

**Self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability of the young adult in  
the school-to-work transition phase**

by

**Sadika Ismail**

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Supervisor:  
Prof Nadia Ferreira

Co-supervisor:  
Prof Melinde Coetzee

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## DECLARATION

Student number: **36216062**

I declare that **Self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability of the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase** is my own work, and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



Ms Sadika Ismail

November 2015

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## SUMMARY

### SELF-ESTEEM, GRADUATENESS SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES AND CAREER ADAPTABILITY OF THE YOUNG ADULT IN THE SCHOOL-TO-WORK TRANSITION PHASE

by

SADIKA ISMAIL

**SUPERVISOR** : Prof N Ferreira  
**CO-SUPERVISOR** : Prof M Coetzee  
**DEPARTMENT** : Human Resource Management  
**DEGREE** : MCOM HRM

This research focuses on the relationship between self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability among young adults in the school-to-work transition phase to assist them in dealing with the transitions they are faced with during the school-to-work transition phase in the hopes of making them more career adaptable and employable. A cross-sectional quantitative research approach was followed, and a non-probability convenience sample ( $N = 332$ ) of undergraduate black (98.5%) and female (62%) young emerging adults (18 to 29 years) at a Further Education and Training (FET) college in South Africa participated in the study. A canonical correlation analysis indicated a significant overall relationship between the graduateness/self-esteem canonical variate and the career adaptability canonical variate. Hierarchical regression analyses indicated that the relationship between graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability was moderated by self-esteem. Tests for mean differences revealed that males and females differed significantly regarding their personal self-esteem and lie items. Recommendations are suggested for use by human resource professionals in terms of career development practices.

#### Key terms

career development, career adaptability, self-esteem, graduateness, graduateness skills and attributes, emerging adult, employability, school-to-work transition phase, young adult

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## **CHAPTER 1: SCIENTIFIC OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH**

This research focuses on the relationship between self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability among young adults in the school-to-work transition phase. The aim of this chapter is to provide the background to and rationale for the study and to formulate the problem statement and research questions, after which the aims of the research are stated. The research design and method, with their different steps that give structure to the research process, are formulated and the layout of the chapters is indicated, followed by a chapter summary.

### **1.1 BACKGROUND TO AND MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH**

The context of this study is the career development of the young adult within the school-to-work transition phase. More specifically, the research focuses on enhancing the individual's career adaptability in a more uncertain and turbulent occupational world through the investigation of a possible relationship between the young adult's self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability.

Career opportunities for newcomers to the job market appear riskier, more adventurous and less defined than a generation ago (Coetzee, 2006; Dolphin, Gottfried, Raikes, Silim, & Thompson, 2014). The changing nature of the world of work poses several challenges to young adults between the ages of 17 and 25 who are in the school-to-work transition phase of their lives and careers. Amongst these challenges are unemployment, greater participation in higher education, decreased employment opportunities, diminished job security and advancing technological developments (Ashe, 2012; Potgieter, 2012a). The young adult in the school-to-work transition phase, especially in South Africa, faces challenges such as the economic downturn, a lack of experience, a skills profile that is often very different from what is being demanded by employers, as well as the added personal responsibility to keep abreast with these changes, to continuously improve their skills and to sustain their employability (Marock, 2008; Pool & Sewell, 2007; Van Aardt, 2012). The increased concerns about the employability of young adults, especially in South Africa, has led to more emphasis on employability and helping people to increase their employability (Marock, 2008).

When compared to other nations at similar stages of economic development, South Africa has an abnormally high unemployment problem, both in general and among the youth, with only 40% of those of working age being employed compared to the 65% in Brazil, 71% in

China and 55% in India, with the emerging market average being at 56% (African Economic Outlook, 2012).

The unemployment rate in South Africa was found to have increased 0,3 of a percentage point in quarter three of 2013, when it reached a level of 25,2% (Statistics South Africa, 2013). Statistics further show that the youth (aged 15 to 34) account for the highest proportion (70,7%) of the unemployed, with the unemployment rate among the youth being at 52.9% (Statistics South Africa, 2013). Furthermore, 33,5% or 3,5 million of the 10.4 million youth aged between 15 and 24 years were not in employment, education or training (NEET) in quarter 1 of 2013 (Statistics South Africa, 2013). Figure 1.1 below provides a graphical representation of the rise in unemployment in South Africa from 2008 to 2013.

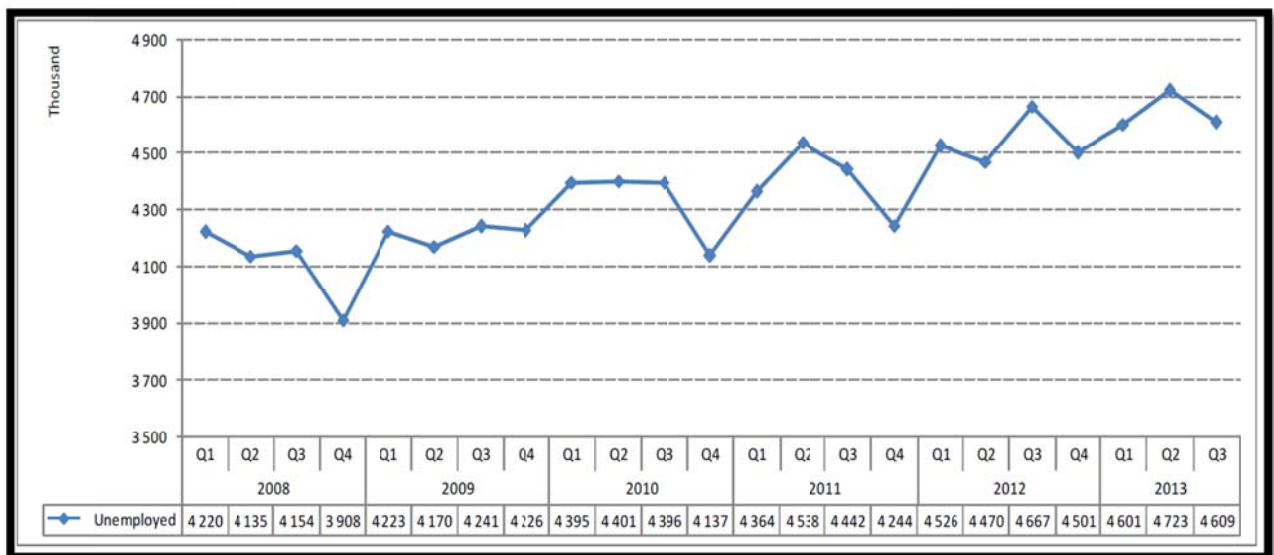


Figure 1.1 Total unemployment, quarter 1:2008 to quarter 3:2013 (Statistics South Africa, 2013, p. 11)

Compared to quarter 4 of 2013, employment increased by 143 000 in quarter 4 of 2014, largely due to increases in the formal sector, which grew by 138 000 jobs (Statistics South Africa, 2015a). When observing the unemployment rate within the provinces, decreases in the unemployment rate were observed in seven of the nine provinces (Statistics South Africa, 2015a). The largest decreases were recorded in KwaZulu-Natal (3,3 percentage points), Mpumalanga (2,7 percentage points) and the Free State (2,4 percentage points) (Statistics South Africa, 2015a). The official unemployment rate was unaffected in Gauteng and Limpopo (Statistics South Africa, 2015a). Figure 1.2 provides unemployment statistics per province in South Africa for quarter 4 of 2014.

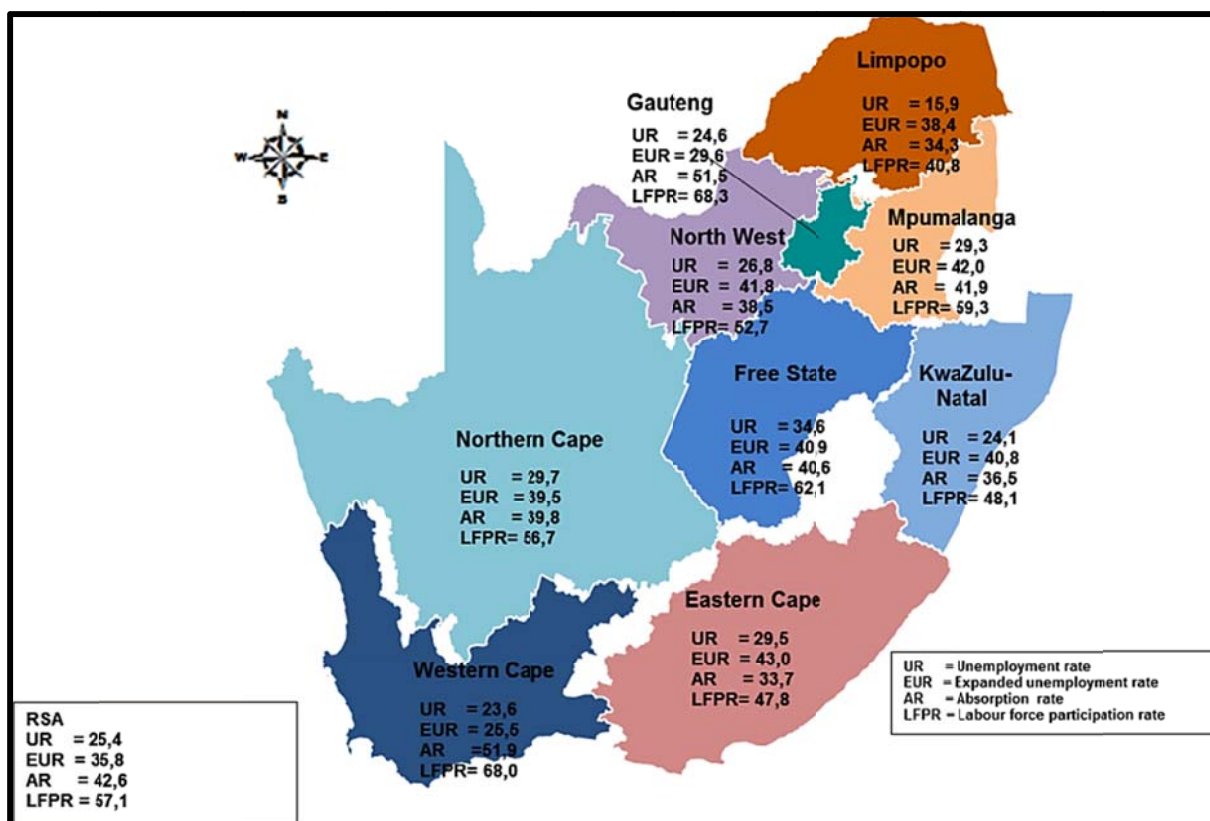


Figure 1.2. Summary of labour market measures at a glance, Q4: 2014 (Statistics South Africa, 2015a, p. 19)

The reason that unemployment is an area of such great concern is because work plays a significant role in the lives of people. Work has been identified as the foundation for meeting human needs (Strauser, 2014). As paid employment, work typically occupies about one third of an individual's waking hours – and often more when it spills over to other, non-work spheres as people take their jobs and career-related concerns to their home, leisure and community lives (Grobler, Warnich, Carrell, Elbert, & Hatfield, 2011; Jadidian & Duffy, 2012; Lent & Brown, 2013; Leong, Hartung, & Pearce, 2014; Muja & Appelbaum, 2012). Work is the primary means through which individuals make a living in an effort to meet their day-to-day survival, relatedness and self-determination needs (Grobler et al., 2011; Jadidian & Duffy, 2012). The sooner career practitioners appreciate the role that work plays in the lives of people, the sooner they will be able to provide comprehensive, thorough and systematic career development interventions across the life span (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2009).

Close to 40% of students in South Africa fail their first year of study – especially those from previously disadvantaged backgrounds (Maree, 2012; Mkhabela, 2004; Pandor, 2005). Even though there may be many reasons for this state of affairs, one of them is the fact that most learners, black in particular, receive little if no any career counselling at school, which means

that their choices relating to their particular field of study are based on inadequate information (Maree, 2012; Van Aardt, 2012).

Early definitions of career were equated with the terms vocation or occupation, i.e. remunerated employment (Patton & McMahon, 1999). The inseparability of work and life, and the ongoing relationship between the two, has only been recognised recently (Patton & McMahon, 2006). Broader definitions of careers have thus emerged that take into account lifelong processes and choices, as well as a much wider number of internal individual and external factors (Cameron, 2009; Gunz & Peiperl, 2007). Schreuder and Coetzee (2011) view a career as the significant learnings and experiences that help identify an individual's professional life, direction, competencies and accomplishments through positions, jobs, roles and assignments.

More people now expect to have a career than was previously the case, and more people want to have a career that makes a contribution to their happiness, well-being and preferred lifestyle (Learning and Skills Improvement Service, 2009). Career development practice, like 100 years ago, will always be necessary as long as students, adults or employees are seeking careers and employers are seeking labour (Conlon, 2004).

Career development is regarded as an on-going process of planning and directed action toward personal work and life goals (Simonsen, 1997). Career development is about actively creating the work one wants to do within the context of the life one wants to live (Learning and Skills Improvement Service, 2009, p. 9). Development, as Simonsen (1997) explains, therefore translates into growth and the continuous acquisition and application of one's skills. According to Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2013), career development is an interpretive process driven by an individual's adaptation to his or her environment. Individuals adjust to a string of various transitions from school to work, from job to job and from occupation to occupation, with the goal of person–environment incorporation as they develop varying levels of psychological resources to cope with the crucial tasks, transitions and traumas they experience in their career development (Guan et al., 2013). Even though careers are personally constructed, the process involves social interaction and the negotiation of meaning (Usinger & Smith, 2010).

Career development is often referred to in conjunction with other terms, including “education”, “training”, “employment”, “skills development”, “human resources development”, “career counselling”, “career information and advice”, “careers education”, “career coaching” and “livelihood planning” (DHET & SAQA, 2012). It therefore was decided to use career

development as the core concept, the definition of which is given as lifelong learning, workforce development and social inclusion (DHET & SAQA, 2012).

Career development has been used synonymously with the terms “career advancement” and “career management”, where career advancement refers to a linear process in which the individual gradually enhances his/her career ranking over time, while career management views the individual as an active agent in predicting and adapting to new opportunities and proactively handling negative situations, thereby directing the course of his/her career development (Lent & Brown, 2013).

According to the DHET and SAQA (2012), various terms are used for career development by the various sectors that offer career-development-related services within the South African context. Within schools, activities associated with career development are referred to as careers and career choices, encompassing a wider term known as “life orientation”. Within the post-school sector, the terms “student counselling services” and “student support services” are used to include activities such as career, curriculum and personal counselling. In the labour market sector, the term “employment services” is used by the Department of Labour and encompasses career guidance, employment counselling and employability enhancement as a function. At the enterprise level, a term such as “career management” is often used and refers to self-management of career planning (DHET & SAQA, 2012). With all this being said, presently in South Africa, certain sectors are beginning to display a preference for the term “career development”. Given its correlation with lifelong learning and work, it seems that career development represents the complete series of activities and events associated with an individual’s career and that it is a suitable term to consider (DHET & SAQA, 2012).

Career development is influenced by numerous factors, one of which is self-esteem, which should be taken into consideration when involving the young adult in the career counselling process (Kerka, 1998; Potgieter, 2012a; 2012b). Employees form beliefs about themselves, based on their roles from within an organisational context, which have major consequences for their work-related motivation, competence, attitudes and behaviours, also known as ‘organisation-based self-esteem’ (Bowling, Eschleman, Wang, Kirkendall, & Alarcon, 2010; Gardner & Pierce, 1998; Panaccio & Vandenberghe, 2011).

An age-old challenge that companies continue to face is how to attract and retain high-quality people. Those business cultures and supervisors that support and nurture self-esteem are more likely to retain bright, talented people compared to a culture that does the

opposite (Branden, 1998; Chen & Scannapieco, 2010). Branden (1998, p. 2) further explains that organisations not only require a higher level of knowledge and skill, but also a higher level of “independence, self-reliance, self-trust, and capacity to exercise initiative – in a word, **self-esteem**”. Not only academic achievement, but high self-esteem is also vital for an individual’s long-term general well-being and personal development (Ntshangase, Mdikana, & Cronk, 2008). Sluss, Ashforth, and Gibson (2012) found that the higher an individual’s level of self-esteem, the stronger the relationship between task significance and work adjustment. Oztas (2010) found that young students’ self-esteem and epistemological beliefs directly affected their occupation choice, which therefore has an influence on their life satisfaction. Therefore, for young adults in search of employment, it can be deduced that they may stand a better chance of gaining employment if they were to enhance their levels of self-esteem.

Research findings have reinforced the traditional belief that high self-esteem is related to positive outcomes, perseverance after a failure and improved academic performance (Cheng, Govorun, & Chartrand, 2012). Jraidi, Chaouachi, and Frasson (2010) found that, when a person’s self-esteem is enhanced, their learning performance is also enhanced. Malhi (2010) found that students with a high level of self-esteem tend to be more ambitious than those with low self-esteem. Seabi (2011) found a positive relationship between self-esteem, intellectual functioning and learning strategies and academic achievement. Wiggins (1994) reports that students who feel positive about themselves are more determined to solve challenging tasks, are happier and tend to perform better academically than those who do not. People with a low level of self-esteem tend to lack confidence, and feel inferior and incompetent in terms of achieving anything they attempt (Baumeister, 1997; Coetzee, 2005; Coetzee & Potgieter, 2014; Potgieter, 2012a). It therefore can be concluded that people with low self-esteem would be less likely to possess graduate attributes that are well-developed as opposed to people with high self-esteem.

Research findings suggest that, if significant emphasis is placed on the development of self-esteem, it could consequently have sizeable consequences on life outcomes (Erol & Orth, 2011). The study by Jraidi et al. (2010) revealed that self-esteem can be enhanced when interacting with a tutoring system, and this supports the findings of Brockner and Gaure (1983) that low self-esteem can be altered through training. Therefore the conclusion can be drawn that self-esteem can be taught to young adults in the school-to-work transition phase through training.

In the context of a rapidly changing information- and knowledge-intensive economy, workers must be both immediately and sustainably employable (Potgieter, 2012a; 2012b). In order to do so, technical and academic knowledge and skills that are specific to their own discipline or occupation are no longer enough, as they must also possess 'generic' skills, dispositions and attributes that are transferable to many occupational situations and areas (Bridgstock, 2009; Chetty, 2012; Fallows & Steven, 2000; Savickas, Nota, Rossier, Dauwalder, Duarte, & Guichard, 2009). South Africa has an acute problem with youth unemployment, which means that young people or graduates are not acquiring the skills or experience needed to enter the world of work and to drive the economy forward (De la Harpe, Radloff, & Wyber, 2000; National Treasury, 2011). There is increasing pressure being placed on universities to prepare graduates for the rapidly evolving, highly competitive labour markets (McKeown & Lindorff, 2011). Fallows and Steven (2000) argue that the challenging economic times demand that young adults and graduates possess skills that will improve their chances of employment. Koen, Klehe, and Van Vianen (2013) found that employability promotes job search as well as the chance to find re-employment, even among those individuals who have been unemployed for long periods of time. Therefore, in order for young adults to be employed effectively they must have the necessary skills and attributes required by the workplace – i.e. they must possess the necessary graduate attributes that will make them employable (Chetty, 2012).

In light of the global employment of young adults and graduates, the current and future employment market requires graduates to be equipped with a range of transferable skills and attributes that can be taken from one job to another, used within any profession and at any stage of the graduate's career (Coetzee, 2014a; 2014b; Griesel & Parker, 2009; Raybould & Sheedy, 2005). The general expectation from employers is that graduates will have developed as well-rounded individuals and that they will possess competencies and broader transferable skills and attributes, in addition to their discipline-specific knowledge, which will allow them to be competent, energetic and informed citizens who are original and effective in the workplace (Coetzee, 2011; Green, Hammer & Star, 2009; Kember & Leung, 2005). Employers argue that graduates lack basic working or functioning knowledge and that higher education institutions fail to produce graduates with the required attributes that will ensure that they are employable and immediately productive in the workplace (Bernstein & Osman, 2012; Griesel & Parker, 2009; Johnsson & Hager, 2008).

Working knowledge refers to the capacity to work in a team, to relate to a wide range of people, and to appreciate different cultural contexts, as well as the possession of a strong sense of self-efficacy in relation both to tasks and to others (Griesel & Parker, 2009). A



formal qualification is no longer regarded as a guarantee for employment, but an individual is expected to possess a broad range of skills and abilities (individual and behavioural characteristics), a flexible attitude towards work and career, in addition to profession-specific skills and knowledge (Chetty, 2012; Clarke, 2008). Behavioural competencies take into account those “soft skills” that are associated with underlying individual attributes such as motives, traits, self-esteem and social roles (Clarke, 2008; Sparrow, 1995). Individual characteristics and attributes are defined as variables that include self-esteem, self-efficacy, personality factors, risk taking and adaptability (Fugate, Kinicki, & Ashforth, 2004; King & Kitchener, 2004).

Graduates have also begun to realise that they need to take ownership of developing themselves and that they need to acquire career meta-competencies such as flexibility, adaptability, upskilling and personal attributes as a vital element in career self-management (O’Donoghue & Maguire, 2005; Tomlinson, 2007). In order to meet global economic demands and take advantage of employment opportunities, young graduates need to develop both their career management and employability skills (Jones, Torezani, & Luca, 2012; Kumar, 2007). Graduates must be well prepared for the role they will play in workplaces and society (Gardner, 2007).

It is important to note that there is not much certainty on how exactly graduateness skills and attributes can be developed, as there is little consensus among researchers regarding the definition of graduateness skills and attributes. Green et al. (2009) mention that an indication of the evident confusion is that numerous terms have been used interchangeably to describe desirable graduate outcomes. Adjectives such as ‘generic’, ‘core’, ‘key’, ‘enabling’, ‘transferable’ and ‘professional’ are used in conjunction with nouns such as ‘attributes’, ‘skills’, ‘capabilities’ and ‘competencies’, to name just a few (Green et al., 2009, p. 19).

To exacerbate matters further, graduateness skills and attributes are often associated with “graduateness”, which implies that graduates are able to demonstrate a set of generic, transferable meta-skills and personal attributes that generally are regarded as indicators of their employability and work readiness (Clanchy & Ballard, 1995; Coetzee & Bergh, 2009; Coetzee & Schreuder, 2012; Rigby et al., 2010). Employability, then, can be defined as having a set of skills, knowledge and personal attributes that make a person more likely to secure employment and be successful in his/her chosen occupation (Pool & Sewell, 2007). A conclusion can thus be drawn from this that graduateness presupposes employability (Eccles, 2012) and that graduateness skills and attributes refer to those skills or attributes that enhance employability and thus graduateness.

Graduateness skills and attributes represent the essence of personal growth and intellectual development cultivated by university education (Steur, Jansen, & Hofman, 2012). For the purpose of this study, **graduateness skills and attributes** refer to the existence of a set of generic, transferable meta-skills and personal attributes that employers regard as vitally imperative to their businesses, and which graduates therefore are expected to possess when entering the workplace (Coetzee, 2012a; Griesel & Parker, 2009; Raftapoulous, Coetzee, & Visser, 2009). It is important to note that these skills and attributes are separate from their discipline-specific knowledge, skills and values (Coetzee, 2012a; Griesel & Parker, 2009; Raftapoulous et al., 2009).

Griesel and Parker (2009) frame these graduateness skills and attributes in four categories, namely (1) basic skills and understanding (basic communication skills and understanding of the workplace to function successfully), (2) knowledge and intellectual ability (combination of intellectual ability and knowledge foundation in order to engage effectively with demands from the workplace and to benefit from workplace opportunities), (3) workplace skills and applied knowledge (graduates are able to make the necessary shift between theory and practice) and (4) interactive and personal skills (changing workplace dynamics and practices will demand of graduates flexibility and adaptability).

The Australian Education Council (1992) reported on several key competencies that individuals need to have before entering the labour market. These include (1) collecting, analysing and organising ideas and information, (2) planning and organising activities, (3) working with others, (4) problem solving and (5) utilisation of technology.

In addition, it was reported in the UK, Canada and the USA that, if graduates wish to enter the world of work, they need to possess generic skills such as numeracy, literacy, communication, problem-solving, technical and interpersonal skills, which are essential attributes when graduates want to enter the new world of work successfully (Australian Education Council, 1992).

Coetzee (2012a) developed the graduateness generic meta-skills and personal attributes framework for students, which is pertinent to the present study. The framework addresses three holistic, overarching attributes that are regarded as vital enabling outcomes of university education, these being: (1) scholarship (graduates' attitudes or stance towards knowledge), (2) global citizenship (graduates' attitudes or stance to the world), and (3) lifelong learning (graduates' attitudes or stance towards themselves) (Barrie, 2004; Coetzee, 2012a; 2014a).

Bearing in mind these gradueness skills and attributes, research has shown that high self-esteem may be an important outcome of academic achievement, and that self-development has significant consequences for life outcomes (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003; Erol & Orth, 2011). People with low self-esteem are less capable of choosing a job that suits their specific needs and abilities, and they thus often set lower expectations for themselves, which may, in turn, lead to reduced effort (Brockner & Guare, 1983; Sigall & Gould, 1977). Individuals with high and positive self-esteem were found to be more realistic about their achievements and committed to lifelong learning (Coetzee & Bergh, 2009). People with high self-esteem may set higher goals than people with low self-esteem. They may be more willing to persevere when faced with initial failure and less likely to surrender to paralysing feelings of incompetence and self-doubt (Baumeister et al., 2003). Applied to the world of work, the self-esteem hypothesis suggests that people who feel better about themselves perform better (Baumeister et al., 2003).

Potgieter (2012a; 2012b) found that people with high self-esteem stay up to date with the latest developments in their jobs and careers, and that career meta-competencies like self-esteem significantly influence employability attributes, thus influencing employability. Fugate et al. (2004) explain that employability consists of three separate, yet inter-related, dimensions: (1) adaptability, (2) career identity and (3) human and social capital. Graduate employability models propose that self-confidence and self-esteem are key catalysts of re-employment (Pool & Sewell, 2007). It thus can be concluded that, should the young adult in search of employment possess a high level of self-esteem, he or she may be more likely to have better developed gradueness skills and attributes, making him/her more employable.

In the constantly evolving society in which young adults now find themselves, they need to be lifelong learners, receive ongoing training and acquire the skills to adapt to changing career contexts and deal with repeated transitions (Maree, 2012; O'Donoghue & Maguire, 2005). Employees need the psychological resources and self-determining capabilities to manage new career-related situations, which could include job loss and finding re-employment (Ferreira, 2012; Savickas, 1997; 2002; 2005; Super & Knasel, 1981). A graduate attribute is required that proposes that in the constantly evolving world, individuals should learn to adapt to change, to accommodate it and to enjoy it as well (Blewitt, 2010).

Preparing for one's occupational future is generally considered as one of the major developmental tasks in adolescence, and throughout the world the importance of assisting adolescents in successful career preparation has thus been recognised (Hirschi, 2009; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2004; Super, 1990). Hirschi

(2009) mentions that one of the central constructs in such career preparation and development is career adaptability.

Career adaptability is regarded as a trend that affects the way in which an individual views his or her ability to plan and adjust to change, especially in unpredictable situations (Rottinghaus, Day, & Borgen, 2005). The formation of career adaptability as a set of psychosocial resources and transactional competencies is dependent on the dynamic interplay between personal and environmental factors (Tolentino et al., 2014). It includes an individual's capability to face, track or acknowledge changing career roles and to handle career shifts effectively (Savickas, 1997; 2002; 2005; 2013). More specifically, Savickas (1997; 2002; 2005; 2013) explains that career adaptability involves looking forward to one's future career (planning), knowing what career to follow (decision making), looking around at different career options (exploration), and having a feeling of self-efficiency to effectively carry out the activities needed to accomplish one's career objectives (confidence). Recent studies demonstrate that these four dimensions characterise a multi-dimensional measure of career adaptability (Creed, Fallon, & Hood, 2009; Ferreira, 2012; Hirschi, 2009).

The career adaptability model of Savickas (2002) offers a blueprint to promote career adaptability throughout the life span of an individual. The dimensions of this model are concern, control, curiosity and confidence. **Concern** is explained as being aware of and being 'planful' of one's occupational future; **control** as the individual's subjective feeling of self-governing and decisiveness concerning a vocational future; **curiosity** as the inclination to explore one's environment; and finally **confidence** as the inclination to be competent or capable regarding the ability to solve substantial career problems (Rossier, Zecca, Stauffer, Maggiori, & Dauwalder, 2012; Savickas, 2005; 2013).

Savickas (1997) suggests that, by using the developmental dimensions of both self and environmental exploration, career planning and decision-making (all of which can be conceptualised as self-regulatory strategies), the construct career adaptability can be operationalised. Self-development and career adaptability include collecting and assessing information about potential jobs (exploring), being intentional and constructing plans (planning), accepting responsibility for constructing careers (deciding) and managing the interpersonal, intrapersonal and environmental factors that influence the achievement of one's goals (Barber, Daly, Giannantonio, & Philips, 1994; Baumeister & Vohs, 2007; Savickas, 2005; Yousefi, Abedi, Baghban, Eatemadi, & Abedi, 2011).

Luthans, Youssef, and Avolio (2007) found that psychological capital, which is closely linked to adaptability, involves (1) having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on challenging tasks and putting in the necessary effort to succeed at them; (2) making a positive contribution regarding succeeding now and in the future; (3) persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting routes taken to goals in order to ensure success; and (4) when faced with problems and adversity, being positive and bouncing back to attain success.

In view of the high unemployment rates, McArdle, Waters, Briscoe, and Hall (2007) mention that, by being proactive, adaptable and maintaining a strong career identity, employable individuals may be more likely to see the positives in unemployment and, as a consequence, may use this time for critical reflection on career identity and direction (Eby & Buch, 1995; Fugate et al., 2004; Hall, Briscoe & Kram, 1997; Latack & Dozier, 1986). McArdle et al. (2007) further explain that using unemployment as an opportunity to effect change and strengthen one's career identity may mean that people high on employability maintain positive self-esteem, despite being unemployed.

Labour markets around the world are in turmoil and it therefore has become clear that assessing and developing career adaptability is now an essential challenge for career scholars and counsellors (Briscoe & Hall, 1999; Maree, 2012). The 21<sup>st</sup>-century labour market will command assessment strategies and control feedback to workers who should be encouraged to become critical thinkers, creative problem solvers and skilled decision makers who can adapt to various demands made on them by different work contexts in order to become employable instead of being trained for a single specific job only (Maree, 2012). Part of an individual's life mission is to assume responsibility for creating greater health, happiness and commitment, and for making a greater endeavour in the world around us and in ourselves and, when this happens, we increase our real self-esteem (Dolan, 2007).

As previously stated, Potgieter (2012a; 2012b) found that career meta-competencies like self-esteem significantly influence employability attributes. The study by McArdle et al. (2007) found that adaptability significantly contributes to employability, and also that the self-esteem of individuals higher on employability is less likely to suffer during unemployment compared to those who are low on employability, which they attributed to the fact that employable individuals take a more positive approach to unemployment, seeing it as an opportunity rather than a threat (McArdle et al., 2007).

According to Ferreira (2012), individuals who have well-developed self/other skills and behavioural adaptability will experience **concern** about the vocational future, prepare for the

vocational future (which can also be regarded as **control**), display **curiosity** by exploring possible selves and future scenarios, and display **confidence** in the pursuit of their aspirations within their careers. Therefore, individuals with well-developed self-esteem can be regarded as being adaptable in their careers.

This study proposes that individuals' self-esteem and graduateness skills and attributes significantly influence their career adaptability and thus their employability. The research literature (Chetty, 2012; Coetzee, 2012a; 2014c) regards employability as a subset of individuals' graduateness. Individuals' self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes, and their career adaptability, have been linked to their employability and work readiness (Chetty, 2012; Coetzee, 2012a; 2014c).

This research study therefore aimed to extend research on career development in young adults within the school-to-work transition phase by investigating the relationship between self-esteem, as conceptualised by Battle (1992), graduateness skills and attributes as conceptualised by Coetzee (2012a; 2014c), and career adaptability as conceptualised by Savickas (1997; 2002; 2005; 2013).

The foregoing background leads to the statement of the following hypotheses:

**H1:** There is a significant and positive relationship between individuals' self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and their career adaptability.

**H2:** Young adults' self-esteem and graduateness skills and attributes significantly predict their career adaptability.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

In view of the above, this study aimed to investigate the relationship between self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability. The aim was also to propose recommendations for the field of career development for the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase, and to make a potentially important and original contribution to the existing knowledge base in the field. It is evident from the theoretical background discussed above that understanding the variables self-esteem and graduateness skills and attributes in terms of career development could ultimately enhance a person's career adaptability.

A review of the current literature on self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability indicates the following research problems:

- Theoretical models do not clarify the relationship between self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability.
- Industrial and organisational psychologists, as well as human resource practitioners, require knowledge about the theoretical and observed relationship between self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability to assist young adults in the school-to-work transition phase in their career development planning.
- The relationship dynamics between self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability, and the implications of this relationship for career development by young adults in the school-to-work transition phase may inform career development practices that possibly could enhance the career adaptability of young adults, which is not known in full, particularly in the South African context – hence the need for investigation.
- The concept of graduateness skills and attributes is relatively new in the South African context, hence there seems to be a paucity of research in terms of how this variable relates to individuals' self-esteem and career adaptability. Similarly, the concept of career adaptability is under-researched in the South African context. This research therefore is new and original in its contribution to the field of career counselling for the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase.

It seems that research on the relationship between self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability will make a significant contribution to the discipline of Human Resource Management, particularly with regard to career development practices aimed at enhancing individuals' career adaptability in a more uncertain employment context. Finally, the results may be generalised to other institutions to assist with the career development of the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase.

### **1.2.1 Research questions relating to the literature review**

**Research question 1:** How are the three constructs self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability conceptualised and explained by theoretical models in the literature?

**Research question 2:** Does a theoretical relationship exist between self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability, and how can this relationship be explained?

**Sub-question 2.1:** What is the theoretical relationship between self-esteem and career adaptability?

**Sub-question 2.2:** What is the theoretical relationship between self-esteem and graduateness skills and attributes?

**Sub-question 2.3:** What is the theoretical relationship between graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability?

**Sub-question 2.4:** Can the relationship between self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability be explained by means of an integrated theoretical model?

**Research question 3:** Does gender influence the theoretical relationship between self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability?

**Research question 4:** What are the implications of the empirical associations for career development in the career development support practices for the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase?

### **1.2.2 Research questions relating to the empirical study**

**Research question 1:** What is the nature of the empirical relationship between the variables self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability in a sample of respondents studying at a South African higher education institution?

**Research question 2:** What is the nature of the overall statistical relationship between the self-esteem and graduateness skills and attributes construct variables as the set of independent latent variables and the career adaptability construct variables as the set of dependent latent variables?

**Research question 3:** Does self-esteem significantly moderate the relationship between graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability?

**Research question 4:** Do differences exist between males and females regarding their self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability as manifested in the sample of respondents?

**Research question 5:** What conclusions and recommendations can be formulated for the field of Human Resource Management regarding the use of self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability in career development support aimed at enhancing individuals' career adaptability and contributing to future research?



## 1.3 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

On the basis of the above research questions, the following aims were formulated:

### 1.3.1 General aim of the research

The general primary aims of the study was, firstly, to explore the relationship between self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability with regard to the career development of the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase.

The secondary aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability with specific reference to males and females to see if they differ significantly in relation to the three variables.

### 1.3.2 Specific aims of the research

The following specific aims were formulated for the literature review and the empirical study:

#### 1.3.2.1 Literature review

In terms of the literature review the specific aims were:

**Research aim 1:** To conceptualise the career development of the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase.

**Research aim 2:** To conceptualise and explain the constructs self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability in terms of theoretical models in the literature.

**Research aim 3:** To identify and explain the relationship between self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability in terms of theoretical models of these constructs.

**Sub-aim 3.1:** To conceptualise the relationship between self-esteem and career adaptability from a theoretical perspective.

**Sub-aim 3.2:** To conceptualise the relationship between self-esteem and graduateness skills and attributes from a theoretical perspective.

**Sub-aim 3.3:** To conceptualise the relationship between graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability from a theoretical perspective.

**Sub-aim 3.4:** To explain the relationship between self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability by means of an integrated theoretical model.

**Sub-aim 3.5:** To identify the implications of the relationship dynamics for Human Resource Management practices regarding career development support for the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase.

**Research aim 4:** To conceptualise the effect of gender on the relationship between self-esteem, graduate attributes and career adaptability.

#### *1.3.2.2 Empirical study*

In terms of the empirical study, the specific aims were:

**Research aim 1:** To conduct an empirical investigation into the statistical relationship between self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability in a sample of young adults studying at a Further Education and Training Institution in South Africa.

**Sub-aim 1.1:** To empirically investigate the relationship between self-esteem and career adaptability.

**Sub-aim 1.2:** To empirically investigate the relationship between self-esteem and graduateness skills and attributes.

**Sub-aim 1.3:** To empirically investigate the relationship between graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability.

**Research aim 2:** To empirically investigate whether the self-esteem and graduateness skills and attributes as a composite set of independent variables are significantly and positively related to the career adaptability variables as a composite set of dependent variables.

**Research aim 3:** To empirically investigate whether self-esteem moderates the relationship between graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability.

**Research aim 4:** To empirically investigate whether males and females differ significantly regarding their self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability as manifested in the sample of respondents.

**Research aim 5:** To formulate conclusions and recommendations for the discipline of Human Resource Management regarding career development practices, and in relation to possible future research based on the findings of the research.

#### **1.4 POTENTIAL VALUE ADDED**

The objective of this study was to assess the relationship between self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability in the career development of young adults within the school-to-work transition phase in order to posit recommendations for career development support practices for this phase. Self-esteem was measured using the Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventories (CFSEI 2-AD) as developed by Battle (1992). Graduateness skills and attributes were measured using the Graduate Skills and Attributes Scale (GSAS) developed by Coetzee (2010; 2014c), and career adaptability was measured using the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS) as developed by Savickas and Porfeli (2012).

This research provides a starting point for determining a possible relationship between self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability. If significant relationships are found, then the findings will be useful in informing human resource practitioners regarding career development practices, particularly with regard to young adults in the school to work transition phase.

With the labour market moving away from job security and towards continuous task and role change, one may expect that career management skills (the abilities required to proactively steer the working world and successfully manage the process of career building), based on attributes such as lifelong learning and adaptability, would unequivocally be included in the employability and generic skills policy debates, and thus would play a prominent role in university programmes (Bridgstock, 2009).

Maree (2012) mentions that career adaptability has become essential for workers who must deal with continuous change and its effects on their lives, negotiate continuous transitions and design successful lives. Research indicates that career adaptability is a key sign of success in the adolescent years that directly relates to positive youth development (Hirschi, 2009).

Organisations are becoming ever more dependent on the flexibility and adaptability of employees, as well as on their potential to continuously build, develop and cultivate new expertise, knowledge and skills in an attempt to enable organisations to perform

advantageously in competitive business markets globally (O'Donoghue & Maguire, 2005; Thijssen, Van der Heijden, & Rocco, 2008).

It is believed that this study could make a potentially important and original contribution in terms of the implications on self-esteem, as well as the graduateness skills and attributes that should be focused on within higher education institutions to improve the career adaptability of individuals, thus improving their careers as a whole.

#### **1.4.1 Potential value at a theoretical level**

At a theoretical level, this study may prove useful because of the potential relationship between self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes (independent variables) and career adaptability (dependent variable). If significant relationships are found, then the findings should prove useful in the career development of youth in the school to work transition phase. Furthermore, the research results could also contribute to the existing body of knowledge relating to the levels of self-esteem and graduateness skills and attributes that influence career adaptability in the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase.

#### **1.4.2 Potential value at an empirical level**

At an empirical level, the research may contribute toward understanding the empirical link between self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability in the positive career development and employability of young adults in the school-to-work transition phase of their lives. In addition, the study may highlight whether males and females differ in terms of their self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability.

If no relationships are found between the variables, then the usefulness of this study will be restricted to the elimination of self-esteem and graduateness skills and attributes as predictors of career adaptability. Researchers could then focus their efforts on other research studies or avenues that could yield significant proof for solving the problem of how to improve career development.

#### **1.4.3 Potential value at a practical level**

At a practical level, if readers of this study develop a better understanding of the constructs self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability which may positively

or negatively influence the young adult's career development, then the outcomes are significant enough to justify the pursuit of this study. Positive outcomes from the proposed research could include raising awareness of the fact that individuals differ with regard to their self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability and that these constructs could thus influence a person's career development.

Another positive outcome may be that human resource practitioners could be more aware of these factors influencing the young adult's career development practices. Furthermore, the findings of this study could be used during the career counselling process to assist young adults entering the world of work in developing their careers, by being more adaptable to changes in the working world and in their careers.

This is potentially ground-breaking research ground because, to date, there is no existing study on the relationship between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability.

## **1.5 THE RESEARCH MODEL**

The research model of Mouton and Marais (1996) served as the framework for the research. This model incorporates five dimensions of social science research, namely the sociological, ontological, teleological, epistemological and methodological dimensions.

This model assumes that research represents a social process. Mouton and Marais (1996) view social research as a joint human activity in which social reality is objectively studied in order to gain a valid understanding of it. Clarke (2005) explains that social scientists recognise that concepts within models are often based on opinion, values, traditions, cultures and rules that cannot be broken down precisely. From this we understand that, if the aim of science is to build explanatory theory about its data, the aim of social science is to build explanatory theory relating to people and their behaviour (Punch, 2014).

## **1.6 FIELD OF STUDY**

The present study was conducted in the field of Human Resource Management, which is described conceptually as a philosophy of managing people based on the idea that the human resources of a company are exclusively imperative to sustained organisational success (Ferreira, Ismail, & Swanepoel, 2012; Price 2011). An organisation is said to gain and maintain competitive advantage by utilising its human resources (people) effectively,

and by extracting their expertise and skills in order to meet clearly defined objectives (Price, 2011).

Human resource management refers to a process of generating, executing and evaluating policies and practices for obtaining, developing and engaging numerous employees to do the work of the organisation (Rogers, 2012). Human resource management places great emphasis on the fact that people are valuable resources that require meticulous and continuous nurturing (Kreitner & Cassidy, 2011).

The human resource practitioner recognises the interdependence of individuals, organisations and society and the impact of factors such as increasing government influence, growing consumer awareness, skills shortages, and the changing nature of the workforce (Landy & Conte, 2004). The human resource practitioner acts as a scientist who derives certain principles of individual, group and organisational behaviour through research; consultants and staff psychologists, who is responsible for developing scientific knowledge and applying it to the solution of problems at work; and teachers who train in the research and application of Human Resource Management (Landy & Conte, 2004).

Thematically, human resource management relates to the career development support of the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase and who is a newcomer to the world of work.

### **1.6.1 Theoretical models**

With regard to self-esteem, the self-esteem model of Battle (1992) was applied to this research. The underlying strength of this model is its applicability to young adults. The generic transferable meta-skills of graduateness and the personal attributes framework of Coetzee (2012a; 2014c) were applied to this research. The career adaptability model developed by Savickas (1997) also was applied to this research.

### **1.6.2 Conceptual descriptions**

Concepts are used to impose a coherent meaning on the world, and it is through them that people make sense of reality and perceive coherence and order (Clarke, 2005). The following conceptual descriptions serve as points of departure for discussion in this research:

**Career development** refers to the activities that are directed at assisting individuals in achieving their career objectives, which may include skills development, performance feedback and coaching, job rotation, mentoring roles, as well as stimulating and visible job assignments (Cummings & Worley, 2015).

For the purpose of this study, the **young adult** refers to any person, male or female, between the ages of 17 and 25 years.

Characterised as a period of change, waiting and uncertainty, the **school-to-work transition phase** occurs when young adults begin to search for employment in which they must demonstrate that their skills, abilities and knowledge are worthy of remuneration (Ryan, 2001a; Super, 1957).

**Self-esteem** is defined as a socially constructed emotion indicating feelings and perceptions about an individual's numerous self-concepts and self-images, which are based on the psychological need for acceptance and belonging within an individual's social group, and the desire for effective and accurate functioning, competence and achievement in comparison to other members of one's group (Battle, 1992; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Coetzee, 2005; Hewitt, 2002; Maslow, 1970; Potgieter, 2012b).

**Graduateness skills and attributes** refer to the existence of a set of generic transferable meta-skills and personal attributes that employers regard as imperative to their businesses, and which graduates therefore are expected to possess when entering the workplace. It is important to note that these skills and attributes are separate from discipline-specific knowledge, skills and values (Coetzee, 2012c; Griesel & Parker, 2009; Raftapoulous et al., 2009).

**Career adaptability** is a psychosocial construct that indicates an individual's readiness and resources for coping with current and anticipated occupational development tasks, vocational transitions as well as personal traumas (Creed et al., 2009; Ferreira, 2012; Maree, 2012; Savickas, 1997; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Adaptability shapes self-extension into the social environment as individuals connect with society and adjust their own professional behaviour proportionately to the developmental tasks imposed by a community and the transitions they are faced with in their vocational roles (Savickas, 2005).

Table 1.1 provides a summary of the core constructs (self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability), their underpinning models and the measuring instruments utilised in this study.

Table 1.1

*Summary of the Core Constructs, Theoretical Models and Measuring Instruments of Relevance to the Study*

Construct	Core description	Underpinning theoretical model/theory	Measuring instrument	Relevance to career development of the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase (17-25 years)
<b>Self-esteem</b>	Defined as a socially constructed emotion indicating feelings and perceptions about an individual's numerous self-concepts and self-images, which are based on the psychological need for acceptance and belonging within an individual's social group, and the desire for effective and accurate functioning, competence and achievement in comparison to other members of one's group (Battle, 1992; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Coetzee, 2005; Hewitt, 2002; Maslow, 1970; Potgieter, 2012b).	Battle's (1992) model of self-esteem	Culture-free self-esteem inventories (CFSEI 2-AD, Battle, 1992)	Difficult career situations often translate into difficult life situations, and such situations will have a negative impact on a person's self-esteem (Niles, Jacobs, & Nichols, 2010). Harter (1999) found a drop in self-esteem during adolescence. If self-esteem can be enhanced during adolescence, this may enhance one's employability.
<b>Graduateness skills and attributes</b>	Refers to the existence of a set of generic transferable meta-skills and personal attributes that employers regard as imperative for their businesses, and which graduates therefore are expected to possess when entering the workplace. These skills and attributes are separate from their discipline-specific knowledge, skills and values	Coetzee's (2012a; 2014a) model framework for the development of the Graduateness Skills and Attributes Scale	Graduateness Skills and Attributes Scale (GSAS, Coetzee, 2010; 2014a)	In the uncertain working world and within this information age, in order for the youth to be employed, workers need to become lifelong learners and to improve their decision-making skills (Zunker, 2002; 2012).



	(Coetzee, 2012a; Griesel & Parker, 2009; Raftapoulous et al., 2009).			
<b>Career adaptability</b>	A psychosocial construct that indicates an individual's readiness and resources for coping with current and anticipated occupational development tasks, vocational transitions as well as personal traumas (Creed et al., 2009; Ferreira, 2012; Maree, 2012; Savickas, 1997; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).	Savickas's (2005) career construction theory	Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS, Savickas & Porfeli, 2012)	Career adaptation is vital for students in that they need to be aware of their ability to adapt to the future world of work and they need to be responsible for their future choices and decisions, open to different and fresh experiences, and confident in their choices (Tien, Lin, Hsieh, & Jin, 2014).

### 1.6.3 Market of intellectual resources

The market of intellectual resources refers to the collection of beliefs that have a direct impact on the epistemic states of scientific statements (Mouton & Marais, 1996). For the purpose of this study, the theoretical models, meta-theoretical statements, conceptual descriptions of self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability, the central hypothesis as well as the theoretical and methodological assumptions, are presented.

### 1.6.4 Meta-theoretical statements

Mouton and Marais (1996) explain that, within different stages of the scientific research process and for different reasons, the researcher is compelled to make certain assumptions justifying specific theories and methodological strategies that are not tested in that particular study. One important category of such assumptions is meta-theoretical (or metaphysical) assumptions underlying the theories/models/paradigms that form the definitive context of the study.

In the disciplinary context, this study focuses on Human Resource Management as a field of application (Mouton & Marais, 1996).

## 1.7 EMPIRICAL STUDY

The empirical research will be presented from a post-positivist research paradigm instead of a positivist paradigm. The positivist paradigm holds the belief that objective accounts of the world can be given, in which the researcher is totally detached from or independent of the research; knowledge is discovered and verified through direct observations or measurements of phenomena; and facts are established by taking apart a phenomenon in order to examine its component parts (Krauss, 2005; McIlveen, Beccaria, Du Preez, & Patton, 2010). This perspective assumes that the inquiry can be free from bias and totally objective only if the researcher can assume total detachment (Clark, 1998).

Ryan (2006) mentions that, because people live their lives in the context of a worldview, this influences the way in which they think, behave and structure their lives, including the way in which they approach research. However, people often fail to recognise that the beliefs they have regarding research are related to this worldview, and it is especially important that researchers review and analyse these worldviews (Ryan, 2006). It can be understood from this that it is close to impossible to be completely objective, even when conducting research. Under post-positivistic philosophy, the researcher is not seen as being totally detached from the research or completely objective, but rather that involvement in the research and the researcher's personal perceptions and actions are acknowledged as being characteristic of human inquiry (Clark, 1998; Giddings & Grant, 2007).

Ryan (2006) mentions that post-positivist research has the following characteristics:

- Research is broad rather than specialised – lots of different things qualify as research;
- Theory and practice cannot be separate. We cannot afford to ignore theory for the sake of 'just the facts';
- The researcher's motivation for and commitment to research are central and crucial to the enterprise (Schratz & Walker, 1995);
- The idea that research is concerned only with correct techniques for collecting and categorising information is now inadequate (Schratz & Walker, 1995).

Using the above explanations of the two paradigms, and taking into account the validity of the study, it therefore was concluded that the post-positivist framework would be most appropriate for this study.

## **1.8 CENTRAL HYPOTHESIS**

This study endeavoured to gather evidence in support of the following hypothesis:

A relationship exists between self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability. Self-esteem and graduateness skills and attributes significantly predict career adaptability. This hypothesis further assumes that self-esteem significantly moderates the graduateness skills and attributes – career adaptability relation. Also, males and females will display different levels of self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability.

## **1.9 THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS**

Based on the literature review, the following theoretical assumptions are addressed in this study:

- There is a need for basic research that seeks to isolate self-esteem and graduateness skills and attributes relating to an individual's career adaptability.
- Gender, self-esteem and graduateness skills and attributes will influence an individual's career adaptability.
- The three constructs – self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability – are multidimensional.

## **1.10 METHODOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS**

Methodological assumptions are those beliefs that concern the nature of social science and scientific research. Methodological beliefs are basically methodological preferences, assumptions and presuppositions about what good research should be. There is a direct link between methodological beliefs and the epistemic status of research findings (Mouton & Marais, 1996).

The following epistemological assumptions were the methodological assumptions that affected the nature and structure of the current research study:

### **1.10.1 Sociological dimension**

According to Mouton and Marais (1996), the sociological dimension explains scientific research as a joint or collaborative activity. This research will make use of the research community for its contributions in the area of this study.

### **1.10.2 Ontological dimension**

The ontological dimension posits that research in the social sciences is always directed at an aspect or aspects of social reality (Mouton & Marais, 1996), i.e. how people view reality. It relates to the study of human activities and institutions of which the behaviour can be measured. This research measured properties of the constructs self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability. This study was based on the quantitative method and the ontological assumption therefore was that reality is objective and singular, apart from the researcher (Creswell, 2003).

### **1.10.3 Teleological dimension**

The teleological dimension views research as a human activity that is intentional and goal-directed, and the main aim of research in this dimension is to understand phenomena (Mouton & Marais, 1996). This dimension further suggests that research should be systematic and goal directed. The problem that was investigated was related to the research goals throughout. The research goal of this study was to measure the relationship between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability. The teleological dimension also looks to furthering the field of Human Resource Management by providing recommendations in terms of career development.

### **1.10.4 Epistemological dimension**

According to Mouton and Marais (1996), this dimension may be regarded as the embodiment of the ideal of science, i.e. the quest for truth. The aim of research in this dimension is to provide a valid and reliable understanding of reality. This research endeavoured to attain truth by obtaining valid and reliable results and utilised a well-structured research design.

### **1.10.5 Methodological dimension**

The methodological dimension deals with the types of processes to be followed in order to achieve a specific outcome. Research methodologies can be classified as quantitative, qualitative or participatory (Mouton & Marais, 1996).

This study presents quantitative, exploratory research in the form of a literature review on self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability, as well as quantitative research in relation to the empirical study.

## **1.11 RESEARCH DESIGN**

According to Kumar (2014), a research design is a procedural plan that the researcher implements in order to respond to questions in a valid, objective, accurate and economical manner. Gorard (2013) explains that the research design is a means of organising a research project from the very beginning to allow the researcher the opportunity of capitalising on the chances of generating evidence that provides an influential answer to the research questions for a given level of resources.

The research design will be discussed by firstly explaining the types of research conducted, followed by a discussion of validity and reliability.

### **1.11.1 Exploratory research**

Exploratory research takes place when not much is known about the research topic and the researcher merely wants to explore or investigate the topic by gathering basic data (Grinnell & Unrau, 2011; Kumar, 2014). It involves asking very specific and complex research questions, also known as causality questions, based on existing substantial knowledge in the research topic area (Grinnell & Unrau, 2005).

Some of the main aims of exploratory research are to gain new insights, to undertake preliminary investigation, to establish central concepts and constructs, and then to determine priorities for future research (Mouton & Marais, 1996). This research was exploratory in that it compared various theoretical perspectives on self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability.

### **1.11.2 Descriptive research**

Descriptive research presents a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting or relationship (Kreuger & Neuman, 2006). The main aim of a descriptive study was to describe what is prevalent in terms of the issue or problem under study (Kumar, 2014). Descriptive research is applicable in the literature review with reference to the conceptualisation of the constructs self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability.

In the empirical study, descriptive research was applicable with reference to means, standard deviations and Cronbach's alpha coefficients in relation to the constructs of self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability.

### **1.11.3 Explanatory research**

In an explanatory study, the main emphasis is to clarify why and how there is a relationship between two aspects of a situation or phenomenon (Kumar, 2014). Explanatory research takes a step further from merely indicating the existence of a relationship between the variables – it indicates the direction of the relationship in a causal relationship model (Mouton & Marais, 1996). However, due to the cross-sectional design of the research, the focus was not on establishing cause-effect relationships. The researcher sought to explain the nature, direction and magnitude of the relationship. This form of research was applied in the empirical study of the relationship between the self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability of a group of young adults in the school-to-work transition phase.

The researcher wished to formulate a conclusion on the relationship between the constructs of self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability, and therefore fulfilled the requirements of explanatory research as outlined above.

### **1.11.4 Validity**

Research is valid when it measures what it is supposed to measure, i.e. determines the extent to which an instrument fulfils the purpose for which it was intended (Erasmus, Loedolff, Mda, & Nel, 2010; Kumar, 2014).

Bless and Higson-Smith (1995) and Kumar (2014) mention that one of the main objectives of a research design is to determine the relationship between the independent and dependent

variables with a high degree of certainty, accuracy, objectivity and validity. Should the research design achieve this objective, the research design will be regarded as valid.

The research design had to be both internally and externally valid. Jha (2008) explains internal validity as the fact that any causal difference in the dependent variable can be attributed to the independent variable. External validity is the extent to which the results of the research study can be generalised to other groups (Bordens & Abbott, 2014). Therefore, to ensure external validity, one would need to draw a representative sample from the population (Sachdeva, 2009).

#### *1.11.4.1 Validity in terms of the literature review*

Validity was ensured by utilising literature that is relevant to the characteristics, problems and objectives of this study. The constructs and concepts found relating to self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability were structured in a rational, systematic and organised manner. Wherever possible, the most current literature was utilised. However, there were certain conventional sources that were used due to their relevance to this study.

#### *1.11.4.2 Validity in terms of the empirical study*

Standardised measuring instruments were used in this study to ensure the validity of the empirical study. These measuring instruments were judged for their criterion-related validity (to ensure that the instrument provides results similar to those provided by other, established measures of the same variable), content validity (the degree to which a measure covers the range of meanings included within a concept) and construct validity (the degree to which an instrument measures the theoretical constructs they are supposed to determine) (Bordens & Abbott, 2014; De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, & Delpont, 2011).

#### **1.11.5 Reliability**

Reliability is the ability of a measure to generate consistent results every time that it is applied (Monnette, Sullivan, & De Jong, 2014). Reliability was addressed by using existing literature sources, theories and models that are available to researchers (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2005).

Research design reliability was ensured by limiting the nuisance or problematic variables through the planning of the research. Literature review reliability was ensured through the

availability and access of the literature to other interested parties. The research context was respected at all times. A few internet sources were utilised to keep the data as current as possible, but those that were used were confirmed by the researcher by looking at other data explaining the same concepts to ensure the reliability of the information.

By using a representative sample of the population, the reliability of the empirical study therefore was ensured. All instruments in this study also were utilised on the basis of their reliability, which has been ensured through previous research.

#### **1.11.6 Unit of analysis**

The units of analysis are those particular constituents about which data is collected and whose attributes we wish to explain (Monnette et al., 2014). The unit of analysis in this study is the individual. The purpose of this study was to determine the nature, direction and magnitude of the relationship between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability of the individual. When the individual is the unit of analysis, the focus is generally on sub-groups – testing differences between person-centred characteristics, such as the gender of the individual (Babbie, 2007; Buisson-Narsai 2005).

#### **1.11.7 Research variables**

This research aimed to measure two independent variables (self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes) in relation to one dependent variable (career adaptability). According to Robbins and Judge (2009), a dependent variable is a key factor that one wants to explain or predict and that is affected by some other factor. Robbins and Judge (2009) further explain that an independent variable is the presumed cause of some change in the dependent variable.

In this study, the criterion data of the culture-free self-esteem inventories (CFSEI 2-AD, Battle, 1992) and the criterion data of the Graduate Skills and Attributes Scale (GSAS, Coetzee, 2010; 2014a) comprised the independent variables and the criterion data of the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS, Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) comprised the dependent variable.

In an effort to determine a relationship between the independent variables (self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes) and the dependent variable (career adaptability), data were gathered by means of the measuring instruments indicated above.



This research was interested in:

- Measuring the relationship between self-esteem (independent variable) and career adaptability (dependent variable)
- Measuring the relationship between self-esteem (independent variable) and graduateness skills and attributes (independent variable)
- Measuring the relationship between the graduateness skills and attributes (independent variable) and career adaptability (dependent variable).
- Measuring the moderating role of self-esteem (moderating variable) in the graduateness skills and attributes (independent variable)–career adaptability (dependent) relation.
- Measuring the relationship between self-esteem (independent variable), graduateness skills and attributes (independent variable) and career adaptability (dependent variable).
- Measuring whether males and females differ significantly regarding self-esteem (independent variable), graduateness skills and attributes (independent variable) and career adaptability (dependent variable).

Figure 1.3 below provides a diagrammatic representation of the aforementioned relationship between the variables of the study.

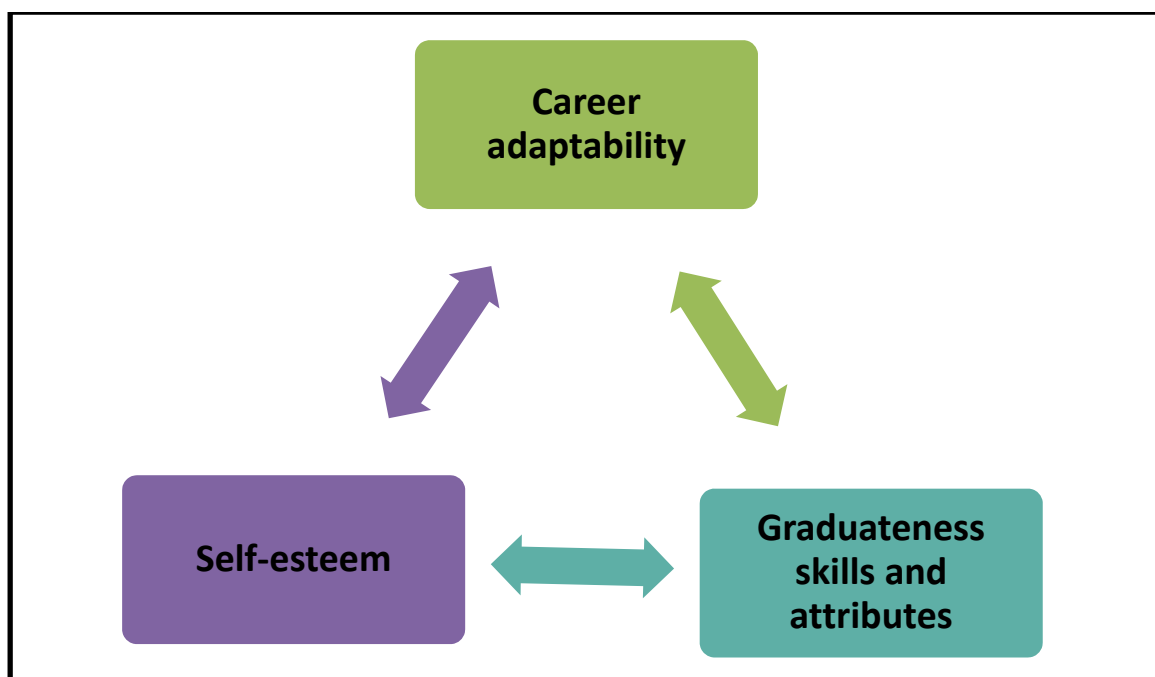


Figure 1.3. Relationship between variables

### **1.11.8 Delimitations**

This study was limited to research dealing with self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability. In an attempt to ignore factors that could affect self-esteem in this study, the influences were limited to general self-esteem, social self-esteem, personal self-esteem and lie items (Battle, 1992).

In an attempt to ignore factors that could affect graduateness skills and attributes in this study, the influences were limited to interactive skills, problem solving/decision making, continuous learning orientation, enterprising skills, presenting and applying information skills, goal-directed behaviour, ethical and responsible behaviour and analytical thinking (Coetzee, 2010; 2014a).

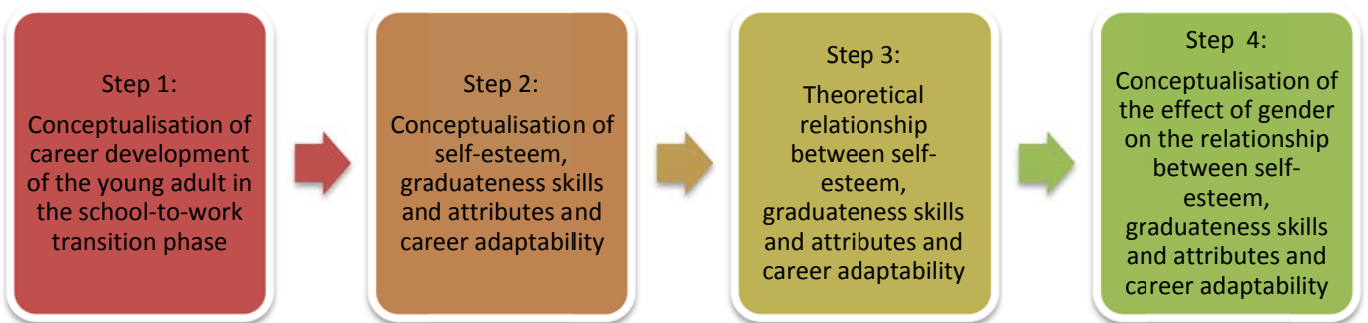
In an attempt to ignore factors that could affect career adaptability in this study, the influences were limited to concern, control, curiosity and confidence (Porfeli & Savickas, 2012). Furthermore, this study focused only on gender as a control variable.

This study is a groundwork research study that restricts its focus to the relationship between self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability. Should such a relationship exist, it thus will be useful to other researchers in addressing issues relating to the three constructs of self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability.

## **1.12 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research was conducted in two phases, each with different steps, which are discussed in the section below. Figure 1.4 provides an overview of the different phases.

## PHASE 1: LITERATURE REVIEW



## PHASE 2: EMPIRICAL STUDY

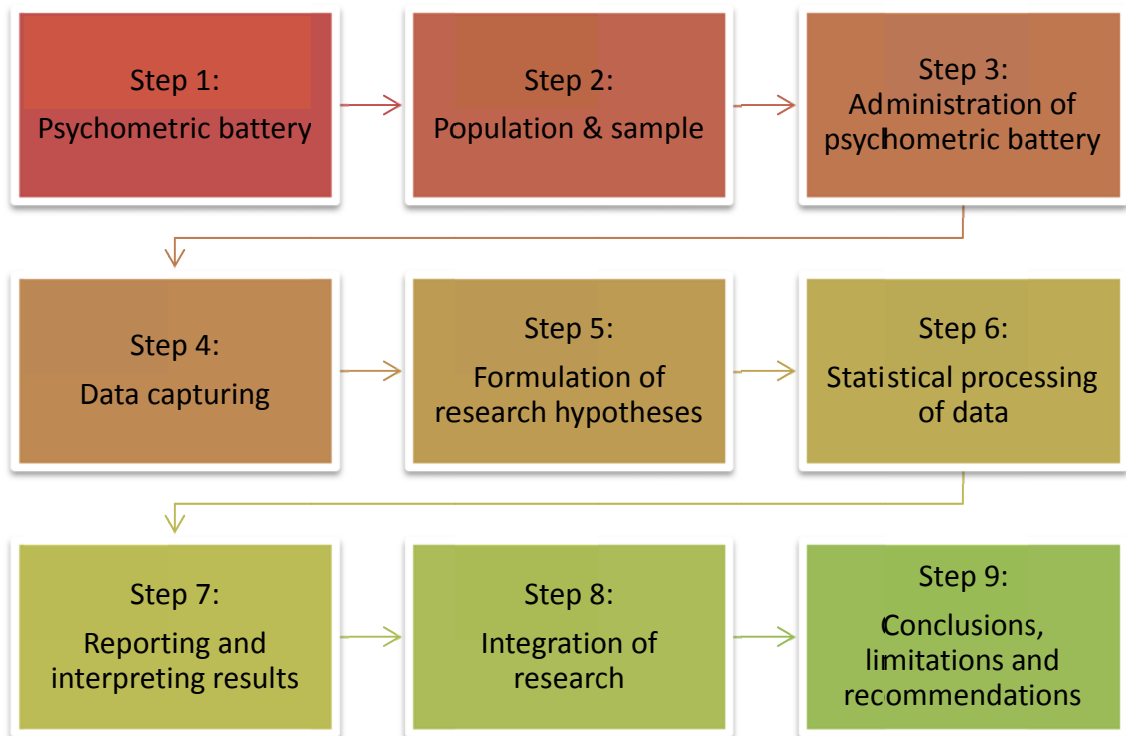


Figure 1.4. Overview of the research methodology

### 1.12.1 Phase 1: The literature review

The literature review consists of a review of self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability.

**Step 1: Addressed research aim 1 of the literature review, namely to conceptualise the career development of the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase**

Research relating to career development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century was evaluated. Emphasis was placed on the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase.

**Step 2: Addressed research aim 2 of the literature review, namely to conceptualise self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability**

Research in the field of career psychology relating to the constructs of self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability and their related constructs was evaluated critically. Based on this conceptualisation, the implications for human resource management practices pertaining to the career development of the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase are discussed.

**Step 3: Addressed research aim 3 of the literature review, namely to identify and explain the theoretical relationship between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability**

This step relates to the theoretical integration of the theoretical relationship between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability.

**Step 4: Addressed research aim 4 of the literature review, namely to conceptualise the effect of gender on the relationship between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability**

Research relating to the effect of gender on the concepts of self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability, and thus the relationship between these three constructs, are discussed.

**1.12.2 Phase 2: The empirical study**

The empirical study was conducted in the South African organisational context, and followed the steps below:

### **Step 1: Choosing and motivating the psychometric battery**

The measuring instruments that measured the dependent variable (career adaptability) and the two independent variables (self-esteem and graduateness skills and attributes) are discussed. This can be found in Chapter 4.

### **Step 2: Determination and description of the population and sample**

The population is identified and the sample is described. This can be found in Chapter 4

### **Step 3: Administration of the psychometric battery**

The psychometric battery was handed out to students at FET colleges in Gauteng to complete.

### **Step 4: Capturing the criterion data**

The responses of the subjects to each of the items of the four questionnaires were captured on an electronic spreadsheet format. All data was analysed by means of the SPSS and SAS statistical programs.

### **Step 5: Formulation of research hypotheses**

The research hypotheses were formulated from the central hypothesis to be empirically tested. This can be found in Chapter 4.

### **Step 6: Statistical processing of the data**

The statistical procedure relevant to this research includes descriptive statistical analysis (internal consistency reliability, means, standard deviations, kurtosis and skewness and frequency data); correlational analysis (Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients); and inferential statistics (canonical correlation analysis, hierarchical moderated regression and test for significant mean differences). This is discussed in Chapter 5.

### **Step 7: Reporting and interpreting the results**

The results are shown in tables, diagrams and/or graphs and the discussion of the findings is presented to ensure that the interpretation of the findings is conveyed in a clear and articulate manner. This can be found in Chapter 5.

### **Step 8: Integration of the research findings**

The findings relating to the literature review were integrated with the findings of the empirical study to give a combined integration of the overall findings of the research. This can be found in Chapter 5.

### **Step 9: Formulation of conclusions, limitations and recommendations**

The final step relates to the conclusions drawn based on the results and their integration with the theory. The limitations of the research are discussed, and recommendations are made in terms of self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability as constructs used to inform career development practices of the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase. This can be found in Chapter 6.

### **1.13 CHAPTER LAYOUT**

The chapters of this study are the following:

**Chapter 1:** Scientific overview of the research

**Chapter 2:** Career development of the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase

**Chapter 3:** Self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability

**Chapter 4:** Research methodology

**Chapter 5:** Research results

**Chapter 6:** Conclusions, limitations and recommendations

### **1.14 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The background to and motivation for the research, the problem statement and aims of the study, the potential value that this study will add, the research model, field of study, the theoretical research and its design and methodology, the central hypothesis and the research method were all discussed in this chapter. The rationale for the study is the fact that there is no known research on the dynamics of the relationship between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability in the context of the career development of the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase. This research attempts to critically evaluate and, on the basis of sound research methodology, to investigate the relationship between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability to be able to put forth suggestions for career development practices for the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase.

Chapter 2 addresses research aim 1 and discusses the career development of the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase.

## **CHAPTER 2: META-THEORETICAL CONTEXT OF THE STUDY: CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF THE YOUNG ADULT IN THE SCHOOL-TO-WORK TRANSITION PHASE**

### **KEYWORDS**

21<sup>st</sup>-century career, boundaryless career, career development, career success, emerging adulthood, protean career, psychosocial career transition resources, school-to-work transition phase

The aim of this chapter is to place this study in context by outlining the meta-theoretical context that forms the definitive borders of the research. Career development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the school-to-work transition phase and psychosocial career transition resources are discussed in this chapter.

### **2.1 CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

Career development refers to the activities that are directed at assisting individuals in achieving their career objectives, which may include skills development, performance feedback and coaching, job rotation, mentoring roles, as well as stimulating and visible job assignments (Cummings & Worley, 2015). Career development is defined as a process by which the capacities of employees are enhanced through a series of experiences and tasks that can be performed in one or more organisations (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Mercedes, Ramón, & Mar, 2014). Savickas et al. (2009) refer to career development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as “life trajectories”, in which individuals gradually design and construct their own lives, including their work careers, in terms of what they are going to make of their lives while they navigate through a series of major transitions caused by changes in health, employment and intimate relationships.

Career development has become a life-designing issue for young adults in that they face career development issues that have become more complex, broad and deep (Guichard, Pouyard, De Calan, & Dumora, 2012; Savickas, 2010; Savickas et al., 2009); complex, because what was previously an issue of vocational choice is now described as the ability to invest the individual competences in work tasks that they consider advantageous to themselves; broad, because work investments require individuals to examine all aspects of their lives, i.e. to determine the life priorities and lifestyle they yearn for, as well as redefining these in the course of their life, and to assess the career capital (in terms of knowing who, knowing how and knowing why) that they have constructed. And finally, career development

issues have deepened because today's individuals must determine their fundamental values, as well as the key elements that provide meaning and consequently direction to their lives, hopefully on the basis of interactions with others (Guichard et al., 2012; Savickas, 2010; Savickas et al., 2009).

Previously, career development was used to predict and assist with people's adjustment to work environments, jobs, occupations or vocations on the assumption that both the environment and people's behaviour is highly stable (Chan et al., 2015; Savickas et al., 2009). However, no matter how stable individual characteristics might be, the environment is changing rapidly and the focus of career development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has now shifted to assisting individuals to look ahead and look around, to develop the self, and to select appropriate and feasible opportunities to become the individual he or she wants to be (Savickas, 1997; Savickas et al., 2009). This therefore means that theoretical models of career counselling are needed that emphasise human flexibility, adaptability and lifelong learning (Savickas et al., 2009).

Individuals entering the world of work deal with a number of challenges, including a decrease in employment opportunities, deterioration of job security, constant changes in technology, coping with the transition from student to employee, adapting to the new work environment, as well as a mounting personal responsibility to remain up to date with changes, to up-skill themselves, to increase their employability and to engage in lifelong learning (Coetzee & Esterhuizen, 2010; Marock, 2008; Pool & Sewell, 2007).

Some of the changes that contemporary workers face are reorganisation, continuous technological progression, job rotation, an ageing population and thus an ageing workforce, shortages of skills on both a national and international level, the evolving nature of work and employment, decreasing employment opportunities; globalisation and an increase in global mobility, and the birth of the knowledge economy (Cameron, 2009; Richardson, 2000; Van der Heijde, 2014). Collin and Young (2000) found the changes in the market and work expectations to be the leading changes in the world of work. Guichard et al. (2012) found that organisations have become more flexible, with individuals finding less predefined career paths within the organisations for which they work. Manning, Giordano, Longmore, and Hocevar (2011) found the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century career to be entry into the labour market, career development and establishing firm partnerships. Hall (1996) and Sennet (1998) found the reduction in the stability and security of careers to be the most important change in 21<sup>st</sup>-century careers.



Amundson (2006) identified globalisation, the increased use of new technology and communication practices, as well as the transfer from industrial to information sciences, as the key forces driving the changes in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century work context. Blickle and Witzki (2008) reiterated the findings of Amundson (2006) and included mergers and acquisitions on the list of driving forces. Burke and Ng (2006) then added downsizing, business restructuring and subcontracting as factors that influence the changes in the 21st century. Brevis-Landsberg (2012) also identified trends towards democratisation, diversity of an organisation's workforce and increasing social imbalances to be challenges facing the world of work.

Schreuder and Coetzee (2011) identified the following changes in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century career:

- careers are now either protean, boundaryless, composite or entrepreneurial;
- career progress and success are redefined, there now is an emphasis on lifelong learning, employability, career resilience and career adaptability;
- new knowledge and skills are now required from prospective employees – there are new employment relationships;
- individualism is valued more than organisational loyalty;
- employees' needs are more diverse;
- the traditional male and female roles are being challenged; and
- there is a new psychological contract in that employees now expect more from their employers, especially in terms of supporting their career development process.

From the aforementioned discussion it is clear that it has become the responsibility of the young adult to undergo the necessary training and lifelong learning to ensure that he or she has the skills to be relevant in the labour market. This will ensure sustained employability for the individual in the ever-changing world faced with the new challenges in 21<sup>st</sup>-century careers.

The school-to-work transition (17 to 25 years) is one of the most critical phases in a graduate's career, as it influences future career success and professional outcomes (Koen, Klehe, & Van Vianen, 2012). These newcomers to the labour market generally take longer than the standard job seekers to find adequate employment and more often than not they experience underemployment or job incompatibility (Koen et al., 2012). The new relationship between the employee and the world of work generates the desire to develop career interventions that will assist individuals to reflect on their career meta-competencies as key resources in sustaining their employability (Coetzee, 2008; Ferreira, 2012; Savickas, 2011a; Savickas et al., 2009). These career interventions should also assist individuals in

developing the necessary career adaptability skills that will allow them to reconceptualise their careers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and thus redesign their working lives (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2012).

The framework for co-operation in the provision of career development (information, advice and guidance) services in South Africa (DHET & SAQA, 2012) proposes the implementation of such career development intervention and aims:

- To function as the basis and starting point for the development and implementation of a national career development policy for the country;
- To accentuate government's role in guaranteeing that all citizens are assured access to comprehensive and integrated career development services to assist them in making informed career and learning decisions;
- To offer suggestions for the strengthening and continuity of leadership regarding career development services in South Africa;
- To encourage co-operation and collaboration at all levels of government, as well as with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the private sector, to ensure transparency and ease of access to career services that are geared to meet the needs of a diverse range of citizens;
- To recommend stakeholder roles and responsibilities for different areas and aspects of career development services in the country;
- To identify processes that stimulate regular review and complete planning of career services;
- To offer specific recommendations for various aspects of the provision of career development services for the country; and
- To provide a high-level plan to move forward in the development of career development services.

An outcome for the changing world of work and the greater focus on employability has forced young adults to prepare themselves by gaining a wider variety of skills to allow for greater flexibility in order to meet the needs of organisations and consumers (Ferreira, 2012). Although change is stressful, an inability to control one's environment also tends to lead to anxiety (Muja & Appelbaum, 2012). Harvey, Bauserman, and Bollinger (2012) found a heightening concern regarding general employment when faced with the current economic conditions and the high levels of unemployment.

Higher education plays a crucial role in assisting new graduates facing the working world to acquire the skills necessary to become more employable, which can then assist them to manage their own careers efficiently (Fallows & Steven, 2000). Employability thus has become an enormous concern for both educational service providers and those individuals wishing to enter the world of work (Cox & King, 2006).

Given the threats to a successful start to one's career, it would be helpful to provide newcomers with the essential resources to cope with the transition from school to work in order to prevent underemployment, prolonged unemployment and any negative consequences for their future career (Koen et al., 2012). These resources which will allow the young adult to take advantage of opportunities and deal with transitions, barriers and setbacks are reflected in career adaptability (Koen et al., 2012).

The above-mentioned trends require an understanding of the world of career development, particularly focusing on the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase.

### **2.1.1 Career evolution**

Under the modern era, many authors agree that the career has become a 'lifestyle concept' in that it emphasises the entire person and thus is defined as a sequence of events (planned and unplanned) that builds up to an individual's life or the total collection of roles that individuals play as they develop throughout their lifetime (Cleary, Horsfall, Muthulakshmi, Happell, & Hunt, 2013; Gysbers, 2013; Van Zyl & Stander; 2014).

Although, for many, careers are inextricably bound up with work, there are implications that careers are not just work, but professional work, and that it is about getting ahead or advancing (Gunz & Peiperl, 2007). Arthur, Hall, and Lawrence (1989) mention that careers reflect the relationships between people and providers of an official position, namely an institution or organisation, and how these relationships fluctuate over time. Recently, Zunker (2012) defined careers as the roles that individuals play over their lifetime, where these roles may include leisure, community service and many other activities. Sharf (2013a), on the other hand, defines a career as the lifetime pursuits of the individual.

Briscoe, Hall, and Frautschy DeMuth (2006) found that 21<sup>st</sup>-century career identities are less defined, as careers become more multidisciplinary and the goals and mind sets of the new generation demonstrate a decrease in employee commitment to employers. Recent generations place greater emphasis on subjective factors like recognition based on results

among peers, and less emphasis on transactional “linear” or “corporate ladder” careers (Baruch, 2004a, 2004b; Quigley & Tymon, 2006). They also fail to see the boundaries of the numerous areas of their lives, which have major implications on their careers, as careers become more multidirectional and boundaryless (Baruch, 2004a).

The concept of careers has changed dramatically over the years. The last two decades of career research have revealed that contemporary careers now necessitate attitudes and methods that are adaptive, proactive and self-managed in order to cope with the amplified uncertainty, mobility and boundarylessness of work (Blustein, 2006; Gubler, Arnold, & Coombs, 2013; Waters, Briscoe, Hall, & Wang, 2014). Whereas the career of the past was categorised by linear, ascending movement within one organisation over the length of an individual’s working lifespan, today’s “post-corporate” career is becoming progressively “boundaryless”, marked by more transitions across as well as within organisations (Chandler & Kram, 2007). The traditional organisational career, previously regarded as the norm, is now considered by many to have been more significant in the last century (Baruch, 2004a; Clarke, 2009; Ferreira, 2012; Inkson & Arthur, 2001; Kuijpers & Scheerens, 2006). It was in this type of career that organisations with a goal to create predictability generated unyielding career structures, whose methods were formal, overbearing and transparent (Adamson, Doherty, & Viney, 1998). The organisational career was also based on the premise that people would ideally work for a specific organisation until retirement, and that seniority and maturity were valued and respected qualities (Hall & Mirvis, 1995).

However, in terms of the theoretical development of careers, the last decade has shown a major shift from the traditional career to the “new” career (Briscoe & Finkelstein, 2009; Briscoe & Hall, 2006; Hess, Jepsen, & Dries, 2012). Within the current career context, these responses are unsuitable, as there now is a greater need for increased flexibility, less concrete structures, more adaptability and increased self-directedness on the part of the individual (Adamson et al., 1998; Hirschi, Hermann, & Keller, 2015; Sullivan, 1999). Security for an individual is now affixed to their own transferrable skills and employability, rather than to a particular organisation (Mallon, 1998; Mirvis & Hall, 1996). The new career context is portrayed as one in which transitions take place more often than was previously the case, leading to discontinuities and disjointed careers (Chudzikowski, 2012). In this current context, careers are described as tempestuous routes that unfold across several different settings, including organisational, occupational and cultural settings (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). Gunz, Evans and Jalland (2000) mention that these types of careers are completely supported by the career literature as the route to take in the future of careers, as they lead to greater career success.

The contemporary career paradigm acknowledges the unpredictable, turbulent and globally market-sensitive context within which an individual's career unfold (Savickas, 2011a). The new career literature highlights the fact that the traditional organisational career is unable to defend itself based on the fact that it can no longer promise long-term employment to employees, let alone a rapid progression along the organisational ladder (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Dries, Van Acker, & Verbruggen, 2012; Sullivan, 1999). The new career literature also describes the context of contemporary careers as one branded by recurrent individual career moves, both within and across organisations (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Lifelong employment has become less widespread, as employee loyalty has been reduced by the increasing levels of job insecurity (Spell & Blum, 2000; Staufenbiel & König, 2010). Therefore, when compared to the traditional career context, the occurrence of career transitions is thought to have amplified (Chudzikowski, 2012).

Concepts such as 'portfolio' (Handy, 1994), 'intelligent' (DeFillipi & Arthur, 1994), 'boundaryless' (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996), 'protean' (Hall, 1996), 'nomad' (Cadin, Bender, De Saint Giniez & Pringle, 2000), 'spiral' (Brousseau, Driver, Eneroth & Larsson, 1996), 'kaleidoscope' (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005), 'post-industrial' (Gershuny, 1993) and 'post-corporate' (Peiperl & Baruch, 1997) careers have been proposed to demonstrate the way in which careers have become more inclined to be branded by flexible employment contracts, multiple employers, creative job moves and multiple career changes (Chudzikowski, 2012; Dries & Verbruggen, 2012; Ferreira, 2012).

The most prominent of these new career models, the protean and boundaryless careers, stress the importance of personal value-driven, self-directed career attitudes, individual control over employability, and skills development above and beyond organisational career management, which result in better mobility and a lifelong career outlook (Arnold & Cohen, 2007; Chan et al., 2012). The idea of these models is appealing as they incorporate the career needs of individuals with the workforce needs of the organisation (Clarke, 2009).

The field of career development has been greatly influenced by the forces of change that mould modern notions of work and career (Cameron, 2009). These modern notions of career emphasise more individual freedom and autonomy within an individual's career, which develops beyond the boundaries of a single organisation (Inkson, 2006; Kattenbach et al., 2014). Individuals' career attitudes and experiences have been influenced greatly by changes in the economic environment, technological advancements, organisational restructuring, layoffs, changes in the business environment and demographical developments over the last two decades (Chandler & Kram, 2007; Hall, 2002; Kattenbach et

al., 2014; Pinnington & Lafferty, 2003). These changes in the environment have added to the formation of a new psychological contract that clearly depicts the mutual responsibilities of employees and employers (Hall, 2002). The prevalence of restructuring the organisation, flattening the hierarchies, de-layering and downsizing has contributed to a more flexible or “boundaryless” career environment that expects the individual to self-manage his/her own career, instead of relying on direction or instruction from the organisation or basing their careers on individual decisions, especially on their capability to invest their skills according to identifiable opportunities (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005; Barnett & Bradley, 2007; Guichard et al., 2012; Kossek, Roberts, Fisher, & Demarr, 1998; Sewell, 2005).

### **2.1.2 The boundaryless career**

In terms of theoretical development of careers, the last decade has shown a major shift from the traditional career to the “new” career (Briscoe & Finkelstein, 2009; Briscoe et al., 2006; Hess et al., 2012). The most prominent of these new career models, the protean and boundaryless careers, emphasise personal value-driven, self-directed career attitudes, individual control over employability and skills development above and beyond organisational career management, which result in better mobility and a lifelong career outlook (Arnold & Cohen, 2007; Chan et al., 2012). The idea of these models is appealing, as they incorporate the career needs of individuals with the workforce needs of the organisation (Clarke, 2009).

The ‘new’ career context is portrayed as one in which transitions take place more regularly, leading to discontinuities and splits in one’s career (Chudzikowski, 2012). The career literature completely supports the fact that these types of careers are ‘the way to go’ in the future, and that they lead to greater career success (Gunz et al., 2000).

A boundaryless career refers to a career that transcends boundaries (Verbruggen, 2012). Even though research on the boundaryless career has concentrated mostly on careers that cross organisational boundaries, the original concept was more general in that it included mobility across various types of boundaries, including but not limited to occupational, cultural and geographical ones, and encompassing both physical and psychological boundary crossing away from the current employer (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009; Tams & Arthur, 2006). Physical boundaries refer to the actual physical move across boundaries, such as movement between employers, industries and jobs, whereas psychological mobility refers to an individual’s perception or attitude of the ability to move (Forret, Sullivan, & Maineiro, 2010).

One of the key distinctions of the boundaryless career framework is its emphasis on career activities across boundaries to secure employability (McCabe & Savery, 2007). Within the contemporary career environment, employability is determined by performance and flexibility, individuals are employed under multiple firms, they develop multiple networks of associates and peer-learning relationships, they undergo on-the-job training, their success is measured by meaningful work, and milestones in the career are learning-related (Cascio, 2003). Individuals in the boundaryless context have self-ownership of their careers, through which they manage their careers in a fairly autonomous manner between jobs, organisations and professions and, in so doing, their employment value is improved (Forrier & Sels, 2003; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011; Van der Klink, Van der Heijden, Boon, & Van Rooij, 2014).

Several authors have focused on the change from the traditional, long-term-based career relationship to the new, transactional, shorter career relationship between employees and employers (Baruch, 2004a; Blicke & Witzki, 2008; Cox & King, 2006; De Vos & Soens, 2008; Hall, 2004). Scholars point to a shift from the long-term-based career relationships, to transactional, short-term-based ones that evolve between individuals and their employing organisations (Adamson et al., 1998; Baruch, 2003; Baruch, 2004a; Blicke & Witzki, 2008; Cox & King, 2006; De Vos & Soens, 2008). Previously, individuals were expected to work for and serve one or two organisations throughout their entire lifespan. In recent years, however, the focus has shifted to employees moving between various organisations throughout their lifespan and they now expect to be served by these organisations (Baruch, 2004a; 2004b). Due to this change in loyalty and the shorter working relationship, the psychological contract, as well as the expectations of employees and employers, has also changed. Under the old contract, employees were loyal workers who experienced a sense of job security in return for their loyalty. However, under the new contract, employees exchange performance for continuous learning and development (Baruch, 2006; Clarke, 2008; De Vos & Soens, 2008; Sullivan, 1999).

A huge number of people have experienced transitions in their careers, moving from the traditional career to the boundaryless career (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994). As the business environment becomes more chaotic and less predictable, this transition creates new challenges (Ashkenas, Ulrich, & Jick, 1995). Organisations and people change their expectations, thus producing new psychological contracts (Baruch, 2006; Bozbura & Arslanbas, 2012; Clarke, 2008; De Vos & Soens, 2008; Rousseau, 1995; 1996; Sullivan, 1999). Workers today often battle to cope with and adapt to situations in which they have little or no control (Blustein, 2008). Landry, Mahesh, and Hartman (2006) and Schabracq and Cooper (2000) found that, along with these changes, the new careers have either

changed to make use of technological tools, or they have made way for individuals to be more creative in their work and therefore allow for a considerable amount of freedom. With these changes, individuals now require extensively more skills and immensely different abilities in order to succeed in their careers.

Briscoe and Hall (2006) argue that a sense of identity and values serves as a guide for the individual's career. The ability to adapt and be flexible also can substantially shape the direction, potential and success of the career (Briscoe & Hall, 2006). Protean and boundaryless career approaches, with their respective emphases on value expression (Hall et al., 1997) and "knowing why" (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994), as well as independent career management and opportunity-seeking, are promising as orientations that will lead to clearer identity and enhanced adaptability. Forret et al. (2010) recommend that future research should look at the differences in boundaryless careers depicted by physical mobility and psychological mobility in order to draw attention to the adaptability of the boundaryless concept.

According to Baruch (2004a), organisations do not matter as much as they previously did. The boundaryless organisation (Ashkenas et al., 1995) resulted in the emergence of the boundaryless career (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994). Careers have now become transitional and flexible, and the restructuring dynamics have blurred the neat and fixed former routes for success (requiring new perspectives on what success means), with linear career systems also having become multidirectional (Baruch, 2006).

Even though the boundaryless career concept has been quite effective in terms of informing both theory and research, it is also receiving much critique (Briscoe et al., 2006; Pringle & Mallon, 2003; Rodrigues & Guest, 2010; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Boundaryless career literature tends to undervalue the aspects that hamper or cushion boundary-crossing behaviour (Brown, 2002; Dries, 2011; Hess et al., 2012). Even though the prospects of pursuing secure, single-employer careers are decreasing, the current literature tends to overrate the deviations that have been taking place, especially regarding the capability of individual employees to advocate their careers as 'free agents' (Arnold & Cohen, 2007; Tulgan, 2001). Various studies have determined that, on average, boundaryless careers are still quite rare, even among individuals who are highly employable (Vandenbrande, Coppin, & Van der Hallen, 2006; Verbruggen, Sels, & Forrier, 2007).



The boundaryless career emphasises the seemingly infinite possibilities the career presents and how recognising and taking advantage of such opportunities leads to success (Arthur, Inkson & Pringle, 1999; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1996).

Given the many benefits of boundaryless careers, it was also found that these careers may be harmful for the more vulnerable employee groups, such as women, racial minorities and undereducated people in that they have experienced unequal drops in job stability in recent years (Sullivan, 1999; Van Buren, 2003). Over and above this, Walton and Mallon (2004) found that traditional career incentives like promotions, salary increases, job security provided by the organisation, as well as mutual employee–employer loyalty, are still preferred by the majority of employees. Forrier, Sels and Stynen (2009) also found that, when cross-boundary moves are made, they often are determined by organisational or labour market factors, rather than by career orientation.

Another concern of the boundaryless career concept relates to the standards or norms that are sometimes attached to the construct, particularly that researchers sometimes seem to propose boundaryless careers as the best way for people to be successful in their careers today, ignoring possible downsides of this type of career (Arnold & Cohen, 2007; Gunz et al., 2000). One of these downsides is the physical mobility of the boundaryless concept, in that physical mobility may generate uncertainty, can be highly stressful and is often involuntary (Pringle & Mallon, 2003; Rodrigues & Guest, 2010). Psychological mobility (i.e. people's attitudes towards crossing boundaries) also has its downsides (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). For instance, people who see their career as boundless to their present organisation might be less prone to invest in their relationships at work or in their internal career development, two factors that have been shown to negatively impact people's career outcomes (De Vos, Dewettinck, & Buyens, 2009; Orpen, 1994). In addition, because psychological mobility may impact their physical mobility, psychological mobility may indirectly cause the downsides associated with some types of physical mobility (Lazarova & Taylor, 2009).

### **2.1.3 The protean career and career success**

The protean career is a self-directed course to the career that entails a certain amount of independence from external career influences (Briscoe & Finkelstein, 2009). The protean career is one that is driven by one's own values (Briscoe & Hall, 2006). The attitude of a protean career indicates the degree to which an individual manages his or her career in a proactive, self-directed way, driven by personal values and assessing success in the career based on subjective success criteria (Hall, 2002). The protean attitude can act as a

psychologically energising force through its link to a sense of autonomy and control over one's career (Waters, Briscoe, & Hall, 2014). A considerable implication for the individual working in the constantly changing organisational environment is that he or she must have a clear sense of personal identity that will serve the purpose of an internal guide for making career decisions (Hall, 2002). Briscoe et al. (2006) explain that individuals with protean career attitudes are self-directed (i.e. they take an independent and proactive role in managing their own vocational development) and they are value-driven (i.e. they follow their own career values and aim for personal career success). The protean career thus is the individual's contract within himself or herself, instead of the employment contract between the individual and the organisation (Baruch, 2006; Bozbura & Arslanbas, 2012).

Briscoe et al. (2006) have found that, even though the protean and boundaryless careers relate to each other, they are also distinct constructs. As Baruch (2006) explains, the protean career will prosper in the boundaryless career world, whereas it is concealed and unsupported within the traditional, strict and stable career system. People with protean attitudes are thought to be more self-directed compared to those with boundaryless career attitudes, who are thought to be more mobile (Arthur et al., 2005; Hall, 1976; 2002). Briscoe et al. (2006) explain that an individual can be protean in a bounded environment, and could also be boundaryless (e.g. a free agent) but not necessarily values-driven, in a protean environment.

Career and life success are defined and formed by individuals (Bozbura & Arslanbas, 2012). In contrast with the traditional career approach, relevant career success is concerned more with inner feelings of self-actualisation, accomplishment and satisfaction of a person in his or her own career (Baruch, 2006). Career success can be defined as "the accomplishment of desirable work-related outcomes at any point in a person's work experiences over time" (De Vos & Soens, 2008, p. 450). Career success can be both subjective and objective (Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995; Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001). Objective career success refers to those aspects of career success that are perceptible and can be viewed by others, such as a wage, the number of promotions and functional level (Dries, Pepermans, Hofmans, & Rypens, 2009). Subjective career success, on the other hand, refers to an individual's own perceptions of his or her career (Verbruggen, 2012). It is generally operationalised by job and/or career satisfaction and accomplishment (Heslin, 2005; Seibert, Crant, & Kraimer, 1999). Previously, researchers focused almost entirely on objective career success (Arthur et al., 2005; Heslin, 2005). However, with careers becoming more boundaryless than before, objective career success becomes more difficult to achieve and people thus progressively may gauge their careers based on standards that are subjectively

chosen (Dries, Pepermans, & Carlier, 2008). As a result, interest in subjective career success has increased considerably in the past few decades (Heslin, 2005; Sinclair, 2009).

A protean career attitude is able to promote both objective and subjective career success, as it is positively related to a proactive nature and an inherent enthusiasm for self-career management (Briscoe et al., 2006). Research suggests that proactivity is positively associated with both objective (i.e., salary and promotions) and subjective (i.e., career satisfaction) signs of career success (Seibert et al., 1999). These positive effects of a protean career attitude on career satisfaction are interceded by increased career self-management (i.e., an employee's effort to define and meet his/her personal career objectives) (Cao, Hirschi, & Deller, 2013; De Vos & Soens, 2008).

## **2.2 SCHOOL-TO-WORK TRANSITION PHASE**

Characterised as a period of change, fear, waiting and uncertainty, the school-to-work transition phase occurs when individuals begin to search for employment and need to demonstrate that their skills, abilities and knowledge are worthy of remuneration (Kowtha, 2011; Ryan, 2001b; Super, 1957). The school-to-work transition phase (ages 17 to 25) is the period when a young individual becomes ready to assume adult responsibilities, and reveals a shift from dependent childhood to independent adulthood (Schoon, McCulloch, Joshi, Wiggins, & Bynner, 2001).

Although there are various stages in the career development process, this research focuses on the career development of the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase owing to the high youth unemployment rates in South Africa, as discussed in Chapter 1. The other stages are discussed in greater detail below.

The school-to-work transition phase (17 to 25 years) is a crucial phase in the life course and has become the focus of considerable interest, both academic and policy-oriented (Koen et al., 2012; Ryan, 2001a; Schoon et al., 2001). Fournier and Payne (1994) state that the possible reasons for this include the fact that (1) young adults entering the world of work are exceptionally vulnerable to socialising factors in the organisation, as they do not possess any previous experience on which to rely on to make sense of this new context (Feldman & Brett, 1983; Katz, 1980; Louis, 1980; Mansfield, 1972; Miller & Jablin, 1991; Van Aardt, 2012; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979); (2) the way that graduates experience and adjust to entry into an organisation has vital implications for their later self-development, as this experience of the first year of employment has been shown to have significant effects on

shaping their future career identity, motivation, sense of competence and performance (Arnold, 1986; Berlew & Hall, 1966; Bray, Campbell, & Grant, 1974; Hall & Mansfield, 1971). Arnett (2000) explains that it is during this period in life when numerous diverse directions remain possible, when little is known and decided about the future, and when the extent of independent exploration of the possibilities of life is grander for most individuals than it will be at any other period of the life course.

Super (1957) identified the following about the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase (17 to 25 years):

- the young adult is a minority in the adult world and is unaccustomed to the outlooks and habits of the adult;
- the young adult's past methods of gaining recognition are not as useful in this society;
- the exploratory activities that the young adult previously engaged in have not prepared him for this world;
- the young adult is suspended between the world of children and adults, not fitting into either environment;
- the young adult thus finds it twice as challenging to identify with and understand the ways of the new culture;
- without a job, the young adult feels that he does not belong in the working world and possibly even in the home;
- the young adult feels discriminated against, as his prolonged education becomes a cause of distrust for older workers;
- He/she also feels that he/she is generally better educated than his/her superiors, yet he/she receives the least interesting and lowest paid jobs, which ultimately results in the young adult floundering, as he/she wishes to rebel but does not know how or who to rebel against; and
- thus is faced with the inevitable struggle both in getting and holding a job.

Arnett (2000) refers to the school-to-work transition as the period of emerging adulthood that:

- is a period portrayed by change and exploration for most people, as they assess the life possibilities open to them and progressively arrive at more stable choices in terms of love, work and worldviews.
- is also the era of possibilities, in which several different prospective futures remain possible and personal freedom and exploration are higher for most people than at any other time.

- there are three areas outlined in emerging adulthood, namely demographics, subjective perceptions and identity exploration, which are explained in Figure 2.1 below.
- the years of emerging adulthood are distinguished by a high degree of demographic diversity and instability, revealing the emphasis on change and exploration. Timing of marriage and parenthood, frequent residential changes and school attendance all represent this demographic diversity and instability, as different individuals will enter each phase at different times. It is only during the transition from emerging adulthood to young adulthood that this diversity reduces and the instability wanes, as young individuals reach more stable choices in love and work.
- there is a subjective sense on the part of most emerging adults that they have left adolescence but have not yet completely entered young adulthood. This subjective perception extends to the belief of emerging adults, who believe that it is only in achieving individualistic qualities of character such as accepting responsibility for one's self, making independent decisions and becoming financially independent that they become self-sufficient individuals and are thus able to move out of emerging adulthood and into young adulthood.
- emerging adulthood provides opportunities for identity explorations in the areas of love, work and worldviews. Identity formation involves experimenting with the different life possibilities and progressively moving towards making more stable decisions.
- in contrast with the adolescent view of romantic relationships as being the first experiences of romantic love and companionship, in emerging adulthood, romantic relationships' explorations in love become more intimate and serious.
- emerging adults become more focused in work in that they begin to consider how their work experiences will lay the groundwork for the jobs they may have through adulthood. They also explore unusual work and educational possibilities.
- emerging adults' religious beliefs suggest that, regardless of educational background, they consider it important during emerging adulthood to re-examine the beliefs they have learned in their families and to form a set of beliefs that is the product of their own independent reflections.
- explorations in love occasionally result in disappointment, disenchantment or rejection, while exploration in work occasionally results in failure to acquire the occupation most desired, or even an inability to find work that is satisfying and fulfilling, and explorations in worldviews occasionally leads to the rejection of childhood beliefs devoid of anything more persuasive in their place.

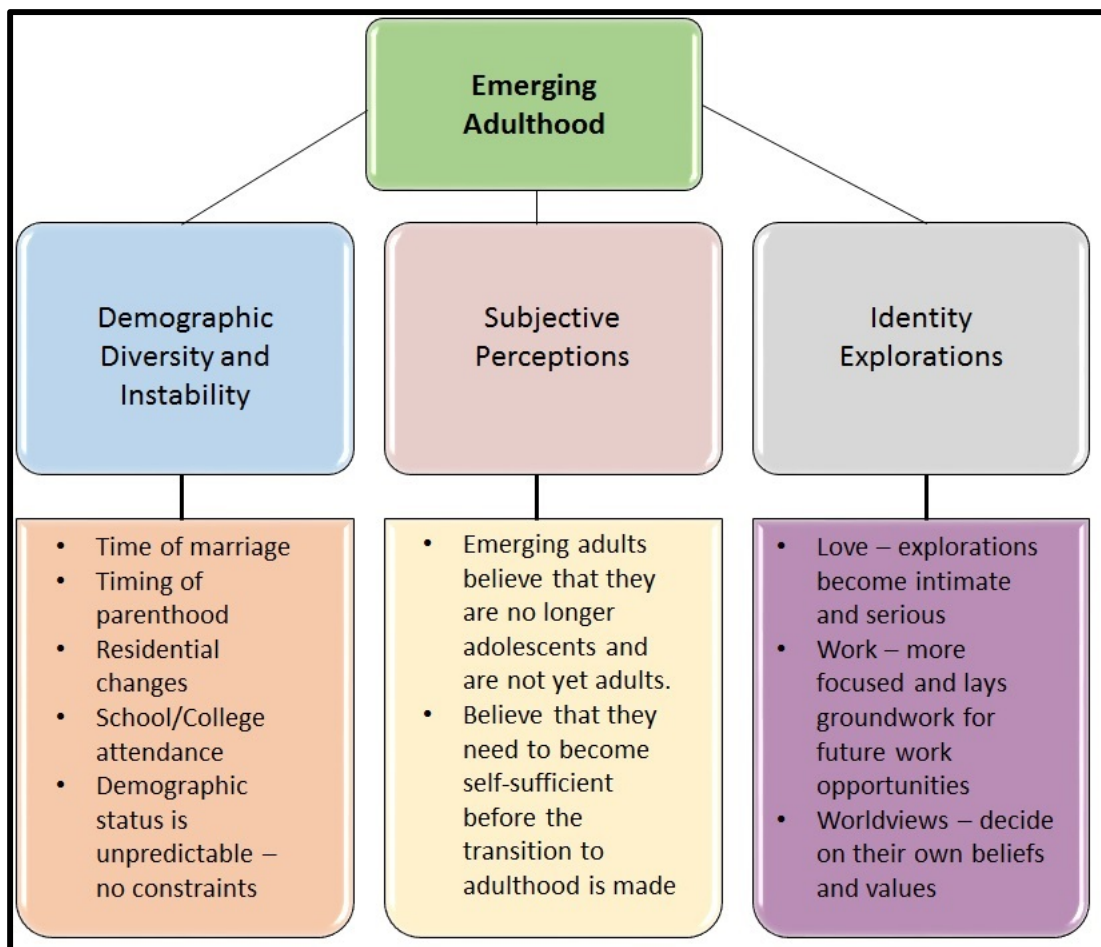


Figure 2.1. The three areas of emerging adulthood

Emerging adulthood typically lasts from about age 18 through the middle or even late 20s to approximately 29 years (Arnett, Žukauskienė, & Sugimura, 2014; Dolgin, 2011). Arnett (2000; 2011; 2015) explains that emerging adulthood is said to exist whenever there is a lull of several years between the time young people complete secondary school and the time that they enter stable adult roles in love and work.

Unlike adolescents, emerging adults are not dealing with issues associated with puberty, they are not in secondary school, and they are not regarded as minors under the law (Arnett et al., 2014). Instead, emerging adults have achieved physical and sexual maturity, they are highly distinct with regard to their didactic and vocational combinations and courses in that some are employed full time, others are studying at a tertiary institution full time, and many of them merge work and education, especially those in their late teens and early twenties (Arnett et al., 2014). By treating these individuals as adolescents undermines their capabilities of self-direction, self-reflection and independent living (Arnett et al., 2014).

Unlike young adults in their thirties, most emerging adults have not yet reached the firm structure of an adult life, with long-term commitments in love relationships and work (Arnett, 2000; 2004; 2011; 2015; Arnett et al., 2014). Instead, emerging adults find themselves in a period of heightened instability, since they experience a chain of love relationships and recurrent job changes before making permanent decisions (Arnett 2000; 2004; 2011; 2015; Arnett et al., 2014). The emerging adulthood phase is said to cease when individuals are able to (1) accept responsibility for themselves; (2) make independent decisions; and (3) becoming financially independent (Arnett 2000; 2011; 2015).

According to Super (1957), the school-to-work transitions starts at an average age of 17 and concludes at the age of 25. However, in 1994, a study of fifteen advanced countries revealed that the school-to-work transition starts at an average age of 17 and concludes at the age of 23, lasting for an average of six years (Ryan, 2001a). No age averages could be found for individuals in developing countries (Beukes, 2010; Ryan 2001a). Neumark (2007) proposes that the school-to-work transition phase covers two segments of the life cycle of youth. The first segment takes place when young adults make decisions between their schooling and their future career, including both the content of their education and its duration, whereas the second segment takes place when young adults leave school and attempt to find employment in the form of jobs that mark the beginning of the course of their future careers (Neumark, 2007). The field of human resource management and the focus of this study are specifically interested in the second segment, as shown below in Figure 2.2.

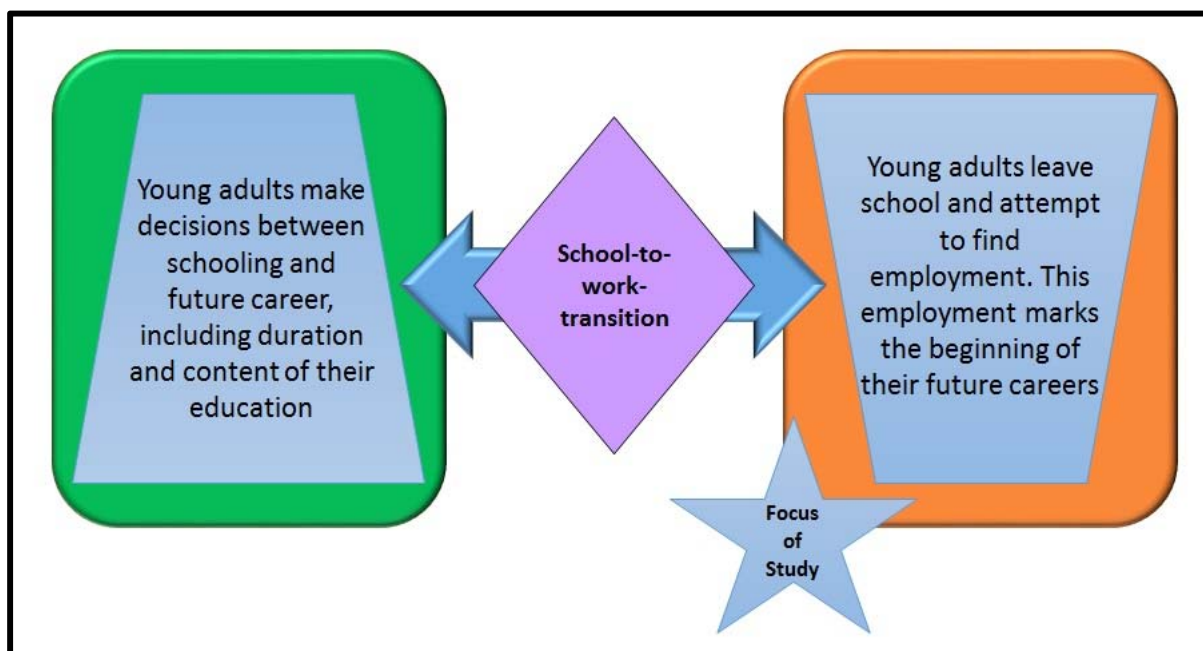


Figure 2.2. Segments of the school-to-work transition phase

Young adults entering the world of work for the first time are faced with many challenges, such as dealing with unemployment after qualifying or, once they have found employment, needing to cope with the transition from student to employee whilst adjusting to their new work environment and navigating the numerous global career challenges of the 21st century (Coetzee & Esterhuizen, 2010). The youth unemployment challenge in South Africa is strongly linked with the inability of young adults to obtain employment owing to their lack of experience, which very often is compounded by a lack of skills (Van Aardt, 2012). Other factors attributed to the difficulty young people experience in obtaining employment in the formal sector of the economy are the economic downturn, the South African context, which makes many psychological demands on the young adult, a skills profile that is often very different from what is being demanded by the labour market, and the fairly inelastic labour policy and legislation procedures in South Africa. All of these highlight the magnitude of the need to prepare youth to create their own employment (Quintini & Martin, 2014; Van Aardt, 2012; Van Vuuren & Fourie, 2000).

Individuals are drawing on their personal resources and capacities (strengths, intrinsic motivation, values, aspirations and coping capacities) to make themselves more buoyant and adaptable in settling the person-environment fit dynamics in a more chaotic employment context (Coetzee & Schreuder, 2013; Ferreira, 2012; Quigley & Tymon, 2006; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

Within such contexts, a shift in the career counselling of young graduates who are grooming themselves for entry into the world of work has taken place, from a major focus on vocational assessment and job search guidance to involving the young adult in proactive, self-directed career development planning activities, evaluating their readiness to participate in life as independent individuals, encouraging goal-directed attitudes and behaviour, and inspiring them with the necessary competencies required to make a smooth transition to employment and a progressive adjustment to the working world (Coetzee & Esterhuizen, 2010; Herr, Cramer, & Niles, 2004; McArdle et al., 2007).

Improving the school-to-work transition and ensuring better career opportunities for the youth after their entry into the labour market are common goals in emerging and advanced economies, as they can play a part in escalating the productive potential of the economy as well as increasing social cohesion (Quintini & Martin, 2014). Providing career guidance and training during the school-to-work transition phase, particularly to previously disadvantaged unemployed youth, could boost their chances of entering the labour market and assisting them in making better, informed decisions about their future (Department of Labour, 2009;



Quintini & Martin, 2014). The combination of work and study would also assist the young adult in obtaining some of the necessary skills required in the labour market before leaving the education system (Quintini & Martin, 2014). Proper career preparation can help individuals in the school-to-work transition phase to successfully seek and find employment, thus enhancing career outcomes (Koen et al., 2012).

According to Savickas (1997) and Koen et al. (2012), a vital component of successful career preparation in adolescence is the development of career adaptability. Career adaptability resources are the self-regulation strengths or capacities that a person may draw upon to solve the unfamiliar, complex and ill-defined problems presented by developmental vocational tasks, occupational transitions and work traumas, which dwell at the intersection of person-in-environment rather than at the core of the individual (Koen et al., 2012; Savickas, 1997).

Similarly, it has been argued that the possibility of employability skills leading to an increase in work-related outcomes and helping people to adapt to change enhances career opportunities in the workplace (Mohd Yusof, Mustapha, Syed Mohamad, & Bunian, 2012). It is no secret that the labour market of today is demanding new and different types of skills from employees than was previously the case as a result of the ever-changing organisational structures, rising career patterns, decreasing job security and the progression of technology and globalisation (Cinar, Dongel, & Sogutlu, 2009; Clarke, 2008). In other words, the current workplaces require workers with highly technical skills coupled with well-developed gradueness skills and employability attributes (De Guzman & Choi, 2013; Singh & Singh, 2008).

Savickas (2007) mentions that, according to career construction theory, careers do not unfold; rather, they are constructed as individuals make particular decisions or choices that display their identities and validate their values in the social reality of work roles. Viewing career construction as a sequence of efforts to implement a self-concept in work roles places a lot of attention on adaptation to a series of transitions from school to work, from job to job, and from occupation to occupation (Savickas, 2006). Individuals thus construct their careers by utilising adaptive strategies within their work roles based on their personalities (Savickas, 2006; 2007). This adaptation is inspired and directed by the objective of bringing inner needs and outer opportunities into harmony, with the harmonics of a good fit magnifying the individual's past preoccupations and current aspirations (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Adaptation, or goodness of fit, is indicated by success, satisfaction, and development (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

The career development process in adolescence is related to a more improved social adjustment and well-being and thus sets the stage for later career development across the lifespan (Hirschi, 2010a). Career development across the adolescent years is of great significance, as both educational and social decisions made at this age are capable of having lifelong effects on academic and career advancement opportunities (Perry, Liu, & Pabian, 2010). Adolescence has been described as a turbulent period resulting in a transition from childhood (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011). Piaget (1977) identified adolescence as a time of mild turmoil, whereas Erikson (1963) believes that, in terms of psychosocial development, adolescence is a time of identity and role confusion (Sharf, 2013a). Arnett (2000) found that emerging adulthood is that period in life that offers the most opportunity for identity explorations in the areas of love, work and worldviews.

According to Piaget (1977), a slow but sure method of developing problem-solving abilities and planning begins during adolescence; with age, planning then becomes more methodical, which allows adults to engage in introspection and to think about themselves in a variety of situations. It is at this point that adolescents can clearly visualise themselves working in occupations that they could not have imagined a few years earlier (Sharf, 2013a). Because adolescents have developed the ability to think logically, they tend to be rather idealistic, in that they expect their world to be logical when it is not (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958). The process of job entry and job selection can assist young people to become more realistic in their thinking (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958).

Zunker (2006) identified a list of career development competencies that are imperative for adolescents to develop. These are reflected in Table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1

*Career Development Competencies that Adolescents Need to Develop (Zunker, 2006, p. 421).*

Career development competencies that adolescents need to develop:
(1) becoming conscious of personal characteristics, interests, aptitudes and skills;
(2) understanding the relationship between school performance and future choices;
(3) developing a positive attitude to work;
(4) clarifying the role of personal values in career choice;
(5) distinguishing educational and skill requirements for areas of career interest;
(6) recognising the effects of job or career choice on other areas of life;
(7) beginning realistic assessment of their potential in various fields;
(8) developing skills in prioritising needs related to career planning;
(9) refining future career goals through synthesis of information concerning self, use of resources and consultation with others;
(10) identifying specific educational requirements to achieve goals;
(11) clarifying own values and life interests as they relate to work and leisure;
(12) making final commitments to a career plan in the school-to-work transition phase;
(13) understanding the potential for change in own interests or values related to work;
(14) understanding the potential for change within the job market;
(15) understanding career development as a lifelong process; and
(16) accepting responsibility for own career directions.

Schreuder and Coetzee (2011) stress the importance of the self-concept in career development, as they see career development as involving the creation and establishment of the self-concept within an occupational context. Super (1957) mentions that the young adult who has a well-formulated self-concept that takes into account the realities of the working

world would enjoy an easier transition from school to work than one who has a hazy, unrealistic self-concept.

Super's (1980) life-span, life-space theory describes how an individual's self-concept develops over time across four different career stages, each categorised by a special set of concerns: (1) exploration concerns, concerning interests and capabilities identification, and the way these might correspond with different types of careers; (2) establishment concerns, concerning settling down in the current career field, and attempting to establish a particular level of security at the same time as balancing work with family issues; (3) maintenance concerns, concerning enhancing the current position and preserving one's self-concept in an ever-changing work environment; and (4) disengagement concerns, concerning reduction in workload, evolving career fields, or retreating from paid work altogether (Hess et al., 2012; Savickas, 1997; Super, Thompson, & Lindeman, 1988). Figure 2.3 below provides a depiction of these stages and their sub-stages.

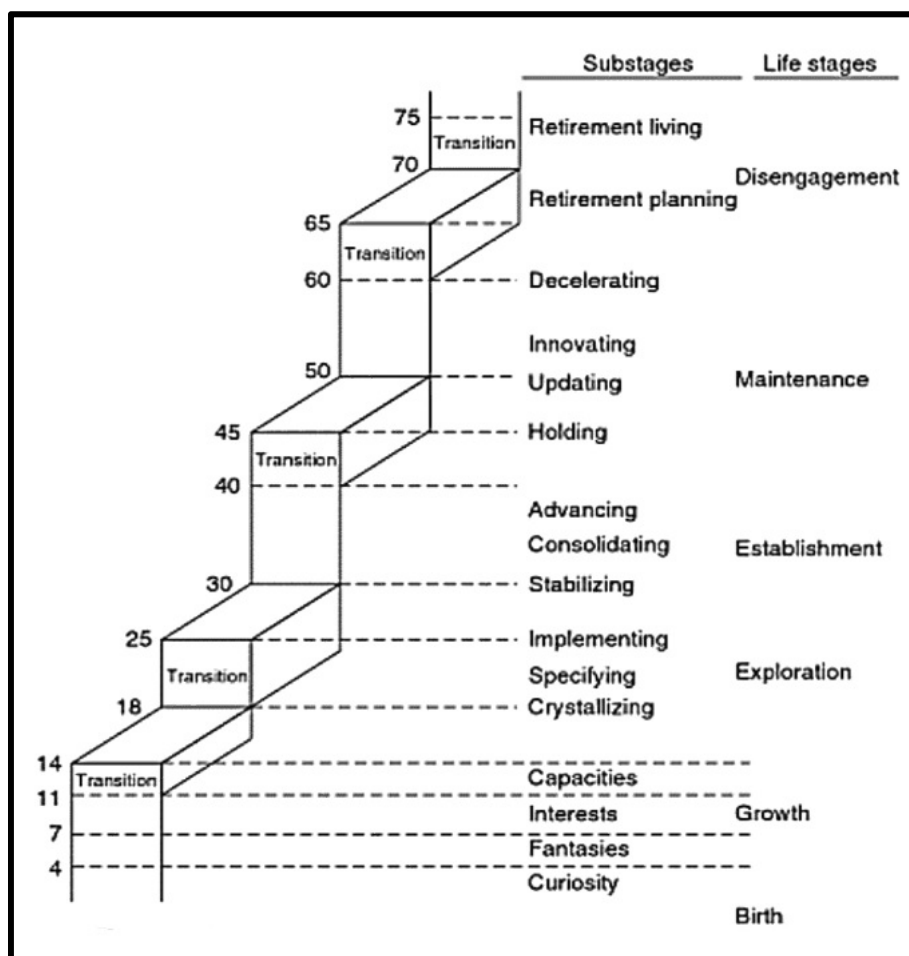


Figure 2.3. Super's (1990) life stages and sub-stages (in Brown, Brooks & Associates, 1990, p. 214).

Applying Super's (1990) life stages and sub-stages to the young adult, Schreuder and Coetzee (2011) provide the following discussion: (1) the exploratory period is the period in which young adults begin to reflect on where their interest and talents lie and what do they value; (2) the crystallisation period, when young adults concentrates their attention on considering career options they could realistically pursue and evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of various careers; (3) the specification period, which is the period in which young adults makes clear-cut decisions about the career they will pursue and commit themselves to it; (4) career resilience is the period from childhood to adolescence, when young adults develop self-confidence in their skills and persistence when faced with obstacles along the way, and (5) as they enter their twenties, they subsequently develop career insight.

According to Greenhaus, Callanan, and Godshalk (2010), the key developmental tasks during late adolescence (ages 18 to 25) in the exploration phase are:

- creating an occupational self-image,
- evaluating alternative occupations,
- creating primary occupational choice,
- pursuing essential post-school education and
- developing one's employability, thereby procuring job offers from the desired organisations.

Super's (1955) stages of adolescent career development surface from the stages of curiosity and fantasies in childhood (Figure 2.3). Commencing at around the age of eight, the development of interest begins to replace occupational fantasies. At the age of 11, young children develop a sense of their capacities, a view of their own ability to master certain skills.

During adolescence, children develop a system of values and each child is unique in the values and the times at which these values develop. This period of growth evolves into the transition phase (at about the age of 18) as it prepares adolescents for starting the crystallising sub-stage of adulthood that then begins (Sharf, 2013a).

The above discussion indicates that individuals experience different stages in their career development process, with each stage containing several elements enabling the individual to attain a successful career (Ferreira, 2012). These stages and elements from Super's (1990) career stage theory are summarised in Table 2.2 below.

Table 2.2

*Super's Life Stage Model* (Coetzee & Roythorne-Jacobs, 2012)

Life stages	Core life theme preoccupations (Savickas, 2005)	Characteristics	Self-related developmental tasks	Work-related career development tasks
Disengagement (old age from 65+)	Losing one's job owing to poor health or physical limitations	Decelerating, retirement planning and retirement living	Finding new balance of involvement with society and with self	Decline in work activity – greater activity in roles involving family, volunteer work and leisure  Community service
	Slowing down work or part-time work		Reappraisal of self-concept	
	Planning retirement			
Maintenance (middle adulthood, age 45+ to 65)	Dealing with new technological advancements – holding one's job and reputation	Holding, updating and innovating	Realistic self-assessment, opportunities to learn new skills, and the sharing of skills and expertise	Maintaining levels of achievement despite challenges of competition, rapid changes in technology and family
	Improving performance		Setting new priorities	
Establishment (early adulthood, age 25+ to 45)	Advancing in one's work (promotion, increase in pay)	Stabilising, consolidating and advancing period of trial in the late twenties and a period of stabilisation in the thirties and early forties	Working to take one's place in chosen field of work	Pursuing advancement (e.g. responsibility)
	Feeling sense of stability in the job		Settling down in chosen/permanent position	Economic stability
	Knowing basic requirements of the job		Learning to relate to others	Succession of job changes before a final choice (trial)
	Thinking about job on long-term basis		Developing a realistic self-concept	During stabilisation, security and advancement become priorities
	Imagining oneself as an effective, reliable worker			

Exploration (adolescence, age 14+ to 25)	Exploring career possibilities	Crystallising, specifying and implementing self-concept	Connecting self- concept to world of work (developing self- concept)	Identifying types of work through part- time jobs and job shadowing
	First full-time job			
	Type of encounters with supervisors, co-workers			
	Job search			
	Fitting in			
Growth (birth to age 12 to 14)	School system	Curiosity, fantasy, interest and capacity	Formation of self-concept through interaction with adult figures	Orientation to work through chores and responsibilities at school and home
	Family, friends			
	Growth in relationship to issues that concern dealing with teachers, peers, parents and siblings			

Howard and Walsh (2010, 2011) extended the sub-stages of the late growth stage of Super's (1955) theory of adolescent development. Table 2.3 below displays this extension. The capacities sub-stage corresponds with Howard and Walsh's level 4 (internal processes and capacities), which starts approximately at the age of 11, in which there is consciousness of the ability to accomplish specific tasks and having difficulty with others. There also is awareness of the skills needed for certain tasks (Sharf, 2013b).

Super's (1955) value sub-stage corresponds roughly to level 5 (interaction) in Howard and Walsh's (2010; 2011) theory, where it is pointed out that, at an approximate age of 14, children possess the ability to value aspects and types of work differently and see occupations as varying in terms of status and standing (Sharf, 2013a; 2013b). Super's (1955) transition to the crystallising sub-stage is when conditions in reality, such as not being able to get the job you want or admission to the college you prefer, occurs at about the same time as level 6 (systemic interaction) in Howard and Walsh's (2010; 2011) theory, according to which adolescents are now able to make complex career decisions (Sharf 2013a; 2013b). While evaluating their interests and abilities, they also know what is important to them in a

certain vocation and see how their own values are being met or not met in the requirements of that vocation (Sharf, 2013a). They acquire accurate knowledge of the careers they are interested in, as well as an accurate awareness of the labour market itself and areas where jobs become available. Thus they are developing a high level of vocational readiness that prepares them to enter the job market (Sharf, 2013a).

Table 2.3

*Comparison of Super's (1980) and Howard & Walsh's (2010; 2011) Stages of Adolescent Career Development*

Age	Super's (1980) stages of adolescent career development	Explanation	Howard & Walsh (2010;2011)	Explanation
11	Capacities	A view of their own ability to master certain skills	Level 4: Internal processes and capacities	Awareness of ability and difficulty to complete certain tasks
Different ages for different children. Approximately 14	Values	Develop values in terms of what is important to them	Level 5: Interaction	Value occupations differently and see them as varying in terms of prestige
18	Transition to crystallisation	Adolescents prepare for adulthood	Level 6: Systemic interaction	Adolescents can now make complex career decisions

Arnett (2000; 2004; 2011; 2015) also extended Super's (1955; 1980; 1981; 1990) exploration stage by introducing the period of emerging adulthood, which is characterised by change and exploration for most individuals, as they observe the life possibilities open to them, progressively arriving at more bearable choices in love, work and worldviews. Arnett (2000; 2004; 2011; 2015) provide five features that differentiate emerging adulthood from adolescence and young adulthood (which comes after emerging adulthood), and these five features are:



- (1) the age of identity explorations, when young people make crucial decisions regarding employment and romantic relationships.
- (2) the age of instability, when young people may change their romantic partner, their job or even the area of their studies based on the opportunities available to them.
- (3) the self-focused age, when young adults make decisions that will only affect themselves and not others for the simple reason that they have fewer family responsibilities.
- (4) the age of feeling in-between, a transition stage when young people feel that they are neither adolescents nor adults but on the road to becoming adults.
- (5) the age of possibilities, the time when young people believe that regardless of what is currently happening, their life will get better.

According to Sharf (2013a; 2013b), Arnett's (2000) emerging adulthood and Super's (1957) exploration phase are complementary to each other in that, while Super (1957) highlights the individual's career choice in the sub-stages of crystallising, specifying and implementing, Arnett (2000; 2015) focuses on other psychological factors, such as romantic and family relationships. Arnett's (2004) age of instability and self-focused stage describe insecurities and changes that infer a greater amount of self-questioning and insecurity than do Super's (1957) sub-stages of crystallising, specifying and implementing which in turn infer a progressive growth in knowledge of interests, abilities, values and the world of work that is not present in Arnett's emerging adulthood stage (Sharf, 2013a; 2013b).

Related to the discussion of the various stages of career development, career maturity inspires an individual's ability to understand the crucial career development tasks and challenges relevant to their particular life and career stage (Coertse & Scheepers, 2004). Developing career maturity (decisiveness and independence in planning and decision-making skills) has been recognised as being a vital element in an individual's career development and decision-making, job and career satisfaction, and retention in the current world of work (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011; Swanson & D'Achiardi, 2005; Themba, Oosthuizen, & Coetzee, 2012).

Adolescence, and particularly the period of transition into adulthood, is a crucial time for planning associated with family, education and work (Zarrett & Eccles, 2006). Adolescents approve of goals associated with work and family as they develop, although they vary in developmental pathways to pursue these goals (Lee & Vondracek, 2014). Hutchins and Akos (2013) found that adolescents who understand themselves and the world of work are in a better position to find work environments that permit them to express themselves or what

they value. Adolescents who attend schools that deliver all-inclusive career development programmes are more likely to experience a number of positive outcomes, including more realistic prospects about their future, more crystallised or secure, established decisions about potential careers, and greater job satisfaction in young adulthood (Blustein, 1997; Hutchins & Akos, 2013; Whiston, Brecheisen, & Stephens, 2003).

The aim then of career counsellors working in the organisational context is to assist the young adult entering the world of work to manage this transition from school to the working world successfully (Beukes, 2010).

### **2.3 PSYCHOSOCIAL CAREER TRANSITION RESOURCES**

Individuals require certain psychological capacities and resources in order to solve the challenges and complexities that arise from their vocational tasks, the recurrent career transitions they experience and the traumas they possibly may encounter when pursuing their careers in the contemporary workplace and labour market (Coetzee, 2014c). Psychosocial career resources and capacities have become greatly noticeable in today's career and turbulent environmental context (Coetzee, 2014c). It has become imperative in the contemporary world of the development of personal career-related capabilities and dispositions, since individuals are compelled to rely strongly on these capabilities and dispositions in order for them to significantly influence their career environments and adjust their behaviour to excel in a more turbulent work environment (Converse, Pathak, DePaul-Haddock, & Merbedone, 2012; Tladinyane, Coetzee, & Masenge, 2013).

The development of career meta-capacities has also been seen as fundamental when negotiating the person-environment fit harmonics in the present changing and unpredictable career context (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Individuals are now more dependent on their psychological and social resources (inner value and social capital) and less dependent on the career arrangements of organisations, as they encounter more regular career transitions and are expected to enjoy greater support in career decisions and be proactive, able, adaptable and self-directed lifelong learners (Coetzee, 2014c).

Constant change, new learning environments and decentralisation have forced employees to take responsibility for developing their own careers by upgrading their skills, preparing a personal career plan and customising that plan to fit in with the organisation's plan (Koonce, 1995; Marock 2008; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011). Acknowledging the uncertainty of the employment relationship with their employers and dealing with more regular career

transitions, employees tend to be more pre-emptive towards their careers by drawing on their career self-management skills and career resilience to sustain their employability (Bezuidenhout 2011; Coetzee & Schreuder, 2013; Savickas 2011b; Schreuder & Coetzee 2011).

Given the many threats within the unstable organisational environment facing the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase, it would be highly advantageous to provide these newcomers to the working world with the essential resources to cope with the transition from school to work in order to prevent underemployment, prolonged unemployment and negative consequences for their further careers (Koen et al., 2012). These resources, or the readiness to take full advantage of opportunities and cope with potential transitions, barriers and setbacks, are reflected in **career adaptability** (Koen et al., 2012). Career adaptability can improve the chances of an individual finding a suitable job, thereby enhancing their career success and even their well-being (Hartung & Taber, 2008; Hirschi, 2010b; Koen et al., 2012; Skorikov, 2007). Patterson (2001) also found that employees who actively embrace change and are tolerant of ambiguity are more likely to prosper in today's highly turbulent organisational environments.

An unsuccessful move from school to work can have the following effects: graduates can end up harming themselves, the organisation they find themselves in as well as the overall society in terms of costs and unemployment-related problems (Morrison, 2002; Quintini & Martin, 2014). To avoid all of the above-mentioned effects, it is essential to enhance a successful school-to-work transition. One way of doing this is through suitable career preparation, as better preparation can assist individuals in successfully seeking and finding employment, thereby enhancing career outcomes (Department of Labour, 2009; Hirschi, Niles, & Akos, 2011; Jepsen & Dickson, 2003; Koen et al., 2012; Koivisto, Vinokur, & Vuori, 2011; Quintini & Martin, 2014; Van Aardt, 2012).

Kowtha (2011) found that there are frequent mismatches in the job market between the graduate's educational background and the skills required by the job. A longitudinal study by Bynner (1997) showed that issues in developing basic literary and numerical skills (**graduateness skills and attributes**) by the age of 10 were associated with later problems in the school-to-work transition, interceded by problems in the development of work-related skills and school achievement (Pinquart, Juang, & Silbereisen, 2003). Research in the past has shown that newcomers to the job market who possess some job-related skills and knowledge will probably learn in a more improved manner and at a faster pace compared to those who find themselves in a job that has no relation to their previous education,

experience and training (Beyer & Hannah, 2002; Dokko, Wilk, & Rothbard, 2009). It is evident from this that differences in newcomers' collection of knowledge and skills due to their school and tertiary education could result in discrepancies in their workplace learning capacities, such as their ability to grasp information supplied to them by trainers and seniors, as well as successive adjustment to the profession and organisation (National Treasury, 2011; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). It is broadly agreed that the young adult needs a combination of basic education, remediation, training, career information, labour market information, job search skills and good work experience to make a successful school-to-work transition (Coetzee, 2011; Mabuza, 2012; Spill & Tracy, 1986; Stirk & Reissner, 2010).

As previously mentioned, within the context of the traditional career, the organisation was at one point exclusively responsible for the careers of its employees. However, with the advent of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century career, responsibility has shifted from the organisation to the individual to market themselves and to increase their employability skills (Hall, 2004). The new psychological contract of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century world of work shows that the employer does not guarantee lifelong employment and constant career advancement for the individual employee (Baruch, 2006; Bozbura & Arslanbas, 2012; Clarke, 2008; De Vos & Soens, 2008; Forrier & Sels, 2003; Sullivan, 1999). Instead, with the changing nature of jobs and the birth of the concept of the protean career (Hall, 1996; 2004) there has been a handover of career-related responsibility from the employer to its employees, as well as an appeal for individuals to become more proactive with regard to their careers, thus expecting a higher level of personal initiative from the individual (Bozbura & Arslanbas, 2012; Frese & Fray, 2001; Raabe, Frese, & Beehr, 2007; Seibert et al., 1999; Van der Heijde, 2014; Waters et al., 2014).

Clarke (2008) mentions that, in order for organisations to maintain their competitive advantage, they need to focus on upskilling their workforce as a valuable resource. However, since the organisation plays a very minor role in an individual's career development, it is now the responsibility of the individual to engage in upskilling themselves by involving themselves in activities like training and workshop sessions (Raabe et al., 2007). Therefore, if an organisation wishes to retain its employees, it would need to support them in their exploration actions (Hess et al., 2012). Career counselling and career guidance are methods that individuals can use to assist them in identifying their strengths and weaknesses and thus the areas in which upskilling is required (Alfred, Snow, & Miles, 1996; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Baruch, 2004a; 2006; Clarke, 2008; Harvey, 2001; King, 2004). As a result, individuals need to display high levels of personal initiative for this task (Raabe et al., 2007).

Organisations also attempt to alter employees' attitudes towards their career development and role in the workplace (Briscoe & Hall, 2006; De Vos & Soens, 2008). De Vos and Soens (2008) found that those individuals who adopted a protean career attitude presented higher levels of career satisfaction and perceived employability and that the development of career insight significantly mediated this relationship.

Individuals need to be able to think for themselves and think of themselves as self-employed, rather than as being employed (Clarke, 2008; London & Smither, 1999; Schein, 1996). Individuals, and particularly those entering the world of work for the first time, should be encouraged to embrace career development activities and self-management instead of relying on organisations and educational institutions to do it for them (Chan et al., 2012; Clarke, 2008). Career self-management typically includes career guidance, career counselling and engaging in learning opportunities (Clarke, 2008). Furthermore, individuals need to be aware of their own strengths and weaknesses so that career development activities could assist them in overcoming their weaknesses and utilising their strengths to take advantage of opportunities presented to them by the new world of work (Ghulam & Bagley, 1999).

Since career development makes up part of the general psychosocial development in adolescence, it is necessary to study it in relation to other key areas of development, such as the development of school achievement and self-related beliefs (like **self-esteem**) (Pinquart et al., 2003; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011). It has been found that the higher the individual's perceived efficacy to fulfil educational requirements and vocational roles, the better they tend to prepare themselves educationally for their career, and the greater their power in persisting when confronted with challenging career pursuits (Bandura, Barbarabelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 2001; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011).

When individuals proactively involve themselves in career self-management and career-development activities, they can be expected to enjoy greater control over their careers and as a result boost their employability (Clarke, 2008; Waters et al., 2014).

This study therefore aimed to look at the relationship between self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability in providing suggestions for career development of the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase, thereby increasing their employability.

## 2.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided the basis for the fact that the work context has undergone dramatic changes in the 21st century. These changes, in turn, have caused major changes in careers, as they have shifted from the traditional career to the “new” boundaryless career. This shift has influenced the need for individuals wishing to enter the world of work to have skills and competencies and to be able to adapt to the constant changes in the world of work. A pure educational background is no longer sufficient to ensure employment.

Individuals can engage in career counselling and career development activities to identify their strengths and weaknesses and develop their self-esteem and graduateness skills and attributes in order to enhance their career adaptability. This study focused on the self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability of the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase in the hope of providing suggestions to the field of career development in order to enhance employability.

Herewith research aim 1 (to conceptualise the career development in the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase) has been achieved.

Chapter 3 will focus on research aim 2 (to conceptualise and explain the constructs self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability in terms of theoretical models in the literature).

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **SELF-ESTEEM, GRADUATENESS SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES AND CAREER ADAPTABILITY**

#### **KEYWORDS:**

Career adaptability, employability, generic skills, gradueness, gradueness skills and attributes, self-concept, self-efficacy, self-esteem

This chapter focuses on a discussion of self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes as career meta-competencies that influence the career adaptability of individuals. This chapter aims to explore the constructs of self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability and their related theoretical models. The variables influencing self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability and their implications for the career development of the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase will also be discussed.

#### **3.1 SELF-ESTEEM**

The concept of self-esteem will be discussed in the following sections. The concept will be conceptualised and the underpinning theoretical model will be explained. The variables influencing self-esteem and their impact on the young adult in the school-to-work transition will also be discussed.

##### **3.1.1 Conceptualisation of constructs related to the self**

When discussing the constructs related to self, Hattie (2014) provides a historical review of the different views of many scholars. He explains that Descartes's (1596-1650) view of the essence of self relates to cognitive factors – "I think, therefore I am." Hattie (2014) further explains the essence of self from Locke's (1632-1704) point of view as relating to consciousness, wherein this consciousness of self cannot be separated from thinking, and only those experiences we remember form part of this self. From this perspective, the self is conceptualised as actions undertaken in the past and anticipated in the future for which an individual accepts full responsibility (Martin & McLellan, 2013).

Hattie (2014) further notes that Kant (1724-1804) differentiated between the self as the subject and the self as the object and maintained that the self-concept is that opinion we hold of ourselves, which may not reflect the actual or true self. According to Hattie (2014),

Mill (1808-1873) claimed that the idea of “myself” was closely related to former ideas of myself, thus introducing the function of memory, wherein memory and self are simply two sides of the same fact or two different ways of looking at the same fact. Bain (1859) claimed that the self is the sum total of all mental and bodily functions. Spencer (1963) contended that the self is more than a sequence of thoughts, feelings and ideas; that there unavoidably is something beyond them and this is a principle of unity and continuity. Bergson (1975) reasoned that, in memory, the past lives in the present and forms both the past and present into one unrefined whole – the self. Peirce (1955; 1960) asserted that the self comprises more than memory; it is defined in terms of reliability and continuity of feelings, actions and ideas.

James (1890) was the first psychologist to develop a theory regarding self-esteem. He categorised the self as either the empirical ego (the ‘me’) or the pure ego (the ‘I’). James (1890) wrote about three aspects of the self: 1) its constituents; 2) the feelings and emotions they rouse; and 3) the actions they prompt.

James (1890) explained that there are four constituents of the self: the **body**, which is the deepest part of the material self, where some parts of the body seem more intimately known than the rest; **the social self**, which is the recognition one gets from friends; the **spiritual self**, which is the inner or subjective being and contains the psychic faculties or dispositions that are the most enduring and intimate parts of the self; and the **pure ego**, which James (1890) also referred to as the “I” self, and which can be likened to what we think of as the soul or the mind (Hattie, 2014; James, 1890).

The feelings and emotions that the self-concept rouses are mainly those feelings and emotions of self-complacency and self-dissatisfaction (also known as self-feelings). These two opposite feelings comprise pride, conceit, vanity, self-esteem and arrogance on the one hand, and modesty, humility, compassion, shyness and shame on the other (Hattie, 2014; James 1890). The actions that are prompted by the self-concept are self-seeking and self-preservation.

Cooley (1902) spoke of the self in terms of the looking glass. He regarded the self as a reflected appraisal that people adopt based on the imagined appraisal of others. The reference to other people forms a rather fixed imagination of how one’s self appears in a specific mind. This self-idea consists of three principal elements: 1) the imagination of our appearance to the other person; 2) the imagination of his judgement of that appearance; and 3) a type of self-feeling like pride or mortification. The principle of this looking-glass element



of self is the capability of an individual to view him or herself through the reactions of others, and for others to appraise and react to the person as an object like other persons (Hattie, 2014). This means that, if a person imagines that another person has a negative view of him or her, he or she will also have a negative view of him or herself (Strauss & Coethals, 1991).

Mead (1934) claimed that the individual self is individual only because of its relation to others. Mead (1934) further stated that people not only have a need for self-enhancement, but for superiority as well. The extent of self-evaluation may be determined by the superiority of self; however, superiority is not the end in view – it is a way of preserving the self.

Freud (1917) provided the literature with the associated terms ego, narcissism, well-being, self-regard and self-esteem. Freud's (1917) most appealing contribution to psychology is the idea that we are mostly unaware ("unconscious") of the true psychological mechanisms that determine our experiences and actions (Martin & McLellan, 2013). According to Freud (1917), the ego invests libido in the self, which thereby creates narcissism and identities with other people to resolve conflict and manage the id, the superego and reality. To Freud (1917), the most basic part of the mind was the 'it' (translated into English as the id), the 'I' (translated as the ego) and the 'over-I' (translated as the superego) (Feist & Feist, 2009). The existence of the self and the self-concept are clearly suggested by these concepts (Strauss & Coethals, 1991).

Freud's (1917) theory was based on his seduction theory (Oedipus complex theory), pleasurable/unpleasurable principle (Baker & Baker, 1987), reality principle (Feist & Feist, 2009) and the moralistic principle (Feist & Feist, 2009). The 'id' has no contact with reality, but it continuously strives to reduce tension by satisfying basic needs. Its sole function therefore is to obtain pleasure and avoid pain, and it is the centre of the instinctual processes, thereby serving the pleasure principle (Hattie, 2014). The ego or the 'I' is in contact with reality. It grows out of the id during infancy and becomes a person's only source of communication with the external world, and therefore is governed by the reality principle. Finally, the superego signifies the moral and ideal aspects of the self, is guided by the moralistic and idealistic principles as opposed to the pleasure principle (which is guided by the id) and the realistic principle (which is guided by the ego), and expresses expectations to the individual (Feist & Feist, 2009; Hattie, 2014).

Table 3.1 provides an overview of the various theories and their authors as discussed above.

Table 3.1

*Overview of Self-concept Theories and Theorists*

<b>Theorist</b>	<b>Self-concept theory</b>
Descartes (1596–1650)	I think therefore I am
Locke (1632–1704)	Essence of self is related to consciousness
Kant (1724–1804)	Self as the subject as opposed to self as the object
Mill (1808–1873)	Memory and self are two sides of the same fact or two different ways of looking at the same fact
Bain (1859)	The self is the sum total of all mental and bodily functions
Spencer (1963)	The self is a principle of unity and continuity
Bergson (1975)	The self is one unrefined whole (both past and present)
Peirce (1955; 1960)	The self is defined in terms of reliability and continuity of feelings, actions and ideas
James (1890)	Categorised the self as either the empirical ego (the 'me') or the pure ego (the 'I').
Cooley (1902)	The self is a reflected appraisal that people adopt based on the imagined appraisal of others
Mead (1934)	Individual self is individual only because of its relations to others
Freud (1917)	Associated terms ego, narcissism, well-being, self-regard and self-esteem

To summarise, the majority of theorists see the self as representing an individual's perception of him/herself. A person's perception of the self influences the way in which the person behaves, how the person acts and also the way in which the person perceives him/herself (Battle, 1982). People's views about themselves are the building blocks of self-esteem (Pelham & Swann, 1989). According to Pelham and Swann (1989), the construct of self includes self-esteem and self-concept, and the concepts of self-esteem and self-concept are used interchangeably. Hattie (2014) claims that self-concept relates to identity, whereas self-esteem relates more to what I wish that identity to be. Huitt (2011) claims that self-concept refers to the cognitive or thinking aspect of the self, whereas self-esteem refers to the affective or emotional aspect of the self and generally alludes to how one feel or values him or herself.

From the humanistic personality theories and social psychology perspectives, the conceptualisation of the concept of the self includes the self-concept, self-identity, self-perception, self-regard, self-esteem and self-efficacy. These constructs are discussed further below. Figure 3.1 provides an overview of these constructs that conceptualise self-esteem.

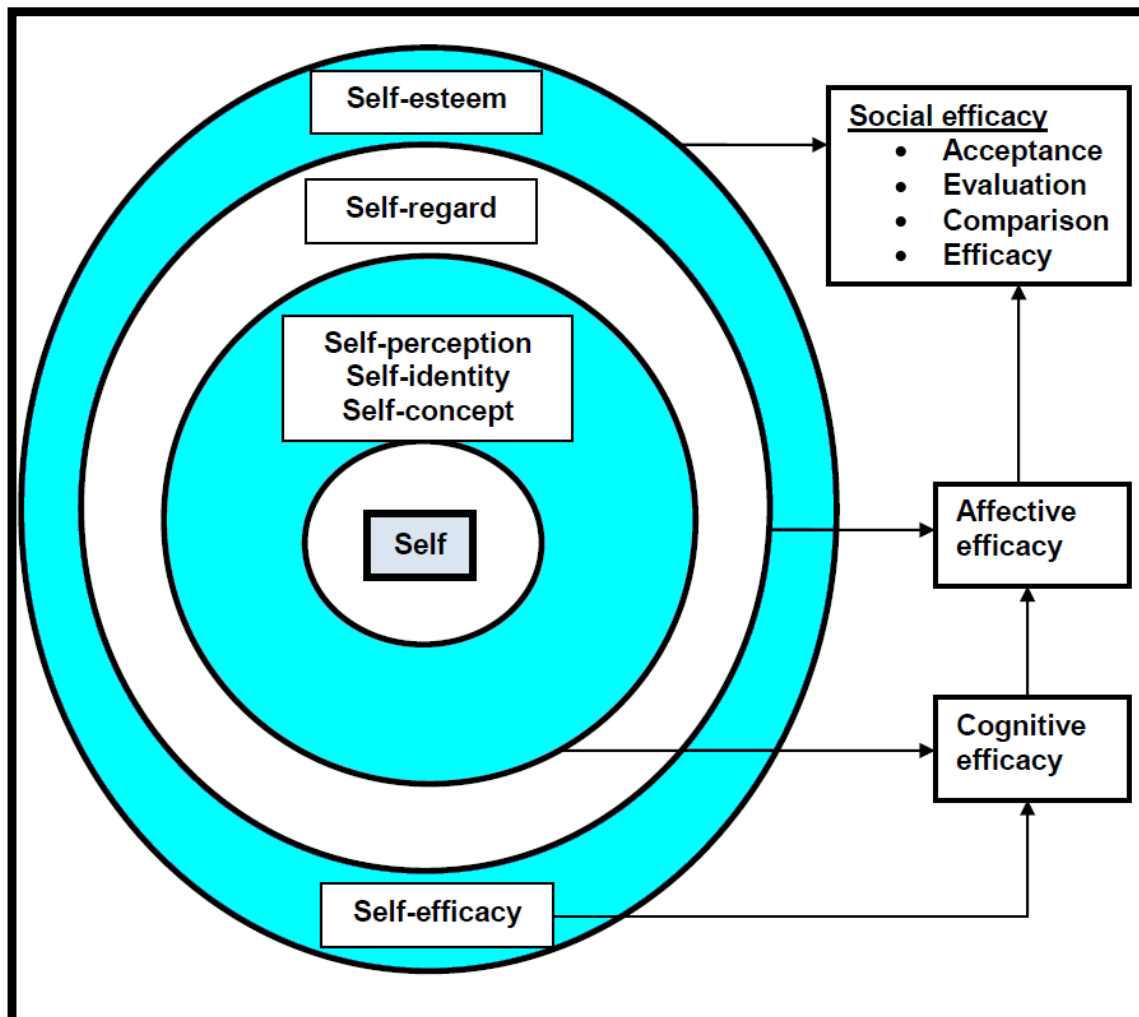


Figure 3.1. The conceptual foundations of self-esteem (Coetzee, 2005, p. 112)

### 3.1.2 Conceptualisation of self-concept

Self-concept, when broadly defined, is a person's perception of him or herself, where these perceptions are formed through experience with and interpretations of one's environment (Marsh & Shavelson, 1985; Shaffer & Kipp, 2014). Cook (2014) claims that, when self-concept is conceptually defined, it is defined as a sense of self, which commences in infancy and is influenced by the primary caretaker. Lynch (2014) mentions that the self-concept is how individuals view themselves. According to Woolfolk, Winne and Perry (2010), self-concept is a cognitive structure – a belief about who you are. Self-concepts are influenced specifically by evaluations by significant others, reinforcements and attributions for one's

own behaviour (Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976). According to Rogers (1959), the self-concept is defined as a global perception of oneself and one's self-esteem reactions. Baumeister (1997) defined self-concept as the total sum of inferences that a person has made about him/herself.

According to Offer (1969), the adolescent self-image is broken down into five global areas of psychosocial functioning:

- The psychological self (including impulse control, emotional health and body image);
- The sexual self;
- The social self (including social functioning and vocational attitudes);
- The familial self (including family functioning); and
- The coping self (including self-reliance, self-confidence and mental health).

Shavelson et al. (1976) posited a multifaceted, hierarchical model of self-concept in which they define self-concept as follows:

- 1) It is multifaceted in that people categorise the vast amount of information they have about themselves and relate these categories to one another. The specific facets reflect the category system adopted by a particular individual and/or shared by a group.
- 2) It is hierarchically organised, with perceptions of behaviour at the base moving to inferences about self in subareas (e.g. academic), then to inferences about self in general.
- 3) The general self-concept is stable, but as one descends the hierarchy, self-concept becomes increasingly situation specific and, as a consequence, less stable.
- 4) Self-concept becomes increasingly multifaceted as the individual moves from infancy to adulthood.
- 5) It has both a descriptive and an evaluative dimension, such that individuals may describe themselves ("I am happy") and evaluate themselves ("I am good at Mathematics").
- 6) It can be differentiated from other constructs such as academic achievement.

Shavelson et al.'s (1976) structure of self-concept is displayed in Figure 3.2 below:

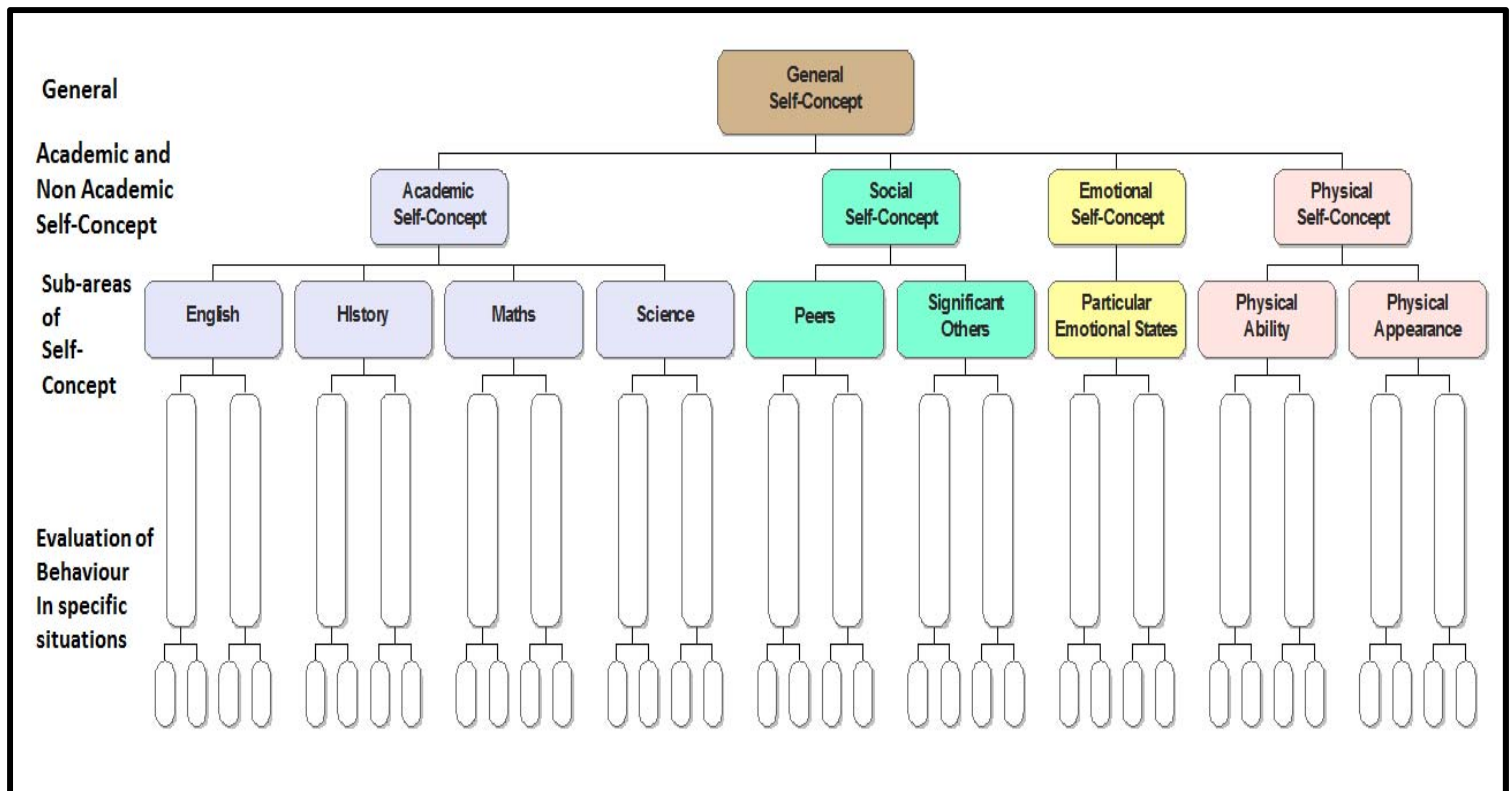


Figure 3.2. Structure of self-concept (Shavelson et al., 1976, p. 413)

### 3.1.3 Conceptualisation of self-identity

Self-identity refers to prominent and enduring aspects of one's self-perception (Dean, Raats, & Shepherd, 2012; Sparks, 2000). Baumeister (1997) refers to self-identity as the definitions that are created for and superimposed on the self. According to Sparks and Guthrie (1998), self-identity refers to the somewhat enduring characteristics that people ascribe to themselves, which incorporate socially given linguistic categorisations. Under this interpretation, social identities (Tajfel, 1978) and role identities (Stryker, 1986) are subsumed as particular kinds of self-identity (Sparks & Guthrie, 1998), or even that an individual's self-identity includes both personal and social identities (Banaji & Holmes, 1994; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994).

According to Baumeister (2012), if identity is regarded as a theory or concept produced from self-knowledge (Epstein, 1973; Schlenker & Leary, 1982), the creation of this identity must be regarded as a process of definition, wherein different features of the self are defined in different ways. There appear to be three main types of self-definition processes, and these are: Type 1 (assigned components of the self); Type 2 (single-transformation achievement); and Type 3 (hierarchical components). Baumeister (2012) then provides two types of self-definition-by-choice, which are Type 4 (optional choice) and Type 5 (required choice). Table 3.2 provides an overview and explanation of the five types discussed above.

Table 3.2

*Self-definition Processes* (Baumeister, 2012, p. 50)

Type	Description	Associated problem	Example
1	Assigned component	None (stable, passive)	Family lineage, gender
2	Single-transformation	Achievement: single self-definition by one standard	Motherhood, knighthood
3	Hierarchy of criteria	Achievement: frequent or continual redefinition of self by one standard	Wealth (in middle class)
4	Optional choice	Choice is available: Alternative options exist, but one option is dominant or clear guidelines exist	Religious or political affiliation (in pluralistic society)
5	Required choice	Person is required to find meta-criteria for choosing among incompatible alternatives	Choice of mate or career (in modern society)

According to Baumeister (2012), medieval identity was mainly defined by passive-stable and transformational (Type 1 and 2) processes, where people were defined by their social rank and relationship network into which they were born. Gender decisively determined the course of one's life. Some traces of hierarchical (Type 3) and perhaps even optional choice (Type 4) processes can be observed in medieval society, but these were probably exceptional.

In the early modern period, self-definition became centrally concerned with the problems characteristic of hierarchical (Type 3) and optional choice (Type 4) processes (Baumeister, 2012). The rise of the middle class entailed an increased use of wealth as a standard of self-definition, with its attendant issues of competition, uncertainty, constant change and discontent. The Protestant schism, and then the subsequent decline of the Christian faith, were the eras in which optional-choice processes were most widespread, in that Protestantism confronted people with an alternative choice to their most fundamental beliefs.

Around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, novels specifically concerned with adolescence appeared in abundance. Victorian adolescents had to define their adult identities by making choices without clear or specific guidelines and amid a general upheaval of cultural values. Such choices reflect required choice (Type 5) self-definition, which has been recognised as a normative feature of human development and labelled *identity crisis*.

Oyserman (2001) refers to an individual's self-concept as an autobiographical knowledge structure that infuses information with meaning, organises memory, and plays a role in regulating cognition and behaviour. However, people are limited when it comes to processing information and thus are unable to access all the self-relevant knowledge at a given time (Sparks & Guthrie, 1998). Alternatively, several levels of self-concept are activated, which comprise one's *working self-concept* (Markus & Kunda, 1986). Three identity levels have been identified: individual, relational or interpersonal, and collective or group (Brewer & Gardner, 1996).

### 3.1.3.1 Individual level

The individual level involves interpersonal comparisons in which one's sense of uniqueness and self-worth are derived from being different—and often better—than others (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Johnson, Chang, & Rosen, 2010). Global self-worth is established through comparing oneself with another person or group of people (Buss, 2001; Kernis, 2006). Identities under the individual level endorse possible selves that display development in terms of personal characteristics, for example by being more skilled, wealthier, healthier or better educated (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Lord, Brown, & Freiberg, 1999). At this level, behaviour is driven by personal attitudes and welfare (Ybarra & Trafimow, 1998). The comparison and development of the above create a powerful image that sustains and justifies current activities (Lord et al., 1999).

### *3.1.3.2 Relational level*

Self-concepts are defined in terms of roles that specify a person's relationship with other individuals, and these self-concepts are motivated by the welfare and role expectations of their partners (Andersen & Chen, 2002; Brewer & Gardner, 1996). Such relationships could include child-parent relationships, student-teacher relationships or subordinate-manager relationships. According to Lord et al. (1999), mutual benefits and interdependent selves become more substantial at this level. Interpersonal-level identities propose that the possible selves should be linked to improved role relationship (being loved and understood by one's parent or spouse and being respected by one's superior and colleagues) (Potgieter, 2012b).

### *3.1.3.3 Collective level*

At the collective level, people define themselves in terms of the social groups to which they belong (Johnson et al., 2010). At this level, people are motivated by the welfare of these groups and internalise collective goals and norms (Jackson, Colquitt, Wesson, & Zapata-Phelan, 2006). If an individual is treated poorly by the group, this poor social treatment communicates to the individual that he or she is not respected or liked by the group. Reflected appraisals are a vital source of self-relevant information at the interpersonal level (Brewer & Gardner, 1996).

### *3.1.3.4 Interdependent identities*

At the relational and collective levels, which are jointly referred to as interdependent identities, self-worth is derived from the quality of relationships with one's partner and group (Johnson et al., 2010). Lord and Brown (2004) suggest that charismatic leaders encourage interdependent identities among their followers, which promote effective group coordination and performance. Other cues include the culture and climate of organisations and the nature of work tasks (e.g., competitive vs. cooperative).

## **3.1.4 Conceptualisation of self-perception**

The constructs of self-perception, self-awareness and self-consciousness are often used interchangeably with the concept of self-identity, specifically in the context of self-appraisals (Gray-Little & Hafdahl, 2000). Self-perceptions can reflect a range of general and specific personal attributes, including those of physical characteristics, behavioural tendencies and domains of competency (Jussim, 2005; Salley, Vannatta, Gerhardt, & Noll, 2010; Shavelson et al., 1976). The motivation to see oneself positively influences one's behaviour, thinking



and feeling (Dunning, 1999; Sanitioso & Niedenthal, 2006; Sedikides & Strube, 1997; Weinstein, 1980). It is for this reason that people tend to view themselves as described by attributes they believe are related to success and other desirable outcomes (Dunning & McElwee, 1995; Dunning, Meyerowitz & Holzberg, 1989; Kunda & Sanitioso, 1989; Sanitioso & Niedenthal, 2006). Self-perceptions are shaped in a large part by the results of one's interpretation of interactions with others, direct feedback from others, and social comparison (Cooley, 1902; Ruble, Boggiano, Feldman, & Loebel, 1980). According to Luft (1969), accuracy of self-perception is related to the accuracy of perception of significant others.

Self-perception theory was proposed by Bem (1965; 1972), who claimed that people learn about themselves much as they learn about others, that is, by observing behaviours and making inferences. The core idea is that people learn about themselves the same way they learn about others: they see what the person does and they draw conclusions about traits that produce such acts (Baumeister, 2010).

Sanitioso and colleagues (e.g., Brunot & Sanitioso, 2004; Sanitioso, Kunda, & Fong, 1990; Sanitioso & Niedenthal, 2006) identified selective recall as a process underlying motivated self-perception: people are more likely to remember past behaviours or self-information that infer possession of a desired attribute than those that imply the opposite. Physical self-perceptions have been shown to be positively related to social enhancement (Fox, 1990) and psychological well-being (Sonstroem & Potts, 1996). Individual characteristics (such as interpersonal orientation, locus of control, intelligence, analytical ability and levels of self-esteem) influence people's self-ratings and therefore their self-perception (Theron & Roodt, 2001). Therefore, physical self-perceptions serve an important role in the initiation and continuation of physical activity behaviour, and act as an important outcome to increase global self-esteem and psychological well-being (Fox, 1997).

### **3.1.5 Conceptualisation of self-regard**

Positive regard is defined as the need to be loved, cared for, noticed and accepted by other people (Rogers, 1959). In addition, positive self-regard includes feelings of self-confidence and self-worth. People value all those experiences that meet their need for positive regard. After the self emerges, people begin to develop self-regard as a result of the frustration or satisfaction of their need for positive self-regard (Rogers, 1959).

According to Patterson and Joseph (2013), infants have a basic and universal need for positive regard from the world around them and, as they become aware of the separation

between self and others, this need comes into play. The infant and then the child learn to respond in ways that result in receiving love and affection from parents, caregivers and significant others. Some children subjected to abuse and criticism do not find ways to satisfy their need for positive self-regard. However, as love and affection from others can be communicated either conditionally or unconditionally, the child's positive self-regard can take two forms: (1) when children perceive themselves to be unconditionally regarded, they learn to trust in their own experiencing, and (2) when they perceive themselves as conditionally regarded, a conflict is established in which they learn that in order to be loved (positively regarded), they must not trust their own experiencing (Patterson & Joseph, 2013).

Maslow (1970) added to the literature by claiming that people need to satisfy their need for love and belongingness before their self-esteem needs can become active. Once people begin to feel confident and worthy, they no longer require a replenishing supply of love and approval from others. In conclusion, self-regard seems to be the affective aspect of self-esteem, which includes feelings of self-confidence and self-worth (Potgieter, 2012b).

### **3.1.6 Conceptualisation of self-efficacy**

Self-efficacy is defined as a personal judgement of "how well one can execute courses of actions required to deal with prospective situations" (Bandura, 1982, p. 122). Self-efficacy refers to the belief that one is capable of achieving one's goals (Fort, Jacquet, & Leroy, 2011). According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy differs from self-esteem and self-concept in that it consists of an individual's task-specific beliefs in his or her ability to perform particular goal-directed actions. Self-efficacy is understood as related causally to the consequent actions or performance with which it is related (Martin & McLellan, 2013).

Self-efficacy influences thought patterns, actions and emotional arousal (Bandura, 1982). A lack of self-efficacy hampers task completion, while a high level of self-efficacy expedites task completion (Beefink, Van Eerde, Rutte, & Bertrand, 2012). Self-efficacy has been used as a motivating tool to create and sustain self-learning and development and has been shown to be related to a variety of organisational outcomes, including job performance and career development (Hackett & Bretz, 1981; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). There is extensive research on the effect of self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997) and of personal goals (Locke & Latham, 2002) on task and job performance (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998).

Self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; 2002; 2006; 2008) is regarded as one of the internal/psychological variables that affect the career development and career choices of both men

and women (Hackett & Bretz, 1981). According to Betz and Fitzgerald (1987), women tend to feel less efficacious in considering traditionally male-dominated educational majors and careers because of cultural (e.g., gender-role socialisation), subcultural (e.g., race and religion), and familial factors (e.g., maternal education).

### **3.1.7 Conceptualisation of self-esteem**

According to Konrath and Anderson (2012), in 1642, John Milton introduced the term self-esteem to English literature in positive terms as a temperament that might prevent one from falling into a sinful kind of sacrilegious love. A published use of self-esteem in the negative – as sinful pride and self-aggrandisement – came no later than 1657 (from the works of an austere Christian monk) (Hattie, 2014).

James (1890) was the first to view self-esteem as a psychological concept when he defined self-esteem as the appreciation of the self, comprising of feelings and emotions toward the self. He conceptualised self-esteem as an equation of self-evaluation – a ratio of our “pretensions” divided by our “successes” (James, 1890, p. 310). He believed that one holds an average level of self-feeling at all times, irrespective of objective reality, and thus viewed self-esteem as a trait.

Cooley (1902), best known for his conceptualisation of the looking-glass self, in which the self is determined by perceptions of others’ judgements, thus observed that who we believe ourselves to be is very much tied to our social environment. We imagine ourselves to be what others think us to be, including all of our aspects such as our character, looks, beliefs, and so forth. Under this understanding, a person’s self-esteem is based on the impressions of others. If people hold a negative view of us, we then tend to hold a negative view of ourselves.

Mead (1934) viewed the self as a product of interactions in which individuals experience themselves as reflected in the behaviour of others. Although Mead (1934) did not refer to the concept of self-esteem directly, he spoke about the self-evaluation being an attitude toward the self, which is consistent with most of the definitions of self-esteem discussed below. Mead (1934) believed that the self develops from the continual interaction of the ‘I’ (the subjective, private, experiencing part of the self) with the ‘Me’ (the objective, social aspect of the self). The ‘I’ consists only of the awareness of experiences of thinking and feeling and is present from infancy. The ‘Me’ grows gradually in children as they develop the ability to perceive objects distinct from themselves.

Neo-Freudian theorist Horney (1950) stated that every individual is born with a unique potential and that self-esteem derives from achieving that potential. Sullivan (1953) posited that self-esteem is the social need to be accepted and liked and to belong that is derived from social interaction facilitated by reflected self-appraisal.

Adler (1956) theorised that people construct their own views of self: they strive for meaning; they work toward the goal of wholeness; and they strive for superiority. Adler (1956) also did not refer to self-esteem directly; instead, he used the term self-acceptance, which entails perceptions of competence and achievement consistent with the definition of self-esteem. Adler (1956) believed in coping with rather than avoiding life's problems.

Allport (1961) saw the development of self-esteem as a central issue in early childhood. He equated self-esteem with the sense of pride that comes from recognition when one is able to do things on one's own. White (1963) stated that self-esteem has two sources: an internal source of a sense of accomplishment, and an external source of affirmation from others.

Rogers (1951) defined self-esteem as the extent to which people like, value and accept themselves. Rogers (1951) believed that the self develops from a combination of what is experienced and interjected, derived from values and affective preferences. The individual conceptualises an ideal self or the "person you would like to be"; the actual self-image or "the person you think you are"; and the true self, or "the person you actually are". The more congruent the three aspects are, the healthier the self-esteem.

Maslow (1968) included self-esteem as a basic need, second only to self-actualisation, and emphasised the fundamental importance of self-actualisation for understanding the self. This general scheme was derived from the work of Heidegger (1962), according to whom the present self has a number of potentialities for future being; some of these become fulfilled, whereas others do not. This guiding concept of potential fulfilment gives meaning and purpose to the present self (Baumeister, 2012).

Coopersmith (1967) and Rosenberg (1965; 1979) were the first researchers to develop theories of self-esteem as a significant personality construct grounded in empirical methods. Rosenberg (1965) researched the development of the self-image during adolescence and its consequences for adolescents and adults. He emphasised the self-image as a global aspect of the personality and concluded that self-esteem is an attitude toward a specific object, the self. Each characteristic of the self is evaluated and results in an estimate of that characteristic. Every element of the self is evaluated according to a value that has developed

during childhood and adolescence. Feedback from others, particularly significant others, is a key element of self-esteem.

Coopersmith (1967) researched the development of self-esteem in pre-secondary school children and believed self-esteem to be a more complex phenomenon, consisting of self-evaluation and manifestations of defensive reactions to that evaluation. Coopersmith (1967) claimed that self-esteem is comprised of two parts – subjective expression and behavioural manifestation – and self-esteem thus is a self-evaluation of personal worthiness. Branden (1969) defined self-esteem as a standard by which one judges oneself, an estimate, an emotion, and as the understanding that we are adequate for life and its requirements.

Epstein's (1973) cognitive-experiential self-theory views self-esteem as a basic human need, views self-enhancement as a basic motive and, when conceptualised, self-esteem is a consequence of one's understanding of the world and others, and who one is in relation to them. It was Epstein (1973) that noted that there are different levels of self-esteem, which will be discussed in section 3.1.8.1. The self tries to maintain equilibrium through compromises among various motives. This accounts for how people with low or high self-esteem respond to positive and negative feedback differently.

Gecas (1982) differentiated between self-esteem based on a sense of competence, power or efficacy and self-esteem based on a sense of virtue or moral worth. Self-esteem based on competence involves effective performance and is associated with self-attribution and social comparison processes. Self-esteem based on self-worth is associated with values and norms of personal and interpersonal conduct.

Harter (1999) discussed both global and domain-specific evaluations of the self. She believes that it is necessary to distinguish between self-evaluations that represent global characteristics of the individual (e.g. I am a worthwhile person) and those that reflect the individual's sense of adequacy across particular domains, such as one's cognitive competence, social competence, athletic competence and so forth. She points out that general self-esteem is not a summary of self-evaluations of different domains.

For many recent neo-Freudians, self-esteem is related to narcissism, that is, the ability to love oneself (Goldberg, 1982; Kohut, 1971; 1977; Samuels, 1977). According to Jacobson (1964), self-esteem is greatly dependent on achievement.

Self-esteem can be defined as an objective perception of one's self and of one's own personality, which refers to that more or less organised set of representations that one has of oneself: we can call it the idea of self (Ceccatelli & Di Battista, 2012). Self-esteem is regarded as one's evaluation of one's worth as a person based on an evaluation of the qualities that form the self-concept (Shaffer & Kipp, 2014).

A person's self-esteem is defined as a relatively stable sense of personal worth influenced by external valuations (Rosenberg, 1965) and includes both a cognitive and affective component (Rosenberg, Schooler, Schoenbach, & Rosenberg, 1995). It is regarded as the evaluative aspect of self-knowledge that concerns the extent to which people like themselves (Brown & Marshall, 2006; Pulido-Martos, Augusto-Landa, & Lopez-Zafra, 2012). In other words, self-esteem implies personal feelings of respect and value that a person feels about him/herself (Pulido-Martos et al., 2012).

Carlock (1999) provided a list of definitions of self-esteem that can be viewed in Table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3

*Definitions of Self-esteem* (Carlock, 1999, p. 6)

Author	Definition
Bednar and Peterson (1989)	Posited that an enduring sense of realistic self-appraisal, which reflects how the person views and values the self, is directly related to the degree to which the individual chooses to cope and face with challenges, rather than to avoid them, regardless of the outcome (similar to Allport, 1961)
Horney (1992; 1994)	Believed that each person is born with unique potential, and that self-esteem derives from achieving that potential. High self-esteem comes from cultivating one's talents, yet the self only flourishes with interpersonal recognition, affirmation, validation, encouragement and support.

James (1890)	Defined self-esteem as the degree to which one can achieve one's goals and aspirations, or the ratio between one's accomplishments and one's supposed potentialities.
Josephs (1992, p. 91)	Stated that self-esteem refers to "how highly one regards oneself". Saw two dimensions of self-esteem: self-acceptance in belonging and pride in individuality.
May (1973)	Regarded autonomy as crucial to self-esteem. Stressed the inevitable anxiety that comes from asserting one's individuality in the face of external pressures to be different. If one can withstand that pressure, self-esteem is strengthened.
Sullivan (1953)	Viewed self-esteem as a social need to be liked and accepted, to belong, to fit in. Believed self-esteem is derived from social interaction mediated by reflected self-appraisals, and is maintained by conforming to social expectations and resisting unacceptable roles.

Self-esteem is derived from two sources: how a person views his performance in areas important to him, and how a person believes he is perceived by significant others, such as parents, teachers or peers (Orenstein, 1994; Rosenberg, 1965). Self-esteem affects motivation, functional behaviour and life satisfaction, and is significantly related to well-being throughout life. It is possible that behaviours meant to maintain and enhance a positive sense of self are universal, that self-esteem is a basic human need (Greenberg, 2008).

In summary, self-esteem is defined as a socially constructed emotion indicating feelings about and perceptions of an individual's numerous self-concepts and self-images, which are based on the psychological need for acceptance and belonging within an individual's social group, and the desire for effective and accurate functioning, competence and achievement in comparison to other members of one's group (Battle, 1992; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Coetzee, 2005; Maslow, 1970; Potgieter, 2012a).

### 3.1.8 The structural components of self-esteem

In this section, the types and levels of self-esteem, followed by the stability of self-esteem and the enhancement of self-esteem, will be discussed.

### 3.1.8.1 *Types and levels of self-esteem*

Epstein (1973) noted that there are different levels of self-esteem: global, intermediate and situational. Global self-esteem is the general evaluation of the self. Intermediate involves specific domains, such as competence, lovability, self-control and body appearance. Situational is the day-to-day manifestation of self-esteem that varies with circumstances. According to Epstein (1973), global and intermediate self-esteem affect situational self-esteem. Epstein (1973) says the self tries to maintain equilibrium through compromises among various motives, which accounts for how people with low or high self-esteem respond differently to positive and negative feedback.

Mruk (2013) suggests that, while self-esteem has long been divided into two basic types (viz. high self-esteem and low self-esteem), it is now possible to see each of these types as having different levels. High and low types of self-esteem are relatively standard descriptions of the types of self-esteem; however, Mruk (2013) refers to a third type of self-esteem that has been given many names, such as fragile, insecure, paradoxical, pseudo, unstable and defensive self-esteem (Mruk, 2013). Mruk (2013) calls this type defensive self-esteem and reasons that this type of self-esteem always involves a state of vulnerability that results in some form of defensiveness as a way of regulating the self when threatened. Mruk (2013) mentions that there are several types of self-esteem, each of which manifest itself in one of two ways, called levels (displayed in Table 3.3.).

It is important to distinguish between defensive self-esteem and medium self-esteem (Mruk, 2013). Most self-esteem measures assess three basic groups: people with low self-esteem, people with high self-esteem and everyone else; the latter appears to be the vast majority, which is regarded by many researchers as those with medium self-esteem (Mruk, 2013). Medium self-esteem is regarded as being a low level of high self-esteem because it is more positive than negative (Coopersmith, 1959; 1967; Mruk, 2013). Defensive self-esteem, as discussed above, is a type of self-esteem and not a level of self-esteem. Mruk (2013) provided a table that integrates the types and levels of self-esteem (see Table 3.4 below):



Table 3.4

*Types and Levels of Self-esteem* (Mruk, 2013, p. 160)

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Defensive self-esteem I: (Worthiness based)</b></p> <p>A. <u>General type</u>: Unstable or fragile self-esteem characterised by a low sense of competence, compensated for by focusing on or exaggerating one's sense of worthiness or importance, sometimes at others' expense.</p> <p>B. <u>Levels</u>:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Acceptance seeking: Self-esteem often contingent on approval or acceptance from others. Prone to being dependent, sensitive to criticism and rejection.</li> <li>2. Narcissistic: Exaggerated sense of worth regardless of competence level, sense of entitlement, and very reactive to criticism. Vulnerable to defensive acting out when threatened personally or socially.</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>High self-esteem:</b></p> <p>A. <u>General type</u>: Relatively stable or secure self-esteem characterised by higher degrees of self-awareness and openness to experience. Realistic optimism and lower levels of defensiveness. Usually satisfied with life and relationships.</p> <p>B. <u>Levels</u>:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Medium: Stable sense of adequacy in terms of competence and worthiness, interested in more. Future oriented. Easily the most common type and level of self-esteem.</li> <li>2. Authentic: General sense of realistic competence and solid worthiness. Actively concerned with living out positive, intrinsic values. Relationships likely to be characterised by openness, mutual respect and support.</li> </ol>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Low self-esteem:</b></p> <p>A. <u>General type</u>: Relatively stable, reduced level of self-esteem characterised by a concern to avoid further loss of competence and worthiness. Often involves lower levels of relational or life satisfaction.</p> <p>B. <u>Levels</u>:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Negativistic: Generally cautious style of self-regulation, focuses on self-protection. May be negativistic or pessimistic, but is generally functioning in life and in relationships.</li> <li>2. Depressed: Impaired functioning due to a low sense of ability and worth. Often in poor relationships. Vulnerable to depression, giving up, various forms of dependency, self-abuse or suicide.</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Defensive self-esteem II: (Competence based)</b></p> <p>A. <u>General type</u>: Unstable, often fragile self-esteem characterised by low sense of worthiness that is compensated for by focusing on competence and success, sometimes even at the expense of others.</p> <p>B. <u>Levels</u>:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Achievement-seeking: Self-esteem contingent on garnering successes or achievements. Anxious about and sensitive to failure. Often rigid, may seem perfectionistic, and driven toward goals at cost of self or relationships.</li> <li>2. Antisocial: Exaggerated need for success or power. Self-esteem easily threatened when faced with loss or criticism. Can involve very aggressive forms of acting out in order to succeed or defend fragile sense of worth.</li> </ol>

A wealth of research suggests that people with low self-esteem respond less adaptively than do people with high self-esteem when faced with negative events (Heimpel, Wood, Marshall, & Brown, 2012). After a failure, people with low self-esteem are less likely than people with high self-esteem to make external ascriptions (Blaine & Crocker, 1993), to work hard to improve their performance (McFarlin, Baumeister, & Blascovich, 1984), and to emphasise their strengths in areas that are unrelated to the failure (Baumeister, 1982; Dodgson & Wood, 1998).

High levels of self-esteem tend to be associated with positive outcomes such as productivity (e.g. academic achievement, occupational success) and psychological adjustment (e.g. subjective well-being, persistence when faced with adversity) (Zeigler-Hill, 2012). People with high self-esteem have high satisfaction with their lives (Diener, 1984), and are less likely to be depressed or anxious (Crandall, 1973; Tennen & Herzberger, 1987). On the other hand, too much self-esteem has been linked to defensiveness and aggressive behaviour when threatened (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996; Heatherton & Vohs, 2000). Irrespective of the way that self-esteem is measured, there have been increases in the self-esteem and positive self-evaluation of children, high school students and college students since the late 1960s (Gentile, Twenge, & Campbell, 2010; Konrath & Anderson, 2012; Twenge & Campbell, 2001; Twenge, Campbell, & Gentile, 2011).

### *3.1.8.2 Stability of self-esteem*

Self-esteem is found to be relatively stable over the lifespan; however, it tends to increase with age, peak around 60, and then tends to decline (Orth, Trzesniewski, & Robins, 2010). Even with limited research-based evidence it has been reasoned that major transitions in life, like adults' retirement or exit from working life, might contribute to a normative decline in self-esteem (Orth, Robins, Trzesniewski, Maes, & Schmitt, 2009). According to Trzesniewski, Donnellan, and Robins (2003), the stability of self-esteem is lowest in childhood and early adolescence and becomes much stronger later in adolescence and in early adulthood.

Robins, Trzesniewski, Tracey, Gosling, and Potter (2002) reported that the trend in self-esteem for both males and females showed a meaningful decline between ages nine and 20, followed by a recovery and gradual increase in self-worth from young adulthood to about age 65, when self-esteem begins to decline again among the elderly. Another recent longitudinal study revealed a similar pattern of rising self-esteem and psychological well-being between the ages of 18 and 25, with the largest increases shown by emerging adults

who had gotten married and/or experienced increases in social support from family, friends, co-workers and romantic partners (Galambos, Barker, & Krahn, 2006).

Most scholars support the idea that self-esteem decreases in early adolescence, with considerable declines in academic motivation and achievement and sense of self-worth (Baldwin & Hoffman, 2002; Robins & Trzesniewski, 2005). Although some adolescents experience temporary or persisting declines in self-esteem after school transitions, self-esteem rises for most young people, who report feeling good about their peer relationships and athletic capabilities (Cole et al., 2001; Twenge & Campbell, 2001).

### *3.1.8.3 Enhancement of self-esteem*

Self-enhancement theory (Baumeister, 1982) is the foundation of the importance of self-esteem. According to this theory, self-esteem is an essential human motive (Rosenberg et al., 1995). It is often called the “self-maintenance motive” (Tesser & Campbell, 1983) or the “motive of self-worth” (Covington, 1984), which implores the individual to “protect and enhance his/her feelings of self-worth, as the frustration of these desires generates some measures of psychological distress” (Rosenberg et al., 1995, p. 145). Low self-esteem operates as a risk factor for depressive symptoms in all phases of the life span (Orth et al., 2009). Low self-esteem is associated with vulnerability to stress (Crocker & Park, 2004), poorer well-being (Kernis, 2006), and poor performance (Crocker & Luthanen, 2003).

Many theorists argue that higher self-esteem is not the cure that many in society believe it to be (Baumeister et al., 2003; Damon, 1995; Hewitt, 1998). However, it is generally assumed that higher self-esteem is desirable and therefore is considered valuable to enhance an individual's self-esteem (Bednar, Wells, & Peterson; 1989; Pope, McHale, & Craighead, 1988; Potgieter, 2012b; Sappington, 1989). Shavelson et al. (1976) claimed that self-esteem is resistant to change because of its stability. However, despite the quality of self-esteem being resistant to change, Coopersmith (1967) and Kernis (2006) found that self-esteem can be altered and thus enhanced. Frey and Carlock (1989) believe that human interaction with the environment is more likely to influence and therefore enhance self-esteem than interaction without human meaning (Frey & Carlock, 1989). Frey and Carlock (1989) believe that the self (and therefore self-esteem) is constantly changing and striving to improve. Several factors influence the enhancement of the self. Figure 3.3 provides an overview of the self in process.

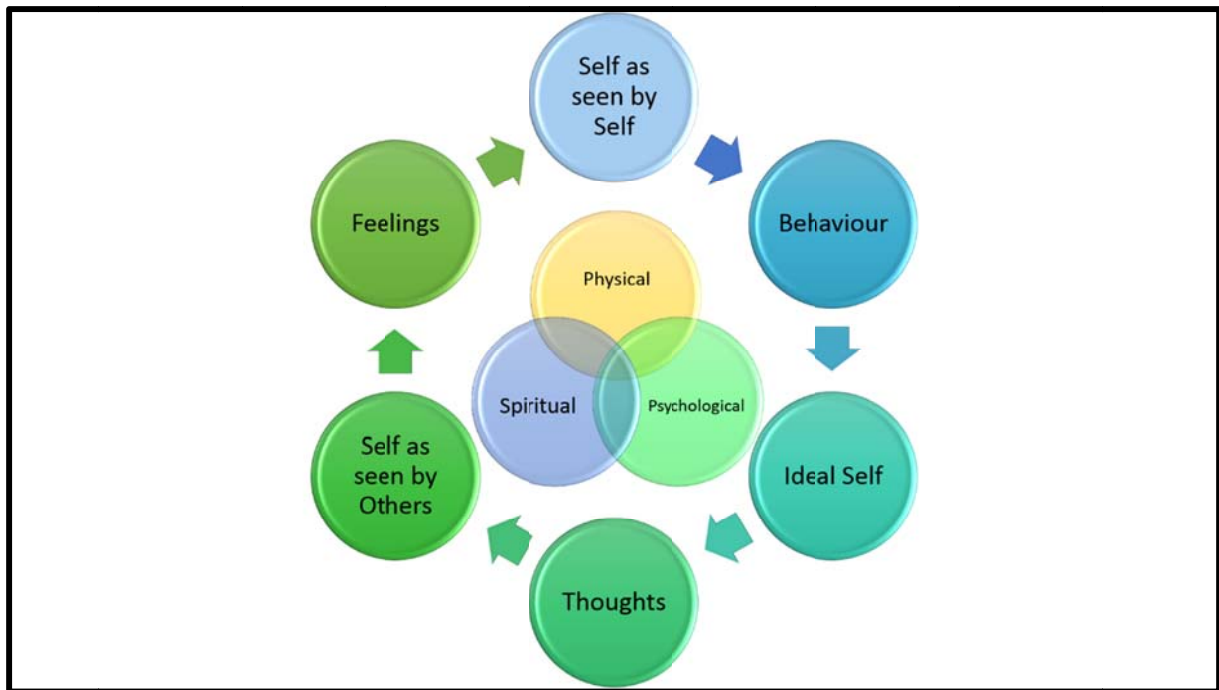


Figure 3.3. Self in process (Pietrofesa, 1971, p. 88)

According to Kernis (2006), self-esteem can be enhanced by increasing the importance of certain fields in which one feels adequate, and decreasing the importance of success in fields where one feels less adequate. Kernis (2006) identified the following as possible solutions in enhancing self-esteem:

- Attributing failures to external or unstable causes, while attributing success to one's own qualities.
- Selectively remembering all successes, focusing on positive qualities and spending more time thinking about them.
- Comparing oneself to others who are less successful than oneself.

DuBrin (2014) mentions that improving self-esteem is a lifelong process because self-esteem is related to the success of an individual's activities and interactions with people. The following approaches to enhancing self-esteem are noted:

1. Attain legitimate accomplishments
2. Be aware of personal strengths
3. Minimise settings and interactions that detract from your feelings of competence
4. Talk and socialise frequently with people who boost your self-esteem
5. Model the behaviour of people with high self-esteem

Mruk (2006) suggests that an individual's self-esteem can be enhanced by working with and increasing a person's competence and feelings of self-worth. In addition, Mruk (2006) found that self-esteem could be enhanced more effectively in a group setting than for an individual to try to enhance self-esteem in an individual setting. Mruk (2006) delineated eight areas common to self-esteem programmes that lead to effective self-esteem enhancement:

1. Acceptance and caring. Practitioners employ the humanistic approach of "unconditional positive regard" introduced by Rogers (1951). They develop rapport and build a working alliance.
2. Consistent positive (affirming) feedback. The practitioner can become a significant other to the client. Feedback must be authentic.
3. Cognitive restructuring. Mruk (2006) discusses three steps in how to use positive self-feedback: identifying problematic habits, labelling them, and substituting more rational or realistic responses. This is similar to rational-emotive behavioural therapy and is expected to result in new habits in thinking, feeling and acting.
4. Natural self-esteem moments. Because self-esteem is lived phenomenologically, clients can be taught to increase their awareness of the role of self-esteem in their lived experiences and make changes in the moment. Consciousness-raising techniques, challenge and support foster change.
5. Assertiveness training. Programmes that teach assertiveness skills are grounded in the belief in human worth and rights. "A deep sense of worth and actual behavioural competence at preserving it appears to be helpful in enhancing self-esteem."
6. Modelling. Exposure to those with appropriate levels of self-esteem, including the therapist, can assist the client in learning to model competence and worthiness.
7. Problem-solving skills. Since coping with life's challenges effectively is related to self-esteem, teaching clients how to solve their own problems can increase chances of success and increase competence, and hence self-esteem.
8. Opportunities for practice. Mruk (2006) emphasises that practice is the most important factor. Enhancing self-esteem takes time and practice. Old thoughts and actions must be unlearned and new, more facilitative ones learned over time.

Ceccatelli and Di Battista (2012) mention that schools can enhance the self-esteem of pupils through:

1. Collaborative and active learning;
2. The legitimacy and appreciation of differences; and
3. Reflection on learning processes.

Carlock (1999) proposed a model for enhancing self-esteem that incorporates working with self-awareness and skills development to modify self-esteem. The model consists of five phases, as shown in Figure 3.4.

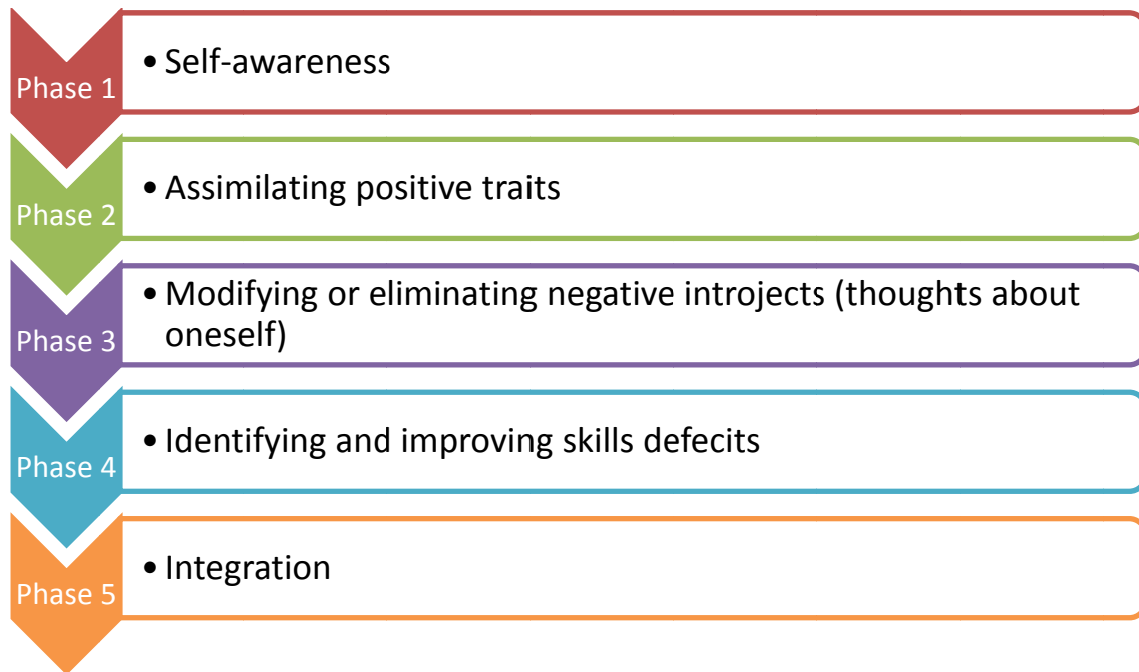


Figure 3.4. Model for enhancing self-esteem

**Phase 1:** Self-awareness. Self-awareness involves learning to observe ourselves objectively. Through this awareness process we begin to identify how we define ourselves and the origins of those self-definitions, after which we then are able to decide if our beliefs are accurate or distorted and whether we choose to alter, adjust, dispute or add traits that more precisely reflect our current selves.

**Phase 2:** Assimilating positive traits. Catching yourself in the act of exhibiting a trait and identifying the information that supports that trait is quite effective in promoting the assimilation process. Identifying memories, relationships, life experiences or events when you experienced or expressed these traits also facilitates assimilation.

### **Phase 3: Modifying or eliminating negative introjects (thoughts about oneself)**

Carlock (1999) states that, in order to modify or eliminate negative introjects, one should follow the steps below:

1. Identify the negative introjects in clear and specific terms
2. Examine the impact of each introject
3. Examine the source of each introject
4. Decide whether you want to keep, alter or give up each introject
5. Identify the exact revision you want to assimilate
6. Recognise that old patterns die hard

### **Phase 4: Identifying and improving skills deficits**

Some people have lowered self-esteem as a result of skills deficits in a variety of areas, probably due to a lack of good modelling and narrowed experience. Thus, by identifying and improving skills deficits, Carlock (1999) mentions that self-esteem can be enhanced.

### **Phase 5: Integration**

This phase involves refining, practising, continued awareness building and relapse prevention. Identifying situations that present potential challenges to your self-esteem, anticipating and preparing for such events whenever possible, paying close attention to evidence of positive core traits and beliefs prior to the event, and bolstering self-support and interpersonal supports are a few examples of relapse-prevention strategies (Carlock, 1999).

According to Branden (1974), there are several approaches to enhance self-esteem in students. The *cognitive approach* places emphasis on developing positive mental attitudes, assisting students to think about their feelings and to adopt healthier methods of interpreting or relating to the events that take place in their lives. The *behavioural approach* strives to develop specific functional behaviours in students that allow them to display behaviours that command higher levels of respect from others and create greater self-esteem in themselves. The *experiential approach* offers positive experiences for students to accumulate feelings of self-respect and self-esteem, where most of the activities under this approach depend on external sources of feedback and reinforcement. The *skills development approach*, consistent with the beliefs of Carlock (1999), is an approach that provides a number of programmes to build self-esteem by improving the functional communication skills, decision-making skills or social skills of students. These programmes are based on the concept that

only if students actually function at a higher level are they able to sustain positive feelings about themselves. Finally, the *environmental approach* is a more holistic approach that organises the environment and the activities students engage in to develop particular attitudes and skills that lead to self-esteem. This approach tends to address aspects such as discipline, social activities, goal setting, responsibility, and the way that adults interact with students (Branden, 1974).

From the discussion above, it is evident that self-esteem can be altered and enhanced. It is interesting to note that many of the authors state that one way in which self-esteem can be enhanced is through the acquisition and improvement of skills.

### **3.1.9 Models of self-esteem**

For the purposes of this study, Battle's (1992) model of self-esteem will be discussed.

#### *3.1.9.1 Battle's model of self-esteem*

Battle's (1992) model of self-esteem is applicable to this study, as the underlying principles of this model allow the construct of self-esteem to be studied in a socially embedded context such as the workplace. Battle (1982; 1992) supports the multidimensional theoretical approach to defining the construct of self-esteem.

##### *(a) The dimensions of self-esteem*

Self-esteem consists of a number of dimensions, and these are general, social, academic and parent-related self-esteem for children, and general, social and personal self-esteem for adults (Battle, 1982). General self-esteem refers to an individual's overall perceptions of and feelings about their worth. Social self-esteem refers to the individual's perception and feelings of the quality of his/her relationships with peers. Personal self-esteem refers to an individual's most intimate perceptions and feelings of self. In combination, these three dimensions make up an individual's overall self-esteem. In addition, each of these components of global self-esteem consists of various factors, such as cognitive factors (self-evaluations, sense of self-efficacy), affective factors (subjective feelings, mood) and interpersonal needs (social acceptance by others) (Battle, 1982). Table 3.5 provides an overview of these dimensions and their underlying principles.



Table 3.5

*The Dimensions and Principles Underlying Self-esteem According to Battle's (1992) Model of Self-esteem* (Coetzee, 2005, p. 139)

<b>General</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of psychological well-being</li> <li>• Self-efficacious functioning in terms of cultural criteria of success and happiness</li> <li>• Self-acceptance/self-expression</li> </ul>
<b>Social</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acceptance/belongingness</li> <li>• Evaluation</li> <li>• Comparison</li> <li>• Efficacy</li> </ul>
<b>Personal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional self-awareness</li> <li>• Mood/state (anxiety, depression, hurt, worry)</li> <li>• Self-regard (physical)</li> </ul>

*(b) The psychological roots of self-esteem*

Battle's (1992) psychological understanding of self-esteem is rooted in the four ideas of acceptance, evaluation, comparison and efficacy. The self, at first, is vague, poorly integrated and rather uneven, but as a child matures and interacts with significant others, the self becomes increasingly differentiated. The self therefore represents the result of a person's inherent make-up and life experiences (Battle, 1992). Once established, cognitive and affective self-evaluations of self-worth and self-efficacy tend to be rather stable and resistant to change (Battle, 1992). These self-evaluations motivate the individual to choose objectives and goals that are consistent with or similar to them. Parents have the greatest influence on self-development (self-esteem) and, as a result, the child's self reflects the appraisals of his or her parents. The self-system is therefore rooted in interpersonal relationships and is greatly influenced by reflected appraisals (Battle, 1992).

### *(c) Self-esteem as a socially constructed emotion*

Battle's (1992) measurement of self-esteem tries to encapsulate the reality of the experience of the self within a specific social context from the view of the individual. Self-esteem is described as a socially situated experience and does not only consist of constant or variable psychological states. The socially constructed emotions that either increase or decrease self-esteem take place at predictable times and are embedded in a Western societal culture, with its particular notions about status relationships, success or failure in the achievement of socially prescribed goals, and the actual or imagined evaluative judgments of others (Battle, 1992; Hewitt, 2002). According to Hewitt (2002), this approach makes self-esteem more dependent upon the situation and its demands and therefore implies that people manage their self-esteem in a similar manner to the way in which they manage their emotions. Thus, within limits, people can lower or raise their self-esteem in response to role requirements, presenting a self with appropriate manifestations. A positive sense of identity (of which self-esteem is a key measure) is vitally important because it is essential to empathic role taking, the capacity to see and to identify with another person's point of view (Hewitt, 2002). The understanding of self-esteem in the workplace forges the affective link between the self and others. Discussion of self-esteem in the workplace encourages people to explore the nature and significance of the social bond and the affective link they have with other people (Hewitt, 2002; Kanfer & Klimoski, 2002).

#### **3.1.10 Variables influencing self-esteem**

The influence of gender, age and race on an individual's self-esteem will be discussed in this section.

##### **3.1.10.1 Gender**

Orth et al. (2010) suggest that gender moderates the trajectory of self-esteem across the life span. It appears that gender differences are greater in adolescence and young adulthood, but that the average trajectories of men and women converge in old age. However, Xu, Farver, Yu, and Zhang (2009) reported no gender differences with regard to self-esteem.

According to Ahmad, Imran, Khanam, and Riaz (2013), gender affects changes in self-esteem during the adolescent years in that females display lower self-esteem in adolescence (Bachman, O'Malley, Freedman-Doan, Trzesniewski, & Donnellan, 2011; Cairns, McWhirter, Duffy, & Barry, 1990; Chubb, Fertman, & Ross, 1997; Mäkinen, Puukko-

Viertomies, Lindberg, Niimes, & Aalberg, 2012; Martinez & Dukes, 1991; Quatman & Watson, 2001), while males may have higher global self-esteem than females (Alpert-Gillis & Connell, 1989; Harper & Marshall, 1991; Steitz & Owen, 1992; Verkuyten, 1986), or there may be no difference between the genders (Erol & Orth, 2011; Kohr, Coldiron, Skiffington, Masters, & Blust, 1988; Mullis, Mullis, & Normandin, 1992; Osborne & LeGette, 1982; Schwalbe & Staples, 1991).

Harter (1999) also found a drop in self-esteem during adolescence that affects both genders, but females seem to experience a greater decline than males, particularly associated with physical appearance. The gap between adolescents' view of their 'real selves' compared to their 'ideal selves' widens and self-esteem declines (Kearney-Cooke, 2000). The research indicates that this drop is more profound for girls than for boys (Eccles et al., 1989; Rosenberg & Simmons, 1975). There also are studies that mention that women view themselves more positively than do men (Lackovic-Girgin & Dekovic, 1990; Thornberg & Jones, 1982; Whiteside, 1976).

Block and Robins (1993) found that self-esteem was interpersonally oriented for adolescent girls, while for boys self-esteem was person-oriented. Thus, while self-esteem was related to the masculine trait of unique superiority for boys, high self-esteem was related to interconnectedness with others for adolescent girls (Josephs, Markus, & Tafarodi, 1992).

Quatman and Watson (2001) found that boys achieved higher global self-esteem scores than did girls. They also found that boys scored significantly higher than girls in six domains of self-esteem (personal security, home/parents, attractiveness/physical appearance, personal mastery, psychological reactivity/permeability, and athletics), while, within the remaining two domains (perception of peer popularity, academics), no significant differences were exhibited between male and female (Quatman & Watson, 2001)

Throughout high school, male self-esteem was found consistently to be higher than female self-esteem; that is, there were significant differences in self-esteem scores for males and females (Chubb et al., 1997). Consistent with this finding, Smith (2002) investigated the effect of gender on self-esteem and gender differences. No significant difference was found concerning gender.

Women report lower self-esteem levels than men in young adulthood, but the trajectories of the two sexes converge in old age (Orth et al., 2010). Both males and females display high self-esteem during childhood, but self-esteem drops during adolescence, rises again during

adulthood and then declines in old age (Josephs, Markus & Romin, 1992; Robins & Trzesniewski, 2005).

### 3.1.10.2 Age

Young children have high self-esteem, which gradually drops as they grow older. Robins and Trzesniewski (2005) ascribe this high self-esteem in children to the fact that children have unrealistically positive views about themselves. As they develop cognitively, they start to base their self-evaluations on external feedback and social comparisons. As a result, they start to form a more realistic self-view (Robins & Trzesniewski, 2005).

Kearney-Cooke (2000) states that self-esteem declines during adolescence, which may be the result of increasing cognitive ability and sensitivity to perceived social evaluation. Research on self-esteem development in adolescence has yielded inconsistent results. Erol and Orth (2011) mention that several studies reported an increase in self-esteem (Cairns et al., 1990; Huang, 2010; Labouvie, Pandina, White, & Johnson, 1990; McCarthy & Hoge, 1982; Mullis et al., 1992; O'Malley & Bachman, 1983; Prawat, Jones, & Hampton, 1979; Pullmann, Allik, & Realo, 2009; Roeser & Eccles, 1998; Twenge & Campbell, 2001), whereas other studies reported that self-esteem does not change (Chubb et al., 1997; Young & Mroczek, 2003), and yet others found that self-esteem decreases (Keltikangas-Järvinen, 1990; McMullin & Cairney, 2004; Robins et al., 2002; Zimmerman, Copeland, Shope, & Dielman, 1997).

Orth et al. (2010) record a drop in self-esteem during adolescence and attribute this drop to conflicting role demands and an increasing complexity in peer and romantic relationships. Robins and Trzesniewski (2005) state that body image, problems with puberty and the ability to acknowledge missed opportunities are the reasons for a drop in self-esteem during adolescence.

With regard to young adulthood, studies suggest that self-esteem increases during young adulthood (Galambos et al., 2006; Huang, 2010; Orth et al., 2010). Additional evidence is provided by cross-sectional data, likewise suggesting that self-esteem gradually increases during young adulthood (Gove, Ortega, & Style, 1989; Pullmann et al., 2009; Robins et al., 2002; Twenge & Campbell, 2001). McMullin and Cairney (2004) reported a gradual decrease in self-esteem during young adulthood.

Robins et al. (2002) found that self-esteem gradually increases throughout adulthood. Orth et al. (2010) found that middle-aged people have a slightly higher self-esteem than older adults. However, several other studies have failed to show any significant age-related differences (Brandstadter & Greve, 1994; Demo, 1992).

According to Chung et al. (2014) given the transitional nature of emerging adulthood, self-esteem changes during this period. Their result indicated an overall increase in self-esteem during college, showing that self-esteem increases during emerging adulthood, thus supporting the “maturity principle” that claims that, as people age, they increase in traits that reflect maturity and adaptability (Erol & Orth, 2011; Orth et al., 2010; Roberts & Mroczek, 2008; Roberts, Wood, & Caspi, 2008; Wagner, Lütke, Jonkman, & Trautwein, 2013).

### 3.1.10.3 *Race*

Children and adolescents from collectivist societies such as China, Japan and Korea tend to report lower levels of global self-esteem than their age-mates from individualistic countries such as the United States, Canada and Australia (Harter, 1999).

Black people (in comparison to white people) have been found to have higher self-esteem when younger. However, at some point in adulthood, black people show a significantly steeper decline in self-esteem than white people (Orth et al., 2010; Robins et al., 2002; Twenge & Crocker, 2002). Bachman et al. (2011) found that both male and female black students average higher than white and Asian students in self-esteem scores. Demo and Parker (1987) found that the self-esteem scores of black and white college students were not significantly different.

### 3.1.11 **Summary of self-esteem**

In summary, the following core conclusions can be drawn regarding the construct of self-esteem. Self-esteem is a basic human need (Greenberg, 2008) that is derived from two sources: how a person perceives his own performance in areas important to him and how a person believes he is perceived by significant others (Rosenberg, 1965).

People with low self-esteem respond less adaptively than do people with high self-esteem when faced with negative events (Heimpel et al., 2012). Most scholars support the idea that self-esteem decreases in early adolescence, with considerable declines in academic

motivation and achievement of self-worth (Baldwin & Hoffman, 2002; Robins & Trzesniewski, 2005).

There are various ways in which self-esteem can be enhanced and it has been proven to be desirable and valuable to enhance self-esteem (Bednar et al., 1989; Branden, 1974; Carlock, 1999; Ceccatelli & Di Battista, 2012; DuBrin, 2014; Kernis, 2006; Mruk, 2006; Pope et al., 1988; Potgieter, 2012b; Sappington, 1989).

Figure 3.5 provides an integrated model of self-esteem.

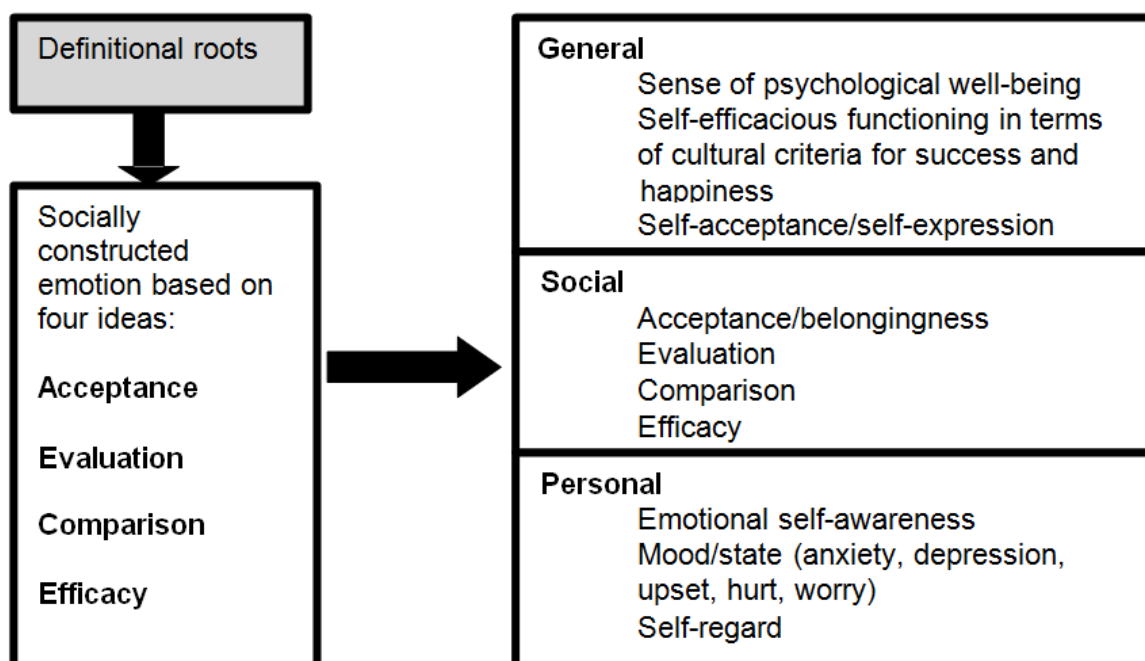


Figure 3.5. An integrated model of self-esteem (Coetzee, 2005, p. 152)

### 3.2 GRADUATENESS SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES

At first glance, the concept of graduateness appears to refer to a suite of attributes that university graduates possess; however, upon closer inspection, it is evident that the concept of graduateness is more multifaceted and requires a broader and more nuanced understanding (Chetty, 2012). A review of some of the literature on this topical issue reveals that there are various dimensions that encapsulate the concept of graduateness. Chetty (2012) explains that the discussion usually covers the following key aspects:

- Graduateness understood as a suite of attributes that graduates acquire during the course of their university study;

- The relationship between graduateness and employability;
- Employer needs and expectations; and
- Student attitudes and orientations to the labour market.

This section is structured by beginning with the conceptualisation of graduateness skills and attributes, and then elaborates on each of the dimensions mentioned above. The theoretical models are then explained and the variables influencing graduateness skills and attributes and their impact on the young adult in the school-to-work transition will also be discussed.

### 3.2.1 Conceptualisation of graduateness skills and attributes

In 1995, the British Higher Education Quality Council introduced a graduateness programme, called the Graduate Studies Programme, the aim of which was to identify the attributes required of graduates across all degree programmes and how these attributes are defined and assessed (Brown, Bull, & Pendlebury, 1997).

Graduateness refers to the quality of personal growth and intellectual development of graduates produced by a higher education institution, and the relevance of the skills and attributes they bring to the workplace (Coetzee 2009; 2012c; Coetzee & Schreuder, 2011; 2012; Griesel & Parker 2009; Steur et al., 2012). Graduateness is considered an important basic learning outcome of university education (Barrie, 2004; 2005; 2006; Glover, Law, & Youngman, 2002). According to Wheelahan (2002), graduateness refers to the combination of graduate attributes at various levels of functioning knowledge, which comprises implicit learning and tacit knowledge that a graduate may or may not have acquired through the formal study of a programme. Therefore, graduateness is a state of being as a result of achieving a combination of graduate attributes (Naidoo, 2013).

University education has a formative function, cultivating a specific set of graduateness skills and attributes that constitute a graduate employee's graduateness in three holistic, overarching attitudinal domains of personal and intellectual development (Barrie, 2004; Coetzee, 2012c; Steur et al., 2012): (1) *scholarship* (graduates' attitudes or stance towards knowledge), (2) *global and moral citizenship* (graduates' attitudes or stance towards the world and their communities), and (3) *lifelong learning* (graduates' attitudes or stance towards themselves). Coetzee (2014d) explain these three domains in terms of the graduate, wherein she mentions that as *scholars*, graduate employees should be leaders in the construction and use of new knowledge and understanding through inquiry, critique and synthesis. Graduates should have the ability to apply their knowledge to solve consequential and complex problems, and communicate their knowledge confidently and effectively

(Coetzee, 2014d). As *global and moral citizens*, graduate employees should strive to make a contribution to global and local societies in a full, meaningful, ethical and responsible way through their roles as members of the local, national and global communities (Coetzee, 2014d). As *lifelong learners*, graduate employees must be committed to and capable of continuous learning to further their understanding of the world and their place in it (Coetzee, 2014a; 2014d). Employers generally consider these generic, transferable skills as a signal that an employee is employable and ready for work (Coetzee, 2014a; 2014d; Griesel & Parker, 2009; Raftapoulous et al., 2009).

A graduate employee's gradueness skills and attributes denote the core of personal growth and intellectual development cultivated by university education (Steur et al., 2012). Gradueness skills and attributes of current and prospective employees should be viewed as imperative in creating the type of workplace that allows innovation, adaptability and flexibility to thrive (Thompson, Treleaven, Kamvounias, Beem, & Hill, 2008; Van Dam, 2004a; 2004b).

The characteristics that seem to exemplify the ideal graduate are self-management, autonomy and self-directedness – the ability, attitude or competence to take charge of learning, development or life (Botha, 2012). Graduates need to be adept at prioritising and goal setting, be proactive in the management of change, have the necessary skills for self-advocacy and networking to cope with changing circumstances, be effective in their maintenance of continuous learning and be able to work within changing teams in order for them to be employable (Glover et al., 2002).

### 3.2.1.1 *Generic graduate skills and attributes*

Terms such as generic skills, graduate qualities, generic attributes and core capabilities are used interchangeably, with an evident assumption of shared meaning (Barrie & Prosser, 2004). Graduate attributes are those qualities, skills and understandings a university community supposes its students would develop during their period at the institution, and which then will shape the contribution they are able to make to their profession and as citizens (Bowden, Hart, King, Trigwell, & Watts, 2000). The development of generic skills has been driven by the belief that there are skills that all graduates should possess, and that would be applicable to a wide range of tasks and contexts beyond the university setting (Gilbert, Balatti, Turner, & Whitehouse, 2004).



According to Cummings (1998), the significance of generic skills, or graduate attributes, in higher education has been influenced by the following three factors: (1) the prevalent perspective that education is a lifelong process; (2) a greater focus on the relationship between education and the employment of graduates; and (3) the development of outcome measures as a part of the quality movement.

Generic attributes are “skills, personal attributes and values which should be acquired by all graduates regardless of their discipline or field of study. In other words, generic skills should represent the central achievements of higher education as a process” (HEC, 1992, as cited in Bath, Smith, Stein, & Swann, 2004, p. 20). According to Barrie (2004), there are certain key features to a definition of generic graduate attributes, which include:

1. These outcomes are referred to as generic because it is claimed that they have developed regardless of the field of study or domain of knowledge. That is not to say that they are independent of disciplinary knowledge – rather, these qualities may be developed in various disciplinary contexts and are outcomes that in some way transcend disciplinary outcomes.
2. They are abilities to be looked for in a graduate of any undergraduate degree. They are not entry-level skills – rather they are regarded as an important outcome of university-level learning experiences
3. They are often referred to as generic attributes rather than generic skills in recognition that, as outcomes, they encompass more than skills and attitudes. As well as being a more global term for such outcomes, it is one that can incorporate new or alternative ideas of wisdom and knowledge.
4. These outcomes result from the usual process of higher education. That is, they are not a set of additional outcomes requiring an additional curriculum – rather, they are outcomes that can be reasonably expected from the usual higher education experience.

Nunan (1999, as cited in Bowden et al., 2000, p. 3) argues that there are four main categories of graduate attributes, relating to (1) the body of knowledge that comprises the disciplinary foundation of a given course of study, (2) the critical understanding that derives from thinking, communicating, applying and evaluating that body of knowledge, (3) the dimensions of citizenship and service that follow from a view of graduates playing a leadership role in their society, and (4) a capacity for employment and personal flexibility.

Graduates are expected to possess skills as well as ancillary qualities (or attributes), such as the use of language, memory, general knowledge and familiarity with information technology

(IT) (Hussain, 2007). The Graduate Studies Programme report (Higher Education Quality Council, 1995) discusses the attributes arrived at by various universities as follows:

- a) A grounding in the content and methods of a discipline(s)
- b) An engagement with teaching and learning that is research informed so that the students may become research aware
- c) The development of self-motivating study habits and skills
- d) The experience of an academically coherent programme of study
- e) The development of a critical and analytical approach to theories and concepts and the assumptions on which they are based
- f) A grasp of the impermanence and open-ended character of a discipline's share of, and contribution to, knowledge and understanding
- g) Where appropriate, the skills necessary for professional practice and
- h) The development of transferable intellectual and practical skills.

Other competencies with more emphasis on personal transferable skills were identified as follows:

- a) Managing tasks and solving problems (focusing on achieving objectives, using analytical and conceptual thinking, gathering information to assist problem solving, and making decisions)
- b) Working with others (using logical and rational arguments to persuade others, understanding and building/reflecting on how others perceive him or her, identifying the needs of others, and building positive relationships)
- c) Communication (oral and written communication) and
- d) Self-awareness (taking responsibility for own learning and development, dealing with pressures and emotions, and showing a sense of purpose) (Higher Education Quality Council, 1995).

Graduates as lifelong learners should have an open mind, have a sense of individual autonomy and management, take responsibility for searching for and building new knowledge and competence, be able to monitor personal performance and goal achievement, and possess meta-cognitive competence (Botha, 2012; Candy, 1995; Coetzee, 2011; Donald, 2002). According to Bath et al. (2004), graduate attributes or qualities include critical thinking, intellectual curiosity, problem solving, logical and independent thought, communication and information management skills, intellectual rigour, creativity and imagination, ethical practice, integrity and tolerance. Naidoo (2013) explains

that graduate attributes are affected by many factors outside the formal curriculum, such as individual levels of motivation, work exposure, role models, and mentoring and coaching.

Although the definitions above display the graduate as a citizen, a member of society and a contributor to the professional world, these definitions also display the attributes that relate to an individual seeking and maintaining employment, i.e. employability, which is discussed in the next section.

### *3.2.1.2 Employability*

The term *graduateness* is often confused with *employability*. It is for this reason that this section will differentiate between the two terms. While *graduateness* is seen as the skills, knowledge and understanding graduates possess, *employability* is concerned with the capability of graduates to enter the national or international workplace (Glover et al., 2002).

*Employability* refers to the capability of an individual to identify and realise job and career opportunities (Fugate et al., 2004) owing to a wide, necessary set of competencies, including occupational expertise, anticipation and optimisation of the work environment, and personal flexibility (Froehlich, Beusaert, Segers, & Gerken, 2014; Fugate et al., 2004; Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006). According to Stauffer, Maggiori, Froidevaux, and Rossier (2014), *employability* is a multidimensional concept that combines career identity, personal adaptability, and social and human capital dimensions, and denotes a type of work-specific proactive adaptability.

Holmes (2013) identified three opposing perspectives on *employability*, which he termed the 'possessive', 'positioning' and 'processual' approaches to *employability* and that provide a more comprehensible explanation of *employability*. The possessive approach is based on the assumption that *employability* is defined as a set of achievements, including skills, understandings and personal attributes (Yorke, 2004). Pegg, Waldock, Hendy-Isaac, and Lawton (2012) mention that this is the most commonly used approach. Holmes (2013) and Huang, Turner, and Chen (2014) contend that this perspective is theoretically flawed in that it disregards the influence of sociocultural factors (gender, race groups and social class) on *employability* and the development of *employability*.

The positional approach supports the idea that graduate skills are strongly correlated with issues of social positioning (Holmes, 2013). Brown and Hesketh (2004) indicate that individuals are counselled in being able to manipulate the likelihood of gaining desired

employment. This approach is argued to be more concurrent with evidence of employment outcomes and leads to being regarded as “counsel of despair” (Holmes, 2013; Huang et al., 2014).

Finally, the processual approach utilises the concept of graduate identity, wherein it develops methods in which students present themselves to potential employers (Holmes, 2013). This approach, particularly focusing on the concept of graduate identity, is strong theoretically, supported by empirical evidence, and delivers a solid base for curriculum and other interventions to enhance graduate employability (Holmes, 2013). Personal and external barriers that influence employability, especially those relating to the varying supply of graduates and demand from employers, should be taken into account (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005).

Employability, as a sub-element of a student’s gradueness (Coetzee, 2012a), creates a sense of self-directedness or personal agency in getting or keeping a job or some form of employment, based on a set of personal career-related attributes mostly endorsed by employers and researchers as a substitute to job security in an uncertain employment context (Rothwell, Jewell & Hardie, 2009; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011). Attributes such as career self-management, career resilience, proactivity, emotional literacy and cultural competence are included in these career-related attributes (Bezuidenhout, 2010). Coetzee (2011; 2012a) indicated that the generic skills and attributes that represent students’ gradueness are strongly predicted by their career-related employability attributes.

Employability has been associated with the capacity to get and hold employment, both within and across organisations (Finn, 2000; Fugate & Kinicki, 2008; McArdle et al., 2007; Rothwell & Arnold, 2007; Van der Heijde, 2014). Although formulated from an individual gain perspective, employability also has been regarded as advantageous for organisations, since employable individuals are flexible (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007; Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006; Van Dam, 2004a; 2004b), implying a win-win situation (Van Der Heijde, 2014).

Gradueness involves the acquisition of discipline-specific skills and competencies within the context of a tertiary institution, which involves the development of these attributes as identified by educators and employers that facilitate graduates’ development and successful completion of a degree (Cilliers, 2012). Employability, on the other hand, focuses on the acquisition of specific skills that will enable graduates to successfully find and maintain their employment, and the acquisition of these skills is not confined to the academic context, but

may be developed and displayed in a practical context (Cilliers, 2012). Therefore the skills that an individual develops within the academic context (graduateness skills and attributes) may facilitate the development of the skills required to be employable, and from this we therefore can deduce that employability is an outcome of an individual's graduateness (Cilliers, 2012).

Research has shown that, although graduate output is increasing, the uptake of these graduates into the labour market is decreasing (DPRU, 2006 as cited in Kraak, 2010, p. 89). According to Elias and Purcell (2004), in spite of the growth in the number of graduates entering the job market, holding a degree enhances an individual's career prospects and potential earnings. It stands to reason, therefore, that in order for students to be gainfully employed they must have the necessary skills and attributes required by the workplace – making almost self-evident the link between graduateness and employability (Chetty, 2012).

According to Hall (2013), the career of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not assessed by chronological age and life stages, but by continuous learning and identity changes. Careers are no longer defined by linear advancement within a single organisation, work is no longer defined by fixed tasks, and skills and competencies required for any single particular job may not be sufficient for a long period of time (Bridgstock, 2009).

Bagshaw (1997) argues that employability is dynamic and not inhibited from the fit between the emergent graduate and the employment market and the skills and competencies to be successful in the world of work. Bagshaw (1997) further expresses the view that graduates need to be flexible and adaptable to seek alternative work in a changing world. Paying attention to the graduateness of students grooms them for a successful transition to work and to managing their continued employability in a rapidly changing occupational world (Coetzee, 2012; 2014a; 2014d; Griesel & Parker, 2009; Rothwell et al., 2009; Steur et al., 2012; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008).

### 3.2.1.3 *Employer needs and expectations*

Harvey and Knight (1996) found that employers often assume that a degree brings with it a body of knowledge, but the types of qualities expected and the expectations of the employers would depend on the context within which the employee would be operating. To employers there are benefits of recruiting graduates, such as ambition, flexibility, logical thinking, analysis, creativity, innovation, ability to learn quickly and independently, well-developed communication skills and specialist knowledge, as well as intelligence (National

Report, 2003). Harvey and Knight (1996) provide a number of reasons why employers employ graduates, namely knowledge, intellect and adaptability, ability to work in an organisation, interpersonal skills and communication.

In addition to possessing a degree, employers expect students to display a combination of personal qualities, understandings and practices, and to have the ability to reflect productively on experience (Stevenson & Clegg, 2011; Yorke & Knight, 2006). Employers suggest that, in order to develop these skills and qualities, it is important to participate in extracurricular activities such as cultural, voluntary and sporting activities that are organised within universities through student societies (Dalglish & Chan, 2005; Huang et al., 2014; Sleaf & Reed, 2006).

Bennett (2002) provides a list of the outcomes of a review of governmental and academic literature on the transferable skills development field. Within this list, the following transferable skills were regarded as critically important to employers: adaptability/flexibility, analysis, communication, initiative, IT/computer skills, leadership, motivation, numeracy, organisation, presentation, problem solving, self-confidence and working in teams.

Griesel and Parker (2009) focused on the graduate attributes they considered important and the extent to which they felt South African graduates displayed these attributes. Some of their key findings were:

- competent communication in English as the language of business, which implies being able to successfully demonstrate competence and comprehension
- comprehension of the business and working environment
- proficiency in the use and production of field-specific as well as general knowledge, including a lifelong learning orientation
- workplace-based, culturally intelligent, practical and strategic problem-solving
- self-confidence, self-efficacy and autonomy
- competent functioning as a team member and in intercultural environments

Bowers-Brown and Harvey (2004) mention that several authors are seeing a shift in the requirements of business as a result of changes in the organisation of work, with employees being required to exhibit generic problem-solving ability and adaptability as the workplace changes. It can be argued that one needs to be realistic about the extent to which higher education can reduce the gap between higher education outcomes and employer

expectations, and that employers also need to consider their role in providing on-the-job training and continuous development (Griesel & Parker, 2009).

#### 3.2.1.4 *Student attitudes and orientations to the labour market*

According to Tomlinson (2007), the discourse on employability relentlessly overlooks the perceptions that students have of their future work and employment, and the attitudes, identities and orientations they develop in relation to this. Students are viewed in universalistic terms, and such assumptions ignore the diverse work-related identities and orientations learners develop in relation to their future labour market activities (Tomlinson, 2007). The way in which individuals experience work is subjective, and this is likely to influence their labour market outcomes and shape their employment prospects (Chetty, 2010).

Tomlinson (2007) found that:

- Fewer students look forward to their careers as being played out within the confines of a single organisation.
- The task of managing careers is increasingly seen as being “up to them”, whereby their future careers are in their own hands.
- Students regard factors such as personal disposition, attitudes and individual characteristics as influencing their career trajectories.
- Students view themselves as competing in relative terms against other graduates with similar educational profiles and credentials. They see the labour market as competitive and congested.
- Students are increasingly aware of the need to develop and package their credentials to their advantage.

Hussain (2007) found that students were generally less aware of the necessary skills and attributes that are required of them and that they did not fully understand the ones needed to become good graduates. According to Naidoo (2013), students need to (1) become highly skilled, competent and flexible individuals who are able to acquire new and different kinds of knowledge and skills from those learnt at university; (2) be lifelong learners who are able to evaluate the learning needed; and (3) develop a plan for meeting these learning needs. This approach offers students the opportunity for self-reflection and self-responsibility for both personal and professional development, aiming to improve graduateness and employability with long-term benefits for the graduates, employers and society.

### 3.2.2 Models of graduateness skills and attributes

In this section, models of graduateness skills and attributes that relate to the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase are discussed. The following models of graduateness skills and attributes are discussed in this section:

- Barrie's (2004) research-based approach to generic graduate attributes policy
- Barrie's (2007) conceptual framework for the teaching and learning of generic graduate attributes
- Steur, Jansen and Hofman's (2012) model of graduateness
- Coetzee's (2012a) framework for the development of the graduateness skills and attributes scale
- Bennet, Dunne and Carré's (1999) model of graduate employability
- Yorke and Knight's (2006) understanding, skills, efficacy beliefs and metacognition (USEM) graduate employability model
- Pool and Sewell's (2007) career EDGE model of employability
- Bridgstock's (2009) conceptual model of graduate attributes for employability

#### 3.2.2.1 *Barrie's research-based approach to generic graduate attributes policy*

When revising the policy of the University of Sydney, Barrie (2004) identified three holistic, overarching attributes as vital outcomes of university education: scholarship, global citizenship and lifelong learning. These outcomes are equivalent to top-level enabling conceptions of graduate attributes and are defined as follows:

1. **Scholarship:** An attitude or stance towards knowledge: Graduates of the university will have a scholarly approach to knowledge and understanding. As scholars, the university's graduates will be leaders in the creation of new knowledge and understanding through inquiry, critique and synthesis. They will be able to apply their knowledge in order to solve consequential problems and communicate their knowledge confidently and effectively.
2. **Global citizenship:** An attitude or stance towards the world: Graduates of the university will be global citizens who will strive to contribute to society in a complete and meaningful way through their roles as members of local, national and global communities.
3. **Lifelong learning:** An attitude or stance towards themselves: Graduates of the university will be lifelong learners dedicated to and capable of continuous learning and



reflection for the purpose of furthering their understanding of the world and their place in it.

The development of these three overarching enabling graduate attributes is supported by the development of skills and abilities in five main groups. These five groups represent the next level of the hierarchy, the translation idea of graduate attributes as disciplinary groups of personal attributes, cognitive abilities and skills of application:

1. Research and inquiry: Graduates of the university will be able to produce new knowledge and understanding through the process of research and inquiry.
2. Information literacy: Graduates of the university will be able to use information efficiently in a variety of contexts.
3. Personal and intellectual autonomy: Graduates of the university will be able to work independently and sustainably, in a way that is informed by openness, curiosity and a desire to meet new challenges.
4. Ethical, social and professional understanding: Graduates of the university will hold personal values and beliefs that are coherent with their roles as responsible members of local, national and professional communities.
5. Communication: Graduates of the university will be able to identify and appreciate communication as a tool for negotiating and creating new understanding, interacting with others and furthering their own learning.

Figure 3.6 illustrates these graduate attributes.



Figure 3.6. Enabling graduate attributes and translation-level attributes (Adapted from Barrie, 2004, p. 270)

### 3.2.2.2 *Barrie's conceptual framework for the teaching and learning of generic graduate attributes*

Barrie (2007) noted that, even though there is a growing need for students to be equipped with the required gradueness skills, there was a greater need to identify the various understandings and opinions of the academics responsible for equipping graduates with these attributes. Clanchy and Ballard (1995) claimed that the extent to which the development of graduate attributes in the academic development context echoed a shared understanding needed to be questioned. Holmes (2000) found that there is an implication of lethargy and even resistance on the part of some academics to generic attributes initiatives.

Bennett, Dunne, and Carré (2000) explored employers' perspectives of the role of generic skills in the workplace and the different uses, purposes and contexts for their development in the first few years of graduate employment. The results of this study showed a widespread confusion among university academics about the nature and purpose of generic skills in

higher education. Furthermore, employers and employees alike had varying understandings of their importance in the workplace.

Barrie (2004) found that academics' understandings of the position of graduate attributes in the typical university curriculum showed the reality of these incongruent views. Marton and Booth (1997) found that academics expressed contrasting understandings of graduate attributes as an outcome of university education. In other words, academics in broadly different disciplines can share the same understanding of the nature of graduate attributes. Similarly, academics in the same discipline can hold very different understandings, which are achieved differently in their teaching and curricula. It is important to note that the contrasting conceptions identified place graduate attributes differently in terms of the nature and complexity of the skill or attribute and its relationship to discipline knowledge. Thus, this has consequences for the methods that academics incorporate through the teaching and learning of these attributes, claimed as outcomes in policy, in their teaching and curricula.

Barrie (2007) identified a hierarchy of four increasingly complex understandings of the nature of graduate attributes as outcomes from academics. Related to these understandings were six different understandings of the process of teaching and learning such attributes, and certain outcomes were associated with certain processes (Barrie, 2007).

While much of the literature presupposes a shared understanding on the part of the university community as to the position of generic learning outcomes amongst the most familiar discipline-based knowledge outcomes, research has found that academics hold qualitatively contrasting understandings or conceptions of such outcomes (Barrie, 2004; 2006). Table 3.6 displays academics' differing conceptions of graduate attributes as outcomes which appears after a brief discussion of the theory.

The four increasingly complex, qualitatively distinct understandings of generic attributes as outcomes are described as:

1. Precursor conception;
2. Complement conception;
3. Translation conception; and
4. Enabling conception.

Barrie (2007) explains that generic attributes can be regarded as basic *precursor* abilities that present the groundwork to which the discipline knowledge of a university can be added. Other academics express a perception of generic attributes that goes beyond the precursor

conception to encompass university-learned, general functional abilities and personal skills that usefully can *complement* the discipline-specific learning outcomes of a university education. Still other academics understand generic attributes to be more than useful *additional* general skills. Rather, they are specialised alternatives of such general skills that are indispensable in the application of discipline knowledge, and the *translation* of university learning to unfamiliar settings, thus beneficially transforming the products of university learning. Some academics express a more complex understanding of generic attributes as *enabling* abilities and aptitudes that rest at the core of all scholarly learning and knowledge, with the potential to transform the knowledge they are part of and to support the production of new knowledge and transform the individual. Barrie (2007) claims that this disparity among academics of the understanding of generic attributes partly assists in explaining the reasons for the inadequate implementation of graduate attributes within university courses.

Table 3.6 provides the conceptions of academics relating to generic graduate attributes as outcomes.

Table 3.6  
*Academics' Conceptions of Generic Graduate Attributes (GGAs) as Outcomes (Barrie, 2007, p. 441)*

		Referential (what is meant)		
			Additive	Transformative
Structural (internal and external horizon)			GGAs are discrete from other university learning outcomes	GGAs interact with other university learning outcomes
	Irrelevant	No aspect of GGAs in the foreground, they are ignored. The relationship to other learning outcomes is as a backdrop.	1: Necessary basic <b>PRECURSOR</b> skills, but irrelevant as they are a prerequisite for university entry	
	Unrelated	In the foreground are undifferentiated functional atomistic personal skills that are not related to discipline knowledge.	2: Useful skills that <b>COMPLEMENT</b> or round out disciplinary learning	
	Application	In the foreground are specialised clustered abilities and skills of application. These abilities are relevant to discipline knowledge.		3: These are the abilities that let students <b>TRANSLATE</b> , make use of or apply disciplinary knowledge in the world
	Integral substrate	In the foreground are interwoven abilities and aptitudes for learning. These aptitudes shape disciplinary and other knowledge.		4: They are <b>ENABLING</b> abilities that infuse university learning and knowledge

Six multifaceted, qualitatively distinct categories of description were identified from the study of the pooled interview data relevant to academics' understandings of how students acquire generic attributes (Barrie, 2007). These are remedial, associated, teaching content, teaching process, engagement and participatory.

Some academics do not regard the teaching of generic attributes as being part of typical university teaching at all. Instead, the development of generic attributes is understood to be the responsibility of earlier education experiences and the only role of the university in teaching such generic attributes is in terms of *remedial* teaching for those students who have not already developed these skills. Academics regard the development of generic attributes as being part of the university's teaching role; however, the teaching of such generic attributes is seen as unrelated to the teaching of disciplinary content and is an aide to the

university curriculum for those students who need it. In other words, this process of development of generic attributes is distinctly supplementary to other university teaching and learning (Barrie, 2007).

For some academics, this role is achieved through the provision of an additional, separate curriculum in *association* with the usual university curriculum. This is not regarded as a remedial curriculum; rather, it is a curriculum for all students. With regard to the teaching role, it is a (small) part of the curriculum for all students in this conception, as opposed to the remedial, deficit-model teaching approach that characterised the first category of description. The development of generic attributes being separate from other elements of the curriculum is thus characterised as supplementary (Barrie, 2007).

Academics can also understand generic attributes to be developed as part of the taught content of usual university courses. Rather than an additional curriculum, the generic attributes curriculum is included as an integral part of the *teaching content* of the discipline. In this conception, the teacher of the discipline content perceives the teaching of generic attributes to be part of their normal teaching role, and not something additional or separate to this. Thus, generic attributes under this conception are recognised as an integrated component of the course curriculum, rather than being a supplementary curriculum (Barrie, 2007).

Other academics perceive the development of generic attributes as being achieved through the *teaching process* of usual university courses. The way the content is taught under this conception facilitates the teaching of the attributes. Generic attributes are developed by students through the learning opportunities provided by specific teaching processes. This is the first structure of awareness that implicitly includes an active learner, even though the focus remains on the teacher. The meaning assigned to this particular structure is again one of an integrated curriculum (Barrie, 2007).

Academics express yet another perspective that is expressed by academics, namely that the development of generic attributes is not a part of *what* is taught, or the *way* it is taught, but rather in terms of the way that the student *engages* in learning in his or her usual university course (Barrie, 2007). The development of generic attributes is understood as (being about) something that is learnt, not something that is taught, with the learner rather than the teacher being at the forefront. The development of graduate attributes is understood to relate primarily to the way students interact with the learning experiences of the course. The focus is on the way the students engage in learning within the discipline. Within this integrated

curriculum, the focus on the way the learner engages with the course reflects an awareness that the way a student learns is a function of more than just the way the teacher teaches (Prosser & Trigwell, 1999).

Some academics have expressed yet another understanding that the development of generic attributes takes place through the way the student *participates* in the broader learning experiences of university life. The learner’s engagement in learning is not restricted to the way the learner engages in the formal teaching and learning experiences of the course. Rather, the foreground in this conception is the way the student participates in the broader experience of university life (Barrie, 2007). Table 3.7 displays the academics’ conceptions of how students develop the generic graduate attributes.

Table 3.7  
*Academics’ Conceptions of How Students Develop Generic Graduate Attributes* (Barrie, 2007, p. 445)

How generic attributes are developed		Referential (what is meant by the structure)		
		Supplementary	Integrated	
Structural (internal and external horizon)	Focus on teacher and teaching	Not part of any curriculum	1. <b>REMEDIAL:</b> not usually part of university <b>teaching</b>	
		A secondary curriculum	2. <b>ASSOCIATED:</b> Generic attributes are not <b>taught as a discrete subset</b> of the teaching in university courses	
		Disciplinary curriculum content		3. <b>TEACHING CONTENT:</b> Generic attributes are <b>taught in the context</b> of teaching the disciplinary knowledge
		Disciplinary curriculum process		4. <b>TEACHING PROCESS:</b> Generic attributes are <b>taught</b> through the <b>way</b> the course <b>disciplinary knowledge is taught.</b>
	Focus on learner and learning	Course experience		5. <b>ENGAGEMENT:</b> Generic attributes are <b>learnt</b> through the way students engage with the <b>course’s learning experiences.</b>
		University experience		6. <b>PARTICIPATORY:</b> Generic attributes are learnt in the way students participate and engage with all the experiences of university life.

### 3.2.2.3 *Steur, Jansen and Hofman's model of gradueness*

According to Steur, Jansen, and Hofman (2011), gradueness is comprised of abstract concepts that are difficult to detect and, by including employability skills in the definition of gradueness, a greater focus is created on employability skills, which are more concrete and obvious. Therefore, Steur et al. (2012) proposed a theoretical model which, unlike other models for generic learning outcomes, explicitly separates gradueness from employability skills.

Steur et al. (2012) claim that the essence of gradueness contributes to personal growth, and that a characteristic of this personal growth or gradueness implies a transformation in students (Jansen, 2009; Perry, 1970; Stevenson, 2003; Van Rossum & Hamer, 2010). This transformation means that freshmen and graduates are at different stages of their intellectual development, and thus gradueness is considered to be a specific stage in students' intellectual development that is most likely to be achieved by the time students graduate. This stage is situated in the highest cluster of Perry's (1970) model of intellectual development and is described by what Van Rossum and Hamer (2010) translate as "widening horizons" and "growing self-awareness". Steur et al. (2012) identify reflective thinking as a key element of gradueness, wherein it is the role of the university to promote this reflective ability, especially in an era in which most students will become professionals. It then is the student's role to be receptive toward developing a reflective attitude.

The idea that gradueness implies a transformation in students (Jansen, 2009; Perry, 1970; Stevenson, 2003; Van Rossum & Hamer, 2010) forms the essence of Perry's (1970) theory of academic development, which distinguishes nine developmental positions distributed among three clusters. These positions represent different views of knowledge, starting from a dualistic position (in which something is held to be either true or untrue, and certain authorities are held to know the answer) to the relativism position (in which one commits to certain ideas, values and responsibilities) (Steur et al., 2012). Steur et al. (2012) explain that it is in this relativist cluster of positions that the stage of gradueness should be placed. This transformation in students is supported by Barrie's (2007) academic understanding of enabling abilities that have the potential to transform the knowledge they are part of and to support the production of new knowledge to transform the individual.

Stevenson (2003) highlights the importance of linking different types of knowledge, for example theoretical knowledge and functional knowledge. Using this idea, Steur et al. (2012) explain that the linking of different types of knowledge denotes that gradueness is not



merely about expanding knowledge, but that it also enables the practical application of theoretical knowledge.

(i) Domains of graduateness

A student's development in one field (scholarship or world citizenship) is expected to have an overspill to a more general field (a student's intellectual development). This is aligned with the basic idea of graduateness of Steur et al. (2012), i.e. development in one area contributes to a higher-order level of development: reflective thinking. The position where development in these two areas reinforces intellectual development (i.e. reflective thinking) is where graduateness occurs.

Given the rising significance of lifelong learning in current society (Commission of the European Communities 2002; Dearing, 1997) and its generic character (wherein it is important in all academic disciplines), it was decided to include lifelong learning in this model to ensure the contemporary character of the model. These elements of graduateness (reflective thinking, scholarship, citizenship and lifelong learning) are elaborated on below.

- i. Reflective thinking
- ii. Scholarship
- iii. Moral citizenship
- iv. Lifelong learning

(i) Reflective thinking

Comparable to Perry's (1970) model, graduateness is situated in the third cluster of reflective thinking. It is at this stage that students ought to recognise that knowledge is uncertain and that they must translate and integrate information from different angles in order to reach a conclusion (King & Kitchener, 2004). In other words, reflective thinking is about reflecting on the situation and reflecting on the instruments required, such as theoretical knowledge and various skills, and it is also about the application of such knowledge and skills based on one's own judgement (Steur et al., 2012).

(ii) Scholarship

Scholarship is not merely about basic research skills, which will differ between disciplines, but it is also about a scholarly attitude (Byrne & Johnstone, 1987). The transformative

character of scholarship is not merely about mastering research skills, but also about developing a scholarly stance towards the world.

(iii) Moral citizenship

Steuer et al. (2012) emphasise an area within gradueness that is concerned with the moral development of students and their responsibilities toward society. In liberal education, these elements are closely related, so much so that students are educated to question their own beliefs. This does not necessarily mean that students need to change their beliefs and opinions. They do, however, need to know from where their beliefs come, and be aware that other people might hold different beliefs from theirs. Steuer et al. (2012) base this model on Kohlberg's (1973) theory on the development of moral reasoning in which he proposes that individuals become less dependent on authority with respect to their moral judgements; this is derived from the same line of thinking as Perry's (1970) model of intellectual development and King and Kitchener's (2004) model of reflective judgement. In order to emphasise both elements (social responsibility and moral judgment), Steuer et al. (2012) chose to use 'moral citizenship' to address this domain.

(iv) Lifelong learning

Lifelong learning represents the ability to guide one's own learning process and willingness to learn (Pintrich, 2000). Steuer et al. (2012) use the term 'lifelong learning' to emphasise that learning is a continuing process and that these learning skills are not only a means to ensure graduation, but also that they empower the graduate by enabling him/her to adapt when future situations require knowledge and skills that are not yet known. Subsequently, the graduate is required to provide his or her own study or training by acquiring the knowledge and skills that are necessary to deal effectively with any given situation.

(v) The model

The domains of gradueness under Steuer et al.'s (2012) model are: reflective thinking, scholarship, moral citizenship and lifelong learning. What these constructs have in common is that they all refer to some kind of transformation in students, or what is considered to be the essence of gradueness. Steuer et al.'s (2012) model revolves around the idea that reflective thinking triggers the other three domains. That is to say that development in either one of the other three areas is expected to reinforce development in reflective thinking.

Figure 3.7 represents Steur et al.'s (2012) model of graduateness. Steur et al. (2012) argue that graduateness appears in the position where reflective thinking is linked to any of the domains of scholarship, moral citizenship, lifelong learning or a combination of these. In other words, reflective thinking can be achieved in (at least) three different ways, but for it to be considered as graduateness, it requires high-level functioning in both reflective thinking and at least one of the other domains.

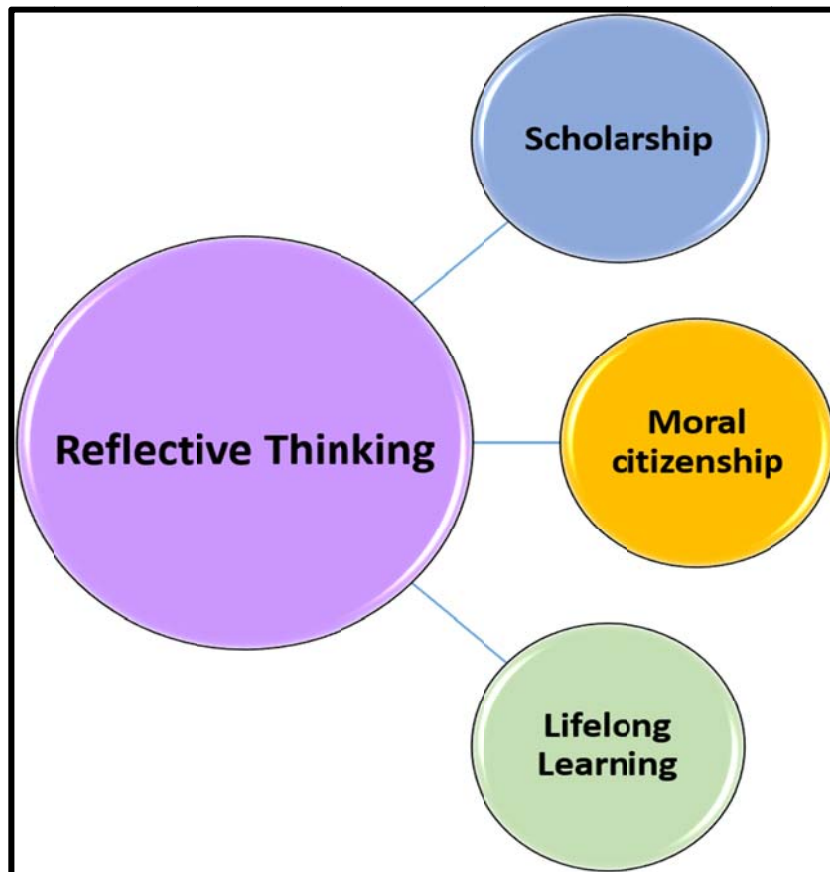


Figure 3.7. The graduateness model (Steur et al., 2012, p. 867)

#### 3.2.2.4 Coetzee's framework

Coetzee (2012a) identified eight core skills and attributes that constitute the graduateness of students pursuing a career in the economic and management sciences. These eight graduate skills and attributes (shown in Figure 3.8) are clustered in three holistic, overarching attitudinal domains of personal and intellectual development: scholarship, global and moral citizenship and lifelong learning, which are based on the works of Barrie (2004) and Steur et al. (2012).

Coetzee (2012a) explains that, as scholars, graduate employees have a duty to be learners in the creation and application of new knowledge and understanding through inquiry, critique and synthesis. They ought to be able to apply their knowledge when solving consequential and complex problems, and in communicating their knowledge confidently and effectively. As global and moral citizens, graduate employees are expected to want to contribute to a global and local society in a full, meaningful, ethical and responsible way through their roles as members of local, national and global communities (Coetzee, 2012a). This explanation is once again in agreement with Barrie's (2004) and Steur et al.'s (2012) idea of graduates as global and moral citizens respectively. Coetzee (2012a) explains that, as lifelong learners, graduate employees should be committed to and capable of continuous learning in order to further their understanding of the world and their place in it.

Coetzee (2012a) developed a generic set of transferable meta-skills and personal attributes that reinforce the development of the three overarching enabling graduateness skills and attributes (scholarship, global and moral citizenship, and lifelong learning). These transferable meta-skills and personal attributes are discussed below under the three overarching enabling graduateness skills and attributes.

(a) Scholarship:

- Problem-solving and decision-making skills. These skills are associated with being creative and proactive when finding a solution to a recognised, yet often ill-defined, problem or complicated situation.
- Analytical thinking skills. Analytic thinking denotes being skilful in employing logical reasoning, inquiry and analysis in explaining information and data and drawing insightful conclusions from the analysis of the data.
- Enterprising skills. These skills encompass being adventurous and applying critical thinking, initiation and proactivity in the process of participating in economic activities or undertakings, either to create and operate an enterprise of one's own or to be a substantial contributor to an enterprise as an employee. Being enterprising also means that one is able to recognise and be proficient when dealing with organisational or team politics.

(b) Global and moral citizenship

- Ethical and responsible behaviour. This involves accepting full responsibility for, and being at the forefront of, maintaining the policy of moral beliefs and values of one's profession, community and/or workplace in everything one does.
- Presenting and applying information skills. These skills are concerned with the ability to clearly, respectfully and convincingly communicate knowledge, facts, ideas and opinions (both oral and written), with the idea of offering solutions for one's personal benefit, or for the benefit of one's community or workplace.
- Interactive skills. These skills are concerned with: (1) the effective and efficient use of the English language and technology when communicating with others, and (2) the ability to function effectively and efficiently as a person in communicating and interacting with people from diverse cultures, backgrounds and authority levels, both nationally and internationally.

(c) Lifelong learning

- Goal-directed behaviour. This applies to the ability to be proactive and to take initiative in order to achieve one's goals, accomplish tasks, or meet deadlines. Setting realistic goals, developing plans and taking action to achieve one's goals, accomplish tasks and meeting deadlines are key elements of goal-directed behaviour.
- Continuous learning orientation. This includes exhibiting a cognitive openness toward lifelong learning and the willingness to proactively engage in the process of gaining new knowledge, skills and abilities throughout one's life and career in response to, and in anticipation of, changing technology and performance criteria.

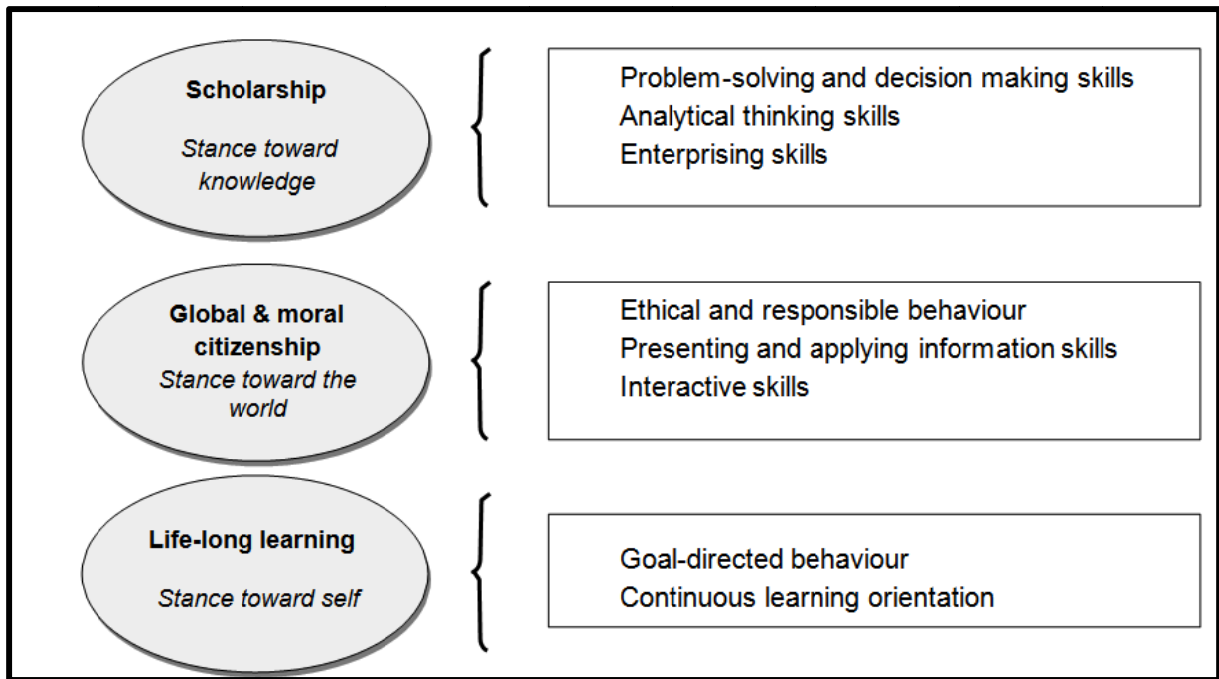


Figure 3.8. Overview of the graduteness skills and attributes cultivated by university education (Coetzee, 2012a, p. 6)

### 3.2.2.5 Bennet, Dunne and Carré's model of graduate employability

Bennet et al. (1999) proposed a model of graduate employability in which they distinguish between five elements of course provision in higher education: disciplinary content knowledge, disciplinary skills, workplace awareness, workplace experience and generic skills, as shown in Figure 3.9.

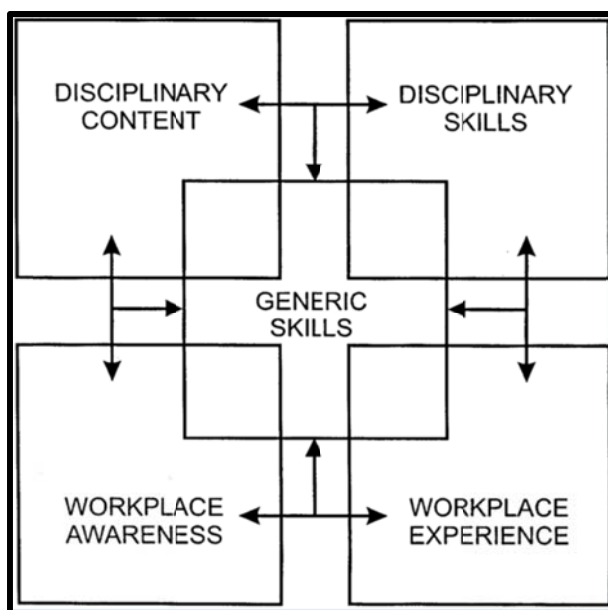


Figure 3.9. Model of course provision for graduate employability (Bennet et al., 1999, p. 80)

The focal point of this model is the concept of generic skills and its interrelationship with all the other elements, which indicates a link to graduateness. Generic skills in this model are divided into four categories, viz. management of self, management of others, management of information and management of task. These skills are generic in that they are not restricted to any discipline or any course in higher education or to any other context. These four categories of generic skills are discussed below:

(a) Management of self

These skills include time management, taking responsibility for learning, developing and adapting learning strategies, displaying flexibility, reflecting on one's learning, stress management, etc. The basis of this category is that an individual should manage him/herself in a manner that facilitates learning.

(b) Management of others

Bennet et al. (1999) argue that graduates should have the necessary skills to work in a team, respect and value the opinions of others, co-operate with fellow team members, show leadership, encourage learning, and adapt to the needs of the group. Graduates need to understand how to utilise other people's strengths and skills to their own developmental advantage.

(c) Management of information

Concurrent with Coetzee's (2012a) interactive skills, Bennet et al. (1999) propose that graduates need to learn how to effectively manage information, which includes the ability to use information technologies effectively, use appropriate language and utilise information critically, innovatively and creatively.

(d) Management of task

The last category of generic skills proposes that graduates should be able to manage a task from its inception to its completion. Examples of skills in this category include planning, goal-setting, prioritising tasks, development and use of appropriate strategies, and assessing outcomes.

Bennet et al. (1999) explain that, even though disciplinary knowledge and disciplinary skills are seen as two distinct domains, they are interdependent. While disciplinary knowledge is concerned with what is required, disciplinary skills are concerned with how to implement the disciplinary knowledge. Disciplinary skills are often regarded as the core skills that students need in order to graduate. As noted by Barrie (2007), academics have different understandings of generic graduateness attributes, and Bennet et al. (1999) mention that the relationship between generic and core skills is complex because of the differing academic understandings of generic and core skills.

Workplace awareness and workplace experience provide potential graduates with an indirect link to the workplace. The attempts by universities to provide simulated workplace experiences are represented by workplace awareness and workplace experience in the model. Those courses that provide workplace awareness strive to support the application of theoretical knowledge in simulated work environments that are similar to the activities of the workplace, thus providing workplace experience. These elements of the model provide potential graduates with an indirect link to the workplace. According to Bennet et al. (1999), higher educational institutions increasingly are of the opinion that actual or simulated workplace experiences are the best method for developing generic skills. Employers also expect graduates to be able to engage in workplace experiences, as these may improve the attributes they require as well as facilitate the development of knowledge transfer, as employers view students' ability to accomplish this as lacking (Griesel & Parker, 2009). It is with this argument in mind that many higher education institutions are introducing work-integrated learning.

Bennet et al. (1999) explain that the links between the elements of this model indicate possible connections that are dependent on the purposes and intentions of the academics at the higher education institution. Disciplinary knowledge can be learned within the higher education institution with the intention of resultant use in the workplace or vice versa, indicating that there is no assumption of directionality of learning in this model. Furthermore, Bennet et al. (1999) explain that, even though there are arrows in the diagram that indicate possible lines of transfer, no assumption is made about the possibility of transfer because transfer is unlikely to take place unless it is planned for.



### 3.2.2.6 *Yorke and Knight's understanding, skills, efficacy beliefs and metacognition (USEM) graduate employability model*

Yorke and Knight (2006) developed a popular graduate employability model, the USEM model, in which they outline that employability consists of four broad and interrelated components:

- a) Understanding of the subject discipline and the aspects relevant to one's performance in the organisation;
- b) Skilful practices in context;
- c) Efficacy, referring to an individual's personal qualities that may influence his/her success in both work and social life; and
- d) Metacognition, which includes reflection and self-regulation.

The USEM model emphasises the need for graduates to possess discipline-specific knowledge and to be able to apply this to a work context; skills that include key skills that can also be related back to a workplace; efficacy beliefs or the attitude and beliefs relating to the self, as well as metacognition, which incorporates reflective thinking and self-regulation. All these aspects are concurrent with the models provided above, indicating the evident relationship with gradueness.

According to Yorke (2006), employers generally view a graduate's achievement in terms of the subject discipline as necessary but inadequate for the person to be recruited, so much so that , in some employment contexts, the actual subject discipline may be relatively insignificant. Achievements outside the limitations of the subject discipline (such as the possession of so-called 'soft skills') are generally considered to be important in the recruitment of graduates.

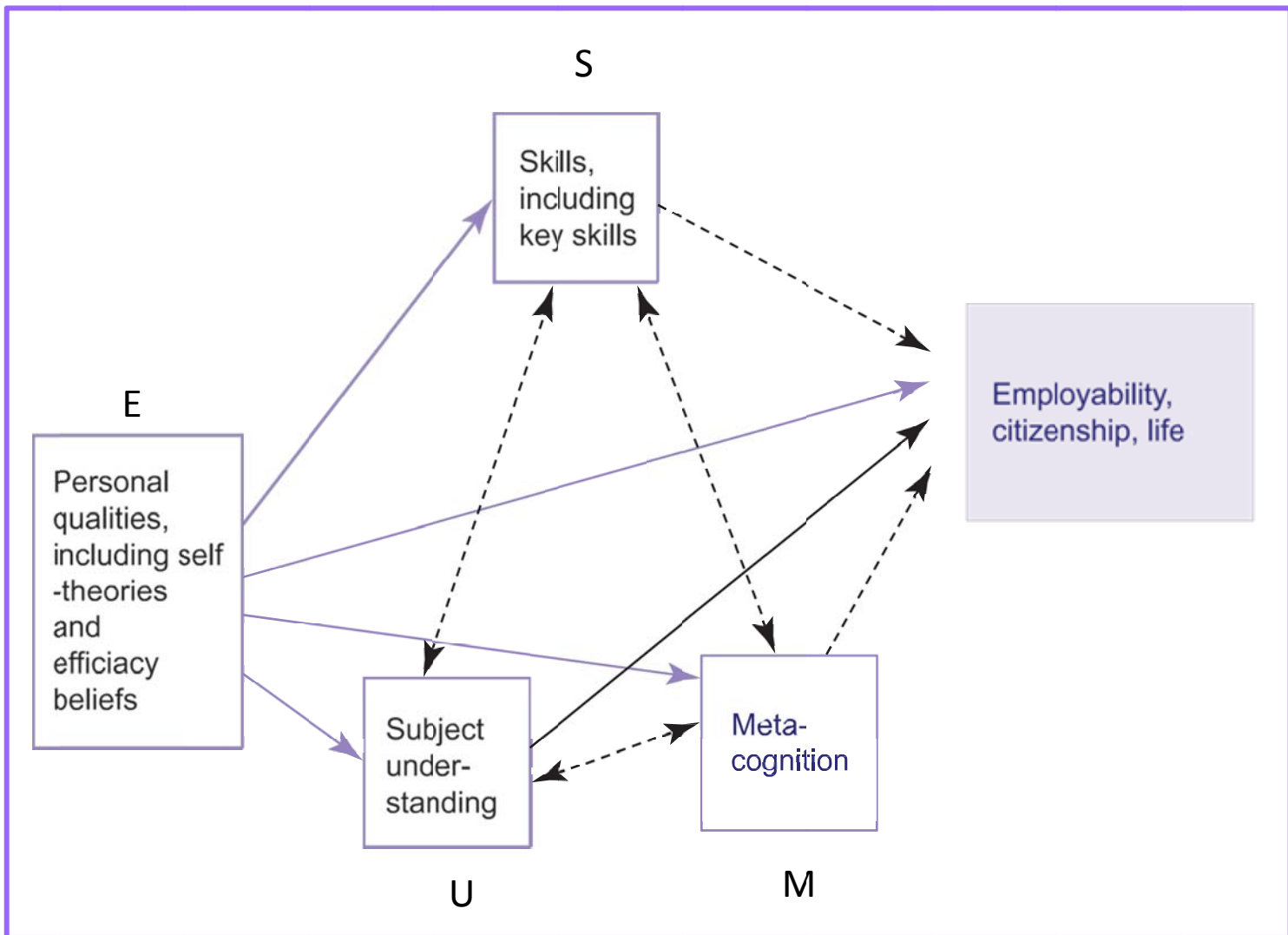


Figure 3.10. The USEM account of employability (Yorke & Knight, 2006, p. 5)

The above model (Figure 3.10) emphasises the ability of the individual to master the field of study, develop the skills required by employers and to identify, describe and reflect on the qualities that may influence career success.

### 3.2.2.7 Pool and Sewell's Career EDGE model of employability

According to Pool and Sewell (2007), employability refers to the possession of a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that cause an individual to be more likely to select and secure an occupation in he/she they can be satisfied and successful. It is from this definition that "the key to employability" model began.

Not only does this model fuse the fundamental conceptual issues that support the understanding of the concept of employability, but it also provides a simple, understandable explanation of what employability actually is (Pool & Sewell, 2007; Sewell & Pool, 2010). The design of the model claims that each component is crucial and that, should one element be missing, it would result in a reduction in a graduate's employability. The main principle of this model is that aspects such as subject-related competence, transferable competencies, career development competencies, experience (both in work and in life), emotional intelligence, meta-cognitive capacity, self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem should always be included when developing in young adults the ability to nurture and negotiate a career through the 21<sup>st</sup>-century world of work (Botha, 2014; Pool & Sewell, 2007; Sewell & Pool, 2010).

The model depicted in Figure 3.11 shows the essential components of employability, and also suggests the direction of interaction between these elements. Pool and Sewell (2007) indicate that, if students are allowed access to and develop the CAREER EDGE elements (i.e. the first tier of the model), and then reflect on these experiences, it consequently will lead them to developing higher levels of self-esteem, self-confidence and self-efficacy, which are the core links to employability

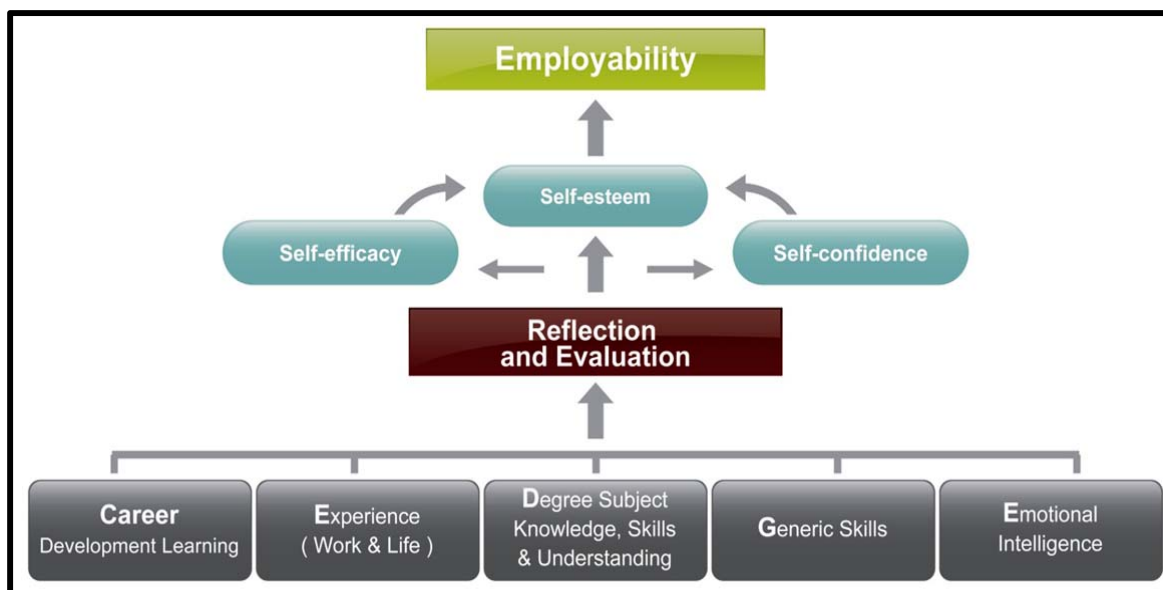


Figure 3.11. The essential components of employability (Pool & Sewell, 2007, p. 280)

Pool and Sewell (2007) mention that employers will judge graduates on the basis of how well they have mastered their degree course; however, this alone will not guarantee employment in which a graduate will be successful and satisfied. It for this reason that the student should also develop generic skills, which include, among others, adaptability, lifelong learning,

communication skills (both oral and written), working well in teams, autonomy, IT skills, time management, decision-making skills, ability to manage others and creativity (Pool & Sewell, 2007). According to Pool and Sewell (2007), without emotional intelligence a graduate is unlikely to find successful, satisfying employment. People with high levels of emotional intelligence are able to motivate themselves and others to achieve more, and they enjoy more career success, build stronger personal relationships and enjoy better health than those with low levels of emotional intelligence (Cooper, 1997; Pool & Sewell, 2007).

Career development learning includes tasks that will assist students in becoming more self-aware, focus on their areas of interest, use any opportunities in the labour market to sell themselves as effective prospective employees, and ensure the continued relevance of their competencies. Concurrent with Bennet et al. (1999), Pool and Sewell (2007) mention that life experiences and work contexts need to be instilled in graduate learning to boost the capacity to become employable.

Instilling in students the necessary skills, knowledge, understanding and attributes is vital; however, it is just as important to provide students with the opportunities to reflect on and evaluate these learnings in order to understand how far they have come in terms of their employability and how far they still have to go (Pool & Sewell, 2007). By drawing up personal development plans, students will have the opportunity to reflect on and evaluate their learnings.

Self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem are closely linked and provide a critical link between knowledge, understanding, skills, experience and personal attributes and employability. Self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem may all be nurtured in higher education institutions by exposing students to mastery experiences, vicarious experiences provided by social models and social persuasion (Pool & Sewell, 2007; Sewell & Pool, 2010).

Figure 3.12 depicts the metaphorical model of the key to employability of all the elements (the key) unlocking employability (the door).

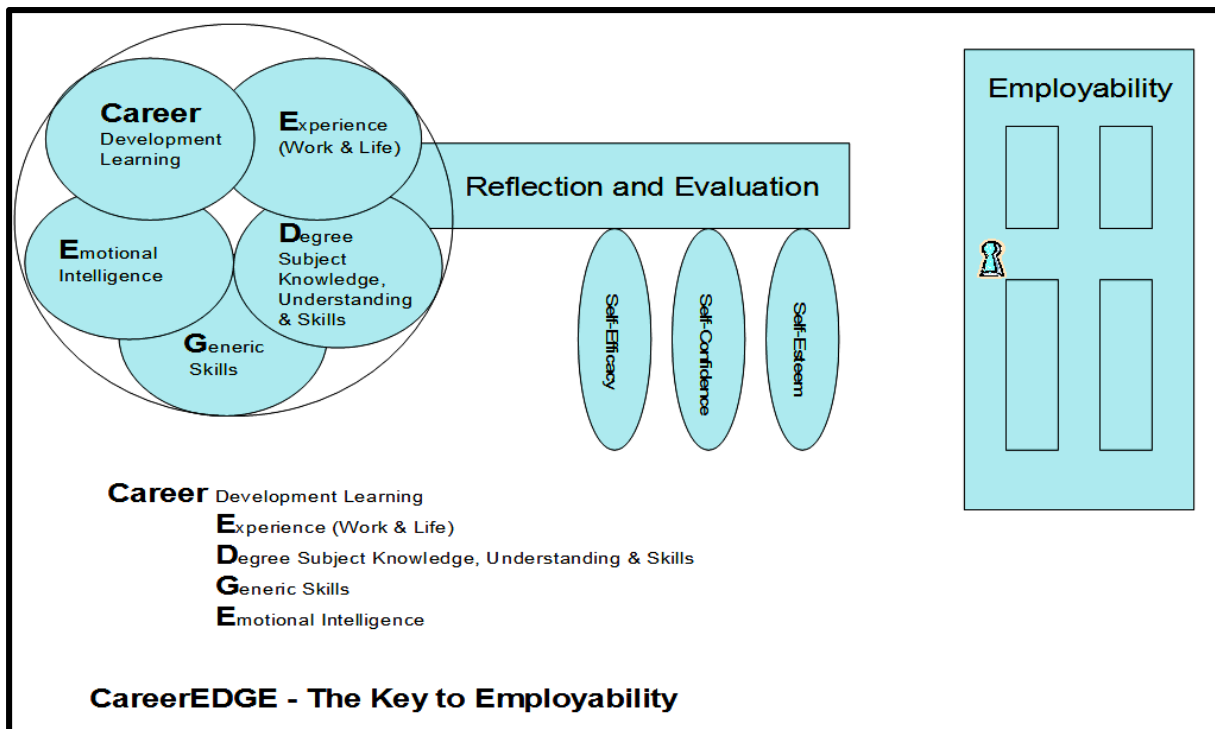


Figure 3.12. A metaphorical model of employability (Pool & Sewell, 2007, p. 281)

### 3.2.2.8 Bridgstock's conceptual model of graduate attributes for employability

Bridgstock (2009) proposes that recent employability models overlook career management skills. Given the increasingly turbulent employment context in which graduates find themselves, and the subsequent emphasis on employability security (Opengart & Short, 2002), Bridgstock (2009, p. 35) argues that career management skills, i.e. “the abilities required to proactively navigate the working world and successfully manage career building process, based on attributes such as adaptability and lifelong learning”, should be included in recent graduate employability models.

Bridgstock's (2009) model contains the skills needed to enhance a graduate's employability, as well as the integral part played by career management. These are elaborated on below.

#### (a) Career management

Bridgstock (2009) views career management as a process that takes place through reflective, evaluative and decision-making processes, in which graduates intentionally manage their work, learning and other aspects of their lives based on specific traits and

dispositions that can be used to effectively obtain, present and employ generic and discipline-specific skills in the work environment.

(b) Employability skills

Employability skills are those skills necessary to acquire and maintain employment. They consist of three skills sets, namely generic skills, discipline-specific skills and career management skills. Career management skills are divided into two categories of competence, namely self-management and career building. Career management skills and knowledge are crucial components of employability, as they play a large part in determining “which, to what extent, in what manner, when and where generic and discipline-specific skills are learned, displayed (e.g. in applying for a job) and used” (Bridgstock, 2009, p. 36). Career building skills are the skills related to knowing and understanding the labour market and the role of the individual in it. This is concurrent with Coetzee’s (2012a) explanation of graduates as lifelong learners, as well as Pool and Sewell’s (2007) explanation of career development learning.

(c) Underpinning traits and dispositions

According to Bridgstock (2009), underpinning traits and dispositions are regarded as the foundations that cause the successful development and application of career management skills. Research suggests that these traits provide comparatively good graduate employment outcomes and higher levels of career success. Some studies have found that students with high levels of intrinsic motivation and career self-efficacy are expected to achieve good educational results (Evans & Burck, 1992) and experience an easier transition from school to work (Pinquart et al., 2003). Other research has shown that, once these students are at work, they seem to be more satisfied with their work and perform significantly better than others (Judge & Bono, 2001).

Figure 3.13 provides a diagrammatic representation of Bridgstock’s (2009) model.

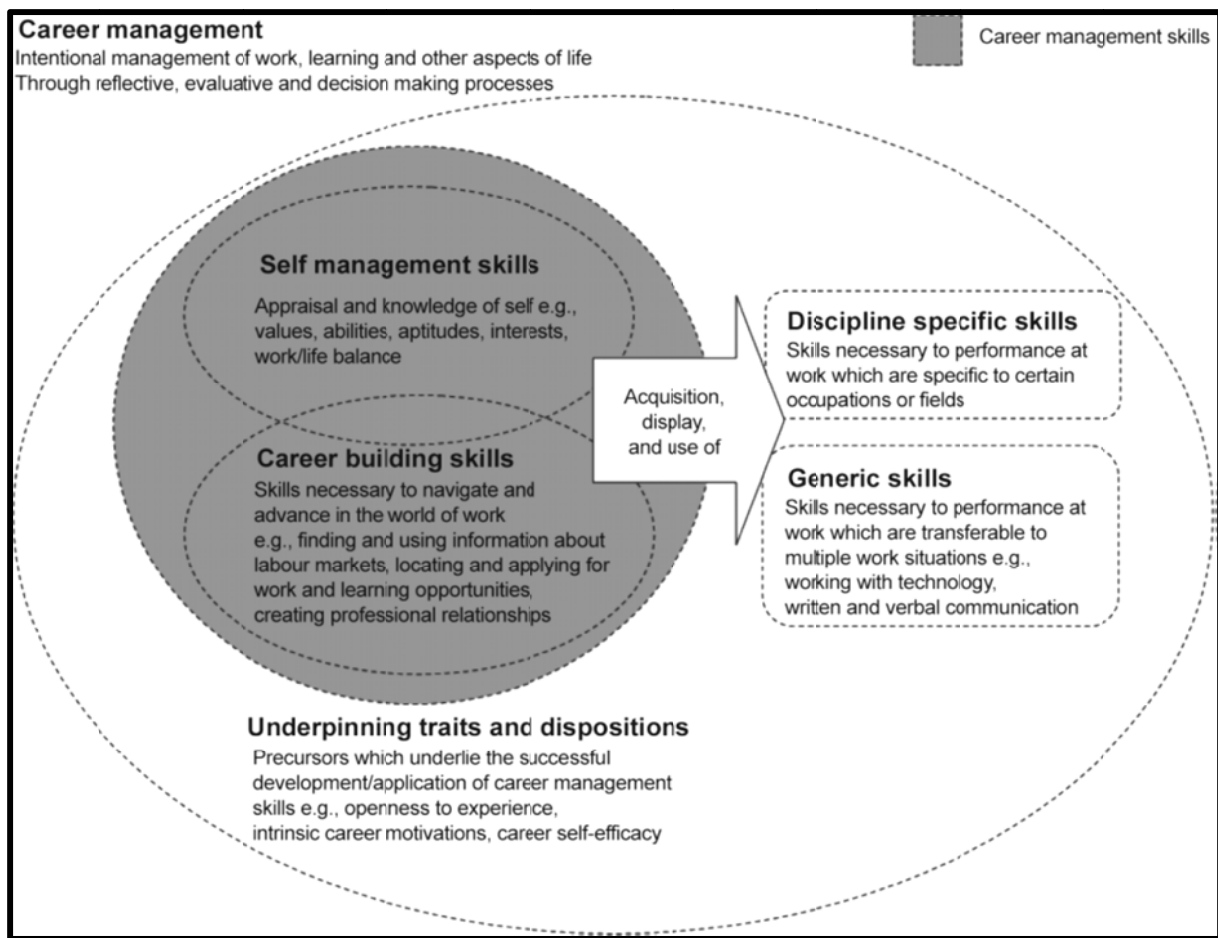


Figure 3.13. Conceptual model of graduate attributes for employability, including career management skills (Bridgstock, 2009, p. 36)

### 3.2.2.9 Evaluation of the models

Table 3.8 below provides the basic premise of the models discussed above, as well as the reason for their inclusion in or exclusion from the empirical research study.

Table 3.8

*Models Related to Graduateness Skills and Attributes Considered for Inclusion in this Study*

<b>Developer and model</b>	<b>Basic premise</b>	<b>Reason for inclusion in or exclusion from the empirical research study</b>
<b>Barrie's (2004) research-based approach to generic graduate attributes policy</b>	Identified three holistic, overarching attributes as vital outcomes of university education: scholarship, global citizenship and lifelong learning	Included as part of Coetzee's (2012a) framework, which is designed specifically for South African use
<b>Barrie's (2007) conceptual framework for the teaching and learning of generic graduate attributes</b>	Provided differing perceptions from academics regarding graduateness skills and attributes	This model was excluded from the empirical research study because the constructs have not been operationalised and cannot be measured. In addition, this model was designed for the Australian higher education environment and no evidence was found to confirm that the model would be applicable in all cultures
<b>Steur et al.'s (2012) model of graduateness</b>	Separated graduateness from employability. Model emphasises reflective thinking, scholarship, citizenship and lifelong learning as the elements of graduateness	Included as part of Coetzee's (2012a) framework, which is designed specifically for South African use
<b>Coetzee's (2012a) framework</b>	Identified eight core skills and attributes that are clustered in three holistic, overarching attitudinal domains of personal and intellectual development: scholarship, global and moral citizenship and lifelong learning, which are based on the works of Barrie (2004) and Steur et al. (2012)	This model was included in the empirical research study because it was designed specifically for the South African graduate and therefore is appropriate for a study on the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase. This model also incorporates Barrie's (2004) model, as well as Steur et al.'s (2012) model of graduateness



<p><b>Bennet et al.'s (1999) model of graduate employability</b></p>	<p>Proposed a model of graduate employability in which they distinguished between five elements of course provision in higher education: disciplinary content knowledge, disciplinary skills, workplace awareness, workplace experience and generic skills</p>	<p>This model was excluded from the empirical research study because the constructs have not been operationalised and cannot be measured</p>
<p><b>Yorke and Knight's (2006) USEM graduate employability model</b></p>	<p>Employability consists of four broad and interrelated components: understanding of the subject discipline; skilful practices in context; efficacy; and metacognition, which includes reflection and self-regulation</p>	<p>This model was excluded from the empirical research study because it was designed for the UK higher education environment and no evidence was found to confirm that the model would be applicable in all cultures</p>
<p><b>Pool and Sewell (2007) career EDGE model of employability</b></p>	<p>The main principle of this model is that aspects such as subject-related competence, transferable competencies, career development competencies, experience (both in work and in life), emotional intelligence, meta-cognitive capacity, self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem should always be included when developing in young adults the ability to nurture and negotiate a career through the 21<sup>st</sup>-century world of work</p>	<p>This model was excluded from the empirical research study because it was designed for the UK higher education environment and no evidence was found to confirm that the model would be applicable in all cultures</p>
<p><b>Bridgstock (2009) conceptual model of graduate attributes for employability</b></p>	<p>Includes career management skills (career adaptability and lifelong learning) as part of graduate employability models</p>	<p>This model was excluded from the empirical research study because it was designed for the Australian environment and no evidence was found to confirm that the model would be applicable in all cultures</p>

### **3.2.3 Variables influencing graduateness**

The influence of gender, age and race on an individual's graduateness skills and attributes will be discussed in this section.

#### **3.2.3.1 Gender**

Jackson (2013) found that female learners scored significantly higher than their male counterparts on the importance of employability skills in a higher education curriculum. Jackson (2012) found that males recorded lower ratings in employability competence than females.

#### **3.2.3.2 Age**

There is evidence to suggest that age is negatively related to the ability and willingness to learn (Colquitt, LePine, & Noe, 2000; Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004; Kubeck, Delp, Haslett, & McDaniel, 1996; Warr, 2001; Warr & Birdi, 1998; Yeatts, Folts, & Knapp, 2000). With increased age, cognitive abilities such as speed of information processing and working capacity decrease (Niessen, Swarowsky, & Liez, 2010; Verhaeghen & Salthouse, 1997). When people become aware of a decrease in their cognitive abilities, their motivation to work may decrease (Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004) and they may experience a disparity between demands and their knowledge, skills and abilities. It therefore can be deduced that the older the individual, the weaker his or her graduateness skills and attributes will be.

It seems that older employees are less employable than younger employees, while employees who have been employed in the same position and/or the same organisation for more than seven years and who have entered the later career stages seem to display fewer employability behaviours (and thus graduateness skills and attributes) (Clarke, 2009; De Grip, Van Loo & Sanders, 2004; Van Dam, 2004a; 2004b; Van Der Heijden, 2002). Jackson (2012) found that age appeared to have no effect on self-scored competence in employability.

#### **3.2.3.3 Race**

Kraak (2005) found that among the individuals who graduated from Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges there were more white graduates than African graduates who were able to obtain employment. However, it is unclear whether the inability of the African graduates to obtain employment is related to their employability skills (graduateness skills

and attributes) or lack thereof. Jackson (2012) found that Asian learners scored themselves lower in overall employability competence.

### **3.2.4 Summary of gradueness skills and attributes**

In summary, the following core conclusions can be drawn regarding the construct of gradueness skills and attributes. Gradueness refers to the quality of personal growth and intellectual development of the graduates produced by a higher education institution, and the relevance of the skills and attributes they bring to the workplace (Coetzee, 2009; 2012a; Coetzee & Schreuder, 2011; Coetzee & Schreuder, 2012; Griesel & Parker, 2009; Steur et al., 2012).

Gradueness skills and attributes constitute a graduate employee's gradueness in three holistic, overarching attitudinal domains of personal and intellectual development: (1) scholarship, (2) global and moral citizenship; and (3) lifelong learning (Barrie, 2004; Coetzee, 2012a; Steur et al., 2012).

Generic skills and attributes refer to those skills that are developed regardless of the field of study or domain of knowledge. They are not a set of additional outcomes requiring an additional curriculum; rather, they are outcomes that reasonably can be expected from the higher education experience (Barrie, 2004).

Figure 3.14 below provides an integrated model of gradueness skills and attributes based on the theories and discussion above.

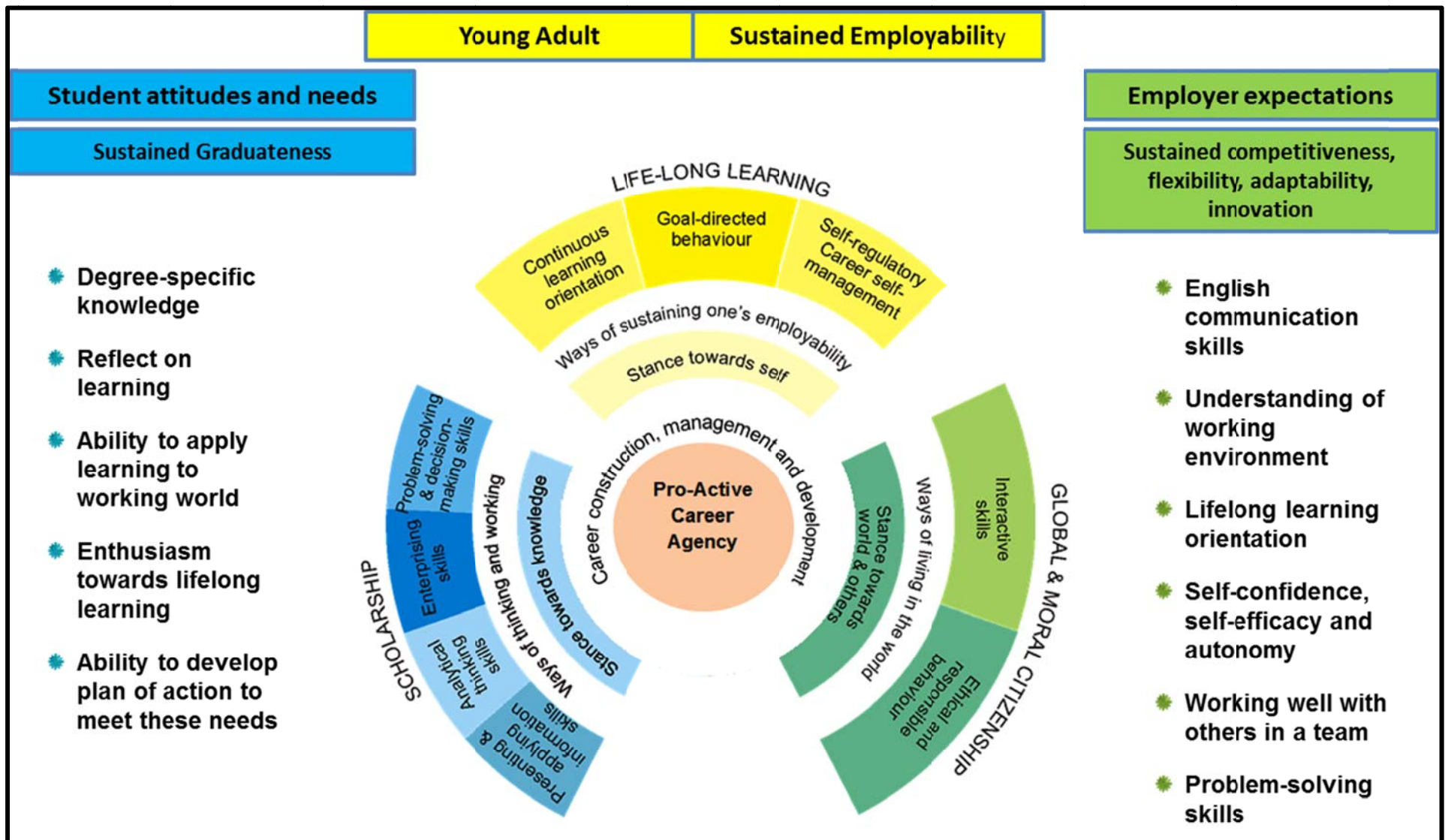


Figure 3.14. Model integrating theory related to graduateness skills and attributes (Adapted from Coetzee, 2012b, p. 6)

### 3.3 CAREER ADAPTABILITY

The concept of career adaptability will be discussed in the following sections. The concept will be conceptualised and the theoretical models explained. The variables influencing career adaptability and their impact on the young adult in the school-to-work transition will also be discussed.

#### 3.3.1 Conceptualisation of career adaptability

The word adaptability is derived from the Latin word *adaptō*, which means to fit or connect (Nota, Ginevra, Santilli, & Soresi, 2014; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Over time, subtle distinctions have been made to the term adapt, including adaptation, adapting, adaptivity and adaptability (Nota et al., 2014). These are explained as follows:

- Adaptation denotes an ability to employ one's self-concept in working roles and, on achieving a good fit, it guides one to the accomplishment of an advantageous synthesis between past concerns and present desires (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).
- Adapting entails the portrayal of certain behaviours that adjust to altering situations (managing professional distress, coping with work transitions) through five classically repeated actions: 1) orientation, 2) exploration, 3) establishment, 4) management, and 5) disengagement (Nota et al., 2014; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).
- Adaptivity can be seen as a core characteristic of an individual that is either a personality trait of that individual that is irrepressible and stable, or a propensity of that individual to be flexible or willing to change (Nota et al., 2014; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).
- Adaptability is a psychosocial construct focused on the individual's resources to handle developmental tasks to prepare for future professional roles and thus implies an ability to adjust to unforeseen needs that arise from changes in the labour market and/or in working conditions (Nota et al., 2014; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

The concept of adaptability has been defined differently by varying authors. The concept has been explained primarily by Super and Knasel (1981), who describe it as a fundamental construct in an individual's career development process and that has since been recommended as a key competency in career success (Creed et al., 2009; O'Connell, McNeely, & Hall, 2008; Savickas, 1994). Stauffer et al. (2014) explain that adaptability is the pivotal component of career construction theory, as well as the fusing ingredient offered as

an extension to Super's (1957; 1990) life-span, life-space theory, in which Super took the client's development, self and context into consideration. It was Savickas (1997) who introduced adaptability as a substitute for Super's (1955) idea of career maturity, in terms of which he explained that adaptability indicates a significant skill in an individual's ability to manoeuvre the career decision-making process and the working world (Duffy, 2010; Savickas, 1997; 2005). Goodman (1994) mentioned that adaptability referred mostly to the modifications that individuals need to make between different career stages or the balance that they aim to achieve between their work and personal environment. Pulakos, Arad, Donovan, and Plamondon (2000) define adaptability as adaptive performance within the workplace, and Ployhart and Bliese (2006) conceptualise adaptability as an intra-individualised construct that manipulates the method through which individuals understand and react to various situations (Hamtaux, Houssemand, & Vrignaud, 2013). Savickas (1997) conceptualises adaptability as planful attitudes that can be learned, thereby allowing individuals to increase their adaptability. Should the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase learn planful attitudes, he/she would be able to plan and map out his/her goals, which possibly enable him/her to address and achieve those goals of acquiring, retaining and developing their employment opportunities more effectively (Beukes, 2010).

Even though there are different definitions of adaptability, the majority of researchers agree that adaptability is related to the way people manage and adjust to change, in other words people's adjustment to their career environments (Hamtaux et al., 2013; Rottinghaus et al., 2005; Savickas, 1997).

When discussing the concept of career adaptability, Rottinghaus et al. (2005) explained the concept as something that affects the way in which an individual sees his or her ability to plan and adjust to change, especially in unpredictable situations. Savickas (1997) defines career adaptability as a psychosocial construct that displays employees' resources for managing present and impending work and career challenges that may affect their incorporation in their social environment (Zacher, 2014a). Career adaptability resources are therefore not stable traits such as personality characteristics, but rather self-regulatory capacities that may change over time and situations and that are triggered by factors within the person, the environment, and their interaction (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

According to Savickas (1997; 2002; 2005; 2013), career adaptability involves looking ahead to one's future career (planning), knowing what career to follow (decision making), looking around at different career opportunities (exploration) and possessing a feeling of self-efficiency in order to successfully perform the activities that are needed in order to

accomplish one's career objectives (confidence). Baumeister and Vohs (2007) expand on this by explaining that an individual's self-development and career adaptability involves looking around at any available prospects, looking ahead to the future (planning), making appropriate and feasible choices (deciding), and managing the intrapersonal, interpersonal and environmental factors that hinder the achievement of an individual's goals; in other words, self-regulating.

Savickas (2005) conceptualises adaptive individuals as those who are or who become concerned with their future as employees and then take the necessary steps to increase their personal control over their vocational future. Adaptive individuals are proactive by displaying curiosity and exploring possible selves and future scenarios, and seek to boost their confidence in an effort to pursue their aspirations (Savickas, 2005).

It is believed that engaging in adaptive behaviours before career transitions acts as a form of preparation that promotes job seekers' ensuing quality of employment and career success (Hirschi, 2010a; Koen, Klehe, Van Vianen, Zikic, & Nauta, 2010). When faced with unemployment, recognising a sense of competence, exploring one's career options and planning one's career increase the likelihood of finding suitable employment (Zikic & Klehe, 2006). Career adaptability research has increasingly shown that adolescents higher in career adaptability are more successful in managing vocational transitions, have a lower chance of long-lasting unemployment, and make better career-related choices (Creed, Muller, & Patton, 2003; Fouad, 2007; Germeijis & Verschueren, 2007; Hirschi et al., 2011; Koen et al., 2012; Patton, Creed, & Muller, 2002).

Career adaptability enables individuals to become self-sufficient by supporting themselves and enhancing higher performance in their work (Bimrose, Brown, Barnes, & Hughes, 2011). It provides assistance to an individual in adjusting to and fitting into a new career-related situation (Koen et al., 2010). Career adaptability may be useful in understanding the job search process, as it signifies the willingness and various adaptive resources that may assist individuals in preparation for and management of career, transitions such as a move from unemployment to re-employment (Koen et al., 2010).

In the context of the present research, career adapt-ability is a psychosocial construct comprised of the resources an individual uses to respond to tasks and challenges of vocational development (Johnston et al., 2013; Savickas, 1997; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). The four dimensions of adapt-ability – concern, control, curiosity and confidence – combine to represent a total adapt-ability score (Johnston et al., 2013).

According to Dix and Savickas (2013) there are two dimensions to career adaptability: the first dimension represents the relation of an individual's level of development to chronological age and is measured by comparing the developmental tasks that an individual is encountering to the tasks that an individual is expected to be dealing with based on chronological age. The second dimension represents the behaviours that are instrumental to adequately respond to the developmental tasks, and the measurement of this dimension entails the comparison of an individual's methods for coping with a task to the typical behaviours of a group coping with that same task. Whereas the first dimension concentrates on developmental tasks, the second dimension concentrates on coping responses (Dix & Savickas, 2013).

Career adaptability involves an individual's capability to face, track or acknowledge changing career roles and to effectively handle shifts in career (Savickas, 1997; 2002; 2005; 2013), such as terminating a state of joblessness by searching for a job. Career adaptability assists the individual to adjust to and fit into a new career-related situation (Koen et al., 2010). Career adaptability is also essential to achieving career effectiveness in an evolving climate and imperative in enabling individuals to manage and cope with shifting environmental demands (Hall, 2004; Pulakos et al., 2000). Career adaptability is also reflected in the changing demands of employers who are increasingly seeking an adaptable workforce (Pulakos et al., 2000).

### **3.3.2 Theoretical model**

For the purpose of this study, Savickas's (2005) career construction theory is discussed.

#### **3.3.2.1 *Savickas's career construction theory***

Career construction theory is a career theory that seeks to explain occupational choice and work adjustment, which each probe a different aspect of vocational behaviour (Savickas, 2006). It suggests that career development and adjustment involve the requirement for employees to constantly adapt to their social environment in order to accomplish person-environment fit, as well as subjective and objective career success (Savickas, 2002; 2005; 2013; Zacher, 2014a). The current global economy poses the question how individuals can negotiate a lifetime of job changes without losing their sense of self and social identity (Savickas, 2006). Career construction theory therefore responds to the needs of today's mobile workers, who might feel torn and confused as they face a rearrangement of



occupations, transformation of the labour force, as well as multicultural requirements (Savickas, 2005; 2006).

Career construction theory presents a model for understanding vocational behaviour across the individual's lifecycle and the approaches and resources that career counsellors utilise in order to help clients make informed career choices and preserve successful and satisfying work lives (Savickas, 2006). The theory views careers from a contextual perspective, one that views development as driven by adaptation to an environment rather than by maturation of inner structures (Savickas, 2005). Career construction theory views interests or personality types as groups of socially constructed attitudes, interests and abilities, and thus, in essence, interests or personality types represent a person's social reputation and self-concept (Sharf, 2013a).

Career construction theory (Savickas, 2005) conceptualises human development as being focused on adaptation within a social environment for the purpose of person–environment integration. As people shape their lives, they must adapt to the prospect that they work, play and develop relationships (Savickas et al., 2009). The career construction model of adaptation focuses on the work role in that it deals with the social expectations that individuals prepare for, enter and participate in in the work role and career adaptability, thus deals with the capacity of individuals to successfully negotiate career transitions between occupational positions (Savickas, 2009; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

According to Savickas (2006), career construction theory views adaptation to transitions as being promoted by five principal types of behaviour: (1) orientation; (2) exploration; (3) establishment; (4) management; and (5) disengagement. These activities of construction form a rotation of adaptation that is intermittently repeated as fresh transitions appear on the horizon. As each transition approaches, individuals are able to adapt more effectively should they meet the change with growing awareness, seek information that leads to informed decision making, and experiment with behaviours that lead to a stable commitment projected forward for a certain time period, active role management and, eventually, forward-looking deceleration and disengagement. For example, an employee begins a new job with a phase of growth in the new role, including exploration of the requirements, routines and rewards of that role. Then he or she becomes established in the role, manages it for a certain time period and eventually disengages from it, either voluntarily when further growth readies him or her to change jobs, or involuntarily when organisational changes make their position redundant. They change jobs often and make recurrent transitions, each time repeating the cycle of orientation, exploration, stabilisation, management and disengagement.

Klehe, Zikic, Van Vianen, Koen, and Buyken (2012) proposed a model of career adaptability that is illustrated in Figure 3.15.

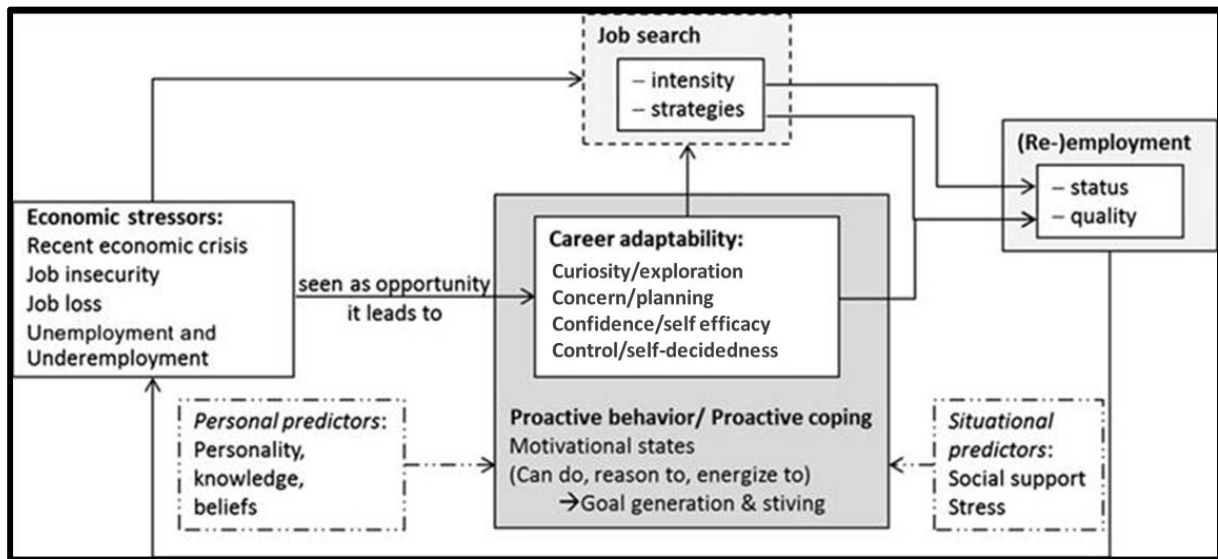


Figure 3.15. Career adaptability as a way to cope proactively with economic stress (Klehe et al., 2012, p. 154)

Career construction theory includes three components: life themes, vocational personality and career adaptability (Amundson, Harris-Bowlsbey, & Niles, 2009). These components are discussed below.

(a) Life themes

The life theme component of career construction theory emerged from Super's (1957) proposition that, when individuals express vocational preferences, they put into occupational terminology their ideas of the kinds of people they are and want to be; when entering an occupation, they strive to implement a concept of themselves; and once they stabilise in an occupation, they strive to realise their potential and preserve their self-esteem (Savickas, 2005; 2006).

In terms of this perspective, work provides a setting for human development and a vital position in each individual's life, a place that matters. The life theme thus highlights the view that careers are about mattering (Savickas, 2006).

(b) Vocational personality

According to Savickas (2006), career construction theory involves three perspectives on vocational behaviour: differential, developmental and dynamic. From the individual differences psychology perspective, it studies the subject matter of vocational personality types and *what* different people choose to do. From the developmental psychology perspective, it studies the process of psychosocial adaptation and *how* individuals cope with vocational development tasks, occupational transitions and work traumas. From the narrative psychology perspective, it studies the dynamics by which life themes impose meaning on vocational behaviour and *why* individuals fit work into their lives in distinct ways. Together, the three perspectives allow counsellors and researchers to investigate the way individuals construct their careers by using life themes to incorporate the self-organisation of personality and the self-extension of career adaptability into a self-defining whole that stimulates work, directs occupational choice and shapes vocational adjustment.

(c) Career adaptability

The career adaptability construct was described by Savickas (1997) in his acknowledgement of the thinking of Super, who proposed the Life Space Life Span theory, represented in the Life Career Rainbow and later as part of Savickas's (2005) own integrated career construction theory (Johnston et al., 2013). Specifically, Super (1990) denoted that the individual is the principal actor of his/her career construction, which is characterised by five stages of development, viz. the five life phases of growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance and disengagement. In his work, Super (1990) emphasises the adjustment process through which individuals adapt to the situations they have to face by making efforts to realise their own self.

During this adjustment process, people try to improve themselves or increase their person-environment fit, and at the same time attempt to become what they wish to be and to achieve their objectives (Savickas, 1997). Such attention to adjustment laid the foundations that allowed Savickas (1997) to bring together into a single model the different perspectives on vocational development that he had elaborated (Savickas, 1997) and to rethink development in terms of adaptability. Savickas (1997) conceptualised career adaptability as a higher order, hierarchical construct with numerous dimensions at the first-order level and that, when combined, these dimensions reflect an integrated gauge of an employee's overall career adaptability.

Four main resources (known as the 4Cs) characterise adaptability and represent the problem-solving and coping approaches used by individuals to integrate the self-concept into their work role (Nota et al., 2014). These four tasks or resources entail to 1) become *concerned* with one's future role as a worker, 2) enhance personal *control* over the professional activities one performs, 3) show *curiosity* before making educational and vocational choices, and 4) develop the required *confidence* to make and implement career choices (Savickas, 2002; 2005; 2011a; 2011b; Savickas et al., 2009; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). These dimensions of career adaptability signify general adaptive resources and strategies needed at different career transitions, even those beginning in adolescence, as well as in daily general life (Savickas, 2005). Figure 3.16 illustrates these four dimensions.

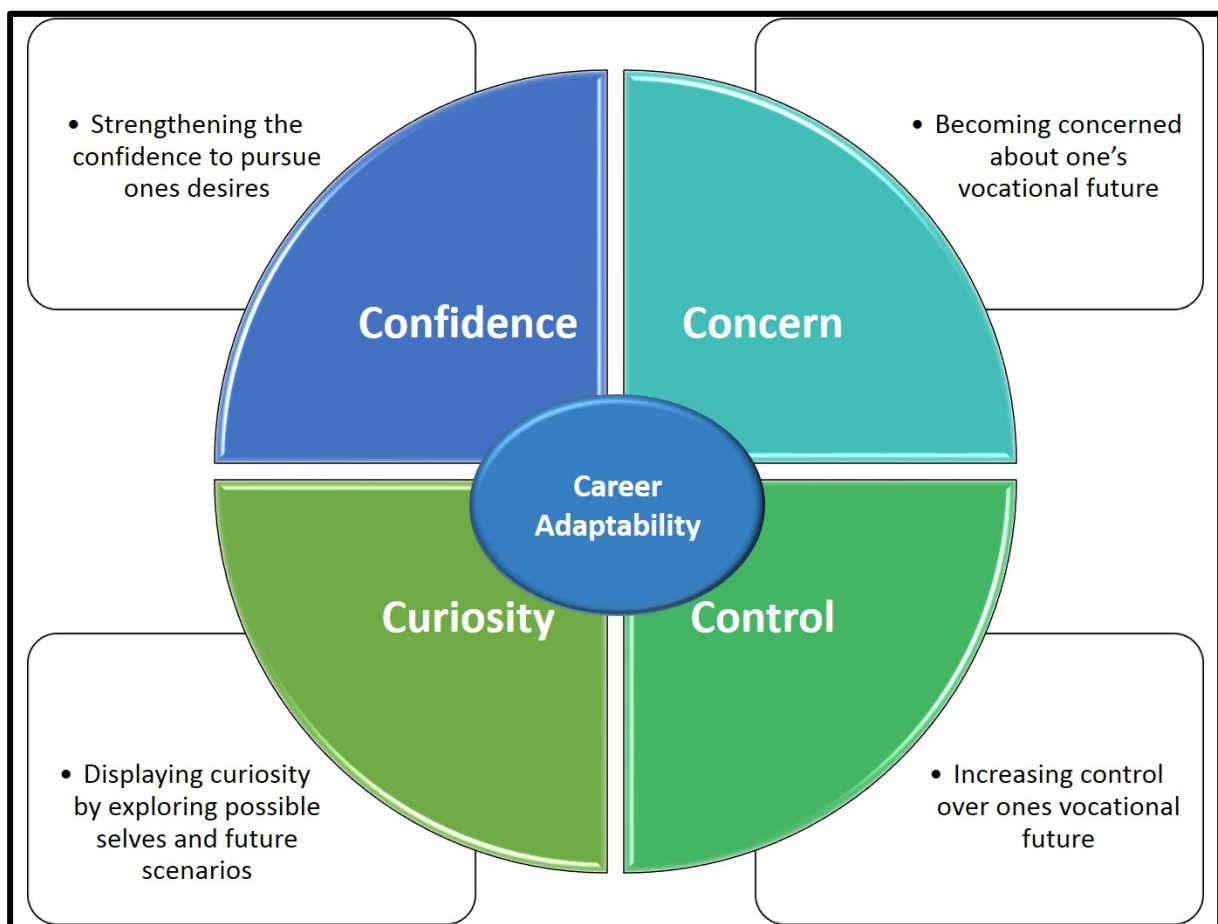


Figure 3.16. The four dimensions of career adaptability

The Career Adaptabilities Scale (CAAS) (Savickas, 2007; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) measures career adaptability as a higher order construct that incorporates four psychosocial resources of employees for overseeing their career development: concern describes the degree to which employees are future oriented and prepare for impending career tasks and challenges; control is defined as the degree to which employees accept personal

responsibility pertaining to influencing their development and work environment by displaying self-discipline, effort and determination; curiosity involves employees exploring possible future selves and opportunities and thinking about how they may influence various work roles and environments; and confidence describes employees' beliefs that they can transform their career goals into reality and successfully solve problems and rise above any obstacles (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012; Zacher, 2014a).

### **3.3.3 Variables influencing career adaptability**

Factors affecting career adaptability may influence a participant's concern (planning and expectations for the future), control (taking responsibility for one's own actions and learning to make better decisions), curiosity (exploring surroundings, looking for growth opportunities and becoming curious about new opportunities) and confidence (performing tasks efficiently, learning from mistakes, having a sense of pride and a sense of self-confidence) within their career (Ferreira, 2012). The influence of gender, age, qualification level and other variables on an individual's career adaptability are discussed in this section

#### **3.3.3.1 Gender**

Hou, Leung, Li, Li, and Xu (2012) reported that male students scored significantly higher than females in control, curiosity and confidence. No gender difference was found in concern.

#### **3.3.3.2 Age**

Zacher (2014b) found that participant age positively predicted changes in control, confidence and overall career adaptability over time. Zacher (2014b) found that older individuals experience greater increases in control and confidence over time than younger individuals, which is also consistent with the motivational theory of life span development. Correlated with age, Zacher (2014a) found that concern was negatively correlated with age, while control correlated positively.

Adaptation to change in work settings may become more difficult with age (Peeters & Emmerick, 2008), based on the idea that age is negatively related to the ability and willingness to learn (Colquitt et al., 2000; Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004; Kubeck et al., 1996; Warr, 2001; Warr & Birdi, 1998; Yeatts et al., 2000).

### 3.3.3.3 *Qualification level*

Zacher (2014b) found that education positively predicted change in a participant's concern over time, but an effect of education on overall career adaptability was not found. Hou et al. (2012) found that the level of education also affected career adaptability in that those students in their first and third year of studies reported a higher level of career adaptability than those in their fourth year.

### 3.3.3.4 *Other variables*

Porfeli and Savickas (2012) found a strong correlation between career adaptability and career identity – particularly with career exploration and identification with career commitments, which implies that identity and career adaptability are vital in career construction (Savickas, 2011b), and that individuals who display higher levels of career adaptability make career choices that apply their identity. Pouyard, Vignoli, Dosnon, and Lallemand (2012) found that anxiety and fear of failing influence the development of adaptability resources.

De Guzman and Choi (2013) found that individuals with higher levels of career adaptability were more likely to find a suitable job, thereby realising career success and work satisfaction. Soresi and Nota (2012, as cited in Nota et al., 2014, p. 254) found that students with higher levels of career adaptability were more future oriented and presented higher levels of hope, optimism and a higher tendency to positively cope with stress and challenging situations (resilience) than participants with lower levels of career adaptability. Soresi, Nota, and Ferrari (2012) found that adolescents with higher levels of adaptability displayed lower perceived internal and external vocational barriers, a more extensive range of career interests, and higher quality of life than those adolescents with lower levels of career adaptability.

Nota, Ginevra, and Soresi (2012) found that adolescents with higher levels of career adaptability felt more career decided, more future projected, and more capable of creating their future career intentions and transforming their intentions into goal-oriented behaviours. Ferrari, Nota, and Soresi (2010) found that middle and high school students with higher levels of time perspective (a component of career adaptability) were more greatly involved in the decisional process and more committed in school. Duffy (2010) found that individuals with a greater sense of personal control displayed greater levels of career adaptability and subsequently may be able to proactively overcome the challenges of the world of work.

### 3.3.4 Summary of career adaptability

In summary, the following core conclusions can be drawn regarding the construct of career adaptability:

Career adaptability is a psychosocial construct that indicates an individual's readiness and resources for coping with current and anticipated occupational development tasks, vocational transitions as well as personal traumas (Creed et al., 2009; Ferreira, 2012; Maree, 2012; Savickas, 1997; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Adaptability shapes self-extension into the social environment as individuals connect with society and adjust their own professional behaviour proportionately to the developmental tasks imposed by a community and the transitions they are faced with in their vocational roles (Savickas, 2005).

Figure 3.17 provides an overview of career construction theory, with a particular focus on career adaptability.

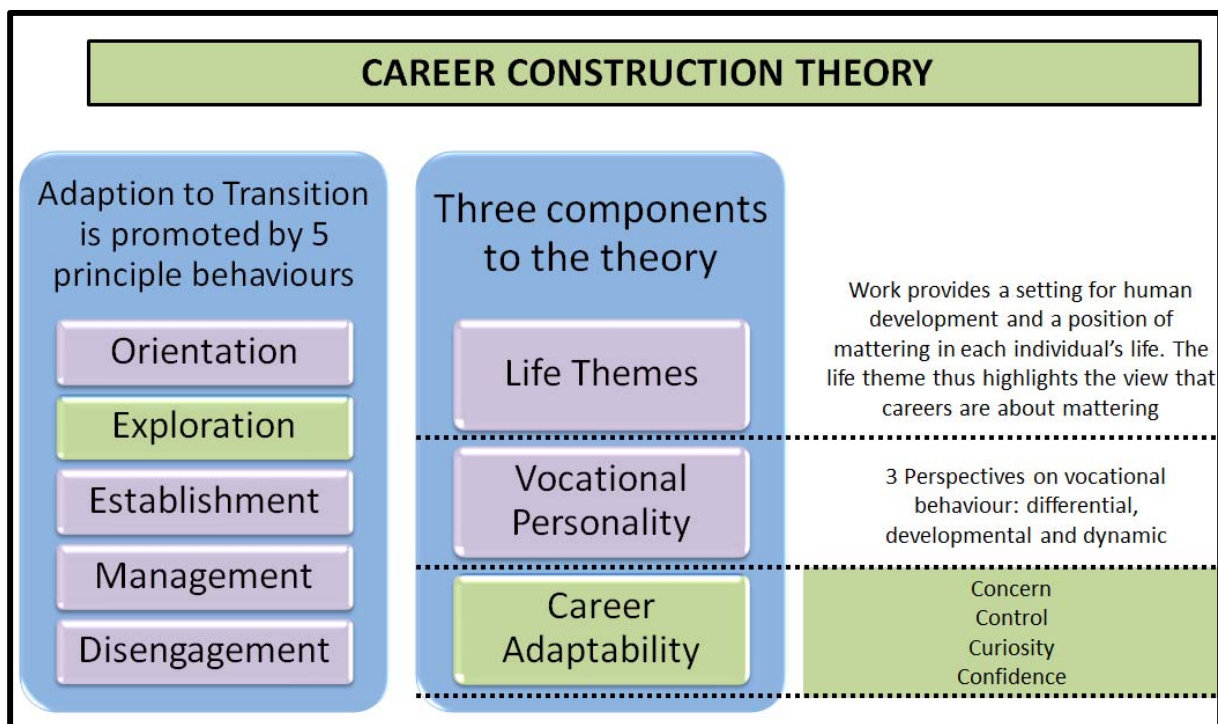


Figure 3.17. Career construction theory focusing on career adaptability

Among others, research has shown the effects of career adaptability on age, gender and race groups. The instrument used to measure career adaptability is the Career Adaptabilities Scale (CAAS) (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

### 3.4 THEORETICAL INTEGRATION

Given the rising unemployment rate in South Africa (as discussed in Chapter 1), career adaptability has a vital importance for workers who must deal with recurring and rising change and its effects on their lives, negotiate frequent transitions, and create successful lives (Maree, 2012). Employees require the psychological resources and self-determining capabilities that will assist them in managing these career-related transitions, which may include anything from job loss to searching for re-employment (Savickas, 1997; 2002; 2005; 2013; Super & Knasel, 1981). Difficult career situations often translate into difficult life situations, and such situations will negatively impact a person's self-esteem (Niles, Jacob, & Nichols, 2010).

Self-esteem is defined as a socially constructed emotion signifying feelings and perceptions about an individual's numerous self-concepts and self-images, which are based on his/her psychological need for acceptance and belonging within one's group, the desire for effective and authentic functioning, competence and achievement in comparison with other members of one's group (Battle, 1992; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Hewitt, 2002; Maslow, 1970). This corresponds with Rosenberg's (1965) belief that self-esteem is derived from two sources: how a person perceives himself (the need for self-esteem) and how a person believes that significant others perceive him (the need for esteem from others).

Positive self-esteem indicates that a person has a good fit with the social world, is competent and able to meet the challenges of the world, is ready to participate in life within this social context and is able to balance social demands and personal desires (Hewitt, 1998; Scheff, 1990). This is then aligned with the purpose of career construction theory (Savickas, 2005), which requires a person to adapt to the changes in the social environment to ensure a good person-environment fit. Lifelong learning and continued adaptation to changing circumstances are often perceived as crucial prerequisites of employability – the capacity of graduates to enter and fit into the labour market to gain employment (De Vos, De Hauw, & Van der Heijden, 2011; Lent, 2013).

Heimpel et al. (2012) found that people with low self-esteem are less likely than those with high self-esteem to engage in adaptive coping efforts. A general way to increase a person's self-esteem is to teach people problem-solving skills, as these provide an effective technique that may be applied to a range of difficulties and challenges (Bednar et al., 1989; Mruk, 2013; Pope et al., 1988). Problem-solving skills have been identified as a key gradueness attribute that will improve one's employability (Barrie, 2004; Bath et al., 2004; Bowers-Brown



& Harvey, 2004; Coetzee, 2012a; Griesel & Parker, 2009; Higher Education Quality Council, 1995). To become and stay employable, an array of competencies that includes social and adaptive competencies, above and beyond technical domain knowledge, should be considered (i.e. gradueness skills and attributes) (Froehlich et al., 2014; Fugate et al., 2004; Rodriguez, Patel, Bright, Gregory, & Gowing, 2002). Potgieter (2012a) found that people with well-developed self-esteem display their employability attributes (gradueness skills and attributes) confidently.

In order for young adults to deal with the multiple transitions facing them in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century world of work, they must have the ability to adapt promptly to the changes in the nature of work; to take responsibility for self-managing any career shifts; and be committed to lifelong learning (Hager & Holland, 2006). Within the context of these transitions, the relational aspects of the psychological contract between employees and employers expect employees to obtain and foster a set of personal skills and competencies or strengths, such as lifelong learning, tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty (adaptability), autonomy, self-awareness and self-efficacy (self-esteem) (Ballout, 2009). Interestingly enough, Savickas and Porfeli (2012) imply that there is a theoretical connection between career adaptability and utilising one's strengths (Douglas & Duffy, 2015).

Being career adaptable involves the lifelong learning of new skills and procedures, transferring skills within and between contexts, effectively dealing with any uncertainty, viewing new situations as opportunities rather than obstacles, as well as being self-aware and reflecting on one's own actions (Creed, Macpherson, & Hood, 2010). Pouyard et al. (2012) found that a lack of motivation or willingness to learn can affect the development of adaptability resources. A recurring element in the theoretical models related to gradueness skills and attributes mentioned above is that graduates need to have a willingness to learn, which constitutes lifelong learning (Coetzee, 2012a; Pintrich, 2000). Learning is an active process by an individual and, to be effective, must be based on a strong willingness to learn, and this willingness or enthusiasm to learn arises primarily from a good level of self-esteem (Ceccatelli & Di Battista, 2012).

Career adaptability improves employability both within and separate from an organisation (Arthur, 1994; Ellig, 1998; Hall, 1996; Ito & Brotheridge, 2005; London, 1983; 1993; Waterman, Waterman, & Collard, 1994). De Guzman and Choi (2013) found that adolescents with high levels of career adaptability showed high employability skills (gradueness skills and attributes), which emphasises that people with higher levels of adaptability have a greater possibility of finding a suitable job. Porfeli and Savickas (2012)

found that career adaptability was strongly associated with career identity, more specifically with vocational exploration and identification with career commitments, which emphasises that identity and career adaptability are crucial in career construction (Savickas, 2011a) and that people with higher levels of career adaptability make career choices that implement their identity. Van Vianen, Klehe, Koen, and Dries (2012) found that career adaptability is positively related to self-esteem. McArdle et al. (2007) discovered that career adaptability, identity and social support predicted employability and, through the latter, self-esteem, job search behaviour during unemployment, and quality of re-employment at six-month follow-ups.

It has been found that self-esteem serves as a substantial predictor of an individual’s career adaptability (Cai et al., 2015; Öncel, 2014; Tolentino et al., 2014). Guan et al. (2014) found that career adaptability makes a distinctive contribution in predicting graduates’ job search self-efficacy. Under the perspectives of career construction theory, future work self represents the “willingness” to alter oneself to meet future challenges, whereas career adaptability refers to the resources that condition doing so (Savickas, 1997), and together these two factors aid the development of high job search self-efficacy, as well as support new entrants’ employment status (Guan et al., 2014). Figure 3.18 illustrates this finding in what Guan et al. (2014) refer to as the mediating model.

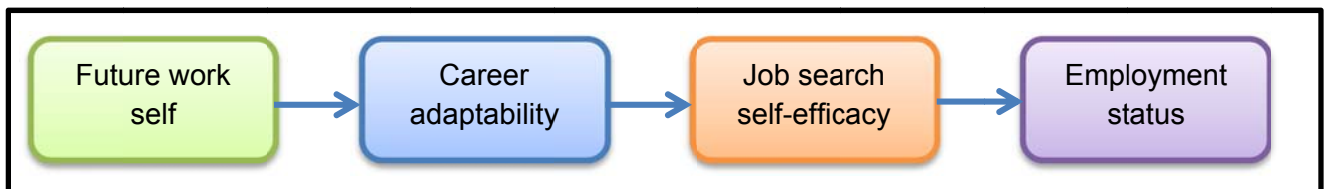


Figure 3.18. The mediating model (Guan et al., 2014, p. 137)

Using the above model as an example, Figure 3.19 explains the focus of this research and also explains the hypothesised relationship in which it is hypothesised that, if self-esteem and graduate attributes are enhanced, it will make the young adult more career adaptable, which in turn will enhance the young adult’s employability.

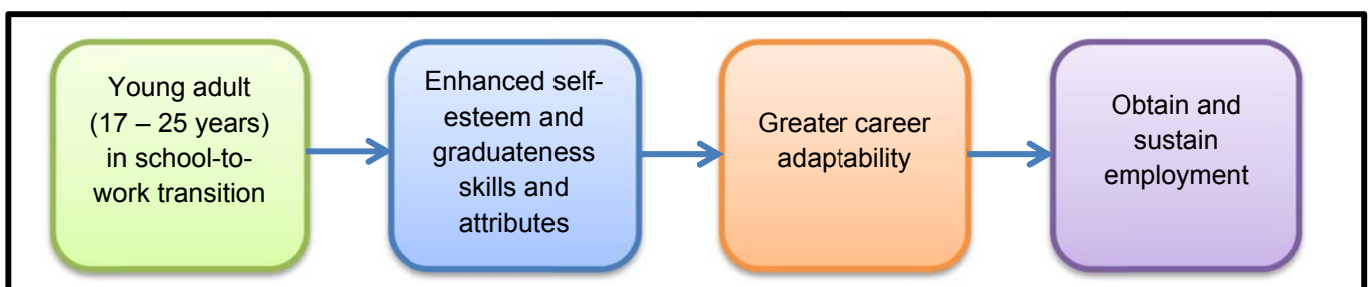


Figure 3.19. Focus of this research

Based on the theoretical evidence provided above, this study focused on confirming the existence of a relationship between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability in the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase. Figure 3.20 depicts the overall hypothesised relationship between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability of the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase (17 to 25 years).

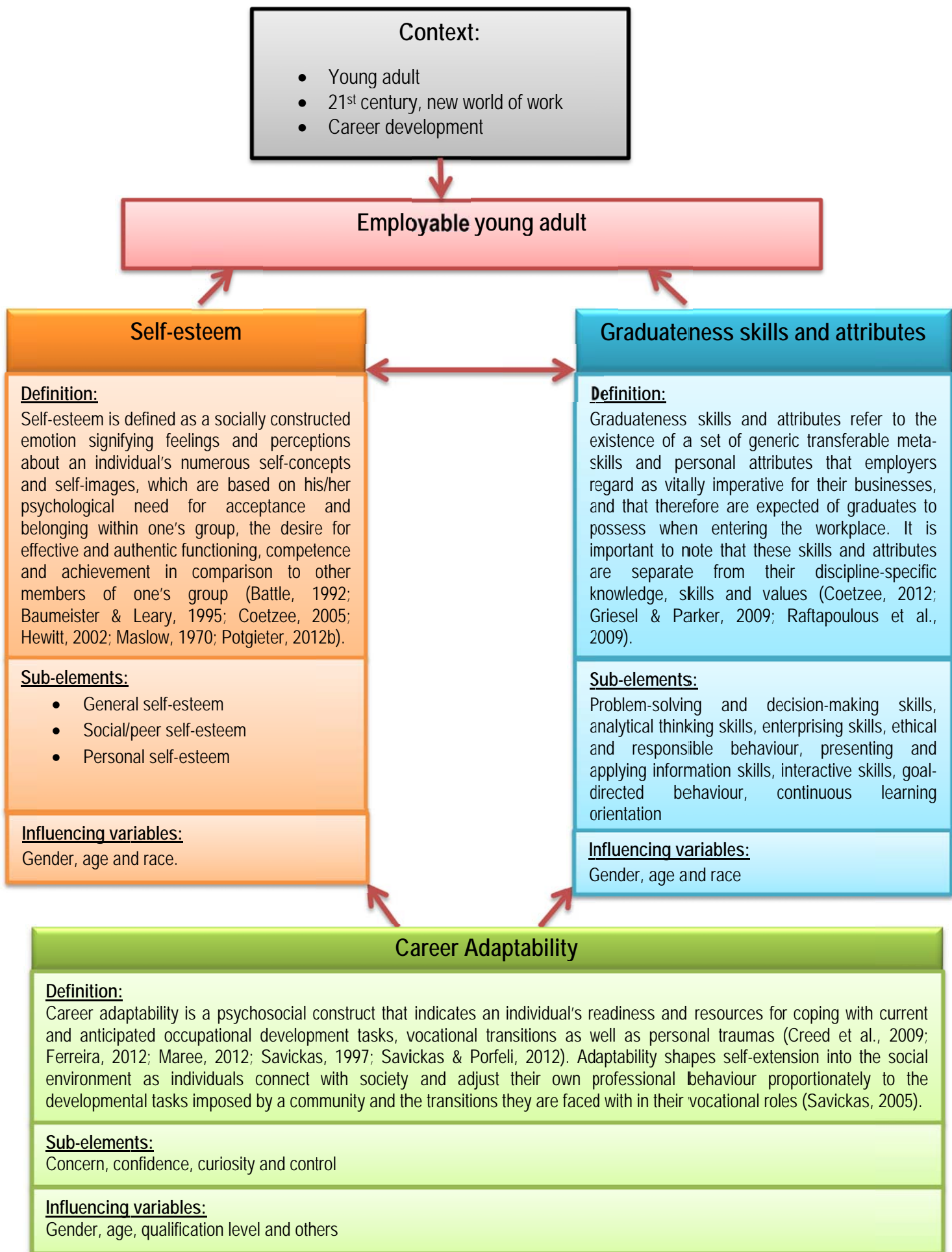


Figure 3.20. Overall hypothesised relationship between self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability

Based on the hypothesised theoretical models, the following theoretical hypotheses are formulated:

#### **3.4.1 Hypothetical relationship between self-esteem and graduateness skills and attributes**

In the 21<sup>st</sup>-century world of work, young adults are expected to possess graduateness skills and attributes along with their degree-specific skills. They are also expected to be well-rounded individuals who have great self-esteem that will enable them to work well with others. It is also found that individuals who have a higher level of self-esteem are more able to excel in acquiring certain skills as well as meet goals that they set. This means that high self-esteem is vital to acquiring graduateness skills and attributes.

#### **3.4.2 Hypothetical relationship between self-esteem and career adaptability**

Possessing a positive level of self-esteem means that one is better able to adapt to changing situations and contexts. Individuals with low level self-esteem are found to be less likely to engage in adaptive behaviours. Employers require their employees to be able to adapt to changing situations as well as to have a good self-concept, greater self-confidence and thus high self-esteem.

#### **3.4.3 Hypothetical relationship between graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability**

Employers require their employees to possess certain generic skills (graduateness skills and attributes) along with their discipline-specific skills. Employees are also expected to be able to adapt to changing circumstances in their work contexts. Should graduates then possess graduateness skills and attributes as well as career adaptability, they will be more likely to gain and retain meaningful employment.

#### **3.4.4 Variables of self-esteem and graduateness skills and attributes, when combined to form a composite set of independent variables, display a significant, positive relationship with variables of career adaptability as a composite set of dependent variables**

Young adults are required to possess graduateness skills and attributes, along with being self-aware and self-confident in their abilities in order to be and remain employed. Should

young adults possess these qualities, they are expected to be more adaptable to any changes in the world of work they may face. By investigating the variables that have the most impact on this relationship, human resource practitioners and career counsellors will be able to focus on the area that needs attention without expending too much time and energy on the other areas.

#### **3.4.5 Self-esteem moderates the relationship between gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability**

Young adults entering the world of work are required to possess gradueness skills and attributes that will make them employable. It is when young adults possess these gradueness skills and attributes that they tend to be more confident in their abilities and talents to acquire and maintain employment, in other words, their self-esteem is increased. This increase in self-esteem thus enables an individual to deal better with the career transitions they may be faced with, thus making them more adaptable.

#### **3.4.6 Males and females differ significantly regarding their self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability**

Possessing a positive level of self-esteem means that one is better able to adapt to changing situations and contexts. Should graduates possess gradueness skills and attributes as well as career adaptability, they will be more likely to gain and retain meaningful employment. If males and females differ significantly regarding their self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability, human resource practitioners and career counsellors will be able to focus on the area that needs attention without expending time and energy on the other areas.

### **3.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF THE YOUNG ADULT IN THE SCHOOL-TO-WORK TRANSITION PHASE**

According to Coleman (2011), adolescence is regarded as a time of both change and consolidation in terms of the self-concept, and there are a number of reasons for this. First, the major physical changes that the adolescent experiences also carry with them an adjustment in bodily self-concept and thus comprise a highly significant element of the overall concept of self. Secondly, intellectual growth during this stage makes possible a more complex and sophisticated self-concept. Third, development of the sense of self seems likely as a result of changes in social relationships, in particular increasing autonomy,

changes in family interactions and the growing influence of peers. Finally, this is also a time of transition in relation to the social environments experienced by young people.

Arnett (2000) characterises this period as one that is distinguished by relative independence from social norms and from normative expectations. Having left the dependency of childhood and adolescence, and having not yet entered the responsibilities that are part and parcel of adulthood, emerging adults often explore a range of possible life directions in love, work and worldviews (Arnett, 2000).

Young adults preparing for and negotiating the transition from school to work, where career discourses are forefront, are in the process of constructing their career-related identities (Guichard et al., 2012). It is important to note that Erikson's (1950; 1968) identity crisis takes place within the adolescent years. Vocational identity and the context in which it emerges are a useful aspect of adolescent career development (Sharf, 2013b). If, as Super (1957) declared, the construction of one's vocational identity is the implementation of one's self-concept in an occupational role, then low self-esteem will without doubt obscure one's self-perception and negatively influence one's career decision-making process. Therefore, most people today recognise that positive career development experiences can promote positive global and contingent self-esteem, and that low self-esteem can hinder the individual's opportunities for experiencing positive career situations by limiting the individual's perceived opportunities, which therefore indicates the bidirectional relationship between self-esteem and career development (Niles et al., 2010).

The uncertainty of the working world is common to all, hence Augé (2012) stresses that the young adult feels confined in a time of instability and fear that he or she will not find a job and will not be able to plan his/her future. It is from this that Nota et al. (2014) maintain that career counsellors can no longer act as though the future is predictable and laden with opportunities and promise. Career adaptability therefore is the key to these young people being able to manoeuvre through the turbulence and unpredictability that faced them.

Career adaptation is vital for students in that they need to be aware of their ability to adapt to the future world of work and they need to be responsible for the future choices and decisions, open to the different and fresh experiences, and be confident in their choices (Tien, Lin, Hsieh & Jin, 2014). According to Hirschi (2009), a number of prospective longitudinal studies have suggested that youth who are more adaptable in terms of decision making, planning and exploration are more successful in mastering vocational transitions. Zunker (2002) states that workers in this information age need to become lifelong learners

who embrace flexibility rather than stability. According to Steur et al. (2012), a graduate employee's graduateness skills and attributes represent the essence of personal growth and intellectual development cultivated by university education. The golden thread throughout all the models relating to graduateness skills and attributes relates to the management of self, a good self-concept, self-esteem and efficacy beliefs.

On the basis of the above discussion, career counsellors need to consider adolescence as a transition on its own, aside from the school-to-work transition. Career counsellors need to understand that self-esteem can be enhanced through training (Brockner & Gaure, 1983; Carlock, 1999; Ceccatelli & Di Battista, 2012; Kernis, 2006; Mruk, 2006; Smoll, Smith, Barnett, & Everret, 1993) and that individuals with a high level of self-esteem are more likely to achieve academically, to master the skills taught (graduateness skills and attributes), have a clear sense of who and what they are and display confidence in whatever they try (Baumeister, 1997). Also, individuals with low self-esteem are likely to be associated with adjustment difficulties (Coleman, 2011), thus reducing their ability to adapt to changes in the world of work. Zunker (2012) mentions that, when counselling adolescents, career counsellors should strive towards enhancing the adolescent's self-knowledge (and thus self-esteem), occupational exploration skills and career-planning skills (career adaptability), aiding their learning how to avoid gender-role stereotyping, and improving their decision-making skills (graduateness skills and attributes).

### 3.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter explored the concepts of self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability and their related theoretical models. The various factors that influence the development of self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability, and their implications for the career counselling and career development of the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase, were discussed.

With this the following (literature) research aims were achieved:

**Research aim 2:** To conceptualise and explain the constructs self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability in terms of theoretical models in the literature.

**Research aim 3:** To identify and explain the relationship between self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability in terms of theoretical models of these constructs.



**Sub-aim 3.1:** To conceptualise the relationship between self-esteem and career adaptability from a theoretical perspective.

**Sub-aim 3.2:** To conceptualise the relationship between self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes from a theoretical perspective.

**Sub-aim 3.3:** To conceptualise the relationship between gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability from a theoretical perspective.

**Sub-aim 3.4:** To explain the relationship between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability by means of an integrated theoretical model

**Research aim 4:** To conceptualise the effect of socio-demographic variables (gender, age, race and qualification level) on the relationship between self-esteem, graduate attributes and career adaptability.

Chapter 4 discusses the empirical investigation with the specific aim of determining the statistical strategies that can be employed to investigate the relationship dynamics between the variables self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability as manifested in a sample of young adults at further education institutions in South Africa.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter outlines the empirical investigation undertaken in the study with the specific aim of describing the statistical strategies that were employed to investigate the relationship dynamics between self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability. Firstly, an overview of the study population and sample is presented. The measuring instruments will be discussed and the choice of each justified, followed by a description of the data gathering and processing. The research hypotheses will be stated, and the chapter concludes with a chapter summary.

The empirical research phase consisted of nine steps, as outlined below:

- Step 1: determination and description of the sample
- Step 2: choice and substantiation of the psychometric battery
- Step 3: administration of the psychometric battery
- Step 4: capture of the criterion data
- Step 5: formulation of the research hypotheses
- Step 6: statistical processing of the data
- Step 7: reporting of the interpretation of the data
- Step 8: integration of the research
- Step 9: drawing research conclusions, highlighting the limitations and making recommendations

Steps 1 to 6 are addressed in this chapter, and steps 7 to 9 are addressed in Chapters 5 and 6.

### **4.1 DETERMINATION AND DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE**

A sample is a small subgroup chosen from the larger population, because it usually is not possible to study an entire population (Bordens & Abbott, 2014). The population refers to the entity or group of people from which the sample is drawn (Salkind, 2012; Welman & Kruger, 2001).

Non-probability sampling designs are used when the number of elements is unknown or cannot be identified individually (Kumar, 2014). Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling design that is mainly steered by the convenience to the researcher in terms of choosing the potential respondents. This could relate to a number of aspects, e.g. easy accessibility, geographical proximity, known contacts, ready approval for taking part in the study or being a part of the group (Kumar, 2014). The sample of this study was chosen due to its easy accessibility as well as its convenient geographical proximity to the researcher.

The population of this research project comprised young adult learners enrolled at further education and training (FET) colleges in Gauteng. A total of 355 students answered the questionnaire. Of these, 332 questionnaires were identified as usable for the purpose of the study (N = 332). Thus a response rate of 93.5% was achieved.

#### 4.1.1 Composition of gender groups in the sample

The gender distribution of the participants is indicated in this section.

Table 4.1

*Gender Distribution of Sample*

GENDER					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Males	125	37.7	37.7	37.7
	Females	207	62.4	62.4	62.4
	Total	332	100.1	100.1	100.1

As indicated in Table 4.1, the gender groups consisted of 37.7% males and 62.4% females. This is illustrated in Figure 4.1 below.

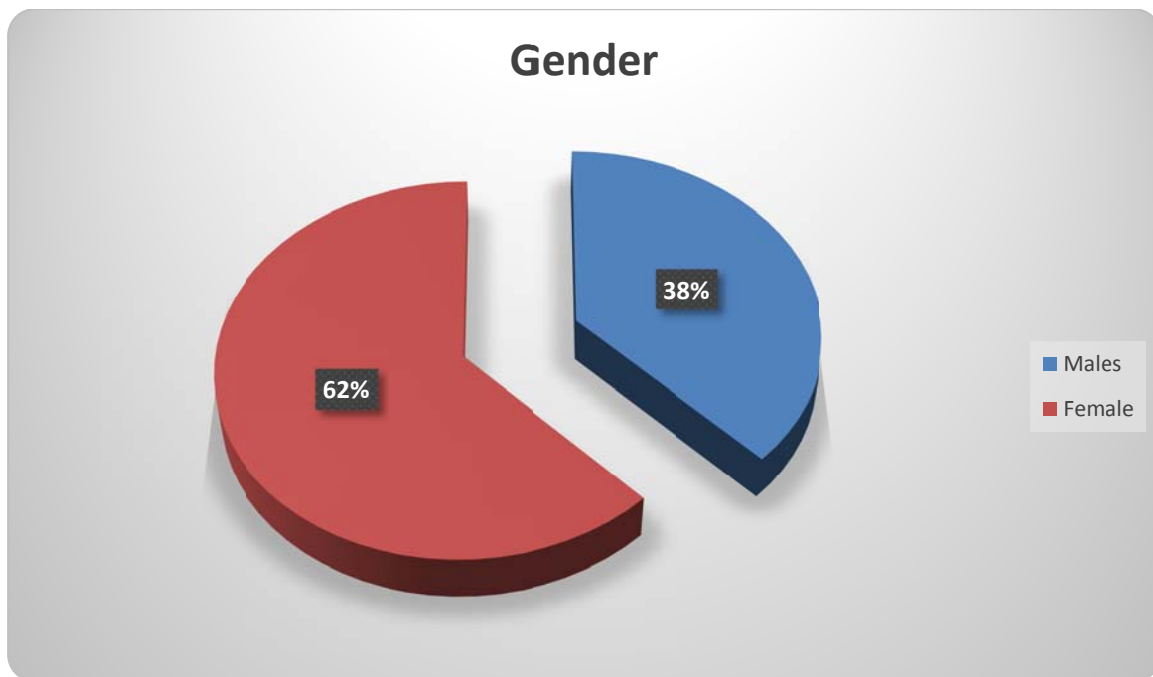


Figure 4.1. Sample distribution by gender (N = 332)

#### 4.1.2 Composition of age groups in the sample

This section provides information on the age distribution of the sample.

Table 4.2

*Age Distribution of Sample*

AGE					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	18 & younger	18	5	5	5
	19 – 20	88	27	27	32
	21 – 22	134	40	40	72
	23 – 24	59	18	18	90
	25 & older	33	10	10	100
	<b>Total</b>	332	100	100	

As indicated in Table 4.2, the age group distribution shows that participants aged 21 and 22 comprised 40% of the sample, participants aged 19 and 20 years comprised 27%, participants aged 23 and 24 years comprised 18%, while participants 25 and older comprised 10% and participants 18 years and younger comprised 5% of the total sample

(N = 332). It is important to note that the age group 18 to 25 comprises a homogeneous group in terms of the life stage theory, namely that of the young (emerging) adult. The information is illustrated in Figure 4.2 below.

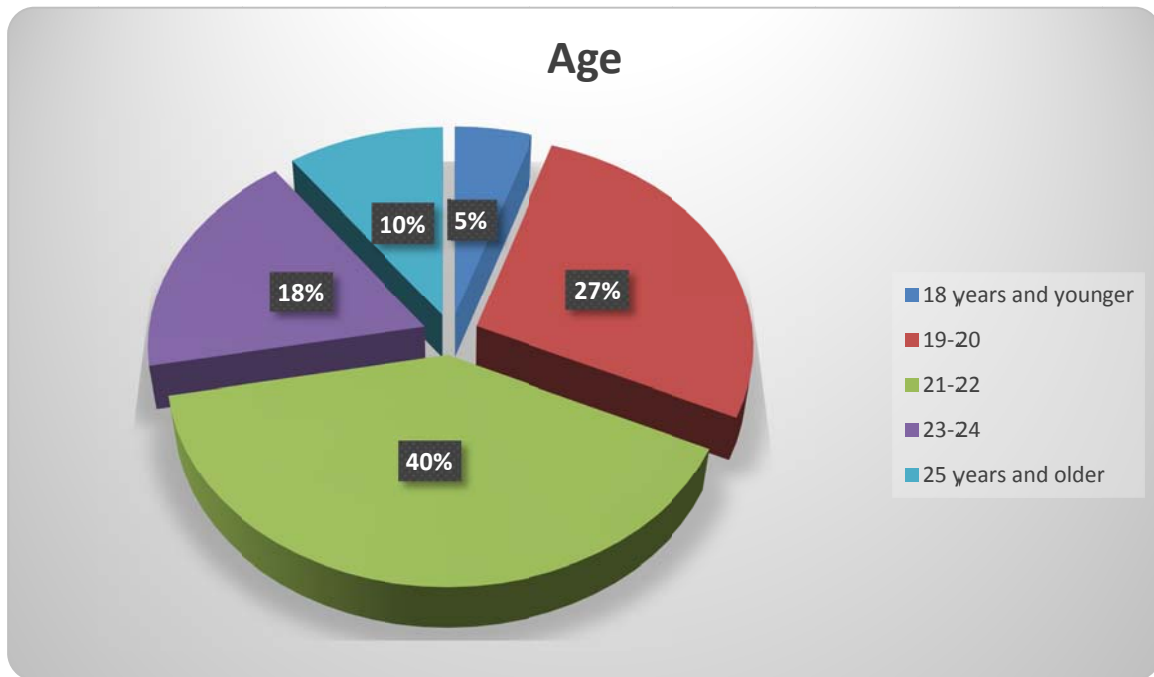


Figure 4.2. Sample distribution by age (N = 332)

#### 4.1.3 Composition of race groups in the sample

In this section the race distribution of the sample is provided.

Table 4.3

*Race Distribution of Sample*

RACE					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	African	327	98.5	98.5	98.5
	Coloured	4	1.21	1.21	99.7
	Other	1	.03	.03	99.74
	Total	332	99.74	99.74	

As indicated in Table 4.3, the race distribution of the sample shows that Africans made up the majority of the sample, at 98.5%, of the sample of coloureds comprising 1.2% of the

sample and other races making up .03% of the sample (N = 332). This is also illustrated in Figure 28.

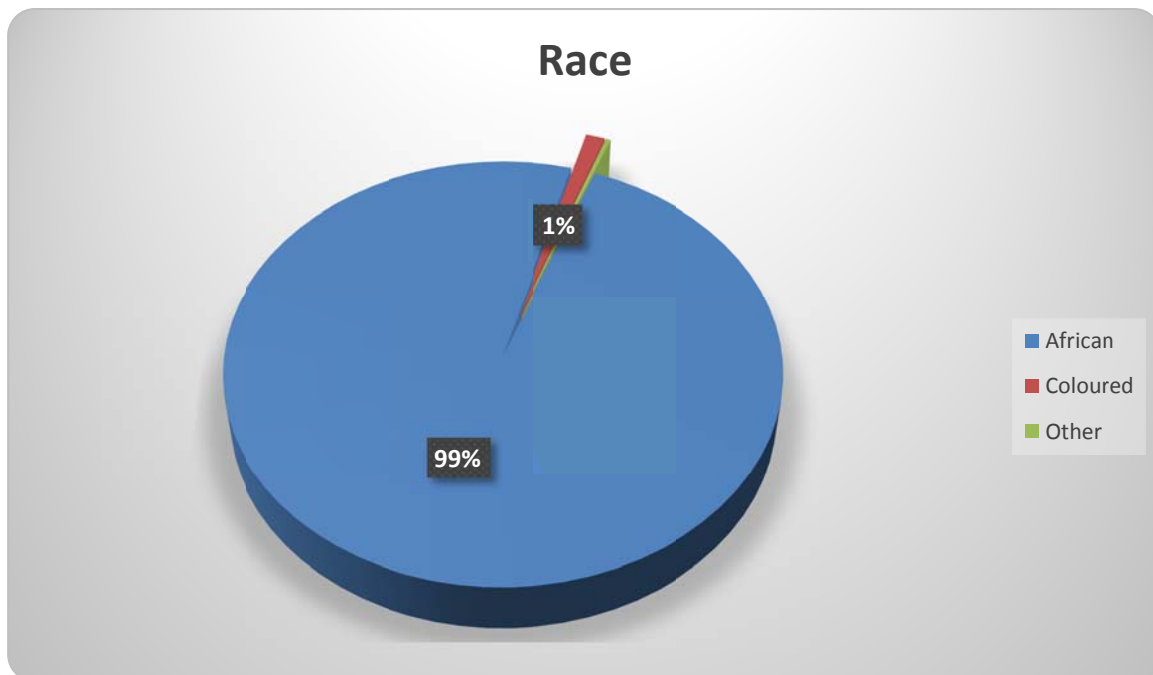


Figure 4.3. Sample distribution by race (N = 332)

#### 4.1.4 Composition of employment status of the sample

In this section the employment status of the sample is discussed.

Table 4.4

*Employment Status Distribution of Sample*

EMPLOYMENT STATUS					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Unemployed	314	94.6	94.6	94.6
	Part-time	9	2.7	2.7	97.3
	Self-employed	5	1.5	1.5	98.8
	Full-time	4	1.2	1.2	100
	Total	332	100	100	

As indicated in Table 4.4, the employment status distribution shows that 94.6% of the sample was unemployed, 2.7% were employed part time, 1.5% were self-employed and 1.2% were employed full-time. This is also illustrated in Figure 4.4 below.

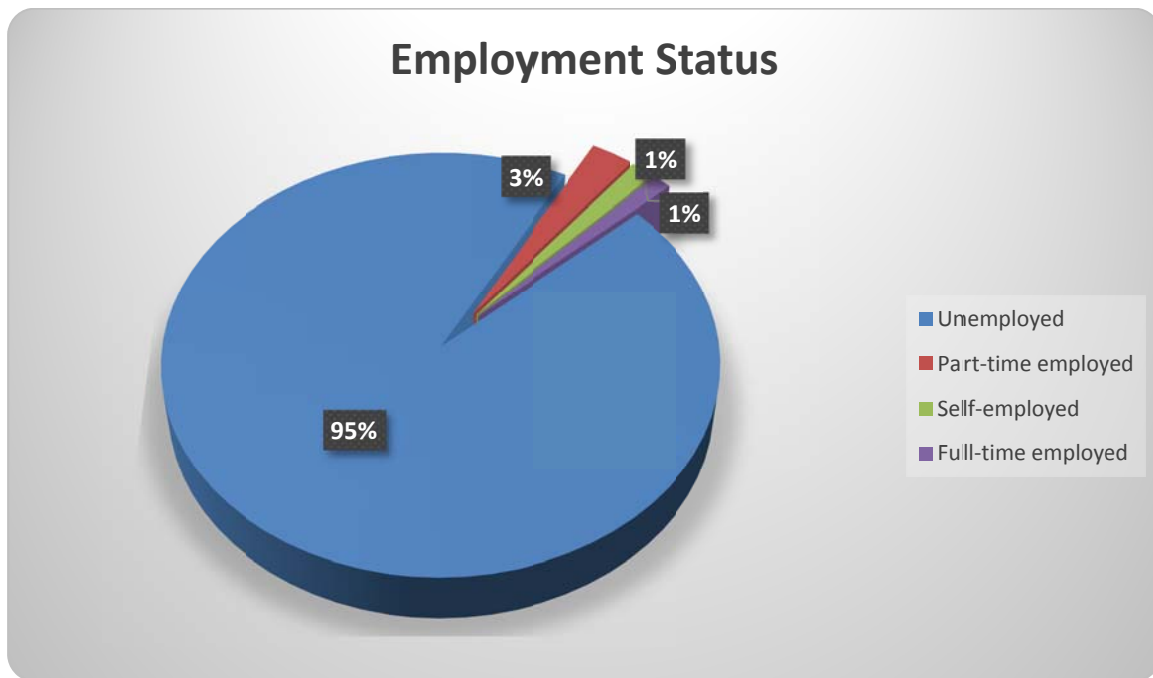


Figure 4.4. Sample distribution by employment status (N = 332)

#### 4.1.5 Composition of the qualification level of the sample

The qualification level of the sample is indicated below.

Table 4.5

Qualification Level Distribution of Sample

QUALIFICATION LEVEL					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	1 <sup>st</sup> year	192	57.7	57.7	57.7
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	94	28.3	28.3	86.0
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	39	11.8	11.8	97.8
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	7	2.1	2.1	99.9
	Total	332	99.9	99.9	

As indicated in Table 4.5, the qualification levels show that 57.7% of the sample were registered for the first year of their qualification (post-matric), 28.3% were registered for the second year of their qualification, 11.8% were registered for the third year of their qualification and 2.1% were registered for the fourth year of their qualification. This is also illustrated in Figure 4.5 below.



Figure 4.5. Sample distribution by qualification level (N = 332)

#### 4.1.6 Composition of the qualification type of the sample

In this section the type of qualification the participants in the sample were registered for at the time of the study is discussed.



Table 4.6

*Qualification Type Distribution of Sample*

Qualification Type					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Business Management	51	15.4	15.4	15.4
	Engineering	41	12.4	12.4	27.8
	Finance, Economics & Accounting	13	3.9	3.9	31.7
	Human Resource Management	76	22.9	22.9	54.6
	IT & Computer Studies	4	1.2	1.2	55.8
	Management	31	9.3	9.3	65.1
	Marketing Management	33	9.9	9.9	75
	Office Administration	7	2.1	2.1	77.1
	Public Relations	48	14.5	14.5	91.6
	Safety	17	5.1	5.1	96.7
	Tourism	11	3.3	3.3	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>		

As indicated in Table 4.6, the distribution of qualification types of the sample shows that 22.9% were registered for Human Resource Management, 15.4% were registered for Business Management, 14.5% were registered for Public Relations, 12.4% were registered for Engineering, 9.9% were registered for Marketing Management, 9.3% were registered for Management, 5.1% were registered for Safety, 3.9% were registered for Finance, Economics and Accounting, 3.3% were registered for Tourism, 2.1% were registered for Office Administration and 1.2% were registered for IT and Computer Studies at the time of the study. This is also illustrated in Figure 4.6.

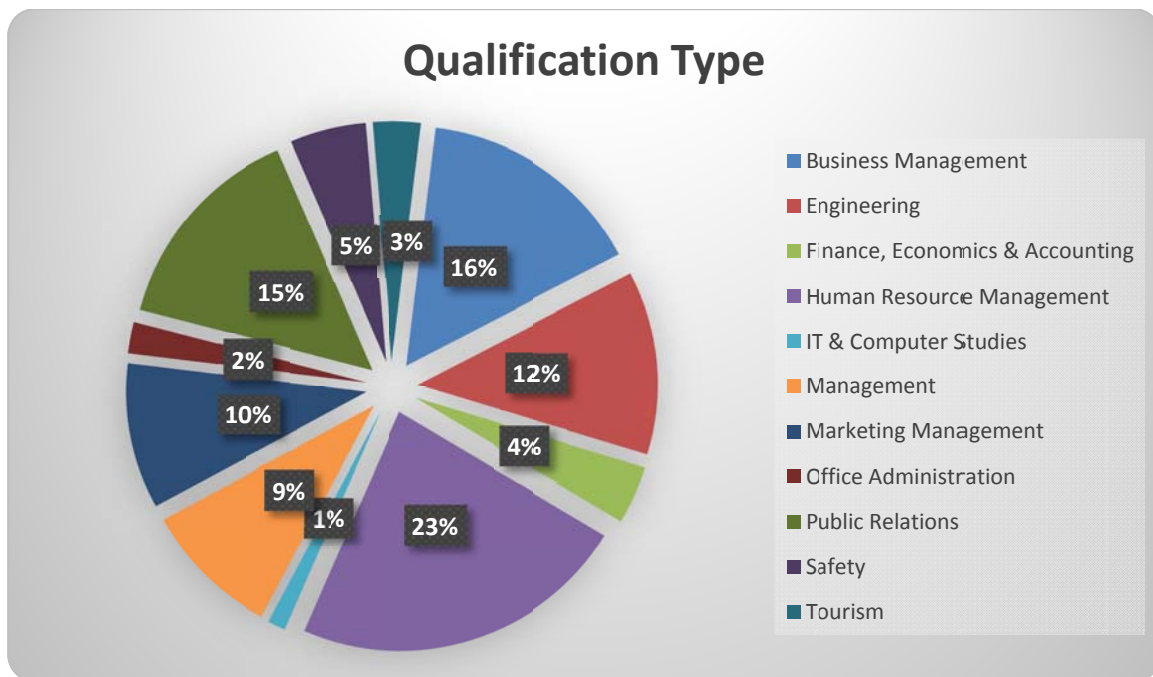


Figure 4.6. Sample distribution by qualification type (N = 332)

#### 4.1.7 Summary

In summary, the sample of this study is female (62.4%), between the ages of 21-22 years of age (40%), black (98.5%), unemployed (94.6%), in their first-year of tertiary studies (57.7%) in the field of Human Resource Management (22.9%). It should be understood that this is not the norm for HRM studies in South Africa. In relation to young adults in South Africa, between the ages of 15-34 years, females make up 50 % and blacks make up 84% (Statistics South Africa, 2015b), implying that this sample cannot be generalised to the total population and the results obtained from this study cannot be used to determine a relationship between self-esteem, gradauteness skills and attributes and career adaptability of the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase.

The biographical profile obtained for the sample shows that, in terms of the main sample characteristics, gender needed to be considered in the interpretation of the empirical results. Age was not considered in the interpretation of the empirical results in that all the respondents fit into the emerging adulthood phase and therefore there was no reason for further investigation. Table 4.7 provides a summary of the frequency distribution of the biographical profile of the sample.

Table 4.7

*Summary of Frequency Distribution: Biographical Profile of the Sample*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
<b>Gender</b>	Males	125	37.7	37.7	37.3
	Females	207	62.4	62.4	100.1
	Total	332	100.1	100.1	
<b>Race</b>	African	327	98.5	98.5	98.5
	Coloured	4	1.21	1.21	99.74
	Other	1	.03	.03	99.74
	Total	332	99.74	99.74	
<b>Age</b>	18 & younger	18	5	5	5
	19-20	88	27	27	32
	21-22	134	40	40	72
	23-24	59	18	18	90
	25 & older	33	10	10	100
	Total	332	100	100	
<b>Employment Status</b>	Unemployed	314	94.6	94.6	94.6
	Part-time	9	2.7	2.7	97.3
	Self-employed	5	1.5	1.5	98.8
	Full-time	4	1.2	1.2	100
	Total	332	100	100	
<b>Qualification Level</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> year	192	57.7	57.7	57.7
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	94	28.3	28.3	86.0
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	39	11.8	11.8	97.8
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	7	2.1	2.1	99.9
	Total	332	99.9	99.9	
<b>Qualification Type</b>	Business Management	51	15.4	15.4	15.4
	Engineering	41	12.4	12.4	27.8
	Finance, Economics & Accounting	13	3.9	3.9	31.7
	Human Resource Management	76	22.9	22.9	54.6
	IT & Computer Studies	4	1.2	1.2	55.8
	Management	31	9.3	9.3	65.1

	Marketing Management	33	9.9	9.9	75
	Office Administration	7	2.1	2.1	77.1
	Public Relations	48	14.5	14.5	91.6
	Safety	17	5.1	5.1	96.7
	Tourism	11	3.3	3.3	100
	Total	332	100	100	

## 4.2 CHOOSING AND MOTIVATING THE PSYCHOMETRIC BATTERY

The selection of the measuring instruments for the purposes of the study was informed by the literature study. The following measuring instruments were used:

- A biographical questionnaire to determine data regarding gender, age, race, qualification level and qualification type
- The Culture-free Self-esteem Inventories for Adults (CFSEI 2-AD), developed by Battle (1992)
- The Graduateness Skills and Attributes Scales (GSAS), developed by Coetzee (2010)
- The Career Adapt-abilities Scale (CAAS), developed by Savickas and Porfeli (2012)

### 4.2.1 The biographical questionnaire

A biographical questionnaire was used to obtain the personal information of the sample, namely the gender, age, race and qualification level.

### 4.2.2 The Culture-free Self-esteem Inventories for Adults (CFSEI 2-AD)

This section will cover the development, rationale, scale description, administration, interpretation, validity, reliability and motivation for using the CFSEI 2-AD.

#### 4.2.2.1 Development of the CFSEI 2-AD

The CFSEI 2-AD (Battle, 1992) is a self-report inventory developed over a course of several years' work with students and adult clients. The inventories, which are intended to measure an individual's perception of feelings of self-worth and achievement in comparison to others, have proven to be of great value in offering much more insight into clients' subjective feelings and their psychological state of well-being. The CFSEI 2-AD comprises three components, namely the general, social and personal component.

General self-esteem is that aspect of self-esteem that refers to an individual's overall perceptions (cognitive self-evaluations) and feelings of their own worth and competence. Social self-esteem is that aspect of self-esteem that refers to an individual's perception (cognitive self-evaluations) of the quality of their relationships with peers. Finally, personal self-esteem is that aspect of self-esteem that refers to an individual's most intimate feelings of self-worth.

#### *4.2.2.2 Rationale for the CFSEI 2-AD*

The CFSEI 2-AD is designed to assess the construct self-esteem in adults in a valid and reliable manner. It has been used successfully by psychologists, psychiatrists, counsellors and teachers as a screening device to identify individuals who may be in need of psychological assistance. The CFSEI 2-AD is viewed as a valuable clinical tool, although it also has been used extensively for research purposes.

The results from the CFSEI 2-AD may, for example, indicate that a person possesses high self-esteem in all areas except the social area. This result could help the therapist to focus on developing that individual's self-esteem in the social area. This instrument therefore serves as a tool in designing personal development interventions and measuring progress in growth (Battle, 1992).

#### *4.2.2.3 Description of the scales of the CFSEI 2-AD*

The CFSEI 2-AD, which is the second edition of the instrument, contains 40 items and the following subtests:

- General self-esteem (16 items, e.g. 'I am happy most of the time')
- Social/peer related self-esteem (eight items, e.g. 'I have only a few friends')
- Personal self-esteem (eight items, e.g. 'I am easily depressed')
- Lie subtest items that indicate defensiveness (eight items, e.g. 'I like everyone I know')
- Total self-esteem score

The items in the instrument are divided into two groups, namely those that indicate high self-esteem and those that indicate low self-esteem. Responses are of the forced choice variety and respondents choose options based on a six-point Likert scale.

#### *4.2.2.4 Administration of the CFSEI 2-AD*

The inventory can be administered to individuals and groups and usually takes about 15 to 20 minutes to complete. The instructions are indicated on the questionnaire and the response sheet. The respondents complete the 40 items by checking each item according to a scale from 1 to 6, where 1 represents “strongly disagree”, 2 “somewhat disagree”, 3 “slightly disagree”, 4 “slightly agree”, 5 “somewhat agree” and 6 represents “strongly agree”. Although the test can be scored manually or by means of a software program, the examiner scored the form manually for the purpose of this research.

The scores for the CFSEI 2-AD are derived by totalling the number of items checked that indicate high self-esteem, excluding the lie scale item. A separate score may be computed by totalling the number of items checked correctly in the lie scale. The total possible score for Form AD is 32, and the highest lie score is 8.

#### *4.2.2.5 Interpretation of the CFSEI 2-AD*

Each subscale (general, personal, social and total) is measured separately and reflects the perceptions (self-evaluations) and feelings of the respondent in these dimensions. As a result, an analysis can be carried out to indicate which dimensions are perceived to be true for the respondent and which are not. This serves as a useful diagnostic technique to ascertain the level of the respondent’s self-esteem. The higher the score, the more positive the level of self-esteem.

#### *4.2.2.6 Validity and reliability of the CFSEI 2-AD*

Battle (1992) found evidence of the validity of the CFSEI 2-AD. Content validity was built into the instrument by developing a construct definition of self-esteem and by writing items intended to cover all areas of construct. Battle (1992) found acceptable internal consistency for the factor analysis conducted on the CFSEI 2-AD, where internal consistency reliability coefficients ranged between .79 and .92 for all the subscales.

Battle (1992) furthermore calculated means, standard deviations and correlations for the total sample involved in the initial test-retest reliability study. He found that the data was significant (.81 for all subjects). Coetzee (2005) also conducted factor analysis tests on the CFSEI 2-AD and confirmed the reliability of the instrument.

#### *4.2.2.7 Motivation for using the CFSEI 2-AD*

The CFSEI 2-AD was chosen for its appropriateness for the current study; it is an easily and quickly administrable instrument and has been proven both valid, reliable as well as free from any cultural biases. At face value it seems to be unsusceptible to practice, memory or other transfer effects that could influence the internal consistency reliability and internal and external validity of the research. The instrument can furthermore be used for development interventions and to measure growth progress. Battle (1992) also noted that it has been proven that the instrument can offer great insight into a person's subjective feelings about him/herself and his/her psychological state of well-being.

### **4.2.3 The Graduateness Skills and Attributes Scale (GSAS)**

This section will cover the development, rationale, scale description, administration, interpretation, validity, reliability and motivation for using the GSAS.

#### *4.2.3.1 Development of the GSAS*

The GSAS was developed by Coetzee (2010; 2014a) for the South African higher education context and is used as an instrument to measure students' confidence in their ability to demonstrate the skills and attributes that are associated with their graduateness. The set of graduateness skills and attributes measured by the GSAS is based on a comprehensive literature review, an employer survey (Griesel & Parker, 2009), and a survey of the perceptions of the academic staff members from the economic and management sciences fields of study of an open distance-learning higher education institution (Coetzee, 2010; 2014a).

Based on the higher education survey, Coetzee (2010; 2014a) describes graduateness as the competencies and attributes that higher education academics impart to their students with a view to them becoming competent and professional graduates who have the potential to make sustained positive contributions to society, to their professions and in their workplaces. Higher education aims to produce graduates who are responsible, accountable, relevant and ethical as citizens in every community in which they operate. The education, teaching, learning and assessment process must provide a foundation of core skills and attributes (values, attitudes and behaviours) that enable graduates to continue to be proactive, enterprising learners who are flexible and able to adapt to change throughout their careers and professional lives.

#### 4.2.3.2 Rationale for the GSAS

The purpose of the GSAS (Coetzee, 2010; 2014a) is to assess eight facets of an individual's gradueness skills and attributes, namely: (1) interactive skills (communication skills, networking skills, influencing skills); (2) problem-solving and decision-making skills; (3) lifelong learning orientation (personal growth and development, self-assessment); (4) enterprising skills (business and financial skills, systems thinking, creative and critical thinking); (5) skills in presenting and applying information; (6) goal-directed behaviour (self-directedness and time management); (7) ethical and responsible behaviour; and (8) analytical thinking (data sourcing and analysis, numerical literacy).

#### 4.2.3.3 Description of the scales of the GSAS

The GSAS (Coetzee, 2010; 2014a) is a self-rated, multifactorial measure that contains 64 items and eight subscales that measure the gradueness skills and attributes on the eight facet subscales:

- interactive skills (16 items, e.g. 'I can communicate my viewpoints with clarity and fluency in English');
- problem-solving and decision-making skills (eight items, e.g. 'I make quick but clear decisions that spur others on toward action');
- continuous learning orientation (seven items, e.g. 'I follow up on goals, tasks and assignments to assure successful completion');
- enterprising skills (nine items, e.g. 'I prefer to work under my own direction');
- skills in presenting and applying information (five items, e.g. 'I can write my ideas and opinions clearly to convince my audience');
- goal-directed behaviour (10 items, e.g. 'I spend a lot of time surfing the internet to find new information on search engines');
- ethical and responsible behaviour (five items, e.g. 'I accept responsibility for the results of my decisions and actions'), and
- analytical thinking (four items, e.g. 'I feel confident in my ability to draw insightful conclusions from numerical data').

#### 4.2.3.4 Administration of the GSAS

The GSAS is a self-rated questionnaire that can be administered individually or in groups and takes approximately 15 to 20 minutes to answer, although there is no time limit. The GS is administered according to the rating and scoring instructions provided by Coetzee (2010;



2014a). Supervision is not necessary, as the questionnaire is self-explanatory. For subscales 1 to 8, respondents are required to rate each item on a six-point Likert-type scale. The higher the number, the more true that item is of the respondent. Respondents are expected to rate their responses as “never true of me” (1 -2), “occasionally true for me” (3), “often true for me” (4), and “always true for me” (5-6). Each of the eight facet subscales produces a separate score.

#### *4.2.3.5 Interpretation of the GSAS*

Each subscale (interactive skills, problem-solving, continuous learning orientation, enterprising skills, presenting and applying information, goal-directed behaviour, ethical/responsible behaviour and analytical thinking skills) is measured separately. The institution standing subscale requires respondents to rate each item on a five-point Likert-type scale. Respondents are expected to rate their responses as “strongly disagree” (1), “somewhat agree” (2), “neither agree nor disagree” (3), “somewhat agree” (4), and “strongly agree” (5). The higher the number, the more the respondent agrees with the specific statement.

#### *4.2.3.6 Validity and reliability of the GSAS*

An exploratory factor analysis (Coetzee, 2010; 2014a) and correlational analyses of a sample (n = 270) of final-year undergraduate, honours, master’s and doctoral distance-learning students in the economic and management sciences field (predominantly employed in the service industry) provided evidence that the GSAS items meet the psychometric criteria of construct, convergent and discriminant validity, and the content is also appropriate for the theoretical constructs being considered.

Multiple regression analyses revealed that the GS has predictive validity in terms of students’ self-perceived employability, optimism about future career prospects, and job satisfaction (Coetzee, 2010). In terms of reliability (internal-consistency), Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for each subscale range between .75 to .92 (high) (Coetzee, 2010; 2014a). Coetzee (2010; 2014a) also found that current level of academic study (e.g. final-year undergraduate studies, honours, master’s and doctoral-level studies), African, Indians, coloureds and whites, males and females differed significantly regarding their self-perceived gradueness. Employment status, marital status and age did not significantly influence individuals’ self-perceived gradueness.

#### *4.2.3.7 Motivation for using the GSAS*

The GSAS was chosen for its appropriateness to the current study; it is an easily and quickly administrable instrument and has been proven both valid and reliable. The inclusion of the GSAS in this research study promoted an understanding of the construct of gradueness skills and attributes.

#### **4.2.4 The Career Adapt-abilities Scale (CAAS)**

This section covers the development, rationale, scale description, administration, interpretation, validity, reliability and motivation for using the CAAS.

##### *4.2.4.1 Development of the CAAS*

The CAAS – International Form was constructed by an international team of vocational psychologists from 18 countries based on the initial development work done by Savickas (2010) (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012; Savickas, 2010).

##### *4.2.4.2 Rationale for the CAAS*

The purpose of the CAAS is to measure career adaptability by assessing four facets of an individual's career adaptability, namely concern, control, curiosity and confidence, as psychosocial resources for managing occupational transitions, developmental tasks and work traumas (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

##### *4.2.4.3 Description of the scales of the CAAS*

The CAAS is a self-rated, multifactorial measure that consists of 24 items that are divided into four subscales:

- Concern (six items, e.g. 'Thinking about what my future will be like');
- Control (six items, e.g. 'Making decisions by myself');
- Curiosity (six items, e.g. 'Looking for opportunities to grow as a person'); and
- Confidence (six items, e.g. 'Working up to my ability').

The CAAS measures concern, control, curiosity and confidence as psychosocial resources for managing occupational transitions, developmental tasks and work traumas (Maree, 2012). Each item in the questionnaire corresponds to a particular ability, where participants

need to rate the given statements according to how strongly they have developed each ability from 1 (not strong) to 5 (strongest).

#### *4.3.4.4 Administration of the CAAS*

The CAAS is a self-rated questionnaire that can be administered individually or in groups and takes approximately 10 to 15 minutes to answer, although there is no time limit. The instructions are indicated on the questionnaire and response sheet.

Respondents are required to rate each item on a five-point Likert-type scale. The higher the number, the more true that item is of the respondent. Respondents are expected to rate their responses as “not strong” (1), “somewhat strong” (2), “strong” (3), “very strong” (4) and “strongest” (5). Each of the five subscales produces a separate score. Supervision is not necessary as the questionnaire is self-explanatory.

#### *4.2.4.5 Interpretation of the CAAS*

Each facet subscale is measured separately and reflects the respondents’ preferences for and feelings on the various items that relate to that specific facet. As a result, analysis can be carried out in relation to which facets are perceived to be true for the respondents and which are not. The higher the score, the truer the statement is of the respondent. Subscales with the highest mean scores within each of the five scale components are regarded as the respondents’ dominant career adaptability facet.

#### *4.2.4.6 Validity and reliability of the CAAS*

Confirmatory factor analysis showed that data for the CAAS – International model fit the theoretical model very well, showing fit indices of RMSEA = .05 and SRMR = .04, (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). The CAAS – South Africa shows fit indices of RMSEA = .05 and SRMR = .05 (Maree, 2012).

Maree (2012) concluded that the CAAS – South Africa performs similarly to the CAAS – International in terms of psychometric characteristics and factor structure. His study showed that the total score as well as the four subscales each demonstrated good to excellent internal consistency estimates and a coherent, multidimensional hierarchical structure that fits the theoretical model and linguistic explanation of career adaptability resources (Maree, 2012).

The Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS) – International Form 2.0 has demonstrated excellent reliability and appropriate cross-national measurement equivalence, (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). The CAAS – International has reported a reliability of .92, which is higher than the subscales for concern (.83), control (.74), curiosity (.79) and confidence (.80) (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

The reliabilities of the subscales in South Africa were slightly lower than the international sample, with values .77 for concern, .71 for control, .78 for curiosity and .80 for confidence (Maree, 2012). The reliability of the total score was .91 (Maree, 2012).

The above discussion confirms that the CAAS is a valid measure of career adaptability.

#### *4.2.4.7 Motivation for using the CAAS*

The CAAS was used for this research study because it allows the specific nature of career adaptability to be measured. The psychometric assets of the CAAS also make it a valid and reliable measure of the five dimensions of the structure of career adaptability.

Since the purpose of the research study was not to make individual predictions on the basis of the CAAS, but instead to investigate broad trends and certain relations between variables, the measuring instrument was considered to be acceptable for the study.

The inclusion of the CAAS in this research study therefore promoted an understanding of the construct of career adaptability.

### **4.3 DATA COLLECTION**

According to De Vos (2003), questionnaires, checklists, indexes and scales form the categories of the different data-gathering methods in a quantitative research approach. The following data procedure was followed:

- In terms of ethics, permission for the research was obtained from the institution's research ethics committee. A cover letter was attached to the questionnaire that explained that by completing and returning the questionnaire, the respondent agreed to allow the researcher to utilise the results for the purposes of research only.
- The respondents were also informed of the aim of the study, the confidentiality and anonymity of the responses, as well as instructions for completing the questionnaire on the day they were handed the questionnaire.

- A biographical questionnaire was included that asked the respondents for their gender, age, race, employment status, qualification registered for as well as qualification level.
- The CFSEI 2 - AD, GSAS and CAAS were distributed to all the respondents in the sample.
- The respondents completed the questionnaires during different class times, after which they were collected by the researcher.

According to De Vos et al. (2011), this method of data collection is known as personal questionnaires and the researcher must limit his or her own part in the completion of the questionnaire to a minimum. This means that the researcher should stay in the background to prevent any problems but must be allowed to encourage the respondents to complete the questionnaires. This approach of data collection ensures a high response rate, which is an advantage. With the help of the headmasters of the colleges, as well as the lecturers and support staff at the colleges, collection took place on a few days during class time.

#### **4.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The term ethics implies certain preferences that influence human behaviour in compliance with a code of principles, the rules of conduct, the responsibility of the researcher and the standards of conduct of a given profession, and in adherence to professional, legal and social obligations in relation to the research participants (Babbie, 2007; Bless, Higson-Smith, & Kagee, 2007; De Vos et al., 2011; Sullivan, Monette, & DeJong, 2008; Walliman, 2006).

To ensure that the researcher adhered to all ethical requirements, the following procedures were followed:

- Research was conducted within recognised parameters.
- Permission was obtained from the host institution.
- Both classical and recent resources were utilised when analysing and describing concepts.
- Experts in the field of research were consulted in order to ensure a scientific research process.
- All sources were quoted and explicitly referenced.
- All participation in this study was completely voluntary.
- Informed consent was obtained from all participants.
- Participants who were interested in the results of the study were informed to contact the researcher.

- Information and feedback obtained from the participants was totally confidential.
- All participants remained anonymous.
- Original data would be kept with the researcher for a period of five years.
- The research process and findings were documented in the form of a thesis to provide opportunities for obtaining accurate information.

#### 4.5 FORMULATION OF RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

A hypothesis is an assumption, idea, prediction or tentative explanation for an observation, phenomenon, relationship or situation that can be tested by further investigation (Bordens & Abbott, 2014; Kumar, 2014). The hypothesis usually follows from the theory by deduction (Punch, 2014).

In the literature review chapters, the central research hypothesis was formulated as being to determine whether a relationship exists between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability. Table 4.8 below displays the research hypotheses that were formulated with a view to achieving the empirical objectives of the study and to meet the criteria for the formulation of hypotheses.

Table 4.8  
*Research Hypotheses*

Aim	Research hypothesis	Statistical procedure
<b>Research aim 1</b>		
To conduct an empirical investigation of the statistical relationship between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability in a sample of young adult respondents in the South African context.	H01 – There is no significant relationship between a young adult’s self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability.  Ha1 – There is a significant relationship between a young adult’s self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability.	Correlations
<b>Research aim 2</b>		
To empirically investigate whether self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes variables as a	H02: The self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes variables as a composite set of	Canonical correlation analysis

<p>composite set of independent variables are significantly and positively related to the career adaptability variables as a composite set of dependent variables.</p>	<p>independent variables are not significantly and positively related to the career adaptability variables as a composite set of dependent variables.</p> <p>Ha2: The self-esteem and graduateness skills and attributes variables as a composite set of independent variables are significantly and positively related to the career adaptability variables as a composite set of dependent variables.</p>	
<b>Research aim 3</b>		
<p>To empirically investigate whether self-esteem moderates the relationship between graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability.</p>	<p>H03: Young adults' self-esteem does not act as a moderator in the relationship between their graduateness skills and attributes and their career adaptability</p> <p>Ha3: Young adults' self-esteem acts as a moderator between their graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability.</p>	<p>Hierarchical moderated regression</p>
<b>Research aim 4</b>		
<p>To empirically investigate whether males and females differ significantly regarding their self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability.</p>	<p>H04 – Male and female young adults do not significantly differ with regard to their self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability.</p> <p>Ha4 – Male and female young adults differ significantly with regard to their self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability.</p>	<p>Test for significant mean differences</p>

## 4.6 STATISTICAL PROCESSING OF THE DATA

A quantitative study can be regarded as an inquiry into a social or human problem, based on testing a theory that is composed of variables, measured with numbers with the aim of quantifying the extent of variation in a phenomenon, and analysed with statistical procedures in order to determine whether the predictive generalisations of the theory are true (Creswell, 2003, Kumar, 2014). The objective of quantitative research is to establish, confirm or validate relationships from the sample data available and to develop generalisations to the larger population (De Vos et al., 2011; Kumar, 2014; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005).

A non-probability convenience sample cannot be expected to yield sample values (parameters) of the population. For this purpose, statistical methods need to be developed that will make it possible to determine the confidence with which such inferences can be drawn. The two most commonly used methods of statistical inferences are (1) estimation using confidence intervals and (2) null hypothesis testing. The present study made use of null hypothesis testing in order to verify the formulated hypotheses.

The statistical analyses that are covered in this chapter are illustrated in Figure 4.7.

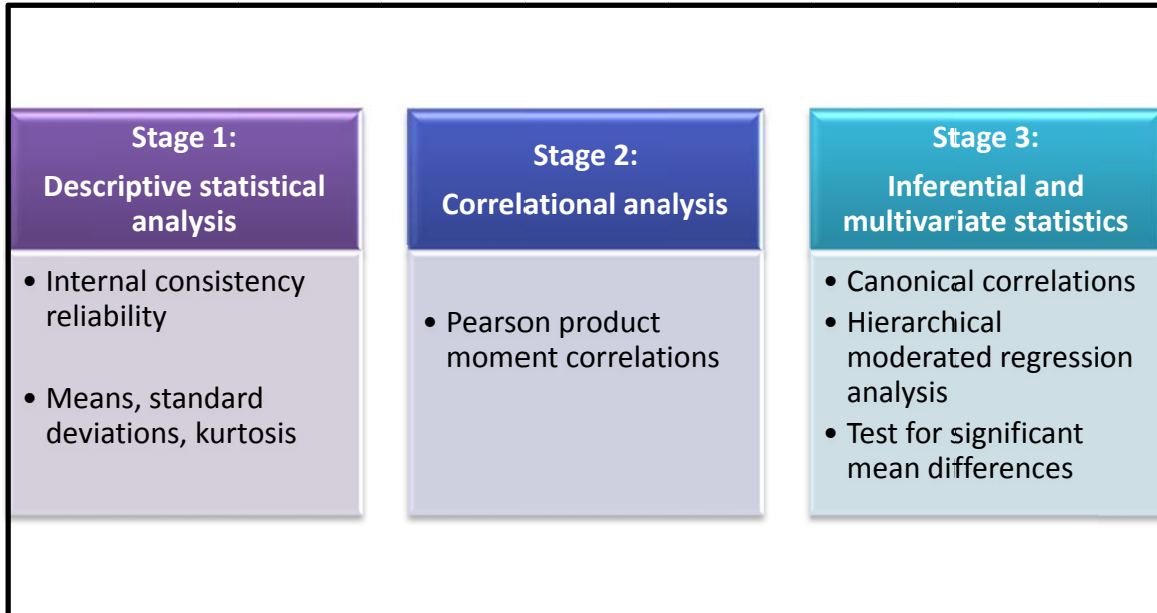


Figure 4.7. Statistical analysis process

### 4.6.1 Stage 1: Descriptive statistical analysis

Cronbach's alpha coefficients were determined for the CFSEI-2AD, GSAS and CAAS to determine the reliability of these instruments for the purpose of this study. The categorical or



frequency data (means and standard deviations) as measured by the CFSEI-2AD, GSAS and CAAS were determined for the total sample in order to apply the relevant statistical procedures.

#### **4.6.2 Stage 2: Correlational analysis**

Pearson product moment correlation coefficients were used to specify the relationship between the variables of CFSEI-2AD, GSAS and CAAS. In those instances where the distribution of scores was skewed, Spearman correlation coefficients were computed. The level of statistical significance was set at  $p \leq .05$ .

Steyn (2002) criticises the sole use of statistical significance testing and recommends that effect sizes be established to determine the importance of a statistically significant relationship. Small and unimportant effects may result in statistical significance simply because large numbers of respondents were used in the study, and significantly large and important effects can be overlooked simply because the sample size was too small (Field, 2013).

The effect size is the magnitude of a relationship between two variables that is objective and usually standardised (Field, 2013; Gifford, Hine, & Veitch, 1997). A relationship between an independent and a dependent variable in an observational study can be characterised in terms of the strength of the relationship or its effect size (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003).

Significance level refers only to the odds that a difference or influence exists in the whole population from which the sample is drawn and does not tell us about the importance of an effect, whereas the effect size is the magnitude of that influence (Field, 2013; Gifford et al., 1997). A practical effect size of  $r \geq .30$  (medium effect) (Cohen, 1992; Gifford et al., 1997; Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010) was considered for the correlation analyses to be able to interpret the practical significance of the findings.

#### **4.6.3 Stage 3: Inferential and multivariate statistical analysis**

Inferential statistics were used to further examine the relationship between the variables self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability. Inferential statistics are concerned with inferences about the data and were applied as below:

- (1) Canonical correlational analysis
- (2) Hierarchical moderated regression analysis, and
- (3) Test for significant mean differences.

#### 4.6.3.1 *Canonical correlational analysis*

Canonical correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship between two sets of multiple variables, i.e. self-esteem and graduateness skills and attributes (skills scores – independent variable) and career adaptability (career scores – dependent variable). Helio plots were used to illustrate the canonical correlations.

#### 4.6.3.2 *Hierarchical moderated regression analysis*

Hierarchical moderated regression is a method of empirically detecting how a variable influences or “moderates” the nature of a relationship between the dependent and independent variables (Saunders, 1956). One variable (for example x) moderates the relationship between two other variables (for example y and z) if the degree of association between y and z varies as a function of the value held by x (Hair et al., 2010).

In terms of this research, hierarchical moderated regression was conducted to determine if self-esteem (moderator variable) moderated the relationship between graduateness skills and attributes (independent variable) and career adaptability (dependent variable).

#### 4.6.3.3 *Test for significant mean differences*

In order to determine whether there were any significant differences between the mean scores of males and females, a t-test (for parametric data) and a Mann-Whitney U test (for non-parametric data) were conducted to be able to identify significant differences between gender groups with the intention of determining whether these groups differ in terms of their self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability. The level of statistical significance was set at  $p \leq .05$ .

#### **4.6.4 Level of significance**

The level of significance expresses statistical significance in terms of specific probability. In practice, a general level of significance at  $p \leq .05$  is chosen to test the hypothesis, which therefore provides a 95% confidence level in the results as the standard when applied in the

research context. The most commonly used significance levels are  $p \leq .05$  and  $p \leq .01$ . For the purpose of this research study, the  $p \leq .05$  level of significance was used.

In the human sciences, researchers are concerned about missing a significant result or making a type II error, as they are concerned about falsely concluding a significant result. A type II error occurs when we believe that there is a genuine effect in our population when in actual fact there is not one (Field, 2013); in other words, when the researcher falsely accepts a null hypothesis when it is false (Williams, Sweeney & Anderson, 2006).

As the total number of statistical tests to be performed on a sample increases, the probability of a type I error also increases. A type I error occurs when we believe that there is no effect in the population when in actual fact there is (Field, 2013); in other words, when the researcher falsely rejects a null hypothesis when it is in fact true (Williams et al., 2006). One approach to counter the accumulation of this effect is to set the level of significance smaller for the individual statistical test so as to compensate for the overall Type I error effect. However, deciding on the significance level is never easy and the final choice largely is arbitrary (Hays, 1994). Various levels of significance have been identified. Table 4.9 indicates the different levels of statistical significance.

Table 4.9  
*Different Levels of Statistical Significance* (Tredoux & Durrheim, 2002)

Probability	Level	Significance
$p$	.10	Less significant
$p$	.01 to .05	Significant
$p$	.001 to .01	Very significant
$p$	.001	Extremely significant

When a test of significance reveals a  $p$ -value lower than the chosen significance level, the null hypothesis is rejected and the results are referred to as statistically significant (Field, 2013; Williams et al., 2006).

#### 4.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter focused on the empirical investigation undertaken in the study. The population and composition of the sample that were used in the study, as well as the measuring instrument, data collection process, administration of the measuring instrument and the data analysis process were discussed. A discussion of the formulation of the hypotheses and the statistical processing of the data concluded the chapter.

Chapter 5 addresses the following aims of the research:

**Research aim 1:** To conduct an empirical investigation of the statistical relationship between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability in a sample of young adult respondents studying at a Further Education and Training institution in South Africa.

**Research aim 2:** To empirically investigate whether self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes variables as a composite set of independent variables are significantly and positively related to the career adaptability variables as a composite set of dependent variables.

**Research aim 3:** To empirically investigate whether self-esteem moderates the relationship between gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability.

**Research aim 4:** To empirically investigate whether males and females differ significantly regarding their self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability as manifested in the sample of respondents.

## CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH RESULTS

In this chapter, the statistical results pertaining to the following research aims are reported:

**Research aim 1:** To conduct an empirical investigation of the statistical relationship between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability in a sample of young adult respondents studying at a Further Education and Training institution in South Africa.

**Research aim 2:** To empirically investigate whether self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes variables as a composite set of independent variables are significantly and positively related to the career adaptability variables as a composite set of dependent variables.

**Research aim 3:** To empirically investigate whether self-esteem moderates the relationship between gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability.

**Research aim 4:** To empirically investigate whether males and females differ significantly regarding their self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability as manifested in the sample of respondents.

The descriptive statistics, correlational statistics and inferential statistics are discussed, followed by a discussion and synthesis of the results. The chapter will concludes with a brief summary and a review of Chapter 6.

### 5.1 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Descriptive statistics are those statistics that describe a set or sample of data and are usually calculated to provide information about a population of interest (Samuels, Witmer, & Schaffner, 2012). Even though descriptive statistics are generally used to address the specific research undertaken by a study, they can also be employed to assist in discovering important yet often hidden patterns in the data that may shed further light on the problems that need to be resolved through the study (Bordens & Abbott, 2014). In this section the internal consistency reliability of the three measurement instruments is assessed, followed by a discussion of the means ( $M$ ), standard deviations ( $SD$ ), skewness and kurtosis that were computed for each scale.

### 5.1.1 Reporting of internal consistency reliability

Internal consistency reliability relates to the concept-indicator idea of measurement – because multiple items are utilised to assist in inferring the level of the underlying trait, the question relates to the extent to which these items are consistent with each other or are functioning in the same direction (Punch, 2014). The reliability analysis focused on assessing the internal consistency reliability of the three measurement instruments, namely the Culture-free Self-esteem Inventories for Adults (CFSEI 2-AD), the Graduateness Skills and Attributes Scale (GSAS) and the Career Adapt-ability Scale (CAAS). The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the three instruments are reported in the following sections.

#### 5.1.1.1 Reporting on scale reliability: Culture-free Self-esteem Inventories for Adults (CFSEI 2-AD)

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used in this study to determine the reliability of the instrument. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient ranges from 0 to 1, with 1 indicating perfect consistency (Mayers, 2013). Therefore, the higher the alpha coefficient, the more reliable the item or test. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .70 is considered a desirable reliability coefficient, although it may decrease to .60 in exploratory research (Hair et al., 2010). In the case of individual testing, however, reliabilities as low as .30 are acceptable when instruments are used to gather group data (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002).

Table 5.1 provides the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each of the four subscales of the CFSEI 2-AD (Battle, 1992). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient scores varied from .79 (high) to .31 (low) for the total sample (N = 332). The total CFSEI 2-AD scale obtained a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .79 (high), which can be considered adequate for the purpose of the current study.

In order to improve the reliability of the general self-esteem scale, items B2, 3, 8, 11 and 37 were removed. In order to improve the reliability of personal self-esteem, item B15 was removed. In order to improve the reliability of the lie items scale, items B4 and B14 were removed. The SPSS analysis procedure was followed and item correlations were considered.

Table 5.1  
Internal Consistency Reliability: CFSEI 2-AD

<i>Subscale</i>	<i>Cronbach's alpha</i>	<i>Number of items</i>
<i>General self-esteem</i>	.74	16
<i>Social self-esteem</i>	.31	8
<i>Personal self-esteem</i>	.74	8
<i>Lie items</i>	.59	8
<i>Overall scale</i>	.82	40

5.1.1.2 Reporting of scale reliability: Graduate Skills and Attributes Scale (GSAS)

Table 5.2 provides the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each of the eight subscales of the GSAS (Coetzee, 2010). These subscales are grouped into three groups, namely scholarship, global citizenship and lifelong learning. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient scores varied from .95 (high) to .61 (medium) for the total sample (N = 332). The total GSAS scale obtained a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .95 (high), which can be considered adequate for the purpose of the current study.

Table 5.2  
Internal Consistency Reliability: GSAS

<i>Subscale</i>	<i>Cronbach's alpha</i>	<i>Number of items</i>
<i>Scholarship</i>	<b>.86</b>	<b>21</b>
<i>Problem-solving skills</i>	.77	8
<i>Enterprising skills</i>	.72	9
<i>Analytical thinking skills</i>	.65	4
<i>Global citizenship</i>	<b>.91</b>	<b>26</b>
<i>Interactive skills</i>	.85	16
<i>Presenting &amp; applying info</i>	.61	5
<i>Ethical/responsible behaviour</i>	.58	5
<i>Lifelong learning</i>	<b>.86</b>	<b>17</b>
<i>Continuous learning orientation</i>	.79	7
<i>Goal-directed behaviour</i>	.75	10
<i>Overall scale</i>	<b>.95</b>	<b>64</b>

### 5.1.1.3 Reporting of scale reliability: Career Adapt-Ability Scale (CAAS)

Table 5.3 provides the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each of the four subscales of the CAAS (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient scores varied from .91 (high) to .68 (medium) for the total sample (N = 332). The total CAAS obtained a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .91 (high), which can be considered adequate for the purpose of the current study.

Table 5.3  
*Internal Consistency Reliability: CAAS*

<i>Subscale</i>	<i>Cronbach's alpha</i>	<i>Number of items</i>
<i>Concern</i>	.68	6
<i>Control</i>	.74	6
<i>Curiosity</i>	.78	6
<i>Confidence</i>	.77	6
<i>Overall scale</i>	.91	24

### 5.1.2 Reporting of means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis

After the internal consistency reliability of the two scales had been identified, a descriptive analysis was conducted to investigate the distribution of the scores. The means (*M*), standard deviations (*SD*), skewness and kurtosis were computed for each scale. After a brief explanation, these are reported below.

The mean is a statistical model of the centre of the distribution of the scores (Field, 2013). The standard deviation is an estimation of the average variability (spread) of a set of data. Skewness is a measure of the symmetry of a frequency distribution, where symmetrical distributions have a skew of 0 (Field, 2013; Kim, 2013). A positive skew value indicates that the tail on the right side of the distribution is longer than that on the left side and that most of the values are clustered to the left of the mean (Kim, 2013). In contrast, a negative skew value indicates that the tail on the left side of the distribution is longer than that on the right side and that most of the values are clustered to the right of the mean (Kim, 2013). A reference of large divergence from normality is an absolute skew value greater than 2 (West, Finch, & Curran, 1995). Howell (2004) mentioned that skewness values must fall between -1 and 1 to be considered acceptable to prove a normal distribution.



Kurtosis measures the degree to which scores cluster in the tails of a frequency distribution (Field, 2013). The original kurtosis value is sometimes called kurtosis (proper), and a normal distribution is referred to as a mesokurtic distribution or bell-shaped distribution (Mayers, 2013). A general trend that is followed when utilising statistical packages like SPSS is to calculate the 'excess' kurtosis by subtracting 3 from the kurtosis (proper), where the excess kurtosis should be 0 for a normal distribution (Kim, 2013). A distribution with positive kurtosis has many scores in the tails, is pointy and is known as a leptokurtic distribution (Field, 2013; Kim, 2013; Mayers, 2013). In contrast, a distribution with negative kurtosis is relatively thin in the tails, tends to be flatter than normal and is known as a platykurtic distribution (Field, 2013; Kim, 2013; Mayers, 2013). West et al. (1995) proposed a reference of substantial departure from normality as an absolute kurtosis (proper) value  $> 7$ . According to Field (2013), the further a value is from 0, the more likely it is that the data are not normally distributed. George and Mallery (2010) suggest that kurtosis values between -2 and 2 are considered acceptable in order to prove normal univariate distribution. Brown (2015) indicates that kurtosis values between -3 and 3 are considered acceptable in order to prove normal distribution.

#### 5.1.2.1 *Culture-free Self-esteem Inventories for Adults (CFSEI 2-AD)*

Table 5.4 summarises the means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis of each of the four subscales of the CFSEI 2-AD, as well as of the overall scale. The means of the four subscales ranged between 3.26 and 4.86. As shown in Table 5.4 and Figure 5.1, the highest mean score was  $M = 4.86$  ( $SD = .75$ ) for the subscale *social self-esteem*, while the lowest mean was obtained for the subscale *lie items* ( $M = 3.26$ ;  $SD = .80$ ). The skewness values show that the scores for the subscale *personal self-esteem* were negatively skewed (bounded to the right), while all the other subscales as well as the overall scale were positively skewed (bounded to the left). Skewness for the four subscales ranged between -1.06 and .08, thereby falling within the -1 and 1 normality range recommended for these coefficients (Howell, 2004). Kurtosis values showed that *social self-esteem* had a leptokurtic distribution (positive, left), whereas all the other subscales as well as the overall scale had a platykurtic distribution (negative, right). The kurtosis values ranged between -.45 and 2.26, thereby falling within the -3 and 3 normality range (Brown, 2015).

Table 5.4  
Means, Standard Deviations, Skewness and Kurtosis: CFSEI 2-AD

Construct	Mean	Standard deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
General self-esteem	4.28	.66	-.28	-.09
Social self-esteem	4.86	.75	-1.06	2.26
Personal self-esteem	3.40	1.04	.08	-.45
Lie items	3.26	.80	-.01	-.04
Overall CFSEI 2-AD scale	4.18	.61	-.28	.25

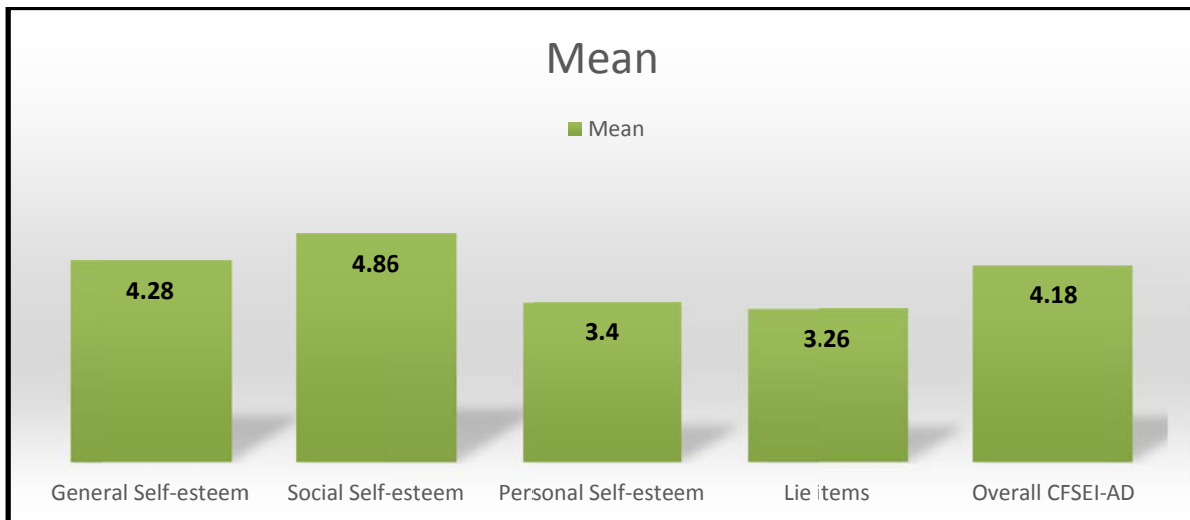


Figure 5.1. Means of the CFSEI 2-AD

#### 5.1.2.2 Graduate Skills and Attributes Scale (GSAS)

Table 5.5 summarises the means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis of each of the eleven subscales of the GSAS, as well as of the overall scale. The means for the eleven sub-scales ranged between 3.99 and 4.66. As shown in Table 5.5 and Figure 5.2, the highest mean score was  $M = 4.66$  ( $SD = .70$ ) for the subscale *goal-directed behaviour*, while the lowest mean was obtained for the subscale *analytical thinking skills* ( $M = 3.99$ ;  $SD = .97$ ). The skewness values show that the scores for the subscales scholarship skills, analytical skills and enterprising skills were all negatively skewed (bounded to the right), while all the other subscales and the overall GSAS scale were positively skewed (bounded to the left). Skewness for the eleven subscales ranged from  $-.59$  to  $.10$ , thereby falling within the  $-1$  and  $1$  normality range recommended for these coefficients (Howell, 2004). Kurtosis values ranged between  $-.59$  and  $-.001$ , thereby falling within the  $-3$  and  $3$  normality range (Brown, 2015).

Table 5.5  
Means, Standard Deviations, Skewness and Kurtosis: GSAS

Construct	Mean	Standard deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Scholarship skills	4.18	.72	.09	-.42
Problem-solving skills	4.30	.84	-.07	-.59
Analytical thinking skills	3.99	.97	.06	-.55
Enterprising skills	4.18	.78	.10	-.46
Global/ moral citizenship	4.59	.66	-.21	-.21
Interactive skills	4.62	.69	-.17	-.28
Presenting and applying information	4.43	.85	-.20	-.49
Ethical/responsible behaviour	4.64	.86	-.52	-.26
Lifelong learning	4.65	.69	-.44	-.24
Continuous learning orientation	4.64	.80	-.32	-.55
Goal-directed behaviour	4.66	.70	-.59	-.001
Overall GSAS scale	4.43	.65	-.11	-.35

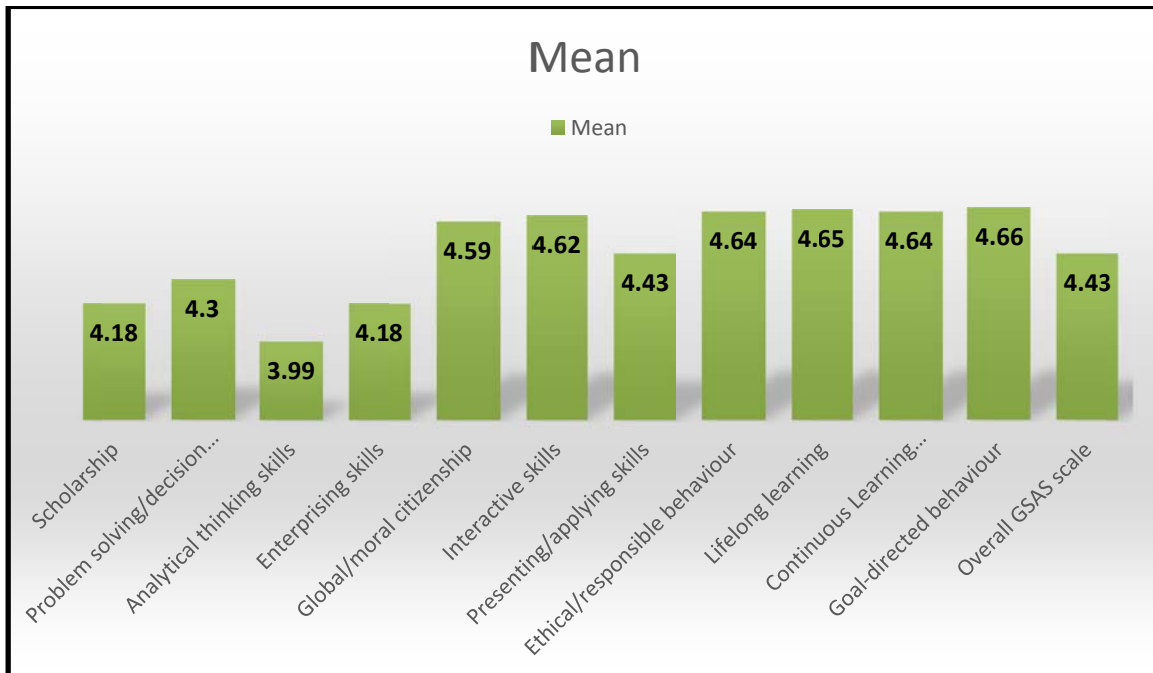


Figure 5.2. Means of the GSAS

### 5.1.2.3 Career Adapt-Ability Scale (CAAS)

Table 5.6 summarises the means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis of each of the four subscales of the CAAS. The means for the four subscales ranged between 4.01 and 4.38. As shown in Table 5.6 and Figure 5.3, the highest mean score was  $M = 4.38$  ( $SD = .52$ ) for the subscale *concern*, while the lowest mean was obtained for the subscale *curiosity* ( $M = 4.01$ ;  $SD = .66$ ). The skewness values show that the scores were positively skewed (bounded to the left). Skewness for the four subscales ranged from  $-.31$  to  $-.88$ , thereby falling within the  $-1$  and  $1$  normality range recommended for these coefficients (Howell, 2004). The kurtosis values ranged from  $-.64$  and  $.89$ , thereby falling within the  $-3$  and  $3$  normality range (Brown, 2015).

Table 5.6  
Means, Standard Deviations, Skewness and Kurtosis: CAAS

Construct	Mean	Standard deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
<b>Concern</b>	4.38	.52	-.65	-.30
<b>Control</b>	4.17	.62	-.88	.89
<b>Curiosity</b>	4.01	.66	-.31	-.64
<b>Confidence</b>	4.10	.62	-.31	-.60
<b>Overall CAAS</b>	4.16	.52	-.36	-.48

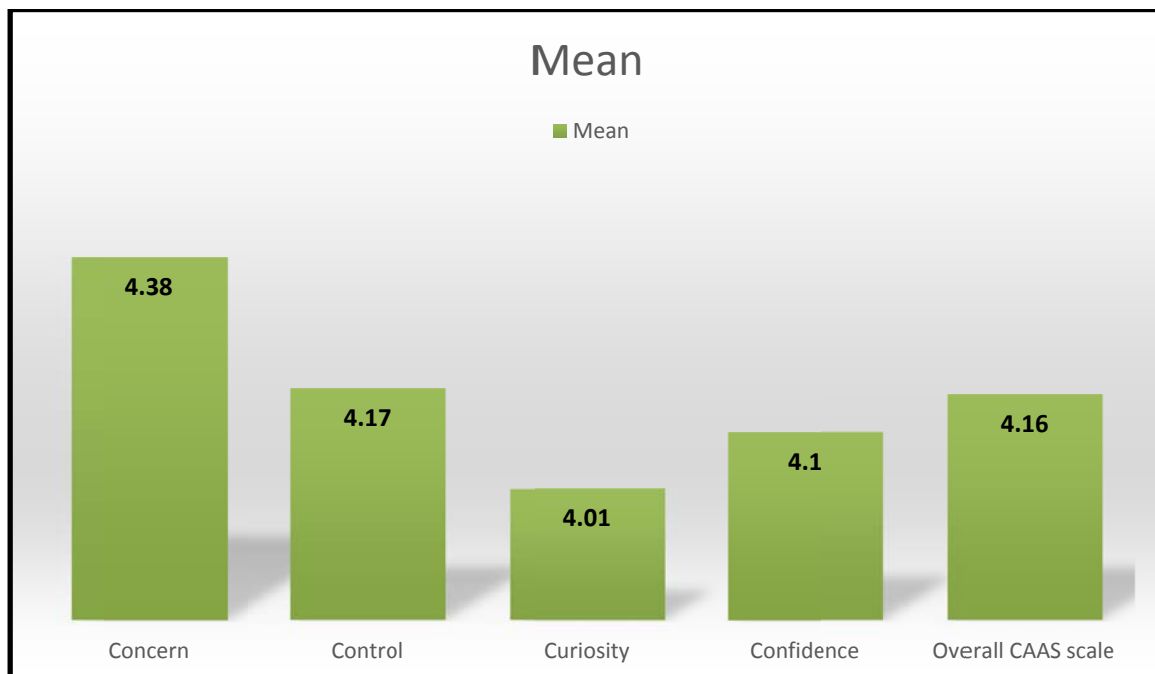


Figure 5.3. Means of the CAAS

In summary relating to the CFSEI 2-AD scale, social self-esteem reported the highest mean ( $M = 4.86$ ) and general self-esteem reported the lowest mean ( $M = 4.28$ ). In terms of the GSAS scale, goal-directed behaviour reported the highest mean ( $M = 4.66$ ) and analytical thinking skills reported the lowest mean ( $M = 3.99$ ). Finally, in terms of the CAAS, concern reported the highest mean ( $M = 4.38$ ) and curiosity reported the lowest mean ( $M = 4.01$ ).

## **5.2 CORRELATIONS**

In order to investigate the relationship between the variables in this study, the descriptive statistics had to be transformed into explanatory (correlational) statistics to determine whether the results provided adequate evidence in support of research hypothesis Ha1: There is a significant relationship between a young adult's self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability.

The Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) is used to calculate the direction of and strength between variables (Steyn, 2001). For the purpose of this study, a cut-off point of  $r \geq .30$  (small effect) at  $p \leq .05$  was used to determine the practical significance of correlation coefficients.

### **5.2.1 Reporting of the bivariate correlations between CFSEI 2-AD and GSAS**

This section reports on the bivariate correlations between the CFSEI 2-AD and the GSAS variables. As shown in Table 5.7, a number of significant relationships were observed between these variables.

Table 5.7  
Bivariate Correlations between CFSEI 2-AD and GSAS

Variables	Gender	General self-esteem	Personal self-esteem	Social self-esteem	Lie items	Overall CFSEI 2-AD	Scholarship	Problem-solving/decision-making skills	Analytical thinking skills	Enterprising skills	Global/moral citizenship	Interactive skills	Presenting/applying information skills	Ethical/responsible behaviour	Lifelong learning	Continuous Learning orientation	Goal-directed behaviour	Overall GSAS	
Gender	-																		
General self-esteem	.04	-																	
Personal self-esteem	.14**	.62***	-																
Social self-esteem	-.02	.31***	.10	-															
Lie items	-.12*	-.47***	-.50***	-.23***	-														
Overall CFSEI 2-AD	.09	.83***	.83***	.58***	-.55***	-													
Scholarship	.02	.31***	.14**	.41***	-.23***	.36***	-												
Problem-solving/decision-making skills	.00	.29***	.14**	.37***	-.24***	.34***	.88***	-											
Analytical thinking skills	-.00	.28***	.17***	.34***	-.20***	.34***	.78***	.60***	-										
Enterprising skills	.04	.23***	.08	.35***	-.16**	.27***	.90***	.66***	.55***	-									
Global/moral citizenship	-.03	.35***	.13**	.45***	-.20***	.38***	.79***	.76***	.60***	.67***	-								
Interactive skills	-.04	.32***	.11*	.41***	-.18***	.34***	.74***	.71***	.53***	.64***	.96***	-							
Presenting/applying information skills	-.05	.32***	.20***	.39***	-.22***	.39***	.72***	.69***	.57***	.59***	.84***	.71***	-						
Ethical/responsible behaviour	.01	.25***	.07	.38***	-.14**	.29***	.54***	.54***	.44***	.42***	.67***	.50***	.51***	-					
Lifelong learning	-.01	.28***	.16**	.38***	-.27***	.35***	.77***	.74***	.58***	.66***	.78***	.75***	.71***	.46***	-				
Continuous learning orientation	-.02	.22***	.12*	.35***	-.20***	.29***	.74***	.70***	.57***	.62***	.75***	.75***	.65***	.41***	.91***	-			
Goal-directed behaviour	-.01	.29***	.18***	.36***	-.30***	.35***	.70***	.68***	.52***	.60***	.71***	.66***	.67***	.45***	.94***	.73***	-		
Overall GSAS	-.01	.35***	.17**	.46***	-.25***	.40***	.94***	.87***	.76***	.79***	.92***	.85***	.84***	.67***	.89***	.84***	.82***	-	

Notes: N = 332; \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*  $p \leq .05$

Several significant relationships are found between the CFSEI-2AD and GSAS. General self-esteem showed significant positive relationships with all the GSAS variables.

- Scholarship ( $r = .31$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Problem-solving/decision-making skills ( $r = .29$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Analytical thinking skills ( $r = .28$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Enterprising skills ( $r = .23$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Global/moral citizenship ( $r = .35$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Interactive skills ( $r = .32$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Presenting/applying information skills ( $r = .32$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Ethical/responsible behaviour ( $r = .25$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Lifelong learning ( $r = .28$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Continuous learning orientation ( $r = .22$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Goal-directed behaviour ( $r = .29$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Overall GSAS scale ( $r = .35$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).

Personal self-esteem displayed significant positive relationships between all the GSAS variables, except ethical/responsible behaviour and enterprising skills, where no significant relationships were found.

- Scholarship ( $r = .14$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .01$ ).
- Problem-solving/decision-making skills ( $r = .14$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .01$ ).
- Analytical thinking skills ( $r = .17$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Global/moral citizenship ( $r = .13$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .01$ ).
- Interactive skills ( $r = .11$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .05$ ).
- Presenting/applying information skills ( $r = .20$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Lifelong learning ( $r = .16$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .01$ ).
- Continuous learning orientation ( $r = .12$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .05$ ).
- Goal-directed behaviour ( $r = .18$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Overall GSAS scale ( $r = .17$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .01$ ).

Social self-esteem displayed significant positive relationships with all the GSAS variables.

- Scholarship ( $r = .41$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Problem-solving/decision-making skills ( $r = .37$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Analytical thinking skills ( $r = .34$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).

- Enterprising skills ( $r = .35$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Global/moral citizenship ( $r = .45$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Interactive skills ( $r = .41$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Presenting/applying information skills ( $r = .39$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Ethical/responsible behaviour ( $r = .38$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Lifelong learning ( $r = .38$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Continuous learning orientation ( $r = .35$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Goal-directed behaviour ( $r = .36$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Overall GSAS scale ( $r = .46$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).

Significant negative relationships were observed between lie items and all the GSAS variables.

- Scholarship ( $r = -.23$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Problem-solving/decision-making skills ( $r = -.24$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Analytical thinking skills ( $r = -.20$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Enterprising skills ( $r = -.16$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .01$ ).
- Global/moral citizenship ( $r = -.20$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Interactive skills ( $r = -.18$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Presenting/applying information skills ( $r = -.22$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Ethical/responsible behaviour ( $r = -.14$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .01$ ).
- Lifelong learning ( $r = -.27$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Continuous learning orientation ( $r = -.20$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Goal-directed behaviour ( $r = -.30$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Overall GSAS scale ( $r = -.25$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).

Regarding the relationship between the CFSEI 2-AD and GSAS variables, Table 29 shows that the associations were all significant and positive, ranging between  $.11 \leq r \leq .46$  (small to large practical effect,  $p \leq .001$ ). Significant negative relationships were found between lie items and GSAS ranging between  $-.25 \leq r \leq -.14$  (small to medium practical effect,  $p \leq .001$ ). It was anticipated that multicollinearity would not pose a problem, as the Pearson product-moment coefficients (see Table 5.7) showed a small to large practical effect (highest value being .46), and this is well below the level of concern for multicollinearity ( $r \geq .90$ ) to be present (Hair et al., 2010).



### 5.2.2 Reporting of the bivariate correlations between the CFSEI 2-AD and CAAS

This section will report on the bivariate correlations between the CFSEI 2-AD and the CAAS variables. As shown in Table 5.8, a number of significantly positive relationships were observed between these variables.

Table 5.8  
*Bivariate Correlations between CFSEI 2-AD and CAAS*

Variables	Gender	General self-esteem	Personal self-esteem	Social self-esteem	Lie items	Overall CFSEI2-AD	Concern	Control	Curiosity	Confidence	Overall CAAS
Gender	-										
General self-esteem	.04	-									
Personal self-esteem	.14**	.62***	-								
Social self-esteem	-.02	.31***	.11	-							
Lie items	-.12*	-.47***	-.50***	-.23***	-						
Overall CFSEI2-AD	.09	.83***	.83***	.58***	-.55***	-					
Concern	-.05	.17***	.06	.18***	-.16**	.16**	-				
Control	-.02	.16**	.08	.17**	-.12*	.17**	.61	-			
Curiosity	.00	.12*	.07	.16**	-.08	.15**	.59***	.66***	-		
Confidence	.01	.17***	.11*	.25***	-.16**	.23***	.58***	.64***	.73***	-	
Overall CAAS	-.02	.18***	.09	.22***	-.15**	.21***	.80***	.86***	.88***	.87***	-

Notes: N = 332; \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*  $p \leq .05$

Several significant relationships were found between the CFSEI-2AD and CAAS. General self-esteem showed significant positive relationships with all the CAAS variables.

- Concern ( $r = .17$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ )
- Control ( $r = .16$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .01$ )
- Curiosity ( $r = .12$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .05$ )
- Confidence ( $r = .17$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ )
- Overall CAAS ( $r = .18$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ )

A significant positive relationship was observed between personal self-esteem and confidence ( $r = .11$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .05$ ). No significant relationships were

found between personal self-esteem and any of the other CAAS variables (viz. concern, control and curiosity).

Social self-esteem showed significant positive relationships with all the CAAS variables.

- Concern ( $r = .18$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ )
- Control ( $r = .17$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .01$ )
- Curiosity ( $r = .16$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .01$ )
- Confidence ( $r = .25$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ )
- Overall CAAS ( $r = .22$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ )

Significant negative relationships were observed between lie items and all the CAAS variables, except curiosity, where no significant relationship was found.

- Concern ( $r = -.16$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .01$ )
- Control ( $r = -.12$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .05$ )
- Confidence ( $r = -.16$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .01$ )
- Overall CAAS ( $r = -.15$ ; small practical effect size,  $p \leq .01$ )

Regarding the relationship between the CFSEI 2-AD and the CAAS variables, Table 5.9 shows that the associations between general self-esteem, social self-esteem and the overall CFSEI 2-AD were significant and positive, ranging from  $.11 \leq r \leq .25$  (small to medium practical effect,  $p \leq .001$ ). Personal self-esteem and the CAAS variables (concern, control and curiosity) were not significant. It was anticipated that multicollinearity would not pose a problem, as the Pearson product-moment coefficients (see Table 5.8) showed a small to medium practical effect, and this was well below the level of concern for multicollinearity ( $r \geq .90$ ) to be present (Hair et al., 2010).

### **5.2.3 Reporting of the bivariate correlations between the GSAS and CAAS**

This section will report on the bivariate correlations between the GSAS and the CAAS variables. As shown in Table 5.9, all GSAS variables displayed significant positive relationships with the CAAS variables.

Table 5.9

## Bivariate Correlations between GSAS and CAAS

Variables	Gender	Scholarship	Problem-solving/decision-making skills	Analytical thinking skills	Enterprising skills	Global/moral citizenship	Interactive skills	Presenting/applying information skills	Ethical/responsible behaviour	Lifelong learning	Continuous learning orientation	Goal-directed behaviour	Overall GSAS	Concern	Control	Curiosity	Confidence	Overall CAAS
Gender	-																	
Scholarship	.02	-																
Problem-solving/decision-making skills	.00	.88***	-															
Analytical thinking skills	-.00	.78***	.60***	-														
Enterprising skills	.04	.90***	.66***	.55***	-													
Global/moral citizenship	-.03	.79***	.76***	.60***	.67***	-												
Interactive skills	-.04	.74***	.71***	.53***	.64***	.96***	-											
Presenting/applying information skills	-.05	.72***	.69***	.57***	.59***	.84***	.71***	-										
Ethical/responsible behaviour	.01	.54***	.54***	.44***	.42***	.67***	.50***	.51***	-									
Lifelong learning	-.01	.77***	.74***	.58***	.66***	.78***	.75***	.71***	.46***	-								
Continuous learning orientation	-.02	.74***	.70***	.57***	.62***	.75***	.75***	.64***	.41***	.91***	-							
Goal-directed behaviour	-.01	.70***	.68***	.52***	.60***	.71***	.66***	.67***	.45***	.94***	.73***	-						
Overall scale	-.01	.94***	.87***	.76***	.79***	.92***	.85***	.84***	.67***	.89***	.84***	.82***	-					
Concern	-.05	.42***	.39***	.30***	.39***	.46***	.45***	.35***	.31***	.42***	.39***	.39***	.46***	-				
Control	-.02	.47***	.42***	.34***	.43***	.49***	.49***	.41***	.30***	.43***	.43***	.38***	.49***	.61***	-			
Curiosity	.00	.55***	.48***	.37***	.52***	.52***	.51***	.42***	.35***	.47***	.49***	.40***	.55***	.59***	.66***	-		
Confidence	.01	.58***	.55***	.39***	.52***	.57***	.56***	.45***	.36***	.60***	.59***	.53***	.61***	.58***	.64***	.73***	-	
Overall scale	-.02	.59***	.54***	.41***	.55***	.60***	.59***	.48***	.39***	.57***	.56***	.50***	.62***	.80***	.86***	.89***	.87***	-

Notes: N = 332; \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*  $p \leq .05$

Significant relationships were found between all the GSAS and CAAS variables. All subscales of the GSAS (scholarship, problem-solving/decision-making skills, analytical thinking skills, enterprising skills, global/moral citizenship, interactive skills, presenting/applying information skills, ethical/responsible behaviour, lifelong learning, continuous learning orientation and goal-directed behaviour) showed a significant positive relationship with all the CAAS variables (concern, control, curiosity and confidence).

Concern revealed a positive relationship with:

- Scholarship ( $r = .42$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Problem-solving/decision-making skills ( $r = .39$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Analytical thinking skills ( $r = .30$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Enterprising skills ( $r = .39$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Global/moral citizenship ( $r = .46$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Interactive skills ( $r = .45$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Presenting/applying information skills ( $r = .35$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Ethical/responsible behaviour ( $r = .31$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Lifelong learning ( $r = .42$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Continuous learning orientation ( $r = .39$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Goal-directed behaviour ( $r = .39$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Overall GSAS scale ( $r = .46$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).

Control revealed a positive relationship with:

- Scholarship ( $r = .47$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Problem-solving/decision-making skills ( $r = .42$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Analytical thinking skills ( $r = .34$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Enterprising skills ( $r = .43$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Global/moral citizenship ( $r = .49$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Interactive skills ( $r = .49$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Presenting/applying information skills ( $r = .41$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Ethical/responsible behaviour ( $r = .30$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Lifelong learning ( $r = .43$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Continuous learning orientation ( $r = .43$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Goal-directed behaviour ( $r = .38$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Overall GSAS scale ( $r = .49$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).

Curiosity revealed a positive relationship with:

- Scholarship ( $r = .55$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Problem-solving/decision-making skills ( $r = .48$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Analytical thinking skills ( $r = .37$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Enterprising skills ( $r = .52$ ; large practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Global/moral citizenship ( $r = .52$ ; large practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Interactive skills ( $r = .51$ ; large practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Presenting/applying information skills ( $r = .42$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Ethical/responsible behaviour ( $r = .35$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Lifelong learning ( $r = .47$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Continuous learning orientation ( $r = .49$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Goal-directed behaviour ( $r = .40$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Overall GSAS scale ( $r = .55$ ; large practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).

Confidence revealed a positive relationship between:

- Scholarship ( $r = .58$ ; large practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Problem-solving/decision-making skills ( $r = .55$ ; large practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Analytical thinking skills ( $r = .39$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Enterprising skills ( $r = .52$ ; large practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Global/moral citizenship ( $r = .57$ ; large practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Interactive skills ( $r = .56$ ; large practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Presenting/applying information skills ( $r = .45$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Ethical/responsible behaviour ( $r = .36$ ; medium practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Lifelong learning ( $r = .60$ ; large practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Continuous learning orientation ( $r = .59$ ; large practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Goal-directed behaviour ( $r = .53$ ; large practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).
- Overall GSAS scale ( $r = .61$ ; large practical effect size,  $p \leq .001$ ).

Regarding the relationship between the GSAS and the CAAS variables, Table 5.9 shows that all the associations between the GSAS and CAAS variables were significant and positive, ranging between  $.30 \leq r \leq .62$  (medium to large practical effect,  $p \leq .001$ ). It was anticipated that multicollinearity would not pose a problem, as the Pearson product-moment coefficients (see Table 5.9) showed a medium to large practical effect, with the highest value being .62, which is well below the level of concern for multicollinearity ( $r \geq .90$ ) to be present (Hair et al., 2010).

The results of the bivariate correlation analyses provided supportive evidence for research hypothesis Ha1 (there is a significant relationship between a young adult's self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability).

### **5.3 INFERENCE STATISTICS**

In this section, the canonical correlations, hierarchically moderated regression and tests for mean differences are reported.

#### **5.3.1 Canonical correlation**

This section is relevant to research aim 2, namely to investigate empirically whether self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes variables as a composite set of independent variables are significantly and positively related to the career adaptability variables as a composite set of dependent variables (Ha2: The self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes variables as a composite set of independent variables are significantly and positively related to the career adaptability variables as a composite set of dependent variables).

Canonical correlation analysis was used to study the multivariate relationships between the gradueness skills and attributes/self-esteem canonical variate variables and the career adaptability canonical variate variables. The self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes variables were treated as the set of independent variables and the career adaptability variables as the set of dependent variables.

Canonical correlation has several advantages for researchers as canonical analysis: (1) it limits the probability of committing Type I errors, (2) it may better reflect the reality of research studies in that the complexity of research studies involving human and/or organisational behaviour may suggest multiple variables that represent a concept and thus create problems when the variables are examined separately, (3) canonical analysis can identify two or more unique relationships if they exist (Hair et al., 2010).

Wilks's lambda chi-square test was performed to test for the significance of the overall canonical correlation between the independent and dependent variates of a canonical function. In order to counter the probability of a Type I error, the significance value for interpreting the results was set at a 95% confidence interval level ( $F_p \leq .05$ ). Effect sizes were used to decide on the practical significance of the findings. The cut-off criteria for factorial loadings ( $\geq .30$ ) were used to interpret the relative importance of the canonical

structure correlations or loadings in deriving the canonical variate constructs (Hair et al., 2010). The redundancy index was also considered in assessing the magnitude of the overall correlational relationships between the two variates of a canonical function and the practical significance of the predictive ability of the canonical relationship (Hair et al., 2010). The squared canonical correlation ( $Rc^2$ ) values of  $\leq .12$  (small practical effect),  $\geq .13 \leq .25$  (medium practical effect) and  $\geq .26$  (large practical effect) ( $Fp \leq .05$ ) (Cohen, 1992) were also considered in the interpretation of the magnitude or practical significance of the results.

The interpretation of the canonical statistics was divided into two section. The first section focused on an in-depth analysis of all the GSAS variables, while the second focused on only the meta-GSAS variable (i.e. scholarship, global/moral citizenship and lifelong learning).

### 5.3.1.1 All GSAS variables and self-esteem as the independent canonical variate

Table 5.10 shows that the full model was significant using Wilks's multivariate test criterion (Wilks's lambda,  $\lambda$ , = .49, function 1:  $Fp = 5.73$ ;  $p = .0001$ ). Only the first function was significant, and 45% ( $Rc^2 = .45$ ) of the overall explained variation relative to the first function. The full model  $r^2$  type effect size (yielded by  $1 - 0.\lambda$ ) was .51 (large practical effect), indicating that the full model explained an adequate proportion – about 51% – of the variance shared between the two variable sets. The redundancy index indicated that the gradueness skills and attributes/self-esteem canonical variate explained 31% ( $Rc^2 = .31$ ; large practical effect) of the overall variance in the career adaptability canonical variate variables and was able to predict 45% (large practical effect) of the proportion of overall variance in the dependent canonical variate construct (career adaptability).

Table 5.10

*Canonical Correlation Analysis relating Self-esteem and all the Gradueness Skills and Attributes (Independent Variables) to Career Adaptability (Dependent Variable)*

<b>Measures of overall model fit for canonical correlation analysis</b>				
Canonical function	Overall canonical correlation ( $Rc$ )	Overall squared canonical correlation ( $Rc^2$ )	$F$ statistic	Probability ( $p$ )
1	.66	.45+++	7.94	<.0001***
2	.21	.08+	1.73	.02**
3	.13	.04+	.87	.58
4	-.02	.01+	.28	.93
<b>Multivariate tests of significance</b>				
Statistic	Value	Approximate $F$ value	Probability ( $p$ )	
Wilks's lambda	.49	5.73	<.0001	
Pillai's trace	.57	4.83	<.0001	
Hotelling-Lawley trace	.95	6.79	<.0001	
Roy's greatest root	.82	23.86	<.0001	

Notes:  $N = 332$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$  \*\*  $p \leq .01$  \*  $p \leq .05$   
 +  $Rc^2 \leq .12$  (small practical effect size) ++  $Rc^2 \geq .13 \leq .25$  (moderate practical effect size) +++  $Rc^2 \geq .26$  (large practical effect size)

Table 5.11 provides the canonical coefficients (weights), canonical structure coefficients ( $R_c$ ), canonical cross-loadings ( $R_c$ ) and squared canonical loadings ( $R_c^2$ ). Owing to the instability and variability of the canonical weights (Hair et al., 2010), only the individual canonical structure loadings were considered in interpreting the relative importance and magnitude of importance (practical significance) in deriving the canonical variate construct: skills set (all graduateness skills and attributes and self-esteem – independent canonical variate construct) and career scores (career adaptability – dependent canonical variate construct).

Regarding the independent canonical variate, the graduateness skills and attributes/self-esteem canonical variate construct was most strongly influenced by the graduateness skills and attributes variables. More specifically, interactive skills ( $R_c = .88$ ;  $R_c^2 = .35$ ), continuous learning orientation ( $R_c = .88$ ;  $R_c^2 = .35$ ), problem-solving skills ( $R_c = .85$ ;  $R_c^2 = .32$ ), enterprising skills ( $R_c = .83$ ;  $R_c^2 = .31$ ) and goal-directed behaviour ( $R_c = .78$ ;  $R_c^2 = .28$ ) showed a large degree of association with the graduateness skills and attributes/self-esteem canonical variate. Presenting and applying information skills ( $R_c = .72$ ;  $R_c^2 = .23$ ), analytical thinking skills ( $R_c = .62$ ;  $R_c^2 = .18$ ) and ethical and responsible behaviour ( $R_c = .57$ ;  $R_c^2 = .15$ ) displayed a moderate degree of association with the graduateness skills and attributes/self-esteem canonical variate, with  $R_c^2$  values ranging between  $.25 \leq R_c^2 \leq .13$ .

The self-esteem variables did not strongly contribute to explaining the graduateness skills and attributes/self-esteem canonical variate. More specifically, social self-esteem ( $R_c = .36$ ;  $R_c^2 = .06$ ), general self-esteem ( $R_c = .26$ ;  $R_c^2 = .03$ ) and personal self-esteem ( $R_c = .15$ ;  $R_c^2 = .01$ ) displayed an extremely small degree of association with the graduateness skills and attributes/self-esteem canonical variates, displaying  $R_c^2$  values in the range of  $R_c^2 \leq .12$ .

In terms of the dependent canonical variate (career adaptability variables), Table 33 shows that the career adaptability canonical variate was most strongly influenced by career confidence ( $R_c = .96$ ;  $R_c^2 = .42$ , very large practical effect), career curiosity ( $R_c = .87$ ;  $R_c^2 = .34$ , very large practical effect) and career control ( $R_c = .76$ ;  $R_c^2 = .26$ , large practical effect) and, to a lesser extent, by career concern ( $R_c = .70$ ;  $R_c^2 = .22$ , moderate practical effect).

In terms of the canonical cross-loadings and squared loadings between the independent and dependent canonical variate variables and constructs, interactive skills and continuous learning orientation ( $R_c = .59$ ;  $R_c^2 = .35$ ) contributed most in explaining the career adaptability canonical variate construct, followed by problem-solving skills ( $R_c = .57$ ;  $R_c^2 = .32$ ), then enterprising skills ( $R_c = .56$ ;  $R_c^2 = .31$ ), goal-directed behaviour ( $R_c = .53$ ;  $R_c^2 = .28$ ), presenting and applying information skills ( $R_c = .48$ ;  $R_c^2 = .23$ ), analytical thinking skills



( $R_c = .42$ ;  $R_c^2 = .18$ ) and finally ethical/responsible behaviour ( $R_c = .39$ ;  $R_c^2 = .15$ ). Self-esteem variables did not contribute strongly in explaining the career adaptability canonical variate construct.

Table 5.11

*Results of the Standardised Canonical Correlation Analysis for the First Canonical Function (All GSAS Variables).*

Variate	Variables	Canonical coefficients	Structure coefficients ( $R_c$ )	Canonical cross-loadings ( $R_c$ )	Squared canonical loadings ( $R_c^2$ )
<b>Graduateness skills and attributes/ self-esteem canonical variate</b>	General self-esteem	-.09	.26	.18	.03
	Social self-esteem	-.08	.36	.24	.06
	Personal self-esteem	.09	.15	.10	.01
	Problem-solving	.19	.85	.57	.32
	Analytical thinking	-.01	.62	.42	.18
	Enterprising skills	.31	.83	.56	.31
	Interactive skills	.34	.88	.59	.35
	Presenting/applying information	-.10	.72	.48	.23
	Ethical/responsible behaviour	.11	.57	.39	.15
	Continuous learning orientation	.30	.88	.59	.35
	Goal-directed behaviour	.09	.78	.53	.28
<b>Career adaptability canonical variate</b>	Concern	.11	.70	.47	.22
	Control	.10	.76	.51	.26
	Curiosity	.28	.87	.58	.34
	Confidence	.63	.96	.64	.42

Figure 5.4 provides a graphical illustration of the canonical relationships between the independent variables (all graduateness skills variables and self-esteem variables) and the dependent variables (career adaptability variables).

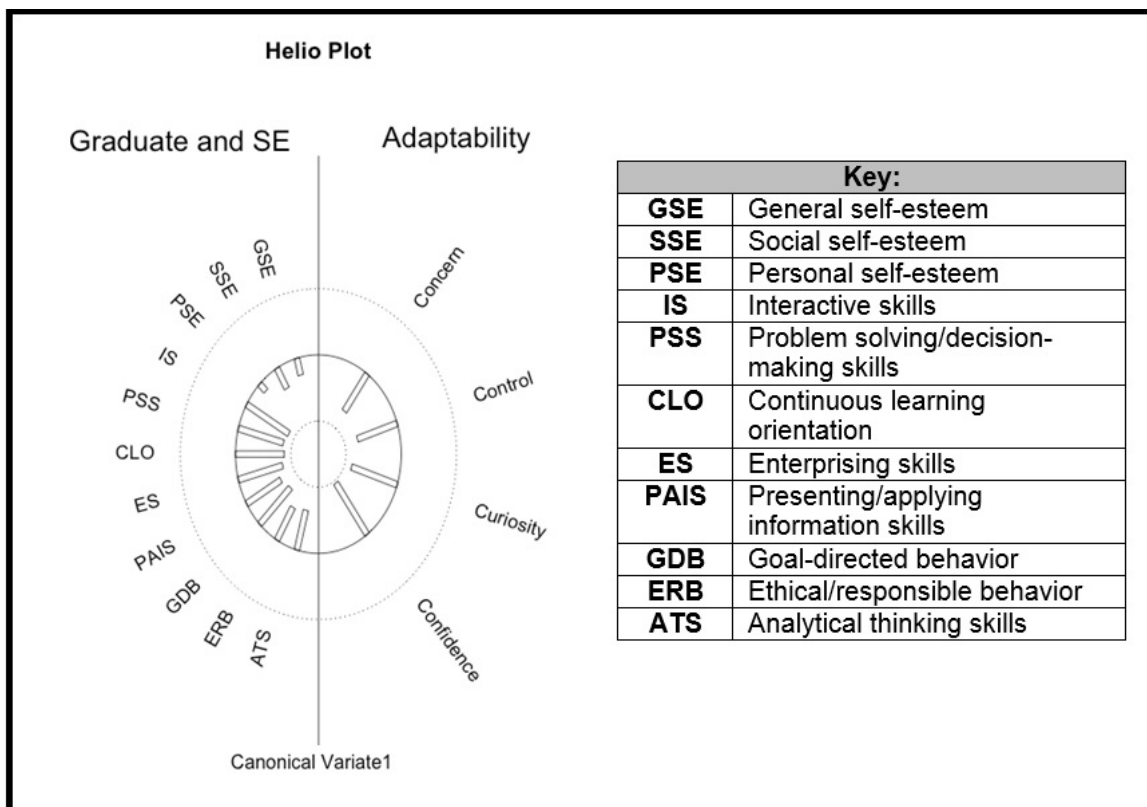


Figure 5.4. Canonical correlation helioplots illustrating the overall relationship between the skills set (all GSAS variables and self-esteem) variables and the career adaptability variables

### 5.3.1.2 Meta-GSAS variables and self-esteem as the independent canonical variate

Table 5.12 shows that the full model was significant using Wilks's multivariate test criterion (Wilks's lambda,  $\lambda$ , = .49, function 1:  $F_p = 7.94$ ;  $p = .0001$ ). The first and second function were both significant, and 46% ( $Rc^2 = .46$ ) and 8% ( $Rc^2 = .08$ ) respectively of the overall explained variation relative to each function. The full model  $r^2$  type effect size (yielded by  $1 - 0.\lambda$ ) was .51 (large practical effect), indicating that the full model explains an adequate proportion – about 51% – of the variance shared between the two variable sets. The redundancy index indicated that the gradueness skills and attributes/self-esteem canonical variate explained 34% ( $Rc^2 = .34$ ; large practical effect) of the overall variance in the career adaptability canonical variate variables and was able to predict 45% (large practical effect) of the proportion of overall variance in the dependent canonical variate construct (career adaptability).

Table 5.12

*Canonical Correlation Analysis Relating Self-esteem and Meta-Graduateness Skills and Attributes Variables (Independent Variables) to Career Adaptability (Dependent Variable)*

<b>Measures of overall model fit for canonical correlation analysis</b>				
Canonical function	Overall canonical correlation ( $R_c$ )	Overall squared canonical correlation ( $R_c^2$ )	F statistic	Probability (p)
1	.67	.45+++	7.94	<.0001***
2	.23	.08+	1.73	.02*
3	.12	.05+	.87	.58
4	-.02	.00+	.28	.93
<b>Multivariate tests of significance</b>				
Statistic	Value	Approximate F value	Probability (p)	
Wilk's lambda	.49	7.94	<.0001	
Pillai's trace	.56	6.61	<.0001	
Hotelling-Lawley trace	.95	9.46	<.0001	
Roy's greatest root	.83	33.69	<.0001	

Notes: N = 332; \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$  \*\*  $p \leq .01$  \*  $p \leq .05$

+  $R_c^2 \leq .12$  (small practical effect size) ++  $R_c^2 \geq .13 \leq .25$  (moderate practical effect size) +++  $R_c^2 \geq .26$  (large practical effect size)

Table 5.13 provides the canonical coefficients (weights), canonical structure coefficients ( $R_c$ ), canonical cross-loadings ( $R_c$ ) and squared canonical loadings ( $R_c^2$ ). Owing to the instability and variability of canonical weights (Hair et al., 2010), only the individual canonical structure loadings were considered in interpreting the relative importance and magnitude of importance (practical significance) in deriving the canonical variate construct: skills set (meta-graduateness skills and attributes and self-esteem – independent canonical variate construct) and career scores (career adaptability – dependent canonical variate construct).

Regarding the independent canonical variate, the graduateness skills and attributes/self-esteem canonical construct variate was most strongly influenced by the meta-GSAS (graduateness skills and attributes) variables. More specifically, total graduateness skills and attributes ( $R_c = .95$ ;  $R_c^2 = .41$ ), scholarship skills ( $R_c = .91$ ;  $R_c^2 = .37$ ), lifelong learning ( $R_c = .91$ ;  $R_c^2 = .37$ ) and global/moral citizenship ( $R_c = .95$ ;  $R_c^2 = .36$ ) showed a large degree of association with the graduateness skills and attributes/self-esteem canonical construct variate.

The self-esteem variables did not contribute strongly in explaining the graduateness skills and attributes/self-esteem canonical variate. More specifically, social self-esteem ( $R_c = .28$ ;  $R_c^2 = .04$ ), general self-esteem ( $R_c = .26$ ;  $R_c^2 = .03$ ), total self-esteem ( $R_c = .25$ ;  $R_c^2 = .03$ ) and personal self-esteem ( $R_c = .18$ ;  $R_c^2 = .02$ ) displayed an extremely small degree of association with the graduateness skills and attributes/self-esteem canonical variate, displaying  $R_c^2$  values in the range of  $R_c^2 \leq .12$ .

In terms of the dependent canonical variate (career adaptability variables), Table 5.13 shows that the career adaptability canonical variate was most strongly influenced by total career adaptability ( $R_c = .97$ ;  $R_c^2 = .43$ , very large practical effect), career confidence ( $R_c = .95$ ;  $R_c^2 = .41$ ), career curiosity ( $R_c = .87$ ;  $R_c^2 = .35$ , very large practical effect) and career control ( $R_c = .77$ ;  $R_c^2 = .27$ , large practical effect) and, to a lesser extent, by career concern ( $R_c = .70$ ;  $R_c^2 = .23$ , moderate practical effect).

In terms of the canonical cross-loadings and squared loadings between the independent and dependent canonical variate variables and constructs, total gradateness skills and attributes ( $R_c = .64$ ;  $R_c^2 = .41$ ) contributed most in explaining the career adaptability canonical variate construct, followed by lifelong learning and scholarship skills ( $R_c = .61$ ;  $R_c^2 = .37$ ) and then global and moral citizenship skills ( $R_c = .60$ ;  $R_c^2 = .36$ ). Self-esteem variables did not contribute strongly in explaining the career adaptability canonical variate construct.

Table 5.13

*Results of the Standardised Canonical Correlation Analysis for the First Canonical Function (Meta-GSAS Variables).*

Variate	Variables	Canonical coefficients	Structure coefficients ( $R_c$ )	Canonical cross-loadings ( $R_c$ )	Squared canonical loadings ( $R_c^2$ )
<b>Gradateness skills attributes/ self-esteem variables</b>	General self-esteem	-.08	.26	.18	.03
	Social self-esteem	-.07	.28	.19	.04
	Personal self-esteem	.07	.18	.12	.02
	Self-esteem total	-.00	.25	.17	.03
	Scholarship	1.04	.91	.61	.37
	Global/moral citizenship	1.27	.89	.60	.36
	Lifelong learning	.99	.91	.61	.37
	Gradateness total	-2.04	.95	.64	.41
<b>Career adaptability variables</b>	Concern	.11	.70	.48	.23
	Control	.14	.77	.52	.27
	Curiosity	.28	.87	.59	.35
	Confidence	.60	.95	.64	.41
	Career adaptability	0	.97	.66	.43

Figure 5.5 is a graphical illustration of the canonical relationships between the independent variables (meta-gradateness skills variables and self-esteem variables) and the dependent variables (career adaptability variables).

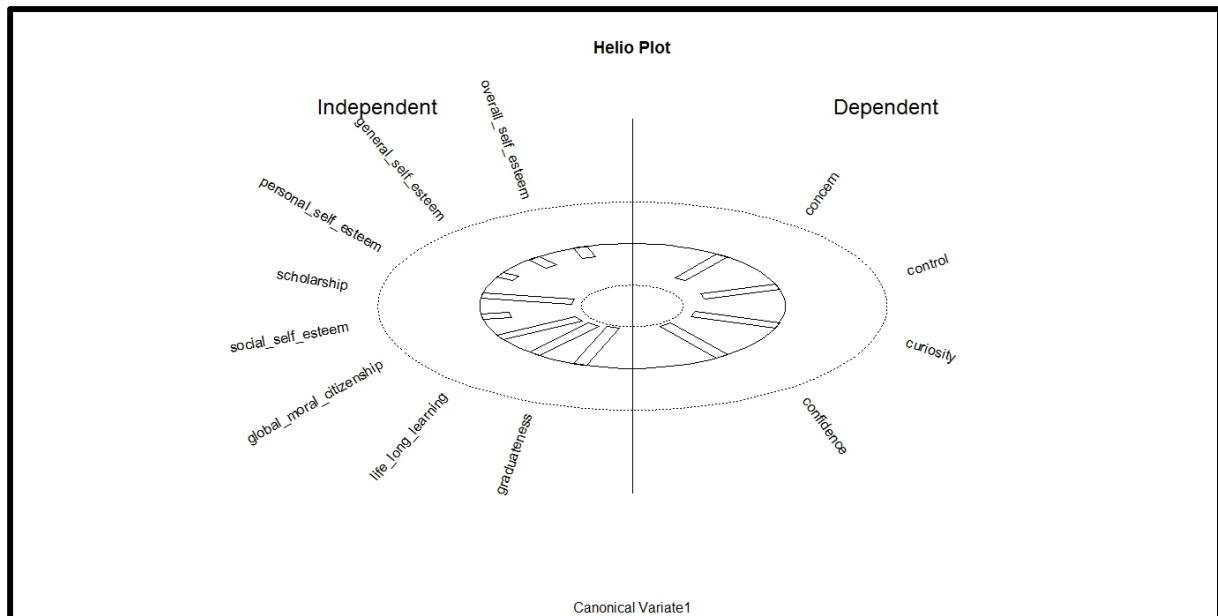


Figure 5.5. Canonical correlation helioplots illustrating the overall relationship between the graduateness skills attributes/self-esteem canonical variables and the career adaptability variables

The results of the canonical correlation analyses provided support for Ha2 (the self-esteem and graduateness skills and attributes variables as a composite set of independent variables are significantly and positively related to the career adaptability variables as a composite set of dependent variables).

#### 5.4.2 Hierarchical moderated regression

This section is relevant to research aim 3, namely to empirically investigate whether self-esteem moderates the relationship between graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability (Ha3: Young adults' self-esteem acts as a moderator between their graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability).

Hierarchical moderated regression was performed to explore the interaction effect between individuals' graduateness skills and attributes (overall graduateness, scholarship, global/moral citizenship and lifelong learning) and self-esteem in predicting their career adaptability. The aim was to assess the moderating role of self-esteem in the graduateness-career adaptability relation.

The results indicated that the four GSAS variables were positive predictors of overall career adaptability. Gender and self-esteem did not have a significant main effect on overall career adaptability in each of the four models. Significant interaction (moderating) effects were only

observed for the overall graduateness, global/moral citizenship and lifelong learning variables, but not for the scholarship variable. All values were mean-centered. The correlations between the construct variables in Table 5.9 were all well below the cut-off for multi-collinearity concerns ( $r \leq .80$ ). It was therefore assumed that multi-collinearity did not negatively affect the regression results. The regression results are reported on below.

### 5.3.2.1 Reporting of hierarchical moderated regression between overall graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability as moderated by self-esteem

As shown in Table 5.14, in terms of the main effects, in the first model (overall graduateness and self-esteem in relation to overall career adaptability), the overall graduateness by self-esteem product term was statistically significant ( $\beta = .11$ ;  $t = 2.55$ ;  $p \leq .01$ ). The  $R^2$  change was significant ( $\Delta R^2 = .01$ ;  $f^2 = .41$ ;  $F = 54.44$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ; large practical effect).

Figure 5.6 plots this relationship and shows that the relationship between overall graduateness and overall career adaptability was stronger when self-esteem was high. At the higher end, high self-esteem participants (HSE) displayed significantly higher self-perceived graduateness skills and attributes as their overall career adaptability increased. HSE participants who scored high on overall graduateness also indicated significantly higher career adaptability scores than the low self-esteem (LSE) participants. Interestingly, when scores were low on career adaptability and low on graduateness skills and attributes, the HSE participants displayed a slightly lower career adaptability score than the LSE participants.

Table 5.14

*Hierarchical Moderated Regression: The Relation between Graduateness Skills and Attributes and Career Adaptability as Moderated by Self-esteem*

	<b>b</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b><math>\beta</math></b>	<b>t</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b><math>\Delta F</math></b>	<b><math>\Delta R^2</math></b>	<b>f<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Gender</b>	-.003	.05	-.003	-.72					
<b>Graduateness</b>	.52	.04	.65	13.78***					
<b>Self-esteem</b>	-.05	.04	-.06	-1.23					
<b>Graduateness x self-esteem</b>	.14	.05	.11	2.55**	54.44***	.40	6.53**	.01	.41

Note:  $N = 332$ . \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ . \*\*  $p \leq .01$ . \*  $p \leq .05$ . All statistics are from the final (third) step.  $\beta$  = standardised regression coefficient.  $f^2$  = effect size estimate for the interaction term. Beta values are mean-centred.

A slope test was conducted to examine the nature of the significant interactions. Figure 5.6 illustrates the relationship between graduateness and career adaptability as moderated by self-esteem.

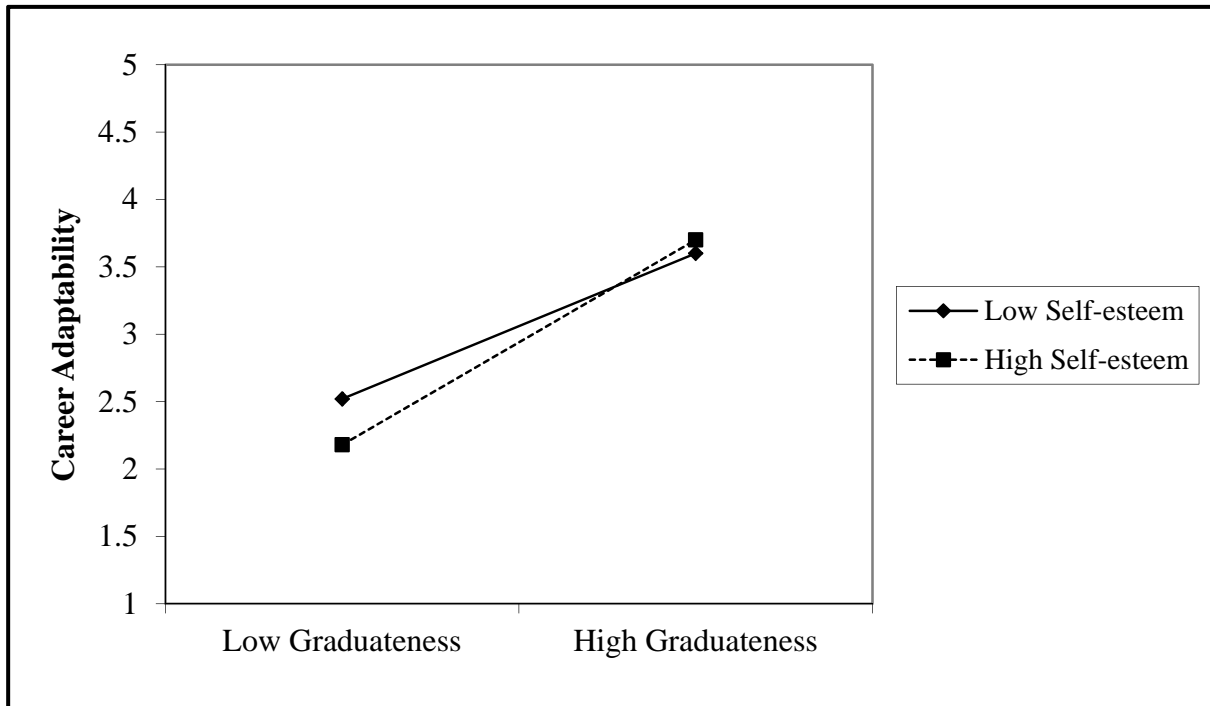


Figure 5.6. Moderating role of self-esteem in the relationship between graduateness and career adaptability

### 5.3.2.2 Reporting of hierarchical moderated regression between global/moral citizenship skills and career adaptability as moderated by self-esteem

A similar pattern was observed in terms of the interaction (moderating) effects of self-esteem for the global/moral citizenship (Table 5.15 and Figure 5.7) variable. At the higher end, high self-esteem participants (HSE) displayed significantly higher self-perceived global/moral citizenship skills and attributes as their overall career adaptability increased. HSE participants who scored high on global/moral citizenship skills also indicated significantly higher career adaptability scores than the low self-esteem (LSE) participants. Interestingly, when scores were low on career adaptability and low on global/moral citizenship skills, the HSE participants displayed a slightly lower career adaptability score than the LSE participants.

Table 5.15

*Hierarchical Moderated Regression: The Relation between Global Citizenship and Career Adaptability as Moderated by Self-esteem*

	b	SE	$\beta$	t	F	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta F$	$\Delta R^2$	f <sup>2</sup>
Gender	.01	.05	.01	.15					
Global citizenship	.45	.04	.59	11.93***					
Self-esteem	-.03	.04	-.03	-.63					
Global citizenship x self-esteem	.14	.05	.13	2.86**	41.38***	.34	8.17*	.02	.34

Note: N = 332. \*\*\* p ≤ .001. \*\* p ≤ .01. \* p ≤ .05. All statistics are from the final (second) step.  $\beta$  = standardised regression coefficient. f<sup>2</sup> = effect size estimate for the interaction term. Beta values are mean-centred.

A slope test was conducted to examine the nature of the significant interactions. Figure 5.7 illustrates the relationship between global/moral citizenship and career adaptability as moderated by self-esteem.

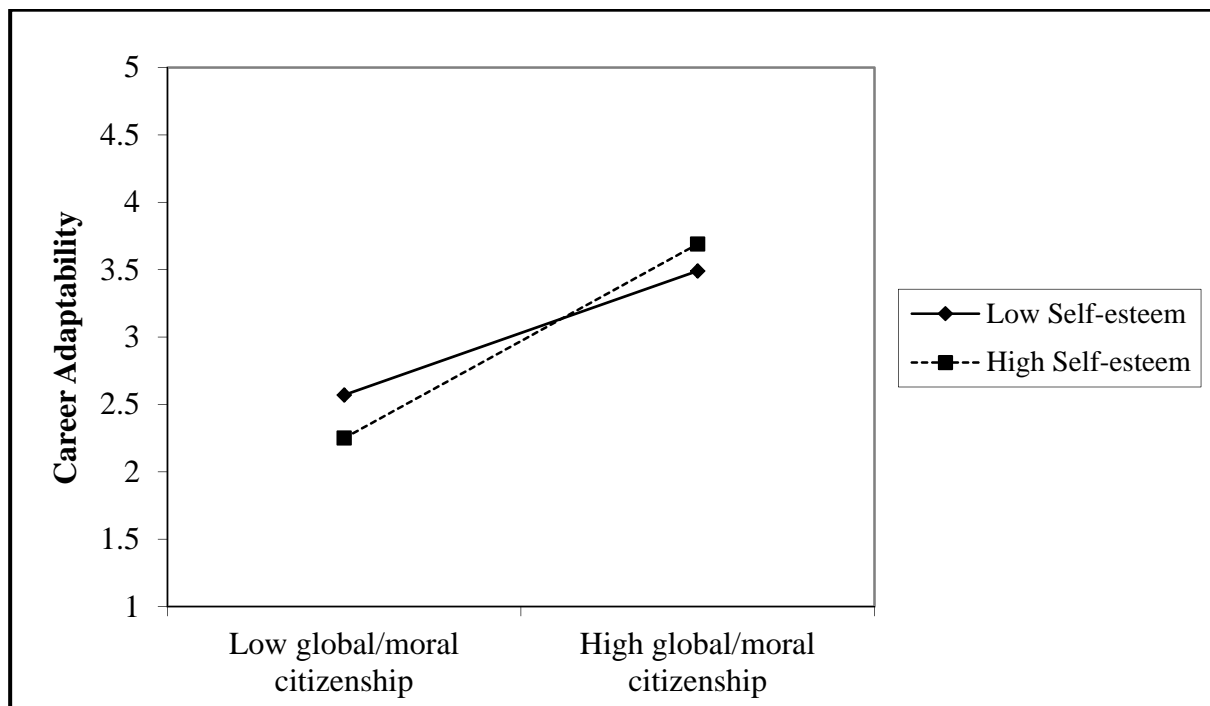


Figure 5.7. Moderating role of self-esteem on the relationship between global citizenship and career adaptability



### 5.3.2.3 Reporting of hierarchical moderated regression between lifelong learning skills and career adaptability as moderated by self-esteem

Once again, a similar pattern was observed in terms of the interaction (moderating) effects of self-esteem for the global/moral citizenship (Table 5.16 and Figure 5.8) variable. At the higher end, high self-esteem participants displayed significantly higher self-perceived lifelong learning skills and attributes as their overall career adaptability increased. High self-esteem participants who scored high on lifelong learning skills also indicated significantly higher career adaptability scores than the low self-esteem (LSE) participants. Interestingly, when scores were low on career adaptability and low on lifelong learning skills, the HSE participants displayed a slightly lower career adaptability score than the LSE participants.

Table 5.16

*Hierarchical Moderated Regression: The Relation between Lifelong Learning and Career Adaptability as Moderated by Self-esteem*

	<b>b</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b><math>\beta</math></b>	<b>t</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b><math>\Delta F</math></b>	<b><math>\Delta R^2</math></b>	<b>f<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Gender</b>	.001	.05	.001	.03					
<b>Lifelong learning</b>	.43	.04	.59	12.36***					
<b>Self-esteem</b>	.01	.04	.01	.13					
<b>Lifelong learning x self-esteem</b>	.21	.05	.18	4.02***	45.79***	.36	16.14***	.03	.37

Note: N = 332. \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ . \*\*  $p \leq .01$ . \*  $p \leq .05$ . All statistics are from the final (second) step.  $\beta$  = standardised regression coefficient.  $f^2$  = effect size estimate for the interaction term. Beta values are mean-centred.

A slope test was conducted to examine the nature of the significant interactions. Figure 5.8 illustrates the relationship between global/moral citizenship and career adaptability as moderated by self-esteem.

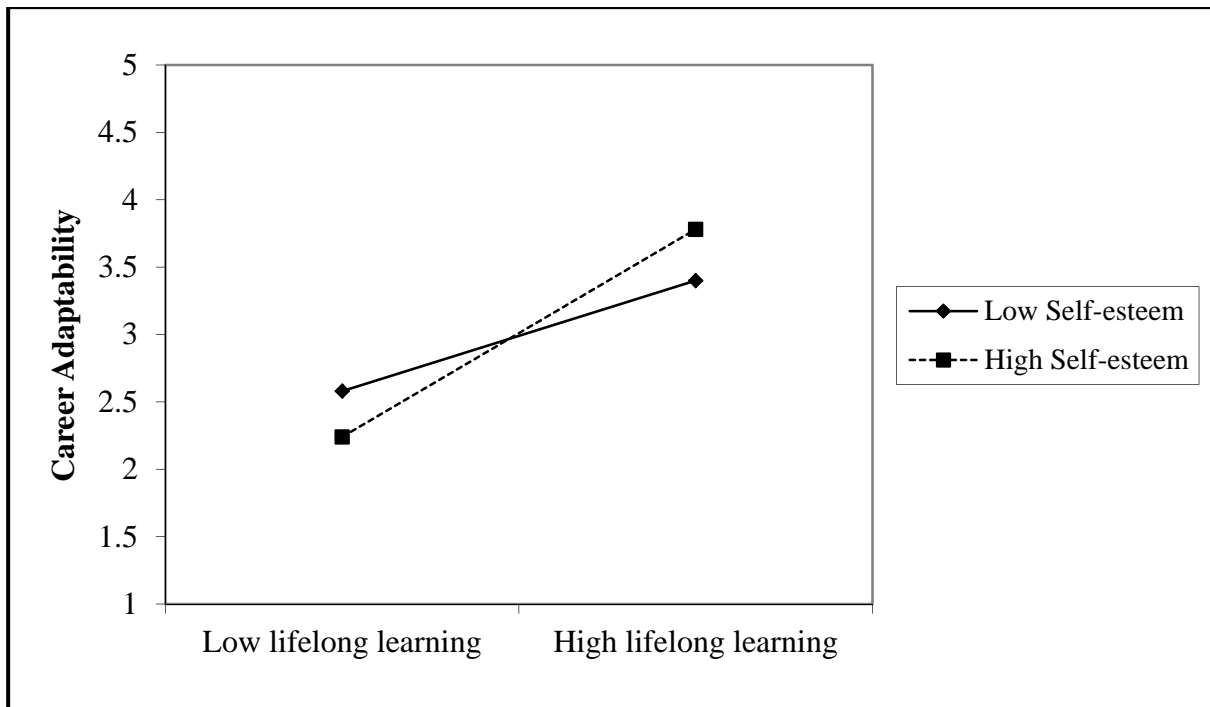


Figure 5.8. Moderating role of self-esteem on the relationship between lifelong learning and career adaptability

5.3.2.4 Reporting of hierarchical moderated regression between scholarship skills and career adaptability as moderated by self-esteem

Table 5.17 indicates that no significant interaction effect of self-esteem was found between scholarship skills and attributes and career adaptability.

Table 5.17

Hierarchical Moderated Regression: The Relation between Scholarship and Career Adaptability as Moderated by Self-esteem

	b	SE	$\beta$	T	F	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta F$	$\Delta R^2$	f <sup>2</sup>
<b>Gender</b>	-.03	.05	-.02	-.54					
<b>Scholarship</b>	.41	.03	.58	11.93***					
<b>Self-esteem</b>	-.01	.04	-.01	-.15					
<b>Scholarship x self-esteem</b>	.06	.05	.06	1.21	54.92***	.34	1.46	.003	.34

Note: N = 332. \*\*\* p ≤ .001. \*\* p ≤ .01. \* p ≤ .05. All statistics are from the final (second) step.  $\beta$  = standardised regression coefficient. f<sup>2</sup> = effect size estimate for the interaction term. Beta values are mean-centred.

The results of the hierarchical moderated regression provided supportive evidence for the research hypothesis Ha3 (young adults' self-esteem acts as a moderator between their graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability).

### 5.3.3 Tests for significant mean differences

This section is relevant to research aim 4, namely to empirically investigate whether males and females differ significantly regarding their self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability (Ha4: Male and female young adults differ significantly with regard to their self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability).

Independent t-tests were conducted to test if males and females differed significantly regarding their self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability. Table 5.18 displays the results for the t-tests.

Table 5.18

*Independent Samples t-test Scores for Gender (N = 332)*

Variable	Gender						F	t	df	Sig
	Female			Male						
N	mean	SD	N	mean	SD					
<b>Self-esteem</b>										
General self-esteem	207	4.26	.05	125	4.31	.06	.40	-.64	330	.53
Social self-esteem	207	4.87	.05	125	4.84	.07	.13	.36	330	.72
Personal self-esteem	207	3.28	.07	125	3.59	.09	6.92	-2.63	330	.01**
Lie items	207	3.34	.06	125	3.14	.07	4.58	2.14	330	.03*
Total self-esteem	207	4.14	.04	125	4.25	.05	2.42	-1.56	330	.12
<b>Graduateness skills and attributes</b>										
Scholarship skills	207	4.15	.05	125	4.17	.07	.07	-.27	330	.79
Problem-solving skills	207	4.30	.06	125	4.30	.08	.00	-.03	330	.98
Analytical thinking skills	207	3.99	.07	125	3.99	.09	.00	.04	330	.97
Enterprising skills	207	4.15	.05	125	4.22	.07	.60	-.77	330	.44
Global/moral citizenship skills	207	4.58	.05	125	4.54	.06	.23	.48	330	.63
Interactive skills	207	4.64	.05	125	4.58	.06	.45	.67	330	.50
Presenting & applying information	207	4.47	.06	125	4.38	.08	.73	.85	330	.40
Ethical/responsible behaviour	207	4.63	.06	125	4.65	.08	.06	-.25	330	.80
Lifelong learning	207	4.66	.05	125	4.64	.06	.06	.24	330	.81
Continuous learning orientation	207	4.66	.06	125	4.62	.07	.12	.34	330	.74
Goal-directed behaviour	207	4.66	.05	125	4.65	.06	.01	.08	330	.94
Graduateness total	207	4.44	.05	125	4.43	.06	.02	.14	330	.89
<b>Career adaptability</b>										
Concern	207	4.40	.04	125	4.35	.05	.74	.86	330	.40
Control	207	4.18	.04	125	4.15	.06	.17	.41	330	.69
Curiosity	207	4.01	.05	125	4.01	.06	.00	-.01	330	.99
Confidence	207	4.09	.04	125	4.10	.06	.01	-.09	330	.93
Career adaptability total	207	4.17	.04	125	4.15	.05	.09	.31	330	.76

The results of the independent samples t-tests (Table 5.18) indicate that there was a statistically significant difference between males and females in personal self-esteem ( $F = 6.72$ ,  $t(330) = -2.63$ ,  $p \leq .01$ ) and lie items ( $F = 4.58$ ,  $t(330) = 2.14$ ,  $p \leq .05$ ). No other statistically significant differences between males and females and the remaining variables were found.

The results of the independent samples t-tests provided supportive evidence for the research hypothesis Ha4 (Male and female young adults differ significantly with regard to their self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability.)

## 5.4 SYNTHESIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

In this section the biographical profile of the sample is discussed, including the results in terms of the tested research hypotheses.

### 5.4.1 Biographical profile of sample

Participants in the sample were predominantly first-year African unemployed females in the emerging adulthood phase (18 to 29 years) registered for Human Resource Management.

### 5.4.2 Sample profile: Self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability

In this section, the interpretation of the means will be discussed. Table 5.19 shows the highest and lowest means of the three measuring instruments.

Table 5.19  
*Summary of Means of Measuring Instruments*

	CFSEI 2-AD	GSAS	CAAS
Highest mean	Social self-esteem (4.86); General self-esteem (4.28)	Goal-directed behaviour (4.66)	Concern (4.38)
Lowest mean	Lie items (3.26)	Analytical thinking skills (3.99)	Curiosity (4.01)

Overall, the results relating to CFSEI 2-AD indicated a relatively high level of self-esteem on the part of the participants, which means that the participants had a good overall perception of themselves and their self-worth (Battle, 1992). The high mean score for social self-esteem suggests that individuals display high levels relating to their perception of and feelings about the quality of their relationships with peers (Battle, 1992). This is consistent with the age of identity exploration of Arnett (2004; 2011; 2015), as well as Super's (1957) exploration

phase, into which this sample fits. Individuals who are in these phases are interested in fitting in, developing and encountering relationships with their supervisors and co-workers, which therefore explains the high value of social self-esteem in this sample. Low internal consistency reliabilities were obtained for social self-esteem, and these results therefore cannot be interpreted with confidence. General self-esteem then was considered as the highest mean for the self-esteem subscales. The high score obtained for general self-esteem suggests that individuals display high levels of psychological well-being and function self-efficaciously in terms of cultural criteria of success and happiness. In addition, such individuals are able to express themselves without difficulty and have a high self-acceptance. The participants therefore seem to have a high overall perception of and feelings about their worth (Battle, 1992). High internal consistency reliabilities were obtained for the general self-esteem dimension and the findings therefore can be interpreted with confidence.

The low mean scores obtained for the lie items variable suggest that the participants did not respond defensively to the self-esteem items and the scores on the various scales can be interpreted with confidence.

With regard to gradueness skills and attributes, the high mean score obtained for goal-directed behaviour suggests that individuals were able to be proactive and to take initiative in order to achieve their goals, accomplish tasks or meet deadlines, as well as in terms of setting realistic goals, developing plans and taking action to achieve their goals, accomplish tasks and meeting deadlines, which are key elements of goal-directed behaviour. The sample in this study was taken from a Further Education and Training (FET) college, where students need to be able to meet deadlines, accomplish their tasks, plan well (be proactive) in terms of achieving their goals (final examination to obtain their qualification). The high mean value for goal-directed behaviour supports the fact that these students do indeed possess this skill. High reliability coefficients were obtained for the goal-directed behaviour subscale and the findings therefore can be interpreted with confidence.

The low mean score obtained for analytical thinking skills suggests that individuals were not skilful in employing logical reasoning, inquiry and analysis in explaining information and data and making insightful conclusions from the analysis of the data. FET college students are usually made up of students who have not met the necessary entrance requirements for university or technical college studies, which thus supports the low mean score value. High reliability coefficients were obtained for the analytical thinking skills subscale and the findings therefore can be interpreted with confidence. The high standard deviation obtained for

analytical thinking skills indicates that the data points are distant from the mean. This implies that some respondents received high scores in analytical thinking skills while others received extremely low scores.

Regarding career adaptability, the high mean value for concern suggests that the individuals recognised control as the most important variable embedded in their career paths. These participants are very concerned about their vocational future and feel they need to prepare for impending career tasks and challenges that may come their way. Because the sample consists mainly of undergraduate students, it is understandable that they are concerned about what lies ahead for them vocationally. They are already taking the necessary steps to prepare them for their impending career tasks by studying towards a qualification. High reliability coefficients were obtained for the concern subscale and the findings therefore can be interpreted with confidence.

The low mean value for curiosity shows that the individuals were less excited to explore their environment and possible future selves and opportunities through information-seeking and risk-taking, gaining new knowledge and competencies as well as thinking about how they may influence various work roles and environments. The standard deviation of curiosity is the highest when compared to the other variables, which indicate that some respondents were very curious about their future careers, whereas others were only slightly, if at all, curious about exploring other vocational opportunities. It should also be understood that the mean value for curiosity is not significantly lower than the others, which once again confirms the standard deviation in that some participants regard curiosity as important while others consider other variables to be more important than curiosity. The majority of the respondents were unemployed, which explains that many of them were more concerned about whether they would obtain employment at all, while others may even have been disheartened about any future vocational prospects and thus would not be curious to explore other opportunities, as they would be satisfied with the idea of obtaining any form of employment.

#### **5.4.3 Research aim 1**

The results provide supportive evidence for research hypothesis Ha1: There is a significant and positive relationship between the self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability of the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase.

#### *5.4.3.1 Interpretation of correlations between CFSEI-2AD and GSAS*

According to the results (Table 5.7), participants with high self-esteem displayed a high level of confidence in their graduateness skills and attributes. These findings suggest that participants with higher general, social and personal self-esteem are also likely to have a higher level of confidence in their scholarship skills, problem-solving/decision-making abilities, analytical thinking skills, enterprising skills, global/moral citizenship skills, interactive skills, presenting and applying information skills, ethical/responsible behaviour, lifelong learning, continuous learning orientation skills and goal-directed behaviour. However, it is interesting to note that no significant relationships were found between personal self-esteem and enterprising skills, or between personal self-esteem and ethical/responsible behaviour.

The lie items revealed a significant negative relationship with all the graduateness skills and attributes, suggesting that the more confidence a participant has in his/her ability to demonstrate graduateness skills and attributes, the less likely such an individual would respond defensively when reporting his/her self-esteem.

These findings are in line with the findings of Briscoe and Hall (1999), Coetzee and Roythorne-Jacobs (2012), Hall and Chandler (2005), Herr et al. (2004) and Potgieter (2012a), who also found that individuals with higher self-esteem are more able to demonstrate employability attributes (graduateness skills and attributes) as opposed to individuals with low self-esteem.

#### *5.4.3.2 Interpretation of correlations between CFSEI 2- AD and CAAS*

According to the results (Table 5.8), participants with high self-esteem display high self-perceived career adaptability. These findings suggest that the higher an individual's general, social and personal self-esteem, the more likely such an individual will be able to adapt to changing career situations.

All the CFSEI 2-AD variables correlated the highest with the CAAS confidence variable. In fact, the confidence variable is the only variable that had a significant relationship with personal self-esteem. This finding can be attributed to the fact that self-esteem refers to one's self-perception or beliefs relating to oneself (Battle, 1992), and the CAAS confidence variable describes employees' beliefs that they can transform their career goals into reality, successfully solve problems and rise above any obstacles (Savickas, 2007; 2013; Savickas

& Porfeli, 2012). Therefore, if an individual's belief in himself/herself is high, the individual's belief in his/her career (career confidence) is also likely to be high.

These findings are in line with the findings of Ballout (2009), Cai et al. (2015), Hager and Holland (2006), Heimpel et al. (2012), Öncel (2014), Tolentino et al. (2014) and Van Vianen et al. (2012), who found that career adaptability is positively related to self-esteem.

The lie items revealed a significant negative relationship with all the CAAS variables except curiosity, suggesting that the higher the level of confidence a participant has in his/her self-perceived career adaptability, the less likely such an individual would respond defensively when reporting on his/her self-esteem. No significant relationship was found between lie items and curiosity, indicating that individuals understand the importance of exploring possible future selves and opportunities, but given the transitions they are faced with, including South Africa's unemployment issues as well as the context of the volatile labour market they find themselves in, much of their efforts and time go into other priorities, for example acquiring the skills necessary to obtain employment and remain employed. This could be the reason why individuals respond defensively regarding their self-esteem.

#### *5.4.3.3 Interpretation of correlations between GSAS and CAAS*

According to the results (Table 5.9), participants with a high level of confidence in their gradueness skills and attributes display high self-perceived career adaptability. These findings suggest that the higher an individual's confidence in his/her gradueness skills and attributes, the more likely such an individual will be concerned of and 'planful' of his/her occupational future; the more control he/she will display concerning a vocational future; the more curious he/she will be to explore the environment and possibilities open to him/her; and finally, the more confidence he/she will display in his/her competence or capabilities to solve substantial career problems.

All GSAS variables displayed positive significant relationships with all CAAS variables. These findings are in line with De Guzman and Choi (2013), De Vos et al. (2011) and Lent (2013), who found that gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability are crucial requirements of employability and that individuals with high levels of career adaptability show high employability skills (gradueness skills and attributes).



#### **5.4.4 Research aim 2**

The results provided supportive evidence for research hypothesis Ha2: The self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes variables as a composite set of independent variables is significantly and positively related to the career adaptability variables as a composite set of dependent variables.

##### *5.4.4.1 Interpretation of canonical correlation analysis between skills set (self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes) and career variables (career adaptability)*

According to the results (Tables 5.10 to 5.13), gradueness skills and attributes displayed the highest correlation with career adaptability. Interestingly, when only the meta-gradueness variables (scholarship, global/moral citizenship and lifelong learning) were used in the analysis, loadings were increased. One therefore can conclude that the gradueness skills and attributes are key predictors of the career adaptability of an individual.

These findings are supported by the work of De Guzman and Choi (2013), Del Corso and Rehfuss (2011) and Coetzee, Ferreira and Potgieter (2015), who found that gradueness skills and attributes are strong predictors of career adaptability.

#### **5.4.5 Research aim 3**

The results provided supportive evidence for research hypothesis Ha3: Young adults' self-esteem acts as a moderator between their gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability.

##### *5.4.5.1 Interpretation of hierarchical moderated regression analysis*

The results suggested that self-esteem has an interaction (moderating) effect with overall gradueness, global/moral citizenship and lifelong learning in predicting career adaptability. No significant effect was found with scholarship skills in predicting career adaptability.

The findings of this study are supported by the research of McArdle et al. (2007), who found that adaptability significantly contributes to employability, and that the self-esteem of individuals higher on employability is less likely to suffer during unemployment compared to those who are low on employability.

Research by Coetzee et al. (2015) indicates that teamwork (interactive skills) is positively associated with higher levels of career adaptability. De Guzman and Choi (2013) found that problem-solving and decision-making skills, interactive (team) skills and presenting and applying information (communication) skills are strong predictors of career adaptability. Zhao, Kong, and Wang (2012; 2013) found that people with low self-esteem will refrain from interacting with others due to a lack of confidence in their own social behaviours and thus also will avoid all social situations to avoid negative consequences (Zhao et al., 2012; 2013). Thus people with high self-esteem will display higher interactive skills, which are positively associated with higher levels of career adaptability.

Individuals displaying high levels of self-esteem set challenging goals and engage in activities to achieve these goals (goal-directed behaviour) (Crook, Healy, & O'Shea, 1984; Ellis & Taylor, 1983; Potgieter, 2012b). In other words, individuals who possess a high level of self-esteem are more likely to engage in goal-directed behaviour as well as have a continuous learning orientation (lifelong learning), thus enabling them to adapt better to difficult career situations.

The results further indicated that, when scores were low on career adaptability and low on overall graduateness skills and attributes, global/moral citizenship and lifelong learning, the high self-esteem participants displayed a slightly lower career adaptability score than the low self-esteem participants. This finding is supported by the research of Baumeister, Heatherton, and Tice (1993), Baumeister et al. (1996), Cairo, Kritis, and Myers (1996), Rusu, Mairean, Hojbotă, Gherasim, and Gavriloaiei (2015), Savickas, Passen, and Jarjoura (1988) and Twenge and Campbell (2008), who state that individuals with inflated levels of self-esteem tend to be overconfident of their abilities and talents (overall graduateness skills and attributes); they lack empathy, are unable to consider other people's perspectives and react more defensively after criticism by being less friendly, thus affecting their interactive skills (global/moral citizenship). They also tend to set unrealistic goals (lifelong learning).

By being overconfident in their talents, individuals with high self-esteem create a difficult situation for themselves in terms of the career path they wish to take (Rysiew, Shore, & Leeb, 1999), thereby bringing their career control and career confidence levels down and thus their career adaptability. In terms of setting unrealistic goals, should these unrealistic goals result in failure it is believed that these individuals will experience greater worry, regret, anxiety or stress in planning future tasks relating to their career development, and it thus is expected that individuals with higher levels of apprehension relating to their future careers would exhibit lower levels of career adaptability (Creed et al., 2009). Should individuals with

high self-esteem not make the necessary effort to enhance their interactive skills, this would affect their person-environment fit, thus lowering their career adaptability.

With regard to scholarship skills, no significant effect was found between scholarship skills in predicting career adaptability. It is important to note that scholarship skills include problem-solving skills and decision-making skills (the ability to consider complexities of the larger cultural, business and economic reality when approaching a problem), analytical thinking skills (involves the higher order critical or reflective thinking in providing accurate explanations of information and data; splitting information into separate categories enabling one to view relationships and patterns; and arriving at insightful conclusions from the data) and enterprising skills (taking initiative and being adventurous when participating in economic activities or undertakings, either in creating or operating an enterprise of one's own or in being a substantial contributor to an enterprise as an employee) (Coetzee, 2012a; 2014a). The respondents in this study fell into the emerging adulthood phase and were unemployed, undergraduate students. They therefore did not possess the necessary business skills and even the required knowledge of the working world to have well-rounded scholarship skills necessary to predict their career adaptability.

#### **5.4.6 Research aim 4**

The results provided partial supportive evidence for research hypothesis H04: Male and female young adults do not differ significantly with regard to their self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability.

##### *5.4.6.1 Interpretation of test for mean differences*

Personal self-esteem and lie items were the only two variables that differed significantly between males and females. The results of this study indicate that personal self-esteem was higher for males than for females, whereas lie items were higher for females than for males.

These findings are supported by Ahmad et al. (2013), Bachman et al. (2011), Cairns et al. (1990), Chubb et al. (1997), Makinen et al. (2012), Martinez and Dukes (1991) and Quatman and Watson (2001), who found that females display lower self-esteem than males.

With regard to lie items, the males reported a lower level than females, indicating that females responded more defensively to the self-esteem items than males. Individuals who respond defensively to self-esteem items negate the idea of ascribing to themselves traits that are generally legitimate but are socially unacceptable (Potgieter, Coetzee, & Masenge,

2012). It is interesting to recall that, for males, self-esteem is person-oriented whereas for females it is interpersonally oriented and related to interconnectedness with others (Block & Robins, 1993; Joseph et al., 1992). Females therefore would aim to paint a positive picture of themselves in order to improve their image with others, and hence would respond to the self-esteem questions more defensively than males.

## 5.5 SUMMARY OF DECISIONS REGARDING THE RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Table 5.20 presents an overview of the research hypotheses that were formulated for the purposes of this research study, the statistical procedures that were performed to test the research hypotheses and the final decisions reached.

Table 5.20  
*Summary of Decisions Regarding the Research Hypotheses*

Aim	Research hypothesis	Supportive evidence
1	H01 – There is no significant relationship between a young adult’s self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability.	No
	Ha1 – There is a significant relationship between a young adult’s self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability.	Yes
2	H02: The self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes variables as a composite set of independent variables are not significantly and positively related to the career adaptability variables as a composite set of dependent variables.	No
	Ha2: The self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes variables as a composite set of independent variables are significantly and positively related to the career adaptability variables as a composite set of dependent variables.	Yes
3	H03: Young adults’ self-esteem does not act as a moderator in the relationship between their gradueness skills and attributes and their career adaptability.	No
	Ha3: Young adults’ self-esteem acts as a moderator between their gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability.	Yes
4	H04 – Male and female young adults do not significantly differ with regard to their self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability.	No
	Ha4 – Male and female young adults differ significantly with regard to their self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability.	Partially accepted

## 5.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the descriptive, correlational and inferential statistics relevant to the study in order to integrate the findings of the literature review with the findings of the empirical research study that was conducted. Chapter 5 thus addressed the following research aims of the study:

**Research aim 1:** To conduct an empirical investigation into the statistical relationship between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability in a sample of young adult respondents studying at a Further Education and Training institution in South Africa.

**Research aim 2:** To empirically investigate whether self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes variables as a composite set of independent variables are significantly and positively related to the career adaptability variables as a composite set of dependent variables.

**Research aim 3:** To empirically investigate whether self-esteem moderates the relationship between gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability.

**Research aim 4:** To empirically investigate whether males and females differ significantly regarding their self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability as manifested in the sample of respondents.

Thus, the empirical research aims of the study were achieved. Chapter 6 will conclude the empirical study by addressing the following research aim:

**Research aim 5:** To formulate conclusions and recommendations for the discipline of human resource management regarding career development practices and possible future research based on the findings of the research.

## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter discusses the conclusions, limitations and recommendations of this research study. This chapter addresses research aim 5, namely to formulate conclusions and recommendations for the discipline of human resource management regarding career development practices and possible future research based on the findings of the research.

### **6.1 CONCLUSIONS**

This section focuses on the conclusions drawn from the literature and empirical studies in accordance with the aims of the research, as set out in Chapter 1.

#### **6.1.1 Conclusions relating to the literature review**

The general aim was to investigate the relationship dynamics between young adults' self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability and to identify the implications of the relationship dynamics for human resource management practices regarding career development support for the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase. The general aims were achieved by addressing and achieving the specific aims of the research.

Conclusions were drawn in terms of each of the specific aims regarding the relationship dynamics between the self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability of the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase.

##### *6.1.1.1 Research aim 1: To conceptualise the career development of the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase*

The first aim, namely to conceptualise the career development of the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase, was achieved in Chapter 2.

##### **(a) Conclusions relating to the evolution of careers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

The literature indicated that young adults are faced with a rapidly changing employment environment, into which they are expected to fit as though they are acquainted with and accustomed to the constant changes that the world of work brings. Career development activities have shifted to assisting individuals to look ahead and look around, focusing on

self-development, and with time to select appropriate and feasible opportunities to become the individual they want to be (Savickas, 1997; Savickas et al., 2009). This indicates the need for career counselling models to emphasise human flexibility, adaptability and lifelong learning (Savickas et al., 2009).

Along with decreasing employment opportunities, deterioration of job security, continuous technological advancements, job rotation, skills shortages, globalisation, the birth of the knowledge economy and the evolving nature of work and employment, young adults are also expected to continuously upskill themselves in order to remain abreast of the latest developments in their field, as well as to adapt to all the changes with which they are constantly faced.

This changing world of work has a greater focus on employability and thus forces young adults to equip themselves by gaining a wider variety of skills to allow for greater flexibility in order to meet the needs of organisations and their consumers (Ferreira, 2012). Although change is stressful, an inability to control one's environment also tends to lead to anxiety (Muja & Appelbaum, 2012). Koen et al. (2012) suggest that newcomers to the working world should be provided with resources that will enable them to take advantage of opportunities and deal with transitions, barriers and setbacks, and that these resources are reflected in career adaptability.

The new career of the 21<sup>st</sup> century demands increased flexibility, less concrete structures, more adaptability and increased self-directedness on the part of the individual (Adamson et al., 1998; Hirschi et al., 2015; Sullivan, 1999). An individual's security is now affixed to his/her own transferable skills and employability, rather than to a particular organisation (Mallon, 1998; Mirvis & Hall, 1996). The new career context is portrayed as one in which transitions take place more often than previously was the case, leading to discontinuities and disjointed careers (Chudzikowski, 2012). Under this current context, careers are described as tempestuous routes that unfold across several different settings, including organisational, occupational and cultural settings (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). Gunz et al. (2000) mention that these types of careers are completely supported by career literature as the route to take in the future of careers, as they lead to greater career success.

Newer concepts have been proposed to demonstrate the way in which careers have become more inclined to be branded by flexible employment contracts, multiple employers, creative job moves and multiple career changes (Chudzikowski, 2012; Dries & Verbruggen, 2012; Ferreira, 2012). The most prominent of these concepts or models are the protean and

boundaryless careers, which stress the importance of personal value-driven, self-directed career attitudes, individual control over employability and skills development above and beyond organisational career management, resulting in better mobility and a lifelong career outlook (Arnold & Cohen, 2007; Chan et al., 2012). The idea of these models is appealing, as they incorporate the career needs of individuals with the workforce needs of the organisation (Clarke, 2009).

(b) Conclusions relating to the school-to-work transition phase

The literature indicated that the school-to-work transition phase takes place around the ages of 17 to 29, a time that is characterised by change, fear, exploration and uncertainty (Arnett, 2000; Kowtha, 2011; Ryan, 2001b; Super, 1957). Young adults in this phase experience a mix of emotions, such as feelings of not fitting in, as well as feelings of endless possibilities as they explore themselves in terms of relationships both on the home front and at work.

Neumark (2007) proposes that the school-to-work transition phase covers two segments of the life cycle of youth. The first segment takes place when young adults make decisions between their schooling and their future career, including both the content of their education and its duration, whereas the second segment takes place when young adults leave school and attempt to find employment in the form of jobs that mark the beginning of the course of their future careers (Neumark, 2007).

Within the evolving career context, a shift in career counselling of young graduates who are grooming themselves for entry into the world of work has taken place from a major focus on vocational assessment and job search guidance, to involving the young adult in proactive, self-directed career development planning activities, evaluating their readiness to participate in life as independent individuals, encouraging goal-directed attitudes and behaviour, and inspiring them with the necessary competencies required to make a smooth transition to employment and a progressive adjustment to the working world (Coetzee & Esterhuizen, 2010; Herr et al., 2004; McArdle et al., 2007).

Improving the school-to-work transition and ensuring better career opportunities for the youth after their entry into the labour market are common goals in emerging and advanced economies, as the youth can play a part in escalating the productive potential of the economy as well as increasing social cohesion (Quintini & Martin, 2014). Providing career guidance and training during the school-to-work transition phase, particularly to previously disadvantaged unemployed youth, could boost their chances of entering the labour market



and assisting them in making better and more informed decisions about their future (Department of Labour, 2009; Quintini & Martin, 2014). The combination of work and study would also assist the young adult to obtain some of the necessary skills required in the labour market before leaving the education system (Quintini & Martin, 2014). Proper career preparation can help individuals in the school-to-work transition phase to successfully seek and find employment, enhancing career outcomes (Koen et al., 2012).

The literature showed that vital components of successful career preparation in adolescence are the development of career adaptability and a well-rounded self-concept (Koen et al., 2012; Savickas, 1997; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011). The current workplace environment also requires workers who are equipped with high technical skills to couple these skills with well-developed gradueness skills and employability attributes (De Guzman & Choi, 2013; Singh & Singh, 2008).

Hutchins and Akos (2013) found that young adults who understand themselves and the world of work are in a better position to find work environments that permit them to express themselves or what they value. Adolescents who attend schools that deliver all-inclusive career development programmes are more likely to experience a number of positive outcomes, including more realistic prospects about their future, more crystallised or secure, established decisions about potential careers, and greater job satisfaction in young adulthood (Blustein, 1997; Hutchins & Akos, 2013; Whiston et al., 2003). The aim then of career counsellors working in the organisational context is to assist the young adult entering the world of work to manage this transition from school to the working world successfully (Beukes, 2010).

*6.1.1.2 Research aim 2: To conceptualise and explain the constructs self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability in terms of theoretical models in the literature*

The second aim, namely to conceptualise and explain the constructs self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability in terms of theoretical models in the literature, was achieved in Chapter 3.

(a) Conclusions relating to self-esteem

Self-esteem is a basic human need (Greenberg, 2008) that is derived from two sources: how a person perceives his own performance in areas important to him, and how a person believes he is perceived by significant others (Rosenberg, 1965).

The literature showed many definitions of the concept of self-esteem, all emphasising the fact that self-esteem is the evaluative component of one's self-concept and includes an evaluation of the cognitive, affective and social aspects of the self (Potgieter, 2012b). For the purposes of this study, self-esteem was defined as a socially constructed emotion indicating feelings and perceptions about an individual's numerous self-concepts and self-images, which are based on the psychological need for acceptance and belonging within an individual's social group, and the desire for effective and accurate functioning, competence and achievement in comparison to other members of one's group (Battle, 1992; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Coetzee, 2005; Hewitt, 2002; Maslow, 1970; Potgieter, 2012b).

Battle's (1992) model of self-esteem was applicable to this study, as the principles underlying the measurement of self-esteem allowed for the study to be conducted within the context of the workplace. Battle (1992) identifies three dimensions of self-esteem, namely general self-esteem, social/peer self-esteem and personal self-esteem.

People display different levels of self-esteem. People with low self-esteem respond less adaptively than do people with high self-esteem when faced with negative events (Heimpel et al., 2012). Most scholars support the idea that self-esteem decreases in early adolescence, with considerable declines in academic motivation and achievement of self-worth (Baldwin & Hoffman, 2002; Robins & Trzesniewski, 2005).

There are various ways in which self-esteem can be enhanced, and it has been proven to be desirable and valuable to enhance self-esteem (Bednar et al., 1989; Branden, 1974; Carlock, 1999; Ceccatelli & Di Battista, 2012; DuBrin, 2014; Kernis, 2006; Mruk, 2006; Pope et al., 1988; Potgieter, 2012b; Sappington, 1989).

Individuals' self-esteem differs as a result of certain variables. The key variables found in the literature include:

- Age (Chung et al., 2014; Erol & Orth, 2011; Orth et al., 2010; Roberts & Mroczek, 2008; Roberts, Wood, & Caspi, 2008; Robins & Trzesniewski, 2005; Wagner, Lüdtke, Jonkman, & Trautwein, 2013)
- Gender (Ahmad et al., 2013; Alpert-Gillis & Connell, 1989; Bachman et al., 2011; Cairns et al., 1990; Chubb et al., 1997; Harper & Marshall, 1991; Makinen et al., 2012; Martinez & Dukes, 1991; Quatman & Watson, 2001; Steitz & Owen, 1992; Verkuyten, 1986)
- Race (Bachman et al., 2011; Demo & Parker, 1987; Harter, 1999; Orth et al., 2010; Robins et al., 2002; Twenge & Crocker, 2002).

(b) Conclusions relating to gradueness skills and attributes

Graduateness skills and attributes refer to the existence of a set of generic transferable meta-skills and personal attributes that employers regard as vitally important for their businesses, and which graduates therefore are expected to possess when entering the workplace. It is important to note that these skills and attributes are separate from their discipline-specific knowledge, skills and values (Coetzee, 2012; Griesel & Parker, 2009; Raftapoulous et al., 2009).

Coetzee's (2012) framework identified eight core skills and attributes that are clustered in three holistic, overarching domains of personal and intellectual development: scholarship, global and moral citizenship, and lifelong learning. The eight core skills and attributes are problem-solving and decision-making skills, analytical thinking skills, enterprising skills, ethical and responsible behaviour, presenting and applying information skills, interactive skills, goal-directed behaviour and continuous learning orientation. This model was included in the empirical research study because it was designed specifically for the South African graduate and therefore was appropriate for a study on the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase. This model also incorporates Barrie's (2004) model, as well as Steur et al.'s (2012) model of graduateness.

Individuals' graduateness skills and attributes differ as a result of certain variables. The key variables found in the literature are:

- Age (Clarke, 2009; De Grip et al., 2004; Jackson, 2012; Van Dam, 2004a, 2004b; Van Der Heijden, 2002).
- Gender (Jackson, 2013)

- Race (Jackson, 2012; Kraak, 2005)

(c) Conclusions relating to career adaptability

Career adaptability is a psychosocial construct that indicates an individual's readiness and resources for coping with current and anticipated occupational development tasks, vocational transitions as well as personal traumas (Creed et al., 2009; Ferreira, 2012; Maree, 2012; Savickas, 1997; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Adaptability shapes self-extension into the social environment as individuals connect with society and adjust their own professional behaviour proportionately to the developmental tasks imposed by a community and the transitions they are faced with in their vocational roles (Savickas, 2005).

Career construction theory (Savickas, 2005) is a career theory that seeks to explain occupational choice and work adjustment, each probing a different aspect of vocational behaviour (Savickas, 2006). It suggests that career development and adjustment involve the requirement for employees to constantly adapt to their social environment in order to accomplish person-environment fit as well as subjective and objective career success (Savickas, 2002; 2005; 2013; Zacher, 2014a).

Four main resources (known as the 4Cs) characterise adaptability, and they represent the problem-solving and coping approaches used by individuals to integrate the self-concept into their work role (Nota et al., 2014). These four tasks or resources entail to 1) become *concerned* with one's future role as a worker, 2) enhance personal *control* over the professional activities one performs, 3) show *curiosity* before making educational and vocational choices, and 4) develop the required *confidence* to make and implement career choices (Savickas, 2002; 2005; 2011a; 2011b; Savickas et al., 2009; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). These dimensions of career adaptability signify general adaptive resources and strategies needed at different career transitions, even those beginning in adolescence, as well as in daily general life (Savickas, 2005).

Individuals' career adaptability differs as a result of certain variables. The key variables found in the literature include:

- Age (Colquitt et al., 2000; Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004; Kubeck et al., 1996; Peeters & Emmerick, 2008; Warr, 2001; Warr & Birdi, 1998; Yeatts et al., 2000; Zacher, 2014a; 2014b).

- Gender (Hou et al., 2012)
- Qualification level (Hou et al., 2012; Zacher, 2014b)

*6.1.1.3 Research aim 3: To identify and explain the relationship between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability in terms of theoretical models of these constructs*

The third aim, namely to identify and explain the relationship between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability in terms of theoretical models of these constructs, was achieved in Chapter 3.

*(a) Sub-aim 3.1: To conceptualise the relationship between self-esteem and career adaptability from a theoretical perspective*

Possessing a positive level of self-esteem means that one is better able to adapt to changing situations and contexts. Individuals with a low level self-esteem are found to be less likely to engage in adaptive behaviours. Employers require their employees to be able to adapt to changing situations, as well as to have a good self-concept, greater self-confidence and thus high self-esteem.

Positive self-esteem indicates that a person has a good fit with the social world, is competent and able to meet the challenges of the world, is ready to participate in life within this social context and able to balance social demands and personal desires (Hewitt, 1998; Scheff, 1990). This is then aligned with the purpose of career construction theory (Savickas, 2005), which requires a person to adapt to the changes in the social environment to ensure a good person-environment fit.

Career adaptability is positively related to self-esteem (Van Vianen et al., 2012). Heimpel et al. (2012) found that people with low self-esteem are less likely than those with high self-esteem to engage in adaptive coping efforts. Self-esteem has also been found to serve as a substantial predictor of an individual's career adaptability (Cai et al., 2015; Öncel, 2014; Tolentino et al., 2014).

*(b) Sub-aim 3.2: To conceptualise the relationship between self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes from a theoretical perspective*

In the 21<sup>st</sup>-century world of work, young adults are expected to possess gradueness skills and attributes along with their degree-specific skills. They are also expected to be well-rounded individuals who have great self-esteem, which will enable them to work well with others. It is also found that individuals who have a higher level of self-esteem are more able to excel in acquiring certain skills as well as meet goals that they set. This means that high self-esteem is vital to acquiring gradueness skills and attributes.

A general way to increase a person's self-esteem is to teach people problem-solving skills, as this is an effective technique that may be applied to a range of difficulties and challenges (Bednar et al., 1989; Mruk, 2013; Pope et al., 1988). Potgieter et al. (2012) found that people with well-developed self-esteem display their employability attributes (gradueness skills and attributes) confidently.

A recurring element in the theoretical models related to gradueness skills and attributes mentioned in Chapter 3 is that graduates need to have a willingness to learn, which constitutes lifelong learning (Coetzee, 2012a; Pintrich, 2000). Learning is an active process by an individual and, to be effective, must be based on a strong willingness to learn, and this willingness or enthusiasm to learn arises primarily from a good level of self-esteem (Ceccatelli & Di Battista, 2012).

*(c) Sub-aim 3.3: To conceptualise the relationship between gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability from a theoretical perspective*

Employers require their employees to possess certain generic skills (gradueness skills and attributes), along with their discipline-specific skills. Employees are also expected to be able to adapt to changing circumstances in their work contexts. Should graduates then possess gradueness skills and attributes as well as career adaptability, they will be more likely to gain and retain meaningful employment.

Research has shown that gradueness skills and attributes are positively related to self-perceived employability (Mulaudzi, 2015). Problem-solving skills have been identified as a key gradueness attribute that will improve one's employability (Barrie, 2004; Bath et al., 2004; Bowers-Brown & Harvey, 2004; Coetzee, 2012; Griesel & Parker, 2009; Higher Education Quality Council, 1995). Lifelong learning and continued adaptation to changing

circumstances are often perceived as crucial prerequisites of employability (De Vos et al., 2011; Lent, 2013). To become and stay employable, an array of competencies, including social and adaptive competencies above and beyond technical domain knowledge, needs to be considered (i.e. gradueness skills and attributes) (Froehlich et al., 2014; Fugate et al., 2004; Rodrigues et al., 2002).

Career adaptability improves employability both within and separate from an organisation (Arthur, 1994; Ellig, 1998; Hall, 1996; Ito & Brotheridge, 2005; London, 1983; 1993; Waterman et al., 1994). De Guzman and Choi (2013) found that adolescents with high levels of career adaptability showed high employability skills (gradueness skills and attributes), which emphasized that people with higher levels of adaptability have a greater possibility of finding a suitable job.

*(d) Sub-aim 3.4: To explain the relationship between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability by means of an integrated theoretical model*

In order to deal with the multiple transitions facing the young adult in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century world of work, it is essential that these young people must have the ability to adapt promptly to the changes in the nature of work; take responsibility to self-manage any career shifts; and be committed to lifelong learning (Hager & Holland, 2006). Within the context of these transitions, the relational aspects of the psychological contract between employees and employers expect employees to obtain and foster a set of personal skills and competencies or strengths, such as lifelong learning, tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty (adaptability), autonomy, self-awareness and self-efficacy (self-esteem) (Ballout, 2009).

There is a theoretical connection between career adaptability and utilising one's strengths (self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes) (Douglas & Duffy, 2015; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Being career adaptable involves the lifelong learning of new skills and procedures, transferring skills within and between contexts, effectively dealing with any uncertainty, viewing new situations as opportunities rather than obstacles, as well as being self-aware and reflect on one's own actions (Creed et al., 2010).

*6.1.1.4 Research aim 4: To conceptualise the effect of gender on the relationship between self-esteem, graduate attributes and career adaptability*

The fourth aim, namely to conceptualise the effect of gender on the relationship between self-esteem, graduate attributes and career adaptability, was achieved in Chapter 3.

The literature showed that gender affects changes in self-esteem in that females display lower self-esteem than males (Alpert-Gillis & Connell, 1989; Bachman et al., 2011; Cairns et al., 1990; Chubb et al., 1997; Harper & Marshall, 1991; Makinen et al., 2012; Martinez & Dukes, 1991; Orth et al., 2010; Quatman & Watson, 2001; Steitz & Owen, 1992; Verkuyten, 1986). However, other research has shown that there are no differences in self-esteem between the genders (Erol & Orth, 2011; Kohr et al., 1988; Mullis et al., 1992; Osborne & LeGette, 1982; Schwalbe & Staples, 1991; Smith, 2002).

The literature has also shown that gender affects changes in gradueness skills and attributes in that female learners scored significantly higher than their male counterparts on the importance of employability skills in a higher education curriculum (Jackson, 2012; 2013).

With regard to career adaptability, the literature reported gender differences in control, curiosity and confidence, while no gender difference was found in concern (Hou et al., 2012). On the other hand, Ferreira (2012) found that females scored significantly higher than males on all career adaptability variables.

### **6.1.2 Conclusions relating to the empirical study**

The general empirical aim of the study was to carry out five principal tasks:

- (1) To conduct an empirical investigation of the statistical relationship between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability in a sample of young adults studying at a Further Education and Training institution in South Africa. This was achieved by empirically testing research hypotheses H01 and Ha1.
- (2) To empirically investigate whether the self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes as a composite set of independent variables are significantly and positively related to the career adaptability variables as a composite set of dependent variables. This was achieved by empirically testing research hypotheses H02 and Ha2.
- (3) To empirically investigate whether self-esteem moderates the relationship between gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability. This was achieved by empirically testing research hypotheses H03 and Ha3.



- (4) To empirically investigate whether males and females differ significantly regarding their self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability as manifested in the sample of respondents. This was achieved by empirically testing research hypotheses H04 and Ha4.
- (5) To formulate conclusions and recommendations for the discipline of human resource management regarding career development practices and possible future research based on the findings of the research

The statistical results provided supportive evidence for the research hypotheses and were reported in Chapter 5. The findings in terms of each of the research aims that merit discussion will be presented as conclusions in the following section.

*6.1.2.1 Research aim 1: To conduct an empirical investigation into the statistical relationship between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability in a sample of respondents studying at a Further Education and Training institution in South Africa*

Owing to the fact that limited empirical studies have been conducted on the relationship between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability that are relevant to this study (especially in the multicultural South African context), it is necessary to exercise caution against over interpreting the current findings with reference to the practical implications without any further research.

The results displayed supportive evidence for Ha1: There is a significant relationship between a young adult's self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability. This aim has been broken down into three parts, as follows:

- (a) To empirically investigate the relationship between self-esteem and career adaptability

The results found a significant relationship between self-esteem and career adaptability. Possessing a positive level of self-esteem means that one is better able to adapt to changing situations and contexts. Individuals with a low level of self-esteem were found to be less likely to engage in adaptive behaviours. Employers require their employees to be able to adapt to changing situations, as well as to have a good self-concept, greater self-confidence and thus high self-esteem.

According to the empirical results, the following conclusions can be drawn:

Young adults who have a high overall perception of themselves and their self-worth are more concerned with their role as a worker and tend to be more future oriented and reactive to impending career tasks and challenges. They also take responsibility for their own development by displaying self-discipline, effort and determination. These young adults are curious in exploring possible future selves and opportunities and are confident in their abilities to transform their career goals into reality by solving and overcoming possible problems and obstacles.

Young adults who display high emotional self-awareness, mood and self-regard (personal self-esteem) believe that they are capable of transforming their career goals into reality and thus are confident in their ability to solve problems and overcome obstacles. Young adults who have a sense of belonging and who perceive themselves as worthy due to their social acceptance by others tend to be more future oriented, to accept personal responsibility for their own development and put in the necessary effort and determination to reach their career goals, to consider the ways in which they can influence different work roles and environments, and to successfully overcome the problems and obstacles they may face.

(b) To empirically investigate the relationship between self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes.

The results found that there was a significant relationship between self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes. In the 21<sup>st</sup>-century world of work, young adults are expected to possess gradueness skills and attributes, along with their degree-specific skills. They are also expected to be well-rounded individuals who have great self-esteem, which will enable them to work well with others. It also was found that individuals who have a higher level of self-esteem were better able to excel in acquiring certain skills as well as meet the goals that they set. This means that high self-esteem is vital to acquiring gradueness skills and attributes.

According to the empirical results, the following conclusions can be drawn:

Young adults who have a high overall perception of themselves and their self-worth, who display high emotional self-awareness, mood and self-regard (personal self-esteem) and who have a sense of belonging and perceive themselves as worthy due to their social acceptance by others are more creative and proactive when finding a solution to a problem.

They employ logical reasoning, inquiry and analysis when explaining information and data and drawing insightful conclusions from the analysis of the data, are adventurous and proactive when participating in economic activities and are able to recognise and be proficient when dealing with organisational or team politics. These young adults accept responsibility for maintaining and upholding their beliefs and values, as well as those of their community and workplace. They respectfully, convincingly and effectively communicate knowledge, facts, ideas and opinions (both oral and written) in English using the appropriate technology in order to offer solutions for their personal benefit and for the benefit of all those involved. Young adults with a high overall perception of themselves set realistic goals and take the necessary action to achieve these goals, simultaneously acquiring new knowledge, skills and abilities throughout their life and career to keep abreast with changing technology and performance criteria.

No significant relationship was found between personal self-esteem and ethical and responsible behaviour. This means that young adults who display high emotional self-awareness, mood and self-regard (personal self-esteem) may not necessarily accept full responsibility for maintaining the policy of moral beliefs and values of their profession, community and/or workplace in everything they do. This could be due to the fact that such young adults may have an overinflated idea of themselves and would not pay particular attention to others (Barry, Wallace, & Guelker, 2011; Baumeister et al., 1993; 1996; Cairo et al., 1996, Rusu et al., 2015, Savickas et al., 1988; Twenge & Campbell, 2008).

(c) To empirically investigate the relationship between graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability

The results found a significant relationship between graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability. Employers require their employees to possess certain generic skills (graduateness skills and attributes) along with their discipline-specific skills. Employees are also expected to be able to adapt to changing circumstances in their work contexts. By acquiring and perfecting their graduateness skills and attributes as well as their career adaptability, young adults will be more likely to gain and retain meaningful employment.

According to the empirical results, the following conclusions can be drawn:

Young adults who display problem-solving and decision-making skills, analytical thinking skills, enterprising skills, ethical and responsible behaviour, presenting and applying information skills, interactive skills, goal-directed behaviour and continuous learning

orientation are more concerned with their future role as workers, enhance personal control over the professional activities that they have to perform, are more curious before making educational and vocational choices and develop the required confidence to make and implement career choices (Savickas, 2002; 2005; 2011a; 2011b; Savickas et al., 2009; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

6.1.2.2 *Research aim 2: To empirically investigate whether the self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes as a composite set of independent variables are significantly and positively related to the career adaptability variables as a composite set of dependent variables*

The results displayed supportive evidence for Ha2: The self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes variables as a composite set of independent variables are significantly and positively related to the career adaptability variables as a composite set of dependent variables.

Young adults are required to possess gradueness skills and attributes along with being self-aware and self-confident in their abilities in order to be and remain employed. Along with this, they are expected to be more adaptable to any changes in the world of work they may face. By investigating the variables that have the most impact on this relationship, the empirical study revealed that self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes (as the independent canonical variate) predicted a large variance in the career adaptability variables (as the dependent variate).

Gradueness skills and attributes contributed most in explaining the career adaptability canonical variate construct. Self-esteem variables did not contribute strongly in explaining the career adaptability canonical variate construct.

6.1.2.3 *Research aim 3: To empirically investigate whether self-esteem moderates the relationship between gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability*

The results displayed supportive evidence for Ha3: Young adults' self-esteem acts as a moderator between their gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability. Young adults' gradueness skills and attributes (overall gradueness, global/moral citizenship and lifelong learning) and their career adaptability were found to be stronger when their self-esteem was high than when their self-esteem was low.

The relationship between graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability is moderated by self-esteem, indicating that the better developed a young adult's self-esteem, the greater his/her ability to enhance his/her career adaptability and cultivate graduateness skills and attributes. It is believed that this would allow him/her to better face and deal with career transitions, thus allowing him/her to become and remain employable.

*6.1.2.4 Research aim 4: To empirically investigate whether males and females differ significantly regarding their self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability as manifested in the sample of respondents*

The results displayed partial supportive evidence of Ha4: Male and female young adults differ significantly with regard to their self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability.

The results of the empirical study indicated that personal self-esteem was higher for males than for females, suggesting that males display higher emotional self-awareness, mood and self-regard than females.

The results further indicated that lie items were higher for females than males, suggesting that females would like to portray a more positive image of themselves, regardless of the reality, therefore responding more defensively than men.

No significant effect was found between gender and graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability.

### **6.1.3 Conclusions relating to the central hypothesis**

The central hypothesis (Chapter 1) stated that a relationship exists between self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability. Self-esteem and graduateness skills and attributes significantly predict career adaptability. This hypothesis further assumes that self-esteem significantly moderates the graduateness skills and attributes–career adaptability relation. Also, males and females will display different levels of self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability.

The literature review and empirical study provided supportive evidence of the central hypothesis.

#### **6.1.4 Conclusions relating to contributions to the field of human resource management**

The findings in the literature review provided insights into the various concepts and theoretical models that promote self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability. The literature review further explained the way in which young adults' self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes relate to their career adaptability.

The findings of the empirical study provide a novel contribution in terms of the relationship dynamics between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability. The understanding of the findings adds to an extensive perspective in which young adults' self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes explain their career adaptability.

Furthermore, these findings can be utilised by career practitioners to enhance the self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes of young adults, which in turn will improve their career adaptability, thus enabling them to become and remain employable.

### **6.2 LIMITATIONS**

The limitations of the literature review and the empirical study are discussed in this section.

#### **6.2.1 Limitations of the literature review**

The following limitations were encountered in the literature review:

The exploratory research on the relationship between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability was limited to the research literature on these three constructs that currently is available.

By utilising Battle's (1992) model of self-esteem, the study was limited to general, social and personal self-esteem. Similarly, by utilising Coetzee's (2010) model of gradueness skills and attributes, the study was limited to problem-solving and decision-making skills, analytical thinking skills, enterprising skills, ethical and responsible behaviour, presenting and applying information skills, interactive skills, goal-directed behaviour and the continuous learning orientation.

There is a shortage of research both in the South African context and abroad on the relationship between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability.

Although there is a broad research base on self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability, few studies have focused specifically on the relationship of these constructs in terms of the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase.

### **6.2.2 Limitations of the empirical study**

The findings of this study may be limited to the ability to generalise and make practical recommendations because of a number of factors, including both the size and characteristics of the sample as well as the psychometric properties of the CFSEI 2-AD, GSAS and CAAS. The following limitations of the empirical research should be taken into account:

Although the findings of the study shed some light on the relationship between self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability in the South African environment, it is not possible to generalise the results to include the broader population because of the demographic confines as well as the small size of the sample. The sample was limited to adult learners enrolled in Further Education and Training (FET) institutions in Pretoria, Gauteng province, therefore the results may not be generalisable to the general public in South Africa. A sample size of 332 does not appear large enough to conclusively establish whether there is a definite relationship between the variables of self-esteem, graduateness skills and attributes and career adaptability. Furthermore, the sample was limited to a group of predominantly unemployed, black and female young adult learners and thus the findings cannot be generalised to other employment, gender and race contexts.

In view of the cross-sectional nature of the research design, the relations between the variables have been interpreted in an exploratory manner. In addition, the potential risk of common method bias should be considered because of the fact that the questionnaires utilised a self-report methodology. In addition, the CFSEI 2-AD (Battle, 1992), GSAS (Coetzee, 2010) and CAAS (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) were dependent on the respondents' self-awareness and personal perceptions, which potentially could have affected the validity of the results, as a self-report methodology was used. Nevertheless, acceptable internal consistency reliabilities were reported for the three measuring instruments.

### **6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings, conclusions and limitations of this study, recommendations for human resource management and further research in the field are highlighted below.

### **6.3.1 Recommendations for the field of human resource management**

The main aim of the study was to identify the implications of the theoretical relationship between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability and, based on the findings, to make recommendations for career counsellors and human resource practitioners on how best to assist young adults to improve their employability and ease the school-to-work transition phase.

The empirical study confirmed the significant relationship between young adults' self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability. The results of the empirical study further provided evidence of the moderating role of self-esteem in the relationship between gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability. Human resource practitioners and career counsellors therefore should engage in interventions to assist individuals to enhance their self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes in order to enhance their career adaptability and thus their employability.

Career development interventions should aim at enhancing young adults' self-esteem through the enhancement of their general, social and personal self-esteem. Young adults should be supported in increasing their sense of psychological well-being and the ways in which they view themselves; they should be supported in accepting themselves for who they are and in how to build and maintain social relationships with others; and they should be supported in terms of understanding and accepting their own emotions and increasing their personal self-regard. Young adults could attend therapy sessions to assist them in improving their self-esteem.

Along with this, young adults' gradueness skills and attributes should be enhanced. Career counsellors and human resource practitioners should team up with teachers, lecturers and employers to understand the importance of and reach consensus on how to aid young adults in bettering their gradueness skills and attributes. Young adults who have not had the privilege to gain these necessary skills should attend workshops and courses to assist them in developing and even enhancing their problem-solving and decision-making skills, analytical thinking skills, enterprising skills, ethical and responsible behaviour, presenting and applying information skills, interactive skills, goal-directed behaviour and continuous learning orientation.

Career counsellors and human resource practitioners can enhance young adults' gradueness skills and attributes in the world of work by scheduling training programmes



and interventions to assist them in gaining these necessary skills. Employers and human resource practitioners can assign mentors to these young adults to ensure that their spirits are not broken by the overwhelming tasks with which they may be faced. This, in turn, will enhance their career adaptability.

Individuals high on career adaptability are sought after by employers, as they respond to transitions better than those low on career adaptability. Career development interventions should concentrate on supporting young adults in formulating their employability capacities in order to increase their confidence and self-efficacy in demonstrating their skills and abilities to manage their careers and employability (Del Corso, 2013). Career adaptability resources can be enhanced through the facilitation of career interventions such as time perspective workshops, which promote future orientation and planfulness (concern), information-seeking activities (curiosity), self-esteem enhancement (confidence), and decision-making training (control) (Savickas, 2013; Tolentino et al., 2014). From the results of this study, it is recommended that, by enhancing young adults' self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes, their career adaptability will improve, thus making them employable.

### **6.3.2 Recommendations for further research**

To enhance external validity, further research should focus on acquiring a larger, more representative sample. The sample should be expanded in terms of representation of different races, genders, ages and employment, which would provide a better representation of different levels of self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability.

There also is a need for more research on self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability in the South African context. Further studies would be beneficial for career counselling in that it would offer direction to young adults when making career-related decisions built on the foundations of their capacities to interpret their career self-concept and motivators as employment opportunities that would align with their personal needs (Coetzee & Roythorne-Jacobs, 2012).

Different career and life stages influence the relationship between an individual's self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability. Future longitudinal research would contribute much in analysing the shift in levels of gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability, as the career self-concept evolves over time (Coetzee et al., 2015).

## 6.4 INTEGRATION OF THE RESEARCH

This research study investigated the relationship between the self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability of the young adult in the school-to-work transition phase. The research results have established that the self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes of young adults in the school-to-work transition phase significantly enhance their career adaptability. The results further confirmed that young adults' self-esteem is a predictor of the relationship between their gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability.

Employers have come to recognise that young adults' gradueness skills and attributes and their ability to adapt to new work demands are vital human capital resources for ensuring that young adults are employable, as well as for sustaining a competitive business advantage (Coetzee, 2012; Coetzee et al., 2015; Kyllonen, 2013; Potgieter & Coetzee, 2013; Sung, Ng, Loke, & Ramos, 2013). Being career adaptable involves the lifelong learning of new skills and procedures, transferring skills within and between contexts, effectively dealing with any uncertainty, viewing new situations as opportunities rather than obstacles, as well as being self-aware and reflecting on one's own actions (Creed et al., 2010).

The literature review implied, but did not confirm, the existence of a relationship between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability. However, the empirical research for this study proved the existence of a significant relationship between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability. The constantly evolving 21<sup>st</sup>-century world of work compels employees to be active agents in their own development and career progress (Botha, 2014). It thus is incumbent on both career counsellors and young adults to cultivate, nurture and enhance young adults' self-esteem and gradueness skills and attributes, thereby enhancing their career adaptability in order to gain and maintain employment.

In conclusion, the findings of this research study provide some initial insights into the relationship between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability. This may prove to be useful to human resource practitioners, career counsellors and individual young adults who wish to improve the employability of young adult graduates. Furthermore, recommendations were made for further research.

## 6.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the conclusions of the research study in terms of the theoretical and empirical objectives. Possible limitations of the study in terms of both the theoretical and empirical stages of the study were discussed. Recommendations for further research investigating the relationship between self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability, as well as the influence of gender on these constructs, were suggested. To sum up, the chapter integrated the research of this study with relevant published research, emphasising the extent to which the results of the study provided support for the relationship between the constructs of self-esteem, gradueness skills and attributes and career adaptability.

With this, research aim 5 (To formulate conclusions and recommendations for the discipline of human resource management regarding career development practices and possible future research based on the findings of the research) has been achieved and the study is concluded.

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