



The employability paradox

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ABSTRACT

Human assets are a source of competitive advantage to the firm. Studies have found that to attract and retain talented employees, firms need to offer more than just money – they need to offer challenging roles and development opportunities. However, the more organisations invest in an employee's growth and development the more the employee is able to contribute to organisational goals, but their attractiveness to alternative employers and their capability of finding alternative employment (their employability) also increases.

This is the paradox central to this study. The study explores the dilemma of employability and how the employer can meet the needs of the knowledge worker whilst realising a firm specific competitive advantage through protecting the firms return on investment in employee development.

The information obtained from the literature was used as a basis for the construction of a *de jure* model, which indicates which strategies or best practices used by firms in responding to or managing the employability paradox, meet the needs of the knowledge worker and/or employing firm. This model was utilised as a discussion framework during eighteen expert interviews. The outcome of the primary data allowed for the validation and extension of the *de jure* model into an integrated and more robust *de facto* model.

The research affirms the existence of the employability paradox and provides examples of how the paradox is manifested within firms. Strategies and best practices used by firms in managing this paradox are integrated into a practical framework which indicates whether these strategies meet the needs of the firm and/or the knowledge worker.

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DECLARATION

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for and degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

Louisa Sieber

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.1 ILLUSTRATION OF THE PROBLEM

"We pay people, we develop them and then they go", says Exxaro CEO Sipho Nkosi (Creamer, 2008). Exxaro is one of fifty-two mining companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (McGregor BFA, 2008) and South Africa's fourth largest coal producer (Exxaro.com, 2008). In 2007 Exxaro was voted the 15th Best Company to work for in South Africa (bestcompanytoworkfor.co.za), earned net profit after tax of R1 447 million, offered competitive salaries, spent 7.61% of their annual payroll on skills development and contributed a disproportionate 25% of the total number of engineering learners that the Mining Qualifications Authority registered (Exxaro.com, 2008). Yet they lost 345 technically skilled employees from March last year (2007) to February this year (2008), putting an 18% dent in their technical skills profile (Creamer, 2008).

Exxaro's experience illustrates the tension between a firm's investment in their human assets as a source of competitive advantage and their ability to realise a return on this investment. This tension is due to the emergence of a dilemma which arises as a result of firm investment in employee development to enable employees better to contribute to organisational goals but, consequently, increases their attractiveness to alternative employers and their capability of finding alternative employment (their employability).

The issue of obtaining a firm specific competitive advantage through the development of employees and then retaining these capabilities for the benefit of the organisation is a challenge not isolated to Exxaro, but is a common concern throughout corporate South Africa. These conflicting demands that can both be



simultaneously true (Lewis, 2000) represent the paradox central to this study. This paper explores the concept of employability, how it applies to knowledge workers and maps suggested strategies and best practices used by organisations to manage this paradox.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

Today's boundaryless and knowledge based economy with its focus on learning organisations delivers a contradictory message to employees and organisations in career management. On one hand, organisations expect and demand their employees adopt a lifelong learning approach to be "world class" in the global market place. On the other hand, organisations need to bear the cost of the ongoing technical and behaviour training that employees need to go through to be successful (Thite, 2001).

In this environment contemporary organisations are no longer able to promise long term job security (Clarke and Patrickson, 2007), resulting in the decline of the traditional career. The 'lifetime employment' contract with one employer is no longer relevant for a large share of the working population (Bridges, 1994) and has been replaced with a more dynamic view towards careers (Hyatt, 1995) from both the individuals and the organisations perspective.

This new employer and employee relationship has led to the emergence of the knowledge worker and has translated into employees demanding more and more career growth and investment from employing firms to ensure their continued employability in the job market. Career resilience and the development of career capital is a key principle in these 'new' careers (Coffield, 2008).



This raises the question or now important people are in determining organisational goals. Resource based theorists argue that human assets can be a source of sustainable advantage as their combined knowledge, skills and attributes are hard to imitate (Coff, 1997). In the GIBS Review (2006) Patrick Fitzgerald, Dean of Commerce, Law and Management at the University of the Witwatersrand states that, in the current and future battle for 'competitivity', development, economic progress and a better quality of life for all, the question of how talent and skills are handled will be a crucial differentiator.

The importance of the individual as a key contributor to organisational success, changing career patterns and the erosion of job security have resulted in a growing emphasis on employability as a basis for career and employment success (Thite, 2001). The individual's capability of finding alternative employment represents the employee's employability quotient (Clarke and Patrickson, 2007). Individuals no longer have long- term expectations of employment with the same employer, but expect commitment by the organisation to provide them with the best training and development so as to ensure their ability to find employment in the market place (Baruch, 2001). Organisations understand that, in order to obtain the skills, knowledge and competencies desirable in employees, they need to provide individuals with the opportunity and resources to grow and develop (Legatt-Cook, 2007).

The management of employees' knowledge, skills and attributes by organisations pose a paradox that may result in firms not acquiring any benefit or, in fact, creating a direct competitive threat. Paradox, as a theoretical concept, is appearing increasingly in organisational studies to describe conflicting demands and often



opposing perspectives that are logical in isolation, but appear absurd when appearing simultaneously (Lewis, 2000). The employability paradox arises as, like fixed assets, employees' knowledge, skills and attributes grow the more they are invested in but, unlike fixed assets, people assets can resign and move to a competing firm, can demand increased salaries and may not engage fully in contributing to firm goals, thus negating any investment made (Coff, 1997).

The more organisations invest in an employee, the more the employee is able to contribute to organisational goals, but their value (price they can command for their contribution) and capability of finding alternative employment (their employability) also increases (Coff, 1997). Therefore, should the employee demand higher wages or leave, the organisation may not experience a positive return on the investment made. The risk is magnified should the employee move to a competitor, whereby the organisation may experience a direct threat as the benefit of their investment is reaped by a competing firm.

Marks and Spencer (2008) encapsulates the need to manage this paradox in their approach to talent management. They publicise on a web-site that they want to employ only people who have the confidence and ability to work somewhere else, but the commitment and motivation to stay. Marks and Spencer offer greater opportunities within the company in an attempt empower their staff with a sense of career destiny in order to harness the "employability paradox" (Marks and Spencer, 2008).

1.3 RELEVANCE IN THE SOUTH ALRICAN CONTEXT

Human capital is as important to the modern organisation as financial capital, resulting in organisations competing aggressively for talent (Boudreau and Ramstad, 2007). Many skills that are in demand in South Africa are also in short supply globally, compounding the South African skills shortage and leading to a global war for talent (Butcher, 2008). Both the Economist Intelligence Unit and management consultancy firm McKinsey have revealed in their widely respected business surveys that the first concern on CEO's worry list in 2007 was to retain and attract top talent, particularly in emerging markets (eyeofdubai.com, 2008).

The notion of a 'skills crisis', especially in the professional categories, is one of the greatest challenges facing government in South Africa (Kraak, 2008). Technological innovation, globalisation and the shift to a knowledge economy have wrought unprecedented changes in contemporary labour markets (Legatt-Cook, 2007). For a developing country such as South Africa there is a need for workers to be able to adapt to rapidly changing conditions in highly volatile markets (Streeck, 1992).

To succeed in this dynamic environment multi-functional competence is required (Geser, 2000) resulting in workers needing additional capacities to at least understand, if not shift into, diverse enterprise. (Kelly, Brannick, Hulpke, Levin and To, 2003). This kind of capacity is difficult to build under pure market conditions as many employers may not see the justification for investments in skill in excess of the employee's functional role. In these contexts, skilled staff is more easily poached from companies than trained (Kraak, 2008), so escalating the demand for skills.



Achieving a competitive auvantage unough people is an important management reality in South Africa (Smith, 2008). David Conradie, principal Human Capital Manager at Deloitte, maintains that the answer to the skills crisis lies in the willingness of organisations to adopt new ways to attract, motivate and retain the people that drive a disproportionate share of their organisation's performance and generate greater-than-average value for customers and stakeholders (GIBS Review, 2006).

1.4 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

The dynamic interplay between the global economy, the knowledge worker and the organisation shapes the concept of employability. Traditional human resource management practices acknowledge that a high performing employee is required to contribute to a competitive organisation within the global environment. However, practical strategies on how firms are to develop knowledge workers to ensure they become and remain high performing employees, whilst safe-guarding the firms return on investment, have not been well documented. Employability is embedded in the transferability of the knowledge worker's set of skills, abilities and competencies, hence the need to gain deeper insights into the approaches available to organisations to manage this paradox.

In the literature the components of employability are well defined. However, the resultant paradox that firms face on how to obtain a return on their investment in people is not widely detailed, nor is there much reported research on suggested strategies and best practices on organisational approaches to managing the employability paradox. The motivation for this study is to contribute to the body of literature on employability and establish an empirical model that outlines which



strategies or best practices beliefles of knowledge workers, as applied by firms when managing the employability paradox.

1.5 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore the organisation's dilemma in meeting the needs of the knowledge worker through investing in employee development, whilst realising a firm specific competitive advantage through protecting the firm's return on investment in employee development. For the purpose of this study knowledge workers can be defined as middle managers, technical specialists and above.

The research aims to gain insight into employability and suggested strategies to manage the employability paradox through the formulation of a *de jure* and *de facto* model. As an outcome of the literature review, a *de jure* model will be formulated prior to conducting the qualitative in-depth interviews. This model will be utilised as a data gathering tool and discussion point during the qualitative interviews. The interviews are anticipated to validate the *de jure* model and allow further insight into the existing literature as well as development thereon. A more integrated and comprehensive *de facto* model is expected to emerge from this research process.

For an organisation to obtain a competitive advantage through the development of people against a backdrop of the ongoing war for talent (Tulgan, 2001) and the skills shortage in South Africa (Kraak, 2008), a strategy is required that meets the needs of both the employer and the employee (Atkinson, 2002). This has led to the need for an accessible empirical framework or *de facto model* to detail what the impact is of the strategies implemented by the respondents' firms in managing the employability paradox.



The consequent benefits and continuous from the research may demonstrate value primarily to organisations in assisting them with their approach to managing the employability paradox. This research should contribute in guiding human resource practioners to recognise the employability paradox and implement improved strategies in the management thereof. However, the research could also provide individual knowledge workers with a better understanding of their role in the employability paradox and how individual firms position themselves in respect of contributing to the employee's employability quotient.

The literature review presented in the following sections focuses on the key issues, themes and empirical evidence regarding the new world of work, the evolution of the knowledge worker, employability, organisational paradoxes and organisational approaches to managing this paradox. The review provides the foundation for the *de jure* model and highlights the need for further empirical research into this field.



CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature review comprises five sections. Firstly, a review of today's working context and the resultant impact on employer and employee relations. Secondly, the literature review details the evolution of the knowledge worker and the emergence of career resilience through the development of career capital. It goes on to describe the value of the knowledge worker to the organisation. The next section details employability, its evolution, application to this research paper and how it is construed from the individual and organisation perspective. Penultimately, the nature of the paradox is outlined and finally, organisational approaches to managing this paradox are detailed. These five sections build on each other to provide both context and a solid understanding of the employability paradox.

Each topic and section is explored in adequate detail to provide the researcher with sufficient background to conduct the in-depth qualitative interviews and to compile the *de jure* model as discussed in Chapter 1, 4 and presented in Chapter 5.

The majority of the literature reviewed is current and reveals that the context and components of employability are well defined; however, the resultant paradox that firms face on how to obtain a return on their investment in people is not widely detailed, nor is there much reported research on suggested strategies and best practices on organisational approaches to managing the employability paradox. This identifies a gap in the literature which this research hopes to fill by building an empirical model that outlines which strategies or best practices benefits employers or knowledge workers, as applied by firms when managing the employability paradox.



2.2.1 NEW WORLD OF WORK

The changing nature of the economy reflects the shifting forces of politics, product markets, technology and increased competitive pressures linked to the increasing global nature of markets (Atkinson, 2002). Atkinson (2002) maintains that these internal and external changes are fundamentally transforming the nature of organisations with consequent impacts on employee relations, resulting in a change in the employer and employee relationship.

This dynamic environment has driven contemporary organisations to be more adaptable and amorphous; therefore firms are no longer able to promise long term job security to employees (Clarke and Patrickson, 2007). This has resulted in the decline of the traditional career with employers demanding greater flexibility in the hiring and firing of employees and a desire to hire skilled workers that will be immediately effective rather than invest in the training of current employees (Legatt-Cook 2007).

This fluid approach has created a dilemma for organisations which Atkinson (2002) highlights, in that many organisations are still seeking loyalty and commitment from employees, even when they are unable or unwilling to provide job security in return. In this context, job insecurity has emerged as an important construct (Sverke, Hellgren and Naswall, 2002).

These developments have resulted in a new world of work for both the employer and the employee. Gardner (2005) affirms that the old world of work was characterised by job security and vertical career progressions, whereas the "new"



world of work is characterised by the concept of employability in which employees are the architects of their own future.

2.2.2 REDEFINING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT

The impact of the new world of work on the employee has been significant with the attributes sought by business organisations and the expectations of employees changing over time (McGregor, Tweed and Perth, 2004). Smithson and Lewis (2000) stress that employees today experience dynamic psychological contracts as the work situation changes. Psychological contracts can be described as a set of expectations held by the individual employee that specifies what the individual and the organisation expect to give and receive from each other in the course of their working relationship (Maguire, 2001).

The psychological contract operates over and above the formal contract of employment (Smithson and Lewis, 2000) and underpins the work relationship. By understanding the relationship between employee and employer, managers can eliminate false assumptions about job duties, behaviours and relational expectations (Delcampo, 2007). The effective management of the psychological contract is expected to result in increases in job performance, lower staff turnover and higher job satisfactions (Delcampo, 2007).

Should the psychological contract not be effectively managed or considered in decisions made, a violation can take place. Contract violations take several forms, one of which is a breach of the contract which takes place when one party is unwilling to honour its side of the contract (Atkinson, 2002). Breach of a psychological contract results in negative employee behaviour such as employee resignation, intention to quit or neglect of in-role job duties (Turnley and Feldman,



2000). It is therefore in the organisations interests to ensure that psychological contracts are effectively managed.

This major change in the relationship between the employer and employee has led to a move from the relational contract with a degree of mutual investment and interdependence to a transactional contract, focusing on the short term and money and skills (Bijlsma-Frankema and Koopman, 2004). Under the "new" psychological contract there are no long term expectations of employment for individuals, but a commitment from the organisation to provide employees with the best training and development (Baruch, 2001).

The organisation is seen as having an obligation to provide the opportunity for continuous learning to assist in employability, whilst the employee is obliged to provide satisfactory levels of performance (Maguire, 2001). Sverke *et al.* (2002) affirms that this "new" psychological contract has resulted in a fundamental and involuntary change in the set of beliefs of employees about the employing organisation and their place in it. This 'new' contract reflects the need for flexible, highly skilled employees who have little job security but who are marketable externally (Atkinson 2002).

Focusing on the psychological contract emphasises the importance of balancing both individual and organisational concerns about careers (Atkinson, 2002). The impact for the organisation and the individual resides in the understanding that pertinent employee attributes, skills and competencies contribute towards and, in many cases, drive the competitive advantage of the firm (Coff, 1997).



2.3.1 THE EVOLUTION OF THE KNOWLEDGE WORKER

The "new" psychological contract allows companies to have the functional and numerical flexibility necessary to adapt to a changing environment (Sverke *et al.*, 2002) resulting in the transformation of the majority of skilled employees into knowledge workers with education and skills development being fundamental to labour productivity and to the wage that workers can command (O' Brian, 2008).

The term "knowledge worker" was first coined by Peter Drucker in his book "Landmarks of Tomorrow" in 1959, wherein he describe the move from an era that valued things for what they produced (i.e. machines) to an era that values the application of knowledge. Knowledge and the application thereof largely reside in people; these people with the specialist skills and knowledge were called knowledge workers. He stressed that knowledge workers require experience, qualifications and the ability to acquire and apply theoretical and analytical knowledge throughout their working life. He emphasised the need for continual reinvention to maintain alignment with the changing business context. Above all, he noted, will be the requirement that a habit of continuous learning is acquired. The concept of the knowledge worker is now widely acknowledged, with Tulgan (2001) stating that any employee that uses knowledge to add value to a business process should be viewed as a knowledge worker.

Table 1 overleaf, details the drivers and influences of employees in their transition from the old to the new economy as identified by McGregor, Tweed and Pech (2004). This model identifies the evolution of the knowledge worker, with a shift from dependability factors to adaptability factors where self direction, development



and self reliance become key (IVICOTEGOT et al., 2004). Themes of career resilience have emerged as a response to this dynamic world of work and the emergence of the knowledge worker.

Table 1: Drivers and Influences of Knowledge Workers						
Drivers and Influences "Old" economy		"New" economy Knowledge Workers				
Attachment factors	Long term tenureDependence	Short term involvementAdaptability				
Motivation factors	Job Securitylifetime employmentRegular Salary	Intellectual commitmentJob stimulationMonetary Rewards				
Work practice factors	Regular, continuing functions and processes	Consecutive or sequential projects				
Reward factors	Stable reward structureInternal, vertical promotion	 Volatile reward structure Lateral, cross boundary advancement 				
Development factors	 Training Career related training to further self in company and improve company capacity Company specific skills 	 Education Self actualisation through professional development within and external to the company Transferable knowledge 				
Cultural factors • More control of individuals • Organisationally driven		 Greater autonomy of individuals Individual and team driven				
Organisational factors	Single employer certainty To a Two and Book 2004					
Source: McGregor, Tweed and Pech, 2004						



2.3.2 CAREER RESILIENCE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CAREER CAPITAL

The rise of the knowledge worker has a direct impact on how individuals approach their career path within organisations and in the external labour market. In the new world of work, careers have been conceptualised as boundaryless, transcending the boundary of a single path with a single employer (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996), protean, managed by the person not the organisation (Hall and Moss, 1998) and portfolio, driven by the employee independent from the organisation (Handy, 1994). These are diametrically opposed to the traditional, historical linear progression of careers.

This movement indicates that people are becoming more mobile, individually conscious and self driven (Baruch, 2006) and has resulted in self-reliant workers who need to reinvent themselves in order to keep pace with change. Individuals have become the drivers of their own careers and move between organisations to pursue opportunities that support their growth (Stahl, Miller and Tung, 2002). This introduces the concept of career resilience, where an employee develops a working career that spans the boundaries of organisations and industries to ensure a more enduring working life.

Atkinson (2002) describes the career resilient worker as an employee who moves quickly to keep pace with change, is dedicated to continuous learning, takes ownership of career management and is committed to company success. This is supported by Brown (2003) who describes career resilient individuals as employees who are dedicated to the idea of continuous learning, as they need to ensure they have the competitive skills required to find work when they need it. Career resilience further promotes these individuals ability to control their own



destiny through the acquisition and transference of knowledge, skills and attributes so as to grow their portfolio of tradable assets in both the internal and external labour market (Baruch, 2006).

An employee that is career resilient can be viewed as an employee who has created a sufficient amount of career capital to be desirable in the employment market. Career capital consists of the different modes of support that the individuals obtain and have at their disposal and may invest for their future career success (Iellatchitch, Mayrhofer and Meyer, 2003). Iellatchitch, et al. (2003) continue by stating that individuals have a unique portfolio of capital built on their networks, attributes, experience, education and professional development.

This career capital is purchased by an organisation in an economic exchange where the organisation buys the employee's contribution at the best possible price in order to improve its efficiency; through this exchange the individual's career capital attains a specific value (lellatchitch *et al*, 2003). lellatchitch *et al*, (2003) continue by saying that financial compensation is not the only reward sought by knowledge workers, growth opportunities in order to increase their career capital is also required. In order for organisations to enter into this exchange they need to understand the value of human capital.

2.3.3 VALUE OF HUMAN CAPITAL

Resource based theorists argue that human assets are the source of an organisation's sustainability as their combined knowledge, skills and attributes are hard to imitate (Coff, 1997). In today's competitive global business environment, high performing employees can be viewed as the foundations of a company's competitive advantage (Bounties, 2001; Lawler, 2005; Baruch, 2006). Prosperity



depends less on physical resources and more and more on the ability to create economically useful new ideas (Yigitcanlar, Baum and Horton, 2007). Yigitcanlar, et al. (2007) continues by emphasising that knowledge work and knowledge workers can be seen as the engines of growth. Following from this reasoning Friedman, Hatch and Walker (1998) state that companies should view their employees as human capital. This approach sees people as an off-balance sheet asset capable of contributing towards and, in many cases, ensuring the organisations sustained success.

Meisinger (2006) suggests that, as people are a key component to business success, employees' skills, knowledge and attributes are the major bases on which organisations compete. The nature of this competition has resulted in the need for individuals constantly to strive to raise the skills bar (Meisinger, 2006). The increased need for improved performance from both an organisation and an individual's perspective has led to the need to develop and maintain the capabilities of individual employees so they can contribute to the organisation as a whole. If sustainable competitive advantage is what most organisations are looking for, then one way to achieve it is through the investment in employee growth and development (Lee and Bruvold, 2003). Lee and Bruvold (2003) found that a firm's visible commitment to employee growth resulted in higher productivity, more committed and more innovative employees who could better contribute to an organisations competitive advantage. (Mizrahi, 2002) affirms this finding and asserts that, in order for employers to attract and retain talented, career resilient, knowledge workers, firms need give individuals the opportunity to develop greatly enhanced employability in exchange for better productivity and some degree of commitment to the company purpose for as long as the employee works there.



Bontis (2001) affirms that an organisation's competitive advantage is tied to the effective application of knowledge, skills and attributes residing within individual workers. The reliance on knowledge work has led to a dependency of organisations on knowledge workers and created a situation where recruiting and retaining the best employees, at a competitive price, is one to the major challenges facing organisations today (Tulgan, 2001).

This positions the discussion to move to the concept of employability as a key contributor to career and organisational success. Employability refers to the capacity and willingness of workers to remain attractive for the labour market (supply factors) by reacting to and anticipating changes in tasks and work environment (demand factors), facilitated by the human resource development instruments available to them (institutions) (de Grip, van Loo and Sanders, 2004).

2.4 EMPLOYABILITY

2.4.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE CONCEPT OF EMPLOYABILITY

The recent attention to employability (Thite, 2001; Atkinson, 2002; Brown, 2003; Thijssen *et al.*, 2008) is inspired by organisational needs for flexibility in changing labour markets, by the present job mobility rates (change of employer and/or occupation), and by the growing pool of free agents or consultants. This might be interpreted as a forerunner to a labour market where working on a payroll will be the exception (Bridges, 1994). No matter how employment is maintained, expertise or competence within a certain field is the key to guaranteeing individuals employability (Thijssen, *et al.* 2008).

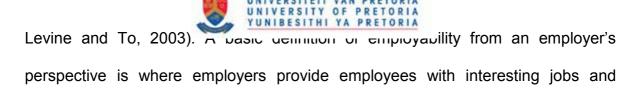


Cox and King (2006 p 200) quote framents 1999, in a prirase which encapsulates the concept of employability from an individuals perspective, "To be employed is to be at risk, to be employable is to be secure". For years lifetime employment within the same working organisation was considered the norm for individuals. Currently, lifetime employability is emphasised (Thijssen, van der Heijden and Rocco, 2008). Employability is a measure of the likelihood of an individual finding suitable work and an outcome of a 'new' psychological contract where shorter term employment relationships are built around an exchange of benefits and contributions (Clarke and Patrickson, 2007). Clarke and Patrickson (2007) state that the interest in employability has been driven by two main factors;

- 1. the economic impact of skill and labour shortages
- 2. the changing nature of careers and erosion of job security

The characteristics of employability from individuals' perspectives refer to the power of employees to guide their own careers, the resilience to cater to changing requirements and the transferability and broadness of occupational and self-management skills used to acquire other jobs (Forrier and Sels, 2003). Forrier and Sels (2003) further define employability as the variety of jobs that individuals can do properly with their current qualifications for functional flexibility in the internal or external labour market. Following this definition, multiskilled workers with suitable learning and career planning competencies (van der Heijeden, 2005), are equal to employable workers because their current employability radius is relatively large.

From an employer's perspective, employability has resulted in organisations needing to equip employees with the skills and competencies they require to be employable and to create their own jobs and enterprises (Kelly, Brannick, Hulpke,



opportunities to develop skills for a mobile career (Pearce and Randal, 2004).

De Grip, et al (2004) highlight the interdependence of the relationship between the individual and the organisational perspective on employability by describing the relationship in economic terms as the dynamic matching of the supply factors (individuals) to the demand factors (organisations).

2.4.2 EVOLUTION OF EMPLOYABILITY

The concept of employability came into use around 1955 (Versloot, Glaude and Thijssen, 1998). As early as 1976 Hall (1976) introduced the idea of the protean career. However, it is only since the late 1990's that employability has been empirically studied (Thijssen, *et al.* 2008). In the 1990's publications about the end of the ordinary job (Bridges, 1994) and about self-employment for everybody (Hakim, 1994) were prevalent. According to (Thijssen, *et al.* 2008) employability has been studied from three different perspectives (individual, organisational and societal) across a wide range of disciplines.

The individual perspective comprises employment in the sense of an attractive job. For individual workers employability is an indication of their opportunity to acquire and to keep attractive jobs in the internal or external labour market (Forrier and Sels, 2003).

At the organisational level, employment implies work - all the jobs done by employees in a certain company for compensation. For an employer, employability is an indicator of the opportunity to match labour supply and demand in a changing organisation (Thijssen, *et al.* 2008). It also emphasises the employer's



responsibility to provide employees with interesting jobs and opportunities to develop skills for a mobile career (Pearce and Randal, 2004).

The societal or national perspective comprises full employment at a country level (Thijssen, et al. 2008). The promotion of employability in the workplace among young people, unemployed and potentially disadvantaged groups in the labour market remains an important goal for governments in promoting employability through focused labour market polices (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005). For a society as a whole, employability is an indicator of the working population's opportunity to gain full employment and economic health (Thijssen, et al. 2008). Governments have recognised that individuals employment security increasingly depends on their having skills that will attract a range of employers (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005).

During the academic history of employability three periods appear in terms of research characteristics. Refer to **Table 2** following published by Versloot, *et al.* (1998) which summarises the evolution of employability over history.

- In the 1970's (and before) attention was focused on employability measures aimed at full employment, with interventions at a national level were government assisted unemployed citizens to find a job.
- In the 1980's attention was on controlling intra-organisational job markets.
 Organisations emphasised life-time employment for permanent employees as a guiding principle only. Flexibility and the ability to change functional jobs were expected.
- In the 1990's employability became the concern of the individual employee.
 Employees take their own responsibility for career development and need to be able to cope with changes in the internal and external labour markets.



The latitude and meedom of choice for career self management have increased considerably, but the protection offered by organisations has decreased.

Table 2: Employability related developments across historical periods							
	1970's	1980's	1990's				
View on Employability	Employability seen as flexibility of society	Employability seen as flexibility of a company	Employability seen as flexibility of workers				
Purpose of Employability	Full employment and decreases of collective financial burden	Efficient and effective HR management without a lack or surplus of personnel	Individual opportunity for a job on the internal or external labour market				
Interventions at what level	Central or local authorities	Public or private (larges) companies	Individual employees				
Major Target Groups	School leavers without useful studies and underprivileged people	Large groups of personnel in lower and middle ranks in companies under reorganisation	Everybody, employed or unemployed, who wants employment				
Important measures and activities	government programs support employers in carrying responsibility for employment by increasing the labour market qualifications of the people with a weak position in the labour market	The flexible firm implies management of intra-organisation staffing problems, assuming both quantitative flexibility (number of periphery workers) and qualitative flexibility (employability or functional flexibility of core workers).	The individual's ability to cope with labour market problems implies career self-management that has to be encouraged by someone's employer. Companies will offer facilities to improve the responsibility and initiative of employees				
Source: Versle	oot, Glaude and Thij	ssen. 1998	<u> </u>				



2.4.3 DEFINITION OF EMPLOYABILITY APPLIED IN THIS RESEARCH PAPER

The most common component in current employability descriptions is the personal adequacy to perform a job (Thijssen, *et al.* 2008). This basic definition is often considered too limited and has been broadened to include personal competences (employability competencies or employability skills) such as learning competencies and career competencies (Forrier and Sels, 2003). These employability skills determine whether workers are able and ready to use opportunities beyond their current employability radius.

The broadest definition takes into account contextual conditions. This definition encompasses both personal and contextual factors influencing future labour market perspectives. This includes factors at the level of the organisation and society that can influence the future labour situation of workers (Thijssen, *et al.* 2008).

For the purpose of this study the emphasis is on the contextual factors as afforded by the organisation to ensure personal adequacy for work from the individual perspective, including employability competencies and employability skills, but excluding societal contextual factors.

In order to obtain clarity on the definition of employability as applied in this research paper, it is imperative to understand the various viewpoints raised in the literature reviewed between the individual's perspective and the employer's perspective of employability.



2.4.4 INDIVIDUAL PERSPECTIVE

In order to be truly employable, employees need to develop both transferable skills (skills applicable throughout a working life) and subject matter skills (skills relevant to each career) (Cox and King, 2006). Pool and Sewell (2007) have proposed that employability for an individual consists of four main elements that need to be simultaneously present;

- Employability assets the employee's knowledge, skills and attitudes
- Deployment includes career management skills (i.e. job search skills)
- Presentation includes job-getting skills (i.e. interviewing and CV writing)
- Context external influencers (i.e. labour market)

Kelly, et al. (2003) lists seven important characteristics of the employment relationships from an individual perspective;

- The employee need be self confident, committed, adaptable, flexible, a team worker and an articulate communicator
- The employment relations can be dissolved if the employer's contribution or aspirations do not match the requirements of the employee
- The ultimate reward for personal growth is a future ensuring capacity for continuous self renewal
- Employees think of themselves as self-employed even when they are employed by an organisation
- The employees need to market themselves as persons who can lead people but also possess the capacity to function as effective team players, to do the work and not just manage it

• Employees realise they will learn so much that they will be employable

elsewhere

 Employees will take up organisations' offers to pay for them to acquire new skills and maintain existing ones. Such investment in learning will enhance the employees' future employability

In this dynamic business era it is a requirement of employees to protect their employability by committing to a program of ongoing learning and personal development beyond formal education (Legatt-Cook, 2007). Employability is a lifelong issue and nobody is ever perfectly employable. There will always be aspects of a person's employability that would benefit from improvement (Pool and Sewell, 2006).

However, concerns have been raised in the literature regarding the actualisation of employability as a construct by individuals. Clarke (2008) has cited three examples from literature that raises questions regarding employee acceptance and commitment to the concept of employability;

- In a longitudinal study of career management in a large financial institution

 Atkinson (2002) found that, over time, many professional employees

 become less, rather than more independent in terms of career management

 and that many employees still hanker after the ideal of job security.
- In a study by Bates and Bloch (1996) there is an indication that individuals do not have the desire for self management and do not recognise the need to develop career management strategies. They were also not aware of their strengths and weaknesses, did not have plans for self-development or the skills to write a CV. The majority were also not trying to build networks.



There was an expectation by employees that employers should offer some degree of career management.

• Civelli (1998) argues that most people do not have the capacity to evaluate their knowledge, abilities and competences and, even if they do have the tools for self evaluation, they may not have the skills to communicate or sell their competencies to a prospective employer. A further concern is that an individual has no control or influence over the contextual conditions (i.e. labour market). This makes it highly improbable for all four main elements of employability to be simultaneously present.

While employability can be viewed as the tool to bridge the gap between the "old" and the "new" physiological contract, it appears that not all knowledge workers are embracing employability as a concept and that, in fact, it is very difficult for the individual to align all four elements of employability in order to leverage this construct in their favour.

2.4.5 ORGANISATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Employers construe employability as the skills, knowledge and competencies considered desirable in employees (Legatt-Cook, 2007). There is also an increasing emphasis on employees to exhibit appropriate personal attributes that are acceptable to their working peers and customers (Legatt-Cook, 2007). In order to develop and grow these skills, competencies and attributes, employers expect to provide individuals with the opportunity to enhance their productivity through developing the skills, attributes and competence in exchange for better productivity, commitment and community for as long as the employee works for them (Waterman, Waterman and Collard, 1994).



Thite (2001) articulates the benefits of investing in people from an organisational perspective stating that, in order for an organisation to obtain a competitive advantage through institutionalising knowledge and passing it on to successive generations, carefully trained and developed staff are required. The benefit of this exchange is further supported by Craig, Kimberly and Bouchiki (2002) who found that employment security was not the most powerful force driving commitment. They consulted executives who intended to stay with their companies the longest, and who voiced the greatest commitment, and found that they were those whose companies offered them ample opportunities to enhance their employability and to advance their careers.

Kelly, *et al.* (2003) list five important characteristics of the employment relationships from a firm's perspective;

- Firms need invest in their employees to develop generic transferable skills,
 in return for commitment and loyalty
- Employers accept responsibility to provide employees with information, time,
 resources and opportunities to assess and develop skills that are needed
- The employment relationship can be dissolved if the employees contribution or aspirations do not match the requirements of the employer
- Organisations encourage employees and pay for them to acquire new skills and maintain existing ones. Such investment in learning will enhance the employees' performance with the organisation
- Employers no longer commit to life-time employment

A fundamental difference between traditional job security perspectives and employability lies in the distinction between firm-specific skills and advanced general skills as the source of an organisations competitive advantage (Kelly, *et al.*,



2003). Kelly, *et al.* (2005) continues by stating that the organisations advantage within the employability perspective is based on its ability to enhance employee capabilities rather than its ability to control the capabilities of its human resources.

However, Baruch (2001) found that companies were generally reluctant to offer training and development linked to strengthening individual employability, preferring instead to focus on company or sector specific training that would directly benefit firm needs. This raises questions regarding the employer acceptance and commitment to the concept of employability. Firms' reluctance to invest in generic skills was based on three main factors;

- The cost of more generic long-term training was seen as too high in comparison to the benefits of meeting direct or short term needs
- The belief that promoting future employability would be seen as an indication to employees that their jobs were at risk thus resulting in poor moral and lower job commitment
- The fear of enhancing individual employability would lead to higher staff turnover

The potential of an organisation to perform optimally in global markets depends on employees' capabilities to develop, cultivate and maintain fundamental qualifications (Thijssen, *et al.* 2008). These qualifications are continuously changing at an ever-increasing rate, producing new expertise needs, but also creating opportunities for learning (Thijssen, *et al.* 2008). It is therefore imperative that both employees and employers recognise this interdependence.



2.5 THE PARADOX

2.5.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE PARADOX

As discussed earlier, human assets can be a source of sustainable advantage for an organisation as tacit knowledge and social complexity are hard to imitate (Coff, 1997). However, these desirable attributes cause a paradox that may prevent firms from generating an advantage. Coff (1997) continues by stating that firms cannot achieve a sustainable advantage from these human assets unless organisations are able to cope with the associated management dilemmas.

Managers today face many challenges in terms of managing complexity. Success in the new economy requires a mindset shift from an either/or mental model to a both/and paradigm. Success requires an ability to manage paradox (Boninelli and Meyer, 2004). The Oxford English Dictionary defines a paradox as a seemingly absurd or self-contradictory statement or proposition that may in fact be true; A person or thing that combines contradictory features or qualities (askoxford.com, 2008).

The paradox appears increasingly in organization studies, often to describe conflicting demands, opposing perspectives, or seemingly illogical findings (Lewis, 2000). Lewis (2000) asserts that the term "paradox" denotes contradictory yet interrelated elements that seem logical in isolation but absurd and irrational when appearing simultaneously. It can be held that paradoxes can be regarded as two opposite thoughts that can both be simultaneously true. It is within these tensions where the complexity can make mutually beneficial solutions impossible to see, let alone realistic to achieve (Martin and Ernst, 2005).



No matter how employability is embraced in the literature as a solution to bridge the gap between the "old" and the "new" psychological contract, employers are faced with a dilemma. Enhancing workers' employability increases their value, not only from the perspective of the firms for which they work, but also on the external labour market (de Grip, et al., 2004). Therefore, by enhancing workers' employability, firms are boosting their own potential productivity and profits by investing in extra flexibility, but are also investing in a transferable resource which could contribute the same value to a competitor should they decide to leave.

It is important to note that once the paradox has been identified it can only be managed and not solved or resolved (Handy, 1995; Rhinesmith, 2001). Rhinesmith (2001) continues by saying a solution that over-emphasises one side of the equation will definitely fail. However, the use of paradox can assist with deepening understanding of organisational phenomena by assisting in addressing logical contradictions and identifying tensions and oppositions in order to develop a deeper and more holistic view (Poole and Van de Ven, 1989). In this way paradoxes can promote reflection and conversations amongst managers that extend capabilities beyond the limits of formal logic (Lado, Boyd, Wright, Kroll, 2006).

The central paradox identified for this paper is that, in order for firms to be competitive in the new economy, organisations need, and are expected to by current and potential employees, to invest in their employees' knowledge, skills and attributes. However, human capital is portable and this investment increases the employability of employees, making them more attractive to competing firms thus



potentially countermanding any penent earned on the investment (Coff, 1997). This is the employability paradox.

The management of this duality hinges on exploring the tension in a creative way that captures both extremes, thereby capitalising on the inherent pluralism within the duality (Eisenhardt, 2000). Managers need to recognise, become comfortable with and even profit from the tension and the anxieties of this paradox (Lewis, 2000).

2.5.2 WHY THIS PARADOX MAY NOT BE A PARADOX

Under specific circumstances an opposing argument can be presented against that of the one suggested above. These circumstances are evident where interdependent relationships between two or more variables exist. Interdependence is a dynamic of being mutually responsible to and sharing a common set of principles or interconnectedness with others, with reciprocity seen as a fundamental principle (Westlund, 2003).

Economic theorists believe that human assets are human capital under limited organisational control that has the potential to generate economic rent (Coff, 1997). Both the individual and the organisation are profit maximising entities, reliant on each other (Lazear and Shaw, 2007). Should pay be linked to performance the more one entity maximises profit, so does the other. This indicates an interdependent relationship, not a paradox.

Further to this point, firm specific human assets can be utilised in only one context - that of the employing firm. A firm that relies on such knowledge is likely to attain

high returns as there is no competitive market to drive up wages or employ the talent in question (Coff, 1997). As employees do not have an external market for their knowledge, skills and attributes they are reliant on their employers for employment. This also indicates an interdependent relationship, not a paradox.

These examples are limited in nature and refer to specific circumstances. They do not detract from the duality that exists nor the value of exploring the tension created through the organisations needing to invest in employee growth and development so as to maximise employee contribution to organisational goals, and the consequential increase in attractiveness of these employees to alternative employers and their increased capability of finding alternative employment (their employability).

2.6 ORGANISATIONAL APPROACHES TO MANAGING THE PARADOX

Human assets are typically associated with turnover and/or information dilemmas. Firms need to develop coping mechanisms or strategies for these challenges in order to achieve a competitive advantage (Coff, 1997). Following are current employability strategies and approaches as discussed in the literature reviewed. Superscripts have been allocated to each strategy in order to cross-reference them to the *de jure* model as depicted in Chapter 5, Appendix C and the *de facto* model as depicted in Chapter 6.



Thijssen, et al. (2008) nave usualled times dimerent strategies for organisations to manage employability;

Broadening strategy

This strategy is appropriate to an education-enhancing culture. This includes both specific¹ and general training² activities in facilities designed to stimulate participation, training programs based on learning principles such as formal training and development opportunities³, including simulation of workplace support⁴ and self directed learning⁵.

This concept is qualified by Clarke (2007) who states that many companies focus on managing employees only for current employment with training for specific focused needs⁶, rather that a long term investment in human capital.

Selling strategy

This is an appropriate approach in a mobility or transition supporting culture. Companies create contextual conditions aimed at selling and exploiting the talents of their employees by helping them to find other paid jobs inside or outside the organisation.

This strategy facilitates the transition from one's current job to another one, providing a vacancy board⁷, offering possibilities for assessment of the qualities of employees⁸, supporting career choices⁹ and providing outplacement services¹⁰. Companies can create conditions that are aimed at employees' acquiring good career competencies. Examples are coaching¹¹ and offering training aimed at networking¹² and providing opportunities for applying newly learned knowledge and skill¹³.



This is appropriate in a contact limiting culture. Companies may have a *laissez* faire ¹⁴ approach in that they consider the current occupational competencies of employees as something they can exploit without investment.

Devins and Hogarth (2005) support this view in that they have found that employers are often willing to accept the costs of labour turnover in lower level occupations¹⁵ as a factor of life (Legatt-Cook, 2007). There is empirical evidence that the majority of workers do not require highly developed skills sets in order to perform their occupational roles (Devins and Hogarth, 2005 cited by Legatt-Cook, 2007). It is unrealistic to assume that all workers are equally able to commit to the ideal of the lifelong learner worker, remaining competitive in the labour market and protected from economic downturn.

Employers' practices in recruitment, retention, development, training and opportunities for career progression have focussed on the need to reduce labour turnover of knowledge workers. Legatt-Cook (2007) recommends a strategy for firms to pay for more vocational training of employees despite the fact that the cost of this training is around general (transferable) skills rather than firm specific skills. Legatt-Cook (2007) cites a study by Green, Felstead, Mahyew and Pack (2000) where they show that training had no impact on increased labour mobility. If anything, training that is funded by employers is more likely to reduce labour mobility as it tends to create a greater commitment amongst employees.

Rhinesmith (2001) indicates that, by optimising not maximising your primary responsibilities (compromise), both parties will have a shared understanding of



each other's position. The muriqual and the employer need take into account both the positive and negative consequences of their actions on the opposite party. This requires intellectual intelligence to hold two opposing views in equal tension, but also requires emotional intelligence to operate and have empathy with another person's perspective. This will also involve regular communications¹⁷ with representatives of the contradictory positions to confirm if their needs are being taken into account.

This literature provides few examples of the best practices and strategies firms can implement to manage the employability paradox, so as to obtain a return on their investment in people. However, the strategies and best practices, as discussed in the literature, are to form the building blocks for a more integrated and comprehensive model.

2.7 KEY SUMMARIES FROM THE LITERATURE

The literature review provides the theoretical foundation and context for the research undertaken. The review starts by showing how the dynamic nature of the new world of work has impacted on the relationship between the employer and employee and changed the nature of the psychological contract. The "new" psychological contact does not offer long-term expectations of employment for individuals, but places an obligation on the organisation to provide employees with the opportunity for continuous learning to assist in their employability.

The literature highlights how these "new" contracts have led to the redefinition of careers and the emergence of the knowledge worker. The lack of formal career paths within a single organisation has resulted in employees taking ownership of



their own futures. The interature runner ruentines knowledge workers becoming career resilient and moving between organisations to pursue opportunities that support their growth and develop their career capital. The value of this human capital is well documented in the literature, with employee contributions being recognised as the driving force behind an organisation's success. The link between the development of knowledge workers and the attraction, retention and productivity of talent within organisations has also been clearly validated.

With the context being set, the literature review introduces the concept of employability as a key contributor to career and organisational success. Employability can be viewed as the dynamic matching of the supply factors (individuals) to the demand factors (organisations) facilitated by the human resource development instruments available to them (institutions) (de Grip, van Loo and Sanders, 2004). The three perspectives of employability (individual, organisation and societal) are discussed and the evolution of the study of employability is detailed. Employability, as applied in this research paper, is focused on the contextual factors as afforded by the organisation to ensure personal adequacy for work from the individual perspective, including employability competencies and skills, but excluding societal contextual factors. What is demonstrated in the existing literature and assimilated in the review are the individuals and organisational viewpoints on employability, and the actualisation thereof.

The literature reviewed endorses the constructs that make up the paradox, which can be defined as the tension between an organisations investment in their human assets as a source of competitive advantage and their ability to realise a return on this investment. This dilemma arises as the more organisations invest in an



capability of finding alternative employment (their employability) also increases.

Two examples of where this paradox is not a paradox are also highlighted.

The literature review ends with a consolidation of organisational approaches to managing this paradox. This reveals that the context and components of employability are well defined; however, the resultant paradox that firms face on how to obtain a return on their investment in people is not widely detailed, nor is there much reported research on suggested strategies and best practices on organisational approaches to managing the employability paradox. This identifies a gap in the literature which this research hopes to fill by building an empirical model that outlines which strategies or best practices benefit employers and/or knowledge workers, as applied by firms when managing the employability paradox. This review provides the foundation for the *de jure* model as discussed in Chapter 1, later in Chapter 4 and presented in Chapter 5 and highlights the need for further empirical research into this field.



3.1 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The literature review has highlighted the importance of coping with paradox as a capability for success in an increasingly complex market place. However, there is little literature describing strategies or best practices for firms to implement in order to manage employability and their resultant impact on the organisation and/or the knowledge worker.

This chapter details the purpose of the research, which is to seek answers to the research questions outlined below. These questions will set the parameters of the project, focusing the study (Broom, 2005). This chapter draws on the issues emerging from the literature review presented in Chapter 2, together with the concepts and the purpose of the research detailed in Chapter 1.

The research questions will further explore the dilemma of employability and how the employer can meet the needs of the knowledge worker through investing in employee development, whilst realising a firm specific competitive advantage through protecting the firms' return on investment on employee development. The research will describe, decode and translate the findings into a practical and meaningful framework to determine if strategies or best practices used by firms in responding to or managing the employability paradox, meet the needs of the knowledge worker and/or employing firm.



The four research questions are:

Question 1

3.2

Do firms recognise the existence of the tension or paradox in the concept of employability?

This question seeks to ensure the respondents' understanding and recognition of the paradox of employability.

Question 2

What is the evidence of this paradox within the firm?

The question seeks to obtain examples of where the paradox was prevalent within the respondent's firm and to confirm the manifestation thereof.

Question 3

What responses do companies have, if any, to this paradox?

The research question seeks to explore the strategies or best practices deployed by the respondents' firms in responding to or managing this paradox.

Question 4

Do the strategies or best practices used by firms in responding to or managing the employability paradox meet the needs of the knowledge worker and/or employing firm?

This research question seeks to show what the impact is of the strategies implemented by the respondents' firms in order to determine whose needs will be met by these strategies.



CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the research methodology utilised in this study. Four distinct stages have been identified in the research process:

- Stage one the literature review formed the theoretical basis for the preparation of a de jure model
- Stage two additional and validating information was obtained using indepth qualitative interviews
- Stage three the information obtained from the qualitative interviews was analysed and coded
- Stage four a de facto model was formulated based on the outcomes of this research

4.1 RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN

This study is exploratory in nature as it examines a relatively new and underdeveloped area of employability. The broad purpose of exploratory research is the investigation of a relatively unknown research area in order to gain new insight into the phenomenon being studied (Malterud, 2001).

To answer the research questions, data need be examined from various angles to construct a rich and meaningful picture of this complex, multifaceted situation (Leedy and Ormond, 2001). A phenomenological research design has been selected as most appropriate, as Leedy and Ormond (2001) describe such a study as one that attempts to understand people's perceptions, perspectives and understandings of a particular situation, and that description supports the objectives of this research project.



The approach on which the research is founded involved both secondary data (literature review) and primary data (qualitative research through expert interviews) (Zikmund, 2003). Qualitative research is concerned with the non-statistical method of inquiry and the analysis of social phenomena (Mouton and Babby, 2003). The qualitative method was employed due to the need to seek refinement and to delve deeper into the constructs and principles pertaining to the employability paradox as presented in the literature. The study consisted of four distinct and sequential stages.

4.2 STAGE ONE: FORMULATION OF THE *DE JURE* MODEL

In order to obtain information and explore the relationships identified by previous research, a review of the literature was undertaken in Chapter 2. The information obtained from the literature was used as a basis for the construction of a *de jure* model, represented in Chapter 5, to specify relationships between the variables (Golafshani, 2003). The information for the formulation of the *de jure* model was sourced from the journals, academic papers, books and articles on employability as referenced in this paper.

The process of formulating the *de jure* model (detailed in Chapter 5) began with establishing an appropriate model. The model was created by using the two perspectives as detailed in the literature (individual and organisational) as the basis for two axes (X and Y). These axes were intersected at right angles, at their midpoint, to obtain four equally sized quadrants, so representing the employability paradox. Qualitative content analysis of the literature was undertaken and single



specific thoughts were clustered into similar categories that reflected the various perspectives as contained in the literature (Leedy and Ormond, 2001). This established a framework (model) on which to map the contextual factors as afforded by the organisation to ensure personal adequacy for work from the individual perspective, including employability competencies and skills, but excluding societal contextual factors.

The intended advantage of the *de jure* model was to formulate a framework on which to evaluate and validate strategies (quadrant analysis) and best practices as discussed in the literature and to indicate the impact of the firm's approach when managing this paradox. The model was used as input into the in-depth interview, to obtain a common platform of understanding and to contribute to the quality and relevance of the output of the in-depth interview process conducted in stage two.

4.3 STAGE TWO: PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION (IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS)

Given the exploratory nature of this study, a second phase of face-to-face interviews were held in order to seek answers to the four main research questions outlined in Chapter 3. To probe for elaboration from respondents, primary data was obtained through semi structured in-depth, expert interviews guided by an interview schedule, Appendix A, (Zikmund, 2003). The *de jure* model was used as a discussion point for clarification of concepts, seeking of meaning in the respondent's perspectives and to identify and probe the emergence of new strategies or best practices.

This research used details from the perspective of the research participants



data through a detailed and honest discussion between the respondents and

researcher.

4.3.1 POPULATION AND UNIT OF ANALYSIS

The population can be defined as the individuals, groups, organisations, human products and events about which we wish to draw a conclusion (Mouton and Babby, 2003). The population of relevance for this study consists of all human resource practioners and specialists who have an expertise or interest in employability and with influence on company human resource strategy formation. The units of analysis under study are the perceptions of human resource practioners towards the employability paradox.

4.3.2 SAMPLING

A non-probability, judgment (purposive) sample has been used (Zikmund, 2003). The units to be observed have been selected on their availability, accessibility and, on the basis of the researcher's judgement, in line with predetermined sampling criteria of which respondents will be most useful to the study. Snowball sampling was applied with each respondent being requested to refer the researcher to additional potential respondents that met the relevant criteria. The sampling criteria encompassed:

- human resource practioners located in Johannesburg
- those holding a tertiary qualification



- those with direct innuence on the numerical strategy of their company of employment (either as a consultant or a full time employee)
- all respondents with a minimum of 6 years experience in the management of human resources in a global organisation
- those who spoke English and gave permission for the interviews

A total of eighteen human resource practioners was interviewed. Given the nature of this study, a sample size of between five and twenty five is considered adequate (Leedy, and Ormond, 2001). Please refer to Appendix B which provides the details of the respondents interviewed.

4.3.3 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection can be defined as the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, in an established systematic fashion that enables one to answer stated research questions and evaluate outcomes (Zikmund, 2003). Following is the data collection method employed for this research paper.

4.3.3.1 METHOD

Primary data (qualitative research) was gathered via in-depth, face-to-face interviews conducted with respondents who met the sampling criteria. The in-depth interview is an authoritative means of uncovering the experience of the respondent and is a powerful tool for increasing knowledge (Broom, 2005) so it is a highly appropriate methodology for this study. Semi-structured interviews left the interviewer free to pursue matters as circumstances dictated (Lee, 1998). This allowed the focus to be on the respondent's experience and on extracting the individual's understandings and responses to employability (Zikmund, 2003). By



restricting it to the preconceived ideas of the researcher (Broom, 2005).

4.3.3.2 INTERVIEW SCHEDULE DESIGN

In order to facilitate the exploration of each theme identified by the research questions in Chapter 3, the research was steered by a discussion guide or interview schedule, as attached in Appendix A (Zikmund, 2003). The interview schedule facilitated a "guided conversation" and allowed the respondent to bring up related events (Broom, 2005). The schedule comprised behaviour prompts for the researcher, a scripted definition, structured and semi-structured interview questions, with each question relating back to one of the four research questions outlined in Chapter 3. The questions were not asked *verbatim*, but versions of them were asked as the respondents' account touched on related issues (Broom, 2005).

Given the exploratory nature of the subject material, it was required for the researcher to develop a rapport with the respondent to encourage information sharing; this was done through an informal dialogue approach to the interviews. The interviews were done *in situ* at the respondents' offices, in order for the researcher to gain insights into the environment and context that contributed to the respondent's orientation.

The interview schedule began with behaviour prompts for the researcher to ensure observation of protocol and adherence to the ethical process. This was followed by the reading of a scripted definition of the employability paradox and discussion of the *de jure* model, to ensure common understanding and frame the discussion



going forward. The deminion answer for a single point of reference on which respondents could contextualise the construct and obtain clarity on the topic under discussion prior to the interview commencing (Broom, 2005).

In order to ensure the respondent's understanding and recognition of the paradox of employability as posed in Research Question 1 (Do Firms recognise the existence of the tension or paradox in the concept of employability?) the interview schedule was opened with a dichotomous, closed-ended question calling for a "yes" or "no" answer. This was probed for supporting reasoning with an openended question. To confirm the extent of the respondent's view of the employability paradox another closed-ended question was put forward, requesting a response on a Likert scale (Zikmund, 2003).

To explore the construct more deeply and to obtain examples of where the paradox manifested within the respondent's firm, Research Question 2 (What is the evidence of this paradox within the firm?) was also opened with a dichotomous, closed-ended question calling for a "yes" or "no" answer. This was again followed by an open-ended question probing for supporting reasoning.

To solicit responses to Research Question 3 (What responses do companies have, if any, to this paradox?) an open-ended question was asked. This question generally took the longest to answer. The prompts, as identified from the literature reviewed, allowed the interviewee to reflect on issues within the context of their own experience (Broom, 2005).



Research Question 4 (Do the strategies of pest practices used by firms in responding to or managing the employability paradox meet the needs of the knowledge worker and/or employing firm?) asked respondents to identify whose needs were met (the knowledge worker and/or the employing firm), through the implementation of the strategies or best practices implemented by the respondents' firms to manage the employability paradox. In order to better quantify the qualitative analyses of the *de jure* model, the grouping and plotting of themes for the *de facto* model was grounded in the interviewees judgments as indicated on a 10 point Likert scale (Zikmund, 2003). This 1-10 scale (with 1 being "not focused" on meeting needs and 10 being "very focused" on meeting needs) requested the respondent to indicate their opinion as to what extent the strategy or best practice under discussion meets employee and/or organisational needs.

The interview was closed with a request for any general parting comments and, in line with the snowball sampling method, a request for referrals of additional potential respondents was made. The respondent was thanked and the interview was ended. A note of thanks was e-mailed to the respondent the following day.

4.3.3.3 PRE-TESTING

To ensure the effectiveness of the interview schedule, the interview was pre-tested in order to practise the timing and interview prompts (Zikmund, 2003) prior to being utilised in the field. The pre-test confirmed that the interview guide assisted in retrieving the data required to answer the research questions (Broom, 2005). Gray (2004) highlights that a pre-test allows the researcher to decide how many interviews to conduct per day, as well as to determine the intervals between them.



4.3.3.4 DATA COLLECTION

Each interview took approximately 45 minutes to complete and the semi-structure encouraged participants to converse freely about the research questions. Detailed notes were taken during the interviews and visual aspects of the physical context, facial expressions or body language were recorded (Lee, 1998).

4.4 STAGE THREE: DATA ANALYSIS

The central task in the data analysis stage was to identify common themes in the respondent's discussions (Leedy and Ormond, 2001). According to Zikmund (2003) data analysis is the application of reasoning to understand and interpret the data that has been collected. Once the data was collected a multi-method approach was employed, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative analysis, consisting of content analysis with editing and coding, frequency analysis with rank-ordered tables and quadrant analysis. The analysis process took approximately 90 minutes per interview held.

4.4.1 CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content analysis was undertaken on the information obtained from the open-ended questions (refer Appendix A for the open-ended questions, being 1.b., 2.e. and 3.f.). The interview transcriptions of open-ended questions, or primary data, were analysed using the methodology as descried by Leedy and Ormond (2001). The processes in analysing the responses to the open-ended questions were as follows:

Statements that relate to the topic were identified



Information from the interview was broken up to reflect a single specific thought

- Statements were coded and clustered into "meaning units"
 Single specific thoughts were clustered into similar categories that reflected the various perspectives of the respondents
- Divergent perspectives were sought
 Conflicting and similar perspectives were considered
- Composites were constructed

Broom (2005) asserts that the transformation of data into key findings need be broken down, conceptualised and categorised in order to identify unforeseen patterns, identify concepts and discursive practices. This allows the researcher to infer meaning from the data in a way that demonstrates logic. The data was captured in order to identify the themes and patterns, allowing for easier synthesis into categories and ultimately extending and validating the *de jure* model.

4.4.2 FREQUENCY ANALYSIS

Frequency analysis was used in instances where a range of commonalities were identified. The use of frequency analysis indicated the number of times a particular variable occurred (Zikmund, 2003) and the frequency distribution of respondents' answers to a question. Frequency analysis was also used to analyse the responses to the closed-ended questions in order to obtain definitive positions from the respondents in response to the questions posed.



4.4.3 AGGREGATION

The primary data collected from the respondents was assessed in order to determine common themes and patterns in the perceptions of human resource practioners. Based on explanatory logic, the themes and patterns emerging from the interviews were mapped onto an Excel spreadsheet and subsequently aggregated in order better to understand and interpret the categories, frequency and nature of the responses.

4.4.4 QUADRANT ANALYSIS

Quadrant analysis, based on the respondents' input into Question 4 plotted the responses on two 10-point Likert scales, which translated into four quadrants on a two dimensional table. This comparative approach was employed to provide more quantitative information for the *de facto* model as portrayed in Chapter 6, thus strengthening the study's overall outcome.

4.4.5 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Criticisms of qualitative research often centre on the lack of reliability and validity of its findings with critics questioning the ability of qualitative research to replicate observations (reliability) or to obtain correct answers or correct impressions of the phenomenon under study (validity) (Golafshani, 2003).

To ensure that reliability and validity was achieved during the research, the following mitigating tactics were used:

 Purposive sampling, based on pre-determined respondent criteria and knowledge of the subject area, was used to focus the study and obtain



deeper insight, rather than as an attempt to observe or collect data from all potential respondents

- Detailed selection criteria assisted in ensuring repeatability
- The use of a single interviewer facilitated internal consistency (Zikmund, 2003)
- The interview scripts were standardised as far as possible across all groups
- Research tools and data analysis techniques were assessed by a research specialist in the field of qualitative research, prior to the implementation in the in-depth interviews. This allowed for greater reliability of the analysis and aggregation process as it was validated on a second tier
- Consistency was facilitated by the application of the data analysis process

4.5 STAGE FOUR: FORMULATION OF THE *DE FACTO* MODEL

In the final stage, a *de facto* model was formulated, integrating the outcomes of the secondary data analysis from Phase 1 and the outcomes of the primary data. The model formulated a framework on which to evaluate strategies and best practices for the management of the employability paradox. To improve the robustness of the *de jur*e model, Axis-X and Axis-Y were placed over a numerical grid. This allowed for a continuum on the axes to indicate which strategies or best practices meet the needs of the organisation and/or the knowledge worker. The grouping and plotting of themes for the *de facto* model was grounded in the respondents judgments as indicated on a 10-point Likert scale (Zikmund, 2003). This ensured a more quantitative plotting of strategies and best practices, as collected in the interview process.



There are various limitations in this study which need be acknowledged. They have been identified as follows:

- The researcher is not formally trained in observation techniques and interview strategies (Leedy and Ormond, 2001). Significant preparation and planning has gone into the approach of the interview to mitigate this effect.
- Interviewer and respondent bias may also impact the results. Awareness of this possibility from the interviewer's perspective may moderate this outcome by the interviewer focusing on remaining objective.
- As the sample is not fully representative of the population, a sampling or systematic error may result in a finding that is not representative of the population (Zikmund, 2003) further, the scope of the research is limited to exploring the viewpoint of the organisation and not that of the individual. Therefore, it may be inappropriate to project the findings beyond this sample without additional research.
- The outcome of the research is highly dependant on the quality of the information provided by the respondents during the in-depth interviews. This is mitigated to some degree by the preparation of the interview schedule and de jure model.

4.7 CONCLUSION

4.6

The stages of the research design and methodology were intended to meet the requirements outlined in Chapter 1. The research explored the paradox of employability and described, decoded and translated the findings into a practical and meaningful framework to map the impact of strategies or best practices as applied by firms when managing the employability paradox.



5.1 INTRODUCTION

The findings from each research stage as outlined in the research methodology (Chapter 4) are reported below.

5.2 FORMULATION OF THE DE JURE MODEL

The *de jure* model was developed from the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, prior to conducting the interviews, and was designed to create a framework in which to map the impact of organisational approaches to managing the employability paradox. The development process began with the formulation of a two-by-two model that characterizes the context in which the employability paradox occurs.

The *de jure* model is a two-by-two matrix with four quadrants representing the employability paradox on a two dimensional graph. Two axes were identified from the literature. One axis (the Y-Axis) represents the organisation's perspective and the other (the X-Axis) the individual's perspective. Both axes were placed at right angles to each other, intersecting at mid-point, to create four, equally sized and opposing quadrants. The four quadrants displayed by the model represent the organisation and individual perspectives, with the paradox visually displayed by the placement of the diametrically opposed quadrants. This created focus on whose needs were being met (those of the knowledge worker and/or organisation) through the strategies and best practices as deployed by the firm to manage the employability paradox. The placement of the axes in this manner created four



- Meet the needs of the organisation and meet the needs of the individual (top left quadrant).
- Meet the needs of the organisation and do not meet the needs of the individual (top right quadrant).

quadrants represent those strategies, which:

- Meet the needs of the individual and do not meet the needs of the organisation (bottom left quadrant).
- Do not meet the needs of the individual and do not meet the needs of the organisation (bottom right quadrant).

The process of populating the *de jure* model entailed a qualitative extraction and grouping of the employability perspectives within these four, equally sized quadrants. The strategies and best practices, as reviewed in the literature, were identified and qualitatively grouped in the four quadrants based on which strategies meet, or do not meet, individual and/or organisational needs. The placement of the strategies and best practices within the quadrants were not rank-ordered and their order within the quadrants has no specific relevance. The grouping of strategies and best practices enabled the broad categorisation of the contextual factors, as afforded by the organisation, to ensure personal adequacy for work from the individual perspective, including employability competencies and skills, but excluding societal contextual factors.

5.3.1 PURPOSE AND APPLICATION OF THE DE JURE MODEL

As practical strategies on how firms develop knowledge workers to ensure they become and remain high-performing employees, whilst safe-guarding the firms'

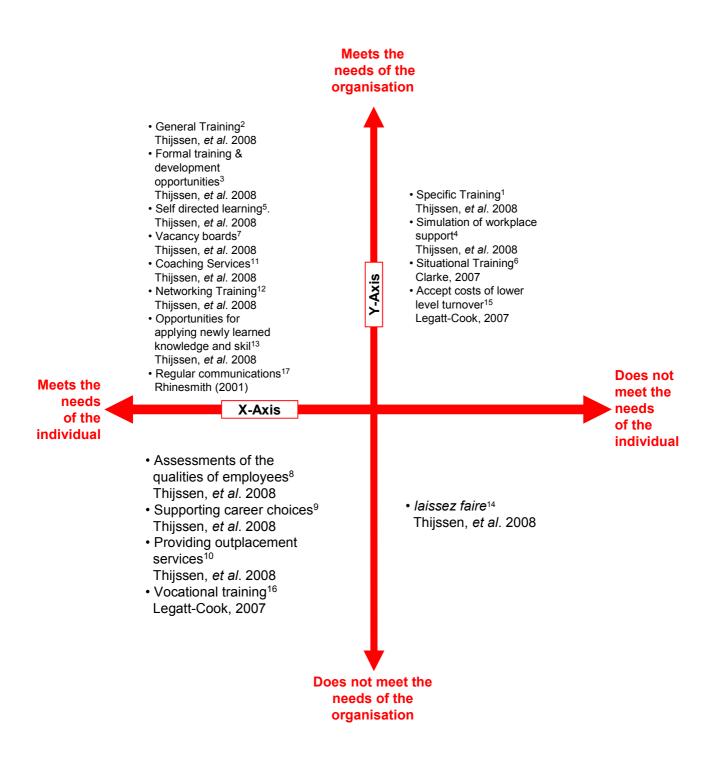


returns on investments, have not been well documented. The *de jure* model formulates a framework which details strategies and best practices as discussed in the literature and indicates the impact of the firm's strategic approach on both the individual and the organisation when managing the employability paradox.

The model was used as input into the in-depth interviews in order to obtain a common platform of understanding and to contribute to the quality and relevance of the output of the in-depth interview process conducted in stage two. The *de jure* model of employability is illustrated in Figure 1 overleaf where various organisational approaches to managing the paradox, as discussed in the literature reviewed, are qualitatively plotted, but not rank-ordered, and show whose needs will be most met by these strategies. Each of these previously mentioned strategies is further interpreted in Appendix C and cross-referenced by superscript to Section 2.6 (on pages 34-36), where they appear in context in the literature review.

FIGURE 1: DE JUNE MODEL. ONGANIGATIONAL APPROACHES TO

MANAGING THE PARADOX



Note: Superscripts 1 – 17

Please refer Section 2.6, Page 34 – 36, for contextual explanation regarding these strategies.

• Refer Appendix C for a summary interpretation of these strategies.

In order to answer the research questions, data was collected via 18 expert interviews. Utilising the interview guide as shown in Appendix A, this process required approximately 45 minutes of in-depth interviews per respondent. This was followed by ninety minutes of content analysis per interview. The details of the process and findings are described below.

Each of the seven interview questions contained within the interview guide is directly linked back to one of the four research questions. The mapping of the interview questions to the research questions was as follows, and is further represented in Appendix D:

- Research Question 1 Interview Question 1.a., 1.b. and 1.c.
 Research Question 1 aimed at establishing whether firms recognise the existence of the tension or paradox in the concept of employability.
- Research Question 2 Interview Question 2.d. and 2.e.
 Research Question 2 sought to obtain examples of where the paradox was prevalent within the respondent's firm and to confirm the manifestation thereof.
- Research Question 3 Interview Question 3.f.
 Research Question 3 detailed the strategies or best practices deployed by the respondents' firms in responding or managing the employability paradox.
- Research Question 4 Interview Question 4.g.
 Research Question 4 categorised the strategies or best practices used by firms in responding to or managing the employability paradox in terms of how they meet the needs of the knowledge worker and/or employing firm.



Once the data was collected it was analysed using both qualitative and quantitative measures. Content analysis identified common themes, and frequency analysis was used to create rank-ordered tables and analyse the responses received to closed-ended questions.

The content analysis was performed using a template created in an Excel spreadsheet that allowed for each newly identified concept pertaining to employability to be captured in a table related to the relevant research question. Each time a respondent mentioned an employability component or new idea it was captured systematically on the template.

As the content analysis process advanced a vast spread of frequencies was identified. For each identified concept the number of mentions by each respondent was tallied using frequency analysis, and then rank-ordered from most mentioned to least mentioned. As a result of the vast frequencies, a process of collapsing and aggregating the data into common themes was undertaken with any duplicated responses per respondent being removed. The number of responses given in the final aggregated, rank-ordered table resulted in more focused and concise insights. Frequency analysis was used to rank-order the responses and to analyse the responses to the closed-ended questions in order to obtain definitive positions from the respondents in response to the questions posed.

In the following section the aggregated research findings are presented. The results are listed under each of the four research questions and directly correlate back to the responses from each of the seven interview questions. The detailed responses for each interview question are presented in Appendix E.



5.3.2 RESULTS FOR INCOME WOLD HOW I

Question 1: Do firms recognise the existence of the tension or paradox in the concept of employability?

Research Question 1 sought to determine if firms recognised the existence of the tension or paradox in the concept of employability. This research question was unpacked into three related constructs of employability, which culminated in a closed-ended question to obtain the respondent's ratification or rebuttal of the employability paradox.

The first interview question (1.a.) requested respondents to identify the need for employee development within their firms as without employee development the construct of employability can not exist. All respondents indicated that they had a need to develop employees within their firm. One respondent indicated that, even though they could identify the need, they did not pursue any employee development initiatives within their firm.

To confirm understanding, the drivers of employee development within the respondents' firms were probed (interview question 1.b.). All respondents confirmed that employee development was based on the firms' lifecycle and could change accordingly. The specific drivers are detailed in Table 3, overleaf. For each of the identified drivers the number of mentions by each respondent was tallied using frequency analysis and then rank-ordered from most mentioned to least mentioned. As a result of the vast frequencies, a process of collapsing and aggregating the data into ten common themes was undertaken, with any duplicated responses per respondent being removed.



TABLE 3: RESULTS - DRIVERS OF INVESTMENT IN EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT BY ORGANISATIONS

Rank	#	Category	Frequency
1	1	Investment in employee development is based on the firms life cycle	18
2	2	Investment in employee development to enhance on the job performance	16
3	3	Investment in employee development to provide succession of future talent for the organisation	12
4	4	Investment in employee development to build a competitive advantage for the firm through people	11
5	5	Investment in employee development to attract and retain talented employees	8
5	6	Investment in people development and skills upliftment will benefit SA. It is the right thing to do	8
7	7	Investment in people to enhance and re-enforce company culture	3
7	8	Investment in people to enable them to make a difference outside their current role	3
9	9	Investment in people to develop in house assets to spend less on consulting companies	1
9	10	Investment in people to meet employee aspirations	1

The respondent who indicated that the firm did not pursue employee development initiatives cited three reasons;

- A preference to purchased skills in the labour market when required
- A minimum qualification requirement prior to employment
- Budgetary constraints

The final interview question under Research Question 1 (1.c.) used a Likert scale of 1 to 4 (with 4 being "agrees strongly" and 1 being "disagrees strongly") to identify whether, and to what extent, the respondent acknowledged the concept of the paradox of employability. Please find the results represented in Table 4, following;



TABLE 4: RESULTS - RECOGNITION OF THE LIVE LOYABILITY PARADOX WITHIN ORGANISATIONS

Respondent	1. Disagree Strongly	2. Disagree somewhat	3. Agree somewhat	4 Agree Strongly
1	0	0	0	1
2	0	0	0	1
3	0	0	1	0
4	0	0	0	1
5	0	0	0	1
6	1	0	0	0
7	0	0	0	1
8	0	0	0	1
9	0	0	0	1
10	0	0	0	1
11	0	0	0	1
12	0	0	0	1
13	0	0	0	1
14	0	0	0	1
15	0	0	1	0
16	0	0	0	1
17	0	0	0	1
18	0	0	0	1
Total	1	0	2	15
%	5	0	11	84

When answering this question 84% of respondents strongly agree that there is a conflict of interest or tension between a firm developing employees and the employees' improved ability to find alternative employment. Two respondents (11%) agreed somewhat and only one respondent (5%) did not recognise the conflict of interest or tension between a firm developing employees and the employees' improved ability to find alternative employment



5.3.3 RESULTS FOR RESULTS FOR

Question 2: What is the evidence of this paradox within the firm?

Research Question 2 recorded examples of where the paradox was prevalent within the respondent's firms, in order to describe the manifestation thereof.

Interview question 2.d asked respondents if they had evidence within their firms of where their firms had invested in human assets and, as a result, these employees had become more attractive to other employers. All but one respondent agreed that this paradox manifested within their firms. The respondent who was unable to provide substantiation of this phenomenon cited the fact that he had no empirical evidence to confirm the link between levels of competence and portability.

Interview question 2.e. probed for specific examples of where firms had invested in human assets and, as a result, these employees had become more attractive to other employers. Again, all but one respondent was able to provide specific examples thereof. Two themes emerged from the responses to this question employee turnover and employee disengagement. These themes were contextualised by Respondent No. 5 who stated that the more their firm invested in human assets, the more attractive their employees became to the market. However, when individuals realise their capabilities and marketability and, especially where their new talents are not being optimally utilised or they are locked into service within an organisation, they either go (exit the firm) or stay and become disengaged. It is with those individuals who disengage where the real challenge arises. These central themes of employee turnover and employee disengagement are represented in the table 5 and 6, following. Within these themes further



recognised by respondents, to those least recognised by respondents.

TABLE 5: RESULTS - EXAMPLES OF THE MANIFESTATION OF THE EMPLOYABILITY PARADOX WITHIN FIRMS: EMPLOYEE TURNOVER

Rank	Category	Frequency	
	Employee Turnover		
1	Manifested through poaching or headhunting of employees by competitors	13	
2	Manifested through the skills shortage in SA creating a demand for skilled employees	9	
3	Manifested through employees moving for greater opportunities	8	
4	Manifested and accepted as the company is considered the industry training ground	5	
5	Manifested through people leaving to apply their new skills in another work environment	4	
5	Manifested in the nature of the new generation of workers want development but do not anticipate having long careers within a single organisation	4	
7	Manifested through employees wishing to join a better known brand	2	
8	Manifested through fear of retrenchment resulting in a move to another employer	1	

TABLE 6: RESULTS - EXAMPLES OF THE MANIFESTATION OF THE EMPLOYABILITY PARADOX WITHIN FIRMS: EMPLOYEE DISENGAGEMENT

Rank	Category	Frequency	
	Employee Disengagement		
1	Skills and capability mismatch	6	
2	Poor performance	2	



5.3.4 RESULTS FOR RESULTS FOR

Question 3: What responses do companies have, if any, to this paradox?

The responses that companies have to this paradox were probed in Research Question 3. The research question sought to explore the strategies or best practices deployed by the respondents' firms in responding to or managing this paradox. Interview question 3.f. asked respondents to list specific strategies or plans of how they develop and grow their employees, whilst ensuring they obtain a return on this investment in human resources. Three prompts were used to encourage respondents to explore these areas.

The prompts were:

- Asking if all employee investment centred on obtaining a return on investment and how this return was ensured.
- Probing for any strategies that actively keep track of talented employees who have voluntarily exited the firm.
- Enquiring after any development opportunities for employees that do not impact direct costs.

Forty strategies and best practices were identified after collapsing and aggregating the data into common themes. Each aggregated strategy or best practice is numbered under the heading "category". These strategies and best practices were rank-ordered according to the frequency of response by the respondents and are represented in Table 7, overleaf.

TABLE 7: RESULTS - STRAILGILG LIVIFLOILD D/ FIRMS TO OBTAIN A RETURN ON INVESTMENT ON EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

Rank	Cate- gory	Do you have specific strategies on how you develop and grow your employees, whilst ensuring that your firm obtains a return on this investment	
		Category	Ency
1	1	Vacancy boards are internal advertising boards, most often appearing on an organisations intranet, wherein all current vacancies within the organisation are advertised	17
2	2	Bursaries or study assistance offered to employees to obtain formal qualifications linked to their role (either current or future) within the organisation	16
2	3	Specific training refers to training that is role (job or task) specific including simulation of workplace support, situational training and self directed learning to improve on the job performance	16
2	4	General training refers to training that can be applied beyond the incumbent's current role. General training is often applicable beyond the organisation and industry (i.e. leadership and managerial training)	16
5	5	Firms use top quartile remuneration strategies to retain highly skilled employees that they have invested in	14
6	6	Firms obtain a return on investment in employee development through contractual clauses which tie in employees to either a financial or time linked work back periods for money spent on generic training	13
6	7	Have a recognised Talent Pool, who has received feedback that they are future talent for the organisation, so supporting employee career choice	13
8	8	Fill majority of senior positions with internally developed or developing candidates	12
8	9	Coaching/mentorship occurs when a person (usually more senior or expert in the organisation) guides, advises and assists an employee with a view to impart knowledge to the employee and/or improve job performance	12
8	10	Networking training clarifies the value and enables employees to build and maintain personal networks (or contacts/communities of practice) within and external to an organisation	12
11	11	Develop industry reputation / Brand as employer of choice	11
11	12	Provide employees with opportunities for international exposure to utilise and grow skills	11
13	13	Contractual agreements enforcing restraint-of-trade should an employee leave their current organisation	9
13	14	Exit Interviews to identify and action root causes of employee exits, with a view to providing corrective action to retain future talent	9

		TORIBESTIAL TA PRETORIA					
13	15	Graduate programs, apprenticeships and learnerships	9				
13	16	Global talent program to utilise and grow talent globally	9				
17	17	Entrepreneurial culture encouraged	8				
17	18	Formal processes to rotate and expose staff within the group / across divisions to provide work challenges and learning opportunities					
19	19	Link employee development to performance contracting with regular feedback sessions on employee progress					
20	20	Provide opportunities for employees to apply newly learned knowledge and skill by creating a link between training interventions to actual jobs (learning paths)	6				
20	21	Accept costs of lower level turnover with no specific development strategy for lower level staff	6				
20	22	Implement strategies to align employee and organisational values	6				
20	23	Formal alumni networks enable firms to track talented employees who have exited the organisation that may return to the firm in the future or contract their services to the firm if mutually agreed	6				
24	24	Individuals within the firm informally maintain relationships with talented employees that voluntarily exit the organisation with a view to advising them of opportunities to return to the firm	5				
24	25	Allow vocational training by permitting staff to take sabbaticals to fulfil growth and learning opportunities	5				
24	26	Assessments of employee qualities would be evaluation tools used to assist in creating employee self-awareness, and would include abilities and psychometric testing to provide greater employee insight and identify potential development gaps	5				
24	27	Firms are to provide an holistic employment offering comprising multiple components when developing and retaining employees	5				
28	28	Provide employees with flexible work practices such as job sharing, shorter working weeks, flexible hours	4				
28	29	Induction program to show employees interlinkages within the firm and the role of training	4				
30	30	Internal company recognition programs	3				
30	31	Providing outplacement services would include offering employment or head hunting firms access to current employees to ensure their successful outplacement. This outplacement could be both internal and external to the organisation.	3				

		TORRISCOTTINE THE FRANCISCOTTINE	
32	32	Ensure stringent recruitment criteria to ensure employee fit as from recruitment	2
32	33	Hold retention interviews to proactively determine employee state of mind, to ensure key employees are actively utilised in challenging roles	2
32	34	Company internal rules of engagement detailed for interdivisional transfers to restrict internal head hunting	2
32	35	Action learning groups; forums initiated by individuals who have attended development opportunities where individual learning's are shared in interdivisional task focused groups, led by the person who obtained the learning	2
32	36	Implement team based work	2
37	37	Laissez faire - takes no action but considers the current competencies of employees as something they can exploit with no investment	1
37	38	Performance interventionist training	1
37	39	Provide hard currency pensions/investments/retention bonus's to protect talent against the global war for talent	1
37	40	Community projects allowing employees to make a difference to SA	1

In order to investigate the data further, a coding framework was developed to identify information that would contradict, validate or enhance the *de jure* model. The coding framework utilised the following colours to indicate which responses:

Contradicts the <i>de jure</i> model,
Validates the <i>de jure</i> model
Enhances or extends the <i>de jure</i> model.



In Table 8 below, please into the coued strategies and best practices identifying which strategies and best practices validate and enhance the *de jure* model. No strategies were found to contradict the *de jure* model.

TABLE 8: RESULTS - CONTRADICTIONS, VALIDATION AND ENHANCEMENTS TO THE *DE JURE* MODEL OF STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY FIRMS TO OBTAIN A RETURN ON INVESTMENT ON EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

Rank	Cate- gory	Do you have specific strategies on how you develop and grow your employees, whilst ensuring that your firm obtains a return on this investment Category	Frequency
1	1	Vacancy boards are internal advertising boards, most often appearing on an organisations intranet, wherein all current vacancies within the organisation are advertised	17
2	2	Bursaries or study assistance offered to employees to obtain formal qualifications linked to their role (either current or future) within the organisation	16
2	3	Specific training refers to training that is role (job or task) specific including simulation of workplace support, situational training and self directed learning to improve on the job performance	16
2	4	General training refers to training that can be applied beyond the incumbent's current role. General training is often applicable beyond the organisation and industry (i.e. leadership and managerial training)	16
5	5	Firms use top quartile remuneration strategies to retain highly skilled employees that they have invested in	14
6	6	Firms obtain a return on investment in employee development through contractual clauses which tie in employees to either a financial or time linked work back periods for money spent on generic training	13
6	7	Have a recognised Talent Pool, who have received feedback that they are future talent for the organisation, so supporting employee career choice	13
8	8	Fill majority of senior positions with internally developed or developing candidates	12
8	9	Coaching/mentorship occurs when a person (usually more senior or expert in the organisation) guides, advises and assists an employee with a view to impart knowledge to the employee and/or improve job performance	12

8	10	Networking training clarifies the value and enables employees to build and maintain personal networks (or contacts/communities of practice) within and external to an organisation	12
11	11	Develop industry reputation / Brand as employer of choice	11
11	12	Provide employees with opportunities for international exposure to utilise and grow skills	11
13	13	Contractual agreements enforcing restraint-of-trade should an employee leave their current organisation	9
13	14	Exit Interviews to identify and action root causes of employee exits, with a view to providing corrective action to retain future talent	9
13	15	Graduate programs, apprenticeships and learnerships	9
13	16	Global talent program to utilise and grow talent globally	9
17	17	Entrepreneurial culture encouraged	8
17	18	Formal processes to rotate and expose staff within the group / across divisions to provide work challenges and learning opportunities	8
19	19	Link employee development to performance contracting with regular feedback sessions on employee progress	7
20	20	Provide opportunities for employees to apply newly learned knowledge and skill by creating a link between training interventions to actual jobs (learning paths)	6
20	21	Accept costs of lower level turnover with no specific development strategy for lower level staff	6
20	22	Implement strategies to align employee and organisational values	6
20	23	Formal alumni networks enable firms to track talented employees who have exited the organisation that may return to the firm in the future or contract their services to the firm if mutually agreed	6
24	24	Individuals within the firm informally maintain relationships with talented employees that voluntarily exit the organisation with a view to advising them of opportunities to return to the firm	5
24	25	Allow vocational training by permitting staff to take sabbaticals to fulfil growth and learning opportunities	5

		Assessments of employee qualities would be evaluation tools used to	
24	26	assist in creating employee self-awareness, and would include abilities and psychometric testing to provide greater employee insight and identify potential development gaps	5
24	27	Firms are to provide an holistic employment offering comprising multiple components when developing and retaining employees	5
28	28	Provide employees with flexible work practices such as job sharing, shorter working weeks, flexible hours	4
28	29	Induction program to show employees interlinkages within the firm and the role of training	4
30	30	Internal company recognition programs	3
30	31	Providing outplacement services would include offering employment or head hunting firms access to current employees to ensure their successful outplacement. This outplacement could be both internal and external to the organisation.	3
32	32	Ensure stringent recruitment criteria to ensure employee fit as from recruitment	2
32	33	Hold retention interviews to proactively determine employee state of mind, to ensure key employees are actively utilised in challenging roles	2
32	34	Company internal rules of engagement detailed for interdivisional transfers to restrict internal head hunting	2
32	35	Action learning groups; forums initiated by individuals who have attended development opportunities where individual learning's are shared in inter-divisional task focused groups, led by the person who obtained the learning	2
32	36	Implement team based work	2
37	37	Laissez faire - takes no action but considers the current competencies of employees as something they can exploit with no investment	1
37	38	Performance interventionist training	1
37	39	Provide hard currency pensions/investments/retention bonus's to protect talent against the global war for talent	1
37	40	Community projects allowing employees to make a difference to SA	1



5.3.5 RESULTS FOR NEGLANOIT WOLD HON T

Question 4: Do the strategies or best practices used by firms in responding to or managing the employability paradox, meet the needs of the knowledge worker and/or employing firm?

In order to determine if the best practices or strategies implemented by firms to manage the employability paradox meet the needs of knowledge workers and/or organisations, interview question 4.g. requested respondents to indicate on a Likert scale of 1 - 10 the impact of their strategies and best practices in managing the employability paradox on both the individual and organisation. This 1-10 scale (with 1 being "not focused" and 10 being "very focused") requested the respondent to indicate their opinion as to what extent each strategy or best practice under discussion focused on meeting employee and/or organisational needs.

For each category (strategy or best practice) mentioned, the respondent indicated their perception as to what extent the strategy or best practice focused on meeting employee and organisational needs. On collapsing and aggregating the data into common themes, these strategies and best practices were rank-ordered according to the frequency of responses by the respondents. The mean of all the respondents' rankings were then calculated for each category (strategy and best practice). In Table 9 below, is an example for illustration purposes where two respondents have both indicated that the strategy under discussion focuses 80% on meeting employee needs and concurrently meeting 80% of the organisational needs. In order to calculate the mean the respondents' ratings were totalled and then divided by the frequency of responses to that category. This enabled a single



aggregated rating to be obtained per category (strategy and best practice) so as to limit respondent bias and obtain a quantitative indicator of need fulfilment.

TABLE 9: ILLUSTRATION USED TO INDICATE THE CALCULATION OF THE MEAN

Category (strategy or best practice)														
Strategy or Best Practice	Stakeholder	1-1 on	Rating 1-10 Likert scale (with 1 being "not focused" on need attainment and 10 being "very focused" on need attainment)							Fre que ncy	Emp Pers pect ive	Org Perspe ctive		
Respon-	Employee	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	8	0
dent 1	Organisation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	'	0	8
Respon-	Employee	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	8	0
dent 2	Organisation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	'	0	8
Total												2	16	16
Mean													8	8

The single mean permits quantitative recording of these strategies and best practices in order to ascertain objectively which of these strategies or best practices meet the needs of the knowledge worker whilst simultaneously protecting the interests of the employing firm. The calculation of the mean will enable the quantitative plotting of these strategies and best practices on the *de facto* model presented in Chapter 6.

In Table 10 following, please find the results of the employee and organisational mean for strategies employed by firms to obtain a return on investment on employee development.

TABLE 10: RESULTS - LIVIPLOTEL AND ORGANISATIONAL MEAN FOR STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY FIRMS TO OBTAIN A RETURN ON INVESTMENT ON EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

¥	gory	Do you have specific strategies on how you develop and grow your employees, whilst ensuring that your firm obtains a return on this investment	iency	Mean Totals	
Rank	Category	Category	Frequency	Empl oyee Mean	Organ isation mean
1	1	Vacancy boards are internal advertising boards, most often appearing on an organisations intranet, wherein all current vacancies within the organisation are advertised	17	8.47	8.82
2	2	Bursaries or study assistance offered to employees to obtain formal qualifications linked to their role (either current or future) within the organisation	16	7.44	5.94
2	3	Specific training refers to training that is role (job or task) specific including simulation of workplace support, situational training and self directed learning to improve on the job performance	16	3.94	10.00
2	4	General training refers to training that can be applied beyond the incumbent's current role. General training is often applicable beyond the organisation and industry (i.e. leadership and managerial training)	8.44	7.75	
5	5	Firms use top quartile remuneration strategies to retain highly skilled employees that they have invested in	14	10.00	1.00
6	6	Firms obtain a return on investment in employee development through contractual clauses which tie in employees to either a financial or time linked work back periods for money spent on generic training	13	2.00	8.62
6	7	Have a recognised Talent Pool, who have received feedback that they are future talent for the organisation, so supporting employee career choice	13	7.54	8.77
8	8	Fill majority of senior positions with internally developed or developing candidates	12	8.33	8.42
8	9	Coaching/mentorship occurs when a person (usually more senior or expert in the organisation) guides, advises and assists an employee with a view to impart knowledge to the employee and/or improve job performance	12	8.33	8.33
8	10	Networking training clarifies the value and enables employees to build and maintain personal networks (or contacts/communities of practice) within and external to an organisation	12	7.92	8.00
11	11	Develop industry reputation / Brand as employer of choice	11	4.45	9.45

		YUNIBESTIHI YA PRETORIA			
11	12	Provide employees with opportunities for international exposure to utilise and grow skills	11	8.45	8.18
13	13	Contractual agreements enforcing restraint-of-trade should an employee leave their current organisation	9	1.00	10.00
13	14	Exit Interviews to identify and action root causes of employee exits, with a view to providing corrective action to retain future talent	9	7.89	5.22
13	15	Graduate programs, apprenticeships and learnerships	9	8.89	8.00
13	16	Global talent program to utilise and grow talent globally	9	9.00	8.11
17	17	Entrepreneurial culture encouraged	8	8.25	8.38
17	18	Formal processes to rotate and expose staff within the group / across divisions to provide work challenges and learning opportunities	8	7.38	8.13
19	19	Link employee development to performance contracting with regular feedback sessions on employee progress	7	6.29	8.71
20	20	Provide opportunities for employees to apply newly learned knowledge and skill by creating a link between training interventions to actual jobs (learning paths)	6	4.17	8.17
20	21	Accept costs of lower level turnover with no specific development strategy for lower level staff	6	1.00	10.00
20	22	Implement strategies to align employee and organisational values	6	10.00	10.00
20	23	Formal alumni networks enable firms to track talented employees who have exited the organisation that may return to the firm in the future or contract their services to the firm if mutually agreed	6	10.00	10.00
24	24	Individuals within the firm informally maintain relationships with talented employees that voluntarily exit the organisation with a view to advising them off opportunities to return to the firm	5	7.20	6.60
24	25	Allow vocational training by permitting staff to take sabbaticals to fulfil growth and learning opportunities	5	10.00	2.80
24	26	Assessments of employee qualities would be evaluation tools used to assist in creating employee self-awareness, and would include abilities and psychometric testing to provide greater employee insight and identify potential development gaps	5	7.20	7.40
24	27	Firms are to provide an holistic employment offering comprising multiple components when developing and retaining employees	5	10.00	10.00

		YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA			
28	28	Provide employees with flexible work practices such as job sharing, shorter working weeks, flexible hours	4	9.00	9.00
28	29	Induction program to show employees interlinkages within the firm and the role of training	4	6.50	7.75
30	30	Internal company recognition programs	3	7.67	7.00
30	31	Providing outplacement services would include offering employment or head hunting firms access to current employees to ensure their successful outplacement. This outplacement could be both internal and external to the organisation.	3	10.00	4.00
32	32	Ensure stringent recruitment criteria to ensure employee fit as from recruitment	2	8.00	8.00
32	33	Hold retention interviews to proactively determine employee state of mind, to ensure key employees are actively utilised in challenging roles	2	10.00	10.00
32	34	Company internal rules of engagement detailed for interdivisional transfers to restrict internal head hunting	2	1.00	10.00
32	35	Action learning groups; forums initiated by individuals who have attended development opportunities where individual learning's are shared in inter-divisional task focused groups, led by the person who obtained the learning	2	8.00	8.50
32	36	Implement team based work	2	4.00	8.00
37	37	Laissez faire - takes no action but considers the current competencies of employees as something they can exploit with no investment	1	3.00	4.00
37	38	Performance interventionist training	1	4.00	10.00
37	39	Provide hard currency pensions / investments / retention bonus's to protect talent against the global war for talent	1	10.00	1.00
37	40	Community projects allowing employees to make a difference to SA	1	9.00	10.00



5.3.6 VALIDITY AND NELIADILITI

Validity and reliability in this research process was achieved through a level of consistency and standardisation in both the data analysis methodology and through the use of a single data analyser.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The results from the four research questions support the constructs found in the existing literature and contribute to new knowledge. In Chapter 6, the results from the research process and the *de facto* model are discussed in more detail. The *de facto* model provides a quantitative framework which details the impact of strategies and best practices on both the individual and the organisation when managing the employability paradox.



CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 6 the results are discussed in terms of the research questions and the literature reviewed. This chapter shows insight into the findings in terms of the context of the study and in light of the theory base and will indicate that the research objectives have been met. The research results discussed in this chapter contribute to an enhanced understanding of the paradox of employability and detail the strategies and best practices, and their impact, as applied by firms in managing this paradox.

6.2 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 1

Do firms recognise the existence of the tension or paradox in the concept of employability?

Research Question 1 sought to determine if firms recognised the existence of the tension or paradox in the concept of employability. This research question was unpacked into three related constructs of employability which culminated in a closed-ended question that obtained ratification from the respondents of the existence of the employability paradox. The data shows that the majority of firms recognise the paradox in the concept of employability.

The first interview question (1.a.) requested respondents to identify the need for employee development within their firms in order to determine if the foundation for employability was present. All respondents indicated that they had a need to develop employees within their initi. This supports the resource based theories discussed in the literature (Coff, 1997; Legatt-Cook, 2002) and that employability has become a key factor of the employment offering (Thite, 2001, De Grip, *et al.*, 2004; Kelly, *et al.*, 2003).

To confirm understanding, the drivers of employee development within the respondents' firms were probed (interview question 1.b.). The 10 reasons for employee development as a provision of employability from the firm's perspective and as recorded in Table 3 (Chapter 5), and how it supports or detracts from the literature reviewed, are listed individually below in rank-order, followed by a detailed commentary.

Rank	#	Category	Frequency
1	1	Investment in employee development is based on the firms life cycle	18

This finding was mentioned by every respondent interviewed and indicates that mature firms are more likely to offer employees formal development programs and growth opportunities than immature firms. However, more quantitative research needs to be undertaken to confirm this supposition. The example used in Chapter 1 of Exxaro, listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange since 2000 (Exxaro.com), illustrates that, when a mature firm is faced with skills shortages (Kraak, 2008), they have no alternative but to develop the required technical skills themselves. This confirms Kraaks' (2008) opinion that certain skills are not readily available in the South African market.



To further validate the concept or employee development linked to a firms lifecycle, the respondent who indicated that, even though they could identify the need to develop employees but did not currently pursue such development initiatives, was from a firm established less than two years ago. This was the only respondent in the sample who represented a firm less than five years old. The respondent confirmed that their lack of development was a situational strategy due to the firm's position within their life-cycle and voiced concerns regarding the sustainability of this approach. This firm is a recent start-up, spearheaded by a management walk out from a company listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. requires highly skilled specialists and, when skills are required they are required immediately, so are headhunted from the market accordingly. This has resulted in an agreed minimum or specific skills and qualification requirement, prior to employment. The respondent also advised that budgetary constraints do not currently allow for employees to be developed due to the immediate focus on building the business and producing financial results for investors. The respondent does foresee that this model is unsustainable over the long-term and, as their lifecycle matures, they will need to develop skills internally.

Rank	#	Category	Frequency
2	2	Investment in employee development to enhance on the job performance	16

Most respondents indicated that this was their key driver for developing employees. This finding validates the literature as Thijssen, *et al* (2008) describes employability at its most basic level as when organisations provide opportunities for employees to obtain skills that enable them to better fulfil tasks within their current work environment.



Rank	#	Category	Frequency
3	3	Investment in employee development to provide succession of future talent for the organisation	12

The data shows that organisations need to develop staff internally to fulfil anticipated future vacancies. This is supported in the literature by Thijssen, *et al.* (2008) who define employability at the organisational level as an indicator of the opportunity to match (current and future) labour supply and demand in a changing organisation.

Rank	#	Category	Frequency
4	4	Investment in employee development to build a competitive advantage for the firm through people	11

In the literature reviewed Thite (2001) and Kelly, *et al.* (2003) articulate the benefits of investing in people from an organisational perspective in order to obtain a competitive advantage for the firm. The data supports the literature in this regard with more than half the respondents citing competitiveness as a driver of employee development.

Rank	#	Category	Frequency
5	5	Investment in employee development to attract and retain talented employees	8

In support of this finding, Craig, *et al.* (2002) and Waterman, *et al.* (1994) state in the literature reviewed that employees who worked for firms that offer development and growth opportunities were the most committed to remaining with the firm.



Rank	#	Category	Frequency
5	6	Investment in people development and skills upliftment will benefit SA. It is the right thing to do	8

Eight of the respondents indicated that their investment in employee skills was driven by the need to increase the overall skills levels within South Africa. This finding shows the depth of understanding of the employability paradox and its acceptance by these respondents. These respondents recognise that the benefit of the skills they impart in employees will not necessarily be reaped by their organisation, but will benefit the country as a whole. As the research did not specifically examine the broadest definition of employability (Thijssen, *et al*, 2008) which takes into account societal factors, this finding was unexpected.

The broadest definition of employability encompasses both personal and contextual factors influencing future labour market perspectives and includes factors at the level of the organisation and society that can influence the future labour situation of workers (Thijssen, *et al.* 2008). This finding is interesting as it indicates the firms' awareness and acknowledgement of this broader definition of employability. It also indicates the willingness of firms to be a positive influence within this context.

Rank	#	Category	Frequency
7	7	Investment in people to enhance and re-enforce company culture	3

Three respondents indicated the re-enforcement of company culture as a development driver. Waterman, *et al.* (1994) say in the literature that employee development will lead to better organisational community.



Rank	#	Category	Frequency
7	8	Investment in people to enable them to make a difference outside their current role	3

In the literature Kelly, *et al.* (2003) say that the ultimate reward for personal growth is a future which ensures capacity and self renewal. The data shows that firms do invest in employees' ability to enable them to make a difference outside of their current role.

Rank	#	Category	Frequency
9	9	Investment in people to develop in-house assets to spend less on consulting companies	1

This data finding refers to the developing of required skills within the firm, and specifically refers to the development of subject matter and transferable skills by employees as described in the literature by Cox and King, (2006).

Rank	#	Category	Frequency
9	10	Investment in people to meet employee aspirations	1

Pools and Sewell (2007) confirm that there will always be aspects of a person's employability that would benefit from improvement. This finding, though requiring additional validating research as only 1 respondent discussed it as a driver, emphasises the individual's desire for self development and personal growth. This finding contradicts Clarke's (2008) examples which question employee acceptance and commitment to the concept of employability.



The need for employee development making been dentified, the final interview question under Research Question 1 (1.c.) wished to identify whether, and to what extent, the respondents acknowledged the concept of the paradox of employability. Table 4 (Chapter 5) shows that a clear majority of respondents (84%) indicated that they strongly agree that there is a conflict of interest or tension between a firm developing employees and the employees' improved ability to find alternative employment. These respondents confirmed that, the more they invested in an employee's growth and development, the more the employee was able to contribute to organisational goals, but their attractiveness to alternative employers and their capability of finding alternative employment (their employability) also increases (Coff, 1997, de Grip, et al., 2004). However, this paradox did not deter firms from further development activities as stated by Respondent No. 6; "If you are willing to develop talent to the point of a potential "flight risk", then you need to be willing to do anything to retain the talent in order to reap the benefit."

6.3.1 CONCLUSIVE FINDING FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 1

Firms recognise and understand the existence of the tension or paradox in the concept of employability.



6.4 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS I OR RESEARCH WOLSTION 2

What is the evidence of the employability paradox within the firm?

Research Question 2 recorded examples of where the employability paradox was prevalent within the respondents' firms and describes the manifestation thereof.

Interview question 2.d asked respondents if they had evidence within their organisations of where their firms had invested in human assets and, as a result, these employees had become more attractive to other employers as asserted in the literature by de Grip, et al., (2004). In support of the literature, all but one respondent agreed that this paradox manifested within their firms. The respondent who was unable to provide substantiation of this phenomenon cited the fact that he had no empirical evidence to confirm the link between levels of competence and employee portability. However, this construct has been disputed by all the other respondents.

Interview question 2.e. probed for specific examples of where firms had invested in human assets and, as a result, these employees had become more attractive to other employers. Again, all but one respondent was able to provide specific examples thereof. Two themes as reflected in Table 5 and 6 (Chapter 5) emerged from the responses to this question - employee turnover and employee disengagement. These manifestations concur with those noted in the literature when a break in the psychological contract occurs (Turnley and Feldman, 2000; Clarke and Patrickson, 2007).



The top three reasons cited by illins of now this paradox is manifested in their firms through employee turnover is;

- through poaching or headhunting of employees by competitors
- a market driven demand for skills due to the skills shortage in SA
- employees moving to other organisations for greater opportunities

The most remarkable findings from the data was that five of the organisations actively foster a reputation where they consider themselves to be the industry training ground and willingly impart skills and develop employees with a view to not obtaining a full return on this investment. This again supports the broadest definition of employability (Thijssen, *et al.*, 2008) and indicates acceptance of the employability paradox and a willingness to be a positive influence within the greater South African context.

Further to this, and in support of the literature (McGregor, *et al*, 2004; Clarke and Patrickson, 2008), the data shows that organisations are of the opinion that the new economy worker wants, and actively seeks out, environments where they can apply their newly learnt skills, where they can find career development and challenging work opportunities. Firms believe that these individuals wish for a learning path within an organisation, but do not anticipate having long careers within a single organisation.

The least cited reasons for employee turnover were stated as;

- employees wishing to join a better known brand
- employees moving to other employers through fear of retrenchment with their current employer



Within the second theme of employee disengagement the data shows how this paradox is manifested in respondents firms. The most cited reason creates a context where employees have been developed or recently qualified and their new qualifications do not match their capabilities. The respondents were of the opinion that this results in disengaged employees as the employee believes themselves to be underutilised and underappreciated by their employing firms. Should employees not be able to exit the firm due to contractual obligations, respondents believe that poor performance soon follows.

These themes were contextualised by Respondent No. 5 who stated that the more their firm invested in human assets, the more attractive their employees became to alternative employers. However, when individuals realise their capabilities and marketability and, especially where their new talents are not being optimally utilised or they are contractually restrained from exiting an organisation, they either go (exit the firm) or stay and become disengaged. It is with those individuals who disengage where the real challenge arises.

6.4.1 CONCLUSIVE FINDING FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 2

The employability paradox is manifested in firms through employee turnover and employee disengagement.



What responses do companies have, if any, to this paradox?

This research question explored the strategies or best practices deployed by the respondents' firms in responding to or managing this paradox. Interview question 3.f. asked respondents to list specific strategies or plans of how they develop and grow their employees, whilst ensuring they obtain a return on this investment.

Forty strategies and best practices were identified; these were further categorised as strategies and best practices which either validate, enhance or extend, the *de jure* model. The strategies obtained from the data which validate the *de jure* model are shown below in rank-order and linked to the related reference from the literature. These strategies are represented in Appendix C and cross-referenced using superscript to Section 2.6 (Page 34-36), where they appear in context in the literature review.

As the literature is often very broad, certain strategies or best practices have been linked to more than one reference from the literature. In turn, best practices and strategies from the literature have been linked to more than one data finding. All the strategies or best practices discussed in the *de jure* model have been validated through the data collection process. Inter-linkages occur from the response to certain strategies provided by respondents where they have included an additional layer of detail, provided the specific tactics deployed by their firms or grouped strategies from the literature collectively.

The additional layer of uctain is evident when respondents refer to specific training⁷ (Thijssen, *et al.* 2008) and a single respondent included performance interventionist training as a stand-alone focus area. Tactics are included under regular communications¹⁷ (Rhinesmith, 2001) where three specific tactics were detailed;

- exit interviews to identify and action root causes of employee exits
- linking employee development to performance contracting through regular feedback sessions
- holding of retention interviews to proactively determine employee state of mind

When discussing specific training as a strategy, respondents collectively grouped simulation of workplace support, situational training and self directed learning to improve on the job performance as tactics within this category.

6.5.1 VALIDATE THE DE JURE MODEL

Table 11 is an extract of the eighteen strategies and best practices obtained from the data in Table 7 (Chapter 5) that evidence a link to the literature reviewed and validate the *de jure* model in Chapter 5.

TABLE 11: FIRM STRATEGIES AND BEST PRACTICES ON MANAGING THE EMPLOYABILITY PARADOX AS OBTAINED FROM THE DATA RECEIVED, EVIDENCES THE LINK TO THE LITERATURE REVIEWED AND VALIDATING THE DE JURE MODEL.

Rank	Frequency	Do you have specific strategies on how you develop and grow your employees, whilst ensuring that your firm obtains a return on this investment	Superscript	Validating reference from the literature
1	17	Vacancy boards are internal advertising boards, most often appearing on an organisations intranet, wherein all current vacancies within the organisation are advertised	7	Vacancy boards Thijssen, <i>et al.</i> 2008

		YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORI	A .	
2	16	Bursaries or study assistance offered to employees to obtain formal qualifications linked to their role (either current or future) within the organisation	3	Formal training & development opportunities Thijssen, et al. 2008
2	16	Specific training refers to training that is role (job or task) specific including simulation of workplace support, situational training and self directed learning to improve on the job performance	1 4 5	Specific training, self directed learning, simulation of workplace support Thijssen, et al. 2008
2	16	General training refers to training that can be applied beyond the incumbent's current role. General training is often applicable beyond the organisation and industry (i.e. leadership and managerial training)	2	General training Thijssen, et al. 2008
6	13	Have a recognised Talent Pool, who has received feedback that they are future talent for the organisation, so supporting employee career choice	9	Supporting career choices Thijssen, et al. 2008
8	12	Coaching/mentorship occurs when a person (usually more senior or expert in the organisation) guides, advises and assists an employee with a view to impart knowledge to the employee and/or improve job performance	11	Coaching services Thijssen, <i>et al.</i> 2008
8	12	Networking training clarifies the value and enables employees to build and maintain personal networks (or contacts/communities of practice) within and external to an organisation	12	Networking training Thijssen, <i>et al</i> . 2008
13	9	Exit Interviews to identify and action root causes of employee exits, with a view to providing corrective action to retain future talent	17	Regular communications Rhine-smith, 2001
13	9	Graduate programs, apprenticeships and learnerships	6	Situational training Clarke, 2007
19	7	Link employee development to performance contracting with regular feedback sessions on employee progress	17	Regular communications Rhine-smith, 2001
20	6	Provide opportunities for employees to apply newly learned knowledge and skill by creating a link between training interventions to actual jobs (learning paths)	13	Opportunities for applying newly learned knowledge and skill Thijssen, et al. 2008
20	6	Accept costs of lower level turnover with no specific development strategy for lower level staff	15	Accept costs of lower level turnover Legatt-Cook, 2007
24	5	Allow vocational training by permitting staff to take sabbaticals to fulfil growth and learning opportunities	16	Vocational training Legatt-Cook, 2007

		YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORI	A	
24	5	Assessments of employee qualities would be evaluation tools used to assist in creating employee self-awareness, and would include abilities and psychometric testing to provide greater employee insight and identify potential development gaps	8	Assessments of the qualities of employees Thijssen, et al. 2008
30	3	Providing outplacement services would include offering employment or head hunting firms access to current employees to ensure their successful outplacement. This outplacement could be both internal and external to the organisation.	10	Providing outplacement services Thijssen, <i>et al.</i> 2008
32	2	Hold retention interviews to proactively determine employee state of mind, to ensure key employees are actively utilised in challenging role	17	Regular communications Rhine-Smith (2001)
37	1	Laissez faire - takes no action but considers the current competencies of employees as something they can exploit with no investment	14	Laissez faire Thijssen, et al. 2008
37	1	Performance interventionist training	1	Specific training Thijssen, et al. 2008

6.5.2 EXTEND OR ENHANCE THE DE JURE MODEL

The twenty-two strategies listed below have been extracted from the data in Table 7 (Chapter 5) and are strategies or best practices which extend or enhance the *de jure* model. They are shown below in rank-order, with commentary provided for each finding to describe the nature and context in which the strategy was discussed by the respondents.

Rank	Frequ- Ency	Do you have specific strategies on how you develop and grow your employees, whilst ensuring that your firm obtains a return on this investment
5	14	Firms use top quartile remuneration strategies to retain highly skilled employees that they have invested in.

The data shows that the most cited strategy by respondents in order to obtain a return on investment on employee development is to use top quartile, sometimes as high as 90% quartile, remuneration in order to retain highly skilled or talented employees for the benefit of the firm.



Rank	Frequ- ency	Do you have specific strategies on how you develop and grow your employees, whilst ensuring that your firm obtains a return on this investment
6	13	Firms obtain a return on investment in employee development through contractual clauses which tie in employees to either a financial and/or time linked work back periods for money spent on generic training

Again, the data shows that most firms use contractual clauses to lock employees in to either a financial and/or time-linked work back period. The contractual value or work back period is usually linked to the cost and the length of the initiative undertaken and is primarily applied to recoup costs on formal training and development opportunities.

Though applied by most companies, the majority of respondents did state that they did not believe that contractual obligations actually translated into firms reaping the benefit of the employee development. However, the respondents felt that at least their cost of capital was recovered from either the employee or the hiring firm. The opportunity cost and effort expended could not be recouped.

Rank	Frequ- ency	Do you have specific strategies on how you develop and grow your employees, whilst ensuring that your firm obtains a return on this investment
8	12	Fill majority of senior positions with internally developed or developing candidates

The findings show that internal promotion is considered a way of developing employees and providing them with challenging opportunities that will immediately and directly benefit the employing firm.

Rank	Frequ- ency	Do you have specific strategies on now you develop and grow your employees, whilst ensuring that your firm obtains a return on this investment
11	11	Develop industry reputation / Brand as employer of choice

Eleven respondents indicated that it was necessary to develop a sound industry reputation in order to brand the firm as an employer of choice. The respondents were of the opinion that a strong employer brand would attract and retain talented employees, affording them an opportunity to obtain a return on any investment made on employee development.

Rank	Frequ- ency	Do you have specific strategies on how you develop and grow your employees, whilst ensuring that your firm obtains a return on this investment
11	11	Provide employees with opportunities for international exposure to utilise and grow skills

With the move towards a global economy, the data shows that firms believe that international exposure is a successful strategy to obtain a return on investment whilst developing the employee's skills. Respondents offer opportunities for international exposure as both a tool to attract employees and as a tool to retain them.

Rank	Frequ- ency	Do you have specific strategies on how you develop and grow your employees, whilst ensuring that your firm obtains a return on this investment
13	9	Contractual agreements enforcing restraint-of-trade should an employee leave their current organisation

Restraint-of-trade agreements prohibiting senior employees from exiting the firm to either join competitors or to open their own competing enterprise were also prevalent in the data obtained. However, as with the previous contractual

obligations, responder to believed that restraint-or-trades merely encouraged employees to be more creative when exiting the firm in order to work "round" their restraint-of-trade agreements. None of the respondents who indicated this as a strategy had ever legally enforced a restraint-of-trade contract when an employee had exited the firm.

Rank	Frequ- ency	Do you have specific strategies on how you develop and grow your employees, whilst ensuring that your firm obtains a return on this investment
13	9	Global talent program to utilise and grow talent globally

The data shows that global talent programs within firms with international representation allow for the firm, from a Group perspective, to obtain a return on employee development by being able to meet employee demands for an international placement.

Rank	Frequ- ency	Do you have specific strategies on how you develop and grow your employees, whilst ensuring that your firm obtains a return on this investment
17	8	Entrepreneurial culture encouraged

Encouraging an entrepreneurial culture is shown by the data as a strategy to obtain a return on investment on employee development. Respondent No 15 clarifies this by saying that they allow employees to use their skills to present business ideas for the development of new business projects within the firm. Should the project be accepted, the employee runs with the project to completion and is rewarded based on the projects' financial contribution to the business as a whole. This encourages employees to keep growing and developing whilst providing a "pay-back" to the firm in the form of new product lines.



Rank	Frequ- ency	Do you have specific strategies on how you develop and grow your employees, whilst ensuring that your firm obtains a return on this investment
17	8	Formal processes to rotate and expose staff within the group / across divisions to provide work challenges and learning opportunities

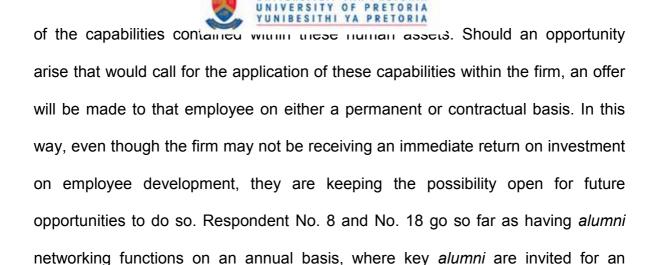
The data shows firms use a strategy to rotate and expose staff across divisions within the organisation. This encourages employee learning whilst simultaneously obtaining synergies and cross pollination throughout the firm.

Rank	Frequ- ency	Do you have specific strategies on how you develop and grow your employees, whilst ensuring that your firm obtains a return on this investment
20	6	Implement strategies to align employee and organisational values

Six respondents discussed the need to implement strategies that align employee and organisational values, in the belief that aligned values will result in more engaged and committed employees. The thought behind this strategy is that employees who are experiencing value alignment will develop themselves where they see gaps for the mutual benefit of themselves and the firm and will subsequently put their skills to use to close the gap identified, thus ensuring a return on employee investment.

Rank	Frequ- ency	Do you have specific strategies on how you develop and grow your employees, whilst ensuring that your firm obtains a return on this investment
20	6	Formal <i>alumni</i> networks enable firms to track talented employees who have exited the organisation that may return to the firm in the future or contract their services to the firm if mutually agreed

Many firms have established formal *alumni* networks, usually on an internal database, to enable them to track talented employees who have exited the organisation. The purpose of tracking these employees is for firms not to lose sight



Rank	Frequ- ency	Do you have specific strategies on how you develop and grow your employees, whilst ensuring that your firm obtains a return on this investment
24	5	Individuals within the firm informally maintain relationships with talented employees that voluntarily exit the organisation with a view to advising them of opportunities to return to the firm

evening of social interaction with selected full time employees.

The data finding in this regard is where individuals within a firm informally maintain relations with talented employees who have voluntarily exited the organisation, with a view to advising them of any opportunities to return to the firm should a suitable opening arise. Again this refers to the intention of a firm obtaining a return on employee development at a future date, regardless of the status of the employee's employment within the organisation.



Rank	Frequ- ency	Do you have specific strategies on how you develop and grow your employees, whilst ensuring that your firm obtains a return on this investment
24	5	Firms are to provide an holistic employment offering comprising multiple components when developing and retaining employees

Five respondents indicated that it was not any one strategy that firms needed to provide in order to obtain a return on investment on employee development. The return could be reaped only through a holistic employment offering, comprising multiple components to develop and retain employees. No specific examples of bundling were offered by the respondents, but it appeared to be a desired end state envisioned by the organisations.

Rank	Frequ- ency	Do you have specific strategies on how you develop and grow your employees, whilst ensuring that your firm obtains a return on this investment
28	4	Provide employees with flexible work practices such as job sharing, shorter working weeks, flexible hours

The data shows that firms use flexible work practices as a way of obtaining a return on investment on employee development. This strategy specifically focuses on retaining the capabilities of employees within the firm through accommodating their personal commitments during their various life-stages (i.e. working mothers are allowed to work flexible work hours or to work from home in order for them to spend more time with their family and to continue contributing to the firm).

Rank	Frequ- ency	Do you have specific strategies on how you develop and grow your employees, whilst ensuring that your firm obtains a return on this investment
28	4	Induction program to show employees interlinkages within the firm and the role of training

Four respondents highlighted the importance of induction in showing employees what development opportunities the firm offers, how they link back to individual performance and what is expected from the employee (the return on investment)



should they take up the opportunity. This contextualises the development process and clarifies the firm's expectations from the start.

Rank	Frequ- ency	Do you have specific strategies on how you develop and grow your employees, whilst ensuring that your firm obtains a return on this investment
30	3	Internal company recognition programs

The data shows that firms use the best practice of internal company recognition programs to reward employees who have exceeded in specific areas. The motivation behind the implementation of these programs is to stretch employees through rewarding them for going the extra mile. In this way firms believe they are obtaining more from the employee than they would normally receive, so are obtaining a return on investment in employee development.

Rank	Frequ- ency	Do you have specific strategies on how you develop and grow your employees, whilst ensuring that your firm obtains a return on this investment
32	2	Ensure stringent recruitment criteria to ensure employee fit as from recruitment

Stringent recruitment criteria ensuring employee/organisation fit is more likely to result in longer retention periods of employees within the firm. Therefore, the firm will obtain a greater return on investment in this employee's development the longer the employee remains working for the firm.

Rank	Frequ- ency	Do you have specific strategies on how you develop and grow your employees, whilst ensuring that your firm obtains a return on this investment
32	2	Company internal rules of engagement detailed for interdivisional transfers to restrict internal head hunting

Two respondents indicated that their organisations had stringent policies to govern inter-company transfers. This effectively restricted internal head hunting and



development without the risk of another division headhunting the employee. However, the risk with this strategy is that the employee moves outside the firm, consequently the firm as a whole loses the benefit of the employee's capabilities.

Rank	Frequ- ency	Do you have specific strategies on how you develop and grow your employees, whilst ensuring that your firm obtains a return on this investment
32	2	Action learning groups; forums initiated by individuals who have attended development opportunities where individual learning's are shared in inter-divisional task focussed groups, led by the person who obtained the learning

The data shows that the establishment of action learning groups is a strategy which encourages the practical sharing of an individuals' learning with a greater audience who have been tasked to complete a specific project that requires this knowledge. This generates a return on investment in four ways. The first is through embedding the knowledge in the incumbent who participated in the development opportunity by them sharing the information with a wider audience in a practical way. The second is through the exposure of the development opportunity to the wider audience, and the third is through encouraging implementation of the learning by allowing the individuals to apply practically the learning to a specific inter-divisional task. The fourth return is through the inter-divisional team based networking that occurs whilst undertaking the task.



Rank	Frequ- ency	Do you have specific strategies on how you develop and grow your employees, whilst ensuring that your firm obtains a return on this investment
32	2	Implement team based work

Team based work, as a strategy for obtaining a return on investment for employee development, is argued by the respondents that by working in teams individuals share knowledge and skills and are therefore less likely to create a critical vacancy should they exit the organisation as the team will continue without them.

Rank	Frequ- ency	Do you have specific strategies on how you develop and grow your employees, whilst ensuring that your firm obtains a return on this investment
37	1	Community projects allowing employees to make a difference to SA

Only one respondent indicated that they actively pursue community projects as a way to obtain a return on employee development. Respondent No. 8 described the benefit of this strategy. Through employees applying newly found skills on company time to community based projects, not only do employers improve their image in the community, but employees are provided with an opportunity to apply practically their skills whilst contributing to the "greater good". This provides an emotional reward to employees for their development, so minimising the likelihood that they will seek an intrinsic reward.



Rank	Frequ- ency	Do you have specific strategies on how you develop and grow your employees, whilst ensuring that your firm obtains a return on this investment
37	1	Provide hard currency pensions/investments/retention bonus's to protect talent against the global war for talent

The respondent who provided the data for this strategy is part of an international organisation. It was specifically indicated by the respondent that this strategy was only applied in South Africa to counter-act the global war for talent and to position their firm as an attractive employer on the global employment market. The motivation for this strategy was to provide talented individuals with "hard-currency" pensions, investments and retention bonuses to protect them from being headhunted by offshore firms. In this way the organisation was able to retain employees and so obtain a return on their development.

6.5.3 CONCLUSIVE FINDING FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 3

Forty strategies or best practices were uncovered that were deployed by the respondents' firms in responding to or managing the employability paradox. Eighteen strategies and best practices were recorded that endorse those contained in the literature and validate the *de jure* model in Chapter 5. Twenty-two strategies were obtained from the data which extend or enhance the *de jure* model.



6.6 DISCUSSION OF REQUESTION 4

Do the strategies or best practices used by firms in responding to or managing the employability paradox meet the needs of the knowledge worker and/or employing firm?

This research question seeks to show what the impact is of the strategies implemented by the respondents' firms to manage the employability paradox through enhancing the *de jure* model.

6.6.1 ENHANCEMENTS TO THE DE JURE MODEL

Insights obtained from the empirical research have highlighted an additional twenty two strategies and best practices, represented in Table 8 (Chapter 5), which need to be included on the *de jure* model. The need for a more quantitative recording of strategies on the *de jure* model was also identified in order to determine to what extent these strategies and best practices meet the needs of the knowledge worker and/or that of the employing firm. This resulted in the development of a *de facto* model as an extension of the existing work in this field.

6.6.2 FORMULATION OF THE DE FACTO MODEL

The *de facto* model is an extension of the *de jure* model represented in Chapter 5. The model remains as a two-by-two matrix with intersecting axes to create four quadrants, so as to represent the employability paradox on a two dimensional graph, with the paradox visually displayed by the placement of the diametrically opposed quadrants.



To improve the robustriess of the defute model, Axis-A and Axis-Y were placed over a numerical grid with the two axes representing a continuum of need fulfilment from each perspective as a result of an organisation implementing strategies, or best practices, to manage the employability paradox. The Y-Axis represents the organisation's perspective and, the X-Axis the individual perspective. The continuum moves on a scale of 1 – 10 (with 1 being "not focused" to 10 being "very focused") of strategies and best practices that;

- Meet the needs of the organisation to those that do not meet the needs of the organisation (Y-Axis)
- Meet the needs of the individual to those that do not meet the needs of the individual (X-Axis)

The placement of the axes in this manner created four quadrants that allowed for the quantitative plotting of strategies or best practices. The four quadrants represent those strategies, which

- Meet the needs of the organisation and meet the needs of the individual (top left quadrant)
- Meet the needs of the organisation and do not meet the needs of the individual (top right quadrant).
- Meet the needs of the individual and do not meet the needs of the organisation (bottom left quadrant)
- Do not meet the needs of the individual and do not meet the needs of the organisation (bottom right quadrant).

The process of populating the *de facto* model entailed a quantitative plotting of the strategies and best practices on the numerical grid. The category indicating the



strategy or best practice as tabulated in Table 7 (Chapter 5) is recorded on the *de facto* model and plotted as per the mean shown in Table 10 (Chapter 5). Colour coding is also applied as per Table 8 (Chapter 5) to indicate which strategies validate and which strategies extend or enhance the *de jure* model.

This creates a more comprehensive model to identify what the impact is of the strategies implemented by the respondents' firms. It assists in determining whose needs will be most met by the strategies or best practices, as deployed by the firm to manage the employability paradox. A written summary of the plotting within the *de facto* model is in Appendix E, which indicates the quadrant categorisation of strategies and best practices as contained in the *de facto* model, it also uses the colour coding to indicate which strategies validate and which strategies extend the *de jure* model.

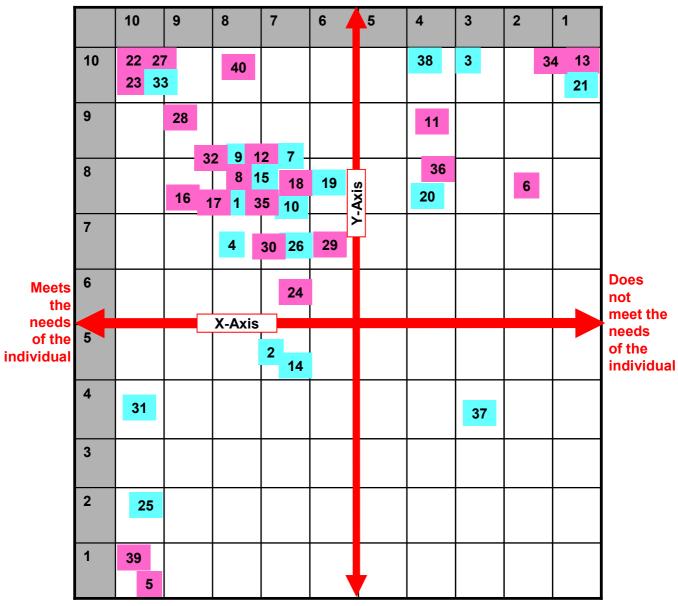
It is interesting to note that the majority of strategies and best practices recorded meet both the needs of the individual and the needs of the organisation (24 in total). This shows that South African firms do believe they understand the needs of knowledge workers and consider their interests in the formulation of organisational strategies. However, this result may also be influenced by respondent bias, as the sample is not fully representative of the population. Further, the scope of the research is limited to exploring the viewpoint of the organisation and not that of the individual. Therefore, it may be inappropriate to project the findings beyond this sample without additional research.

Please refer Figure 2 overleaf for the *de facto* model.



FIGURE 2: DE FACTO MODEL. ORGANISATIONAL APPROACHES TO MANAGING THE PARADOX

Meets the needs of the organisation



Does not meet the needs of the organisation



6.6.3 PURPOSE AND AFFLICATION OF THE DE FACTO MODEL

The *de facto* model integrates the results from the literature with that of the empirical evidence obtained. It identifies practical strategies and best practices and their resultant impact from the firm's perspective, on both the individual and the organisation when managing the employability paradox.

The *de facto* model will provide organisations with suggested strategies in managing the employability paradox and assist firms in understanding the impact of their chosen strategies on both themselves and their employees. The model will also assist knowledge workers in evaluating the organisation's approach in encouraging employability within its workforce.

6.6.4 CONCLUSIVE FINDING FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 4

The *de facto* model meets the research objectives as defined by Research Question 4 through quantitatively identifying which of these strategies or best practices meet the needs of the knowledge worker and/or the employing firm.



CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will highlight the main findings of this research project, including recommendations to stakeholders and outline areas for future research.

7.2 REVIEW OF RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

The literature emphasises the importance of the individual as a key contributor to organisational success and how the changing career patterns and the erosion of job security has resulted in a growing emphasis on employability as a basis for the career and employment success (Thite, 2001). Thite (2001) continues by saying that organisations expect and demand that their employees adopt a life long learning approach to be "world class" in the global market place. However, these organisations need to bear the cost of this ongoing technical and behavioural training that employees need to go through to be successful. The management of employees' knowledge, skills and attributes by organisations pose a paradox that may result in firms not acquiring any benefit or, in fact, creating a direct competitive threat. This is the dilemma central to this study.

This paradox arises as, like fixed assets, employees' knowledge, skills and attributes grow the more they are invested in but, unlike fixed assets, people assets can resign and move to a competing firm, can demand increased salaries and may not engage fully in contributing to firm goals, thus negating any investment made (Coff, 1997). This is the employability paradox.



Practical strategies on how mins are to develop knowledge workers to ensure they become and remain high performing employees whilst safe-guarding the firms return on investment, have not been well documented. As employability is embedded in the transferability of the knowledge worker's set of skills, abilities and competencies, there is a need to gain deeper insights into the approaches available to organisations to manage this paradox.

The research questions have explored the dilemma of employability and how the employer can meet the needs of the knowledge worker through investing in employee development, whilst realising a firm specific competitive advantage through protecting the firm's return on investment on employee development. This chapter will highlight the main findings of this research, include recommendations to stakeholders and outline future research areas.

7.3 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Eighteen expert interviews were conducted with human resource practioners who have an expertise or interest in employability and with influence on company human resource strategy formation. The research has found that firms recognise and understand the existence of the tension or paradox in the concept of employability. This was confirmed by all but one respondent and is clearly affirmed by eight of the respondents who indicate that their investment in employee skills was driven by the need to increase the overall skills levels within South Africa as being the "right thing to do". This finding shows the depth of understanding of the employability paradox and its acceptance by these respondents. There is recognition that the benefit of the skills that the organisation will impart in employees will not necessarily be reaped by their firm, but will benefit the country as a whole. This finding is interesting as it indicates the firm's awareness and



acknowledgement of the product definition of employability. It also indicates the willingness of firms to be a positive influence within a national context.

The research found that the employability paradox is manifested in firms through employee turnover and employee disengagement; the same manifestations concur with those noted in the literature when a break in the psychological contract occurs (Turnley and Feldman 2000; Clarke and Patrickson, 2007). To link with the previous finding where respondents clearly acknowledge and accept the employability paradox, five of the organisations actively foster a reputation where they consider themselves to be the industry training ground and willingly impart skills and develop employees with a view not to obtain a full return on this investment. This again supports the broadest definition of employability (Thijssen, et al., 2008) and indicates acceptance of the employability paradox and a willingness to be a positive influence within the greater South African context.

In order for firms better to manage the employability paradox, forty strategies or best practices were uncovered that were deployed by the respondents' firms in responding to or managing the employability paradox. Eighteen strategies and best practices were recorded that endorse those contained in the literature and twenty-two additional strategies were obtained from the data.

The research describes, decodes and translates these findings into a practical and meaningful framework, or *de facto* model, which maps the firms' perspective on the impact of these suggested strategies on the organisation and/or the knowledge worker. Please refer to Figure 2 (Chapter 6) for the *de facto* model. The *de facto* model shows that the majority of strategies are positioned to meet the needs of the knowledge worker and the needs of the employer. This indicates that South African



firms do believe they understand the medus of the knowledge worker and consider their interests in the formulation of organisational strategies.

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STAKEHOLDERS

Following please find recommended applications for this research as it applies to stakeholders, including organisations, investors, knowledge workers and academics.

Employability can be viewed as the dynamic matching of the supply factors (individuals) to the demand factors (organisations), facilitated by the human resource development instruments available to them (institutions) (de Grip, van Loo and Sanders, 2004). Management needs to take cognisance of the interdependence between the individual and the organisation perspective, especially if they wish to obtain a competitive advantage through their human assets. Though managers confirm the existence of the employability paradox, this is not necessarily top of mind when developing strategies to develop or retain employees. In order to ensure that firms reap the benefit of employee development they need ensure they implement "world-class" strategies to manage the employability paradox.

The *de facto* model integrates the results from the literature with that of the empirical evidence obtained and identifies practical strategies and best practices and their resultant impact from the firm's perspective, on both the individual and the organisation when managing the employability paradox. Managers will be able to utilise this model to obtain ideas for strategy development and to understand the impact of these strategies on both the organisation and the employee.



The *de facto* model will also assist knowledge workers in evaluating the organisation's approach in encouraging employability within its workforce. This can be used as an indicator of the firm's approach to employability and as a result, portray employer attractiveness for knowledge workers.

An indication of employer attractiveness based on the application of the *de facto* model, may also indicate a firm for which knowledge workers wish to work. This would indicate a firm that obtains a return on investment in employee development so maximises the competitive advantage provided by their human assets. In the long run this could be an indicator of a more successful firm for investors, though further research would be needed to confirm this link.

The research questions have explored the dilemma of employability and how the employer can meet the needs of the knowledge worker through investing in employee development, whilst realising a firm specific competitive advantage through protecting the firm's return on investment on employee development. The *de facto* model indicates which of these strategies meet the needs of the organisation, whilst simultaneously meeting the needs of the individual.

This research project provides insight into the constructs of employability and practical strategies on how firms can develop knowledge workers to ensure they become and remain high performing employees, whilst safe-guarding the firms' return on investment, so contributing to the literature through deeper insights into the approaches available to organisations to manage this paradox. This research builds on existing literature and provides interesting opportunities for further study.

The area of employability and the employability paradox is relatively underdeveloped. Seven areas for future research are suggested below:

- A quantitative study of increased sample size (to obtain statistical relevance) to confirm the impact (plotting) of the strategies and best practices used by organisations to manage the employability paradox would further validate the *de facto* model.
- The scope of this research is limited to exploring the viewpoint of the organisation and not that of the individual. Further research need be undertaken to assess any difference in perspective as to the impact of strategies and best practices to manage the employability paradox from an individual perspective and cross-referenced to the *de facto* model which has been built from an organisational perspective.
- Further research to identify and examine the difference in the components of the employability paradox and the strategies and best practices as applied to manage this paradox in the South African economy, relative to a global context, would be of interest.
- More research needs to be undertaken to confirm the supposition that mature firms are more likely to offer employees formal development programs and growth opportunities than immature firms, as stated by the respondents.
- Offering development opportunities to meet employee aspirations requires additional validating research as only 1 respondent discussed it as a driver of employee development from the firm's perspective. This finding emphasises the individual's desire for self development and personal growth and contradicts Clarke's (2008) examples which questions employee



acceptance and communent to the concept of employability, making it an appealing topic to investigate further.

- An exploratory study to determine how firms position themselves within the construct of the broader definition of employability would provide new information in this field.
- Investigating a firm's attractiveness as an employer based on their application of the strategies as contained de facto model and using this as a predictor of firm performance would be a fascinating project for further research.

7.6 CONCLUSION

The dynamic interplay between the global economy, the knowledge worker and the organisation shapes the concept of employability. This study has contributed to the body of research on employability and confirmed the employability paradox in South Africa.

Traditional human resource management practices acknowledge that a high performing employee is required to contribute to a competitive organisation within the global environment. The integration of strategies and best practices into a single framework which evaluates those strategies that meet the needs of the knowledge worker whilst protecting the interests of the employing firm through ensuring a return on investment in employee development offers a new perspective on this field of study. The results, as presented in the *de facto* model, are a graphic and integrated representation to be used by both organisations and knowledge workers to understand the impact of firms' strategies when managing the employability paradox



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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: DISCUSSION GUIDE AND SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The Employability Paradox Questionnaire (45 minutes)

- Introduction / Breaking the Ice (3 min)
 - The aim of the introduction is to get to know the respondent and encourage open and honest dialogue with the respondent.
- Interviewer introduces himself and thanks respondent for there time
 - Brief explanation of discussion and dialogue process
 - Assurance of confidentiality, ethical clearance procedures and note taking
- Respondent requested to introduce themselves and provide Background (short)
- Present the paradox of Employability and contextualise the topic:

It is often said that a firms human assets are a source of competitive advantage to the firm. Studies have found that to attract and retain talented employees, firms need to offer more than just money – they need to offer challenging roles and development opportunities. However, the more organisations invest in an employee's growth and development the more the employee is able to contribute to organisational goals, but their attractiveness to alternative employers and their capability of finding alternative employment (their employability) also increases.

This is the dilemma (or paradox) central to this study. A paradox can be defined as conflicting demands or opposing perspectives, which when viewed individually are true.

This paper is a study of the paradox of employability. It discusses the dilemma of meeting the needs of the knowledge worker whilst protecting the interests of the employing firm through ensuring a return on their investment in the employee. For the purpose of this study knowledge workers can be defined as middle managers, technical specialists and above.



• Move into interview dialogue using interview schedule as a guide:

Questions to obtain clarity on respondent's opinions to research question

- 1. Do firms recognise the existence of the tension or paradox in the concept of employability?
- a. In your organisation do you have a need to develop your employees?

Yes	No

- b. What drives your organisation to invest / not to invest in training and development of employees?
- c. On a scale of 1 to 4, With 4 being agrees and 1 being disagrees please advise me if you believe there is a conflict of interest or tension between
 - a firm developing employees, and
 - the employees improved ability to find alternative employment (I.e. do you believe that if you invest in people, they are more able to find alternative employment however, there are also consequences in not investing employees).

Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Agree
Strongly	Somewhat	Somewhat	Strongly
1	2	3	4

Don't	
Know	



Questions to obtain clarity on respondent's opinions to research question

2. What is the evidence of this paradox within the firm

d. Is their evidence within your firm of where you have invested in human assets and as a result these employees have become more attractive to other employers?

e. How is this manifested in your firm?

Questions to

obtain clarity on respondent's opinions to research question

- 3. What responses do companies have, if any, to this paradox?
- f. Do you have specific strategies or plans on how you develop and grow your employees, whilst ensuring that your firm obtains a return on this investment in human resources? If so, what are they?

 Prompts;
 - i. Do all your employee investments centre on obtaining a return, if so how to you ensure this return, if not, what are the other investments?
 - ii. Do you have any post retention strategies (i.e. after the employee has left the organisation) if so what are they.
 - iii. Do you offer any development opportunities to employees that do not impact your direct costs, if so what are they.



4. Which of these strategies meet the needs of the knowledge worker whilst protecting the interests of the employing firm

g. Considering each of your above mentioned strategies and plans for the investment in human resources. In your opinion to what extent on a scale of 1 – 10 (with 1 being not focussed at all and 10 being very focused on need fulfilment), are these strategies and plans focussed on creating benefits for the organisation versus the individual needs.

the organization versus the intervious freeze.										
Focus on Employee Needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Focus on Organisation needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
_										
Focus on Employee Needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Focus on Organisation needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Focus on Employee Needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Focus on Organisation needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Focus on Employee Needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Focus on Organisation needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
										_
Focus on Employee Needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Focus on Organisation needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Focus on Employee Needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Focus on Organisation needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

- WRAP UP/CONCLUSION (3 mins)
 - Any final thoughts/recommendations regarding employability?
 - Request for referral to additional respondents
 - o Thank you and goodbye.



APPENDIX B: LIST OF RESPONDENTS, THEIR CONFANY AND DESIGNATION

Respondent Name	Designation	Company
Hanli Pretorious	Director Human Resources	Transunion
Debbie Lugtenburg	Manager Human Resources	The Brand Union
Jonathan Muthige	Human Resources and Transformation Director	Coca-Cola South Africa
Andile Luke	Human Resource Director	Tracker South Africa
Kenlynn Hoosen	National Transformation and Human Resources Manager	Quest
Paige Schiller	Group Human Resources Director	Gem Diamonds
Terry Meyer	Consultant	Leadership SA Consulting
Dawn Dodds	Human Resources Manager	Trenstar
Reiner Krige	Group Executive: Human Resources	JDG Trading
Lawrence Mlotshwa	Group Director Human Resources	Absa Group
Johan Ludike	Senior Manager: Leadership	MTN
Michael Erasmus	General Manager: Human Resources	Afrox
Robbie Lazare	Executive Vice President: Human Resources	Anglogoldashanti
Ingrid Gabler	Director: People	KPMG
Rodney Williams	Human Resource Manager	Beeld
Aninka Wessels	Managing Executive: Human Resources	TFMC
Marie Janzen	Chief Operating Officer: Human Resources	Telesure Group
Sandy Mohonathan	Specialist: Human Resources	Accenture



APPENDIX C: KEY TO DE JURE MODEL - ORGANISATIONAL APPROACHES TO MANAGING THE EMPLOYABILITY PARADOX

Super- script	Strategy	Interpretation
1	Specific Training ¹ Thijssen, <i>et al.</i> 2008	Specific training refers to training that is role (job or task) specific
2	General Training ² Thijssen, <i>et al.</i> 2008	General training refers to training that can be applied beyond the incumbent's current role. General training is often applicable beyond the organisation and industry (i.e. leadership and managerial training)
3	Formal training & development opportunities ³ Thijssen, <i>et al.</i> 2008	Formal training and development opportunities refers to obtaining formal educational qualifications, such as diploma's, degrees or industry specific accreditations
4	Simulation of workplace support ⁴ Thijssen, <i>et al.</i> 2008	Simulation of workplace support is directly related to improving the ability of a specific task or instance delivery within the incumbents workplace
5	Self directed learning ⁵ . Thijssen, <i>et al.</i> 2008	Self directed learning, is any learning that is controlled by the incumbent
6	Situational Training ⁶ Clarke, 2007	Situational training is similar to Specific and Simulation of Workplace support, in that it enhances on-the-job performance based on the situation facing the incumbents. Therefore it could also apply to preparing the incumbent for a new role
7	Vacancy boards ⁷ Thijssen, <i>et al.</i> 2008	Vacancy boards are internal advertising boards, most often appearing on an organisations intranet, wherein all current vacancies within the organisation are advertised
8	Assessments of the qualities of employees ⁸ Thijssen, <i>et al.</i> 2008	Assessments of employee qualities would be to evaluation tools used to assist in creating employee self-awareness, and would include abilities and psychometric testing to provide greater employee insight and identify potential development gaps
9	Supporting career choices ⁹ Thijssen, <i>et al.</i> 2008	Supporting career choices would be where an organisation assists employees in successfully fulfilling career choices (best job incumbent match), either internally or externally to the organisation
10	Providing outplacement services ¹⁰ Thijssen, <i>et al.</i> 2008	Providing outplacement services would include offering employment or head hunting firms access to current employees to ensure their successful outplacement. This outplacement could be both internal and external to the organisation
11	Coaching Services ¹¹ Thijssen, <i>et al.</i> 2008	Coaching occurs when a person (usually more senior in the organisation) guides, advises and assists an employee with a view to impart knowledge to the employee
12	Networking Training ¹² Thijssen, <i>et al.</i> 2008	Networking training clarifies the value and enables employees to build and maintain personal networks (or contacts) within and external to an organisation
13	opportunities for applying newly learned knowledge and skill ¹³ Thijssen, <i>et al.</i> 2008	Where firms that have imparted new skills to an employee make a decision to allow the employ and opportunity to apply the newly learned knowledge and skill within the organisation (usually on projects) in order to embed the knowledge learnt.
14	laissez faire ¹⁴ Thijssen, et al. 2008	Laissez faire is where a company takes no action and they consider the current competencies of employees as something they can exploit with no investment
15	Accept costs of lower level turnover ¹⁵ Legatt-Cook, 2007	Companies consider skills to be a commodity and accept the cost of lower level turnover as a factor of life
16	Vocational training ¹⁶ Legatt-Cook, 2007	Vocational training is similar to general training; however it is driven by employee demand. It focus's on general or transferable skills
17	Regular communications ¹⁷ Rhinesmith (2001)	Regular communication by all parities will enable the firm to understand if employee needs are being taken into account, so firms will have the information required to act accordingly



APPENDIX D: LINKAGE OF REGLAROTT AND INTERVIEW QUESTION

Research Question	Interview Question	Desired Outcome
Research Question 1 Do firms recognise the existence of the tension or paradox in the concept of employability?	 a. In your organisation do you have a need to develop your employees. b. What drives your organisation to invest / not to invest in training and development of employees. c. On a scale of 1 to 4, With 4 being agrees and 1 being disagrees please advise me if you believe there is a conflict of interest or tension between; a firm developing employees, and the employees improved ability to find alternative employment. (I.e. do you believe that if you invest in people, they are more able to find alternative employment – however, there are also consequences in not investing employees). 	This question sought to ensure the respondents understanding and recognition of the paradox of employability
Research Question 2 What is the evidence of this paradox within the firm?	d. Is their evidence within your firm of where you have invested in human assets and as a result these employees have become more attractive to other employers. e. How is this manifested in your firm	The question sought to obtain examples of where the paradox was prevalent within the respondents firm and to confirm the manifestation thereof.
Research Question 3 What responses do companies have, if any, to this paradox?	f. Do you have specific strategies or plans on how you develop and grow your employees, whilst ensuring that your firm obtains a return on this investment in human resources. If so, what are they. Prompts; i. Do all your employee investments centre on obtaining a return, if so how to you ensure this return, if not, what are the other investments? ii. Do you have any post retention strategies (i.e. after the employee has left the organisation) if so what are they. ibid. you offer any development opportunities to employees that do not impact your direct costs, if so what are they.	The research question sought to explore the strategies or best practices deployed by the respondents firms in responding or managing this paradox.
Research Question 4 Which strategies meet the needs of the knowledge worker whilst protecting the interests of the employing firm?	g. Considering each of your above mentioned strategies and plans for the investment in human resources. In your opinion to what extent on a scale of 1 – 10 (with 1 being "not focused" and 10 being "very focused"), are these strategies and plans focussed on meeting the needs of the organisation and/or the individual.	This research question sought to identify the mutuality and / or exclusivity in terms of the receipt of benefits of the strategies implemented by the respondents firm



DATA FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 1

Respondent	Yes	No
1	1	0
2	1	0
2 3 4 5	1	0
4	1	0
5	1	0
5	1	0
7	1	0
8	1	0
9	1	0
10	1	0
11	1	0
12	1	0
13	1	0
14	1	0
15	1	0
16	1	0
17	1	0
18	1	0

Interview question 1.a:

In your organisation is there a need to develop your employees.

Frequency Test: 100% of respondents indicated a need to develop their employees.

Respondent	1. Disagree Strongly	2. Disagree somewhat	3. Agree somewha t	4 Agree Strongly
1	0	0	0	1
2	0	0	0	1
3	0	0	1	0
4	0	0	0	1
5	0	0	0	1
6	1	0	0	0
7	0	0	0	1
8	0	0	0	1
9	0	0	0	1
10	0	0	0	1
11	0	0	0	1
12	0	0	0	1
13	0	0	0	1
14	0	0	0	1
15	0	0	1	0
16	0	0	0	1
17	0	0	0	1
18	0	0	0	1
Total	1	0	2	15
%	5	0	11	84

Interview question 1.c:

On a scale of 1 to 4, with 4 being "agrees strongly" and 1 being "disagrees strongly" please advise me if you believe there is a conflict of interest or tension between a firm developing employees, and the employees improved ability to find alternative employment. (Recognition of Employability Paradox).

Frequency Test: 84% = strongly agree

11% = agree somewhat

5% = disagree strongly



Interview question 1.b: What drives your organisation to invest / not to invest in training and development of employees

,,	Drivers of Employee Development within an Organisation	employees	
#	Category	Rank	Frequency
	Depends on firms life cycle		1
	Depends on firms life cycle		1
	Depends on firms life cycle		1
	Depends on firms life cycle		1
5	Depends on firms life cycle		1
	Depends on firms life cycle		1
	Depends on firms life cycle		1
	Depends on firms life cycle		1
	Depends on firms life cycle		1
	Depends on firms life cycle		1
	Depends on firms life cycle		1
	Depends on firms life cycle		1
	Depends on firms life cycle		1
	Depends on firms life cycle		1
	Depends on firms life cycle		1
	Depends on firms life cycle		1
	You can't recruit for every job it depends on the firms lifecycle		1
	Not a nice thing to do, depends on the firms lifecycle		1
	Investment in employee development is based on the firms life cycle	1	18
Respondent	Drivers of Employee Development within an Organisation		-
#	Category	Rank	Frequency
	enhance on the job performance		1
	enhance on the job performance		1
	enhance on the job performance		1
	enhance on the job performance		1
	better contribute to organisations goals		1
	right tools and resources to do the job		1
	Get employees to perform better		1
	keep up to date with technologies to be used on the job		1
	enable job performance		1
	to obtain competence within the job		1
	to ensure technical competence		1
	to support business plan		1
	to build specialist skills needed for the business		1
	Improve productivity and efficiency on the job		1
	enhance productivity		1
	ensure expertise on the job		1
Category 2	Investment in employee development to enhance on the job performance	2	16
Respondent	Drivers of Employee Development within an Organisation		
#	Category	Rank	Frequency
1	ensuring future talent for the organisation management		1
	ensuring future talent for the organisation management		1
	ensuring future talent for the organisation management		1
	ensuring future talent for the organisation management		1
	ensuring talent for the organisation		1
	to create leadership capacity in the organisation		1
	build talent to meet organisations challenges		1
	build long term leadership		1
	build future talent for the organisation		1
	ensuring succession of leadership		1
17	building of talent to lead the organisation forward		1
18	leadership development		1
Category 3	Investment in employee development to provide succession of future talent for the organisation	3	12
Respondent	Drivers of Employee Development within an Organisation		
. #	Category	Rank	Frequency
3	create a competitive advantage for the firm		1
	create a competitive advantage for the firm		1
	keep competitive in market place		1
7	differentiate the firm through people, remain competitive		1
7 8	differentiate the firm through people, remain competitive better contribute or organisations competitiveness		1
7 8 10	0 1 1 7		
7 8 10 13	better contribute or organisations competitiveness		1
7 8 10 13 14	better contribute or organisations competitiveness To stay abreast of change to challenge the market		1 1
7 8 10 13 14 15	better contribute or organisations competitiveness To stay abreast of change to challenge the market to contribute to the firms competitiveness		1 1 1
7 8 10 13 14 15	better contribute or organisations competitiveness To stay abreast of change to challenge the market to contribute to the firms competitiveness build firm competitiveness		1 1 1
7 8 10 13 14 15 16	better contribute or organisations competitiveness To stay abreast of change to challenge the market to contribute to the firms competitiveness build firm competitiveness stay abreast of global best practices		1 1 1 1 1



Respondent	Drivers of Employee Development within an Organisation		
#	Category	Rank	Frequency
3	attract and retain talented employees		1
5	attract and retain talented employees		1
7	attract and retain talented employees		1
8	attract and retain talented employees		1
10	to attract and retain employees		1
12	to attract and retain employees		1
16	attract and retain talented employees		1
17	to attract and retain employees		1
Category 5	Investment in employee development to attract and retain talented employees	5	8
Respondent	Drivers of Employee Development within an Organisation		
#	Category	Rank	Frequency
3	the right thing to do		1
4	the right thing to do		1
-	The state that is a factor of a state of a s		4
7	the right thing to do in Africa - develop stem cells (science, technology, engineering, mathematics)		1
8	build talent for SA to counteract the skills shortage (only big companies have the muscle to do this)		1
9	Invest in the broader economy by training for the country		1
10	generous with training and advice to make the country a better place		1
14	the right thing to do		1
17	Have a national duty to uplift the lives of people through passing on and building skills for all South		
17	African.		1
Category 6	Investment in people development and skills upliftment will benefit SA. It is the right thing to do.	5	8
Respondent	Drivers of Employee Development within an Organisation	-	
#	Category	Rank	Frequency
11	Re-enforce company culture	1101111	1
18	Re-enforce company culture		1
15	grow company culture		1
Category 7	Investment in people to enhance and re-enforce company culture	7	3
Respondent			
#	Category	Rank	Frequency
6	Provide opportunities for employees to make a difference	Tunit	1
16	Provide opportunities for employees to make a difference		1
14	Provide opportunities for employees to make a difference		1
Category 8	Investment in people to enable them to make a difference outside their current role	7	3
Respondent	Drivers of Employee Development within an Organisation		
#	Category	Rank	Frequency
14	Spend less on consulting companies		1
Category 9	Investment in people to develop in house assets to spend less on consulting companies	9	1
Respondent	Drivers of Employee Development within an Organisation		
#	Category	Rank	Frequency
1	Meeting of employee aspirations		1
Category 10	Investment in people to meet employee aspirations	9	1
Category 10	in contain poople to indet employee depirations	J	

Drivers of why firms do not invest in Employee Development within an Organisation

Respondent	Drivers of why firms do not invest in Employee Development within an Organisation		
#	Category	Rank	Frequency
2	Buy Skills though it does increase our salary bill	1	1
Total	No investment in people due to a "buy-for-skills" policy, where needed skills are sourced in the market	1	1
Respondent	Drivers of why firms do not invest in Employee Development within an Organisation		
#	Category	Rank	Frequency
2	Minimum entry requirement prior to employment	1	1
Total	No investment in people due to minimum recruitment requirements applied	1	1
Respondent	Drivers of why firms do not invest in Employee Development within an Organisation		
#	Category	Rank	Frequency
2	Budgetary Constraints	1	1
Total	No investment in people due to budgetary constraints.	1	1

Respondent	Yes	No
1	1	0
2	1	0
3	1	0
4	1	0
5	1	0
6	0	1
7	1	0
8	1 1 1	0
9	1	0
10	1	0
11	1	0
12	1	0
13	1 1 1	0
14	1	0
15	1	0
16	1	0
17	1	0
18	1	0
Total	17	1

Is there evidence of where you have invested in human assets and as a result employees have become more attractive

Interview question 2.d:

All but one respondent have evidence of the employability paradox within their firms.

to other employers?

Interview question 2. e: How is employability manifested in your firm

No evidence of the employability paradox

Respondent	Why there is no evidence of the employability paradox within the firm		
#	Category; No Evidence	Rank	Frequenc y
6	I do not believe employability to be manifested in the firm and have never been exposed empirical evidence to suggest a link between levels of competence and portability		1
Category 1	No Evidence	1	1

Evidence of the employability paradox through employee turnover

Respondent	Drivers of Employee Development within an Organisation		
#	Category; Employee Turnover	Rank	Frequenc y
1	Move to competitiors (usually bigger corporates) with bigger pockets		1
2	People move for more money		1
5	poaching by competitors		1
7	Move for money in a very regulated environment		1
8	move to competitiors		1
9	Move for money		1
10	employees are actively headhunted for money		1
12	constant headhunting both externally and internally		1
13	move for more money		1
14	repeated job offers to staff		1
16	headhunting and targeting of skills by competiors		1
17	job offers for more money		1
18	People move for more money		1
Category 1	Manifested through poaching or headhunting of employees by competitiors	1	13

Respondent	[tion		
#	Category; Employee Turnover	Rank	Frequenc y
3	Demand for Skills / Skills shortage		1
4	Skills shortage / smalls skills pool		1
5	Risk in SA due to skills shortage		1
7	Small talent pool in SA		1
9	Skills shortage creates demand for skills		1
10	Skills shortage		1
16	Demand for Skills / Skills shortage		1
17	Demand for Skills / Skills shortage in regulated industry (function of the size of the market)		1
18	Demand for Skills / Skills shortage		1
Category 2	Manifested through the skills shortage in SA creating a demand for skilled employees	2	9

Respondent	Drivers of Employee Development within an Organisation		
#	Category; Employee Turnover	Rank	Frequenc y
2	People move for greater opportunity		1
5	move for growth opportunities		1
7	people mover for greater learning and opportunity		1
8	People move for greater opportunity		1
10	move for development opportunities		1
14	move for development opportunities		1
17	move for development opportunities		1
18	People move for greater opportunity		1
Category 3	Manifested through employees moving for greater opportunities	3	8

Respondent	Drivers of Employee Development within an Organisation		
#	Category; Employee Turnover	Rank	Frequenc y
2	Considered as a training school in the industry		1
4	Considered a training ground of the industry		1
8	Thought of as a training ground of the industry		1
16	International reputation as training ground		1
18	Considered as a training school in the industry / good reputation for staff development		1
Category 4	Manifested and accepted as the company is considered the industry training ground	4	5

Respondent	Drivers of Employee Development within an Organisation		
#	Category; Employee Turnover	Rank	Frequenc
1	People move to put there training into practice		1
3	people move to put training into practice		1
14	put theory learnt in training into practice		1
15	People move to put there training into practice		1
Category 5	Manifested through people leaving to apply their new skills in a work environment	5	4

Respondent	Drivers of Employee Development within an Organisation		
#	Category; Employee Turnover	Rank	Frequenc y
5	It is the nature of the new generation of workers		1
9	It is the nature of the new generation of workers		1
11	the new generation of workers do not want to stay but want development		1
16	Is the logical consequenc of training youngsters today		1
	Manifested in the nature of the new generation of workers want development but do not		
Category 6	anticipate having long careers within a single organisaiton	5	4

Respondent	Drivers of Employee Development within an Organisation		
#	Category; Employee Turnover	Rank	Frequenc v
5	Attracted by a better known brand		1
7	Attracted by a better known brand		1
Category 7	Manifested through employees wishing to join a better known brand	7	2

Respondent	Drivers of Employee Development within an Organisation		
#	Category; Employee Turnover	Rank	Frequenc y
5	Job insecurity with current employers		1
Category 8	Manifested through fear of retrenchment results in a move to another employer	8	1



Evidence of the employability

Respondent	Drivers of Employee Development within an Organisation		
#	Category; Disengaged Employees	Rank	Frequenc y
3	knowledge rich and talent poor - book learning but little depth of experience and high		1
7	mismatch between employee capability and levels of training		1
9	mismatch between employee capability and levels of training		1
10	mismatch between employee capability and levels of training		1
11	mismatch between employee capability and levels of training		1
14	mismatch between employee capability and levels of training		1
Category 1	Skills and capability mismatch	1	6

Respondent	Drivers of Employee Development within an Organisation		
#	Category; Disengaged Employees	Rank	Frequenc y
9	poor performance		1
3	poor performance		1
Category 2	poor performance	2	2



DATA FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 3

DATA FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 4

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APPENDIX F: QUADRANT CATEGORISATION OF STRATEGIES AND BEST PRACTICES FROM THE *DE FACTO* MODEL

KEY		
Strategies which validate the <i>de jure</i> model		
Strategies which extend or enhance the de jure model		

MEETS TH	HE NEEDS OF THE ORGANISATION MEETS THE NEEDS OF THE INDIVIDUAL
Category	Strategy or Best Practice
1	Vacancy boards are internal advertising boards most often appearing on an organisations intranet, wherein all current vacancies within the organisations are advertised.
4	General training refers to training that can be applied beyond the incumbent's current role. General training is often applicable beyond the organisation and industry (i.e. leadership and managerial training)
7	Having a recognised talent pool, the members of which have received feedback that they are future talent for the organisation. So supporting employee career choice.
8	Fill majority of senior positions with internally developed or developing candidates
9	Coaching/Mentorship when a person guides, advises and assists and employee with a view to impart knowledge to the employee and/or improve job performance
10	Networking training clarifies the value and enables employees to build and maintain personal networks within and external to the organisation
12	Provide employees with opportunities for international exposure to utilise and grow skills
15	Graduate programs, apprenticeships and learnerships
16	Global talent program to utilise and grow talent locally
17	Entrepreneurial culture encouraged
18	Formal process to rotate an expose the staff within the group / across divisions to provide work challenges and learning opportunities
22	Implement strategies to align employee and organisational values
23	Formal <i>alumni</i> networks enable firms to track talented employees who have exited the organisation that may return to the firm in the future or contract their services to the firm if mutually agreed
24	Individuals within the firm informally maintain relationships talented employees that voluntarily exit the organisation with a view to advising them of opportunities to return to the firm
26	Assessments of employee qualities often through evaluation tools to assist in creating employee self awareness, and would include personal profiling and psychometric testing to provide greater employee insight and identify potential development gaps
27	firms are to provide holistic employment offering comprising multiple components when developing and retaining employees
28	provide employees with flexible work practices such as job sharing, shorter working weeks, flexible hours
29	induction program to show employees interlinkages within the firm and the role of training
30	internal company recognition programs
32	ensure stringent recruitment criteria to ensure employee fit from recruitment
33	hold retention interviews to proactively determine employee state of min, to ensure key employees are actively utilised in a challenging role
35	action learning groups; forums initiated by individuals who have attended development opportunities where individual learning's are shared in interdivisional task focused groups, led by the person who obtained the learning
40	community projects allowing employees to make a difference to SA



MEETS THE NEEDS OF THE ORGANISATION BUT DOES NOT MEET THE NEEDS OF THE INDIVIDUAL				
Category	Category Strategy or Best Practice			
3	Specific training refers to training that is role (job or task) specific including simulation of workplace support, situational training and self directed learning to improve on the job performance			
6	firms obtain a return on investment in employee development through contractual clauses which tie in employees to either a financial or time-linked work back period for money spent on generic training			
11	Develop industry reputation / Brand as employer of choice			
13	Contractual agreements enforcing restraint of trade.			
19	Link employee development to performance contracting with regular feedback sessions on employee progress			
20	provide opportunities for applying newly learned knowledge and skill by creating a link between training interventions and actual jobs			
21	accept costs of lower level turnover with no specific development strategy for lower level staff			
34	company internal rules of engagement detailed for interdivisional transfers to restrict internal head hunting			
36	implement team based work			
38	Performance interventionist training			

MEETS T	MEETS THE NEEDS OF THE INDIVIDUAL BUT DOES NOT MEET THE NEEDS OF THE ORGANISATION				
Category	Strategy or Best Practice				
2	Bursaries or study assistance offered to employees to obtain formal qualifications linked to their role (either current or future) within the organisation				
5	firms use top quartile remuneration strategies to retain highly skilled employees that they have invested in				
14	exit interviews to identify and action root causes of employee exits, with a vie to providing corrective action to retain future talent				
25	allow vocational training by permitting staff to take sabbaticals to fulfil growth and learning opportunities				
31	Providing outplacement services would include offering employment or had hunting firm's access to current employees to ensure their successful outplacement. This outplacement could be both internal and external to the organisation				
39	provide hard currency pensions / investments / retention bonus's to protect talent against the global war for talent				

DOES N	DOES NOT MET THE NEEDS OF THE ORGANISATION AND DOES NOT MEET THE NEEDS OF THE INDIVIDUAL		
Category			
37	Laissez faire – takes no action but considers the current competencies of employees as something they can exploit with no investment		