THE RELEVANCE OF PERSON-ENVIRONMENT FIT AMONGST HUMAN RESOURCE GRADUATES FROM NELSON MANDELA METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY WITHIN THE NELSON MANDELA METROPOLE.

By

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work. It is submitted in fulfilment for the degree MAGISTER ARTIUM in Industrial and Organisational Psychology at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. This dissertation has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

M. Matthysen

October 2009
ABSTRACT

This study sought to investigate the relevance of Person-Environment (P-E) fit amongst Human Resource (HR) graduates from Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) within the Nelson Mandela Metropole (NMM). A secondary objective of this study was to determine whether P-E fit was a determinant of Human Resource (HR) graduates' migration. The study comprised a pilot study and main study (n=50). The study was qualitative in nature, but incorporated a quantitative research component to support the qualitative research findings. Results showed that HR graduates from the NMMU perceived P-E fit as important. Immense emphasis was placed on achieving P-E fit by means of finding employment related to Human Resource Management (HRM). The lack of P-E fit, amongst HR graduates, was furthermore revealed as a determinant of graduate migration. HR graduates would relocate to pursue a career in HRM. Implications of the findings are that organisations should use the theoretical knowledge of HR graduates to develop their skills and broaden their practical knowledge. This will secure competent future HR managers for the NMM and help to combat scarce skills migrations from the area.

KEYWORDS:

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

1.1 INTRODUCTION

“Person-environment (P-E) fit is broadly defined as the compatibility between an individual and a work environment that occurs when their characteristics are well matched. Despite, or perhaps because of, the simplicity of this definition, several distinct types of fit have garnered attention” (Kristoff-Brown, Zimmerman & Johnson, 2005, 281).

This chapter provides an overview of the present study. It discusses the relevance and objectives thereof. Furthermore, it provides an introduction to the subject matter pertaining to P-E fit. The population and sample size, data analysis, research design and measuring instrument utilised in the study will be discussed. The next section will focus on the rational and motivation for the present study.

1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The concept of P-E fit is defined by Sekiguchi (2004) as the degree of congruence or match between a person and environment. P-E fit, according to Carson (2003), refers to a set of theories that seek to account for vocational behavior and experience in terms of the degree of fit between a person and their environment.

The aforementioned environment refers to an individuals’ working environment. This work environment encompasses the organisation, the employees within it and an individual’s occupation. The fit between an individual and the different levels of his/her work environment could result in positive or negative outcomes. For example, if there is a mismatch between the individual and his/her job, it could possibly result
in negative outcomes such as decreased job satisfaction or motivation etc. Whereas a match between an individual and his/her job could result in positive outcomes such as increased motivation and organisational commitment.

The current study aimed at exploring the relevance of P-E fit amongst Human Resource (HR) graduates from the NMMU within the NMM.

The latter was motivated by subjective interest in P-E fit and HR graduates from the NMMU. Furthermore, it was motivated through evidence indicating that most of the prospective candidates for available vacancies in the NMM have exceptional educational backgrounds but are applying for vacancies that have nothing in common with their qualifications (O’Brien, personal communication, 26 July 2008).

Most of the prospective candidates applying for available vacancies in the NMM indicated that they would apply for any available employment just to gain experience (O’Brien, personal communication, 26 July 2008). The latter was mostly applicable to graduates entering the workforce. It is very seldom that organisations (medium to small) recruit graduates to fill jobs, such as HR officers/consultants, and train them to acquire the necessary experience needed, especially in the NMM (Minnie, personal communication, 26 July 2008).

Only larger organisations implement training programmes for graduates to be trained in order to gain the necessary experience for that specific organisation. Unfortunately, this only happens to a handful of graduates in the NMM (Minnie, personal communication, 26 July 2008). This statement was supported by a survey done in 2006 that indicated that the Eastern Cape had the greatest outflow of youth migration (graduates) to other provinces (Mufamidi, 2008). This youth migration could be caused by a lack of suitable career options for graduates (specifically HR graduates) from the NMMU within the NMM.
The rationale for this study was based on the aspects of P-E fit. According to Foxcroft and Roodt (2005) these aspects include knowing oneself (individual interests and values); knowing the world of work (the NMM) and; matching this self-knowledge with the knowledge of the world of work. This matching process, or fit, is influenced by various aspects of an individual's environment such as available and suitable career options. The aforementioned youth (graduate) migration also formed part of the rationale for the present study.

When an individual is making a vocational choice it is not only personality, interests and values that influences the choice, but also the environment (Momberg, 2005). The environment influences the development of personality, vocational interests and determines the availability of career options that the individual can decide between (Momberg, 2005, p.67).

Momberg's (2005) aforementioned statement was also part of the rationale for this study. The environment (NMM) may determine the availability of career options. Thus, the environment may negatively influence P-E fit when it does not allow an individual to match his/her self-knowledge (being aware of interests and values) with that of the world of work due to a lack of available career options. The next section provides an understanding for the foundations of the present study.

1.3 THE FOUNDATION OF THE STUDY

This study focused on P-E fit amongst HR graduates from the NMMU. The underpinning variable of the study was P-E fit, including various theories and factors related to P-E fit, career choice theories and HR graduates from the NMMU. The next sections will briefly define P-E fit, introduce career choice theories and explain why HR graduates from NMMU were under scrutiny.
1.3.1 P-E fit defined
As mentioned previously, the concept of P-E fit is defined by Sekiguchi (2004) as the degree of congruence or match between a person and their work environment. P-E fit refers to a set of theories that seeks to account for behavior and experience in terms of the degree of fit between a person and their work environment (Carson, 2003).

P-E fit, according to Carson (2003), has been described primarily in terms of compatibility or congruence (match) between a person and some environmental object (for example, an organisation, work group or job). According to Schreuder and Coetzee (2006), P-E fit is defined as a match between an individual’s skills and abilities and the demands of the job.

Sekiguchi (2004) explains that the concept of P-E fit basically indicates that alignment between characteristics of people and their work environments result in positive outcomes for both the individual and the environment. Individual-level outcomes, attitudes, and behavior do not result from person or environment separation, but rather from a relationship between the two (Awoniyi, Griego and Morgan, 2002). Individuals are more effective, more satisfied and more committed to their jobs when their personal attributes match, align, or are congruent with the attributes of their situational environment (Awoniyi et al, 2002).

This matching process, or fit, could be influenced by various aspects of an individual’s environment. The current study hopes to identify the determinants and consequences possibly influencing P-E fit amongst HR graduates from the NMMU. The various theories and factors related to P-E fit are embedded in the literature study (Chapter two).

1.3.2 Career choice theories
Career choice, according to Swanepoel et al (2003), can be defined in the context of
an individual’s preferences, orientation, and aspirations, as well as in the context of economic conditions and sociological factors such as family and education. “Over the past fifty years many different theories of career choice have been formulated to explain how individuals choose careers” (Swanepoel et al, 2003, p.399). Career choice theories are divided into content- and process theories. Content theories describe career choice in terms of specific factors such as individual characteristics or psychological phenomena that are involved in choice. For example, individual interests (Swanepoel et al, 2003, p.399). Process theories describe career choice as a dynamic process that evolves over stages of development. For example, from childhood to adulthood (Schreuder & Theron, 2001).

As mentioned before, chapter two will provide an outline and discussion pertaining to theories and factors related to P-E fit and career choice relevant to the present study. The next section explains why HR graduates from the NMMU were under scrutiny in this study.

1.3.3 Human Resource graduates from Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.

HR graduates from NMMU were scrutinised in this study due to the researcher’s subjective interest in P-E fit amongst HR graduates from the NMMU. The subjective interest was motivated by secondary data that was collected through brief unstructured interviews conducted with HR graduates from NMMU. Secondary data will be discussed in chapter four. From the secondary data inferences were made indicating that some HR graduates applied for jobs in the NMM that were not related to their studies as all the available HR jobs in the NMM required experience from previous HR related jobs. The latter was supported by statements made by Minnie (2008) and O’Brien (2008) indicating that most graduates apply for any work just to gain experience (personal communications, 2008).

Furthermore, from the secondary data it became evident that those HR graduates
that found work related to HR had to relocate to other provinces or migrated abroad. The latter could possibly cause the NMM to lose educated and valuable individuals. Furthermore it also contributes to the skills shortage as, according to the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (2008), the demand for Human Resource Managers (HRM) is on the increase, because of the serious shortage of skilled and trained workers in South Africa. However, as the demand for HRM increases, companies (small to large) seeking HR managers/consultants/officers should consider training HR graduates as they can add valuable skills and knowledge to the organisation. The inferences made from the secondary data will briefly be elaborated in chapter five.

1.4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study was to determine the relevance of P-E fit amongst HR graduates from the NMMU in the NMM. A second objective of this study was to determine whether P-E fit is a determinant of migration amongst HR graduates from the NMMU.

1.5. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem statement of this study was to determining how significant P-E fit is as a predictive measure for career success amongst HR graduates from the NMMU within the NMM.

1.5.1 Sub-problems
A sub-problem for this study was to determine whether migration amongst HR graduates from the NMMU resulted from striving to achieve P-E fit.

1.6. RESEARCH METHOD

The current research project consisted of both qualitative and quantitative research
techniques. Qualitative research was the primary focus for the present study as the topic under scrutiny was relatively new and the problem needed to be researched in more depth. Quantitative research techniques were utilised to provide more understanding to the topic under scrutiny (Malhotra, 2007). Therefore, quantitative research was the secondary focus of the study and was not utilised to answer the constructed research propositions but to add valuable insights into the subject matter. Furthermore, quantitative research was utilised as a support function towards the qualitative research findings.

Schurink (2008) explains that qualitative research refers to all research designs which focus on understanding and interpreting the existing personal experiences and inter-subjective realities of individuals, teams and organisations using subjective experientially expressed data. According to Creswell (2003), qualitative research is exploratory and is useful when the researcher does not know the important variables to examine. This approach is needed when the research topic under scrutiny is relatively new (Creswell, 2003). Qualitative research is unstructured, exploratory in nature, based on small samples and may utilise popular qualitative techniques such as depth interviews (Malhotra, 2007). The findings of qualitative research should be regarded as input into further research (Malhotra, 2007).

The study incorporated a component of quantitative research to provide more insight into the topic under scrutiny. “Quantitative research uses numbers and statistical methods. It is based on numerical measurements of specific aspects of phenomena” (Thomas, 2003, p.12). Qualitative and quantitative research in combination can provide rich insights. Although the present research was qualitative in nature, both research designs were utilised to provide valuable insight and understanding into the relevance of P-E fit amongst HR graduates from the NMMU within the NMM. The construction of the measuring instrument will be discussed extensively in the methodology chapter (chapter four) of the present study.
1.6.1 Research propositions
According to Cooper and Schindler (1998) the research literature disagrees about the meaning of the terms proposition and hypothesis. A research proposition is a statement about the concepts that may be judged as true or false if it refers to observable phenomena. When a proposition is formulated for empirical testing, it is called a hypothesis. A hypothesis is of a tentative and conjectural nature (Cooper & Schindler, 1998). The researcher decided to use research propositions rather than hypothesis for the reason that the empirical part of this study was mainly of an exploratory nature. Furthermore, the research was not based on previous models and can therefore be approached from a more pragmatic view, which will be more meaningful. For the purpose of the present study the following research propositions were formulated:

\textit{P1: P-E fit is relevant to HR graduates from the NMMU within the NMM.}

\textit{P2: P-E fit is a determinant of migration amongst HR graduates from NMMU.}

The formulation of the research propositions will be discussed comprehensively in chapter three.

1.6.2 Population and sample size
A population refers to the aggregate of all the elements that share some common set of characteristics and that comprise the universe for the purposes of the research problem (Malhotra, 2007). Snowball sampling was utilised to determine the sample size for measuring the research propositions. Snowball sampling is an approach for locating information-rich key informants (Patton, 1999). Using this approach, a few potential respondents are contacted and asked whether they know of anybody with similar characteristics as them. (Patton, 1999). For example, asking one HR graduate whether he/she knows and, or, could refer to other HR graduates.
For the purpose of this study, the population size will consist of HR graduates from the NMMU. Slabbert (personal communication, 10 August 2008) indicated that the population of HR graduates for 2005 until 2008 was \( N=226 \). For qualitative research designs the sample size is typically small (Malhotra, 2007). Therefore, a sample of fifty HR graduates (\( n=50 \)) will be utilised.

1.6.3 Measuring instrument
A questionnaire was constructed to determine the relevance of P-E fit amongst HR graduates from the NMMU. This questionnaire was also utilised to determine whether P-E fit was a determinant of migration amongst HR graduates from the NMMU.

1.6.4 Data collection
For the purpose of this study a questionnaire was constructed incorporating a qualitative and quantitative research component. As mentioned before, the study’s primary focus was qualitative in nature, therefore quantitative research techniques were only utilised to provide more valuable insights to the propositions under scrutiny as well as to act as a support function for the qualitative research findings. Depth interviews were utilised as the primary research technique and the Likert scale questionnaire as a secondary research technique.

1.6.4.1 Depth interviews
Depth interviews are an unstructured and direct way of obtaining information and can be conducted on a one-on-one basis (Malhotra, 2007). Malhotra (2007) further explains that depth interviews can uncover a great depth of insight which is useful for this study.

1.6.4.2 Likert Scale
The Likert scale was utilised to incorporate other factors of the literature study to determine how respondents perceive P-E fit as well as HRM as a career choice. The
validity and reliability of the measuring instrument are discussed in chapter five. The Likert scale is a widely used rating scale that requires the respondents to indicate a degree of agreement or disagreement with each of a series of statements/items about the stimulus objects (Malhotra, 2007).

1.6.5 Method of analysis
Content- and statistical analysis were utilised as the methods of analysis. Content analysis was utilised to analyse the qualitative component of the research instrument. The quantitative component of the research instrument was analysed by making use of descriptive statistics.

Content analysis classifies textual material, reducing it to more relevant, manageable bits of data (Weber, 2000). Weber (2000) further explains that content analysis is a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text. Content analysis can involve tedious coding and analysis (Malhotra, 2007).

Descriptive statistics is a method of statistical analysis of numeric data, discrete or continuous, that provides information about centering, spread, and normality (Neuman, 2006). The main functions of descriptive statistics are to provide means of central tendency, dispersion, and distribution shape (Dewberry, 2004). The qualitative research findings were analysed through utilising Microsoft Excel 2007.

1.7. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

The significance of the current study lies in determining how significant P-E fit is amongst HR graduates, from the NMMU, as a predictor of career success. The results of the study could possibly identify the determinants of HR graduate migration and whether migration is due to P-E fit.
1.8. CONCLUSION

This chapter briefly introduced the present research study. The chapter focused on
the rationale of the study. HR graduates from NMMU were scrutinised in this study
due to a subjective interest in P-E fit amongst HR graduates from the NMMU. The
main objective of this study was to determine the relevance of P-E fit amongst HR
graduates from the NMMU within the NMM.

A second objective of this study was to determine whether P-E fit is a determinant of
migration amongst HR graduates from the NMMU. Both qualitative and quantitative
research are utilised as it provides rich insights and understanding into the topic
under scrutiny (Malhotra, 2007). The study will apply snowball sampling to determine
the sample size for measuring the research propositions. Furthermore, the
questionnaire constructed for the purpose of this study consisted of open-ended
questions and a Likert scale questionnaire. The method of analysis for this study was
content- and statistical analysis.

The next chapter will focus on and provide a better understanding of various theories
and factors related to P-E fit. Chapter three will present findings from previous
conducted empirical research concerning the present subject matter and discuss the
formulation of the study’s research propositions. Chapter four will explain and discuss
the research methods utilised. Chapter five will discuss, make inferences and outline
the findings obtained through qualitative research. Chapter six will discuss the results
pertaining to the quantitative research component. Lastly, chapter seven will provide
an overview of the entire study and discuss the outcomes of the propositions set.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW: PART A

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will provide a broader definition of P-E fit and will discuss the various dimensions incorporated into P-E fit. Career choice theories, such as process theory and content theory, will be discussed as they provide an explanation on how individuals choose their career (Swanepoel et al, 2003). In addition, career maturity will be discussed since it is a central component of Super’s (1957) theory. This chapter will also focus on Schein’s (1996) career anchors seeing that an individual’s career anchor is a combination of their interests, values, motives and competence. The Work Adjustment Theory (WAT) and the Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) framework will also be discussed. WAT will be discussed as it focuses on the concept of fit between the individual and the environment and emphasizes the process through which individuals will attempt to maintain this fit with their environment (Bradely, Arthur & George 2002, in Sekiguchi, 2004, p.181). Furthermore, The ASA framework will be discussed as it focuses on the employment selection processes and what individuals look for in organisations when applying for available vacancies. Lastly, this chapter will focus on HRM in the workplace.

2.2 PERSON-ENVIRONMENT FIT DEFINED

P-E fit was briefly defined in chapter one. According to Carson (2003), P-E fit has been described primarily in terms of compatibility or congruence (match) between a person and some environmental object (for example, an organisation, work group or job). According to Schreuder and Coetzee (2006), P-E fit is defined as a match between an individual’s skills and abilities and the demands of the job. As mentioned above, the next sections will discuss the different types and dimension of P-E fit.
2.2.1 Dimensions of P-E fit

P-E fit is a complex and multidimensional concept and there are several dimensions to conceptualise P-E fit (Sekiguchi, 2004).

2.2.1.1 Supplementary versus complementary fit
According to Sekiguchi (2004), supplementary fit occurs when an individual possess the characteristics that are similar to other individuals in the same environment. The latter environment is described according to the individuals in it. Therefore, fit is seen as having similar characteristics to those within the environment. Complementary fit is when an individual characteristic adds to the environment, making it whole (Sekiguchi, 2004). The environment in the complementary fit is described apart from the individuals in it. Rather, it is described by the demands and requirements within it.

2.2.1.2 Demands-abilities fit versus needs-supplies fit
This dimension subsumes from complementary fit (Sekiguchi, 2004). Needs-supplies fit occurs when an environment satisfies individual’s needs, desires or preferences, when it supplies resources that are demanded by individuals, such as, financial and physical resources as well as growth opportunities (Kristof, 1996). This implies that individual needs are met when the environment supplies what an individual’s wants/needs, such as growth opportunities and suitable remuneration. Demands-abilities fit occur when an individual has the abilities required to meet environmental demands (Kristof, 1996). For example, a qualified and experienced technician would have the necessary skills and abilities required by an electrical company recruiting technicians (environmental demand). Thus, creating a demands-ability fit.

2.2.1.3 Perceived versus actual fit
The third dimension is the perceived (subjective) versus actual (objective) fit. Cable and Judge (1999) explain that perceived fit is conceptualised as the judgment that an individual fits well with the environment. Perceived fit is measured by simply asking individuals to what degree they believe fit exists (Cable & Judge, 1999). Thus, it is purely based on individual perception of how well they fit with the environment. According to Cable and Judge (1999), actual fit refers to the comparison between separately rated individual and environmental characteristics. Actual fit is measured by comparing characteristics at two levels, namely the individual and the environment.
Thus, it is not a perception but an actual measured fit. Figure 1 illustrates the relationship among these different conceptualisations of P-E fit.

![Diagram of P-E fit](image)

**Figure 1: The relationship among different conceptualisations of P-E fit (Sekiguchi, 2004).**

### 2.2.2 Different types of P-E fit

Several different constructs have evolved from P-E fit, including person-job fit (P-J), person-group fit (P-G), person-organisation fit (P-O) and person-vocation fit (P-V) (Sekiguchi, 2004). These concepts will be discussed in the following sections.

**2.2.2.1 Person-Job fit (P-J)**

P-J fit refers to the match between an individual’s abilities with what is required to perform the job (Cable & DeRue, 2002). P-J fit is defined as the match between the applicant and the job (Kristof-Brown, 2000). This is usually based on the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) of the applicant and the demands of the job. P-J fit is further defined as the fit between the abilities of a person and the demands of a job or the desires of a person and the attributes of a job (Sekiguchi, 2004). P-J fit involves the measurement of what is referred to as *hard* information about an individual’s suitability for the tasks that are required for successful performance of a specific job (Handler, 2004). *Hard* aspects of P-J fit include things such as an individual’s specific skills, their level of knowledge about specific subject matter, and their cognitive abilities (Handler, 2004). In many cases, P-J fit also includes *softer* measures such as the examination of an individual’s personality traits relative to specific job requirements (Handler, 2004). The concern for matching the job requirements with personality characteristics is best articulated in John Holland’s (1973) personality-job fit theory (Robbins & Judge, 2007). Holland (1973) presents six personality types and proposes that satisfaction and the propensity to leave a job depends on the degree to which individuals successfully match their personalities to an occupational...
environment (Robbins & Judge, 2007). Holland’s (1973) theory will be discussed further on in this chapter.

The concept of P-J fit is the traditional foundation for employee selection (Werbel & Gilliland, 1999). According to Sekiguchi (2004), the primary concern in employee selection has been with finding those applicants who have the skills and abilities necessary to do the job. Employee selection is a major antecedent of P-J fit. Furthermore, employee selection processes of most organisations have traditionally focused on achieving P-J fit (Werbel & Gilliland, 1999). P-J fit can lead to a number of positive outcomes such as, job satisfaction, motivation, increased performance, attendance and retention of staff (Sekiguchi, 2004).

2.2.2.2 Person-organisation fit (P-O)

P-O fit is defined as the compatibility between people and organisations (Kristof, 1996). The fit between the applicant and the organisation is usually described in terms of a match between values (Kristof-Brown, 2000). Robbins and Judge (2007) explain that organisations face dynamic and changing environments and require employees who are able to readily change tasks and move fluidly between teams. In contradiction to P-J fit, P-O fit suggests that it is probably more important that employee’s personalities fit with the overall organisation’s culture than with the characteristics of any specific job (Robbins & Judge, 2007).

An individual with P-O fit is likely to perform successfully across the organisation in differing roles. Individuals will be most successful in an organisation that shares their personalities (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman & Johnson, 2005). P-O fit has been described in terms of underlying similarity between the values of the person and the organisation (Kristof-Brown, 2000). Values guide behaviour and decisions, and recruiting an individual who matches the organisation’s values helps to strengthen the organisation's culture (Kristof-Brown, 2000).

One of the P-O fit models that have initiated much empirical research is Schneider’s Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) framework. This framework describes the mechanism for mutual adaptation between the person and the environment. The ASA framework will be discussed further in this chapter.
2.2.2.3 Person-group fit (P-G)
P-G fit focuses on the interpersonal compatibility between individuals and their work groups (Werbel & Gilliland, 1999). P-G fit is defined as the match between the employee and the immediate work group (Evers, Anderson & Voskuilj, 2005). The latter is similar to Sekiguchi’s (2004) dimension of supplementary fit as it signifies that individuals possess the characteristics that are similar to other individuals (work group) in the same environment. Kennedy (2005) further defines P-G fit as the compatibility between an individual and his or her work group, where the group can range from a specific work group to departments, regions, or divisions of an organisation. According to Furnham (1997), P-G fit decreases absenteeism in an organisation whereas poor P-G fit increases it. Meltzler (2002) explains that as work teams become more widely used in organisations, the consideration of P-G fit becomes increasingly relevant. Achieving fit between the individual and the group is important for behavioral and attitudinal outcomes for groups and their members (Meltzler, 2002). Since values and norms may be radically different between the group and the organisation, it is critical to consider the role P-G fit should have in the employee selection process (Meltzler, 2002).

2.2.2.4 Person-vocation fit (P-V)
P-V fit is the broadest level of environmental fit, generally defined by the compatibility of individuals with their vocations/professions (Kennedy, 2005). P-V fit is conceptualised as interest, congruence or the “degree of match between the individual’s vocational interests and aspects of their work environment” (Harris, Moritznes, Robitschek, Imhoff, & Lynch, 2001, p. 314). P-V fit is further defined by Mencl (2005) as the congruency between one’s personality and a vocational environment. Mencl (2005) explains that the basis for this description is occupational development literature that discusses matching personal interests with occupations. Kennedy (2005) explains that P-V fit has strong roots in vocational psychology, a discipline focusing on an individual’s selection of an occupation and his/her satisfaction and productivity within that occupation. An individual’s vocational satisfaction, stability, and achievement are determined by the congruence between the individual’s interests and his/her vocational environment (Holland 1973, in Kennedy 2005). De Clercq (2006) explains that P-V fit is determined by measuring the similarity between an individual’s personality and that of a vocational
environment. Research in this field includes vocational choice theories that propose matching people with careers that meet their interests such as Holland (1973) and Super’s (1957) theories of career choice (De Clercq, 2006, p.14). This type of fit can be distinguished from P-O fit because the prediction of vocational choice does not necessary contribute to the prediction of fit with a particular organisation (De Clercq, 2006, p.15).

The abovementioned levels of environmental fit create a deeper understanding of the fit between the individual and his/her working environment. The P-E fit concept suggests a lack of fit may result in physiological- or psychological stress or both (Sadri, 1997 in Oosthuizen, 2005). Cope (2003) supports the latter by explaining that occupational stress is the primary result of inadequate P-E fit.

There are numerous definitions, dimensions and constructs surrounding and pertaining to P-E fit, however, it all evolves from one central component - matching an individual to the work environment they have entered into. All of the dimensions, definitions and constructs conclude that congruence between an individual and environmental object will lead to positive outcomes and a mismatch to negative outcomes. Therefore, to conclude this section, individuals should perceive P-E fit as an important aspect to a successful career. The next section will discuss career choice theories as they influence the type of work environment an individual will enter into (Swanepoel et al, 2003).

2.3 CAREER CHOICE THEORIES

Career choice, according to Swanepoel et al (2003), can be defined in the context of an individual’s preferences, orientation, and aspirations, as well as in the context of economic conditions and sociological factors such as family and education. As mentioned in chapter one, career choice theories are divided into content- and process theories. Through content theories career choice is described in terms of specific factors such as individual characteristics or psychological phenomena that are involved in choice (Swanepoel et al, 2003, p.399). Process theories describe career choice as a dynamic process that evolves over stages of development.
In the following sections career choice is described in terms of a content theory (Holland, 1973) and process theory (Super, 1957).

2.3.1 Holland’s Theory (Content theory)

“One of the most widely used approaches to guide career choices is the theory of John Holland” (Swanepoel et al, 2003, p.400). Holland (1973) explains that career choice is an expression of personality. According to Swanepoel et al (2003), Holland (1973) states that there is an interaction between personality and the environment, so that individuals are drawn towards environments which correlate with their personal orientation. Sharf (1992) explains that people express themselves, their interests and values, through their work choices and experience. Holland (1973) recognises that his theory can account for only a portion of the variables that underlie career selection (Sharf, 1992, p.45). Furthermore, Holland (1973) is clear in stating that his theoretical model can be affected by age, gender, social class, intelligence, and education (Sharf, 1992, p.42). With the latter understood, Holland (1973) goes on to specify how the individual and the environment interact with each other through the development of six separate types: Realistic (R), Investigative (I), Artistic (A), Social (S), Enterprising (E), and Conventional (C) (Walsh & Osipow, 1995, p.378). These are collectively referred to as RIASEC and will be explained in the next sections.

2.3.1.1 Realistic (R)

According to Holland (1973), the realistic type is most related to careers of manual, mechanical, agricultural, or technical nature (Feldman, 2002, p.30). The realistic individual prefers realistic occupations such as an electrician, surveyor or car mechanic. These individuals also value concrete things or tangible personal characteristics such as money, power, and status (Peterson & Gonzalez, 2000, p.112). Gothard, Mignot, Offer and Ruff (2001) mention that realistic individuals are physically strong, unsociable, aggressive and lack verbal skills but have good motor coordination.

2.3.1.2 Investigative (I)

Investigative individuals tend to pursue scientific and mathematical careers that enable them to use observational and analytical skills (Feldman, 2002, p.30). These
individuals need to understand things and think through problems (Gothard et al, 2001, p.14). Furthermore, these individuals perceive themselves as academics, intellectual, having mathematical and scientific ability (Peterson & Gonzales, 2000, p.13).

2.3.1.3 Artistic (A)
The artistic type is drawn to jobs related to language, drama, music, or other areas within the fine arts. These individuals perceive themselves as expressive, original, intuitive, independent, disorderly, having artistic and musical ability as well as an ability in acting, writing, and speaking (Peterson & Gonzalez, 2000, p.113). Individuals that are introverted, avoid problems that are highly structured and have a need for individualistic expression (Gothard, 2001, p.14).

2.3.1.4 Social (S)
According to Feldman (2002), individuals classified by Holland’s (1973) social type prefer activities in which they can interact with others to educate, understand, or assist. These individuals value social and ethical activities (Peter & Gonzalez, 2000, p.114). Gothard et al (2001) explain that these individuals also have verbal and interpersonal skills and prefer to solve problems through feelings.

2.3.1.5 Enterprising (E)
The enterprising individual also tends to enjoy social interactions, but this type of person is prone to take the role of leader, organiser, or persuader in exchange with others (Feldman, 2002, p.30). Peter and Gonzalez (2000) explain that enterprising individuals value political and economic achievement and engage in enterprising activities such as selling or leading others.

2.3.1.6 Conventional (C)
The conventional type prefers activities that involve the systematic manipulation of data found in clerical and computational jobs (Feldman, 2002, p.30). According to Gothard (2001), the conventional individuals like well-structured tasks, value material possessions and status, and they prefer structured verbal and numerical activities.
In addition to classifying people and environments into the six types, Holland (1973) explained that personality types could be arranged in a hexagonal structure (see Figure 2). According to Feldman (2000), the types next to each other in the hexagon are most closely related or consistent, and those opposite each other in the arrangement are least related.

![Figure 2: Holland's (1973) Hexagonal arrangement of personality types (Feldman, 2000, p.33)](image)

Sharf (1992) explains that once an individual and environment have been classified according to the six types, Holland (1973) posited that congruency between the individual and the environment is related to the distance between personality types as they are arranged in the hexagonal structure. For example, Schreuder and Coetzee (2006) explain that artistic and conventional types are opposite each other in the hexagon; therefore, artistic people are expected to be least satisfied and successful in conventional environments. Schreuder and Theron (1997) elucidate that individuals are more likely to thrive in environments congruent with their personality types because such environments provide rewards that are valued by that type of person.

### 2.3.2 Super’s Theory (Process theory)

Super’s (1957) theory explains that career choice refers to a whole series of related decisions which are made during a developmental process covering five life stages from childhood to old age (Swanepoel et al, 2003, p.399).
According to Swanepoel et al (2003), Super (1957) recognises the changes that people go through as they mature. Career patterns are determined by socioeconomic factors, mental and physical abilities, personal characteristics and the opportunities to which individuals are exposed (Walsh & Savickas, 2005). According to Walsh and Osipow (1995), Super (1957) argued that socioeconomic status has a two-fold effect on career development: the opening and closing of career opportunities and the shaping of occupational concepts and self-concepts. People seek career satisfaction through work roles in which they can express themselves and implement and develop their self-concepts (Walsh & Savickas, 2005). Career maturity, a main concept in Super’s (1957) theory, is manifested in the successful accomplishment of age and stage developmental tasks across the life span. People develop career preferences as they mature. Career maturity will be discussed further in this chapter.

The following career stages are identified by Super (1957): Growth (age ± 12-14), Exploration (adolescence, age ± 14-25), Establishment (early adulthood, age ± 25-45), Maintenance (middle adulthood, age ± 45-65) and Decline (old age, age ± 65) (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2006, p.125).

2.3.2.1 Growth stage

During the growth stage the individual begins to fantasize about careers and develop vocational interests and capacities (Hall, 2002). Children develop concepts of themselves through contact with adults who become role models (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2006, p.125). The growth stage, according to Patton and McMahon (1999), is characterised by the exploration by children of the world around them. During this stage individuals attend school, develop work habits, gain more control over their lives, and become future oriented (Patton & McMahon, 1999, p.44). As a result they may identify with role models and begin to develop interests and an awareness of their abilities (Patton & McMahon, 1999, p.44). Fantasy and play help them to develop concepts of themselves in adult roles (Patton & McMahon, 1999, p.44). Schreuder and Coetzee (2006) explain that fantasy influences the development of interests, but as experience makes children more aware of their capacities, their interests become more realistic. Once children have developed interest through fantasy, experience and feedback, they are able to plan for the future. Swanepoel et al (2003) supports the statement made by Schreuder and Coetzee (2006) explaining
that as children gradually become more aware of the opportunities that life offers them, their interests become more closely linked to reality.

2.3.2.2 Exploration or adolescence stage

During this stage the individual begins to explore his/her interests and different career opportunities (Hall, 2002). The exploration stage is the time when career choices are narrowed and individuals frequently have selected and embarked on training or education to prepare them for their chosen vocation (Patton & McMahon, 1999, p.44). Adolescents first make tentative career choices, which may be tried out in the exploration of part-time or holiday work. Schreuder and Coetzee (2006) state that tentative choices are usually followed by exploration of a chosen field in greater depth. Patton and McMahon (1999) explain that it is during this stage that a vocational identity develops. If however, an adult has set an adolescent career goal, his/her career exploration may be too focused, which may lead to unhappiness and frustration later in life (Swanepoel et al, 2003, p.399). According to Patton and McMahon (1999), the exploration stage involves three career development tasks. The first task during this stage is crystallisation, the cognitive process of forming a vocational goal on the basis of vocational information and awareness of traits such as interests and values (Patton & McMahon, 1999, p.46). The next task, specification, involves the actual selection of a specific career. Finally, implementation involves training for one’s selected vocation and commencing employment (Patton & McMahon, 1999, p.46).

2.3.2.3 Early adulthood

In early adulthood an individual may initially struggle a bit and eventually establish him/herself in a particular field (Hall, 2002). During this stage an individual gains employment (Patton & McMahon, 1999, p.46). Establishment involves a period of trial in the late twenties and a period of stabilisation in the thirties and early forties (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2006, p.124). Trial includes a sequence of job changes before a final choice is made or before it becomes clear that the career will consist of changes (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2006, p.124). During stabilisation, security and advancement become priorities (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2006, p.125). Patton and McMahon (1999) explain that once an individual is stabilised in an occupation, the next task of the individual is to consolidate their position. Frustration due to
unsuccessful stabilisation may lead to either stagnation or to change (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2006, p.124). According to Schreuder and Theron (1997), Super (1957) contends that most people, including those who find stabilisation and those who favour change, see the years of early adulthood as the best years of their lives.

2.3.2.4 Maintenance stage
During the maintenance stage, those adults who had previously stabilised in a career now attempt to maintain their position in the workplace in the face of competition from younger individuals, whose more up-to-date training may pose a threat to the career advancement of older counterparts. (Swanepoel et al, 2003, p.400). Patton and McMahon (1999) explain that the maintenance stage is characterised by “preserving the place one has made in the world of work.” Individuals who do not change occupations or organisations enter the stage of maintenance (Patton & McMahon, 1999, p.46). Before entering this stage, individuals may evaluate their occupation and decide to change organisations or occupations. The tasks of this stage includes holding on, keeping up, and innovating (Patton & McMahon, 1999, p.46). According to Schreuder and Coetzee (2006), individuals who have not established what they wanted to, may stagnate in the status quo and avoid actively acquiring new knowledge and skills. These individuals avoid opportunities to learn new skills and develop a passive approach to their work instead of actively acquiring and applying new knowledge (Swanepoel et al, 2003, p.400).

2.3.2.5 Decline stage
As individuals age they often recent their physical and mental decline and implications that this has for their future (Swanepoel et al, 2003, p.400). This stage, according to Patton and McMahon (1999), is associated with planning for retirement, possible reduction of workload and eventual retirement. As people enter old age, they first tend to decelerate work activities by seeking less responsibility or selectively changing work roles (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2006, p.125). As they sense a decline in their physical and mental powers, they may selectively start disengaging from work roles (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2006, p.126).

Schreuder and Coetzee (2006) explain that although Super (1957) distinguishes these life stages, he stresses the point that individuals do not develop uniformly. Life
stages normally occur at the approximate ages indicated, but are not discrete and not invariable (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2006, p.126). The ages at which they begin and end are flexible and transition to a particular stage may include characteristics of another stage (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2006, p.126).

Super’s (1957) view of a career as a series of life stages in the course of the total life span is graphically portrayed as a model called the Life-Career Rainbow (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2006, p.126). The latter shows that roles may vary during a lifetime (Peterson & Gonzalez, 2000, p.187). In adolescence, exploration is paramount, leading to career decisions. In the early adult years, becoming established in a career and finding one’s way is very important (Peterson & Gonzalez, 2000, p.188). In the middle adult years, maintenance, job satisfaction, and adjustment to work changes are the focus of attention. In later adult years, slowing down and adjustment to different career concerns occur (Peterson & Gonzalez, 2000, p.188). Super (1957) believes that nine life roles are a good way to understand the concept of career. Reardon, Lenz, Sampson and Peterson (2000) support the view mentioned by Peterson and Gonzales (2000) that each individual occupies one or more of these roles at different times throughout their lifetime. The combination and intensity of life roles are the basis of a person’s career. As seen in Figure 3, on the next page, the six life roles are (1) child, (2) student, (3) leisured, (4) citizen, (5) worker, and (6) homemaker (Reardon et al, 2000, p.14).

According to Schreuder and Theron (1997), the significance of any one or more roles varies from individual to individual and according to the relevant life stage of the individual. Below the rainbow figure, personal determinants involving psychological and biological factors, which have an influence on the significance of particular roles in the life space, are indicated (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2006, p.127). Above the figure, situational determinants are indicated involving historical and socio-economic factors which influence the career process.
As mentioned earlier in this section, career maturity is a main concept in Super's (1957) theory and it is manifested in the successful accomplishment of age and stage developmental tasks across the individual life span. The next section will discuss career maturity as it is a central aspect to Super's (1957) theory.

2.4 CAREER MATURITY

Career maturity can be generally defined as the extent to which the individual has mastered the vocational development tasks, including both knowledge and attitudinal components, appropriate to his/her stage of career development (Walsh & Osipow, 1995, p.196). The career maturity construct is central to the developmental approach to understanding career behaviour. It refers, broadly, to the individual’s readiness to make informed, age-appropriate career decisions and cope with career development tasks (Patton, Watson & Creed, 2004, p.33). According to Peterson and Gonzalez (2000), career maturity is a collection of physical, psychological, and social characteristics. It includes the degree of success in coping with the demands of earlier stages and sub stages of career development (Peterson and Gonzalez, 2000, p.183). Career maturity is distinguished between cognitive and affective aspects. The former pertains to specific skills that are related to career decision-making and the latter pertains to the attitude of an individual with regard to the career decision-making process (De Bruin & Bernadr-Phera, 2002, p.2).
Career maturity is further defined by Coetzee and Roythorne-Jacobs (2007) as the ability to make career decisions that reflect decisiveness, self-reliance, independence, and willingness to compromise between personal needs and requirements of a career situation. Career maturity is seen as the collection of behaviours necessary to identify, choose, plan and execute career goals (Coertse & Schepers, 2004 p.56).

According to Patton and McMahon (1999), career maturity is a hypothetical construct. Career maturity's operational definition is perhaps as difficult to formulate as that of intelligence, but the history thereof is much more brief and the achievements even less perfect. Contrary to the impressions created by some writers, it does not increase monotonically, and it is not a unitary trait (Patton & McMahon, 1999, p.42). Walsh and Osipow (1995) support the view of Patton and McMahon (1999) that career maturity may not even have a universal meaning or definition.

Stead and Watson (1999) explain that each principal life-stage task of an individual, as mentioned by Super (1957), of an individual can be subdivided into specific developmental tasks for that particular period of life. Success in mastering these tasks lead to a high level of career maturity or readiness to make a career choice appropriate to that life stage (Stead & Watson, 1999, p.72). Career maturity is essential in choosing a career. A career immature person can not make an optimal career decision (Coertse & Schepers, 2004, p.56). Coertse and Schepers (2004) explain that a career mature person displays certain characteristics. These characteristics include gathering self-knowledge in order to gain insight, obtaining necessary competencies in order to make an informed decision, integrating self-knowledge and knowledge of the world of work, and implementing the abovementioned knowledge when planning a career (Coertse & Schepers, 2004, p.56).

From the above discussion it can be seen that career maturity is an important construct as it determines an individual's readiness to make appropriate career related decisions. An individual that is career immature could make inappropriate career decisions that could possibly lead to job dissatisfaction. The next section will discuss Schein's (1996) career anchors as an individual's career anchor is a
combination of perceived areas of competence, motives, interests and values (Schreuder & Theron, 1997, p.139).

2.5 SCHEIN’S CAREER ANCHORS

Feldman (2002) explains that career anchors are core values, interests, and abilities developed throughout early career that guide career decisions during the establishment years and subsequent career stages. A career anchor consists of the individual's talents, motives and values which he/she uses to define motives and stabilise their career (Swanepoel et al, 2003, p.404). “Although Schein (1996) argued that an individual can maintain only one dominant career anchor, his own empirical evidence suggested that individuals can hold more than one anchor strongly” (Coetzee & Roythorne-Jacobs, 2007, p.60).

According to Feldman and Bolino (2000), the career anchor includes needs, values and talents that surface to the top of an individual's self-image. However, it is plausible that there is room at the top for more than one anchor. Marshall and Bonner (2003) state that one to three anchors tend to cluster together to form an individual’s career and work preferences.

2.5.1 Different career anchors
The following career anchors were identified by Schein (1996, in Feldman 2002): Technical-functional competence; managerial competence; autonomy-independence; security-stability; service-dedication; pure challenge; lifestyle integration; and entrepreneurship.

2.5.1.1 Technical-functional competence
The technical-functional competence career anchor, according to Swanepoel et al (2003), consists of individuals that benefit from being good at something and will work to become and expert. Feldman (2002) supports the latter view, explaining that the technical-functional anchor refers to an individual’s commitment to learning expertise within a profession.
2.5.1.2 Managerial competence
Managerial competence is the anchor that describes an individual’s desire to influence others and assume responsibility for the work of others (Feldman, 2002, p.167). Unlike technical/functional individuals, these individuals want to be managers. They like problem-solving and dealing with other people. They thrive on responsibility (Swanepoel et al, 2003, p.404). Gribble (2007) elucidates that this is a very strong career anchor and should appeal to an individual if they are willing to take risks and work continuously towards going up the ladder, obtaining additional perks and benefits at each step.

2.5.1.3 Autonomy-independence
Autonomy-independence describes an individual’s interest in working alone, without external supervision (Feldman, 2002, p.167). According to Swanepoel et al (2003), these individuals have a primary need to work under their own rules. Furthermore, this anchor refers to the need and desire to have control over one’s own work (Gribble, 2007, p.2).

2.5.1.4 Security-stability
Security focused people seek stability and continuity as a primary factor of their lives. They avoid risks and are generally lifers in their jobs (Swanepoel et al, 2003, p.405). Feldman (2002) explains that the security-stability career anchor refers to an individual’s need for a stable working environment that does not change frequently. This is a very common anchor and relates to job security, a steady and regular income and time-related career progression (Gribble, 2007).

2.5.1.5 Service-dedication
The service-dedication anchor relates to an individual’s predisposition to help others through choosing occupations such as nursing or social work (Feldman, 2002, p.167). These individuals are driven by how they can help others more than using their talents (Swanepoel et al, 2003, p.405).
2.5.1.6 Pure challenge
The pure challenge anchor refers to individuals that are driven by challenge and seek constant stimulation and difficult problems that they can tackle. These individuals will change jobs when the current one gets boring.

2.5.1.7 Lifestyle integration
According to Feldman (2002), individuals with lifestyle integration seek to balance their career with their family responsibilities and leisure activities.

2.5.1.8 Entrepreneurship
Finally, those who are anchored in entrepreneurship are creative and may want to start their own ventures or organisations (Feldman, 2002, p.167). Individuals with this career anchor are typically high in energy and enjoy change and a challenge (Gribble, 2007, p.2).

The next section will focus on the Work Adjustment theory (WAT) as well as the Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) framework. The ASA framework, originally proposed by Schneider, is a framework proposing that the outcome of three interrelated dynamic processes, attraction-selection-attrition, determines the kinds of people in an organisation (Sekiguchi, 2004, p.181). WAT is scrutinised as it focuses on the concept of fit between the individual and the environment and emphasizes the process through which individuals will attempt to maintain this fit with their environment (Bradely, Arthur & George 2002, in Sekiguchi, 2004, p.181).

2.6 THE WORK ADJUSTMENT THEORY (WAT)

Work adjustment is a continuous and dynamic process by which a worker seeks to achieve and maintain a correspondence with a work environment (Peterson & Gonzalez, 2000, p.128). As mentioned above the WAT focuses on the concept of fit between an individual and their work environment and what an individual will do to maintain this fit. “Dawis and Lofquist developed the WAT from a research project at the University of Minnesota” (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2006, p.114). This theory posits work adjustment as a fit between the individual and the work environment. At the heart of the WAT is the contention that person and environment attempt to achieve
and maintain correspondence with each other, which should lead to satisfaction (Gothard et al, 2001, p.13).

According to Patton and McMahon (1999), the WAT provides a model for conceptualising the interaction between individuals and work environments. In essence, an individual exist in a dynamic relationship with his/her work environment, in which he/she seeks to develop a satisfactory relationship by making continual adjustments (Patton & McMahon, 1999, p.22). However, Patton and McMahon (1999) explain that the WAT places greater emphasis on adjustment over time, and in doing so, it more clearly establishes itself as a person-environment fit theory.

“The WAT attempts to predict such work adjustment by examining the abilities and values of the individual, on the one hand, and the ability requirements and reinforcer patterns of the work environment, on the other hand” (Stead & Watson, 1999, p.23). Zunker (1998) explains that the individual must successfully meet the job requirements, and the work environment must fulfill the requirements of the individual. Work adjustment will result from the ability of individuals to change either their work habits or their work environments for correspondence or fit to be achieved (Stead & Watson, 1999, p.23).

According to this theory, an individual has requirements or needs of a work environment, and a work environment in turn has needs or requirements of an employee (Sharf, 1992, p.24). Sharf (1992) explains that a situation where the interaction is mutually satisfying, in which the needs of both the individual and the environment are met, is described as correspondence. “Whatever satisfies needs are called reinforcers because they can maintain or increase the rate of behaviour” (Sharf, 1992, p.24). Examples of reinforcers include achievement, advancement, co-workers, security and social status. Coetzee and Schreuder (2006) explain that individuals and environments behave in order to have their needs met. When correspondence occurs, both parties express satisfaction. However, in this theory, the term satisfaction is reserved for the individual’s experience of the environment, and the term satisfactoriness is reserved for the environment’s experience of the individual (Coetzee & Schreuder, 2006, p.114). For example, is the individual meeting the expectations of the environment? Thus, correspondence occurs when both the
individual and the environment are satisfied. According to Coetzee and Schreuder (2006), both satisfaction and satisfactoriness are necessary if the individual is to remain in the environment. Tenure is therefore the result of both factors and it is also the main indicator of work adjustment (Coetzee & Schreuder, 2006, p.114). WAT identifies, among other factors, four personality styles which describes an individual’s typical manner of interacting or responding to the environment (Feldman, 2002, p.42). These personality styles include celerity, pace, rhythm, and endurance (Sharf, 1992, p.100). Celerity, for example, refers to the speed with which the individual typically initiates interactions with the work environment. Celerity relates to the individual’s tolerance for a lack of correspondence (Feldman, 2002, p.42). Individuals who are high in celerity are greatly bothered by a lack of correspondence and normally engage in frequent job changes. The other three personality styles relate to the way in which the individual initiates change (Feldman, 2002, p.42). Pace refers to the level of effort exerted in interactions. Some individuals will exert more effort in obtaining correspondence than others (Sharf, 1992, p.100). Individuals also differ in rhythm of effort expended. Some individuals consistently strive for correspondence while others tend to go through cyclical periods of effort aimed at increasing correspondence (Sharf, 1992, p.100). Finally, endurance indicates the length of time the individual commits to the interaction. This means the length of time an individual will work at a task or respond to the environment (Sharf, 1992, p.100).

Patton and McMahon (1999) elucidate that the needs of the work environment and the needs of the employee are not static. Change in either may lead to dissatisfaction (Patton & McMahon, 1999, p.26). Work adjustment, therefore, is a dynamic and ongoing process between the individual and the environment, both of which are continually trying to satisfy and be satisfied (Sharf, 1992, p.100). In conclusion, the degree to which an individual can tolerate dis correspondence or ‘mismatch’ depends on his/her flexibility. During these times, the individual and the environment may make adjustments to improve satisfaction or satisfactoriness (Sharf, 1992).

The next section will discuss the Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) framework, originally proposed by Schneider, which determines the kinds of people in an organisation.
2.7 ATTRACTION-SELECTION-ATTRITION (ASA) FRAMEWORK

Schneider, Goldstein and Smith (1995) asserted that “the people make the place” and that organisational culture, climate and practices are determined by the employees in the organisation. This theory is part of the socialisation process, whereby new members in an organisation, according to the framework, fit in a specific organisation. In 1995 the ASA Framework was updated. Schneider et al (1995) added the dimension that the employees are responsible for the structure, processes and culture of the organisation.

A basic assumption underlying the ASA framework is that individuals carefully analyse their work environments and adjust their individual actions accordingly (Schneider et al, 2005). For example, individuals with antisocial tendencies are more likely to be attracted to, and selected into, the group environments that fit well with those tendencies (Robinson & O’Leary, 1998, p.2). In addition, most individuals will adapt/adjust some of their behaviors, cognitions, and attitudes to better fit with the social environment in which they work (Robinson & O’Leary, 1998, p.2). Those that adapt well are more likely to remain with the organisation, whereas those who do not sufficiently adapt are more likely to leave. Schneider proposed that three interrelated processes – attraction, selection, and attrition – determine what kind of individuals will enter and remain in an organisation (Devendorf, 2005, p.3).

2.7.1 Attraction

The attraction process refers to the idea that people prefer organisations that are perceived to have attributes that are congruent with their own personal characteristics. Therefore, organisations are seen as differentially attractive, depending on the characteristics of the person who is making the evaluation (Devendorf, 2005, p.3). According to Sekiguchi (2004, p.181), “the attraction process concerns the fact that people’s preferences for particular organisations are based upon an implicit estimate of the congruence of their own personal characteristics and the attributes of potential work organisations”.

2.7.2 Selection
The next process encompasses the selection process whereby an organisation recruits and hires individuals in such a way that they select people based on the attributes the organisation desires (Sekiguchi, 2004, p.181). Denvendorf (2005) supports the latter view by indicating that because organisational members are also attracted to similar others, formal and informal recruitment and selection efforts are likely to result in the selection of individuals who possess characteristics that are similar to those of the organisation’s recruiters and hiring managers.

2.7.3 Attrition
Sekiguchi (2004) explains that the attrition process occurs when individuals leave an organisation when they do not fit. In this instance, P-E fit is influenced when environmental change occurs (Sekiguchi, 2004, p.182). As members become better acquainted, those who are not similar to the rest of the organisation will begin to experience discomfort and eventually resign (Devendorf, 2005, p.3). When the individual does not change with the environment, in other words, adjust to the environment (WAT), he/she will leave the organisation/environment creating the ‘misfit’.

In summary to the above discussion, Dipboye and Colella (2005) explain that the ASA framework suggests that similar kinds of individuals will be attracted to an organisation, which will begin to determine the makeup of the organisation. Individuals are attracted to organisations whose members are similar to them in relation to personality, values, and other attributes (Borman, Ilgen & Klimoski, 2003, p.2). Organisations are said to further promote this homogeneity by recruiting and selecting individuals who are similar, only differing on specific competencies (Dipboye & Colella, 2005, p.41). The theory also suggests that people who do not fit with the organisation are likely to leave. In this sense, the people who remain will be similar (Dipboye & Colella, 2005, p.41). Dipboye and Colella (2005) further explain that as a result of these attraction, selection, and attrition processes, it is predicted that the resulting similarity will influence employees’ attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors.
Borman et al (2003) stipulates that the continuous process of attraction, selection, and attrition over time creates a force toward a fit between the people employed in the organisation. The process is a less-than-perfect one in the sense that it does not create a perfect fit between all employees, their work, and those with whom they work, but it does create a force toward fit (Borman et al, 2003, p.2).

The above sections focused on some theories, constructs and dimensions related to P-E fit. The next section will focus on Human Resource Management (HRM) as a career choice and in relation to P-E fit.

2.8. HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN THE WORKPLACE.

“Work is central to life and human existence. In general, adults have to engage in some form of work activity to make a living. Most do so within the context of some or other organisation in which they are employed. Such individuals can be classified as the personnel or human resources of an organisation. The human capital and the work they perform can make a major difference to the performance, competitiveness and general success of any organisation” (Swanepoel et al, 2003, p.3).

The real origins of personnel or HRM practice can be traced back to all those efforts by employers who over the years tried to devise ways to maintain and utilise their employees better (Swanepoel et al, 2003, p.7). Today HRM is recognised as a business orientated and integrated general management function with a qualitatively different role to fulfill than when it was viewed as a support function in organisations. Swanepoel et al (2003) explain that the HRM process can be viewed as the planning and organising for, the leading and control of the organisation’s human resource system.

It has been proven that the human resources architecture of organisations has a positive relationship with the performance and competitiveness of organisations (Becker, Huselid & Ulrich 2001). Becker et al (2001) describe human resources architecture as the sum of the HR function, the broader HR system, and the resulting employee behaviors. This is why it is so beneficial to study HRM. It is a dynamic and
challenging field of study which focuses on the human resources architecture of organisations.

HRM is the process through which an optimal fit is achieved among employee, job, organisation, and environment so that employees reach their desired level of satisfaction and performance and the organisations meet set goals (Hall & Goodale, 1986 in Nel, van Dyk, Haasbroek, Schultz, Sono & Werner, 2006). In its most basic form, when a person is employed by an organisation, an employment relationship of exchange comes into being (Nel et al, 2006, p.6). There is an exchange of energy, knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities to do certain work in return for some form of remuneration or reward. Swanepoel et al (2003) support Hall & Goodale’s (1986, in Nel et al, 2006) notion of fit, indicating that all these aspects relating to the interaction between the employees and the organisation have to be managed in such a way that there is a good or optimal fit between the parties involved in this employment relationship. According to Swanepoel et al (2003), the human factor is central to the operations and success of most organisations, therefore, it is essential for organisations to devise and implement processes, practices, systems, etc that can enhance the fit between the employee(s) (human resources) and the organisation.

The emerging trend in HRM is toward an approach through which organisations benefit in two significant ways: an increase in organisational effectiveness and the satisfaction of each employees’ needs (Grobler, Wärnich, Carrell, Elbert & Hatfield, 2006, p.5).

The demand for HR managers is on the increase. This is because of the serious shortage of skilled and trained workers in South Africa. Furthermore, the changed demographics of the South African workforce have added to the complexity of the HRM function. While South African organisations have become more diversified, discrimination is still a problem (Grobler et al, 2006). In fact, South African workers still experience employment discrimination. HR professionals are the key individuals within organisations who must develop and enforce policies and procedures that protect members of the diversified workforce against unlawful discrimination. According to Grobler et al (2006), HR professionals consider academic preparation a necessity for career success. Years ago, this was not the case. The reason for this
situation could be that HR staff members were often selected largely because of their personalities; those with people-oriented traits were preferred (Grobler et al., 2006, p.63). Liking people is important, but it does little to describe the skills and knowledge of the modern HR professional. The future HR professional will almost certainly be expected to hold a university degree or equivalent diploma.

HRM is an intervening process aimed at continuously establishing an optimal fit or match between people and their employing organisations. Swanepoel et al. (2003) explain that aiming to achieve this makes HRM a very dynamic, complex and demanding area of management. Each employee is a complex human being and each organisation is a complex social entity. All parties involved bring certain variables and dynamics to the employment relationship and to organisational life (Swanepoel et al., 2003, p. 13).

For the purpose of this study, as mentioned in chapter one, HR graduates were scrutinised due to the researcher’s subjective interest in P-E fit amongst HR graduates from the NMMU. Chapter one mentioned that brief unstructured interviews were conducted with some HR graduates from the NMMU. From the secondary data obtained through these interviews inferences were made that some HR graduates applied for jobs in the NMM that were not related to their studies (HRM) as all the available HR jobs in the NMM required experience for previous HR related jobs.

As mentioned in this section HRM is a dynamic, complex and emerging area of management. Therefore, those who have chosen to study HRM and have graduated within the field of HRM from the NMMU should be given the opportunity to apply their gained HRM knowledge in organisations within the NMM. These opportunities should be created through fast-track training programmes to develop necessary skills to complement their theoretical knowledge so that these HR graduates can become the future HR professionals.

2.9. CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on appropriate theories and factors related to P-E fit that are relevant to the present study. These theories included WAT (Work Adjustment
Theory) and the ASA (Attraction-selection-attrition) framework. WAT is a continuous and dynamic process by which a employee seeks to achieve and maintain a correspondence with a work environment (Peterson & Gonzalez, 2000, p.128). Furthermore, WAT focused on what an individual will do to maintain this fit. The ASA framework, originally proposed by Schneider et al (1995), is a framework proposing that the outcome of three interrelated dynamic processes, attraction-selection-attrition, determines the kinds of people in an organisation (Sekiguchi, 2004, p.181). This framework suggests that similar kinds of individuals will be attracted to an organisation, which will begin to determine the makeup of the organisation. Individuals are attracted to organisations whose members are similar to them in relation to personality, values, and other attributes (Borman, Ilgen & Klimoski, 2003, p.2).

Career choice theories, process theory and content theory, were also discussed as it explains how individuals choose their career (Swanepoel et al, 2003). The latter influences in what type of environment the individual will be likely to enter.

Lastly, the chapter focused on HRM as a career choice. HRM is an important aspect for all organisations, especially in South Africa due to the fact that there is a serious shortage of skilled and trained workers (NMMU, 2008). Therefore, it is essential to have skilled HR professionals with a relevant degree, or equivalent diploma, specializing in HRM to rectify the current situation in South Africa regarding the shortage of skilled and trained workers. In conclusion, it is important that organisations, in South Africa, invest in HR graduates by providing them with the necessary training needed to acquire the desired experience for the organisation. These organisations will be enriched with human capital as the HR graduates will posses the knowledge, skills and experience to provide the organisation with a competitive edge.

The next chapter will focus on empirical research done in the field of P-E fit and career choice theories. Furthermore, the chapter will also focus on recent research pertaining to graduate migration.
CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW: PART B

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in the previous chapter, P-E fit is broadly defined as the compatibility between an individual and a work environment that occurs when their characteristics are well matched (Kristof-Brown et al, 2005). Despite the simplicity of this definition, several distinct types of fit have garnered attention. Much emphasis has been placed on the match between peoples’ interests and those of others in a vocation (Kristof-Brown et al, 2005). However, other types of fit, such as an individual’s compatibility with his/her job, organisation and work group have also emerged as important research domains. These dimensions of P-E fit have been discussed in the previous chapter.

P-E fit research spans over decades, and fit conceptualisations as well as applications continue to receive increasing attention (Arthur, Bell, Villado & Doverspike, 2006). P-E fit has been a central theoretical framework in understanding why individuals are attracted to, are selected by, and stay with organisations. Research in P-E fit seems to be too underdeveloped to encompass the range of fit relations, processes and dimensions (Ramaswami, 2007).

The aim of this chapter is to identify what research has previously been done pertaining to P-E fit, career choice and graduate/student migration that is relevant to the present study’s research objectives. Lastly, based on the previous empirical research obtained, the formulation of the current research propositions will be discussed.

3.2 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH RELATING TO P-E FIT

The following sections will provide an outline for, and discuss some of the empirical research completed on P-E fit that is relevant to the present study.
3.2.1 Person-Environment fit: A status report on the current literature domain and directions for future research – Ramaswami (2007).

Ramaswami (2007) presented a conceptual framework that captured the existing P-E fit research scope and status report on P-E fit research that was based on articles published between 1960 and 2007 in top management and applied psychology journals. The focus of Ramaswami’s (2007) research was to provide a critical in-depth review on P-E fit obtained through past and current P-E fit research. The conceptual framework and status report were intended to stimulate research on neglected fit conceptualisations and research questions.

The intent of Ramaswami’s (2007) research was to complement existing work pertaining to P-E fit by providing a more comprehensive framework and a status report that captured the range of the current P-E fit literature. Ramaswami (2007) explained that this research paper did not focus on measurement issues, or even provide a detailed review of findings. Rather, through an in-depth critical review of the best work pertaining to P-E fit, Ramaswami’s (2007) research paper attempted to define the conceptual space within which alternative operationalisations of fit could be developed.

The general objectives of Ramaswami’s (2007) paper were to propose a Facet-Process-Sphere framework of existing and unexplored types of fit and classify, within the proposed framework, empirical articles on fit. Thereby, highlighting gaps that need to be addressed and offer recommendations to advance this line of research.

The Facet-Process-Sphere framework in Ramaswami’s (2007) research uncovered the possibilities by which an individual can conceptualise the fit between individual and different environmental spheres on different facets of fit. Individuals are simultaneously nested in multiple spheres, such as job, organisation, vocation, group and community, and it is important to understand the fit of an individual within and across these multiple systems. Process, as mentioned in the framework, refers to the theoretical way in which two entities are congruent with each other i.e. whether they share certain attributes or fulfil each other’s requirements. The latter is similar to supplementary- and complementary fit. As mentioned in the previous chapter,
supplementary fit refers to attribute similarity between an individual and an environmental sphere (Ramaswami, 2007). Complementary fit refers to the fit between an individual and environmental sphere based on satisfaction of meeting each other’s requirements (Ramaswami, 2007). Facets of fit refer to the attributes, such as personality, working/living conditions and demographic details, on which one can measure fit between an individual and an environmental sphere. According to Ramaswami (2007), P-E fit has certainly not been fully examined or appreciated in the past four decades. The framework utilised by Ramaswami (2007), attempts to go beyond current conceptualisations of P-E fit.

Ramaswami (2007) explained that by utilising the proposed Facet-Process-Sphere framework as a heuristic to measure the various types of fit will enable individuals to make better informed choices regarding their jobs, organisations, vocations and even the community they work or reside in (Ramaswami, 2007). Based on the facets in the Facet-Process-Sphere framework, a change in job, group, and organisational analyses incorporating all relevant facets may be necessary to enhance the validity and usefulness of recruitment-, selection- and training systems.

The latter empirical research paper is significant to the present study as it stipulates that P-E fit is a valuable facet in making informed career-, job- and organisation choices. The main objective of the present study was to determine the relevance of P-E fit amongst HR graduates from the NMMU within the NMM. A second objective of the study was to determine whether P-E fit is a determinant of migration amongst HR graduates from NMMU.

Therefore, by taking Ramaswami’s (2007) research into account, HR graduates that are informed on the subject matter regarding all facets of P-E fit, such as P-V fit and P-J fit, would understand the importance thereof and the consequences of a misfit. The latter could affect the selection process for HR graduates seeking employment in the NMM. It can either result in HR graduates migrating to other provinces/countries to find HRM related employment relating in the NMM to achieve P-E fit. Alternatively, HR graduates could possibly prefer to reside in the NMM, working in a non-HRM related job, until they find employment related to HRM in the
NMM. The aforementioned could be explained through P-E fit possibly not being perceived as important amongst HR graduates from the NMMU within the NMM.

3.2.2 Toward a dynamic perspective of Person-Environment fit – Sekiguchi (2004).

This theoretical research paper presented by Sekiguchi (2004) introduced some of the P-E fit models that were based on the dynamic perspective of P-E fit. Furthermore, Sekiguchi’s (2004) research suggested future research directions towards better understanding these dynamic processes.

Sekiguchi (2007) introduced several P-E fit models that reflected a dynamic interplay between the person and the environment. The following section is only a summary of these models. Firstly, Sekiguchi (2007) introduced two dynamic P-E fit models from career theory: WAT (Work Adjustment Theory) and the general model for achieving fit during early career. The latter models try to illustrate how individuals choose environments that create good fit and how resultant P-E fit or misfits affects individual affective and behavioural outcomes in their careers. Secondly, Sekiguchi (2007) introduced models on group and organisational behaviour: ASA framework and the model of the relationship among culture, fit and change. These models focus not only on individual behaviour but also on group or organisational behaviour.

Finally, two models were introduced by Sekiguchi (2004) that focused on a dynamic interplay between two or more different types of P-E fit: The role of socialisation in actual and perceived fit and the model of the changing effects of surface-and deep-level of fit. These models are important considering the complex and multidimensional nature of the P-E fit construct. Sekiguchi (2004) explains that although these models capture the dynamic nature of P-E fit processes, there still seems to be a room for further advancement of the dynamic P-E fit perspective.

The concept of P-E fit indicates that alignment between characteristics of people and their environments result in positive outcomes for both individuals and organisations (Sekiguchi, 2007). Individuals seek out vocations that have a career environment that matches their own interests. Thus, high P-E fit or congruence results in
satisfaction vocational stability, and achievement. In contrast, low P-E fit is likely to result in dissatisfaction and ultimately leaving that occupation (Sekiguchi, 2007). Sekiguchi’s (2004) research underscored that individuals choose environments that create good fit. Furthermore, it emphasised how P-E fit or misfits could influence individual affective and behavioural outcomes in their careers. Sekiguchi (2004) concluded his theoretical research by indicating that there are several directions for future research to develop a more comprehensive understanding of dynamic P-E fit. Firstly, considering both stable and unstable characteristics of the individual and environment at the same time would result in the development of more sophisticated models of P-E fit. Secondly, integrating the theories of leadership, organisational change, and P-E fit would result in a new perspective of dynamic P-E fit. Finally, empirical investigations of the dynamic P-E fit processes require sophisticated research methodology. For example, researchers should consider using qualitative as well as quantitative research methods if they want to develop a new model inductively from empirical observations.

Sekiguchi’s (2004) research is relevant to the present study as it underscores the importance of understanding P-E fit in a dynamic manner. Sekiguchi (2004) explains that individuals choose environments that create a good fit and that fit or misfit could influence an individual’s behaviour within their careers. The present study wishes to determine whether HR graduates from the NMMU will choose an environment that creates a ‘good fit’. For example, HR graduates will either choose employment related to their studies (HRM) or not, and perceive it as a ‘good fit’. Thus, determining the relevance of P-E fit amongst HR graduates from NMMU within the NMM.

### 3.2.3 Consequences of individuals’ fit at work: A meta-analysis of person-job, person-organisation, person-group, and person-supervisor fit – Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman and Johnson (2005).

Much emphasis has been placed on the match between peoples’ interests and those of others in a vocation (Kristof-Brown et al, 2005). However, other types of fit, such as an individual’s compatibility with his or her job, organisation, work group and supervisors have also emerged as important research domains. Kristof-Brown et al
(2005) explain that although research on these other types of fit has been prolific, rarely has it been synthesised to draw conclusions about the true impact of fit on individual-level outcomes such as attitudes, behaviours and tenure.

Kristof-Brown et al (2005) presented a meta-analysis research study investigating the relationship between P-J fit, P-O fit, P-G fit and P-S (person-supervisor) fit with pre-entry (applicant attraction, job acceptance, intent to hire, job offer) and post-entry individual-level criteria (attitudes, performance, withdrawal behaviours, strain and tenure). The researches collected data through published articles, conference presentations, dissertations and working papers. Each study that was utilised for data collection was coded on multiple dimensions such as types of fit (P-J fit, P-O fit, P-G fit and P-S fit), context (pre-entry versus post-entry), sample size and reliability of the measure.

The results of the study, based on emerging themes, indicated that the four types of fit were only moderately related to each other (Kristof-Brown et al, 2005). These results underscore the uniqueness of each type of fit and the ability of individuals to discern among aspects of their work environment when assessing fit (Kristof-Brown et al, 2005). In particular, Kristof-Brown et al (2005) explains that the relationships between P-S fit and the other types of fit were small, suggesting that employees do not view supervisors as isomorphic representations of the organisation. “It is clear from these results fit matters” (Kristof-Brown et al, 2005, p.316). As anticipated, attitudes about various aspects of the environment were most strongly related to the corresponding type of fit. Job satisfaction was most strongly influenced by P-J fit, organisational commitment was related to P-O fit, satisfaction with co-workers by P-G fit, and satisfaction with supervisor with P-S fit (Kristof-Brown et al, 2005).

These results provide additional support for the capability of individuals to compartmentalise their reactions to various aspects of their work environment. Kristof-Brown et al (2005) explain that in both pre-entry and post-entry contexts stronger relationships were reported for attitudinal criteria than for behaviours. The consequences of withdrawing from work, performing poorly, or leaving the organisation can be severe, making it likely that attitudes will be influenced by fit well before behaviours are changed (Kristof-Brown et al, 2005). This research paper
provided strong evidence for the importance of multiple types of fit for work-related attitudes and behaviours (Kristof-Brown et al, 2005).

The latter research paper is relevant to the present research as it addressed the relationship between fit and individual-level vocational pre-entry outcomes and post-entry consequences. The present study mainly focuses on HR graduate pre-entry context (the selection processes). By focusing on the latter, the present study could possibly identify to what degree P-E fit will play a role in determining job choice (related to HRM or not) based on the P-V fit and P-J fit dimensions of P-E fit. The aforementioned will be discussed in the next chapter.

3.2.4 Career success: The effects of human capital, person-environment fit and organisational support – Ballout (2007).

The conceptual research paper presented by Ballout (2007) reviewed relevant literatures on career success and develop a theoretical framework and testable propositions concerning how human capital, P-E fit and organisational support relate to career success. Whilst acknowledging the substantial literature that has accumulated on the various operationalisations involved in employees’ career success, there is little research on how P-E fit and career success are related (Ballout, 2007).

Career success and P-E fit have received significant attention in studies of the workplace (Ballout, 2007). This is due to the general recognition that these concepts have important implications for individual behaviours and work outcomes. According to Ballout (2007), in trying to improve selection processes, organisations look at attracting individuals that exhibit values similar to their own. Individuals, in turn, are attracted to, and seek career opportunities with organisations that believe they fit in and realise their career ambitions. Therefore, the goal of the research paper was to explore issues relating to the influence of P-E fit and organisational support on career success.

The results of Ballout’s (2007) study, based on summarising literature related to career success, P-E fit and organisational support, portrayed that the fit between
person and environment is a dominant force in employee selection and in explaining individuals’ job satisfaction, performance, and career success. P-E fit and career success should be related since both interact to affect employees’ career decisions, satisfaction and advancement in both the work group and organisation context. Furthermore, the results suggested that P-E fit and organisational support were important antecedents of career success.

Knowledge of career changes and these antecedents help individuals and organisations manage career success (Ballout, 2007). The practical implications of Ballout’s (2007) research were that both employers and employees may benefit from integrating different types of fit into the psychological contract because each fit will impact aspects of career success. Therefore, organisations need to select and develop employees that can easily adjust and fit into careers that are compatible with their work environments (Ballout, 2007, p. 741).

The research paper presented by Ballout (2007) was relevant to the present study as it emphasised that P-E fit is an important antecedent for career success. Thus, the perceived importance of P-E fit to HR graduates from the NMMU would possibly impact their career success in the field of HRM.

3.2.5 Person-job fit versus person-organisation fit as predictors of organisational attraction and job acceptance intentions: A longitudinal study – Carless (2005).

This longitudinal field study examined the relationship between perceived P-J fit and P-O fit, organisational attraction, intentions to accept a job offer, and actual job offer decision (Carless, 2005). Data were collected form 193 graduate applicants prior to the selection process, during the selection process, at the end of the selection process, and after job acceptance decision (Carless, 2005).

The findings of Carless’s (2005) research showed support for the hypothesis that perceptions of P-J fit and P-O fit influenced attraction at different stages of selection. Carless (2005) explains that the second hypothesis, proposing that the relationship between perceptions of P-J fit and P-O fit and intentions to accept a job offer are
mediated by organisational attraction, was partially supported. Inferences were made indicating that at the end of the selection process, there was a direct relationship between P-J fit perceptions and intentions. P-O fit perceptions were unrelated to intentions to accept a job offer. P-J fit and P-O fit perceptions (before and during the selection process) were unrelated to actual job acceptance decision.

These findings presented by Carless (2005) highlight the importance of ensuring that applicants have sufficient information about the job during the recruitment and selection process.

It is important for individuals to understand the dimensions of P-E fit as well as the importance and consequences thereof. An individual's perceptions of P-E fit will influence the selection process positively or negatively. In correlation to the present study, HR graduates’ perceptions of P-E fit could determine their career success in the field of HRM and whether they find it important to find, or search, for a job related to their studies.

The aforementioned research conducted by Carless (2005) is relevant to the present study as it utilised a sample of graduates and focused on the relationship between P-J fit and P-O fit as well as intentions to accept a job offer and the actual job offer decision.

### 3.3 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH RELATING TO CAREER CHOICE THEORIES

Career choice involves the individual’s career preferences, orientations and decisions and can be studied in terms of development over the life span and match between individual characteristics and aspects of work (Erasmus, Swanepoel and Schenk, 2008, p.399). Career choice is influenced by socio-economic conditions and factors such as family and education. As mentioned in a previous chapter, over the past fifty years many different theories of career choice have been formulated to explain how individuals choose careers (Swanepoel et al, 2003, p.399). Career choice theories are divided into content- and process theories. Content theories are aimed at explaining and predicting career choice in terms of specific factors such individual characteristics or psychological phenomena that are involved in choice
Process theories are conceptualisations of career choice as a dynamic process that evolves over stages of development. Process- and content theory were discussed in the previous chapter. In the following sections empirical research pertaining to career choice is outlined and discussed. These research articles incorporated some aspects of fit and are relevant to the present studies research objectives.

3.3.1 College major choice: An analysis of Person-Environment fit – Porter and Umbach (2006).

Porter and Umbach (2006) state that although recent research suggests that congruence between students and their academic environment is critical for successful student outcomes, little research has been done on student college major choice. The choice of a college major can be one of the most important decisions a student can make (Porter & Umbach, 2006, p.429). The impact of college major choice lasts far beyond student learning and satisfaction while in college. Some have found that an academic major has a significant impact on career opportunities and rewards.

The purpose of Porter and Umbach’s (2006) study was to integrate and test various theories to provide a comprehensive understanding of student major choice. Holland’s (1973) theory of careers was used to analyse college major choice in the latter study. Data was collected from three first-time, full-time and degree-seeking cohorts of new students entering a selective liberal arts college and who graduated within six years of entry. Data on the student’s attributes and major(s) at graduation were taken from institutional databases.

Several recent studies of students have applied Holland’s (1973) theory of careers to further the understanding of the importance of P-E fit in relation to academic major choice (Porter & Umbach, 2006). The basic premise for Holland’s (1973) theory is that human behaviour is a result of the interaction between individuals and their environments. Holland’s (1973) theory was discussed comprehensively in chapter two of the present study. Applying Holland’s (1973) theory, Smart, Feldman and Ethington (2000, p.3) suggestes that students “choose academic environments
compatible with their personality types” and in turn “academic environments reward different patterns of student abilities and interests.” Recent research suggests that congruence between person and environment is critical to the success of college students (Feldman et al, 2000).

The results of Porter and Umbach’s (2006) research indicated that personality, as represented by the Holland (1973) categories, was extremely predictive of student major choice. The researchers’ findings added to a growing body of evidence that students in particular majors have very similar political views and personalities. Assisting students in making informed decisions about the selection of a major should promote greater student satisfaction with, and success in their undergraduate experience (Porter & Umbach, 2006).

Porter and Umbach’s (2006) research is discussed as it emphasises the importance of college major choice. This is relevant to the current study for the reason that by making the wrong major choice, a major that does not align with individual interests, could have an impact on an individual’s career choice. Thus, ultimately affecting P-E fit.

3.3.2 The effects of framing vocational choices on young adults’ sets of career options – Feldman and Whitcomb (2005).

There is mounting evidence that young adults are switching career paths and fields of study more frequently, having difficulties committing to specific career goals, and taking longer to make even tentative commitments to initial career paths (Germeijs & DeBoeck, 2003).

The objectives of Feldman and Whitcomb’s (2005) research paper were to examine whether young adults use abilities or interests as the grounds for their vocational choices. Secondly, the research paper examined whether young adults approach the decision-making task by including all career options. Data were collected from 159 university undergraduates from a public university in the United States of America.
Switching of career paths and fields of study is natural among young adults as they discover their strengths, weaknesses, and the realistic demands of various careers (Moss & Frieze, 1993 in Feldman & Whitcomb, 2005). However, repeated and extended switching of career paths is becoming increasingly common among teenagers and young adults (Feldman, 2003 in Feldman & Whitcomb, 2005).

The research paper presented by Feldman and Whitcomb (2005) extends the understanding of cognitive processes that underlie career choice. More specifically, the paper examines how framing career choice decisions affects the degree of closure in career choice decisions (Feldman & Whitcomb, 2005). The results of the researchers’ study supported the hypothesis set. Individuals who use skills as the basis for choosing potential career paths will identify a smaller set of career alternatives than individuals who use interests as the basis for choosing potential career paths (Feldman & Whitcomb, 2005). Practical implications for Feldman and Whitcomb’s (2005) research were that the findings suggested that the prevalent practice of focusing students’ attention on finding activities they like may be less successful in helping students identify appropriate careers than focusing students’ attention on their skills and abilities (Feldman & Whitcomb, 2005, p.7).

Feldman and Whitcomb’s (2005) research is relevant to the present study as it emphasises the importance of interest and skills when making a career choice. An individual’s career choice will have a positive or negative impact on P-E fit depending on whether interests or skills are the major driving force. Therefore, making the right career choice is essential to students entering universities studying towards a specific discipline.

3.3.3 Evaluation of the effects of vocational choice and practical training on students’ employability – Kagaari (2007).

The purpose of this article was to demonstrate the need to pay special attention to students’ vocational choices, university based training and employability (Kagaari, 2007). This study was undertaken to seek information and explain the need for career guidance and career choice, curriculum development, practical and industrial training, retraining of staff for the employability of Kyambogo University electrical
engineering graduates (Kagaari, 2007). The sample for the latter study consisted of 46 final year students, 90 graduates and 50 supervisors.

Walakira (2000, in Kagaari, 2007) argued that for industry to be efficient, modern industry requires highly trained graduates for effective and efficient performance and production especially those who are committed and identify themselves with their jobs. Kagaari (2007) concurred with Walakira (2000) and further identified that graduates’ ability to find employment is greatly influenced by a lack of information on employment trends and career guidance at university. Furthermore, the selection method used to admit students into public universities do not consider the students’ interests, aspirations and expectations. The latter further influences the graduates ability to find employment (Kagaari, 2007).

Kagaari (2007) explains that the need for this study was based on vocational choice, practical training and graduates’ employment challenges was established from the empirical data obtained which focused on career guidance, employability, university curriculum and practical training. The study underscored the need for students to make their career choice based on interest and aspirations (Kagaari, 2007). The study revealed that students do not have adequate information on the programmes being offered at the university under scrutiny (Kagaari, 2007).

The study completed by Kagaari (2007) is relevant to the present study as it focused on vocational choice. Career choices are formulated based on interest and aspirations and are originated early in an individual’s life through reference groups, life experiences such as school, and family. Therefore, making the wrong career choice will negatively affect P-E fit as there would be a mismatch between an individual’s interests and their work environment. As mentioned before, it is essential for students entering university, studying towards a specific discipline, to make the right career choice. Therefore, they should utilise the resources available to them, such as career guidance counsellors, in order to make the right decision.
3.3.4 Influence of culture, family and individual differences on choice of gender-dominated occupations among female students in tertiary institutions – Salami (2007).

The purpose of the study completed by Salami (2007) was to investigate the influence of family, individual difference and cultural factors on the choice of gender-dominated occupations among female students in some tertiary institutions. Data were collected from 340 female students randomly selected from tertiary institutions in Southwest Nigeria.

In Nigeria, the women have been contributing their quota to the national development through their participation in the labour force. For instance, most women are employed in low paying, traditionally female careers and work such as nursing, teaching, social work, sales, care taking, and administrative support positions (Chovwen, 2003). However, women are under-represented in science, mathematics, education and technology careers in Nigeria (Salami, 2007).

The results of Salami’s (2007) study indicated that most of the female students who chose an engineering (male-dominated) occupation were from high socio-economic status homes while those from lower socio-economic status homes chose nursing (female-dominated) occupations. The reason for the latter result may be that the parents in a higher socio-economic status had more opportunity structures such as financial and material resources and wider information about occupations. Furthermore, the results indicated that family involvement predicts career choice. Therefore, students from parents with high-involvement scores chose male-dominated occupations such as engineering. This result concurs with findings from previous researchers who reported that family involvement and interactions significantly influenced career decision making of children (Salami, 2007).

Salami’s (2007) research further indicated that attitudes towards religion were significantly related to choice of occupations. An explanation for this result might be that attitude towards religion provides people with meaning and purpose in life as well as direction about what occupations should be chosen, performed or avoided (Salami, 2007).
In conclusion, Salami’s (2007) study showed that family factors (family involvement and socio-economic status), and cultural factors (attitude towards religion and work values) made significant contributions to the prediction of career choice of female students.

This study is relevant to the present study as it focuses on aspects in an individual’s environment that have an impact on career choice. These factors influencing career choice could influence P-E fit. The next section of this chapter focuses on recent empirical research relating to student/graduate migration.

3.4 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH RELATING TO GRADUATE MIGRATION

A research paper presented by Faggian, McCann and Sheppard (2006) analysed the employment–migration behaviour of university graduates from the United Kingdom (UK). In particular, their objective was to identify whether ethnicity played any role in determining the spatial patterns of sequential migration exhibited by UK university graduates.

Migration research, according to Faggian et al, 2006) which combines human capital migration models with models of spatial job-search, suggests that the likelihood of an individual moving between regions should be related to both the personal characteristics of the individual, as well as to the local economic and employment characteristics of both the origin and destination regions.

In terms of personal characteristics, the dominant determinant of migration behaviour is generally assumed to be the human capital characteristics (knowledge and skills) of the individual, with other characteristics such as marital status, ethnicity and previous migration all playing a role (Faggian et al, 2006). In terms of regional characteristics, the probability of individual migration depends on the local unemployment rates, the relative local wage levels, levels of income and employment growth rates, amenity variations and crime (Faggian et al, 2006).
Faggian et al (2006) explains that if these arguments are applied to the case of the sequential migration behaviour of university graduates from domicile to university and then from university to employment, it is possible to make some predictions as to the patterns of graduate migration behaviour. The results from Faggian et al (2006) are broadly consistent with the literature on human capital and regional labour markets. “Having high university grades and qualifications tends to reduce the likelihood of being either a non-migrant or an individual truncates the migration process and returns home to work” (Faggian et al, 2006, p.469). In other words, higher human capital encourages migration. Furthermore, Faggian et al’s (2006) results indicated that being sponsored through university also increases migration for employment purposes. Lastly, the focus on university graduates suggested that non-white ethnicities are much less mobile than whites in the early stages of a student-graduate’s career.

The study conducted by Faggian et al (2006) is relevant to the current study as it emphasises that individuals with high qualifications are more likely to migrate and seek employment in a different region. Furthermore, the study by Faggian et al (2006) underscored that the likelihood of graduate migration should be related to local economic and employment conditions. The latter is relevant to the current study as the possible lack of employment opportunities related to HRM in the NMM could, or could not, cause HR graduates from the NMMU to migrate to other regions due to perceived importance of P-E fit.

Maringe and Carter (2007) conducted a study to determine student motivation to study abroad. The researchers specifically focused on African students whereby Southern African countries were strongly represented. One of the research objectives was to determine the push and pull factors that drive African students to study abroad (Maringe & Carter, 2007). In focus groups the students were asked to reflect on the reasons they decided to leave their home countries. Using the push-pull framework, it appeared that the most significant push factors were economic, political and lack of local capacity within countries of origin. The majority who spoke of economic factors made reference to prevailing levels of economic stagnation or decline in their home countries (Maringe & Carter, 2007). However, others spoke of local labour market tendencies which seemed to favour those with UK qualifications.
at the expense of those with local qualifications. With political instability in many parts of Africa, students alluded to various political influences shaping their decision to study abroad (Maringe & Carter, 2007).

Maringe and Carter’s (2007) research is relevant to the current study as it indicates that local labour markets in Africa (Southern Africa) do not fully utilise the potential of students with a local qualification. Therefore, students will migrate to another country, or for current research purposes - to another province, where their potential can be recognised thus, resulting in regional ‘brain drain’.

In support of Maringe and Carter’s (2007) research, a study done by Carrington (2000) focusing on the extensiveness of ‘brain drain’, illustrated that the biggest migratory flows from Africa to the United States are from Egypt, Ghana and South Africa, with more than 60 percent of immigrants from those three countries having a tertiary education. Migration of Africans with only a primary education is almost zero. (Carrington, 2000). Carrington (2000) explains that the migration of individuals with a tertiary education might be due to wage differentials, differences in the quality of life and educational opportunities for children as well as job security.

3.5 THE PRESENT STUDY: RESEARCH OBJECTIVE FORMULATION

All of the aforementioned empirical research articles pertaining to P-E fit and career choice are relevant to the current study’s research objectives and are of extreme importance in the field of P-E fit and career choice. However, none of them specifically focus on the relevance of P-E fit amongst university graduates. The articles focus on theoretical and dynamic perspectives of P-E fit and emphasise that the achievement of P-E fit is a possible predictor of career success.

Furthermore, these articles provide a clear indication that P-E fit should be viewed as a valuable facet to any individual, specifically those entering the job market. Although, these research articles added value to the present research study it is important to research whether P-E fit is perceived as important amongst university
graduates seeing that P-E fit is an important aspect of career success. Therefore, the following research proposition was formulated:

**P1: P-E fit is relevant amongst HR graduates from NMMU within the NMM.**

The empirical research articles concerning graduate migration basically imply that graduate migration is related to local employment and economic conditions and high qualifications, but they do not indicate whether P-E plays a role in the migration process. Therefore, the second research proposition was formulated:

**P2: P-E fit is a determinant of HR graduate migration from NMMU.**

The following section will provide a conclusion for the present chapter.

### 3.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on empirical research pertaining to P-E fit, career choice and graduate migration. The research articles were outlined and discussed in terms of their relevance to the present study’s objectives. Furthermore, the need for the present study was identified.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, HR graduates were under scrutiny due to the researcher’s subjective interest in P-E fit amongst HR graduates from the NMMU within the NMM. From the empirical research pertaining to P-E fit and career choice it became evident that there is a need to determine the relevance of P-E fit amongst HR graduates from NMMU.

The empirical research relating to graduate/student migration identified the need to determine whether P-E fit is an explanation for HR graduates to migrate to other provinces or abroad in pursuit of a career in HRM.

As mentioned earlier, the present study only the dimensions of P-E fit pertaining to the selection processes (pre-entry processes) of employment and career choice, such as P-J fit and P-V fit will be utilised. The latter dimensions emphasise the type
of occupation an HR graduate will choose whether it will be related to HRM or not. The remaining dimensions’ (P-O fit, P-G fit and P-S fit), although important, occur after the initial selection process and during the individual's employment tenure. Furthermore, the attraction process pertaining to the ASA framework and career choice theories will be utilised as they also incorporate the selection process. The next chapter focuses on the research methodology utilised. The research design, population and sample size, measuring instrument as well the data analysis techniques utilised in the present study will be discussed.
CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

“Research is formalised curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose.” (Hurston, 1960).

The purpose of this chapter is to list the methodological considerations for this study. The aims of this study were, firstly, to determine the relevance of P-E fit amongst HR graduates from the NMMU within the NMM. Secondly, to determine whether P-E fit is a determinant of graduate migration for HR graduates. The preceding chapters presented the rationale of the study, defined the research objectives, outlined the findings of relevant literature related to P-E fit and presented the theoretical underpinning variables for this study. This chapter introduces and discusses the research methods utilised in the study. Furthermore, the chapter discusses and focuses on the following: the population and sample size obtained for this study, the data collection techniques and formulation thereof, the measuring techniques utilised and lastly, the techniques used in analysing the data collected.

4.2 RESEARCH METHODS

4.2.1 Exploratory research
Exploratory research is undertaken to reveal the issues related to the problem definition (Jankowicz 2005, p.199). An outstanding characteristic of exploratory research is that it is ideally undertaken when few or no earlier studies have been conducted on a research problem that may serve to verify findings (Collis & Hussey 2003, p.10). Gaining insights and a better understanding of the research problem, which ensures a more rigorous investigation, is a further feature of exploratory research. This type of research looks for patterns, ideas or hypotheses, rather than testing or confirming the hypotheses. In chapter three a possible need was identified to research the relevance of P-E fit amongst HR graduates from the NMMU within
the NMM. Therefore, by taking the purpose of the study and the objectives of the research into account, this research can at best be defined as exploratory.

4.2.2 Qualitative research methods

The most appropriate research method for this study was qualitative research. This form of research provides insights into, and an understanding of the problem confronting the researchers (Malhotra, 2007). A quantitative research component was added to purely support the qualitative research component. The latter also proved to add valuable insights into the subject matter. Both these research methods will be discussed in this chapter. Qualitative research is useful for discovering which sensory feelings are important to respondents (Malhotra, 2007). Qualitative research is exploratory in nature and is utilised when the research topic under scrutiny is relatively new (Creswell, 2003). Qualitative research methods often rely on secondary research such as reviewing available literature and data (Kolter, Adam, Brown & Armstrong, 2006). Secondary research is explained later in this chapter. Qualitative research is explained as a research design in which the major emphasis is on gaining ideas and insights (Koontz, 1998).

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), qualitative methods refer to a broad class of empirical procedures designed to describe and interpret the experiences of research participants in a context-specific setting. Furthermore, qualitative research is based on small samples and may utilise popular qualitative techniques such as dept interviews (Malhotra, 2007). Lancaster (2005, p.76) argues that the qualitative research approach is mainly used when the researcher needs to gather and analyse detailed data that cannot be mathematically or statistically interpreted and analysed, such as ideas, attitudes or feelings. The qualitative researcher collects data using a research instrument, or gathers information by means of a behavioural checklist. Qualitative research is, therefore, fundamentally interpretive. This implies that the researcher interprets the data and then draws conclusions about its meaning (Creswell, 2003, p.17)

Qualitative research is used to explore and understand people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behaviour and interactions (Bandolier, 2007). A major strength of the qualitative approach is the depth to which explorations are conducted and
descriptions are written, usually resulting in sufficient details for the reader to grasp the idiosyncrasies of the situation (Myers, 2002).

4.2.3 Quantitative research methods
Although the results of qualitative research can provide some indication as to the "why", "how" and "when" something occurs, it cannot reliably tell us "how often" or "how many" (Kolter et al, 2006). Therefore, the present study also utilised quantitative research methods in the data collection process in the form of a five point Likert scale to support the qualitative research component. Although some items in the Likert scale correlated with questions in the qualitative research questions, the Likert scale was not primarily created to address the research propositions set. The construction of the Likert scale will be discussed later in this chapter.

“Quantitative research uses numbers and statistical methods. It is based on numerical measurements of specific aspects of phenomena” (Thomas, 2003, p.12). The quantitative approach to research is deemed to be objective in nature, as it focuses on seeking the facts or causes of social phenomena (Lancaster 2005, p.67). Furthermore, quantitative research employs strategies of inquiry, such as experiments and surveys, and collects data, using research instruments that yield statistical data. A quantitative approach therefore involves collecting and analysing data that can be mathematically and, or, statistically interpreted and analysed (Collis & Hussey 2003 p.13).Quantitative research is defined by Thyer (2001) as a systematic investigation that includes descriptive and inferential statistical analysis.

4.2.4 Combining qualitative and quantitative research methods
The use of quantitative research methods, in the present study, was to add value to the general approach of the study which was qualitative in nature. “It is a sound principle of marketing research to view qualitative and quantitative research as complementary, rather than in competition with each other” (Malhotra, 2007, p.143). Therefore, qualitative and quantitative research in combination can provide rich insights into the subject matter under scrutiny. Although the present research was qualitative in nature, both research designs were utilised to provide an enhanced
understanding into the applicability of P-E fit amongst HR graduates from the NMMU within the NMM.

4.3 POPULATION AND SAMPLE SIZE

4.3.1 Population size
For the purpose of this study, the population size will comprise of HR graduates from the NMMU. Slabbert (personal communication, 10 August 2008) indicated that the population of HR graduates for 2005 until 2008 was N=226. The researcher mainly utilised qualitative research therefore, the sample was relatively small (Malhotra, 2007).

4.3.2 Sample Size
As mentioned in the above section, for a qualitative research designs the sample size is typically small. (Malhotra, 2007). Thus, a sample of 50 HR graduates (n=50) from NMMU were utilised. This sample size is suitable for the purpose of the present study as conducting an in-depth interview is a lengthy process. The following sections discuss the demographic details obtained from the sample of HR graduates, herein after referred to as respondents.

4.3.2.1 Graduation year
Figure 4 illustrates the different graduation years obtained from the respondents.

![Figure 4: Graduation years (n=50)](image)
As mentioned before the respondents utilised in this study graduated between 2005 and 2008 from NMMU. From figure 4 it was evident that the majority of HR graduates under scrutiny graduated in 2005. The rest of the HR graduates graduated between 2006 and 2008.

4.3.2.2 Hometown

Figure 5 represents the respondents’ place of origin (hometown). The majority of respondents originated from the NMM. Eighteen percent of the respondents originated from East London and a small minority originated from Hermanus, Patensie and George.

![Figure 5: Hometown (n=50)](image)

4.3.2.3 Gender

From the respondents, 54% were female and 46% were male (Figure 6). Although the majority of respondents were female, a high percentage of respondents were male. This implies that there was no bias towards a specific gender.
The majority of respondents (62%) are currently employed in occupations related to their studies (HRM) (Figure 7). Thirty-eight percent of the respondents indicated that their current occupations are not related to HRM. These results are explained in a later chapter.

Figure 8 illustrates the difference between the male and female respondents’ employment statuses, whether it was related to HRM and not. The majority of respondents that were employed in occupations related to HRM, were female (52%).
Only 21% of the male respondents are currently employed in HRM related positions. Therefore, the majority (79%) of the male respondents are not employed in occupations related to HRM.

4.3.2.5 Current city

Figure 9 represents the respondents’ current cities. The majority (70%) of respondents resided in the NMM. Eight percent of the respondents resided in Cape Town and 10% resided in Johannesburg (JHB). A small percentage (12%) of the respondents resided abroad.
4.3.3 Sampling technique

The current study utilised snowball sampling to identify suitable informants. Snowball sampling is an approach for locating information-rich key informants (Patton, 1999). Snowball sampling relies on referrals from initial subjects to generate additional subjects (Statpac, 2008). The 'snowball' effect occurs as referrals multiply at each step (Heckathorn, 2002). Furthermore, snowball sampling is designed to identify people with particular knowledge, skills or characteristics that are needed as part of a committee and, or, consultative process (Department of sustainability and environment [DSE], 2008).

Snowball sampling uses recommendations to find people with the specific range of skills that has been determined as being useful (DSE, 2008). Advantages of snowball sampling are determining stakeholders, increasing the number of participants in the process, building on resources of existing networks and, lastly, determining unknown stakeholders (DSE, 2008). A disadvantage of snowball sampling is that the choice of initial contacts is very important. Making the wrong choice could possibly impact the quality of the sample (DSE, 2008). Furthermore, the way that the sample is chosen by the target group makes it liable to various forms of bias. People tend to associate not only with people with the same study selection characteristic but also with other characteristics (Heckathorn, 2002).

Patton (1999) concurs that snowball sampling is designed to identify people with particular knowledge, skills or characteristics. While this technique can dramatically lower search costs, it comes at the expense of introducing bias because the technique itself reduces the likelihood that the sample will represent a good cross section from the population (Statpac, 2008).

4.4 DATA COLLECTION

4.4.1 Secondary data

Secondary data was firstly obtained to develop an approach to the research problem. Secondary data are data collected for some purpose other than the problem at hand (Malhotra, 2007). Secondary data are also used to gain initial insight into the research problem (Steppingstones, 2004). Secondary data are,
according to Malhotra (2007), information made available by business and government sources. Furthermore, secondary data are an economical and quick source of background information (Forestry, 2004).

### 4.4.2 Depth Interviews

Depth interviews were utilised in the qualitative component of the study. Malhotra (2007) explains that depth interviews can uncover a great depth of insight from respondents and can result in a free exchange of information. Depth interviews were used in this study as they are of an unstructured nature that uncovers underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes and feelings on a topic (Malhotra, 2007). Depth interviewing is a direct way of obtaining information and is conducted on a one-on-one basis. Face-to-face interviews have the highest response rates and permit the longest questionnaires. Furthermore, interviewers can also observe the surroundings and can use nonverbal communication and visual aids (Neuman, 2006).

### 4.4.3 Telephonic Interviews

A minority of the respondents resided in regions outside of the NMM. Therefore, telephonic interviews were utilised to contact those respondents. However, sufficient information was obtained for the data analysis procedures. Trochim (2006) explains that telephone interviews enable a researcher to gather information rapidly. Like personal interviews, they allow for some personal contact between the interviewer and the respondent (Trochim, 2006). Furthermore, telephonic interviews allow the interviewer to ask follow-up questions. Telephonic interviews also have some major disadvantages. Many people do not have publicly-listed telephone numbers. The latter was not seen as a disadvantage for this study as snowball sampling was utilised. The contact numbers of referrals were provided. A further disadvantage of utilising telephonic interviews was the cost of contacting those abroad, therefore the respondents that resided abroad were sent an electronic copy of the questionnaire. This proved to be a very useful form of data collection as the respondent elaborated extensively on the questions asked. For the 12% of the respondents that resided abroad, the questionnaire was administered electronically due to high telephone costs. However, sufficient information was obtained for the purpose of this study.
As mentioned previously, although the focus of this study was qualitative in nature, quantitative research techniques were utilised to add valuable insights concerning the applicability of P-E fit amongst HR graduates from NMMU within the NMM.

4.4.4 Likert Scale
Various statements/items from the Likert scale correlated with the depth interview questions to support the qualitative research component. The Likert scale has several advantages. It is easy to construct and administer. Respondents readily understand how to use the scale, making it suitable for mail, telephone, or personal interviews (Malhotra, 2007). As mentioned previously, due to some respondents residing in other regions and abroad, the Likert scale was sent electronically. For the remaining respondents that resided in the NMM the Likert scale was administered at the beginning of the depth interviews. This also proved to set the respondents at ease and establish rapport.

4.4.5 The Pilot Study
A pilot study is a small experiment designed to test logistics and gather information prior to a larger study, in order to improve the studies quality and efficiency (Altman & Burton, 2006). A pilot study can reveal deficiencies in the design of a proposed experiment or procedure and these can then be addressed before time and resources are expended on large scale studies (Altman & Burton, 2006). “Reliability can be improved by using a pre-test or pilot version of a measure first” (Neuman, 2006, p.191).

The pilot study sample consisted of (n=10) respondents. The respondents from the pilot study indicated that the measuring instrument was clear and to the point. Therefore, no changes were made for the larger study. The next section will provide an explanation on how the measuring instruments were constructed.
4.5 MEASURING INSTRUMENT

The objectives of the measuring instrument were to determine whether P-E fit is applicable amongst HR graduates from NMMU within the NMM as well as to determine if P-E fit is a determinant of migration away from the NMM.

The measuring instrument included a short covering letter explaining the objectives of the study. Furthermore, the measuring instrument incorporated both qualitative and quantitative research components divided into two sections. The latter components included a five point Likert scale and an open-ended questionnaire conducted in the form of a depth interview. A short demographic section was also included (See Appendix 1). The main purpose of the demographic section was to identify the HR graduates' hometown, current city, current occupation and graduation year. The demographic results were illustrated earlier in this chapter.

4.5.1 Qualitative question construction

The questions assembled for the purpose of the depth interviews were constructed from secondary data obtained as well as from empirical research (See table 1). Secondary data was obtained by conducting short unstructured interviews with the researcher's reference group due to subjective interest in P-E fit.

As mentioned previously the study focused on the dimensions of P-E fit related to the selection process. Therefore, during the construction of the questionnaire only theories that were related to before and during the job selection process were utilised.

Table 1 illustrates the components utilised from the literature study for the construction of the depth interview questions. The following literature components were utilised: Career choice theories, P-E fit literature, the ASA framework (attraction process), graduate migration and information obtained through secondary data.
Table 1: Construction of dept interview questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research element</th>
<th>Components utilised from the literature study</th>
<th>Questions constructed from the literature component</th>
<th>Information possibly required from the depth interview questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Secondary data** | Information obtained through secondary data and P-E fit Literature. | • How long did it take you to find a job in general?  
• How long did it take you to get a HRM related job?  
• Do you feel that the NMM has enough job opportunities in HRM for HR graduates from NMMU? | Results could provide insight into the research objective concerning the relevance of P-E fit amongst NMMU HR graduates from the NMM. |
| **Empirical research** | ASA Framework (attraction process) | • Does the stature of an organisation play a role in your decision to apply for jobs? (Big Branded companies – Goodyear) | These results could possibly determine the importance of P-E fit amongst NMMU HR graduates. |
| | Graduate migration | • Would you leave the NMM in pursuit of a career in HR in another geographical location?  
• In which geographical area will you search for a HRM job and why? | Results could possibly provide insight into the secondary research proposition concerning P-E fit as a determinant of migration for HR graduates from the NMMU. The results could also provide an understanding of the perceived importance of P-E fit for HR graduates from NMMU. |
| | P-E fit literature | • Do you feel that it is important for you to find/have found a job related to your studies? | |
| | Career choice theories | • In terms of studying HR, do you still feel that you have made the right career choice?  
• Why did you study HRM? | Was HR the right career choice? Inferences of the importance of P-E fit for HR graduates could be made. |

4.5.2 Quantitative question construction

The Likert scale was also constructed through incorporating components from the literature study (See table 2). As mentioned before, the Likert scale was utilised to incorporate other factors of the literature study that could possibly shed more light on the understanding respondents have on career choice and the importance of P-E fit. Various statements/items from the Likert scale correlated with the depth interview
questions. The following factors were measured in the Likert scale: P-E fit, career choice, graduate migration, the ASA framework and the respondent's current occupation.

The P-E fit factor intended to measure and, or, determine whether the respondents perceived P-E fit as important. The factor pertaining to career choice aspired to determine whether the respondents perceived that the match between career choice and personal attribute, such as personality and interests, were important. The graduate migration factor aimed to measure and, or, provide insight into whether the respondents would migrate to pursue P-E fit. Lastly, the factor relating to the ASA framework aimed at determining how the attraction process within ASA framework influenced the respondents’ decisions to apply for a vacancy. Table 2 illustrates the Likert scale items that were formulated for each measurable factor.

The Likert scale is a widely used rating scale that requires the respondents to indicate a degree of agreement or disagreement with each of a series of statements about the stimulus objects (Malhotra, 2007). Typically, each scale item has five response categories, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” As mentioned previously a demographics sections was also included to determine the respondent’s graduation year, hometown, current city and -occupation.

Table 2: Likert scale construction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likert Scale factors:</th>
<th>Items constructed:</th>
<th>Factor description:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| P-E fit               | • Finding a “match” between yourself and your job will result in positive outcomes such as job satisfaction, commitment etc.  
                         • You believe it is highly important to find a job related to your studies.  
                         • Achieving and maintaining “fit” is important to you.  
                         • If you found a job that matched your interests, personality and studies you will try to maintain this “fit” if the work environment changes (retrenchment of staff, new management/staff, relocation | This factor could possibly provide insight into the perceived importance of P-E fit amongst the HR graduates from the NMMU. |
### ASA framework
- It is important that the other people in your organisation have similar characteristics as yourself.
- It is important that the organisation share similar values as you do.
- The stature of an organisation plays a role in your decision to apply for a job.
- This factor aims at measuring what “fit” respondents look for when they are job hunting (where the focus is). The factor could possibly determine how the attraction process within ASA framework influences the HR graduates decisions to apply for a vacancy.

### Career Choice
- You studied HRM because it matched your personality and interests.
- In your opinion “Career choice is an expression of personality”
- You feel that you have made the right career choice
- This factor aims to determine whether HR graduates from NMMU perceive that the match between career choice and personal attribute, such as personality and interests, are important.

### Graduate Migration
- You will leave the NMM in pursuit of a career in HRM.
- Individuals with high qualifications are more likely to seek employment in different regions.
- Graduate migration is related to local employment conditions.
- Most HR graduates experienced difficulty in finding work related to HRM in the NMM.
- The factor aims to measure and, or, provide insight into whether HR graduates from NMMU would migrate to pursue P-E fit.

### Current Occupation
- Your current occupation is related to your studies.
- This factor aims at providing information on whether the HR graduates’ current occupation is congruent with their choice of university degree.

## 4.6 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

In any research study it is essential to determine the reliability and validity of a chosen measuring instrument. Leedy and Ormrod (2001, p.100) points out that in order to have validity, there must also be reliability. Salkind (2000, p.106) argues that the reliability and validity of a measuring instrument are essential, since the absence
of these qualities could explain why researchers act incorrectly in accepting or rejecting their research hypotheses. He further reasons that reliability and validity are the researcher’s first line of defence against spurious and incorrect conclusions – if these instruments fail, then everything else down the line fails as well.

4.6.1 Reliability
A measuring instrument is reliable when a test measures the same thing more than once under comparable conditions, and results in the same outcome each time (Salkind, 2000, p.160). Leedy (1997, p. 35) and Riley, Wood, Clarke, Wilke and Szivas (2000, p. 126) describe reliability in terms of whether the measuring instrument (in this case the questionnaire) consistently measures what it is intended to measure. Reliability is defined as the extent to which a questionnaire, test, observation or any measurement procedure produces the same results on repeated trials. In short, it is the stability or consistency of scores over time (Miller, 2000). Struwig and Stead (2001, p.130) argue that “reliability is the extent to which the test scores are accurate, consistent or stable.”

Both Huysamen (1975, p. 406) and Singleton, Straits and Straits (1993, p. 121) agree that the reliability of the instrument may be improved through conducting exploratory studies in the area of interest or by conducting pre-tests on a sample of persons similar in characteristics to the target group. In the case of this research study, an attempt to measure reliability was done through utilising a pilot study (see section 4.4.5). Furthermore, the reliability was assessed by comparing the ratings obtained from the items in the Likert scale with answers obtained from similar questions posed in the in-depth interview questions.

4.6.2 Validity
In general, the validity of a measuring instrument is the extent to which the instrument measures what it is supposed to measure. Validity takes different forms, each of which is important in different situations (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001, p.98):

- **Face validity** is the extent to which, on the surface, an instrument *looks like* it is measuring a particular characteristic. Face validity is often useful for ensuring the co-operation of people who are participating in a research study.
• **Content validity** is the extent to which a measuring instrument is a representative sample of the content area (domain) being measured. A measuring instrument has high content validity if its items or questions reflect the various parts of the content domain in appropriate proportions. Furthermore, content validity refers to the accuracy with which an instrument measures the factors or situations under study. Simply stated, content validity is concerned with how accurately the questions asked tend to elicit the information sought.

• **Criterion validity** is the extent to which the results of an assessment instrument correlate with another, presumably related measure (the latter measure is called the *criterion*).

• **Construct validity** is the extent to which an instrument measures a characteristic that cannot be directly observed but must instead be inferred from patterns in people’s behaviour (such a characteristic is called a *construct*).

• **Internal validity** refers to the extent to which researchers form conclusions on the data obtained without influencing the data in terms of their personal bias.

• **External validity** refers to the extent to which the conclusions made from the research can be generalised to the broader population, different subjects, settings, times and so forth and not merely the sample studied.

Kemp (1997, p. 197) explains that the three types of validity that particularly need to be considered in the use of a questionnaire are content validity, construct validity and face validity. He further suggests that the evaluation of the validity of a questionnaire can be ensured by proper advanced planning of the questionnaire. He maintains that the evaluation of the validity of a questionnaire can be achieved by “a logical examination of the items to determine if they adequately represent the subject being investigated, if they relate to the construct being tested and if they appear, at face value, to be suitable” (Kemp, 1997, p. 197).
Great care was taken in the development of the questionnaire to evaluate the content, construct and face validity of the questionnaire by subjecting the questionnaire to a panel of experts and key community figures. This panel of judges considered the questions from the in-depth interviews and items from the Likert scale as clear, self-explanatory and related to the objectives of the study.

4.7 DATA ANALYSIS

4.7.1 Content Analysis

Since the general approach for this study was qualitative research, it incorporated content analysis. Content analysis is an appropriate method when the phenomenon to be observed is communication, rather than behaviour or physical objects. “It is defined as the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of a communication. It includes observation as well as analysis” (Malhotra, 2007, p. 205). It is used to determine the presence of certain words, concepts, themes, phrases, characters, or sentences within texts to quantify in an objective manner (Palmquist, 2000). According to Krippendorf (2004), content analysis is potentially one of the most important research techniques in social science.

Furthermore, content analysis is a technique for gathering and analysing the content of text (Neuman, 2006). The content refers to words, meanings, symbols, themes, or any message that can be communicated. The text is anything written, visual, or spoken that serves as a medium for communication. The unit of analysis may be words, characters, themes, space and time measures or topics. Content analysis can involve tedious coding and analysis. While content analysis has not been widely used, the technique offers great potential. For example, it could be profitably employed in the analysis of open-ended questions (Malhotra, 2007).

Content analysis is nonreactive because the process of placing words, messages, or symbols in a text to communicate to a reader occurs without influence from the researchers who analysed its content (Neuman, 2006). Content analysis can document vague feelings based on unsystematic observations as true (Neuman, 2006). Content analysis describes what is in the text. It can not reveal the intentions
of those who created the text or the effects that messages in the text have on those who receive them (Neuman, 2006).

The researcher analysed the scripts that were retrieved from the depth interviews. From these scripts the researcher extracted main- and sub themes. The themes that were extracted from the scripts will be related back to the scrutinised components from the literature study. The latter will be discussed in chapter five.

4.7.2 Statistical Analysis
The Likert scale was analysed by making use of descriptive statistics. The quantitative component (Likert scale) was not the focal research method for the present study but served as additional information in support of the qualitative analysis.

Descriptive statistics are a general type of simple statistics used by researchers to describe basic patterns in the data (Neuman, 2006, p.347). Descriptive statistics are a method of statistical analysis of numeric data, discrete or continuous, that provides information about centering, spread, and normality. Results of the analysis can be in tabular or graphic format (Isixsigma, 2002).

O'Leary (2004) explains that descriptive statistics are used to describe and summarise the basic features of the data in a study, and are used to present quantitative descriptions in a manageable and intelligible form. The main functions of descriptive statistics are to provide means of central tendency, dispersion, and distribution shape. Such measures vary by data type, and are standard calculations in statistical programs. Descriptive statistics are concerned with describing numbers and the relationships between them (Dewberry, 2004). Very often the intention is to capture the essence of the numbers, to summarise them in such a way and to render them as easily possible to understand and digest (Dewberry, 2004).

The quantitative data obtained through the Likert scale were prepared through coding, and were transcribed into a Microsoft Excel 2007 spreadsheet. The data was also analysed by utilising Microsoft Excel 2007.
4.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on the research methods utilised in this study. The research method for this study incorporated qualitative and quantitative research techniques. Although the study was mainly qualitative in nature, quantitative research techniques were incorporated to support the qualitative research as well as to provide a better understanding of the subject matter.

Secondary data was first obtained through conducting unstructured interviews with the researcher’s reference group to obtain an approach to the research objectives. The study utilised depth- and telephonic interviews as well as a Likert scale for data collection. Both the interview questionnaire and Likert scale were constructed from components obtained from the literature study. A pilot study was conducted to increase the reliability of the measuring instrument and to improve the quality and understanding of the questionnaire. Snowball sampling was utilised as the sampling technique. This study incorporated qualitative and quantitative techniques therefore inferences will be made by utilising content- and statistical analysis. The following chapter will discuss the results and findings obtained from the content analysis.
CHAPTER 5

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in the previous chapter, this study focused on both qualitative and quantitative research methods. This chapter will illustrate and discuss the results obtained from the qualitative part of the study. As mentioned in a previous chapter, content analysis was utilised to analyse the qualitative data.

Content analysis is an appropriate method when the phenomenon to be observed is communication, rather than behaviour or physical objects. “It is defined as the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of a communication. It includes observation as well as analysis” (Malhotra, 2007, p.205).

Through utilising content analysis certain main themes and sub-themes became evident. These themes and sub-themes are discussed in terms of the literature components utilised for the questionnaire construction. The results from content analysis are illustrated in table 3. Pie charts were utilised to present some of the qualitative findings. Finally, this chapter will present a brief summary identifying the main findings from the qualitative research component.

5.2 RESULTS

The following table (Table 3) illustrates the summary of qualitative results obtained through content analysis.
Table 3: Summary results for content analysis (n=50)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Propositions from Literature</th>
<th>Components from Literature</th>
<th>Questions (Appendix 1, Part B)</th>
<th>Main themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **P1: P-E fit is relevant amongst HR graduates from NMMU within NMM** | P-E fit Literature | Question 1 | • 2 – 3 Months  
• 6 Months | • Difficulty to find work in Port Elizabeth  
• Found work through “connections”  
• Easier to find work overseas |
|  |  | Question 2 | • Work not related to HR  
• Took long to find work related to HR | • HR jobs require experience  
• Organisations do not employ graduates |
|  |  | Question 3 | • Majority started by looking for HR related work | • Few positions in the NMM  
• All occupations  
• Affirmative Action |
|  |  | Question 12 | • 70% agreed  
• 24% disagreed  
• 6% indifferent | • Time and money to study  
• Apply knowledge  
• Interest, passion changes |
|  |  | Question 13 | • Few job opportunities are for HR graduates (strong response) | • Companies do not employ graduates  
• Experience required |
| **Career Choice** |  | Question 10 | • Matched interests  
• Want to work with people | • Career testing  
• Enjoy working with people |
|  |  | Question 11 | • 56% agreed  
• 38% disagreed  
• 6% undecided | • Work towards an HR job  
• Affirmative action  
• Unemployment caused uncertainty |
| **ASA Framework (attraction process)** |  | Question 8 + 9 | • 50% agreed  
• 34% disagreed  
• 14% indifferent | • Compensation  
• Opportunities  
• Economy  
• HR experience important  
• Personal choice  
• Decision is situational |
| **P2: P-E fit is a determinant of migration for HR graduates from NMMU** | Graduate Migration | Question 4 + 5 | • 58% would leave Port Elizabeth  
• 38% would stay  
• 4% indifferent | • No work opportunities in Port Elizabeth  
• Job related to HR  
• Family  
• Situational |
|  |  | Question 6 | • Cape Town | • JHB  
• Overseas |
|  |  | Question 7 | • Better job opportunities  
• Compensation  
• Living conditions (coast) |
5.3 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The next section will discuss the results obtained through content analysis. The questionnaire was constructed through utilising the following components from the literature: P-E fit, career choice, graduate migration and the ASA framework. The questions from each component will be discussed individually.

5.3.1 P-E fit Literature

As mentioned in chapter one, the concept of P-E fit is defined as the degree of congruence or match between a person and environment (Sekiguchi, 2004). P-E fit is broadly defined as the compatibility between an individual and a work environment that occurs when their characteristics are well matched (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). According to Schreuder and Coetzee (2006), P-E fit is defined as a match between an individual’s skills and abilities and the demands of the job. All of the dimensions, definitions and constructs of P-E fit conclude that congruence between an individual and environmental object will lead to positive outcomes, such as job satisfaction, commitment and tenure, and a mismatch will lead to negative outcomes. Questions 1, 2, 3, 12 and 13 were related to P-E fit (See Table 3).

5.3.1.1 Question 1

This question focused on how long it took respondents to find employment in general, whether it was related to HRM or not. Findings indicated that respondents took at least two to six months to find employment after graduating. This is possibly due to the current economic conditions or a possible lack of HR vacancies within the NMM. Sub-themes that emerged were that respondents found it difficult to find employment in the NMM and, that the majority of the respondents that found work, within the first two months indicated that it was due to connections in the industry. Furthermore, a small amount of respondents indicated that it was much easier to find work abroad and in other regions. The latter could be due to improved employment conditions (in the field of HRM) in other regions such as Johannesburg or abroad versus employment conditions in the Eastern Cape, specifically the NMM.
5.3.1.2 Question 2
This question asked the respondents how long it took them to find employment related to HRM. The main themes that emerged were that respondents presented difficulty in finding employment related to HRM in the NMM. The respondents also indicated that most of the employment opportunities related to HRM in the NMM required experience in the field of HRM and that most organisations in the NMM do not employ graduates. The latter correlated with findings from secondary data indicating that HR graduates applied for vacancies in the NMM that were not related to their studies as all the available HR vacancies in the NMM required experience from previous HR related employment.

Further findings indicated that due to the lack of employment opportunities in HRM in the NMM, respondents were forced to search for HRM employment across different regions.

5.3.1.3 Question 3
This question focused on whether respondents started their job search by searching for employment related to HRM. The main findings for this question indicated that respondents started searching for HRM related employment straight after graduating.

Sub-themes indicated that due to a lack of HRM positions in the NMM, respondents included any available employment opportunities in their job search just to find employment in the NMM. Affirmative action emerged as a reason for respondents, mostly male, expanding their job search to include all available occupations.

5.3.1.4 Question 12
This question focused on the respondent’s perceived importance of finding employment related to their studies (HRM). The percentages in the pie charts below were calculated by counting the number of respondents that agreed and, or, disagreed that finding employment related to HRM was important.
From figure 10 it was evident that the majority of the respondents (70%) perceived that finding employment related to HRM was important. The respondents indicated that the latter was due to the amount of time and money spent on obtaining their degree as well as their interest for HRM. Findings strongly indicated that respondents perceived P-E fit to be important and that achieving P-E fit would lead to positive outcomes such as organisational commitment.

The respondents that disagreed (24%) indicated that their interests changed as well as their passion for HRM; therefore, job satisfaction was more important than finding employment related to HRM. The latter finding is in congruence with Schein’s career stage of early adulthood. In early adulthood an individual may initially struggle a bit and eventually establish him/herself in a particular field (Hall, 2002). Establishment involves a period of trial (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2006, p.124). Trial includes a sequence of job changes before a final choice is made. (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2006, p.124).

5.3.1.5 Question 13
This question asked respondents whether they believed that the NMM has enough employment opportunities for HR graduates. This question presented a strong response and was similar to the response from question two. Respondents indicated that the NMM does not have enough HRM job opportunities for HR graduates from
NMMU. The respondents implied that organisations do not employ HR graduates as they do not possess enough work experience in the field of HRM. Respondents perceived the latter to be unfair and discouraging as they are graduates and need to be presented with opportunities to gain HRM experience in organisations. These findings supported findings from question 2, indicating that respondents were forced to search for employment opportunities across different regions. This could result in the NMM losing valuable human capital.

This questions finding further corresponded with secondary data obtained from Minnie (personal communication, 2006) indicating that prospective candidates, applying for available HR vacancies in the NMM, would apply for any available employment just to gain experience as organisations do not always employ graduates without experience. The latter was mostly applicable to graduates entering the workforce (Minnie, personal communication, 26 July 2008).

5.3.2 Career Choice
Questions 10 and 11 were related to the career choice component (See Table 3). Career choice, according to Swanepoel et al (2003), can be defined in the context of an individual's preferences, orientation, and aspirations, as well as in the context of economic conditions and sociological factors such as family and education. Holland (1973) explained that career choice is an expression of personality. According to Swanepoel et al (2003), Holland (1973) stated that there is an interaction between personality and the environment, so that individuals are drawn towards environments that correlate with their personal orientation. Sharf (1992) explained that people express themselves, their interests and values, through their work choices and experience.

5.3.2.1 Question 10
This question asked respondents why they studied HRM. The results from content analysis indicated that the respondents chose to study HRM because it was of interest to them and they wanted to work with people. A sub-theme that emerged was that respondents utilised career testing to determine in what direction they should study. This result possibly identifies the importance respondents placed on
choosing the right field of study, such as HRM. People express themselves, their interests and values, through their work choices and experience (Sharf, 1992).

5.3.2.2 Question 11

In question 11 respondents were asked whether they believed they made the right career choice. The results are presented in the following pie chart.

![Figure 11: Question 11 results (n=50)](image)

From figure 11 it was evident that the majority (56%) of the respondents indicated that they believed they have made the right career choice. Furthermore, 38% of the respondents felt that, after graduating and entering the job market, they have made the wrong career choice as they found it difficult to find employment related to HRM in the NMM. Career maturity could possibly be a reason for the latter result. Career maturity can generally be defined as the extent to which the individual has mastered the vocational development tasks, including both knowledge and attitudinal components, appropriate to his or her stage of career development (Walsh & Osipow, 1995, p.196). Career maturity was discussed comprehensively in chapter two. Therefore, it was possible that, the respondents were not ready to make a decision regarding their choice of university degree.

Affirmative action presented itself as a reason for respondents, mostly male respondents, not finding work related to HRM in the NMM. The latter results correlated with results from question 3, indicating that affirmative action was a reason for some male respondents to expand their job search to include all available
employment options. Results from question 11 further indicated that due to unemployment in the NMM some respondents (6%) displayed uncertainty whether they have, or have not, made the right career choice. The following section will discuss the component’s results pertaining to the ASA framework.

5.3.3 ASA Framework
As mentioned in chapter four, the questions pertaining to the ASA framework only focused on the attraction process of the ASA framework as the present study mainly focused on the HR graduates’ employment selection processes. In other words, what attracted the HR graduates to apply for a vacancy and, or, what ‘fit’ were they searching for when applying for an available vacancy. The attraction process refers to the idea that people prefer organisations that are perceived to have attributes that are congruent with their own personal characteristics (Devendorf, 2005, p.3). According to Sekiguchi (2004), “the attraction process concerns the fact that people’s preferences for particular organisations are based upon an implicit estimate of the congruence of their own personal characteristics and the attributes of potential work organisations”. Questions 8 and 9 were related to the component pertaining to the ASA framework (See Table 3).

5.3.3.1 Question 8 and 9
The findings from these questions illustrated whether organisational stature played a role in the respondents job applications (See Table 3). Figure 12 presented these results.
From figure 12 it was evident that 51% of the respondents agreed that the stature of an organisation plays a role in their decision to apply for a vacancy even though the vacancy is not related to HRM. This is due to the compensation, growth and development opportunities available in an organisation with high stature. The respondents indicated that they could work their way into an HRM related job as most high stature organisations firstly make use of internal selection for available vacancies.

Figure 12 further illustrated that 35% of the respondents indicated that they would rather work in a small organisation with a HRM related job than in a high stature organisation with a non-related HRM job. The latter is due to the fact that HRM experience is more important than working in an organisation with stature. The next section discusses the results related to the graduate migration component of the qualitative research questionnaire.

5.3.4 Graduate Migration
A secondary objective of this study was to determine whether P-E fit was a determinant of graduate migration. As discussed in chapter three, Faggian et al (2006) conducted a study indicating that individuals with high qualifications are more likely to migrate and seek employment in a different region due to economic and employment conditions of both origin and destination regions. Furthermore, the study by Faggian et al (2006) underscored that the likelihood of graduate migration should
be related to local economic and employment conditions. This was supported by findings presented by Maringe and Carter (2007), indicating that the most significant factors pushing graduates to migrate were economic, political and lack of local capacity within countries of origin. The majority who spoke of economic factors made reference to prevailing levels of economic stagnation or decline in their home countries (Maringe & Carter, 2007). Questions 4, 5, 6 and 7 related to the graduate migration component and are discussed in the following sections (See table 3).

5.3.4.1 Question 4 and 5
These questions focused on the possibility of HR graduates migrating to other regions in pursuit of careers in HRM. Figure 13 illustrated the percentages of respondents that would relocate in pursuit of an HRM career, those that would not relocate, and those that are uncertain if they would relocate or not.

![Figure 13: Question 4 and 5 results (n=50)](image)

It is evident from figure 13 that the majority of respondents (58%) would relocate to other regions in pursuit of a career in HRM. These respondents either have relocated or are open to the idea of relocating due to the lack of HRM work opportunities in the NMM and to further their careers in HRM. The latter finding was supported by the findings presented by Faggain et al (2006) and Maringe and Carter (2007), indicating that graduates migrate to other regions or abroad due to local economic and
employment conditions as well as a lack of local capacity within countries and, or, regions of origin.

The other 38% of the respondents implied that they would not relocate to other regions due to their families being situated in the NMM. From these results it is clear that the majority of respondents perceived P-E fit as important as they would relocate to other regions to pursue their careers in HRM due to the lack of HRM related employment opportunities in the NMM.

5.3.4.2 Question 6 and 7

These questions focused on which geographical area respondents would have searched for employment. Findings indicated that most of the respondents would have searched for HRM related employment opportunities in Cape Town. Firstly, the latter finding was due to Cape Town being situated along the coast and secondly, Cape Town presented more work opportunities and better compensation. Sub-themes that emerged were that respondents would also search for HRM employment opportunities in Johannesburg and abroad. The next section presents a discussion and summary of the results obtained through content analysis.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the qualitative results obtained through content analysis. These results were presented in table 3. The qualitative research questionnaire was constructed through utilising various components from the literature study namely, P-E fit, career choice, graduate migration and the ASA framework.

The findings from the question pertaining to P-E fit indicated that respondents perceived P-E fit to be important and that achieving P-E fit would lead to positive outcomes such as organisational commitment. The latter finding concurred with findings from Sekiguchi’s (2004) research emphasising that individuals choose environments that create good fit. Therefore, P-E fit is perceived as important to individuals. Furthermore findings emphasised how P-E fit or misfits could influence individual affective and behavioural outcomes in their careers. This finding was further inferred from the fact that the majority of respondents started their job search
by searching for employment related to HRM and indicated that finding employment related to their studies was important. Furthermore, respondents felt strongly about being presented with an opportunity to gain the necessary HRM experience in organisations within the NMM.

The findings obtained through content analysis also indicated that the NMM does not have enough HRM job opportunities for HR graduates from NMMU. Respondents emphasised that most organisations in the NMM do not employ graduates due to their lack of experience in the field of HRM. The latter forced respondents to broaden their employment search to include all possible employment opportunities in the NMM, related to HRM or not. Respondents also broadened their search to include other regions and opportunities abroad.

Findings from the career choice questions suggested that respondents chose HRM as a career path due to the fact that it was congruent with their interests and that they wanted to work with people. The majority of the respondents still feel that they have made the right career choice. A moderate minority of respondents believed they have made the wrong career choice. However, the latter minority believed it was important to find employment that is congruent with individual interests and personality. These findings concur with research done by Porter and Umbach (2006), indicating that the choice of a college major can be one of the most important decisions a student can make as it has an influence on a student’s future career.

The majority of respondents illustrated that stature of an organisation influences their decision to apply for available vacancies. The latter implied that they would apply for a non-related HRM vacancy in a high stature organisation versus a HRM related vacancy in a small unknown organisation. However, applying for a non-related HRM vacancy in a high stature organisation would not affect the respondents’ perceived importance of P-E fit. This finding could be a result of the lack of HRM employment opportunities in the NMM.

In conclusion, the findings related to graduate migration indicated that respondents would relocate to other regions or abroad to pursue a career in HRM. This is due to the lack of HRM employment opportunities in the NMM. As mentioned previously, the latter finding concurred with findings presented by Faggain et al (2006) and
Maringe and Carter (2007), explaining that graduates would migrate to other regions and, or, abroad due to local economic and employment conditions as well as a lack of local capacity within countries and, or, regions of origin. The next chapter will discuss and present the findings obtained for the quantitative part of the study by means of descriptive statistics.
CHAPTER 6

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in the research methodology chapter (Chapter four), the Likert scale was analysed by making use of descriptive statistics. The raw data was coded, transcribed and analysed in Microsoft Excel 2007. The use of the Likert scale was purely to support the qualitative part of the study. The factors that were measured are career choice, current occupation, graduate migration, P-E fit and the ASA framework which were presented in chapter four (See table 2). Various statements from the Likert scale correlated with the depth interview questions (qualitative research component).

This chapter will present and discuss the results obtained through the Likert Scale. Each factor’s items will be discussed individually. Each item’s results will be illustrated through histograms. A brief summary of the each factor’s scores will be discussed. Furthermore, each items’ scores are presented in Appendix 2. Finally, this chapter will present a brief summary identifying the main findings obtained from the quantitative research component.

6.2 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section will focus on the results obtained from the Likert scale. As mentioned before, the results of each factor will be discussed on an item-to-item basis. The following section will discuss the factor that focused on career choice.
6.2.1 Career Choice

As mentioned in previous chapters Holland (1973) stated that career choice is an expression of personality (Swanepoel et al, 2003). Sharf (1992) explained that people express themselves, their interests and values, through their work choices and experience. This factor aspired to determine whether HR graduates from NMMU perceived that the match between career choice and personal attribute, such as personality and interests, were important. All the items relating to the career choice factor will be presented individually. As seen in Appendix 2 the items relating to career choice are items 2, 3 and 4.

6.2.1.1 Expression of personality (Item 2)

This item asked the respondents whether they believed that career choice was an expression of personality. Figure 14 exemplified that the majority (60%) of respondents perceived career choice as an expression of personality. It was evident that the respondents distinguished personality to be congruent with career choice.

![Figure 14: Expression of personality (n=50)](image-url)
6.2.1.2 Career choice assessment (Item 3)

This item stated whether the respondents believed they had made the right career choice. From figure 15 it was apparent that there was a great amount of variance in this finding. Thirty-six percent of the respondents agreed that they had made the right career choice and 34% disagreed. However, 18% strongly agreed with the statement signifying that the majority of respondents were in agreement that they had made the right career choice.

This item’s finding correlated and supported the qualitative findings signifying that the majority of respondents indicated that they believed they have made the right career choice.

Figure 15: Career choice assessment (n=50)

6.2.1.3 Personal attributes (Item 4)

This item focused on the congruence between HRM as a university degree choice and the respondents’ personality and interests. Figure 16 clearly indicates that the majority (66%) of respondents agreed that they studied HRM as it was congruent with their personality and interests. Eight percent of the respondents disagreed with
this item. The findings from this item were supported by a previous finding (Item 2) illustrating that the majority (60%) of respondents perceived career choice to be an expression of personality. Therefore, the majority of respondents perceived the match between choice of university degree or career choice and an individual’s personality and interests as important.

Figure 16: Personal attributes (n=50)

6.2.1.4 Career choice scores
This section will present a tabularised summary of the career choice factor’s scores obtained through descriptive statistics by utilising Microsoft Excel 2007. As mentioned previously in chapter four, this factor focused on the sample of HR graduates’ career choice and whether the HR graduates perceived the congruence between career choice and personal attributes, such as personality and interests, to be important (See chapter 4, table 2).

Table 4: Career choice scores (n=50)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor: Career Choice</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Dev.</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Mode %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.593333</td>
<td>1.043334</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>54.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 indicates that 54% of the respondents were in agreement with this factor. The mean score for this factor was 3.59 with a moderately high standard deviation of 1.04. This would indicate that although the mean indicates an agreement score the standard deviation shows some amount of variance in the findings. Therefore the mean score is not an entirely true indication of the samples orientation towards this factor. However, from the aforementioned results pertaining to this factor, the respondents perceived the latter match between career choice and personal attributes to be important. Furthermore, respondents believe that they have made the right career choice and that their choice of university degree is congruent with their personalities and interests.

6.2.2 Current occupation
This factor aimed at providing information on whether the sample of HR graduates' current occupation is congruent with their choice of university degree. As seen in Appendix 2 the item relating to current occupation was item 1.

6.2.2.1 Current occupation (item 1)
Figure 17 presents the results from this item. Twenty-eight percent of the respondents strongly agreed and 18% agreed that their current occupations are related to HRM. Therefore, the majority of respondents were in agreement with the item. However, a high percentage of respondents indicated that their current occupations were not related to HRM (14% strongly disagreed and 22% disagreed with the item). This findings percentages more or less correlate with the demographic results indicating that the majority of HR graduates have jobs related to HRM (See figure 7). The demographic results also identified that the majority of respondents employed in occupations related to HRM are female. A small percentage of male respondents are currently employed in HRM related positions (See figure 8). The latter finding could be due to affirmative action measure implemented in organisations.
6.2.2.2 Current occupation scores

This factor focused on determining whether the sample of HR graduates’ current occupations was related to HRM.

Table 5: Current occupation (n=50)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor: Current occupation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Dev.</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Mode %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.436549</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in table 5, 28% of the respondents strongly agreed that their field of study corresponded with their current occupations. The mean score for this factor was 3.24 with a relatively high standard deviation of 1.43, this would indicate that although the mean indicates an indifferent score the standard deviation shows some variance in the findings (Table 5). For example, 28% of the respondents strongly agreed and 18% agreed with this item. This implies that 46% were in agreement with this item and their current occupations were related to HRM. Fourteen percent of the respondents strongly disagreed and 22% disagreed with this item. Therefore, 36% were in disagreement with this item and their current occupations were not related to HRM. Eighteen percent of the respondents indicated indifferent scores, which implies
that they either do not understand the item or they are unsure whether their current occupations entail aspects of HRM. Therefore the variance relates to the small difference between the percentage of respondents that are in agreement and those that are in disagreement with this item. However, the demographic details in chapter 4 imply that the majority (62%) of the respondent’s current occupation related to HRM (See figure 7). In summary to the above discussion and findings regarding current occupation a higher percentage of the respondent are employed in positions related to HRM.

6.2.3 Graduate Migration
Items 5, 6, 7 and 8 are related to the graduate migration factor (See Appendix 2). The factor aspired to measure and, or, provide insight into whether HR graduates from the NMMU would migrate to pursue P-E fit. The results of each item will be represented individually.

6.2.3.1 Relocation (item 5)
This item asked the respondents whether they would relocate to another geographical location/area to pursue their careers in HRM.

![Figure 18: Relocation (n=50)]
Figure 18 clearly indicates that the majority (38%) of respondents strongly agreed with the item, implying that they would relocate to pursue their careers in HRM. It is evident from figure 18 that less than 10% of the respondents would not relocate to pursue their careers in HRM. These finding correspond with the qualitative findings related to graduate migration. Findings from the qualitative component also indicated that the majority of respondents would relocate to pursue their careers in HRM. The latter was due to the lack of HRM employment opportunities in the NMM and that organisations do not employ graduates due to their lack in the field of HRM. The respondents that would not relocate to other regions indicated that it was because of their families.

6.2.3.2 High qualifications (item 6)
This item asked the respondents whether they believed individuals with high qualifications are more likely to seek employment in other regions in general. It was apparent from figure 19 that the majority (72%) of respondents were in agreement that individuals with high qualifications are more likely to seek employment in other regions. Figure 19 illustrates that less than 5% of the respondents strongly disagreed that highly qualified individuals are more likely to migrate. This result could be due to respondents/graduates who possess a tertiary education want to pursue a career in their field of study and are more likely to migrate in order to do this when there is a lack of local employment opportunities.
6.2.3.3 Local employment conditions (item 7)

This item focused on whether graduate migration was due to local employment conditions. From figure 20 it was evident that this item yielded a strong response. Thirty-eight percent of the respondents agreed and 60% strongly agreed with this item. Therefore, the majority of respondents believed that graduate migration was due to local employment conditions. Less than 10% disagreed with this item.
This result corresponded with the qualitative findings indicating that HR graduates would relocate due to the lack of HRM related employment opportunities in the NMM (Question 4 and 5). As mentioned in a previous chapter, the latter finding concurred with findings presented by Faggain et al (2006) and Maringe and Carter (2007), explaining that graduates would migrate to other regions and, or, abroad due to local economic and employment conditions as well as a lack of local capacity within countries and, or, regions of origin.

6.2.3.4 HRM employment (item 8)

This item focused on the respondents experiencing difficulty in finding employment related to HRM in the NMM. Figure 21 illustrated that 54% of the respondents strongly agreed and 32% agreed with this item. Less than 3% were in disagreement with this item. Therefore, the majority of respondents experienced difficulty in finding HRM related employment in the NMM. The latter concurred with the qualitative research findings. The findings from the qualitative research implied that due to the lack of HRM employment opportunities and, or, difficulty in finding employment related to HRM in the NMM, the HR graduates would relocate to pursue their careers in other regions or abroad.

![Figure 21: HRM employment (n=50)](image-url)
6.2.3.5 Graduate migration scores

As mentioned before, this factor aspired to measure and, or, provide insight into whether HR graduates from the NMMU would migrate to pursue P-E fit.

Table 6: Graduate migration scores (n=50)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor: Graduate migration</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Dev.</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Mode %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>0.97589</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Forty-six percent of the sample perceived that HR graduates would migrate to pursue P-E fit. In other words, HR graduates would migrate or relocate to find congruence between their studies and occupations. Finding work related to HRM (their studies) is perceived as important. The latter was also determined in an item relating to the career choice factor. The mean score for this factor was 4.18 with a standard deviation of 0.98. Thus, the mean indicates an agreement score. The standard deviation does not show a great amount of variance in the findings. Therefore, the mean score is seen as a relatively true indication of the samples’ orientation towards this factor.

6.2.4 P-E fit

As mentioned before in previous chapters, P-E fit is broadly defined as the compatibility between an individual and a work environment that occurs when their characteristics are well matched (Kristof-Brown et al, 2005). The following sections will discuss the results obtained from the items related to P-E fit. Each item will be presented individually. Items 9, 10, 11 and 12 are related to the P-E fit factor (See Appendix 2).

6.2.4.1 The importance of fit (item 9)

This item referred to the respondents’ perceived importance of finding employment related to HRM. Figure 22 illustrated that the majority (48%) of respondents were in agreement that finding employment related to HRM was important.
These results correlated with the results obtained from the qualitative research component indicating that respondents believed that it was important to find work related to their studies due to the amount of time and money spent on obtaining their degree as well as their interest in HRM. The minority of respondents did not agree with this item (2% strongly disagreed and 10% disagreed). The latter also correlated with results obtained from the qualitative research component. Qualitative findings signified that those respondents who disagreed indicated that their interests changed as well as their passion for HRM therefore, job satisfaction was more important than finding employment related to HRM.

6.2.4.2 Consequences of fit (item 10)
This item focused on whether respondents perceived that congruence between a work environment and personality as well as interests would lead to positive outcomes such as job satisfaction, organisational commitment, motivation and tenure. Seventy-two percent of the respondents strongly agreed and 28% of the respondents were in agreement with this statement (Figure 23).
Inferences were made that respondents perceived congruence between their work environment, personality and interests to lead to positive outcomes. The latter findings are clearly presented in figure 23. This result corresponds with qualitative results (question 12) indicating that achieving P-E fit would lead to positive outcomes such as organisational commitment.

6.2.4.3 Achieving and maintaining fit (item 11)

This item referred to the respondents’ perceived importance of achieving and maintaining P-E fit. The majority (62%) of respondents were in agreement that achieving and maintain P-E fit is deemed as important. None of the respondents were in disagreement with this item. Figure 24 presents these findings.
Figure 24: Achieving and maintaining fit (n=50)

6.2.4.4 Changing work environment (item 12)

This item focused on achieving desired P-E fit and the likeness of maintaining this fit when the work environment changes. From figure 25 it was evident that 62% of HR graduates were in agreement with this statement. A very low percentage was in disagreement with this statement. Therefore, the majority of respondents employed in HRM related vacancies would remain in their jobs when organisational change occurs. In other words, they would adjust to maintaining P-E fit.
6.2.4.5 P-E fit scores

This factor focused on determining the perceived importance of P-E fit amongst the HR graduates from the NMMU.

Table 7: P-E fit summary scores (n=50)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor: P-E fit</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Dev.</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Mode %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.295</td>
<td>0.800738</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean score for this factor was 4.29 with a standard deviation of 0.8, this would indicate that the mean score indicates an agreement score. The standard deviation does not show a great amount of variance in the findings. The mean score is seen as a relatively true indication of the samples’ orientation towards this factor. This is an indication that the majority of respondents perceive P-E fit as important. The majority of respondents perceived that finding employment related to HRM was important and that congruence between their work environment, personality and interests will lead to positive outcomes such as organisational commitment. Furthermore, the respondents were in agreement that achieving and maintain P-E fit was deemed as important and would remain in their jobs when organisational change occurs.
6.2.5 ASA Framework

A basic assumption underlying the ASA framework is that individuals carefully analyse their work environments and adjust their individual actions accordingly (Schneider et al, 2005). This factor aimed at possibly determining whether the attraction process within ASA framework influenced the respondents’ decisions to apply for a vacancy. Items 13, 14 and 15 are related to the ASA framework factor.

6.2.5.1 Organisational values (item 13)
This item focused on whether respondents perceived the congruence between their values and those of the organisation as important. From figure 26 it was evident that 52% of the respondents were in agreement that personal value and organisational value congruence was important. Thirty-four percent strongly agreed and none of the respondents were in disagreement with this item.

![Figure 26: Organisational values (n=50)](image)

6.2.5.2 Organisational stature (item 14)
This item focused on whether the stature of an organisation influenced the respondents’ decisions to apply for a vacancy. From figure 27 it was apparent that 54% of the respondents agreed and 16% strongly agreed with this statement.
Therefore, the majority of the respondents were in agreement that stature influenced their employment decision.

The latter finding correlated with the findings from the qualitative research component focusing on organisational stature. The qualitative findings indicated that respondents agreed that the stature of an organisation played a role in their decision to apply for a vacancy even though the vacancy is not related to HRM. Respondents indicated that this was because of the compensation and different work opportunities available in an organisation with high stature. Twenty percent of respondents indicated an indifferent score which also correlated with the qualitative findings signifying that the decision to take a non-related HRM job in a high stature organisation versus a HRM related job in a small unknown organisation is situational and depends on the economy and their current life stage. Ten percent disagree with the statement. The findings from the qualitative research component indicated that the latter was due to HRM experience being more important than working in an organisation with high stature.

6.2.5.3 Co-workers’ characteristics (item 15)
This item focused on the perceived importance of the congruence between co-worker
characteristics and those of the HR graduates. The majority (36%) of the respondents were indifferent that their characteristics had to match those of their co-workers (Figure 28). Twenty-eight percent disagreed and 32% agreed with this item. This item yielded an interesting response and should be further investigated to determine the rationale behind this response. However, the amount of variance with this finding could indicate that the respondents did not understand the item as intended.

![Figure 28: Co-worker characteristics (n=50)](image)

6.2.5.4 ASA framework scores

The factor aimed at possibly determining whether the attraction process within ASA framework influences the HR graduates decisions to apply for a vacancy. The attraction process refers to the idea that people prefer organisations that are perceived to have attributes that are congruent with their own personal characteristics (Devendorf, 2005, p.3). Forth-six percent of the sample were in agreement with this factor (Table 8). Indicating that the respondents perceive congruence between their personal characteristics and the organisations they seek employment in as important.
Table 8: ASA framework mean scores (n=50)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor: ASA Framework</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Dev.</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Mode %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.666667</td>
<td>0.93167</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean score for this factor was 3.67 with a standard deviation of 0.93, this would indicate that the mean score indicates an agreement score. The standard deviation shows some variance in the findings. Therefore, the mean score is seen as a relatively true indication of the samples' orientation towards this factor.

6.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed and presented the quantitative results obtained through means of statistical analysis (descriptive statistics).

As mentioned before, and at the beginning of this chapter, the Likert scale was not the focal research method for the present study and it was not primarily utilised to address the propositions set. However, the Likert scale was utilised to assess support for findings from the qualitative research component of this study by correlating statements from the Likert scale with the depth interview questions results. The Likert scale also provided a deeper understanding regarding the perceptions of P-E fit amongst the HR graduates from the NMMU. The following inferences were made regarding the Likert scale factors.

The factor focusing on career choice aimed to determine whether the HR graduates perceived the congruence between career choice and personal attributes such as personality and interests to be important. Although there was some amount of variance in the mean score for this factor, the individual item results indicated that the respondents perceived the match between career choice and personal attributes to be important. Career choice was also seen as an expression of personality. Furthermore, respondents believed that they have made the right career choice and that their choice of university degree is congruent with their personalities and interests.
The factor relating to current occupation aimed at providing information on whether the sample of HR graduates’ current occupation is congruent with their choice of university degree. Although there was a great amount of variance in the results for this factor, the majority of HR graduates were in agreement with the item. A high percentage of HR graduates also indicated that their current occupations were not directly related to HRM. However, the results from this item correlated with results from the qualitative research component also signifying that the majority of HR graduates have jobs not related to HRM.

The factor relating to graduate migration aimed at determining whether HR graduates from the NMMU would migrate to pursue P-E fit. The findings inferred that the majority of HR graduates would migrate to pursue P-E fit. In other words, HR graduates would migrate or relocate to find congruence between their studies and occupations. According to the qualitative findings related to graduate migration, the latter was due to the lack of HRM employment opportunities in the NMM and that organisations do not employ graduates due to their lack of experience in the field of HRM. Quantitative findings indicated that the majority of HR graduates indicated that graduate migration was due to local employment conditions. This result corresponds with the qualitative findings indicating that HR graduates would relocate due to the lack of HRM related employment opportunities in the NMM. Further findings from this factor indicated that the majority of HR graduates found it difficult to find employment related to their studies. This result correlated with the qualitative findings. The findings from qualitative data implied that due to the lack of HRM employment opportunities and, or, difficulty in finding employment related to HRM in the NMM, the HR graduates would relocate to pursue their careers in other regions or abroad.

The P-E fit factor focused on determining the perceived importance of P-E fit amongst the HR graduates from the NMMU. The majority of respondents perceive P-E fit as important. Furthermore, the majority of HR graduates perceived that finding employment related to HRM was important and that congruence between their work environment, personality and interests will lead to positive outcomes such as job
satisfaction. This factor also uncovered that HR graduates were in agreement that achieving and maintain P-E fit was deemed as important and that they would remain in their jobs when organisational change occurs. The results from this factor correlated with the findings obtained through qualitative research.

As mentioned earlier, the attraction process refers to the idea that people prefer organisations that are perceived to have attributes that are congruent with their own personal characteristics (Devendorf, 2005, p.3). The ASA framework factor aimed at determining whether the attraction process within ASA framework influenced the HR graduates decisions to apply for a vacancy. HR graduates perceived that the congruence between organisational values and personal values were important. Further findings implied that the majority of HR graduates would apply for non-related HRM vacancies in high stature organisations versus HRM related vacancies in small unknown organisations. These results correlated with the findings obtained from the qualitative research.

The next chapter will provide a summary of the main findings and emphasize once again how the results obtained from qualitative research correlated with the quantitative results. The chapter will discuss the outcomes for the research propositions. Lastly, the chapter will discuss the research limitations and future recommendations.
CHAPTER 7

MAIN FINDINGS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of P-E fit basically indicates that alignment between characteristics of people and their work environments result in positive outcomes for both the individual and the environment (Sekiguchi, 2004). The purpose of this study was to determine the relevance of P-E fit amongst HR graduates from the NMMU within the NMM. Furthermore, this study investigated the possibility of P-E fit as a determinant of graduate migration.

Propositions were set proposing that P-E fit is relevance amongst HR graduates from NMMU as well as P-E fit being a determinant of graduate migration. The study comprised of both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Although the study’s main focus was of a qualitative nature, a quantitative component was utilised to support the qualitative component of the research instrument as well as to provide valuable insight into the respondents understanding of career choice and P-E fit. A sample of fifty (n=50) HR graduates was drawn by utilising snowball sampling. Data were collected by conducting personal interviews with each of the respondents and providing them with the Likert scale questionnaire.

Content- and statistical analyses (descriptive statistics) were utilised to analyse the data. Validity was assessed by subjecting the measure to a panel of experts and key community figures who found it to be valid in terms of meeting the research objectives. Reliability was determined through presenting similar questions in both the quantitative and qualitative research components as well as by conducting a pilot study to test the comprehension level of the measuring instruments. Results from both measuring instruments (interview questionnaire and Likert scale) corresponded on most of the key issues examined.
This chapter will provide a summary of the study’s main findings. Furthermore the chapter will discuss the research propositions set. Limitations of the study and scope for future research will also be offered.

7.2 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

The respondents perceived P-E fit as important and indicated that by achieving P-E fit positive outcomes would follow. Sekiguchi’s (2004) research supports this finding, suggesting that the concept of P-E fit indicates that alignment between an individual characteristics and their work environment result in positive outcomes for both the individual and work environment. This finding was also supported by the P-E fit factor in the Likert scale, revealing that the majority of respondents perceived P-E fit as important. Quantitative findings further correlated with this finding, signifying that respondents perceived obtaining employment related to their studies as important and that positive outcomes are derived from P-E fit. Additionally, qualitative results indicated that respondents experienced positive outcomes such as job satisfaction, organisational commitment and tenure as a result of positive P-E fit. These results support the findings from Sekiguchi’s (2004) research indicating that individuals choose environments that create a positive fit which influences individual affective and behavioral outcomes.

Results emerging from the interviews indicated that the NMM does not have enough HRM employment opportunities for HR graduates from NMMU due to the graduates’ lack of experience in the field of HRM. This result was supported by findings obtained from the Likert scale implying that the NMM has a lack of HRM employment. Therefore respondents had to broaden their employment search to include any available vacancies related to HRM or not in the NMM and other regions. The latter finding was due to affirmative action mainly for the white male respondents. Demographic findings support this by identifying that the majority (79%) of male HR graduates were not employed in occupations related to HRM.

Although P-E fit was perceived as important, findings reveal that an organisation’s stature would influence the respondents’ decisions to apply for a vacancy in an organisation. The majority of respondents indicated that they would apply for a
vacancy that was not related to HRM in an organisation with a high stature. This was due to compensation and development opportunities. The finding regarding stature was supported by the Likert scale results suggesting that the majority of respondents would apply for non-related HRM vacancies in high stature organisations versus HRM related vacancies in small unknown organisation.

Qualitative findings indicated that HR graduates from the NMMU studied HRM as it was congruent with their interests and that they wanted to work with people. The career choice factor emerging from the quantitative measure showed that HR graduates perceived the congruence between career choice and personal attributes, such as personality and interests, to be important. The majority of the HR graduates still feel that they have made the right career choice. Results from the Likert scale indicated that the majority of the HR graduates viewed career choice as an expression of personality. Furthermore, the majority of HR graduates indicated that their current occupation was related to HRM (their studies). These results relating to career choice and, or, university degree choice are in agreement with results from a study conducted by Porter and Umbach (2006). These authors indicated that personality was extremely predictive of student major choice. The wrong major choice, as termed by Porter and Umbach (2006), would ultimately influence an individual's future P-E fit.

In terms of graduate migration, HR graduates indicated that they would relocate to other regions or abroad to pursue a career in HRM. The latter was due to a lack of HRM employment opportunities in the NMM. From the quantitative component, the factor relating to graduate migration suggested that the majority of HR graduates would migrate to pursue P-E fit. The latter means that graduates would relocate and, or, migrate to find congruence between their studies and careers. Quantitative findings further implied that HR graduates would relocate due to the lack of local employment opportunities in HRM within the NMM. These results concurred with results from research conducted by Faggain et al (2006), which revealed that graduates are more likely to migrate to other regions due to local economic and employment conditions. The next section will discuss the outcomes of the research propositions.
7.3 PROPOSITION OUTCOMES

In a previous chapter it became evident that, although research on P-E fit, career choice and graduate migration exists little, or no, research has been done on the relevance of P-E fit amongst graduates, or on determining whether P-E fit is a determinant of migration in South Africa. Therefore, the follow propositions were formulated:

P1: P-E fit is relevant amongst HR graduates from the NMMU within the NMM.

This proposition was supported by the findings relating to P-E fit. As mentioned in the main findings, HR graduates from the NMMU perceived P-E fit as important. HR graduates perceived that it was imperative to find employment related to their studies. Furthermore, the HR graduates perceived positive outcomes to be derived through positive P-E fit. Thus, the HR graduates emphasized that achieving and maintaining P-E fit is important.

P2: P-E fit is a determinant of HR graduate migration from the NMMU.

The second proposition, the study’s secondary objective, was also supported. The quantitative as well as the qualitative findings indicated that HR graduates would relocate to other regions and, or, abroad to pursue their careers in HRM.

7.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A limitation of this research was that it only scrutinised HR graduates from the NMMU. Therefore, generalisations across different groups of graduates and universities cannot be made.

A further limitation of this study was the utilisation of snowball sampling to identify suitable informants. The disadvantage of snowball sampling is that the choice of initial contacts is very important for the quality of the sample (Heckathorn, 2002).
7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANISATIONS WITHIN THE NMM

The findings from this study could hold practical implications for organisations within the NMM. HR graduates possess theoretical knowledge on HRM. This knowledge needs to be applied in the workplace. The workplace needs to create opportunities for HR graduates to apply this HR knowledge and attain the necessary skills in the field of HR to create future HR professionals. This should take place through fast track training programs geared at gaining practical experience on a wide front of HR functions. Secondly, industry should realise that if they neglect their social responsibility towards the HR profession by not providing practical mentorships, they will lose valuable knowledge and skills to other parts of the country or even foreign countries. Thirdly, organisations should create opportunities for HR graduates to develop competencies in other spheres of management if offerings in HRM are limited. Such a company policy will combat brain drain from the Eastern Cape.

7.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study focused on the relevance of P-E fit and graduate migration. The lack of employment opportunities in the NMM was mentioned several times by respondents in this study as a reason for not finding employment related to HRM in the NMM. Therefore, a recommendation for future research could possibly include examining graduate employment or graduate employability within the NMM.

The present study only scrutinised HR graduates. A recommendation for future research could be to extend the focus to other groups of graduates from the NMMU.

Lastly, from the findings of this study, it was evident that P-E fit was a determinant of graduate migration. P-E fit is only one factor that influences graduate migration. Therefore, future research could focus on different push and pull factors of graduate migration such as remuneration, promotional opportunities and work life balance. In other words, future research should focus on the determinants and consequences of graduate migration as graduate migration leads to local ‘brain drain’.
REFERENCES


http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/~palmquis/courses/content.html (accessed 19 March 2009 at 12:44)


Thompson.


http://books.google.co.za/books?id=qWvvykkhOlwC&pg=PA297&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=0_0&sig=ACfU3U2vBMxTYqdtwWhFgNN4aNQ_B3JHFQ (accessed 20 July 19:29).


Dear Respondent,

The purpose of this study is to determine the relevance of Person-Environment (P-E) fit amongst Human Resource (HR) graduates from NMMU. P-E fit is the match between a person and their work environment. Please complete both parts of the questionnaire. Your cooperation in completing the following questionnaire will be much appreciated.

Megan Matthysen

Read each statement and indicate how strongly you agree or disagree by placing an X in the appropriate box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Indifferent</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Your current occupation is related to your studies.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. In your opinion: “Career choice is an expression of personality”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. You feel that you have made the right career choice (HR).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. You studied HRM because it matched your personality and interests.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. You will leave Port Elizabeth in pursuit of a career in HRM (to other geographical areas).</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Individuals with high qualifications are more likely to seek employment in different regions.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Graduate “migration” is related to local employment conditions.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Most HR graduates experienced difficulty in finding a job related to HRM in Port Elizabeth.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. You believe it is highly important to find a job related to your studies (HRM).</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Finding a “match” between yourself and your job will result in positive outcomes such as job satisfaction, commitment etc.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Achieving and maintaining person-environment fit is important to you.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. If you found a job that matched your interests, personality and studies you will try to maintain this “fit” if the work environment changes (retrenchment of staff, new staff/management, relocation of the company).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. It is important that your organisation possesses similar values as you do.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14. The stature of an organisation plays a role in your decision to apply for a job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. It is important that the other people in your organisation have similar characteristics as yourself.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graduation year: ____________  Hometown: ____________

Current occupation: ____________  Current city: ____________

Gender: Male    Female
Open-ended questions

1. Thinking back to the start of your job search, how long did it take you to find a job in general?

2. How long did it take you to find a job related to HRM?

3. Did you start your job search by searching for a job in HRM?

4. Would you leave Port Elizabeth in pursuit of a career in HRM in another geographical location?

5. If so, why?

6. In which geographical area/location will you search for a job?

7. Why?

8. Does the stature of an organisation play a role in your decision to apply for a job? For example; would you apply for a job not related to HR (personal assistant) at Goodyear or Volkswagen VS a job related to HR (HR assistant) in a small unknown company?

9. If so, why?

10. Why did you study HRM?

11. Do you still feel that you have made the right career choice?

12. Do you feel that it is important for you to find, or, to have found a job related to your studies? Please explain.

13. Do you feel that Port Elizabeth has enough job opportunities for HR graduates? Please explain (if you can).
## Appendix 2

### Likert scale item mean scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Dev</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Mode%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current occupation</strong></td>
<td>Statement 1</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statement 2</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>60.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statement 3</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statement 4</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>66.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Career choice</strong></td>
<td>Statement 5</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statement 6</td>
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<td>1.11</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statement 7</td>
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<td>0.61</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statement 8</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Graduate migration</strong></td>
<td>Statement 9</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>1.12</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>48.0%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Statement 10</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Statement 11</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>P-E fit</strong></td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Statement 14</td>
<td>3.76</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>Statement 15</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td><strong>ASA framework</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statement 14</td>
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<td>0.84</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>0.87</td>
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<td>5</td>
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