MBA Dissertation

How successful are graduates of Generation Y in securing employment in their chosen field?

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Abstract

[Motivation] In today’s competitive labour market it is imperative to have a secure career. However, due to recession and other external influences, that can sometimes be very difficult to achieve. Many recent graduates find themselves in the position of being unemployed or underemployed. That raises the question whether young people should pursue a higher degree at all. [Research Focus] This dissertation investigates how members of Generation Y perceive their educational history, their opinions and values as well as their challenges in the labour market. Such a study is important because students should receive advice on how to better prepare themselves for their professional future. This dissertation will also give advice of how colleges can be a better support function for their students. Furthermore, employers’ challenges and opportunities will be discussed as well. [Research Methods] The research methods include an extensive review of relevant literature, together with a collection of and analysis of empirical data. That data is built on 201 questionnaires. While a link to the questionnaire was provided onto several online tools, a small amount of questionnaires was distributed during summer classes at Dublin Business School. [Findings/Conclusions] The fundamental conclusions are that Generation Y does not have unrealistic career aspirations and that it is absolutely normal for graduates of Generation Y to go through a so-called ‘transition time’ from graduating college to their first years in the labour market until being in the career they aim to be in. [Recommendations] The dissertation recommends that students collect as much professional experience as possible before graduating, whether doing internships or working part time. Other recommendations include building networking skills, making use of college’s career service and being open and confident.

Keywords: Generation Y/ Gen Y, students, graduates.
Each generation goes further than the generation preceding it because it stands on the shoulders of that generation. You will have opportunities beyond anything we've ever known.

Ronald Reagan
Chapter 1
Introduction

The researcher begins this dissertation by presenting a general background to her topic. Then she will outline the focus of her research and provide a rationale for her study. Following that, the overall research aim and individual research objectives will be clarified. In the last part of the introduction, the researcher justifies the value and importance that the study generates for the external audience.

Background

Competition in today’s labour market is extremely fierce. Many young college graduates have an excellent academic background but lack work experience. The idea of this particular study occurred to the researcher when she was looking for appropriate jobs upon the completion of her MBA. She used social media sites such as LinkedIn and Monster. The ugly truth is that barely any jobs that require a postgraduate degree were listed for graduates who lack work experience. Employers whom were advertising jobs, in which a postgraduate degree is a must, required a minimum of two to three years of work experience. Other entry-level jobs that do not require work experience merely ask for a Bachelor’s degree or lower. The question that occurred to her was if it would have been better to first gain some work experience and then to continue the academic career of pursuing a postgraduate level. The researcher is not alone with this sensation or problem because there are thousands of students who continue their academic career after having graduated with a Bachelor’s degree.

Also, it currently seems that young people, especially the ones that do possess an academic degree, have major difficulties finding work upon graduating. This is not only a phenomenon, but also an actual problem, not just for the young graduates but also for the entire workforce.

It is comprehensible that individuals who are just in the initial stages of their professional careers need some transition time into the labour market. Abel et al. (2014, pp. 1-8) explain that the percentage of recent college graduates who are unemployed or “underemployed”, which means, working in a position that does not require the individual’s
degree, has significantly risen, especially since the economic recession. The authors also say that the quality of the jobs held by the underemployed has declined and still, more and more graduates feel enforced accepting low-wage or part-time jobs. For example, the Office for National Statistics in the UK found out that almost half of recent graduates are in non-graduate jobs. The number has risen from already disappointing 39 percent in 2008/9 to 47 percent in 2013 (Allen, 2013).

There are a number of reasons why graduates have trouble finding their place in the labour market. One major reason, and graduates certainly have no influence in that, are economical crises that come and go.

Putting aside the external environment and possible lack of work experience, do they lack any abilities that are required in the workplace for professional success such as communication skills, time management, and leadership and problem-solving skills? Nowadays, it is important for employers that employees not only have hard skills but a perfect combination between the both, hard and soft skills (Rao, 2012).

**Research Focus**

Competition for the job market is not only intense among Gen Y’ers. Recent research from Ernst & Young has shown that although the supply of labour has grown substantially during the past two years, even employers face a ‘fierce’ battle to attract and retain the highest skilled workers (Churchard, 2014). Research on unemployment in general is enormous and information about Generation Y is sufficient and easy to gather. Interestingly, almost everything that has been published about Generation Y does not come from Generation Y itself. Conducted research about Generation Y, sometimes also referred to, as Millennials is mainly attributed to Generation X and older. Hence, most of their findings are based on opinion and observation. Even if young adults participate in research projects, findings and analysis are formed by researchers, and they usually are not part of Generation Y. And this is where another fresh angle of research becomes clear, as the researcher herself is part of Generation Y.
The researcher is particularly interested in Generation Y with college degrees, whether they are about to achieve their Bachelor’s or Master’s degree or whether graduates have already started their career in the professional labour market.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) (2013) and McCrindle Research (2006) carried out large studies about new generations at work and how to efficiently and effectively create a working environment in which Generation Y feels nurtured, challenged and respected. Nonetheless, extensive research on aligning Generation Y with other generations and problems and challenges that Generation Y might has, coming from college into the labour market, has not yet been conducted.

According to another survey carried out by the CIPD “too few employers are engaging with young people at school or college to build their employability skills or providing work experience placements, apprenticeships, internships or entry level jobs for young people“ (Cipd.co.uk, 2013). This could be one reason why graduates struggle to find work. However, there is some research of leading organisations establishing partnerships with universities and other learning institutions to “secure a pipeline of work ready candidates, with skills that are specific to their industry” (Steele, 2014, cited in Churchward, 2014).

Many employers today are working hard on building a diverse workplace. The research on diversity is vast, not just in terms of basic forms of diversity such as race, religion, sexual orientation and ethnicity but also more specifically on diversity at the workplace. Browaeys et al. (2011, p. 261) state that for example people with different expertise and experience in certain kinds of projects enrich other people’s knowledge. “Diversity itself motivates tolerance” and this means that people working together from a diverse background is a challenge in itself but this challenge creates an environment of collaboration and flexibility to work under potentially complex conditions. Many international consultants and managers agree that diverse and global teams are one of the most consistent sources of competitive advantage (Luthans et al., 2012, p. 166). A large study carried out by Groysberg et al. (2013) gives insight on how leaders can create diverse and inclusive organisations.

Because Generation Y has to share the workplace with other generations, it is crucial that the researcher further investigates the area of generational diversity. She is especially
interested in soon-to-be graduates and recent graduates of Generation Y. By finding out what their opinions, attitudes and expectations are in terms of employment she is hoping to provide a new and fresh angle to existing research. There seem to be some inconsistencies between opinions of researchers, employers and maybe even parents whether today’s generation has unrealistic career expectations or not. Therefore this research aims at finding out what Gen Y really believes, whether they admit being very selective and/or demanding in respect to their first career or whether that has recently changed.

Although the topic of the study is the researcher’s own interest and as a matter of fact, she is a graduate of Generation Y herself, this study can be of great importance to other young graduates. The study will also be significant to older generations, as many companies are undertaking a huge effort towards making the mix of generations work.

The main research question that the researcher is interested in, is:

How successful are graduates of Generation Y in securing employment in their chosen field?

Sub-research questions, which will be explored, are:

- What are the challenges for recent graduates when seeking employment?
- What recommendations can be given to soon-to-be graduates and recent graduates of how they can better prepare themselves for the labour market?
- What is most important when having multiple generations at work?

Overall Research Aim and Individual Research Objectives
The overall aim of the research will be finding out what college students think of their academic history, how they value it and most importantly how they perceive their professional future will look like. Further, this research will assess the current topics of Generation Y in the workplace, including what challenges and expectations employers have to face and what kind of guidance can be given to them.

The introduced hypothesis for the research is, that:

Recent college graduates of Generation Y will have to come a long way before being in the career they are aiming to be in.

Specifically, within the context of Generation Y in the workplace, the individual objectives of this research are to:

1. Identify the possible causes of failure in securing employment in their chosen field.
2. Explore Generation Y’s expectations and whether they are in relation to their possible workplace and investigate their views, values, and attitudes.
3. Evaluate critically how successful graduates of Generation Y are in securing employment in their chosen field.
4. Formulate recommendations to soon-to-be graduates and recent graduates of how they can better prepare themselves for the labour market.

The first objective is necessary as it is the starting point of the discussion of the researcher’s hypothesis and the collection and evaluation of secondary data. Objective two and three together will form the basis of the literature review but also involve the analysis of empirical data. The researcher will add on to existing research in that area. Finally, as a result of the literature review, findings and analysis of the questionnaires, recommendations can be given.

Value of this Research

The rationale of asking the questions is that the researcher believes it is very interesting for current students to know the answer to these questions. It is needless to say that
extensive research on Generation Y has already been conducted but the aim of this research is to make students aware of what they might be expecting after they graduate and give them guidelines of how to prepare for the job market. In practice, the topic might also be of interest to colleges and employers/managers. They might adjust practices and consider new opportunities that can be provided for soon-to-be graduates and recent graduates of Generation Y. This study is neither experimental, nor longitudinal; the areas covered are of urgent interest because it reflects the current circumstances, non-perceived because of secondary research provided and perceived because of primary research.

**Outline Structure**

The next chapter of the dissertation is a literature review only. Although the main topic discussed is Generation Y and their expectations and challenges, allusion will also be made to the overall picture, generational diversity and how to manage a multigenerational workforce. Chapter three covers the methodology used for this dissertation while chapter four deals with the findings, the analysis and the synthesis of the primary research. In the conclusion, the individual research objectives will be looked at again, stating whether they have been achieved or not.

**Chapter 2**

**Literature Introduction**
“The modern business has no place to hide. It has no place to go but everywhere” (Lane et al., 1997). The international business environment is the most complex of all systems because it includes everyone, in and outside of an organisation.

Before addressing the main topic, it is necessary to look at the overall picture. Therefore this chapter starts by discussing diversity in general. There are numerous forms of diversity and there seems to be no universal definition. For the dissertation, the broad term of diversity will be narrowed down to generational diversity. Consideration of generational diversity is crucial as this will be evident in most of today’s workplaces. There are challenges to having multiple generations at work but if handled accordingly, it can be of great benefit, not only to the organisation but also to the individual. In order to successfully manage multiple generations at work, managers should fully understand each generation’s expectations, values and communication styles. Then it is to align them and find a common ground so that organisations together can hit the ground running. Generation Y will be discussed in detail, giving more attention to graduates of Generation Y. Focus will be put on the expectations and challenges they have. Finally, the whole picture from the employer’s perspective will be looked at, addressing their expectations and challenges and how these can turn into benefits for them.

Diversity

Authors and researchers and those people that teach or train about diversity seem to not agree on a universal definition for diversity, however, most would agree that they do align with each other. There are various forms of definitions ranging from broad to detailed explanations. According to Thomas, diversity simply includes “individuals who are different in some ways and similar in others” (Thomas, 1999, p. 5).

Loden (1996, p. 16) uses primary and secondary dimensions to describe diversity. The primary dimensions include race, age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and mental/physical abilities and those cannot easily be changed while the secondary dimensions such as religion, communication style, education, income and geographical location are more interchangeable.
Diversity itself is not a new phenomenon but there is a growing recognition that it is not only considered as a morally good thing but also businesses see the necessity of embracing it (Clements and Jones, 2006, p. 5). Certainly, embracing it does not mean to merely include ‘diversity’ in business policies, rather it is to demonstrate day-to-day activities for people and actually celebrating diversity. This can include the engagement of education, a training and recognition programme and open communication.

Wynne proposes that there are five different forms of diversity in the EU workplace and he claims that businesses must be prepared to address all of them. The suggested forms of diversity are older workers, members of ethnic minorities, members of certain religions, women and workers with disabilities (Wynne, 2012, p. 32).

There seems to be a disagreement within Wynne’s statement as he says that the ageing of the population has guaranteed that fewer young employees are entering the workforce every year. Although it now is more important than ever to retain older employees by keeping them in good health, productive and motivated as they have the experience and the knowledge that younger employees yet have to gain, more and more Baby Boomers will soon retire and younger people will start entering the workforce. And although those younger people bring fewer and sometimes no professional experience to the workplace, they are to be valued as well because they have excellent theoretical skills and what is more, they are computer savvy. Having a working culture of multiple generations is challenging and often times not easy but it is of significant value if treated appropriately.

Diversity aligns well with a learning organisation. Pedler et al. (1989) describe it as not simply an organisation, which sticks to a comprehensive training but rather an organisation “which facilitates the learning of all its members and continuously transforms itself”. A learning organisation is described as where “one lives and breathes knowledge acquisition and skill development” – the ultimate extension of ‘learning on the job’ (Price, 2007, p. 516). Hence, it is crucial aligning all these diverse members in the workforce; these are Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y. It needs to be investigated where values of the different groups of people can be aligned.

**Generational Diversity**
The term ‘generation’ will briefly be considered before the topic around generational diversity is discussed. A generation is an “identifiable group that shares birth years, age, location and significant life events at critical development stages” (Kupperschmidt, 2000). Lancaster and Stillman (2005) describe that generations have developed their own ‘personality’ shaped by events, icons and conditions that have an influence on attitudes as well as values of each person within that generation. Owing to exactly this fact, it is paramount to not only be aware of different generations but to be able to manage them accordingly.

Studies and research on diversity are widespread but generational diversity has received less attention. According to Matin and Tulgan (2002), the newest diversity issue in the workplace is age diversity. Principal of McCrindle Research, Mark McCrindle, also believes that intergenerational conflict outweighs gender and cultural conflict as the biggest issue facing today’s workplace (McCrindle Research, 2006 cited in Dorizas, 2009). Because most organisations employ a diverse range of generations, this topic needs greater consideration. Also, as this dissertation’s focus is Generation Y in the workforce, it is important to consider generational diversity because multiple age groups are at work. Referring back to the above-mentioned definition about diversity, “individuals who are different in some ways and similar in others”, the question arises how different or how similar are the various generations?

Backes-Gellner and Veen (2013) found out that increasing age diversity has a positive effect on company productivity, however, only if a company’s preference is in creative rather than routine work. The diversity in terms of interests and attitudes among people of different ages is huge and more than ever it is important to find common consensus because that is what eventually will lead to organisational competitive advantage. In order to be able to make sense of some differences and similarities, some of the beliefs and attitudes of three generations that are currently in the workforce will be considered.
From the table above it seems that the three generations are completely different in terms of opinions and attitudes relating to the job. However, other aspects such as ‘work-life balance’ were not considered. Generation Y is famous for demanding a proper ‘work-life balance’ but Baby Boomers and Generation X also need some kind of balance to remain happy, creative and productive at the workplace. According to Klun (2008), “work-life balance is a cross-generational concern – and a key to retaining high performers”. Some main characteristics of Baby Boomers and Generation X will briefly be discussed before studying Generation Y in further detail.

Some basic characteristics of Baby Boomers are that they have a strong work ethic; they are goal oriented and highly competitive (Gavatorta, 2012). They assume that working overtime is a given as it was during this generation that the normal working week started to increase from 40 hours per week (Cekada, 2012). Whether one holds an academic degree or not, Baby Boomers believe that it is imperative to work your way up with experience (Bruce Mayhew Consulting, 2014). Scheef and Thielfoldt (2004), describe that many companies experience their major generational difference or disagreement when Boomer managers have to manage younger employees who, according to their opinion, “don’t fit the mold”. Here allusion may be made to loyalty. In general, Baby Boomers are considered to manifest loyalty to their company and Generation Y are typically seen as disloyal to their employers.

According to Gavatorta (2012), Gen Xer’s main characteristics are that they are extremely individualistic and technologically proficient, and demanding a high work-life balance. In fact, most literature agrees that this age group is the one that request a balance between home and work more than any other generation. While Generation X is somewhat

This table was adapted from Clare Mulligan, www.claremulliganconsulting.ie
similar to Generation Y, Gen X’ers are often renowned for their scepticism and negativity while Gen Y’ers are more known to be optimistic. Many sources claim similar characteristics for Generation X and Generation Y but then they state that the generations are hugely different in terms of values, opinions and expectations. Is that really the case? For instance, members of Generation X are known to place a high value on family time, a high work-life balance and that they are eager to learn new skills while having meaningful work. The same is often said for members of Generation Y. Based on the perception of Generation Y, part of the primary research will look at whether the different generation are similar or not.

**Generation Y**

Gen Y’ers are sometimes also referred to as Millenials or the New Boomers, however “Generation Y” is the term that is most popular. Different literature presents different birth years for Generation Y. While some authors say that Gen Y’ers are people born between 1984 and 2004, others say they are born between 1980 and 1999. There is no universal definition of birth years for Generation Y.

Generation Y is an enormously optimistic, educated, energetic and compassionate generation (Kehrli and Sopp, 2006). They seem to know what they want and they are not afraid to ask for it. Members of Generation Y are described to be the ‘masters’ of the Internet because they are extremely confident with technology (Hayes, 2006). They are also characterised as being incredibly independent (Seidl, 2008) and creative and team oriented (Blake, 2011).

Generation Y is labelled in such different ways, that it seems there is an abundance of information. There is no doubt that those young people shape the modern workplace, but if too much attention is given to the younger working population, older generations might feel that they are pushed away. Eime (2011) correctly acknowledges “despite the imperative to engage and attract the younger generation of talented candidates for the future, older, experienced workers should not be ignored for immediate needs”. In many cases, that seems to be the case.

More often than not, members of Generation Y are, above all, portrayed as being very narcissistic. That does not arise from nowhere. Most parents of Generation Y raised their
children in a way that they received praise for each and every little thing. Erickson (2008) says that detractors criticise Generation Y “as products of a misguided movement in parenting and education designed to buffer children from the negative effects of competition and build self-esteem – an approach, they argue, that has filled them with false self-confidence.” Whether this rather open statement is to be considered as true or not, it should be taken into account that those whom label Generation Y as narcissistic despite knowing the term and meaning of being narcissistic, the definition of the term might change overtime. As some words are being added or taken out of dictionaries, some terms need new elucidation.

All the attributes about Generation Y, positive and negative, are sometimes not only contradictory in itself but they also represent a catalogue of generalisations. Every so often that can be considered extremely criticising. Many authors fail to recognise one important point and that is the acknowledgement of precisely those generalisations made. Gelbart and Komninos (2012) consider these generalisations quite serious. Individuals of Generation Y grew up in different socio-economic circumstances. Some individuals are well educated while others are not. Some have parents where both were working to build a career while others may only have had one parent that worked and in some cases, parents were not working at all. These situations, as well as the financial position, education and general knowledge, affect and shape each individual. Therefore, it is inappropriate categorising Generation Y, in fact, any generation.

**Graduates of Generation Y**

After graduating college, it becomes extremely important to get things sorted and to plan what will happen next. While some students start reflecting on things while still in college, for example if they are on the road of achieving their goals, if their goals have changed, what they have learned so far, if they already know in which industry and what companies to apply and much more, others only start thinking about it upon graduating college. Having work experience or not, Twyford (2007) states that “Gen Y graduates are the future”.

A study carried out in 2006 asking executives and human resource managers of more than 400 companies on their opinion about Generation Y revealed that college graduates of today only have “adequate” professionalism, innovation, creativity, critical thinking, and
problem-solving skills (Ellin, 2014). Whether Generation Y agrees or disagrees with those findings of that particular study, it is crucial to concede that this is the perception of managers.

Generation Y is criticised for their ‘pickiness’ and unrealistic career expectations (Gray, 2008). Many sources will agree with this statement. However, there are others, such as Alice Swanson, (professor at the University of Colorado Leeds School of Business and president of Learn to Earn Workshops, which trains college seniors and recent graduates on interpreting their skills, interviewing and finding their first career occupation,) who as a matter of fact has talked to hundreds of college graduates, and she came to the conclusion that the trend of being ‘picky’ about the first job seems to have declined. She explains that graduates know they need to start low and work hard (Swanson, 2008).

**Challenges for Graduates of Generation Y**

Many college students work part-time to finance their tuition fees. Often times, these part-time jobs are not related to their field of studies. They work at grocery stores, fast food restaurants, restaurants, hotels or call centres. One major challenge for recent college graduates is that they need to learn to sell their skills in the right way. This leads to the assumption that these young people will not get any far by merely telling in an interview that they worked at restaurants during the summer or during college. However, if they explain that while working at a restaurant for example, they have gained significant customer experience and work commitment; that is a great benefit to employers (Swanson, 2008).

It might be a big challenge to convert theoretical skills and knowledge into practice, especially for the ones whom only have little to no working experience at all. Twyford (2007) explains that in today’s work environment, it is important to “think outside the square and towards solutions”.

Another challenge but also an opportunity is that even before graduating, it is important to start networking and building relationships. Many researchers for example agree that providing an accurate and comprehensive LinkedIn-account can benefit long before applying for jobs. Schlesinger (2013) says that presenting yourself on LinkedIn can become a great asset.
Nevertheless, despite having a decent college degree, numerous graduates are facing unemployment, underemployment as well as fierce competition from experienced workers (Schlichting, 2012). A study carried out by High Fliers, a company that analyses graduate recruitment data from 30 universities in the UK reveal that graduates who had worked while in college were three times more likely to get a job. Martin Birchall, the managing director of the company concluded “Work experience is no longer an optional extra for university students, it’s an essential part of preparing for the graduate job market” (cited in Graduate Fog, 2013).

Many reports talk about how recent graduates are unsuccessful at finding jobs that are suited to their level of education (Abel, Deitz and Su, 2014). Regardless whether graduates are under or overqualified for jobs, have enough working experience or not, one major reason why graduates fail to obtain a job is recession times. The authors also found out that recent graduates, if they find a job, have to take on low-wage positions. This raises the question, whether members of Generation Y should still be advised to go to pursue a postgraduate degree. Rosemary Guzman Hook, a certified career coach and executive recruiter at Hook The Talent, Inc., emphasises to not undervalue experience. She said that a Master’s degree might impress potential employers, but so will the experience (Olson, 2013). By all means, it is true that for many years it has proven that a college degree was a great benefit but is it still a great benefit today? Those young graduates that are struggling to find a job might become discouraged and regretful and start thinking about how it might have been more advantageous to complete an apprenticeship after graduating from high school. This is a serious issue, as it would certainly question today’s educational system.

There are also some people, that start studying a certain area of studies that they are very interested in but already know from early on that their final qualification will not prove worthwhile because they either cannot live from the income that their job will bring or they might just not find work in that field. That might leave them with a high amount of student dept, unemployment or taking on employment that might only be part-time and/or in a different sector. A general issue is that “43 percent of Gen Y workers are not in the career they expected to be; 70 percent of recent college grads left their jobs within two years and 60 percent are looking for another.”(Gen Y workers are ready to take off', 2008). In their study, Abel, Deitz and Su (2014) investigated the unemployment rate between recent college
graduates and just college graduates and they came to the conclusion that the unemployment rate for recent graduates is higher than for the ones that have been out of school longer. This suggests that it is unequivocally usual for graduates to go through a transition time when leaving college. With reference to Abel’s, Deitz’ and Su’s (2014) analysis, the resulting system indicates, that there is a strong tendency that recent graduates experience a high rate of underemployment upon graduation. However, the high rate of underemployment seems to decrease as these college graduates get some experience in the labour market. Taking the aforementioned question into consideration, whether a college degree today is still a benefit, based on Abel et al.’s findings, a college degree is worth it. Nevertheless, young people would need to accept that they might have to take on jobs that do not require their degree. That is part of the transition time, which seems to be inevitable to leave out. Therefore, the next section of this dissertation will have a focal point on the transition from college to work.

Transition from College to Work

Louisa May Alcott, an American novelist, once said “I’m not afraid of storms, for I’m preparing to sail my ship” (Ryan, 1996, p. 69). Just like Alcott, college students are getting ready for their life after college. Life after college can be extremely scary but also very exciting. In McClellan and Parkers’ book, ‘Stepping up to stepping out’ (2012) McAtee remarks that how the transition experience occurs for students will depend upon a combination of factors, such as individual circumstances, how the student deals with change and unknown anticipations and not to mention how well a student is prepared for his/her change. In his book, ‘Counseling Adults in Transition, Schlossberg (1984, pp. 136 - 142) suggests a theory which can be used to help students through their transition period from college to work. Despite the publication year of the book, his theory may still proof valid today. Schlossberg proposed four elements that are frequently described as the 4Ss: How a graduate deals with his/her transition from college to work will be influenced by the situation, the self, the support that a student has and the available strategies such as the different choices for undertaking future steps.

The training act of predetermined behaviour is also known as ‘programming’. Barr and Keating (1985, p. 3) explain it as a “theoretically based plan, under which action is taken toward a goal within the context of institutions of higher education”. This is where student services of colleges can come into play. They can help students establishing or expanding
their catalogue or checklist for themselves. By asking the right questions relating to the before mentioned 4Ss, student’s inevitable process from leaving college to preparing or starting their career can be made smoothly for them. It will give them support and reassurance in terms of their important future.

Some people belonging to the traditionalist generation (64 years and older) and fewer from the Boomer generation (aged 46 to 63) do not understand why young people go to a university at all. In their opinion they should just learn what people in their generation have learned, such as becoming a carpenter, blacksmith, bricklayer etc. Many Gen X’ers believe that young people have no plan what to do with their future and hence, they just enrol themselves at colleges and universities to study something that is close to their interest. McAtee (2012) however, puts in plain words that the number-one reason students go to a university is to get a job. There are students who witness their parents losing jobs and more and more young people are conscious towards rising prices and weak economic conditions. That is why the transition from college to work might be the scariest of all.

It can be assumed that many students and/or graduates are not aware that there are many programmes available to support students in the transition time from college to work. McAtee (2012) explains that the various programmes range from formal organisations such as the NCRC (Nationally Recognized Career Readiness Certificate) or Workkeys to more general workshops. He describes some of the common programme subject matters such as mock interviews, service learning, internships, and job shadows. Other renowned topics for example are workshops on resumes, cover letters, thank-you –notes, job search strategies, networking and salary negotiating training etc. (McAtee, 2012, p. 35). Whatever transition a graduate may go through, each transition will bring its individual set of challenges, emotions, and achievements.

Ray and Kafka (2014) recently conducted Gallup-poll study of college graduates that looked at the links among college experience and graduates’ lives. Their overall conclusion was that the type of institution students attended, whether small or large, public or private, very selective or less selective matters less than what kind of experiences students have made. There was no difference when comparing young adults’ workplace engagement and current well-being. These findings suggest that life and the experience in college made have a huge impact of life after college. That comment does not only refer to colleges’ career service but greatly to student’s abilities to make friends, how to deal with problems and time pressure,
and how well they work in teams. It can be presumed that college provides one with experiences that cannot easily be gained at work.

**Expectations**

Much research has been conducted about Gen Y’s attitudes and their approach to work. Research on Gen Y by Drake International resulted into the assumption that the salary is not the only important factor Gen Y’ers weigh up when accepting a job (cited in Twyford, 2007). Gen Y is attracted by “professional growth and development, work-life balance, variety, social interaction, responsibility and input, and reward and recognition.” Twyford (2007) has talked to graduates whom just started their professional career and many of them are not too concerned with remuneration at this point of time. They want an interesting and challenging but supportive work environment where they can learn from those with more experience and expertise. Again, this aligns with what Swanson (2008) has said. “When you’re starting out, money isn’t the key, it’s where the job can lead is important”.

Recent college graduates frequently enter the workplace with a short-term career outlook. They seem to have no goals of growing within their job or even within their first company (Wallace, 2001). This is based on observations of Paddy Nelson, HR director of a technology company. Wallace also notes that most graduates are remarkably confident and for that reason, Generation Y feels absolutely comfortable negotiating higher salaries. Hewlett, Sherbin, and Sumberg (2009) also state, that across all sectors, only 45 percent of Gen Y workers expect to work for their current employer for their entire career. Is it reasonable to state that only 45 percent of Gen Y workers expect to stay with their current employer until retirement? This must be recognised as a generational perception. Understandably, when comparing the careers of Traditionalist and Baby Boomers, it was typical and people expected to stay with an employer for a long time but nowadays that has changed. Many authors are very direct and try to generalise a lot and this could make some members of the Gen Y think that a lot of what they are doing or thinking is wrong because it is different from what older generations have done. Similarly and probably more likely, older generations are prone to think that Generation Y is wrong in many circumstances because they are so different from their generation. One example of a significant difference between Generation Y and older generations is the perception and value of ‘feedback’.
section will focus on Gen Y and feedback, as Gen Y employees, unlike other generations, place a very high value on relationships (Behrstock-Sherratt and Coggshall, 2010).

**Gen Y on Feedback**

Gen Y members are eager to see their daily contributions have positive changes at work (Behrstock-Sherratt and Coggshall, 2010). There is an enormous amount of authors that hold the position that Generation Y needs continuous praise. However, most of the authors who write about Generation Y are not Generation Y itself. Would Generation Y agree to the statement that they need constant approval and praise? This question correlates well with an article that discusses challenges, which employers have with Generation Y. It says that members of Generation Y, as they were raised, were told daily how special and wonderful they are and if Generation Y does not hear that praise from their employer for about a week, they might assume they are not doing a good job. “Complimenting them three times a week makes a huge difference” (Blake, 2011). It might be natural to approve to this statement, particularly those people that are not members of Generation Y, but it is crucial to give more thought to it. Is the statement true? Who all agrees to it? It cannot be denied that it is naturally for everyone to want to receive praise and recognition and feedback but it is of particular interest to distinguish between positive and negative feedback. Is Generation Y open towards negative feedback? The researcher came across a recent study carried out by Joseph Folkman, a behavioural statistician who investigated whether Generation Y really aims at receiving honest feedback. His study revealed that 66% of the respondents (1026 surveyed in total), preferred some helpful, corrective feedback, rather than praise or recognition for a job well done (Folkman, 2014). Hence, his recent findings do not relate to what many authors say about Generation Y needing continuous feedback.

Advice that can be given for feedback is that it needs to be well thought out. It must not only be honest but also constructive. It is neither fair nor professional labelling a young employee as naïve, idle, or unskilled. Any criticism without advice and direction will generate feelings of frustration, vulnerability and incapability by the employee (Schlichting, 2012). This however, should not only apply to Generation Y but every individual, no matter what generation he/she is in.
Having looked at Generation Y’s values, expectations and challenges it is necessary to now discuss what is involved for employers, as they are the ones, which will deal with the younger population in the workplace.

**Challenges for Employers**

Companies today have to face the inevitable transformation of their workforce as Baby Boomers begin to retire (‘Generation Y grows up’, 2009). No matter whether companies are ready or not, those workers prepared for retirement will be replaced by Generation Y. In her psychology article, Ellin (2014) mentions a Dallas psychologist, Sherry Buffington, who simply said, "Most managers have absolutely no clue how to manage this generation." Whether employers or managers approve that statement or not, some of the key challenges that employers are facing and will continue to face are technology and communication. “Rapid advances in technology and communication have only increased the challenges of managing today’s workforce” (Cekada, 2012). Technology is a ubiquitous part of Generation Y’s life (Behrstock-Sherratt and Coggshall, 2010). Baby Boomers often complain about Generation Y’s constant use of technology to communicate (Gavatorta, 2012). However, members of Generation Y grew up with technology at their fingertips. It would be wrong to solely blame them because society plays a big role as well. Society has shaped society. Gen Y’ers naturally expect to be able to communicate with others anytime and anywhere (Shaffer, 2008, p. 2). Cekada (2012) explains that people learn to communicate based on generational backgrounds. Nevertheless, it is to recognise that communication today is very different from what is was in the past.

Matin and Tulgan (2002) point out that the once unconditional rules about how younger workers treat older workers and superiors have changed, rules are continuously being rewritten. Also, many employers are required to revise outdated HR policies to accommodate not only the needs but also the demands of Generation Y (Eime, 2011).

Lebo, (2009) listed some challenges for employers such as setting limits on the non-work related use of social communication technology, developing techniques for formal writing skills and face-to-face interpersonal skills and nurturing independence and decision-making. While the challenges for employers presented in the literature is vast, there seems to be a lack of published material that is actually explaining how to overcome those challenges. Numerous articles provide whole catalogues of possible challenges for employers and most of
them give only vague ideas of what exactly should be done. For instance by stating that it is to *finding a way to deliver constructive criticism* does not provide employers with useful guidelines of what needs to be done or what should not be done to deliver constructive criticism.

Referring to Swanson’s suggestion, in an interview, it is the employers’ task to ask questions that relate to the employees’ skills, not experiences (Swanson, 2008). This is an important point in encouraging interviewees sharing their skills and convincing that they are the right fit for the organisation they applied to. However, another challenge for employers that needs to be recognised, is the reality that it is no longer merely about interviewing applicants in job interviews, companies too, need to sell themselves and convince others that their company is worth to be working for (Chandler, 2013).

If employers want to attract the best talent, Hayes (2006) advises that managers should find cost effective ways to reward the young working population. Hayes article clearly states that money matters a lot for Generation Y and that a base salary is no longer enough. On the one hand, this intelligibly means that money is seen as a motivator for Generation Y; however, it does not say that money is the most important element in what Generation Y is looking for in a career.

To conclude, global companies in general will need to become proficient at changing work-life programs and other policies to satisfy a range of needs in the increasingly diverse global workforce (Klun, 2008). Where challenges are, there will also be a range of opportunities and these will be presented below.

**Opportunities for Employers**

One important point that will be beneficial to employers is that they should stop focusing on what Gen Y is not. Rather, they “should start thinking about how to create the right atmosphere, one that capitalises on their team building, trusting, tech-savvy nature” (Gavatorta, 2012). By tapping into Gen Y’s technological sophistication and their interest in achieving, employers will make one step towards Gen Y’s demands and needs that will ultimately be beneficial for them (Lebo, 2009). Also, even if it may sound somewhat unconventional for some people, especially when older generations are around, a great
opportunity for employers is to actually listen to younger workers. Many employers initially ‘welcome’ younger workers and promise to listen and provide support at all times but then, more often than not their doors are closed and the young employees are left out. By involving Gen Y workers as early as possible in the mainstream of the business, employers can create an open and responsive environment, in which young employees feel nurtured, welcome and needed (Cone, 2007).

Some challenges that employers face can easily be turned into opportunities. According to Blake (2011), employers could help young workers by increasing their investment in training. Personal development and training is a key consideration for Generation Y. On the one hand, that might seem like it is a benefit for employees only but many sources are convinced that when giving personal development and training to young recruits, it will trigger loyalty toward the employer.

Kehrli and Sopp (2006) propose three strategies that can help to get most of Generation Y at work that are informal mentoring, structured accountability and shared responsibility. Mentors in organisations should accept young recruits as partners. If possible, mentors should give them some authority. While this might be difficult for some, they will positively be surprised of what the effects of that are. According to Kehrli and Sopp (2006), it will pay off in loyalty and make them better decision-makers and future managers in the end. Is that not part of what many employers seek in their recruits? Even if the young working population makes mistakes or regret their decision made, it is important to give them room for mistakes so that they can learn from it. Everybody makes mistakes and learns from it. If Generation Y however is not aware of mistakes made, it is important to fill them in, leaving out any tones of power and control (Lebo, 2009). Much published material contends that Generation Y will stop listening to their superiors if they feel they are seen as a nonessential and replaceable employee.

It might be troublesome or difficult for employers whom have not already have figured out that in fact, truly listening to Gen Y’ers can be very beneficial. Also, employers and managers should not feel unnerved when Gen Y’ers ask “Why?” so often. They have such a strong desire to learn. “We ask ‘Why?’ not to be difficult, but because we truly want to know why” (Austin, cited in Gavatorta, 2012). Therefore, when young people ask for reasons why certain things are done, it does not necessarily mean that they want to change things, they just
might not immediately understand why things are done the way they are. Employers should rather see the act of asking questions as a sign of engagement. Is that not what many employers and managers desire for their employees to bring to the job? Answering questions can be one step of acknowledging employee engagement.

Lebo (2009) explains that some organisations also use reverse mentoring. This means that young recruits help senior executives learn social networking and other communication technology. This is important owing to the fact that a deeper understanding of social networking and all the related technology can help knowing and better evaluating the marketplace. Apart from the opportunity of having managers introducing a reverse mentoring system in their organisation, it can also be incorporated as a training method for multigenerational employees.

Gen Y has the ability to quickly gather, comprehend and act upon information (Nayar, 2013). That is an enormous advantage. Unlike Generation Y, previous generations did not grow up with the natural drive to quickly find solutions. One reason for that is that they did not have the benefits of the Internet. However, it is to bear in mind, that businesses were running and developing despite not employing what we consider sophisticated systems and business operations. They had other means and employees naturally had more passion and devotion to work rather than the skills. Skills came with experience and that was what mattered. Now there seems to be a huge debate whether skills or experience come first. Large IT companies such as Google and Facebook are now more than ever counting on individuals whom bring emotional intelligence into the organisation rather than relying on where the individual graduated from and with what grades (Thygesen, 2014).

Daniel Goleman, an internationally known psychologist, was the first one to spread the concept of emotional intelligence. In many parts of the world, emotional intelligence is taught as early as children reach the age of kindergarten and yet, many employers claim that young people lack those skills. Nevertheless, the Harvard Business Review has acclaimed emotional intelligence as “a ground-breaking, paradigm-shattering idea” and praises it as one of the most powerful and significant business ideas of the decade (Goleman, 2014).

If employers of older generations stay connected and approachable with Gen Y, it can be a huge benefit. Jeffrey Nunokawa, English professor at Princeton University is open to younger generations. For example, he has his own Facebook page and uses it as a teaching and writing
experiment. He is convinced that experienced professors can help younger people by “being approachable and willing to serve as informal mentors” (cited in Fogg, 2013).

Employing and managing Generation Y indeed is a challenge. However, it has to be seen from both sides and one might be surprised how valuable Generation Y is and how many benefits they can bring to an organisation.

A Multigenerational Workforce

Although the main focus is on Generation Y in the workforce, it is important to also consider the other generations in the workforce. “Generational issues are questions of diversity” (Cone, 2007). Multiple pieces of research give advice on effective diversity training and the encouragement of the awareness of generational differences. Theoretically, the researcher understands that all this is necessary but voices in the real world are becoming louder and dissatisfaction becomes apparent. Differences between generations can cause stress, discomfort, conflict and frustration but they can also become a starting point of better creativity and productivity (Raines, 2002).

Cocchiara et al. state that it is not sufficient to merely reach a specific number of diverse people in an organisation. It certainly would make the amount of staff diverse but not necessarily the work itself. It is essential to go beyond this and to truly leverage generational diversity (cited in Faye et al., 2010, p. 152).

For generational diversity management to be successful, it must be “part of a bigger plan of action addressing the systems, the structures, and the culture of the organization” (Lai & Kleiner, 2001, p. 16). Leaders are required to deal with difficult questions about the nature of learning and leading. Therefore it is quintessential to have a plan for generational differences, also because “getting along is not enough” (O’Donovan, 2009, pp. 68-71).

“The ability to relate effectively to all types of people is one of today’s essential leadership skills “ (Raines, 2002). There lies lots of work ahead for leaders. Raines (2002) lists a few benefits of a multi-generational work team, such as that the team is more flexible and innovative and that it can attract and retain talented people of all ages because it can meet the need of a diverse group in public and that decisions are stronger because they are broad-
Much of the literature deals with Generation Y in the workforce. It is almost overwhelming and could give one the impression that other generations are being neglected and left out. Many organisations are transferring their priorities from older professionals to younger ones. On the one hand, that seems reasonable because it is Generation Y that is currently the biggest generation in the workforce. They make up 62 percent of the workforce in the US (Economist, 2013) and as stated in a recent article from the Forbes magazine, by 2020, about 86 million Millennials will be represented in the workplace. On the other hand however, the workforce is not entirely made up of young people and many employers might overlook that fact when trying to be too ambitious to accommodate Generation Y. As Sprague (2008) correctly acknowledges, the focus should rather lay on the whole multigenerational workforce. Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y make up the current workforce.

Although the majority of the oldest generation, known as ‘traditionalist’ and born between 1925 and 1946, just left the workplace and went into retirement, there are still three generations working together. Because each generation has their own set of values, one problem is that people of different age cohorts do not always understand each other. This can create serious culture clashes (Fogg, 2008).

As the author of this dissertation is born in the age cohort between 1980 and late 1990s, she might naturally not be completely objective towards this research area, however, is it not common behaviour wanting to celebrate an achievement? Did any other generation, previous to Generation Y immediately get back to work once they obtained a major achievement such as boosting sales for the organisation or getting certain contracts or clients on board? Sometimes, it seems that older generations do not understand that it is important for Generation Y to celebrate and be proud of something they have accomplished. Does it really matter how Generation Y gets their work done? As a matter of fact, the younger generations get their work done; they just do it differently to how other generations approach their responsibilities (Fogg, 2008).

Often times, there are also conflicts when it comes to organisational practices. Employers of older generations that might not be as open to change as younger employers tend to operate and do things the way it always has been done. Resistance to change can have
serious consequences and might leave one open to competitors who are willing and able to adapt to change (Simonds, 2013). According to Rick Maurer, an organisational consultant and author of “Beyond the Wall of Resistance”, points out that staff resistance results to about 70 percent of organisational change to be unsuccessful (cited in Simonds, 2013).

Many older generations believe that young people did not grow up with respect. However, this is only their perception, particularly the perception of Baby Boomers managers. They have the idea that their high position and the enormous amount of work experiences give them the right to have more benefits than young and inexperienced employees, such as designated parking spaces (Birdsall, 2012). Interestingly, according to Birdsall (2012), the younger Gen X’ers, and even more so the Gen Y’ers, did arrive on the job with a great volume of respect. As a matter of fact, the traditional command-and-control type of management is still apparent in many organisations today. However, the young working population is less likely to respond to that. Gen Y was raised questioning their parents and now they naturally question employers. Generational gaps are common in today’s world, not only but particularly in the workplace. When older generations have the attitude that they can learn from younger generations, an open environment is created (Schwarz cited in Simonds, 2013). This is crucial for organisational success.

According to Cekada (2012), each group requires a unique approach to issues such as recruitment, compensation, expectations, motivators, collaboration, learning styles and training. One task of every chief executive is promoting or rather creating a working environment in which each individual is able to reach his or her full potential (Schlichting, 2012). That is what is written in many literature articles but yet; in many cases it is only theory. Today there are at least three different generational cohorts working together and due to their different sets of values, attributes and experiences, clashes of opinions and arguments are predetermined. It is to find a way, in which all members of an organisation can propose their ideas and work according to their own capabilities. However, according to Schlichting (2012), most organisations simply do not have the infrastructure or funds to meet the needs to every innovative employee recommendation. Different learning styles for example, can display sharp contrasts among the various generations. As Mike Roberto, a management professor at Bryant University simply declares, “The way you do training or development has to be different today” (cited in Cone, 2007). It is comprehensible that younger generations today demand a less theoretical and more proactive learning environment. Employers are to
consider that but it is crucial to not force older workers to rapidly be able to switch to newer grounds. That is a sensitive issue and therefore calls for sensitive handling.

If companies do not manage the relationships between Gen Y’ers and other generations carefully, the situation in the workplace could possibly become even more difficult (Gavatorta, 2012). However, when employers think about ways that involve everyone doing their best work and giving the best contributions towards a project and especially recognising that one group cannot be successful without others, managing across generations can be made successful. Cone (2007) is convinced that the trick is to understand the expectations of younger workers, providing them with the experience that they need. At the same time, it is to not estrange members from older generations from work or colleagues. “A great way to bridge generational gaps is to create a common language to help people connect and communicate with one another, particularly by focusing on their behaviors” (Gavatorta, 2012).

Employers and managers can create a successful and supportive learning environment for everyone by knowing and understanding generational differences. As Cekada (2012) pointed out, Baby Boomers have the knowledge that was gained during a period of over 30 years; younger generations provide technological expertise and arrive at the workplace with a great level of enthusiasm and energy. If everyone appreciates the qualities and is willing to adjust and recognise each other, conflicts can be prevented while much more can be created, such as a working environment that is filled with harmony and effective communication that leads to organisational success.
Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

In the following stages of this chapter, the researcher will discuss the areas of research philosophies, research approaches and the different research strategies and designs. Reasons are given to why the researcher chose certain methods over other ones. The means by which data was collected and analysed will be outlined in detail. Furthermore, the researcher will discuss some research ethics and limitations of this dissertation.

The research ‘onion’, first introduced in 1997 by Saunders et al. and still valid today can be seen as a metaphor for describing the different stages that are involved in the research process. The outer layers of the onion encompass the reasoning about research philosophies and approaches. The middle layers are grounded in research strategies and choices while at the core of the onion, data collection and data analysis are considered.
Research Philosophy

Slife & Williams (1995) explain that although philosophical ideas remain largely hidden in research, they still influence the practice of research and it is important that they are identified. The research philosophy contains fundamental assumptions about the way in which one views the world (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 104). A ‘worldview’ can be considered as a general orientation about the world and the nature of research that the researcher holds (Creswell, 2009, p. 6).

Creswell (2009, p. 6) introduces four different worldviews, postpositivism, constructivism, advocacy/participatory and pragmatism. Saunders et al. (2012, pp. 104-107) identify positivism, realism, interpretivism and pragmatism. Although using different terms, these four philosophies essentially have the same meaning.

Realism is similar to positivism as it is pertinent to scientific inquiry (Kumar, 2005, p. 122). There are two forms of realism, direct and critical realism. This philosophical approach emphasizes that objects exist, whether one knows or does not know about their existence. This approach does not relate to the researcher’s aim, as she proposes a theory, which she is able to test through her questionnaire. The research philosophy of interpretivism supports the prerequisite to comprehend distinctions among human beings in their role as social performers (Saunders et al., 2012, pp. 104-107). As the population of the study is students and graduates of Generation Y, and the researcher herself is a member of Generation Y, there is no need for her to switch from one social role to another. Pragmatism contends that the most significant factor of the research philosophy selected is the research question and the objectives. While this may be in accordance with the researcher’s goal, more importance is on the idea to be able to produce a general principle as to why members of Generation Y may fail to secure employment in their chosen field and to identify the major challenges they have.

Hence, the researcher espouses a worldview of postpositivism. Creswell (2009, p. 6) states that this worldview can sometimes be referred to as positivist research or empirical science. “Quantitative scientific research methods are employed to establish general laws or principles through rigorously controlled experimentation” (Burns and Burns, 2008, p. 14). This means that the scientific researcher engages in objective, structured research with statistical analysis of data to be able to identify what the reality upholds. For the dissertation, the researcher begins with her hypothesis, which is that ‘Recent college graduates of
Generation Y will have to come a long way before being in the career they are aiming to be in’, collects data that will either support or disprove the given theory, and then the researcher will construct general views upon the analysed results.

The aim of the researcher is to develop relevant and true statements about the success rate of graduates of Generation Y in securing employment in their chosen field, and the challenges that recent graduates face when seeking employment. Once the questionnaires are analysed, the statements about the topic are to explain the situation. Furthermore, the researcher will remain objective during the entire process of the quantitative research.

Research Approach

There are two different approaches to conducting research: deduction and induction. “The world is rarely as simple as offering a straight choice between two research approaches” (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 110). Sometimes it is a good idea to combine deduction and induction within the same piece of research, as there appear to be legitimate reasons why a researcher’s view of theories may change. It could happen that new theoretical ideas or findings are published before the researcher has created the findings or a collection of data might only become relevant after findings are generated or a researcher’s view changes because the data analysed does not comply with the original hypothesis (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 12). The famous Hawthorne studies exemplify that deductive research can generate unforeseen outcomes. The researcher believes that for testing her hypothesis, it is wise to select the combination of deduction and induction for her topic rather than focussing on either one of them. The reason behind this decision is that on the one hand, by using the quantitative research strategy, the researcher will be testing her theoretical proposition that she designed for the purpose of its testing and this is an indication of a deductive approach. On the other hand however, the researcher might be developing a new theory as a result of analysing data that were collected. If the researcher’s theory proves wrong, then she will need to develop a new theory or adjust the current one and this would be an indication for an inductive approach.
Research Strategy

There are different types of research strategies, such as quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. Some of the basic distinguishing features between quantitative and qualitative research strategies is that quantitative research can be interpreted as a research strategy that has its focus on the quantification in the collection and analysis of data. It usually encompasses the testing of a theory and is therefore a deductive orientation. Researchers epistemological orientation is positivism in particular (Bryman and Bell, 2011, pp. 26 – 27).

According to King et al., (1994, p. 4 cited in Thomas, 2003, p. 2) quantitative research seeks measurements and analyses that are easily replicable by other researchers. This is only true to a certain extent as an important factor is missing in his statement. When research work is to be replicable by others, the time factor plays a pivotal role as attitudes, behaviours, views and experiences of participants may change over time.

Qualitative research on the other hand typically stresses words rather than the quantification when gathering and analysing data. Within that type of research, researchers typically create a theory, which means that it is an inductive approach and their worldview is interpretivism.

With positivism as a worldview, the researcher adopted the quantitative strategy. Within quantitative strategies, there are also a few strategies of inquiry. The researcher focused on ‘survey research’ as this provides a quantitative or numeric description of opinions and attitudes of the respondents, which are soon-to-be-graduates and recent graduates of Generation Y. The ‘survey research’ strategy is the most appropriate one as it fits the purpose and time frame. “A survey is a research strategy, which involves the structured collection of data from a sizeable population. Saunders et al. note that survey strategies are very popular and because they are so widespread, people seem to have no difficulties understanding surveys, provided that questions are asked in an easy and logical way. The benefit of using a quantitative approach of research is that people filling out questionnaires can do that in their own time and might feel more comfortable than being directly interviewed.
**Data collection**

Data collection may take the form of questionnaires, structured observation and structured interviews” (Saunders et al, 2012, p. 115). The researcher focussed on questionnaires as this aligned well with the quantitative approach. However, the term ‘questionnaire’ touches on all methods of data collection in which each prospect respondent is requested to answer the same group of questions in the same order (Saunders et. al., 2012, p. 141). The researcher collected data by using the Internet so each respondent read the questions and recorded his or her own answers. A few questionnaires were distributed in summer classes that took place at Dublin Business School.

The questionnaire is comprised of a more structured than unstructured method. As the researcher intends to quantify the research material, she designed a questionnaire that is mostly pre-coded. She wants to compare the views that Generation Y espouses and the experiences that they have made in relation to employment and therefore it is best to provide questions with lots of tick boxes for the respondents to fill. However, some questions also offer white space where respondents were able to write something in their own words. In doing so, the researcher was hoping to gain further insights about facts that she might not have come across before. Furthermore, giving respondents the possibility to write down own responses in some parts of the questionnaire allowed for some kind of qualitative research to optimistically get a more in-dept picture of the current situation that Generation Y finds themselves in. The researcher aimed at getting a more thorough analysis while saving time of not having to interview participants or doing panels.

For the questionnaire that was published online, there was no one to personally explain the meaning of the questions asked. It will be of utmost importance that the questions are clear and easy to understand (Kumar, 2011, p. 145). The researchers’ questionnaire was composed of a sequence of questions that is easy to follow.

There are different ways of administering questionnaires. For the majority of the questionnaires, it was not possible using the method of collective administration, as they were published online. As the normal classes at DBS have already ended in April, the researcher decided to mainly make use of the Internet. Otherwise the researcher would have only asked students in classrooms, which would have directly ensured a very high rate of responses. Furthermore, the researcher would have been able to further explain the purpose of the study and really encourage students to fill out her questionnaire. However, the researcher believes
that sending out questionnaires on social media pages such as LinkedIn and Facebook, using different groups will help to reach a large amount of potential respondents.

Advantages of using questionnaires

In contrast to a qualitative data analysis, distributing questionnaires via the Internet is less expensive. The researcher did not interview prospective respondents; that not only saved her time but also human and financial resources. Additionally, the questionnaire offers greater anonymity (Kumar, 2011, p. 148). The likelihood of obtaining more accurate information is greater than in comparison to face-to-face interaction when more sensitive questions are being asked. Also, using questionnaires through social media allows for a high amount of responses in a very short amount of time.

Disadvantages of using questionnaires

Generally speaking, one main disadvantage using a questionnaire is that the application is restricted to a study population that can read and write (Kumar, 2005, p. 130). However, this disadvantage does not become apparent here, as the population of the researcher’s project intentionally is Generation Y and it specifically is aimed at those that have at least a high school degree.

In addition, questionnaires are also well known for their low response rates. However, the researcher ensured that a number of factors were considered to ensure a response rate that was as high as possible. She is convinced that respondents have at least, to some degree interest in the topic as it is about Generation Y and they might benefit from the findings as well, not just the researcher herself. Also, the layout and length of the questionnaire, as well as the letter explaining the motive and the meaning of the study were of significance as well.

Another drawback that is mentioned in the literature is that spontaneous responses are not allowed for (Kumar, 2005, p. 130). However, being spontaneous in the researcher’s questionnaire was not necessarily required, as respondents might have had to reflect back to what they have experienced. Other possible drawbacks that researchers may encounter using questionnaires are that the response to a question may have an impact to the response of other questions and that respondents may speak with others before filling out the questionnaire. The researcher is aware that this might be true, however, she did not genuinely believe that this hindered receiving accurate answers.
Study design

There are various study designs that a researcher can undertake. Study designs can be based on the number of contacts, the reference period or the nature of investigation (Kumar, 2005, pp. 93-113). Based on the number of contacts that a researcher has with the study population, the designs can be categorised into cross-sectional, before-and-after studies and longitudinal studies. For the purpose of this research, the time horizon of the study carried out was cross-sectional because the researcher is time-constrained in completion of the dissertation. The researcher chose this design because it is best suited to studies aimed at finding out the prevalence of a phenomenon, situation, attitude etc. (Kumar, 2011, p. 107). Furthermore, the design of cross-sectional studies is not only fairly cheap to undertake, it is also extremely easy to plan, and therefore, it is especially beneficial due to the rather short amount of time that is available for the researcher to complete her work. However, the researcher was only in contact once with the study population. The aim was to achieve an overall ‘picture’ of the situation of soon-to-be graduates and recent graduates of Generation Y.

Besides the various study designs, there are also some designs that might fall into the same category but in truth, they do not because of their uniqueness such as feminist research or action research. The researcher considers ‘action research’ to be valuable in the whole process of her study. “Research is a means to action, either to improve your practice or to take action to deal with a problem or an issue” and “most action research is carried out to identify areas of concern, develop and test alternatives, and experiment with new approaches” (Kumar, 2005, p. 108). That is precisely what the researcher intended to do. She firstly addressed the issue of young graduates in the workplace, compared and criticised different authors, discovered gaps in research and by analysing her findings resulting from the survey, she will able to identify areas of maybe new concern and give future graduates recommendations of how to better prepare themselves for the workplace. The researcher will furthermore be able to verify the hypothesis whether Generation Y will have to make a lot of progress and improvement when seeking employment in their chosen field.
Selecting Respondents

The population of the study was Generation Y. More specifically, Generation Y of soon-to-be graduates and recent graduates that may or may not have started their professional career within the last few years. An accurate size of the population cannot be determined, as the researcher mainly published the link for her questionnaire on the Internet and she did not merely distribute the designed questionnaires. Only a small amount of questionnaires was distributed in classes.

The researcher created the survey with Google Docs and then provided a link on online platforms in several groups of Facebook, such as DBS 2013/2014, DBS MBA 2013/2014, Expats in Dublin and many more. A link to the questionnaire was also posted on her profile and some people shared the link on their profiles to reach more people. Furthermore, the researcher sent out a link on her LinkedIn profile and in the DBS Alumni group. The researcher was hoping to receive least 150 correctly filled-out surveys to evaluate the questions and the hypothesis.

Sampling

For this study, it was also necessary to sample because the population of Gen Y of soon-to-be graduates and recent graduates is quite high. There are two main styles of sampling; probability sampling and non-probability sampling. The researcher aims to be able to generalise from findings while avoiding sampling bias. The total number of the population is unknown because the researcher published the link to her questionnaire online and therefore, a sampling frame cannot be given. Hence, the researcher adopted a non-probability sampling technique. That means that the researcher does not know the chance/probability of each member of the population selected. There are several forms of non-probability sampling techniques such as quota sampling, purposive sampling, snowball sampling, self-selection sampling and convenience sampling. Although the most frequently form of non-probability sampling when collecting qualitative data, the researcher decided to perform purposive sampling for her quantitative data collection. Here, the researcher’s judgement was used to select the sample members based on a range of possible reasons and premises (Saunders et al, 2012, p. 105). She needs to understand Generation Y’s opinion and expectations in order to make logical generalisations.
Data Collection Instruments

The researcher used a modified instrument. There was the possibility using the online survey tool ‘SurveyMonkey’, however, the basic programme is only free for 100 responses per survey and no more than ten questions per survey (Creswell, 2009, p. 149). The aim was to receive a larger amount of responses and the survey contained more than ten questions, and as the researcher tried to make this project as economical as possible, she decided to use Google Docs. There are numerous advantages using Google Docs. It is possible creating surveys free of charge and for an unlimited number of participants. What is more, these surveys are mobile friendly and thus, reaching a larger number of possible participants is almost guaranteed. It is also beneficial because one can choose to get email notifications as soon as a questionnaire has been filled out.

Data Analysis Procedures

The researcher clearly distinguished between respondents that are soon-to-be graduates and those that have graduated already. For most of the questions it sufficed analysing from the summary of results, which is automatically given by Google-Docs. Additionally, for cross-relationships of different questions, spread sheets in excel- forms were used for some deeper analysis purposes.

Research Ethics

Researchers are asked to anticipate ethical issues that may arise during their studies (Hesse-Bieber & Leavey, 2006). “Research does involve collecting data from people, about people” (Punch, 2005). One possible ethical issue that could have arisen is that because the researcher’s study was cross-sectional and she is under a certain time-constraint, it was not possible conducting a pilot study to gain trust and respect from participants. Furthermore, the researcher had to make sure to provide an appropriate and easy-to-understand cover letter for her questionnaire, that might help establishing trust and confidentiality. The researcher might also come across ethical issues in data collection. Sarantakos (2005, p. 122) suggests to the researcher to develop an ‘informed consent form’ that includes information on the identification of the researcher, benefits for participating, a guarantee of confidentiality to participants and an assurance that participants can withdraw at any time. More ethical issues
might become apparent when writing a research project. However, the researcher ensured “to not use language or words that are biased against person because of gender, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic group, disability or age (Creswell, 2009, p. 92). Under no circumstances, she falsified or invented findings to meet her or the audience’s needs. Furthermore, she gave credit to work of other authors, referencing accordingly.

**Limitations of Research**

The researcher ensured that as many ethical issues as possible are treated appropriately and according to the law. As the researcher carried out a cross-sectional study, there is a disadvantage because these types of studies cannot measure change (Kumar, 2011, p. 145).

The researcher has decided to use the quantitative research approach. She is aware that if her main focus was on the qualitative approach, she might have gotten a more in-depth picture of the situation of soon-to-be graduates and recent graduates and their opinions, expectations and challenges in seeking employment. The error/bias rate of respondents was not possible to calculate, as the researcher is unable to estimate the exact size of the population due to the distribution of the questionnaires online. Finally, it must be noted that none of the methods of data collection provides 100 percent accurate and reliable information.

**Conclusion**

To summarise, the researcher’s main methods for carrying out her primary research were as follows: The *research philosophy* being used in this dissertation is positivism because the researcher focused on quantitative scientific research with the aim to generalise from findings. The *research approach* is a combination of deduction and induction because the researcher will firstly test the proposed hypothesis. If it proves wrong, the researcher will have to either adjust her hypothesis or design a new one. The *research strategy* is quantitative as the focus is on the quantification in the collection and analysis of data. Within the quantitative strategy, the researcher selected *survey research*, as it is the most appropriate one because it fits the purpose and time frame. The *methodical choice* adapted is the mono-method, as the researcher will only use a single data collection technique for her quantitative design. The time horizon is cross-sectional as for this dissertation, a time frame of 12 weeks was given to complete the work. *Data collection* will mainly be through the Internet and some
questionnaires will also be distributed in summer classes at DBS. **Analysis of data** will be made with summarised findings and pie charts from Google Docs as well as using Excel spread sheets in order to correlate between questions.
Chapter 4

Questionnaire Findings: Description, Analysis and Synthesis

Introduction

This chapter reveals the findings of the questionnaire designed for Generation Y. The research concentrates on students, soon-to-be graduates and graduates of Generation Y and their opinions on expectations and challenges at the workplace. The questionnaires are divided in two key groups; one group that is still pursuing their final degree, labelled as students’ questionnaire, the other group has graduated from college, labelled graduates’ questionnaire. The questions asked to each of the two groups are basically the same; they only differ in present/future tense for students and in past tense for graduates. Although all of the participants are members of Generation Y, the researcher is particularly interested whether there are big differences or similarities between students and young recruits in terms of expectations and opinion in the labour market.

Several of the findings will be supported by pie charts for an easier and visual understanding. Complete evidence of the questionnaire responses can be found in Appendix. Due to the high number of questions asked, not every single question will be described in detail. However, some of the questions not described below will still be referred to in the analysis part. The beginning of the empirical findings chapter will fundamentally involve lots of basic description of the results before elaboration is made with cross-referencing of the empirical data.

Description

The researcher was able to collect a total of 201 responses. The very first question divides students and soon-to-be graduates from graduates. The sum of people that filled out the students’ questionnaire was 126 and the total sum of people that have already graduated was 75. The first part of the questionnaire deals with basic information, such as gender, educational status and whether the participants currently have a job or not. Out of all participants, 63.5 percent are female, whereas 36.5 percent are male.
Basic Information from the students’ questionnaire

From the students’ questionnaire, 71 percent of the participants are female and 29 percent are male. Overall, 28 percent indicated that their highest degree is a High School Diploma, 60 percent are holding a Bachelor’s degree as their highest degree and 16 percent of the participants have a Master’s degree.

What is your highest degree until now?

- Bachelor’s [75]
- Master’s [16]
- Doctorate [0]
- High School [35]

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<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School Diploma</td>
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<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
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To the question, whether the students are currently pursuing another degree, 24 percent is engaging in receiving a Bachelor’s degree, 60 percent a Master’s degree and 6 percent a Doctor’s degree. Ten percent of the participants are currently not pursuing another degree.

Are you currently pursuing another degree?

- Bachelor’s [30]
- Master’s [75]
- Doctorate [8]
- None [13]

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<th>Degree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>13</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6%</td>
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Out of the 35 participants holding a High School Diploma, 26 are currently pursuing a Bachelor degree, three a Master’s degree and one a Doctorate degree. Five people are not pursuing another degree.

Out of the 75 participants that have a Bachelor’s degree, four are currently pursuing another Bachelor degree, one indicated that he/she is going for a Doctorate and 64 are aiming for the Master’s degree. Six people out of the 75 with a Bachelor’s degree are currently not
pursuing another degree. From students with a Master’s degree, six are pursuing a Doctorate, eight another Master’s and two are not going for a further degree.

More than half of the students (51%) that participated stated that their field of studies is *Business*. Among those, their focus is varies by International Business Studies, Human Resource Management, Marketing and Finance as well as a few others.

The results show that 39 percent of the students currently have a job, more than half of them (55 %) are working full-time. Among those that are working full-time, 15 indicated that their role is a normal employee, nine people are interns, two a manager and one a trainee.

**Basic Information from the graduates’ questionnaire**

The percentage of female and male participants of this questionnaire is more balanced than the students’ one; 56 percent are female and 44 percent are male. Out of all the graduates, 44 percent have a Bachelor’s degree as their highest degree, 47 percent a Master’s degree and three percent have a Doctorate degree. Seven percent indicated that they have a High School degree.

To the question whether those graduates are currently pursuing another degree, 88 percent answered that they are not pursuing another degree. Among those, six percent have a High School Diploma, 42 percent a Bachelor’s degree, 49 percent a Master’s degree and three percent have a Doctorate degree.

88 percent of the graduates marked that they are employed. From those that are employed, 91 percent are working full-time and 9 percent are working part-time. Among those that are working full-time, 50 indicated that their role is a normal employee, one person is an intern, five are managers, four are supervisors and one person is a trainee.

The next section of the questionnaire deals with the transition time from college to work.

**Transition from college to work from the students’ questionnaire**

Less than half of the students (41%) made use of their college’s career service. Students were able to tick more than one box when selecting the kind of service that they drew upon. From those that did make use of the service, 31 percent said that they got
guidance on CV’s, 18 percent went to job fairs and was taught job search strategies and 17 percent received guidance on cover letters. Eight percent of the students participated in mock interviews and two percent in salary negotiation training. Seven percent clicked the option ‘others’ and among that, specifications were made such as advice on what sort of jobs to apply for, recommendable future studies, job listings online and on campus as well as workshops.

Out of the ones that used their college’s career service, 84 percent thought it was helpful. For the specification in what the services were helpful, 40 percent said that they now have a better idea of the ideal cover letter and CV. 24 percent noted that the service helped them in knowing how to make the most of a job search. 14 percent declared that the service helped them in finding a job.

From those students that did not make use of their college’s career service, 29 percent indicated that they did not know about it, 38 percent did not take it seriously and 32 percent had other priorities.
The last question of this section of the questionnaire asked whether students have a LinkedIn account or not. 62 percent of them gave an affirmative answer. From those, 35 percent indicated that their account is not updated at all times.

### 16. If you answered yes in question 15, is your account always up to date?

<table>
<thead>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>35%</td>
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**Transition from college to work from the graduates’ questionnaire**

Out of all the graduates that participated in the survey, 71 percent answered that they did not make use of their college’s career service. 37 percent did not know about the service, 45 percent did not take it seriously and 18 percent indicated that they had other priorities. Out of the 29 percent that used their college’s career service, 30 percent received guidance on CV’s, 20 percent attended job fairs, 18 percent got guidance on cover letters and job search strategies. 11 percent participated in mock interviews and four percent had salary negotiation training.

Out of the ones that used their college’s career service, 74 percent thought it was helpful. Just like in the student’s questionnaire, the highest ranking, in what the service was helpful is having an idea of the ideal cover letter and CV. However, 28 percent also indicated that they found a job through the help of their career services.
From the graduates that have a LinkedIn account (73%), 69 percent stated that it is up to date at all times.

The following section of the discussion will deal with the transition from college to work and the expectation of students and the realities that are experienced by employed graduates.

**Transition from college to work/expectations**

The percentage amount of students and graduates is quite similar when comparing the time frame when students will be applying for jobs and when graduates actually applied for jobs. An average of 35 percent of students and graduates will apply/applied for jobs two to three months before graduating. Also, 25 percent of students consider applying for a job about half a year before graduating and 28 percent of graduates actually did that. For the question of how many applications will be/were sent out, 41 percent of students indicated that they would send out more than 20 applications. 37 percent of the graduates actually sent out more than 20 applications.

About half the students and also half of the graduates are/were confident in relation to finding the job or the career they want to be. An average of 22 percent of the participants are/were not confident concerning their ideal job and about 30 percent are/were unsure about it.
In relation to student’s perception, hope or expectations, 45 percent assume that the time it will take until being employed is two to three months. Similarly, 44 percent of graduates indicated the same.

The researcher was also interested in whether Generation Y people would apply for jobs that do not require their individual degree. For this question students and graduates had quite different opinions. 50 percent of people that are still pursuing their degree answered yes, 31 percent might apply for jobs that do not require their degree and 19 percent would not. 77 percent of graduates however indicated that they did apply or still would apply for jobs that do not require their degree.
The participants were also supposed to imagine the scenario of being offered a job that does not require their individual degree. That job might also involve less pay or not very challenging work. Ten percent of students and 14 percent of graduates stated that they would not accept that job offer and continue their job search until they find what they want. The rest said that they either needed the job and/or the experience but most of them declared that they would only stay with that company until they find the job or the career that suits them better. In terms of expected and actual salary range, the figures for students and graduates are quite similar. 21 percent of students expect to have an initial salary between €20,000 and €25,000 and 32 percent of graduates indicated that this is their actual salary range.
One question in the survey asked participants for how long they are planning to stay with their first employer. 51 percent of students aim to be with their first employer between two and three years and 37 percent of graduates are planning to or already stayed with their first employer between two and three years. 31 percent of students and 25 percent of graduates are still unsure.

67 percent of students and 66 percent of graduates already have/had work experiences in their field of studies.

Students:

Do you already have work experiences in your field of studies?

- Yes 84 (67%)
- No 42 (33%)

Graduates:

If employed now, did you have work experiences in your field of studies before taking on your current job?

- Yes 45 (69%)
- No 23 (34%)
Looking at how many hours a week the participants are prepared to work or are actually working, 42 percent of students are willing to work between 40 and 45 hours per week and 23 percent of students are willing to work more than 45 hours per week. The percentage amount for graduates is 44 percent for 40 - 45 hours and 12 percent for more than 45 hours a week. 70 percent of students are only willing to do so if they can benefit from intrinsic rewards such as satisfying and meaningful work, recognition, more responsibility, growth opportunities, etc. The reality for the graduates that are working is that 41 percent are currently working more than 40 hours without being financially compensated or without getting paid time off.

Students:

Some of the main mentioned areas in which both students and graduates believe they need further training and development are teamwork, leadership skills, public speaking as well as presentation skills and time management. The less common areas mentioned are engaging in small talk, taking orders, negotiation skills, social skills and dealing with criticism.

Graduates:

In one open-ended question, students and graduates were asked to state their opinion on whether it is wise to pursue a Master’s degree immediately after a Bachelor’s degree or if it is better to first gain some work experience and pursue a Master’s degree at a later stage.
The opinions of students and graduates are not very different, 25 percent of students and 29 percent of graduates believe that it is better to pursue a Master’s degree right after a Bachelor’s degree while 37 percent of students and 39 percent of graduates consider it is better to first gain some work experience for continuing the studies. 25 percent of students and 16 percent of graduates indicated that it depends on the individual’s situation and the remaining participants did not state an opinion at all.
The participants were also asked on their opinion of unpaid and underpaid internships. 49 percent of students and graduates would accept an unpaid/underpaid internship and an average of 32 percent would not. Those that said ‘other’ indicated that it would depend on their economical situation.

![Students' Opinion on Unpaid/Underpaid Internships](image1)

![Graduates' Opinion on Unpaid/Underpaid Internships](image2)

In another question the participants were asked to imagine that they were offered two different jobs. Company A was described to be the company where one would love to work for but the pay is not as imagined. Company B offers a great salary but this job is not really where an individual would want to work. The findings show very similar answers among students and graduates, 77 percent of students and 84 percent of graduates would rather take the job that pays less but the work is more what they imagined.

![Students' Opinion on Job Offers](image3)

![Graduates' Opinion on Job Offers](image4)

The following section of this chapter deals with the students’ and graduates’ opinion at work. It shows their preference of their working environment, the perception of their performance when distracted and their viewpoint on feedback. In terms of confidence, 38 percent of students and 47 percent of graduates indicated that when it comes to new work environments, colleagues and mentors to be very confident.
If they had the choice, almost half of the students (46%) and more than half of the graduates (51%) would prefer to work in turns, occasionally at the office and also from time to time at home.

A high amount of students and graduates indicated that they take out their phone at least a couple of times a day and 82 percent of all participants find their answer justified and acceptable.
Although more than 85 percent consider themselves multitasking at work, 35 percent of students and 24 percent of graduates admit that their concentration at work decreases when doing non-related work activities.

Nevertheless, when it comes to working under time pressure, 57 percent of both, students and graduates believe that they work very well under time pressure.
Participants were also asked to share their opinion on feedback at the workplace.

Students:

- You want to be praised regardless the quality of work you have accomplished: 15 (7%)
- You only want to be praised for good work that you have done: 89 (43%)
- You are open to negative feedback: 103 (49%)
- You only want to hear positive feedback: 3 (1%)

Graduates:

- You want to be praised no matter the quality of the work you have accomplished: 10 (0%)
- You only want to be praised for good work that you have done: 51 (43%)
- You are open to negative feedback: 56 (47%)
- You actually only want to hear positive feedback: 3 (3%)

Almost 50 percent of all candidates participated are open to negative feedback. 42 percent of students and 43 percent of graduates indicated that they only want to be praised for good work accomplished. Although open to negative feedback, the candidates are also of the same opinion that their performance would increase if they hear a simple ‘thank you’ and/or ‘congratulations’. For more than half of the candidates, the same can be said for the question that performance will automatically be decreased if no supportive feedback is given.

When it comes to challenges in securing employment, a high amount of students and graduates indicated that their ‘lack of work experience’ is or was a major problem. While 17 percent of students and graduates assume there are or there were not any major challenges in securing employment, another 20 percent of students and graduates anticipate that their ‘low self-confidence’ might be or was a difficult obstacle to overcome. After finding a job, participants anticipate that giving presentations, convincing others and being confident in general might prove to be a major challenge. Other fears or obstacles that participants mentioned were either not being challenged enough or being too challenged at work, doing the right networking, the ability to progress within the organisation, leadership skills, satisfying colleagues, time management, the fear of being fired and a proper work-life balance.
Students:

58. What do you think will be major challenges in securing employment?

- None: 26 (17%)
- Your lack of work experience: 74 (47%)
- Your fear of moving to another city: 11 (7%)
- Your low self-confidence: 31 (20%)
- Other: 14 (9%)

Graduates:

58. What do you think will be/were your major challenges in securing employment?

- None: 15 (17%)
- Your lack of work experience: 33 (37%)
- Your fear of moving to another city: 15 (17%)
- Your low self-confidence: 18 (20%)
- Other: 8 (9%)

Analysis and Synthesis

Career service

To compare, 41 percent of students and 29 percent of graduates made use of their colleges’ career service. Both of these numbers are extremely low. From those that did not use the career service, 29 percent of the students and 37 percent of the graduates were not even aware that their school offers a career service. There are a number of possible reasons why Gen Y’ers were not familiar with it. Apart from the likelihood that these people did not engage in conversations relating to the topic or were not interested in them, perhaps schools do not have enough eye-catching notes that informs about their service. Although it is not necessarily the task of lecturers to inform their students in class, but some do, if they know about it and consider the services helpful. Another possible explanation why students are not aware about their school’s career service might be that staff members do not talk to classes in person and explain what they do and what the benefits might be.

Only a small amount of students (8%) and graduates (11%) undertook mock interviews and even fewer students (2%) and graduates (4%) received salary negotiation training. As discussed in the literature review, mock interviews and salary negotiation training
are considered to be renowned topics (McAtee, 2012, p.35). Although Wallace (2001) states that most members of Generation Y feel absolutely comfortable negotiating higher salaries, it is surprising because only a small amount of participants did salary negotiation training. Assuming that these services are voluntary and most probable take place outside of classes, many students might not have worried about it because they had other priorities such as studying and keeping submission dates. On the other side, however, not all colleges might be providing more service than support with CV’s and/or cover letters.

LinkedIn

Talking about professional social media platforms, 66 percent of all participants indicated that they have a LinkedIn account. Taking into consideration that almost half of all participants’ study focus is/was business, that figure seems remarkably low. Also, the researcher’s questionnaire revealed that only 65 percent of students and 69 percent of graduates have their account updated at all times. The number for graduates is marginally higher than for students. That might be because they feel it is more important now to keep it up to date than when still being a student, however, both of the numbers are still low. Referring back to the literature review, Schlesinger (2013) says that an accurate and comprehensive LinkedIn-account can benefit long before graduating from college. Despite being a professional networking platform and search engine, LinkedIn is not only a tool for job seekers but also for job providers. 94 percent of recruiters engage in social media, particularly in LinkedIn to fill open positions (Fernando, 2014). When participants were asked to give recommendations to students, many of them indicated that it is important to network and have a LinkedIn account. Especially graduates or recruits know how valuable that tool is as it has helped some of them, whether finding a job or just having a professional presentation of oneself.

Transition from college to work/expectations

Looking at how students prepare themselves for their professional lives, as seen in the discussion of results, about a quarter of students and graduates are going to send out/sent out applications half a year before graduating and an average of 35 percent of students and graduates do/did so two to three months before graduating. That could imply that Gen Y’ers are well prepared considering job search, having an updated CV and knowing what they want. There does not seem to be a required or recommended minimum of how many applications one should send out. Whether sending out more than 20 applications is a lot or not, 41 percent
of students are going to and 37 percent of graduates did. Some people send out hundreds of applications regardless whether they possess the required experience or expertise. Graduates sending out 20 applications, one can assume that these are prepared appropriately and well thought out.

As mentioned in the literature review, competition in today’s job market is extremely fierce and students, after graduating, desire a job that fits their expectation and field of studies. Taking a cross-sectional look at recommendations that were given to students, many participants propose that it is wise to apply for jobs early. One possible reason for that is that graduates may have applied for jobs later than required and regret their decision. Graduates might be worried about not being employed upon graduating, however, the findings reveal that about half of the participants are/were actually confident in relation to being employed in their chosen field. However, that may arise from the fact that Generation Y is claimed to being confident in general.

Referring to the earlier discussion that many sources regard Generation Y as ‘picky’ and that they seemingly have unrealistic career expectations, based on the findings of this study, that statement could be claimed as untrue. Combining the analysis of different questions asked, based on the researcher’s findings, students do not have unrealistic career expectations for the beginning of their career. For example, half of the students asked would apply for jobs that do not require their degree and 19 percent said maybe. 77 percent of graduates would, for the beginning of their career, apply for jobs in which their degree is not necessary. The number for graduates is higher because the already have experienced actual job search after graduating and they might be more informed or knowledgeable about the competitive job situation. Graduates might have already gone through the difficulties of finding a job. Also, when participants were asked which job they would rather accept, a company they would enjoy working at but involved not the desired salary and very well-paid job that it less enjoyable, most students (77%) and most graduates (84%) would choose the less paid job. Their reasons were simple and just about as other published material already defined it. Members of Generation Y are very passionate and seek challenging work. They want to be happy and as one participant stated, there is nothing worse than waking up in the morning with the feeling of being forced to go to your job that you hate. In the end, most of your time during the day you spend at work. While money might be an important factor, it does not seem to be at the top of the list of Generation Y. Young people today might be less ‘picky’ with reference to earning a large amount of money but they could still be considered
to be ‘picky’ about the kind of work they want to do as it has to be meaningful and challenging for them.

If an underpaying job were actually offered to them, or a job that does not require their degree, only 10 percent of students and 14 of graduates would decline the offer. An important topic discussed was unemployment and underemployment. Abel et al., (2014) stated that the number of young people in a position of underemployment is rising. The researcher of the dissertation can only confirm that many young people do take on jobs because they have the financial needs or are desperate for experience. Also, the study revealed that desired salary range of students does not differ much from the actual salary range of young employees.

Internships

Another open-ended question in the survey dealt with students’ and graduates’ opinion of unpaid/underpaid internships for a time period of three to six months. Interestingly the results are extremely similar. About half of the students and graduates would agree to work with no payment or only little payment but they would have certain conditions. Most participants said they would only do so if they truly feel that they could gain valuable work experience. Out of those, a few said that they would also have to enjoy the work they are given. Many declared they would only do it if they had another income or sufficient financial resources for their responsibilities. From those that would not accept an unpaid/underpaid internship, many consider it very unreasonable to not get paid as interns most of the time do the same work as company employees. Also, although the literature says that many young people today still live with their parents in order to save money, not everyone receives financial support from their parents or the government and would have to decline an internship to be able to cover expenses. A few others do not support the idea due to ethical reasons. They would feel undervalued, exploited and hold the opinion that it would not look good on a CV if future employers see that the candidate accepted an unpaid internship. That could make employers feel that their applicant is not strong in the areas of leadership or negotiation skills. Others also support the idea that if you are pursuing a Bachelor’s degree or higher, you should be paid. In fact, it candidly does depend on the situation of the individual, if they have had previous work experience or not or if they are desperate for experience, whether they have enough economic means or not.

The researcher strongly agrees that employers should make employees feels valued, no matter whether an intern or not. As an intern will only stay with a company for a limited
amount of time, the internship should be financially rewarded so that at least cost of living and maybe also transportation is covered. It is completely understandable that an internship should be seen as a valuable experience for young people; however, there are two sides of the coin. Although interns need some training time, they eventually support the company and employers that do not compensate their interns in a fair way should start thinking about that approach. As mentioned earlier, *it’s always a give and take.*

As Wallace (2001) stated, members of Generation Y enter the workplace with a short-term career outlook. Assuming that ‘long’ is defined for a time period exceeding eight or ten years, his statement is most probably true. However, as discussed earlier whether Generation Y is narcissistic or not, it is not fair claiming certain characteristics to be true merely because of the fact that things were done in a certain way for a long time. It is not doubtful that the meaning of staying with an employer for a long period of time will be changed and one day, ‘staying with an employer for three years’ might be considered a long time. Many sources claim this to be *loyalty* towards employers. On account of that many members of Generation Y change jobs more often than any other previous generation has, Gen Y’ers are thought to be disloyal to their employer. In the questionnaire, almost half of the students (47%) and even more of the graduates (61%) indicated that they would leave their employer once better opportunities arise, no matter whether the company has undertaken great efforts and money to train them. The researcher’s findings in terms that young people seeking meaningful and challenging work aligns well with already published material. Only one percent of the students and nine percent of the graduates do not want to be challenged in their job. The remaining students and graduates aim to be either somewhat challenged or very challenged. The simple expression ‘*It’s always a give and take*’ has a lot meaning to employee’s loyalty. If young employees have the opportunity to grow within the company they work for, if they do meaningful and challenging work, if they receive the support they need but also some autonomy regarding decision-making, this is more likely to resolve in loyalty to the employer. In addition, the findings of the questionnaire demonstrate that 23 percent of students and 12 percent of graduates are willing to work more than 45 hours a week. While this might not seem much, 42 percent of students and 44 percent of graduates are prepared to work between 40 and 45 hours. Members of Generation Y want to work, they want to learn and experience new processes. In many cases, they understand that working overtime is a given, just like Boomers want them to consider that. Also, when looking at Gen Y’s desire to obtain a high title in the workplace within two to three years (66 % of students and 56% of graduates), that
implies that Gen Y’ers would like to stay with their employer for longer than the indicated time period.

While the researcher was expecting that only a few of the students and graduates have/had work experience before starting their first job after college, the findings show that an average of almost 67 percent of all participants have/had work experience. Many employers consider not having work experience a severe issue and that was thought to be one main reason why graduates struggle finding a job. And although the study addressed earlier that asked executives and human resource managers about the opinion on Gen Y revealed that college graduates today only have adequate soft skills, 64 percent of all participants of the researcher’s study believe that they have all the skills they need. This could be considered as only a perceptive difference but it rather is a generational difference. In spite of the fact that it only was a minor area in the questionnaire, talking about generational differences, about half of all participants feel that they are very different from their parent’s generation and the other half feels they are only somewhat different. Although there are many studies and articles on the different attitudes, ethical values between the generations, in the workplace it is most important to be aware of those differences and respect them.

Opinion on Education/Experience

One important part of the questionnaire asked students and graduates on their opinion on education versus experience. As the findings are very similar between these two groups, the researcher will state their common opinions on that topic. Some of the reasons why participants stated that it is wise to pursue a Master’s degree right after a Bachelor’s degree are as follows: The work experience that one gets will not be useful for the degree, one may not go back to college after getting used to working and having a regular salary and there might be a problem because one is no longer used to the ‘school rhythm’ and studying for exams might be more difficult. Losing strength, motivation and commitment is far more risky when taking a break from studies. “The longer one postpones, the lazier one becomes”. Other people stated that it would be a favourable advantage on the CV when applying for jobs. One person introduced the issue that obtaining a Bachelor’s degree today does not have the same weight as it used to have. Therefore he/she sees a Master’s as essential. Another person mentioned that it is better to pursue the Master’s right after a Bachelor’s because some countries have age constraints regarding free education or government support while still a student until a certain age. Some people say that a Master’s degree is not really needed after
all. If you work your way up with only a Bachelor’s degree, you may earn more money than others that have a better certificate. Also, some employers may find someone with a Master’s degree and no work experience overqualified and would rather employ someone with a Bachelor’s degree and more work experience.

In the following paragraph, reasons are presented as to why the participants believe it is better to pursue a Master’s degree after some work experience could be gained. Many people stated that it is important to them to first find out which areas they are most interested in. This can only be achieved by getting different experiences in the labour market. Then it is to find out what kind of degrees are really wanted or needed in the market. One person is convinced that it is easy finding a job after a Bachelor’s but once one is done with the Master’s, employers might not be interested in the higher certificate of someone if that person does not bring experience. Another participant said, “University is often too theoretical. It is easier and more efficient to learn a job by doing it instead of learning about it”. Also, some companies may pay part of the tuition fee for the Master’s.

Although Birchall (2013) said that work experience is no longer an optional extra for college students and Olsen (2013), wrote in her blog that it is to not underestimate experience. The researcher believes that all of the answers of the participants seem to be reasonable. There does not seem to be an entirely right or wrong answer. As some people stated, it depends on the individual’s situation. Whether they truly know what they want from life, how their economical situation looks like, how motivated they are, whether they were able to gain some experiences in internships or not.

When it comes to the preference of a physical working environment, almost half of the students and more than half of the graduates would like to work at the office and at times, also from home. Literature teaches and also the researcher’s findings show that Generation Y is considered to be extremely freedom seeking, open to change, independent, flexible and ambitious. It can be assumed that when Gen Y is given what they want or need, i.e. the flexibility to work from home at times might have them stay motivated and committed to work. Although there are others that would rather exclusively work in the office, if employers are flexible enough and trust is established, Gen Y’s performance might boost. As mentioned in the section ‘opportunities for employers’, employers should start thinking about how to create the right atmosphere. Attention should also be drawn to the fact that the findings reveal 63 percent of all participants can only concentrate on a project about two to three hours before
needing a break. Even if the young working population needs to take extra breaks or interrupt their work that should be considered as acceptable. Fogg (2008) emphasizes that it should not matter how Generation Y accomplishes a job, the fact is that they get their job done.

While many sources discuss how Generation Y needs continuous feedback, the researcher was interested in finding out the kinds of feedback and whether Generation Y is open towards negative feedback. The literature review addresses the issue of positive and negative feedback. Based on findings of Folkman’s recent study, many members of Generation Y that want to know how they are doing, only really want the answer if the result is good news (Folkman, 2014). Interestingly, these findings are completely different from the researcher’s findings. Only 2 percent of the participants only want to hear positive feedback. Assuming that the respondents answered the question truthfully, that opens up more room for discussion as both studies were carried out this year. However, more questions should have been provided relating that topic only in order to address that subject matter more accurately. As the results revealed that more than half of the participants believe that their performance would decrease if no supportive feedback is given, it is of utmost importance, whether the feedback given is positive or negative, to deliver it in a honest and constructive way. That can help one do better in a job and may keep employees motivated and encouraged to work.

Literature claims that nowadays, it is essential to gather some work experience while still in college. When participants were asked what they believe are the major challenges in securing employment, almost half of the students and the graduates indicated that it would be their lack of work experience. When looking at other questions however, that seems surprising as more than half of the students and 49 percent of graduates said that they feel confident in finding the job or the career they want to be in. Also, about 67 percent of all the participants said that they already have had work experience in their field of studies. Those answers seem a bit contradictory and unexpected, however, the work experience gathered during college time might not have been either enough or the right experience.

Recommendations

Advice that students and graduates would give to students seems to be wise, well thought out and reasonable. Even older generations would advise Generation Y to not expect too much and be realistic and that it is okay to get some rejections and that it is to learn how to deal with them and to not give up but to be patient. As someone stated “You will probably not love the first job you have, and along the way, will likely find out that you want to change
direction or chose a somewhat different path than what you initially expected. That is reasonable. Don't be afraid of that. It’s a sign of growth. Go for it.” That suggests that an individual’s success depends on the ability to grow, to seek out opportunities and to be confident in one’s one ability to shine. Some participants also recommend to go abroad, whether to work or to travel. Nowadays people realise more than ever that learning a new language and spending time abroad can only be beneficial for one’s résumé.

Conclusion

Although the researcher was expecting to reveal many differences among students and graduates and young recruits, when looking at the whole picture of all participants, students and graduates seem to have very similar opinions about the workplace including its challenges and expectations. However, the question whether Generation X and Generation Y are similar or different, is rather more complicated to answer. That depends on certain characteristics. The literature has shown for example that Generation X values a good work-life balance. The researcher’s findings unveil that 95 percent of all participants indicated that a good work-life balance would enhance their motivation at work. So as in terms of that, it can be said that Generation X and Y are highly similar while they might be of complete different opinions when it comes to feedback or how work is to be accomplished.
Conclusion

Introduction

As a final part of this dissertation, the research objectives given in the beginning will be looked at again. As the previous chapters, the literature review and the discussion along with the analysis were large, a summary of the findings is necessary as it will provide the reader with clear information in relation to the objectives and then, recommendations will be given. Recommendations are formed not only based on the researcher’s analysis of findings but are partly in point of fact, opinions and suggestions from some of the participants of the questionnaire used for the research project.

Research Objectives

The overall research aim was collecting facts about college students’ and graduates’ opinion of their academic history and how they want or expect their professional future to look like. Furthermore, it was to assess Generation Y in the workplace and to identify what kinds of challenges and expectations both employees and employers face and what kind of guidance can be given to them.

The specific research objectives were within the context of Generation Y, to:

1. Identify the possible causes of failure in securing employment in their chosen field.
2. Explore Generation Y’s expectations and whether they are in relation to their possible workplace and investigate their views, values, and attitudes.
3. Evaluate critically how successful graduates of Generation Y are in securing employment in their chosen field.
4. Formulate recommendations for soon-to-be graduates and recent graduates of how they can better prepare themselves for the labour market.
Research Objective 1

As a result of the Literature Review and the empirical research, causes of failure in securing employment is mainly due to lack of work experience, rather than being lazy or ‘picky’. It also includes the lack of knowledge about how career services at college can support their students.

It can be concluded that it is recommendable to extensively make use of college’s career services. This is not only essential while still in college but there should be the possibility for alumni to refer back to their student services and make use of their programmes such as work shops that train students on how to properly design resumes and cover letters, do mock interviews, job-search strategies, networking and salary negotiation training. This is a shout towards colleges and universities to definitely include, if not already, these programme areas. If colleges have special relationships with employers, it is worthy to think about including internships and job shadow programs for students and graduates.

As previously indicated in the literature review, McAtee (2012) made reference to some of the less common programmes for alumni that help with career changers and unemployed alumni. He considers support for alumni just as important as support for students. Some colleges claim to offer alumni services already, however, most of the services merely cover a community that is established on social media sites such as LinkedIn where graduates can reconnect with former classmates to catch up with news and share information that is interesting and relevant for them. Many colleges profess that their focus is all about their students; this should not only be literally true but also psychologically. That means that they should be there for students in any way they can and if they want to go the extra mile, colleges should, if needed, give extensive support to alumni as well.

Another recommendation that can be given to colleges is to make some classes relating to preparation of life after college mandatory. Too many respondents of the researcher’s questionnaire stated that they were either too busy or did not take the student services seriously. Therefore, by making some career courses or workshops mandatory, colleges could make a helpful contribution to those that are not successful in securing employment or that are not confident etc.
Research Objective 2

It cannot be argued that entirely new knowledge has been created here, however, findings of the questionnaire showed that Generation Y’s expectations are not irrational as to what some authors have previously claimed. Most members of Generation Y agree that they need to work their way up with experience and most opinions in terms of salary are not exaggerated and comparatively modest. Generation Y is respectful towards superiors but they also expect to be treated with respect, and receive honest and constructive feedback in order to excel in the work they do. This research objective has been fulfilled as these areas where extensively covered in both secondary and primary research.

Research Objective 3

This research objective was rather difficult to assess as opinions and experiences are widely spread. A more thorough qualitative analysis is needed to approach that matter with more accuracy, while clearly separating Generation Y’s fields of studies and making finer distinctions between what is really valued, challenging and expected of and from members of Generation Y. The term successful should also be clearly defined, as each individual will most likely have a different definition for it. However, the researcher assumes that successful means finding a job or a career upon or within two to three months after graduating. Thus, it can be concluded that most graduates are successful. Nevertheless, the duration of finding a job and the state of happiness one feels, are also contributors that have to be considered when talking about success. Also, findings in the literature revealed it is common for graduates going through a transition time. Graduates may not directly be successful or happy in the first job or career they are aiming to be in and they have to accept work that is either underpaying or not challenging enough in the beginning, however, they should see it as a learning experience and within only a few years they might be in the career they really want to be in. Besides, more than half of the participants indicated that they are or were confident in relation to the career they are aiming to be in.
Research Objective 4

Here it is to refer back to the researcher’s hypothesis, which is that ‘Graduates have to come a long way before being in the career they aim to be in’. After the discussion and analysis as well as recommendations given from the participants of the questionnaire, the hypothesis can be considered as true and correct. Together from common knowledge and also the findings, it can be recommended that the better one is prepared, the easier the transition from college to work will be.

Students that are about to graduate college and that will be looking to finding a career are expected to know how to be a lifelong learner. During their entire time from being a high school student to being a student at a college or university, students have learned how to cope with difficult situations, how to research and analyse, how to work in teams and much more. The experiences as a student are not only valuable for themselves but also for prospect employers. Furthermore, students need to know what expectations employers will have from them. Assuming what might be expected is not sufficient and will lead to disappointments in the end. Disappointments in job searching can easily turn into discouragement of stopping to sending out applications for example. This can effortlessly be avoided by doing one’s homework: knowing what documents for an application are required, researching as much as possible about a prospect employer and learning how to deal with certain situations. Graduates should also know how to accomplish goals in their chosen career. It can be assumed, individuals will learn during the entire time of their career or careers, but the ability to be life-long learner, is likely to be gained during the time spent in college.

As some participants mentioned their major challenges at the workplace, such as time management, leadership skills, being confident in general and giving presentations, these skills actually can be learnt before entering the workplace. These skills can be acquired at college and therefore, it should be clear that when afraid of these challenges, overcoming or even if it is just tackling those challenges while still in college can be a great benefit before starting a job.

Most advice and suggestions given align well with topics discussed in the literature review and questions asked in the questionnaire. The most frequent recommendations were to gather as much work experience as possible before graduating, whether being employed part-time or doing internships. Many also proposed to start applying for jobs as early as possible
and to be open and flexible in terms of job locations. Also, many believe that using their college’s career service will be of great benefit as in knowing how a perfect cover letter and résumé should look like.

Besides the research objectives, general conclusions are still to be considered. For the purpose of this dissertation, the researcher was hoping to collect at least 150 responses from her questionnaire. She was able to collect 201 answers, which suited her frame satisfactorily. The researcher published her questionnaire twice in a time period of two weeks. Because the understanding and quality of the answers in the questionnaire are not all identical, for instance, some participants gave detailed answers and reasoning to open-ended questions while others did not fill it out at all or gave answers that were not appropriate to analyse, the researcher did well on choosing the purposive sampling method. In doing so, she was able to form reasonable generalisations. The answers from the open-ended questions gave the researcher a more qualitative and thus, clearer picture regarding Gen Y’s opinion on unpaid internships and whether to take a job that pays more money or a job that makes you happy. While some participants answered open-ended questions very briefly only, some had a strong opinion and gave explicit reasoning why they would choose a certain situation over another one.

As previously mentioned, survey research involves the structured collection of data from a sizeable population. Although the researcher’s study population is not sizeable, the findings are still valid based on the research carried out.

Most action research is conducted to determine areas of concern, develop and test other options and new approaches. That was the researcher’s intention as she identified some major areas of what might hinder or in fact, hinders Generation Y from securing employment in their chosen field. Moreover, she gave suggestions of what can be done better to prepare for the labour market. Although criticism was given in the literature review that it should not be reasonable to ‘put all members of Generation Y into one bag?’ and draw generalisations, for the researcher’s choice of carrying out quantitative research and her positivist approach, generalisations of findings are not only aimed for but necessary.
Finally, as mentioned earlier, a successful organisation employing multiple generations should have their focus on organisational goals and not the means by which individual workers get there. Ellis (2011) reminds us that the most important thing to do is to create a team that understands the strengths of each generation. Only when everyone is pursuing the same goals, organisations can reach their full potential. Furthermore, it can be concluded, when dealing with different generations, mutual respect, open communication, direct feedback and the awareness that people can learn from each other (no matter if the person teaching one is younger or older) is of utmost importance.
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Appendices

Appendix 1  Reflections

1. Process:

During the first semester of the MBA programme, our research method lecturer kept emphasizing that we should write our dissertation about a topic that truly interests us. For a long time, I had been reflecting upon and been interested in how young people with an academic background but little to no work experience see their educational history, whether they consider it valuable and whether they find themselves successful. Elaborating on my thoughts and interests, my research area was quickly refined to students and recent graduates of Generation Y. My special interest was differentiating between student’s perception and graduates’ realities relating to work topics, such as expectations and challenges. Hence, finding out whether students have high expectations and are utterly discerning about their professional life and comparing the opinions with other members of Generation Y that have already gathered some experiences in the labour market. The process of collecting information was not difficult as there is already a vast amount of published material about Generation Y. However, most material published is not from Generation Y itself and that can be the distinguishing source of disagreement. This is where my primary research began, asking Generation Y directly and not the opinions and perceptions of older generations about Generation Y. Discoveries that I made by chance were that the opinions and values of students and young recruits barely differ from each other. This could easily be explained by the fact that all participants of my study are under one age cohort and it is said to be that each generation has a similar mindset, however, I thought that there might be major differences between students and graduates, even though they are within one age group. Other discoveries that I made but were through planned search strategies are that students do have to come a long way before being in the career they aim to be in. It is no longer an optional extra to gather work experience while studying. My thinking has changed as I realise, it is not a disadvantage having to work besides studying in view of the fact that gaining work experience does not only provide one with means to finance cost of living but also with social skills, team building skills, independence and more. And as revealed in the literature, a combination of soft and hard skills are not only wanted but are required by today’s employers.
2. Use of Sources

In very early stages of the research process I thought that there was not enough information available about graduates of Generation Y. There is an enormous amount of material about myths of today’s young workforce and how to retain the best talent but there was not much about the whole picture perceived by Generation Y itself. However, once the research questions became more clear, I realized that I had to start looking at all the generations in the workforce because it is not only about Gen Y members. As diversity includes a multigenerational workforce, diversity needed to be explained in my discipline but only in means of generational differences. Throughout researching the literature, I learnt that there is not one specific picture of Generation Y. As a matter of course, there are certain characteristics of how Generation Y is labelled, ranging from spoilt and attention-seeking to independent and creative but I wanted to go beyond those generalisations and ask them myself.

3. Dissertation Formulation

For a deeper understanding of my topic, the reader needed to see the outside picture first, thus it was necessary talking about generational diversity, and not only about challenges and expectations of Generation Y but also challenges, expectations and opportunities for employers. It is essential that these align with one another; otherwise there cannot be a multigenerational workforce where everyone feels nurtured and can reach their full potential if the awareness for other people’s wants and needs is not there.

4. Self-reflection and own learning

In the beginning of our course year, we were introduced to the subject ‘Personal and Professional Development’. Part of our written assessment was a ‘learning portfolio’, which we were asked to write during the first semester.

Having evaluated my ‘Learning Style Questionnaire’, I found out that I am a reflective learner. Knowing that, I now consciously understand myself; my thinking and my actions better then ever. To give an example, during the year at DBS, when working on assignments, I have always been very thoughtful, thorough and methodical and I rarely jumped to
conclusions, however, I have always been very slow to make up my mind and reach a decision, probably because I was too cautious and did not take enough risks.

4.1 Self-Appraisal

Although I value some spontaneity, life has taught me that structure is extremely beneficial. Having a good time management is only part of the structure and that is where there is room for improvement for myself. I get things done on time, however, when I try to get them done in my own set time; I sometimes fail and postpone it again. I know that I can do good work and sometimes it is only little words of encouragement, praise or motivation that will either help me to start tackling or continuing and finishing a project.

4.2 Problem-Solving

Two incidents during the MBA course have made me realise that communication is the key. Although it sometimes may not be very convenient or comfortable, I know that it is the best thing to do when something is not going the way it is supposed to. It is entirely reasonable to accept fear but it is to communicate it and let others help when help is offered. Even if it firstly is not directly offered to me, I know that by asking for help, I will not ever be disappointed and let down.

One particular challenge that I had to overcome was to actually start the whole dissertation researching and writing process. Although we previously had to write a research proposal, I was unable to see the whole project finalised. A big help was the book by John Biggam, “Succeeding with your Master’s Dissertation”. I have extensively read and made use of it, as it is very structured. During my dissertation process, it gave me confidence through the guidelines that were easy to follow.
4.3 Summary of Added Value

In this brief section, I intend to clarify two important things; firstly, how the programme has added value and in particular, how the dissertation has added value. This refers not only to my individual person but also to the external audience.

Having the possibility to achieve the MBA degree within one year only is already adding value as I can enter the workforce sooner than I could have if I had pursued a Master’s elsewhere. At the start of the course, I did not thoroughly understand the benefits of the two subjects ‘Personal & Professional Development’ and ‘Research Methods’. However, looking back, I understand how important they are, not only for the completion of the degree but also for the fact of realising what it means learning to learn. The programme has further added value by encouraging me to think more strategically by thinking outside of the box. Not everything is as it may seem like and this is where I would like to make the allusion to the topic of my dissertation.

The research area of Generation Y is enormous and I understand that not everything could be covered in my part. However, looking at what Generation Y is like should not be grounded in observations and perceptions of others and their conclusions made. The value my dissertation has added lies in the fact that the primary research is based on the perceptions and opinions of Generation Y and not anybody else. This is to be acknowledged, as there is rarely information on Generation Y from Generation Y.

4.4 Plans to apply/sustain the learning

As I am eager to improve myself and to learn new things, I am already trying to keep as much structure as possible in my day. My main areas of improvement are time management and presenting myself with more confidence. It is astonishing what all can be done by actually applying rigid structure and consistency. I realise this is not to be learnt over night but it is a long process. Although time at college is now completed, there will always be opportunities to learn, not only from experience but also by consciously making decisions that I will be able to benefit from.
Appendix 2 Questionnaire

Note: Below is a copy of the student’s questionnaire; the graduates’ questionnaire contained the same questions, however, worded in the past tense.

Generation Y (people born between 1980 and 1999)

This questionnaire is for Generation Y (students, soon-to-graduates, graduates and young employees) and aims at finding out what their opinions, values and attitudes are in the context of the labour market.

There are about 60 questions and it will take about 15 minutes to fill it out. I know this is a lot but I would greatly appreciate your participation. Your participation in this study is completely confidential and results will only be used for the completion of my dissertation. It is voluntary and you are free to withdraw your participation from this study at any time. Please be as accurate as possible. I also encourage you to fill out the open-ended questions.

If you have any questions regarding the survey or this research project in general, please contact me (Nicole Rombach, 10033649@mydbs.ie) or my supervisor David Wallace at david.wallace@dbs.ie. Thank you for your time.

Basic Information

1. Were you born between 1980 and 1999 (Gen Y)?
   - Yes
   - No

2. What is your gender?
   - Male
   - Female

3. What is your highest degree until now?
   - High School Diploma
   - Bachelor’s
   - Master’s
   - Doctorate

4. Are you currently pursuing another degree?
   - None
   - Bachelor’s
   - Master’s
   - Doctorate
5. What is your field of studies?
   - Business
   - Sciences
   - IT
   - Engineering
   - Health
   - Education
   - Arts
   - Other:
   - Business
   - Sciences
   - IT
   - Engineering
   - Health
   - Education
   - Arts
   - Other:

6. Specify your degree.
   Example: Business: Finance

7. Do you currently have a job?
   - Yes
   - No

8. If yes, what is your position?
   - Part-time
   - Full-time

9. What is your role?
   - Intern
   - Trainee
   - Employee
   - Supervisor
   - Manager

Transition from college to work

10. Did you make use of your college's career service?
    - Yes
    - No

11. If you answered yes, in question 10, please specify
    - Mock interview
    - Salary negotiation training
    - Guidance on cover letters
    - Guidance on résumés/CVs
    - Job search strategies
    - Job fairs
    - Other: _please specify____________

12. If you answered yes in question 10, was it helpful?
    - Yes
    - No
13. If you answered yes in question 12, IN WHAT was it helpful?
   You may check more than one box
   - Finding employment
   - Gaining more confidence for real job interviews
   - Knowing how to do make the most of job search
   - Having an idea of the perfect cover letter and CV
   - Other: please specify

14. If you answered no in question 10, what were the reasons?
   - I did not know about the services
   - I did not take it seriously
   - I was too busy

15. Do you have a LinkedIn account?
   - Yes
   - No

16. If yes, is your account always up to date?
   - Yes
   - No

**Expectations**

17. Before applying for jobs, do you make sure no unwanted content is on Facebook and other social media sites?
   - Yes
   - No
   - To a certain extent

18. Indicate when you will start applying for jobs.
   - Half a year before graduating
   - 2-3 months before graduating
   - Upon graduating
   - Other: __________________

19. How many applications do you think you will send out?
   - About 5
   - About 10
   - About 15
   - More than 20
   - Unsure

20. Indicate the number of months that you think it will take to be employed.
   - 0 months
   - 2 - 3 months
   - 4 – 5 months
   - 6 or more months
   - Unsure
21. How confident are you in relation to finding the job/career you want to be in?
   - Confident
   - I don’t know
   - Not confident

22. Would you apply for jobs that do NOT require your individual degree?
   ie. You have a Master’s degree but apply for a job that only requires a Bachelor’s degree
   - Yes
   - No
   - Maybe

23. Imagine. You are offered a job that does not require your degree. (ie. You have a Master's degree and the company only requires a Bachelor’s degree.) This might involve less pay or not very challenging work. Will you accept the job?
   You can check more than one box
   - Yes, I need some experiences
   - Yes, I need the money
   - Yes, only until I find something better
   - Yes but only if I can negotiate better pay because my degree is higher than what the company requires
   - No, I will continue to look for the perfect job.

24. Realistically, what is your desired salary range for the beginning of your career?
   - None
   - €20,000 - €25,000
   - €25,000 - €30,000
   - €30,000 - €35,000
   - €35,000 – €40,000
   - €40,000 - €45,000
   - €45,000 – €50,000
   - €50,000 – €55,000
   - €55,000 - €60,000
   - Other: _________

25. What are your expectations in terms of paid time off? How many days per year?
   - About 10 days
   - About 15 days
   - About 20 days
   - About 25 days
   - About 30 days

26. For how long are you aiming to work for your first employer?
   - About half a year
   - Less than a year
   - Two to three years
   - Longer than three years
   - Unsure

27. Do you already have work experiences in your field of studies?
   - Yes
   - No
28. How challenged do you aim to be in your future job?
   o Very challenged
   o Somewhat challenged
   o Not challenged

29. When finding work, are you expecting to obtain a high title in the workplace within 2-3 years?
   o Yes
   o No

30. In the beginning of your career, how many hours are you willing to work per work?
   o Less than 30
   o 30 - 35
   o Not more than 40
   o 40 - 45
   o More than 45

31. In the beginning of your career, are you willing to work 40+ hours without being financially compensated or without getting paid time off?
   o Yes, if I have no other choice
   o No, under no circumstances
   o Only if I get to benefit from intrinsic rewards (satisfying and meaningful work, recognition, more responsibility, growth opportunities, etc.)

32. Do you think you have the required soft skills needed for your future career?
   Soft skills = personality-driven skills such as ability to work in a team, time management, listening and engaging in small talk, leadership skills, etc.
   o Yes
   o No
   o I don’t know
   o I’m lacking some but I am improving

33. Which soft skills do you think you need further training/development?

34. Your opinion: Your prospect employer values soft skills more than hard skills.
   Hard skills = job skills such as technical skills, the ability to use a software program etc.
   o Disagree
   o Agree
   o Unsure

35. Do you think your individual academic degree is necessary for the career/job you want to be in?
   o Yes
   o No
   o Unsure
36. What do you think are the main benefits of holding a Master’s degree?
   (You do not need to have a Master’s degree. You may select more than one answer)
   o There aren’t really more benefits to having a Bachelor’s degree
   o Earn higher pay
   o Gain more promotions
   o More job security
   o Other, please specify

37. You have an excellent college degree and little to no work experience in your field of studies. It is obvious that you are not being pushed up the ladder (starting out with a high salary and/or lots of responsibility) right away. You need to work your way up with experience. What is your opinion on that statement?
   o Disagree
   o Agree
   o Unsure

Open-ended questions

38. Do you think it is wise to pursue a Master’s degree immediately after a Bachelor’s degree or do you think it is better to first gain some work experience and pursue a Master’s degree at a later stage? State ‘why’.

39. Briefly state your opinion on unpaid or underpaid internships lasting between 3 to 6 months.

40. Imagine: You are offered two jobs. Company A is where you would love to work for but you find out that the pay is not as you imagined it to be. At Company B you are offered a great salary but this job is not really where you want to work. State which job offer you would accept and why.

Your opinion at work

41. Are you confident in dealing with new work environments/colleagues/mentors?
   o Very confident
   o Somewhat confident
   o Not confident, but not shy
   o Not confident at all

42. If you had the choice, would you rather work in the office or flexible hours from home?
   o Office
   o Home
   o Both in turns
43. How often do you check your phone for non-related work activities when working? 
   ie. such as texting, Facebook, games etc.
   o Every few minutes
   o Once an hour
   o A couple of times a day
   o Never

44. Do you think your previous answer is justified/acceptable?
   o Yes
   o No

45. Do you think your concentration at work decreases when doing non-related work activities?
   o Yes
   o No
   o A little bit

46. Do you consider yourself multitasking at work?
   o Yes
   o No

47. How well do you work under time pressure?
   o Very well
   o Somewhat well
   o Not well

48. What is your opinion in terms of loyalty when the organisation you are working for just undertook great efforts and money to train you?
   o I will stay with them for a while no matter whether I like working there or not
   o I will leave once I have the opportunity for more benefits or growth chances
   o Other, please specify

49. Which of these statements are closest to your opinion on praise/feedback at the workplace?
   You may choose more than one answer.
   o You want to be praised no matter of the quality of the work you have accomplished
   o You want to be praised for good work that you have done
   o You are open to negative feedback
   o You actually only want to hear positive feedback

Teamwork

50. How well do you work in teams?
   o Very well
   o Somewhat well
   o Not so well

51. If you could choose, would you rather work with Baby Boomers (ages 50 to 68) or with Generation X (ages 35 to 49)?
   o Baby Boomers
   o Generation X
   o It doesn’t matter
52. In which team would you rather work in?
   o I prefer working in a team with people my age
   o I prefer working in a team with people from multiple generations

Referring to the previous question, please state why.

Motivation

53. Generation Y is motivated more intrinsically (growth within the company, responsibility, work-life balance, challenging and meaningful work) than extrinsically (financial benefits, stock options, health insurance etc.)
   o Disagree
   o Agree
   o Unsure

54. You are more inclined to get work done when you are told to do something in a supportive way, rather than an authoritarian way.
   o Disagree
   o Agree
   o Unsure

55. A good work-life balance will enhance your motivation to work.
   o Disagree
   o Agree
   o Unsure

Performance

56. Your performance at work would INCREASE if you hear a simple “Thank you”, “Congratulations” and/or supportive feedback.
   o Disagree
   o Agree
   o Unsure

57. Your performance at work would DECREASE if you do not hear supportive feedback.
   o Disagree
   o Agree
   o Unsure
Challenges

58. What do you think will be major challenges in securing employment?
    You may choose more than one answer.
    o None
    o Your low self confidence
    o Your lack of work experience
    o Your fear of moving to another city
    o Other, please specify

59. After finding a job, what do you think will be major challenges for you?
    You may choose more than one answer.
    o Getting along with other generations
    o Giving presentations
    o Convincing others
    o Being confident in general
    o Other, please specify

60. If Generation Y has an issue in a job, they will simply leave rather than trying to solve
    the issue.
    o Agree
    o Disagree
    o Unsure

Generation Y

61. What are the top 5 characteristics of Generation Y?
    Select 5 boxes only.
    o Lazy
    o Hard-working
    o Honest
    o Arrogant
    o Modest
    o Loyal
    o Freedom-seeking
    o Challenges-seeking
    o Independent
    o Flexible
    o Ambitious
    o Ethical
    o Attention-seeking
    o Cynical
    o Open to change
    o Spoilt
    o Need for feedback
    o Creative
62. For how long can you concentrate on a project before you need a break?
   o 1 hour
   o 2-3 hours
   o 4-5 hours
   o 6 hours
   o Other, please specify

63. How different do you think is your generation (Gen Y) from your parents’ generation (Gen X) in terms of values and opinions about the labour market?
   o Very different
   o Somewhat different
   o Not different at all

64. Final question, what recommendations would you give to students before graduating and applying for jobs?