

PERCEPTION VERSUS REALITY

The Experiences of New Graduates Entering the Workplace



NATHAN WARREN
NATIONAL COLLEGE OF IRELAND
MA IN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
SUBMITTED TO NATIONAL COLLEGE OF IRELAND AUGUST 2017

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank National College of Ireland for providing me with the platform to complete this thesis and to all their staff and lecturers who have been of great assistance throughout my time at the college. I would especially like to thank Laura Fallon who was the course co-ordinator throughout my time at the college and Julius Nyiawung who has been a brilliant and supportive supervisor for this thesis. On a personal note, I would like to thank all my family and friends who have supported me throughout the process of this course. A special thanks to my mother Wendy Warren and my uncle Leonard Warren because without the two of them the completion of this course would not have been possible. Lastly, I would like to thank Johnny Coleman for providing motivation and support to keep going when times were difficult.

I will conclude by again saying a big thank you to everyone who has been involved with me throughout this journey.

Abstract

The global workplace has faced drastic changes in recent years due to various economic and social factors. From this rates of unemployment soared in many countries around the globe, Ireland being a country that was hugely impacted by this. Despite the negative factors that have been experiences over the past decade economies are starting to recover and the rates of unemployment are steadily declining. From the trouble that the globe face one thing became clear, that is the importance of third level education when entering the job market. A recent OECD study showed that unemployment rates were significantly lower for third level graduates than that of those who didn't achieve a higher second level education (4.9% compared to 12.4%) (OECD, 2016). A reason for this may be because higher education “promotes more efficient decision- making processes related to the labour market through the acquisition of information that has a positive impact on occupational choices” (Vila, et al., 2007).

From this revelation, numerous studies have been conducted, this one included, which focus on various areas of graduates in the labour market. The focus area of this study is one that has not yet been conducted in an Irish context. The analysis of graduate's perceptions of the workplace versus the realities that they face is a broad area which can present some interesting results for both current students who will be graduating in the coming years but also those employers who will be taking those graduates in to their companies and developing their careers.

An employer must ensure that they are providing a comprehensive level of job satisfaction for graduates and achieving a good standard in meeting the expectations that are set out by graduates when entering in to the workplace, if an employer does not successfully meet these expectations it can influence a graduate's job satisfaction and affect their commitment to an organisation (Jusof, et al., 2011).

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

National College of Ireland
Research Students Declaration Form
(Thesis/Author Declaration Form)

Name: Nathan Warren
Student Number: X15033987
Degree for which thesis is submitted: MA in HRM

Material submitted for award

- (a) I declare that the work has been composed by myself.
- (b) I declare that all verbatim extracts contained in the thesis have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of information specifically acknowledged.
- (c) My thesis will be included in electronic format in the College Institutional Repository TRAP (thesis reports and projects)
- (d) **Either** *I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.

Or *I declare that the following material contained in the thesis formed part of a submission for the award of

(State the award and the awarding body and list the material below)

Signature of research student: Nathan Warren

Date: 29/08/2017

Abbreviations

OECD – The Organisation for Economic Co – Operation and Development

CIPD – The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

HR – Human Resources

HRM – Human Resource Management

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Aims of Research	1
Justification	3
Research Questions	4
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	5
Literature Review	5
III. METHODOLOGY.....	21
Methodology	21
Pilot Study.....	25
Survey Questions	26
Sample Selection.....	29
Limitations	31

IV. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS	33
V. DISCUSSION	37
Discussion of Results	37
VI. CONCLUSION	42
Conclusions	42
CIPD Recommendation	46
CIPD Personal Statement	48
REFERENCE LIST	49
Appendix	53

INTRODUCTION

Aims of the Research

In the year 2017 third level education has become more accessible than ever and this is evident given the number of students graduating from third level institutions in Ireland. Ireland ranks well above average in the number of student completing third level education in comparison to other countries within the OECD (OECD, 2016). College provides many new and exciting experiences for students as for many it is their first taste of independence while also helping them to develop their career prospects. Whether a student who has come straight from school in to a full – time undergraduate course or a part time postgraduate student who has been working for years the aim would be to develop their career prospects. This study is inclusive of all students because everyone will be going to the workplace with new perspectives after the completion of a third level course. There has been many research pieces conducted with the focus being placed on graduates to the important role they play in the labour market and the effect they will have within organisations in the future.

Graduates provide the labour with highly educated and skilled workers who have high career prospects and aspirations. When students are graduating from higher education they have many perceptions about what working life will be like for them and how their education will give them a head start in the workplace, what many of them don't realise is that many employers will also have perceptions of what they expect from graduates and more often than not the perception of the graduate may differ to that of the employer. This means that

graduates are left facing work situations that are completely different from what they initially expected and that's where the problems that will be looked at in this study start to occur (Jusof, et al., 2011).

This study aims to highlight the key areas that perceptions are not being met for graduates, this was done by conducting a survey were recent graduates who have made the transition in to the workplace rated how well some of the key perceptions they had are being met. The study found interesting and varying results showing the diverse experiences graduates can have in the workplace and how various factors can influence these experiences. Along with the survey lots of literature was looked at to analyse what other researchers have found in relation to graduates in the workplace. Between the results of this study and the results of the already existing literature a clear idea has been formulated for what aspects of the workplace graduates are happy with and which ones organisations could improve upon.

Justification

The motives behind conducting a study such as this one in Ireland can be given both an empirical and a practical justification. Empirically there has been no study of the same nature conducted on graduates working in the service sector in Ireland so a gap exists in the literature that this study aims to fill. Several practical justifications can also be made for this study. Graduates are known for setting their perceptions quite high when entering the workplace when the reality is that these perceptions are not always met. This leads to low job satisfaction and low organisational commitment for graduates. There is also the issue of high emigration rates amongst graduates in Ireland. Irish graduates view emigration as an attractive option that provides them with far more to gain than lose (Moriarty, et al., 2015). Employers must ensure that they are making every effort possible to remedy the underachieved perceptions of graduates going forward so that they can attract and retain a strong labour force in the future. This study aims to highlight some of the perception gaps that graduates are facing in the workplace. It will also highlight the areas that employers are performing well in so that they can continue to build on this going forward.

Research Questions

The main aim of this research is to analyse and determine how can perception gaps and job satisfaction among graduates be explained. If the workplace is unable to meet the needs of graduates then the negative impact could be huge, it could lead to low levels of job satisfaction, lack of organisational commitment and an increased rate of emigration amongst Irish graduates. From this primary research question several sub – questions have also risen and will be assessed throughout the course of the study, they are as follows:

1. What area of the workplace is providing the greatest perception gap?
2. What areas are employers providing high levels of satisfaction in?
3. What is the overall outlook for future graduates working in Ireland?

These research question will aim to be answered using the existing literature in conjunction with the results that are found in the process of this study. Finally, throughout the study gaps will be analysed and as part of the CIPD curriculum recommendations will be made with the aim of improving working life for graduates and setting guidelines for employers to help when hiring graduates in Ireland going forward. The key areas where employers are succeeding and failing in will be presented so it provides a platform for employers to build upon going forward. It will also aim to provide an insight for graduates in relation to what they should be expecting when entering the workplace and providing caution to be careful when setting the standards of their perceived expectations when entering the workplace.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Literature Review

As part of the research for conducting this study a vast number of journals and pieces of research were studied to gain a comprehensive overview of the studies that exist around graduates and what some of the key findings from these studies have been, this will help to enhance subject knowledge surround graduate literature while also helping to develop and refine the main research and sub questions of the study (Saunders, et al., 2009).the existing literature plays a significant role in the results of this study because the results will inevitably be compared and contrasted against the results of the existing literature to either add validity or critique the found results (Saunders, et al., 2009). Although there is some research surrounding graduates in an Irish context the area of study was expanded to graduate studies on a global level to gain a full world context of graduate literature. Many interesting points and facts arose from these studies in which some points compliment this research while others may conflict with it, all will be looked at in further detail as the study continues and comparative analysis will be done against the results of this study.

The first article that should be looked at is the one that the inspiration for this study was gained from. This study was a Malaysian based study aimed at determining the expectation gaps experienced by graduates when entering the workplace and the effect they had on their job satisfaction levels. The aim of the research is to “attempt to reveal what fresh graduates expect and their actual experiences pertaining to the working environment” while also assessing the

impact these expectation gaps may have on job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Jusof, et al., 2011). The study is an interesting piece of research but it has got its limitations which the authors openly admit to, the two main limitations are that the study was only conducted in a Malaysian context and that it was not focused on a specific field of study (Jusof, et al., 2011). Despite the limitations of this study it still poses some interesting results. The study found that numerous expectation gaps do exist in the workplace for graduates and went on to say that addressing these issues should be the shared responsibility of the graduates, the higher education institutes and the employers, the study also continues to give several suggestions that each could make to help close the expectation gaps experienced by graduates (Jusof, et al., 2011). The primary focus areas of the suggestions are for the institutions and the employers to create support measures for graduates to help them in the transition from studying to the workplace. The study may not necessarily have any translation or correspondence to an Irish context but it did provide the inspiration to conduct a study of a similar nature in an Irish context to see was there any correlation between the results from two vastly different countries.

Moving on from the initial Malaysian study a vast amount of research surround graduates in the workplace started to be looked at. The studies have several varying focus areas, such as job satisfaction, pay difference and work – life balance just to name a few. The studies helped to develop a strong insight in to graduates in the workplace in a global context, with some specific focus being placed on Ireland as this study is to be carried out in Ireland. The following review will analysis some of the key themes and conclusions that have been

drawn from these studies and assess how they link in to the results of this study, many will complement the study, however, some may also present conflicting ideas and conclusions.

When researching literature surrounding recent graduates in the workplace it became obvious that many of the studies were conducted with a focus on job satisfaction. This is understandable given the priority that is placed on job satisfaction, especially if workplaces are looked at from a Human Resource Management perspective. Job satisfaction can be defined in a broad context but ultimately it refers to an employee's overall satisfaction with their job, it can include many aspects such as pay, development and work – life balance.

A study carried out by Kucel and Vilalta – Bufí in 2013 examined the job satisfaction of university graduates in Spain, they done this basing their research around 'Lockes discrepancy theory'. They describe the theory by saying that “an individual's job satisfaction is the result of their subjective evaluation of the existing discrepancy between what they want from their job and what they perceive they get from the job” (Kucel & Vilalta - Bufí, 2013), the theory can also be described as “a popular framework used to explain the underlying actors of job satisfaction at the organisational level” (Salahodjaev, 2015). As the study carried on they started to look at how over – skilling and over – education can affect job satisfaction, the conclusions that they reached were quite surprising given that they state that over – skilling has a much more negative impact on job satisfaction than that of over – education (Kucel & Vilalta - Bufí, 2013). The initial interpretation would be that if a graduate's education wasn't used correctly after investing so much time in to it that it would have a negative impact on job

satisfaction but in fact it is the misuse of their perceived skills that frustrated graduates in Spain more.

This study pervades a unique approach to looking at a graduate's job satisfaction due to the use of Lockes discrepancy theory. In many respects the study consists of a similar nature to this study given that it is aimed at analysing the discrepancy between the perceptions and realities of graduates in the workplace, however, one of the striking differences is that the study in Spain was conducted purely with the intention of looking at job satisfaction whereas this study is focused more on highlighting what the key discrepancies are in an overall context and not just focusing on job satisfaction and the use of education and skills.

Given that the last study was only conducted in a Spanish context the results can be difficult to generalise because they are only that of one country so the next study to look at was a study of a similar nature that was carried out the Czech Republic. This study aimed to “investigate the link between educational mismatch, earnings and job satisfaction in the Czech Republic” (Salahodjaev, 2015). Like Ireland, the Czech Republic holds one of the highest education attainment rates in the OECD (Salahodjaev, 2015) (OECD, 2016), this draws similarities between the two countries and relates the study to this one that is being carried out in an Irish context. The results of the study compliment the study that was carried out in Spain as it also found that over – education and over – skilling can both negatively impact job satisfaction but they did not draw the same conclusion that over – skilling is more negative (Salahodjaev, 2015). This study also goes on further to say that ‘educational mismatch’ is what will have a

significantly negative impact on wages and even went as far as saying that the wage penalties faced by female graduates are larger than that of male graduates (Salahodjaev, 2015).

The previously mentioned articles indicate that over – education and over – skilling is an issue that affects graduates in the workplace and indeed this has become such a debated topic across Europe that the European Commission published an article relating to it. The article mainly examined the statistics surrounding the over – educated and over – skilled employees in Europe. They found that there is a significantly low number of people considered to be both over – skilled and over – educated, they say it is roughly 15% (Flisi, et al., 2014). The stats go on further to show that 30% of people are considered over – educated for their job and 17% over – skilled (Flisi, et al., 2014). As the study goes on it continues to provide statistics for employees across Europe. One statement that stuck out was when they argued the point that older populations are better matched to their jobs than the younger populations in Europe (Flisi, et al., 2014). They further go on to present a chart which indicates that the age range in Ireland with the most occupational mismatch is from the age 20 to 40 (Flisi, et al., 2014)(See Appendix 1). This would be the age range that the highest number of graduates would come from so it serves as an indicator that graduates are not initially being placed in jobs that match their education so this may affect their transition from education to the workplace.

The next article takes a different approach to job satisfaction than those that were previously mentioned, this article looks at the overall job satisfaction of

graduates from a university in Athens, Greece. The article list three main categories that should be associated with job satisfaction. They are as follows:

1. Extrinsic Satisfaction in the form rewards – this includes financial rewards and general working conditions.
2. Intrinsic satisfaction – this involves taking pleasure in work and the satisfaction of completing tasks.
3. Relations-Social satisfaction – this includes the working environment and the colleagues that surround them.

A further chart can be seen in the appendix to show the breakdown of these three categories (See Appendix 2)(Kollias, et al., 2012). The study further explores the sub – criteria of each of these three categories and states that from their study the three most valued sub – criteria for graduates are work conditions, security and social status (Kollias, et al., 2012). When conducting the research for this study these three categories were taken in to consideration to ensure that all aspects of perceptions and satisfaction were looked at. This meant having to evaluate the initially prepared survey and make some minor changes to ensure it was inclusive of all areas. The most important take away from this article was a statement that was made in it because it has the highest amount of relevance to this study. The authors said that “an interesting factor from this research is that graduates are overall satisfied although it appears that only a small percentage of their expectations has been fulfilled” (Kollias, et al., 2012). This statement conflicts with other research which has looked at expectation gaps and said that “the expectation gaps exist and therefore it is of paramount importance for the gaps to be efficiently and effectively addressed” (Jusof, et al., 2011). The latter

statement makes more sense of the two because these expectation gaps need to be closed to provide long term satisfaction for graduates in the workplace.

Sex and race were not factors that were included in this study mainly due to the limitation of time constraints and sample selection. However, Hersch and Xiao did research this area so their results will be looked at because they help gain background information and may help to complement some of the missing links from this study. From their research, they state that women are more satisfied than men in the workplace, they say this may be due to different work values and expectations (Hersch & Xiao, 2016). The difference in values is an interesting point that appears, it says that women value intangible aspects such as good relationships and the work itself while men value tangibles such as salary and promotion aspects (Hersch & Xiao, 2016). Based off the results that they present it is easy to see why they think women are more satisfied, the values that these surveyed women desired are much easier to attain than the ones that the men are looking for. This research posed some interesting results and opens an avenue for further study.

When searching for articles surrounding graduates and their level of pay it becomes clear that gender issues is a constantly reoccurring topic. The differences in pay between male and female graduates was not initially an issue that was considered when starting the study but as it progressed it became hard to overlook hence the decision to include it in the study. Firstly, an article relating to the pay rates of graduates must be looked at. A study carried out by Russell et al looked at the pay scales of graduates in private sector organisations, their research also supports the idea that a pay gap exists amongst male and female graduates, they

say that 3 years after graduation a gap of 8% in hourly wages exists in the private sector and a 4% gap in public sector (Russell, et al., 2010). The research goes on to highlight 4 main factors that may influence the difference in pay between gender, they are as follows:

- 1) Differential returns to educational capital for male and female graduates.
- 2) Differential returns to employment experience.
- 3) Gender differences in field of study, and differences in the rewards attached to these fields.
- 4) Negative impact of working in a female dominated workplace.

(Russell, et al., 2010).

It is most likely that these four reasons would be responsible for the pay gap in Ireland due to the extensive employment laws that aim to combat unfair treatment in the workplace. Initially the Anti – Discrimination (Pay) Act 1974 was used to highlight the fact that pay could not be discriminated against in the workplace regardless of gender. It has since been updated and included in the Employment Equality Acts 1998 – 2015 where gender is listed under one of the 9 grounds that Irish workplaces are unable discriminate against (Daly & Doherty, 2010). These adds validity to the work of Russell et al because the four contributing factors that he mentions don't fall under any of the discriminatory terms listed in the Employment Equality Act. If an employee feels they are performing equal work but is being paid a different rate due to any of the 9 grounds then employers are leaving themselves vulnerable to claims under the Employment equality Act and once the claimant meets the requirements and provide the necessary information then the burden of proof is on the employer to

prove that it was not a discriminatory act (Daly & Doherty, 2010) (Wallace, et al., 2013). Pay is not an area that will be looked at extensively in this study so it was not included in the survey since the aim is to gain results that are not based on financial factors.

Emigration is an issue that was cited in the justification for this study and it is also an issue that has been studied in Ireland throughout the years. Ireland faced a severe economic crash that led to high austerity and many issues in the labour market, this resulted in increased rates of emigration from 2008 onwards (Stephens, 2015). Irish graduates find working abroad as a chance to increase employability and develop themselves, hence the fact that mobility is more prominent amongst Irish graduates than their counter parts in other countries (Moriarty, et al., 2015). In a 2015 study the two main reasons that were cited for graduates emigrating was “to improve my skills and opportunities” and “a lack of suitable opportunities in Ireland” (Moriarty, et al., 2015). Stephens furthers this by adding that from the 28 graduates that he interviewed the two main push factors for graduate leaving Ireland are the negative atmosphere of austerity and to find a new start (Stephens, 2015), these are similar to that of Moriarty et al but just presented in a different manner. The general perception would be that high emigration is a relatively new phenomenon in Ireland due to the difficult economic times that have been faced but that would be untrue because high emigration amongst graduates can be found occurring for much of the 20th Century and is known as a problem that has plagued Ireland periodically (Stephens, 2015)(Murray & Wickham, 1990). In 1990 the main two reasons cited for graduate emigration was the general state of ‘the economy and number of job

opportunities that are available' and 'high tax rates' (Murray & Wickham, 1990). The study in 1990 was one of the first studies of its kind and addressed several areas that need to be developed upon to decrease graduate emigration rates yet 25 years later studies of the same nature were published and still highlighted several of the same issues. One notable point from all the studies is that a lack of opportunity is not relevant to all lines of work because certain industries had a shortage in skills and could not find the bodies to fill the roles (Murray & Wickham, 1990) (Moriarty, et al., 2015). If all these articles were combined and looked at in a longitudinal context then it would show that very little has changed in the approach to solving the issue of high emigration rates among Irish graduates. Since the issue has been so publicly highlighted in recent years employers have started reviewing the packages that they are offering graduates to try influence graduates to stay working in Ireland.

A lot of the literature reviewed so far has been focused on negative aspects of the workplace so the next article looks at some of the benefits of education and how it can improve overall satisfaction in both the workplace and home life. The link between a good education and a good job is one that has existed for many years and a study in Russia examined this idea by analysing the correlation between high education standards and upward social mobility. The study emphasises the importance of education through the years by stating that "obtaining a higher education became virtually a mandatory stage in the trajectories of upward mobility" (Burlutskaia, 2014). They say that young people enter education with their primary focus being placed on acquisitive values and that indeed they are setting a foundation for success in later life (Burlutskaia,

2014). Figures in this study show that we are starting to see a decline in the correlation between higher education and upward social mobility but it is still a key resource in gaining social capital to help later in life for improving employability and career advancement (Burlutskaia, 2014).

The previous paragraph gave mention to viewing higher education as a social capital, this is a theory that has existed for many years and was initially put forward by Gary Becker in 1962 under the title of ‘Human Capital Theory’ (Becker, 1962). The main point of the theory as described by Becker is that most investments in human capital both raise observed earnings at older ages, because returns are added to earnings then, and lower them at younger ages, because costs are deducted from earnings then” (Becker, 1962). When Becker first presented the theory, he addressed the limitations due to the theory being in the early stages of development and said that time would either prove its validity or dismiss it as a fad (Becker, 1962). Fast forward to 2008 and human capital theory was revisited by Dobbs et al. The theory has developed and became more inclusive “to encompass even relatively costless knowledge and experience acquired on the job” (Dobbs, et al., 2008). The theory proved its validity and went on to show that people invest in themselves for their own self-interest and to gain greater financial benefits later in life (Dobbs, et al., 2008). This theory can be used to show the value of education and lifetime development to younger people so they can see exactly how it will benefit them later in life, it provides a great motivation for any prospective students. Both articles relating to viewing education as human capital complement each other because they show the benefits that education can have in

improving an individual's working life and how in turn that can benefit their personal lives.

Human capital is important for students but it is also seen as a driver for talent management in organisations and as a mechanism to gain competitive advantage (Lockwood, 2006). Talent management is an important concept when looking at literature related to graduates. Lockwood states that talent management consists of 5 main areas, they are: attracting, selecting, engaging, developing and retaining employees (Lockwood, 2006). Fernando describes talent management using 3 similar categories, his categories are: talent identification, talent development and talent engagement, motivation and retention (Fernando, 2008). Talent Management is in the best interest of the organisation because "turnover of talented professionals increases a firm's cost's and hinders the company's overall competitiveness (Doh, et al., 2001). When looking at talent management research the term 'War for Talent' will appear quite frequently. This term refers to the ongoing struggle organisations are having with attracting and retaining highly skilled workers. Lockwood says that "in the war for talent, organisational success depends on effective recruitment and retention" (Lockwood, 2006). Many organisations are struggling to win the war for talent while others are prospering through it due to the emphasis they are placing on programmes to ease the pressure on the previously mentioned categories of talent management. Chambers et al give a fitting statement by saying "You can win the war for talent, but first you must make elevate talent management to a burning corporate priority" (Chambers, et al., 1998).

An example in Ireland that is used to by the CIPD is the Kerry Food Group. The CIPD presented a case study to show how graduate programmes can be run correctly and the long term benefits they can have for employees. The Kerry Food Group set up a graduate management programme which is run in partnership with the Irish Management Institute with the aim of simplifying the transition from college to the workplace and setting a strong foundation for a long-term career (Stewart & Rigg, 2011). The programme was designed by management after detailed discussion with the graduates regarding the workplace (Stewart & Rigg, 2011), this shows that they value and appreciate the feedback from graduates and want to involve them in the decision - making process early on in their careers. Even post completion of the programme employees with the Kerry Food Group have numerous options to continue developing through both internal and external resources which are all supported and encouraged by the employer.

While everything that the Kerry Food Group is doing is great for graduates it is also great for the organisation because it is helping to build their reputation and employer brand. Knox and Freeman say that employer brand is used to “characterise the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing firm” (Knox & Freeman, 2006). The employer brand has shown its importance in recent years and consists of building a strong reputation and promotes the organisational culture (Stewart & Rigg, 2011). Hr departments have developed an interest in employer branding because it is a tool that can be used in the promotion of the organisation to attract and retain key talented employees (Stewart & Rigg, 2011)

(Knox & Freeman, 2006). the employer brand can consist of many components but Know and Freeman provide a list of the key attributes that graduates look for in an organisation (See Appendix 3) (Knox & Freeman, 2006). Developing a strong employer brand is a crucial step in the recruitment of graduates because it is the first step in the process of transferring from education to working life so graduates will be looking to join organisations that have a well-recognised employer brand and a good record of working with graduates and providing opportunities.

An area that is interesting for graduates but not widely examined in the existing literature is how to lead graduates. The results further on in this study will show that graduates have mixed feelings towards supervisors and managers so it is worth looking at leadership literature and determining the most suitable methods to lead. Leadership theories can be explained several ways but ultimately it can be defined as the ability to lead others, it is as process of motivating a group to work together and achieve great things as a unit (Vroom & Jago, 2007). Vroom and Jago are two of the most prominently studied researchers in leadership theory and they state that some of the main methods of influence are “threats, the promise of rewards, well-reasoned technical arguments and inspirational appeals” but do go on to say that it is debatable if all of these really fall under the label of good leadership traits (Vroom & Jago, 2007). Take ‘threats’ for example, no employee would find being threatened as an inspirational for of encouragement, this is something that even an experience employee would find difficult to cope with so it is difficult to see a graduate being able to deal with it. If a graduate was placed in a situation where they felt threatened by supervisors or management it is

highly likely that they would start to look for alternative forms of employment outside of that organisation.

It is said that leadership can be broken in to two categories, they are people orientated and task orientated leaders (Gartzia & Baniandrés, 2015). People orientated leaders are more focused on the wellbeing and development of their staff while task orientated leaders are more focused on business objectives (Gartzia & Baniandrés, 2015). Graduates need a good mixture of both styles of leader to get in the business state of mind and complete tasks while also feeling like they are being nourished through development and that their wellbeing is cared for. The difference between a good and bad leader could play an influential role in the future satisfaction of a graduate and their employment status within that organisation in the years to come.

Throughout this literature review a large amount of research has been analysed in order to form a background context to for this study. It has shown that graduates in the workplace is a widely researched topic and many areas of it have been looked at. The literature opened a gap for this study because the topic of perceptions versus realities in the workplace has not been looked at in an Irish context. This study will contribute to the existing literature by adding an analyse of how a gap in perceptions can affect the transition from education to the workplace for these graduates. The studied literature revealed many prevalent themes and issues that occur globally for graduates. Overall the literature helped to show the benefits of higher education for individuals. It showed that graduates have a better employment rate and have set a strong foundation for a prosperous career. One issue that was evident is that organisations are failing to please

graduates in certain areas of the workplace. This study will help to highlight which areas Irish organisations are falling behind on and what changes can be made to remedy this going forward.

METHODOLOGY

Methodology

After initially deciding upon a topic for this study the next major decision to make was to decide which methodology would be used to conduct the research. Research methods can be broken down to two main branches, they are *Qualitative Research* and *Quantitative Research*. Selecting the correct research methodology is a crucial aspect of the study because as Dawson says, “the research methodology is the philosophy or general principles which guides the research” (Dawson, 2009). For the selection of the methodology both forms of research methods had to be looked at to determine which one was the most suitable and would produce the best possible results for this study.

Firstly, qualitative research methods were looked at to determine the way this study could be conducted under qualitative methods. Qualitative research is mainly carried out using interviews and focus groups to get in depth opinions from the respondents while examining their attitudes, behaviours and experiences. One of the main forms of qualitative research is known as action research. In this form of research, the researcher is more so collaborating with the participants to solve a specific issue, the researcher is viewed as more of a facilitator for interviews and focus groups (Dawson, 2009). Action research is popular in areas such as organisational management, education and agriculture (Dawson, 2009). The next major form of qualitative research finds its origins from an Anthropological field of study but has since been used in a broader context, it is known as ethnography (Dawson, 2009) (Saunders, et al., 2009). Ethnography

places an emphasis on describing and interpreting cultural behaviours (Dawson, 2009). It is usually conducted under a longitudinal format and involves the researcher immersing themselves in the researched culture and developing results over a long period of time because every aspect of the culture will be analysed and interpreted under this research method (Saunders, et al., 2009). Qualitative research can be quite time consuming because when interviewing participants enough time needs to be allocated to interview each one and then the time taken to analyse the results of each interview. However, despite its time consumption qualitative research can produce some very interesting results due to the in depth and opinionated results that are formulated from it.

Quantitative research is conducted on a much larger scale than qualitative research and is predominantly conducted using surveys. Quantitative research is carried using participant observation and is used in instances where the researcher is examining a specific culture to gain a deeper understanding of it (Dawson, 2009). Surveys are a great tool to use when conducting descriptive or explanatory research and is the method most used in business research (Saunders, et al., 2009). The collected data of surveys can be used to “suggest possible reasons for particular relationships between variables and to produce models of these relationships” (Saunders, et al., 2009). Surveys are a great research tool because they allow for a collection of large amounts of data, the results may not be as in depth or opinionated as they would be if conducted through interviews but that does not take away from the validity of surveys.

As shown the difference between the two main research methods is quite vast which reinforces the fact that great caution should be taken when choosing

the research methodology for any given study. After researching both methods, a decision was made to use quantitative research methods for this study, the main research tool would be a survey. Given that the nature of the study is to explain the perceptions versus the realities of graduates in the workplace it would be considered as an observational study so a survey with a high number of responses would provide the most relevant and accurate results. When making the decision to use a survey all the existing literature was looked at to assess the methods that they used and it was found that most of literature surrounding graduates was conducted using quantitative methods, specifically surveys. All their surveys were looked at to get an idea of the questions that they were asking and how they could relate to this study. From going through all the surveys, it was decided that a hybrid form of the survey from the Malaysian study that inspired this study would be used (Jusof, et al., 2011). Not all the questions they used were selected for this study, instead the most relevant questions were chosen that would help to achieve the main research questions of this study. In addition to the main questions several background questions were asked to gain some general information on the respondents. Along with this one open ended question was also included at the end of the survey to receive any feedback or additional opinions the respondents may want to add.

When conducting the research there was no ethical issues that arose that had to be considered when promoting the survey because the sample that would be used was consenting adults who were informed of the aims of the research. There were also no ethical considerations because none of the questions asked

were looking for sensitive information or asking questions that may have caused harm or distress to respondents.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted on five graduates to determine if the survey was clear and to see if purposeful results would be returned. From the pilot study results it seemed like the clarity of the questions and purpose of the study were understood. The participants in the pilot study came from different college and work backgrounds which was fine because the pilot study was aimed at determining to see if a similarity in results would present itself regardless of background. There were some consistencies in the answers while others varied drastically, this may be due to individual perceptions and varying workplaces. The pilot study was a productive start because it showed that the survey worked. The results were not as clear cut as hoped for but with a higher number of responses more consistencies should begin to occur.

After the pilot study, the decision was made to readjust the focus of the study to graduates working in the service sector to help narrow the specifications of the study even further and gain a more consistent set of results. The service sector was the most accessible sample available and should yield a higher number of responses than if the study was focused on one industry or organisation.

Survey Questions

The following is a sample of the survey questions that were distributed for this study. Questions 1 – 5 were asked to gain background information on the respondents. Questions 6 – 16 were all the main body questions that were taken from the Malaysian study and aims at gaining the results for this study (Jusof, et al., 2011), all these questions were asked to be rated on a scale of one to six. Finally, it finishes with an open-ended question to allow for respondents to make any additional comments that they may wish to add in relation to the study. In the description for the survey clear guidelines were set to show the purpose and aims of the study. It was also requested that respondents have graduated in the past three years and currently be working in the service sector. It was asked for graduates to have graduated in the past three years to allow for accurate recollections of their initial perceptions before entering the workplace. The questions that were asked are as follows:

1. What age range are you?
2. What year did you graduate?
3. What was your field of study?
4. What is your current employment status?
5. What industry are you now working in?
6. Work in an organisation where employees care for one another.
7. Work in an organisation where the organisation listens to customers and responds quickly to their needs.
8. Work in an organisation where employees are always kept informed of what is happening in the organisation.

9. Work in an organisation where employees continually search for ways to work more efficiently.
10. My supervisor serves as a role model to me.
11. My supervisor articulates a vision of future opportunities.
12. I freely share my opinions with others.
13. I listen to my colleagues' problems.
14. I trust my inner feelings and reactions when making decisions.
15. The attraction of the friendliness of people I work with.
16. The attraction of the opportunity to develop my skills and abilities.
17. The attraction of the amount of freedom I have on my job.
18. The attraction of the chances I have to accomplish something worthwhile.
19. The attraction of my chances to gain promotion or getting a better job.
20. The attraction of the praise I get from my supervisor.
21. A company provides me with opportunities to develop new skills.
22. A company provides me with opportunities to improve chances for promotion.
23. A company provides me with opportunities to know more about technical information.
24. A company provides me with opportunities to learn more about the products and services.
25. A company provides me with the facilities that enable me to continue my education.
26. Overall, how satisfied are you in your current role and organisation?

27. Finally, I would like to leave an open-ended section for any additional comments you may have regarding the experiences you have had in the workplace since completing your course.

Sample Selection

Once the survey instrument was finalised and all possible research questions were looked at a suitable sample for the study needed to be selected. The sample consists of the graduates who would participate in this study so careful thought needed to be placed when selecting the sample. For this study, no specific sample size was set because the questions it aims to answer are broad and therefore the more responses gained would make it easier to generalise the results. Dawson says that selecting the sample carefully for quantitative research makes it easier to generalise the results (Dawson, 2009).

Initially, the plan for this study was to have a single organisation participate to gain results purely focused on that organisation. However, it was difficult to find an organisation that was willing to grant access to their employees and allow analysis to be carried out on their organisation which meant that this idea had to be abandoned early on. The next plan was to focus on one field of study that graduates came from, the hope was to focus on Human Resource Management graduates. This idea was pursued but then it became difficult to gain access purely to human resource graduates. A percentage of the graduates do come from a human resource field of study but not enough responses were gained to make it a valid study.

Due to the time constraints of the study and gaining access to specific samples it resulted in the study being conducted under a convenience sampling technique because the thought was that this would gain the most responses. The survey was shared through emails and various social media platforms in which the

criteria for the study was clearly specified. The uptake to the survey was slow despite maximum effort being placed on promoting it and actively seeking out respondents. The survey was closed after 40 responses due to there not being enough time remaining to gain more responses. Overall, the survey did not gain the response rate that was hoped for making it impossible to generalise the results for graduates on a whole in the workplace. However, regardless of the difficulties faced the results were still analysed and presented and will be discussed further in the discussion section of this study.

Limitations

When starting this study, it was expected that very few limitations would be faced and if there was any they would be minor and easy to work around. However, this was not the case because as the study progressed the limitations presented much greater obstacles than what was initially anticipated. The biggest limitation faced was due to the time constraints of the rapidly approaching deadline. The second limitation was then created by these time constraints. Initially the desire was to focus the study on a select number of organisations or one specific field of study but this became unachievable due to the insufficient time to find a large enough sample and without the backing of an organisation. This in turn affected the focus of the study and meant that it was adjusted to analysing the broad area of graduates working in the service sector.

Readjusting this focus was done with the hope of creating a large response rate due to the high number of graduates working in the service sector but this also presented the next limitation of the study and possibly the most difficult to overcome. The uptake of responses to the survey was nowhere near the response rate that was hoped for. Even when it came to the point of reverting to convenience sampling the response volume was not high enough. Given the chance to conduct the study again much more time would be dedicated to the survey and more thought placed on the selected sample.

The final limitation that was faced was one that was easier to navigate around but is significant enough that it is worth noting, it was the limitation of finding relevant literature. There was a limited amount of research available that

specifically related to Irish graduates in the workplace but this was overcome by research graduate literature in a global context. By broadening this context, it meant that much more caution had to be used when generalising the results from the research material because it may not all fall in line with what the circumstances are in Ireland.

Despite all the limitations that were faced a fully comprehensive study has been presented and has created a branch in Irish graduate related literature that provides an opportunity for lots of further study in the years to come. Should anyone be considering conducting a study of a similar nature it would be advisable to select a more concentrated sample and specifically direct the survey questions in a way that will gain the best possible results from this sample.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

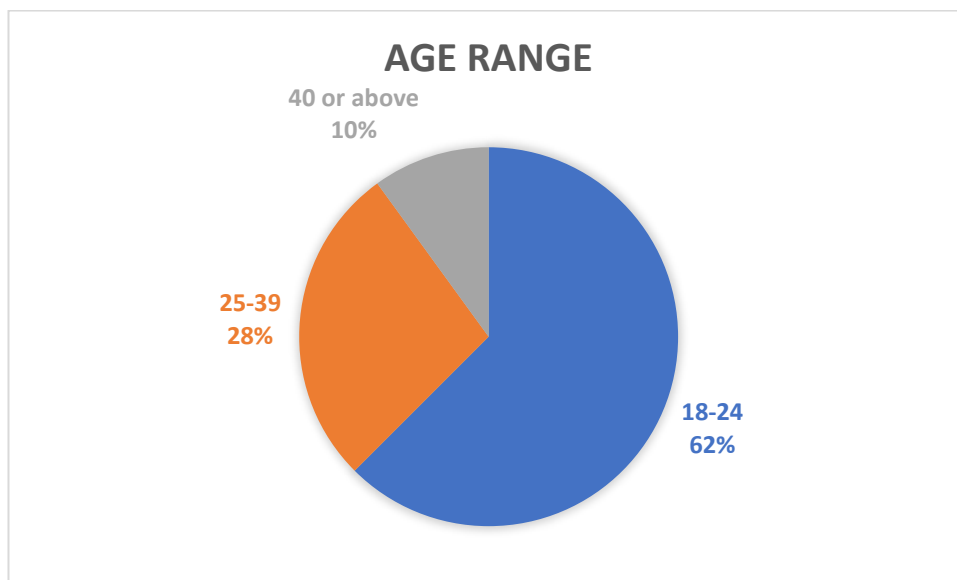
After the survey was completed all the results had to be gathered and analysed. For the distribution of the survey Google Forms was used so this meant that all the results were already presented in both a collective and individual manner. Each individual response was looked at to determine if there was a theme to their answers. The results were also looked at as a completed whole to determine what generalisations could be made and to see if any specific areas stood out in a particularly positive or negative manner.

Firstly, the data needs to be looked at as a collective to see if any clear patterns emerged. Due to the survey response rate not being as high as wished for it became difficult to find clear patterns or generalisations emerging as was already previously mentioned in the limitations of this study. However, there was still some consistency in results and when broken down correctly ideas can start to be drawn about which areas graduates were satisfied with and which ones they thought could be improved in comparison to what their initial perceptions were before joining the workplace.

The respondents age range and field of study varied but the majority have graduated in the past three years and all were now working in the service sector as has been requested in the details of the study. The age range was what was expected, over 60% were in the age bracket of 18 – 24, see Fig. 1. This would have been expected as most graduates would be of a younger age when entering the workplace but it does also show that there is a high number of individuals who return to education at a later stage in life, this may be as a postgraduate student or

to start fresh as an undergraduate if they have never studied prior to that. As mentioned earlier in the study within the OECD countries those who have achieved a higher education have a lower unemployment rate of 4.9% (OECD, 2016), this has also represented itself amongst the respondents of this study by showing that 82.1% were working in full time employment with a further 12.8% working in part time employment helping to further show the benefits education can have when it comes to finding employment.

Fig. 1



One area that a lot of positivity came from within the survey was how graduates communicate with other colleague's in the workplace. When asked if they freely share opinions with colleague's they returned a mean value of 4.58 with the maximum possible value being 6. In addition to this they were asked if they listen to their colleague's problems and opinions, to this they responded with a mean value of 4.75 from a maximum of 6. Both these represent a good level of communication among employees and provides positive indicators because the

modal response for both questions was the value of 6. When comparing the results for these two questions against the results from the Malaysian research that inspired this study it is clear to see that the results from this study are a lot more positive and provided a much higher mean score for both questions (Jusof, et al., 2011). If these responses are compared to the responses to the question relating to employees being informed about what is happening in the organisation some clear differences can be seen in the responses, see fig. 3. This indicates that employees are communicating well with one another but they don't feel management are communicating the necessary information in relation to the day to day ongoing business of the organisation.

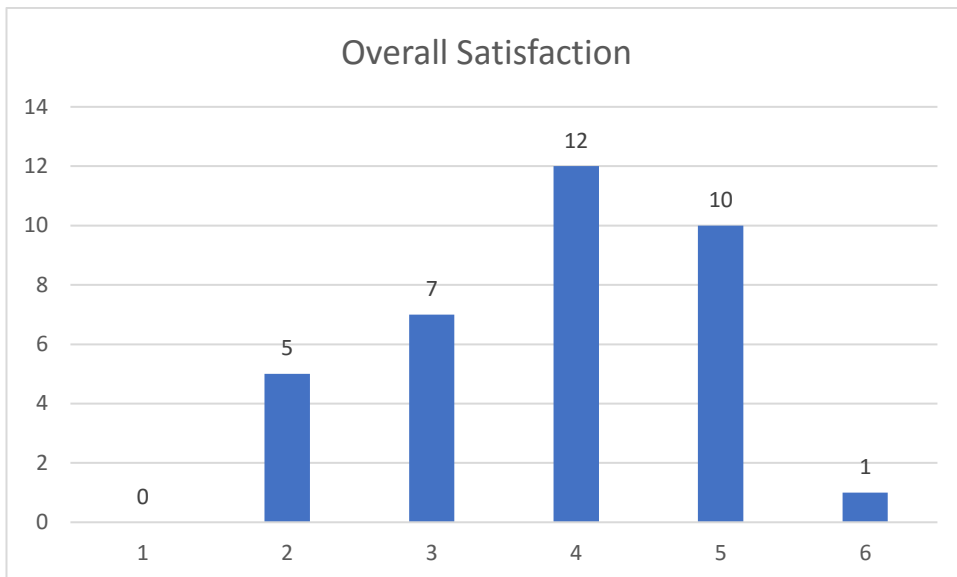
Fig. 3



The final question of the survey was a broad question but also one that gave a good insight in to how graduates find the workplace, the question was 'how satisfied are you in your current role and organisation?'. This is such an important question because the results represent an accumulation of all the

previous questions summed up in to one. The results from this question were not overwhelmingly positive but they also weren't very negative, see fig 4. The results are split down the middle with a mean score being 3.86. This reinforces the idea that there are positive elements for graduates in the workplace but also that there is still areas of the workplace that can be improved upon to increase the overall level of satisfaction.

Fig. 4



FINDINGS

Discussion of Results

After all the data from the survey was analysed it came time to discuss the results in comparison to the existing literature. For this the questions were split in to four sections and each section will be discussed and analysed. The four sections were supervisors, development, culture and overall satisfaction. Each section will be discussed further in the coming pages.

Contained within the survey was three questions that directly relate to supervisors. A supervisor aims to oversee the work of an employee and is usually the first point of contact in the managerial chain of command for an employee, other common terms supervisors may be known as is team leaders or line managers. A supervisor will usually have several employees on their team meaning that they need to be well rounded and capable of managing employees. It is said that anyone who works at a management level, including supervisors, needs three key skills which are technical, interpersonal and conceptual (Hitt, et al., 2012). These skills are gained and developed through experience, education and most importantly aptitude (Hitt, et al., 2012), meaning that not everyone will have the skills needed to successfully work in a management or supervisory role. In modern managerial literature one of the most cited traits that managers need is the ability to be a good leader as opposed to just being a manager, Goffee and Jones say that “real leaders genuinely care about their cause” and are highly conscious of how they come across to the employees that they lead (Goffee & Jones, 2015) (Goffee & Jones, 2009). Some of the key attributes that you will find

in good leaders are that they are trustworthy, encouraging, honest, decisive, communicative and dependable (Hitt, et al., 2012).

Overall, the result relating to supervisors tended to be of a more positive nature. The results vary at times but quite a few respondents rated several of the questions relating to supervisors on the higher scale which shows the power that a good supervisor can have. A good supervisor can make the transition from education to the workplace an easier transition by providing constructive feedback and guiding the graduate towards future opportunities. However, not all the responses in relation to supervisors was of a positive nature which shows that a bad supervisor can have a negative impact on a graduate's satisfaction in the workplace. One respondent to the survey commented at the end of the survey on their own personal experience and how it has negatively affected them, they said "No appraisals, lack of leadership from management. Self-arranged education days. Lack of support and mentorship", this shows the negative impact that bad leadership can have on a graduate's career. This emphasises the importance organisations should place on having good managers and supervisors who possess the skills and attributes that were mentioned above.

The development of a graduate's education and career is a topic that was discussed in the literature review and will now be discussed further in relation to the results of the survey. Graduates are usually highly educated and skilled so it is only natural that they would be full of ambition to continue developing when they enter the workplace which would make their perceptions pertaining to the developmental aspect of the workplace quite high. From the results gained in the survey it seems that organisations are doing well in the area of development.

When asked how organisations are doing in providing graduates with outlets to develop skills and abilities 75% of the respondents rated the efforts of the organisation on a higher scale. 72.5% of the respondents also felt that the organisations were providing supportive facilities for them to continue furthering their education. This is an impressive figure and represents support and encouragement from the organisations. When a graduate continues to improve their education and skills it provides great benefits for the organisations because they are getting a more highly educated worker which will help to increase productivity and contribution from the employee while also helping the organisation to further gain an element of competitive advantage. However, one element of development that the results were a bit more divided on were the questions relating to promotions in the workplace. Only 52.5% of the respondents felt that their organisation was providing a sufficient platform for them to improve their chances for promotion. This is an area organisations may need to look at going forward to increase their prospect of attracting and retaining graduate's employees.

The next sections of the results that needs to be discussed is from the questions that related to the culture of the respondents organisations. Culture consists of learned assumptions, values and beliefs amongst a group and in an organisational context it can influence how the employees observe and interpret the business world that they are involved in (Hitt, et al., 2012). An organisations culture is embedded throughout the organisation and is built by both the employees and the management. The culture of an organisation is as much about how the employees interact with one another as it is how they interact with

management. However, management can have more of an influence of creating the culture of an organisation with the policies they incorporate and their interactions with staff. The results from the questions relating to culture in the survey presented positive results for graduates. The respondents indicated that they are working in organisations that have a free flow of information amongst employees which will help to build a culture of trust and free expression. It also showed that the organisations that these respondents are working for are listening to customers' needs and reacting quickly to them, this is especially important in the service sector to continually improve the quality of the service that they are providing to customers. If graduates enter an organisation that has already established a positive culture amongst their employees then this will help to ease the transition from education to the workplace for graduates. Interactions with colleagues has a huge influence on job satisfaction so if an organisation has a culture of trust and support then they are improving their chances of having higher levels of job satisfaction amongst employees and making the transition for graduates a much easier experience.

The final question of the survey asked how satisfied the respondents were in their current role and organisation. This is a broad question but can tell a lot about how graduates find the workplace in an overall context. 62.5% rated the question on a higher scale which does give quite a positive indication on how organisations are performing and meeting the perceptions of graduates. Only one respondent gave the highest possible score which shows that there is room for improvement on behalf of the organisation but overall there is a strong foundation to start with.

Overall, the survey gave mixed results but as a whole they were of a more positive nature and judging by the answers of this sample group organisations are performing quite well in helping graduates transition from education to the workplace. The results have shown certain aspects that organisations could improve on going forward while also acknowledging the aspects that organisations are performing well on. The results also serve as an indictment to the fact that graduates should be cautious when setting high level perceptions when entering the workplace because it could lead to issues and a low level of job satisfaction for themselves.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the perception gaps that exist amongst new graduates after entering the workplace, throughout the study all literature used and research conducted was aimed at answering this question and finding possible explanations for the perception gaps that were found to exist. Numerous key aspects of the workplace have arisen throughout the study and have aimed to be adequately researched and addressed in a manner that offers in depth analysis to each aspect.

From the outset of the study key figures and statistics have been given to summarise the position that graduates have in the Irish labour market. Ireland produces such a high rate of graduate labour meaning that it should be of upmost importance for organisations to acknowledge and harness the benefits that a graduate labour market can provide. When hiring a third level graduate they are hiring someone who has heavily invested in their personal human capital and will be providing a high level of education and skills that they have learned through their studies, not to mention that graduates are usually eager and ambitious to make their mark in the workplace and create a successful career. Throughout the study it has been repeatedly mentioned that graduates in Ireland have a predominantly low level of organisational commitment and have tended to seek opportunities abroad if unable to find the correct opportunity here in Ireland. This shows the importance of Irish organisations placing an emphasis on managing graduate labour and expectations because if they don't a significant number of

them will leave the country for prolonged periods to make a better career, meaning that Irish organisations will miss out on the benefits that these employees should offer.

The survey that was conducted provided the main body of the research for this study and provided mixed results. The response rate was not what was hoped for but the responses that were received did provide an interesting point of study and helped to answer the research questions that were stated from the outset. The study aimed to explain that gaps in perceptions for graduates. Using the literature and results of the study the main explanation that can be concluded that it comes down to a difference in values between graduates and the employers that they work for. Graduates set high expectations when they enter the workplace which makes it more difficult for them to be met. Graduates enter in to established organisations who already have their business aims and objectives that they work towards so when hiring a graduate they expect them to get on board and also work towards them aims and objectives.

Managing graduates should be treated in the same way that organisations managed their talented staff because with that nourishment these graduates have the potential to develop in to talented and key members of the staff. From the literature and results of the study one thing became clear and that is the importance of a good supervisor and leader. The literature showed the ideal model of how a supervisor should act while the results showed that the respondents don't necessarily feel like all their supervisors do lead and manage in this manner. A good supervisor can motivate and graduate and help develop them to their

maximum potential which will then provide great benefits for the graduate and the organisation because both will benefit from this achieved potential.

Development in the workplace was the next topic that featured prominently throughout the study. Development is so important for graduates because they have been through the education system for many years developing themselves and when they get to the workplace they want to keep developing. There are many ways organisations can help graduates develop but there is organisations in Ireland that are going above and behind to help these graduate employee to continuously develop and better themselves. By referring to the Kerry Group case studied that was mentioned in the earlier stages of this study a good example is seen for how Irish organisations can help graduate employees to continue developing while in the workplace. The Kerry Group state that their aim is to help the transition from education to the workplace so they can help to create a long-term future for these graduates as part of their organisations (Stewart & Rigg, 2011). The graduate programme that they have set up is quite innovative in its nature and many Irish organisations could use this as a bench mark for where they wish to get their graduate and development programmes. The innovative nature of this programme probably plays a role in why the CIPD chose to use it as a case study. The results from the survey did present good ratings on development but they weren't as good as what was hoped for so it does show that many areas can still be improved upon by Irish organisations.

Going forward in Ireland graduates will play a vital role in the labour market. The Irish labour market is always looking for highly skilled and educated workers so if the organisations are willing to place the effort on developing a

graduate and helping them gain the experience needed to progress then they will surely end up with a highly skilled and educated work force to help achieve business objectives and continuously help the organisation grow in the years to come.

CIPD Recommendations

On conclusion of this study the results and analysis had to be assessed to put forward some suggested recommendations to the CIPD. These recommendations would be reflective of what Irish organisations could do to make the transition from education to the workplace an easier and more beneficial experience for both Irish graduates and organisations. The recommendations from this study would be that the two main areas organisation should look at is the recruitment and retention of graduate employees.

The area of recruitment is of high significance in the graduate labour market because it is the first stage of working life for graduates. Organisations should be promoting themselves as an employer of choice amongst graduates in order to gain competitive advantage in the recruitment stage of the work cycle. To become an employer of choice among graduates would be very beneficial to the employer brand of any organisation. It shows that it is an organisation that is willing to offer opportunities and develop the next generation of staff. One of the already established resources that organisations could use to attract and recruit graduates is the many graduate fairs that are conducted around Ireland each year. To take part in these graduate fairs would be of relatively low cost to employers. By investing even €5000 then organisations could create stands, posters, leaflets and supply the man power needed to promote themselves at these graduate fairs. It would build a reputation as an employer that recruits graduates and should lead to a higher influx of applications for vacancies within the organisation.

Once the graduates have been recruited the next major area that organisations should be focused on is ensuring that they are able to retain them. From the results of the study and analysis the main area that would be recommended for organisations to focus on to improve retention would be their developmental area. By providing training days and on the job upskilling graduates will feel that they are continuing to improve themselves and that they are working towards greater opportunities in the future. Employers can invest various amounts depending on how much they wish to spend on development. They could range from investing relatively low amounts on training days and on the job training to investing heavily on continuous education through outlets such as postgraduate courses. The important point to remember is that organisations must view development as an investment that will help to gain competitive advantage in the workplace while also helping to retain their highly skilled graduate workforce.

Overall, organisations in Ireland seem to be performing quite well with managing graduates but that doesn't mean that they can become complacent. Organisations must continue to improve working conditions for graduates in order to attain a satisfied and hardworking skilled labour force.

CIPD Learning Journal / Reflection

Through the completion of this thesis along with the curriculum of the MA in Human Resource Management course I have learned a lot. When starting the course, I had a very minimal knowledge on the field of study but on completion I feel that I have gained the knowledge and skills needed for a successful career in a human resource department going forward. I have learned the relevant information needed to work in a human resource department while also improving my overall employability by gaining this accreditation and learning many relevant details about the business world. The thesis proved to be the most difficult aspect of the course because it was the largest individual research project I have had to complete to date. I suffered many setbacks and obstacles throughout the study but overall, I was satisfied with the final product that was presented. If conducting the project again there would certainly be areas that I would focus more on and changes that would be made. To conclude, this thesis was an enjoyable experience and something that I have learned a lot from which will greatly benefit my career and any further study I may complete in the future.

REFERENCES

References List

Becker, G., 1962. Investment in Human Capital: A Theoretical Analysis. *The Journal of Political Economy*, 70(5.2), pp. 9 - 49.

Burlutskaya, M., 2014. Higher Education as a Means of UPward Social Mobility: The Expectations of Graduates and the Realities of Present-Day Society. *Russian Education and Society*, 56(4), pp. 52 - 63.

Chambers, E. et al., 1998. The War for Talent. *The McKinsey Quarterly*, Issue 3.

Daly, B. & Doherty, M., 2010. *Principles of Irish Employment Law*. 1st ed. Dublin: Clarus Press Ltd.

Dawson, C., 2009. *Introduction to Research Methods: A Practical Guide for Anyone Undertaking a Research Project*. 5th ed. London: Constable & Robinson Ltd..

Dobbs, R., Sun, J. & Roberts, P., 2008. Human Capital and Screening Theories: Implications for Human Resource Development. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 10(6), pp. 788 - 801.

Doh, J., Smith, R. & Stumpf, S. T. J. W., 2001. Pride and Professionals: Retaining Talent in Emerging Economies. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 32(5), pp. 35 - 42.

Fernando, K. V., 2008. Aligning Recruitment to Talent Management Efforts. *The Association for Strategy & Leadership Professionals*, pp. 1 - 7.

- Flisi, S. et al., 2014. *Occupational Mismatch in Europe: Understanding Overeducation and Overskilling for Policy Making.*, Luxemburg: JRC Science and Policy Reports.
- Gartzia, L. & Baniandrés, J., 2015. Are People-Orientated Leaders Percieved as Less Effective in Task Performance? Surprising Results from Two Experimental Studies. *Journal of Business Research*, pp. 1 - 9.
- Goffee, R. & Jones, G., 2009. *Clever.* 1st ed. Boston: Harvard Business Review.
- Goffee, R. & Jones, G., 2015. *Why Should Anyone be Led by You? What it Takes to be an Authentic Leader.* 1st ed. Boston: Harvard Business Review.
- Hersch, J. & Xiao, J., 2016. Sex, Race, and Job Satisfaction Among Highly Educated Workers. *Southern Economic Journal*, 83(1), pp. 1 - 24.
- Hitt, M. A., Black, J. S. & Porter, L. W., 2012. *Management.* 3rd ed. New Jersey: Pearson Education.
- Jusof, M., Simun, M. S. & Choy Chong, S., 2011. Expectation Gaps, Job Satisfaction and Organisational Commitment of Fresh Graduates: Roles of Graduates, Higher Learning Institutions and Employers.. *Education + Training*, 53(6), pp. 515 - 530.
- Knox, S. & Freeman, C., 2006. Measurung and Managing Employer Brand Image in the Service Industry. *Journal of Marketing Management*, Volume 22, pp. 695 - 716.
- Kollias, C., Tourna, E. & Koukouletos, K., 2012. Job Satisfaction of Higher Education Graduates. *Operational Research* , 12(3), pp. 421 - 437.

Kucel, A. & Vilalta - Bufí, M., 2013. Job Satisfaction of University Graduates. *Revista de Economía Aplicada*, XXI(61), pp. 29 - 55.

Lockwood, N. R., 2006. *Talent Management: Driver for Organizational Success*. [Online]

Available at:

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/9621/b77d004dd791177906f12eb364f7061fe022.pdf>

[Accessed 24 07 2017].

Moriarty, E., Wickham, J., Daly, S. & Bobek, A., 2015. Graduate Emigration from Ireland: Navigating New Pathways in Familiar Places. *Irish Journal of Sociology*, 23(2), pp. 71 - 92 .

Murray, P. & Wickham, J., 1990. Irish Graduate Emigration and the Single European Market. *An Irish Quarterly Review*, 79(313), pp. 56 - 62.

OECD, 2016. *Education at a Glance 2016: OECD Indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing .

Russell, H., Smyth, E. & O'Connell, P. J., 2010. Gender Differences in Pay Among Recent Graduates: Private Sector Employees in Ireland. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 13(2), pp. 213 - 233.

Salahodjaev, R., 2015. Is More Always Good? Over - Education, Job Satisfaction and Wages on the Czech Labour Market. *Society and Economy*, 37(3), pp. 403 - 414.

Saunders, M., Philip, L. & Thornhill, A., 2009. *Research Methods for Business Students*. 5th ed. Essex: Pearson Education Limited.

Stephens, S., 2015. The Global Financial Crisis and Migration: The Experience of Irish Graduates. *Journal of Global Mobility*, 3(1), pp. 83 - 99.

Stewart, J. & Rigg, C., 2011. *Learning and Talent Development*. 1st ed. London: Chartered Institution of Personnel and Development.

Vila, L., Garcia-Aracil, A. & Mora, J.-G., 2007. The Distribution of Job Satisfaction Among Young European Graduates: Does the Choice of Study Field Matter?. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 78(1), pp. 97 - 118.

Vroom, V. H. & Jago, A. G., 2007. The Role of the Situation in Leadership. *American Psychologist*, 62(1), pp. 17 - 24.

Wallace, J. et al., 2013. *Industrial Relations in Ireland*. 4th ed. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan.

Appendix

Appendix 1:



(Flisi, et al., 2014)

Appendix 2:

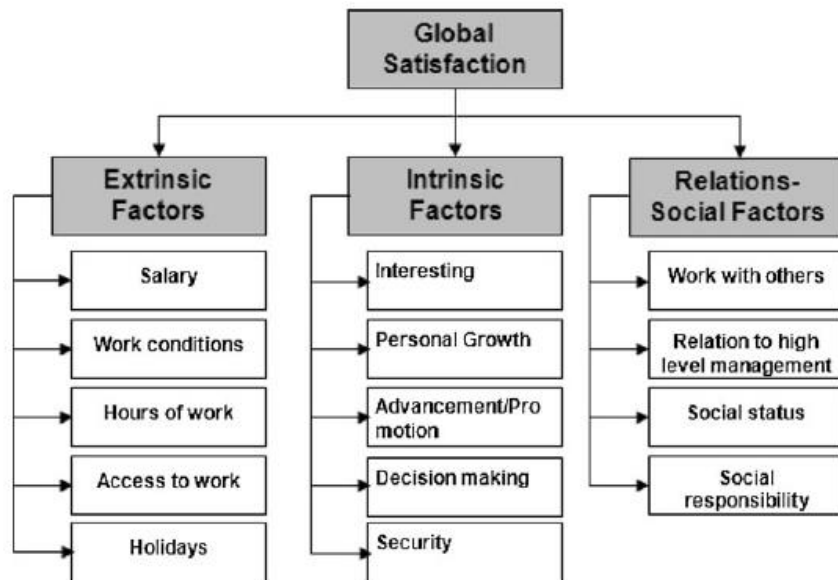


Fig. 1 Hierarchical diagram of criteria and subcriteria

(Kollias, et al., 2012)

Appendix 3:

- Allows a lot of freedom to work on your own initiative
- Employs people with whom you feel you will have things in common
- Has a dynamic, forward-looking approach to their business
- Has a friendly, informal culture
- In the early years, offers the opportunity to move around the organisation and work in different roles
- Invests heavily in training and development of its employees
- Is a pure meritocracy
- Is a small organisation
- Is widely regarded as a highly prestigious employer
- Offers a lot of scope for creativity in your work
- Offers a relatively stress-free working environment
- Offers a very high starting salary
- Offers clear opportunities for long-term career progression
- Offers the opportunity for international travel
- Offers the opportunity to work and live abroad
- Offers variety in your daily work
- Provides you with an internationally diverse mix of colleagues
- Really cares about their employees as individuals
- Requires you to work standard working hours only
- Uses your degree skills

(Knox & Freeman, 2006)