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.074$) of the variance in career satisfaction, whereas talent development explained 24.5% ($R^2 = 0.060$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.051$) of the variance in career satisfaction, and talent retention explained 25.1% ($R^2 = 0.063$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.054$). The effects were small.
- *Talent attraction* [$F(1, 99) = 7.959$], *talent development* [$F(1, 99) = 11.280$], and *talent retention* [$F(1, 99) = 9.377$] are significant positive predictors of career satisfaction. Talent attraction explained approximately 27.3% ($R^2 = 0.074$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.065$) of the variance in career satisfaction, whereas talent development explained 32% ($R^2 = 0.102$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.093$) of the variance in career satisfaction, and talent retention explained 29.4% ($R^2 = 0.087$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.077$). The effects for talent attraction and talent retention were small, and for talent development, medium.

Based on the above results, Hypothesis 3, that talent management programmes are a significant positive predictor of work-related outcomes, is accepted.

DISCUSSION

The main objective of this research was to determine the predictive relationships between the antecedent variables of graduate internship programmes (i.e. talent management) and the outcome variables (i.e. employee value proposition, work engagement, job satisfaction, career satisfaction and life satisfaction). The results of this study showed that talent management practices such as talent attraction, talent development and talent retention had a positive impact on the graduates' experiences of the internship programme. Effective talent management practices enable organisations to attract the top young talents (Poole, 2017) required for their competitiveness (Gitonga, 2016).

The results of the study showed that both talent management practices and graduate experiences of the graduate internship programme enhanced positive work-related behaviours, such as work engagement, job satisfaction, career satisfaction and life satisfaction. As mentioned by Kopertyńska and Kmiolek (2015), the organisations that formed part of the graduate internship programme of the participants in this study appeared to have invested in work solutions aligned with the needs of young generation employees. Graduates in this study also experienced the availability of development opportunities that, in turn, enhanced their job satisfaction and work engagement (Beebe et al., 2009; Sharkawi et al., 2014). The results of this study further confirmed that graduates experience a sense of career satisfaction because they were given the opportunity to enhance their career prospects through participation in a graduate internship programme (Martin, 2005). The graduate intern's positive experience regarding the graduate internship programme and the possibility of an occupation had a positive spill-over effect on life satisfaction (Stanojević et al., 2016).

This research makes important theoretical and practical contributions. From a theoretical point of view, this research adds to the limited body of empirical knowledge that currently exists on the role of talent management in the establishment of graduate internship programmes. From a practical point of view, managers should take note of the positive effects of the talent management of individual and organisational-level outcomes in this study. Management and talent practitioners should therefore invest in talent management strategies that incorporate the needs of younger employees, as they are the key to the future performance and survival of organisations.

This research had some limitations. Firstly, a cross-sectional research approach was followed, which implies that cause-and-effect relationships between the variables are relevant for a certain point in time. Future research can benefit from longitudinal studies where graduate internship programme trends can be tracked over longer periods of time for the purpose of

developing predictive models. Secondly, this research only focused on graduate internship programmes in the public sector and cannot be generalised to the private sector. Future studies can benefit from a comparative analysis between the two sectors, as this has implications for talent attraction and retention.

In conclusion, this research highlights the important role of strategic talent management as a tool to prepare young talent for the workplace. A properly assembled talent management strategy enables the effective development and implementation of graduate internship programmes, which, in turn, contribute to key individual outcomes. Organisations are encouraged to invest in graduate internship programmes, as they play an important role in creating a future employable workforce.

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CHAPTER 6:

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter revisits the background to the research study and offers the conclusions and a short discussion of the recommendations and limitations of the study. The conclusions are based on the findings and are discussed in reference to each of the research objectives.

6.2 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The study followed an exploratory approach employing a case study strategy. The internship phenomenon was investigated to find out how talented graduates can be identified and retained; what managers, supervisors and mentors need to do to keep Generation Y employees engaged and motivated in terms of HR activities. What are the important elements in an EVP that graduates would value? How talent management practices in internship programmes impact on graduates' work behaviour.

6.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The general objective of the study was to explore talent indicators in internship programmes for HR graduates. There were four specific objectives resulting in four articles for the study. Two of the articles were purely qualitative, one incorporated both qualitative and quantitative approaches, and the last one was purely quantitative. The objectives were the following:

- To explore the perspectives of HR managers on talent indicators for HR graduate interns
- To explore the determinants of an EVP for graduate interns
- To redesign the HR function to effectively manage and accommodate generation Y (graduate interns)
- To explore the antecedents and outcomes of a graduate internship programme

6.4 CONCLUSIONS

6.4.1 Conclusions relating to objective 1 / Article 1: Exploring the perspectives of HR managers on talent indicators for HR graduate interns.

Every organisation must have future plans and forecast their future needs to moderate the effects of turnovers and attrition. Literature proves that graduate development programmes

are among the strategies used to deal with these issues and graduate interns are the best way to bring new talent into organisations (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014; Joubert, 2007). Many students participate in these programmes year after year but not everyone receives offers of permanent employment. Mentors and supervisors have to act as sieves to recommend to HR and management suitable candidates for vacant positions. The study sought to explore possible indicators of talent given the fact that most organisations do not have talent management practices at internship level; graduates are just trained to acquire workplace skills and it is up to individual mentors to recognise potential in their mentees (Participant 21, a black female assistant director in the public service with 20 years in the HR).

However, the focus group findings and quantitative findings showed slightly different perspectives on the variables. Three factors or independent variables (Martin & Bridgmon, 2012) emerged from talent management and were labelled talent attraction, talent development and talent retention. Of the three factors the most influential was development. This makes sense as development is the main purpose of the internship programme. The agreement between the intern and the employer does not guarantee employment once the programme has been completed (DPSA, 2015), so of the three factors of talent management, talent development is the most significant. Focus groups corroborated this finding as most recounted being sent for different training workshops.

HR practitioners who participated in the study were able to provide the researcher with insight into their relationships with graduate interns. It seems researchers are unable to come to a consensus regarding a definition of talent (Ross, 2013). When asked how they identified talent among graduates, mentors and supervisors referred to characteristics that indicate the potential of the candidate. Graduates are assessed based on their employment contracts and aspects covered in their development programme. Most participants agreed that graduates who perform above the set standards show promise and it is up to the mentor to challenge them even more to reveal their talent. Some also mentioned willingness to learn as a contributing factor, stating that individuals who willingly subject themselves to learning experiences have the opportunity to excel. This corresponds with the study by Meyers, Van Woerkom & Dries (2013) that talent can be acquired through learning processes.

The researcher conceptualized the following model of talent indicators from the themes that emerged:

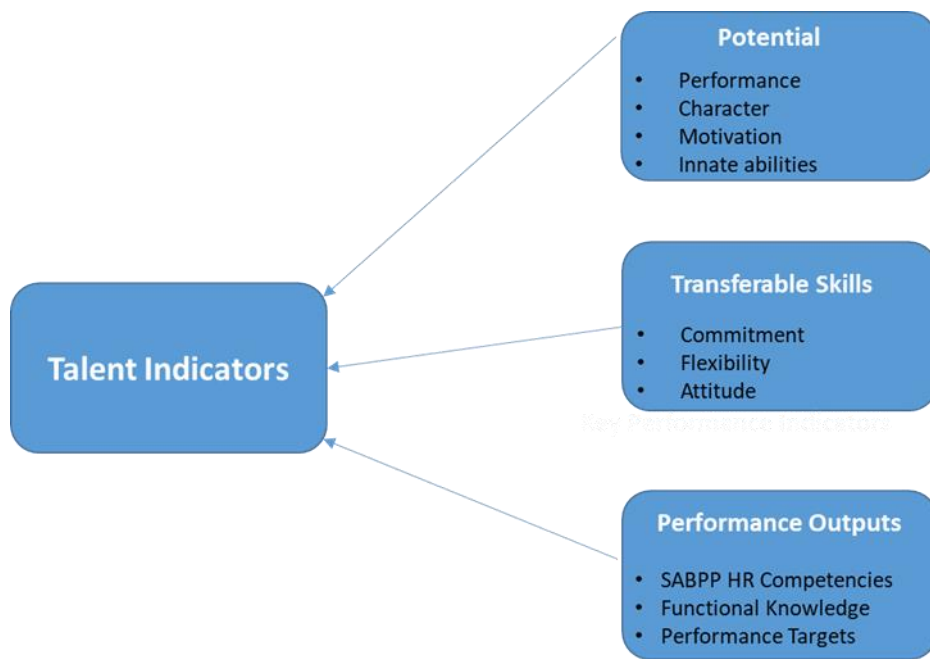


Figure 6.1: *Conceptual Model of Talent Indicators (Researcher's own: 2017)*

6.4.2 Conclusions relating to objective 2/ Article 2 – Exploring the determinants of an employee value proposition for graduate interns

EVPs are compelling instruments in the quest for organisations to win the war for talent. Shifts in the global arena, whether in terms of technology or diversity, require organisations to design formidable EVPs to attract and retain top talent in pursuit of maintaining a competitive advantage. Different components of EVP appeal to various groups of people, and organisations that embrace diversity are able to design EVPs that will evoke positive behaviour from employees. The purpose of the study was to explore what Generation Y employees were most attracted to and what they would want to see in an EVP.

Although it is an older theory for motivation, Maslow's hierarchy of needs has repeatedly proven that individuals are fulfilled by different things, and that needs follow a certain order from physiological to self-actualization; more basic needs should be satisfied first. Money is a tool easily and effectively able to satisfy lower-level needs like food and water (Warnich, Carrell, Elbert, & Hatfield, 2015; Erasmus, Loedolff, Mda, & Nel, 2015 Bergh, 2011; Dessler, 2011). Although interns receive only a stipend depending on their qualification levels (DPSA, 2015), this is covered in the economic component of an EVP. It is, however, not even half of what some entry-level employees receive for their services. There are other types of incentives that organisations can use to encourage interns and make them more engaged and satisfied in their jobs.

Some issues regarding the stipend emerged from the focus group: participants felt that it was insufficient to cover the costs of transport, accommodation, and food. Some also raised the issue of clothes, as they have to supplement their existing wardrobes to suit their work dress code. Another problem mentioned was family that do not understand the concept of a stipend and expect the intern to contribute financially as they are seen to have a job. Not all participants had a problem with the money; they were more interested in the working experience and said that they had known from the beginning how much they would be getting. Many studies have proven that, as much as Generation Y employees want money, they do not seem to place too much value on it (Martin, 2005).

The study also revealed that most graduates value employers who offer them training opportunities and a great digital experience as they rely on technology to carry out many of their life tasks (Luscombe, Lewis, & Biggs, 2013; Weyland, 2011). Many interns are still studying so they favour organisations that offer a reasonable work-life balance (Martin, 2005); if they have to work long hours and over weekends they are likely to look for employment that allows more time for studies and a private life. Studies have shown that graduates value things over money like relationships with colleagues, and good leadership from mentors they can trust over money (Behrstock-Sherratt & Coggshall, 2010; Anderson, 2010).

Wigham (2007) says that graduates are more encouraged when they feel that their skills and abilities contribute to the bigger picture of the organisation not just in the department. Those who participated in the focus group raised a few issues about their mentors; some complained about mentors' lack of availability, not being given enough to do to being overworked without proper instructions. EVPs promise good work experience in exchange for time, mental and physical effort, and skills.

6.4.3 Conclusions relating to objective 3 / Article 3 - The role of the HR function in managing graduate interns

Human Resource departments are responsible for administering internship programmes, from recruitment to completion of the programme when portfolios of evidence have to be compiled. Technology fully challenges the HR function and as it evolves HR has to adapt. As large numbers of generation Y employees enter the labour market, the challenge is multiplied as they are custodians of all things technological and want the most recent and fully updated systems and resources to enhance their working experience.

The HR department is responsible for handling these issues so the effects on the organisation are moderated in the early stages before it influences employee behaviour in organisations.

Internal factors such as policies, systems and structures have a greater impact on employees (Robbins, Judge, Odendaal & Roodt, 2016).

The programme presents challenges and benefits to employers and graduates alike. As higher education institutions admit more students each year more graduates looking for work are produced, and they need internships to develop workplace skills. Government ends up employing more graduates than can be meaningfully occupied, placing a strain on available resources. Physical working conditions contribute to performance outcomes. Graduates were concerned about working in overcrowded offices with no proper ventilation, loud noises, and poorly maintained sanitary facilities. Mentors that are both trained and willing are also rare and those available take on more graduates than they can handle.

Mentors and supervisors have their own share of challenges to deal with, some believing that mentoring interns cost valuable time in terms of their other responsibilities. Some admitted to being creative and allowing interns to perform tasks that should have been done by permanent employees of the department, but labour shortages forced their hand and they utilised interns to achieve their targets within stipulated time frames.

6.4.4 Conclusions relating to objective 4/ Article 4 - Exploring the antecedents and outcomes of a graduate internship programme

Ko and Sidhu (2012) discovered that negative experiences in an internship programme changes a graduate's perception about the organisation and influences the decision to pursue employment in other organisations. If students form negative perceptions about the public sector, they will turn to the private sector for employment.

Graduates mould their behaviour to get what they want or avoid what they do not want (Bergh, 2011). If they know that certain behaviour will result in a reward, they will work hard towards earning it as they are more interested in being acknowledged in front of others for a job well done. Management or leadership styles, organisational culture, and resources most influence work-related attitudes.

Internship programmes are most graduates' first contact with the real world of work. Behaviour, choice of organisation, and employability prospects are some of the elements to be impacted by what they experience in these programmes.

Results showed that many graduates had a positive experience with the graduate internship programme and were happy and satisfied with the opportunity to learn more skills and gain workplace experience. Though most of them were employed in fixed-term contracts after the

programme with only a few earning permanent positions, it corroborates what literature says about internships enhancing the employability prospects of graduates. At the moment the country is not succeeding in creating enough jobs, so the fact that so many of them have found employment speaks to the value of internships.

6.5 LIMITATIONS

Literature contained data on talent indicators in sports and the arts, but was quite silent on identifying and measuring the talents and potential of employees in government offices. There are many tools like assessment centres and appraisal reviews to determine talent by measuring an employee's performance against set performance standards. The researcher had to adapt from what is termed characteristics of high-potential people.

6.6 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Business research helps businesses make strategic decisions (Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin: 2013) by creating useful knowledge from information gathered from experts and people with first-hand experience of phenomena. A lot of challenges can be effectively dealt with and even eliminated in future internship programmes, especially in government, as most graduate participants were serving their internships in the public sector. The study produced two conceptual models – the talent indicator model and the GVP model. Custodians of the internship programme can adopt these models and try to implement them to see how it will impact on the programme.

6.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.7.1 General recommendations

- Mentor development is strongly recommended especially for mentors in the public service. They should be sensitised about the importance of internship programmes in line with government policies. Some of them perceive the mentoring of graduates as extra work they are not paid for. There has to be a shift in mindset for the sake of achieving the greater good and assisting government in their quest against graduate unemployment.
- Mentors should fully utilise graduates. Many of them form part of the self-efficacious generation Y and are able to perform and produce amazing results. They were born in a high-tech era and have an almost intuitive understanding of technology that allows them to produce quality results smarter and faster, so mentors should take advantage of these abilities. This would be a fair transaction between the two parties.

- It is recommended that institutions of higher education be included in the monitoring and evaluation of internship programmes, as this may reduce the effects of graduate misuse during placements.
- The study recommends that government enters the technological era and advertises on online media instead of circulars and in newspapers. Online recruitment enjoys broader exposure and attracts a more talented and diverse workforce.

6.7.2 Recommendations for future research

- The research can be extended to other professions to include graduates from other disciplines. Larger samples would offer the possibility of broader generalisation.
- Future studies can include a balance between public and private sector participants to enable a better comparison of practices in internship programmes.

6.8 CONCLUSION

The study established that the ever-changing work environment necessitates the evolution of HR practices to accommodate various groups of employees in organisations. Specific preferences of generation Y employees were uncovered and it was concluded that technological information systems best catered for their needs. Another interesting fact was that they prefer more development opportunities and a fair work-life balance as they are social beings that thrive in social settings. An exciting development was the conceptual model of talent indicators informed by HR practitioners themselves and other literature sources.

This model can be put to the test to manage talent among graduate interns and assist in the advancement of graduate internship programmes. The researcher can confidently conclude that the study met the objectives set.

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