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A framework for career success for specialists

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Abstract

Specialists contribute to the success of organisations in the form of unique expertise and specific skill sets. Research into career success for specialists is limited and the career of the specialist is not well defined. This study aims to increase understanding of what constitutes career success for specialists, what strategies individuals can employ to achieve such success and what organisations can do to support specialist career success.

In line with qualitative research methodological principles, this study followed an exploratory approach to understanding specialist career success. A total of seventeen in-depth interviews were held with senior specialists who have achieved career success, senior internal Human Resource practitioners, and external career development and Human Resource experts. The sample represented a broad range of industries, including Petrochemicals, Telecommunications, Banking, Financial Health Insurance, Academia, Healthcare, Aerospace, FMCG, Mining, Information Technology, Specialist Consulting and Specialist Search and Recruitment.

Key findings reflect that career success is an individual construct which is achieved through a variety of strategies. The research allowed for the development of a framework for career success for specialists, which outlines the career path options and career success strategies available to specialists. Furthermore, a model titled 'the 5 C's of organisational support for specialists' summarises what organisations can do to support specialist career success. The outcome of this study provides guidance for specialists in managing their own careers and for organisations who wish to understand specialists in order to attract and retain them as valuable contributors to organisational success.

Keywords: Career success, career development, career strategies, specialists.

Declaration

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



.....
Heather Jeanne Watson

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

“Career success is a construct which exists only in people’s minds and which has no clear boundaries”

(Gattiker and Larwood 1988, p.570, in McDonald & Hite, 2008, p.101).

Specialists play an important role in the achievement of organisational success by providing expert knowledge and skills that enable business to implement strategy and prosper (Kang & Snell, 2009). The ways in which specialists define and achieve career success is under-researched, with the majority of career success studies having focused on generalists or managers. The ultimate purpose of this research is to propose a career success framework for specialists that enables specialists to manage their own career success and for organisations to improve the way in which they support specialists in their career development.

The study has both business and academic implications. Firms will benefit from this study, in that an improved understanding of how specialists achieve career success will provide impetus to quality human capital management practices. Quality career development and support practices for specialists will positively influence business success. For specialists themselves, the research will provide a framework of options and strategies to apply in achieving individual career success. By adding to the body of academic knowledge on specialists and career success, the study will benefit the research community and encourage further research.

1.1 Career Success

Career success is best understood from an individual perspective and has implications for organisational Human Resource (HR) strategy and individual career development. As an individual outcome, career success both depends on and contributes to organisational success (Judge, Higgins, Thoresen & Barrick, 1999). In defining the constructs of career success, it is important to acknowledge the individualistic and fluid nature of the topic (McDonald & Hite, 2008). It is therefore important to understand career success from the individual perspective of particular groups, in the case of this study, the specialist occupation. Furthermore, defining career success has been identified as a macro-level trend that is likely to have an impact on talent management in the future, according to Carter, Cook and Dorsey (2009).

Career success was defined by Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz 1995 (in Judge, Higgins, Thoresen & Barrick, 1999, p.622) as “the real or perceived achievements individuals have accumulated as a result of their work experiences”. A wealth of research into career success provides insight into key career success constructs. This study adopts a mystery creation and solving approach, which Alvesson and Karreman (2011) advocate as a move away from just fitting data to theory towards challenging existing theory and enabling novel insights. Existing literature and career success constructs are therefore taken into account, but not used as the primary basis for understanding how specialists define career success and what career strategies they adopt to achieve such success. For the study to be socially and practically relevant and to have broader theoretical relevance (Alvesson and Karreman, 2011), it is critical that the research be conducted with the aim of exploring and discovering individual perceptions in an open way. This allows for new interpretation of the phenomenon in question, i.e. career success for specialists.

1.2 The Specialist

For the purpose of this study, a specialist is defined as an individual, employed full-time by a for-profit organisation, at a senior level, with no direct reports (i.e. employees or teams reporting directly to the individual) and who provides functional knowledge and expertise to the organisation. This means that the target of this study is the professionally qualified, experienced specialist who is at the same job grade or level as mid- to senior-management in the organisation.

Many researchers refer to such specialists as knowledge workers (Naidu, 2009; Lamb & Sutherland, 2010; van Staden & du Toit, 2010; Kelly, Mastroeni, Conway, Monks, Truss, Flood, & Hannon, 2011). The definition provided by van Staden and du Toit in their 2010 study is of the knowledge worker “as an individual that has considerable knowledge and learning in a specialist field” (p. 81). Vinkenbunrg & Weber (2012) clearly delineate between a manager of people and specialists, whilst Kelly et al. (2011) refer to specialists as problem solvers who use their in-depth knowledge of highly specialised areas. Currie, Tempest & Starkey (2006) make reference to specialists as master craftsmen, a vestige of the pre-industrial craft model of career. The future of work involves a shift back to this mastery according to Gratton (2010, p.18), who proposes “that in the future the means by which individual value is created will shift from having generalist ability to having specialist ability and achieving serial mastery”.

Specialists are also referred to as professionals (Abele & Wiese, 2008; Farren, 2008; McDonald & Hite, 2008; Abele & Spurk, 2009; Stumpf, 2010; Spurk, Abele, & Volmer, 2011; Van Den Born, & Van Witteloostuijn, 2011). The Skills Development Act regulations of 1998 distinguish professionals from managers by defining them as “people who possess a high level of professional knowledge and experience in a field of physical and life science or the social sciences and humanities” (Department of Labour, Skills Development Act Regulations, 1998, Annex, p.1). Professional occupations include “scientists, engineers, computer programmers, accountants, teaching professionals, management consultants, medical practitioners, priests, attorneys and social workers” (Skills Development Act, 1998, Annex, p.1). According to 2012 labour force statistics, the number of professionals in South Africa was approximately 747 000 in March 2012, accounting for almost 6% of the employed South African labour force (Statistics South Africa, 2012). As key contributors to both organisations and the country, specialists play an important role in society and the economy.

In terms of specialists, the most relevant studies are those of Gratton (2011) and McDonald & Hite (2008). In global Future of Work research, the importance of “serial mastery” is discussed (Gratton, 2011). Based on the five forces that will shape the future world, key shifts in assumptions include that of the need for developing deep, valuable skills and competencies, that is, serial mastery, in order to add real value (Gratton, 2011).

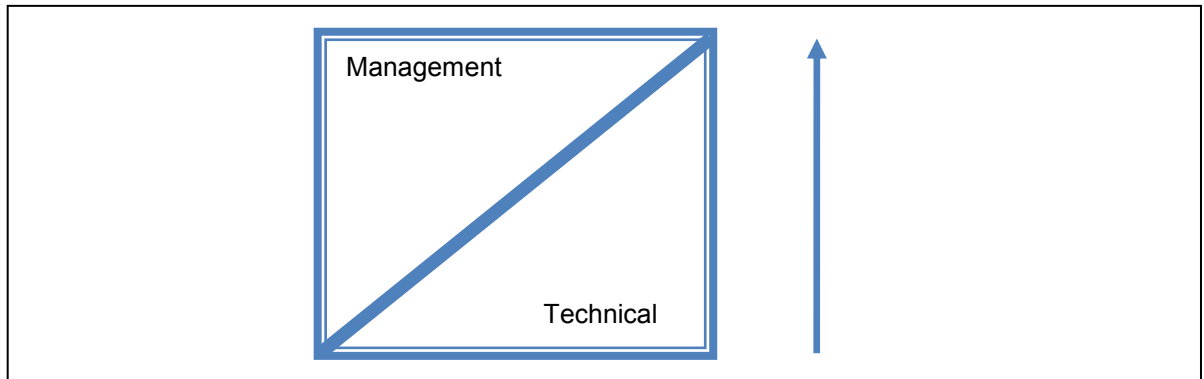
McDonald & Hite (2008, p.86) conducted a qualitative study which explored “young professionals’ definitions of career success and the strategies they employ to achieve that success”. The participants in the study were mostly female, white and from the education field (McDonald & Hite, 2008). A key distinction with this study is the focus on senior specialists who have already progressed and achieved a degree of career success, as well obtaining a higher degree of diversity with regards to education and industry type.

1.3 Career Development

Traditionally, career progression has focused on the generalist route, which advocates a move from technical or specialist level to management (Ismail, 2003; Kelly et al, 2011). This linear progression is presented in Figure 1 below and reflects how career paths often see a move away from technical work towards managerial work. General

career paths in organisations normally see specialists moving up the career ladder into management. As they do more management work, there is an inclination to do less technical work (Ismail, 2003; Kelly et al., 2011).

Figure 1: General career path in organisations (Ismail, 2003; Kelly et al. 2011)



The key problem is that the role of the specialist in today's business world is largely ignored, with the majority of specialists having limited career pathway options (Kelly et al, 2011). To achieve career success, specialists are often expected to take on a people management role, which is in contradiction to their core talents and passions (Farren, 2008). According to Stone (2006, para. 10), "this produces managers that resent having to deal with 'people issues', which take them away from what they actually like doing – the technical stuff". With limited career opportunities and restricted skills development, specialists are often faced with organisational and personal barriers to career success (Kelly et al, 2011; Zikic, 2009).

Providing relevant and structured specialist career options that allow for alternatives to management, is a challenge many organisations face (Curtis, 2010). The traditional career path, which is viewed as linear, static and rigid is being replaced with a multidirectional, dynamic and fluid career path (Baruch, 2004; Benko & Anderson, 2010). A shift in career pattern thinking is evident in current research into boundaryless and protean careers (Arthur, Khapovaz & Wilderom, 2005; Currie, Tempest & Starkey, 2006; Clarke, 2009; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009; Rodrigues & Guest, 2010; Verbruggen, 2011; Colakoglu, 2011; Grimland, Vigoda-Gadot & Baruch, 2012). Despite the focus on boundaryless careers, where organisational boundaries are permeable and therefore allow for increased mobility, and career success is seen as a personal construct, the traditional, linear career is still relevant to many organisations and individuals (Currie, Tempest & Starkey, 2006; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009; Clarke, 2009).

Farren (2008) recommends that companies implement multiple career paths and acknowledge that a “one-size-fits-all notion of career progression” (p.1) is not relevant. Providing mass career customisation to suit the individual needs of professionals through diverse career paths is one solution. Benko & Anderson (2010) use the alternative of a lattice metaphor to the traditional corporate ladder metaphor in proposing a multidirectional career framework which recognises that employees zig zag through their careers, and that career and organisational boundaries are permeable. The lattice model focuses on building careers by customising learning and growth that are aligned to individual career and life goals (Benko & Anderson, 2010). In recognising that how people work has changed and that employee participation is key for engagement and productivity, Benko and Anderson (2010) offer a credible solution to achieving organisational performance and results.

1.4 Career Strategies

“True success is not just getting what you want in life - it’s liking what you get”.

(Hall & Chandler, 2005)

Career strategies are the plans and actions individuals adopt to achieve career goals. Within this framework, individuals accumulate career capital and competencies, engage in career development interventions, and pursue career goals. According to existing research, core career strategies include continuous learning and competency development, self management, networking, mentoring, self esteem, positive affect, self efficacy and attitude/ mind-set (Currie, Tempest & Starkey, 2006; Kuijpers, Schyns & Scheerens, 2006; McDonald, 2008; Kammeyer-Mueller, Judge & Piccolo, 2008; Abele & Wiese, 2008; Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2008; Singh, Ragins & Tharenou, 2009; Ballout, 2009; Clarke, 2009; Naidu, 2009; van Staden & du Toit, 2010; Lamb & Sutherland, 2010; De Vos, De Hauw & Van der Heijden, 2011). Particular emphasis is placed on both career capital (Lamb & Sutherland, 2010), networking (Kuijpers et al, 2006; Currie, Tempest & Starkey, 2006; McDonald & Hite, 2008; Clarke, 2009; Naidu, 2009; Wolff & Moser, 2009; van Staden & du Toit, 2011)) and political skill (Todd, Harris, Harris & Wheeler, 2009; Liu, Liu & Wu, 2010; Treadway, Breland, Williams, Cho, Yang & Ferris, 2011; Blickle, Schneider, Liu & Ferris, 2011) as predictors of career success. Understanding the particular career strategies successful specialists have employed is a key focus of this study.

1.5 Research Objectives

The importance of this study relates to the vital role specialists play in organisational success and that individual career success can lead to organisational success (Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005; van Staden & du Toit, 2011). Managing the careers of specialists is of particular importance. Studies have shown that specialists, like engineers, are difficult to retain and do not make the transition into management easily (Dolan, Bejarano, & Tzafirir, 2011, Choo, 2012).

Researchers have highlighted the need for more qualitative studies that focus on individual construction and judgement of career success (Heslin, 2005; Arthur, Khapovaz & Wilderom, 2005; McDonald & Hite, 2008; Ng & Feldman, 2010; Yean, 2010; Van Den Born & Van Witteloostuijn, 2011; Dolan et al, 2011). Furthermore, McDonald and Hite (2008, p.88) claim that “there appears to be little empirical work linking career development strategies and career success”. A need to understand the individual contexts that influence career success construct systems is suggested by both McDonald & Hite (2008) and Dries, Pepermans & Carlier (2008).

In gathering multiple perspectives on the topic, this study provides an accurate framework for defining specialist career success. By focusing on specialists who have already achieved career success, by their own definition and in terms of seniority in organisations, empirical evidence supports a practical and legitimate framework. In addition, the framework incorporates core career strategies successful specialists have employed in achieving career success and helps explain what systems have influenced career success definitions.

In summary, the key research objectives are;

- To understand how specialists define career success;
- To identify the factors that influence this definition;
- To determine how organisations should support specialist career development; and
- To formulate a framework for specialist career success by exploring the strategies senior specialists employ to achieve career success, in line with their definition of career success.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a plethora of literature on careers. The majority of academic research into careers has focused on career capital, objective and subjective career success, career development and career counselling. A literature review of the four broad areas integral to this study follows, i.e. the specialist occupation, career theories, career success and career strategies.

2.1 The Specialist Occupation and Career Success

Despite the myriad of literature relating to career development, there is limited research into the components for achieving career success specifically for specialists. Research has been mostly quantitative, evident in studies into career success for women academics (Riordan & Louw-Potgieter, 2011), career satisfaction of professionals (Abele & Spurk, 2009; Spurk, Abele & Volmer, 2011), individual career success factors and strategies of insurance agents (Yean, 2010), career success of managers (Ituma, Simpson, Ovadje, Cornelius & Mordi, 2011; Grimland, Vigoda-Gadot & Baruch, 2012), career commitment of managers and non-managers (Ballout, 2011), career transitions and success of business graduates (Chudzikowski, 2011), career success of business students (Colakoglu, 2011), competency development and career success of financial services employees (De Vos, De Hauw & Van der Heijden, 2011) and a career success model for managers (Dries, Pepermans & Carlier, 2008).

Specialists differ from generalists in their deeper knowledge within specific fields, whilst generalists are typically multi-skilled (Kang & Snell, 2009). Furthermore, specialists are less likely to share knowledge across boundaries than generalists (Kang & Snell, 2009; Kelly et al., 2011). With a multi-disciplinary perspective, generalists are able to effectively communicate with specialists and solve complex cross-disciplinary problems (Kelly et al., 2011). This ability to manage diverse people and situations is a key distinguisher between generalists and specialists (Kelly et al., 2011). In their 2011 study in the pharmaceutical industry, Kelly et al., lament the lack of overall competency development for specialists, which may influence their lack of multi-disciplinary thinking, communication and effectiveness. In addition, limited career pathways for specialists can result in specialists undertaking management training and development to progress, despite not wanting to take on a managerial role (Kelly et al., 2011; Dolan, Bejarano & Tzafir, 2011).

Research into career choice provides a clue into why specialists are often not suited to nor enjoy management roles (Choo, 2012). Career choice is influenced by an individual's perception of his or her job-fit, internal factors (interests, needs and abilities), external factors (job availability and income), and interpersonal factors (influence of others) (Choo, 2012). Specialists make their career choice in order to do technical work using their expertise, which does not fit into non-technical, cross-disciplinary management tasks of co-ordinating and supervising others (Ismail, 2003; Kelly et al, 2011). In addition, Becker (2010) highlights the lack of leadership and management skills training in traditional specialist qualifications, such as engineering. It is not surprising that many specialists do not feel equipped to move into management roles, given their widely theoretical and specialised training.

The dual career system which provides for technical/ specialist and managerial careers has received much criticism in that it is perceived to be inequitable (Ismail, 2003; Choo, 2012). It is believed that the technical specialist career is seen as lower in prestige to a management career, lacks real power, offers a lower salary and has a slower promotion progression than management (Kelly et al, 2011; Choo, 2012). This is evident in the limited career opportunities and restricted skills development for technical/ specialist individuals, who find knowledge sharing more difficult as they become more specialised (Kelly et al, 2011). Becker (2010) asserts that "training as an engineer or scientist is far from being the best career track to a top position" with evidence in the decrease of ex scientists and engineers sitting at management board level at Siemens. His paper on why young people do not want to become engineers highlights the attractiveness of non-technical career choices (Becker, 2010). In contrast, Gratton (2011) claims that developing deep mastery in competences that will be valuable, in demand and difficult to imitate, will be key to success in the future.

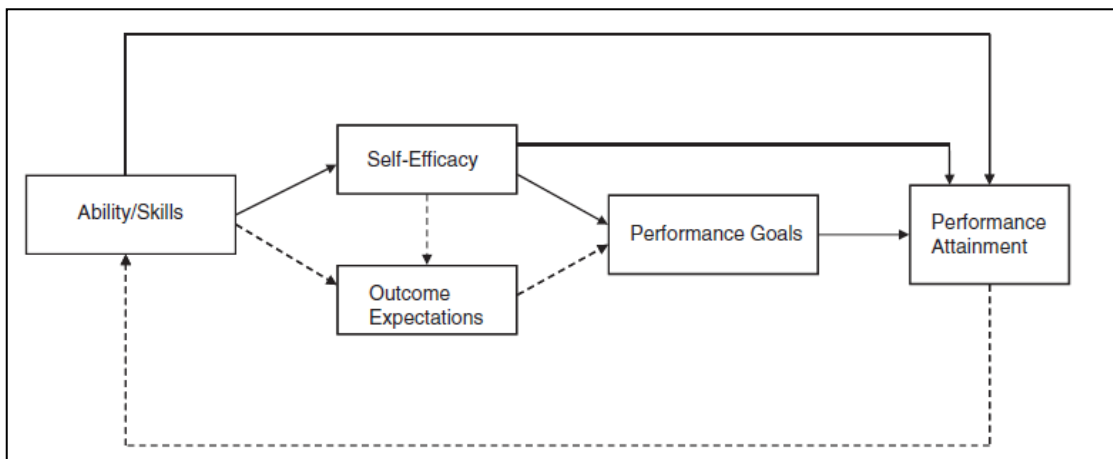
There is therefore a need to define what career success means for specialists and to explore whether such a definition differs from the generally accepted definitions of career success.

2.2 Career Theories

Traditional career development theories have focused on career choice. Choo (2012) explains that theories that relate to how individuals make career choices include Holland's Trait Theory, based on individual interests, abilities and needs; Schein's Career Anchor Model, where career choice is linked to individual values; and Social

Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), which is based on Bandura’s 1986 self-efficacy theory. SCCT provides a basis for understanding occupational interests, vocational choices and career success and stability (Brown, 2011; Choo, 2012). Considered as the most important career theory, SCCT forms the basis of many studies into career success (Brown, 2011; Choo, 2012). The SCCT performance model presented by Brown (2011), in Figure 2 below, purports that performance is mitigated by cognitive ability and skills, outcome expectations, self-efficacy beliefs and goal mechanisms. Brown’s 2011 model is relevant to career success in its explanation of how an individual’s skills, ability to produce results and belief in such results relate to their goals and achievement of goals. This holistic view of the individual provides some understanding of the correlation between ability, belief, goals and achievement.

Figure 2: Social cognitive model of work performance (Brown, 2011, p.82)



In their seminal work on human motivation, McClelland and Steele (1973) propose that individuals are primarily motivated by the need for achievement, the need for affiliation or the need for power. The fulfilment of such needs can lead to a sense of success. According to McClelland and Steele (1973) all motives are learned. People with strong achievement motivation prefer tasks which (a) allow them to attain success through their own effort and ability, (b) are moderately difficult and risky, (c) allow for clear and timeous feedback on results, (d) involve novel and innovative solutions, and (e) have a future orientation.

According to McClelland and Steele (1973, p.301), “a high need to achieve does not equip a man to deal effectively with managing human relationships”. In contrast, a high need for power, control or authority is typical of those in or wanting to go into managerial roles where they can have influence over others (McClelland & Steele,

1973). The third motivation category is need for affiliation. People with high affiliation motivation are driven by a need for security, interpersonal relationships and the desire to be liked (McClelland & Steele, 1973).

Sullivan and Baruch's 2009 study into advances in career theory and research provides a big picture view of key career concepts, models and ideas since the 1950's original linear career progression, which was based on age, tenure and career stages. More recent developments in career concepts have seen the emergence of the protean career (Hall, 1996b; Briscoe & Hall, 2006; in Sullivan & Baruch, 2009), the boundaryless career (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006; in Sullivan & Baruch, 2009), the post corporate career concept (Peiperl & Baruch, 1997; in Sullivan & Baruch, 2009), hybrid careers (in Sullivan & Baruch, 2009), and the kaleidoscope career model (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005; in Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). It is clear that career theories are evolving from the traditional, linear progression framework to multi-directional, boundaryless and self directed models (Arthur, Khapovaz & Wilderom, 2005; Currie, Tempest & Starkey, 2006; Baruch, 2006; Clarke, 2009; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009; Rodrigues & Guest, 2010; Verbruggen, 2011; Colakoglu, 2011; Grimland, Vigoda-Gadot & Baruch, 2012).

Though individuals are taking more control of their own career management, the role of the organisation is still important. Baruch (2006) asserts that "the organization is the enabler of successful career, not the commander who moves the chess pieces across the board". In establishing flexible career systems and support to individuals, organisations need to understand how individuals define career success and adopt HR practices that are relevant and that engender organisational commitment (Currie et al, 2006; Baruch 2006; McDonald & Hite, 2008; Ballout, 2009; Riordan & Louw-Potgieter, 2011; Ituma et al, 2011; Colakoglu, 2011; Grimland, Vigoda-Gadot & Baruch, 2012). Specific supportive organisational HR practices which contribute to individual career success relate to work-life balance (Baruch, 2006); training and development (McDonald & Hite, 2008; Clarke, 2009; Ballout, 2009; Kang & Snell, 2009; De Vos et al, 2011; Ituma et al, 2011; Colakoglu, 2011); employee relations systems (Kang & Snell, 2009; Blickle et al, 2011); networking (McDonald & Hite, 2008; Verbruggen, 2011); job rotation and project work (Verbruggen, 2011); encouraging knowledge sharing (Kang & Snell, 2009); and offering mentoring (Singh et al, 2009).

Savickas, Nota, Rossier, Dauwalder, Duarte, Guichard, Soresi, Van Esbroeck & van Vianenl (2009) further criticise existing theory and argue that many are no longer functional or appropriate for the changing, new world. They propose a new paradigm

for career counselling which they refer to as life designing and building in the 21st century (Savickas et al, 2009). The life-designing model is based on theories of self-constructing and career construction, and is complemented by theories of protean careers and boundaryless mindsets (Savickas et al, 2009). Moving towards self-efficacy and managing one's own career through deliberate career planning and pursuing goals is a concept supported by Abele & Wiese (2008), Dries, Pepermans & Carlier (2008), Ballout (2009), Clarke (2009), Stumpp, Muck, Hülshager, Judge & Maier (2010) and van Staden & du Toit (2010).

Human Capital theory (Becker, 1964 in Judge, Klinger & Simon, 2010) proposes that as individuals develop knowledge, skills and abilities, they increase their value to the firm and are so duly rewarded in the form of increased income and upward mobility (Ng et al, 2005; Judge et al, 2010). The existing theory goes a long way to explaining career choice and development, but fails to adequately address career success and strategies in specialist occupational groups.

2.3 Career Success

Judge et al. (1999, p. 622) define career success as “the real or perceived achievements individuals have accumulated as a result of their work experiences” and distinguish between intrinsic (job satisfaction) and extrinsic (pay and status) success. In contrast, Gratton (2010) advises that whilst personal drive, ambition and competition defined success in the past, combining in-depth, cross functional mastery and the ability to connect with high-value networks will lead to success in the future.

Career success is a complex phenomenon, longitudinal in nature and has diverse start and end points, meaning that different people will experience career success along distinct routes (Judge et al, 2010). Various researchers have provided alternative insights into the construct.

2.3.1 Subjective and Objective Career Success

In general, researchers focus on the subjective and objective predictors of career success and agree that human capital, organisational sponsorship, socio-demographic status and individual differences are the most frequently cited variables (Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, & Barrick, 1999; Ng et al., 2005). There is a strong relationship between human capital (work experience or knowledge) and socio-demographic

(individuals' demographic and social backgrounds) predictors with objective career success, whilst subjective career success is more related to organizational sponsorship (career sponsorship, supervisor support, training and skill development opportunities, and organizational resources) and stable individual differences (dispositional traits) (Ng et al., 2005). These variables are underpinned by the contest-mobility model (job performance and value add to the organisation) and the sponsored-mobility model (getting special attention and support from influential people in the organisation), both of which contribute to career success (Ng et al., 2005).

The notion of career success is often defined in terms of objectivity (i.e. extrinsic factors such as pay and promotion) and subjectivity (i.e. intrinsic factors that relate to job satisfaction) (Judge et al, 1999; Arthur et al, 2005; Ng et al, 2005; Abele & Wiese, 2008). Longitudinal studies show that a sense of subjective or intrinsic career success has a large influence on objective or extrinsic career success (Hall & Chandler, 2005; Abele & Spurk, 2009; Dolan et al, 2011).

In many qualitative studies, especially when participants are knowledge workers, the objective career success construct of salary or money is of less importance than subjective career success constructs (Arthur et al, 2005; Dries et al, 2008; McDonald & Hite, 2008; van Staden & du Toit, 2010; Lamb & Sutherland, 2010). In management level research projects into career success, researchers have found that more value is attached to objective career success than to subjective career success (Ituma et al, 2011).

2.3.2 The Role of Personality and General Mental Ability

Personality characteristics and self-managed career development play a key role in achieving career success (Abele & Wiese, 2008; Dries, Pepermans & Carlier, 2008; Ballout, 2009; Clarke, 2009; Stumpp, Muck, Hülshager, Judge & Maier, 2010; van Staden & du Toit, 2010; Yean, 2010). In their 1995 seminal work on personality traits, mental ability and career success, Judge, Cable, Boudreau & Bretz (in Judge et al, 1999), purport that individual career success is both affected by and has an impact on organisational success. Their research found a correlation between career success and the personality traits of conscientiousness and emotional stability.

Judge et al's 1999 longitudinal work on career success verifies the link between personality traits, general mental ability and career success. Their results confirm that subjective or intrinsic career success is connected to high conscientiousness and that

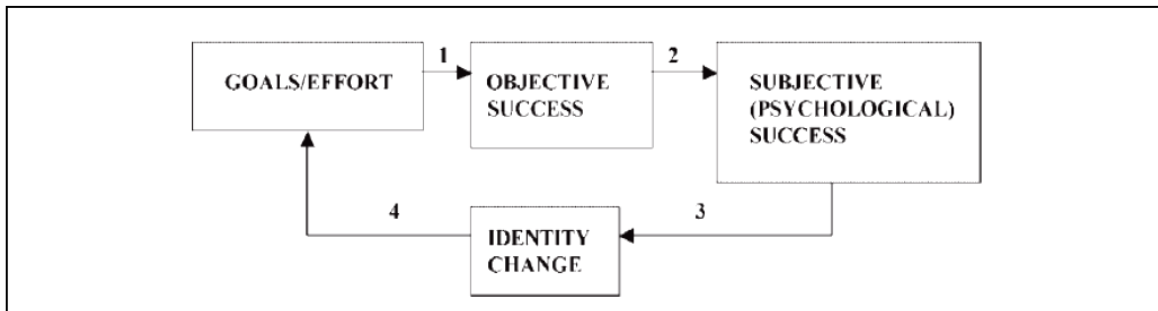
objective or extrinsic career success is correlated with low neuroticism, low agreeableness, high extraversion, high conscientiousness and high cognitive ability (Judge et al, 1999). In a related 2010 study, Judge, Klinger and Simon found that general mental ability leads to extrinsic success in the form of increased wages and higher occupational prestige. This correlation is greater for individuals who engage in more education, more job training and who have more complex jobs (Judge et al, 2010).

The role of personality and career success is further supported by Lent and Brown's 2008 study into Social Cognitive Career Theory and subjective well-being in the workplace. They propose a model that incorporates central pathways to job satisfaction, which is a central tenet of subjective career success (Lent & Brown, 2008). These central pathways include: personality and affective traits (positive and negative affect, neuroticism, extraversion and conscientiousness); life satisfaction (where work and life satisfaction have a bidirectional influence); goals and goal-directed behaviour; self-efficacy and expected or received work outcomes; goal- and efficacy-relevant environmental supports and obstacles (Lent & Brown, 2008).

2.3.3 Career Success Measures

Career success is an idiosyncratic construct, using the criteria of individual career aspiration, i.e. "expected level of achievement" (Dolan et al, 2011, p.3148), job satisfaction, flexibility, self-awareness and learning (Hall & Chandler, 2005). These largely individual measures are coined psychological success within the career context by Hall and Chandler (2005), who explain that "psychological success develops in a cyclical fashion as a result of setting and attaining challenging goals" (p.158). Their adaptation of Hall's 2002 psychological success model (see Figure 3 below) reflects shorter learning cycles throughout a person's career as they gain more experience and master new skills. In other words, as an individual gains experience and so changes, they are able to achieve goals in shorter time periods. The psychological success model supports Brown's 2011 SCCT performance model in that it links goals to career success and add insight in the form of the amount of effort required to achieve career success.

Figure 3: Simplified version of the psychological success model (adapted from Hall, 2002, p.74, in Hall & Chandler, 2005, p.158)



Researchers further explain career success in terms of the criteria used to evaluate career success, which include self-referent standards (i.e. personal standards and expectations) and other-referent standards (i.e. comparing self to others or based on the expectations of others) (Heslin, 2005; Abele & Wiese, 2008; Abele & Spurk, 2009). Abele and Spurk (2009) found that self-referent subjective career success, operationalised as job satisfaction, leads to objective career success, while objective career success, at career entry, positively influences other-referent subjective career success.

Ultimately, career success is a self-defined, individualistic and complex construct (McDonald & Hite, 2008) and as such needs to be understood from an individual perspective. Gratton (2011) proposes that in the future, measures of success will move away from the quantity of our consumption towards the producing of quality experiences.

2.3.4 Employability

In addition, career success is often defined in terms of employability, i.e. marketability and career satisfaction, especially in this age of the boundaryless career (Currie et al, 2006; Clarke & Patrickson, 2008; Clarke, 2009; De Vos, De Hauw & Van der Heijden, 2011). Clarke and Patrickson (2008, p.121), reflect that “changing career patterns and the erosion of job security have led to a growing emphasis on employability as a basis for career and employment success” and that people with highly developed and in-demand skills benefit the most. Specialists fit into this category of being highly employable. Career success and employability are interrelated and supported by developing boundaryless or protean mindsets and behaviours, taking individual

responsibility for career management, engaging in career development and flexibility (Clarke, 2009; Ullrich, 2010).

Employability is exacerbated by career development in terms of perceived support for career development, self-perceived employability and actual participation in career development (De Vos et al, 2011). In their 2011 study on competency development and career success, De Vos et al, use the indicators of career satisfaction and perceived marketability to define subjective career success. They distinguish employability as an individual's competencies, i.e. their potential to do, get and build new work, while marketability is about the actual positive career outcomes of an individual's competencies (De Vos et al, 2011).

2.3.5 Career Success Models

Dries et al. (2008) propose a multi-dimensional model for career success based on participant's own words when defining career success and linked to existing career success models. In exploring the meanings attached to the language participants used for specific career success constructs, the model acknowledges nine key constructs, i.e. performance, advancement, self-development, creativity, security, satisfaction, recognition, cooperation and contribution, which fall into the categories of affect/achievement and intra-personal/ inter-personal (Dries et al., 2008). The model provides an idiosyncratic and comprehensive picture of career success constructs. In questioning assumptions around what constitutes 'normal' and 'abnormal' career patterns, Dries et al (2008, p.265) highlight current disregard and consequent "inadequate rewarding of those in abnormal careers, e.g. experts in 'lateral' career tracks", i.e. specialists.

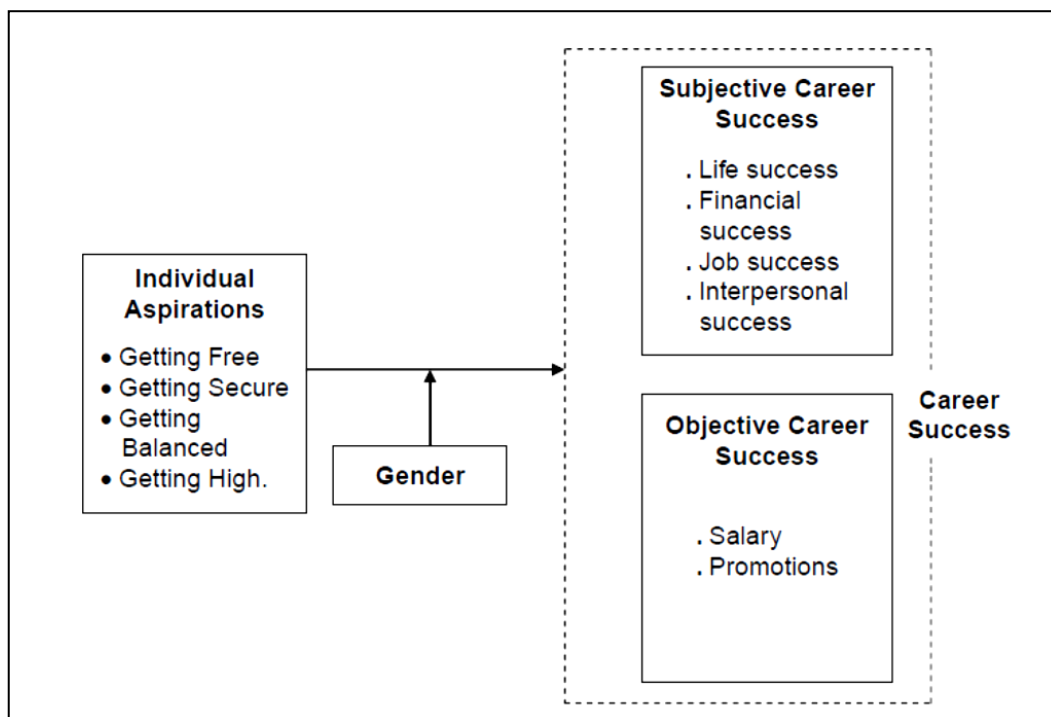
The individual aspiration view of career success is supported by Ullrich (2010) and Dolan et al. (2011). In Dolan et al's 2011 conceptual model, shown in Figure 4 below, the relationship between individual career aspirations and career success is shown to be moderated by gender. The authors use the 1986 work of Derr to assess individual career aspirations and career success for engineers and check gender differences (Dolan et al., 2011). Measures of individual aspiration using Derr's career success aspiration taxonomy (Dolan et al., 2011) are described as;

- Getting High: achieving expertise and pursuing excitement with the aim of establishing a good reputation

- Getting Free: achieving autonomy or independence
- Getting Balance: achieving work/ life balance
- Getting Secure: achieving stability or security through favourable working conditions
- Getting Ahead: achieving status or prestige

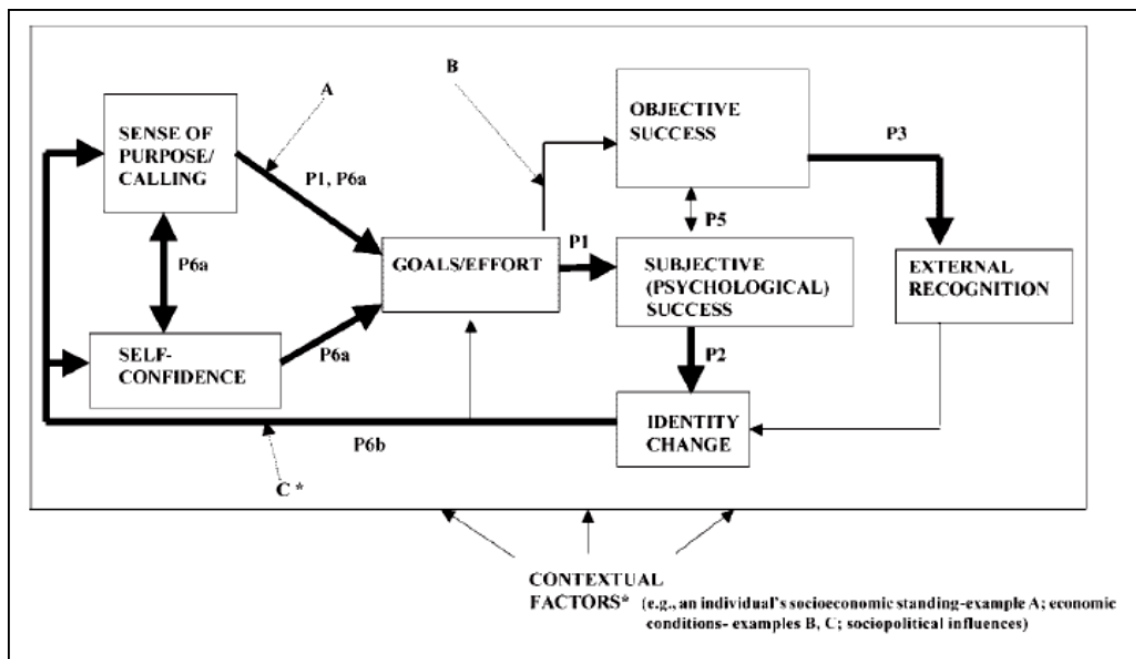
The research proposes that both subjective and objective career success are an outcome of the achievement of individual aspirations (Dolan et al., 2011). If an individual's core aspiration is getting ahead, for example, then a promotion at work with a salary increase would result in objective and subjective career success respectively.

Figure 4: Career aspirations, career success and gender (Dolan, Bejarano & Tzafir, 2011, p.3151)



Hall and Chandler's 2005 "Calling model of career success" (see Figure 5 below) indicates how a sense of purpose or calling enables a feedback loop success cycle that describes how individuals manage their careers in flexible, self-directed ways. This dynamic cycle repeats itself over time and is indicative of how a person adapts to the career context of their calling and gains confidence with an increasing sense of competence (Hall & Chandler, 2005).

Figure 5: A calling model of career success (Hall & Chandler, 2005, p.165)



This model is supported by previous research into the development of self-confidence by engaging in goal setting, making an effort and getting results (Hall & Chandler, 2005). Key characteristics of a calling include: (a) it is unique for each person; (b) it involves prerequisites like talent, being open to finding one's purpose, and a passion for the calling; (c) it allows an individual to energetically enjoy his/ her efforts; and (d) it is not easy to ascertain and an individual will need to reflect, talk with others, try out different things and be persistent (Novak, 1996, in Hall & Chandler, 2005).

The majority of career success constructs and models described above are generic traits and may or may not relate directly to specialists. The need for further investigation into how specific groups perceive and interpret career success is supported by various researchers (Heslin, 2005; Arthur, Khapovaz & Wilderom, 2005; McDonald & Hite, 2008; Ng & Feldman, 2010; Yean, 2010; Van Den Born & Van Witteloostuijn, 2011; van Staden & du Toit, 2011).

2.4 Career Strategies

The value of both specialist and generalist human capital is critical for organisational learning and consequent performance (Kang & Snell, 2009; Ng & Feldman, 2010). Human capital can be defined as individual skill and knowledge and influences the

organisation's ability to attain new knowledge (Kang & Snell, 2009). A key driver of human capital involves career development and related strategies.

Career strategies are the things individuals plan and do to help them achieve career goals and success, and in turn perform (Yean, 2010). Referred to as career direction, by Ullrich (2010), career strategies are vital for future career success. Individuals need to take responsibility for their own career success by understanding and articulating their goals, and then developing and following evolving career strategies (Ullrich, 2010).

2.4.1 Organisational Career Management Strategies

Despite the transition in how careers are managed with a move towards self-managed careers, the role of the organisation is still important. Baruch (2006) suggests that the organisation's role in career management is a supportive one which aligns to the firm's strategy. This alignment is important for person-fit and manifests in practical recommendations (Baruch, 2006), which include;

- Taking the risk of investing in employees through training and development in order to strategically manage human capital
- Managing increasingly global careers in a balanced way through fit-for-purpose and fair HR practices
- Acknowledging and managing an increasingly diverse workforce
- Providing support to employees for career-related stress

Ituma et al (2011) support these suggestions and assert the need for organisations to contextualise career success models as vital to attracting and retaining crucial employees. In addition, with globalisation, international HRM managers must "pay attention to endogenous factors embedded within specific national context in their design of appropriate career management strategies" (Ituma et al, 2011, p.3654). Through introducing initiatives that empower employees through the acquisition of new competencies and encourage work-family balance, organisational HR practitioners can further support the achievement of individual career success (Ituma et al, 2011).

The need for Human Resource Development (HRD) practitioners to update organisational career management strategies is emphasised by McDonald and Hite (2008, p.98) who advocate that HRD take "a more broad-based view of goal attainment - one that acknowledges internal measures of success and the likelihood that

employees will not be with the organization throughout their careers”. In addition, a more diverse HRD approach focused on the development of social capital that meets the need young professionals have for networking, informal learning and work-life balance (McDonald & Hite, 2008; Gratton, 2010). The need for organisations to guide employees in planning, organising and building valuable career capital is further advocated by Lamb and Sutherland (2010).

2.4.2 Individual Career Management Strategies

Researchers have proposed a multitude of strategies individuals employ to achieve career success, which are mitigated by having a protean or boundaryless mindset, the right attitude and positive self-esteem (Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2008; Kammeyer-Mueller et al, 2008; Clarke, 2009; Verbruggen, 2011; Grimland et al, 2012; Kapoutsis, Papalexandris, Thanos, & Nikolopoulos, 2012).

Notable career strategies include; relationships with supervisors or managers (Stumpf, 2010; Yean, 2010); seeking support and mentoring (Arthur et al, 2005; Kuijpers et al, 2006; Singh et al, 2009; Yean, 2010); self career management (Clarke, 2009; van Staden & du Toit, 2011); seeking and creating opportunities (Clarke, 2009; Yean, 2010); networking (Kuijpers et al, 2006; Currie et al, 2006; McDonald & Hite, 2008; Clarke, 2009; Naidu, 2009; Wolff & Moser, 2009; Gratton, 2010; Gratton, 2011; van Staden & du Toit, 2011); continuous learning (Currie et al, 2006; McDonald & Hite, 2008; Naidu, 2009; Judge et al, 2010; Ng & Feldman, 2010; Gratton, 2011; van Staden & du Toit, 2011; Colakoglu, 2011); and political skill (Clarke, 2009; Todd et al, 2009; Liu et al, 2010; Treadway et al, 2011; Blickle et al, 2011; Kapoutsis et al, 2012). It is clear that much emphasis is placed on mindset, networking, continuous learning and political skill.

2.4.2.1 Mindset and Positive Affect

A positive mindset can influence career success. Researchers propose that having a protean or boundaryless attitude, which is values driven and demonstrated by flexibility and self awareness, positively influences career success (Clarke, 2009; Verbruggen, 2011; Grimland et al, 2012). Verbruggen (2011) purports that psychological mobility, i.e. an individual's attitude towards crossing boundaries, leads to increased income and more promotions. This idiosyncratic basis for understanding how a boundaryless

mindset affects career success is supported by Clarke (2009) who suggests that employees are taking responsibility for their own employability, especially those with marketable skills.

Judge (2009, p.58) discusses core self-evaluations (CSE), which is a judgement of self-worth and denotes individual characteristics such as “self-esteem, locus of control, generalized self-efficacy, and (low) neuroticism (high emotional stability)”. High levels of CSE lead to better work performance, career success, job and life satisfaction, lower stress, and resilience (Judge, 2009). Self image, or how individuals view themselves, has been found to correlate with success. Kammeyer-Mueller et al. (2008) aver that positive self-esteem, a self-fulfilling prophecy, results in increased occupational prestige and income. Interestingly, the research found that career outcomes did not have an impact on self-esteem (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2008). The concept of a positive mindset affect, or happiness, and its impact on success has been a source of interest in research. Nickerson, Diener & Schwarz (2011, p.718) argue the positive correlation between happiness and positive self-esteem, and state that “positive affect is a cause, rather than an effect, of desirable life outcomes”.

In support of this, Boehm and Lyubomirsky (2008, p.101) claim that happiness is the reason why some people are successful and others are not, and that “induction of positive affect leads to improved workplace outcomes”. The basis for their argument is that happiness is underpinned by approach-oriented behaviours, that is, happy people are more likely to go into new situations, interact with others and actively work towards new goals (Boehm and Lyubomirsky, 2008). In being more committed to their organisations, better able to deal with organisational change, more satisfied with their jobs and viewed more favourably by their co-workers means that people with happy dispositions perform better at their jobs and achieve career success (Boehm and Lyubomirsky, 2008). Further evidence of the link between happiness and success is found in Fisher’s (2010) study on happiness at work. Both positive individual and group attitudes, like engagement, satisfaction, commitment and involvement can also predict desired outcomes of the organisation, as detailed in Table 1 below (Fisher, 2010).

Table 1: Happiness-related constructs in the workplace (Fisher, 2010, p.385)

Transient Level	Person level	Unit Level
State job satisfaction	Job satisfaction	Morale/ collective job satisfaction
Momentary affect	Dispositional affect	Group affective tone
Flow state	Affective organisational commitment	Group mood
Momentary mood at work	Job involvement	Unit-level engagement
State engagement	Typical mood at work	Group task satisfaction
Task enjoyment	Engagement	
Emotion at work	Thriving	
State intrinsic motivation	Vigour	
	Flourishing	
	Affective well-being at work	

2.4.2.2 Networking

Networking is about an individual's skill in building, maintaining and using relationships with both internal and external contacts (Wolff & Moser, 2009). In their 2009 longitudinal study on the effects of networking on career success, Wolff and Moser found that networking has a positive impact on both salary growth and career satisfaction (p. 196). This conclusion is supported by Kuijpers et al (2006), Currie et al (2006), McDonald & Hite (2008), Clarke (2009), Naidu (2009) and van Staden & du Toit (2011). Results further indicate that maintaining internal networks is more important to increased income than external networking (Wolff & Moser, 2009).

Interestingly, knowledge workers reported that networking was the least important career strategy in van Staden and du Toit's 2011 study, which the researchers claim is concerning given the clear relation between networking and career success. Clarke (2009) relates how a lack of political networking skill can hamper career progress in that individuals who are able to make the right connections are promoted more often than those who cannot.

Viewed as a valuable career strategy that boosts growth and expertise, networking is about the extent of boundaryless networks that enable varied perspectives and a multitude of contacts (McDonald & Hite, 2008). The value of networking is further supported by Kuijpers et al (2006), who suggest that professional career counsellors should focus on career control and networking, rather than reflection in career guidance, which has a negative correlation to career success. Organisational roles in building social capital through facilitating networking and relationships, in order to

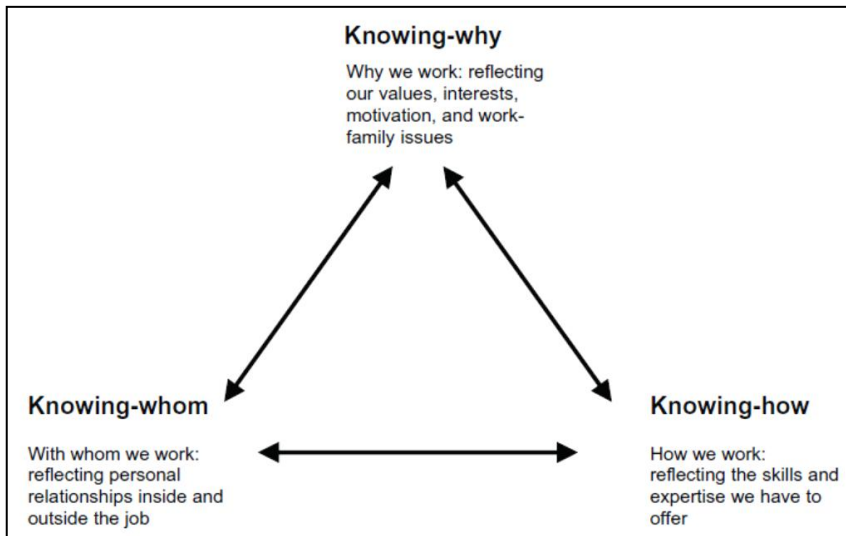
increase organisational value, is emphasised by Gratton (2010), who advises that the future of work will require organisations to facilitate networks within, across and outside of the business.

2.4.2.3 Continuous Learning and Career Capital

In managing human resources, organisational learning stems from intellectual capital, which incorporates human, social and organisational capital (Kang & Snell, 2009). Career capital is the accumulated knowledge and skill assets that employees gather as they build their careers and incorporates experience and learning (Lamb, 2007). In developing career capital, an individual contributes to a potentially successful career. Studies into career capital are largely focused on knowledge workers (Lamb, 2007; Froneman, 2008; Naidu, 2009; Kelly et al, 2011; van Staden & du Toit, 2011) and provide insight into career development in specific occupations.

The work of DeFillippi and Arthur (1996) (in Clarke, 2009) and Inkson and Arthur (2001) (in Clarke, 2009) provides a framework for career capital by accumulating career assets, which is referred to as the three ways of knowing and the intelligent career (Parker et al, 2009). The link between the intelligent career and career success is supported by Clarke (2009), Parker et al. (2009), Colakoglu (2011) and Van Den Born & Van Witteloostuijn (2011). Figure 3 shows the interplay between the three ways of knowing of the intelligent career as presented by Parker et al. (2009). Knowing-why relates to understanding the purpose of work and reflect an individual's values, interests and motivation. Knowing-how is about the skills and knowledge an individual possesses. Knowing-whom pertains to the relationships an individual has within and outside the job. Parker et al (2009) explain that the interface between the three ways of knowing reflects uni-dimensional cause and effect relationships.

Figure 6: The intelligent career: interplay among three ways of knowing (Parker et al, 2009, p.293)



This interplay is supported by Gratton (2010, p.21) who asserts that the future of work will be “increasingly defined by innovation, the capacity to combine and connect know-how, competencies and networks will be key... whom you choose to connect with, and to whom they are connected, will be one of the defining aspects of future working life.”

Lamb and Sutherland’s 2010 de facto model of career capital broadens existing theory and provides the key components of career capital for knowledge workers. The model provides a basis for understanding the specific components of career capital that contribute to career success. According to Bourdieu (1986) in Lamb and Sutherland (2010), the dimensions of career capital include economic capital (income), social capital (relationships and networks), cultural or information capital (education and cultural status), and symbolic capital (valued social rules).

The importance of allowing individuals to develop their career capital through education, training and development opportunities is supported by Kelly et al (2011), whose research suggests that this allows movement between specialist and generalist roles. Organisational training affords individuals the opportunity to continue growing and developing (McDonald & Hite, 2008).

2.4.2.4 Political Skill

In a 2012 study into the antecedents of career success for managers and professionals, Grimland, Vigoda-Gadot & Baruch found that social capital, view of

organisational politics, a protean career attitude, and professional vitality all influence career success. The importance of political skill in achieving objective career success is supported by the work of Clarke (2009), Todd et al. (2009), Liu et al. (2010), Treadway et al. (2011) and Blickle et al. (2011).

Treadway et al's 2011 study into social influence and interpersonal power in organisations concluded that performance is positively correlated to interpersonal power and political skill, which both relate to levels of influence within the organisation. Given that the specialists in this study do not have people reporting to them directly and therefore limited authority, the importance of political skill and influence as key career capital components cannot be underestimated.

Political skill is understood as an individual's social effectiveness (Todd et al, 2009), which is developed through understanding social interactions in the workplace. Liu et al (2010, p.1451) "found that political behavior is associated with enhanced career growth potential through increased personal power, but only when individuals are politically skilled". The positive influence of political skill on career success is further mitigated by an individual's reputation in the workplace, which is a deliberate effort (Blickle et al., 2011). Naidu's 2010 R&D career capital development model supports the notion of personal reputation as a core career capital component.

Kapoutsis et al (2012) draw on the theory of reciprocity, signal theory and psychological contracts in proposing that by adopting socially desirable political tactics in a reciprocal behavioural response to their environment, i.e. perceptions of organisational politics and support, individuals can have successful careers. The authors differentiate between sanctioned political tactics (e.g. persuading others, using expertise, focusing on superordinate goals and building one's image) and non-sanctioned or illegitimate political tactics (e.g. manipulating others, controlling information, blaming or attaching others and using replacement) (Kapoutsis et al, 2012). A supportive organisational culture encourages legitimate political behaviours which fit organisational goals and benefit both the individual and the organisation (Kapoutsis et al, 2012).

2.5 Conclusion to Literature Review

Despite a wealth of academic knowledge on career development, the need for a study focused on senior specialists is evident. Understanding how specialists define career success and what factors influence such perceptions is important for both individuals

and organisations. The benefit of understanding career success for specialists is encapsulated by Abele & Spurk (2009) who contend that “subjectively successful professionals become objectively more successful, and this is advantageous for both the individual and the organization” (p.821).

Exploring the complex, idiosyncratic way in which individuals frame and achieve career success has implications for new and improved human capital and career development practices in the future (McDonald & Hite, 2008; Kelly et al., 2011). For organisations to function effectively in the new world of work, they need to understand how people define career success and what strategies they employ to achieve such success (McDonald & Hite, 2008).

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.1 Purpose of the Research

This chapter details the research questions and purpose of this study. The objective of this research report is to answer the research questions described below and to analyse findings with the purpose of developing a framework for career success for specialists. The research questions were identified from the literature review in chapter 2 and from concepts outlined in the introduction to the report.

3.2 Research Questions

This research report aims to answer four research questions;

3.2.1 Research Question 1: How do senior specialists define career success?

Research question 1 aims to fully explore and comprehend how individual specialists define career success. Whether specialists consider themselves successful or not will contribute to understanding how they define career success. It is expected that definitions will differ per individual and be objective and subjective, as well as self-referent and other-referent.

3.2.2 Research Question 2: What factors influence senior specialists' definitions of and attainment of career success?

Through questioning what has influenced individual definitions of career success, the study aims to dig deeper into the motivation and reasoning behind career success for specialists. It is expected that particular people will have influenced specialists' definitions of career success and that a myriad of factors will have influenced their attainment of career success.

3.2.3 Research Question 3: What strategies do senior specialists employ to achieve career success in line with their definition of career success?

The development of a framework for specialist career success will be informed by investigating the career strategies that successful specialists have used to achieve career success. By exploring how specialists manage their careers in terms of content (the what) and process (the how), i.e. the strategies (plans and actions) they have employed to achieve career success, it is expected that a clear picture of achieving career success will emerge. Specific reference will be made to the impact of general management experience, participation in professional forums and the established career success constructs of positive affect, networking, continuous learning and political skill.

3.2.4 Research Question 4: What do and what should organisations do to support specialist career development?

In addition, understanding how specialists manage their own careers and what organisations do to support specialist career development will be explored. It is expected that a range of insights into how organisations should ideally support specialists in managing their careers will emerge. The responses to this question should provide valuable suggestions to organisations that employ specialists.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology used in this study. The literature review provided a basis for the design of the interview guideline. In keeping with a qualitative research approach, the study was exploratory in nature, which is reflected in the research method, design, sampling and data analysis applied.

4.2 Research Method and Design

This study is a report into career success for specialists. With little evidence of knowledge in the area of specialist career success, the research methodology was exploratory and used qualitative techniques, including expert and in-depth interviews. This allowed the researcher to achieve depth in understanding the key components of career success for specialists and obtain expert insights into the topic. Given the idiosyncratic nature of the topic and limited researcher control, a qualitative approach was most appropriate. Interviews were semi-structured and aimed to answer the key research questions. A probing technique was adopted in that the researcher built on participant responses by the use of interrogatives and relevant, follow-on questions in order to gain real insight into the topic. High quality interview questions were adopted as they are vital in enabling “discoveries that may lead to new theory and questions” (Agee, 2009, p. 438). As per Saunders and Lewis’ (2012) advice, participants were asked to sign consent forms once they had agreed to be interviewed. To ensure confidentiality, research participants are not referred to by name or company. All ethical requirements were strictly adhered to, i.e.

- No inducement was offered for participation in the study
- Informed consent forms are signed and included
- Interviews were conducted in English, a language all participants were conversant in
- There was no risk of harm or disadvantage to research participants
- Research participants were informed of all aspects of the research
- Research data from interviews has been stored to ensure no individual identification to data

- Only aggregated information has been included in the research report with individual quotations not being ascribed to a particular research participant's name or company

According to Cassell and Symon (2011), the criteria of good qualitative research include research being fit for purpose and a demonstration of the value of the qualitative study to academia, business and individuals. It is believed that this research is appropriate and relevant to academia, business and individual specialists, in that it contributes to current career research and provides practical recommendations on specialist career success. Applying positivist measures like reliability, validity, replicability and generalizability to qualitative research may not be appropriate (Cassell and Symon, 2011) due to the diverse nature of qualitative theories. Criteria such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability provide an alternative to positivist principles and ensure diligence in qualitative studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, in Cassell and Symon, 2011). In response, this study focused on sensemaking as a key objective, i.e. making sense and explaining the phenomenon of specialist career success so that individuals and organisations can better understand it and therefore implement suitable career management strategies.

In line with Saunders and Lewis's (2012) "research onion", the research approach for this study was based on the philosophy of constructionism, with a focus on pragmatism (Patton, 2002). Constructionism informed the studies intent on exploring the collective perceptions and constructed realities, i.e. not facts or figures, of specialists and the meanings they attach to career success (Patton, 2002). Obtaining perceptions of specialists from both internal and external HR professionals provided further insight into the reality of the specialist's world. The study aimed to contribute to practical knowledge and understanding of the specialist career success phenomenon (Patton, 2002).

By following an abductive approach, which is neither deductive nor inductive, the study applied accepted constructs of career success to specialists, observed and attempted to understand surprising empirical material that emerged, and then built a novel interpretive model to resolve the surprises (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011). This process of mystery creation and solving was based on the following methodological principles advocated by Alvesson & Kärreman (2011, pp. 41 to 50);

1. (De)fragmentation: in order to discover the deeper meaning of career success for specialists, it was important to include "both pattern-inscribing/ interpretation and fragmentation-inscribing/ interpretation in constructing order as well as

disorder” (p.42). This involved first asking open ended questions to gain insight into individual perceptions of career success and then eliciting responses to specific career success constructs, including positive affect, networking, continuous learning and political skill.

2. Defamiliarization: through observing and interpreting the phenomenon of specialist career success in a new way, instead of relying on dominant, existing cultural and language categories and distinctions (p. 44). Interviews initially did not involve any explanation of the concept of career success in order to evoke personal perceptions that were not influenced by pre-conceptions.
3. Problematization: by questioning established meanings of career success through unpacking, deconstructing and critiquing existing research, the study aimed to develop new ways of thinking about career success (p.47). The principle of problematization was followed by including open ended questions about the most frequent career constructs found in the literature review, including positive affect, networking, continuous learning and political skill.
4. Broad scholarship: it was important for the study to take sufficient account of existing theory and use it appropriately (p.49). The study involved a literature review of over 65 relevant journal articles and books on careers from the past 20 years.
5. Reflexive critique: through a “conscious effort to open up and consider alternative ways of working with issues....i.e. alternative metaphors and vocabularies”, the study aimed to develop novel insights into career success for specialists (p.51). The creation of a framework provides a novel perspective of career success for specialists.

Jootun, McGhee & Marlandet (2009) also promote reflexivity, which is the influence the researcher exerts on findings, in qualitative research. By acknowledging and making reflexivity explicit, Jootun et al (2009) claim that research rigour is promoted in that; data reliability improves, real understanding of the phenomenon in question is attained; and an open and transparent process is followed. In adopting a qualitative approach, the researcher acknowledged and accepted ambiguity, lack of structure and a subjective perspective. Close interaction and discourse with research participants through semi-structured interviews with informants was needed to attain such deep understanding.

4.3 Population

The population for the study is best described by defining specialists in the context of this study. Specialists are often referred to as knowledge workers (Naidu, 2009; Lamb & Sutherland, 2010; van Staden & du Toit, 2010; Kelly, Mastroeni, Conway, Monks, Truss, Flood, & Hannon, 2011) or professionals (Abele & Wiese, 2008; Farren, 2008; McDonald & Hite, 2008; Abele & Spurk, 2009; Stumpf, 2010; Spurk, Abele, & Volmer, 2011; Van Den Born, & Van Witteloostuijn, 2011) in the literature. Specialists may be found in occupations such as engineering, information technology, actuarial science, human resources, law, management consulting and academia. Specialists differ from generalist knowledge workers in that they are skilled and knowledgeable in a limited professional occupation, e.g. electronic engineers or actuarial analysts.

The study was limited to private firms in the Gauteng province of South Africa. Specialists in firms from the academic, aerospace, banking, financial health insurance, FMCG, healthcare, information technology, mining, petrochemicals, and telecommunications industries were targeted, as they were most likely to employ specialists. The focus was on specialists who operate at a senior level in the organisation. Specialists were defined, in order to facilitate sampling, as not having direct reports, and providing functional knowledge and expertise to the organisation. This non-manager criterion distinguishes this study from knowledge worker studies like Lamb and Sutherland (2010). Given the limited academic research into what it takes to have a successful career as a specialist, the study aimed to explore specialist career success from the perspective of both specialists and HR professionals who work with specialists. Expert interviews were conducted with external HR professionals from the academic, specialist consulting, and specialist search and recruitment fields.

4.4 Sampling

In accordance with the qualitative research design, the study adopted a non-probability purposive, quota sampling approach (Saunders and Lewis, 2012) with three different groups. Triangulation across these three groups strengthened the study and helped to establish commonality and core themes (Patton, 2002). Typical case participants were selected based on a set of criteria (Patton, 2002), i.e.

- a. All specialists as per the definition provided above:

- i. operating at a senior level (working at the same level as a functional or senior manager with regards to job grade and level) in a for-profit organisation (current or within the last 5 years)
 - ii. no direct reports
 - iii. providing functional knowledge and expertise to the organisation
- b. Internal (intra-company) Human Resource professionals in the private sector, that employ specialists:
 - i. employed full-time by a for-profit organisation at a senior level (working at the same level as a functional or senior manager with regards to job grade and level)
 - ii. responsible for career development within the organisation
- c. External (inter-company) Human Resource professionals, who have worked with specialists or are themselves specialists. This may include;
 - i. Career Development/ Human Resource experts working as consultants, in academia or independently
 - ii. Senior experts in the field of specialist search and recruitment

Participation in the study included eight in-depth interviews with specialists and five in-depth interviews with internal HR professionals from eleven different South African organisations. To obtain an alternative perspective of specialist career success, four expert interviews were conducted with external HR professionals and academics. In targeting specific companies, the study obtained both specialist and HR perspectives on the topic. The sample size of seventeen is in line with heterogeneous qualitative research guidelines (Saunders & Lewis, 2012) and was deemed to be feasible given research timelines, access to participants and focus on depth, rather than breadth of information (Patton, 2002). A contingency plan was put in place to replace participants in the case of potential withdrawals.

A list of the research participants with reference to their industry, job title and profession (specialists only) is provided in appendix 5.

4.5 Units of Analysis

The perceptions of specialists and HR professionals informed the final units of analysis for the study. These were established during the data analysis phase of the research and related directly to how specialists define and achieve career success.

4.6 Data Collection Tool

Semi-structured interviews were conducted using an open ended question approach. The aim of the interviews was to answer the proposed research questions. An interview guideline, one for specialist and one for HR professionals (see appendix 2 and 3), was used during the interview process and included ten questions relating to the research objectives, which contributed to reliability (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Interview questions were designed to elicit as much information on participants' perceptions of specialist career success by following an open ended approach.

The simple design of the interview guideline was purposeful in order to allow for open dialogue and the extraction of personal experiences and perceptions. As far as possible, the researcher did not explain or elaborate on research questions and allowed participants to formulate and share their own thinking. Interview guidelines were collated with the principles of focus, answerable questions and openness in mind (Agee, 2009). In line with accepted practice, the interview guideline was pre-tested to check relevance and timing with two individuals, who were deemed as similar to the target sample (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

Given the abductive nature of the study, established and accepted strategies for career success constructs did influence interview questions to some extent, with the intent on discovering anomalies (Alvesson & Karreman, 2011). One research question was included in the latter part of the interview which related to the four key career success factors found in the existing literature. Participants were asked to reflect on whether these constructs have an impact on specialist career success in their view. The existing career success factors of positive affect, networking, continuous learning, and political skill were only put forward to participants in the latter part of the interview to prevent any influence on participants' initial perceptions of career success. It was noted when participants referred to these constructs earlier during the interview. These key factors are described in Table 2 below;

Table 2: Key career success constructs

Key career success construct	Definition
Positive affect	Positive mindset, general happiness, high self esteem and high emotional maturity (Boehm and Lyubomirsky. 2008; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2008; Clarke, 2009; Judge 2009; Fisher, 2010; Nickerson, Diener & Schwarz, 2011; Verbruggen, 2011; Grimland et al, 2012;)
Networking	Individual ability to build, maintain and use relationships with both internal and external contacts (Wolff & Moser, 2009)
Continuous learning	The accumulated knowledge and skill assets that employees gather as they build their careers and incorporates experience and learning (Lamb, 2007); Knowing-why, knowing-whom and knowing-how (Parker et al, 2009)
Political skill	An individual's social effectiveness in the workplace, developed through understanding social interactions, possessing personal power and influence and therefore reputation (Todd et al., 2009; Liu et al., 2010; Blickle et al., 2011; Kapoutsis et al., 2012).

4.7 Data Collection

Data collection took place during in-depth and expert interviews. All interviews were recorded, with permission from participants, and transcribed verbatim within two weeks of the interview. Interviews were conducted face to face in either the participant's office or at a private room on the university campus, and lasted approximately one hour each. The resulting narrative interview reports included notes on non-verbal participant responses and were converted into conceptual interview schemes (Dierckx de Casterle, Gastmans, Bryon & Denier, 2012). An example of a conceptual interview scheme is included in appendix 6.

The interviewer was skilled at interview techniques which allowed for in-depth questioning. This is in line with Agee's (2009) contention that the skill of the interviewer has an impact on the research results in qualitative research. It was essential that a purposeful conversation be held with participants. As such, the interviewer listened carefully, triggered participant responses and took account of all responses seriously (Alvesson & Karreman, 2011). It is important to note that additional research questions did unfold during the study, as new insights emerged (Punch, 2000).

To ensure ethical requirements were fully met and to guide the interviewer in process, an interview protocol was developed and adhered to. The interview protocol used to

administer and implement the interviews to ensure consistency adopted the following principles in line with ethical qualitative research (Boyce & Neale, 2006);

- A standard email (see appendix 1) was sent to potential participants requesting an interview and outlining the purpose of the research, along with an informed consent letter (see appendix 4). On affirmation of consent to participate, a confirmation email was sent to participants along with a meeting request.
- At the start of the interview, participants were thanked for their time and input. The confidentiality of data, voluntary nature of participation and ability to withdraw from the study was confirmed. Participants were reminded of the title and key objectives of the research. Due to the exploratory nature of the research, participants were encouraged to speak freely and openly, and told that their individual perceptions were important.
- In concluding the interview, participants were asked to share any final thoughts and thanked for their input. A signed copy of the informed consent form was collected at this stage. An email was sent to once again thank the participants for their insights within one week of each interview.
- During the interview, the participant's responses were noted down and recorded via audio means using an audio application on i-pad. Permission to take notes and record the interview was obtained at the start of the interview.
- Within two weeks of the interview, notes were summarised into electronic format and audio tapes were transcribed. Key information for each participant was recorded onto a spreadsheet.

Actual themes and specific categories did become clearer once data analysis had taken place (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Responses within interview transcripts were used as units of analysis and attached to specific categories. Themes were then extracted in line with the research questions which relate to defining specialist career success, determining the influence factors on specialist career success definitions and the career success strategies specialists employ to achieve career success. These themes allowed for the collation of a data analysis scheme.

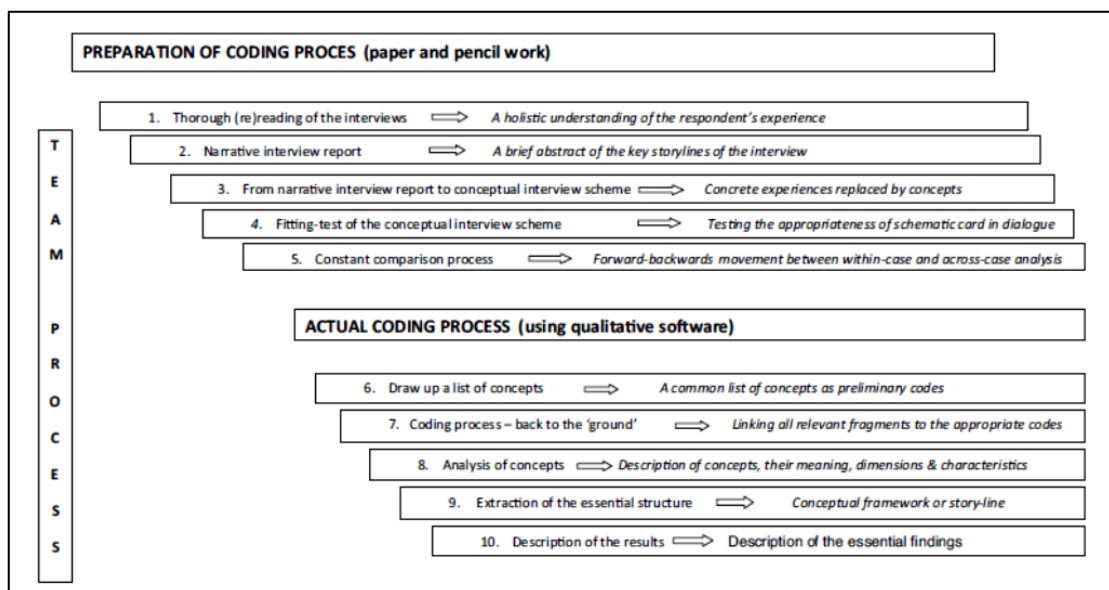
4.8 Data Analysis

As the data was qualitative, it was analysed using constant comparative, content analysis and frequency analysis, with the ultimate aim of building a model for specialist career success. The analysis aimed to identify trends and patterns from interview

transcripts. In comparative pattern analysis, interview responses were compared to interview observations, which lead to valuable information being extracted and the creation of mystery (Alvesson & Karreman, 2011). Given the iterative and idiosyncratic nature of the research, data analysis was done from an *epoche* perspective, which involved suspending judgement until sufficient evidence had been collected (Patton, 2002). The findings were linked directly back to the research questions and presented thematically (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

Dierckx de Casterle et al (2012) advocate a case-oriented approach that focuses on understanding and treating each sample case using a constant comparative method. By exploring each individual case and then comparing across all cases, it is believed that the study has produced contextually relevant results. The QUAGOL qualitative analysis process proposed by Dierckx de Casterle et al (2012) in Figure 7 below was used as a basic guideline for the analysis of data. One limitation of the current study is that a team based approach was not adopted, in that only one researcher collected and analysed all data.

Figure 7: Stages of the Qualitative Analysis Guide of Leuven (QUAGOL) (Dierckx de Casterle et al., 2012, p.364).



The reiterative data analysis process took between two and four hours per individual interview with the entire data analysis process taking approximately 60 hours in total to complete. The data analysis process involved;

- Re-reading individual interview transcripts a minimum of three times in order to obtain a holistic perspective of the individual.
- Producing a narrative storyline report through identifying potential key and underlying themes and noting non-verbal participant responses. The mark citation facility in Microsoft Word was used to highlight recurring words, which were then marked as a level one code using the table of authorities tool.
- Transposing potential key and underlying themes per individual onto a Microsoft Office Excel spreadsheet and sorting the data into alphabetical order. This allowed for cross referencing and counting of duplicate data to establish relative importance of themes. This within-case constant comparison approach allowed for both breadth and depth in understanding each individual's experience.
- Converting all individual level one codes onto one Microsoft Office Excel spreadsheet and sorting all data alphabetically to establish a view of all participant responses. This allowed for across-case constant comparison and the establishment of final key themes. Specialist and Human Resource responses were highlighted in different colours to ensure the integrity of the analysis.
- Individual responses were then placed onto a large blank paper in mind map style, which allowed grouping of themes and the identification of central concepts. At this stage, the process did not involve attempting to link responses to specific research questions and aimed to create mystery and find surprising commonalities amongst responses.
- A preliminary list of concepts was then drawn up and all relevant participant responses were linked back to relevant codes. In conducting frequency analysis, the relative importance of certain concepts for specialists was ascertained. By separating specialist and human resource responses, it was possible to establish differences in participant perspectives on the topic of specialist career success.
- Frequency analysis was used to understand specific responses to the established and accepted career success constructs presented to participants during interviews, i.e. positive affect, networking, continuous learning and political skill. This allowed for a comparison of whether such widely accepted constructs also apply to specialists.
- Further content analysis involved determining the meaning and dimensions of each concept in order to establish a foundation for the research results and to inform the conceptual framework. Whether the data answered the original research questions was then verified and in doing so, the validity and integrity of the data analysis process was established.

- Key findings were then aggregated into relevant tables and figures and included in the results chapter. In addition, narrative storylines and quotations were used to discuss and support research findings.

In answering the research questions, a framework for specialist career success has been designed and presented within the context of specialist career development.

4.9 Research Validity, Reliability and Limitations

The reliability and validity of a qualitative research design using semi-structured interviews posed a number of challenges. Interview limitations included respondent bias, extensive time requirements, interviewer skill and the fact that research results are not generalizable to the whole population (Boyce & Neale, 2006).

Due to the nature of this qualitative study, including time constraints, various additional limitations were identified. These included:

- There being some geographical bias in participant response as only a limited number of participants from firms in the Gauteng province of South Africa, the business hub of the country, were included in the study.
- The possibility of common-method bias exists, as interviews explored participants' perceptions about career success and were self-reported. This may have influenced the results.
- Generalizability to all specialist occupations was not possible, considering a limited number of occupations represented by the sample.

4.10 Conclusion

The applied qualitative research methodology aimed to answer the research questions and gain deep insight into how specialists define career success, what factors influence this definition, how specialists achieve career success and what organisations should do to support specialist career development.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This section provides the findings of the data analysis of data collected during in-depth and expert interviews. In applying the interview guide with the aim of answering the research questions, data analysis allowed for the identification of common themes and research concepts. A consistency matrix was used as a basis for monitoring the relationship between research questions, the literature review, data collection approach and methods of analysis.

5.2 Results of Interviews

Data analysis followed a constant within-case and across-case comparative approach, which allowed for deep insights into key themes and concepts. Content and frequency analysis allowed for the identification of final trends and constructs. Raw tabulated data was grouped into common themes and then converted into key constructs. For example, participant responses of “challenge of solving a problem or developing a model”, “love the challenge” and “personal challenge” were grouped together under the theme “career success definition” and then defined as the construct “challenge”.

5.3 Demographics

A non-probability purposive, quota sampling approach (Saunders and Lewis, 2012) with three different groups was followed with a sample size of seventeen. In accordance with the sampling selection criteria, the relevant demographics for the specialist group related to being at a senior level in the organisation. This was achieved in that 1 participant fell into the executive job grade category, 5 were at the same job grade level as senior management in their organisations, and 2 were self-employed. It was interesting to note that out of the 8 specialists, 2 had PhDs, 4 have or are completing masters level qualifications, 1 has an honours degree and 1 has specialist qualifications. The entire sample consisted of 10 men and 7 women, broken down into 5 male and 3 female senior specialists, 2 male and 3 female internal HR professionals, and 3 male and 1 female external HR professionals/ career development experts.

5.4 Mapping of Research Questions to Research Findings

Common themes in response to the research questions did emerge during data analysis and are presented below. The mapping of research questions to interview questions and subsequent findings is described in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Research question mapping to interview questions and findings

Research question 1:	<i>How do senior specialists define career success?</i>
Interview Questions S: Specialist HR: Human Resources	SQ1.1: Do you consider yourself successful and why? SQ1.2: How do you define career success as a specialist? HRQ1.1: At what point do you think a senior specialists would consider themselves successful and why? HRQ1.2: How do think senior specialists define career success?
Findings	Are you successful as a specialist? What is career success? What is career success NOT?
Research question 2:	<i>What factors influence senior specialists' definitions of and attainment of career success?</i>
Interview Questions S: Specialist HR: Human Resources	SQ2.1: What factors do you think have influenced your perception and understanding of career success? SQ2.2: Who are the people who have had an influence on your definition and understanding of career success and why? HRQ2.1: What factors do you think influence senior specialists' perceptions and understanding of career success? HRQ2.2: Who are the people you think influence senior specialists' definition and understanding of career success and why?
Findings	What influences the specialist's definition of career success?
Research question 3:	<i>What strategies do senior specialists employ to achieve career success in line with their definition of career success?</i>
Interview Questions S: Specialist HR: Human Resources	SQ3.1: How have you managed your career in terms of content (the what) and process (the how), i.e. What strategies (plans and actions) have you employed to achieve career success? SQ3.2: What impact have the career strategies of positive affect (happy disposition), networking, continuous learning/ career capital, and political skill had on your achievement of career success? SQ3.3: Have you ever worked in general management? If yes, how did this experience impact on your career success? If no, what do you think the impact of general management experience is on specialist career success? SQ3.4: Do you participate in any professional forums outside of work? If yes, how have they had an impact on your career success? If no, how do you think they could impact your career success? HRQ3.1: How do you think senior specialists manage their careers in terms of content (the what) and process (the how), i.e. What strategies (plans and actions) do you believe specialists employ to achieve career success? HRQ3.2: What impact do the career strategies of positive affect (happy disposition), networking, continuous learning/ career capital, and political skill have on specialists' achievement of career success? HRQ3.3: What do you think the impact of general management experience is on specialist career success?

	HRQ3.4: What do you think the impact of participating in professional forums, outside of work, is on specialists' career success?
Findings	<p>What impact does the career strategy of positive affect (happy disposition) have on career success?</p> <p>What impact does the career strategy of networking have on career success?</p> <p>What impact does the career strategy of continuous learning have on career success?</p> <p>What impact does the career strategy of political skill have on career success?</p> <p>The what and how of career success? Strategies specialists employ to achieve career success.</p> <p>What is the impact of general management experience on specialist career success?</p> <p>What is the impact of participating in professional forums, outside of work, on specialist career success?</p>
Research question 4:	<i>What do and what should organisations do to support specialist career development?</i>
Interview Questions S: Specialist HR: Human Resources	<p>SQ4.1: In what way do you believe you are responsible for managing your career?</p> <p>SQ4.2: How does your organisation support your career management and what should organisations ideally do to provide career management support to specialists?</p> <p>HRQ4.1: In what way do you believe specialists are responsible for managing their own careers?</p> <p>HRQ4.2: How does your organisation support your career management and what should organisations ideally do to provide career management support to specialists?</p>
Findings	<p>Are specialists responsible for managing their own careers?</p> <p>What do organisations currently do with specialists?</p> <p>What should organisations do with specialists?</p>

5.5 Results for Research Question 1: How do senior specialists define career success?

In understanding how senior specialists define career success, it was important to firstly establish whether or not specialists consider themselves successful. In response to the question of whether they believed they were successful, 7 out of the 8 specialists interviewed said yes. Interestingly, the one individual who believes that he is not successful as a specialist indicated a desire to move into general management. He was the only participant who does not wish to remain in a specialist role. The results of how specialists define career success, as well as how HR professionals perceive specialists define career success are outlined in Table 4 below. The frequency count is reflected as a total number of responses per group to this question and as such, may equate to more than the number of participants.

After 60 hours of analysis, two high level constructs, found in the literature review in chapter 2 were evident. Responses could be categorised as either objective or subjective, as well as either other-referent or self-referent. Objective definitions of

career success include extrinsic factors such as pay and promotion, whilst subjective definitions encompass intrinsic factors that relate to job satisfaction. Other-referent career success definitions are those that reflect comparing self to others or based on the expectations of others, and self-referent definitions are those that incorporate personal standards and expectations. It is interesting that 75% of career success definitions are subjective and 62.5% are self-referent.

Table 4: How specialists define career success

Rank	Concept	Specialist	HR	Total	Objective or Subjective	Other-referent or Self-referent
1	Recognition/ Esteem	13	17	41	Subjective	Other-referent
2	Contribution/ Value add	8	7	15	Subjective	Self-referent
3	Financial reward	5	5	10	Objective	Other-referent
4	Enjoyment of work	8	1	9	Subjective	Self-referent
5	Autonomy/ Independence	5	3	8	Subjective	Self-referent
6	Opportunity to innovate	4	2	6	Subjective	Self-referent
7	Applying competency	3	3	6	Subjective	Self-referent
8	Feeling valued	4	1	5	Subjective	Self-referent
9	Achievement	3	2	5	Subjective	Self-referent
10	Level of influence	2	3	5	Subjective	Other-referent
11	Unique/ Special	3	1	4	Subjective	Other-referent
12	Career progression	1	3	4	Objective	Other-referent
13	Challenge	2	1	3	Subjective	Self-referent
14	Measured results/ outputs	2	1	3	Objective	Self-referent
15	Personal meaning	1	2	3	Subjective	Self-referent
16	Power	0	1	1	Objective	Other-referent

As indicated, the findings show a difference between specialist and Human Resource respondents' perceptions of how specialists achieve career success. Notably, Human Resource respondents place a higher value on the need for recognition than specialists and less value on enjoyment of work.

The relative positioning of participant definitions of career success are highlighted in Figure 8 below. Subjective, self-referent career success definitions account for 60 of participant responses, which equates to 51% of responses. There were 15 counts of career success definitions which fall into the objective, other-referent category. A total of 39 counts of participant career success definitions can be said to be subjective, other-referent, equating to 33% of all responses. Only 3 responses fall into the objective, self-referent career success category.

Figure 8: Specialist Career Success Definition Categories

Subjective career success	SUB-OTHER	INTRINSIC
	TOTAL X 39 COUNTS Recognition/ esteem (30) Level of influence (5) Being unique/ special (4)	TOTAL COUNTS X 60 Contribution/ value add (15) Enjoyment of work (9) Autonomy/ independence (8) Opportunity to innovate (6) Applying competency (6) Feeling valued (5) Achievement (5) Challenge (3) Personal meaning (3)
Objective career success	TOTAL COUNTS X 15 Financial reward (10) Career progression (4) Power (1)	TOTAL COUNTS X 3 Measured results/ outputs (3)
	EXTRINSIC	OB-SELF
Other-referent career success		Self-referent career success

Participant responses and the meaning they place on words, provide an explanation of the various aggregated concepts as per the four career success quadrants highlighted in Figure 8 above. The discussion covers the top five concepts;

1. Sub-other: Subjective/ Other-referent career success definitions included Recognition/ Esteem; Level of Influence; and Being Unique/ Special. Recognition is about being acknowledged as a master in a specific field, at a company, national and global level and for expertise (knowledge and skill). Esteem was ranked first overall in specialist career success definitions and is explained by one participant, who said; *“I consider myself to be successful in that I think I’m one of the go to people in our business, with regard to technical competence and skills in my area ... leads me to believe that I’m someone that’s again a trusted advisor”*. An external HR professional described the importance of recognition as; *“In terms of*

acceptance throughout the world, I think that's extremely important. I think international recognition is definitely the next one and I think most of those guys who reach that level in the organisation are world leaders when it comes to that ...”

2. Intrinsic: The top three subjective/ self-referent career success definitions included;
 - Contribution/ Value add: Adding value to the business by virtue of specialist skills and knowledge was ranked second overall by specialists. As one specialist puts it; *“I've always felt that that's a useful profession, in that it contributes to understanding and to ability for other people to do things and make the world a better place and hopefully improve the lives of other people somewhere down the line - so all those kinds of things. So it's partly that – doing something that you think is worthwhile”.*
 - Enjoyment of work: Enjoying interesting work/ tasks, the ability to choose what work to do and in so doing find fulfilment and stimulation in work was reported by 8 specialists. Only 1 HR respondent mentioned this concept. The importance specialists place on enjoying the work is described by one specialist as; *“There's got to be a sense of, wow, I enjoyed doing that and I can see that it actually helped somebody, or did something that was of use to somebody”* and another as; *“...if I feel turned on by what I'm doing, then I define that as career success.”*
 - Autonomy/ Independence: Ranked fifth overall, the need for autonomy is clearly important to specialists. One participant provides insight into this need; *“I think for me it is about autonomy, because I guess I'm one of those that doesn't play well with others.”*
3. Extrinsic: Objective/ other-referent career success definitions included financial reward, career progression and power. Financial compensation was ranked third overall and is seen as a sign of reward and the value that the organisation places on an individual. Despite the high ranking, most specialists did not view financial reward as a key career driver. As participants explain; *“Obviously there is a little bit of the monetary reward – the commission kind of thing. I won't say it's a driver.”*, *“I think it was more the recognition factor. You sort of feel that you should be recognised and I just used money as a..... Let's not make any bones about it. You're ambitious - you're trying to make your way and that kind of thing, but honestly, money..... hasn't really ever been my particular strong point or measure of success really”* and *“For me success is also ... and I don't like to speak about money, but it's also remuneration in line with commercial effectiveness that you*

add to the business. I think sometimes we tend to downplay also, the financial reward.”

4. Ob-self: Objective/ Self-referent career success definitions only included that of measured results/ outputs. This relates to tangible outputs measured against self defined standards and feedback received of a job well done.

5.5.1 What Career Success is Not

Although not a specific interview question, participants often indicated what career success was not. The results of what specialists do not constitute as career success, as well as how Human Resource professionals perceive specialists do not define career success are outlined in Table 5 below. The frequency count is reflected as total responses per group to this question. A number of participants explained why financial reward and reaching the C-suite does not form part of their career success definition; *“I realised then that money doesn’t equate to prestige or job success or career success – your remuneration is definitely as proportionate to how your company actually appreciates you and what value you add to your organisation”* and *“What I know, being CEO of a company or having a certain salary does not ... I don’t value that highly, it doesn’t engage me. I am more trying to focus and I think get more enjoyment by having a goal and trying to enjoy the process, the journey to get to that goal.”*

Table 5: How specialists do NOT define career success

Rank	Concept	Meaning	Specialist	HR
1	NOT Financial Reward	Money does not equal prestige or job success. Financial rewards are not a driving force but a consequence of value added.	3	0
2	NOT C-Suite	Being a CEO or in the C-Suite is not valued	2	0
3	NOT Power	Do not care about or desire power	0	1

5.6 Results for Research Question 2: What factors influence senior specialists' definitions of and attainment of career success?

In response to the various factors which influence specialists' definitions of career success, Table 6 below reflects a frequency count as a total number of responses per group. Personal factors, significant people and contextual factors all emerged as key influences on perceptions of career success. It is interesting that specialists indicate that significant people in their lives have the most impact on their perception of career success, especially people in authority, their families and mentors. In contrast, Human Resource professionals believe that individual personality has the largest impact on the specialist's perception of career success. The nature of the specialist job, with specific reference to levels of work, is another concept Human Resource participants highlighted that specialists did not.

Table 6 was constructed by ranking the frequency count of participant reports and then grouping these key concepts into three constructs. The specific ranking for each concept is indicated in brackets, with 1 indicating the most frequent concept found and 13 being the least frequent concept reported. The average rank was determined by calculating the aggregated ranking for each of the 3 key constructs in accordance with the specific concept ranking. This means that the smaller the average rank, the more important it is in terms of its influence on perceptions of career success for specialists. Columns 4 and 5 indicate the frequency count per participant group and the final column shows the total frequency count per construct.

Table 6: What influences specialist perceptions of career success?

Construct	Concept (rank)	Ave Rank	Specialist	HR	Total
Personal factors	Personality (1)	2.96	3	9	25
	Motivation/ interest (4)		3	5	
	Professional allegiance (6)		1	4	
Significant people	People in authority (5)	5.89	6	1	27
	Family (7)		4	0	
	Mentors (3)		4	4	
	Line manager (8)		3	1	
	Peers/ colleagues (10)		2	2	
Contextual factors	Context/ environment (2)	6.30	4	6	20
	Luck (9)		3	1	
	Generation (12)		1	1	
	Security (13)		1	0	
	Nature of job (11)		0	3	

Specific descriptions of factors that influence definitions of specialist career success are;

1. Personal Factors relate to an individual's personality and personal traits like curiosity, extroversion versus introversion, focus, values, integrity, ambition, aptitude and excitement; Intrinsic motivational factors relating to the need for achievement, need for affiliation, interests, value motivators and passion; and professional allegiance relating to a dual identity with the tendency for specialists to have greater allegiance to their profession than the organisation, professional membership and identity.
2. Significant People, which includes people in authority like teachers, lecturers, business leaders; family (parents, siblings and wives); mentors; line managers, team leaders and CEOs; and peers/ colleagues.
3. Contextual factors cover the environment, personal circumstances and organisational culture; luck, chance or coincidence; generational factors; security; and the nature of the job, with specific reference to Stratified Systems Theory and levels of work.

The influence of an individual's profession on how they define career success was interesting, as described by one HR participant; *"You have two masters. You have your profession which gives you a kind of ethics and which gives you all that informal stuff an identity and a set of tools. The organisation has a strategy and a business plan and also a set of ethics, but it might be somewhat different and certainly has a different methodology and the match between those two becomes quite difficult to handle. So the influence there would be, you'd have to juggle, almost schizophrenically, two quite powerful influences and ask yourself, is your bread buttered from the corporate side or my profession side and how do I stay true, if it's the corporate side, to my professional identity"*. One specialist describes the influence of line manager's perception of specialists; *"He said that being a specialist was not the best route in this business."*

5.7 Results for Research Question 3: What strategies do senior specialists employ to achieve career success in line with their definition of career success?

The key strategies specialists employ to achieve career success are listed in Table 7 below. These include strategies which respondents advise specialists to employ to achieve career success. Participant responses have been categorised into four key

career success strategy constructs, that is, continuous learning, political skill, positive affect and networking. An explanation of what participants reported as being important to career success is detailed and provides insight into the meaning attached to each of the identified themes. The frequency count is reflected as a total number of responses per group as concepts were often repeated. The average rank was determined by calculating the aggregated ranking for each of the 4 key constructs. This reflects the relative importance of the various strategies mentioned.

With continuous learning ranked first and accounting for 51% of responses, respondents clearly place much importance on qualifications, experience and keeping abreast of developments in the specialist's field of expertise. Of interest is the emphasis specialists place on having a positive mindset and the personal traits of goal setting and dedication, or hard work. Further discussions of insights will be detailed in chapter 6.

Table 7 was compiled by ranking the frequency count of participant reports and then grouping these key concepts into the four constructs of continuous learning, positive affect, networking and political skill. The specific ranking for each concept is indicated in brackets, with 1 indicating the most frequent concept found and 7 being the least frequent concept reported. The average rank was determined by calculating the aggregated ranking for each of the 4 key constructs in accordance with the specific concept ranking. This means that the smaller the average rank, the more important it is, i.e. continuous learning is the most important career success strategy specialists employ with an average ranking of 1.97. Columns 4 and 5 indicate the frequency count per participant group and the final column shows the total frequency count per construct.

Table 7: Strategies specialists employ to achieve career success

Construct	Strategy	Ave Rank	Specialist	HR	Total
Continuous Learning	Continual Learning (1)	1.97	23	14	57
	Business exposure (4)		11	4	
	Coaching and mentoring (6)		3	2	
Positive Affect	Personal/ Positive mindset (3)	2.00	13	4	17
Networking	Relationship building (5)	4.94	8	3	37
	Knowledge sharing (6)		3	2	
Political Skill	Influence through value add (2)	5.29	10	9	21
	Keeping knowledge (7)		2	0	

Participants advised the following strategies for obtaining career success within each of the career success strategies listed in Table 7 above;

1. Continuous learning incorporates learning, business exposure and coaching/mentoring: Learning is the ability to acquire knowledge and skill through on-the-job learning, skills development, formal qualifications, taking all opportunities, gaining broad experience and doing research. One participant advises specialists to; *“stay curious, stay hungry.”* With regards to business exposure participants recommend that specialists gain business acumen through broad exposure in order to acquire new skills and to engage with the business proactively in order to build relationships with others. As participants explain; *“Even if you’re in a specialist area, you would have to add some breadth of business acumen and it doesn’t have to be to the same depth as your original profession”,* and *“I think you need to learn and really know all the tools in your organisation inside out. You need to then study up on all the tools that your organisation are not using and know why they are not using it You will need to not only focus on your technical capabilities, but you need to study your product ...need to know where your company is weak, because this is where you are going to add the most value ... with my tools that I am the master of... Now you choose..... you can not only focus on your technical capabilities if you want to be a specialist – you need to know your business very well”.* Participants further advise that specialists coach and mentor others, as well as receive coaching and mentoring. One participant advises; *“Don’t get one mentor. Get yourself mentors for different themes. Get yourself somebody to teach you how to get along in the company. You choose those characters. Get yourself somebody who is a specialist, a deep specialist in the field that you want to move into and just make sure that you spend time with somebody that is experienced and find out what is it that they do, that makes them go around the company. I think that’s very important.”*
2. Positive Affect. Specialist participants ranked positive affect second in terms of strategies for career success. Positive affect or having a positive mindset helps the specialist get noticed, be dedicated, be passionate, and set and achieve goals. One participant explains; *“I think it’s important to know where you’re going, else you’re not going to get there. There’s a lot of very intelligent people and they’re kind of just floundering around and I think it’s because they lack direction – when they could be something quite phenomenal, if they just kind of sat down and made a goal for themselves - like sat down and decided where they want to be in 5 or*

10 years - whatever, because you've got to know where you want to get to, to get there, else you just don't end up anywhere." Advice from another one participant is to; *"Just understand what you really want. What do you really want? I think if you're a deep specialist, you sometimes feel comfortable hiding behind a desk. If you're a wide specialist, I think it's very difficult because you don't feel comfortable hiding behind a desk and you don't feel comfortable managing a thousand people. So you're like, where the hell do I go?"*

3. Networking: Participant responses relating to relationship building and knowledge sharing fall broadly into the category of networking. Through building emotional intelligence and positive working relationships and getting support from influential people, specialists create a track record for success. As one specialist put it; *"I think when you are in a specialist role similar to myself now, joining a new business, what is key is building relationships with people and that the relationship will allow you to create a track record for success... I think the better you relate to people, the more they can support whatever your goals are."*
4. Political Skill: The two concepts that fall into the category of political skill are influencing through adding value, and knowledge keeping. The ability to convince others through generating and sharing integrated solutions that add value to the business is a legitimate political tactic. An internal HR professional advises; *"Specialists are always special. They know that. If they can use their knowledge, I think they can influence a lot of decisions by management."* It is important that specialist learn to showcase their skills set and demonstrate value add. Participants explain what happens when you do not showcase yourself; *"So if you're unknown and you're sort of sitting there in the corner and there's an opportunity that comes up, you're going to be the last person that comes to mind. They haven't seen you. They haven't heard your voice"* and *"I would say you're your own worst enemy. You're sitting in a little hole doing stuff. Well, if you're sitting in your little hole, the board are not going to come looking at your hole. If you don't jump up and down and make a bit of noise, then you're going to get nowhere. Oh, but I'm not the noisy type. Well, get your arse into gear and get onto that bloody stage and do a little tap dance."* An internal HR professional explains; *"That's the problem with most technical specialists ... they don't generate solutions that the business wants and they tend to have a level of intellectual arrogance...That's bullshit, because you can be expert all you want in your discipline – if you can't generate a solution that adds value to the business and you*

can't sell it to me as an HR person in terms that I can understand - you know what? You're failing." In contrast, keeping knowledge is an illegitimate political tactic, mentioned by only one specialist. Interestingly, this was the participant who does not consider himself successful and wants to go into general management.

5.7.1 Established Career Success Strategies

The results in Table 7 above reflect responses to the non-prompted question of what strategies specialists employ to achieve career success. The interview guideline included subsequent questions that prompted responses to the value of the established career success strategies of positive affect, networking, continuous learning and political skill. These central themes were identified in the literature and discussed in section 4.6. In addition, the impact of general management experience and professional forum participation are reported below. Data analysis results are presented in Tables 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13.

5.7.1.1 Continuous Learning

Continuous learning refers to the accumulated knowledge and skill assets and incorporates experience and learning. The findings on whether respondents consider continuous learning and the accumulation of career capital as important for career success are detailed in Table 8 below. Of the four established career constructs put forward to participants, this had the highest overall positive response. With 19 positive responses to the importance of continuous learning on career success, findings are reflected as a total count.

Table 8: The impact of continuous learning on career success

Rank	Construct	Specialist	HR
1	Continuous Professional Development has a positive impact	9	10
2	Continuous learning is not important	0	0

One specialist advises on the importance of continuous learning and obtaining academic qualifications; *"I tell them to go and get properly qualified, so they have to get a doctorate. I tell them not to do it here. Go overseas. Go to the best place you can*

afford. I tell them to come back and that's the part they never do, because we send all our talent overseas and they never come back. But if they do and when they've got all those things lined up, I encourage them to become experts in two skills – in the teaching and in their learning, because those are the things that, especially in South Africa, really count – and the rest will take care of itself.”

5.7.1.2 Positive Affect

Having a positive mindset, general happiness, high self esteem and high emotional maturity are synonyms for positive affect. As reflected in Table 9, the majority of respondents reported that having a positive disposition, which includes the personal traits of self-belief, optimism, passion, motivation and confidence correlated with career success.

Table 9: The impact of positive affect on career success

Rank	Career Strategy	Specialist	HR
1	Positive Affect has a positive impact	7	9
2	Pessimism can be useful	0	2

Of interest is that 2 of the 9 HR participants related that a level of pessimism can be useful for specialists in the form of a survival value by asserting that; *“...where does depression and where does pessimism come from - if what you have survived - if there's some survival value to it - that's whereevolution psychology would take that line. There's some support for that in the sense that if you are cautious, you anticipate the problems and deal with them. If you are only sunny, you might plough into things that would be damaging. So the positive affect would certainly be pleasant.”*

On being asked whether positive affect has an impact on the career success of specialists, another HR respondent claims that; *“They don't get it. They just think, I'm just not good with people, so therefore I'm just going to borrel (sic) myself into my office and I'm going to wow the world with my creative genius. Yes, it works – fine - if your name is Bill Gates or Steve Jobs, but for the rest of them lesser mortals, you've got to actually go and sell at some point.”*

5.7.1.3 Networking

Networking relates to an individual's ability to build, maintain and use relationships with both internal and external contacts. Table 10 below shows that more HR participants believe that networking has a positive impact on career success than specialists do. Of interest is the assertion that specialists generally network better within their specialist field.

Table 10: The impact of networking on career success

Rank	Construct	Specialist	HR
1	Networking is important and has a positive impact	3	6
2	Networking is not important	3	1
3	Specialist cannot do networking	2	0
4	Specialists network well within their profession/ with peers	0	2

A few specialists displayed disregard for networking as described in the response below; *"I think it does but it's not anything I do. I hate networking. I never network. I suppose I'm a loner and I have a few very good friends and that's good enough for me. I hate going to functions and going to dinners – I never go to parties – you won't find me there - partly, I mean I don't hate it, I suppose, but I see it as a waste of time. My time is precious to me and so, I'll do pretty much as little as I can of that."*

5.7.1.4 Political Skill

An individual's social effectiveness in the workplace, developed through understanding social interactions, possessing personal power and influence and therefore reputation incorporates political skill. The most interesting responses came when participants were posed the question of whether or not political skill influences career success. Notable discomfort was observed in the physical reactions to the question of political skill that were primarily negative, including participants pulling a face, sighing heavily and putting their hands up defensively. Table 11 below indicates that the majority of participants believe that specialists lack political skill. This is particularly true of

specialists themselves, with all 8 specialists reporting that specialists do not have political skill.

Table 11: The impact of political skill on career success

Rank	Construct	Specialist	HR
1	Specialists do NOT have political skill - seen as negative	8	7
2	Specialist can or should apply political skill - seen as positive	5	5

Some of the participant responses to political skill as a career success strategy for specialists include; *“Okay I suck at that. Ja, no. I hear it’s important. I am seriously bad at that like you don’t have to conform with the whole political thing, as long as you’ve got your corner covered”* and *“... it sucks a lot. I have difficulty with politics in an organisation in that it consumes a lot of time and effort and adds zero value to an organisation.”* A third respondent claims that *“I think personally a lot of people became specialists because they didn’t have the political skills”* and *“...they’re absolutely goofy when it comes to this sort of stuff and they don’t get it and it’s part of their charm.”* One HR respondent went as far as to say *“Most specialists are social and political imbeciles.”*

5.7.1.5 General Management Experience

An interesting theme that emerged from the interviews was the impact of general management experience on specialist career success. Table 12 highlights these findings and reflects that the majority of participants, both specialists and HR professionals, believe that general management experience is useful. The value of general management experienced was reported as being integral to developing the skills identified as core strategies for achieving success as a specialist. For example, respondents claim that general management experience gives breadth of business exposure and acumen, and contributes to the development of interpersonal skills, both of which are core career success strategies.

Table 12: The impact of general management experience on specialist career success

Rank	Construct	Specialist	HR
1	General management experience is useful	8	6
2	General management is NOT for specialists	6	3

Many participants believe that specialists either do not like or cannot do general management. One specialist replied; *“Gross, it (general management) sucks..... It’s more HR really than doing adding value to the organisation and I kind of feel - maybe it’s just my personality, but I feel like HR.....like I love the coaching and the mentoring, especially for the people that want to develop themselves, but the guys that are just B team players that don’t care.... It’s like herding sheep.”* On the other hand, a few participants believe that general management is an option as a career path for specialists, as evidenced in the following comment; *“... a specialist can become a general manager.”*

5.7.1.6 Professional Forum Participation

Another theme that emerged from the study was the relevance of participating in professional forums on specialist career success. As reflected in Table 13, most participants do not see value in belonging to professional bodies. Where participants do see usefulness, this is at a superficial level, i.e. to conform, to network and to learn.

Table 13: The impact of professional forum participation on specialist career success

Rank	Construct	Specialist	HR
1	Professional bodies are NOT useful	6	2
2	Only belong to conform/ be legal	2	1
3	Useful for professional development	1	3
4	Useful as part of professional identity, i.e. recognition and networking opportunities	1	3

5.7.2 Comparison between Specialist and HR responses

The key differences and similarities between specialist and HR responses reported above are discussed below. Both specialist and HR participants report that;

1. Positive Affect has a positive impact
2. Continuous Professional Development has a positive impact
3. Specialists do NOT have political skill
4. Specialists can or should apply political skills
5. Coaching and mentoring (self and others) is a career success strategy
6. Influencing through value add is a career success strategy
7. Knowledge sharing is a career success strategy

Key differences between specialist and HR perceptions on career success strategies can be established by the frequency count detailed in Table 14 below. Of interest are the areas of greatest difference, where specialists place far more importance on the role of having a positive mindset, gaining business exposure and relationship building.

Table 14: Difference between specialist and HR responses to Career Success Strategies

Rank	Strategy	Specialist	HR	Difference
1	Personal/ Positive mindset	13	4	+9
2	Business exposure	11	4	+7
3	Relationship building	8	3	+5
4	Networking is important and has a positive impact	3	6	-3
5	Keeping knowledge	2	0	+2
6	Networking is not important	3	1	+2
7	Specialist cannot do networking	2	0	+2
8	Pessimism can be useful	0	2	-2
9	Specialists network well within their profession/ with peers	0	2	-2

5.8 Results for Research Question 4: What do and what should organisations do to support specialist career development?

The question of what organisations currently do and what organisations should do to support specialist career development is answered in this section. It is clear from the findings that what organisations currently do in supporting specialist career development lacks any real depth or value. Table 15 describes participant responses to the current state of affairs in organisations with regards to specialist career

development. It is concerning that a large proportion of respondents, i.e. 65%, believe that organisations favour generalists and do not value specialists.

Table 15: Current organisational support of specialist career development

Rank	Construct	Specialist	HR
1	Favour Generalists and do not value specialists	5	6
2	Organisations are getting it right	2	3
3	Organisations focus on business needs and not individual career needs	1	1

The perception that organisations favour generalists and do not value specialists is reflected in the following participant statements; *“... most companies favour the generalist and the notion of the general manager to the specialist. You know, it’s usually given greater status - there’s usually greater job scope and it’s what the real guys do in that particular organisation”* and *“... the perception is that if you’re not in management, you’re not successful. There’s climbing the corporate ladder – you need to get to the top.”* One participant claimed that *“Most organisations treat all employees the same unfortunately. We have gone from apartheid, where you treated everyone differently, to egalitarianism, where you treat everyone the same. We need more balance and a balanced, different treatment.”* In support, another respondent said *“Unfortunately a lot of companies don’t always recognise the value of those people, but when they leave, then they do.”* One specialist explains that in many cases specialists limit themselves within their organisational context; *“... they do not see a future or struggle with the technical specialisation. This is the reality of the organisational context. There needs to be a mindset change from “either, or” to “and”. This was my realisation that allowed my transition.”*

Organisations that do seem to be getting it right are supporting specialist career development through focused talent management, commensurate remuneration, dual career pathways and paying for conferences. This is reflected in one expert’s opinion; *“Some organisations have dual career paths, where specialists are seen as individual contributors and focus on what they do. It is not working in reality. Organisations who have done the best are universities who send academics on conferences and enable peer acknowledgement”*.

The question of what organisations should do to support specialist career development provided a wealth of ideas, as indicated in Table 16 below. The importance of learning as a central theme in this study was again highlighted with 83% of respondents stating that organisations should focus on learning support for specialists. Of interest is the difference between the importance Human Resource respondents and specialist respondents place on coaching and mentoring.

Table 16: What should organisations do to support specialist career development?

Rank	Construct	Specialist	HR
1	Continual Learning	7	7
2	Career development and paths	5	8
3	Composition of organisational structures	5	6
4	Connection and access to people, information, tools and resources	2	4
5	Coaching and Mentoring	1	4

Participants advised organisations to do the following within each of the themes listed in Table 16 above;

1. Continual Learning: Accommodate specialists through specialised training and development programmes and provide funding and time for learning. For example, bursary schemes, conferences, support for research, and encouraging global peer groups of specialists.
2. Career Development and Paths: Design and implement Career Development interventions and Pathways that take account of specialist needs and aspirations. For example, by establishing dual career paths and cycles as opposed to ladders and allowing for technical and managerial career development that balances grade levels and pay. In addition, engage proactively with specialists by understanding what they want to do and give them interesting, challenging work. A number of participants advised that organisations conduct psychometric testing in order to adopt relevant talent management practices and interventions.
3. Composition of Organisational Structures: Revisit organisational structures and get various structures and grades in place that accommodate specialists and do not force management as the only career route. In addition, revise remuneration and

reward structures that enable balanced and differential treatment aimed at retaining specialists. A Human Resource expert explains; *“currently organisations keep specialists with shares. If they had to half the amount of shares and double the acknowledgement, they would retain specialists at the same level.”* Participants further advise that organisations create a culture of support for specialists and enable ongoing feedback processes.

4. Connection and Access to people, i.e. key decision makers, and information in the form of research, publications, strategic information, organisational culture and forums. One internal HR professional claims that; *“access to information is more important than money”*. Furthermore, by providing access to tools and resources, organisations can support specialists in their career development.
5. Coaching and Mentoring: provide opportunities for specialists to receive coaching and mentoring, particularly from other specialists. The importance of coaching and mentoring opportunities for specialists was explained by one HR expert, who said, *“Organisations ought to provide, certainly coaching type career support, because people who are in specialised careers are more exposed, more lonely, less connected and therefore in greater need of the sort of succour that comes from being with other people. If you’re in charge of a business and you have a team, your team, in a sense, becomes your little community or your support group. If you’re the company secretary, that’s not the case, so I think it incumbent on the organisation to provide that or the person who’s in the specialised job must go out and fetch it for himself or herself and people do that.”*

5.8.1 Responsibility for Career Management

The concept that individuals are responsible for managing their own careers is reflected in the findings in Table 17 below. The majority of specialists believe they are responsible for managing their own careers. In contrast, Human Resource respondents report that career management is a shared responsibility between the individual and the organisation. No participant reported that only the organisation is responsible for career management.

Participant comments on the concept of managing your own career include; *“It’s up to me. I need to own it. I need to find the challenge in my role”* and *“well, the days when people went into big organisations and had their careers managed for them, I think are well and truly over. So not only do I think specialists need to manage their own careers, I think everybody does, because the old notion of somebody who becomes your*

godfather in the organisation and propels you through the ranks, through patronage, I think those days are really well and truly past for everybody, but maybe more so for specialists”.

Table 17: Are specialists responsible for managing their own careers?

Rank	Construct	Specialist	HR
1	Specialists manage their own careers	7	1
2	Career management is a shared responsibility between individuals and organisations	0	6
3	Organisations manage people's careers	0	0

5.9 Conclusion on Findings

The qualitative research findings indicate that career success is in fact an individually defined construct. The purpose of this chapter was to present the findings of the data analysis of information collected during in-depth and expert interviews. The significance and validity of the results are supported by the existing literature on the topic of career success. In addition, new insights emerged from the findings that allowed for the development of a framework for specialist career success. Chapter 6 provides a more detailed discussion of the research findings and the proposed framework for career success for specialists.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides more detailed discussion around career success for specialists. The discussion aims to link the literature review findings to the results of this research study. One of the reasons for this study specifically focusing on specialists was because of the limited existing literature on this group. As such, surprising findings which do not corroborate existing literature are highlighted. In answering the research questions of how specialists define career success, what influences specialist career success, what strategies specialists employ to achieve career success and what organisations should do to support specialist career success, a framework for specialist career success has been developed.

6.2 Research Question 1: How do senior specialists define career success?

The objective of research question 1 was to explore and understand how senior specialists define career success. The research findings that emerged from the in-depth and expert interviews and data analysis process are reflected in Tables 4 and 5 in chapter 5. Specialist definitions of career success were found to be idiosyncratic, which is in line with individual success measures described by Dolan et al (2011), as well as Hall and Chandler (2005) and McDonald and Hite (2008). Senior specialists' definitions of career success and the meaning they attach to career success can be broadly categorised as either subjective or objective, and as either self-referent or other-referent.

6.2.1 Intrinsic and Extrinsic Career Success

In accordance with existing longitudinal studies, research findings show that subjective or intrinsic career success has a large affect on objective or extrinsic career success (Hall & Chandler, 2005; Abele & Spurk, 2009; Dolan et al, 2011). In this study, more respondents defined career success as subjective rather than as objective, i.e. 75% compared to 25%. Concepts that indicate subjective definitions of career success, in order of importance, include: to be recognised and held in high esteem; to make a contribution/ add value; to enjoy the work; to have autonomy/ independence; to have a

feeling of being valued; to have the opportunity to innovate; to have a sense of achievement; to apply competency; to feel and be treated as unique or special; to be challenged; to have a level of influence; by measured results/ outputs; and by placing personal value or meaning on the job. These subjective definitions are in line with the contest-mobility model (job performance and value add) and sponsored-mobility model (getting attention and support from others) purported by Ng et al (2005).

Of interest is the exclusion of employability in participant definitions of career success. This is in contrast to De Vos et al (2011), who claim that subjective career success is defined in terms of employability, i.e. career satisfaction and perceived marketability. This raises the question of how important being marketable or employable is to specialists.

In comparison, objective definitions of career success, including receiving financial reward; progressing in one's career; and having power over others ranked third, twelfth and sixteenth respectively. Participant responses of what career success is not, confirms previous research with particular reference to specialists who reported that financial success was not a key driver in their definition of career success. Qualitative studies have shown that the objective career success construct of salary is of less importance than subjective career success (Arthur et al, 2005; Dries et al, 2008; McDonald & Hite, 2008; van Staden & du Toit, 2010; Lamb & Sutherland, 2010). This is further supported by management level research, which asserts that managers attach more value to objective career success than to subjective career success (Ituma et al, 2011). The importance of financial reward and other objective measures of career success is a key difference between specialists and generalists.

Further analysis shows that specialist definitions of career success are more self-referent than other-referent, with 62.5% of concepts falling into the self-referent category. This may mean that specialists measure themselves slightly more on personal standards and expectations, rather than on comparing themselves to others (Heslin, 2005; Abele & Wiese, 2008; Abele & Spurk, 2009). Despite 37.5% of career success responses falling into the other-referent category, 75% of these definitions remain subjective in nature, that is, they relate to an internal sense of job satisfaction. Overall, the findings suggest that specialist definitions of career success are highly intrinsic in nature.

6.2.2 Career Success Drivers

The meanings reported by participants as being central to their definitions of career success are consistent with the views of Dries et al (2008). The key career success concepts highlighted in Table 4 that align with the multi-dimensional career success model of Dries et al (2008) are described in Table 18 below. The number in brackets for each of the key career success definitions indicates the rank order of the concepts, in accordance with the total frequency count. Of interest is the inclusion of autonomy/independence as defining career success in this study, which is not reflected in Dries et al's 2005 model. In addition, the inter-personal–affect construct of cooperation (Dries et al, 2005) did not emerge in the research findings. This may reflect the high importance specialist place on being autonomous and the low importance they place on networking and team work when defining career success.

Table 18: Comparison of career success definitions and the multi-dimensional model of career success

Research findings: Career success definitions	Multi-dimensional career success model (Dries et al, 2008)
Recognition/ Esteem (1)	Inter-personal–affect: Recognition (adequate reward and appreciation)
Contribution/ value add (2)	Inter-personal–achievement: Factual contribution (contribute something tangible to the collective) Inter-personal–affect: Perceived contribution (serve society through work)
Enjoyment of work (3)	Intra-personal–affect: Satisfaction (achieve personal satisfaction and happiness)
Financial reward (4)	Intra-personal–affect: Security (meet one's financial and employment needs)
Autonomy/ independence (5)	<i>Not reflected in model</i>
Feeling valued (6)	Inter-personal–affect: Recognition (adequate reward and appreciation)
Opportunity to innovate (7)	Intra-personal–achievement: Creativity (create something innovative and extraordinary)
Achievement (8)	Inter-personal–achievement: Performance (attain actual results and meet set goals)
Challenge (11)	Intra-personal–achievement: Self-development (reach one's full potential through handling challenges and learning)
Career progression (15)	Inter-personal–achievement: Advancement (progress and grow level and experience)
<i>Not reflected in research findings</i>	Inter-personal–affect: Cooperation (work well together with others)

With reference to insights from Table 4 and individual aspiration (Dolan et al, 2011), it is clear that senior specialists define career success primarily in terms of getting high (recognition/ esteem was ranked first), getting secure (financial reward was ranked third), getting free (autonomy/ independence was ranked fifth) and getting ahead (achievement and career progression were ranked ninth and twelfth respectively). The exclusion of balance in this study contradicts Derr's career success aspiration taxonomy measure of getting balance (Dolan et al, 2011), as well as McDonald and Hite's (2008) finding that young professionals place high importance on work-life balance.

Understanding the motives that drive specialists provides further insight into the meaning of career success for specialists. The data suggests that specialists are motivated primarily by a need for achievement and display low levels of power and affiliation motivation (McClelland & Steele, 1973). The achievement motive is largely fulfilled through recognition, making a contribution and enjoying the task. Specialist definitions of career success are in line with McClelland and Steele's (1973) assertion that individuals with a strong achievement motivation favour work that; lets them achieve success through their own effort and skill; is both moderately difficult and risky; provides for tangible outcomes; involves innovative solutions; and has a future orientation. In addition, achievement motive correlates with more intrinsic definitions of career success.

The influence of motivational factors was described by a number of participants; *"I would imagine that they are mostly motivated by need for achievement and to a certain degree by a need for affiliation – not for a need for power. So success would be achievement mostly and that would be measured, usually for professionals, by professional outputs"* and *"... people have got different profiles, so they value different things. There's elements about valuing the work."*

6.2.3 Conclusion to Research Question 1

The research findings confirm the literature review that career success is an idiosyncratic construct (Hall & Chandler, 2005; McDonald & Hite, 2008; Dolan et al, 2011). Senior specialists define career success as largely subjective with the top three factors being recognition/ esteem, contribution/ value add and enjoyment of work. This is consistent with the perceptions of HR professionals, who believe that senior specialists define career success according to recognition/ esteem and contribution/

value add. In contrast, HR professionals do not perceive enjoyment of work as a key factor in specialists' definitions of career success. The research found that different kinds of specialists place importance on diverse factors when defining career success. This diversity has been taken into account in the career success framework described in Chapter 7.

6.3 Research Question 2: What factors influence senior specialists' definitions of and attainment of career success?

Research question 2 aimed to establish the key influences on individual definitions of career success and their consequent achievement of success. The research results reflect a range of influences which are largely contextual in nature. The data in Table 6 shows that significant people have the largest impact on specialists' definitions of career success, including people in authority, family, mentors, line managers and peers or colleagues. This confirms the existing literature, in particular the work of McDonald and Hite (2008), who report that the largest external antecedent of career success perceptions is observing others. In terms of internal influences, personal expectations and experiences influence career success perceptions (McDonald & Hite, 2008), which is corroborated by the influence of context/ environment and motivation/ interest found in this study.

The research findings add to the body of knowledge by detailing the influence of personality, luck and professional allegiance on specialists' definitions of career success. The perception that personality plays a role in how specialists define career success agrees somewhat with the work of Lent and Brown (2008) with regards to the influence of extroversion, introversion and goal-directed behaviour. In addition, the personality traits of curiosity, values, integrity, aptitude and excitement were highlighted in this study. The concept that luck plays a role in the achievement of career success was described by one of the participants; *"I'm going to say a weird thing now and I'm actually scared of saying it, because it's my perception, but sometimes I also think it's a bit of luck, you know, working in an area where a breakthrough is being made – and boom! Off you go"*. The findings further suggest that specialists have dual allegiance and may have greater affinity to their profession than their organisation.

The influence of environmental pressures also emerged from this study. This was not found in the literature review as a major factor. Environmental pressures can be described as the social expectations placed on individuals to advance up the traditional

career ladder. Participants reported that they felt pressure from society in general to advance into general management roles in order to be seen as successful. The general negative perception that specialist career progression is limited was described aptly by a career development expert, who explains the environmental pressures specialists face; *“...a lot of people who would have become really good specialists, have been forced to move out of that into more generalist positions because they saw that if they wanted to get ahead in this organisation..... I mean the kind of pressures that came on them, are some things like a wife saying to an Electrician, ‘You know, you’re still an electrician. Marie’s husband is already a foreman. What’s wrong with you?’ You know, the pressure comes from all sides, from family, from seeing other people. Because companies tend to have lower grades for the people that are in these specialist type positions – so that’s why they need to change it. You can earn as much money doing that and becoming very good and being an asset to the company.”*

6.3.1 Conclusion to Research Question 2

In exploring the factors which influence senior specialists’ definitions of and attainment of career success, it emerged that people, environmental and personal aspects all have an impact. Participant responses raise the question of how specialists are perceived by others and how this has an impact on how they define career success. Comments like *“being a specialist is not the best route in this business”* and *“good specialists get forced into generalist positions”* due to external pressures, confirm the need to change the global perception that being and staying a specialist does not result in a successful career. These new findings have been incorporated into the career success framework detailed in chapter 7.

6.4 Research Question 3: What strategies do senior specialists employ to achieve career success in line with their definition of career success?

The development of a framework for specialist career success in Chapter 7 was primarily informed by the responses to research question 3, i.e. what are the career success strategies successful specialists employ to achieve career success. The study explored how specialists manage their careers in terms of content (the what) and process (the how), that is, the strategies (plans and actions) they have employed to achieve career success. Insights from the in-depth and expert interviews, particularly

the finding that different kinds of specialists employ different career success strategies have been incorporated into the framework model in Chapter 7..

The similarities and differences between the literature review and research findings displayed in Table 7 are illustrated in Table 19 below. Given the abductive nature of this qualitative study, four key career success constructs that serve as career strategies, i.e. positive affect, networking, continuous learning and political skill, were posed to participants after they had provided insight into the career success strategies they currently use or recommend. The purpose of this was to establish participant perceptions of the level of influence of these constructs on specialist career success. Table 19 takes into account what participants included in their career success strategies prior to being posed the question of positive affect, networking, continuous learning and political skill as career success strategies.

Table 19: Literature review versus research findings - Career success strategies

Construct/ concept	Literature Review only	Literature review and research findings	Research findings only
Business exposure			X
Continuous learning (Currie et al, 2006; McDonald & Hite, 2008; Naidu, 2009; Judge et al, 2010; Ng & Feldman, 2010; van Staden & du Toit, 2011; Colakoglu, 2011)		X	
Influence through Value Add			X
Knowledge sharing and keeping			X
Networking (Kuijpers et al, 2006; Currie et al, 2006; McDonald & Hite, 2008; Clarke, 2009; Naidu, 2009; Wolff & Moser, 2009; van Staden & du Toit, 2011)	X		
Personal factors/ Positive Affect (Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2008; Kammeyer-Mueller et al, 2008; Clarke, 2009; Verbruggen, 2011; Grimland et al, 2012; Kapoutsis, Papalexandris, Thanos, & Nikolopoulos, 2012)		X	
Political skill (Clarke, 2009; Todd et al, 2009; Liu et al, 2010; Treadway et al, 2011; Blickle et al, 2011; Kapoutsis et al, 2012).		X	
Relationships with supervisors or managers (Stumpf, 2010; Yean, 2010); Relationship building		X	
Seeking and creating opportunities (Clarke, 2009; Yean, 2010);		X	
Seeking support and mentoring (Arthur et al, 2005; Kuijpers et al, 2006; Singh et al, 2009; Yean, 2010); coaching and mentoring		X	
Self career management (Clarke, 2009; van Staden & du Toit, 2011)	X		

The key strategies specialist employ to achieve career success that were highlighted in Table 7, include in rank order, continual learning, influence through value add, having a positive mindset, obtaining business exposure, and relationship building. The data confirms previous research into career success with regards to continuous learning, political skill, seeking support and mentoring, seeking and creating opportunities, and relationships with supervisors or managers.

In contrast to previous research, participants did not identify networking or self career management as career success strategies initially. The fact that networking did not emerge as an important career success strategy is in line with the work of van Staden and du Toit (2011), who found that networking was the least important career strategy for knowledge workers. Despite not referring to the word networking directly, participants did place much importance on relationship building and knowledge sharing, both of which could be said to form part of networking.

Novel responses that were not found in the literature review included the career success strategies of influence through adding value, business exposure, and knowledge sharing or keeping. The concept that specialists can influence organisations by adding value to business success is largely underpinned by gaining broad, integrated business exposure. Although agreeing with the literature that specialists are less likely to share knowledge than generalists (Kang & Snell, 2009; Kelly et al., 2011), the particular career success strategy of keeping knowledge was only employed by one specialist, who explained; *“The company works like this. You are boxed in a certain way and then you’re categorised as being a certain kind of person within that area, because of where you work. So my strategy basically is, acquire as much knowledge as you can, befriend everyone and if you can do something exceptionally well, keep that information to yourself on how to do it”*.

The most interesting responses were found when participants were questioned on the established career success constructs of positive affect, networking, continuous learning and political skill.

6.4.1 Positive Affect as Career Strategy

With regards to positive affect, participants initially appeared surprised that a positive disposition could be viewed as having an impact on career success. Despite this, 16 out of the 17 respondents agreed that positive affect has a positive impact on career success. This confirms that having a positive disposition, self-belief and a sense of self-

worth correlates with career success (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2008; Boehm and Lyubomirsky, 2008; Judge, 2009; Brown, 2011; Nickerson, Diener & Schwarz, 2011). The importance of positive affect further supported the notion that different kinds of specialists employ different career success strategies. Having a positive disposition may in fact not influence the career success of deep specialists as described by an external HR expert; *“I don’t think..... it doesn’t make somebody not successful if they have an extremely scarce skill. I’ve seen some very good grumpy specialists. I mean obviously I believe in that positivity – and that helps you get on with people who are going to commission your work and want to work with you”*.

As part of the positive affect theme, participants reported on the importance of understanding one’s desires and setting goals. The findings suggest that setting goals that meet individual aspirations and values contribute to the development of self-belief and a positive disposition (Lent & Brown, 2008). This is in line with the notion of deliberate career planning and working towards goals in managing one’s own career, that is supported by Abele & Wiese (2008), Dries, Pepermans & Carlier (2008), Ballout (2009), Clarke (2009), Stumpp, Muck, Hülshager, Judge & Maier (2010) and van Staden & du Toit (2010).

6.4.2 Networking as Career Strategy

Although participants did not identify networking as a core career success strategy per se, on being questioned on the impact of networking on career success, 3 specialists and 6 HR professionals agreed that it was important and has a positive impact. One specialist advises on the importance of networking skill; *“You need to know people – you need to know what you’re doing and you need to be able to sell yourself.”*

Of concern is the report that 4 participants, mostly specialists, perceive that networking is not important for specialist career success. This is in disagreement with the current literature which asserts that networking contributes to the attainment of career success (Kuijpers et al, 2006; Currie et al, 2006; McDonald & Hite, 2008; Wolff & Moser, 2009; Clarke, 2009; Naidu, 2009; Gratton, 2010; van Staden & du Toit, 2011).

The assertion by HR professionals that specialists network well within their own peer group, often outside of the organisation, contradicts specialist participant responses that specialists cannot do networking. The Future of Work research conducted by Gratton (2011), advocates the importance of networking for the specialist. In order to shift to future success, an individual must move from “isolated competitor to innovative

connector” (Gratton, 2011, p.200). This focus on collaborative networks helps the specialist to broaden their depth of competence through association with other specialists. The paradox of having to be a unique specialist, stand out from others, and at the same time, be closely connected to others is highlighted by Gratton (2011).

6.4.3 Continuous Learning as Career Strategy

The data confirms that continuous learning and the accumulation of career capital is conducive to career success, with all 17 participants highlighting learning as the top career success strategy. In comparing data with existing research on the intelligent career and the three ways of knowing, it is clear that specialists use career capital to achieve success (Clarke, 2009; Parker et al, 2009; Colakoglu, 2011; Van Den Born & Van Witteloostuijn, 2011).

The accumulation of intellectual capital in order to become a ‘serial master’ is further supported by Gratton (2011) who uses the analogy of being a master craftsman through extensive practice and ongoing learning. The research findings support the notion that being a specialist takes time and dedication (Gratton, 2011). Achieving true mastery takes time according to one participant who said, *“To be an overnight success as a specialist can take 15 years. Stay focused and be the best at one thing, be known for being the guy and be better than anyone else. Drive it yourself”*.

Continuous professional development (CPD) is an integral part of continual learning. Insights from the study are that CPD provides intellectual stimulation and benefits the specialist with regards to their reputation. Though participating in conferences, publishing research, getting involved in peer groups and peer supervision, specialists can raise their profile and be seen to be current (Gratton, 2010).

6.4.4 Political Skill as Career Strategy

The most surprising participant responses were found when discussing political skill as a potential career success strategy (Clarke, 2009; Todd et al, 2009; Liu et al, 2010; Treadway et al, 2011; Blickle et al, 2011). Though all participants acknowledge that organisational politics are a reality, the majority see political skill as a negative personal trait, with all specialists and 7 of the 9 HR professionals perceiving that specialists do not have political skill. This may be related to the meaning respondents attach to the concept of organisational politics.

At the same time, 10 of the 17 participants believe that specialists need to develop political skill in order to achieve career success. This corresponds with Treadway et al (2011) who propose that political skill and interpersonal power correlate positively with performance and level of organisational influence, as well as Kapoutsis et al (2012) who assert that socially desirable political tactics align with career success. The data does show a strong link to legitimate political tactics in the form of influence, with 12 counts of influence as a career success strategy. This was described as the ability to convince others, sell yourself, get noticed and be more visible in order to persuade others.

Self marketing and getting noticed is further advocated by Gratton (2011) who asserts that individuals should manage their reputations by building unique signatures of recognition. The research findings support this application of legitimate political tactics like persuading others, using expertise, focusing on super-ordinate goals and building one's image (Kapoutsis et al, 2012).

6.4.5 Career Capital and Career Success Strategies

The link between the four core career success strategies and the accumulation of career capital is clear. The data on what influences specialist perceptions of career success in Table 6 and career success strategies in Table 7 confirms the importance of the three ways of knowing (Clarke, 2009; Parker, 2009) and the must-have career capitals identified by Lamb & Sutherland (2010). This study confirms the career capitals of knowing what (continuous learning), knowing whom (networking, political skill and the influence of significant people), knowing how (continuous learning), knowing why (influence of personal factors and positive affect), knowing where (continuous learning and the influence of contextual factors), and knowing when (continuous learning and the influence of contextual factors). At a high level it could be said that positive affect may link to fit. However, the cultural, organizational and functional fit component of career capital (Lamb & Sutherland, 2010) does not align precisely to the findings of this study. With regards to nice-to-have differentiating capitals (Lamb & Sutherland, 2010), this study corroborates the capitals of knowing oneself (positive affect), emotional intelligence (positive affect), opportunity identification (continual learning), action orientation (positive affect) and internal locus of control (positive affect). The career success strategy data does not support the differentiating capital of context management, though contextual factors were identified as having a key influence on

specialist definitions of career success. This may indicate a gap in specialist skills and the need to develop contextual intelligence.

6.4.6 Impact of General Management Experience and Professional Forum Participation on Specialist Career Success

The impact of general management experience and participation in professional forums emerged as a theme during the interview process. Whilst general management experience is viewed as having a positive impact on specialist career success, professional forum participation is not.

The view that general management experience is useful and provides specialists with additional skills is supported by the majority of participants. The skills that participants believe general management experience provides to specialists include; the ability to work with others, build relationships, be aware of the broader environment, expand perspective, generate integrated solutions and develop political savvy. Whether specialists can be effective general managers is debatable (Ismail, 2003; Kelly et al, 2011; Choo, 2012), with 6 of the 8 specialists and 3 HR respondents reporting that general management is not for specialists. In the words of one participant; *“...they often don’t make good general managers, because they a) don’t value the work and b) unless they’ve learnt to generate integrated solutions, they often don’t generate the right kind of solutions as a general manager”*.

A large majority of specialists reported that professional forum participation is not useful, in that they perceive that they do not get anything out of participation. Many do see the value of professional associations in the form of access to research and the credibility gained from being a member. One specialist said. *“I’m a member of ..., but in all honesty it doesn’t add any value to my life”*. This contradicts Gratton’s (2011) recommendation that to develop ‘serial mastery’, individuals should participate in what she terms ‘virtual guilds’ which organise apprenticeships, establish membership rules and provide credentials. A handful of HR respondents believe that professional forum participation is useful as part of the specialists’ professional identity and with regards to knowledge sharing, networking and boosting the standing of the profession.

6.4.7 Key differences between Specialist and HR perceptions

Table 4 in Chapter 5 indicates that whilst HR professionals have some understanding of how specialists define career success, they lack insight into the importance specialists place on enjoying the work and feeling valued. In Table 6, HR professionals place much emphasis on the influence of personality, professional allegiance and the nature of the job on specialist definitions of career success, while specialists themselves do not. The differences in perception of specialists and HR professionals with regards to the strategies specialists employ to achieve success were highlighted in Table 14. Given the specialists' emphasis on positive affect, gaining business exposure and relationship building, it seems that HR professionals may be less in tune with the motives of specialists and the reality of the Future of Work (Gratton, 2010).

6.4.8 Conclusion to Research Question 3

The broad strategies senior specialists employ to achieve career success are continuous learning, positive affect, networking and political skill. There is strong evidence of the importance of continual learning as the core career success strategy for specialists. These strategies and their relevance to different types of specialists have been incorporated into the framework for career success for specialists model discussed in Chapter 7.

6.5 Research Question 4: What do and what should organisations do to support specialist career development?

A key objective of the research was to provide recommendations to organisations on how to support specialist career development. Research question 4 sought to determine effective support processes that organisations can put in place to support specialists with their careers. A concerning result shown in Table 14 is that most participants believe that organisations are currently not doing enough to support and value specialists. This aligns to the work of Kelly et al (2011) and Choo (2012), who report that specialist careers have lower prestige, lack power, receive lower salaries and see slower promotion progression. Furthermore, Dries et al (2008) purport that people in abnormal careers, i.e. experts or specialists, are often disregarded and not rewarded adequately. This study confirms these findings in the reported perceptions that organisations do not value specialists.

The organisation's role in supporting specialists career management should be aligned to the firm's strategy and enable person-fit (Baruch, 2006). In addition, McClelland and Steele (1973) posit that people with high achievement motivation will not succeed if the organisation does not provide opportunities, does not allow the individual to take initiative and does not reward initiative. As such, recommendations to organisations on how to support specialist career development, in order to attract and retain them have been categorised into five themes and are discussed briefly below. A model that organisations may adopt in supporting specialists in their career development is presented in Chapter 7.

6.5.1 Continual Learning

Across all respondents, the common theme that emerged with regards to what organisations should be doing to support specialist career development was an enabling learning environment. The importance of an enabling learning environment is supported by Lamb and Sutherland (2010), who advocate that organisations support employees in planning, organising and building career capital. Existing literature is full of examples of how training and development is a supportive strategic HR practice (Baruch, 2006; McDonald & Hite, 2008; Clarke, 2009; Ballout, 2009; Kang & Snell, 2009; De Vos et al, 2011; Ituma et al, 2011; Colakoglu, 2011). This links directly with the finding that continual learning is the specialist's primary career success strategy.

6.5.2 Career Development and Pathing

Organisations should be structuring specialist career options and pathways that provide an alternative to being a generalist or manager (Baruch, 2004; Benko and Anderson, 2010). Through fully understanding what specialists want, what options are available to them and giving them interesting work that they enjoy, specialist retention will improve (Ituma et al, 2011). The framework for career success for specialists' model discussed in Chapter 7 proposes that specialists be allowed to adopt a zig zag approach to their careers (Benko & Anderson, 2010).

6.5.3 Composition of Organisational Structures

Organisational HR practices and structures that acknowledge and enable individual career development are integral to attracting and retaining specialists in the future. This finding is supportive of the assertion that specific supportive HR practices must contribute to employee relations systems (Kang & Snell, 2009; Blicke et al, 2011). Reformed structures should allow for equitable remuneration and grading practices, as well as differential reward policies (Yean, 2010). Understanding what motivates specialists should inform the way they are paid and rewarded.

6.5.4 Connection and Access

The majority of participants placed high importance on access to various resources, including people, information and tools. Connection and access to people, information and tools is a key driver of specialist motivation. Specialists use these resources to learn and to build their networking ability. Though not supported directly by the literature review, connection and access enables specialists to employ the career success strategies of continual learning, networking and political skill.

6.5.5 Coaching and Mentoring

Coaching and mentoring further stimulates the specialist's need to learn, network, and develop political skill. It is a core element of the career success strategy of continuous learning. The importance of coaching, knowledge sharing (Kang & Snell, 2009) and mentoring (Singh et al, 2009) is primarily supported by HR professionals, as seen in Table 16. The data shows that specialists do not place high importance on the provision of coaching and mentoring by the organisation. This may indicate that specialists do not perceive coaching and mentoring as useful.

6.5.6 Conclusion to Research Question 4

Establishing organisational HR policies and practices that support specialist career success is vital for the future attraction and retention of specialists in organisations. Taking an active role in the shared responsibility for specialist career development will have a positive impact on the current perception that organisations favour generalists.

A model entitled the 5Cs of organisational support for specialists is discussed further in Chapter 7.

6.6 Conclusion on Results

The discussion on the research results reflects many links to the existing literature on career success. Some of the surprising findings which add to the body of knowledge on career success and specialist career development include;

- Specialist definitions of career success are primarily intrinsic, that is, both subjective and self-referent.
- Specialists place high value on enjoyment of work, as well as autonomy in defining career success.
- Environmental pressures and the general negative perception that specialist career progression is limited influences specialist definitions of career success.
- Specific strategies that specialists employ to achieve career success not found in the existing literature relate to gaining business exposure, influencing through value add, and knowledge sharing or keeping.

In answering the research questions of how specialists define career success, what influences specialist career success, what strategies specialists employ to achieve career success and what organisations should do to support specialist career success, a framework for specialist career success is proposed in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

The objective of the research was to establish how specialists achieve career success in order to create a framework for career success for specialists. This is believed to be useful to both individual specialists and organisations that employ specialists, as a basis for career development. Further research into how organisations can support specialists in managing their careers and achieving career success is also vital. Chapter 7 discusses the core findings of this research and provides recommendations to specialists and organisations.

7.2 A Framework for Career Success for Specialists

In exploring the perceptions of specialists and HR professionals, a framework for career success for specialists has emerged and is displayed in Figure 9 below. In confirming certain existing literature on the topic of career success and discovering novel concepts on specialist career success, the model explains what career success means for specialists, what career options are available to specialists, and what strategies should be employed to attain career success.

As a foundation to the framework, it is critical that organisations support specialist career development in order for specialists to realise career success. This involves understanding the specific aspirations and motivations of each individual specialist and re-working organisational practices to meet these needs.

7.2.1 Career Options for Specialists

One of the surprising findings from the qualitative study was the realisation that specialist career development is not just about choosing a specialist or generalist path, but that various options are available for specialists. The right career pathway will depend on the individual in terms of their interests, motivation and goals. Specialist career options have been categorised in terms of depth of skill and knowledge, breadth of skill and knowledge, as well as key outcomes of the role. Note that the options do not represent a progressive pathway and as such, individuals may move between the various pathways in a lateral or zig zag way. The pathway options can be described as;

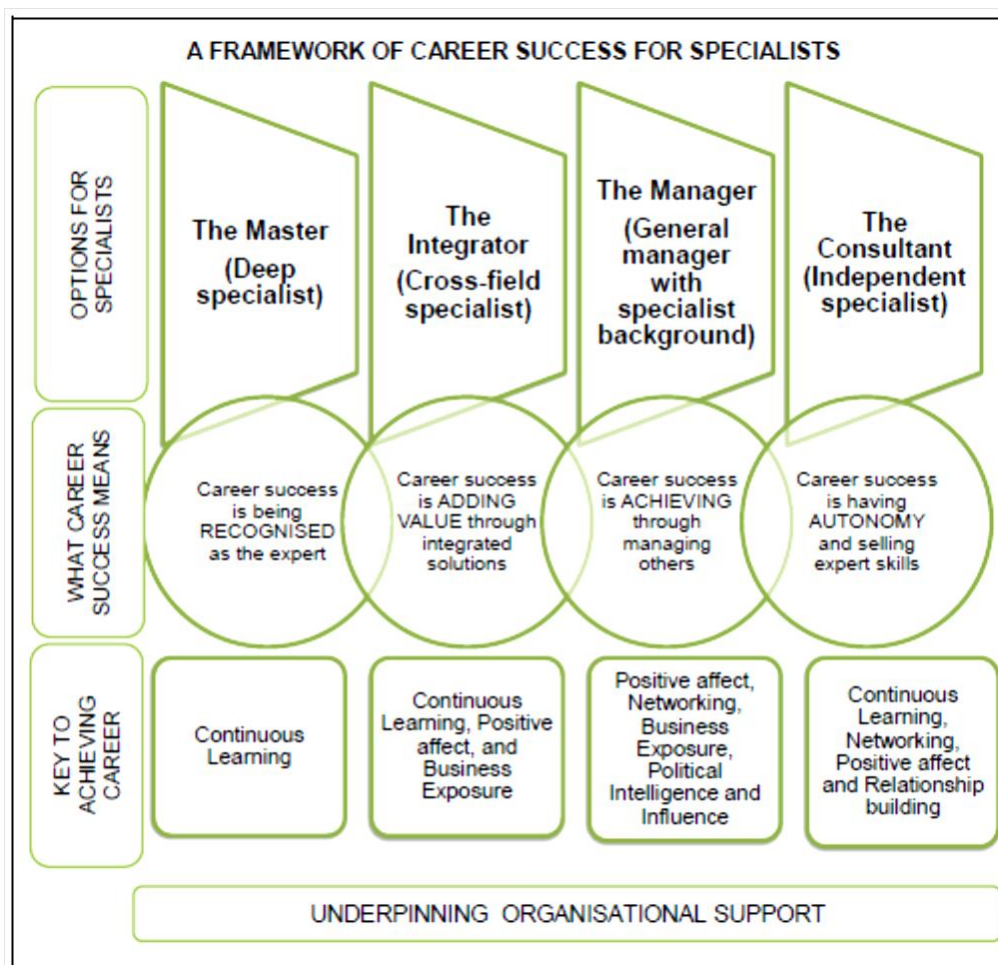
1. **The Master:** a deep specialist who has a depth of skill and knowledge in one or more focused fields. This specialist represents the historical master craftsman and defines career success primarily as being recognised as an expert. The career success strategy of continuous learning enables ‘the master’ to achieve career success, esteem and results at a personal, professional and organisational level. Achieving tangible results, enjoyment of work, opportunities for innovation, applying competency and doing challenging work drive ‘the master’s’ career success.
2. **The Integrator:** a specialist with a broad range of skills and knowledge who has the ability to provide integrated business solutions. ‘Integrators’ define career success in terms of their contribution and value-add to the organisation, primarily in the form of integrated business solutions. Continuous learning, positive affect and business exposure are the key career success strategies employed by ‘the integrator’. These specialists are motivated by solving business problems, enjoyment of work and feeling valued by the organisation.
3. **The Manager:** a specialist who has moved into a people management role and uses his or her specialist knowledge to ensure others achieve business results. These specialists define career success in terms of their and their team’s achievements. Being respected as a trusted advisor, financial reward, and higher levels of influence stimulate ‘the manager’. The core career success strategies employed by ‘the manager’ include positive affect, networking, business exposure and influence through the application of political skill.
4. **The Consultant:** an independent specialist who sells his or her expert skills and knowledge to provide business solutions. This type of specialist defines career success in terms of autonomy or independence, being unique and placing personal meaning on the value of their expertise. ‘Consultants’ typically adopt the career strategies of continuous learning, networking, positive affect and relationship building.

Individuals generally start off their careers as specialists with an expert understanding in one particular field. Career progression is viewed as movement towards the

achievement of one’s own definition of career success. Whether the specialist moves into the role of general manager, cross-field specialist, deep specialist or decides to move into independent consulting will depend on a number of factors. These include; contextual factors like opportunities, organisational structures and external pressures; personal factors, which may include personality type, motivations and interests; as well as the influence of significant people on the individual’s aspirations, needs and choices.

In principle, an individual may decide to work as a cross-field specialist within a firm and then move into general management. After gaining the experience and skills he or she wants, a move back to deep specialist may be relevant and desirable. Perhaps working as an independent consultant for a period will allow further accumulation of career capital. Ultimately, the career options available to specialists are driven by individual desire and the will to choose a career that enables achievement of individual career success.

Figure 9: A Framework of Career Success for Specialists



7.3 Recommendations for Specialists

The research showed that the perception of both specialists and HR professionals is that the specialist career is limited. In developing a framework for career success for specialists (Figure 9), various options and possibilities for career development have been recommended. With regards to the individual's role in career development, a multitude of strategies are discussed in the literature, notably self career management (Clarke, 2009; van Staden & du Toit, 2011) and the development of 'serial mastery' (Gratton, 2010; Gratton, 2011).

The career success strategies pertinent to specialists that were found in this study are incorporated into the framework for career success for specialists in Figure 9 above. It is important that individual specialists first determine what they want to be doing and then implement the most relevant strategy to achieve career success. These include;

1. **Continual Learning:** to remain relevant and continue to position oneself as an expert, continual learning is non-negotiable for specialists. This should be a holistic endeavour that incorporates formal training and education; business exposure; and coaching and mentoring.
2. **Positive Affect:** self-belief and the ability to set and achieve goals are integral to the specialist's achievement of career success. Being passionate about and dedicated to one's area of expertise builds positive affect and consequently a higher chance of success.
3. **Networking:** specialists need to develop their ability to build relationships across and outside the organisation. Through connecting with and sharing knowledge with peers and other significant stakeholders, specialists will gain influence and enhance the likelihood of having a successful career.
4. **Political Skills:** it is important that specialists firstly dispel their negative perception of politics in organisations. By using legitimate political tactics, like lobbying support, influencing key decision makers and enhancing one's visibility, specialists will escalate their careers and achieve success.

The research findings reinforce current literature by indicating the need for individuals to take control of their own career development. By acknowledging the career options available to specialists and influencing organisational career development practices, individual specialists can achieve career success.

7.4 Recommendations for Organisations

All organisations employ specialists. In many cases, specialists perform the work that is integral to organisational success. The perception that specialists have limited career pathways and that they are rarely valued by organisations until after they resign, was highlighted in this study. Tobin (2012) asserts that organisations must find a way to implement technical career development and pathways if they are to retain talented specialists in the future. Much of the literature on career success focuses on the role of organisations, specifically Human Resource Development departments (Baruch, 2006; McDonald & Hite, 2008; Ituma et al, 2011).

It is recommended that organisations apply the 5 C's of organisational support for specialists pictured in Figure 10 below, in order to attract and retain specialists. The 5 C's should be applied in alignment with an understanding of the individual and what type of specialist they are or desire to be;

1. **Continual Learning:** organisations should provide opportunities for specialists to learn on an ongoing basis through holistic training and development that meets individual needs and desires. For example, 'the master' or deep specialist, will be motivated by opportunities to do research and attend international conferences relating to their field of expertise.
2. **Career Development and Pathing:** by understanding the various specialist career options relevant to their business, organisations can implement specialist career pathways that allow for zig zag movement and gaining of diverse experience. For example, providing opportunities to gain broad business exposure would motivate the 'manager'.
3. **Composition of Organisational Structures:** it is vital that organisations show the value they place on specialists by devising remuneration and reward systems that target individual motivations and needs. For example, 'the integrator' or cross-field specialist, will be motivated by rewards that acknowledge their contribution and allow opportunities to work across organisational boundaries.
4. **Connection and Access:** organisations will benefit from providing specialists with access to information and tools, as well as connecting them to key decision makers in the business. For example, by subscribing to industry specific research and publications, organisations will not only gain from more motivated specialists but also from increased access to the latest developments in specialist fields.
5. **Coaching and Mentoring:** specialists would gain value from organisational interventions that afford them the opportunity to coach and mentor others, as well

as to receive coaching and mentoring themselves. One of the key findings of this report is that specialists lack political skill. Both coaching and mentoring would enable the specialist to develop their level of influence, ability to lobby support and build their personal reputation.

The research found that both specialists and HR participants believe organisations can and should be playing a far more supportive role in specialist career development. The 5 C's of organisational support for specialists is a tool firms can apply to understand specialist needs, design fit-for-purpose organisational practices and provide support to specialists in achieving career success. Further research findings for each of the 5 Cs of organisational support for specialists are discussed in section 5.8.

Figure 10: The 5 C's of Organisational Support for Specialists



7.5 Recommendations for Future Research

A number of interesting future research topics emerged from the study. These became apparent during both the literature review and interview process. Further research on career success is recommended in the following areas;

1. Organisational support structures and career paths for specialists: The current research provides some high level recommendations to organisations in the form of the 5 Cs of organisational support for specialists. An in-depth study into the specific support structures, policies and interventions that organisations should adopt to attract and retain specialists would be widely valuable for firms that employ specialists.

2. Value motivators and drivers for specialists to understand them better: As a deeply individual construct, career success is defined differently by different individuals. By conducting quantitative research into the value motivators and drivers of specialists, a richer understanding of the population would emerge. This will assist individual specialists to understand where they fit and will provide organisations insight into what makes different kinds of specialists tick.
3. Specialist's level of influence on strategy: In order to understand the value of specialists in organisations, it would be interesting to explore how they currently influence strategy in organisations. Furthermore, investigating the possible benefits of specialist input to strategy would raise the profile of specialists and so enhance the career of the specialist.
4. Political intelligence: Despite a widespread trend, there is currently limited research into the impact of political skills and tactics on individual career success. Investigating this phenomenon and discovering how organisations and individuals can both develop and manage organisational politics offer a multitude of research opportunities.

7.6 Limitations of the Current Study

The limitations of the current study are largely due to its qualitative, exploratory nature. The use of in-depth and expert interviews raised issues of respondent bias and involved extensive time requirements. Given the limited number of interviews with a sample size of 17 and restricted geographic focus, the research results are not generalizable to the whole population. Common-method bias is a further limitation, as the research explored individual perceptions of specialist career success. There is a possibility that the interviewer may have interpreted participant responses with subjective bias and therefore influenced the final results.

7.7 Conclusion

“The age of the generalist is over. Instead, my prediction for the future is that you will need what I call ‘serial mastery’ to add real value”

Gratton in The Shift (2011, p.20).

Specialists are a crucial ingredient to the achievement of organisational success. They provide expert knowledge and skills that enable implementation of strategy and

organisational performance (Kang & Snell, 2009). As valuable contributors to organisational success, specialists need special treatment. The research provides a framework for career success that indicates the options available to specialists and the strategies which can enable their career success. In addition, the 5 C's of organisational support for specialist career development presents organisations with ways to improve how they support specialists in their career development.

This study has provided insight into how specialists define career success; identified the factors that influence this definition; determined how organisations should support specialist career development; and formulated a framework for specialist career success by exploring the strategies senior specialists employ to achieve career success.

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Appendix 1: Email request to targeted participants

Good day,

As you are aware, I am completing an MBA at GIBS. My research project title is “A Framework for Specialist Career Success for Specialists”. I believe that your expertise would provide me with the insight required to answer the research questions (see below). As such, I would appreciate your agreement to participate in the study, which will involve an in-depth interview (+- 1 hour). I plan to conduct the interviews by the end of July 2012. Please indicate your availability at this time.

Population group: Senior specialist

- employed full-time by a for-profit organisation (current or within the last 5 years)
- senior level (working at the same level as a functional or senior manager with regards to job grade and level)
- has no direct reports
- provides functional knowledge and expertise to the organisation

Population group: Internal (intra-company) Human Resource professional in the private sector, that employ specialists:

- employed full-time by a for-profit organisation at a senior level (working at the same level as a functional or senior manager with regards to job grade and level)
- responsible for career development within the organisation

External (inter-company) Human Resource professionals, who have worked with specialists or are themselves specialists:

- Career Development/ Human Resource experts working as consultants, in academia or independently
- Senior experts in the field of specialist search and recruitment

Research Questions:

1. *How do senior specialists define career success?*
2. *What factors influence senior specialists' definitions of career success?*
3. *What strategies do senior specialists employ to achieve career success in line with their definition of career success?*

Many thanks,

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Appendix 2: Interview Schedule for Specialists

Date	
Name	
Job title	
Profession (if different from job title)	
Company	
Job grade	
Highest qualification	

- **Introduction and background**

- Thank you for your time and input. I would like to confirm the confidentiality of the data I collect from you. If required, this interview can be anonymous and your name and/ or company name will not be reflected in the research report.
- The title of this research is “Career Success for Specialists: A proposed Framework”. The key objectives of this research are to;
 - Understand how specialists define career success;
 - Identify the factors that influence this definition; and
 - Formulate a framework for specialist career success by exploring the strategies senior specialists employ to achieve career success, in line with their definition of career success.
- The interview will be conversational and exploratory. I would like to encourage you to speak freely and openly, and not be limited to just answering the research questions.
- In this study, I have defined specialists as individuals who are employed full-time by a for-profit organisation, at a senior level, with no direct reports (i.e. employees or teams reporting directly to the individual) and who provide functional knowledge and expertise to the organisation. Examples of specialists include engineers, accountants, IT specialists, HR specialists, teaching professionals, management consultants and lawyers.

- **Concepts/ theory:** Some of the key concepts I have found during a literature review of existing research into career success and specialists include;
 - Definitions of specialists as professionals, knowledge workers and functional experts
 - Definitions of career success as being either subjective and objective

- A focus on the career strategies of networking, continuous learning and political skill
- **Objective:** The ultimate purpose of this research is to develop a model for career success for specialists that enables specialists to manage their own career success and for organisations to improve the way in which they support specialists in their career development.

Before we start with the interview, do you have questions?

- **Research question 1:** How do senior specialists define career success?
 - Q1.1: Do you consider yourself successful and why?
 - Q1.2: How do you define career success as a specialist?
- **Research question 2:** What factors influence senior specialists' definitions of career success?
 - Q2.1: What factors do you think have influenced your perception and understanding of career success?
 - Q2.2: Who are the people who have had an influence on your definition and understanding of career success and why?
- **Research question 3:** What strategies do senior specialists employ to achieve career success in line with their definition of career success?
 - Q3.1: How have you managed your career in terms of content (the what) and process (the how), i.e. what strategies (i.e. plans and actions) have you employed to achieve career success?
 - Q3.2: What impact have the career strategies of positive affect, networking, continuous learning/ career capital, and political skill had on your achievement of career success?
 - Q3.3: Have you ever worked in general management? If yes, how did this experience impact on your career success? If no, what do you think the impact of general management experience is on specialist career success?
 - Q3.4: Do you participate in any professional forums outside of work? If yes, how have they had an impact on your career success? If no, how do you think they could impact your career success?
- **Research question 4:** What do and what should organisations do to support specialist career development?
 - Q4.1: In what way do you believe you are responsible for managing your career?

- Q4.2: How does your organisation support your career management and what should organisations ideally do to provide career management support to specialists?
- Closing: Do you have any final comments or thoughts on the topic of career success for specialists? Do you believe that we need to connect again? If yes, when would this suit you? Thank you for your valuable input and participation.

Appendix 3: Interview Schedule for Human Resource Professionals (Internal and external)

Date	
Name	
Job title	
Company	

- Introduction and background
 - Thank you for your time and input. I would like to confirm the confidentiality of the data I collect from you. If required, this interview can be anonymous and your name and/ or company name will not be reflected in the research report.
 - The title of this research is “Career Success for Specialists: A proposed Framework”. The key objectives of this research are to;
 - Understand how specialists define career success;
 - Identify the factors that influence this definition; and
 - Formulate a framework for specialist career success by exploring the strategies senior specialists employ to achieve career success, in line with their definition of career success.
 - The interview will be conversational and exploratory. I would like to encourage you to speak freely and openly, and not be limited to just answering the research questions.
 - In this study, I have defined specialists as individuals who are employed full-time by a for-profit organisation, at a senior level, with no direct reports (i.e. employees or teams reporting directly to the individual) and who provide functional knowledge and expertise to the organisation. Examples of specialists include engineers, accountants, IT specialists, HR specialists, teaching professionals, management consultants and lawyers.
- **Concepts/ theory:** Some of the key concepts I have found during a literature review of existing research into career success and specialists include;
 - Definitions of specialists as professionals, knowledge workers and functional experts
 - Definitions of career success as being either subjective and objective
 - A focus on the career strategies of networking, continuous learning and political skill

- **Objective:** The ultimate purpose of this research is to develop a model for career success for specialists that enables specialists to manage their own career success and for organisations to improve the way in which they support specialists in their career development.

Before we start with the interview, do you have questions?

- **Research question 1:** How do senior specialists define career success?
 - Q1.1: At what point do you think a senior specialists would consider themselves successful and why?
 - Q1.2: How do think senior specialists define career success?
- **Research question 2:** What factors influence senior specialists' definitions of career success?
 - Q2.1: What factors do you think influence senior specialists' perceptions and understanding of career success?
 - Q2.2: Who are the people you think influence senior specialists' definition and understanding of career success and why?
- **Research question 3:** What strategies do senior specialists employ to achieve career success in line with their definition of career success?
 - Q3.1: How do you think senior specialists manage their careers in terms of content (the what) and process (the how), i.e. what strategies (i.e. plans and actions) do you believe specialists employ to achieve career success?
 - Q3.2: What impact do the career strategies of positive affect, networking, continuous learning/ career capital, and political skill have on specialists' achievement of career success?
 - Q3.3: What do you think the impact of general management experience is on specialist career success?
 - Q3.4: What do you think the impact of participating in professional forums, outside of work, is on specialists career success?
- **Research question 4:** What do and what should organisations do to support specialist career development?
 - Q4.1: In what way do you believe specialists are responsible for managing their own careers?
 - Q4.2: How does your organisation support specialist career management and what should organisations ideally do to provide career management support to specialists?

- Closing: Do you have any final comments or thoughts on the topic of career success for specialists? Do you believe that we need to connect again? If yes, when would this suit you? Thank you for your valuable input and participation.

Appendix 4: Informed Consent Form



Research Informed Consent Form

(Date)

Dear _____

I am conducting research on *Career Success for Specialists*. The key objectives of the study are to;

- Understand how specialists define career success;
- Identify the factors that influence this definition; and
- Formulate a framework for specialist career success by exploring the strategies senior specialists employ to achieve career success, in line with their definition of career success.

Our interview is expected to last about an hour, and will help me understand how specialists define and achieve career success. **Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without penalty.** Of course, all data will be kept confidential. If you have any concerns, please contact me or my supervisor. Our details are provided below.

Researcher: Heather Watson
Email: wit@mweb.co.za
Phone: 082 773 7779

Research Supervisor: Professor Margie Sutherland
Email: sutherlandm@gibs.co.za
Phone: +27 11 771 4362

Signature of participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of researcher: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 5: List of Research Participants

Table 20: List of research participants (Specialists)

SPECIALISTS X 8				
Name	Company	Industry	Job title	Profession
Francois Gouws	Sasol	Petrochemicals	Chief Control Engineer	Chemical Engineer
Prudence Spratt	Vodacom	Telecommunications	Product Manager (on-line)	ICT Specialist
Adri Lubbe	African Bank	Banking	Head: Sales	n/a
Theo Kotze	Discovery Health	Financial Health Insurance	Actuarial Analyst	Actuarial Analyst
Michael Ward	Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria	Academia	Professor	Professor of Finance
John Bernath	Self employed	Healthcare	Industrial Psychologist	Industrial Psychologist
Sugandree Mudely	ABSA Bank	Banking	Associate Principal - CRAG (Credit Restructuring and Advisory)	Attorney
Grant Meredith	Pulse Inspection Services	Aerospace	NDT (Non Destructive Testing) Level 3 Consultant	Aerospace specialist NDT

Table 21: List of research participants (Internal HR)

INTERNAL HR PROFESSIONALS x 5			
Name	Company	Industry	Job title
Kim Kemp	African bank	Banking	Head: Capabilities
Steve Bluen	South African Breweries	FMCG	HR Director (ex)
Italia Boninelli	Anglo Gold Ashanti	Mining	Executive Vice President People and Organization Development
Face Lesabe	Atio Corporation	Information Technology	HR Director
Louise van Staden	Sasol	Petrochemicals	Manager HR

Table 22: List of research participants (External HR/ Experts)

EXTERNAL HR PROFESSIONALS/ CAREER DEVELOPMENT EXPERTS x 4			
Name	Company	Industry	Job title
Mark Bussin	21 st Century Pay Solutions	Specialist consulting	Chairman
Johann Redelinghuys	Heidrick and Struggles	Specialist search and recruitment	Partner
Caryn Conidaris	The Human Resource Practice	Specialist search and recruitment	Director
Jonathan Cook	Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria	Academia	Director: Business School

Appendix 6: Conceptual Interview Scheme (extract from interview transcript)

Key themes

Underlying themes

Quotes

(Bold brackets indicate non-verbal responses)

NOTES	INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT
	<p>H In the research that I've done, I found that there are four things that came up over and over again in terms of strategies or factors that have an influence on success generally. I just want to hear whether you think they apply to specialists. The first one is just positive affect, which is just generally having a happy disposition - so confidence, self-belief, positive outlook on life.</p>
<p>(Nods head and smiles)</p> <p><i>Positive affect - yes</i></p> <p><i>Specialist role – no title, less power and less influence – BUT happier (more time & flexibility, better work/ life balance)</i></p> <p><i>General management – burden of responsibility – people and business</i></p>	<p>S I agree with that one. I think very much so, because in my previous role, I would say, from an emotional point of view, having been in management for five years, I wasn't in a happy space. I had so many people issues that I had to deal with and business issues that I had to deal with, that I didn't have time for myself – forget my family and I wasn't in a happy space and I knew that intuitively and outwardly and that's the reason I made the shift into a specialist role and within probably the first three months of me doing that..... yes, I questioned whether it was the right thing I did – I didn't have the title and the power and the influence and whatever, but I felt different as a person. I had more time – yes, I was in a positive, more happier space - this burden of responsibility, people and business responsibility was off me and I needed that. So I think yes – absolutely. I've got a lot more flexibility now that I don't have people reporting to me - far and better work/life balance than before, so I think all that contributes to one being positive and happy and content.</p>
	<p>H So it's interesting that you are possibly thinking of going back into management (laughter)</p>
<p>(Laughter)</p>	<p>S You forget after three years. It's like having a baby (laughter)</p>
	<p>H So the second thing that came up over and over again was networking, which I think you've alluded to in this whole relationships..... You said you use your</p>

	resources.
<p><i>Engage with people in the business and out of the business - vendors</i></p> <p><i>Networking – one conversation can lead to – different perspective and improve knowledge</i></p>	<p>S No absolutely - in the business and outside of the business and I am again one of those people that will engage with people in the business – out of the business - external vendors - I mean I went to one of those Tito Mboweni talks last week - a breakfast at the Johannesburg Country – we were invited by one of our attorneys, but you know, I'll often go for things like that, because you never know what one conversation can lead to - not necessarily a job opportunity or anything of that sort, but you know, just give you a different perspective or improve your knowledge in an area of law or case or whatever it is for that matter, so I think ja, networking is important. You never know when you might need to engage their services.</p>
	H The third one is continuous learning.
<p>(confidence & passion observed)</p> <p><i>Continuous learning – very important</i></p> <p><i>Intellectual stimulation – be proactive</i></p>	<p>S That's something that I didn't mention, but I think that is very important, especially if you don't have a line management that is of the equal knowledge or more than yourself, because then you struggle to find intellectual stimulation, but I think that is very important in fact. You need to be able to..... that's something that you need to be proactive with. That's something that no-one else can do - so it's up to you to look for where your area of interest is - where your area of development is and do that, otherwise you're going to die intellectually.</p>
	H I think you mentioned it in terms of staying up to date with what's going on and keeping abreast. Then the last one. Political skill
(Eyebrows raised)	S Political skill - as in?
	H What do you think it means?
<p>(laughter – nose scrunched up – uncomfortable)</p> <p><i>Political skill = brown nosing</i></p>	<p>S Oh - brown-nosing (laughter). Can't do it. But political skill in what sense?</p>

<p>– can't do it</p>	
	<p>H The research I've done where they talk about political tactics - you get illegitimate political tactics, like brown-nosing and then you get legitimate political tactics - and there's a whole move to call it "political intelligence" and it's about things like knowing who to influence and when – it's about showcasing yourself and all of those things. The reason why I don't explain what it is first is because 90% of people go "Ooh no – politics – I don't do it."</p>
<p>(sigh – acceptance?)</p> <p><i>Political skill – recognised by person in power – if unknown = invisible?</i></p> <p><i>Showcase self – show competency has grown – showcase value add</i></p> <p><i>Quote: "if you're unknown and you're sort of little miss would be sitting there in the corner and there's an opportunity that comes up, you're going to be the last person that comes to mine. They haven't seen you. They haven't heard your voice."</i></p>	<p>S Ja - I mean you're doing it constantly and you don't know it, but yes – be honest, everybody wants to be recognised by the person in power – you know, the person that dictates your success within an organisation and for me I don't know whether to say fortunately or unfortunately, but every quarter, I have to present to our executive committee, so I showcase myself, whether I like it or not. I think it is important to do that, because if you don't do that or you are not conscious of how to manage yourself within the politics of the business - if you don't know how to do that, then you will probably be a specialist in that role forever. There will never be a level of progression for you, because you would have never shown that your competency has grown and you would not have had an opportunity to show again your value-add to the business, to enable you to progress to the next level, whether it being in that specialist role or into a management role and the truth is, the hiring managers or the member of EXCO they are the individuals that determine the decisions that get made around your future and your career. So if you're unknown and you're sort of little miss would be sitting there in the corner and there's an opportunity that comes up, you're going to be the last person that comes to mine. They haven't seen you. They haven't heard your voice.</p>