



Work readiness in graduate recruitment and selection: A review of current assessment methods

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Abstract

Graduate recruitment and selection differs from other contexts in that graduate applicants generally lack job-related experience. Recent research has highlighted that employers are placing increasing value on graduates being work ready. Work readiness is believed to be indicative of graduate potential in terms of long term job performance and career advancement. A review of the literature has found that current graduate recruitment and selection practices lack the rigour and construct validity to effectively assess work readiness. In addition, the variety of interchangeable terms and definitions articulated by employers and academics on what constitutes work readiness suggests the need to further refine this construct. This paper argues that work readiness is an important selection criterion, and should be examined systematically in the graduate assessment process, as a construct in itself. The ineffectiveness of current assessment methods in being able to measure work readiness supports the need to develop a specific measure of work readiness that will allow more effective decision practices and potentially predict long term job capacity and performance.

Keywords: Work readiness, graduate employability, graduate recruitment, graduate selection, graduate assessment, transferable skills, graduate competencies.

Introduction

In recent years a number of economic, technological and demographic trends have significantly impacted the workplace and highlighted the importance of effective recruitment and selection practices. Researchers have predicted that the convergence of globalisation and an ageing population will result in vast labour shortages, as organisations compete on a world stage for high-aptitude, adaptable and multi-skilled employees (Meyer, Allen & Topolnytsky, 1998; Trank, Rynes & Bretz Jr., 2002). With the expected shortage of qualified and experienced senior employees in the years to come, young university graduates are a precious future commodity. Whilst the term “graduates” is generally used to refer to former students who have received an undergraduate or postgraduate university degree, this paper refers only to new graduates who have completed an undergraduate degree and are entering professional employment for the first time. A number of factors differentiate graduate recruitment and selection from other contexts, the most important being that graduates generally lack job related experience. Recent studies have identified work readiness as an area of increasing relevance to graduate recruitment, and a construct which is becoming increasingly valued by employers today. Given the rapidly changing nature of the workplace, the extent to which graduates are “work ready” is seen as indicative of their potential in terms of job performance and career advancement.

The growing demand organisations are placing on graduates possessing the attributes that render them work ready, has significant implications for graduate recruitment and selection practices. In addition, while the impact of the recent Global Financial Crisis on graduate recruitment and selection is not yet clear, it is possible that securing employment has become more difficult for graduates. As such, it may be even more important that graduates possess the necessary work readiness skills and attributes sought by employers. There is relatively little systematic research regarding assessment methods used in graduate recruitment, and therefore it is unclear how effective current assessment methods are in assessing work readiness. This paper examines current graduate recruitment and selection practices and highlights the importance of work readiness for graduate contexts. Furthermore, the extent to which current assessment methods used in graduate recruitment and selection effectively measure work readiness is explored.

Assessment in graduate recruitment and selection

For some time, university graduates have been a key source of new recruits for organisations. Particularly in large organisations, hiring graduates has become an annual cycle and a core component of HR strategy (Slaughter, Stanton, Mohr & Schoel, 2005). From an organisational perspective there are many advantages to hiring graduate employees. It is generally recognised that the best way to build organisational effectiveness is to hire employees with high levels of ability and past achievement. Based on these measures, graduates represent a valuable and plentiful resource of quantifiable ability and achievement (O'Leary, Lindholm, Whitford & Freeman, 2002). Hiring graduates also enables organisations to meet the need for trained and educated individuals in areas that require professional and highly skilled employees. Graduates are often valued for their new ideas and fresh thinking. They are also a potential source of future leadership. While graduates may lack direct job related experience, many students undertake part time or casual employment throughout their university studies. As such, it would be expected that these employment experiences, even if not directly related to their profession, are likely to contribute to graduates' understanding of how organisations function. Furthermore organisations have the opportunity to train graduates according to their methods (ACNielsen Research Services, 2000). In comparison to experienced applicants, today's graduates generally have greater technological abilities, enthusiasm for learning and a comprehensive educational experience (Bottjen, 2001; Hoopis, 1994). In addition, the increase in the number of entry-level positions over the years means that hiring graduates, as opposed to experienced employees, is a cost effective method of filling these positions (Bottjen, 2001). Entry-level positions for graduates include professional, managerial and technical jobs and estimates indicate that as many as 40% of new recruits in organisations are graduates (Rynes, Orlitzky & Bretz Jr, 1997). As such, selection decisions regarding which graduates to employ are crucial because of the potential costs that can result from making the wrong selection decisions (Nicholson & Arnold, 1991).

Difficulties associated with graduate recruitment and selection

A number of key factors render the graduate assessment process particularly difficult and set it apart from selection assessments conducted in other contexts. At the recruitment end of the process, the sheer volume of applications highlights the need to develop systematic methods of heavily screening and processing applications (Carless, 2007). Carless noted that in 2003, the Australian Association of Graduate Employers (AAGE) cited an average of 2023 applications per graduate position with an average of 39 short listed applicants for every job.

Graduates are often selected for their perceived general potential, rather than for a specific role within the company. This unique assessment approach challenges traditional assessment methodology and also complicates the job analysis process which is based on the analysis of a specific job (Keenan, 1995). Traditionally, job analysis is the cornerstone on which assessment is built and dictates selection criteria. Instead of specific job performance criteria it is common for assessments used in entry-level selection to focus on broad abilities such as general cognitive ability (Murphy, 2004). However, this practice raises concerns regarding the validity of assessment methods chosen, particularly where techniques are not adapted for use in a graduate context.

The most obvious and significant factor differentiating graduate selection from other forms of employment selection, is that most graduates have little, if any, direct job-related experience (Keenan, 1995). This is a major distinction which deserves careful consideration given that many selection methods, such as interviews, traditionally assess knowledge, skills and attributes (KSAs) and competencies in relation to previous work experience (Keenan, 1995).

Furthermore, assessment in recruitment contexts tends to include oral assessment, such as interviews. This may present a challenge for graduates, particularly given that there is considerably more focus on written forms of assessment in higher education settings. As such, graduates may not be as prepared to articulate their knowledge, skills and experience to potential employers.

Despite growing interest in the area of graduate recruitment and selection, relatively little is known about the methods used by organisations to assess and select graduates for entry level positions. The fact that graduates lack relevant work experience and that selection criteria are typically not based on a given job analysis raises questions in relation to: the selection criteria being used; how assessment methods are modified to account for graduates' lack of work experience; and whether current methods effectively predict graduate performance. A review of current graduate recruitment, selection and assessment practices follows with a particular focus on the emerging area of graduate work readiness.

Graduate selection criteria

Knowledge, skills and attributes (KSAs)

A qualitative study by ACNielsen Research Services (2000) with employers and industry representatives identified the following sought after skills in new graduate recruits: academic achievement, literacy; numeracy; logical and orderly thinking; computer skills; time management skills; written business communication; oral communication; creativity and flair; interpersonal skills; teamwork skills; problem solving skills; and comprehension of business processes. Some employers also rated research/analysis skills and leadership skills as being important. With regard to the future of business and the rapid changes impacting the world of work, employers indicated a preference for graduates who were adaptable and flexible in order to cope with future changes. Graduates with an awareness of the need for continuous learning were also valued by some professions. It seems that a range of personal attributes are valued by Australian employers that vary according to the organisation, industry and profession. In general, Australian employers consider enthusiasm, motivation, ambition, maturity, and personal presentation to be valuable attributes in graduate applicants.

Work readiness

Traditionally, academic achievement and/or technical competence has been a key selection criterion in graduate recruitment and selection (Roth & Bobko, 2000). While this is usually

dependent on specific subjects for particular disciplines and professions, high academic or technical achievement is generally used as an indicator of intellectual capability, capacity to learn, and motivation to pursue and achieve goals (ACNielsen Research Services, 2000). However, academic or technical ability does not necessarily predict long term future capability. Nowadays, more importance is being placed on graduates possessing a range of generic skills and attributes required across all jobs. In particular, organisations are increasingly interested in the extent to which graduate applicants possess the skills and attributes that make them “prepared” or “ready” for success in today’s rapidly changing work environment. Hence, a relatively new concept has emerged in the literature as a selection criterion for predicting graduate potential, the notion of work readiness (ACNielsen Research Services, 2000; Casner-Lotto, Barrington & Wright, 2006; Gardner & Liu, 1997; Hart, 2008).

Employer perspectives on graduate work readiness

Gardner and Liu (1997) surveyed over 150 employers who were asked to observe their new graduate employees in order to compare and rate their work preparation with the job’s performance requirements. The participant sample included technical graduates (e.g. engineering, computer science, accounting), as well as non-technical graduates (e.g. general business, social sciences, communications). The objectives of the study were to evaluate graduate performance with regards to the specific skills/competencies required for the job and to evaluate the educational and social preparation of the graduates for work. Fifty two skills and competencies, grouped into nine categories were rated including: (1) speaking and listening, (2) reading, (3) writing, (4) mathematics, (5) thinking and reasoning, (6) organisational skills, (7) analysing analytical data, (8) job skills, and (9) personal skills. The study found that some employers perceived their graduate employees as inadequately prepared for entry level work. Although employers were generally happy with graduate performance, there were a few significant differences between job requirements and graduate preparedness. Overall, technical graduates were rated as being more unprepared in terms of speaking and listening, writing, organisational and personal skills than non-technical graduates. For both technical and non technical graduates a lack of work readiness was observed in relational and personal competencies, skills not directly taught in the classroom (Gardner & Liu, 1997). Nowadays, however it is common for undergraduate courses to offer practical units that allow students to experientially develop relational and personal competencies outside of the classroom. Hence these findings may not be valid for today’s graduates.

Alternatively, research by Hart (2008) with 301 organisations found that while employers were generally satisfied with graduates’ entry-level skills, they were less confident about graduates’ achievement of the skills and knowledge necessary for advancement and promotion in the organisation. Of 12 key skill areas, employers identified global knowledge, self-direction, writing, critical thinking and adaptability as areas where graduates were least prepared in terms of work and hence in need of improvement.

ACNielsen Research Services (2000) examined employer satisfaction with the skills of new graduates entering the workforce. A participant sample of 1105 Australian employers rated graduates from a range of disciplines from both the TAFE and University sectors on 25 skills and attributes. Creativity and flair was rated by employers as the most valued attribute of new graduates and also the attribute that new graduates were most deficient in. The other most valued skills or attributes were enthusiasm, capacity for independent and critical thinking, flexibility and adaptability and personal presentation. Graduates were also generally rated as lacking problem solving skills, oral business communication skills, and interpersonal skills. Furthermore, when rating the suitability of applicants for each position in the organisation, employers indicated that 76.5% of applicants were found to be unsuitable.

Similarly, Casner-Lotto, et al., (2006) surveyed 400 US organisations regarding graduates' preparedness, and articulated 11 applied skill sets that new graduate entrants need to succeed in the workplace. Employers rated professionalism/work ethic, oral and written communications, teamwork/collaboration and critical thinking/problem solving as the most important skills for new graduates on entering the work place. With regards to overall preparation or work readiness of graduates, 24% of employers rated university graduates as "excellent", 65% rated them as "adequate", and 9% rated graduates as "deficient". In addition, graduates were rated as being least prepared in terms of written communication skills and leadership skills.

Current conceptualisations of graduate work readiness

The current graduate recruitment literature does not provide a clear conceptualisation of what defines work readiness in graduate employees (Casner-Lotto, et al., 2006). Furthermore, findings from the studies by ACNielsen Research Services (2000), Casner-Lotto, et al., (2006), Gardner & Liu (1997) and Hart (2008) vary in terms of the skills and attributes articulated by employers as being indicative of work readiness. It appears that employers may not value the same skills and attributes equally and that, in some cases, employers use different terms to refer to the same or similar attributes.

The evident lack of clarity and consensus on what defines work readiness may be due to the fact that, as a construct, it is still in the early stages of development. The emergence of interest in work readiness can be linked to the increasing demand from employers for graduates to possess a diverse range of generic graduate attributes or generic skills (Hager & Holland, 2006). This trend has resulted from economic and technological developments which have significantly changed the nature of the workplace. The term generic skills is used interchangeably with related terms including "core skills", "basic skills", "transferable skills" and "employability skills". It refers to a range of qualities and capacities that are viewed as important in the preparation for work in almost any job. Examples of generic skills include communication, problem solving and working with others. Alternatively, Hager and Holland argue that generic graduate attributes go beyond technical skills to also include attitudes, values and dispositions. The various combinations of attributes and skills that a graduate applies in different contexts can be referred to as capabilities (Hager, 2006).

Consistent with the interchangeable terms used to describe generic skills and attributes, different labels are also used in the literature to describe the notion of work readiness including "work preparedness", "graduate employability", "transferable skills" and "generic attributes". A review of the literature indicates that these concepts are closely tied along with overlaps in the skills and attributes that denote graduate work readiness (Atlay & Harris, 2000; Casner-Lotto, et al., 2006; Gabb, 1997; Gardner & Liu, 1997; Hambur, Rowe & Luc, 2002; Hart, 2008; Stewart & Knowles, 2000). Table 1 provides a summary of the studies which examine work readiness and its various cognates, as well as a breakdown of the skills and attributes identified as being important for graduate success.

Table 1. Summary of the Literature Examining Work Readiness and Related Concepts

Reference	Construct terminology	Breakdown of skills/attributes
(Gardner & Liu, 1997)	Workforce readiness	<u>Skills and Competencies:</u> Speaking and listening, Reading, Writing, Mathematics, Thinking and Reasoning, Organisational, Analysing data, Job Skills, Personal Skills
(Casner-Lotto, Barrington & Wright 2006)	Workforce readiness	<u>Applied Skills</u> Critical thinking/problem solving, Oral communications, written communication, teamwork/collaboration, diversity, information technology application, leadership, creativity/innovation, lifelong learning/self-direction, Professionalism/Work ethic, Ethics/Social responsibility
(Hart, 2008)	Work preparedness	Teamwork, Ethical judgement, Intercultural skills, Social responsibility, Quantitative reasoning, Oral communication, Self-knowledge,, Adaptability, Critical thinking, Writing, Self-direction, Global knowledge
(Hambur, Rowe & Luc, 2002; Stewart & Knowles, 1999)	Graduate transferable skills & qualities ("Graduateness")	<u>Personal Attributes</u> Motivation, Organisational ability, Teamwork, Interpersonal/social skills, Leadership <u>Communication</u> Written, Verbal and non verbal skills <u>Problem-Solving</u> Initiative, Creativity, Decision Making
(Gabb, 1997)	Graduate transferable skills & qualities	Motivation, Enthusiasm, Interpersonal skills, Teamworking, Flexibility, Adaptability, Oral communication, Initiative, Proactivity, Problem-solving
(Stewart & Knowles, 2000)	Graduate transferable skills & qualities	Motivation, Initiative, Creativity, Organisational Ability, Communication Skills –Verbal, Communication Skills – Written, Teamworking, Interpersonal/Social, Problem Solving, Leadership, Numeracy, Information Technology
(Atlay & Harris, 2000)	Graduate employability	Information retrieval and handling, communication and presentation, planning and problem solving, social development and interaction
(Knight & Yorke, 2003)	Aspects of Employability	<u>Personal Qualities</u> Malleable self-theory, self-awareness, self-confidence, independence, emotional intelligence, adaptability, stress tolerance, initiative, willingness to learn, reflectiveness. <u>Core Skills</u> Reading effectiveness, numeracy, information retrieval, language skills, self-management, critical analysis, creativity, listening, written communication, oral presentations, explaining, global awareness

Communication, motivation, initiative, creativity and interpersonal skills are the attributes that appear most frequently across the studies shown in Table 1. The findings of these studies in particular highlight the fact that work readiness is a construct which is becoming increasingly valued by employers today. Given the rapidly changing nature of the workplace, the extent to which graduate employees are work ready is seen as indicative of graduate potential in terms of long term job performance and career advancement. The growing demand organisations are placing on graduates possessing the generic attributes that render them work ready, has significant implications for graduate recruitment, particularly with regards to selection. As such, a review of the assessment methods currently being used by organisations in graduate recruitment and selection and the efficacy of these methods for work readiness is necessary.

Review of research in graduate assessment methods

In comparison to studies investigating the methods used in the recruitment and selection of managers, there are fewer studies which have examined assessment methods used in graduate selection. Nevertheless, recent research surveying graduate recruitment and selection practices across organisations in British (e.g. Keenan, 1995), European (e.g. Hodgkinson & Payne, 1998) and Australian (e.g. Carless, 2007) contexts provide us with some insight into current practices.

Pre-screening methods

An important first step in the selection phase appears to be the pre-screening and culling of applicants to a manageable number (Carless, 2007). If conducted poorly, pre-screening can negatively impact on the selection process and render it ineffective (Keenan, 1995). According to Keenan, application forms provide a cost effective and time efficient method of screening applicants in this initial phase. Some organisations may also use pre-screening interviews. Application forms traditionally include the applicant's academic results, to which some employers assign a great deal of weight in terms of screening out unsuitable applicants (ACNielsen Research Services, 2000).

A UK study by Keenan (1995) examining the graduate recruitment and selection methods of 536 organisations reported that 94% of respondents used application forms and 54% screening interviews as a basis for pre-screening the applicants. Hodgkinson and Payne (1998) conducted a cross cultural comparison of the assessment methods used to select university graduates in three European countries. Senior managers and human resource professionals from 176 British, 57 Dutch, and 37 French organisations were surveyed about their most common selection methods. In the pre-screening phase, 83% of British, 66% of Dutch and 55% of French organisations reported using application forms. A decade later Carless (2007), in a survey of 50 Australian organisations, found that most organisations used application forms as the first step in the selection process of graduate employees.

Methods used in final selection

Following the pre-screening of graduate applicants, a final selection phase is undertaken where it appears that organisations draw on a range of assessment methods. For example, Keenan (1995) found that all UK organisations surveyed used interviews in their final selection of graduates and 44% also used assessment centres. Hodgkinson and Payne's (1998) cross cultural study found that organisations from Britain, France and the Netherlands used a variety of traditional methods such as, interviews, ability tests and personality tests. However, it was also found that some organisations used extremely poor methods such as references and graphology as part of the selection process. The later study by Carless (2007) in an Australian context yielded similar results to those reported by Keenan (1995) and Hodgkinson and Payne (1998). One-on-one or panel interviews, cognitive ability tests,

personality tests and assessment centres were reported as the most common methods used in graduate recruitment and selection by Australian organisations.

A limitation common to the studies by Carless (2007), Hodgkinson and Payne (1998) and Keenan (1995) is that data were not collected regarding the selection criteria used by the organisations in conducting their graduate assessments or how the selection criteria was determined. This is further compounded by the problematic nature of the notion of “skills”, which are commonly used as selection criteria in graduate selection. Historically the term “skills” referred to the capabilities required to undertake a particular task (Taylor, 2005). Nowadays however this term is often collapsed and used interchangeably with the term ‘competency’ and ‘attribute’. Furthermore use of the term “skills” has expanded to include a range of “soft”, “generic”, “transferable”, “social”, and “interpersonal” skills. As a result, conceptually the notion of skills has become poorly defined with organisations offering different interpretations (Payne, 2000). As such, the nature of the specific graduate skills and attributes being assessed in these studies is unclear, as is the effectiveness of the methods used in assessing these skills and attributes.

To date, much of the research examining graduate assessment methods has been conducted by surveying organisations. Although this research has contributed to knowledge of the selection practices being used by organisations, they do not examine the validity of assessment methods used in a graduate context in terms of predicting graduate potential and performance. Furthermore, there is little insight about the extent to which organisations utilise work readiness, or attributes that are indicative of work readiness, as predictors of performance in current selection practices.

Effectiveness of current methods in assessing graduate work readiness.

The findings by Carless (2007) in particular, provide some useful insight into the practices of Australian organisations. The most common methods used by the 50 Australian organisations surveyed, in order of popularity were, application forms, interviews, cognitive ability tests, personality tests and assessment centres. These selection methods are each designed to predict different dimensions of performance criteria, however, not all methods are employed in the same selection process. According to Carless, while more than half of the Australian organisations utilised a selection battery comprising three methods: application forms, interviews and one other selection method of choice, 42% indicated they only used application forms and interviews to select graduate applicants. Although these methods have been shown to demonstrate validity across occupational groups and in various contexts, it is less clear how effective they are in assessing potential in graduate applicants. In particular the fact that some organisations only rely on the use of application forms and interviews raises concerns about the ability of current assessment methods in being able to examine graduate work readiness as a construct in itself.

Application forms and academic achievement

Despite the widespread use of university grades in selection practices, in comparison to other job predictors, there is little known about the reliability, validity and implications of this method (Roth & Bobko, 2000). The academic achievement literature generally suggests a positive relationship between university grades and general mental ability (Jensen, 1980). Roth, BeVier, Switzer, and Schipmann (1996) in their meta-analysis examined the relationship between academic grades and job performance. Correlation coefficients were found to be only modest, suggesting academic grades were weak predictors of job performance. Furthermore correlation coefficients for academic grades were found to be lower than other predictors such as interviews and cognitive ability tests.

Of particular interest is the usefulness of academic grades in measuring the work readiness of graduate applicants. While there is limited research on this topic, Hart (2008) reported that less than 30% of employers found academic achievement to be effective in predicting a graduate applicant's work readiness and potential to succeed. As such, it appears that standard application forms and academic achievement scores may be limited in their ability to assess the multidimensional construct of work readiness.

Interviews

Several studies have supported the use of interviews as a valid selection tool, provided they are highly structured (Gatewood, Feild, & Barrick, 2008; Salgado, 1999; Weisner & Cronshaw, 1988; Wright, Lichenfels, & Pursell, 1989). Furthermore, the use of structured interviews in selection has increased potential for assisting organisations in improving employee performance and productivity (Terpstra & Rozell, 1993). However, two vital conditions of the structured interview are that they are based on systematic job analysis and utilise job-related questions (Keenan, 1995). In the case of graduate recruitment and selection, meeting these conditions is difficult, particularly where graduates are not applying for specific roles and organisations are not utilising job analyses. In addition, graduates generally do not have sufficient job experience to be able to answer job-related questions.

With respect to work readiness, the suitability of interviews may be doubtful. Interviews are essentially designed to provide insight into an individual's future performance based on past experience. However, for a cohort with limited job-related experience, the validity of this selection method is questionable. It is also unclear from the research whether employers are modifying the traditional interview to make them more appropriate for graduate applicants. One way employers may modify the interview is to utilise future oriented questions, however, according to Salgado (1999) past-oriented questions generally demonstrate higher validity than future-orientated questions.

Cognitive ability tests

A review of the validity of cognitive ability tests by Ghiselli (1973) found that they were valuable predictors of performance across many types of jobs and occupations. Twenty five years later, a meta-analysis examining cognitive ability tests by Schmidt and Hunter (1998) found similar results. Nevertheless, in relation to assessing work readiness, cognitive ability tests suffer from the same limitations as academic achievement results, since they are designed to measure cognitive ability, rather than work readiness.

Hart's (2008) survey of 301 employers examining employer perceptions of work readiness found that few employers rated multiple-choice tests of cognitive ability effective in predicting graduate performance on the job. Instead, most employers favoured assessments that demonstrated graduate ability to apply learning to complex, real world challenges including tests assessing problem-solving, writing and analytical skills. Hence, as predictors of work readiness in the assessment process, neither academic results nor multiple choice tests of cognitive ability were rated by employers as valuable.

Construct validity

Construct validity concerns the relationship of a measure to the underlying attributes it is attempting to assess (McIntire & Miller, 2007). Of the current graduate selection methods, only cognitive ability tests and personality tests are associated with specific constructs, yet neither of these is synonymous with work readiness. Hence, current measures of personality and cognitive ability would not be expected to be effective predictors of the dimensions that define work readiness in graduates.

The need for systematic assessment of work readiness

The increased interest in examining graduate work readiness suggests that this is a construct of value in entry-level jobs and indicative of graduate job performance, success, and potential for promotion and advancement. It is also evident from the research examining work readiness (ACNielsen Research Services, 2000; Casner-Lotto, et al., 2006; Gardner & Liu, 1997; Hart, 2008), that some graduates entering the workforce lack the preparedness and work readiness expected of them by employers. In other words, on the job performance of some graduates has been found to fall below the requirements of their entry-level roles and as such, have failed to meet employer expectations.

The primary aim of assessment in graduate recruitment and selection is to predict and forecast a candidate's capability potential and future performance on the job. Nevertheless, even after selecting the "best" graduates, employers perceive a lack of work readiness that can hinder graduate success. This implies that current graduate selection practices do not effectively assess this construct. The discrepancy between employer expectations and graduate performance also suggests a growing need to systematically assess work readiness in graduate recruitment and selection. Graduates are unique to other employment groups in that they lack job-related experience, therefore work readiness may be an important consideration in predicting the future potential of graduates.

Current assessment methods, although valid in predicting performance criteria, lack the rigour and construct validity that would be required to effectively assess work readiness in graduates. Furthermore, the variety of definitions articulated by employers and academics on what constitutes work readiness is indicative of a need to further refine this construct. The value of assessments in evaluating work readiness will hinge crucially on how well the attributes that constitute work readiness are conceptualised (Hager, 2006).

To date there is little, if any evidence in the research of a specific measure of work readiness for graduates. The only scale identified in the literature developed for a graduate population and relevant in an Australian context is the Graduate Skills Assessment (GSA). The GSA, developed by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) (Hambur et al., 2002), is designed to assess widely applicable generic skills acquired through the university experience and which may be relevant to university achievement and future graduate work. The generic skills assessed by the GSA include; written communication, critical thinking, problem solving, and interpersonal understandings. However, the GSA does not assess the personal attributes and personality traits that may be associated with implementing these generic skills. Instead, the GSA was developed to provide an indicator to universities of generic skills in their students at entry /exit level. At exit-level GSA results may be also used as an additional criterion for entry into post graduate courses.

It is evident that current graduate recruitment and selection methods fall short with respect to the assessment of work readiness. Given the growing emphasis on this construct from employers, the development of a scale to measure work readiness seems inevitable. Such a measure would allow more effective selection decisions. It is also expected that such a measure would be able to more effectively predict long term work capacity and performance.

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