DEVELOPMENT OF BOUNDARY SPANNING COMPETENCIES IN GRADUATE TRAINEE PROGRAMMES

Master´s Thesis

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Abstract

Increasingly globalized and interconnected world dictates the need for organizations to be highly adaptive to keep up with the fast-changing circumstances. In this situation, organizations are heavily dependent on their human capital and thus, strategically investing into developing human capital helps to gain competitive advantage. One type of such development initiative that is common among many multinational organizations, is the graduate trainee programme. This multi-year programme aims at developing future leaders within the organization by offering experiential learning, training courses and mentoring. However, there is gap in knowledge about the effectiveness of these programmes - if competencies that are essential for succeeding in today´s globalized world, are being developed in these programmes. More specifically, the increasingly diverse workforce of multinational organization and interdependent complexities require leaders who are able to manage across different cultural, functional and hierarchical boundaries inside and outside the organization. In that light, it is essential for multinational organizations to develop the boundary spanning competencies of their future leaders.

This research aims to answer the question if and how are the boundary spanning competencies currently developed in the graduate programmes offered by multinational organizations. The research question is answered based on data collected through primary and secondary sources, from a questionnaire filled in by representatives of multinational organizations as well as doing a content analysis of the publicly available material regarding the graduate programmes. The developed theoretical framework suggests that the personality of an individual, acquirable skills and cultural background contribute to the boundary spanning competencies. Thus, graduate programmes are analysed in the same light, by focusing on the selection, design and cultural contingency aspects of the programmes. The results suggest that in many instances, the way how graduate programmes are currently designed and executed, indeed suggest an effective development of boundary spanning competencies. However, as there are many aspects to consider, further implications for improving the human capital development initiatives are offered.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Research Question

Business environment and organizational practices have constantly been evolving over time, due to various socioeconomic developments and increasing levels of globalization. However, because of digital disruption, high advancement of technologies and rising levels of interdependencies, the dynamics are changing more rapidly than ever before, requiring organizations to be highly adaptive in order to survive.

Therefore, there is an increasing need for competent people who are able to navigate in various environments as well as manage global workforce from diverse backgrounds (Kim & McLean, 2015). Organizations´ competitiveness will lie heavily on the knowledge, skills and competencies of their employees (Boxall & Purcell, 2011), making it of utmost importance for the organizations to attract, develop and retain the necessary talent.

For doing so, many multinational organizations offer focused career development programmes aimed at freshly graduated high-performing junior professionals (Connor & Shaw, 2008). These graduate trainee programmes, often lasting over multiple years, can be used to build up the necessary competencies and behaviours that are desired in the specific organization. As these programmes require a significant investment (Bedingfield, 2005), it is necessary to continuously analyse if the outcomes correspond to the needs of the organization.

In the globalized era, organizations need increasingly leaders who possess skills to effectively manage and collaborate across different types of boundaries both inside the organization as well as with the outside environment (Beechler, Søndergaard, Miller, & Bird, 2004). According to a study focusing on senior-level executives, 86% expressed that is *extremely important* to collaborate effectively across boundaries in their current leadership roles, but only 7% believed that they were very effective at doing that (Yip, Ernst, & Campbell, 2011, p. 11). The graduate trainee programmes, offered by the multinational organizations as a strategic investment to human capital development, should be designed in a way that corresponds with the needs and requirements of the current business environment. The increasingly interconnected and interdependent world would suggest fostering and developing the boundary spanning skills of the individuals and future leaders. As so far there seems to be a lack of relevant knowledge in the field, it leads us to the following research question:

If and how are the boundary spanning competencies of young professionals currently developed in multinational organizations, based on the way graduate trainee programmes are designed?

The aim of the thesis is to contribute to creating new knowledge in the field, fulfilling an important gap. Graduate programmes have previously been analysed mostly from the participants´ perspective (e.g. Garavan & Morley, 1997; Kjærsgaard, 2011) and regarding the influence on their career performance (Hayman & Lorman, 2004) or focusing on the return on investment (Bedingfield, 2005). But the field of seeing graduate programmes as strategic human capital development initiative, has not gained much attention so far.

In order to fulfil the purpose, the thesis will continue by defining the most important terms, followed by theoretical framework that concentrates on the topics of boundary spanning, human capital development, multinational organizations and the aspects of culture. Next, methodology chapter will give an overview of the chosen approach as well as techniques regarding empirical research. Followed by the presentation of results and discussion, the thesis will sum up by offering implications for strategic human resource development, ideas for future research and a conclusion.

1.2 Definition of Important Terms

Some key terms are defined in the context of the thesis as follows:

- *Graduate Programme/Graduate Trainee Programme* is a fast track training programme for high potentials, aimed at developing future leaders in the respective organization. The programme, usually lasting 12-36 months, offers on-the job learning, often combined with some formal training and mentoring to top-performing recent university graduates.
In order to avoid confusion with the graduate study programmes offered by universities, the expression "graduate trainee programme" is also used in the context of the thesis. However, most common way for the organizations seems to call the initiative merely "graduate programme". Other frequent names also include graduate program (US), graduate scheme (UK), leadership development programme, fast-track management program, etc.

- *Competencies* are a cluster of related abilities, commitments, knowledge and skills that enable a person to act effectively in a specific situation (*adopted from* Business Dictionary 2017) In the context of the thesis, the concept involves the ability to meet complex demands, by drawing on and mobilising psychosocial resources (including skills and attitudes) in a particular context (*adopted from* OECD, 2003)

- *Multinational Organization* is a large commercial organization with affiliates operating companies in a number of different countries. A typically one normally functions with a headquarters that is based in one country, while other facilities are based in locations in other countries (Olegario Llamazares García-Lomas, 2015)

- *Culture* refers to networks of knowledge consisting of learned routines of thinking, feeling, and interacting with other people, as well as a corpus of substantive assertions and ideas about aspects of the world in the context (Hong, 2009), it provides a "frame" through which individuals experience the world and that can be used to predict future behaviour. Unless stated otherwise, in the context of the research the cultural aspects refer to national culture (as opposed to organizational, occupational etc.)

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Human Capital as a Valuable Resource

In the increasing knowledge-based society, employees are the main asset for organization´s competitiveness (Boxall & Purcell, 2011). The role of employees contributing to the competitive advantage of an organization is a view that is prevalent in a resource-based view (RBV) of the firm (Wernerfelt, 1984; Barney, 1991). According to RBV, organization´s sustained competitive advantage is constituted by three categories of resources – physical capital, organizational capital and human capital. In order for these mentioned resources to increase the competitiveness of the firm, they need to be valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable and not substitutable without great effort (Barney, 1991, p. 105).

Human capital is one of the most important resources to an organization, as it is a prerequisite for organization´s existence. In order to reach the full potential of human capital, it needs to be continuously managed thoughtfully and effectively (Lesser & Prusak, 2001). This can be done, for example, by investing in development and training initiatives (Lepak & Snell, 1999). The positive correlation between investments in human capital and organization´s performance has been confirmed by various studies (e.g. Hitt, Biermant, Shimizu, & Kochhar, 2001; Welbourne & Andrews, 1996), emphasizing its strategic importance for every organization.

It is important that the strategic management and development of human resources are be carried out in accordance with the general direction of the organization (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014, p. 115) and taking into account important situational factors, both external as well as internal (Beer 1984). The human resource development initiatives are activities that are designed with the goal of introducing new knowledge and skills to individuals, thus improve performance behaviours (Gilley, Eggland, & Gilley, 2002, p. 6). These activities can be formal as well as informal, self-directed as well as organized activities. But in any case, in order to achieve the desired outcome, these cannot be just stand-alone occasional events, but need to be designed with having a systemic, long-term and strategic focus in mind (Gilpin-Jackson & Bushe 2007).

Although successful human resources development initiative requires organization-wide alignment and strategic design, the role of participating individuals is indisputably crucial as well. In order to have a successful training programme that would result in a value for the organization, the individuals participating in the programme need to be motivated, willing and able to learn (Gilley et al., 2002, p. 47). Not being adequately prepared for the new information and content will hinder the knowledge acquisition and transfer. Learning is the key in the transformation and improvement of organizations – without learning, neither individual nor organizational growth and development

will occur (Gilley et al., 2002, p. 319). With engaged and eager employees who are open to developing, the organization will experience greater efficiency, enhanced profitability and more effective competitive practices (Gilley, Shelton, & Gilley, 2011, p. 388).

2.2 Graduates as Participants of Development Initiatives

One specific type of human capital development initiative is graduate trainee programme. This strategic initiative, usually lasting over multiple years and consisting of various experiential learning as well as formal training courses, is aimed at developing top talents to become future leaders in the respective organizations.

The programmes are aimed at freshly graduated young professionals who will join the programme straight after the university. Considering that the graduate programmes are a voluntary initiative and the application process is usually very rigorous, it requires a lot of motivation and dedication for the participants to participate in the programme. As motivation and ability are the main contributors for successful training outcomes (Gilley et al., 2002, p. 47), as well as prerequisites for a successful knowledge transfer (Minbaeva, Pedersen, Björkman, Fey, & Park, 2003), the graduates seem to be a perfect unit for analysis regarding a human capital development initiative.

Another factor that is very important for development initiatives to succeed, is organizational commitment. Sturges & Guest (2001) identified two main factors that influenced the levels of organizational commitment - organizational culture and the extent to which pre-joining expectations were actually met. In the case of graduate programmes, a lot of information is usually received during the recruitment phase, as the selection process usually consists of multiple rounds. Therefore, the graduates will probably have received a rather exhaustive picture of the organization and hopefully adjusted their expectations in a way that they would match with reality.

Once the graduates decide to join the specific programme, they are more likely to put the effort into the initiative. Especially as Arnold & Mackenzie Davey (1994) have found out that one of the main reason why graduates join particular organizations is the possibility of participating in training programmes and chances for personal development. Therefore, the graduate training programmes are most likely seen as attractive opportunity for the participants.

With regards to fostering boundary spanning competencies through the graduate programmes, Reiche (2011) found out that age was significantly negatively correlated with individuals´ boundary spanning effectiveness and effort of knowledge transfer. This means that fresh graduates would be potentially more willing to embrace the concept, if fostered through a thoughtful design of the development initiatives.   Lastly, as many graduates relocate into a new region in order to

participate in the programme, they already require boundary spanning competencies in order to navigate in the unknown circumstances from the very beginning.

In that light, studying graduates would provide a fruitful basis for exploring the human capital development initiatives focusing on boundary spanning competencies in multinational organizations. But what exactly is boundary spanning? Next section will give an overview of the concept.

2.3   Boundary Spanning – the Concept

As mentioned previously, multinational organizations need employees that would effectively manage through the challenging, complex, changing and often ambiguous global business environment (Tarique & Schuler, 2010, p. 123). The individuals do not need to be only experts in their respective sphere, but also proficient in working in diverse contexts (Dierdorff & Morgeson, 2007) and need to be able to also understand and effectively operate with various people in a variety of different environments and systems (Beechler et al., 2004).

Boundary spanning is a concept that deals with the effective collaborative behaviour while managing across inter and intra organizational boundaries (Ernst & Chrobot-Mason, 2010). It is a leadership approach that entails adopting new practices that allow being closely linked to others (despite of their different position, views and perspectives) and therefore being able to work successfully with a great variety of participants. The boundaries could be either clearly defined (e.g. between headquarters of an organization and a specific subunit) or less evidently distinguishable (e.g. between different demographics, cultures and professions) (Schotter, Mudambi, Doz, & Gaur, 2017, p. 4). The types of boundaries that might exist in organization are the following (Ernst & Chrobot-Mason, 2010):

- cultural (demographic)
- vertical (regarding hierarchy)
- horizontal (regarding functional areas)
- stakeholder
- geographical

Most of the challenges faced today in the organizational context are interdependent – these can only be solved by different groups working collaboratively together (Ernst & Chrobot-Mason, 2010). Therefore, it is important to be able to manage across different types of boundaries in and out of organizations, create a common higher goal and get everyone aligned and committed to achieving the desired outcomes. Especially, as it has been said that the success of an organization is

dependent on the ability of integrating disparate pieces of information and groups of people (Ernst & Chrobot-Mason, 2010). Furthermore, it is increasingly important to constantly generate, acquire and integrate both internal and external knowledge and this can be achieved through internal and external boundary spanning (Rosenkopf & Nerkar, 2001). According to the authors, both types of boundary spanning are important and yield positive impacts.

However, the external boundary spanning (inter-organizational) might be hindered due the potential of too much of organization´s proprietary information leaking outside. As this could potentially be disadvantageous for the specific organization, the level of support regarding external boundary spanning varies from one organization to another (Teigland & Wasko, 2003). Therefore, the current thesis will mostly focus on boundary spanning within an organization as it is more likely viewed positively and supported by most multinational organizations.

There seems to be a wide variety of positive effects from boundary spanning activities. For example, intra-organizational knowledge sharing and boundary spanning has found to be positively enhancing individual performance (Teigland & Wasko, 2003). According to Ernst & Chrobot-Mason (2010), the boundary spanning will lead to a variety of successful outcomes, from more engaged and empowered human capital, advanced cross-organizational innovation processes, increased organizational agility to respond to a dynamic marketplace, higher-performing (virtual) teams and improved capacity, just to name a few.

2.3.1 Boundary Spanning Activities

The boundary spanning on an individual level is a process that is implemented through the communication acts between individual members of the organization (Beechler et al., 2004, p. 124). Boundary spanning helps to build a bridge connecting the disparate group (Ernst & Chrobot-Mason, 2010, p. 5) and therefore interpersonal networks are essential (Beechler et al., 2004, p. 124).

Boundary spanning can be executed on a daily basis through various activities. Barner-Rasmussen, Ehrnrooth, Koveshnikov, & Mäkelä (2014) have documented the following possibilities:

- **Exchanging** information and knowledge across organization´s boundaries. The two steps required in order to exchange information are – gathering and then delivering. Exchanging can take place in formal meetings, informal networks or horizontal arrangements, such as task forces or communities of practice

- **Linking** means that boundary spanning individuals are using personal networks to create links across different boundaries. In this situation, individuals possess intermediary roles where they create linkages between different groups in order to enable future transactions on a broader scale

- **Facilitating** covers activities where boundary spanning individual deals with cross-border interaction of others, for example helps two groups to understand each other by framing and structuring arguments in a way that is accepted by both groups.

- **Intervening** deals with solving misunderstandings, conflicts and building inter-group trust by taking an active role and seeking to turn negative interactions to positive ones.

In order to succeed in these activities, organizations should enforce a culture that supports efforts to work effectively across vertical, horizontal, demographic, geographic and stakeholder boundaries (Ernst & Chrobot-Mason, 2010, p. 277) and nurture right people to do it. Boundary spanning requires constantly building and maintaining relations (Beechler et al., 2004, p. 124) and success will also depend on the boundary spanner´s personal resources and skills (Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014).

2.3.2 Boundary Spanning Individuals

It is important for the organizations to attract, retain and develop people who have the capabilities needed to manage the organizational boundaries effectively (Ernst & Chrobot-Mason, 2010, p. 274). Regarding personal traits, Williams (2002) has brought out that boundary spanners are characterized by their ability to engage with others and possess effective interpersonal competencies. Collaborative values, such as honesty, commitment and reliability are said to be essential (Williams, 2002). Furthermore, boundary spanners are often curious and motivated to understand people and organizations outside their own circle. Often, the individuals involved in boundary spanning activities are often performing this role without having it attached to their formal function (Schotter & Beamish, 2011). However, as attitudes of mistrust and suspicion are great barrier to co-operation, establishing trust is of utmost importance for boundary spanning individuals (Williams, 2002).

Tushman & Scanlan (1981) have described boundary spanning individuals as the ones who have substantial communication with areas outside of their unit, who are being frequently consulted on work related matters and who communicate effectively across boundaries. The authors named the boundary spanners as "internal communication stars" who seemed to be more educated and more professional than their peers (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981, p. 84). Furthermore, the individuals

often possessed supervisory and leadership roles due to their competencies, which makes them even more strongly linked to colleagues as well as externally outside their subunit (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981, p. 93). In addition to professional skills, the boundary spanning individuals need to be considerate and understanding of the other, being able interpret the different dynamics shaping their environment and making ethical decisions regarding the context (Beechler et al., 2004). As each subunit within an organization develops over time their own subculture - norms, patterns and jargon, it can create obstacles for others to understand (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981a, p. 290). By being exposed and knowledgeable about the different subcultures and understanding their perspective, it helps to manage across different boundaries more effectively.

Even though personal traits are very important and some parts of skillset required for successful boundary spanning are innate, there are many ways how boundary spanning competencies can be developed.

2.3.3 Developing Boundary Spanning Competencies

A study by Levina & Vaast (2005) indicated that one of the main aspects that contributed to individuals becoming boundary spanners was the precondition of being participant in the practices of both sides of the given boundary. This experience would give access to different types of capital (e.g. social and cultural) an understanding of both practices.

Boundary spanning competencies can be developed in an organization by offering a career development path that resembles a zigzag ladder that crosses over vertical, horizontal, stakeholder, demographic and geographic boundaries, offering exposure and insider perspectives to different subunits (Pfeffer, 2005). The process might be costly and time-consuming and strategic focus together with long-term perspective is needed, but achieved benefits are mostly enduring and worth the investment, if executed thoughtfully (Pfeffer, 2005). This kind of development initiative would create organization-specific competencies and knowledge that are valuable and more not easily duplicated, thereby making it a stronger competitive advantage.

It is very important for the organization to foster a culture that supports boundary spanning activities and offer opportunities for developing the competencies. Cross-utilization and cross-training across different boundaries provide variety for employees, can make work life more challenging and therefore improve the motivation of the employees. Especially as variety is one of the core job dimensions that affects how people respond to their work (Pfeffer, 2005). Furthermore, communication across hierarchical levels and feeling of symbolic egalitarianism

provides more of a sense of working towards common goal, thus helping to diminish "us" versus "them" mentalities (Pfeffer, 2005).

One common way for organizations to offer wider exposure is through job rotations. Job rotation is a systematic and intentional transfer of employees within an organization with the primary aim of increasing individual´s learning and growth (Sweeney, 2007). It has been considered to be a highly effective way to develop employees´ abilities (Eriksson & Ortega, 2006, p. 654). Job rotation offers diversity and variety and therefore has been presented as an especially well suiting practice for developing boundary spanner performance (Sweeney, 2007, p. 10). As boundary spanners need to be knowledgeable about the organization´s different resources, capabilities, tasks and functions, job rotation is an effective way to get acquainted with these aspects and develop a corresponding skill set. In addition to this, job rotation helps to break down organizational silos as the rotating individuals get exposure to different departments and accumulated understanding of organization´s goals, strategy, needs, customers, challenges and mission. Sweeney (2007) has analysed the effect of job rotations on boundary spanner performance and found out that the number of rotations (different types) and the differing levels of rotations (various hierarchical levels) lead to higher level of performance. However, rotations on the same hierarchical level, greater number of training courses and length of the rotations did not seem to have a proven effect on the boundary spanner performance. Thus, a lot of thought needs to be put into the design, structure and implementation of rotations as part of the development programme. Although considered resource-intensive, rotations are a rewarding practice for developing effective boundary spanners and leaders within an organization.

However, designing profitable graduate programmes in the context of multinational organizations might be rather complex as there is necessity to take into account a variety of factors. The programme needs to correspond with the structure and strategy of the organization, not to mention a variety of expectations, needs, values and attitudes of individuals with different interests and from diverse backgrounds. Especially as leadership processes and management practices are heavily influenced by the culture (House et al., 2004, p. 53). For example, the word "leadership" usually has positive connotations in the Western world, but some societies hold a very sceptical view of the term (House et al., 2004, p. 49). Given the interrelatedness of world economy, the diversity of management practices might become a problem (Brodbeck et al., 2000) also within the same organization. Therefore, there are many considerations for multinational organizations regarding the strategic design of their development programmes.

2.4 Complications that Multinational Organizations Face

When developing the human resource development initiatives, the type and structure of the specific organization plays an important role. For example, domestic organizations tend to have more free choice in their strategic human resource development practices and these are generally less complex than the ones of global organizations (Garavan, O'Donnell, McGuire, & Watson, 2007). Furthermore, purely domestic organizations have generally a more homogenous pool of employees, who are probably rather knowledgeable about the cultural norms and values surrounding them. However, in the case of multinational organizations, where the employees come from a variety of backgrounds and an organization needs to take proactively consider more environments they operate in – their legal, economic, political, cultural systems.

According to authors focusing on strategic international human resource management, the effectiveness of a multinational organization can be determined by the extent to which their operating units across the world are differentiated, but at the same time integrated, coordinated and controlled (Punnett & Ricks, 1992). Multinational organization face multiple dilemmas in the increasingly international environment as they need to be global and local (multidomestic) at the same time (Schuler, Dowling, & De Cieri, 1993).

More specifically, there are two recurring debates in international management – the *standardization vs localization* debate on the meso (organization) level and the *convergence vs divergence* debate on the macro (country) level (Pudelko & Harzing, 2007).

2.4.1 Standardization vs Localization

One of the fundamental questions for multinational organizations is the topic of standardization vs localization of its practices, values and cultures. This means, if these should resemble those of the headquarters (home country), the local environment of the foreign affiliates/subsidiaries or some other global standard (Rosenzweig & Nohria, 1994, p. 229). It is especially relevant topic as multinationals deal with wide variety of practices – from operations, finance to human resources and all of them face pressures between global efficiency and local responsiveness (Rosenzweig & Nohria, 1994, p. 230). The empirical evidence argues both way – it has been proved that financial performance is higher when management practices are adapted to the national culture (Newman & Nollen, 1996), on the other hand, standardization is said to offer improved quality, increased global leverage and cost reduction (Yip, 1989).

With regards to human resources – there is a dilemma if the practices should be similar worldwide within the organization or be differentiated according to the local requirements (Armstrong &

Taylor, 2014, p. 101). One of the main aspects of this dilemma focuses on the power relations - which is stronger, the pressure for local adaption or the pressure of internal consistency (Rosenzweig & Nohria, 1994, p. 230). It seems that the degree of autonomy might vary, but a balance between internal consistency and local autonomy needs to be found. Furthermore, it has been proposed that an answer is dependent on a specific organization and might vary considerably between different departments of the same organization – for example, previous empirical research has shown that finance and manufacturing tends to resemble more the headquarters/parent practices, whereas human resource management is more closely linked to local practices as it is more context and culture dependent (Rosenzweig & Nohria, 1994, p. 231).

The implication of culture is one of the critical aspects that influences the strategic choice of human resources practices. Perlmutter (1969) has developed a so-called EPG model – according to him, there are three types of attitudes by multinational organizations – ethnocentric, polycentric and geocentric. Based on this typology, the management practices of subsidiaries/foreign affiliates could resemble the headquarters/home country (ethnocentric type), could be adjusted to the local culture (polycentric) or adhere to a worldwide standard (geocentric). While never only in a pure form, according to Perlmutter (1969), these attitudes of multinational organizations are clearly distinguishable.

Organizations holding an ethnocentric attitude believe that the home country is more trustworthy, reliable and superior to the foreign subsidiaries/affiliates. The national identity of the firm is often emphasized based on the country of the headquarters ("A German company", "A Swedish company"), based on the location of the origin (Perlmutter, 1969, p. 299). Polycentric attitude, on the other hand, focuses on the assumption that locals are more knowledgeable about the respective environment, therefore the subsidiaries/foreign affiliates should be as local in their identity as possible. It is believed that training methods, incentives, standards of performances probably vary between the different societies as people are different, therefore greater autonomy is granted for the foreign affiliates (Perlmutter, 1969, p. 300). Geocentric attitude has a worldwide-orientation, meaning there is no specific bias to the home country (location of headquarters) nor the host country (location of subsidiaries), but focuses on what is the most beneficial to the organization, irrespective of the national culture. It is seen as a collaborative framework between headquarters and subsidiaries - there are universal standards as guidelines, but the subsidiaries/foreign affiliates are independent to tailor the processes according to their specific culture (Perlmutter, 1969, p. 300).

2.4.2 Convergence vs Divergence

The second ongoing debate between two views of the phenomenon of human resources management practices of multinational organizations is the one between convergence and divergence. It is similar to the standardization vs location dilemma, but more on a macro level (Pudelko & Harzing, 2007). On one hand, the convergence view argues that due to globalization and advancement of technologies, the management practices and organizational forms of various organizations are becoming increasingly more universal and similar to each other (Vanhala, Kaarelson, & Alas, 2006), adopting the universal best practices (Pudelko & Harzing, 2007), irrespective of institutional context and national culture. On the other hand, the divergence view emphasizes cultural, national and organizational context and along with institutional explanations, argues that best practices depend on a variety of contingent factors as universal truths and practices do not exist (Vanhala et al., 2006, p. 84).

Divergence view is closely connected to institutional theory that views an organization being shaped by the influences and constraints of the external environment as well as the characteristics and commitments of participants, making the organization constantly adaptive to external and internal factors (Scott, 1987). For example, human resources function is shaped by legislative systems, differences in economics, governance, trade unions and industrial relations (Sparrow et al., 2004, p. 31). Moreover, in addition to institutional factors, culture also plays a crucial role in HR practices of multinational organizations. The cultures of different societies differ from each other (e.g. differences of values related to hierarchy, collectivism, achievement etc.) and these variations also influence selection methods and criteria, training and development and employee relations (Brewster & Harris, 1999).

On the other hand, convergence of HR practices seems to be the trend for multinational organizations. According to a study by Sparrow, Schuler, & Jackson (1994), there was a clear tendency towards convergence in HR practices among multinational organizations for competitive advantage already two decades ago. The same conclusions have been also researched by later large-sample researches, indicating a convergence to worldwide best practices (e.g. Pudelko & Harzing, 2007). The convergence view is closely linked to the classic management theorists who note that there is a pressure for organizations to identify and adopt best practices in management in order to achieve efficiency, irrespective of cultural on national context (Smith & Meiksins, 1995). As the United States has been highly influential economic power, often the management practices have been seen as the most successful and competitive, therefore followed by others (Brewster, 2006).

However, a strict dichotomy between the two is being abandoned as more differentiated picture is depicted (Pudelko & Harzing, 2007). As organizations might also possess hybrid forms – human resources function might have convergence at one level, but divergence at another; or convergence in structure, but divergence in process (Sparrow et al., 2004).

The two central debates, *convergence vs divergence* and *standardization vs localization* need to be taken into account when considering the design aspects of development programmes in multinational organizations. Irrespective of which approaches the organizations choose, they require workforce and leaders who are not only experts in their respective sphere, but need to be able to also understand and effectively operate in a variety of different environments and systems – that means individuals with strong boundary spanning competencies.

2.4.3 Need for Boundary Spanning in Multinational Organizations

Multinational organizations face a lot of complexities regarding the fact that the subsidiaries are geographically dispersed. It requires them to constantly operate with a great deal of diversity and cope with boundaries that are characterized by increased complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty (Schotter, Mudambi, Doz, & Gaur, 2017, p. 15). The demand for intra-organizational coordination between the headquarters and the subsidiaries might give rise to various conflicts between the counterparts, triggered for example by strategic misalignments, perception gaps and information asymmetries (Schotter & Beamish, 2011).

Based on the study by Schotter & Beamish (2011), the boundary spanners were contributing greatly to leveraging the conflicts between the counterparts and creating positive outcomes in difficult situations. Therefore, boundary spanning activities have been proved to be highly important to maintain harmony within a multinational organization.

Evans (1992) has described the boundary spanning activities that help to integrate separate units and create strategic and operational linkages as an "organizational glue". The "glue" concept encompasses guidelines how an organization can foster individual-level boundary spanning, by creating favourable conditions on an organizational level. There are various elements that organizations can use, from fostering horizontal cooperation, helping to create face-to-face relationships, organizing mobility of employees, supporting the broadening of perspectives and relationships, promoting knowledge transfer and cultural skills and offering trainings to develop individual competencies (Evans 1992). Thus, the "glue" concept can be used for both mitigating the different dilemmas as well as to develop human capital and thus, strengthen competitive

advantage. Explanations of some of the activities for applying the "organizational glue" as brought out by Evans (1992):

- **Building face-to-face relationships** – during trainings, seminars and common outings that primarily aim to offer new formal knowledge, it is also important that the organizations support activities where participants across different horizontal, geographic and vertical boundaries get to know each other on a personal level. The ultimate goal is to help to build relationships among the participants, so that they are exposed to new perspectives and reject their stereotypes of other functions and affiliates. Instead, creating networks should be encouraged.

- **Horizontal cooperation** – in various assignments, the members should be required to work together from different functional departments. Through these activities, the development of a tighter network within the organization will be fostered. Furthermore, together with increased knowledge-sharing across horizontal groups, communities of practice and centres of excellence can be formed. Initially, the headquarters can act as a network leader and steer the idea, but later the expertise should spread across organization organically.

- **Training for individual competencies** – through organizing seminars and workshops, the organization aims to develop the personal as well as organizational competencies of individuals as well as can create new knowledge and alignment within the organization. The aim is to clarify the complications and opportunities within an organization, by having multiple perspectives on the same issue and creating increased knowledge sharing opportunities.

- **Increased mobility** – supporting the mobility of individuals across different subunits results in an array of vital outcomes, such as the possibility to develop new leadership qualities, enhanced cross-cultural competencies, broadened perspectives and relationships.

These activities exemplify how the individuals can add value to linking the organization together through boundary spanning activities. In addition to greater organizational alignment, the stronger informal communication links have also proved to support knowledge transfer (Reagans & McEvily 2003) adapting to changed circumstances (Ghoshal, Korine, & Szulanski, 1991).

The motivation for an individual to engage in boundary spanning activities in these situations seem to be connected with the prior career history (Schotter & Beamish, 2011, p. 255). Therefore, it is crucial to develop the competencies and motivation at the time when the participants are the most receptive and open-minded – e.g. during the graduate programmes. There are multiple aspects that might affect the effectiveness of a training programme and a major one is the topic of culture.

2.5 Cultural Aspects

When the organizations invest in human resource development initiatives that help to create links across geographical, demographical, vertical and horizontal boundaries, they also need to take into account the various aspects of culture. Multinational organizations face a lot of cultural barriers that present constant challenges for the organizations (House et al., 2004).

Culture is central to individuals´ understanding of work, their approach to it and the ways their expectations about interactions with others. It provides a "frame" through which individuals understand and experience the world that has been formed through their past experiences. It has a deep-level influence on human behaviour and thereby might predict future behaviours as values guide the individuals in their daily actions (Golden & Veiga, 2005). In case the values and supported practices in an organization are not corresponding to the deeply held values of individuals, they might feel dissatisfied, uncommitted, uncomfortable and distracted and not perform well (Newman & Nollen, 1996). Therefore, it is crucial that in the case of multicultural and diverse workforce, that the organizational culture would not be overly bounded to the specific national culture, but instead reflecting more standardized and universal values.

But this does not mean that organizations should avoid employees from culturally diverse backgrounds. Individuals from different backgrounds possess a diversity of cultural values, preferences, attitudes, this diversity combined provides the team with broader information resources, cultural capital and skill sets. This can be very beneficial, as exemplified by study from Caligiuri, Lazarova, & Zehetbauer (2004), having a nationally diverse leadership team correlates positively with the international performance of the organization.

Cultural aspects also influence the premises of individuals becoming effective boundary spanners. For example, research about knowledge sharing indicated that westerners are better at transferring explicit knowledge, whereas Japanese are better at tacit knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). More specifically, Golden & Veiga (2005) have linked the cultural dimensions identified by Hofstede such as *collectivism vs individualism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity vs femininity, long term vs short term* with individual´s potential probability to engage in boundary spanning activities. Explanations how each aspect can influence the individual are the following (Golden & Veiga, 2005):

- **Collectivism vs Individualism** – individuals from collectivist cultures might have a higher tendency to support and encourage boundary spanning across the organization as they see organization "as a whole", as opposed to people from individualist cultures that might

have a stronger in-group (own team) vs out-group (rest of the organization) attitude. Moreover, members from collectivist cultures seem to be more reciprocal and cooperative in relationships than people from individualist cultures, therefore it could be suggested that they are more leaning to cooperative relationship building.

- **Power distance** – individuals from cultures with high power distance are used to centralized decision-making, which indicates barriers between different units. Furthermore, individuals from these countries would feel discomfort when communicating with other members of the organization that are higher in the rank and therefore they might shy away from boundary spanning activities requiring this kind of communication. On the other hand, the individuals from low power distance cultures and members tend to see each other as equals, therefore vertical boundary spanning activities are undertaken with ease.

- **Uncertainty avoidance** – as boundary spanning activities encompass gathering information, it helps to reduce ambiguities and uncertainty for individuals who otherwise would be threatened by uncertain and unknown situations. Therefore, the individuals from high uncertainty avoidance cultures might be more involved in boundary spanning activities, as increased understanding the environment around them might offer them feeling of assurance. Conversely, individuals from cultures on the lower spectrum might be less concerned about the unknowns around them and might not be so actively involved in trying to gather all the information around them, thus might not be so engaged.

- **Long term vs Short term** – the individuals from cultures that emphasis long term orientation where the distant rewards are more desirable, are probably more devoted to building deep relationships that are a strong basis for boundary-spanning activities. However, individuals from cultures that focus primarily on the short-term objectives might find near-term challenges more important than taking the resources to establish and maintain relationships. Thus, the individuals from long-term orientation cultures might be considered more inclined to boundary spanning activities.

- **Masculinity vs Femininity** – Individuals from masculine cultures tend to be more tough and focused on material success and might value achievements and results over personal relationships. As they might be more competitive, the individuals are probably less likely communicating with others outside of their respective unit and might see boundary spanning as unnecessary unless it is specifically catering to their explicit need. Whereas individuals from feminine cultures are usually considered to be more modest and tender, seeking the approval of others as they have generally a high social orientation. Consequently, they value maintaining strong relationships with others and continuous knowledge sharing for cooperative actions.

However, it must be noted that these aspects might sometimes contradict with each other. For example, France is a culture high in power distance (indicates lower probability of boundary spanning behaviours), but also high in uncertainty avoidance (higher probability), therefore it is likely to cause choice anxiety (Golden & Veiga, 2005, p. 190). The suggested aspects should be treated as a simplification and not necessarily reflecting real world, but helping to understand the potential tendencies and help to explain background of occurrences.

Moreover, there could also be sharp differences between individuals within the same cultural framework that can lead to barriers in communication and knowledge sharing (Mason, 2003, p. 27). Therefore, it is important to possess necessary skills that help to collaborate with individuals, irrespective of their specific cultural background. Barner-Rasmussen et al. (2014) found out that cultural and language skills are significantly associated with individual´s boundary spanning activities. Cultural skills, applied to any types of culture from national, organizational and professional, mean that individual has internalized both explicit and tacit values, norms and beliefs, as well as possesses skills to operate culturally appropriate across various cultures (Barner-Rasmussen et al. 2014). For example, these skills can be especially beneficial in international assignments when otherwise the adjustment to the new environment can prove to be difficult and hinder the success of working for a common goal (Florkowski & Fogel, 1999).

Another aspect that contributes to successful collaboration in international environment is the willingness to deal with individuals from another cultural background within their own geographical border (Florkowski & Fogel, 1999, p. 785). Possessing strong cultural skills and being able to identify with others might help to improve the willingness, as according to social identity theory, people seem to favour in-group members to out-group ones (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Furthermore, there is a generic tendency for people to interact with others similar to themselves, both in terms of deep-level cultural understanding as well as surface-level characteristics (Watts, 1999). In any case, boundary spanning activities have proved to be performed better by individuals who possess cultural skills, compared to the peers who do not (Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014).

All in all, culture is an aspect that influences participants in all aspects at the organization – from dealing with individuals from different backgrounds and working together as a multicultural team, to participating in international assignments and dealing with external clients and stakeholders.

2.6 Graduate Programmes Designed to Develop Boundary Spanning Competencies

Taking all the previously mentioned aspects into consideration, a good design of an effective graduate programme in a multinational organization requires a lot of careful consideration. The aspects that need to be considered are multiple - starting from selection of suitable participants, considering the background and "frame" they bring and the expectations and motivation they possess. Furthermore, the organizations need to consider what are the goals they wish to achieve with the programme and take the long-term and strategic aspect into consideration. Not to mention the complexities that multinational organization face while operating in various environments and with diverse stakeholders. Moreover, it is necessary to design the programmes in a way that finds the right balance between internal consistency and answering to the specific needs of the environment where the organization operates in. Having analysed all these aspects, it is necessary to strategically choose the most effective way that would help to achieve the results and thus, contribute to the competitive advantage of the organization.

Regarding the development of competencies in the settings of multinational organizations, Taylor, Beechler, & Napier (1996) have brought out that every set of competencies can be a) context specific or b) context generalizable (effective across countries), indicating the usefulness outside the location in which these were developed. In the case of multinational organizations, many of the graduate programmes take place in subsidiaries of the organization that are distant from the headquarters, in a variety of countries. According to Taylor et al. (1996), there are three options in this kind of circumstances, how strategic human resource development initiatives can be designed:

First, having an *adaptive* orientation means that it is designed in a way that corresponds highly with external circumstances of the location, but less with the internal consistency of the organization. Second, *exportive* orientation means that top management prefers that it is designed in a way that it is closely linked to the headquarters and home country, replicating the practices from there. This orientation offers higher levels of integration inside the organization, but lower levels of corresponding to the external environment. Third, *integrative* orientation attempts to find the best practices inside the organization and transfer these (could be from subsidiary to another or from subsidiary to headquarters). This allows high internal consistency and moderate external consistency (Taylor et al., 1996, p. 964). The choice of strategy determines how context specific or generalizable the developed competencies are.

As ethnocentric attitudes and behaviours can be damaging for collaboration between counterparts from different cultural backgrounds (Florkowski & Fogel, 1999), the boundary spanning competencies of participants in graduate programmes should be developed in a way that are transferrable across various contexts. However, the input from headquarters and top management is in any case highly important as the success of development initiatives is said to be contingent on the involvement of senior management (Stahl et al., 2012, p. 7). In addition, organizations need to have a culture that supports and fosters boundary spanning activities across different boundaries (Ernst & Chrobot-Mason, 2010).

With regards to developing specifically individual´s boundary spanning competencies, the challenge seems to be multifaceted and composing of multiple aspects that need to be taken into account. Most importantly, the specific personal traits (Williams, 2002), the cultural "frame" and background (Golden & Veiga, 2005), and the way how competencies can be developed through by offering various experiences and exposure to unknown situations (Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014). Figure 1 depicts a model that visualizes the aspects that contribute to individual´s boundary spanning competencies.
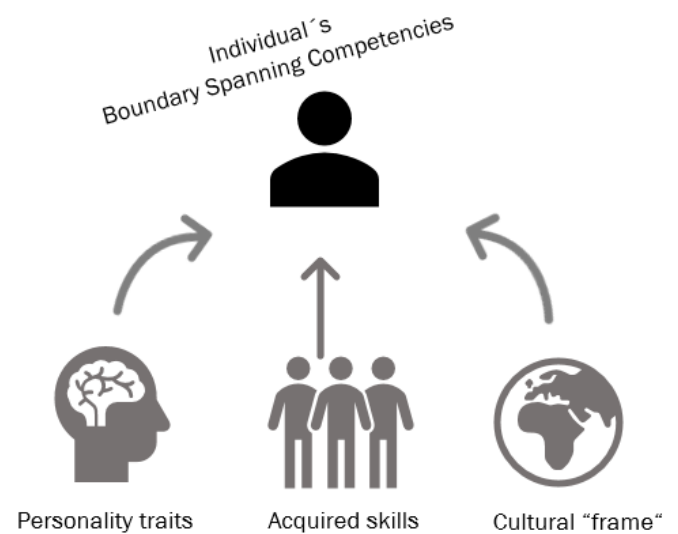
Figure 1 - Aspects contributing to boundary spanning competencies (author´s own contribution)

Based on the theoretical framework, sub-questions were derived in order to analyse if and how the multinational organizations currently focus on fostering the boundary spanning competencies in their graduate trainee programmes. The following questions will lead the empirical analysis of the topic:

1. *Are the graduates selected to the graduate programmes based on their potential for becoming boundary spanners?*
2. *To which extent does the design of the graduate programmes support developing boundary spanning competencies with regards to exposure across vertical, horizontal and geographical boundaries?*
3. *Does the design of the graduate programmes support developing boundary spanning competencies that are effective across cultures?*

Before delving into the results, the following chapter will first give an overview of the methodological considerations regarding the research design.

3. Methodology

To give an overview of the different methodological choices in the thesis, a research "onion" by Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill (2011), is used as a guide (see figure 2). It is a model that depicts the various aspects that need to be considered when conducting the research. The model is divided into six different layers – overarching research philosophy, research approach, research strategy, research choice, time horizon and data collection techniques and analysis procedures (Saunders et al., 2011, p. 136). In order to give an overview of the methodological aspects of this specific thesis, the layers will subsequently be discussed. At the end of the chapter, a visual depiction of a modified "onion" is added, depicting the specific choices of the thesis.
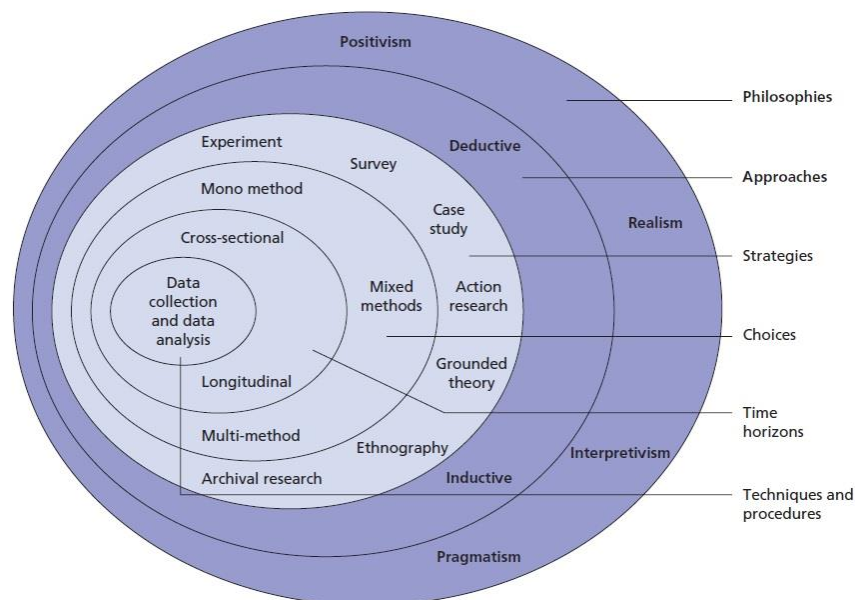
Figure 2 – Research "onion" by Saunders et al. (2011)

3.1 Philosophy and Approach

The research philosophy is closely connected to the way the researcher sees the world and the assumptions influence the choice of research strategy and methods. This thesis falls under critical realism philosophy, which argues that the world constantly changing and focus is on explaining within a context (Saunders et al., 2011, p. 129). Furthermore, realism view agrees that the researcher is biased in its opinions and interpretations, based on the individual´s cultural experiences, world view and upbringing. It indicates that there is an external reality that can be

described by collecting facts about it (Flick, 2015). In the realism research philosophy, it is important to choose methods in a way that they fit the subject matter (Saunders et al., 2011, p. 119).

Regarding the research approach, the thesis is conducted in a deductive manner. This approach create new knowledge about the real world, by constructing a framework on the basis of several theories and later analysing it based on empirical data (Pedersen, 2015). The direction of the approach is from theory to data - first creating theoretical framework, then having a structured approach to collect the empirical data to analyse the issue and explain causal relationships to later generalize conclusions (Saunders et al., 2011, p. 127). It is important to bear in mind that the theoretical analysis helps to create a theory-guided conceptualization of the phenomenon, but it is not one-to-one reflection of reality (Héritier, 2008, p. 63). By incorporating empirical data to the theoretical framework, the combination helps to explain the concrete empirical situation (Héritier, 2008). The analysis of pre-existing theoretical and empirical literature can be found in chapter 2.

3.2 Strategy, Choice and Time Horizons

The purpose of the thesis is to offer a descripto-explanatory study, that means portraying a clear picture of a phenomena and using the description as a precursor to explanation (Saunders et al., 2011, p. 140). A convergent mixed methods design will be used, meaning that quantitative and qualitative data will be collected in parallel, analysed separately by using a combination of analysis techniques and then consolidated (Creswell, 2013, p. 133). More specifically, data is collected through a survey and by analysing available pre-existing content (more detailed information can be found in chapter 3.3). The analysis of available pre-existing data allows to study the reality, as the documents were originally created for other purposes than research. The advantages of using a survey lie in the fact that data can be collected in an economical way from respondents and the responses allow to suggest various relationships between the variables, provide explanations about these relationships and produce models (Saunders et al., 2011, p. 144). The use of a mixed method research helps to answer the research question in a more thorough way and offers opportunities to better evaluation of the findings can be trusted (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Additionally, the different methods help to tackle the same issue from different angles, giving a more complete picture of the specific phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

Regarding time horizon, the thesis describes the situation in a specific time period (in the spring of 2017), that means it has a cross-sectional approach. This thesis can be considered as a reference point for future studies in the same topic, in order to describe the changes in the phenomenon (in a longitudinal study).

3.3 Techniques and Procedures

The specific methods for data collection and analysis will be discussed in the following sections.

3.3.1 Collecting Primary Data: Survey

In order to get information about the design and desired outcomes of the graduate development programmes, data was collected from the direct sources – the individuals who are involved with managing the graduate development programmes in the specific organizations. The responses were collected through internet-mediated self-administered questionnaires. The questionnaire is a suitable tool as it allows efficiently collect answer from geographically distant participants, offers a potential for the respondents to remain anonymous (in case of sensitive topics) and by asking each person the same set of questions, allows a comparable overview of the phenomenon at hand (Saunders et al., 2011, p. 360-364). By offering a condensed description of trends, attitudes and opinions (Creswell, 2013, p. 155), it forms a great basis for later identifying and examining the relationships between the variables and describing the situation (Saunders et al., 2011, p. 360-364).

One essential critique to the use of self-administered, internet-mediated questionnaire is the fact that, one can never be completely sure who exactly answers the questions (Saunders et al., 2011, p. 363). However, in the context of thesis, targeted emails were used for forwarding information, which increases the confidence that suitable and informed person will reach the questionnaire. Regarding suitable types of questions, the authors recommend closed questions that are of the interest to the respondent (Saunders et al., 2011, p. 364). The same aspects were also observed during the pilot testing phase of the questionnaire, which showed that respondents discontinued filling in the answers after seeing multiple open-ended questions. In order to mitigate the issue, the questionnaire was modified to look less resource-consuming for the respondents.

The following strategies were implemented in order to maximise response rate, validity and reliability, based on the suggestions offered by Saunders et al. (2011, p. 362):

- *Clear layout of the questionnaire*. Use of a professional tool (SurveyXact*)* that is specifically designed for conducting surveys, also recommended by the university (Copenhagen Business School, 2017). The layout and design were modified in order to convey professionalism (use of corresponding graphics and choice of colours) and improve readability for the respondents

- *Thoughtful design of the individual questions*. The individual questions were carefully considered, linked to theoretical framework and analysed if they can be used in order to achieve the desired outcomes. These included adopting and adapting questions from other questionnaires as well as developing new ones. Careful design of questions is essential as it determines the quality of the information received (Flick, 2015). Part of the questionnaire consisted of questions analysed in comparison with a large-scale GLOBE study (more information in the following chapter). In order to achieve correspondence between the two surveys, an equal wording was used in order to minimize the adverse effects caused by questionnaire design. However, some of the pre-existing questions seemed to have a negative bias in them, which might cause issue of potentially trying to give socially desirable answers (Dillman, 2000). Therefore, the issue was mitigated by offering a possibility to answer on a continuum where both extremes depicted socially equally desirable options. The questions were consulted with various external people to confirm that they are unequivocally understood.

- *Transparency regarding the purpose of the questionnaire.* Following the suggestions regarding research ethics as an important aspect when negotiating access to the data (Saunders et al., 2011, p. 161) the aim of the survey was clearly communicated to the respondents at all times, together information about the specific institution and specialized department. Furthermore, potential respondents were encouraged to ask further information, if needed. For this purpose, an email address and phone number were added to the covering letter.

- *Carefully executed administration.* In order to get access to the desired respondents and information, a careful execution was planned. Regarding the specific days and times of spreading the questionnaire, a conscious choice was to share the information during office hours in the beginning of the week. This is in accordance with a study carried out by professional survey provider SurveyMonkey that indicated highest response rates to questionnaires are in the beginning of the workweek (SurveyMonkey, 2017). Furthermore, many public holidays fell into the period of data collection, so the following days after holidays were avoided as well. In order to create attention, the relevancy and importance wa communicated to the potential respondents through the cover letter, for example by using phrases such as "a chance to contribute to creating new knowledge in the field" or "the topic has only briefly researched so far". After the respondents opened the link to survey, they came across the introduction to the questionnaire. It had the the purpose of informing the potential respondents about the aims and giving guidelines for filling in the questionnaire, as it has been argued that adding a covering letter helps to improve the response rate (Dillman, 2000) .

The questionnaire (in a basic form, without the design elements) and the covering letter, can be find attached to the thesis as an appendix.

3.3.2 The Sample

The sample group consisted of people who are knowledgeable about the graduate programmes in their respective multinational organizations. Most of these individuals are working in the human resources department, often in the positions that are titled as "early career specialist", "talent acquisition specialist", "graduate recruitment specialist" or other similar titles.

A variety of different methods were used to reach the potential respondents. First, a focused search through a public search engines with keywords focusing on aspects such as "graduate programme", "graduate program", "graduate trainee programme", "leadership development program" etc was conducted to find the most suitable organizations and graduate programmes. Although relevant responses were plentiful, getting access to the specific people proved to be more troublesome. Most of the organizations had no specific contact email or telephone number available and "contact information" page provided only postal address and in some instances, a generic form of contact and enquiry. In the case of the last option, the forms were utilized in order to potentially reach the respondent. As the common recruitment period to graduate programmes is in the fall period, some of the contact emails were inactive and shut down. To find the organizations which are actively searching for graduates, a focused search on recruitment portals, such as *graduateland.com, targetjobs.co.uk* or *indeed.com* was conducted as a second phase. Third, various lists prepared by career centres of universities in order to inform their students about the possibilities of graduate programmes, were used in order to find more respondents that would fill in the criteria. In total, the request to participate in the survey was sent out to 135 potential respondents. Besides from the targeted emails and contact forms on the websites, the survey was posted to a LinkedIn group named "Global HR Professionals" with the hope of getting attention from professionals working with graduate programmes in multinational organizations.

As the result, twelve respondents of the sample group contributed to filling in the questionnaire in April 2017. One of the respondents did not complete the questionnaire, which resulted in eleven units of analysis.

The respondents were on a variety of industries, offering graduate programmes with different specific focus. A summarizing table of the respondents and the organizations:

Respondent ID	Focus of the Graduate Programme	Industry of the organization	Country of HQ
Respondent 1	Engineering	n/a	Germany
Respondent 2	Management/Leadership	Telecommunications	United Kingdom
Respondent 3	Finance	Banking	France
Respondent 4	Real Estate	Real Estate	South Africa
Respondent 5	Sales & Marketing	Retailing	United Kingdom
Respondent 6	Management/Leadership	Foods & Beverages	Ireland
Respondent 7	Management/Leadership	Computers: Consumer Services and the Internet	Japan
Respondent 8	Management/Leadership	Investment Services	United Kingdom
Respondent 9	Marketing	Consumer Goods	Netherlands
Respondent 10	Management/Leadership	Healthcare	United Kingdom
Respondent 11	Management/Leadership	Support Services	United Kingdom

Table 1 - Summary of the Questionnaire Respondents

The response rate of approximately 9% might seem rather low at first, but it is not extremely low compared to the average response rate of internet-based questionnaires where the likelihood is usually 11% or lower (Saunders et al., 2011, p. 364).

However, the relatively low response rate can be explained by three main factors based on the feedback received. First, the active recruitment period to the graduate programmes is usually in the fall period. That means that a lot of the emails that were indicated publicly *(e.g. graduateprogramme@organizationname.com)* are currently inactive and have an automatic response stating that they are currently not being used. As there is only very limited publicly available information behind the individuals of this kind of email, this kind of responses meant a dead end. Second, many organizations gave an answer that it is against their policy to answer to enquiries like that, bringing out various reasons. For example:

"/... the project you have mentioned in your e-mail sounds very interesting however I am sorry to inform you that due to our security and confidentiality policies it is not possible to conduct such research and/or survey in any of our offices."

As a third reason, in multinational organizations the design and execution of graduate programmes might be divided between different parts of the organization. For example, the people responsible for recruitment, selection and actual execution might come from very different areas. Therefore, this leads to not being able to give informed answers about the different aspects mentioned in the questionnaire. Furthermore, in case of multiple organizations, the recruitment and selection seemed to be outsourced to external actors and thus, being completely separated from the actual graduate programme.

Although getting access to the specific informed respondents seemed to be more challenging as initially expected, a lot of the organizations have very detailed information about the design of the graduate programmes publicly available on their website. Therefore, in order to give a more complete understanding of the research problem.

3.3.3 Collecting Secondary Data

In addition to collecting primary data, secondary data was collected and analysed for the thesis process, such as documentary data based on written documents as well as using secondary survey data. More specific information about these follow in the next sections.

3.3.3.1 Content Analysis – Documentary

To get insights about the specific design of the graduate programmes, the publicly available material regarding the graduate programmes was analysed. For most organizations, the data was collected through the careers webpages where the description of the graduate programme was presented. In some instances, a presentation or a brochure uploaded to the organization´s webpage, was analysed.   Content analysis has been broadly defined as a technique of systematically and objectively identifying pre-specified characteristics of messages (Holsti, 1969, p. 601). The content was coded into various pre-specified categories, most of them focusing on different types of rotations and exposure across various types of boundaries. Although not every source provided complete set of information, the content was included into the sample only in case a clearly specified length of the graduate programme was indicated. That aspect helped to validate the sample and eliminate the material that just focused about graduate job opportunities (that are not actually development programmes in their essence). The content analysis also helped to have an overview of the communicative aspects – as the websites are primarily used as a tool to attract the potential candidates, it helped to determine the sender´s identity and the aims of the message (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2007, p. 297).

The sample was initially composing of the same organizations as the one for the questionnaire. However, some of webpages were inactive or did not have enough sufficient available data. Therefore, additional webpages were added to the sample. All in all, content from 100 organization´s was analysed.

3.3.3.2 GLOBE research

In addition to collecting additional data, a pre-existing data-set was used for the purpose of the thesis. More specifically, the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness) research project which focused on examining the impact of culture in organizations. The cross-cultural research measured the practices and values in 62 societies and 951 organizations over 10 years and exploring how is culture related to societal, organizational, and leadership effectiveness (House et al., 2004). In context of the thesis, the part about cultural implications on leadership was focused on.

The aim of the study was to understand which specific leadership characteristics and actions are universally endorsed as effective leadership and how much were these qualities and actions linked to cultural characteristics. Leadership was studied in the following six dimensions:

- Charismatic/Value-Based – reflects the ability to inspire, motivate and expect high performance outcomes from others based on firmly held core values
- Team-Oriented – emphasizes effective team building and implementation of common purpose or goal among team members
- Participative – reflects the degree to which managers involve others in making and implementing decisions
- Humane – reflects supportive and considerate leadership, including passion and generosity
- Autonomous – refers to independent and individualistic leadership attributes
- Self-protective – ensuring safety and security of the individual and group through status enhancement and face saving

The results indicated that the first is universally desirable, but other patterns are often all culturally contingent (House et al., 2004). Having this knowledge in mind, the interim results of the research were analysed and grouped in order to provide a basis for comparison for the thesis at hand. The four dimensions that were the most relevant for the purpose of this study (participative, humane, autonomous and self-protective), were therefore used in a modified version in the questionnaire. The aim was to find patterns and relationships between variables that might be specific to multinational organizations.

3.3.4 Data Analysis

After collection of data from the various sources, it was analysed through a variety of techniques. For quantitative data, it was first prepared (entered, coded, checked for errors, formatted to same type), then processed, grouped and reorganized to allow further analysis. Aspects such as frequency, range, rank, mode, median and correlation were calculated. In many cases, to visualize the tendencies and make the content more easily understandable also to others, the results were presented in various tables, graphs and charts. For qualitative data, after it was collected and organized, it was examined to understand what the respondents might have meant answering these aspects. Then, the answers were categories and structured according to similarity between the answers. After the results were displayed, it allowed to examine and describe the tendencies and trends and explain the relationships within the data set. The results and discussion about the empirical data can be found in chapter 4.

As a conclusion to methodology chapter, figure 3 shows a modified "research onion", depicting the specific methodological choices of the current thesis.
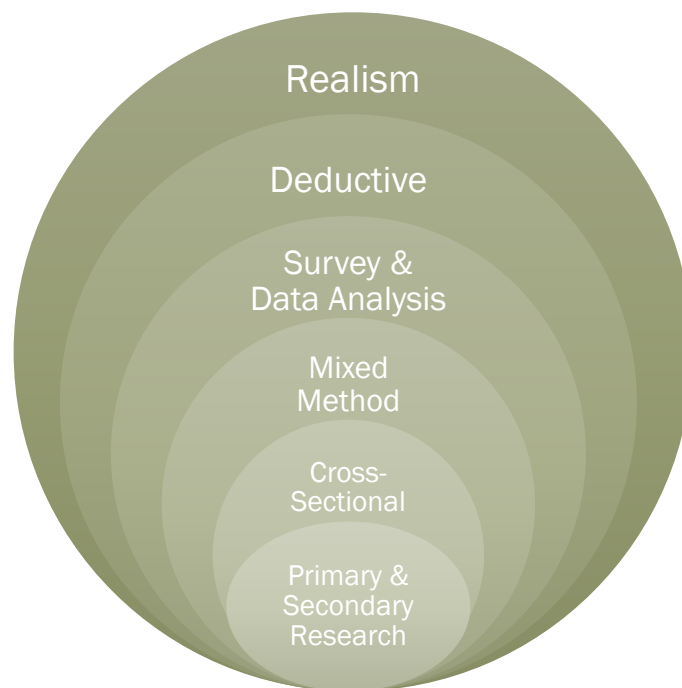
Figure 3 -Research "onion" applied to the specific aspects of the thesis

3.4 Delimitations and Criticism

Despite of the careful design of the method, it is important to recognize that the study has multiple limitations. Davies & Hughes (2014) have described validity of a research as an assumption that the outcome of the research will indeed reflect the reality it aims to describe. Regarding this aspect, it must be noted that the study is based on the various descriptions of the graduate programmes (promotional material, websites, responses of the representatives), therefore it reflects the reality through the eyes of others. Both in case of promotional material as well as survey respondents, the information provided can be biased to be more "favourable" than the reality is. This can have an impact on the implications of the research, as the results could be reflecting the actual situation in a distorted way. However, by adopting a philosophical position of realism – truth is what the senses show us as reality (Saunders et al., 2011, p. 114), it means, if the descriptions portray the reality, then it becomes the reality as we sense the images of of the things in the real world, not the things itself. If the graduate programme has been in this way sensed by someone who has described it as reality, it could be considered reality. In order to get a first-hand sense of reality and not through the descriptions of others, it could be beneficial to research the same topic also by using another research design, for example collecting data through participant observation. More suggestions about future research will follow in chapter 4.5.

Another limitation of this research is that the fact that the thesis focuses specifically on the graduate programmes from English-speaking organizations. This indicates a bias towards specific regions, but there exists also a wide variety of other programmes that are not included in the study. Furthermore, the response rate and sample size could have been considerably larger in order to make more confident conclusions and generalizations about the topic. Regarding representativeness of the specific sample and data collection through questionnaire, it could be argued that there is no 100% certainty that all the respondents are indeed from organizations that correspond to the definition of "multinational organization" within the framework of this study. In addition, the survey responses might also portray a more favourable picture, due to socially desirable answers (Dillman, 2000)

Furthermore, the design of the questionnaire is driven by the researcher´s own agenda (Davies & Hughes, 2014, p. 82). It could be arguable if the specific questions asked objectively reflect the issue at hand. Especially as after pilot testing, the amount of qualitative questions had to be decreased in order to have a higher probability of an increased response rate. But all aspects considered, the research provided interesting results that create new knowledge in the field.

4. Results and Discussion

The results and discussion are presented in the order of the sub-questions. Later on, a summary will combine the different aspects in order to answer the main research question.

4.1 Sub-question 1: Are the graduates selected to the graduate programmes based on their potential for becoming boundary spanners?

The first question will focus on the selection procedure to the graduate programmes. The empirical data was collected through a questionnaire by asking the respondents information about the selection process in their respective organization. To begin with, the selection process for most of the graduate programmes is a multi-stage process. Different competencies and skills are being tested through online methods as well as assessment centres and interviews. For all the respondents, the selection process starts with screening the application documents (CV and cover/motivational letter) and the successful candidates proceed to next stage that usually means a variety of online tests. The respondents mentioned the following aspects being assessed:

/...online tests (verbal, numerical, situational)/ /...video interview/ (Respondent 6)

/...Online Testing (verbal, numerical, logical, situational strengths)/ /... Strengths based video interview/ (Respondent 8)

/.. Situational Judgement Test and a Personality Profiler, Numerical Reasoning Test (NRT), Verbal Reasoning Test (VRT) and Logical Reasoning Test (LRT)/ (Respondent 10)

After successful completion of the internet-mediated assessment, applicants are usually invited to special assessment days. The aim is to confirm the fit between the organization and the participant through different activities, for example:

/...full day assessment centre with mixed activities supported by numerous business leads/ (Respondent 1)

/...presentation, group discussion, interview/ (Respondent 6)

The multi-stage and diverse selection process indicates that not only the technical skills of graduates are being tested, but also personal competencies and a strategic fit. Strong focus seems to be also on evaluating the candidates´ soft skills, especially through selection procedures that entail interaction with other candidates. It corresponds with Branine (2008) who has indicated that there is a move in selection and recruitment methods and criteria from job-related to person-related. The aspect that selection procedures also include assessment on candidates´ situational

strengths and groupwork skills, shows the importance for organizations to see the candidates´ interpersonal skills. These interpersonal skills - collaborating with different types of people and getting aligned for a common goal, correspond closely also to skills required for boundary spanning activities (Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014; Ernst & Chrobot-Mason, 2010; Williams, 2002). Thus, the way how the selection procedure is designed, would indicate that the candidates who are successfully chosen to the graduate programmes, already possess the necessary skills that are prerequisite for successful boundary spanning activities.

In addition to analysing the candidates´ skills, the selection process can also be serving another other purpose. The rigorous and multi-phase selection procedure can act as a signal for candidates - after been selected as a result of a long process, the candidates potentially feel like joining an elite organization where people and high performance matter (Pfeffer, 2005). Furthermore, thorough selection process also potentially acts as a method to immerse the future participants to the organization´s values and culture. As the assessment days sometimes include assignments combining different functional areas (as mentioned by Respondent 1), it acts as a premise for boundary spanning activities. These cross-functional assignments show the interconnected and interrelated nature of the tasks and demolishes the understanding of different departments as separate silos. As most of the challenges nowadays require cooperation and collaboration between different types of people across various boundaries (Ernst & Chrobot-Mason, 2010), this way of approaching the organizational structure is essential for fostering boundary spanning inside the organization.

For boundary spanning activities to emerge, the individuals need to possess some necessary qualities. In order to understand what kind of aspects are being valued in the selection process, the respondents were asked to give ratings of different aspects about the candidates. The aspects were rated on a scale from 1 to 7 (1= not important at all; 7=extremely important), based on the perceived importance of this aspect to be successful in the selection process. The results have been summarized in the table:

Dimension:	Mean	Rank	Min value	Max value	Range
Knowledge of foreign languages	3.7	3	1	7	6
Previous experience living in another culture besides from the home culture	3.3	4	1	6	5
Strong interpersonal skills	6.6	1	6	7	1
Excellent numerical skills	5.4	2	4	7	3

The exact match between the major of degree of the participant and the focus of the graduate programme	3.0	5	1	7	6
Education from the same country where the programme takes place	2.5	6	1	7	6

Table 2 – Importance of selected dimensions in the selection process – summary table

One aspect was clearly the most important according to all the respondents –having strong interpersonal skills. All the respondents rated this aspect very highly, most of them with the maximum of 7 points (extremely important). None of the respondents gave this skill less than 6 points. This result corresponds with previous research focusing on the recruitment practices in multinational organizations, according to which soft skills and personal attributes are increasingly valued and focused on (e.g. Robles, 2012). The shift from evaluating candidates merely based on their job-related and technical skills, is probably strongly connected to the fact that the tasks in all functional areas are increasingly interconnected and require cooperation and collaboration between different counterparts. The interpersonal skills are needed in every aspect of work, both inside and outside of the organization. The varied groups of stakeholders (from colleagues to managers, authorities and clients) might all have conflicting interests that can be successfully handled only by possessing strong interpersonal skills (Gillard, 2009). Moreover, the strong interpersonal skills are strongly interrelated to boundary spanning competencies.

On the other hand, the respondents also rated the need to have excellent numerical skills very highly. All of the respondents ranked it on the upper end of the scale (4 or higher) and it was one of the highest scoring skills out of the selection, with an average of 5.4 points. This is somewhat surprising, as many researchers have indicated a clear shift away from focusing on hard (technical) stills to soft (interpersonal) skills (e.g. Robles 2012).

When putting the two extremes into comparison – personal competencies vs functional expertise, the respondents clearly showed a tendency towards the personal competencies direction (see figure 4).
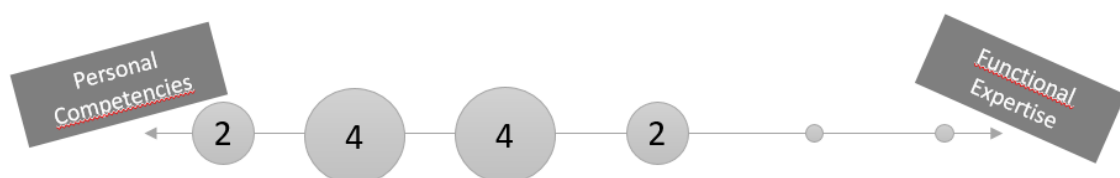
Figure 4- The distribution of answers on a semantic differential scale regarding the importance of an aspect in the selection process (Personal Competencies-Functional Expertise)

The answers, given on a semantic differential scale, show that personal competencies are valued more highly than functional expertise when selecting participants to the graduate programme. With regards to analysing graduate programmes as human capital development initiatives aimed at developing individual´s boundary spanning competencies, this result is encouraging.

Regarding numerical skills and interpersonal skills, the respondents portrayed resembling opinions and rated the aspects with rather similar points. But there were two other dimensions, where the responses ranged drastically, from one extreme to another. The result is even more surprising, as these aspects, cultural skills and language skills, have been considered to be the most significant in connection with one´s potential of becoming a boundary spanner (Barner-Rasmussen et al. 2014). Some respondents found these skills to be extremely/very important, whereas others did not find these important at all. The lower ranking of language skills could be explained by the fact that most of the respondents were involved with graduate programmes offered in English-speaking countries and English is considered to be the "lingua franca" of the business world (Nickerson, 2005), therefore the knowledge of foreign language is not considered to be essential. However, the importance of having an experience living abroad revealed a very interesting trend – these respondents that were representing a graduate programme located in another geographical region than the headquarters, tended to on average to rate the necessity of cultural experience higher (average of 4 points vs average of 1.8 points). In that light, a correlation between the two aspects was calculated (0.422), which is considered to be relatively strong (Shortell, 2001). Furthermore, the same relation (although to a slightly lesser extent) was also visible when regarding the importance of language skills.

Two remaining dimensions, education from the same country and the exact match with the degree programme are aspects that are not considered to be particularly beneficial for an individual to become a boundary spanner. On the opposite, these aspects might mean that the individual has not developed some skills (such as cultural skills), that might be useful for boundary spanning. For example, exposure and knowledge to different disciplines and geographical regions would possibly indicate curiosity and wider understanding of different perspectives. Thus, it could be beneficial for developing individual´s boundary spanning competencies. Therefore, in case an organization would select participants to the graduate trainee programme based on the potential of boundary spanning competencies, these aspects would be expected to be rated to be as low as possible.

Regarding the responses, these two factors were indeed rated on the lower end of the scale (on average 2.5 and 3, respectively), ranking to be the least important of the mentioned dimensions. However, the answers still ranged from one extreme to another, with some of the respondents finding the aspects to be extremely important and others who did not find this to be relevant at all.

The responses regarding the specific educational background can probably be explained also by looking specifically the focus of the graduate programme. For example, in the graduate programmes where the focus is broader, e.g. sales & marketing or general management/ leadership training, the specific education does not necessarily need to be in the specific field as strong managers/leaders can come from different functional backgrounds and do not need to necessarily have a corresponding formal education. The relatively strong negative correlation regarding this question, -0.48 proves the potentially similar opinion from the respondents. However, the engineering-focused graduate programme, representing a more technical field, has indicated an extremely high importance of candidates to possess a specific background, which seems rational and expected. Especially, as the respondent has specifically brought out in the "additional comments" section a link between the programme and other institutions in the specific functional field.

> *Our Engineering Graduate programme is accredited by both the Institute of Chemical Engineers (IChemE) and Institute of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE) (Respondent 1)*

In addition to asking the respondents to rate the different aspects in the selection process, they were asked to state what is the single most important aspect when they are selecting the candidates. When answering the question, the respondents seem to have trouble narrowing down the different criteria and provided various lists with competencies and personal traits instead.

However, the two aspects were standing out from most of the responses – the communication/ interpersonal skills

> */..main focus for us are the communication skills of the candidate. (Respondent 11) /..how the individual performs & interacts with others during the assessment centre activities (Respondent 1)*

as well as the motivation/drive from the candidate.

Both of these aspects are also something that are also essential for an individual for being successful at boundary spanning activities. For example, the motivation is a prerequisite for successful knowledge transfer and knowledge sharing (Minbaeva et al., 2003). Knowledge sharing, in turn, is essential in all the boundary spanning activities – exchanging, linking, facilitating and intervening (Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014). Also the ability to engage with others and possessing interpersonal skills, as repeatedly mentioned before, are found to be the main characteristics of boundary spanners (e.g. Williams, 2002)

All in all, taking into account the selection procedures and criteria, the responses indicate a clear tendency to selecting participants based on their personal competencies. The organizations make

a lot of effort and investments to rigorous selection process in order to find the most suitable candidates and test their knowledge and skills in a wide variety of settings. The way that the respondents valued the importance of different aspects, clearly presented a tendency to value the same aspects that are necessary prerequisites for boundary spanning. Even in the most technical programme, the interpersonal skills were rated to have the highest importance. However, the location of the graduate programme and the distance to headquarters seemed to play a significant role in the answers, portraying weaker connection on selecting the participants with a potentially higher boundary spanning competency. More information about the differences between geographically distant subsidiaries and locations of headquarters will follow in chapter 3, where the context of the graduate programmes is analysed. Before that, sub-question two will give first focus more specifically on the specific design and content of the graduate programmes.

4.2 Sub-question 2: To which extent does the design of the graduate programmes support developing boundary spanning competencies with regards to exposure across vertical, horizontal and geographical boundaries?

In order to describe and analyse the general tendencies regarding the design and structure of the graduate programmes, the publicly available informative material (websites, brochures, presentations) of 100 graduate programmes was collected. The general trend among the organizations is to provide rather precise information about the design of graduate trainee programmes, e.g. regarding length, different assignments and locations. This practice can be seen beneficial in the attempt to attract top candidates – as expectations to personal development are the highest in the beginning phases of the career (Sturges, Guest, & Mac Davey, 2000, p. 355) and the potential of training opportunities and personal development are one of the main reasons for graduates to join the specific organization (Arnold & Mackenzie Davey, 1994).

4.2.1 Length of the Graduate Programme

Regarding the graduate trainee programmes in question, all of the analysed units had specified the length of the specific programme (as it was a precondition to be included in the study). Out of this sample, the shortest programme was ten weeks long and the longest programme six years long (see figure 5). In general, the lengths seemed to be divided based on a 6-month period, with programmes lasting usually a corresponding length (1 year; 1,5 years; 2 years; 2,5 years; 3 years; 3,5 years) and there were no almost no instances with another pattern. The most usual length for a graduate programme was clearly two years, with 42% of organizations indicating that their programme lasts this specific length.

THE LENGTH OF GRADUATE PROGRAMMES
(IN YEARS)
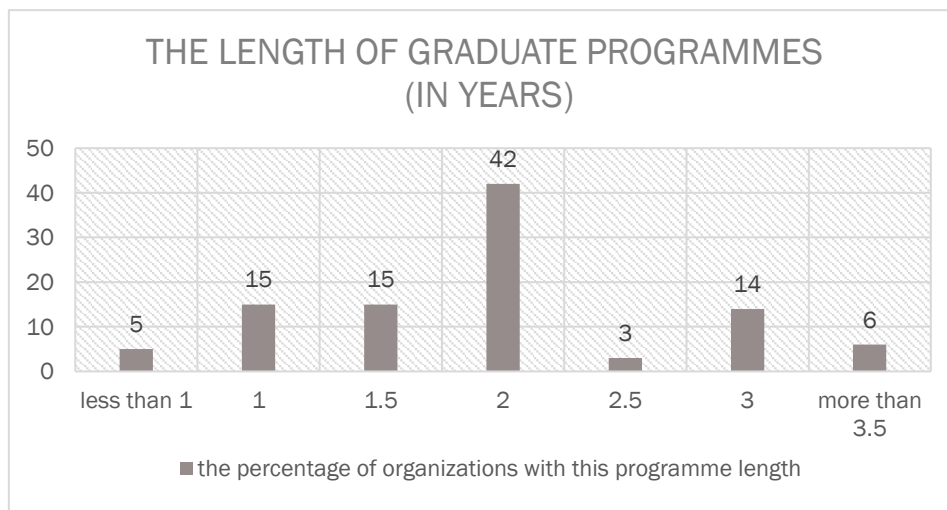
Figure 5 - The Length of Graduate Programmes (based on the analysis of secondary data)

The length of two years seems to be optimal in order to get the candidates acquainted to the organization and portray a mutual investment, but not being requiring too much commitment. It corresponds to a research that indicated that graduates expect to be more mobile between the different organizations during their early career, instead of staying within the same organization the whole time (King, 2003). Furthermore, this length allows the different rotations to be evenly spread over the time period.

The graduate programmes usually offer three types of individual development opportunities – formal trainings, on-the-job experiences and mentoring. As mentioned previously, there is an increased importance of personal competencies and soft skills (communication skills, teamwork skills, knowledge management skills) for young talent at the workplace. The development of these skills is essential, but the development is often contextual and in order to be aligned with the specific needs of the organization, talent development must be increasingly work-based (Garavan et al., 2012, p. 8). Therefore, increasing number of organizations is adopting the 70:20:10 rule of development and learning where 70% consists of on-the-job assignments, 20% on developmental relationships and 10% on formal coursework and training (Wilson, Van Velsor, Chandrasekar, & Criswell, 2011). The adoption (either directly or in a modified version) of this strategy is visible, as most of the graduate programmes seem to focus mostly on experiential learning and various on-the-job assignments, combining it with some formal training courses and mentoring.

4.2.2 Functional Exposure

The exposure to different functional areas across various horizontal boundaries is also seen as highly beneficial for developing boundary spanning competencies (Pfeffer, 2005). From the data collected, 94% of the graduate programmes had an indication that they offer rotations between different departments. The reason for high levels of displaying this information might be explained by the fact that job rotations are often associated for employees with promotion and growth (Campion, Cheraskin, & Stevens, 1994, p. 1535), and highlighting the existence of job rotations in the descriptions of the graduate programmes can act as a mechanism attracting the top candidates.

Whereas some organizations just mentioned the existence of different job rotations, others specified the amount and length of the various rotations (see figure 6).
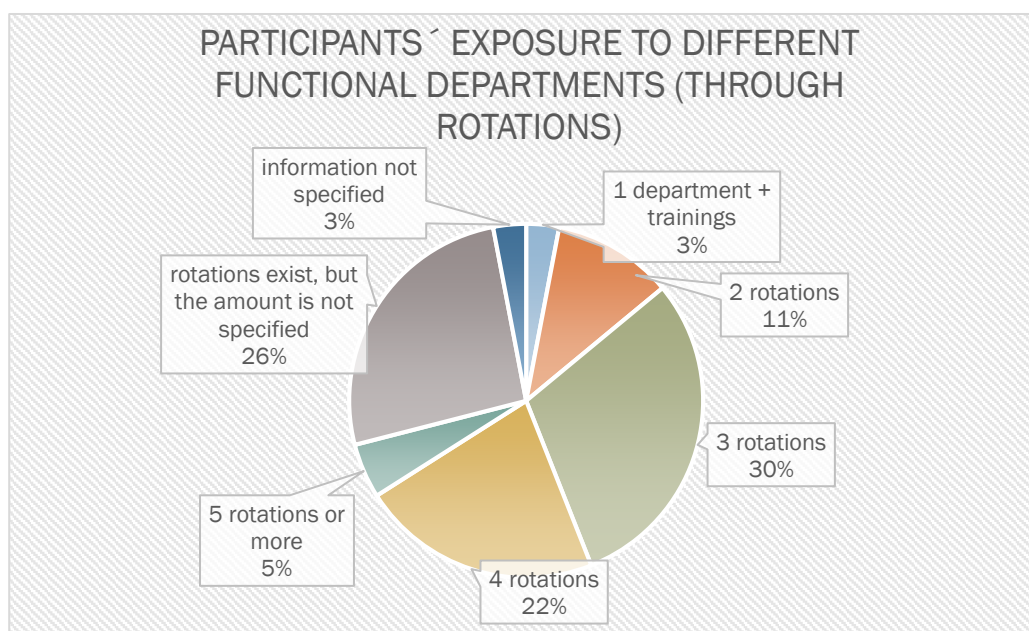
Figure 6 – Exposure to different departments (based on the analysis of secondary data)

The most popular amount of rotations was three (30% of organizations), but also 4 rotations was rather common, with 22% of graduate programmes offering this amount of rotations during a graduate programme. Only 3% of organizations did not offer multiple functional rotations, but in this case, they indicated the existence of one on-the-job experience combined with multiple trainings. The existence of large amount of different functional rotations is highly relevant with regards to developing boundary spanning competencies, as the greater number of rotations from different departments has found out to be increasing boundary spanning performance (Sweeney,

2007). The reasoning would be that the rotations produce different types of knowledge-enhancing opportunities and the exposure to different roles and functions gives an individual more holistic and integrated understanding of the organization (Campion et al., 1994). Job rotations help to increase the individual´s network of contacts, get more immersed in the organizational culture, and the job rotations bring along higher organizational involvement and commitment (Campion et al., 1994, p. 1537). Therefore, the existence of various of rotations in graduate programmes is fostering the development their boundary spanning competencies.

Regarding the length of the rotations, it ranged from being less than 2 months to up to 24 months, most rotations lasting half a year (6 months) or one full year (12 months) (see figure 7). The majority (69.7%) of rotations last between 6 to 12 months.
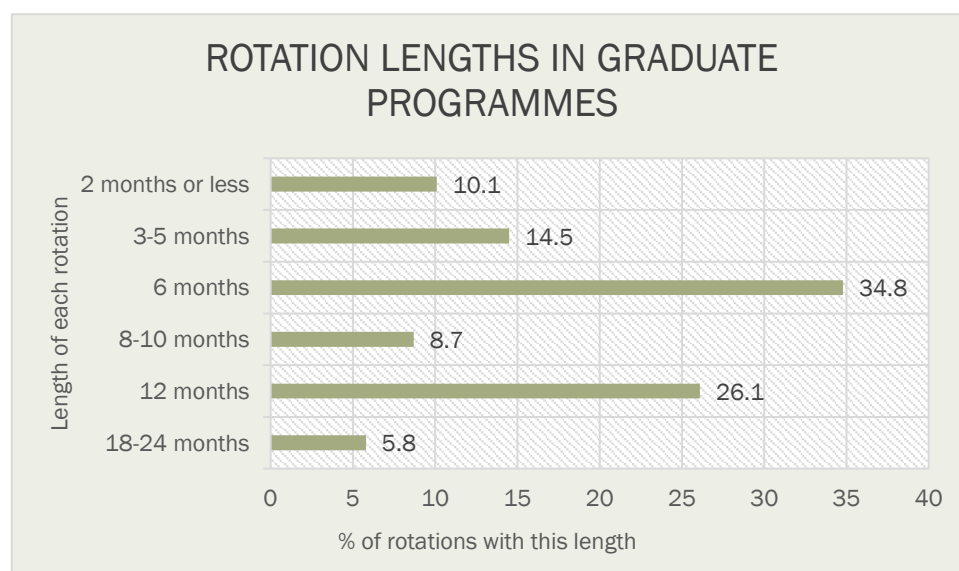
Figure 7 – Length of each rotation (based on the analysis of secondary data)

This length seems to be optimal as the individuals need time to internalize job tasks, duties and responsibilities and rotating through the jobs too quickly does not allow this to happen, due to the lack of sufficient time (Eriksson & Ortega, 2006). The units that receive a rotating individual, need to integrate him/her into the existing organizational and social system, which means increasing responsibilities and potential stress and can lead to dissatisfaction among the units (Campion et al., 1994) and thus, might have negative consequences for the organizations. Therefore, it is important to allow enough time for both parts – the receiving unit as well as the rotating person, to get adjusted to the new circumstances. In addition, when looking at the typical length of the programmes (full-and-half-year-long), the 6 and 12 month rotations fit into the pattern perfectly.

4.2.3 Vertical Exposure

It is important that the rotations are on different hierarchical levels within the organization, as the job rotations done on the same level did not prove to have an effect on developing boundary spanning competencies (Sweeney, 2007). This could be explained by the fact that exposure across different vertical boundaries helps to understand inter-dependencies and causal connections among the organizational levels better (Sweeney, 2007, p. 81). Although the available data did not clearly indicate the different hierarchical levels of job rotations and emphasized the existence between different functional divisions instead, the past participants have often indicated that part of the graduate programme also includes doing some so-called pink-or blue-collar jobs (Jonsson & Clayton, 2014).

With regards to exposure to higher levels of hierarchy, 35% of organizations had specifically mentioned in their programme description that participants have exposure to senior management. Although the forms and activities differed, e.g.

/.. a personal mentor from senior business management/ (Org_63)

/..attend senior-level management meetings/ (Org_82)

/.. gain exposure, interact with senior leaders and get helpful feedback/ (Org_78)

/.. participants are matched with senior executives and mentors who can contribute to their career development and help them build technical and leadership skill/ (Org_53)

The questionnaire respondents were also asked to rate how much exposure the participants of the programme have to senior management of the organization. The results were very high, with an average of 6.67 (on a scale of 1 to 7). All respondents rated the networking opportunities to be high or very high (6 or 7 points).

These examples indicate that the participants of the graduate programmes are seen as a high priority for most of the organizations. This can be seen as leading to favourable outcomes for the organizations, as evidence suggests that the organizations that consider leadership development as integral part of their culture and actively involve senior leaders in the process, excel in talent management initiatives (Siegel, 2008).

4.2.4 Geographical Exposure

Another important aspect for developing boundary spanning competencies of an individual is also the exposure across different geographical boundaries. The off-site job rotations might include novel, ambiguous, uncertain and highly variable conditions that require the individuals to find new

mechanisms coping with these conditions and approach situations in a novel way, something that boundary spanners might often face in their boundary spanning activities (Sweeney, 2007, p. 49). From the content analysis, 65% of the graduate programmes specifically indicated the existence of rotations in different geographical regions. However, not all the organizations relocate the participants of the graduates internationally, also rotations to a new location within the same country were popular.

GEOGRAPHICAL EXPOSURE DURING
THE GRADUATE PROGRAMME

- international exposure (different geographical region internationally)
- rotation to another location within the country
- no geographical rotation

7%
26%
67%

% of out of the number of graduate programmes
that had their information specified (70 out of 100)
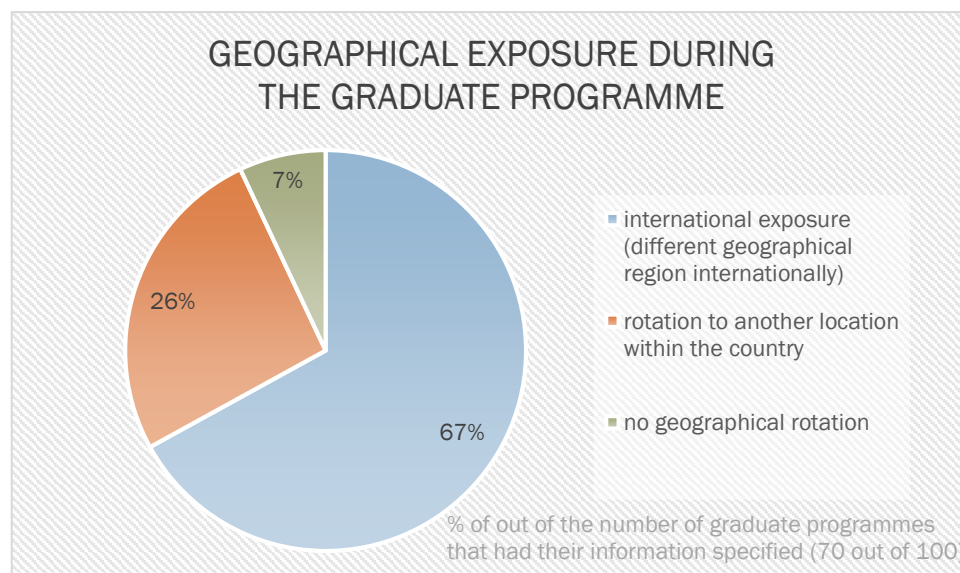
Figure 8 –Exposure across geographical boundaries (based on the analysis of secondary data)

This seemed to be a particularly commonplace for graduate programmes in the United States. As there are considerable differences between the states (e.g. cultural differences) as well as other influences inside the country might be considerable, also the rotations within the country might lead to similar effects as international rotations. Although, probably to a lesser extent as the conditions are not so ambiguous and variable as when relocating to a geographically further location with a completely different political, social and economic context.

Although most of the organizations indicated to have on-the-job international rotations, there were some that did not offer international assignments, but indicated that some of the formal trainings will be carried out in another country. Possibly due to the fact that the multinational organizations offer the training courses at the same time for all the participants from various locations and programmes.

Out of the 70 organizations that had specified the information about the relocation opportunities, there were only 5 organizations that specifically pointed out that their organization does not offer any rotations to another geographical setting. The low number potentially shows that organizations value the skills that individuals gain through experiencing new environments. But regarding the specific locations or number of rotations to different locations, the information was not very clearly

defined. Only in some instances, the specific amount and length of a geographical rotation was brought out. This might have to do with the fact that the international assignments are not standardized throughout the organization for each participant and instead, tailored and taking into account the personal aspects.

Suutari & Viitala (2008) have analysed the specific methods that are the most effective in the development of managers and international assignments. They have brought out that systematic career planning and job rotations were elements that were rated the highest (Suutari & Viitala, 2008). Therefore, offering a combination of all the three – personalized international rotations, could be considered especially effective.

4.2.5 Design of the Graduate Programmes contributing to Boundary Spanning

All in all, the current design of the graduate programmes seems to indeed remind a zigzag ladder across vertical, horizontal and geographical boundaries, as suggested by Pfeffer (2005) as an effective way to develop boundary spanning competencies. All the different types, geographical, vertical and horizontal exposure were prevalent in most of the organizations studies.

Although there is no specified information about the actual implementation of the job rotations and more research could be carried out looking specifically into this field, based on the current research, the design of development initiatives clearly seems to be fostering the boundary spanning competencies of participating individuals.

4.3 Sub-question 3: Does the design of the graduate programmes support developing boundary spanning competencies that are effective across cultures?

As the results from previous sub-question indicated, senior management is very often closely linked to the execution of graduate programmes and participants have multiple networking possibilities with them. The involvement of senior management is said to be essential throughout the whole process (from planning, recruitment and execution) in order to ensure the success of the initiative (Stahl et al., 2012, p. 7).

The fact that many counterparts with different agendas and variety of backgrounds are potentially involved with designing the graduate programmes, raises questions about the cultural aspects. For example, the dilemma between standardization and localization (Pudelko & Harzing, 2007) or the ethnocentricity of the programmes (Florkowski & Fogel, 1999) arise. Most important question

regarding the development of boundary spanning competencies is - if the developed competencies are context-specific or context-generalizable (Taylor, Beechler, & Napier, 1996, p. 964).

To answer these questions, the survey respondents were asked to indicate who has been mostly involved with the design of the graduate programme in their respective organization. The responses were split between two options - collaboration between multiple departments or HR department (see figure 9).
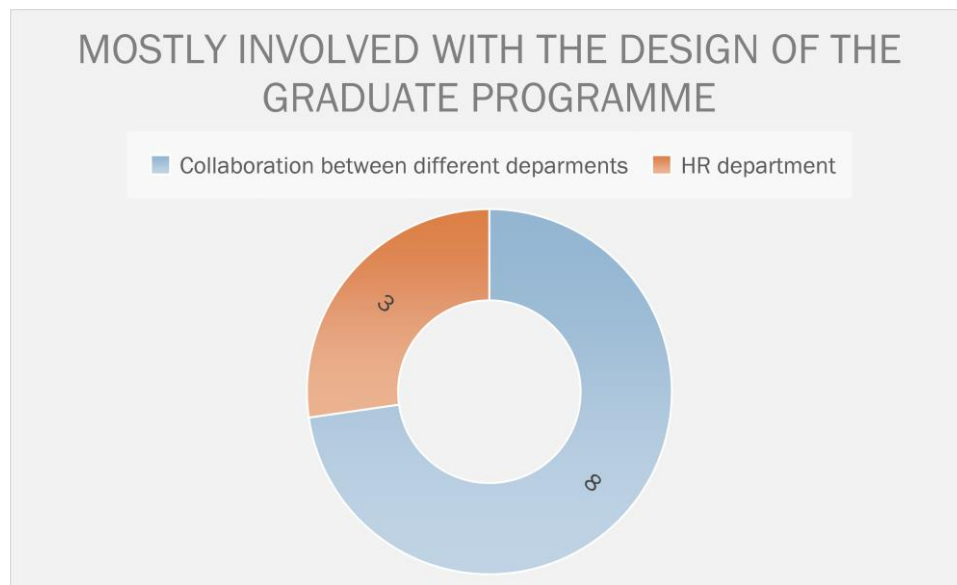
Figure 9- Designers of the graduate programme (based on the survey respondents)

The fact that most of the graduate programmes are designed as a collaboration between different departments could be seen as a sign of further emphasis that the graduate programmes are of high importance and priority for the organizations. Regarding the standardization/localization dilemma, the fact that none of the respondents reported that headquarters was mostly involved with designing the programme in their respective organization, gives a first clue that probably the graduate programmes are not highly standardized within the organization. To understand the potential degree of standardization vs localization of the graduate programmes, the respondents were asked to choose how much they feel that the graduate programmes are specifically tailored to the national culture where it is carried out.
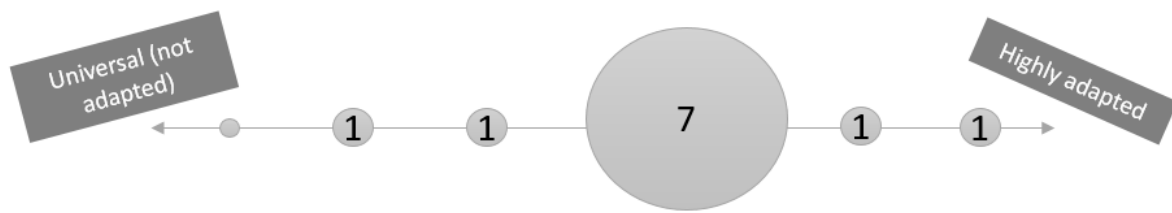
Figure 10- Level of adaptivity of the graduate programmes (regarding culture) (based on survey responses)

The answers, as can be seen from figure 10, were spread out to different points of the scale. Responses ranged from one extreme to another– universality as well as high adaptivity. Interestingly, majority of the respondents chose the option in the middle of the scale, with a slight bias towards adaptivity. These responses seem to indicate there is no clear tendency either to localization nor to standardization regarding the cultural aspects of the graduate programmes. This can be seen as a positive outcome as in case the design of the graduate programmes would be very highly adapted to the specific national culture where it is taking place, it might potentially cause some resistance among participants to whose deeply held values it would not correspond (Newman & Nollen, 1996). Furthermore, as the organizations are international in their nature and need to deal with different types of cultures regarding their operations and workforce, it could be expected that the graduate programmes are designed in a more universal way that allows easier transfer throughout the whole organization.

Regarding the internal consistency of graduate programmes within the same organization, the respondents were asked if their organization offer similar type of graduate programmes in other geographical locations. In case the organizations did, the respondents were asked about the degree of similarity between the different locations (in terms of selection of participants, design and content) The answers indicated varying levels, as can be seen from figure 11.

These results give us an impression that there is no clear trend among the organizations regarding how standardized the graduate programmes are within the organization. Some organizations seem to offer graduate programmes that are very similar to each other, whereas in other organizations the graduate programmes differ a lot. Most responses lean towards the localization direction, but the results are not straightforward enough and the sample size is limited in order to make further generalizations. Instead, it seems to be dependent on the specific organization and strategic choices they make.
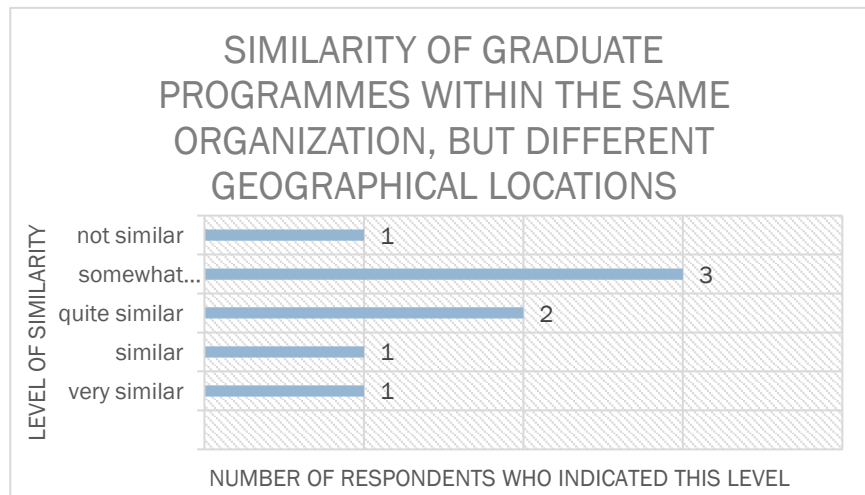
Figure 11- Similarity between the graduate programmes of varying locations (based on survey responses)

The answers can also depend from the fact if the other programmes are also carried out in subsidiaries or in the location of headquarters instead. The subsidiaries of multinational organization are often in different locations where their particular external environments shape and influence their practices (Scott, 1987). The varying degrees of internal consistency, together with by ambiguity and potential gaps of knowledge, can create clashes between the subsidiaries and headquarters (Schotter & Beamish, 2011). In this situation, the strategic human resource development initiatives can be designed I either adaptive, exportive or an integrative way, based on the level of correspondence to the external environment and internal consistency (Taylor et al., 1996).

In order to analyse how is the situation in the graduate programmes that are part of the sample, the issue was approached both directly as well as indirectly. For this, a set of leadership behaviours was described in the questionnaire and the respondents were asked to choose the most desired among the participants of this specific graduate programme. The questionnaire items were modified versions from the GLOBE study, focusing on the four dimensions that had shown the biggest differences between the various cultures - *humane-oriented, autocratic, face-saver and bureaucratic* (House et al., 2004). The answers of respondents were compared with the results from the GLOBE study, both from the subsidiary culture as well as the headquarters culture (in case the respondent was answering from a graduate programme located in a subsidiary). The combined results from the respondents were formed in a graph to visually show the tendencies (see figure 12).
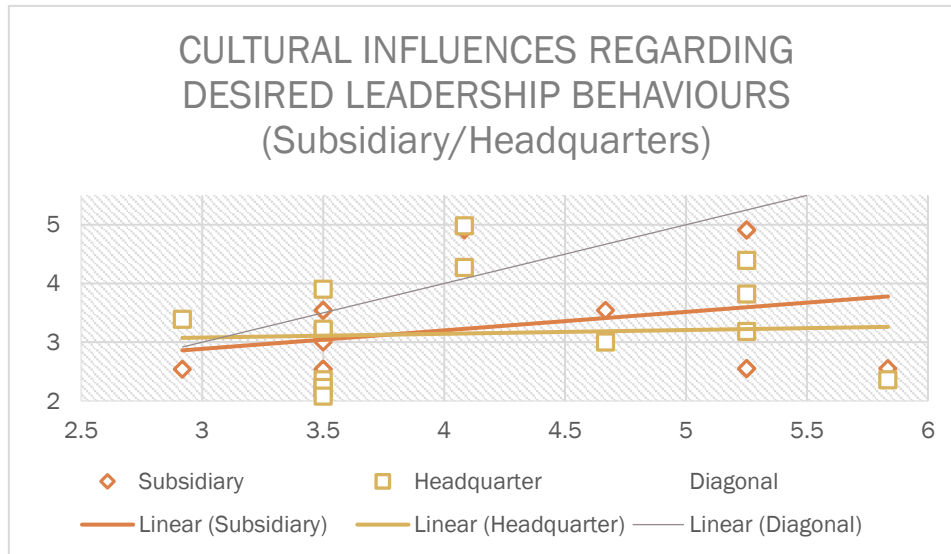
Figure 12 - Desired leadership behaviours and the cultural implications – responses from graduate programmes located in subsidiaries

The results indicated a clear tendency among all the respondents to portray answers that were more similar to the culture of the specific subsidiary rather than the culture of the headquarters. However, as can be seen with the help of a regression line (45-degree line), it is an indication. It means that the design of the graduate programmes reveals tendency to reflect the values of a subsidiary, but not to extreme extents. Instead, the level of correspondence is rather neutral. Coming back to the orientations suggested by Taylor et al. (1996), the organizations tend to reflect integrative orientation, which is characterized by moderate levels of correspondence to external consistency. From the EPG model proposed by Perlmutter (1969), the answers clearly indicate a geocentric attitude of the organization, which means that there is no strong bias to nor headquarters nor subsidiaries, but a worldwide orientation instead. Often in this orientation, the organization sets universal standards as guidelines, but the subsidiaries can tailor the processes in a way that is more suitable for them (Perlmutter, 1969, p. 300)

The results would suggest that the boundary spanning competencies that the graduates gain through the graduate programmes are not very context-specific, at least not regarding aspects of the national culture of where the subsidiary is located. This can be seen as beneficial regarding the way that graduates are trained in the multinational organizations, as the expectations to the graduates seem to be more universal and not specifically culture-bound. In addition to respondents that were answering about the graduate programmes that were located in geographically distant subsidiaries, there were respondents from graduate programmes that were located in the home country/headquarters of the organization. In order to offer comparison, also their answers in the same field were analysed and the results can be seen in figure 13.
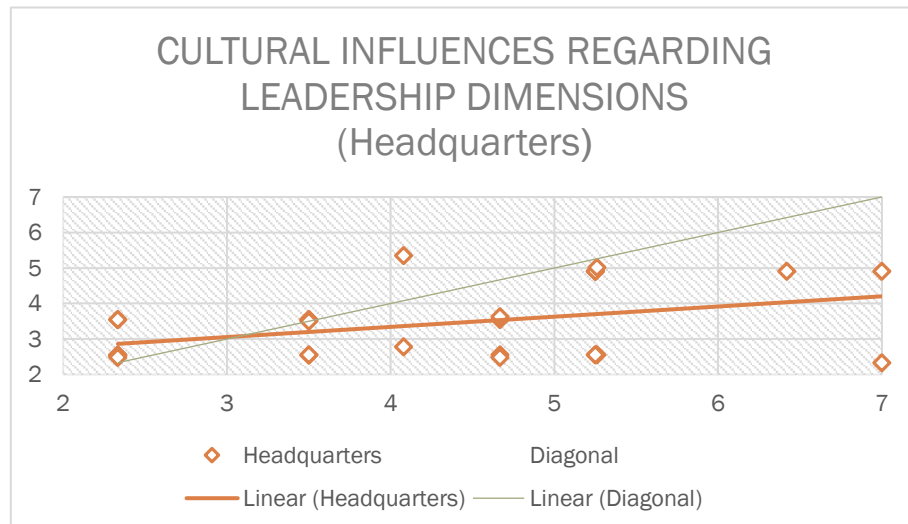
Figure 13 - Desired leadership behaviours and the cultural implications – responses from graduate programmes located in subsidiaries

In that case, the results show a very similar tendency – answers are leaning towards the societal values of the location where the graduate programme takes place, but not to extreme extents. In both cases, graduate programmes located in subsidiaries or in headquarters, organizations must strategically consider how to design the training programmes in way that would not be too ethnocentric. Based on the analysed data connected to the societal values of GLOBE study, the organizations have succeeded in that.

The same aspect was also analysed by asking the respondents directly. The respondents were asked to indicate if these desired leadership behaviours that they brought out, correspond in their opinion to the values of the specific organization, to the societal values of the country of the subsidiary as well as the country of headquarters. Most of the respondents gave a similar answer to all these sub-questions, indicating that in their opinion, these leadership behaviours reflect both of the societal values – the of country of the subsidiary as well as country of headquarters. As the sample included also respondents that had subsidiaries and headquarters from very different cultures (e.g. United Kingdom vs Japan), these answers could indicate that the cultural considerations have not been the conscious focal point when designing the programme.

All in all, the results on cultural aspects indicate that there are not high level of convergence and universality among the organizations and the graduate programmes are often localized to the specific environment where they are carried out. However, the level of localization is rather low and ethnocentric attitudes do not seem to be present. According to the empirical data, the desired leadership behaviours indeed seem to be rather universal and transferrable, but it does not seem to be necessarily as a result of a conscious and deliberate choice. All aspects considered, the competencies developed through the graduate programmes seem to be context-generalizable, which means these transferrable across the whole organization and across different locations.

4.4 Summary

The aim of the empirical part of the research was to answer the main research question: *If and how are the boundary spanning competencies of young professionals currently developed in multinational organizations, based on the way graduate trainee programmes are designed?*

Having this in mind, three sub-questions were designed based on the theoretical framework to approach the issue systematically. A summarized answer to each sub-question will be presented:

1. *Are the graduates selected to the graduate programmes based on their potential for becoming boundary spanners?*

Yes. The selection process and criteria indicate a strong focus on choosing the participants with excellent interpersonal and communication skills and high levels of motivation. The same mentioned aspects are also the main contributors for boundary spanning (Williams, 2002). Furthermore, due to the competitive nature of the graduate programmes, probably only the strongest candidates will be chosen. This corresponds with Tushman & Scanlan (1981a), who have characterized the boundary spanners as more educated and professional than their peers. Therefore, it can be said that the selected participants have indeed a potential to become boundary spanners.

2. *To which extent does the design of the graduate programmes support developing boundary spanning competencies with regards to exposure across vertical, horizontal and geographical boundaries?*

To a rather high extent. All of the analysed graduate programmes offer on-the-job learning to the graduates and 94% of them offer rotations, which means exposure to more functions than one. Over half of the programmes (57%) are designed in a way that participants have 3 rotations or more within the same organization. Furthermore, 65% of the organizations incorporate rotations that require the participant to situate to another location, most of them internationally. In addition, 35% of the organizations mentioned in their programme description that the participants have exposure to senior management. The high levels of possibility to connect with senior management were also brought out by the survey respondents. These results indicate that participants have a wide exposure across vertical, horizontal and geographical boundaries. All these experiences help to understand the insider perspectives of different subunits (Pfeffer, 2005) and diversity and variety, that are considered to be a well suiting practice for developing boundary spanning performance (Sweeney, 2007).

3. *Does the design of the graduate programmes support developing boundary spanning competencies that are effective across cultures?*

Probably. Based on the available data, the responses did not portray high levels of standardization within the organizations, nor ethnocentric attitudes. As the responses were ranging from one extreme to another, the findings might not be generalizable to all the graduate programmes and more research is required. However, the existing responses did indicate geocentric attitudes of organizations – not portraying a strong bias to the headquarters nor subsidiary, but a more universal approach (Perlmutter, 1969). This would suggest that the organizations have an integrative orientation and thus, the developed competencies are context-generalizable (effective across countries) (Taylor et al., 1996).

All aspects considered, the graduate programmes of multinational organizations seem foster the development of boundary spanning competencies. This is exemplified by various aspects, from the rigorous and careful selection process of the candidates and corresponding selection criteria, to the existence of various job rotations and exposure across various boundaries. Lastly, as individual´s cultural background has influence on the boundary spanning behaviours (Golden & Veiga, 2005) and leadership is found to be culturally contingent (House et al., 2004), also these aspects seem to be handled carefully by the way how the graduate programmes are designed.

Therefore, it can be assumed that the participants of graduate programmes indeed develop the necessary boundary spanning competencies and become actively involved in the boundary spanning activities – exchanging, linking, facilitating and intervening (Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014). These, on the other hand, help to create a stronger alignment and coherence within the organization (Ernst & Chrobot-Mason, 2010), spread the knowledge and information and thus, help the organization to achieve its competitive advantage.

4.5 Further Research

The empirical data revealed a lot of important information about the design of graduate programmes and how the design and execution currently fosters the development of boundary spanning competencies. The tendencies give rise to many other interesting topics that could be developed further in future research.

For example, further work could be established in determining how culturally contingent are the graduate programmes in multinational organizations. The results of the thesis offered some encouraging insights regarding the differences between headquarters and subsidiaries and the internal consistency among the organizations, but the topic could be further researched through using a larger and more systematic sample.

Furthermore, taking into account the different cultural backgrounds of the participants, it would be beneficial to investigate to which extent it has an influence on their boundary spanning competencies. Moreover, if the individuals should be approached differently in this kind of training initiatives, based on their background.

It could be also beneficial to look the topic of graduate programmes from the perspective of participants – how do they rate the efficiency of graduate programmes with regards to development of their boundary spanning competencies and other job-related skills.

As this research analysed the phenomena mostly based on different kinds of descriptions about the design and execution, it could be also beneficial to look into the same topic and analysing the actual processes of planning and implementing the programmes. An in-depth case study could provide various insights. Furthermore, it would be interesting to measuring the perceived boundary spanning competencies in the beginning and end of the graduate programme.

From longitudinal aspect, it could be also beneficial to see the changes in the design of the graduate programmes and analyse the same aspects as the current thesis, after 5 or 10 years. This would provide some opportunities to analyse if and how the programmes are adapted to the changing circumstances.

Even though the results offer a variety of potential future research ideas, the current research also discovered many compelling results that could be taken into account by the practitioners in order to improve their graduate programmes.

4.6 Implications for Strategic Human Resource Management

The way how graduate programmes are currently designed and executed, suggests that the development of boundary spanning competencies is indeed fostered through the graduate programmes. However, these results represent general tendencies and thus, each organization should critically examine the practices in their respective organization and identify the potential areas of improvement. In order to ease the process, some implications will be offered, based on the theoretical framework and empirical findings:

To begin with, the graduate programmes should be considered as a strategic initiative for developing the necessary competencies in the organization. Therefore, they should be designed in a way that has a long-term and strategic focus in mind. Furthermore, the senior management, together with human resources department should be closely collaborating in order to design a programme that corresponds with the specific needs of the organization, taking into account the

internal as well as external circumstances. The attention from senior management in both design and execution phase of the graduate programmes is pivotal for the initiative´s success. Thus, if the graduate programme is not already one of the top priorities, it should become one. As the programmes require a considerable investment, it would be a waste not to leash the maximum of its potential. If the participants feel prioritized and sense that the programme is among top priorities for the organization, it would potentially increase their commitment and dedication to the programme and organization in general.

With regards to organizing the various experiential on-the-job learning assignments, these should be designed in a way that participants have exposure across different functional, geographical and vertical boundaries. Although the optimal length of the programme and amount of rotations is dependent on the specific organization and its needs, an effective development of boundary spanning competencies requires exposure across all the mentioned boundaries. The job rotations should not only include different functional departments, but also different levels of hierarchy. Also the blue-collar/pink-collar positions are important to give a more compete overview of the organization and offer insights to a variety of perspectives. However, as this kind of job rotations might come unexpected to the participants, it might hinder the motivation and organizational commitment. As these are main prerequisites for achieving a success of a development initiatives, clear communication and setting corresponding expectations is essential.

Expectations are already formed already before applying to the graduate programmes. When creating informative/promotional material about the graduate programme, it is important communicate clearly various aspects - the duration, length, type of rotations, training possibilities, international assignments as well as the selection process. A clear overview of the programme forms the first impression and many candidates make the application decision based solely on the publicly available material. As the possibilities of different training and personal development opportunities have proved to be one of the main reasons why fresh graduates decide to join the specific organization, it is fundamental to communicate the existence of these aspects clearly.

In case the graduate programme offers possibilities to network with senior management, this aspect would be very important to be highlighted as it can influence the decision of top candidates to join the organization – this signals that the graduate programme is a top priority for the organization and the participants will be valued highly. Only 33% of the analysed websites brought out the possibility to get some kind of attention from senior management, but based on survey results, all of the respondents ranked the exposure to senior management high or very high. Thus, there is room for improvement for many organizations.

Regarding the selection of participants to the graduate programme, the current tendency to incorporate a rigorous and multi-method selection process seems like a great starting point for getting an overview of the various skills and competencies of the participants. In order to select participants specifically based on their potential of becoming boundary spanners, collaborative skills and knowledge sharing motivation should be specifically focused on. Furthermore, if the selection process incorporates assignments that require cross-functional collaboration, it already gives a first overview of the real-life challenges and diminishes the view of different departments as separate silos. The assessment days can be seen as a way to immerse the future participants to the organizational culture and shine light on the organizational values.

With regards to the background of participant, there are many skills and past experiences that contribute to boundary spanning competencies. More specifically, previous research has highlighted interpersonal skills, cultural skills and language skills. An interesting result emerged from the empirical data regarding the difference between graduate programmes carried out in subsidiaries of the organization vs in headquarters. The responses revealed that the graduate programmes that were carried out in subsidiaries placed a much stronger emphasis on the possession of cultural and language skills of the candidates than the ones that are carried out in headquarters. However, the increasingly multicultural workforce and diversity of stakeholders within organizations would suggest that these skills are very important in each organization, irrespective of their distance from the home country. Thereby, the headquarters might tend to hold an overly ethnocentric approach, which would not contribute to being successful in the globalized era and it should be reconsidered In that light, it could be beneficial to incorporate these skills also as top priorities in the decision process. Furthermore, having a more generalized background (not just one specific area of study) and experience of adapting to new circumstances (for example through living abroad), could also be very beneficial. Number of research supports the fact that a workforce from more diverse backgrounds bring a plurality of perspectives, which helps to give a more thorough understanding of an issue at hand.

With regards the multicultural workforce, it must be noted that the cultural background influences the individual and provides a "frame" to perceive the world. In case the graduate programme aims to truly gather top talent, it means being open to different backgrounds. In that case, it is necessary that the approach to training would not be overly ethnocentric as it might create resistance among the participants. Although some extent to localization to the specific external environment is good and beneficial for developing the competencies that are specific to the organization and circumstances. However, in order to develop competencies that are more universal across the whole organization, these should be developed in a way that the internal consistency of the organization is taken into account, without becoming overly standardized.

5. Conclusion

The thesis aimed to explore if and how the boundary spanning competencies of future leaders are developed in multinational organizations. More specifically, the design and execution of graduate trainee programmes were focused on. The graduate programmes can be seen as strategic human capital development initiative aimed at strengthening the competitive advantage of the organization. This can be done by done by developing organization-specific competencies that are valuable and rare. In the context of the thesis, specifically one set of competencies was focused on – boundary spanning competencies. The ability to collaborate and manage across diverse boundaries is an increasingly important skill in the interconnected environment. Therefore, the development of boundary spanning competencies is fundamental for all multinational organizations.

In order to understand the specific context, the concept and development potential, a theoretical framework was created by analysing pre-existing theoretical and empirical research. Based on the theory, boundary spanning competencies are constituted by a combination of three important factors - individual´s personality, (cultural) background and acquirable skills. An organization that wishes to develop boundary spanning competencies, needs to take into account all the three aspects. Taking the departure from the theoretical framework, the aspects of participant selection, design of the graduate programmes and cultural influences were focused on. The empirical data was gathered from primary and secondary sources, using a multi-method approach. More specifically, the informative material (websites, presentations, brochures) of 100 organizations were analysed and eleven representatives of different organizations were questioned through internet-mediated surveys. The work clearly has some limitations, but it succeeds in offering a descripto-explanatory overview of the situation at hand.

The evidence from the results suggests that the development of boundary spanning competencies in multinational organizations is currently supported through various aspects. To begin with, the participants need to go through a rigorous selection process to have the chance to participate in the programme. During the selection process, the skills and competencies of the candidates are tested in a variety of ways, from online tests to interviews and assessment days. A strong emphasis in the selection process is on the interpersonal and communication of the candidates. Respondents indicated a clear tendency highlighting the importance of interpersonal skills and other personal competencies over technical expertise with regards to the selection criteria. Moreover, the importance of different selection criteria seemed to correspond to the same aspects that are needed for boundary spanning. However, there were some aspects, such as the perceived

importance of cultural skills and language skills, that portrayed interesting differences between the respondents located in subsidiaries and respondents located in the headquarters of the organization.

Regarding the design of the graduate programmes, the organizations portrayed a rather high degree of similarity between them. More specifically, most of the graduate programmes focus on experiential learning, by offering multiple job rotations to different functional areas within the organization. In addition to functional boundaries, organizations seem to offer exposure also across geographical and vertical boundaries in their graduate programmes, by having international assignments and offering networking opportunities with senior management. This type of design helps the participants to get insider perspectives and understanding of the counterparts, helps to diminish stereotypes and build interpersonal networks. In addition to developing the competencies of an individual, this kind of design also helps to link the organization closer together, spread the organizational culture and create internal alignment.

Internal alignment and consistency is a challenge for multinational organizations, due to the variety of environments they operate in. In addition to multicultural workforce, there is a constant dilemma of standardization and localization between the headquarters and the subsidiaries. In the context of analysing graduate programmes as human capital development initiatives, important question arises - are the developed competencies are context-specific or generalizable across locations. Based on the responses, none of the organizations seemed to portray overly ethnocentric attitude and instead, seemed to offer a nice balance between internal consistency of the organization and adaption to the external environment. With regards to competencies-development, this approach seems to be optimal as it creates resources that are indeed organization-specific, but still rare, valuable and transferrable across boundaries.

All in all, the graduate programmes seem to be currently on a right track with regards to developing the increasingly-needed boundary spanning competencies, whether they do it consciously or not. However, considering the high amount of investment that graduate programmes require, there is still room for improvement in order to increase the efficiency. Thus, further implications for strategic design of human resource development initiatives have been put forward to improve the design and execution of the graduate programmes.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Content Analysis – List of Organizations

nr	Organization	Content analysed from:
1	Abbott	http://www.ie.abbott/careers/students/development-programmes.html
2	Abercrombie & Fitch	http://www.anfcareers.com/page/Leadership-Development-Programs
3	ABInBev	http://www.bestbeerjob.com/en/programmes/global-management.aspx
4	Acosta	http://www.acosta.com/Careers/LeadershipDevelopment.aspx
5	Adidas	http://careers.adidas-group.com/teams/future-talents/functional-trainee-program
6	Airbus	http://www.airbusgroup.com/int/en/people-careers/students-graduates/international_graduate_programme.html
7	Allianz	https://www.allianz.co.uk/about-allianz-insurance/careers-at-allianz/graduate-careers-recruitment/graduate-schemes/allianz-management-trainee-graduate-scheme.html
8	Alpha	http://alphafmc.com/careers/graduate/
9	AlphaSights	https://www.alphasights.com/careers/jobs/239-associate-programme-graduate-intake-2017
10	Assa Abloy	http://www.assaabloy.com/en/com/career/for-students/
11	AT&T	http://att.jobs/careers/college/full-time-development-programs/graduate-development-programs
12	Atos	http://uk.atos.net/content/dam/uk/documents/Careers/atos-Grad-and-Intern-brochure.pdf
13	Audi	http://www.audi.com/corporate/en/careers/joining-audi/graduates/trainee%20programme.html#fullwidthpar__ah
14	Avery Dennison	http://www.averydennison.com/en/home/careers/early-career-development.html
15	BAE Systems	http://www.baesystems.com/en-us/careers/exploring-your-career-at-bae-systems/interns-and-recent-graduates
16	Baxter	http://www.baxter.com/careers/programs/employee-training-development.page?
17	Beiersdorf	http://www.beiersdorf.com/career/students-and-graduates/graduate-programs
18	BMW	https://www.bmwgroup.com/en/careers/recent-graduates.html
19	BOC	http://www.boconline.co.uk/en/careers/careers-at-boc/graduates/engineering-graduate-scheme/index.html
20	Boeing	http://www.boeing.com/resources/boeingdotcom/careers/college/pdf/Business_Skills_Rotation.pdf
21	Capital One	http://www.capitalonecareers.co.uk/futuretalent
22	Carlsberg	https://www.careersatcarlsberg.co.uk/graduates/programme
23	Caterpillar	http://www.caterpillar.com/it/careers/career-areas/college-university/development-programs/uk-graduates/disciplines.html
24	CBRE	http://www.cbre.co.uk/portal/page/portal/graduates

25	Cintas	http://www.cintas.com/careers/hiring-focus/students.aspx
26	Citizens Bank	https://jobs.citizensbank.com/early-career-programs
27	Commerzbank	https://cbcm.commerzbank.com/media/documents_11/careers_1/2016_3/20160818_Graduate_Programme_FAQsV2.pdf
28	ConocoPhilips	http://careers.conocophillips.com/university-recruitmen
29	Danone	http://corporate.danone.co.uk/en/connect/candidates/graduates-undergraduates/programmes/
30	DB Schenker	https://www.dbschenker.com/global/careers/graduates
31	Dell	http://www.dell.com/learn/al/en/alcorp1/graduate-students
32	Dentons UK	http://students.dentons.com/opportunities-around-the-globe/united-kingdom/bright-future-apprenticeship-programme/apprenticeship-details/
33	DHL	http://www.dhl-graduates.com/
34	Eaton	http://www.eaton.eu/Europe/OurCompany/Careers/EuropeMiddleEastAfrica/CampusConnection/EatonLeadershipDevelopmentPrograms/HumanResources/index.htm
35	Ecco	http://group.ecco.com/en/career/faq-list
36	Edward Jones	http://www.careers.edwardjones.com/explore-opportunities/students/accelerated-leadership.html
37	EF	http://careers.ef.com/categories/recent-graduates-and-internships/360/
38	Emerson	http://www.emerson.com/en-us/careers/students-and-graduate-programs/engineers-in-leadership
39	Ferrero	http://www.ferrerocareers.com/young-talent-industrial-operation-program
40	Ford	http://corporate.ford.com/content/dam/corporate/en/careers/departments/Product-development/PD%20FCG%20Website%20PDF.pdf
41	Gap Inc	https://jobs.gapinc.com/rotational-management
42	Geico	https://www.geico.com/careers/public/pdf/emerging_leaders_brochure_2015.pdf
43	Genworth	https://www.genworth.com/corporate/employment/genworth-employment-opportunities/entry-level-jobs/full-time-jobs-rotational-positions/finance-jobs-development-program.html
44	Goodyear Dunlop	https://www.goodyear.eu/en_za/consumer/why-goodyear/graduate/Goodyear-graduate-southafrica.html
45	GSK	http://futureleaders.gsk.com/
46	H&M	https://career.hm.com/content/hmcareer/en_se/student/education/h-ms-international-talent-program.html
47	Heineken	http://www.theheinekencompany.com/careers/graduates/heineken-international-graduate-programme
48	Hogan Lovells	http://graduates.hoganlovells.com/#/?_k=bdefdl
49	HP	http://www8.hp.com/uk/en/campaign/graduate/graduate-programmes.html
50	HSBC	http://www.hsbc.com/careers/students-and-graduates/programmes/commercial-banking-global-graduate-programme
51	IKEA	http://www.ikea.com/ms/it_CH/jobs/jobs_trainee_recruitment.html

52	Intel	*http://www.intel.com/content/www/us/en/jobs/locations/united-states/students/programs/accelerated-leadership-program.html*
53	Ishida Europe	*http://www.ishidaeurope.com/eu/en/contact/careers/graduate-scheme.cfm*
54	ISS	*https://www.issworld.com/career/job-openings/iss-management-trainee-programme*
55	John Deere	*https://www.deere.com/en_US/corporate/our_company/careers/students/college/new_grads.page*
56	Johnson & Johnson	*http://www.careers.jnj.com/bachelors*
57	KMD	*https://www.kmd.net/career/graduate*
58	Kraft Heinz	*http://www.kraftheinzcompany.eu/careers/european-trainee-program*
59	Lidl	*http://careers.lidl.co.uk/cps/rde/SID-0A7B8E48-76D33C93/career_lidl_uk/hs.xsl/2644.htm*
60	Lloyds	*http://www.lloydsbankinggrouptalent.com/compare-our-programmes/*
61	Lockheed Martin	*http://www.lockheedmartin.co.uk/uk/careers/graduate_recruitment/graduate-programme-overview.html*
62	L'Oreal	*https://career.loreal.com/careers/JobDetail/LAB-Graduate-Program-2016-2017/3271*
63	M&T	*https://www.mtb.com/careers/training-programs/management-development*
64	Mace	*https://www.macegroup.com/-/media/mace-dotcom/files/graduates/mace-graduate-development-brochure-2017.ashx*
65	Macy's	*http://www.macyscollege.com/Careers/LogisticsManagement/*
66	Mars	*http://www.mars.com/uk/en/careers/graduates-students/our-programmes/mars-management-development-programme*
67	Mazars	*https://mazarscareers.ie/images/pdfs/Mazars-Graduate-Recruitment-Brochure-2017.pdf*
68	Merck	*http://www.merckgroup.com/en/careers/graduates_and_students/career_opportunities/graduate_programs/graduate_programs.html*
69	Metlife	*https://jobs.metlife.com/content/ActuarialStudentProgram/?locale=en_US*
70	MUFG	*http://www.bk.mufg.jp/global/careers/pdf/btmu_uk_graduate_programme.pdf*
71	Natixis	*https://www.natixis.com/natixis/jcms/lpaz5_43643/en/graduate-program*
72	Neiman Marcus	*https://www.neimanmarcuscareers.com/career-development/index.shtml*
73	Nestle	*https://www.nestlecareers.co.uk/academy/content/graduates/programmes*
74	Newell Rubbermaid	*http://engineering.umass.edu/sites/default/files/careercenter/jobs/mie_che_ece_rubbermaid_rotational_program_1.pdf*
75	Northrop Grumman	*http://www.northropgrumman.com/Careers/StudentsAndNewGrads/Pages/DevelopmentalPrograms.aspx*
76	Pratt & Whitney	*http://www.utc.com/Careers/Leadership-Programs/Pages/European-Financial-Leadership-Program.aspx*
77	Praxair	*http://www.praxair.com/-/media/documents/specification-sheets-and-brochures/careers/operations-leadership-program-olp-2012.pdf?la=en&hash=4951354BC4B67F53E7F1D2E9276B516CBA0BD89D*

78	Prysmian Group	*http://www.prysmiangroup.com/en/careers/what-we-offer/graduate-program*
79	PwC	*https://www.pwc.ch/en/careers-with-pwc/graduates/advisory-graduate-programme.html*
80	Ramirent	*http://www.ramirent.com/portal/en/careers/management_trainee_programme/*
81	Rb	*https://www.rb.com/careers/graduates-interns/supply-graduate-programme/*
82	RBC	*http://www.rbc.com/careers/tech_graduate.html*
83	Red Bull	*http://www.redbullgraduateprogramme.com/int/en/faq*
84	Rolls Royce	*http://careers.rolls-royce.com/united-kingdom/interns-and-graduates#where-are-you-now/graduate-programmes/*
85	Sainsbury's	*http://early.careersatsainsburys.com/Home/Graduates*
86	Samsung	*http://www.samsung.com/uk/aboutsamsung/samsungelectronics/careers/*
87	Shell	*http://www.shell.com/promos/careers/shell-graduate-programme-interactive-pdf/*
88	Siemens	*https://www.siemens.com/jobs/en/programs-entries/sgp.php*
89	Skoda	*https://www.skoda-career.com/students-and-graduates/universities-trainee-program*
90	SKY	*https://careers.sky.com/starting-out/graduate-opportunities*
91	Tesco	*http://c9aae3c454c2579f8764-39d1c608427224224f5532f88b1fc45e.r34.cf3.rackcdn.com/Tesco%20Graduate%20Brochure%202016.pdf*
92	Textron	*http://www.textron.com/Careers/Students-And-Recent-Graduates*
93	Tti	*http://www.tti-careers.eu/eu/graduates*
94	TUI Group	*http://www.tui-group.com/de/jobcareer/einstieg/absolventen/trainee_programm*
95	Unicredit	*https://www.unicreditgroup.eu/en/careers/student-and-graduates/graduate-program.html*
96	Unilever	*https://www.unilever.com/careers/graduates/uflp/*
97	Vertiv	*https://www.vertivco.com/en-us/about/careers/internship-co-op-and-mba-programs/*
98	Walgreens	*http://careers.walgreens.com/career-areas/corporate/merchandise-procurement.aspx*
99	Whirlpool	*http://emea.whirlpoolcareers.com/graduate-program*
100	Zurich	*https://www.zurich.co.uk/en/about-us/careers/graduates/development-programme*

Dear respondent,

I am kindly asking you to fill in a questionnaire about the development of future leaders in your organization through graduate programmes. The topic has been only briefly researched until now and it would be a great chance to contribute to creating new practical knowledge in the field of leadership development and the implications of culture. It is highly relevant topic as the rapidly changing circumstances and increasingly globalizing world dictate the need to successfully manage across borders in order for the organization to continuously thrive

.

The answers will be used as a part of research for my Master Thesis focusing on the cultural aspects of leadership development as well as the concept of boundary spanning. My name is Eva-Liis Ivask and I am studying at the Master´s programme focusing on Multicultural Communication in Organizations at Copenhagen Business School.

The responses will only be used for the sole purpose of research, can remain anonymous and the results will only be presented in a generalized form. However, in case you would be interested, I am glad to share the results after the successful completion of the thesis.

The survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes.

Guidelines
The following questionnaire will focus on the development of leaders in your organization through a graduate programme.

1. In order to successfully contribute with answers, I would like to think of a graduate programme/scheme provided by your organization you are involved with. In case there are many, please choose one that you are the most familiar with.

2. As part of the study will focus on the aspects of culture, there are no right and wrong answers - just feel free to answer how you believe is the case in your organization. As mentioned earlier, the results will remain confidential and will not be shared with third parties.

3. There are multiple differential scale questions where the descriptions of the two extremes are spread out over lines and might be difficult to read. I apologize for that technical fault in advance.

In case of further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me - eviv15ab@student.cbs.dk

Good luck and thank you again for your contribution!

Yours sincerely,

Eva-Liis Ivask

Selection of Participants

1. Please rate these competencies for a candidate to be successful at the selection process

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Knowledge of foreign languages	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑	(6) ❑	(7) ❑
Previous experience living in another culture besides from the home culture	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑	(6) ❑	(7) ❑
Strong interpersonal skills	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑	(6) ❑	(7) ❑
Excellent numerical skills	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑	(6) ❑	(7) ❑
The exact match between the major of degree of the participant and the focus of the graduate programme	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑	(6) ❑	(7) ❑
Education from the same country where the programme takes place (e.g. programme taking place in London, therefore participants with education from UK universities are preferred)	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑	(6) ❑	(7) ❑

2. What is more important when selecting the candidate for the graduate programme?
The answer will be provided on a scale, where on one extreme is "Personal Competencies" and the other extreme is "Functional Expertise"

Personal Competencies …………………………………………………………………………………Functional Expertise

Desired outcomes of the graduate programme

3. In the following part, leadership behaviours are brought out. Please indicate, which would be the most desired behaviours of participants during this graduate programme. The answers are provided on a scale.

A) When tackling a given task, the leader should:

Decide on his/her own …………………………………………………………………………Follow specific guidelines

B) When communicating with others, the future leader should:

Go straight to the point, using plain and simple language………………………………………Be descriptive, using metaphors and examples

C) In case of a need to make a negative comment to another member, the leader should:

Just make the comment, although it might hinder the relationship and face-saving……………Try to refrain from commenting in order to save face and maintain relationship

D) When he/she has a differing opinion from the group, the future leader should:

> Follow the general opinion of the group………………………….Try to convince others to follow his/her idea

E) When the future leader has subordinates that need to fulfil a task for him/her, the leader should:

> Give loose directions and guidelines…………………………Tell them exactly what to do in a straightforward way

F) The future leader should:

> Boast with his/her accomplishments…………………………….Present him/herself in a humble manner

G) When coming across someone in need, the future leader should:

> Continue with work tasks, help only where there is time left……..Allocate his/her resources to help, even if it interferes with work tasks

4. To which degree do you think that these answers correspond with..
(1=not at all; 4=neutral; 7=completely)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
… the overall culture of this organization	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑	(6) ❑	(7) ❑
… the values of the society - PROGRAMME (where the graduate programme takes place (e.g. programme in Frankfurt, how much do these answers correspond with the general view of German society of what does it take to be a good leader)	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑	(6) ❑	(7) ❑
… the values of the society - HQ (the headquarters are in Stockholm, how much do these answers correspond with the general view of Swedish society)	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑	(6) ❑	(7) ❑

5. Is the participant of the graduate programme exposed to more than one functional department during the trainee programme (e.g. rotations)?

(1) ❑ Yes

(2) ❑ No

5.A. How many different departments an average participant is exposed to (in total)?

(1) ❑ 2

(2) ❑ 3

(3) ❑ 4

(4) ❑ 5

(5) ❑ 6

(6) ❑ 7 or more

5.B. On average, how long is the candidate in each of the other functional departments (that are not the main ones)?

(1) ❑ less than one week

(2) ❑ 1-3 weeks

(3) ❑ 4-9 weeks

(4) ❑ 10 weeks +

6. To which degree does the programme offer exposure to/networking opportunities with senior management?
(1=very low; 4= medium; 7= very high)

(1) ❑ 1

(2) ❑ 2

(3) ❑ 3

(4) ❑ 4

(5) ❑ 5

(6) ❑ 6

(7) ❑ 7

7. Is part of the training programme carried out in another geographical region (another country)?

(1) ❑ Yes, in total 2 regions

(2) ❑ Yes, in total 3 regions

(3) ❑ Yes, in total 4 regions

(4) ❑ Yes, in total 5 regions or more

(5) ❑ No

(6) ❑ I don´t know

8. To which degree do you think that the graduate programme is adapted to the specific culture where it is being carried out? (with regards to the values of the national culture)

Universal (not adapted)...Highly adapted

9. Who has been mostly involved with the design of the graduate programme?

(1) ❑ Headquarters (management)

(2) ❑ The specific department

(3) ❑ HR deparment

(4) ❑ Collaboration between multiple deparments

(5) ❑ Other: _____

10. In your organization, are there any other similar graduate programmes offered in other geographical regions?

(1) ❑ Yes

(2) ❑ No

(3) ❑ I don´t know

10A. Up to your knowledge, how similar are these to this specific one, in terms of selection of participants, content, design etc?

(1=not similar at all; 4=medium; 7=very similar)

(1) ❑ 1

(2) ❑ 2

(3) ❑ 3

(4) ❑ 4

(5) ❑ 5

(6) ❑ 6

(7) ❑ 7

Part B

11. Please describe the selection process when selecting participants for the graduate programme

_____

12. What is the single most important aspect you look for, when selecting participants for the graduate programme? Why?

_____

13. What are the main aims of the graduate programme?

_____

14. What are the desired competencies that a successful leader in your organization should have?

_____

15. How are these competencies developed during the graduate programme?

_____

16. Clarifications, further information about the design of the programme (if any)

_____

General Information

17. The primary location of the graduate programme

List of countries

18. The country of headquarters of the organization

List of countries

19. Focus of the trainee programme

(1) ❑ Management/Leadership training (General)

(2) ❑ Finance

(3) ❑ Suppy Chain

(4) ❑ Human Resources

(5) ❑ Marketing

(6) ❑ IT

(7) ❑ Engineering

(8) ❑ Customer Service

(9) ❑ R&D

(10) ❑ Other _____

20. Length of the trainee programme

(1) ❑ Less than 6 months

(2) ❑ 6-12 months

(3) ❑ 13-18 months

(4) ❑ 19-24 months

(5) ❑ 25 months +

21. Industry of the organization

List of industries

22. Your (the respondent) functional area

_____

23. Name of the organization and trainee programme (optional, but preferred)

_____

24. Please provide an e-mail in case you are interested in the final results of the thesis

_____

25. Anything else to add?

_____

Thank you so much for your contribution!
I wish you the best in your future endeavours.