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**A NATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT GRADUATE INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME
AS A TALENT RETENTION STRATEGY**

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ABSTRACT

The retention of new graduates is a challenge to many South African companies. As a result, organisations invest in graduate internship programmes to attract and retain high calibre graduate interns. The main objective of the research was to determine whether a graduate internship programme, as a national skills development strategy, contributed to the retention of graduate interns in a South African Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) Company.

An exploratory, ex post facto research design was followed using a combination of quantitative and qualitative data gathering techniques. Surveys were administered among a purposive selected sample of graduate interns ($N=79$) and mentors ($N=39$) in a South African ICT company. Open ended questions were used for the triangulation of results.

Results overall showed that the graduate internship programme contributed to the employability and retention of graduate interns. Practically significant relationships were found between technical skills training, mentorship, programme need and the graduate intern's intention to quit the internship programme. Practically significant relationships were also found between mentorship, programme need and the mentor's intention to employ the graduate intern. The research concludes with a retention strategy framework in guiding the implementation of a graduate internship programme in the ICT sector.



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 any degree or examination in any other university. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

Carver Albertus Pop

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an introduction to this research. A brief overview of the research problem, as well as the rationale for this study is given. The aim and scope of the study are clarified while the key concepts influencing the context and the application of the study are also explained. The anticipated contribution of the research is highlighted by discussing the significance of the study. Finally a chapter outline of the research report is provided.

1.2. BACKGROUND AND SETTING OF THE PROBLEM

Substantial costs are associated with attrition of key talent in South African companies. Turnover among newly qualified graduates is high due to their ability to pursue and find alternative employment and is further exacerbated by the undersupply of skilled employees in the market. Newly appointed employees find it easier to leave and are constantly looking out for better prospects and more rewarding opportunities. There are many factors associated with this phenomenon currently and a key factor is the demand for scarce skills (ISETT SETA, 2005). These skills include information technology (IT), human resource management, actuarial science and executive management. Equity factors in terms of race, gender and disability also influences the status quo. Allied to this is the anxiety over the current economic recession concomitant with down-sizing and retrenchment causing young graduates to search for employment in firms where

they feel they are more secure (DPRU, 2007; HESA, 2008; ISETT SETA, 2005; Kanye & Crous, 2007).

The retention of new graduates is a challenge to many South African companies. According to Frost (2002), these challenges are aggravated by three factors – the high emigration rate of skilled graduates, the relative scarcity of specialist employees due to an undersupply of skilled labour and the national drive to address employment equity, which is fuelling the war for talent among people from designated groups. Johnson (2002) maintains that employers have two options to succeed in this talent war: to become and remain an Employer of Choice, i.e. the ability to attract and retain people with the required profile or to develop, retain and efficiently utilize the employer's existing talent pool.

With the current shortage of IT skills in the country (Asgisa, 2007; ISETT SETA, 2005), it is imperative that companies not only successfully recruit IT graduates that are suitable, skilled and developed, but also ensure that they are retained, given the great demand for their skills. Paterson (2007) in his study on Information Communication Technology (ICT) skills in South Africa concluded that in 2006 alone there were 104 000 vacancies in this sector, translating into 46% of unfilled posts. The problem is increased by the fact that firms are generally not able to utilise new graduates to fill their skill requirements because most graduates have the qualifications, but lack the practical skills and experience. Other factors impacting the employability of graduates include: the 'wrong' types of graduates are being produced (the need is for technical graduates),

graduates are not suited for specialist positions, suitably skilled staff are often poached by other companies and graduates are not of a high enough quality (DPRU, 2007, p. 5).

Currently South Africa experiences a high rate of unemployed graduates, which led to the inclusion of a category for new entrants in the National Skills Development Strategy 2 (NSDS2), which was implemented by the Department of Labour (DoL) in 2005. This would explain why the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) have registered and promoted graduate internship programmes to support the objectives set in the NSDS2 (NSDS, 2006).

In addition, the National Government has through the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) identified key enabling areas, one of which is education and skills development. Within this area, a deliberate motivation for ensuring the NSDS works more efficiently to support economic activity is realised together with the acknowledgement of a challenge to prepare young people for work more effectively (Asgisa, 2007).

A study by the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (2003) supports the notion that graduate employers are faced with the challenge of providing support and promoting appropriate forms of work experience (authentic rather than contrived) for new graduates. Programmes to assist graduates to thrive in the real-world context of the workplace by, providing opportunities to maximize the assets (knowledge) they acquire through the university experience, will optimise their successful transition into organisations.

Based on the above it is clear that the development and retention of graduates on any kind of graduate internship programme is an area worthy of investigation in order to determine the components required for effective implementation of internship programmes to support both National Government strategies and organisational goals.

1.3. MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Chen and Klimoski (2007) correctly asserts that a lack of scientific rigor in research precludes valid knowledge creation and that this in turn leads to insufficient dispersion of precious human and financial resources, failure to meet employee development goals and a loss in competitive advantage. They further warn that inferior or faulty models and training interventions may actually do harm to organisations and their employees. This necessitates a strong theoretic understanding and empirical support for contributing factors that enable effective employee learning to become critical levers for ensuring the effectiveness of training and development programmes.

This argument supports the need for a scientific research approach to skills development initiatives, such as graduate internship programmes, as to create valid knowledge in more effective implementation of interventions, thereby ensuring support for national strategies and organisational effectiveness.

The graduate internship programme examined in this study was inaugurated in 2005 by the researcher. The key aim of the programme was to appoint IT graduates from the designated groups on the graduate internship programme, and to develop them during

an eight month period, to enhance their employability in order to retain successful graduates in the organisation. The programme has shown success with the appointment and retention of new graduates. In Table 1 the number of graduates for the intake under investigation is reflected as well as the number of graduates appointed and subsequently retained is reflected for the period 2007 and 2008.

Table 1: Intern Intake versus Appointment

YEAR	INTAKE	APPOINTED
2007	131	123
2008	191	139

It is within this context that the study will investigate the impact the graduate internship programmes of 2007 and 2008 had on its participants with regards to:

- The intention to quit among the graduates, as well as, what factors the graduates perceive as being central to their retention in the organisation; and
- The intention to employ graduates on a permanent basis at the conclusion of the programme by the organisation.

Flowing from data analysis, the study will generate recommendations regarding the key factors required for a successful and effective graduate programme.

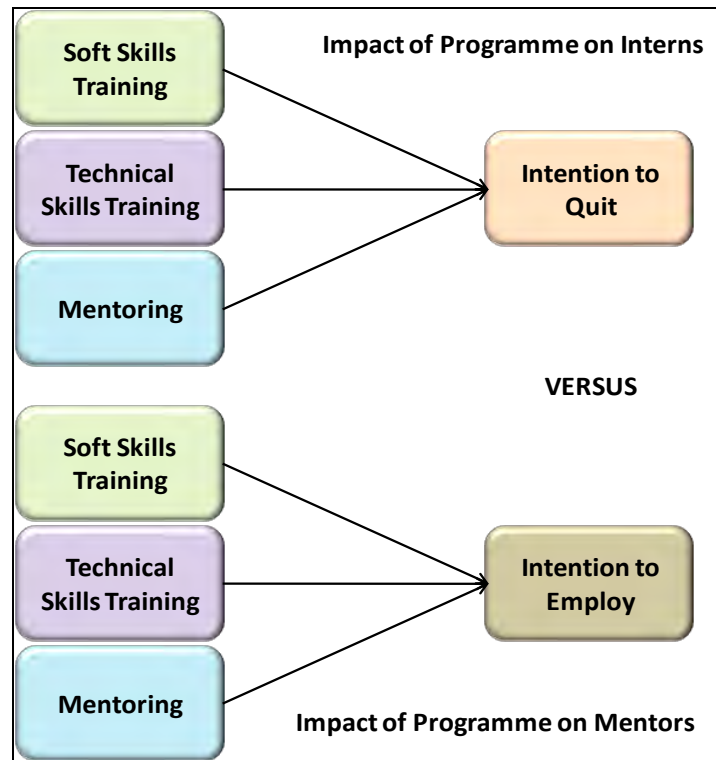
1.4. AIM OF THE RESEARCH

In light of the preceding background on the problem being investigated, the general aim of this research is to determine whether a graduate internship programme in line with the National Skills Development Strategy contributes to retaining graduate interns in a South African ICT company. The specific research objectives include:

- To determine the perceptions of graduate interns and mentors regarding the graduate internship programme;
- To determine whether there is a significant relationship between the components of a graduate internship programme (i.e. soft skills training, technical skills training and mentorship) and a graduate intern's intention to quit the internship programme;
- To determine whether there is a significant relationship between the components of a graduate internship programme (i.e. soft skills training, technical skills training and mentorship) and the organisation's intention to employ a graduate intern;
- To determine whether there is a significant relationship between the need for a graduate internship programme and the retention of graduate interns; and
- To develop an integrated talent retention strategy framework for graduate interns.

The approach used in defining the objectives of this research is depicted in Figure 1, where the intention is to determine the impact of the soft skills training, technical training and mentorship had on the interns' intention to quit and the mentors' intention to employ.

Figure 1: Framework of Research Objectives



1.5. SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

This research focuses on an ICT company that has implemented a graduate internship programme for IT graduates. The research will draw from the experience as evaluated by mentors and interns that participated in these programmes during the 2007 and 2008 periods. The focus will be to determine the impact of both the soft and technical skills training conducted, as well as, the influence of the mentorship relationship on the effectiveness of the programme.

1.6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

There is currently an absence of any research in the South African environment that focuses on Graduate Interns' and Mentors' perception on the role and relationship of

soft skills, technical skills and mentorship in the implementation of graduate internship programme. Therefore, this study will add value in terms of knowledge creation in the area under investigation. Thus it is anticipated that the following significant contributions could emerge from this study:

- Development of a framework for implementation that can be tested and/or adopted in other companies within the ICT sector and further extended to other sectors of the economy as well;
- Contribution to the Information System, Electronic and Telecommunication Technology (ISETT) SETA in terms of effective implementation of graduate internship programmes funded by the SETA;
- Contribution to Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in terms of soft skill development for students and/or better preparation for workplace readiness; and
- Reduction of the turnover rate of graduate interns, which will in turn render cost benefit for organisations as a result of improved retention rates

1.7. KEY CONCEPTS DEFINED

For the purpose of this study the researcher identified and defined several concepts and realities that are closely associated with the topic and these would be briefly examined, so that the present research project is seen within its proper context.

- **Graduate Internship Programme:** For the purpose of this study a graduate internship programme refers to a programme bridging students that have

completed a national diploma or degree in information technology, from tertiary education institutions, into the work environment.

- **Intern:** A graduate with no, or little, practical working experience in the required discipline, seeking to enter the corporate world through a structured bridging programme.
- **Mentor:** An employee with workplace experience, which implies competence in a particular IT skill and/or technology, who is willing to undergo mentorship training and execute the mentoring role for an intern or a number of interns.
- **Employability:** Successful completion of the graduate internship programme demonstrating understanding and application of the soft skills and technical skills required for the relevant position that they would be considered for.
- **Intention to Quit:** The intern's propensity to leave the organisation as a result of their experience and perception of the soft and technical skills training and the mentorship exposure during the graduate internship programme.
- **Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs):** SETAs are bodies set up in each of the economy's 25 key sectors (e.g. Agriculture, Chemical, Tourism, Services, IT etc) to guide and encourage effective training and education for that sector. Businesses are grouped within a SETA because it is assumed that the skills requirements will be the same.

1.8. CHAPTER OUTLINE

The chapter outline below provides an overview of the research report in its entirety:

Chapter 1: Introduction: This Chapter outlines the background, the research setting highlighting the problem and the motivation and aim of the research. This assisted with defining the research objectives. The scope of the research project is explained, anticipated contributions of the research is highlighted and lastly some key concepts associated with this study is explained. These aspects form the basis for this research report.

Chapter 2: Literature Review: In Chapter 2 a detailed literature survey is conducted giving the background to the NSDS and the Skills Development Act and how it impacts on graduate internship programmes. Further the concepts of skills, knowledge and attitudes, skills deficiencies and employability, employer need, retention strategies and mentoring are explored against the current literature available and how it interrelates and applies to the topic under research.

Chapter 3: Research Objectives and Hypotheses: The research objectives and related hypotheses are defined in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4: Research Design: The research design as related to this study is unpacked in Chapter 4 in terms of the research approach adopted, discussing the data collection instruments used, the pilot study that was conducted to validate the survey questionnaires, the unit of analysis and sampling method are explained. The data collection and capturing process, analysis of data and storage of data are highlighted. Finally, the assumptions and limitations, as well as, ethics related to this study are discussed.

Chapter 5: Results: Chapter 5 presents the analysis of the qualitative and quantitative research conducted.

Chapter 6: Discussion of Results: In Chapter 6 the discussion of the results as was analysed in the previous chapter is presented and concludes in the presentation of a retention strategy framework for a graduate internship programme within the ICT sector.

Chapter 7: Summary and Recommendations: In the final chapter, a summary of the research findings with some recommendation for further study is offered.

1.9. CONCLUSION

In this chapter the motivation for the study was explained, providing the problem statement, the research questions and objectives, as well as definitions of key concepts and presentation of the structure of the research report. The following chapter focuses on reviewing the available literature on skills development, retention strategies and employee readiness in terms of skills, knowledge and attitudes and mentorship.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the current literature on graduate internship programmes and the related topics influencing these programmes are surveyed. An overview of the current challenges facing organisations with regards to retention of new graduates is provided. Subsequently the National Government strategy on skills development is discussed as a policy framework impacting skills development in South Africa, and the relevance of this strategy to the topic under research. Furthermore, the current literature on soft skills training and mentoring of graduate interns is explored, specifically retention strategies, employee commitment, skills, knowledge and attitude development, skills deficiencies and workplace readiness and, the impact on job retention and employer needs is also investigated

2.2. NATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

As discussed and highlighted in Chapter 1 the retention of graduates is a challenge due to the migration of skills, scarcity of specialist skills and the undersupply of skilled labour (Frost, 2002; Johnson, 2002). It is therefore important in order to achieve both the National Government agenda on skills development and to ensure growth within organisations, that the development and integration of graduate talent becomes an imperative for long-term sustainability. Within this context it is important to survey the current literature on national policies impacting and supporting the development of skills, the skills requirements that will support the acceleration of graduate productivity

into the workplace and the supporting processes such as mentoring that will enhance this acceleration.

A key component of the literature allied to the study is the state policy document on skills development, i.e. the NSDS, upon which internships and similar work and career development issues are based and determined. This strategy was devised by the Government in order to boost the ultimate goal of a new envisaged society, and to stimulate sustainable economic growth and job creation at all levels of society. This can be achieved primarily, but not exclusively by upgrading of people skills, primarily the youth. The strategy envisaged a new, advanced and sophisticated systemic approach to education and training that will give people practical skills through outcomes-based training. It is hoped that careful and efficient implementation of the new system would enhance skills that facilitate graduates to enable them to make valuable contributions to the economy, as well as facilitate employment, career development, and entrepreneurship (NSDS, 2006). This study cannot be complete without taking cognisance of the National Skills Development Strategy in conjunction with the Skills Development Act (SDA, 1998, 2008). The NSDS has identified the various objectives to accelerating skills development, of which the most relevant to this study is that of assisting new entrants into employment (NSDS, 2006).

Graduate internship programmes are an integral plan of the NSD strategy as they are designed to address skills shortages in particular job categories. The Internship Training Programmes are structured in most cases in such a way as to enhance the skills and knowledge of qualified trainees in their field through participation in on-the-job training

programmes. The duration of such programmes is usually one year and is designed for university students and unemployed university graduates in the disciplines associated with the sector/organisation where the student or graduate is placed.

The goal of the graduate internship programme is to provide interns with an opportunity to learn from the various areas of expertise of a particular employer. In most cases for the purpose of providing a comprehensive training experience, each intern is assigned to a member of staff who acts as a mentor for that intern. The mentor in most cases coordinates the intern's work, supervises efforts, ensures productive use of time, and provides guidance and feedback to the intern. It can be said, thus, that the graduate internship programme is focused training as per Buhlungu and Metcalfe (2001, p. 67).

There are different methods in which organisations conduct the training in order to help interns gain thorough insight in their career field, and these can take the following forms (Buhlungu & Metcalfe, 2001):

- *Orientation* - interns participate in specifically designed orientation where they are familiarised with the operations of the specific organisation so that they can integrate into their work teams smoothly and efficiently.
- *Individual training opportunities* - interns have the opportunity to participate in training activities organised within the organisation as well as seminars offered outside the organisation.

- *Field Work* -: Interns are, depending on the nature of the business, exposed to field work where they participate in various projects and immersion programmes where they are able to learn from these experiences.
- *Discussion* - A series of discussions are organised for interns around the policies and procedures, business culture, operations, aims and objectives and market positioning of the organisation.

Under optimum circumstances, there are a number of benefits for interns during that period (Buhlungu & Metcalfe, 2001):

- They receive holistic training in relation to the organisation's modus operandi;
- They are provided with a work station and access to resources for the duration of their internship;
- There is potential enhancement of the interns' personal development through contacts and/or networks; and
- On many occasions, the organisation encourages and appreciates the interns' initiative, creativity, and resourcefulness at all stages of program design and development.

Based on the above it could be said that the focus on skills development and the implementation of a well planned, structured mentorship programme is a vital component of employability and retention. Thus many successful companies pay so much attention to careful and scientific skills development and mentoring.

2.3. SKILLS TRAINING

The lack of soft skills, workplace readiness and experience are the key consideration of the graduate internship programme in the research setting as part of the strategy to retain the graduates. At the start of their careers many graduates will lack the soft skills such as time management, creative thinking and general communication skills, goal and priority setting as well as team work, all which are key capabilities identified by the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (cited in HSRC, 2008).

The lack of soft skills is the main reason many graduates are unsuccessful in the recruitment phase. Relevant to this study is the concern raised by the DPRU study (2007, p. 7) that many students come from historically Black institutions, where they do not have the opportunities to develop these skills by participating in co-operative education initiatives or extra-curricular activities which facilitate character building. A study by Purcell, Pitcher and Simm (1999) found, that in many cases, it was considered that skills and attributes had been developed outside the course of study. In many cases such skills proved more marketable in the graduate labour market than the type of degree acquired and associated formal qualification.

In support of the above, Hillage and Pollard (1998) maintain that the 'employability assets' of an individual, and therefore a graduate as well, comprise knowledge (what they know), skills (what they do with what they know) and attitudes (how they do it). The study by the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (2003) provided a framework upon which to map the lists of employability assets, which new graduates should possess, as generated by Hillage and Pollard (1998):

- Traditional academic skills including specialist knowledge, ability to apply knowledge, logical thinking, critical analysis, problem-solving, written communication, spoken communication, ability to use numerical data, computer literacy and research skills;
- Personal development skills including self-confidence, self discipline, self reliance, awareness of strengths and weaknesses, creativity, independence, knowledge of international affairs, desire to go on learning. To these could be added other essential personal attributes such as ability to reflect, reliability, integrity, honesty and regard for others; and
- Enterprise or business skills including entrepreneurial skills, ability to prioritise tasks, time management, interpersonal skills, presentation skills, ability to work in teams and leadership skills. To these could be added commercial awareness, flexibility, innovation, independence and risk taking (Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, 2003, p. 13).

Employability is a theme in higher education both nationally (Kruss, 2004; State of Skills, 2005) and internationally (Harvey, 1997; McIlveen & Pensiero, 2008). Kruss (2004) in a South African study on employability and higher education concluded that employers and graduates are of the opinion that although undergraduate studies contribute to the personal development and workplace effectiveness of the graduate, a tertiary qualification does not necessarily prepares students for the work environment. These studies show that there is a serious mismatch between graduate aspirations and the reality of the labour market and that new graduates are insufficiently prepared for the world of work. It is therefore understandable that employers are dissatisfied with the

skills and attributes of recently qualified graduates and concerns are raised about their lack of generic skills (Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, 2003, p. 16).

However, researchers also maintain that the link between labour and higher education may be indirect and not direct as espoused above. Kruss (2004), found that work experience and occupational specialisation are the preserve and domain of the employers in the labour market, who build on the general foundation laid by higher education institutions to develop the requisite specialised skills, knowledge, and dispositions to produce skilled employees (Kruss, 2004, p. 678). Kruss (2004) also outlines the deferred employment model pending professional education and training, much like the internship for medical doctors. Within this approach, once a graduate has a degree, professional specialised knowledge is provided through mentored work experience, controlled, regulated, and accredited by professional associations, in their capacity as statutory bodies. The employer focuses on providing the specialised practice and experiential knowledge required (Kruss, 2004, p. 678). The internship programme of the South African NSD strategy is based on this approach.

2.3.1. Soft Skills

During the present turbulent economic times, the basic soft skills of communication, team work, delegating, appraising, presenting and motivating are now key to making businesses more profitable and enhancing the work environment. This reality is one of the reasons why companies are not just assessing their current staff and future recruits on their business and technical skills but also on their soft skills (Clymer, Roberts &

Strawn, 2001) and was also highlighted in a recent study by a major South African organisation (Collective Resources, 2008).

The Collective Resources (2008) study on skills audit and efficiency, showed conclusively that soft skills development was very important in retaining both organisation cohesiveness and productivity. The study entailed analysis of patterns of shop-floor and office interaction, communication patterns among office teams to determine the skills, knowledge, abilities and personality traits necessary for team and individual success. The study indicated that there were obvious traits of cognitive ability and accuracy, which were vital in successful teams. The more successful teams were the more members displayed traits of conscientiousness and agreeableness. In fact, these teams were over 15 percent more productive (Collective Resources, 2008).

Effective soft skills include the ability of people to balance the commercial needs of their organisation with the individual needs of their staff, while flexibility and ability to adapt to the changing needs of an organisation is a key soft skill, as is the ability to collaborate with others and influence situations through lateral and more creative thinking (Strawn & Martinson, 2000).

In addition, Menochelli (2006) identifies examples of interpersonal/soft skills, such as friendliness, motivation, kindness, team spirit, negotiation instead of confrontation, team cohesiveness, understanding of different cultural and historical differences, motivation, team spirit, observance of rules, procedures and organisation etiquette, meaningful interpersonal skills, showing interest, solving skills, politeness, concise language, solid

relations with diverse personality types, sociability, good inter-personal communication skills and similar traits.

Very few, if any, companies, especially in South Africa are untouched by the ever-widening influence of diverse cultures and good soft skills facilitate better communication and people's ability to manage differences effectively. It is in this context that the reality that soft skills can be developed and honed on an on-going basis through good training, insightful reading, and observation practice needs to be visible in the business cycle (Activia International, 2008).

Pearce (2007), one of the most astute business analysts of existing present and future skills trends and supply and demand analysis wrote as late as 2007 in her collection of articles on personnel patterns that:

"There is a growing recognition that interpersonal skills are not simply helpful in business today; they are essential in today's highly focused, downsized and streamlined organizations where people tend to work in a series of small, often temporary workgroups or teams organized to accomplish short-term objectives." (Pearce, 2007, p. 3).

From the above it can be deduced that soft skills development is critical to the integration of graduates into the work place.

2.3.2. Skills Deficiencies and Workplace Readiness

Another factor to consider is the graduate's inability to work independently due to a lack of workplace exposure and experience. In South Africa the Universities of Technology

have instituted the “Work-Integrated Learning” (WIL) model of training, where students spend some time at the workplace. According to the DPRU study (2007), university graduates generally do not have any chance to gain working knowledge in their fields, and even though colleges often require students to complete an internship before graduating, these are hard to come by. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that many companies do not want to make an investment in training, or fear that other firms will simply poach staff once they have trained them. The Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (2003) also found that work experience is a key determinant of graduates finding suitable employment.

The Scottish study concludes that the most frequently cited reason for obtaining their job by graduates surveyed who were ‘very satisfied’ with their career progress to date , was having had relevant work experience. The benefits of undertaking work experience while studying include developing a work ethic, developing personal skills, time management, relating to other people and workplace etiquette, communication (which in some disciplines were not considered to be taught as part of the degree) and applying learning and the ability to continue learning (Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, 2003, p. 26).

From a psychological standpoint, it is noted that the expectations of graduates are sometimes too high (DPRU, 2007). They expect that their qualifications will open the door to high salaries and management positions and are not willing to learn the skills that form the basis of employment. They often feel that they do not need to start ‘at the bottom’ by virtue of being highly qualified in comparison with existing and older workers

who do not have equal qualifications. More importantly, new graduates expect to be treated fairly and on par with their more experienced peers, given the human rights ethos that permeates higher education institutions currently. This is evidenced in the Markinor South African Employee relationship survey (Markinor, 2003) where the most important factor that influences commitment to an organisation is fairness at work. Interestingly, Taylor (2002) reports in his retention study that what employers give employees instead, are better benefits and more competitive compensation, i.e. commodities. This according to Taylor (2002) is a problem of alignment – not giving what employees want, i.e. factors that will enhance their well-being like fair treatment, care/concern and trust and better communication.

Similar concerns raised in the above studies may be relevant in the experience within the South African work context where graduate internship programmes have been implemented. This could also apply to the expectations that interns may have at the organisation where this study was conducted. As the literature shows a close relationship between soft skills development and work readiness, it becomes important to survey the literature on mentoring with specific focus on improving employability and retention strategies.

2.4. MENTORING

Mentoring is a process where a more experienced member of the organisation (mentor) takes responsibility for and actively participates in the systematic development of the skills and leadership abilities of a less experienced member of the organisation (mentee) (Clutterbuck, 1991; Meyer & Fourie, 2004; Nankivell & Shoolbred, 2006).

Nankivell and Shoolbred (2006) are also of the opinion that mentoring places a focus on a one-to-one relationship between mentor and mentee, which ensures individual attention and support for the learner. Regents (2009) defines mentoring as "... a relationship between an individual with potential and an individual with expertise. The role of the mentor is guide the professional development of the mentee. Knowledge, experience and organizational perspectives are shared candidly within a context of mutual respect and trust" www.research.umn.edu).

Kram (1985) a renowned scholar on mentoring states that most business mentoring has two functions namely a career function as well as a psychosocial function. The **career function** of mentoring is aimed at the development of the professional skills of the mentee for the purpose of the advancement of his/her career. This function entails activities such as: exposure and visibility, coaching, protection, challenging assignments and sponsorship (Kram, 1985: 24-5). The **psychosocial function** of mentoring is aimed at the development of interpersonal skills that enhance a sense of competence, identity, and effectiveness in a professional role. This function entails activities such as: acceptance and confirmation, counselling, role modelling and friendship (Kram, 1985, p. 24).

In its more holistic sense, mentoring is thus a method of staff development whereby a more experienced and usually more experienced staff member (mentor) takes responsibility for and becomes actively involved in the professional and/or personal development and empowerment of a less experienced and usually younger staff member (mentee) (Fisher, 2003).

According to SPA Consultants (2008) the goals of mentoring in the South African business environment are:

- To ensure that the future needs of the organisation are taken care of (i.e. succession planning and management development);
- To ensure the application of equal opportunity policies;
- To address the impact affirmative action has on the organisation;
- To promote a corporate identity or cultural change; and
- To create an awareness of the needs of an increasingly diverse workforce.

The mentorship programme's success in most cases depends on a number of crucial factors: management commitment, complete ownership of the process by all role-players involved, organisational readiness, strict criteria for mentors/mentees, training for mentors/mentees/managers of mentees, clear guidelines on the programme which are going to be followed very closely, regular follow-up sessions with role-players in order to solve problems, close monitor of the process regularly and overall evaluation of the process and continuous feedback to management/participants/staff (Kram 1985, pp. 65-66).

It is therefore obvious, given the many factors that underpin the process, that structured mentoring can incur significant financial obligations for an organisation. This seems due to the fact that implementation requires financial resources, as well as, the productive time of the employees who participate in the process. However, when taking into

account the benefits of the process it is clear why organisations often decide to promote the mentoring processes.

According to Hemson (2006) some of these benefits are as follows, the **mentee benefits** include: career advice and advancement, personalised recognition and encouragement, improved self-confidence, learning to cope within formal and informal organisational structures, honest criticism and informal feedback, and possibilities of retention, especially in the case of possession of hard skills. The **mentor benefits** include: improved job satisfaction, career advancement, personal self-development, fresh ideas and feedback concerning projects in progress and assistance in effectively managing projects. The **organisational benefits** include: competent and dependable employees who continue to grow and meet new challenges and obligations, increased productivity, increased commitment, lower rates of staff turnover, team based/participative management, and increased effective communication and cooperation among staff and administrative units (Hemson, 2006).

2.4.1. Employability and Employer Needs

Employability has become a key issue in the South African labour market because of a number of structural changes in the shape of the market, declining university standards, international competition, changes in patterns of employment, an ageing workforce, and the effects of the 'global economy', the decline of traditional industries and the recent global financial crisis. It is therefore evident that education has a significant role to play in ensuring that learners are equipped not just with vocational knowledge and skills, but

with the 'tools' which will enable them to compete in the new marketplace (Department of Labour, 2009; Mercury, 2009; Youth Employment Conference, 2005).

Private sector leaders, according to Kruss (2004), espoused a direct link between higher education and the job market, expecting higher education to directly prepare graduates with skills to make them employable. Higher education institutions were criticized because they do not offer adequate soft skills such as problem solving, communication, entrepreneurship, good citizenship, managerial skills, leadership skills – generic skills that one needs to learn across any walk of life (Kruss, 2004, p. 682).

Brown et al (2001) succinctly phrase this dilemma:

The volatile nature of consumer markets, the challenge to assumptions about lifetime employment, and the pace of technological innovations with built-in occupational obsolescence that demand regular periods of retraining are central features of the labour market changes leading to a new emphasis on 'employability'. The new worker is required to be flexible and adaptable and able to learn rapidly (Brown et al, 2001, p. 258).

Employability is in many ways linked to young graduates and the unemployed acquiring skills for gaining employment or better employment. In other words, it can be said that employability is the possession of the qualities and competences required to meet the changing needs of employers and customers and to realise potential and aspirations in work (Hillage & Pollard, 1998). However, employability is hampered when where individuals have poor or below average skills to transition to the workplace. Those who have no or low level qualifications, or are "lost" during their university study or after

graduation need special or specialised initiatives to overcome social, economic or psychological problems of unemployment. In South Africa, as shown earlier, graduate internship programmes are a good way to address these challenges, but the supply overcomes the demand more than twenty times over (Gore, 2005).

In international literature there are two major methods of defining employability, the **supply-led definition** which concentrates on making people work-ready and ‘up-skilling’ the workforce and the **demand-led definition** which is a ‘broad model of employability’ incorporating individual factors, personal circumstances and external factors as components that affect employability (Gazier, 1999). The second model suggests that the importance of these factors will change with circumstances, for example, an employer may accept a lower level of skills when labour is in short supply, or change recruitment policies so that other groups can apply. In these cases it is not the ‘skills’ of the individual that have changed, but their ability to take up employment, which seemed to be relevant in a graduate situation. It can be seen that given the circumstances and challenges facing South Africa at present there is no ‘one size fits all’ solution to defining employability and that context and an appropriate definition for that context is probably a more important consideration.

Employers equate employability with meeting labour market needs and maintain that generally the supply from higher education does not meet the demand (Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, 2003, p. 20). There is also a tendency for employers to favour an approach for tailor-made programmes, for example through financial inducements like scholarships and bursaries to encourage students to study ‘useful’

subjects to ensure that the fit between university and the labour market is not poor (McClelland, 1996). Industry prefers people who can contribute from day one and the starting point for training has to be not only knowledge of the subject but a capability in the day-to-day working environment (McLelland, 1996).

If this is the case, it is imperative that both business and government, as well as tertiary institutions need to broaden their perspective and provide graduates with a better understanding and awareness of the wider definition of employability. Placing the onus on students to be 'employable' neglects raising their awareness of the importance of having alternative strategies. If employment is not available at the end of a programme as expected, it only serves to de-motivate and disillusion students (Cotton, 2001). However, in practice it is still found that not enough is done to prepare the graduates to adopt the workplace, both from a psychological point-of-view and technical capability.

2.4.2. Investing In Retention Strategies

Heathfield (2009) states that key employee retention is critical to the long term success of business as it ensures customer satisfaction, product sales, satisfied co-workers and reporting staff, effective succession planning and deeply embedded organisational knowledge and learning. Failing to retain key employees, especially new graduates, is costly for business. Heathfield (2009, p. 1) further maintains that companies need to invest in retention strategies to ensure success and identified the following retention tips:

- A satisfied employee knows clearly what is expected from him/her every day at work. Changing expectations keep people on the edge and create unhealthy stress. They rob employees of internal security and make them feel unsuccessful. The need is for a clearly delineated framework within which employees, more so new graduates, know what is expected from them. Roland et al (1996) concurs with Heathfield (2009) and feels that there is strong correlation, as well as a causal relationship, between job satisfaction, employee commitment and retention.
- The quality of the supervision an employee receives is critical to employee retention. People leave managers and supervisors more often than they leave companies or jobs. When employees feel that they are unvalued, it contributes to turnover. Frequent employee complaints include a lack of clarity about expectations and potential earnings, lack of feedback about performance, failure to hold scheduled meetings and failure to provide a framework within which the employee perceives he/she can succeed (Heathfield, 2009, p. 1). In Hay's international study on retention (2002) it was found that the second-highest factor contributing to high turnover is employees who are 'unhappy with their boss'.
- The ability of the employee to speak his/her mind freely within the organisation is another key factor in employee retention. Employees that are encouraged to offer ideas, provide constructive criticism and improvement strategies are more likely to remain (Heathfield, 2009). Lok and Crawford (1999) also found a significant positive correlation between commitment and innovative and supportive subcultures.

- Talent and skill utilisation is another environmental factor key employees seek in the workplace. Motivated employees want to contribute to work areas outside their specific job descriptions (Heathfield, 2009, p. 2).

Management should, therefore, monitor the performance indicators of their staff in terms of continuity, adaptability, and commitment to team. Of importance in this process are the staff's attitudes and attributes towards personal and professional fulfilment, commitment to their duties and responsibilities and similar trends (Strawn & Martinson, 2000). These factors all validates the need for effective soft skills interventions as it seems it impact directly on employee retention.

Veldsman's (2003) model of employee commitment explains the relationship of various factors that affect the propensity of an employee to stay or leave an organisation. He further argues that the propensity to stay is affected by organisational climate and culture, job satisfaction and employee well-being. This can be translated into a correlation between organisational culture being influenced by soft skills training, employee well-being by mentorship and job satisfaction by technical competence respectively. Veldsman's (2003) model, therefore becomes relevant to the recruitment and retention of newly qualified graduates due to the fact that their propensity to stay or leave is moderated by the their mobility (the ability to pursue and find alternative employment) and the prevailing market conditions facing them (such as a favourable or unfavourable supply/demand for labour or the prevailing economic climate). Newly appointed employees find it easier to leave and are constantly looking out for better prospects and more rewarding jobs in reputable firms and prestigious settings. The

effect of mobility and market conditions on the propensity to stay or leave as postulated by Veldsman can be represented by the following matrix:

Figure 2: Effect of mobility and market forces on the propensity to leave or stay

High Mobility Low	Medium Propensity to Stay	High Propensity to Leave
	High Propensity to Stay	Medium Propensity to Leave
	Unfavourable	Favourable
	Market / Industry Conditions	

New graduates cannot and should not be expected to understand and swear allegiance to enduring characteristics of an organisation when compared to employees who remain for longer periods. The latter’s collective perceptions about their organisation with respect to dimensions such as trust, cohesiveness, support, recognition, innovation and fairness has developed over time. Moran and Volkwein (1992, p. 20) also note that the prevalent norms, values and attitudes of employees are linked to their propensity to stay or leave an organisation.

Skills and talent development are central to successful internship programmes. Hay (2002) found that skills and capacity building for talent proved to be the most significant factor that pertains to employee well-being and retention. If managers take an interest in

the career development of their staff, it has a profound influence on the emotional well-being of employees in the work situation. This factor is most relevant to new graduates who enter a organisation as they not only are eager to learn new skills and advance their careers, but also need mentoring to ‘show them the ropes’ and initiate them into the specific workplace. New graduates are very ambitious and want to climb the corporate ladder as quickly as possible. The Markinor South African employee relations survey (Markinor, 2003) also pointed out that career development is a major driver of employer loyalty and retention. If new graduates feel that there are advancement opportunities in the organisation, the propensity to remain is higher. Opportunities for advancement also have an effect on the well-being of employees.

2.5. LITERATURE REVIEW SUMMARY

In conclusion, talent retention, specifically amongst graduates, is a serious concern in South Africa and should become an aspect of contemporary debate in organisations (Birt, Wallis & Winternitz, 2004). In the end, few things can sabotage organisational performance levels more that losing highly effective employees – although hanging on to the highly ineffective does not exactly boost the indicators, either. However, the latter should be handled specifically and deliberately, on an individual basis, not as part of a general haemorrhage (Kotze & Roodt, 2005).

The new power-base in the labour market is a group of employees referred to variously as ‘knowledge workers’ (Stewart, 1997) or talent (Paton, 2002). In view of the ICT sector as a scare skill, one may consider the ICT graduate as a ‘knowledge worker’. These employees who have embraced the new career model, which matched their

needs for greater career freedom, have sought-after knowledge and skills that place them in demand by organisations (Cappelli, 2000). Capturing this knowledge in organisational systems and databases is often not an option, as this group of employees also possess what Quinn, Anderson and Finkelstein (1996) referred to as systems understanding and self-motivated creativity. The value created by these types of characteristics means that organisations need knowledge workers far more than knowledge workers need them (Stewart 1997, p. 68).

Given the high demand for ICT graduates, it is evident that talent retention, especially among designated groups, is a major concern for South African companies. The investigation of the impact of a graduate internship programme as a retention strategy would not only benefit the research setting in which this study will be conducted, but also companies who employ ICT graduates and therefore make a theoretical and practical contribution.

2.6. CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a comprehensive, yet concise review of the literature within the context of the topic as well as the research area. The areas covered in the review include the National Skills Development Strategy, mentoring, soft skills, employability, job retention, skills, knowledge and attitudes, skills deficiencies, employer needs and retention strategies. The following chapter will outline the hypotheses that informed the central thrust of the research design and methodology of this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

3.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the research hypotheses and sub-hypotheses, as deduced from the research objectives, as discussed in chapter 1, are formulated and presented.

3.2. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following research hypotheses were formulated:

3.2.1. Hypothesis 1

Two integrative (null and alternative) hypotheses, with a number of sub-hypotheses were formulated to determine the relationship between the components of the graduate internship programme and the intern's intention to quit the internship programme. The following integrative null hypothesis was formulated for the graduate interns:

H₀ T1 - There is no statistically significant relationship between the components of the graduate internship programme (i.e. soft skills training, technical skills training, mentorship) and graduate interns' intention to quit the internship programme.

The following sub-hypotheses were formulated for the H₀ T1:

H₀ t1.1 - There is no statistically significant relationship soft skills training and graduate interns' intention to quit the internship programme

H₀ t1.2 - There is no statistically significant relationship technical skills training and graduate interns' intention to quit the internship programme

H₀ t1.3 - There is no statistically significant relationship between mentorship and graduate interns intention to quit the internship programme

The following integrative alternative hypothesis was formulated for the graduate interns:

H_a T1 - There is a statistically significant relationship between the components of a graduate internship programme (i.e. soft skills training, technical skills training, mentorship) and graduate interns intention to quit the internship programme

The following alternative sub-hypotheses were formulated set for H_a T1:

H_{at} 1.1 - There is a statistically significant relationship between the soft skills training and graduate interns intention to quit the internship programme

H_{at} 1.2 - There is a statistically significant relationship between the technical skills training and graduate interns intention to quit the internship programme

H_{at} 1.3 - There is a statistically significant relationship between mentorship and graduate interns intention to quit the internship programme

3.2.2. Hypothesis 2

Two integrative (null and alternative) hypotheses, with a number of sub-hypotheses were formulated to determine the relationship between the components of the graduate internship programme and the mentor's intention to employ a graduate intern upon completion of the internship programme. The integrative null hypothesis is:

H₀ T2 - There is no statistically significant relationship between the components of a graduate internship programme (i.e. soft skills training, technical skills training, mentorship) and mentors intention to employ graduate interns

The following sub-hypotheses were formulated for the H₀ T3:

H₀ t2.1 - There is no statistically significant relationship between soft skills training and mentors intention to employ graduate interns

H₀ t2.2 - There is no statistically significant relationship between technical skills training and mentors intention to employ graduate interns

H₀ t2.3 - There is no statistically significant relationship between mentorship and mentors intention to employ graduate interns

The following integrative alternative hypothesis was formulated for the graduate mentors:

H_a T2 - There is a statistically significant relationship between the components of a graduate internship programme (i.e. soft skills training, technical skills training, mentorship) and mentors intention to employ graduate interns

The following alternative sub-hypotheses were formulated set for H_a T3:

H_{at} 2.1 - There is a statistically significant relationship between the soft skills training and mentors intention to employ graduate interns

H_{at} 2.2 - There is a statistically significant relationship between the technical skills training and mentors intention to employ graduate interns

H_{at} 2.3 - There is a statistically significant relationship between mentorship and mentors intention to employ graduate interns

3.2.3. Hypothesis 3

The researcher wanted to explore whether the availability and hence the need for a graduate internship programme will have an impact on the graduate intern's intention to stay in the organisation.

The following hypotheses were formulated:

H₀ T3 - There is no statistically significant relationship between the need for a graduate internship programme and graduate interns intention to quit the internship programme

H_a T3 - There is a statistically significant relationship between the need for a graduate internship programme and graduate interns intention to quit the internship programme

3.2.4. Hypothesis 4

The researcher wanted to explore whether the availability and hence the need for a graduate internship programme will have an impact on the mentor's intention to employ the graduate intern in the organisation. The following hypotheses were formulated:

H₀ T4 - There is no statistically significant relationship between the need for a graduate internship programme and mentors intention to employ graduate interns

H_a T4 - There is a statistically significant relationship between the need for a graduate internship programme and mentors intention to employ graduate interns

3.3. SUMMARY

The hypotheses as outlined in this chapter focus on the relationship between the components of the graduate internship programme, namely soft skills, technical skills and mentorship and the interns intention to stay, as well as, the organisation's intention, as represented by the relevant mentors and/or their line manager, to employee interns after the completion of the programme. Lastly, the hypothesis to test the impact of the need for the programme and the organisation's intention to employ is presented.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The methodology used in a study is integral to the reliability of the findings and the validity of the study. This chapter focuses on the research design used for this study, detailing the research methodology, procedure, data gathering and data analysis. This section of the document also contains description of the instruments used to measure various constructs applicable to this study. The Chapter concludes with the ethical consideration for the study.

4.2. RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Kerlinger and Lee (2000), research design has the purpose of providing answers to research questions and controlling variance, where the research design must enable researchers to answer research questions as validly, objectively, accurately and economically as possible. Therefore, it is important to select the research design that would best satisfy the research questions as identified.

Sekaran (1992, pp. 12-13) notes that social as well as business research is a systematic attempt to provide answers to questions. Research design is by definition the plan devised by the researcher that will guide the research process from A to Z, in other words choosing the topic, conceptualizing, studying and absorbing similar studies, then assembling, organizing and integrating information [data] and it results in a specific end product [research findings]. It is within these parameters that key questions are to

be asked and answered such as the nature of research questions posed; the degree of control an investigator desires on events to be studied; the nature and particularities of the subjects under investigation and the extent of focus on contemporary phenomena and their relationships to present realities (Moser & Kalton, 1971).

4.2.1. The nature of the present research design

The research design of the present study is based on the understanding that because of the paucity of research on this particular topic it is an exploratory study utilising a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques. Exploratory studies are those examining phenomena, attitudes, perceptions and ideas of specific social groups that have not really been examined as consistently and intensely as other groups (Walizer, 2006). It is understandable that such research endeavours demand a variety of research strategies during the implementation of the chosen research design adopted (Leedy, 1993).

In the first instance an evaluation research design was used. Evaluation research is a field of applied social science which utilises the whole range of social science methods assessing or evaluating intervention programs (Babbie & Mouton, 2007). Program evaluation helps the research to determine the merit of the program and whether the program needs to be improved. Secondly, a causal, Ex Post Facto and survey design was used. According to Zikmund (2003, p. 56) the main goal of causal research is to identify the cause – and – effect relationships among variables. Ex post facto research is aimed at the discovery of possible causes for behaviour (Watson as cited in Coetzee, 2005). This type of research design can aid in identifying those dimensions of the

graduate internship programme that contribute to the employee's turnover intentions. It was thought that such an approach and the analysis of data would also be helpful in determining the employability of graduate interns from the manager's perspective.

4.2.2. Survey research

The purpose of survey research is to “generalize from a sample to a population so that inferences can be made about some characteristic, attitude, or behaviour of this population” (Cresswell, 2003, p. 154). Survey research is regarded by Babbie (2001), as the best method of data collection when the researcher is interested in collecting original data for a population that is too big to test directly. This type of research usually focuses on people, the vital facts of people, their beliefs, opinions, attitudes, motivations and behaviour (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000).

4.3. THE DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

The researcher decided that questionnaires would be used in this project and the construction of the questionnaire was debated and tested in a pilot study as will be described later. The researcher felt that there was a need to follow a number of flexible guidelines as he was aware that the construction of the questionnaire needs to be determined by a number of important factors such as content, format, type, wording and the social composition of the subjects and orders.

Two questionnaires were used in the research. The questionnaires were developed in such a way as to reflect the content of the graduate internship programme as presented in the organisation. The researcher aimed to keep both questionnaires similar in content

in order to get a comprehensive view of both participants and a true reflection of the programme. The first questionnaire focussed on the graduate interns whereas the second questionnaire was developed for the managers who acted as mentors for the graduate interns. From the graduate interns' perspective, the research sought to investigate whether the graduate internship programme contributed to their employability and propensity to stay in the organisation. From the manager's perspective, the research sought to investigate whether the manager would employ the graduate intern upon completion of the graduate internship programme.

Both questionnaires consisted of four sections, including respondent (biographical) information, internship programme training (soft skill and technical training), mentorship and general programme information. Each section used a combination of closed ended and open ended questions. A brief overview of each questionnaire is presented below.

4.3.1. The Questionnaire for the interns

4.3.1.1 Section A: Respondent information

This section collected biographical details on the interns. Respondents were required to fill in information regarding their gender, age, position, business area, geographical region, qualifications and year enrolled for the internship.

4.3.1.2. Section B 1: Soft skills training

The purpose of this part of the questionnaire was twofold. Firstly it was planned in order to determine whether the soft skills training an intern received during the internship programme contributed to the individual's competence in the soft skills listed, and

secondly to determine the importance of each soft skill for the individual. The questionnaire consisted of 16 soft skills the interns received training in during the internship programme. Each respondent was asked to indicate the extent to which the programme contributed to his/her competence in the skills listed on a scale from 1 to 5: *1 = to no extent* and *5 = to a large extent*. The respondent was then asked to rank the importance of 16 listed skills on a scale from 1 to 4: *1 = Insignificant* and *4 = Very important*. After completion of this questionnaire the respondent was asked to identify any other important skills that were not addressed in the internship training. Finally the respondent was asked to rank the five most important graduate soft skills.

The soft skills questionnaire included closed – ended questions. The rationale for the question is given here, but was not mentioned in the questionnaire:

1. Work purposefully towards completing a task – **goal directedness**
2. Communicate (verbally) effectively with people of all ranks – **verbal communication**
3. Business like writing style (i.e. e-mails, reports) - **business writing skills**
4. Professional conduct (i.e. telephone etiquette; meeting new people) – **general business etiquette**
5. Present myself appropriately in the workplace (dress, language) – **non verbal communication**
6. Ability to work in a team - **teamwork**
7. Ability to deal effectively with conflict in the workplace – **conflict management**
8. Resilience in solving problems - **resilience**

9. Personal awareness of strengths and areas of improvement – **personal awareness**
10. Work co-operatively with others (i.e. clients, colleagues) - **interpersonal skills**
11. Make a contribution to solving problems – **problem solving**
12. Take the lead when a task has to be carried out – **self-management**
13. Motivate myself to learn and grow - **self-motivation**
14. Apply creative thoughts, knowledge and skills in practice - **creativity**
15. Appreciate other colleagues in the workplace – **championing others**
16. Be attentive to and understand tasks that need to be completed – **attentiveness**

4.3.1.3. Section B 2: Technical skills training

The purpose of the questionnaire was to ascertain whether the technical skills training contributed to the intern's competence in technical skills. The respondent was asked to rate the extent to which the technical training contributed to the intern's technical skills on a *yes* or *no* scale.

4.3.1.4. Section C: Mentorship

The focus of this part of the questionnaire was to gain insight into the mentoring experience of the graduate intern. The section used an adapted and customised version of Janse van Rensburg and Roodt's (2005) Mentorship Role Questionnaire (MRQ). The questionnaire measured the frequency of interaction, quality of mentorship and the roles

of a mentor. The MRQ measure has a 5-point intensity scale: *to no extent (1)* and *to a large extent (5)*, and *never (1)* to *always (5)*.

4.3.1.5. Section D: General programme information

The final part of the questionnaire sought to ascertain whether the internship programme met the requirements of the graduate intern and the extent to which the intern considered quitting the internship programme.

4.3.2. The Questionnaire for Mentors

4.3.2.1 Section A: Respondent information

In this section respondents were required to fill in information about their gender, age, position, business area, geographical region, qualifications, years of work experience, years employed at the organisation and years working in their current job.

4.3.2.2. Section B 1: Soft skills training

The purpose of this section was to determine the importance of the soft skills training provided to the graduate intern from the perspective of the mentor. The same questionnaire was used as with the graduate interns. However, this questionnaire was only limited to asking the respondent the importance of the training. No pre-measure was done on the soft skills of the graduate intern upon enrolment of the graduate programme. Therefore, it would be impossible to determine from the mentor's perspective as to whether the internship programme enhanced a soft skill of the intern. However, ranking the importance of training in a specific soft skill provided the researcher with useful information as to which soft skills are important to ensure the

employability of the intern. After completion of this questionnaire the respondent was asked to identify any other important skills that were not addressed during the internship training. Finally the respondent was asked to rank the five most important graduate skills.

4.3.2.3. Section B 2: Technical skills training

The purpose of the questionnaire was to determine whether the technical skills training contributed to the intern's competence in technical skills. The respondents were asked to rate the extent to which the technical training contributed to their technical skills on a scale from 1 to 5: *1 = to no extent* and *5 = to a large extent*.

4.3.2.4. Section C: Mentorship

In this section, the respondent was asked to indicate the extent to which the graduate internship programme enabled him/ her to act as a mentor on a five point scale ranging from *1 = to no extent* to *5 = to a large extent*. Open ended question were used to collect qualitative data with regards to opinions and feelings.

4.3.2.5. Section D: General programme information

The final part of the questionnaire focused on the overall importance of the graduate internship programme and whether the mentor will consider employing the graduate intern upon completion of the programme.

4.3.3. Closed versus open-ended questions

The open-ended questions were used because they provide the opportunity to the respondent to answer openly, honestly, spontaneously and at length not to

preconceived answers. Interviews that take place in questionnaires utilising close-ended questions are easier to code and analyse as well to answer on the part of the respondent, and hence, more convenient for both sides. Their analysis is straightforward and follows the rules and procedures of scientific social research.

A major drawback with close-ended questions is that they are severely limited in the choice they give the respondent and the possibility that bias may be introduced, as they are forcing the respondent to choose from given alternatives or by making him/her select alternatives that might have not otherwise come to mind, hence the use of open-ended questions (Boyd, Westfall & Stasch, 1999)

4.4. THE PILOT STUDY

The suitability of the selected research methods for data collection was tested by conducting pilot tests of the questionnaire, as suggested by Brynard and Hanekom (2006, p. 11). The pre-testing of the questionnaire involved obtaining input from the statistical department of the University of Pretoria as well as the study leader, and then asking a sample of 4 managers and 6 interns known to the researcher to complete the questionnaire as part of a pilot study. Feedback was obtained on aspects such as the participants' interest in the questions, the meaning inferred by the participants, the continuity and flow, the question sequence and the length of time required to complete the questionnaire (Cooper & Schindler, 2003, p. 390). This ensured the face validity of the questionnaire. The participants were informed that they were part of a pilot test group, which enabled detailed probing and discussion of the questionnaire. No major changes were made to either the methodology or the research instrument as a result of

the pilot study, only format changes were made to the questionnaire to make it reader-friendly.

4.5. THE UNIT OF ANALYSIS AND SAMPLING METHODS

The unit of analysis for the purpose of this study is the intern-mentor dyad, therefore the population consisted of the line managers and interns. The rationale for including these individuals was to get a comprehensive view of the interns, as well as, the mentor's perceptions of the internship programme. The study aimed at comparing these perceptions in order to establish an internship programme framework that benefits both parties and eventually contributes to the retention of interns that have gone through this programme within the organisation.

4.6. SAMPLING METHOD

Purposive sampling as defined by Zikmund (2003) was used. He defined judgemental or purposive sampling as "... a non-probability sampling technique in which an experienced individual selects the sample based upon some appropriate characteristic of the sample members" (Zikmund, 2003, p. 382).

The participants (graduate interns and mentors) in the graduate programme during 2007/8 were selected to be respondents in the study. The total population of participants in the graduate internship programme is 146 and the programme is offered at the company offices in KwaZulu Natal, Eastern Cape, Western Cape, and Gauteng. The 146 individuals represented IT graduates and IT skills are their core talent. 146 questionnaires were distributed, but due to the electronic nature of the questionnaire,

only 106 interns had access to the questionnaire due to network availability. The population for mentors within the organisation were 85, but only 64 mentors had access to the questionnaire for the same reason as mentioned for the interns. The response rate of the research is indicated in Table 2:

Table 2: Response rate

Participants	Total Questionnaires Distributed	Total Questionnaires Returned	Response Rate (Percentage)
Interns	106	79	75%
Mentors	64	39	61%

The response rate of 75% for the interns and 61% for the mentors is sufficient for exploratory research (Brynard & Hanekom, 2006)

4.7. DATA COLLECTION PLAN

A proposal that explained the aim and possible value of this research was presented to the Group Executive Human Resources of the target organisation, with a formal request for approval to conduct this research. The questionnaires were distributed by the researcher. Clear instructions were provided. The purpose of the study and the benefits for both the participants and the organisation was highlighted. To ensure confidentiality and enhance reliability, the study was conducted anonymously.

4.8. PROCESS OF DATA CAPTURING

Given the technological facilities that both groups possess, i.e. accessibility to email and Internet, a web-based email survey was developed for primary data collection from these two groups. This allowed the researcher to involve participants from across the

country in the survey. This approach was appropriate, as the number of national participants in rural areas is small. Also, to ensure viable quantitative research results, the participant pool was maximised. Participants received an email requesting their participation to a survey. The email provided some background information regarding the survey, the specific case study and a web-link that would direct participants directly to the electronic survey questionnaire.

The web based survey tool allowed for the electronic web interface presentation of the survey questionnaire. The tool also collected the data in a user-friendly format. This data could then be extracted in a spreadsheet format for further analyses and review. Overall the tool provided the researcher with an easy to use, accessible and professional survey tool that enabled easy access to the questionnaire for participants and efficient data management at an acceptable cost.

4.9. ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.9.1. The Qualitative data analysis

Qualitative data analysis utilised themes, codes and content analysis culled from the open ended questions.

4.9.2. Quantitative data analysis

The quantitative data analysis included the following:

- **Sample Statistics** included variables in a sample or measures computed from sample data (Zikmund, 2003:402). Frequency analysis for example was used to

describe the sample by means of descriptors such as counts, percentages and means (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000).

- **Factor Analysis.** The purpose of factor analysis is to reduce the number of variables by finding common factors among them (Punch, 2005).
- **Reliability analysis.** “Reliability is a matter of whether a particular technique, applied repeatedly to the same object, yields the same result each time,” (Babbie, 2001, p. 140). The reliability of the measuring instruments was assessed with the use of Cronbach alpha coefficients (Clark & Watson, 1995; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).
- **Correlation analysis** (i.e. Pearson/ Product moment, Kendall’s Tau) was done to determine the significance of relationships between variables.

The collation of data and analysis thereof and generation of results was calculated by a statistical consultant.

4.10. DATA STORAGE

Research participants completed the questionnaire electronically and the data was stored on a central database that was only accessible to the researcher. A back up copy was held on a memory disk and stored at the Gordon Institute of Business Science.

4.11. ASSUMPTIONS

An assumption is “a condition that is taken for granted, without which the research project would be pointless” (Leedy & Ormrod, in Sage 2009). Several basic assumptions underlie the proposed research study. As such, it was assumed that:

- The population is literate, fluent in English and will be able to complete the questionnaire;
- The ability of the professional workforce due to time constraints and willingness to provide the data required for the study;
- Participants will provide correct and truthful answers to the questions asked in the survey due to the acknowledgment of confidentiality;
- Quantitative research is an appropriate means to explore this organisational behaviour;
- All participants are computer literate.

4.12. LIMITATIONS

The following limitations have been identified with regard to this study:

- This research was a post-test only. This limited the researcher in terms of determining whether the soft skills training enhanced the soft skills of the graduate interns the mentor's perspective.
- The reliance of the study solely based on self-report measures. In future one can look at observations of behaviour, especially as far as the soft skills are concerned.
- The electronic nature of the research questionnaire posed a limitation to those participants in the population group that did not have access to the organisation's network system due to being placed on a client site whose network limited connection to the employer information system network.

4.13. ETHICS

The study adhered to the ethical requirement for sound research by focusing on the following:

- The research was approved by the Ethics committee of the Gordon Institute of Business Studies
- The company's approval was obtained prior to the study.
- Each participant provided informed consent for participation in the study.
- Participation was voluntary and anonymity was maintained.
- All information would be confidential and no names would be used in the research report.
- The researcher were aware of personal bias due to his own involvement in the graduate internship programme but also believe that the nature of the quantitative approach assisted in minimising this personal bias to the minimum.

4.14. SUMMARY

The chapter examined the key ingredients and foundations of the empirical effort undertaken by the researcher. It identified the features of the research and the logic behind their selection. They included the basic steps undertaken in the effort to implement through instruments of scientific research all the steps necessary to make this exercise not only worthwhile, but also based on strictly defined scientific criteria.

The results of the research are reported in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the research design of the study and included the methods, measuring instruments, research procedures and data analysis methods. This chapter delineates the results and findings of the research. The results and findings are reported in two tiers. Tier 1 presents the results of the research in a descriptive format including the demographic breakdowns of the participants and descriptive statistics of the measurements. Tier 2 focuses on the testing of the hypothesis.

5.2. TIER 1: DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

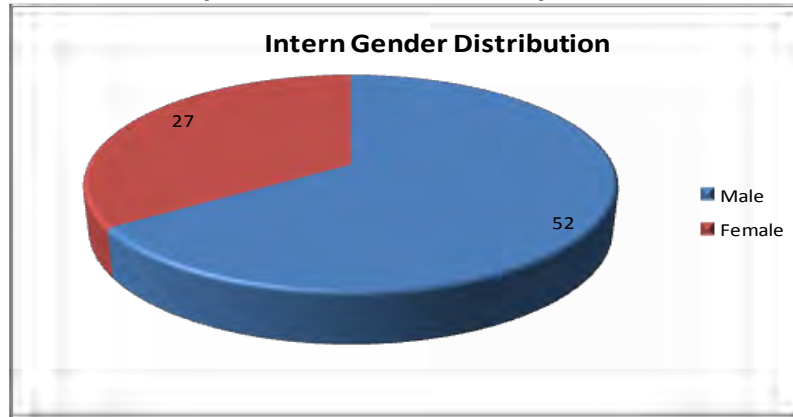
5.2.1. Description of the Population

All geographic areas (regions) in the business were represented by mentors in the 2007 and 2008 graduate internship programmes which formed the focus of the study. The interns that were part of the programmes also represented all areas of the business. In total 79 interns and 39 managers participated in this study. This represents a 61% intern response and a 75% management response. The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented below:

5.2.1.1 Gender

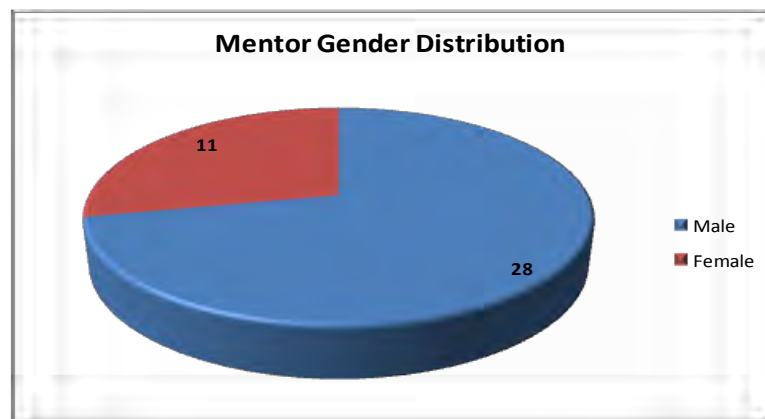
The gender distribution of the intern respondents are as follows:

Graph 1: Gender of Intern Respondents



Graph 1 shows that 27 (34%) of the interns in the sample were female while 52 (66%) were male. This does not correspond with the gender distribution of the organizational internship programme which had a more balanced representation of both male (52%) and female (48%), however the number of respondents is representative of the target population.

Graph 2: Gender of Mentor Respondents

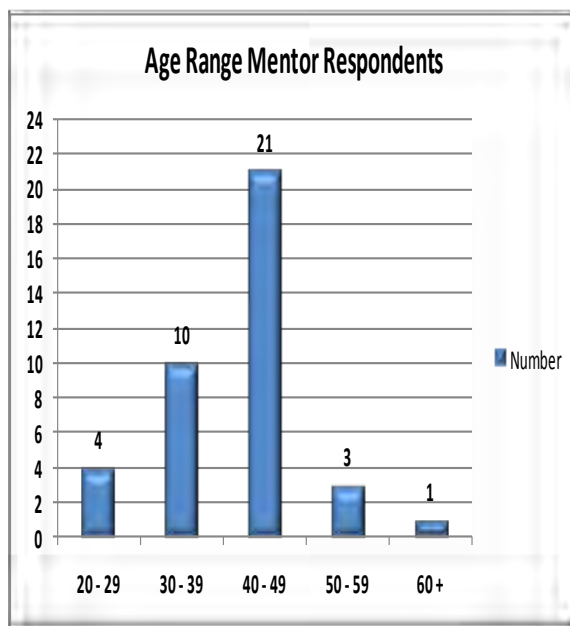


Graph 2 shows that 11 (28%) of mentors were female while 28 (72%) were male. This corresponds with the gender representation within management levels of the organisation.

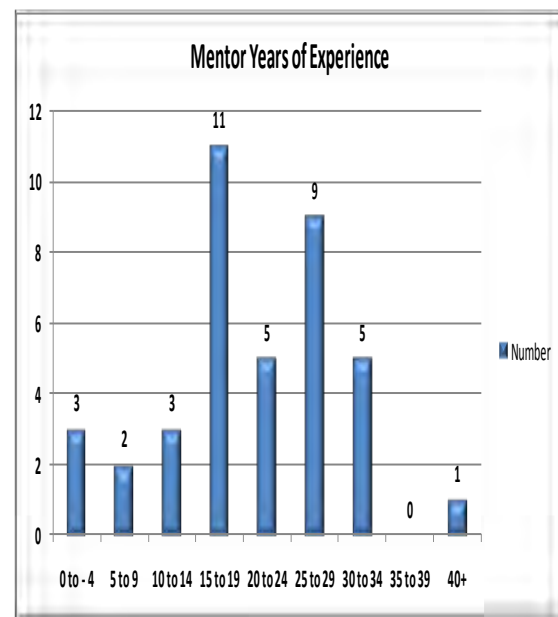
5.2.1.2. Age and Work Experience

The majority of the mentors (90%) were 30 years and older and a total of 87% had more than 10 years working experience. This makes them an ideal representative group as they have both work exposure and an understanding of the business environment to give valuable input with regards to the requirements of Internship Programme.

Graph 3: Mentor Age Range

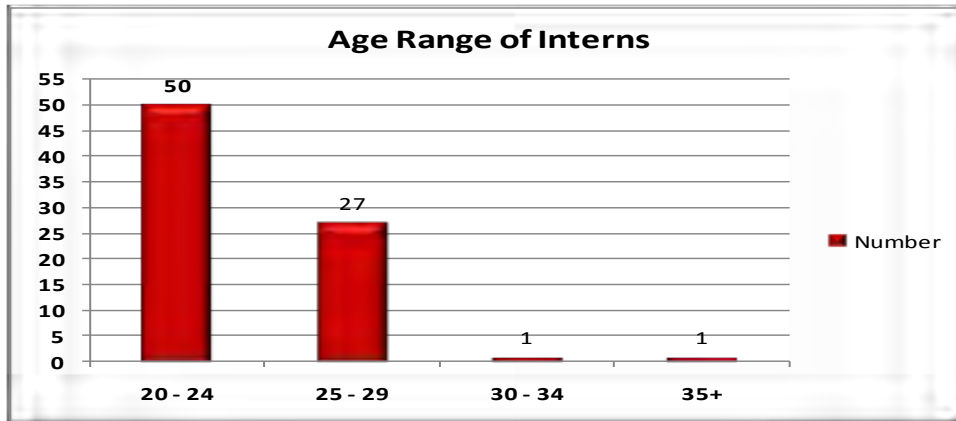


Graph 4: Mentor Years Experience



The majority of interns (63%) were under 25 years of age and 97% under the age of 30. This was to be expected as the intake for the internship programmes focused on unemployed graduates, a majority of the recruitment of these students was done in coordination with universities focusing on their final year students, and students that recently completed their studies, but could not find employment in the IT sector.

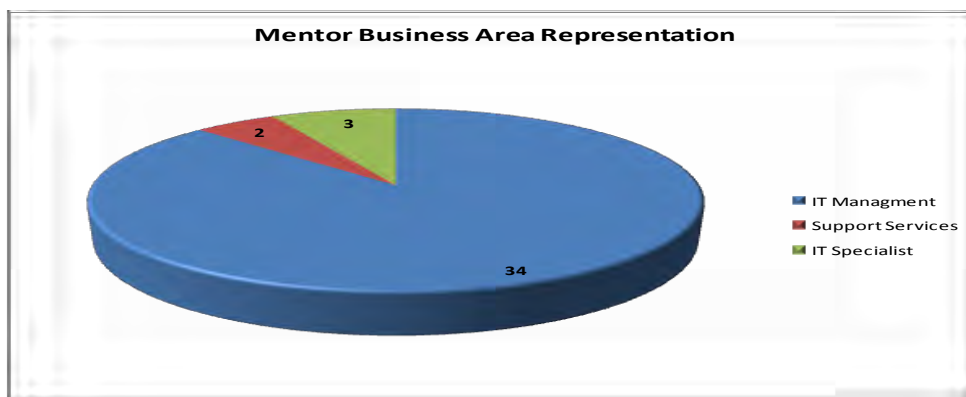
Graph 5: Intern Age Range



5.2.1.3. Business Area

A total of 34 (87%) mentor respondents represented IT management within the business, 2 (5%) represented support services while 3 (8%) represented IT specialist areas (See Graph 6). The 5% for support services was representative of those areas in the support services that had interns in departments such as HR, Finance, Marketing, Commercial and Legal. This corresponds with the breakdown of intern qualifications recruited on the programme where 5% of graduates had non-IT qualifications. 95% of graduates had IT related qualifications and were placed in the IT operational business areas of the organisation.

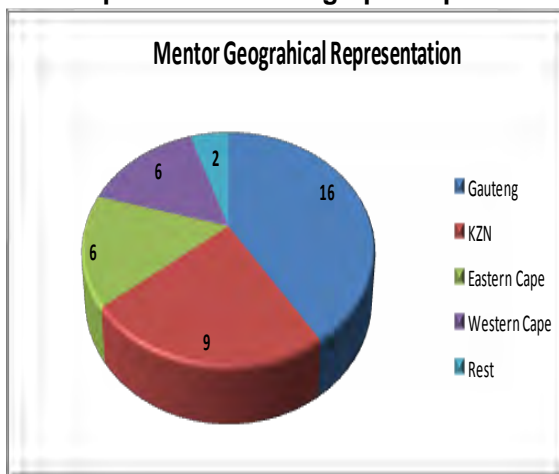
Graph 6: Mentor Business Area Representation



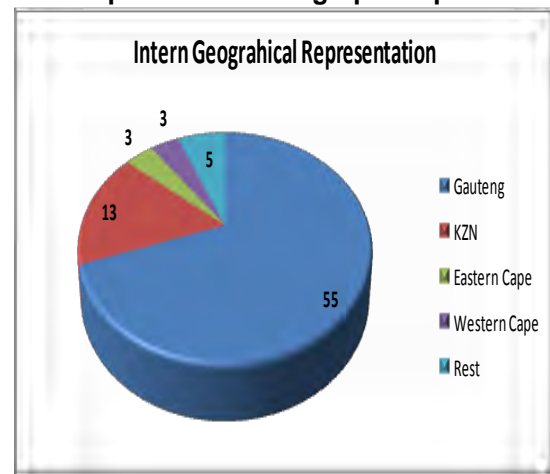
5.2.1.4. Geographic Representation

The majority of the organisation’s business operations are lodged in the Gauteng Province, with KZN and Western Cape as major regional centres. The mentor (Graph 7) and intern (Graph 8) representation reflect this breakdown which makes it representative of the target population. 16 (41%) of mentors and 55 (70%) of interns represented the Gauteng Province, while, 9 (23%) of mentors and 13 (16%) interns the KZN province, 12 (31%) mentors and 6 (8%) interns the Eastern Cape and Western Cape Provinces, with 2 (5%) mentors and 5 (6%) interns the rest of the organisation’s representative areas.

Graph 7: Mentor Geographic Spread



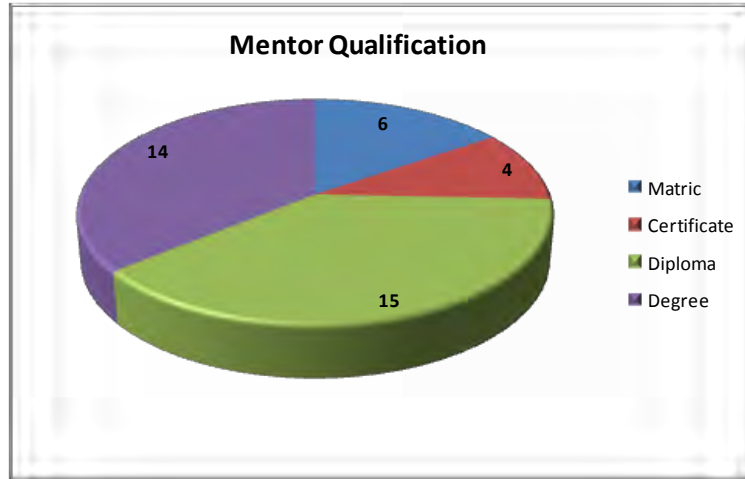
Graph 8: Intern Geographic Spread



5.2.1.5. Education

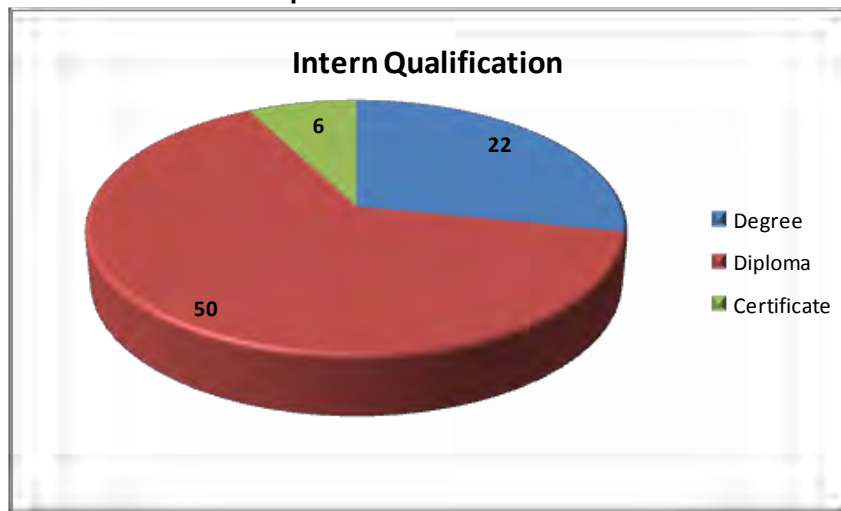
A total of 15 (84%) of the mentors have obtained a tertiary qualification (See Graph 9). These range from IT to business management qualifications, with those mentors in the support services having related qualifications to their area of speciality.

Graph 9: Mentor Qualification



50 (64%) of the intern respondents hold bachelors degrees, while 22 (28%) hold national diploma qualifications and 6 (8%) a relevant IT certification (See Graph 10).

Graph 10: Intern Qualification



The following section will outline the results of the skills training component of the study.

5.2.2. Results of the skills training

The soft skills questionnaire for graduate interns consisted of 16 statements, measuring 16 dimensions of the soft skills training that the graduate interns were exposed to during

the internship programme. The respondents were first asked to rate the contribution of the graduate internship programme to the development of their soft skills and secondly to indicate the importance of the soft skills in the graduate internship programme. The results are depicted in Table 3 and Graph 11.

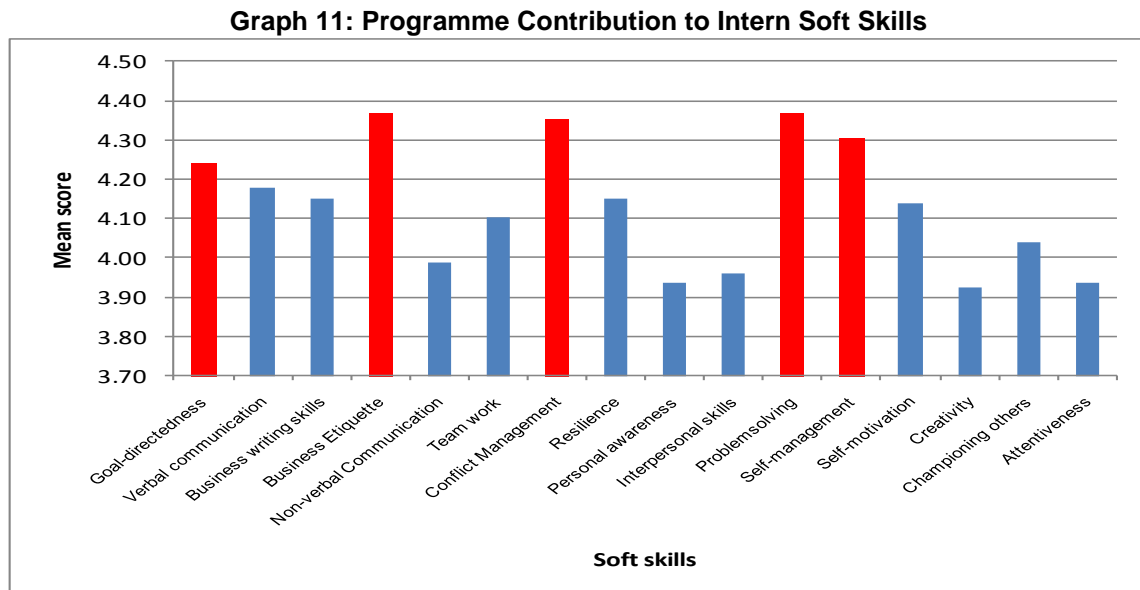
5.2.2.1. Graduate Interns

The contribution of the soft skills has been ranked in terms of importance by the interns as reflected in Table 3.

Table 3: Programme Impact on Intern Soft Skills

SOFT SKILLS	N	MEAN
Goal-directedness	79	4.24
Verbal communication	79	4.18
Business writing skills	79	4.15
Business Etiquette	79	4.37
Non-verbal Communication	79	3.99
Team work	79	4.10
Conflict Management	79	4.35
Resilience	79	4.15
Personal awareness	79	3.94
Interpersonal skills	79	3.96
Problem solving	79	4.37
Self-management	79	4.30
Self-motivation	79	4.14
Creativity	79	3.92
Championing others	79	4.04
Attentiveness	79	3.94

The overall results of the soft skills training indicate that the internship programme contributed to a large extent to the soft skills of the graduate interns. On average, the graduate intern indicated that the programme training contributed most to Business etiquette, Conflict Management, Problem-solving, Self-Management and Goal-directedness soft skills.



The interns were next asked to indicate the importance of the soft skills for their employment. The results are reported in Table 4 and Graph 12.

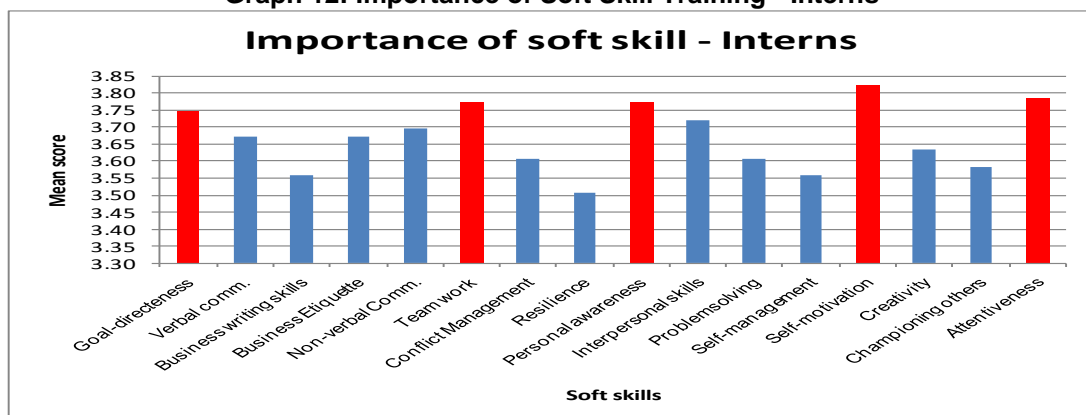
Table 4: Importance of Soft Skills Training

Soft skill	N	Mean
Goal-directedness	79	3.75
Verbal communication	79	3.67
Business writing skills	79	3.56
Business etiquette	79	3.67
Non-verbal Comm.	79	3.70
Team work	79	3.77

Soft skill	N	Mean
Conflict Management	79	3.61
Resilience	79	3.51
Personal awareness	79	3.77
Interpersonal skills	79	3.72
Problem solving	79	3.61
Self-management	79	3.56
Self-motivation	79	3.82
Creativity	79	3.63
Championing others	79	3.58
Attentiveness	79	3.78

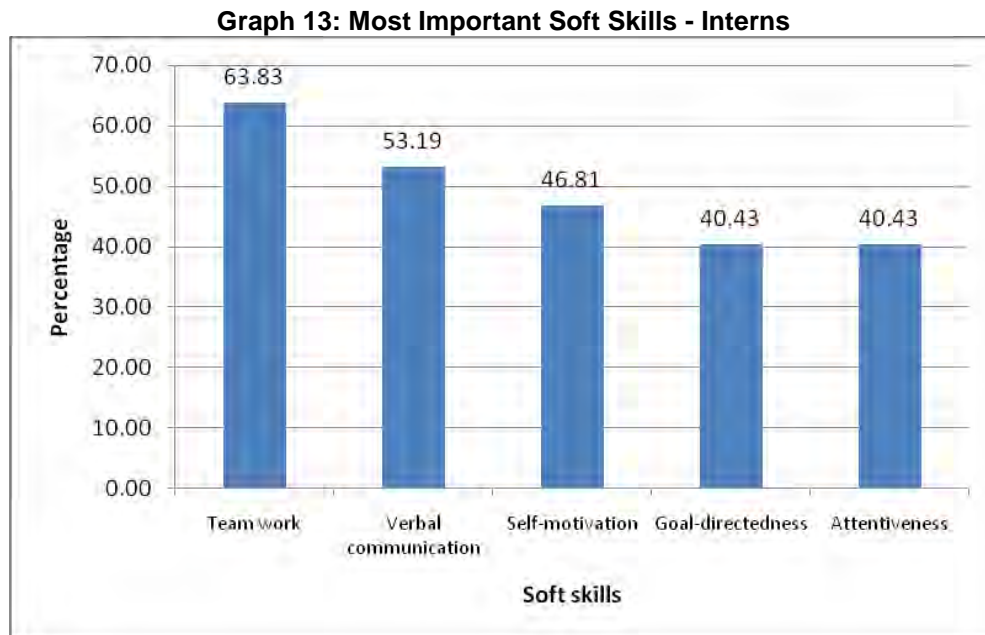
The overall results indicate that the interns perceive all the soft skills in which they received training, as very important. On average soft skills such as self-motivation, attentiveness, personal awareness and teamwork and goal-directedness were perceived as the most important skills.

Graph 12: Importance of Soft Skill Training - Interns



The interns were next asked to rank the five most important soft skills. The results are reported in Graph 13.

From Graph 13 it is evident that the most important soft skills for the graduate interns are teamwork (63.83%), followed by verbal communication (53.19%), self-motivation (46.81%), Goal-directedness (40.43%) and Attentiveness (40.43%).



The following additional soft skills requirements were identified by the respondents:

- People management;
- Networking skills;
- Diversity management;
- Time management; and
- Listening skills.

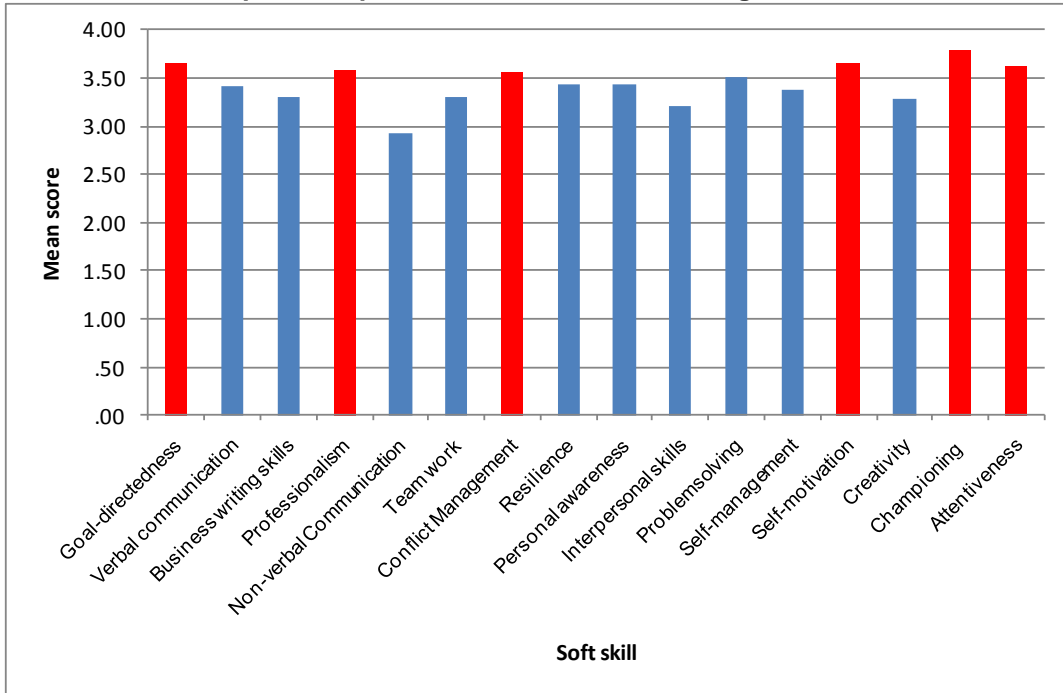
5.2.2.2. Mentors

The mentors were asked to rank the importance of the soft skills training that the interns received. The results are reported in Table 5 and Graph 14.

Table 5: Ranking Importance of Soft Skills - Mentors

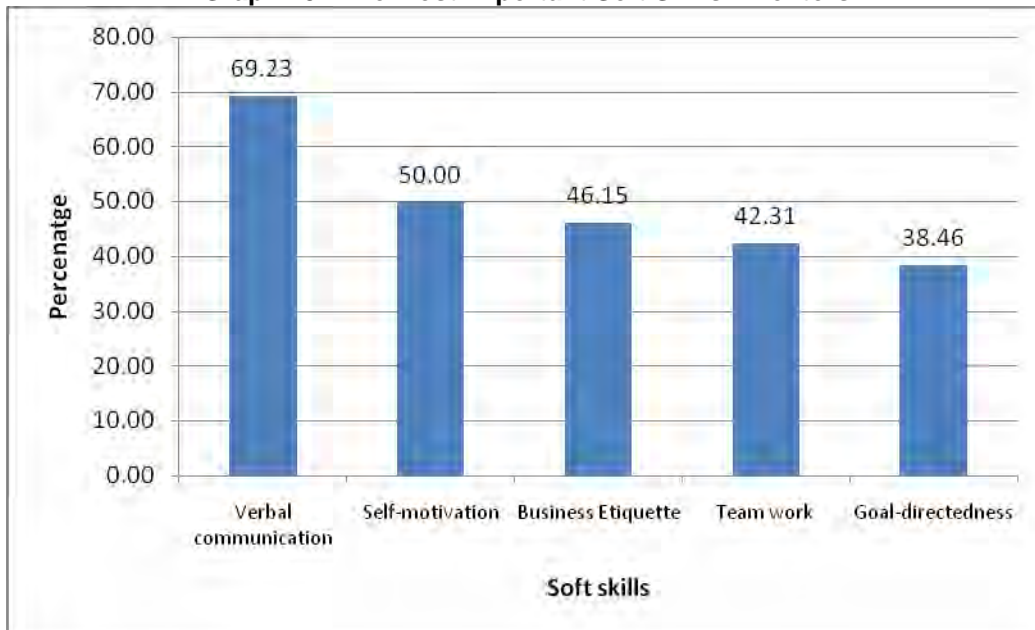
Soft skill	N	Mean
Goal-directedness	39	3.67
Verbal communication	39	3.41
Business writing skills	39	3.31
Business Etiquette	39	3.59
Non-verbal Communication	39	2.92
Team work	39	3.31
Conflict Management	39	3.56
Resilience	39	3.44
Personal awareness	39	3.44
Interpersonal skills	39	3.21
Problem solving	39	3.51
Self-management	39	3.38
Self-motivation	39	3.67
Creativity	39	3.28
Championing others	39	3.79
Attentiveness	39	3.62

Graph 14: Importance of Soft Skills Training - Mentors



The most important skills as identified by the mentors are presented in Graph 15.

Graph 15: Five Most Important Soft Skills - Mentors



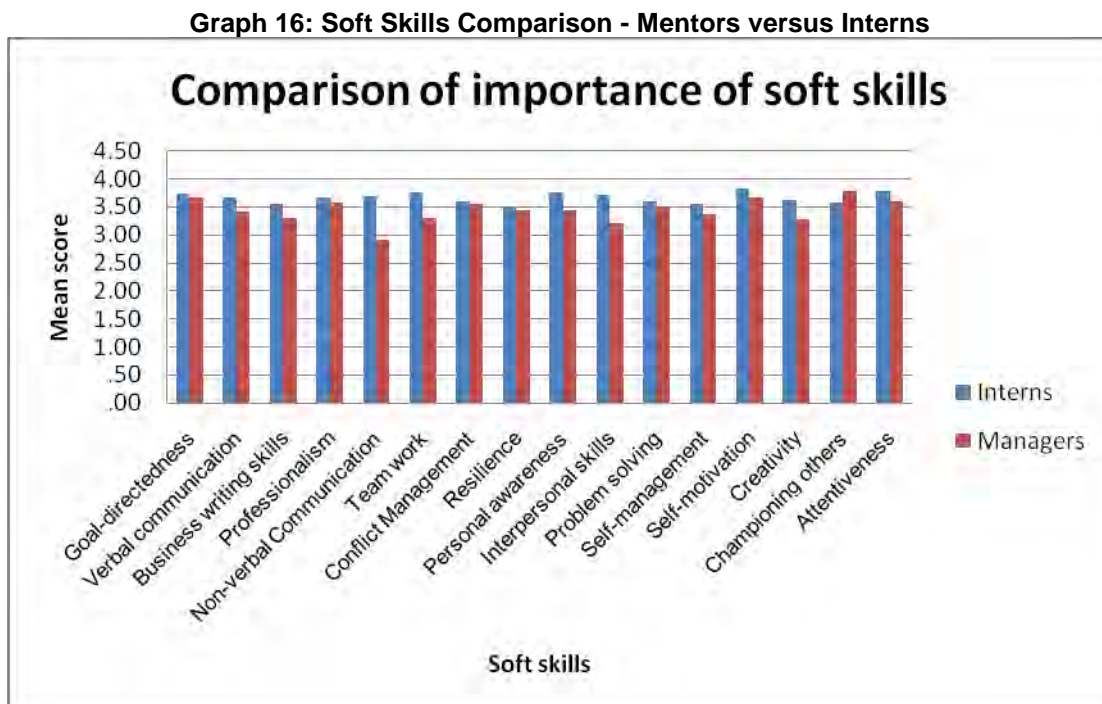
The following additional soft skills requirements were identified by the mentors:

- Presentation skills;

- Analytical thinking; and
- Time Management.

Summary of findings for soft skills training

Graph 16 presents a comparison of the importance of the soft skills presented in the training programme for both groups of participants.



From the above results, it is evident that the soft skills presented in the training are important for both graduate interns and mentors. Both groups of respondents indicate that verbal communication, self-motivation, teamwork and goal directedness are the most important soft skills to assist graduate interns in the workplace. The interns highlighted the need for additional training in soft skills such as people management, networking skills, diversity management, time management and listening skills. The

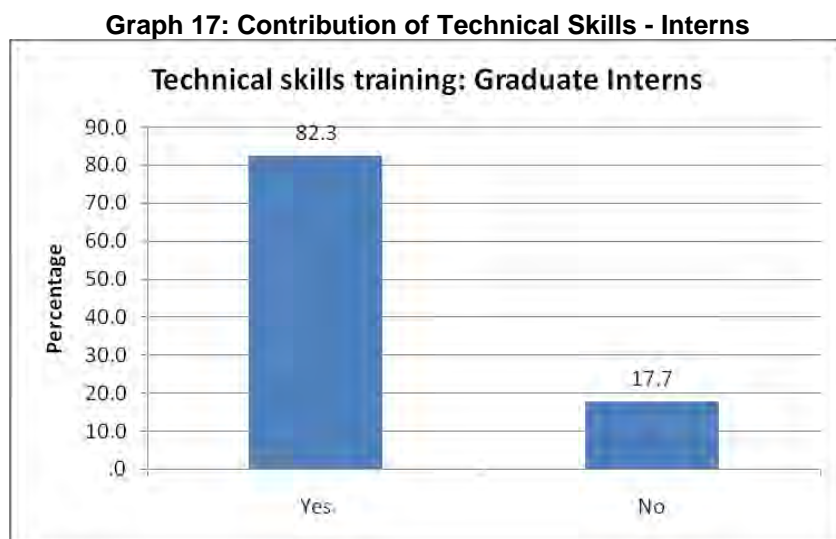
mentors on the other hand had included the need for additional soft skills such as analytical thinking, presentation skills and also time management.

The following section would outline the descriptive results of the technical skills training component of the survey.

5.2.3. Results of the technical skills training

5.2.3.1. Interns

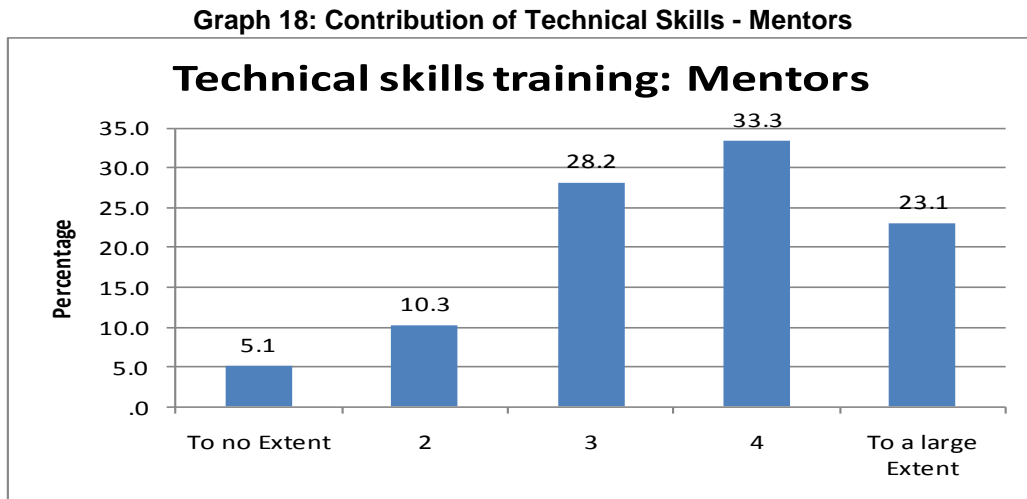
Graph 17 shows that 82.3% of interns felt that their technical training contributed to their technical skills, while 17.7% indicated that it was not sufficient.



Qualitative responses from interns: The interns identified the need for more job specific technical training for the positions they were appointed in during the internship programme.

5.2.3.2. Mentors

Graph 18 shows that 84.6% of the mentors were satisfied that the technical training contributed to the development of the interns, while 15.4% considered it as insufficient.



Qualitative responses from mentors: The mentor respondents indicated that the technical training in general was sufficient to lay the necessary technical foundation, but acknowledged the need for job specific technical training as per business area needs and practical exposure to these technical requirements.

5.2.4. Results of mentorship

The impact of the mentorship component of the programme was evaluated and the results are depicted in Table 6 and Graph 19.

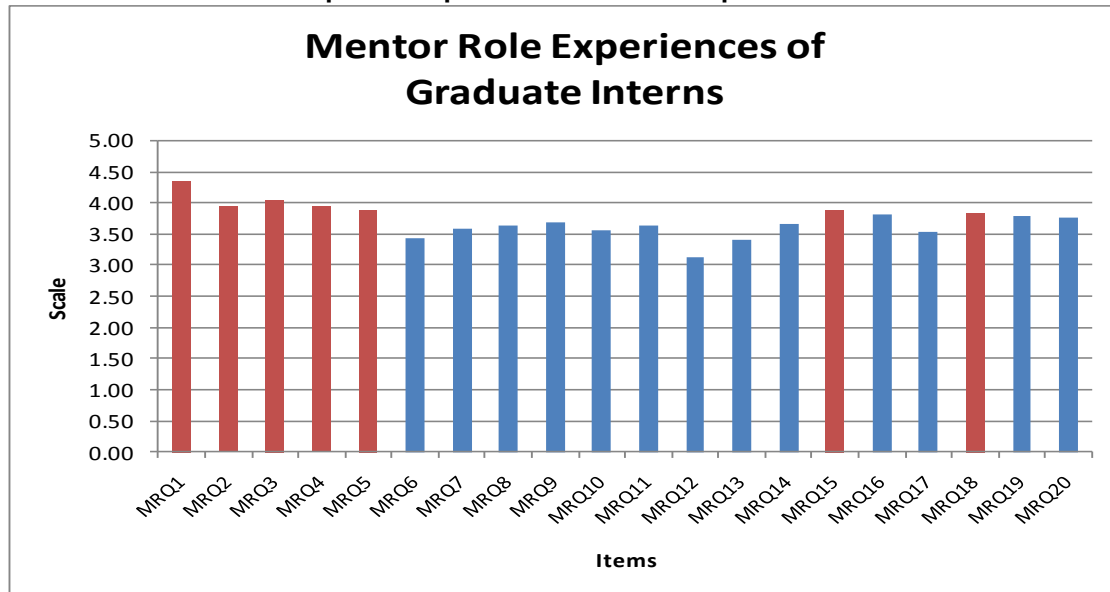
5.2.4.1. Interns

The impact of mentoring as experienced by the interns is presented in Table 6 and Graph 19:

Table 6: Impact of Mentoring - Interns

Item	Mentor Role	N Valid	Mean
MRQ1	Need for mentor	79	4.35
MRQ2	Intern interaction with mentor	78	3.95
MRQ3	Intern benefit from interactions with mentor	78	4.05
MRQ4	Professional guidance and direction by mentor	78	3.94
MRQ5	Challenging assignments to improve intern competence	79	3.89
MRQ6	Frequency of feedback from mentor	79	3.44
MRQ7	Respect from mentor to intern	79	3.58
MRQ8	Promotion of career	77	3.62
MRQ9	Mentor encourage communication about fears and anxiety	79	3.68
MRQ10	Mentor convey feelings of empathy	79	3.56
MRQ11	Mentor encourage intern to prepare for position at BCX	79	3.63
MRQ12	Mentor encourages intern to behave alternatively	78	3.13
MRQ13	Sharing of personal experiences	79	3.41
MRQ14	Mentor serves as role model	79	3.67
MRQ15	Mentor display content expertise	78	3.88
MRQ16	Mentor's attitudes influences intern's attitudes	78	3.81
MRQ17	Mentor share career history	79	3.53
MRQ18	Mentor provide constructive and useful feedback on intern's performance	79	3.85
MRQ19	Appropriate recognition of intern's contributions	79	3.80
MRQ20	Motivation to improve intern's work	78	3.77

Graph 19: Experience of Mentorship - Interns



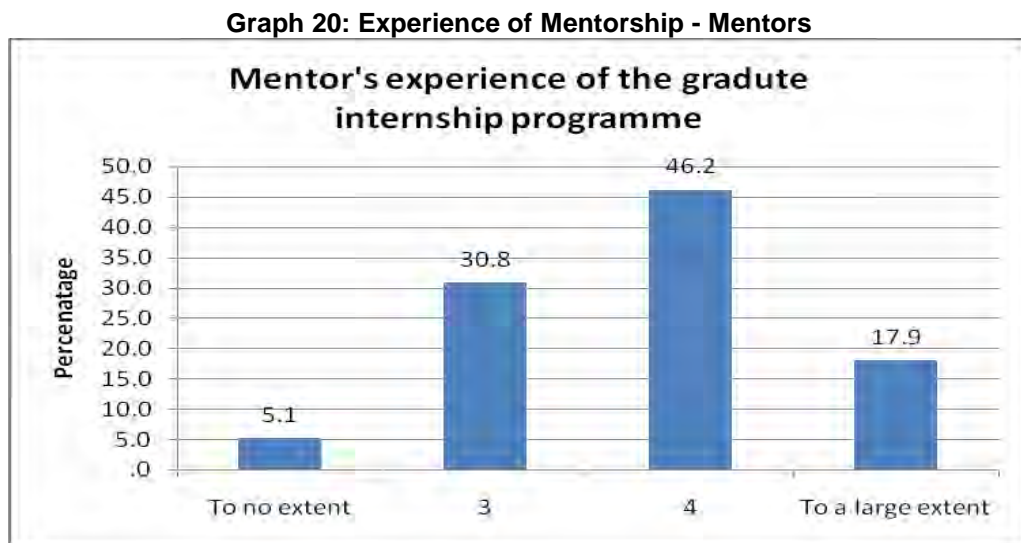
From Table 6 it is evident that the graduate interns perceived the mentorship experience in the organisation positively. The results clearly indicate a need for mentorship as an integral part of the graduate internship programme (MRQ 1). On average, other results also indicated that the interns benefited to a large extent from interactions with the mentor (MRQ 3), received professional guidance from the mentor (MRQ 4), received challenging assignments to improve his/her competence (MRQ 5), mentors displayed content expertise (MRQ 15) and mentors provided constructive and useful feedback on the performance of interns (MRQ 18)

Qualitative responses by interns: The majority of the interns experienced the mentoring programme as positive as the programme offered them exposure and contributed to gaining more self-confidence and this in itself contributed to their own motivation. A few interns experienced their mentors as unwilling to share knowledge as they were threatened by the interns and in these instances even though mentors had a willingness

to support the programme they did not demonstrate the required interpersonal skills to guide the intern, which resulted in a negative experience for the intern.

5.2.4.2. Mentors

Graph 20 shows that 84.9% of the mentors experienced the mentorship programme as positive and contributed to the success of the internship programme.



Qualitative responses by mentors: Mentors made important observations about the need for the mentoring training programme. They noted how it assisted them in being more effective in the mentoring process. Some mentors mentioned time constraints that negatively impacted on the balancing between their mentoring role and fulfilling their normal management duties.

5.2.5. Overall programme results

5.2.5.1. Programme Expectations

Interns: The vast majority of intern respondents indicated that their expectation regarding the internship programme was met. However a few mentioned that expectations were not met due to incorrect position placement versus academic qualification, interest of the mentors and insufficient structure for on-the-job exposure.

Mentors: The majority of mentors indicated that their expectations regarding the internship programme were met with regards to quality of candidates and structure of programme. Time availability for efficient mentoring was mentioned as a constraint in providing quality mentorship assistance to the interns.

5.2.5.2. Need for programme

The need for the internship programme as indicated by the Interns is depicted in Graph 21.

Graph 21: Need for Internship Programme - Interns

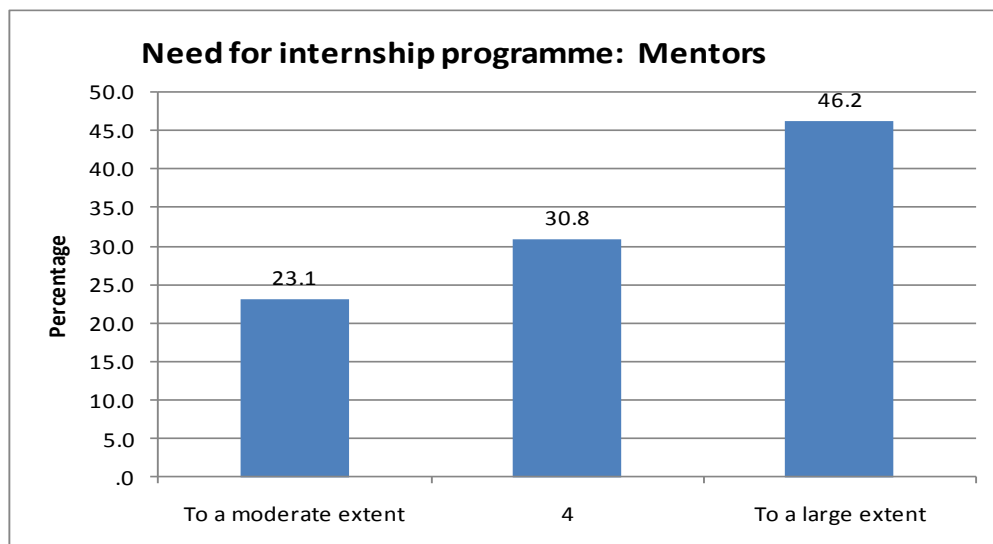


95% of the interns positively expressed the need for the internship programme.

Qualitative responses from the interns: All interns unanimously supported the need for an internship programme as it provides the bridge between the academic world and the work environment. It provides practical exposure and experience for graduates and hence develops the talent pipeline and addresses the graduate unemployment rate.

Graph 22 shows mentor responses for the need for the internship programme.

Graph 22: Need for the Internship Programme - Mentors



77% of the mentors positively expressed a need for a graduate internship programme.

Qualitative responses from the mentors: The mentors recognised the need for an internship programme of this nature, as it contributes to:

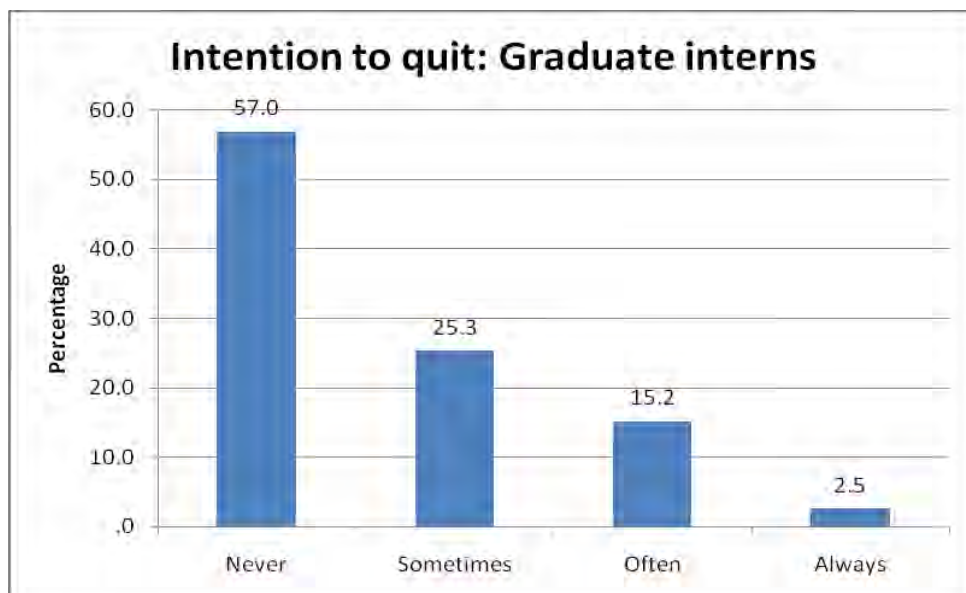
- Developing a pipeline for future junior consultant skills;
- Providing opportunities for career and succession planning of entire departments;

- Combating graduate unemployment;
- Assisting with retention of good quality young professionals;
- Exposing the organisation to new IT talent and thinking;
- Contributing to the development of young business professionals;
- Identifying and bringing “right” talent into the entry level positions of the organization;
- Giving young people the opportunity for work exposure;
- Delivering on the role as a responsible corporate citizen; and
- Creating an opportunity for the organisation on brand awareness.

5.2.5.3. Intention to quit

The graduate interns’ intention to quit the programme during the internship period is presented in Graph 23.

Graph 23: Graduate Interns Intention to Quit

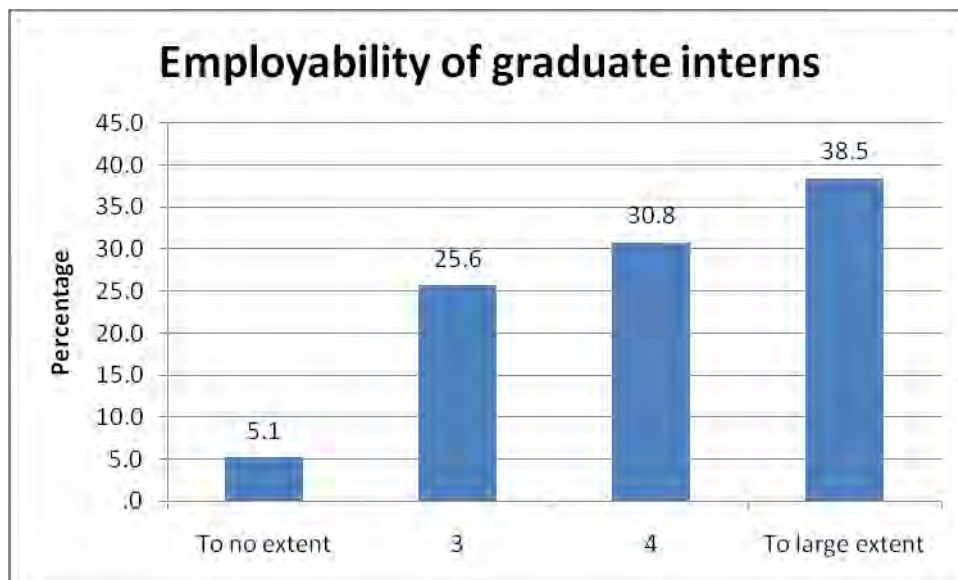


57% of the interns indicated that they never considered quitting the internship programme, while 40.5% considered it, sometimes to often, and only 2.5% considered it all the time.

5.2.5.4. Intention to Employ - Mentors

The organisation’s intention to employ interns after the completion of the programme is presented in Graph 24.

Graph 24: Organisation's Intention to Employ



94.9% of mentors considered the employment of the interns, while 5.1% did not consider employment of the interns at all.

Qualitative responses from mentors: The intention is there to employ as many interns as possible based on the following factors:

- Operational reality of the organisation at the end of the programme (available positions);
- Candidates with positive attitudes and willingness have a higher chance of employability compared to technical ability alone;
- Dedicated mentors and line managers are required to ensure full benefit of the programme and add true value to the company; and
- The involvement of mentors and line managers in the selection process at the onset of the programme.

5.2.6. Programme suggestions

The following suggestions were made:

The interns made the following suggestions:

- Shadowing senior employees;
- Increase remuneration as intern shows progress and performance;
- More regular feedback from management on intern progress;
- Conduct technical and soft skill training earlier in the programme;
- Formalise daily activities in a more structured manner;
- Consider extending the programme to a full year;
- Ensure that mentors are suitable and have the inclination for mentoring;
- Align graduate qualification with relevant business unit or department;
- Rotate interns in order for them to discover their interest;

- Line managers and mentors need to inform their respective departments about interns being placed in their environment; and
- Line managers and mentors that indicated a need for interns need to ensure enough work is available to keep interns busy.

The mentors made the following suggestions:

- Implement a structured training and development plan per intern in business area appointed;
- Technical training must be provided earlier in the programme;
- Managers play an essential role in the success of the programme, therefore buy-in from the business to support the programme from the beginning to end is essential; and
- Reduce numbers of interns in order to make the programme more manageable.

5.3. TIER TWO: TESTING OF HYPOTHESES

The tier two analyses focused on the testing of the hypothesis. Prior to testing the hypothesis the psychometric properties of the Soft skills Training Contribution (SSTC) questionnaire, Soft Skills Training Importance (SSTI) questionnaire and Mentorship Role (MRQ) questionnaire for the graduate intern respondents were examined. These included the following:

- The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) to determine the sample adequacy and sphericity of the item-correlation matrix;

- Exploratory factor analysis to discover and identify the dimensions of the measurements; and
- Reliability analysis using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient to give the measure of accuracy of the instruments and to determine how repeatable the results are.

Sample adequacy and sphericity:

The results of the sample adequacy and sphericity are reported in Table 7.

Table 7: KMO & Bartlett's Test of the Item Inter-correlation Matrix of the Measuring Instruments

KMO and Bartlett's Test		SSTC	SSTI	MRQ
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.917	.803	.928
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	846.535	509.329	1545.406
	df	120	120	190
	Sig.	.000	.000	.000

Table 7 shows that all questionnaires attained a MSA of higher than 0.6 (Hair et al., 1998) which means that the sample is adequate for further factor analysis on the questionnaires.

Factor analysis

Based on the indication of the KMO and the Bartlett's test that the sample is adequate, a first order factor analysis, using the Principal Axis Factoring extraction method was done on the SSTC, SSTI and MRQ. Results revealed only one underlying factor for the three questionnaires and therefore no second order factor analysis was done on the

measurements (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). The reliabilities of the factor per instrument are reported in Table 8.

Reliability analysis

Table 8: Reliability analysis of the measuring instruments for interns

	SSTC	SSTI	MRQ
Cronbach Alpha	.888	.888	.972

Table 8 shows acceptable internal consistencies for the questionnaires. The results compare well with the guideline of Cortina (1993), who states that a Cronbach Alpha of 0.70 and higher is considered to be acceptable.

As far as the mentors are concerned, factor analysis could be done because of the small sample size. However, based on the high reliability of the SSTI for the graduate interns, the SSTI was also used in the testing of the hypothesis for the mentors. The SSTI yielded a Cronbach alpha of 0.85 for the mentors, which compares favourably with the guideline of Cortina (1993). Technical skills training, intention to quit and intention to employ were all measured with one item therefore factor analysis and reliability analysis was not applied.

5.3.1. Testing of the hypotheses

Subsequent to the factor analysis discussed above, Pearson product moment correlations were performed to test the hypotheses in this research. Pearson product moment correlation is used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between variables, in this case the components of a graduate internship programme and intention to quit/employ. The results of the hypotheses are reported below.

5.3.1.1. Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 focused on the relationship between the components of the graduate internship programme and graduate interns intention to quit the programme. Based on the literature review, the following two integrative hypotheses were formulated:

H₀T 1 - There is no statistically significant relationship between the components of the graduate internship programme (i.e. soft skills training, technical skills training, mentorship) and graduate interns intention to quit the internship programme.

H_aT 1 - There is a statistically significant relationship between the components of a graduate internship programme (i.e. soft skills training, technical skills training, mentorship) and graduate interns intention to quit the internship programme

Soft skills training and intention to quit:

H₀t 1.1 - There is no statistically significant relationship between soft skills training and graduate interns intention to quit the internship programme

H_at 1.1 - There is a statistically significant relationship between the soft skills training and graduate interns intention to quit the internship programme

Table 9 present the results of the correlation coefficient between soft skill training and intention to quit.

Table 9: Relationship between Soft Skills Contribution and Intention to Quit

		Soft Skills Training (SSTC)	Intention to quit
Soft Skills Training (SSTC)	Pearson Correlation	1	-.085
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.459
	N	79	79
Intention to Quit	Pearson Correlation	-.085	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.459	
	N	79	79

* Statistically significant: $p < 0,01$

+ Practically significant correlation (medium effect): $r > 0,30$

++ Practically significant correlation (large effect): $r > 0,50$

Table 9 shows that there is no statistically significant relationship between soft skills training and interns intention to quit the graduate internship programme. The null hypothesis of no statistically significant relationship between soft skills training and intention to quit is accepted and the alternative hypothesis is rejected.

Technical skills training and intention to quit:

H_{0t} 1.2 - There is no statistically significant relationship between technical skills training and graduate interns intention to quit the internship programme

H_{at} 1.2 - There is a statistically significant relationship between the technical skills training and graduate interns intention to quit the internship programme

Table 10: Relationship between Technical Skills and Intention to Quit

		Technical skills training	Intention to Quit
Technical Skills Training	Pearson Correlation	1	.285*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.011
	N	79	79
Intention to Quit	Pearson Correlation	.285*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	
	N	79	79

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 10 shows a statistically significant positive correlation (low effect) between technical skills training and interns' intention to quit the graduate internship programme. The null hypothesis of no statistically significant relationship between technical skills training and intention to quit is rejected. The alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Table 11: Relationship between Mentorship and Intention to Quit

		Mentorship	Intention to Quit
Mentorship (MRQ)	Pearson Correlation	1	-.276
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.019
	N	72	72
Intention to Quit	Pearson Correlation	-.276*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.019	

* Statistically significant: $p < 0,01$

+ Practically significant correlation (medium effect): $r > 0,30$

++ Practically significant correlation (large effect): $r > 0,50$

Table 11 shows a statistically significant negative correlation of a low effect between mentor role experiences and intention to quit. Further analysis was done to identify the elements of mentorship that are significantly related to the graduate intern's intention to quit the internship programme. The results are reported in Table 12.



**Table 12: Mentorship Items and Intention to Quit
Correlations**

Items	MRQ 1	MRQ 2	MRQ 3	MRQ 4	MRQ 5	MRQ 6	MRQ 7	MRQ 8	MRQ 9	MRQ1 0	MRQ1 1	MRQ1 2	MRQ1 3	MRQ1 4	MRQ1 5	MRQ1 6	MRQ1 7	MRQ1 8	MRQ1 9	MRQ2 0	Intention to Quit	
MRQ1	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
MRQ2	.585**	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
MRQ3	.516**	.879**	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
MRQ4	.462**	.837**	.857**	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
MRQ5	.452**	.721**	.744**	.751**	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
MRQ6	.229*	.627**	.575**	.634**	.652**	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
MRQ7	.498**	.741**	.739**	.737**	.709**	.683**	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
MRQ8	.426**	.744**	.758**	.777**	.705**	.736**	.736**	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
MRQ9	.416**	.664**	.636**	.673**	.630**	.690**	.741**	.819**	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
MRQ10	.312**	.623**	.570**	.696**	.562**	.668**	.747**	.768**	.810**	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
MRQ11	.451**	.777**	.780**	.768**	.725**	.689**	.753**	.849**	.778**	.692**	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
MRQ12	.203	.467**	.415**	.462**	.577**	.566**	.523**	.633**	.618**	.626**	.566**	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
MRQ13	.284*	.600**	.537**	.527**	.641**	.646**	.625**	.671**	.634**	.618**	.671**	.738**	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
MRQ14	.460**	.693**	.740**	.740**	.690**	.666**	.701**	.787**	.708**	.621**	.833**	.558**	.650**	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
MRQ15	.391**	.645**	.705**	.716**	.674**	.540**	.583**	.669**	.599**	.565**	.697**	.463**	.604**	.680**	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
MRQ16	.407**	.562**	.603**	.597**	.643**	.468**	.584**	.654**	.557**	.638**	.635**	.609**	.722**	.715**	.729**	1	.	.	.	.	.	.
MRQ17	.321**	.485**	.427**	.424**	.531**	.377**	.515**	.540**	.509**	.457**	.522**	.669**	.746**	.562**	.531**	.669**	1	.	.	.	.	.
MRQ18	.430**	.701**	.677**	.720**	.681**	.509**	.660**	.684**	.614**	.584**	.730**	.541**	.662**	.696**	.669**	.655**	.679**	1	.	.	.	.
MRQ19	.381**	.738**	.781**	.796**	.735**	.621**	.738**	.786**	.704**	.618**	.799**	.559**	.665**	.748**	.693**	.552**	.614**	.841**	1	.	.	.
MRQ20	.366**	.720**	.713**	.776**	.698**	.626**	.703**	.782**	.731**	.693**	.844**	.655**	.712**	.753**	.642**	.626**	.591**	.791**	.850**	1	.	.
Intention to Quit	-.146	.363**	.389**	.341**	.335**	-.181	.383**	-.261*	-.234*	-.157	-.331**	-.149	-.121	-.339**	-.213	-.174	-.111	-.300**	-.305**	-.201	1	.

Table 12 shows a practically significant correlation of a medium effect between the frequency of interaction with a mentor, benefit from interaction with a mentor, professional guidance and direction from the mentor, mentor providing challenging assignments to improve intern's competence, mentor conveying feelings of respect for the intern, mentor serving as a role model, mentor providing constructive and useful feedback, mentor acknowledge intern's contribution appropriately and the intern's intention to quit the graduate internship programme. Results further show a statistically significant correlation of a low effect between mentor providing career guidance, emotional support and the intern's intention to quit the internship programme. The correlations were all negative which indicates that the greater attention mentors pay to the significant aspects of mentorship listed above, the less likely the graduate intern will consider quitting the graduate internship programme and vice versa.

The null hypothesis of no statistically significant relationship between mentorship role experiences and intention to quit is rejected. The alternative hypothesis is accepted.

5.3.1.2. Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 focused on the relationship between the components of the graduate internship programme and the mentor's intention to employ graduate interns upon completion of the programme. Based on the literature review, the following two integrative hypotheses were formulated:

H₀T 2 - There is no statistically significant relationship between the components of a graduate internship programme (i.e. soft skills training, technical skills training, mentorship) and mentors intention to employ graduate interns

H_aT 2 - There is a statistically significant relationship between the components of a graduate internship programme (i.e. soft skills training, technical skills training, mentorship) and mentors intention to employ graduate interns

Six sub-hypotheses (one null and one alternate for each of the programme components) were formulated for the components of the programme namely soft skills training, technical skills training and mentorship role experiences. The results are reported below.

Soft skills training and mentors intention to employ:

H₀t 2.1 - There is no statistically significant relationship between soft skills training and mentors intention to employ graduate interns

H_at 2.1 - There is a statistically significant relationship between the soft skills training and mentors intention to employ graduate interns

Table 13: Relationship between Soft skills Training and Mentors Intention to Employ

			Soft Skills Training (SSTI)	Intention to Employ
Kendall's tau_b	Soft skills Training (SSTI)	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.214
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.095
		N	39	39
	Intention to Employ	Correlation Coefficient	.214	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.095	.
		N	39	39

* Statistically significant: $p < 0,01$

+ Practically significant correlation (medium effect): $r > 0,30$

++ Practically significant correlation (large effect): $r > 0,50$

Table 13 shows that there is no statistically significant relationship between the importance of soft skills training and mentors intention to employ graduate interns upon completion of the programme. The null hypothesis of no statistically significant relationship between soft skills training and mentor’s intention to employ is accepted. The alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Technical skills training and intention to employ:

H_{0t} 2.2 - There is no statistically significant relationship between technical skills training and mentors intention to employ graduate interns

H_{at} 2.2 - There is a statistically significant relationship between the technical skills training and mentors intention to employ graduate interns

The result of the correlation between technical skills training and intention to employ is reported in Table14.

Table 14: Relationship between Skills Training and Intention to Employ

		Technical Skills	Intention to Employ
Technical Skills Training	Pearson Correlation	1	-.076
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.648
	N	39	39
Intention to Employ	Pearson Correlation	-.076	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.648	
	N	39	39

Table 14 shows that there is no statistically significant relationship between technical skills training and mentors intention to employ graduate interns. The null hypothesis of no statistically significant relationship between technical skills training and mentor's intention to employ is accepted. The alternative hypothesis is rejected.

Mentorship and intention to employ:

H_{0t} 2.3 - There is no statistically significant relationship between mentorship and mentors intention to employ graduate interns

H_at 2.3 - There is a statistically significant relationship between mentorship and mentors intention to employ graduate interns

Table 15: Relationship between Intention to Employ and Opportunity to Apply Mentoring Skills

			Mentorship	Intention to Employ
Kendall's tau_b	Mentorship	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.455**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.001
		N	39	39
	Intention to Employ	Correlation Coefficient	.455**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.
		N	39	39

* Statistically significant: $p < 0,01$

+ Practically significant correlation (medium effect): $r > 0,30$

++ Practically significant correlation (large effect): $r > 0,50$

Table 15 shows that there is a practically significant positive correlation (medium effect) between mentor's intention to employ graduate interns and the extent to which mentors

were given the opportunity to apply their mentoring skills. The null hypothesis of no statistically significant relationship between mentorship role and mentor's intention to employ is rejected. The alternative hypothesis is accepted.

5.3.1.3. Hypothesis 3

The researcher wanted to explore whether the availability and hence the need for a graduate internship programme will have an impact on the graduate intern's intention to stay in the company. The following two hypotheses were formulated:

H₀T 3 - There is no statistically significant relationship between the need for a graduate internship programme and graduate interns' intention to quit the internship programme

H_aT 3 - There is a statistically significant relationship between the need for a graduate internship programme and graduate interns' intention to quit the internship programme

Table 16: Relationship between Programme Need and Intention to Quit

		Programme Need	Intention to Quit
Programme Need	Pearson Correlation	1	-.371**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	78	78
Intention to Quit	Pearson Correlation	-.371**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	78	79

* Statistically significant: $p < 0,01$

+ Practically significant correlation (medium effect): $r > 0,30$

++ Practically significant correlation (large effect): $r > 0,50$

Table 16 shows a practically significant negative correlation (medium effect) between the need for a graduate internship programme and the interns' intention to quit. The null hypothesis of no statistically significant relationship between programme need and intention to quit is rejected.

5.3.1.4. Hypotheses 4

The researcher wanted to explore whether the availability and hence the need for a graduate internship programme will have an impact on the mentor's intention to employ the graduate intern in the company. The following hypotheses were formulated:

H₀T 4 - There is no statistically significant relationship between the need for a graduate internship programme and mentors intention to employ graduate interns

H_aT 4 - There is a statistically significant relationship between the need for a graduate internship programme and mentors intention to employ graduate interns

Table 17: Relationship between Programme Need and Intention to Employ

			Programme_ Need	Intention to Employ
Kendall's tau_b	Programme_ Need	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.369 ⁺
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.010
		N	39	39
	Intention to Employ	Correlation Coefficient	.369 ⁺	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	.
		N	39	39

* Statistically significant: $p < 0,01$

+ Practically significant correlation (medium effect): $r > 0,30$

++ Practically significant correlation (large effect): $r > 0,50$

Table 17 shows that a practically significant positive correlation of a medium effect was obtained between mentor's need for the graduate internship programme and the mentor's intention to employ the graduate intern. The null hypothesis of no statistically significant relationship between mentorship and mentor's intention to employ is rejected. The alternative hypothesis is accepted.

5.4. Summary

In this chapter the results for the study were presented and discussed. The results for the qualitative responses were firstly presented and analysed and then the results of the quantitative results were presented based on the hypotheses. In the next chapter these results would be discussed and linked to relevant literature in order to construct an integrated graduate internship retention framework.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses and interprets the results obtained in Chapter 5 from the statistical analysis and qualitative responses received from the surveys. The interpretation of results has been compared to literature and these have been presented under the headings of the research objectives to ensure the research objectives have been met. Finally, a retention strategy framework in guiding the implementation of a graduate internship programme in the ICT sector is posited.

6.2. FINDINGS - RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 1

To determine the perceptions of graduate interns and mentors regarding the graduate internship programme.

6.2.1. Soft skills training

The overall results of the soft skills training indicated that the internship programme contributed to a large extent to the soft skills of the graduate interns. On average, the graduate interns indicated that the programme training contributed most to Business etiquette, Conflict Management, Problem-solving, Self-Management and Goal-directedness soft skills. As mentioned by The Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (2003, p. 26) the benefits of undertaking work experience while studying include developing a work ethic, developing personal skills, time management, relating to other people and workplace etiquette, communication (which in some disciplines were not

considered to be taught as part of the degree) and applying learning and the ability to continue learning. Hughey and Mussnug (cited in Raftopoulous, Coetzee & Visser, 2009) also indicated that better decision-making and problem-solving skills help employees remain employable.

Both groups of participants indicated that the soft skills presented in the training are important. Combined, the participants identified verbal communication, self-motivation, and teamwork and goal directedness as the most important for employability. The interns highlighted the need for additional training in soft skills such as people management, networking skills, diversity management, time management and listening skills. The mentors on the other had included the need for additional soft skills such as analytical thinking, presentation skills and time management.

Yorke and Knight (cited by Griesel & Parker, 2009) indicated that employability is amongst others influenced by skilful practices (communication, time management, self-motivation and resourcefulness, problem-solving and lifelong learning) and meta-cognition (self-awareness and the capability to reflect on, in and for action). The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (cited in Griesel & Parker, 2008) further indicated that many graduates will lack soft skills such as time management, creative thinking and general communication skills, goal and priority setting as well as team work. Based on the results, one can thus conclude that the graduate internship programme contributed to the most important soft skills identified for employability.

6.2.2. Technical skills training

Results showed that the technical skills training contributed to a large extent to the graduate interns' employability. According to Smith and Kruger (cited in Raftopoulos et al., 2009), graduates are entering a more flexible, insecure and technology-dependent workplace than ever before and therefore need very specific skills required by the workplace in the 21st century. Recent research has identified the academic and technical skills as the most important category of skills required of graduates in the world of work (Datta, Pellissery & Paul, 2007; Raftopoulos et al., 2009).

According to Bischoff and Govender (cited by Stanz & Mosoenyane, 2008), learning must include practical training, because learners take in knowledge and cannot apply the learning on the job. In a South African study of work-readiness skills, both graduates and managers regarded academic skills and technical skills as the most important category of skills required of graduates in the world of work (Raftopoulos et al., 2009).

6.2.3. Mentorship

The majority of the interns experienced the mentoring programme as positive since the programme offered them exposure and contributed to gaining more self-confidence and this in itself contributed to their own motivation. The results clearly indicate a need for mentorship as an integral part of the graduate internship programme. On average, other results also indicated that the intern benefited to a large extent from interactions with the mentor, received professional guidance from the mentor, received challenging assignments to improve his/ her competence, mentors displayed content expertise and mentors provided constructive and useful feedback on the interns' performance. The

results are in line with Hemson (2006) suggestion that mentee benefits include: career advice and advancement, personalised recognition and encouragement, improved self-confidence, learning to cope with the formal and informal structure of the company, honest criticism and informal feedback.

However, a few interns experienced their mentors as unwilling to share knowledge as they felt threatened by the interns and in these instances even though mentors had a willingness to support the programme they did not demonstrate the required interpersonal skills to guide the intern, which resulted in a negative experience for the intern. Matching the right mentor and intern is thus critical for the success of the mentoring process (Cohen, cited in Janse van Rensburg and Roodt, 2005).

Results also showed that mentors experienced the mentorship programme as positive and it contributed to the success of the internship programme. Hemson (2006) for example, highlighted mentor benefits such as improved job satisfaction, career advancement, personal self-development, fresh ideas and feedback concerning projects in progress and assistance in effectively managing projects. Mentors however made important observations about the need for the mentoring training programme to assist them in being more effective in the mentoring process. Some mentors mentioned time constraints that negatively impacted on the balancing between their mentoring roles and fulfilling their normal management duties. In this context, a more formalised mentoring process will be less time consuming and will supplement the informal process (Dinsdale, in Janse van Rensburg and Roodt, 2005).

6.2.4. General Programme Information

6.2.4.1. Programme Expectations

Interns: The vast majority of intern respondents indicated that the internship programme met their expectations. However, a few mentioned that expectations were not met due to incorrect position placement versus academic qualification, interest and insufficient structure for on-the-job exposure. Therefore, internship programmes should be rigorously conceptualised, planned and provide for statements of expected outcomes and mechanism for evaluations (Buhlungu & Metcalfe, in Kanye & Crous, 2007).

The majority of mentors on the other hand indicated that their expectations regarding the internship programme were met with regards to quality of candidates and structure of programme. Time availability for efficient mentoring was again mentioned as a constraint in providing quality mentorship advice and guidance to the interns.

6.2.4.2. Programme Need

All interns unanimously supported the need for an internship programme as it provides the bridge between the academic world and the work environment. It provides practical exposure and experience for graduates and hence develops the talent pipeline and combats the increasing graduate unemployment rate. In the same vein, research conducted by the HSRC also criticised universities for not preparing students sufficiently for work (Kruss, 2004).

The mentors recognised the need for an internship programme of this nature, as it contributes to the development of a pipeline for future junior consultant skills, provides

opportunities for career and succession planning of the entire department, exposes the organisation to new IT talent and thinking and contributes to the development of young business professionals. The programme also identifies and brings “right” talent into the entry level positions of the organisation, gives young people the opportunity for work exposure, delivers on their role as a responsible corporate citizen and creates an opportunity for the organisation with regards to brand awareness. Dodge and McKeough (cited in Kanye & Crous, 2007) explained that for the employer, interns represented an opportunity to bring in bright and energetic people and inject new talent into the organisation.

6.2.4.3. Intention to quit

57% of the interns indicated that they never considered quitting the internship programme, while 40.5% considered it, sometimes to often, and only 2.5% considered it all the time.

94.9% of mentors considered employment of the interns, while 5.1% did not considered employment of interns at all.

6.2.4.4. Intention to employ

The intention is there to employ as many interns as possible based on the following factors:

- Operational reality of the organisation at the end of the programme (available positions);

- Candidates with positive attitudes and willingness have a higher chance of employability compared to technical ability alone;
- Dedicated mentors and line managers are required to ensure full benefit of the programme and add true value to the company; and
- The involvement of mentors and line managers in the selection process at the onset of the programme.

6.3. FINDINGS - RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 2

To determine whether there is a significant relationship between the components of a graduate internship programme (i.e. soft skills training, technical skills training and mentorship) and a graduate intern's intention to quit an internship programme.

In order to achieve the above research objective, two integrative hypotheses and six sub-hypotheses were formulated around the content of the programme. The results supported the following hypothesis:

- There is no statistically significant relationship between soft skills training and the graduate intern's intention to quit the graduate internship programme;
- There is a statistically significant relationship between technical skills training and the graduate interns' intention to quit the graduate internship programme; and
- There is a statistically significant relationship between mentorship and the graduate interns' intention to quit the internship programme

Although the results showed no significant relationship between soft skills training and the interns' intention to quit the programme, previous results highlighted the contribution and importance of the soft skills training in the present graduate internship programme. The results were also in line with previous research done on soft skills training and employability.

Results showed a statistically significant positive relationship between technical skills training and the graduate interns' intention to quit the internship programme. The positive relationship can be explained by the need for more job specific technical training for the positions interns were appointed in during the internship programme. Skills and talent development are central to successful internship programmes. Hay (2002) found that skills and capacity building for talent proved to be the most significant factor that pertains to employee well-being and retention. Hay (2002) states further that training must be relevant and it must be used to broaden experience rather than reinforce old skills. Therefore, internship programmes should be rigorously conceptualised, carefully planned and should provide for statements of expected outcomes and mechanisms for evaluation (Metcalf, cited in Kanye & Crous, 2007).

The relationship between mentorship and the interns' intention to quit was negative, which means that the more positive the graduate interns experience mentorship, the less frequently he/she will consider quitting the graduate internship programme. Aspects such as the frequency and benefit of interactions with a mentor, professional direction and career guidance, constructive and useful feedback, appropriate recognition of

contributions, respect and emotional support were significant in the graduate interns' intention to quit the internship programme and leave the company.

These results are in line with research that found that companies with a mentoring program have reported a significant improvement in employee retention, organizational learning, leadership training and career development (Beck-Howard, 2009; Hemson, 2006). Casey, Fink, Krugman and Probst (cited in Eigst, 2009) further indicated that a climate encouraging socialization via mentoring precedes the successful transition of graduate nurses to competent co-workers. The quality of supervision and mentorship an employee receives is thus critical to employee retention.

6.4. FINDINGS - RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 3

To determine whether there is a significant relationship between the components of a graduate internship programme (i.e. soft skills training, technical skills training and mentorship) and a mentor's intention to employ a graduate intern.

In order to achieve research objective 3, two integrative hypotheses and six sub-hypotheses were formulated around the content of the programme. The results supported the following hypotheses:

- There is no statistically significant relationship between soft skills training and the mentor's intention to employ the graduate intern;
- There is no statistically significant relationship between technical skills training and mentor's intention to employ the graduate intern; and

- There is a statistically significant relationship between mentorship and the mentor's intention to employ the graduate intern.

Although the results showed no significant relationship between soft skills training and the mentor's intention to appoint the graduate intern, the descriptive results indicate the importance of the soft skills training in the present graduate internship programme. The results were also in line with recent research done on soft skills training and employability (see Raftopoulos et al., 2009, pp. 1-8)

The relationship between technical skills training and the mentor's intention to employ the graduate intern also yielded no significant results. An explanation can be derived from the qualitative results that indicate that the technical skills training should occur earlier and should be in line with the job expectations.

The results showed a positive significant relationship between mentorship and the mentor's intention to employ the graduate intern. This means that the greater the extent to which a mentor is allowed to practice his/her mentorship skills in the graduate internship programme, the more likely he/ she will consider employing the graduate intern. This is evidenced by the qualitative responses where mentors indicated that the interaction with the interns during the graduate internship programme assisted in employing the suitable candidate at the end of the programme.

6.5. FINDINGS - RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 4

To determine whether there is a significant relationship between the need for a graduate internship programme and the retention of graduate interns

In terms of the results, the following hypotheses were accepted:

- There is a statistically significant relationship between the need for the graduate internship programme and the graduate interns' intention to quit the programme; and
- There is a statistically significant relationship between the need for the graduate internship programme and the mentor's intention to employ the graduate intern.

The relationship between the programme need and the graduate interns' intention to quit was negative. This means that the higher the need for a graduate internship programme, the less frequently graduate interns will consider leaving the organisation (See Harvey, 1997; Kruss, 2004; McIlveen & Pensiero, 2008).

The relationship between the programme need and the mentor's intention to employ the graduate intern was positive. This means that the availability of the programme will contribute to the mentor's decision to employ the graduate intern upon completion of the graduate internship programme. One possible explanation can be found in the qualitative responses of the managers which indicated that the internship programme combated graduate unemployment and assisted with the retention of good quality young professionals.

6.6. ADDITIONAL FINDINGS FROM QUALITATIVE DATA

In interpreting the qualitative data the following themes can be inferred:

Training

- Conduct technical and soft skill training earlier in the programme; and
- Align graduate qualification with relevant business unit or department.

Internship Programme Process

- Reduce numbers of interns in order to make the programme more manageable;
- Increase remuneration as intern shows progress and performance;
- Rotate interns in order for them to discover their interest ; and
- Consider extending the programme to a full year.

Mentorship Process

- Formalise daily activities in a more structured manner;
- More regular feedback from management on intern progress;
- Shadowing senior employees;
- Line managers and mentors need to inform their respective departments about interns being placed in their environment;
- Line managers and mentors that indicated a need for interns need to ensure enough work is available to keep interns busy; and
- Implement a structured training and development plan per interns in the business area appointed.

Mentor Selection and Involvement

- Ensure that mentors are suitable and have the inclination for mentoring; and
- Managers play an essential role in the success of the programme, therefore buy-in from the business to support the programme from the beginning to end is essential.

6.7. FINDINGS - RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 5

To develop an integrated talent retention strategy framework for graduate interns

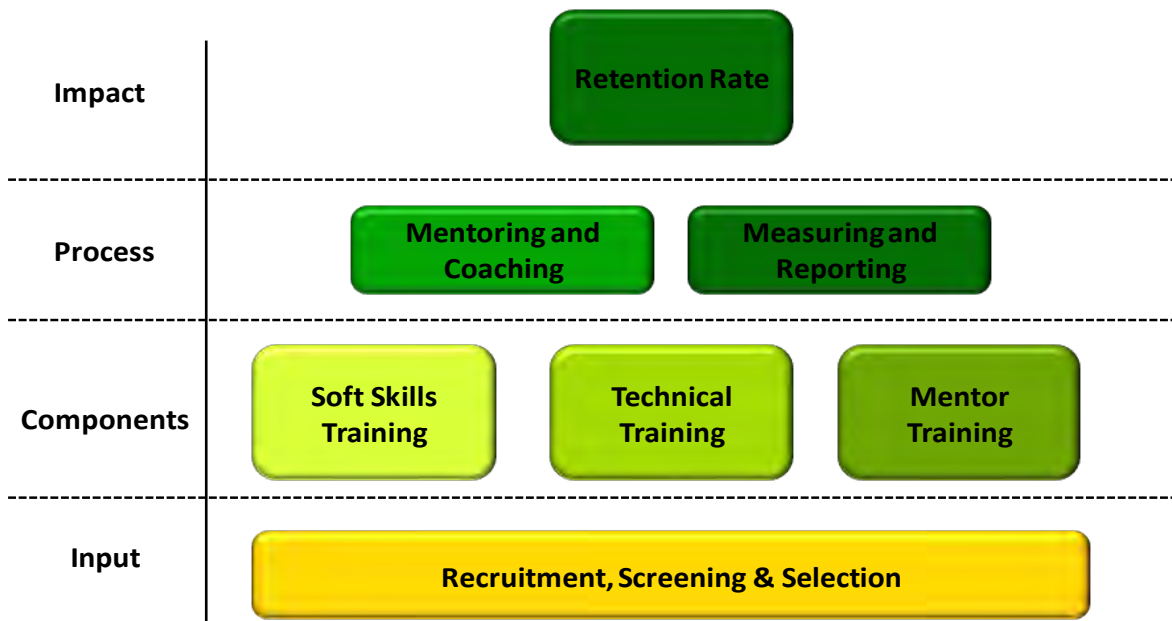
As deduced from the discussion of results and related literature reviews, it is clear that an integrated talent retention strategy is required in order to ensure a high correlation between the intern's intention to quit and the organisation's intention to employ. The components identified during this process that are important and has a relationship to each other are the following:

- Recruitment, screening and selection;
- Soft skills training, technical training and mentor training;
- Mentorship and coaching process;
- Measuring and reporting; and
- Retention rate.

Based on the findings the following framework can be constructed in guiding the implementation of a graduate internship programme in the ICT sector:

Figure 3: Integrated Retention Strategy Framework

Integrated Internship Programme Talent Retention Strategy



The constructs of this framework can be defined as follow:

- **Input elements**

- Proper recruitment at the relevant institutions are important to identify suitable graduates that could fit the potential profile of the organisation;
- Initial screening of the potential candidates is important. This screening should focus on more than just the verification of qualifications but must include a component of life skills training to prepare potential candidates for a workplace interviewing process and acceptable conduct in the business environment; and
- As was evident from the results, it is important to include the potential mentors and their line management in the selection process of successful candidates.

- **Graduate Internship Programme Components**

As was evident from the results and the literature review, key factors of an internship programme are soft skills, technical skills and mentor training. Both the interns and mentors, key role players in the success of the graduate internship programme, also cited these three components. Therefore, the following three components are identified as the minimum criteria for a successful integrated internship programme talent retention strategy:

- Soft skills training that must focus on the preparation of the interns to adjust from student life to the business world. The focus should be on life skills and business orientation training that would enhance adoption of the interns into the overall organisational culture;
- Technical training must focus on the job specific requirements of the position the intern is placed in, in order to assist with greater productivity as soon as possible and to contribute to effective job satisfaction of the individual; and
- Mentor training must be provided for all employees acting as mentors, as well as their management, to ensure more effective management of the mentorship process and to contribute effectively to performance development of the individuals being mentored, while contributing to employee well-being.

- **Process Requirements**

In order to ensure the components of the framework are functioning at an optimal level, the process requirements that need to be implemented are:

- Mentorship through mentoring and coaching of the interns; and

- Regular monitoring and reporting for both individual performance progress and statutory compliance.

- **Impact**

The result of an effective and sustained interaction between the different constructs of the framework will have a positive effect on the talent retention strategy of an organisation.

The framework postulates that the interaction between the different constructs have a direct impact on the different components which in turn will have a direct impact on the retention of interns in the organisation and the subsequent intention to employee graduates on a graduate internship programme. In other words, if any of the constructs on the input, component or process level are neglected it will affect the intern's intention to quit and/or the organisation's intention to employ negatively. The more attention is given to these constructs the more positive the impact will be on an intern's intention to quit (or stay) and/or the organisation's intention to employ.

6.8. SUMMARY

In this chapter the findings for the research study were discussed based on the research objectives and it can be concluded that the objectives for the study have been achieved. A summary of the results, recommendations and future research ideas will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter a summary of the main findings as presented in Chapter 5 and discussed in Chapter 6 are offered. Recommendations for the management team within the research setting are postulated while suggestions for further research are also offered. Finally, some concluding notes are presented in the conclusion of this study.

7.2. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

The war for graduate talent necessitates the development of very specific skills required by the workplace in the 21st century. In reality, companies are not just assessing their current staff and future recruits on their business/hard/technical skills only, but also on their soft skills (Clymer, Roberts & Strawn, 2001; Collective Resources, 2008). Findings in this research showed that the soft skills training component in the programme contributed most to the development of Business etiquette, Conflict management, Problem-solving, Self-management and Goal-directedness skills of the graduate interns. Both groups of participants (the mentors and the interns) regarded the 16 soft skills in which they received training as important, but identified verbal communication, self-motivation, and teamwork and goal directedness as the most important for employability. In line with previous research (Griesel & Parker, 2009; Raftopoulos et al., 2009), one can thus conclude that the current graduate internship programme focuses on the majority of employability soft skills required for the acquisition and retention of a job.

As far as graduate technical skills are concerned, findings showed that the technical skills training contributed to a large extent to the employability of the graduate intern. These findings indicated that practical training is important because learners do not always know how to apply their knowledge (Bischoff and Govender, cited in Stanz & Mosoenyane, 2008). Technical skills training were also significant in the graduate interns' decision to quit the internship programme. In line with Hay (2002), the findings could be ascribed to the fact that the graduate interns highlighted the need for more job specific training. In addition, mentors also indicated the need for more job specific training and maintained that training should occur earlier in the internship programme. This requires a more rigorous conceptualisation and planning of the graduate internship programme to ensure that the outcomes are achieved (Buhlungu & Metcalfe, cited in Kanye & Crous, 2007).

The importance of mentorship in the retention of employees has been widely documented (see Beck-Howard, 2009; Eighst, 2009; Hemson, 2006). From this research, it is evident that there is a need for mentorship as an integral part of the graduate internship programme. Findings further indicated that a graduate intern's intention to quit the graduate internship programme was significantly related to the frequency and benefit of interactions with a mentor, professional direction and career guidance, constructive and useful feedback, appropriate recognition of contributions, respect and emotional support. A mentor who guides, supports and counsels youth as they navigate their way through the world of work, will thus yield positive results, especially from the learners (intern's) point of view (Stanz & Mosoeunyane, 2008).

However, mentors in this research indicated time-constraints as a challenge in effectively exercising their mentorship role. This is an important finding, given that some of the mentors indicated that the mentorship programme assisted them in identifying the suitable candidate (intern) for employment upon completion of the graduate internship programme. Therefore capacity-building for mentors is important for role clarification where mentors will understand what is expected from them in the implementation of mentorship programmes.

Organisations invest in internship programmes to attract and retain high calibre graduate interns (Kanye & Crous, 2007). Therefore it comes as no surprise that significant relationships were found between the need for the graduate internship programme and the retention of graduate interns. In a retention study on nurses, Eigsti (2009) found that the availability of a critical care nurse internship programme contributed to the higher retention levels of critical care nurses. Graduate interns further indicated that the graduate internship programme provided the bridge between academia and the world of work. In line with Kruss (2004), one can thus argue that work experience and occupational specialisation are the preserve and domain of the employers in the labour market. It is the employers that build on the general foundation laid by higher education institutions to develop the requisite specialised skills, knowledge, and dispositions to produce skilled employees. However, the mismatch between roles of higher education and the workplace has also been documented (Griesel & Parker, 2009). There must thus be a closer alignment between the attributes that employers consider important and expect graduates to have when they enter the workplace.

For mentors, the need of the internship programme are, amongst others, reflected in its contribution to the development of pipeline skills, career and succession planning, identifying and bringing 'right' talent into the entry level positions of the organisation, and giving young people the opportunity for work exposure. Graduate interns thus represent an opportunity to bring in bright and energetic people and inject new talent into the organisation (Dodge & McKeough, cited in Kanye & Crous, 2007).

Combined, the research concludes with a talent retention strategy framework in guiding the implementation of a graduate internship programme in the ICT sector. The recommendations for managers are based on this framework and will be discussed in the next section.

7.3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MANAGERS

The data gathered, analysed and interpreted by this research allows for the following recommendations for consideration by manager when implementing a graduate internship programme:

- **Mentorship**
 - Mentoring is pivotal to the success of the graduate internship programme and mentoring training should be considered as a pre-requisite for any employee that is considered to fulfil the role of mentor.
 - The benefit of mentorship skills through mentor training will have positive effects for all employees managed by a mentor and not only the interns.

- Mentoring must take the form of a structured development programme and not merely a management-by-incident approach.
 - It is important that mentors are involved in setting the daily tasks and objectives of the intern, monitor the progress of the intern on a regular basis and provide them with feedback on their progress.
 - Managers could consider job shadowing and rotation within the same department to provide the intern with broader work exposure.
 - Managers must ensure that the work place is adequately prepared prior to the intern commencing the graduate internship programme.
- **Soft and Technical Training**
 - Soft and Technical Skills training should be scheduled earlier in the programme.
 - The relevant technical training requirements should be identified for the specific position the intern is placed in.
 - Soft skills training are as imperative to the preparation for employability and must not be deemed optional or regarded as secondary to the technical skills training.
 - **Programme Duration**
 - Consideration should be given to running the graduate internship programme over a 12 month period.

7.4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The absence of any research in the South African environment with regards to graduate interns' and mentors' perception on the role and relationship of soft skills, technical skills and mentorship in the implementation of a graduate internship programme, makes this research stand out as unique and exploratory in the domain. However, the use of two groups of respondents and the collection of comprehensive data from both interns and mentors in this study may be construed as providing cutting-edge knowledge in this research area.

The following recommendations for future research are posited:

- The present research took the format of a post-test only. This limited the researcher in terms of determining the contribution of the soft skills training, technical training and mentorship from an intern and mentor's point of view. Action research should be undertaken with intervention training where measurements can be made on a consistent basis to determine whether the internship programme contributes to the soft skills of the graduate intern progressively. The methodology to measure soft skills should also be expanded to include observations.
- In this research, the researcher developed a questionnaire to measure the soft skills trained in the graduate internship programme. The questionnaire yielded high face validity and reliability results. The questionnaire can be supplemented with the additional soft skills identified by the participants to make it more comprehensive. This instrument can then be tested in the ICT sector to create a

unique set of indicators for soft skills for the ICT sector. This however does not limit the questionnaire to be validated in other contexts as well.

- This research only focused on the relationship between the components of a graduate internship programme and the retention of graduate interns. It is recommended that future research also focus on other factors such as organisational climate, commitment, job satisfaction, work engagement, work wellness (i.e. burnout, stress) and its impact on the retention of graduate interns.
- Finally, the talent retention strategy framework that was developed in this research should be tested and validated in other ICT companies and sectors.

7.5. CONCLUDING NOTE

Talent retention is an important topic of debate in the ICT sector in South Africa, given the context of a skills shortage, the relative scarcity of specialist employees and the mismatch between the supply from higher education institutions and the demands of the ICT workplace. It is within this context that this study investigated the experiences of both interns and mentors in a graduate intern programme, concomitant with the propensity of graduates to remain in the company after the completion of the programme. Numerous studies have focused on the role of the mentor, with very few focusing on the role of the intern. This research highlighted the significance of both parties in the mentorship relationship and the retention of the graduate interns, and therefore forms an important contribution to the research area.

The talent retention strategy framework forms a key contribution of this study. It is of great value for companies to put strategies in place to ensure that they retain new

graduates if they are suitable, skilled and respond well to on-the-job training. It was beneficial to gather the views of both the interns and the mentors with regards to the value of an internship programme. The importance of soft skills has been strongly foregrounded in this research. At the start of their careers, many graduates will lack the soft skills such as Business etiquette, Conflict Management, Problem-solving, Self-Management and Goal-directedness. The consequence of this is that they will be unsuccessful in the recruitment phase. The value of mentorship and a graduate intern programme is crucial, given the fact that university training is not aligned with the needs of the corporate workplace. It is with optimism that research of this nature would motivate companies to invest in graduate interns as it is an investment in our future talent.

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ANNEXURE A: INTERN QUESTIONNAIRE



QUESTIONNAIRE: GRADUATE INTERNS

An MBA research study is being conducted to determine the influence of the training provided during the internship programme at the company and thereby make recommendations which can be of benefit to other organisations. The goal of this research is to motivate organisations to employ graduates and help them to find innovative support structures to enable them to retain these graduates.

You have been selected to take part in the survey. Approximately **20 minutes** of your time is all that is required to assist current and emerging graduates.

This study complies with all the ethical requirements of the University of Pretoria. Please be assured that your responses will be treated **confidentially** and that the report will only contain a summary of the views expressed by various people who are taking part in the survey. Under no circumstances will you be identified in the report. In order to ensure that you remain **anonymous**, please do not write down your name anywhere on this questionnaire.

Please return your completed questionnaire to Carva Pop **not later than 12:00 on Friday 28 August 2009.**

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact the researcher, **Carva Pop** at 082 553 7608 or carva.pop@bcx.co.za.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire consists of three sections:

- *Section A – Respondent information*
- *Section B – Internship programme training*
- *Section C – Mentorship*
- *Section D – General Programme Information*

Please complete **all the sections** to the best of your ability. Please respond to each statement in an honest and objective manner, based on your **personal experience** as an intern of the graduate internship programme.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION AND ASSISTANCE

Please indicate your consent to participating in this research study by checking the box below.



I hereby give my informed consent to participate in this study

Study leader: Dr Nicolene Barkhuizen
Department of Human Resource Management, University of Pretoria
nicolene.barkhuizen@up.ac.za
Tel: + 27 12 420 6311

SECTION A

RESPONDENT INFORMATION

1.1 Gender

Male

Female

1.2 Please state your age (in years)

1.3 Internship Position

1.4 Current position

1.5 Business Area

1.6 Geographical Region

1.7 Qualifications

1.8 In which year did you participate in the internship programme?

SECTION B

INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME TRAINING

B1: SOFT SKILLS TRAINING

You were exposed to the soft skills training listed below during the internship programme. The purpose of this questionnaire is to determine the soft skills that are considered most important to meet the employability needs of employers and employees.

Please indicate the extent to which the internship programme has enhanced your competence in the skills listed below in the workplace on a scale from 1 to 5: **1 = to no extent; 5 = to a large extent**. Then rate the importance you attribute to this skill on a scale from 1 to 4: **Insignificant (1), Unimportant (2), Important (3) and Very important (4)**.

	Skill	Contribution of Programme	Importance of skill
1.	Work purposefully towards completing a task	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4
2.	Communicate (verbally) effectively with people of all ranks	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4
3.	Business like writing style (i.e. e-mails, reports)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4
4.	Professional conduct (i.e. telephone etiquette; meeting new people)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4
5.	Present myself appropriately in the workplace (dress, language)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4
6.	Ability to work in a team	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4
7.	Ability to deal effectively with conflict in the workplace	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4
8.	Resilience in solving problems	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4
9.	Personal awareness of my strengths and areas of improvement	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4



10.	Work co-operatively with others (i.e. clients, colleagues)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4
11.	Make a contribution to solving problems	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4
12.	Take the lead when a task has to be carried out	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4
13.	Motivate myself to learn and grow	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4
14.	Apply creative thoughts, knowledge and skills in practice	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4
15.	Appreciate other colleagues in the workplace	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4
16.	Be attentive to and understand tasks that need to be completed	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4

Please indicate any other skills not listed above that you needed for employment purposes.

From the items listed above, please list the five (5) graduate skills that you regard as contributing the most to your employability

B 2: TECHNICAL SKILLS TRAINING

What technical skills training did you receive?

To what extent did the technical training prepare you for your employment?

To no extent

1	2	3	4	5
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 To a large extent

Please provide details

SECTION C

MENTORSHIP

This questionnaire is about your mentoring experience during the internship programme. Please complete the questionnaire on the scale provided below.

1.	To what extent do you think that there was a need for you to have a mentor during the internship programme at the company?	To no extent	1--2--3--4--5	To a very large extent
2.	How frequently did you interact with your mentor?	Never	1--2--3--4--5	Always
3.	To what extent did you benefit from interactions with your mentor?	To no extent	1--2--3--4--5	To a very large extent
4.	To what extent did your mentor provide guidance and direction on professional issues?	To no extent	1--2--3--4--5	To a very large extent
5.	To what extent did your mentor give you challenging assignments to improve your competence?	To no extent	1--2--3--4--5	To a very large extent
6.	How often did your mentor give you feedback about what is going on at higher levels in the organisation?	Never	1--2--3--4--5	Always
7.	How frequent did your a mentor convey his/her feelings of respect for you?	Never	1--2--3--4--5	Always
8.	To what extent did your mentor go out of his/her way to promote your career?	To no extent	1--2--3--4--5	To a very large extent
9.	To what extent did your mentor encourage you to communicate openly about fears and anxiety that distracted you from work?	To no extent	1--2--3--4--5	To a very large extent
10.	How often did your mentor convey empathy for the concerns and feelings that you have discussed with him/her?	Never	1--2--3--4--5	Always
11.	To what extent did the mentor encourage you to prepare for a position at BCX?	To no extent	1--2--3--4--5	To a very large extent
12.	To what extent did your mentor encourage you to try alternative ways of behaving on the	To no extent	1--2--3--4--5	To a very



	job?			large extent
13.	How often did your mentor share personal experiences to give a broader perspective on your problems?	Never	1--2--3--4--5	Always
14.	To what extent did your mentor serve as a role model to you?	To no extent	1--2--3--4--5	To a very large extent
15.	To what extent did your mentor display content expertise in your area of work?	To no extent	1--2--3--4--5	To a very large extent
16.	To what extent did your mentor's attitudes influenced your attitudes?	To no extent	1--2--3--4--5	To a very large extent
17.	How often did your mentor share his/her career history with you?	Never	1--2--3--4--5	Always
18.	To what extent did your mentor give you constructive and useful feedback on your work?	To no extent	1--2--3--4--5	To a very large extent
19.	To what extent did your mentor acknowledge your contributions appropriately?	To no extent	1--2--3--4--5	To a very large extent
20.	To what extent did your mentor motivate you to improve your work?	To no extent	1--2--3--4--5	To a very large extent

Any other comments about your mentoring experience during the internship programme at BCX?

SECTION D

GENERAL PROGRAMME INFORMATION

- 1. What was your main reason for coming to the graduate internship programme at the company? Were your expectations met? Please provide details.**

2. To what extent do you think that there is a need for a graduate internship programme in the company?

To no extent

1	2	3	4	5
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 To a large extent

Please provide details

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3. How frequently did you consider quitting the internship programme? Please motivate.

1 = Never	2 = Sometimes	3 = Often	4 = Always
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4. Please provide us with any other suggestions you have regarding how the graduate internship programme can enhance the employability of its graduates.

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WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

ANNEXURE B: MENTOR QUESTIONNAIRE



QUESTIONNAIRE: MANAGERS/ MENTORS

An MBA research study is being conducted to determine the influence of the training provided during the internship programme at the company and thereby make recommendations which can be of benefit to other organisations. The goal of this research is to motivate organisations to employ graduates and help them to find innovative support structures to enable them to retain these graduates.

You have been selected to take part in the survey. Approximately **20 minutes** of your time is all that is required to assist current and emerging graduates.

This study complies with all the ethical requirements of the University of Pretoria. Please be assured that your responses will be treated **confidentially** and that the report will only contain a summary of the views expressed by various people who are taking part in the survey. Under no circumstances will you be identified in the report. In order to ensure that you remain **anonymous**, please do not write down your name anywhere on this questionnaire.

Please return your completed questionnaire to Carva Pop **not later than 12:00 on Friday 28 August 2009.**

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact the researcher, **Carva Pop** at 082 553 7608 or carva.pop@bcx.co.za..

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire consists of three sections:

- *Section A – Respondent information*
- *Section B – Internship programme training*
- *Section C – Mentorship*
- *Section D – General information*

Please complete **all the sections** to the best of your ability. Please respond to each statement in an honest and objective manner, based on your **personal experience** as a manager on the graduate internship programme.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION AND ASSISTANCE

Please indicate your consent to participating in this research study by checking the box below and writing the date of completion of the questionnaire.



<input type="text"/>	I hereby give my informed consent to participate in this study _____ (Date)
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Study leader: Dr Nicolene Barkhuizen
Department of Human Resource Management, University of Pretoria
nicolene.barkhuizen@up.ac.za
Tel: + 27 12 420 6311

SECTION A

RESPONDENT INFORMATION

1.2 Gender

Male
Female

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

1.3 What is your age? (in years)

1.4 Position

1.5 Business Area

1.6 Geographical Region

1.7 Qualifications

1.8 How many years of work experience do you have?

1.9 How many years have you been working at the company?

1.10 How many years have you been working in your current job?

SECTION B

INTERNSHIP PROGRAM TRAINING

B 1: SOFT SKILLS TRAINING

The graduate interns were exposed to the soft skills training listed below during the internship programme. The purpose of this questionnaire is to determine the soft skills that are considered most important to meet the employability needs of employers. Please rate the importance (from your perspective as an employer) you attribute to this skill on a scale from **Insignificant (1)**, **Unimportant (2)**, **Important (3)** and **Very important (4)**.

	Skill	Importance of skill
1.	Work purposefully towards completing a task	1 2 3 4
2.	Communicate (verbally) effectively with people of all ranks	1 2 3 4
3.	Business like writing style (i.e. e-mails, reports)	1 2 3 4
4.	Professional conduct (i.e. telephone etiquette; meeting new people)	1 2 3 4
5.	Presenting themselves appropriately in the workplace (dress, language)	1 2 3 4
6.	Ability to work in a team	1 2 3 4
7.	Ability to deal effectively with conflict in the workplace	1 2 3 4
8.	Show resilience in solving problems	1 2 3 4
9.	Personal awareness of their strengths and areas of improvement	1 2 3 4
10.	Work co-operatively with others (i.e. clients, colleagues)	1 2 3 4
11.	Make a contribution to solving problems	1 2 3 4
12.	Take the lead when a task has to be carried out	1 2 3 4

13.	Motivate themselves to learn and grow	1	2	3	4
14.	Apply creative thoughts, knowledge and skills in practice	1	2	3	4
15.	Appreciate other colleagues in the workplace	1	2	3	4
16.	Be attentive to and understand tasks that need to be completed	1	2	3	4

Please indicate any other important skills not listed above.

From the items listed above, please list the five (5) graduate skills that you regard as most important to the company.

B 2: TECHNICAL SKILLS TRAINING

To what extent did the technical training prepare the intern for his/ her employment?

To no extent

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

 To a large extent

Please provide details

SECTION C

MENTORSHIP

To what extent did the internship programme enable you to apply your mentoring skills?



To no extent

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

 To a large extent

Please provide details

SECTION D

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. What were your expectations of the internship programme? Were these expectations met? Please provide details

2. To what extent do you think that there is a need for a graduate internship programme in the company?

To no extent

1	2	3	4	5
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 To a large extent

Please provide details

3. To what extent would you consider employing a graduate intern after completion of the internship programme?



To no extent

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

To a large extent

4. What is required from the programme to ensure that you will employ an intern permanently at the conclusion of the programme? Please provide details

Please provide us with any other suggestions you have regarding how the graduate internship programme can enhance the employability of its graduates.

WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME