NAVIGATING THE TRANSITION FROM COLLEGE TO WORK: A STUDY OF 
BACCALAUREATE GRADUATES OF A PRIVATE UNIVERSITY IN KENYA

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Abstract

Growing segments of the Kenyan population are demanding higher education. Recent statistics indicate an increase in university enrolments as well as rapid expansion in higher education to meet the rising demand. Many Kenyan parents are investing significant resources and enduring major sacrifices to ensure their children obtain a university education. Similarly, the Kenyan government is also undertaking several measures to ensure that university education is available and accessible to a wide spectrum of Kenyans. However, the high rate of youth unemployment facing the country poses a great threat to the successful transition of university graduates into the workforce. Trends indicate that unemployment among recent university graduates is on the rise, which in turn is negatively impacting returns on higher education investments. This study sought to understand the transition experience of baccalaureate graduates in Kenya so as to inform the discourse on school-to-work transitions in Kenya.

Using the concurrent nested mixed methods strategy; a predominantly quantitative electronic survey was administered to 2010, 2011 and 2012 alumni of a private university in Kenya. The objective of the study was to understand how graduates transitioned into their post-graduate occupations; to identify the strategies they employed to facilitate the transition; and to identify the factors that facilitated or impeded their desired transition outcome. One hundred and fifty three (153) alumni responded to the survey. Findings show that graduates transitioned into their desired post-graduation plans, which mainly included joining the workforce or pursuing further academic studies. Also, majority of graduates preferred careers as employees in the private and not-for-profit sectors, although there were some significant differences in the transitional experiences by gender. Graduates mainly depended on immediate family and friends as key resources to facilitate their transition. Lastly, graduates had difficulty adapting and keeping up with the new adult roles and responsibilities.
Dedicated to the Blessed Mother,

My parents Raphael and Esther Gitonga, siblings Jackie and Ciiru, and my grandparents in Nyeri and Kirinyaga
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Overview

Kenya is a developing country located on the eastern coast of Africa. It covers an area of 585,646 square kilometers with the equator nearly dividing the country in half. Kenya has a population of approximately 40 million composed of 42 different ethnic groups of varying sizes (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2012; Munene, 2012). The majority of her population is located in the southwestern highlands and plateau areas where the soil is fertile, rainfall is adequate and temperatures are mild. The Kenyan economy is market-based with few state-owned enterprises and it maintains a liberalized external trade system (World Bank, 2013). The economy is primarily based on agriculture and tourism. These two sectors contribute about a third of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employ more than two thirds of the labor force and account for 70% of export earnings (Ngome, 2003).

Kenya gained her independence from Britain in December 1963 and became a republic one year later. The country is multilingual with Kiswahili as the national language and English as the official language used in formal settings. Kenya has a total workforce of approximately 17 million, of which 11.4 million are in employment. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2012), 2.1 million are employed in the formal sector, which comprises the public sector, multinationals, and medium-size enterprises. In addition, 9.3 million are employed in the informal sector, which mainly consists of small-scale enterprises and sole-proprietorships.

Like the majority of African countries, Kenya is considered a youthful nation since approximately 78% of her population is below the age of 34 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics,
While this surplus in human capital can be viewed as an incentive for attracting potential investors, it has also been described as causing great strain on the country’s employment structures (Rasmussen, 2010). For example, each year approximately 750,000 young people join the Kenyan labor market (Muthee, 2010). However, only about 25% of them get absorbed into the formal job market (Government of Kenya, 2007c), raising the youth unemployment level to a record 67% of the nationally unemployed (Maina, 2011). Given this scenario, youth unemployment is one of the major challenges facing Kenya today, prompting the government to invite stakeholders, such as employers, learning institutions, policy makers and researchers to partake in resolving this situation.

In 2003, Kenya experienced a democratic regime change that ushered in the country’s first coalition government under the banner of the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC). In his vision, the coalition president, Mwai Kibaki, pledged to create 500,000 jobs each year, pursue a zero tolerance policy on corruption, and introduce constitutional amendments that would decentralize presidential powers (Wamucii & Idwasi, 2011). It is this renewed optimism and energy for the country’s development potential that saw the introduction of a number of economic reforms and planning.

First among the development plans was the launch of the *Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation (ERS)*, which was to place the country on the path towards economic recovery and growth. The ERS was a short-term development plan (2003-2007) geared to promote social and economic development based on four main pillars: good governance, macroeconomic stability, infrastructure improvement, and investment in human capital.

Following the success of the ERS 2003-2007, which saw the economy grow from a low of 0.6% in 2002 to 6.1% in 2006, the government launched *Vision 2030* in 2007 as the country’s
national development plan. In comparison to ERS, Vision 2030 is a long-term development blueprint that spans from 2008 to 2030, divided into five-year Medium Term Plans (MTP). The vision provides a roadmap to developing Kenya into a globally competitive and prosperous nation, based on three broadly defined pillars: economic, social, and political (Government of Kenya, 2007a). These pillars are anchored on the foundations of seven key sectors: macroeconomic stability, infrastructure development, science technology and innovation, land reforms, security, public sector reforms, and human resource development (Government of Kenya, 2007a).

Over the last decade the Kenyan government has embarked on a number of measures to streamline the higher education sector with the Vision 2030 goals. This has been reflected through government policy documents and budgetary allocations for the higher education sector (Amukowa, 2013) and driven by the belief that the sector can create the competitive and adaptable human resource base needed for the country’s development. Examples of efforts made by the government and the higher education sector in this regard include significantly increasing access to higher education by expanding the self-sponsored programs to all public universities and constituent colleges in 2009. Started in 1998, owing to decreased state funding and in response to the high demand for university education in Kenya, the self-sponsored programs, also referred to as Module II or parallel degree programs are privately sponsored degree programs offered in public universities (Ngolovoi, 2009; Ooro, 2009). They are offered alongside the regular government subsidized degree programs also known as Module I programs, hence the term “parallel.” Previously, admission into public universities was limited to only government sponsored students in the Module I programs whose admission was limited to approximately 10,000 students per academic year (Bunyi, 2008; Onsongo, 2011). The introduction of the self-sponsored track saw a drastic increase in the number of students enrolled in public universities with privately sponsored students comprising the majority.
Expansion of these programs to all public universities and constituent colleges further made higher education accessible from all parts of the country and not just the major cities as was the case previously.

Additionally, over the last decade, a number of measures have been undertaken to expand the higher education sector in Kenya. For instance, in 2007 the government upgraded 15 Kenyan polytechnics or vocational colleges into university colleges (Commission for Higher Education, 2013). Also, during this period, the government enacted the Universities Act No. 42, which brought the establishment, governance and administration of universities under the same legal framework easing the process of establishing public universities (Commission for Higher Education, 2013). In turn, this has seen the number of universities authorized to operate in Kenya increased from 12 in 2002 to 65 in 2013 (Government of Kenya, 2013a). These include 22 public universities, 17 chartered private universities, 14 constituent colleges and 14 private universities operating with letters of interim authority (Government of Kenya, 2013a). Other strategies undertaken to expand the sector include the creation of an open university which begins enrolment in 2014 (Otuki, 2014) and the establishment of a public-private partnership framework to allow private investment into public universities so as to facilitate further expansion of existing institutions, establish new institutions and to provide scholarships to ensure more students are able to access higher education (Nganga, 2014).

But just like other societies, the higher education system in Kenya is elitist (Amukowa, 2013; Ooro, 2009). This is because access is primarily dependent on an extremely competitive examination process or backgrounds of privilege (Amukowa, 2013). For instance, despite the rapid expansion of the higher education sector and increase in enrollments, access is still not guaranteed for all high school candidates aspiring to pursue higher education. This is because to be admitted into a
university one must first attain a minimum grade of C+ in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) national exam. Also to be admitted into a public university under the government sponsored “regular” or Module I program, students have to be selected by the universities’ Joint Admission Board (JAB). The JAB, constituted of representatives from all public universities and constituent colleges, conducts the admission exercise annually before each academic year for students who sat the KCSE examination the previous year. The Board selects high school graduates based on academic merit and following the university choices candidates indicated prior to their KCSE exam. Following the recent expansion of public universities, admissions into Module I programs has risen significantly. For instance between 2008 and 2013, the total number for high school graduates admitted rose from 16,134 to 53,010. This is approximately 35% of the number of students who attain the minimum qualifications for admission into a Kenyan university (Ministry of Education Science and Technology, 2013). Those not selected in this process have the option of enrolling in self-sponsored programs in public universities or private universities while others may pursue higher education opportunities abroad.

Even so, university education at a private university or the self-sponsored track at a public university is quite costly for most families. For instance, the annual cost of tuition (not including other costs such as books and accommodation) in both the self-sponsored programs at public university and private universities are estimated to cost between $2,500 and $ 4,000 depending on the degree program. This is quite costly for most families in Kenya. For this reason the government, through the Higher Education Loans Board (HELB), extended academic loan services to students in private universities and those in self-sponsored programs in public universities to ease the financial burden on families and to facilitate access to higher education. Since its establishment in 1974, the HELB only provided academic loans to students in the regular (or Module I) track in public
universities. But with the increase in the number of students enrolling into private universities, and the self-sponsored track in public universities, the extension of the services to this new constituency was necessary. According to HELB, more than 120,000 students were awarded loans in the 2012/2013 academic year. This is more than three-times the number of students who were awarded higher education loans in 2003-2004 (less than 40,000 students) (Higher Education Loans Board, 2014).

Consequently, all these measures resulted in a drastic increase in the number of students enrolled in Kenyan universities. For example, between 2008 and 2013 the number of students enrolled in universities in Kenya increased by almost 102% from 122,800 to 251,000 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2013). This is largely a result of the upgrade of polytechnics into university colleges, the awarding of charters to close to 20 private universities within this period, and expansion of academic loan services especially to students in the self-sponsored programs in public universities. Table 1 is a summary of university enrollments according to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Enrollments</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>122,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>177,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>177,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>198,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>240,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>251,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2013, some 124,000 high school candidates achieved the grades required for admission to universities in Kenya (Nganga, 2014). According to the Commission for Higher Education in Kenya, this number is expected to increase to 200,000 in 2015. Given the rapid expansion taking place in
the higher education sector today, it is certain that the country will be faced with a large number of university graduates joining the labor market over the next decade. The human resource development goal of the Vision 2030 development blueprint laid emphasis on catalyzing the processes of job creation for unemployed youth and facilitating the transition processes for young people leaving learning institutions to seek gainful employment. This study was an attempt to understand the processes of college-to-work transitions in Kenya.

Successful school-to-work transitions can be defined as situations where students in an education system or a training program are able to transition smoothly into the economy, either through securing employment in an organization or pursuing careers in self-employment. Such situations are not easy to create or even to maintain, and this makes the transition process a matter of concern to many policy makers in both developing and developed societies. Transitions from school to work impact a variety of people, for example, primary school leavers, secondary (high school) leavers, post-secondary institution graduates, and overall school dropouts. However, of particular interest to this study are university graduates, and more specifically, undergraduates. It is becoming increasingly important to understand the strategies that various stakeholders employ to facilitate the transition from college into employment given the rising enrolments into higher education in Kenya.

The college-to-work transition is a unique experience in comparison to earlier educational transitions (i.e. high school and grade school). This is partly because it takes place almost concurrently with the transition into the adulthood life stage developmental process. Some of the issues of concern at this stage include identification of potential careers to pursue, marriage, family, and adulthood life tasks, which are significantly different concerns in comparison to previous transition experiences (Noel-Levitz, 2006). This stage is different because it involves the
postponement of major adulthood decisions relating to work, family and responsibility (Arnett, 2000). In industrialized countries, the individuals undergoing this transition have been identified as belonging to the emerging adulthood developmental stage, ages 18-25, and are described as having postponed their adulthood roles and responsibilities so as to explore possibilities in work and education (Murphy, Blustein, Bohlig, & Platt, 2010). It is therefore important that the process of preparing these individuals to join the workforce is well orchestrated so that the desired result can be achieved. Data on this subject, however, shows a largely underdeveloped pathway (Staff & Mortimer, 2008), prompting the need for further inquiry.

Research shows that most college seniors already have thoughts about their transitions to work, and therefore most of their actions are geared towards facilitating their transition process. A dissertation by McCoy (2003) indicated that the primary belief and most urgent concerns of college seniors were securing post-college employment and where they would live after college. Saginak (1998) identified five issues facing college seniors during their final year of transition. One of these issues included the pressure to generate an action plan for their post college activities while other concerns involved role changes and practical considerations such as finishing course work and relocation, time demands and an evaluation of their own education.

Gardner and Van der Veer (1998) identified similar transition issues facing college seniors. These include: finishing course work, starting their professions pursuit, ending or changing significant personal relationships, establishing an independent residence, and managing their personal finances independently. Other transition concerns experienced may include identity changes, such as the shift in professional status from an undergraduate student to a college-educated person, which comes with new social responsibilities and expectations (Chickering & Schlossberg, 2002). A similar study by Pistilli, Taub and Bennet (2003) identified four concerns or anxieties that
face college seniors as they approach their graduation. These include concerns about careers, change or loss, pursuit of graduate or professional schools, and social support. Another study by Taub, Servaty-Seib and Cousins (2006) indicates that college seniors’ concerns are not limited to career preparation strategies but extend to challenges of assuming adulthood responsibilities. The study also indicates that their decisions are influenced by factors such as gender, race, degree major and post-graduation plans.

The study of college-to-work transitions is important because it not only helps provide an understanding of the experiences of young adults transitioning into the world of work but also provides an analysis of their performance in the labor market (Quintini & Manfredi, 2009). Campbell, Herrington and Verenikina (2009) conducted a study in which they found that college graduates entering into the world of work are often unprepared to negotiate the social and cultural dimensions of their new work environment. Like any newcomer entering into a community, college graduates are required to adapt to new conditions, create new relationships, and access new learning opportunities (Campbell et al., 2009). This raises the need for proper preparation strategies on the part of learning institutions to ensure that graduates are adequately equipped for the transition experience.

A successful college-to-work transition can be conceptualized to entail the college senior’s preparation for work, their graduation from college, their entry into gainful employment, and an ability to retain their job by demonstrating competencies and abilities that are desired by their employer or client (in the case of a self-employed graduate). This conceptualization is consistent with Jobin-Davis’ (2000) definition of a successful transition in which the individual must not only be able to make the transition into work, but also retain the job by demonstrating proper work habits and exhibiting the desired competencies to the satisfaction of their employer. It is with this
understanding of the college-to-work transition that the “recent graduate” phase (Figure 1) emerges as a critical stage in the holistic comprehension of the experience.

A review of the experiences in the college senior stage and the recent graduate stage indicate that the two experiences are characterized by similar feelings of uncertainty and stress as a result of the transition atmosphere. Key actors in each of these stages, namely the college senior, the learning institution, and the graduate are noted to take up proactive roles with the aim of ensuring that the tensions in the transition are kept to a minimum. From an institutional perspective, this is done by availing programs and services that provide relevant information, resources and support aimed to ease the process, whereas from an individual perspective, there is a deliberate drive to tap onto available information and resources that will aid the transition experience.

With this in mind, the college to work transition experience of undergraduates may be conceptualized as a continuous process starting from the college senior stage through to the end of the recent graduate stage. The recent graduate period refers to the period after graduation when the individual is contemplating the next engagement such as employment, graduate school or becoming a homemaker. Given this understanding, the researcher conceptualized the college-to-work transition as follows.
Figure 1. The college-to-work transition.

Problem Statement

Growing segments of the Kenyan population are demanding for higher education (Aketch, Odera, Chepkuto, & Okaka, 2012; Oketch, 2003; Otieno, 2004). Within the past decade, statistics indicate an increase in university enrolments as well as rapid expansion in higher education to meet the rising demand. Many Kenyans view university education as an avenue to accessing better career opportunities as well as facilitating upward social mobility (Okech & Amutabi, 2002; Otieno, 2004). Given this, many Kenyan parents invest significant resources and endure major sacrifices to ensure that their children obtain university degrees. Similarly, the government has also been under immense pressure to ensure that university education is not only available domestically, but is accessible to a wider spectrum of Kenyans (Oketch, 2003). To this end, several measures have been undertaken such as upgrading technical training colleges into universities; awarding full charters to private universities; extending higher education loans to students in private universities and expanding the student intake into public universities through the self-sponsored track also known as the parallel
program (Aketch et al., 2012; Oketch, 2003; Otieno, 2004). Critics have argued that this rapid expansion may have a negative impact on the quality of higher education, especially given the capacity constraints experienced by existing institutions (Kigotho, 2009). However, in addition to these concerns, there is the need to consider the absorption of graduates into the workforce after completion of their degrees.

The high rate of youth unemployment in the country poses one of the greatest threats to the successful transition of many university graduates into the workforce. According to Maina (2011), recent graduates are increasingly joining the unemployed category, a phenomenon that is resulting in negative returns on their investments in higher education. This is a worrying trend for many stakeholders, prompting a sense of urgency in diagnosing the root causes as well as encouraging debate on how the problem can be quickly resolved (Wambugu, Munga, & Onsomu, 2009). So far, the analyses have placed the blame on the slow growth of the economy and its failure to absorb the large numbers of young people joining the labor market annually, skills mismatch, structural reforms, high cost of labor, and poor dissemination of labor market information (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2011; Government of Kenya, 2007c; Wambugu et al., 2009). Other factors noted include a lack of alignment between the education system and the human resource needs of the country (Abagi, Nzomo, & Otieno, 2006; Evoh, 2012); the narrow focus of the economy still largely dependent on agriculture and tourism (Hinga, 2010); corruption and nepotism; and historical social injustices such as inequality and marginalization (Forti & Maina, 2012; Government of Kenya, 2007c).

The first Medium-Term Plan (MTP) 2008-2012 of the Kenya Vision 2030 development blueprint emphasizes the need to facilitate transitions of young people from school to work. In the Ministry of Labor, the arm of government charged with the responsibility of human resource
development, the strategic plan 2008-2012 highlights poor linkages between industry, training, and research institutions as one of the major challenges facing Kenya’s human resource development, labor, and employment sectors. Through the Vision 2030 MTPs (2008-2012 and 2013-2017), researchers are encouraged to study ways to improve the linkage between the Kenyan labor market and training/research institutions (Government of Kenya, 2008, 2013b). This study was designed in response to this invitation.

**Purpose of the Study**

This study sought to understand the phenomenon of college-to-work transition in the Kenyan context. The purpose of the study was to gain an understanding of the transition experience of baccalaureate graduates from a private university; to understand the strategies individuals employ to facilitate the transition from college to work; and to identify the institutional factors that either facilitate or impede the desired transition outcome.

**Research Questions**

1. How do baccalaureate graduates from a private university in Kenya transition from college to work?
   a. What individual actions do they undertake to facilitate their transition?
   b. What institutional factors facilitate or impede their transition?

**Significance of the Study**

In addition to making a contribution to the literature on human resource development (HRD) in Kenya, the findings of this study are of interest to a variety of stakeholders affected by the college-to-work transition process in various ways:
College seniors and/or graduates. These individuals are the largest stakeholders in the transition process. They invest their time and lives to attain a college degree. They endure self-sacrifice during this pursuit and are most affected when the transition is not successful.

Family. Sperling and Tucker (1997) noted that the cost of a college education in America is estimated to be the second largest family investment, after the purchasing of a home. Similarly, Geiger and Heller (2011) noted that in 2009, a middle-income level family paid close to 44 percent of its earnings for an average-priced private, non-profit, four-year university degree. Comparable observations can be made to the Kenyan situation as well. Trends indicate that more students are pursuing degrees through the parallel degree programs (also known as self/privately sponsored) in comparison to the regular government-sponsored programs at the public universities (Odhiambo, 2011). There is also an increase in the number of students pursuing degrees at private universities. A return on investments commencing soon after graduation is therefore a key objective of graduates and their families and is necessary to ensure the sustainability of the family’s limited finances. Episodes of unemployment or further economic dependence on the family after graduation can be seen as a drain on the family’s limited resources.

The state and taxpayer. The United States Census Bureau (2002) estimates that holders of bachelor’s degree earn, on average, earn about $2.1 million over their lifetime, twice as much as high school diploma holders. Similar findings are reflected by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014), which estimates that graduates with a baccalaureate degree earn about $24,000 more than high school graduates. Therefore, this means that the more college-educated individuals you have within a state, the higher the revenue that can be generated through income taxes. A similar case exists in Kenya. A rise in revenue for the state also means an increase in social services for the taxpayer. Failed transitions from college-to-work mean an increase in dependence on the state
welfare systems. Such graduates may resort to immigrating to other countries thus denying the country valuable human capital that is needed to attract private-sector investment. This argument is supported by the research findings of Greenwood (1997), Malamud and Wozniak (2008) and Wozniak (2011), who found that higher levels of education correlate with higher migration patterns in the United States.

Universities. Colleges are charged with the responsibility of training individuals and preparing them for the workplace and life in general. Significant amounts of resources are invested in the institution’s programs and curricula to ensure that the graduates reflect the quality of the institutions. Universities, therefore, have a stake in college-to-work transitions since they would like their graduates to be proud of the college experience so that, in turn, after they graduate and are engaged in gainful employment, they can support their undergraduate institution by being active members of the alumni community and giving back to their institution.

Employers. Business and industry leaders are the key stakeholders who express discontent with how college graduates are prepared for work by learning institutions, because the process of recruiting and training a new employee is costly and time-consuming. Employers, faced with increased global competition, would prefer to spend more resources in making their business processes more efficient than training new employees on skills that they were supposed to have learned in school. This is especially a concern since businesses pay high taxes annually with the hope that these institutions of higher learning will provide the necessary education.

This study also makes a contribution to the field of human resources development within the Kenyan context. Empirical studies conducted on this topic indicate a gap between research and practice. For example, Mclean and Kamau (1999), while studying the status of vocation and technical education at the Kenyatta University, observed that universities in Kenya were not directly
involved in HRD for the private sector. They noted that multinational corporations conducted their own training and development and that the private sector was eager to participate in HRD programs that were offered by universities (McLean & Kamau, 1999). Additionally, McLean and Kamau (1999) and Anzaya (2008) observed that there is very limited literature addressing HRD in Kenya. Much of the research relating to human resources focuses on human resource management (HRM) issues (Dimba & Rugimbana, 2013; Kamoche, 2011; Marachi & Wario, 2013; Nyambegera, Daniels, & Sparrow, 2001; Ragui & Gichuhi, 2013).

Finally, there are also very limited studies focusing on transitions of college graduates to work in Kenya. For instance, Maina (2011) examined the entrepreneurial intentions of university graduates with regard to pursuing entrepreneurship as a career; Kinyanjui (2010) investigated the participation of university graduates in starting up entrepreneurial ventures in rural settings; and Muthama and Kinyanjui (2013) investigated the relationship between the university courses students took and the career paths they later pursued, their goal being to establish how these two variables affect job satisfaction. Notably, these studies primarily focus on the transition outcome with limited emphasis on the process of navigating the transition.

**Theoretical Framework**

The underlying phenomenon in this study was the process of transition. This study was an attempt to understand the transition experience of recent baccalaureate graduates focusing on how they navigate the transition; the strategies they use and the factors that facilitate or impede their desired transition outcomes. It is with this understanding that a transition theory framework was found to be the most relevant.
Schlossberg, Waters, and Goodman, (1995) describe a transition theory as one that focuses on life events entailing change. This is therefore an ideal framework for examining the experiences of recent graduates since they are in a life stage that is characterized by several changes in their personal and academic lives. The transition from college is unique because it involves ushering young individuals into adulthood. Several changes that take place during this period may include leaving behind the role of a college student, assuming professional roles, taking up adulthood responsibilities such as marriage and parenthood, becoming economically independent as well as psychosocial development, among others. These changes impose many uncertainties that cause anxiety and stress on the individual and, therefore, to navigate this phase, the college senior or recent graduate must develop ways of coping. These may include: (a) being aware of the possible changes so as to be able to anticipate events that are likely to happen during this phase; (b) preparing for unanticipated events; (c) ensuring that one has the proper attitude to tackle the frustrations emanating from failure to realize the anticipated events.

With this understanding of the college-to-work transition, the researcher chose Schlossberg’s transition theory as the most appropriate framework for this study. Schlossberg defines transition as any event or nonevent that results in change in relationships, routines, assumptions, and/or roles within the setting of self, work, family, health, and/or economics (Schlossberg, 1984). Schlossberg’s transition model is intended to provide practitioners with a structured approach to predicting, measuring, and modifying reactions to change so as to understand students’ needs (Schlossberg, Lynch, & Chickering, 1989). This process of examination entails investigating the factors that influence a person’s coping abilities and how individuals navigate through transitions. The theory identifies factors related to transition, the individual, and the environment so as to determine the
degree of impact that the transition has on the individual at a particular time (Carroll & Creamer, 2004 in Powers, 2010).

In order to understand Schlossberg's transition theory, the following terms need to be understood.

Transition is any event, or non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions and roles.

An anticipated transition is an event that is predictable such as graduating from college and getting a job after graduation.

An unanticipated transition is an event that is not predictable.

Nonevents are transitions that are expected but do not happen such as when a graduate expects to get a job but doesn’t or when a college senior expects to graduate but does not.

Role of perception means that a transition exists only when the individual experiencing it is able to define it.

Impact is the degree to which the transition alters the daily life of the individual.

Schlossberg, Waters, and Goodman (1995) identify four major sets of factors that influence a person’s ability to cope with a transition: situation, self, support and strategies.

Situation refers to how an individual views the transition. This includes whether the individual views the transition as positive, negative, expected, unexpected, desired or dreaded. How the individual perceives the timing of the transition such as, is it the best time, the worst time, on time or off the schedule. Another factor is if the individual perceives the transition as voluntary or imposed.

Self refers to the strengths and weaknesses the individual brings to the transition which may include the individual’s past experience, the options available, the individual’s sense of control, and their level optimism and resilience.

Support refers to sources of support available to the individual in transition. Support could refer to spouse or partner, family member(s), friend(s), co-worker(s), neighbor(s), organization(s), or institution(s). The sources of support can be both positive and negative, such as the individual getting support that helps to facilitate their transition or hinders their successful transition.

Strategies refer to the coping strategies the individual engages. This includes the creative ways the individual copes with the situation, including the individual’s ability to manage his/her emotions/reactions to the stress of the transition and the individual’s personal flexibility.
Schlossberg’s transition theory also provides a framework for conceptualizing the transition experience. According to Schlossberg, Lynch, and Chickering (1989) individuals going through a transition process experience three phases: “moving in,” “moving through,” and “moving out.” Moving in refers to the phase when the individual is confronted with a transition or change; moving through is the process of managing the transition; and last, moving out is the phase when the transition comes to an end. When going through these phases, individuals evaluate each transition over a period of time, determine the likely negative or positive effects, and conduct an inventory of resources available for managing the change. This kind of self-analysis includes consideration of one’s strengths and weaknesses based on personal and psychological factors, the social supports available, and coping strategies the individual could use to modify the situation, control the meaning of the transition, and manage the stress it causes (Schlossberg, et al., 1989).

Figure 2 is an illustration how this framework aligns with the college-to-work model in Figure 1.
A consistent theme in Schlossberg’s research is that transition is a process involving step-by-step change, working through events across a timeframe, and required adjustments across several of life’s dimensions. This means that transitions can be managed and if a transition can be understood, the person who is experiencing the change can be aided as they move through the process. According to Schlossberg (2004), the transition is not the critical issue, but rather how much the experience changes one’s roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions. The bigger the change, the greater the potential impact and the longer it may take to incorporate the transition and move on.
Schlossberg’s work on transition greatly informed this study and the researcher’s to make meaning of the graduates’ experiences starting from their college senior year to their current occupations. Through this study, the researcher sought to discover the process of navigating from college into post-graduate occupations, the perceptions of the graduates regarding their experience and to highlight the strategies employed by college graduates to cope with changes during the transition period.

Definition of Terms

*Parallel degree program* is a degree-awarding stream in the public higher education system in Kenya that allows students who are admissible but who do not qualify for government sponsorship to pay for their education. The program runs concurrently with the regular government-sponsored programs, hence the term “parallel”.

*School-to-Work (STW) Programs* are designed to assist secondary (high school) students in their transition to employment. Generally, training occurs in work-study programs during the junior and senior years of high school. The term also refers to activities, experiences, and opportunities that prepare students for the world of work, such as youth apprenticeships, mentoring, internships, job-shadowing, career exploration, and the integration of academic and vocational curriculum (Bonds, 2003).

*Successful school-to-work transition* refers to when an individual is able to transition into work and retains employment through demonstrating work habits and competencies that are desired by their employer (Jobin-Davis, 2000).

*Transition* is any event, or non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions and roles (Schlossberg, Waters, and Goodman, 1995).
Summary

This chapter was a presentation of an overview of the Kenyan context and a discussion of various aspects related to the study such as the problem statement, significance of the study, purpose of the study, and the theoretical framework. The next chapter is a review of the literature pertinent to this study.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

This chapter is a review of literature on areas pertinent to this study. The chapter is organized into four sections: youth and unemployment, school-to-work transition, college-to-work transition, and preparations for the college-to-work transition. The chapter concludes with a summary of the sections and a brief introduction to Chapter Three.

Youth and Unemployment

The World Bank (2009) and the United Nations (2008) indicate that approximately 18% of the world’s population is youth aged from 15 to 24 years. More than 85% of these youth, who make up more than 1 billion, live in developing regions such as in Sub-Saharan Africa, South East Asia and the Pacific. The International Labour Organization (2011) estimates that the youth proportion in developing countries will grow to almost 90% by the year 2020. Africa’s youth population aged below 24 years constitutes more than two thirds of the total population of the continent, making it the youngest region in the world (Evoh, 2012; International Labour Organization, 2011). This constituency consists of about 37% of the total labor force in Africa and is expected to expand more rapidly than anywhere else in the world (Garcia & Fares, 2008; International Labour Organization, 2011). This largest-ever youth cohort is more educated and healthier than previous cohorts, and it has therefore been argued that with the right polices and institutions in place the region would benefit from its large workforce, as was the case in the Asian economic miracle (Garcia & Fares, 2008).

However, high unemployment rates pose a great threat to realizing the benefits of this youthful mass, especially in Sub-Sahara Africa, which is estimated to have the highest number of
unemployed. Estimates in 2005 indicate that 6 out of 10 individuals of working age in the region are unemployed. The International Labour Organization (ILO) Global Employment Trends 2012 report indicates that 74.8 million youth in the world between ages 15-24 were unemployed in 2011. This is an increase from 2007 when it was estimated that 70 million youth were unemployed. The ILO (2012) also reports that in comparison to adults, young people are approximately three times likely to be unemployed with the current global youth unemployment rate estimated at 12.7% (International Labour Organization, 2012). Some of the reasons attributed to this include the lack of skills when entering the labor market; illiteracy, especially in instances where there is early entry into the labor market or child labor; and general labor market shortcomings such as discriminatory policies and a lack of capacity to absorb large numbers of new entrants into the labor market (Garcia & Fares, 2008). It is estimated that more that 80 million young people are searching for secure jobs globally (International Labour Organization, 2004, 2010).

Youth unemployment continues to be on the rise despite national and international policy efforts targeted at containing it. The phenomenon of youth unemployment is of critical importance because of its effect on economic development, social stability and welfare, and on human capital development. It is considered a significant economic loss with regard to human capital stocks and social welfare expenditures (Caspi, Wright, Moffitt, & Silva, 1998) when a young person, with the capability and willingness to work, spends long periods of time inactive or idle. Some of the social problems associated with youth unemployment include high crime rates, drug use, violence, youth suicide, illegitimate births, and illegal migration (Adepoju, 2003; Singell & Lillydahl, 1989). Human capital is also noted to depreciate with the duration of unemployment (Edin & Gustavsson, 2008). Consequently, such attributes work against the ability to create a favorable investment climate for the private sector to expand and create more opportunities for employment.
Experiences of unemployment also have long-term negative or scarring effects on an individual's future career prospects (Ellwood, 1982; Gardecki & Neumark, 1998; Kletzer & Fairlie, 2003). Unemployment, especially at a youthful stage, has an effect on the returns to education, long-term skills accumulation and incomes (Gartell, 2012); it reduces the probabilities of employment, future earnings or wages (Gray, 2000), and increases the risk of future unemployment (Arulampalam, 2001; Arulampalam, Gregg, & Gregory, 2001; Bell & Blanchflower, 2011; Margolis, Plug, Simonnet, Vilhuber, & Sofer, 2004). Such concerns about youth unemployment propel the research agenda on school-to-work transition.

One of the earliest indications of the negative implications of unemployed youth became obvious while Kenya was still a colony. In the middle and late 1950s, at the height of the liberation struggle, the colonial administration raised concerns about the rising number of unoccupied youths and the impact they would have on the social fabric and security of the colony. In a bid to keep these young people “out of mischief”, the administration created over 200 youth centers to provide practical elementary training (Ford, 1975). In independent Kenya, evidence of concern about the connection between education, employment and the “school leaver” problem can be witnessed in the titles of the many conferences, commissions of inquiry, and policies initiated by the government since 1964 (King, 2007), which were targeted at reviewing the education system and aligning it with the development aspirations of the new nation. Examples of such initiatives included the 1964 act of Parliament that established the National Youth Service (N.Y.S), whose target was to train young citizens with skills to serve the nation in tasks that were considered of national importance or of service to the nation. The Kenya Education Commission of 1964 (also known as the Ominde Commission) was also the first post-colonial taskforce charged with the responsibility of reviewing the national education system to determine its relevance to the development goals of the country. In
In its review, it realized that there was a gap between education and work, and recommended that a conducive environment be created to facilitate the integration of school leavers into employment (Government of Kenya, 1964). In 1966, religious organizations, under the umbrella body of the National Christian Council of Kenya (NCCK), established village polytechnics to train young people in the rural areas in vocational skills such as carpentry, masonry, agriculture, tailoring, domestic sciences, plumbing, bee-keeping, baking and motor mechanics, among others (Wanjala, 1973). This was following the realization that more than 150,000 primary school graduates were joining the labor market each year but did not have the requisite skills to be integrated in the economy (Court, 1973; Wanjala, 1973). Other popular development policies designed to address the youth concern include the Kenya Sessional Paper 2 of 1992 on Small Scale and Jua Kali Enterprises that recognized the informal sector as a major employer of Kenyan youth and a contributor to the national economy (Government of Kenya, 2007b). The National Poverty Eradication Plan (1999-2015) focused on eradicating poverty through comprehensive strategies aimed at reducing unemployment, social integration, and creation of an environment for social development (Thompson, 2001).

Among the more recent initiatives, and most significant in the effort to address the youth unemployment dilemma in Kenya, was the creation of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports in 2005. This government ministry was intended, in part, to address the issue of youth idleness, training, and provision of employment options. Other initiatives include the development of policies such as the first Kenya National Youth Policy (Government of Kenya, 2006), which emphasized youth participation and empowerment, employment creation, education and training, health and environment, youth and media, arts and culture and sports and recreation. One common feature in these initiatives is the recognition of youth as an important constituency that needs to be integrated into the mainstream so that they may play an active role in executing the country’s long-term
national development and prosperity goals as envisioned in the Kenya Vision 2030 development blueprint (Government of Kenya, 2007a).

The 2010 Kenyan Constitution defines youth as “the collectivity of all individuals in the Republic” aged between of 18 and 35 years (Republic of Kenya, 2010). In Kenya, this group of individuals represents more than 40% of the country’s population (International Labour Organisation, 2011). According to the 2009 National Population and Housing Census, young people aged between 15 and 35 years comprise 14 million (African Economic Outlook, 2012; Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2011; Government of Kenya, 2008; Omolo, 2010). The country’s labor force comprises more than 40% of the total population, of which almost 70% are youth (Omolo, 2010). Every year, approximately 750,000 young people join the Kenyan labor market (Muthee, 2010); however, only 25% of these individuals get absorbed into the formal labor market, leaving the majority unemployed (Government of Kenya, 2007b). It can therefore be argued that the Kenyan unemployment problem is in fact a youth problem (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2011).

Most unemployed youth in Kenya have formal education but do not have vocational skills training (Government of Kenya, 2008). This understanding has largely informed the establishment of programs aimed at addressing the youth unemployment problem. The majority of existing initiatives prescribe education and training as the means to solving the problem. For instance, some of the programs and projects that are currently being undertaken by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports include: The Kenya National Youth Policy and Youth Employment Marshall plan; Kazi Kwa Vijana Programme (Jobs for Youth); youth training and skills development through National Youth Service and Youth Polytechnics; Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF); Youth Employment Scheme; entrepreneurship training for youth out of school; Youth and ICT Development; Sports and recreation programs; The National Youth Talent Academy; and
Affirmative action policy for youth. Most of these programs, with the exception of a few such as the Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF), focus on the development of vocational skills for employability and self-employment. However, of notable concern is that there are no programs that particularly address the university graduate constituency who have already acquired professional skills and are seeking employment. Given that this is an increasingly growing constituency, as witnessed in the rising university enrollments especially over the last decade, it is necessary for policy makers and other stakeholders to begin contemplating and putting in place measures to prevent a replica of experiences witnessed when graduates from lower levels of education have joined the labor market.

Kenyans have always expressed great faith in education. After independence, the government promoted education as the key to social and economic development, describing it as the medium that would foster and promote national unity; prepare and equip the youth with skills to enable them to play an effective role in nation-building, as well as to ensure opportunities for the full development of their talents and personality; and to assist in the promotion of social equality and training in obligations and responsibilities (Court & Ghai, 1974). Similarly, the Kenyan public also views formal schooling with high regard, seeing it as a means to social mobility and improving the quality of life, especially given the high socioeconomic inequality witnessed in the country (Okech & Amutabi, 2002; Otieno, 2004). It is this faith in education that catalyzed the rapid expansion of the education system at all levels after independence (Buchmann, 1999) and that continues to do so today.

The government invests heavily in formal education, especially in comparison to other Sub-Saharan countries, which are in the same GDP per capita range as Kenya (Ojiambo, 2009). Even when the economy was faced with instabilities, the Government has maintained its allocation of
close to 30% of the total government spending to the education sector (Ojiambo, 2009). These large investments in the sector have therefore increased the interest of policy makers and various stakeholders in questioning if the desired returns on investments are being realized. Quintini and Manfredi (2009) propose assessing school-to-work transitions as one strategy that can be employed in this inquiry.

**School-to-Work Transition (STWT)**

The transition from school to work is one of the major changes taking place during young adulthood (Schoon & Silbereisen, 2009; Schulenberg, Maggs, & Hurrelmann, 1997; Vondracek, Lerner, & Schulenberg, 1986). It involves a number of developmental tasks such as individual development (Havighurst, 1974), role transitions (Elder, 1985; Silva, & Teixeira, 2013), and institutional careers (Hagestad & Neugarten, 1985; Mayer, 1986), among others. STWT is the dynamic process where a person moves from an education system into a relatively stable working position (Saar, Unt, & Kogan, 2008). This process integrates young people into the labor market and is considered a benchmark in analyzing their entry into the labor market (Saar et al., 2008). STWT is unique from other transitions because it is the first major work adjustment young adults make as they begin their careers (Feldman & Ng, 2007). Issues of concern when assessing a school-to-work transition include the time taken to secure the first job after completing education, smoothness of the transition (here referring to episodes of unemployment or inactivity), and lastly, the extent to which the transition experience determines labor success in the future (Quintini & Manfredi, 2009).

The school-to-work agenda brings together issues relating to schooling, employment, and training (Ryan, 2001) and seeks to understand how the three can be harmonized to maintain a productive workforce within a society. Discourse on school-to-work initiatives focuses on programs
and policies that facilitate youth to access vocational training (Sitlington, Clark, & Kolstoe, 2000); the anticipated outcomes of programs and/or curricula designed to prepare students for adulthood roles (Lehmann, Cobb, & Tochterman, 2001); and labor market policies and programs that facilitate access to jobs and/or facilitate employability skills (Parnell, 1985). Given this, the role of schools is central in this debate and it is viewed as a key institution in preparing young adults for social integration and for securing their living (International Labour Organization, 2009; Sitlington et al., 2000).

The movement to investigate the phenomenon of school-to-work transition in most societies has been encouraged by the rising levels of youth unemployment and, in some cases, the longer transitions being experienced between schooling and entry into the labor market. In the United States, concern has been driven in part by the discovery that the U.S. workforce lacked the skills they needed to meet the demands of the contemporary labor market (Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, 1990). Studies indicated that students leaving high schools were experiencing uncertain futures (Sitlington et al., 2000), partly because traditional academic education was not equipping students with the abilities to apply their abstract knowledge to the context of practical problem-solving situations (Stern, Bailey, & Merritt, 1996). Another shortcoming was weak institutional connections between schools and employers (Kerckhoff, 2002; Mortimer & Kruger, 2000). This was contributing to the misalignment in demand and supply of skills as well as misinformation and misplaced expectations.

Like most life transitions, the outcome of a school-to-work transition is influenced by several individual, institutional, cultural, and societal factors typical of any sociocultural and historical context. Such influences include the timing and sequencing of educational transitions and the level of unemployment (Hurrelmann, 1994; Nurmi, 1993). Literature on STWT identifies a
number of social, economic, educational, familial, and cultural factors that facilitate the understanding of this concept (Hamilton & Powers, 1990; Mann, Miller, & Baum, 1995). At an individual level, some of the factors identified include one’s educational preparedness (Klerman & Karoly, 1994), career planning efforts and structured career exploration experiences (Hirschi, Niles, & Akos, 2011; Jepsen & Dickson, 2003; Mann et al., 1995; Koivisto, Vinokur, & Vuori, 2011), social support from family and friends (Metheny & McWhirter, 2013; West & Newton, 1983), supportive supervisors (Borman, 1991; Feij, Whitely, Peiró, & Taris, 1995), and opportunities for challenge and new learning in the initial post-high-school job (Borman, 1991). Substantive research also shows that socioeconomic backgrounds and individual aspirations also play an important role in determining transition outcomes (Danziger & Ratner, 2010; Kerckhoff, 2003).

However, the transition experience is not entirely dependent on an individual’s resources. Institutional contexts such as the educational system, organization of employment system, and linkages between the two also have influence on the transition outcome (DiPrete, Goux, Maurin, & Tablin, 2001; Hannan, Riain, & Whelan, 1997). There are two primary institutions that are considered central in school-to-work transition. These include the nature and quality of the education system and the labor market (Kerckhoff & Hallinan, 2000; Müller, 2005). Other institutional factors that affect transitions include the strictness of labor market protection legislations, and the generosity of unemployment benefits (Bassanini & Duval, 2006).

Even though the school-to-work agenda has existed for decades now, there is no single acceptable definition of a successful school-to-work transition (Smith & Rojewski, 1993). Some definitions describe it as a system designed to ensure that students experience a smooth transition into adulthood (Lehmann et al., 2001); an intervention that equips students with high levels of academic and occupational knowledge and skills intended to enable them to find employment where
they can exploit their capacities (Stern et al., 1996); and an educational initiative that brings together educators, students, businesses and industry with the aim of helping young people transition smoothly from their classrooms to their careers (Ngeow, 1998; Ryan, 2001).

According to Bonds (2003), school-to-work (STW) is an umbrella term for activities, experiences, and opportunities that prepare students for the world of work. These include programs such as youth apprenticeships, mentoring, internships, job shadowing, career exploration, and integration of academic and vocational curriculum (Bonds, 2003). Similarly, definitions of what a successful school-to-work transition means vary. Some researchers argue that it is when someone is able to secure employment after completing schooling (Caspi et al., 1998); the duration taken from the time of graduation to the point of employment (Quintini & Manfredi, 2009); the individual’s performance in the labor market or their ability find and retain a job through demonstrating the desired skills and work ethic (Jobin-Davis, 2000).

The majority of the research conducted on this topic has been on American students, followed by the United Kingdom (UK), and then Commonwealth countries such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Kelly, 2009). The research has centered on understanding the participation of young people in the labor market as well as the global competitiveness of the nations’ human capital. The focus of school-to-work transitions varies based on the characteristics of the target group. Existing research has focused on high school students who drop out of school before graduating; high school graduates who are not planning on attending college; college students who drop out of college; and college graduates. Some examples of studies that have focused on students at the high school level include Bynner and Parsons (2002); Dooley and Prause (1995); Swanson and Fouad (1999); Winefield, Winefield, Tiggemann, and Goldney (1991); Gardecki and Neumark (1998) and Tolbert (1996); Vuolo, Staff, & Mortimer (2012).
The school-to-work dilemma is a national concern across the globe. It is not easy to make comparisons on this phenomenon across countries, since each country has varying economic, socio-demographic, and institutional characteristics that affect entry of young people into the labor market. Countries also vary in their education and training systems and in their labor market institutions (Müller, 2005). In some countries, employment opportunities for young people are strongly influenced by their personal characteristics such as gender, education attainment, previous work experience, and duration of unemployment (Russell & O'Connell, 2001). Countries in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) such as Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and Japan have been noted to have the most successful school-to-work transitions systems (Stern et al., 1996). This is because young people in these countries experience relatively low unemployment rates or experience shorter episodes of unemployment in comparison to other countries.

Notable among countries with successful school-to-work programs is the partnership between employers and the education sector, in preparing young people for the labor market (Ozga & Jones, 2006; Verger, 2012). For example, Germany, Switzerland, and Austria have a dual system of education that allows employers to hire and train apprentices. In Japan, employers and the schools maintain a close working relationship through which companies offer extensive training for newly hired graduates (Stern et al., 1996). Such arrangements provide a great incentive to students since they serve as a guarantee that good academic performance will earn them a place in the labor market (Soskice, 1994). Another assurance that complements these systems, especially those in Europe, is the widespread recognition of the skills standards and certification accorded by the learning institutions.
The successes experienced in these transition programs have greatly motivated other countries to emulate their models, especially with regard to engaging employers in the education and training of young people (Stern et al., 1996). The United States, for example, enacted a School-to-Work Opportunities Act in 1994 that established a national framework, within which individual states would create statewide school-to-work opportunities systems that created integrated academics, work-based learning experience, and provided a link between post-secondary and career learning opportunities (Gitter & Scheuer, 1997). The act also encouraged the promotion of school-to-work programs such as technical preparatory education, school-to-apprenticeship programs, cooperative education, career academies, youth apprenticeships, school-sponsored enterprises, business education, and programs that supported students who dropped out of school. Additionally, the U.S. also established the Goals 2000: Educate America Act that created a National Skills Standards Board that would develop and oversee a system of voluntary industry-based skills standards (King, 1994). Other countries that have taken up similar policy measures include Australia, Britain, Denmark, France, Korea, Spain, and Sweden. These systems are motivated by the hope that stronger employer involvement, closer ties between schools and the workplace and more effective systems of skill standards and certification would facilitate the experience of young people transitioning into work.

Empirical studies indicate that school-to-work interventions have a positive effect in preparing students for entry into the workforce. For example, Chin, Munby, and Hutchinson (1999) conducted a study on the impact of a cooperative education program in helping students increase employability skills. Their findings indicated that students who were engaged in the cooperative education program learned how to handle explicit instructions, gained knowledge of the workplace, and acquired a willingness to learn. Cumming and Lesniak (2000) similarly conducted a study to
determine the effect of a 13-week intervention intended to equip students with employability skills. Using a sample of 106 current and recently graduated students from cooperative education, tech prep, and vocational computer classes, they found that student’s employability skills improved after the intervention. Students recorded improvements in interviewing skills; technical job skills; self-efficacy; and a better appreciation of teamwork, communication, punctuality, and public speaking (Cumming & Lesniak, 2000).

Koivisto, Vuori and Vinokur (2012) conducted a study on 416 graduates of secondary vocational institutes to investigate how strategies aimed at preparing them for employment impacted their mental health and construction of work-life goals. Participants experienced a 1-week intervention program that was intended to improve their employment preparedness. They were tested at the beginning of the intervention, immediately after, and 10 months later. Findings indicated that the school-to-work intervention increased employment preparedness. The 10-month follow-up test also indicated that the experience increased the participant’s chances of employment, which in turn also positively impacted their work- and life-related personal goals, financial strains, and their mental health.

This review demonstrates the breadth and depth of the school-to-work discourse. Much of the discussion has revolved around providing a general understanding of the concept, hence the review of the definitions, programs, and outcomes. Since the interest of this study was about undergraduate college students, the next section will focus on how the concept of school-to-work transition specifically applies to this group of individuals. From this point forward, the transition process will be referred to as “college-to-work” transition and the transition group is “college graduates.” Also references to the term “students” will be implying undergraduate college students.
College-to-Work Transition

College-to-career transitions are important yet often challenging experiences (Holton, 2001; Polach, 2004). Many college students struggle with this transition, with some expressing feelings of depression and loss, stress, uncertainty, and anxiety as they approach graduation (Diepenbrock & Gibson, 2012; Perrone & Vickers, 2003; Wood, 2004). One of the most difficult and frustrating changes for recent graduate students is making the shift from the structure of the education environment to managing the ambiguities of the career environment (Graham & McKenzie, 1995; Holton & Russell, 1999). Graduates tend to feel paralyzed and experience difficulties assuming their new roles (Graham & McKenzie, 1995; Wood, 2004). These emotional and psychological transitions coupled with the social and physiological changes taking place concurrently only make the transition experience more challenging for the individual.

College-to-career transitions are unique from other previous and succeeding transitions in the sense that they involve the postponement of major decisions relating to work, family, and responsibility (Arnett, 2000). Unlike previous transitions experiences, students do not have a catalogue to follow, a guide to demonstrate to them how their past efforts relate to their future, or even a senior personality to monitor them (McAtee, 2012). Yeadon (2010) also describes this process as involving a fundamental shift on the part of the student, as they cease to be consumers (of education) and become producers. Gardner and Van der Veer (1998) describe this as the shift from being the one soaking up the information to one where information is the focus, and they have a role to produce it. This therefore calls for a phenomenal shift in mindset, since the expectations of employers are significantly different from those of their professors (Yeadon, 2010).

Another characteristic of this kind of transition, especially in reference to industrialized countries, is that its primary actors constitute individuals considered to be in the emerging adulthood
developmental stage. These are individuals, aged 18-25, who characteristically have postponed their adult roles and responsibilities so as to explore possibilities in work and education (Murphy et al., 2010). Emerging adulthood is defined as the stage between adolescence (ages 10-17) and young adulthood (ages 30-early 40s), and therefore is conceptualized as beginning with the end of secondary education (age 18) and ending in the mid-late 20s (Arnett, 2000). Incidentally, this stage did not exist in the 1950s, but is now prevalent in industrialized nations since young individuals are delaying their adulthood indicators, such as starting a career, so that they can experiment and gradually make their key decisions (Arnett, 2007). Research also shows that individuals in this age bracket have certain unique characteristics. For example, it is observed that over half of recent graduates leave their first job within 2 years (Gardner & Lambert, 1993; Holton, 1998), and that most people entering the workforce today were likely to have three to five careers and eight to ten jobs (Peterson, 1995). The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2008) in a longitudinal study also observed that individuals born between 1957 and 1964 held an average of 10.8 jobs from ages 18 to 42.

According to Arnett (2000), the emerging adulthood stage is distinct both demographically and subjectively from the preceding and subsequent stages (adolescence and young adulthood). It is distinct demographically because it is characterized by an exceptionally high level of demographic change and diversity such as residential mobility, occupational transitions, educational status, and personal relationships (Rindfuss, 1991). It is also subjectively distinct because the young people within this bracket do not see themselves as either adolescents or adults (Arnett, 2000).

According to this understanding, college undergraduates would ‘technically’ fall in the emerging adulthood developmental category and are definitively unique from other previous transition groups. Upon graduation, they are faced with numerous opportunities and limited
personal responsibilities. To some, this ushers in a period of excitement and empowerment (Murphy et al., 2010), while to others, it is the beginning of psychological torment. One of the obvious outcomes of this stage is the exploratory attitude that emerging adults assume towards work, as they search for a meaningful career (Kenny & Sirin, 2006; Mortimer, Zimmer-Gembeck, Holmes, & Shanahan, 2002).

According to Schulenberg, Bryant, and O’Malley (2004), this exploratory behavior could serve as a critical turning point. Although majority of young people are able to navigate through this identity exploration, many “falter and flounder,” causing them to have difficulties in adjusting to adulthood roles (Schulenberg et al., 2004, p. 1119). The unstable and unmanned nature of this experience is what raises concerns for employers, career counselors, higher education institutions, parents, policy makers, and emerging adults themselves. This understanding is partly what has propelled the interest in this study with the view that an understanding of the transition experiences of these young adults into adulthood would largely inform the comprehension of the college-to-work transition experience.

Research and reports on the topic of college-to-work transitions indicates that very few college graduates are prepared for realities of the work environment or have the skills they need for a successful organizational entry (Holton, 1998; Nicholson & Arnold, 1991). Both college alumni and employers continue to express dissatisfaction with job competencies of new graduates (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Coplin, 2004; Gardner & Van der Veer, 1998; U.S. Department of Education, 2006; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008; Wood, 2004). Observations by Wendlandt and Rochlen (2008) and Wood (2004) indicated that many graduates are deficient in writing and verbal communication skills, time management, problem-solving, flexibility/adaptability, teamwork, and initiative. This is very unfortunate, since poor college-to-work transitions have been noted to
negatively impact key organizational outcomes. Studies such as Leibowitz, Schlossberg, and Shore (1991) and Gardner and Lambert (1993) observed high turnover rates of about 50% of new employees, while Morrow and McElroy (1987) observed lower job satisfaction among the employees. Research conducted in other fields such as organizational commitment has also noted a connection between commitment and work experiences of new employees during their first year on the job (Meyer & Allen 1988). Many graduates also lack life skills (Yeadon, 2010). For some, it is their first time leaving home, so they are faced with challenges involving independent living. Cuseo (1998) lists some of the challenges experienced by graduates, including managing their budget, choosing insurance, or starting a mortgage. Holton (1998) also notes that many may also experience difficulty interpreting their human resource packages and feel uncomfortable dealing with salary and benefits issues. The sudden assumption of a myriad of responsibilities after graduation coupled with an immersion into unfamiliar social settings can be traumatizing for many new graduates. It is therefore necessary to establish proper support structures that provide the relevant information and skills sets they need to make this transition.

Yeadon (2010) emphasizes that graduates should be equipped with the proper skills that will aid them in making a successful transition, since such preparation contributes greatly in ensuring that they obtain satisfaction in their new jobs. In their preparation, Cuseo (1998) argues that senior transition programs should aim at developing competencies needed for the workplace, facilitate with adjustments and career preparations, promote practical life planning, and recruit them into the alumni network. Such planning can best be conducted within an institutional framework such as the one charged with the responsibility of developing intellectual capabilities as well as equipping them with skills they need for their aspired careers. Hence the college experience is expected to include preparation for the world after college.
College education is intended to point individuals towards the track of assuming leadership and management positions within organizations and society as a whole. This is because the experience is designed to provide a context and environment for students to develop their moral, ethical, cognitive, and identity tenets (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The experience also includes developing a skill set that is not only academic but also one that encompasses life skills. It is therefore important that while the student is going through the above described college experience, a deliberate and thorough effort is made with regard to preparing these individuals for their lives after graduation. According to Staff and Mortimer (2008), however, this process is largely underdeveloped, forcing many graduates to venture into the transition experience with no clue on how they should navigate themselves into gainful employment.

In addition to the student’s preparations and institutional programs, employer’s expectations also have to be addressed in the college-to-work preparation process. Employers expect graduates with baccalaureate degrees to possess a range of skills and attitudes that will enhance their performance as employees (Lowden, Hall, Elliot, & Lewin, 2011). Top among the list of skills highly desired by employers are communication skills (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2006). However, a study by Cheney (2001), found that that employers were experiencing challenges in recruiting candidates for employment. Many of the candidates recruited lacked the required employment skills or had skills that did not match the available positions. Another study by Stevens (2005) found that out of 74 employers surveyed, less than 10% were satisfied with the communication skills of newly hired graduates. Similarly Schoeff (2007) and Stevens (2005) note that employers were worried that students lacked the skill level needed for the business world.

Employers recognize the value that well-qualified and well-trained employees bring to their organizations in the form of sustained growth and competitiveness (Cheney, 2001). This motivates
them to seek new hires with high competencies and knowledge (Filstad, 2004) hence they are very selective in their recruitment processes. According to Imel (1999), employers are seeking individuals who can work smart, not hard. Emphasis is therefore on finding candidates who not only satisfy the requirements for workplace skills or basic skills, but also individuals who have the capacity to adjust to ever changing workplace environments while demonstrating high performance standards (Wallhaus, 1996).

Previously, employers sought employees who demonstrated certain humanistic or soft skills (Centko, 1998), mainly attributed to the individual’s personality. Such qualities included honesty, good appearance, good attendance, pleasant attitude, and the ability to follow directions (Poole & Zahn, 1993). Although these skills are still desired, contemporary employers are also seeking individuals who can work in teams; have a strong sense of self-esteem and initiative; have listening and oral communication skills, demonstrate leadership and interpersonal skills (Kretovics & McCambridge, 1998); problem solving skills, negotiating skills, and an ability to learn (Lane, 1992); critical thinking skills, and technical job skills (Whiteman, 2001); customer service skills techniques, and professional ethics (Shubin, 1993).

Trends indicate that the requirement for such skills is no longer limited to managerial and administrative jobs, but rather it is becoming a broad expectation for employability that applies even across professions (Heinemann, 1996). In addition to personal and social skills, employers are also seeking candidates with professional experiences outside their schooling, such as experiences garnered from extra-curricular activities (Reardon, Lenz, & Folsom, 1998) and internships (Angot, Malloch, & Kleymann, 2008; Newa, 2012; Silva & Teixeira, 2013).
College-to-Work Transition Preparations

According to Cuseo (1998), college courses and the experience in general should develop the competencies needed for entry into the workplace. Scholars have argued that students are not learning all the skills they need to succeed in the world of work in the classrooms (Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008; Wood, 2004), hence the need to have additional programs that assist with preparing them for the transition into the workplace (Yeadon, 2010). These programs are designed to provide students with an additional set of skills that is not addressed by the academic curriculum, with the goal of making sure that their learning experience during schooling is holistic (Keeling, 2004). Such programs, often run by student affairs professionals, may take the format of social events, workshops, retreats, and lecture series and are designed with a focus on developing skills such as teamwork, communication, and leadership (Henscheid, 2008), which are considered soft skills necessary for success during one’s transition (Yeadon, 2010).

There are various strategies that are employed in facilitating the college-to-work transition process. This is in part because of the complexity of the phenomenon and the multiple actors involved in facilitating this process, such as learning institutions, the individual students, families and societies, and employers, among others. However, it is observed that in most cases (such as in the United States), the challenge of navigating the college-to-work transition is to a great extent an individual one; it is primarily dependent on the young people and their parents to exploit their social connections and resources to make it a success (Rosenbaum, 2001; Settersten & Ray, 2010). Guided by the conceptual model of this study (Figure 1 in Chapter One), this review will focus on two primary stakeholders, namely the college senior and/or recent graduate and the institution (here referring to the university, family or society).
**Individual level preparations.** Most college seniors begin planning their transition into work while they are still in school. A study by McCoy (2003) found that the primary belief and most urgent challenge facing college seniors during this period was how they would secure employment and relocation. McCoy also found that compared to finding a job and concerns about where to live, which are practical concerns, seniors did not put much effort into their academic courses. This is because they shared the perception that, the final year of college was a time of suspense and uncertainty, as they moved from one structured experience (college) and into an unknown experience (post-college life). A similar survey by Diepenbrock and Gibson (2012) of current and alumni students at DeSales University inquired about aspects of post-college life that they considered most important. The first survey, completed by 60 seniors, indicated concerns about obtaining a job, student loans, renting or buying housing, getting into graduate school, and budgeting. A second separate survey completed by 147 alumni indicated similar concerns, except that they included resume writing and job interviews. However both populations indicated their first concern was finding a job (Diepenbrock & Gibson, 2012).

The senior year to some students is a state of uncertainty, where they feel that they do not have to make any decisions until required. An attempt to move away from this state may be influenced by peers or by the successes of friends who are making job searches or have obtained jobs. This role played by peers and friends indicates that just like other prior developmental stages (such as adolescence), peer pressure still plays a significant role in this stage as well.

A study conducted by Wood (2004) to investigate the sense of confidence demonstrated by seniors as they entered the workforce, while focusing on the semester prior to graduation found that some seniors were in a dilemma as to what they should do, so many opted to do nothing. Wood describes this state as a “crisis of imagination” (p. 73). Faced with the need to rapidly change
identities, many seniors develop a mental paralysis in which they do not know what direction to move, with many opting to assume a position of withdrawal as they wait for events to take their natural course. Wood (2004) identifies this as the part when career counselors, mentors, and other influential people in the lives of these individuals should come to help them kick-start their thinking, refocus on their goals and motivate them to be proactive in seeking the information they need.

Individual-level preparations refer to efforts that the college senior can start on one’s own as a way of reducing uncertainty and anxieties associated with the transition process. Such processes include:

Conducting a job search. This involves obtaining information regarding various career options while also reflecting on one’s competencies and career interests. It can also be considered a strategy to unlock the crisis of imagination, which includes activities such as resume writing, searching for career-related information, and conducting a job search, all of which greatly assist in reducing the uncertainties associated with the transition process. For example, Lambert (1999) observed that the practice of writing a resume and conducting a focused job search created anxieties about one’s competence and ability to move into the world of work. Sagen, Lundak, and Peterson, (1990) mapped out four stages that are characteristic of this transition: awareness and initial preparation, job-seeking behaviors, graduation, and employment. They concluded that seniors who graduated before starting job-seeking had higher levels of difficulty compared to those who started their job-seeking before they graduated. In addition, another characteristic of this stage is that seniors have an orderly and structured life, where external influences such as faculty and curriculum dictate their life; however, with the transition they are required to transform themselves to assume a self-disciplined life, a process that requires redefining their existing relationships. The work of Sagen et al. presents a
strong demonstration of the multiple changes and experiences that face college seniors, most of which they have to navigate on their own through creative strategies and techniques.

*Extra-curricular activities.* Studies by Kuh (1995) and Foubert and Urbanski (2006) which focused on out-of-class experiences such as volunteering, participation in student government activities, and on-campus employment, found that through participation in these events while in college, seniors were not only able to develop coping skills and enhance their confidence levels, but also allowed them a better appreciation of their college experience. Another benefit mentioned by Howard (1986) is that participation in extracurricular activities can be used to predict an individual’s competence in the workplace. This is because participation in campus extracurricular activities is considered part of the college experience and hence helps in the formation of the individual’s professional and social identity. These experiences also contribute to the overall desired outcome of a college experience, which is to produce a well-rounded individual equipped with both academic and social development experiences. Other career preparation strategies include participating in career planning courses, making conference presentations and reading books that provide one with relevant information about career options, skills and entry strategies (Landrum, Hettich, & Wilner, 2010).

**Institutional level preparations.** Many universities provide support services to prepare their graduates for the workplace (Yeadon, 2010). These services are mostly provided by functions within the learning institution, such as academic departments, faculty, the career services office, and student affairs offices, with the goal of preparing students to make successful transitions (Yeadon, 2010). This mission is so critical that some researchers have advocated that facilitation of smooth and successful transitions into the work place should be incorporated as a core objective of an academic institution (Holton, 1998). Some universities provide senior year programs that are
designed to bring the college experience to closure as well as familiarize college seniors with post-college life. The following are examples of institutional interventions that prepare students for post-college life.

*Academic coursework.* These include academic courses such as capstone projects, fieldwork exercises, guided but hands-on research experiences, community service courses, independent studies, internships, and/or career planning courses. Siegal (1990) conducted a study of a variety of senior year capstone courses and discovered that the most common topics that were discussed included achieving personal independence, preparing for marriage and family, sustaining lifelong learning skills, planning career, serving community, developing ethical constructs, and managing personal finances, all of which are rightly designed to psychologically prepare college seniors for the transition and post-college experiences, such as setting realistic expectations and preparing for adult responsibilities. Additionally, the study also revealed that very little attention was given to the emotional confusion (Siegal, 1990) associated with the transition experience namely, the movement from a familiar and stable college atmosphere into an unfamiliar and turbulent world of work and life in general.

Another institutional intervention is *Senior Year Experiences (SYE).* This is often offered as an academic course requirement but with less formal instruction and more of a seminar or workshop. It includes discussions on a variety of topics such as connecting ones academic discipline with possible career options, career development, leadership development training, job search exercises, alumni networking opportunities or activities, orientations to graduate school, and civic engagement. Senior year course may also focus on development of workplace behaviors, address topics such as business etiquette and workplace ethics, or personal areas of transition such as wellness, relocation and personal finance (Henscheid, 2008). In some instances, the SYE could take the form of a capstone
course, where students engage in a learning community in their major area (Guarasci, 2006; Henscheid, 2008). Gardner and Van der Veer (1998) observed that SYEs are very useful in helping seniors develop confidence in the transition process as preparing them to assume their expected new roles and identities. They described SYEs as a “variety of initiatives in the academic and co-curricular domains that serve to promote and enhance greater learning and satisfaction and a more successful transition for the college student in the final quarter of the baccalaureate experience” (Gardner, et al., 1998, p. 12).

Baade and Sundberg (1993) see effective SYE programs as also serving to benefit the colleges conducting them. This is because they play the role of nurturing college seniors into alumni roles and also help seniors have a greater appreciation for their college experiences and their institution. Another benefit of SYEs suggested by Schilling and Schilling (1998) is that they provide vital assessment data for the institution that can be used when refining curricula, broadening co-curricular experiences, or facilitating the design of developmental needs more effectively. According to Nolan and Jenkins (2012), it is a program that encourages students to examine how their field of study is practiced in the real world. A study by Meyers, La Voy, Shipley and Mainella (2000) on a Senior Experience Program (SEP) offered to graduating students at the University of Maryland, indicated that students did not feel ready for the post-college experience and hence experienced high levels of anxiety. Seniors who participated in this study indicated the desire for more assistance in the capstone related course, the topical seminars, and career development courses (Meyers et al., 2000). Additionally, the findings also revealed that college seniors wanted stronger relationships with their faculty, and that they wanted to have senior programs that facilitate their exit out of college.

Similarly, Eckel (1994) conducted a study to investigate the similarities between First Year Experience (FYE) programs and Senior Year Experience (SYE) programs in facilitating
psychological closure. In his findings, he discovered that the two programs were similar in three ways; (a) both freshmen and seniors were concerned about leaving the familiar and venturing into the unfamiliar; (b) their transition failures result in high levels of attrition, meaning when they don’t find solutions they will quit college; and (3), both are unprepared to succeed in a new environment. He also observed that both groups faced loss, change, and turmoil; both have members who quit rather than find coping mechanisms; and both recognize the need to learn new behaviors and devise strategies to succeed. Since the development of a peer community was an important factor in promoting resilience in college life, he proposed the development of a sense of community during the senior year that would provide support and enhance their satisfaction, which in turn will make them more supportive alumni of the institution.

**Career counseling services.** These are services provided mainly by the learning institutions to prepare graduates for the transition into work. These could take the form of formal programs such as Work Keys and Nationally Recognized Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) programs to general workshops conducted by a career services office or by other offices in partnership with the career services office (McAtee, 2012). Such programs could be structured in such a way that they are offered at a particular stage in the program or so that they are offered as requested. They could also be integrated into classroom work as part of the syllabi or as graded assignments in a class (McAtee, 2012). Possible topics covered under a career services program may include mock interviews, service learning, internships, and job shadowing. Workshops may provide students with training on resume writing, cover letters, thank-you notes, job-search strategies, networking, and salary negotiations. Programs such as career and job fairs may also be conducted by these offices to provide students with accurate information regarding employer expectations (McAtee, 2012).
Other examples of institutional initiatives that are aimed at facilitating the transitional experience by bringing a sense of closure to the college experience include celebratory events such as commencement dinners, senior trips, and the commencement ceremony, which is considered the climax of the college experience. Others include senior colloquiums, senior walks, optional workshops, retreats, conferences and lecture series, etc. Some additional programs that are equally important although less common include mentorship programs conducted in collaboration with alumni organizations and professional partner groups, training in salary negotiations, and programs to help alumni with career changes and unemployment (McAtee, 2012).

Summary

This chapter presents a review of the literature on four main aspects that relate to the study. Each of the topics of discussion makes a contribution to the overall understanding of the phenomenon of the college-to-work transition, especially in relation to the practices and experiences of the primary actors and institutions involved. The next chapter is a discussion of the methods that were used in collecting and analyzing the data for this study.
Chapter Three

Methodology

This chapter provides a description of the research design and methods that were employed in the study. Sections in this chapter include the research design, a description of the research site, identification of the target population, sampling procedures, instrument design, reliability, validity, data collection methods, the data analysis plan, human subjects and ethics. The chapter concludes with a summary of the sections and a brief introduction to chapter four.

This chapter is an illustration of how the following research questions were examined in the study.

1. How do baccalaureate graduates from a private university in Kenya transition from college to work?
   a. What individual actions do they undertake to facilitate their transition?
   b. What institutional factors facilitate or impede their transition?

Research Design

A mixed method research design was applied in this study. This design is a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies to understand a research problem (Creswell, 2003; Creswell & Plano, 2007). According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003), it is a process that involves concurrently or sequentially collecting quantitative and qualitative data in a single study and integrating the data at one or more stages in the process of the research.

This approach was appropriate for the study for three main reasons. First, studies using this approach blend the best elements of quantitative and qualitative designs and as a result minimize the weaknesses of each, as well as providing checks and balances (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Second, it is argued that the mixed methods approach allows each method to complement the other
and provide more comprehensive findings than relying solely on quantitative or qualitative methods alone (Bryman, 2006; Calfee & Sperling, 2010; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Finally, a mixed methods approach is especially useful in exploratory studies when the researcher wants to understand not only the characteristics related to a study but also why the characteristics may occur (Bryman, 2006; Calfee & Sperling, 2010; Creswell & Plano, 2007).

**Concurrent Nested Design**

Within the mixed methods research design, the researcher found suitable the concurrent nested mixed methods strategy (Creswell, 2003) to implement the study. The concurrent nested design means that both quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analyzed at the same time. However, priority is awarded unequally; meaning that one of the two forms of data—either quantitative or qualitative data is predominant while the other is nested or embedded, and therefore given less priority. One advantage of this approach is that the less prioritized form of data can be used to help answer an altogether different question or set of questions (Creswell, 2003). During data analysis, both designs were useful for gaining a broader perspective on the topic at hand and studying different groups, or levels, within a single study.

According to Creswell and Plano (2007), the primary purpose of a concurrent nested strategy is to gain broader perspectives that would otherwise not be achieved by using the predominant method alone. In this study, the quantitative data collection method was elevated while the qualitative data collection method was embedded or nested. Both the quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently. However, during analysis there was an in-depth discussion of the quantitative data since it is the dominant research paradigm while the qualitative data were discussed
Selecting the Site

The university was purposefully selected because it offered the basic college-to-work transition preparatory programs as part of the bachelor’s degree curriculum, as was identified in the review of literature in Chapter Two. These transition programs included: (a) a mandatory senior year experience (SENX or SEN: 4800) course, (b) an internship requirement or profession related project, (c) career counseling services, (d) academic advising services, (e) career fairs, and (f) an active alumni association network.

Further, the university was selected because it had the oldest and most active alumni association in the country. Established in 1990, the alumni association partners with the university in providing programs geared towards facilitating the transition experiences of graduates. A variety of programs were offered: colloquium talks, professional networking initiatives, internship placements and a mentoring program. Overall, the alumni association maintained a sizeable alumni database containing the contact information that adequately suited the criteria for conducting this research. A detailed profile of the institution is presented in Chapter Four including descriptions of the transition programs and services provided by the university.

Description of the Target Population

Before selecting a sample, the researcher must define the population of interest (Singleton & Straits, 2005). Additionally, a criterion has to be established that determines what comprises the population of interest. According to Borg and Gall (1989), a target population refers to “all
members of a real or hypothetical set of people, events or objects to which we wish to generalize the results of our research” (p.216).

In this study the target population consisted of baccalaureate graduates of a private university in Kenya, who graduated in the years 2010, 2011 and 2012. The target population consisted of graduates from all eleven undergraduate programs offered by the institution. According to the alumni association office, the population specified in this category was estimated to be 3,000 individuals. It was anticipated that these individuals varied in age, gender, degree majors, occupation, and transition experiences. It was also expected that they would be located in various locations within the country and around the world. A detailed demographic profile of the participants in this study is presented in Chapter Four.

**Sampling Procedure**

Participants for this study were selected from the university’s alumni database. The alumni office selected the email contacts of individuals who graduated with a bachelor’s degree in years 2010, 2011 and 2012. Using the simple random sampling technique, all individuals that fell within this target audience were considered. The sample size was determined by the response rate. A review of the alumni database indicated that only 1,514 individuals met the desired criteria for this study and therefore these individuals were considered as the target population.

**Instrument Design**

Data for this study was collected using an online survey uploaded by the researcher on a web-based survey tool known as Survey Monkey. Dillman (2000) defines web-based surveys as collecting data through an electronic questionnaire on the World Wide Web. Given the increasing
number of Internet users worldwide, web-based surveys used to collect data via the Internet are
coming popular (Cobanoglu, Warde, & Moreo, 2001). The use of web-based surveys is purported
to be an appropriate means of collecting data from large sample groups with a quicker turn-around
and at a lower cost (Schonlau, Fricker, & Elliott, 2002; Shannon & Bradshaw, 2002). The design,
dissemination, data storage, and data analysis of web-based surveys is argued to be more efficient
and with the advent of multiple survey websites the applications are becoming more user-friendly
(Greenlaw & Brown-Welty, 2009). The use of an online survey was considered appropriate for this
study because it allowed the researcher to access a broader portion of the alumni population spread
throughout different parts of Kenya and around the world.

According to Aday and Cornelius (2006), surveys are designed to systematically collect
information on a topic by asking individuals questions so as to generate statistics about the group or
groups represented in the sample. The questions and design of the survey instrument for this study
were adopted from two graduate tracer studies conducted in two developing countries: Uganda and
the Philippines

The first is tracer study conducted in 2012 by the Makerere University, Uganda. The
researchers sought to establish the performance of graduates from 2003 to 2008 in the field of
humanities and social sciences with regard to securing employment and effectiveness in the world of
work. The research questions assessed whether the knowledge and skills imparted to the graduates,
in the various disciplines and programs, were adequate to prepare them for the jobs they were
currently holding. The ten-page survey contained approximately 60 questions focused on
understanding the transition outcomes of graduates of the university, and how the education
experience affected the education outcomes of the participants. The focus of this research was
similar to that of the Ugandan study, providing further credibility for the researcher to adopt parts
of the survey instrument used. The questionnaire was also ideal to the researcher because the questions were tailored for an audience in the African context and particularly Uganda, a country that shares several cultural and historical similarities with Kenya. For example both countries are former British colonies; they share socio-economic similarities; and, they have a common historical background of educational development (Okech & Rolleston, 2007; Southall, 1974). The researcher adopted the following twelve questions from the questionnaire used in the Ugandan study (Table 1).

Table 2

Makerere Survey Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C1 What is your current employment status?</td>
<td>Wage/Salary Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2 When did you start looking for employment?</td>
<td>Prior to completion:……months earlier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At the time of completion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>After completion…months later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I did not look for a job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C5 Are you still on the first job?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C6 If not, state reasons for changing. (Open ended response)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9 We would like to know how you got your first employment after graduation.</td>
<td>Ministry of Public Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondent to advertised vacant position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District Service Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private employment agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal contacts through friends/relatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I was employed before completion of my studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I set up my professional business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other (Specify)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
Table 2 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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</table>
| C10 | To what extent did you experience the following problems during the search for your first employment after completion? Please rate each of the applicable options on a 3-point scale (To a high extent; To some extent; Not at all)
| | Not being well connected |
| | Lack of required qualifications |
| | Lack of required experience |
| | Lack of jobs in my field of specialization |
| | Employers ask for bribes |
| | Tribalism |
| | Gender discrimination |
| | Other (Specify) |
| C11 | How would you describe your predominant activities since completion?
| | Have spent most of the time on a regular job |
| | Had various temporary jobs |
| | I was most of the time unemployed |
| | Pursued further studies/professional training |
| | Other (Specify) |
| C13 | How satisfied are you with your current employment considering the level of your qualification?
| | Extremely satisfied |
| | Very satisfied |
| | Satisfied |
| | Not at all |
| C15 | If you were given choices to make between employers, what would your priority be?
| | Government employment |
| | Private employment |
| | NGOs/CBOs |
| D1 | Please rate the following statements in relation to the relevance of your first degree to employment. (Scale: Strongly Agree; Agree; No Opinion; Disagree; Strongly Disagree)
| | When I completed my first degree |
| | I had acquired the necessary knowledge and skills for my chosen profession |
| | I was satisfied with my verbal communication skills |
| | I was satisfied with my written communication skills |
| | I was satisfied with computer skills |
| | I was satisfied with my analytical/problem solving skills |
| | I was satisfied with my managerial skills |
| | I was satisfied with my entrepreneurial skills |

(table continues)
Table 2 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E1 If unemployed, what is the main reason for not working: (Please select only ONE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiting for placement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of self-confidence to face the working world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still seeking for work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job offered was not suitable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not interested in working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (Specify)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E4 Please state the reason(s) why you have not yet been employed. (You may tick more than one answer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No job opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family concern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No interest in getting in job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health-related reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of professional eligibility requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of work experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starting pay was too low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged in further study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have plans to seek job out of the country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (Specify)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the above questions were selected from an existing instrument, some alterations to the questions were made to more adequately meet the needs of this research study. Such changes included deleting some of the multiple choice options that were contextual, rewording some of the questions to be in alignment with other questions in this study survey, merging some of the questions and omitting sections that were not aligned with the study focus.

The second graduate tracer study survey was from the Philippines (Commission on Higher Education, 2012). The survey was a product of a collaborative project between the Philippine Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the De La Salle University-College of Education (Philadelphia, USA) and the Philippine Higher Education Research Network Center. The objective was to conduct a nation-wide Philippine graduate tracer study. The study was aimed at providing information on the employability of graduates and to assess the relevance of higher education
programs vis-à-vis the needs of employers. The survey was online and targeted tertiary-level graduates (bachelor’s, masters and doctoral degrees) who graduated between 2006 and 2010.

The Philippine survey had many features that seemed suitable to emulate in this study. This survey was (a) hosted online; (b) uploaded onto Survey Monkey; (c) comprised of 24 questions and was estimated to take between 10 to 20 minutes to complete; and, (d) was designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. These attributes were similar to those anticipated for this study.

The researcher adopted the overall design of this survey and a few questions that were applicable to the study. Questions adopted from the Philippine survey included four demographic questions, and three questions relating to the transition experience (Table 2).

Table 3

Philippine Survey Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. How did you look for a job after graduating from college?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I applied for an advertised vacancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I contacted employers to inquire about vacancies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I advertised/posted my professional skills on job-search sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was approached by an employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I attended job fairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enlisted the help of the career/placement office of my college/university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enlisted the help of university staff and/or my professors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I applied through contacts I established during my undergraduate years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I received referrals from personal connections/contacts (e.g. parents, relatives, friends)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I joined my family’s company or business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I started my own business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I continued my OJT position after graduation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I continued my job as a working student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable. Please state why in the space provided below.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table continues)
Table 3 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher developed eight additional questions to cover aspects of the research questions that had not been addressed by the questions from the two graduate tracer surveys (Table 3). Two of the eight questions were open-ended.

Table 4

<p>| Additional Questions From the Researcher |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
Table 4 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>9 After graduating with your bachelor’s degree, how long did you look for work before obtaining your first job?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obtained job before completing requirements</td>
<td>Obtained job without looking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 month</td>
<td>1-3 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6 months</td>
<td>7-12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 12 months</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10 Was this your only job offer, or did you have others as well?

Yes - This was my only job offer
No - I had one other job offer as well
No - I had two other job offers
No - I had three or more other job offers
Not applicable (e.g. starting my own business, I am not looking for employment)

11 Which of the following resources/activities did you use/participate in while at [university name] (Please mark all that apply)

Attended colloquium talks

Attended professional networking initiatives
Participated in the mentoring program
Attended presentations to learn about resume writing, interviewing skills, and/or other career-related topics
Attended employer information sessions
Spoke with a Career Counselor/Coach about interest areas and/or career direction
Participated in the life skills program
Participated in mock interviews with a Career Counselor/Coach
Participated in on-campus interviewing with potential employers
Attended a career fair (either on or off campus)
Joined a professional society or organization at [university name] related to your career field of interest

Other (please specify)
Table 4 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 Which sources did you consult the most when making preparations for your post-graduation plans?</td>
<td>[University name] Career Services office Online Career Services (not affiliated with [university name]) Job Fairs Networks I made during my Internship [University name] Academic department or faculty Employer Websites, Newspapers or trade publications Employer agencies Professional organization Friends/family Alumni Association office Other (please specify)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Do you think [university name] prepared you adequately for the workforce?</td>
<td>Yes No I do not know Please explain your response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 What would you consider to be the greatest obstacles you experienced since your graduation, with regard to attaining your post-graduation plans? (Please mention at least three)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Who are the three most influential people in your life who have supported you as you pursue your post-graduation plans? (Please list them below in terms of their relationship with you e.g. Mother, Father, [university name] Professor etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Overall, how would you rate your success in attaining your post-graduation plans?</td>
<td>Not Successful Somewhat Unsuccessful Somewhat Successful Successful Highly Successful Please explain your answer:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final part of the instrument developed for this study was divided into five sections and contained 40 questions. Questions relating directly to the research questions were spread out across the different sections. However, in the Current Occupational Status section of the instrument, the questions were tailored to address respondents according to their occupations at the time of the study. For instance, in employment consisted of the employed and self-employed while NOT in
employment consisted of the unemployed and those not seeking employment. Figure 4 provides an illustration of the instrument’s structural design.

Figure 3. Design of the study survey.

Overall, the survey developed for this study consisted of 40 questions distributed across the five sections of the instrument. The following is a breakdown of the number of questions under each section (Table 4).
Table 5

**Instrument Sections**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Number of Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education Experience</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Occupational Status</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating Transition</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of Transition Experience</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Questions</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher also aligned each of the survey questions to the research questions proposed for the study as follows (Table 5).

Table 6

**Alignment of Survey Questions and Research Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do baccalaureate graduates from a private university in Kenya transition</td>
<td>3,11,13,14,16,17,18,19,20,22,23,24,25,30,31,32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from college to work?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. What individual actions do they undertake to facilitate their transition?</td>
<td>4,10, 11, 14, 15, 17, 18, 24, 26,27,33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. What institutional factors facilitate or impede their transition?</td>
<td>12,13, 21,24,25, 28,29,30,31,32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The foundations of the theoretical framework adopted for this study were incorporated in the design of the instrument for this study. According to Schlossberg, Waters, and Goodman (1995), there are four major sets of factors that influence a person’s ability to cope with a transition: situation, self, support and strategies. When selecting questions for the instrument, the researcher was guided by the descriptions of these four factors in order to ensure that the data collected
remained within the scope of the existing research on transitions. Table 6 provides an illustration of this alignment.

Table 7

*Aligning Questions With the Theoretical Framework*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4S Factors</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Situation</td>
<td>3, 13, 16, 17, 24, 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>4-10, 17, 24, 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>12, 21, 24, 25, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>3, 11, 14, 15, 18, 24, 26, 27, 33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reliability**

Checking for reliability ensures consistency of the data collected (Kvale, 1996). To test the reliability of the survey for this study, a pilot test was administered to three alumni who met the desired criteria of participants (i.e. baccalaureate graduates of 2010, 2011 & 2012) and were contacts personally known to the researcher. The survey link was sent to them via email inviting them to provide feedback on the questions and design of the survey. It was anticipated that this exercise would identify any ambiguities in the survey instructions, clarify the wording of the questions, find omissions, detect difficulties in answering the questions, and identify any unanticipated answers.

Key concerns mentioned in the feedback included the length of the survey. For instance, one of the participants indicated that the survey was “kind of long.” However after further deliberation, it was observed that the length was due to the vertical listing of multiple-choice responses or checklists that increased the number of pages (Appendix C). Another participant sought clarity on one of the multiple-choice options provided in Question 40 regarding “Parent’s highest education level.” The respondent questioned whether the term “Secondary A-level
education” also referred to “Form 5 and 6.” Realizing that there may be confusion among respondents, especially since the current education system does not have these levels, the researcher opted to include both terms to enable participants to more easily identify their level of familiarity. Overall, all respondents indicated that the survey was easy to understand and navigate. After reviewing the feedback, the researcher made the necessary changes, submitted the revisions to the UIUC Institutional Review Board (IRB) for review. Upon receipt of approval, the researcher then proceeded on to data collection.

Validity

Validity is about truth and correctness. According to Kvale (1996), validity pertains to the degree that a method investigates what it is intended to investigate. Since this study was guided by Nancy Schlossberg’s theory of transition, the researcher contacted Prof. Schlossberg on June 6th 2013 via email for feedback on the survey instrument and applicability of the framework to the study. In response she, noted the use of situation and self as factors related to the individual and supports and strategies related to the institution as an interesting approach and recommended the researcher provides a rationale for this argument.

Following this feedback, the researcher reviewed the theoretical framework section and elaborated on the rationale for using the framework. The researcher also provided Prof. Schlossberg with a summary of the alignment of the four factors of the framework to the survey questions.

Data Collection Procedures

Data for this study was obtained from a primarily quantitative survey with limited options for qualitative responses. Obtaining both quantitative and qualitative data was expected to help the
researcher gain a better understanding of the phenomenon as well as obtain data that would address the research questions of this study. The researcher emailed a cover letter to the head of the alumni office following preliminary correspondence on the study (Appendix A). The alumni office head responded to the researcher indicating that he had delegated the responsibility of broadcasting the email to his assistant. From this point forward, the alumni affairs assistant became the key contact person for the study. The cover letter sent out to alumni provided an overview of the study, affirmed the ethical measures undertaken, listed the contact information of the research team and provided the link to the survey.

The university’s alumni office broadcasted the first email to the targeted alumni on July 9, 2013. A population of 1,514 alumni was targeted. Forty emails bounced indicating that possibly the email addresses were no longer in use or the addresses were incorrect. A total of 89 completed responses were obtained from the first broadcast. Creswell (2003) recommends that two weeks after the initial electronic correspondence, further communication be made to remind participants of the due date so that the best possible response rate may be achieved. In following this recommendation, a second broadcast was made approximately two weeks later on July 23, 2013 targeting the same population. Similar to the first experience, 40 emails bounced back and an additional 49 responses were received. A final email reminder was then sent out to the target population on August 13, 2013. Similar to the first and second attempts, 40 emails bounced back while an additional 15 responses were received. In sum, 153 participants responded to the survey (Table 7).
Table 8

*Email Broadcasts, Dates and Responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>N=153</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First email broadcast</td>
<td>July 9, 2013</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second email broadcast</td>
<td>July 23, 2013</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third email broadcast</td>
<td>August 13, 2013</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Analysis Plan**

A descriptive statistical analysis approach was used to analyze the quantitative data. This was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS Version 17.0) program. Demographic variables such as age, degree major and gender were described using means, medians, modes, and standard deviations. Additionally, cross tabulations were conducted on key variables namely gender, degree major, and year of graduation to establish relationships, and answer the research questions. Findings from each of these analyses were presented in frequencies, percentages, graphs and tables. A detailed discussion is presented in Chapter Four and a preliminary analysis for each survey question is illustrated in Appendix D.

Content analysis was conducted on the qualitative responses. The core purpose of conducting content analysis is to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992). This qualitative analysis technique is ideal for systematically analyzing text data such as the open-ended survey responses obtained in this study (Kondracki, Wellman, & Amundson, 2002). According to Weber (1990), this approach involves deeply examining the language of the text in order to classify it into categories that represent similar meaning. The categories could be representative of the explicit meaning of the text, or the inferred meaning (such as conclusions or opinions developed after interpreting the text using prior knowledge or contextual information) (Weber, 1990).
A summative approach to qualitative content analysis was employed. This technique involves identifying and quantifying certain words or content in the text, so as to understand the contextual use of the words. Quantification in this case refers to attempts made to explore the use of words rather than to infer the meaning. A summative approach therefore goes beyond mere word counts to include an in-depth content analysis. This kind of analysis focuses on discovering the underlying meanings of the words or the content (Babbie, 1990; Morse & Field, 1995).

Therefore, in the summative approach data analysis begins with searches for occurrences of the identified words by hand or computer. Word frequency counts for each identified term are calculated, with the source or speaker also identified. Counting is used to identify patterns in the data and to contextualize the codes (Morgan, 1993). This allows for interpretation of the context associated with the use of the word or phrase. During this exercise, researchers try to explore word usage or discover the range of meanings that a word can have in normal use.

In this study, the researcher began by reading through all the open-ended questions and identifying the key words that were representative of an occurrence. This was done by creating a coding sheet in Microsoft Excel, for each open-ended question and then listing the key occurrences observed in each comment. This strategy enabled the researcher to account for the frequency with which occurrences were reported. A broad category term was assigned for each occurrence allowing for similar occurrences to be clustered. Then a frequency count was done for each of the identified categories. This enabled the researcher to tabulate the responses into frequency tables that included percentages. The final categories identified represented all aspects of the participants’ responses to the open-ended questions. During the discussion of the findings, the researcher incorporated some direct quotes from the responses to complement the categories being discussed.
Overall, the analysis process resulted in construction of an understanding of the transition experience of graduates, which was presented in the form of a written narrative. Observations from both the quantitative and qualitative data were integrated together and presented under thematic titles, namely: *transitional experience of Kenyan baccalaureate graduates*, which highlighted the respondent’s post-graduation plans as well as their post-graduation outcomes; *individual actions to facilitate the transition* which amalgamated the individual strategies of graduates into generalizable actions; *institutional resources*, which classified the resources into university and social resources; and *challenges experienced*, which listed six challenges that were common among respondents.

**Human Subjects and Ethics**

Prior to initiating the data collection process, the researcher completed and submitted an application to seek approval to conduct research with human subjects according to research regulations at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). The application was filed with the campus Institutional Review Board (IRB) office for the protection of human subjects. Data collection commenced after approval was granted on June 11, 2013. Additionally, the research proposal was also reviewed by the office of the deputy vice chancellor in charge of research at the private Kenyan university to ensure that the study was in compliance with the University’s requirement for conducting research with human subjects.

The risks to which participants were exposed were minimal and were not deemed to be beyond those encountered in normal life. Possible risks included social anxiety and mild discomfort normally associated with individuals taking a test or examination. However, this was anticipated to decrease after beginning the survey since the survey was primarily a multiple-choice format and did not require them to input any identifiable information. Information on consent was included on the
opening page of the survey, notifying respondents about the study, its risks, and its benefits. Completing and submitting the survey expressed consent.

The researcher sought every measure to make sure that participants’ data in this research study were kept confidential at all times, including refraining from using the name of the institution in order to protect its identity. All the data from the study was stored in a safe and password-protected location. There was an additional optional survey in which participants were invited to share their contact information for purposes of participating in a follow-up study in the future. This survey was not connected to the main survey and therefore information shared in the optional survey could not be traced back to the main survey.

Summary

This chapter presented the process of developing the survey instrument as well as a description and justification of the methods that were used to collect and analyze data from the field. Also presented were the measures taken to ensure research with human subjects and ethical considerations were adhered to during the entire study. The next chapter is a presentation of the findings.
Chapter Four

Data Analysis and Findings

This chapter is a review of the data collected in the study, and an analysis of the findings. It is organized into four sections, namely: institutional profile, participant demographics, transition experiences of Kenyan baccalaureate graduates, individual actions to facilitate the transition, institutional resources and challenges experienced. The chapter concludes with a summary of the sections and a brief introduction of Chapter Five.

Institutional Profile

This section provides an overview of the university that the study was conducted. It includes a description and an overview of the programs offered to facilitate the transition of students into the workforce. Information discussed in this section was obtained from documents such as the university catalog (2011-2013), university website, and newspaper and journal articles that discuss aspects of the university. Other sources included informal conversations with alumni, including some of the respondents, and the researcher’s personal information about the university as an alumnus of the institution.

Located in Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya, the institution is the oldest and largest private secular university in Kenya and East Africa. It was established in 1969 and received its charter through the Kenyan Commission for Higher Education (CHE) in 1999. Compared to other private universities in the country, it has the highest number of enrolled students, approximately 5,401 and over 7,000 alumni. The student population ranges from the ages 15-73 and consists of 56 nationalities. Other demographical information is summarized in Table 8.
### Table 9

*Student Population Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Population Demographics</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domestic students (Kenyans)</td>
<td>4,879</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International students</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female population</td>
<td>2,966</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male population</td>
<td>2,435</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In its mission statement, the institution emphasizes the goal to prepare students to become effective and ethical contributors of a changing and increasingly technological world by equipping them with the appropriate knowledge and skills. To achieve this goal, the university has put in place several institutional programs and policies that are geared to equip students with the proper knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for the workforce. The following programs and policies were identified by the researcher as some of the institutional strategies intended to facilitate the transition of graduates from school into the workforce.

**Senior experience programs.** These are programs embedded in the senior year curriculum for the purpose of preparing students for the post-graduation phase. They include two program requirements that are mandatory for college seniors in the university: (a) an integrated “capstone” seminar and (b) a project or internship program. The *Senior Experience* (*SEN: 4800*) is a capstone seminar designed to assist students understand the interdisciplinary nature of knowledge as well as to prepare them for a career. It is a mandatory six-credit-unit course for seniors and is tailored to suit the various degree majors offered in the institution.

The *Internship Program* is a course offered by all departments at the institution for undergraduate seniors and master’s level students. The goal of this program is to provide students with an insight into the world of work and increase awareness of personal areas in which the student may need improvement in preparation for a professional career. The program provides practical and
hands-on experiences in the student’s area of study, while providing them with opportunities to show case their skills to organizations (Newa, 2012). The student is expected to work for a minimum of 400 hours (3 months), spread out in one semester. During this period, the instructor in charge of the course visits the student at least two times at the work site to monitor the student’s progress. At the end of the semester, the employer provides the internship office with an evaluation of the student’s performance. Additionally, the student is also expected to submit a daily diary detailing the tasks s/he completed as well as a project paper/report discussing one’s internship experience.

**Community service learning requirement.** The university has a policy requiring that each student complete a 3-credit community service program that constitutes a minimum of 90 hours of service or a project equivalent. All students pursuing a baccalaureate degree are required to complete this course, off-campus, during their senior year. The goal of the Community Service Learning program is to bring the community, the student and the university into partnership, by inviting students to commit to mutually-agreed-volunteer work with clear learning goals. This experience is intended to sensitize students to the social problems facing the community and to challenge the students to develop solutions; to provide an opportunity for students to translate theory into practice; and to help students understand themselves and the community. The program therefore encourages personal involvement, community awareness, and promotion of leadership and citizenry among the graduates in line with the institution’s mission.

**Placement and career services office.** This office provides students with information necessary for making informed career-related decisions as well as career counseling services. According to its mission statement, the office seeks to enable students and alumni to identify their self-employment potential, secure job placements, develop a strong work ethic and equip them with
job search skills. The office therefore makes an effort to link students with employers through job placements and recruitment, trains students on job search skills, provides entrepreneurship training, and encourages students to engage in volunteerism as a strategy to acquire work experiences beyond internship.

Additional services provided by the office include assisting students with career exploration, resume development, career assessment, career resource materials and the posting of job listings. The office also hosts career-planning workshops and an annual career fair event to provide students with a forum to assess their career options. The career fair is conducted every July on the school grounds, and is attended by a variety of private and public companies. During the event, students get advice on their professional careers as well as motivation from high-powered guest speakers such as chief executive officers of successful companies, prominent entrepreneurs and key personalities. Companies also conduct recruiting during this event.

**Academic advising services.** These are provided as part of the students support services and are geared to facilitate a successful education experience at the institution. Students are assigned to an academic adviser based on their program of study. There are two advisers for the School of Business and two for the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. Students are required to meet with their adviser regularly to update them on their academic progress and get counsel on the program requirements for their majors. Academic advisers also conduct group course-advising sessions once a semester for students to review the students’ progress. Students known to be experiencing specific academic challenges are referred to their respective academic advisers to receive assistance in formulating realistic goals and to map out master plans for their studies.

**Alumni association network.** This is a registered society open to the university’s alumni. It is coordinated by the alumni association office on campus, and is intended to provide graduates with
information on the roles they could play in relation to the development of the association and the university in general. Membership is dependent on individual registration and can be done via email or on-campus and includes graduates providing the office with their contact information such as their location, job and address. Registered alumni pay an annual membership fee and can also enjoy the benefits of accessing certain university facilities such as the library at subsidized rates.

In summary, all five programs discussed in this section were available to the respondents when they were planning as well as making the transition from college. Many appreciated the role played by each of the interventions in facilitating their transition as will be explained in following sections.

**Participant Demographics**

The target population for this study was alumni who graduated with baccalaureate degrees in 2010, 2011 and 2012. According to graduation records, this group consisted of approximately 3,000 individuals. However, only 1,514 were officially registered with the University’s alumni office at the time of the study. This latter number was the sample targeted for the study. The age distribution among respondents was as follows:
Table 10

**Respondents by age**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Male N=41</th>
<th>Female N=97</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean age was 27 years. Additional statistics of respondents by age, major and gender are illustrated in Table 10.
Table 11

**Statistics by age, Major and Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Degree Major</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N=135</td>
<td></td>
<td>N=149</td>
<td>N=138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>27.18</td>
<td>5.2685</td>
<td>1.7029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>26.00</td>
<td>4.0000</td>
<td>2.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>5.618</td>
<td>2.03560</td>
<td>.45865</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over two-thirds of the participants were female (Table 11). Almost all of the respondents were Kenyan nationals who were residing in Kenya. Respondents who were not located in Kenya resided in countries within the East African region. Only 7 respondents were located outside the African continent. More than 80% (112) of respondents were not married.

Table 12

**Respondents by Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N=138</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More than a quarter of respondents were second-generation college graduates. Thirty-nine percent (39%) had fathers with a bachelor’s degree or higher and 28% had mothers with the same qualification. Also the majority of the respondents’ parents were employed in the public or private sector (father 46%; mother 44%). A significant number of the respondents’ parents were self-employed (fathers 29%; mothers 30%). Fewer than 10% were retired.

More than three-quarters of the respondents (78%) graduated with their bachelor’s degree in 2011 and 2010 (67 and 51 respectively).
Table 13

Respondents by Year of Graduation and Major

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Major</th>
<th>2010 N=51</th>
<th>2011 N=67</th>
<th>2012 N=30</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel and Restaurant Management</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Business Administration</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism Management</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Relations</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Systems Technology</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents were graduates from all degree majors offered by the university. However, the majority of those who responded were International Business Administration (40%) and International Relations (27%) degree majors. Female respondents were also the majority in both programs comprising 62% and 88% respectively. These two degree programs were also the most popular majors offered by the university (Munene & Otieno, 2008).

Table 14

Distribution of Respondents by Degree Major and Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Major</th>
<th>Male N=41</th>
<th>Female N=98</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel and Restaurant Management</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Business Administration</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism Management</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Relations</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Systems Technology</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the next section, survey results regarding transition experiences of the respondents will be described. The section will also address the aspirations of graduates prior to graduation, their experiences during the transition and the transition outcomes. A comparison of the results will be made across a number of variables, namely, gender, degree major, year of graduation and occupation.

**Transition Experience of Kenyan Baccalaureate Graduates**

The purpose of this study was to understand the phenomenon of college-to-work transition within the Kenyan context. To achieve this, the researcher proposed the overarching research question: “How do baccalaureate graduates from a private university in Kenya transition from college to work?” Through this question, the researcher sought to understand the overall experience of graduates making the transition, starting from the college senior phase to the recent graduate phase, as described in the conceptual understanding diagram (Figure 1).

Following a review of the survey responses, the transition process was divided into two main phases, namely: *post-graduation plans* representing transitional experiences primarily during the college-senior stage and *post-graduation outcomes* representing the recent-graduate stage. The two stages provide an overall understanding of the transition experience of baccalaureate graduates from a private university in Kenya.

**Post-graduation plans.** The aspiration of most graduates prior to graduation was to pursue a career as an employee rather than be self-employed. This preference was reflected across gender and degree majors, including those who pursued degrees in the business field. For instance, two-thirds of male and female graduates indicated they preferred to be employed. Similarly, two-thirds of
graduates in international business administration, international relations, journalism and information systems technology majors indicated they preferred to be employed.

Close to three-quarters of graduates preferred employment in the private sector and not-for-profit organizations (including non-governmental organizations) compared to 12% who preferred to join the public sector (public service and government institutions). There was a slight variation by gender with regard to employment preference in not-for-profit organizations versus for-profit. Female graduates indicated a higher preference for employment in not-for-profit organizations (57% female; 24% male), while male graduates preferred for-profit organizations (61% male; 27% female). Additionally, it was observed that more female graduates (13%) preferred employment in the public sector, compared to 9% of male graduates.

Table 15

Preferred Sector of Employment by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public service or government institutions</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-government or non-profit organization</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private sector</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Admittedly, this confirms the findings of Maina (2011) and Kinyanjui (2010) stating that college graduates in Kenya were academically socialized to become employees and therefore rarely considered self-employment as one of their career options. For instance, although a majority of graduates (85%) felt confident in their entrepreneurial skills, less than 10% were willing to pursue a career in self-employment.

However, there were some differences when a comparison was made by gender and degree major. For example, male graduates had more confidence with regard to entrepreneurial skills
compared to female graduates (95% male; 82% female). Similarly, male graduates were more inclined to pursue careers in self-employment compared to female graduates (15% male: 6% female). This is not surprising since research, especially in developing countries, indicates a strong gender bias against women in entrepreneurial roles (Imbaya, 2012; Njeru & Njoka, 1998). In turn, this has negatively affected the development of an entrepreneurial culture among women (International Labour Organisation, 2006).

Table 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Major</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Business Admin.</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Relations</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Systems Tech.</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, a review of the top six majors also indicated that graduates in journalism (22%) and information systems technology (13%) expressed the highest interest in pursuing careers in self-employment. Notwithstanding that more than one-third (38%) of graduates in the information systems technology major expressed a lack of confidence in their entrepreneurial skills. Still, it is probable that the optimism of graduates in the two majors of journalism and information systems towards pursuing self-employment is because the programs have a technical inclination compared to other programs. Therefore a graduate wishing to pursue a career in self-employment can easily market their skills as a freelance journalist or with minimal initial capital, can start up a computer repair and assembling business. For example, a journalism graduate who ventured into self-employment made the following statement supporting the practical nature of the degree, “[the]
journalism department is very 'hands-on'. So I had all the technical skills I needed to ensure my business works.”

This however cannot be said of majors such as international relations and psychology, where to establish a consultancy, one requires a high level of expertise which can only be attained through employment and additional academic schooling. This is probably the reason why more than 20% of graduates in the two programs expressed a lack of confidence in their entrepreneurial skills (International Relations, 23%; Psychology, 36%). Nonetheless, it was surprising to observe that graduates who pursued business degrees showed little or no interest in pursuing self-employment (Business Administration 0%; International Business Administration 9%), despite almost all of the students in those majors expressing confidence in their entrepreneurial skills (Business Administration, 100%; International Business Administration, 92%).

Table 17

Received Training on Entrepreneurship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Business Administration</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Relations</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Systems Technology</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some graduates had plans either to pursue further studies (10%) or travel abroad for additional schooling or for work experience (10%). Interestingly, female graduates comprised the majority of those who preferred to travel abroad (13% female; 5% males). There were very few graduates (6%) who did not have an idea of what they wanted to do after graduation. Although the gender disparity in this group was not significant, uncertainty was more prevalent among female graduates (7% female; 5% male).
A comparison across the majors also indicated some differences. For instance, a third of psychology graduates did not have an idea of what they wanted to do after graduation. Similarly, graduates in other majors, such as information system technology (13%), journalism (11%), and international relations (5%) also did not know what they wanted to do after college. Although no specific reason could be attributed to this disparity without an in-depth inquiry, the literature suggests that a graduate’s lack of familiarity with the industry, the broad scope of the degree major and poor preparation on the part of the graduate could cause such uncertainty.

Post-graduation plans, however, were slightly different for the graduates who were working students (employed full-time while pursuing their degree). Since these individuals already had jobs, the majority hoped that getting a degree would positively impact their jobs through promotions or by making them better employees. Some of the expectations they listed include “career progression” and “a promotion or better job”. Others anticipated using the acquired skills to pursue new career paths or to venture into private business. These graduates shared comments such as “I would like to apply the knowledge in my business” or “I would like to get into a better paying profession.”

Post-graduation outcomes.

Employee career path. Most graduates (81%) transitioned into the workforce while 9% were pursuing further studies. Only 10% were unemployed. However, a critical review of this transition shows that female graduates were less successful in transitioning into the workforce compared to their male counterparts. For instance, 53% of female graduates spent their first year after graduation in full-time or temporary employment compared to 67% of male graduates. Similarly, among female graduates 23% were unemployed compared to 14% of male graduates. This difference in labor market performance probably informs the reason why female graduates constituted more than twice
the number of male graduates pursuing further studies or professional training (13 female: 5 male) or who were not doing anything after graduation (6 female; 2 male).

Overall, it took a relatively short time for most graduates to secure a job. More than a third (34%) got jobs before they graduated, while 55% secured a job within a year of completing their baccalaureate degree. A comparison by gender reveals that male graduates were slightly more successful in finding jobs prior to graduation compared to female graduates; however, after graduation, male graduates took longer to find a job compared to females. For instance, 39% of male graduates were able to secure jobs before completing their degrees in comparison to 31% of female graduates. Yet, 12% of male graduates reported taking longer than 12 months to get a job compared to 6% of female graduates. On the other hand, female graduates were more successful finding jobs soon after completing their degree compared to male graduates. An example would be 39% of female graduates obtained their first jobs within the first three months of graduating compared to 27% of male graduates.

Interestingly, it was observed that most male graduates who anticipated pursuing careers as employees started looking for jobs earlier than their female counterparts. For instance, close to 70% of male graduates started looking for jobs before completing their degree compared to about half of female graduates (56%). On the contrary, about one-third of female graduates (35%) indicated that they began looking for jobs as they approached graduation or soon after graduation, compared to 21% of male graduates.
Table 18

*Started to Looking for First job by Gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When did you start looking for a job?</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior to completing my bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the time of completing my bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After completing my bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I did not look for a job</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings were similar across the most popular six majors, namely international business administration, international relations, psychology, journalism, information systems technology and business administration. More than half of the graduates in four of these majors started looking for jobs prior to completing their degree. Journalism and psychology majors however, indicated lower than half the average graduates. Half of graduates in the international relations and journalism majors started looking for jobs at the time of graduation or soon after. Interestingly all but international relations and information system technology majors had graduates who did not look for work. This probably implies that these two programs mainly consisted of graduates who were full-time students.

The majority of graduates who were seeking to pursue careers as employees received one or two job offers when they were looking for their first job. Two-thirds of respondents reported receiving only one job offer, while a quarter received two job offers. However, a comparative review by gender indicates that female graduates had fewer job offers in comparison to their male counterparts. For example, while close to half (45%) of male graduates reported receiving more than one job offer, only 27% of female graduates could boast of the same. This finding indicates that female graduates had fewer options when it came to selecting their first job and therefore had a more challenging experience making the transition and securing employment.
Likewise, a review of the job opportunities by major indicated that graduates from the two business majors had more opportunities in comparison to other majors. For instance, when looking for their first job, close to half (48%) of graduates in the international business administration and business administration majors reported having more than one job offer compared to fewer than 20% of the graduates in other majors. This finding coupled with the high enrollments into the two programs probably indicates their marketability in the job market, especially since business degrees offer skills that are less industry-specific compared to other majors.

Contrary to general expectations about the behavior of young people in the workforce, graduates in this study can be described as somewhat conservative with regard to changing jobs. This is because the findings from this study indicated that close to half of the employed graduates (49%) were still at their first jobs. However, an examination by year of graduation showed that most graduates from earlier years were no longer in their first jobs. For instance, only 34% of respondents who completed their degree in 2010 were in their first job compared to 54% of 2011 and 67% of 2012. The three reasons cited for leaving the first job include, lack of opportunities to advance professionally, poor remuneration and unfavorable working environments. These reasons reflected concerns relating to the terms of employment, which graduates indicated were uncertain, mainly contractual and limiting in terms of professional growth.

Table 19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notable, was the transitional attitude in which graduates viewed their first job. Many described them as short-lived experiences (approximately one year), which they pursued in order to
gain experience that would usher them into more fulfilling and promising opportunities. The reasons graduates provided for leaving their first jobs indicated it was most probably an internship position. This explains the contractual terms of employment experienced and the reason they did not see much promise of advancing into full-time employee status. Nevertheless, the negative comments used to describe the first job experience such as, “poor working environment”, “low pay” and “lack of opportunities to grow” does not portray the internship experience as a progressive tool that can be used to facilitate the transition of graduates into the workforce.

A review of the data by gender indicates that male graduates were more likely to leave their first jobs in search for new opportunities compared to female graduates. An example is the observation that more than half of male graduates (55%) were no longer employed in their first job compared to female graduates (49%). This finding can be supported by the observation that more female graduates preferred to be employed in the public sector (13%) in comparison to male graduates (9%), probably an indication of their concerns for job security and stability often associated with the sector. This difference notwithstanding, concerns over career growth, low pay and work environment remained as the dominant factors that pushed most graduates, regardless of gender, to seek new job opportunities. It can therefore be argued that both male and female graduates shared similarities in their professional aspirations as well as workplace expectations.

When it comes to the top six majors, some differences can be noted across the various disciplines. For instance, in the two major degree programs, international business administration (IBA) and international relations (IR), about half the graduates had changed jobs (IBA 50% and IR 44%). However, in journalism and information systems technology (IST) about three-quarters of graduates had left their first job (journalism 72% and IST 75%). Surprisingly, all graduates in the psychology major (6) had remained in their first job despite the fact that they had completed their
degrees in 2010 and 2011, the two years that registered the highest number of graduates who had left their first jobs. All six graduates were female, hence helping to support the argument that majority of those still in their first job were female.

In conclusion, it can be argued that baccalaureate graduates from the university had positive transition outcomes. This is because more than three-quarters (81%) of graduates indicated that they were actively engaged in some form of employment while an additional 9% were pursuing academic studies. This leaves only 10% unemployed. With regard to gender, female graduates less successful transition outcomes compared to their male counterparts nonetheless, they equally had positive transition outcomes with only 11% unemployed and seeking employment compared to 7% of male graduates. Similarly, findings by degree major indicate that graduates in the journalism and psychology majors experienced difficulties making the transition, hence constituting the highest numbers of unemployed graduates seeking employment at 20% and 27% respectively.

_Self-employed careers path._ Regarding graduates who pursued careers in self-employment, it was observed that most opted to start-up their own enterprises. Of the 14 graduates who identified themselves as self-employed, 71% indicated that they had started their own enterprises and only two had joined a family or relative’s business. Interesting is the observation that half of those in self-employment were not driven into self-employment by the traditional entrepreneurship motivators such as identifying a business opportunity or the desire to be independent. Rather, they were driven by negative external factors such as the failure to find a job, an unpleasant internship experience, a lack of finances to pursue graduate school and as a means to get by financially as they searched for job opportunities.

To illustrate this, a quarter of graduates in self-employment were running enterprises that were not related to their professional skills. Moreover, the reasons they provided for pursuing self-
employment indicated that it was not a first-career option for many of the graduates but rather a last resort after attempts to secure a job were unsuccessful. This attitude goes contrary to the national government’s agenda, which seeks to encourage Kenyan youth to be employment-creators rather than employment-seekers.

**Pursuing further studies.** A few graduates (9%) opted to return to school soon after completing their degrees in order to pursue further professional or academic education. The majority (85%) of those pursuing further studies graduated in 2010 and 2011, which is an indication that most graduates spent one or two years out of school before returning to pursue further studies. Female graduates were the majority at 9% compared to males at 7%. Graduates from psychology, information systems technology, international relations and business administration majors had more than 10% of their graduates pursuing higher education. There were no graduates from the journalism and business administration majors pursuing further education or training.

In the next section, survey results regarding individual actions that facilitated the transition will be described. These include the transition experiences of graduates at an individual level such as their perception of the transition and the individual strategies they employed to manage the transition.

**Individual Actions to Facilitate the Transition**

Faced with high uncertainty and anxiety about their future, most college seniors begin making post-graduation plans while still in school. Although a number of resources and interventions are available to them during this period, research shows that the transition experience is primarily an individual process demanding significant proactive effort on the part of the graduate. Individual level preparations therefore refer to the strategies college seniors and recent graduates
employ to facilitate their transition. This section addresses the research question: “What individual actions do they undertake to facilitate their transition?” and illustrates the strategies graduates employed to facilitate their transition.

Close to two-thirds (60%) of graduates seeking to pursue careers as employees started looking for jobs while still pursuing their bachelor’s degree. However, a review by gender shows a slight variation in how male and female graduates sought employment. For example, male graduates (69%) were much more proactive in looking for jobs than female graduates (55%). Nonetheless, the two indicated similar enthusiasm to prepare for the work force. One notable difference between the genders was the period they started to look for work. For instance, female graduates (35%) started looking for work towards the end of their bachelor’s program or soon after graduation in comparison to their male counterparts (22%). Similarly, a look at the different degree majors indicated that more than half of graduates from each degree program started looking for work prior to completing their degree program except in the journalism (40%) and psychology (0%) majors.

Driven by a proactive desire to minimize uncertainty and an urge to be equipped for the unknown most graduates engage resources within their surroundings to prepare for the transition into work. In this case it was observed that most students primarily engaged their social networks such as friends and family (61%), consulted professional career services within and outside their institution (60%), and searched various media such as employer websites, newspapers and trade publications (51%), for information on potential employment opportunities. Other additional resources that were engaged included participation in career fairs, engaging professional networks established during the internship experience, and seeking the services of employment agencies. Interestingly, the alumni association office was not consulted as much by students preparing for the transition (5%). Overall, female students indicated more dependence on these transition services
compared to male graduates. With the exception of the alumni association office and the university academic department or faculty, where male students comprised slightly more than a quarter of the users, female students primarily exploited the other resources.

When applying for jobs, graduates’ decisions were mostly influenced by factors relating to career advancement, remuneration and relevance to one’s area of expertise. For example, when graduates were asked the three main factors they considered when looking for a job, more than half (52%) indicated they wanted jobs that afforded them opportunities for career growth and development. Additionally, close to 40% indicated they were concerned about the salary and benefits provided by the job, while close to one-third (31%) cited relevance of the job with their professional training. Similar findings were observed across genders although female graduates indicated a higher concern for career growth and development (female 90%, male 76%), a job related to their field of study (female 52%, male 46%) and a job that relates to their skills (female 30%, male 21%). Both male and female graduates indicated equal concern for salaries at about 60%.

Table 20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Considerations</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salaries and benefits</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for career growth/development</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related to my special skills</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related to my course or field of study</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerance to religious practices</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-cultural work-force</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to travel</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to residence</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telecommuting arrangements such as working remotely</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible work schedule</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other significant concerns identified by graduates included relevance of the job to their specific skill set and a flexible work schedule. Surprisingly, although multiculturalism and diversity are some of the highly rated advantages of their university experience, these did not emerge as major concerns that would influence their choice of a place to work (male 6%, female 9%). In addition, only female graduates (7%) indicated concern for tolerance to religious practices. Male graduates (24%) indicated higher concern for a flexible work schedule than female graduates (13%); whereas female graduates showed higher concerns for opportunities to travel, proximity to residence and flexible working arrangements such as opportunities to work remotely through telecommunications.

As identified by Settersten and Ray (2010), the challenge of navigating from college into work is to a great extent a private one. This is because the process of looking for employment is primarily an individual’s responsibility, dependent on the one’s ability to exploit the resources around them such as social connections and media. For instance, when looking for the first job, most graduates indicated that they either applied for advertised vacancies (41%) or pursued referrals from personal contacts such as family members, relatives and friends (31%).

Other job search strategies that were engaged also depended on the individual’s initiative and proactive nature, such as attending job fairs, consulting the services of the career office, placement services, or faculty, engaging social networks established during their university experience and directly marketing themselves by posting their skills on electronic media or contacting employers to enquire about vacancies. Interestingly, not many graduates used the university alumni network to look for their first job (5%) even though it is considered a great resource for facilitating the transition into the workforce.

In addition, a review by gender indicated that both male and female graduates used the same strategies to look for their first job. However, female graduates appeared to rely more on the social
strategies of job searching that were outside the institution while male graduates relied more on proactively marketing their skills and lobbying within the institution’s framework. To illustrate this observation are the findings on the strategies graduates used to look for their first job. The results indicate that female graduates preferred to contact employers about vacancies (18% female; 10% male) and sought job referrals from close contacts such as parents, relatives and friends (53% female; 47% male). On the contrary, male graduates appeared to rely more on advertising or posting their professional skills on job search sites (27% males; 13% female), attending job fairs (30% male; 15% female), consulting the career/placement office (27% male; 15% female), soliciting help from university staff and faculty (20% male; 13% female), and networking with alumni (10% male; 3% female).

This observation is probably due to the fact that most female graduates started looking for work as they approached the end of their degree program and soon after graduation while male graduates started looking for jobs before completing their degree. As a result, the resources accessible to the graduates varied. For instance, male graduates mainly used resources within the institution because they were still enrolled in school while female graduates used resources outside the school because they either had left the institution for internship or had graduated.

These findings corroborate the observation that female graduates (84%) did not feel they had the necessary professional networks when looking for the first job, compared to their male counterparts (70%). Therefore, the majority of females relied on their social network of family and friends to assist them secure jobs. This is illustrated in their internship experiences, where only 15% of female graduates’ internships transformed into full-time jobs, compared to more than a quarter for male graduates (27%).
In sum, the challenge of navigating from college into the workforce is to a great extent particular to the individual. However, a review of the strategies and experiences of graduates indicates there are similarities in areas such as the proactive aspiration to minimize uncertainty and the desire to attain a post-graduation goal. To succeed in a transition, individuals engage the resources within their surroundings yet the ultimate transition outcome will to a large extent be influenced by external factors such as gender, degree major and post-graduation plans.

The next section is a description of survey results relating to institutional resources that facilitated the transition experience of graduates. Aspects relating to how the individual views the transition and their preparedness will be addressed. Additionally, sources of both positive and negative supports will be identified.

**Institutional Resources**

Most colleges and universities have designed interventions aimed at helping their students prepare for life after college. These interventions may be embedded into the curriculum or provided as optional services for students to engage when the need arises, hence the term “resources”. The majority of such programs are offered as part of the college curriculum while some are components of the university/college experience. Examples of resources available within the learning institution may include academic courses, faculty, departments, career services office, student affairs professionals, and extracurricular activities.

However since the college experience does not happen in isolation, there are other resources outside the learning institution that facilitate the transition experiences. Such may include the student’s family and friends, the community, and/or society and media. Since these resources are
available in less structured settings, their role sometimes may be overlooked. However, as it will be observed in the findings of this study, they play a key role in influencing the outcomes.

This section addresses the research question: *What institutional factors facilitate or impede their transition?* This section particularly focuses on identifying the resources graduates engaged to make their transition experience successful. The resources are identified under two main themes: *university resources* and *social resources*.

**University resources.**

[The university experience] equipped me with skills for my field of work i.e. the media industry. It sharpened my interpersonal skills through interactions with people of various cultures. This made it easy to network. It built my confidence tenfold that I would be successful in whatever job I would land. Indeed I am!

Most graduates felt that the *university experience* had adequately prepared them for transition into the post-graduation phase. To prove this, respondents identified a number of aspects in their university experience that prepared them for life after school. One such aspect was the course work covered at the school. Graduates indicated that it encouraged them to develop a global mindset especially in the pursuit and application of skills they acquired. This view is probably because some of the courses offered in the school had an international component to them affording students the opportunity to do in-depth studies on best practices around the globe.

Additionally, graduates expressed appreciation for the university experience through comments such as “it opened up my mind to try something out of the ordinary,” or described the university as “an eye opener.” Other graduates indicated that the learning experience at the university had enhanced their confidence and enabled them to think globally. Such perceptions may also be complimented by the fact that the institution boasts of one of the best-equipped libraries in
the country and has accessible Wi-Fi internet access across campus, both of which factors may have greatly influenced the learning experiences of these graduates.

Respondents also praised the design of the curriculum noting that it helped in developing the knowledge, skills and abilities they needed to pursue their post-graduation plans. For instance, most graduates indicated that the content covered in courses was aligned to their field of practice, which in turn academically equipped them to face the challenges of the workplace. This was captured in comments such as “It [curriculum] not only covered class work, but the real world out there….” Others expressed that the overall design of the learning experience promoted values that were helpful in the pursuit of their post-graduation plans. An example is captured in this statement by one of the respondents,

I learned the importance of organization and planning; from the way I chose my classes to managing my time and completing assignments. Group and individual presentations though annoying at the time, came in handy after graduation; in terms of the confidence gained in speaking before crowds, which is useful in an interview setting. Term papers and assignments and the dreaded Turn-it-in ensured that we were able to carry out research well, which is very useful post-graduation, not only in a work setting but also for graduate school.

Additional comments also positively portrayed the educational experience as one that prepared students for future roles in the workforce. For example, two respondents indicated the following regarding being able to adjust to their work environments: “I was able to cope with the work environment due to the training I had received…” and, “I was able to transition into my job very smoothly and did not struggle to cope with the demands of work….”

Such comments are also supported by the confidence graduates had when they were looking for their first job. For instance, almost all graduates indicated high levels of confidence with regard to professional knowledge and skills (89%), verbal and written communication skills (98%), computer skills (99%), analytical skills (87%) and managerial skills (88%). Additional comments such
as “I was confident in my abilities and in the skills that I had gained and was sure that I could utilize these to find a career that most suited me,” demonstrate the level of preparedness students felt at the time of transitioning into the workforce.

Certain programs provided by the university also played a key role in assisting students prepare for the transition from college. Specifically two programs were identified as the most instrumental, namely, the *Senior Year Experience seminar* (SENEX or SEN: 4800) and the *internship requirement*. According to some graduates, the SENEX seminar prepared them for the hurdles expected after graduation, such as setting realistic expectations and understanding the workplace. Describing their experience, respondents shared comments such as “the senior experience course gave me insight on various [career] options one could take after graduation. The discussions affirmed the decisions [I] made before I graduated” and “The Senior Experience class gave me an idea of what the professional world would be like….” Such comments show the level of appreciation graduates have for the SENEX program. Additionally, graduates also identified the instructional strategies that instructors used to facilitate the seminar, such as inviting alumni and other guest speakers to share their personal transition experiences, as one of the strengths of the program. For instance, one respondent described how the instructor’s approach helped her prepare for the workforce:

> In the senior experience course, the instructor called former [university name] students and other persons to speak on life after college and give a true picture of what to expect in terms of salaries, job seeking and being self-employed.

Another university program that had significant impact on graduates was the internship requirement. Most graduates felt that the internship requirement provided a very strong foundation for the transition into the workforce. This is reflected in comments such as: “I was very confident and did very well at interviews…my two internships greatly contributed to the experience that
propelled me into getting my first job,” This view was also shared by students who did a project paper rather than an actual organization-based internship. They noted that the experience of working on the project helped them develop writing and analytical skills, which in turn proved useful in their professional work and transition planning.

The university’s multicultural environment was also identified as another positive strength of the institution. For instance, the school boasts of a student body comprising of students from at least 56 nationalities as well as a culturally diverse faculty. It is this cosmopolitan nature of the school that graduates felt allowed them to interact and work with people from different cultures, backgrounds, beliefs and religions, in essence exposing them to the real work environment. Respondents shared comments such as:

[University name] is a very diverse university that strives to give students an all rounded kind of experience and not just in academia. This helped me to grow into the outside world earlier and not be naïve about it” “…I also learned how to interact and associate with people from different cultures and of different ages since [university name] has a very diverse and culturally rich student body.”

Equally important were the extracurricular activities available on campus. For instance, graduates expressed that participation in clubs and sports greatly helped them to develop leadership and interpersonal skills, which in turn were useful skills in the workplace. An example is the comment from this respondent, “through involvement of club activities I developed my leadership, communication, and analytical skills.”

Some of the degree programs also conducted specific activities at the departmental level that were geared towards preparing students for careers in a specific area. An example frequently cited by graduates of the international relations (IR) program, was the Model United Nations simulation exercise conducted each year. Graduates of the IR program expressed that it helped them practice
their skills in the fields of diplomacy and foreign policy, which subsequently enhanced their understanding of functioning of the United Nations Organization.

*Career support programs and services* offered by the university were also useful in preparing students for the job search process. Examples of these initiatives include curriculum vitae writing workshops, mock interview sessions, and on-campus career fairs. These programs and services were helpful in reducing the anxiety associated with the job search process as well as building the confidence levels of job seekers. According to some respondents, these programs and services gave them an edge over other candidates when it came to job searching and job interviews.

Lastly, the university experience was equally beneficial for the graduates who intended to pursue further studies after their baccalaureate degree. The majority of them said that the experience provided a good academic foundation that allowed them to perform well in their graduate studies. An example is this comment from one of the respondents pursuing graduate school:

> After my experience at [university name] I knew I was going to do my masters there [at the university] as well because of the superior quality of education. Relevant skills such as computer, critical thinking, intercultural communication, presentation and public communication, and research skills have remained relevant even though [I] am pursuing a degree (MBA) that is different from my undergraduate (journalism).

Other supporting comments include “…I got accepted into the graduate school of choice,” and “[university name] equipped me with higher-order thinking, analytical, leadership and research skills crucial for my graduate studies.”

**Social resources.** The social network emerged as a key resource that supported graduates in making the transition to their post-graduation plans. The three most influential groups of individuals within the graduate's social network included: immediate family (nuclear family), friends and university officials.
Survey responses on the resources graduates consulted the most when preparing to make the transition indicated that more than two-thirds (69%) depended on their friends and family as key resources. Furthermore, when graduates seeking to pursue careers in employment were asked to state the strategies they used to look for their first job, more than half (52%) indicated that they depended on referrals from family and friends.

It is not surprising that majority of respondents identified family members and friends as the key influences that assisted them prepare for the transition out of college. Demographic information on the respondents shows that the majority were young adults aged between 24 and 27 years. Therefore it is likely that the majority were still living with their parents at the time of their transition. Existing research shows that relationships with close acquaintances are important especially during periods of stress (Davila & Levy, 2006; Mattanah, Hancock, & Brand, 2004). Since the period of transitioning from college is characterized by uncertainty, change and role exploration (Arnett, 2000), it is natural that graduates would turn to their immediate family and specifically parents for social support.

Moreover, it has been noted that the present generation of parents are increasingly getting involved in the lives and education of their young adults (Carney-Hall, 2008; Coburn, 2006; Shoup, Gonyea, & Kuh, 2009; Deborah J. Taub, 2008). This is also probably the case in Kenya as well. For instance, in the 1970s and 80s university education was the responsibility of the government. Anyone who qualified, and who was interested in pursuing higher education, was financed fully by the government, including a sustenance stipend. This meant that parents were not bound by any financial commitment to facilitate their child’s higher education process and therefore could afford not to keep track of their progress. However, with the liberalization of higher education and an increased demand for higher education, the subsidy has since diminished. More young people are
enrolling into private higher education institutions making the expense of higher education very costly to families. Given the significant investment, the likelihood for parents wanting to be more engaged in the education of their young adults is much greater.

Another factor that would contribute to parents’ participating in their young adult’s education is when parents are also college graduates. Demographic information indicates that more than a quarter of respondents were second-generation college graduates. Literature on second-generation university students shows that they experience fewer frustrations navigating through college compared to first generation students (Billson & Terry, 1982; Choy, 2001; York-Anderson & Bowman, 1991). Studies also indicate that second generation students enjoy more family support, emotionally and financially (Billson & Terry, 1982; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996) compared to their first-generation peers.

Moreover, second-generation students are also noted to have greater career aspirations and goals, because of their socialization. They possess knowledge, capital and aspirations that give them an edge in pursuing and attaining undergraduate and graduate or professional degrees (Billson and Terry, 1982; Nora, 1996; Riehl, 1994). Therefore, when it comes to the transition process, second-generation college graduates have an edge over first-generation graduates, because their parents can provide guidance on how to prepare and navigate the transition.

Survey results indicate close to half of the respondents’ parents were employed in the public or private sector (father 46%; mother 44%). Given the level of influence parents had in helping the respondents achieve their post-graduate plans, it is likely that they influenced the reason why most graduates preferred to pursue careers as employees in the public or private sectors. It is also possible that the majority of graduates were inclined to follow the path of employment largely because their parents or friends referred them to opportunities in employment rather than self-employment.
The university officials identified by respondents were primarily individuals associated with services or activities offered at the university. Such individuals include professors, academic advisers and career counselors. Others individuals identified to be key resources in the transition process include spouses, extended family members, mentors, work associates, alumni and sponsors. The support provided by these individuals was primarily emotional and/or financial.

In conclusion, immediate family members and friends emerge as the most important social resources for graduates making the transition out of college. These two not only provided emotional and financial support, but also played an instrumental role in facilitating the entry of graduates into the workforce. The university officials identified were primarily key contact persons for specific programs or services provided by the institution. Therefore, the nature of support they provide was mainly at a professional level by virtue of their authority and not necessarily resulting from a personal relationship.

In the next section, survey results regarding the challenges experienced by graduates making the transition will be described. The section also highlights how graduates managed their challenges and the adjustments they made in pursuit of their post-graduation plans.

Challenges Experienced

Several studies investigating the phenomenon of college-to-work transition have identified a variety of concerns and challenges commonly experienced by college seniors and recent graduates as they make the transition out of college. For instance, Pistilli, Taub and Bennet (2003) found that college seniors were concerned about the career choice to pursue, change or loss as a result of the transition, pursuit of graduate or professional schooling, and social support. Taub, Servaty-Seib and Cousins (2006) noted that college graduates experienced challenges adjusting to their new adulthood
roles, which according to Chickering and Schlossberg (2002) revolved around acclimating themselves with the new social responsibilities and expectations. For example, as an adult, the new graduate is expected to look for employment, start a pursuing a career, establish an independent residence and manage their personal finances independently (Gardner and Van der Veer, 1998; McCoy, 2003).

This section is a continuation of the discussion about the research question: *What institutional factors facilitate or impede their transition?* However, the focus is limited to the obstacles faced by graduates in pursuit of their post-graduation plans. The challenges identified correspond with those noted in the literature. They are discussed under the following themes: finding post-college employment, financial constraints, work experience requirement, social support, a lack of professional networks and, pursuing graduate or professional schooling.

**Finding post-college employment.** The majority of respondents identified their foremost challenge to be the lack of enough job opportunities in their field of specialization. Using statements such as “[job] market was saturated,” “flooded job market,” and “too many graduates,” graduates expressed frustration in pursuing their career goals. Many described the process of looking for a job as very competitive, consisting of few openings and a surplus of graduates. As a result, career growth and planning for recent hires was difficult, forcing some to consider pursuing alternative career paths or to settle for jobs that were not in their area of study. For example, one graduate indicated that due to the surplus of graduates in the job market, many companies were exploiting recent graduates by keeping them on long periods of probation. This in turn caused high uncertainty and prolonged agony.

Graduates also cited challenges in securing job interviews noting that they applied for many jobs received only but rejections. A good example of such is a female respondent who indicated her
major challenge as “not finding the opportunity to defend myself as a capable candidate.” Other respondents indicated that they were disheartened by numerous job interview rejections, prompting some to abandon their desire to be employed. In such instances, graduates resorted to pursuing self-employment, enrolling into graduate school, volunteering or withdrawing from the labor market for a period.

Those who aspired to pursue careers in self-employment also expressed similar challenges citing difficulties in setting up enterprises, obstacles relating to the work environment and struggles associated with expanding or growing their enterprises. For example, self-employed respondents cited the lack of an enabling environment for young people who were starting-up businesses, specifically referring to the absence of policies that protect the growth of small businesses. Others cited bureaucratic challenges associated with setting up of businesses and accessing finances for business expansion.

Surprisingly, despite identifying the lack of job opportunities as the biggest challenge when pursuing their postgraduate plans, a significant number of graduates still believed there was no shortage of jobs in their field of specialization. For instance, when asked about the challenges they experienced when looking for their first employment, close to half of respondents (48%) indicated they did not experience a lack of jobs in their field of specialization. This observation was consistent across genders with female graduates indicating slightly higher optimism compared to their male colleagues (female 48%; male 47%).

However, a review across the top-six degree majors indicates a varied opinion among respondents with regard to availability of jobs in the field of specialization. For example, there was higher optimism among graduates in the international business administration (66%), journalism
(43%) and information systems technology (75%) compared to less than 20% among graduates from business administration, international relations and psychology majors.

The reason for the significant difference between the two business majors despite sharing considerable similarities can be established through further in depth-inquiry. However, with regard to the International Relations and Psychology majors, it was observed that the two had similar representation by gender. Therefore, the finding could be a reflection of the overall transition experience of female graduates as was concluded in the “Transition Experience” section earlier.

Financial constraints. When graduates were asked to identify, in order of importance, three main challenges they experienced when pursuing their post-graduation plans, one-third (41) cited financial resources as their main challenge. A review of the responses indicated that the term “financial resources” was used broadly to refer to a limitation in the means that facilitated the achievement of a desired goal. For example, the phrase “lack of financial resources” was used when referring to the lack of money to pay tuition for graduate school, the lack of sufficient money for personal upkeep due to low pay at a job, lack of money due to an episode of unemployment, inability to pay student loans, lack of money to start up or expand a business, or inability to meet financial obligations such as supporting one’s family or contributing to a family member’s medical expenses.

However, this broad conceptualization of financial constraints can be viewed within the framework of transitioning into adulthood. This is because the challenges respondents mentioned relate to financial obligations that are associated with adulthood responsibilities. It is possible therefore, that the frustrations they express are not necessarily referring to a lack of monetary resources but rather an expression of difficulty keeping up with adulthood responsibilities.
An example is this comment by one of the respondents: “[my] current financial position including repayment of higher HELB [High Education Loans Board] loan is a barrier for post-graduate studies currently.” Here the graduate is expressing his desire to pursue graduate studies, but also indicates that he is unable to realize it until he is able to fulfill his financial obligation of paying his student loans (HELB).

**Work experience requirement.** Respondents indicated that most employers required 2-5 years of professional work experience in order to be considered for a job. This was a major obstacle to obtaining a job given, that majority of the graduates were entering the labor market for the first time. For example, one respondent mentioned, “some companies want people with a lot of work experience and [are] not giving opportunity to fresh graduates,” another indicated, “employers are asking for more than 3 years’ experience from a recent graduate.” Such comments indicate a level of frustration on the part of the graduates with more than three-quarters of respondents (76%) questioning where they would get the required work experience.

Consequently, this high threshold for entry-level positions forced some graduates to settle for jobs that were not in their career path or field of study. Others opted for alternative forms of employment such as self-employment while some enrolled in graduate or professional schools. For example, this male respondent expressed his frustration in finding a job and explains his resolution:

It was a challenge finding gainful employment particularly with the number of years of experience that employers expect graduates to have post-graduation. I thus opted to go back to school and hopefully gain the requisite experience.

However, it is probable that some graduates miscalculated their workforce expectations. A review of comments indicates that some graduates may have set their expectations for entry-level jobs higher than what employers were ready to offer. For example, this female respondent cited one of her challenges as “inability of employers giving first time graduates a managerial position” while
another respondent indicated, “...employers ask for ten years [experience]...” Such comments raise the need to question the level of jobs that graduates are considering for application since it is highly unlikely that an employer searching for an entry-level employee would ask for more than two years’ experience. Therefore, it is probable that some of the graduates were applying for jobs that were beyond their level of expertise.

Nevertheless, there was no significant difference by gender with regard to this challenge. Both male and female graduates shared the same view although female graduates experienced it slightly higher than their male counterparts (female, 78%; male, 75%). A review by degree major also showed a similar trend. With the exception of the business administration major, more than two-thirds of respondents in all other majors considered this a significant challenge.

Interestingly, it was also observed that this challenge was more apparent among graduates who had completed their degree in earlier years. For instance, 84% of 2010 graduates considered this to be a major challenge, compared to 77% of 2011 graduates and 69% of 2012 graduates. This was surprising, considering that the class of 2012 had the highest number of unemployed at 20% and therefore it was expected that they would consider this a major concern.

Social support. The concern for social support as identified by Pistilli, Taub and Bennet (2003) also emerged as a major challenge for some graduates. Respondents felt that they did not get the desired support from some of the individuals around them during the transition, which in turn negatively impacted their transition outcomes or plans. For instance, first-generation college graduates felt that they lacked a certain level of support from their parents because they did not have a college experience. This was probably perceived to be a challenge when they witnessed or learned about the kind of support second-generation college students were receiving from their parents.
Additionally, some graduates also felt that they did not get enough support to pursue their post-graduation plans. For instance, some felt they wanted more support in their quest for further education at the graduate or professional level. It is highly likely that the desired support in this case was financial especially considering they had already been supported through receiving a bachelor’s degree. However, given the high costs of college education at a private university, and the strain it causes on a family’s resources, it is possible that most parents preferred to invest their limited resources on the graduate’s younger siblings. It is also likely that the parent’s decisions were motivated by the fact that the recent graduates are expected to assume adulthood responsibilities such as economic independence and supporting one’s family.

Some graduates also expressed that they would have liked to get more support from the university’s faculty, alumni and the alumni association. Desired support would be in the form of advice on professional directions to take and assistance with establishing a professional support network among alumni. For instance, some respondents expressed that they had difficulty knowing how to go about the job search process and needed some guidance on what to do after graduation. Other difficulties experienced included career planning, preparation for the workforce, and mentoring. However, the university through its various transition programs and interventions already provides the support for the listed challenges. It is therefore likely that the students did not exploit the opportunities during their time in school.

**Lack of professional networks.** When respondents were asked about the challenges they experienced when looking for their first employment, more than three-quarters (78%) cited the lack of proper professional networks. According to the responses, a lack of “proper” professional networks can be interpreted to mean the absence of a senior figure, probably in the profession, who can use their influence to facilitate a graduate’s employment or at least one who can refer them to an
appropriate hiring authority. Some comments mentioned to illustrate this challenge include, “lack of appropriate networks,” “lack of networks in my preferred job industry” “having to find a job with no connections,” and “having to compete against candidates with strong networks within [an] organization.”

Similarly, the term was also used to refer to lack of relevant information regarding employment opportunities in one’s field of study. This was the case especially among respondents who started looking for employment after they had graduated. It was probably a challenge because they no longer had access to the transition services provided by the university.

**Pursuing graduate or professional school.** A number of respondents expressed their intention to pursue further education at the graduate or professional level. However, many indicated that they were facing challenges realizing this goal due to factors such as the lack of finances for tuition or the need to attend to other priority demands such as supporting one’s family.

Other challenges relating to pursuing further education include difficulties balancing the demands of the workplace and school requirements. This forced some graduates to defer their plans for further education to a time when they will be more settled in their profession. To illustrate this, the following comments from respondents indicate the challenge they were facing: “challenging working hours,” “balancing work and school,” “challenges of the job and lack of time” and “tight schedule at work place.”

Interestingly, none of the graduates indicated they were unable to pursue further education due to a lack of required qualifications or that they were denied admission due to a low grade point average. This is probably an indication that the desire to pursue further education was sincere, and that they would pursue it if the circumstances were favorable.
In conclusion, the challenges indicated in this section align positively with those identified in the literature. Most of the challenges are interconnected, and to a great extent are temporary. The challenges mentioned are generally associated with the transitional phase graduates are experiencing at the time, which involves taking up adulthood roles and responsibilities. It is anticipated that with time, they will come to pass, especially when the transition is managed or concluded.

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher presented an analysis of the results obtained from the study. The discussion included a synthesis of the data and a presentation of the findings in six broad subsections intended to demonstrate the transition experiences of baccalaureate graduates. The next chapter is the conclusion of the study.
Chapter Five

Summary, Implications and Recommendations

This chapter is a summary of the major findings and a discussion of the implications of the findings in relation to the theoretical framework. The study limitations are also described, in addition to recommendations for future research. The chapter is organized into four sections: summary of the major findings, implications, limitations and recommendations for future research, and conclusion.

Summary of Major Findings

As noted in the previous chapters, the process of transitioning from college into the workforce is one of the most distinct changes that take place in the life of a young adult. However, it was observed, especially in the Kenyan context, that research examining how college students make the transition into post-college life is limited. Most of the research focused on transition outcomes of college graduates while not much attention was given to understanding how graduates actually make the transition into post-college life.

Therefore, this study sought to investigate how baccalaureate students and recent graduates from a private university navigate the transition from college, focusing on the techniques and resources they engage, and the challenges they experience. The following are the main findings.

**Conclusion 1: Majority of graduates transitioned into their desired post-graduation plans.** A majority of the baccalaureate graduates from the private university were able to navigate the transition from college into their desired post-graduation plans. These plans mainly consisted of joining the workforce or pursuing further academic studies. Although there were differences in the
experiences and outcomes due to demographic circumstances such as gender and degree major, the
overall observation indicated that graduates were able to navigate from college into positive post-
college outcomes.

**Conclusion 2: Graduates preferred careers as employees rather than self-employment.** When making post-graduation plans, the majority of graduates indicated that they wanted to pursue careers as employees in the private and not-for-profit sectors. This confirmed the arguments of previous researchers such as Maina (2011) and Kinyanjui (2010), who indicated that college graduates in Kenya were socialized to be employment-seekers rather than employment-creators. It was also observed that, among the few who ventured into self-employment after graduation, a number of them did not actually want to be self-employed but rather they were ‘forced’ into it after episodes of unemployment.

**Conclusion 3: There were differences in transition experiences by gender.** Although male and female graduates shared a number of transitional experiences and strategies, it emerged that they had significant differences in some aspects. For instance, female graduates preferred careers in not-for-profit organizations while male graduates preferred for-profit. Male graduates had a higher preference for self-employment compared to female graduates. Male graduates indicated more proactive attitudes by starting to look for work while still in school compared to female graduates who started looking as they approached graduation or soon after graduation. Female graduates also relied on their social networks when looking for work while male graduates relied on marketing their skills and institutional lobbying.

**Conclusion 4: Graduates mainly depended on immediate family and friends as key resources.** Graduates depended primarily on their social networks for support during the transition from college. The key sources of support were immediate family members, specifically parents and
siblings, and friends. Graduates relied on these individuals for social support, such as when they were faced with challenging situations during the transition, and also as professional networks that referred them for employment.

**Conclusion 5: Graduates had difficulty adapting and keeping up with adult roles and responsibilities.** Graduates identified several challenges while in pursuit of their post-graduation plans. However, the majority of these challenges were due to the transitional phase they were experiencing, which involved transitioning into adulthood and assuming new adulthood roles. Comments shared by graduates in this study indicated that some were experiencing difficulty adapting and keeping up with their new adult roles and responsibilities.

**Implications for Research and Practice**

**For research.** This study contributes to existing research on transitions. It demonstrates how college graduates cope with events and non-events as they navigate through the post-college period. It also highlights the challenges that college seniors and recent graduates experience, and the resources that they require to facilitate the transition. The college-to-work transition experience as indicated in this study provides an ideal platform for the design of further in-depth studies on the phenomenon. For instance, since the findings from this study indicate that graduates of the private university mainly had positive transition outcomes, additional research on the phenomenon is necessary. Further research should focus on other sites such as public universities, private universities and constituent colleges in order to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon within the Kenyan context. Also, further investigations may examine the effects of key variables such as gender, degree major, social class, social networks, and national labor market structures.
among others so as to establish a comprehensive understanding of the transition experiences of college graduates within the Kenya context.

Additionally, this study provides a framework from which development of a college-to-work theory can be initiated. For example, using the conceptual map in Figure 1, a specific time frame can be mapped out for examination, starting from the senior year to recent graduate stage. Specific factors such as the university, the individual and the environment can be examined as key determinants of the transition experience. Variables such as gender, degree major, networks, social class and labor market structure can be examined as key influences that determine a transition outcome.

For practice. By outlining the transition experiences of college graduates in Kenya, this study highlights certain factors that could impact industry and practice. For instance, the findings from this study can be used to inform the design of impact assessments on existing transition programs or initiatives within the institution and nationally. In addition, the findings explain trends relating to performance of college graduates in the labor market and graduates’ perceptions regarding the Kenya labor market structure. For instance, it was observed that baccalaureate graduates were disinterested in pursuing careers in self-employment despite possessing the required the skills and competencies. It is probable that this is a reflection of the negative perception in Kenya towards ‘educated’ individuals venturing into self-employment, especially in the informal sector. Given the influential role played by family members and friends in helping graduates’ navigate the transition it is also likely that they, on behalf of society, may have contributed to the graduates’ suppression of any motivations that were developed during the entrepreneurial training experience. This attitude presents a challenge to the government’s efforts to encourage young people to become employment-creators and therefore informs policy makers and university administrators
on the need to intensify societal sensitization campaigns and develop incentives that will encourage graduates to pursue careers in self-employment. Examples of initiatives or policy recommendations that can promote careers in self-employment would include creating campaigns, such as university conferences at national and regional levels, with the aim of publicizing the benefits of careers in self-employment for university graduates. These would also include showcasing successful examples of university graduates pursuing careers in self-employment across different sectors. Additionally, policymakers could develop policies that protect a specific level of professional start-up enterprises, such as businesses that offer professional services like accounting, marketing, and information technology services, so as to attract graduates with expertise in these areas to venture into business. Policy makers could also ensure funding opportunities for such startups and; create tax incentives and market protection mechanisms similar to those crafted to attract foreign investors. At the university level, administrators could engage interested stakeholders to create entrepreneurship centers on campus, which can serve as incubators for students to engage in business while in pursuit of the degree so as to help them develop a better appreciation of entrepreneurship as a career option.

The findings indicate that college graduates are adequately prepared to join the workforce. However, according to the challenges identified by respondents, it appears that much of the preparation focuses on the academic and social skills, but not so much on understanding how to adjust to developmental life-stages that face graduates in the post-college phase. This is probably the reason why some graduates had challenges assuming adulthood roles and responsibilities, despite exhibiting high confidence regarding professional competencies and preparedness for the workforce. The findings from this study therefore challenge learning institutions to embrace more holistic approaches in the development of students by going beyond preparation for the workforce to
include preparation for adulthood and by extension good citizenship. For example, higher education administrators should strive to develop innovative transition programs and curricula that address the social obligations graduates face upon graduation and particularly explaining how these may impact them economically and professionally. Such would include integrating the preparation for adulthood as a part of the curriculum in the senior year experience course. Traditionally, in the Kenyan context, preparation for life-stages such as young adulthood and adulthood has been left to parents or the family unit. However, as young people spend more time in learning institutions, the preparation for these life-stages is increasingly coinciding with professional development processes. Hence many young people are assuming adulthood roles without adequate preparation on the responsibilities and societal expectations associated with these roles. In the spirit of aligning educational experiences with the societal context, universities could reach out to parents or society leaders especially during the Senior Year Experience course, as they do with business leaders and alumni, so that they can explain to college seniors about adulthood, including the responsibilities and expectations that will be demanded of them by the society upon graduation.

Lastly, this study makes a contribution to the practice of human resource development in Kenya. The findings provide information that can help employers understand how college graduates prepare for the workforce; appreciate how graduates navigate the transition into employment; and identify the resources graduates engage to facilitate their transition into the workforce. Additionally, the findings also highlight the challenges newly-hired employees experience at a social level such as balancing school and work; adjusting and keeping up with adulthood roles and responsibilities; and the lack of social support upon entrance into the workforce. This information is worthwhile for an employer since it can inform recruitment strategies, onboarding processes and new employee socialization procedures. Additionally, by gaining an understanding of how graduates prepare for the
workforce, employers are better placed to engage universities with recommendations on areas they feel would need more emphasis in preparing students for employment. This in turn will create opportunities for closer collaboration between employers and universities; a relationship whose outcome is likely to have a more positive impact on the transition experiences of university graduates joining the workforce.

In sum, the findings from this study make a contribution to the discourse on facilitating school-to-work transitions in Kenya. The study supports the human resource development goal of the Vision 2030 development blueprint, which emphasizes the need to facilitate the transition processes for young people leaving learning institutions to seek gainful employment. In addition, the study also responds to the Vision 2030 medium term plans (2008-2012 and 2013-2017) which invite researchers to study ways to improve the linkage between the Kenyan labor market and training institutions. Consequently, the contributions from this investigation can be considered informative to both research and practice.

The next section is a description of the limitations of the study and recommendations for further research. Aspects relating to logistical challenges experienced during execution of the study and constraints in the interpretation of the data will be discussed. Proposals for further research will also be included.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The researcher experienced a couple of limitations with respect to accessing the desired pool of graduates. Out of 1,514 targeted graduates, only 153 responded to the survey. Although this is a significant response, considering that the survey was electronic, a larger response rate would have better informed the investigation and allowed for more conclusive results. Additionally, participation
in the study was limited to graduates from 3 years to allow for the timely conclusion of the study. However, three years merely provide a preliminary understanding of the phenomenon of transitioning from college within the Kenyan context. Therefore additional research is required, especially focusing on a larger pool of graduates and probably with a longitudinal approach to allow for a better understanding of this phenomenon.

This study targeted graduates from all degree majors offered in the university. However, with few respondents in some of the majors it was difficult to make decisive generalizability of the findings and conclusions. In order to clearly establish the experiences, characteristics and challenges of graduates by degree major, further research will need to be conducted with a much greater emphasis on the specific degree majors. Additional research should also establish the impact of degree majors on determining transition outcomes.

A majority of participants in this study can be described as privileged. This is because they attended a private university; and more than a quarter reported being second generation college graduates. It is possible that these factors influenced their transition experiences, hence the reason why a majority reported positive transition outcomes. However, since the goal of this study was not to evaluate the transition outcomes but rather to understand transition experiences of graduates, the findings can be seen as representative of the aspirations and resources available to college students as they navigate the transition out of college. However, so as to gain a better understanding of the transition experiences of graduates, it is necessary to conduct further studies with a specific emphasis on graduates from a variety of backgrounds such as those from privileged backgrounds, first generation graduates and public universities.

Lastly, due to the exploratory nature of this study, the focus was on understanding the transition experiences of a broad constituency of baccalaureate students. However, it was observed
in the findings that other demographic, personal, environmental and social cultural attributes also play a key role in determining how an individual copes with the transition experience. Therefore, further in-depth research, especially with a specific focus on these factors, is recommended in order to establish a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of transitioning out of college.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study contributes to existing research on college-to-work transitions and to a greater extent, the discourse on school-to-work transitions, youth and unemployment. The findings inform stakeholders in higher education, policy-makers, and the society about what transpires during the transition process of young graduates entering the Kenyan labor market or workforce. Although exploratory, the study provides a good starting point for conducting further research on the phenomenon of transitioning out of college as well as conversations on how to facilitate the transition from college to work.
References


120


Chickering, A. W., & Schlossberg, N. K. (2002). Getting the most out of college. Allyn and Bacon.


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Appendix A Email Request to Participate

Email Subject: Doctoral Research Study - Complete survey Class 2010-2012

Dear [Name] Alumni,

My name is Kevin W. Gitonga I am a doctoral student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I am also a [Year] alumnus. I am conducting my doctoral dissertation research study on transitioning from college into work and my case study is [Year] alumni who graduated in 2010, 2011 and 2012. In this study, I will be asking questions seeking to understand your transition experience from [Year] into the workforce with specific attention to the strategies you employed to facilitate your transition and to identify factors that either facilitated or affected your transition outcomes.

The survey is entirely anonymous and should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. After completing the survey you will be provided with a link to continue to another website so as to sign-up for a raffle to win either a dinner ticket to a prestigious restaurant in Nairobi or a shopping voucher at Deacons Kenya Ltd each valued at Ksh. 3,000.

If you wish to participate in this study please click the link below to start the survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Q56PVKP

Thank you in advance for your support. I appreciate your valuable contribution to this study.

With appreciation,

Kevin W. Gitonga
Researcher
Appendix B IRB Letters of Confirmation

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research
Institutional Review Board
528 East Green Street
Suite 203
Champaign, IL 61820

June 11, 2013

K Peter Kuchinke
Educational Policy Studies
355 Education Bldg
1310 S 6th St
M/C 708

RE: Navigating the transition from college to work: A study of baccalaureate graduates of a private university in Kenya
IRB Protocol Number: 13328

Dear Dr. Kuchinke:

Thank you very much for forwarding the modifications to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Institutional Review Board (IRB) office for your project entitled Navigating the transition from college to work: A study of baccalaureate graduates of a private university in Kenya. I will officially note for the record that these minor modifications to the original project, as noted in your correspondence received May 28, 2013, adding a raffle and contact sheet for future research activities for those participating in the online survey and updating the application and consent letter accordingly and supplying the raffle/future contact information sheets, have been approved. The expiration date for this IRB protocol, UIUC number 13328, is 11/27/2013. The risk designation applied to your project is no more than minimal risk.

As your modifications involved changes to consent form(s), I am attaching the revised form(s) with date-stamp approval. Please note that copies of date-stamped consent forms must be used in obtaining informed consent. If modification of the consent form(s) is needed, please submit the revised consent form(s) for IRB review and approval. Upon approval, a date-stamped copy will be returned to you for your use.

Please note that additional modifications to your project need to be submitted to the IRB for review and approval before the modifications are initiated. To submit modifications to your protocol, please complete the IRB Research Amendment Form (see http://irb.illinois.edu/?q=forms-and-instructions/research-amendments.html). Unless modifications are made to this project, no further submittals are required to the IRB.

We appreciate your conscientious adherence to the requirements of human subjects research. If you have any questions about the IRB process, or if you need assistance at any time, please feel free to contact me or the IRB Office, or visit our Web site at http://www.irb.illinois.edu.

Sincerely,

Anita Balgopal, Director, Institutional Review Board
Attachment(s)

c: Kevin Gitonga

Telephone (217) 333-2670 • fax (217) 333-0405 • email IRB@illinois.edu
IRB COMMITTEE’S REVIEW AND COMMENTS

Researcher Name: KEVIN WANG’OMBE GITONGA

Program: “Navigating the transition from college to work: A study of baccalaureate graduates of a private university in Kenya”

Dear Researcher,

Your research proposal was reviewed by IRB members based on the criteria in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Minimal risks to subjects;</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Anticipated benefits to the advancement of knowledge, in relation to risks subjects may face are reasonable;</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Equitable selection of subjects;</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Informed consent that is documented;</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Where appropriate, adequate incorporation in the research plan of provision to monitor the data collected to ensure the safety of subjects;</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Adequate provision of mechanisms to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of data;</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Presence of additional safeguards to protect subjects in contexts where any of the them are likely to be vulnerable to coercion or to undue influence</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the feedback received, the committee has decided to:

Approve: ☑

Approve with Conditions (see attachments):

Disapprove: 

This is an interim approval, your supervisor will take the responsibility to ensure compliance before you go in the field. Please submit your final revised proposal to the Research Office.

Signature: [Signed] Date: 10th June, 2013

Associate DVC AA- Research
Appendix C Consent form and Survey Instrument

Study Overview and Consent Information

Dear Sir or Madam,

You are invited to participate in a research project seeking to understand the process graduates experience as they transition from college-to-work in Kenya. This project will be conducted by Kevin Wang’ombe Gitonga and Professor Peter Kuchinke from the Department of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership (EPOL) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. You are encouraged to participate in this study because you are: (a) a bachelor’s degree alumni of the University of Illinois, and (b) graduated with a bachelor’s degree in 2010, 2011 or 2012.

In this survey we are seeking to get your perspective on how you are navigating the transition from college into your respective career. We will be asking you questions on the programs, services and resources you engaged from your college senior year through to where you are now. We would like to know your experiences while making this transition, the individual actions you undertook to facilitate the transition and the resources that helped you and/or hindered your transition experience.

All responses made in this survey will be anonymous and therefore we do not anticipate any risk to you that is greater than normal. You are free to skip any questions that you do not feel comfortable responding to and you are at liberty to exit the survey at any point without penalty. Your choice to participate or not to participate will not impact your job or your relationship with the University of Illinois.

After completing the survey, you will be provided with an option to sign-up for a raffle and a follow-up study on a separate second survey. This second survey is entirely optional. We would also like to assure you that the contact information you share in the second survey cannot be linked to the information you shared in the first survey because the two surveys are separate and not linked. All your contact information will be stored in strict confidentiality and will only be used by the research team for the purposes you specify. All contact information collected for purposes of the raffle will be discarded soon after the draw is completed and the winners notified.

The findings from this research will be useful to college seniors, recent graduates, policy makers, universities, employers, instructors, parents and human resource professionals, by providing a better understand of the college-to-work transition process. The results of this study will constitute my doctoral dissertation and will also be published in a scholarly report, journal article or submitted as a conference presentation.

Having read the above description of this study, please continue to the next page if you are interested in completing the survey. If you do not wish to continue with the survey feel free to exit at this point.

If you have any questions regarding this study, you can email Kevin W. Gitonga at gitonga2@illinois.edu or Prof. Peter Kuchinke at kuchinke@illinois.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study or any concerns or complaints, please contact the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board at 217-333-2870 (collect calls will be accepted if you identify yourself as a research participant) or via email at irb@illinois.edu.

Sincerely,

Kevin W. Gitonga

EDUCATION AT
1. In what year did you graduate with your bachelor’s degree?
- 2010
- 2011
- 2012
- Other

2. What was your major field of study?
- Accounting
- Business Administration
- Hotel and Restaurant Management
- International Business Administration
- Tourism Management
- International Relations (IR)
- Psychology
- Criminal Justice
- Journalism
- Information Systems Technology
- Applied Computer Technology
- Other (please specify)
6. At the time you completed your bachelor's degree requirements, how confident were you with regard to your written communication skills
- Extremely confident
- Very confident
- Somewhat confident
- Slightly confident
- Not at all confident

7. At the time you completed your bachelor's degree requirements, how confident were you with regard to your computer skills
- Extremely confident
- Very confident
- Somewhat confident
- Slightly confident
- Not at all confident

8. At the time you completed your bachelor's degree requirements, how confident were you with regard to analytical/problem solving skills
- Extremely confident
- Very confident
- Somewhat confident
- Slightly confident
- Not at all confident

9. At the time you completed your bachelor's degree requirements, how confident were you with regard to managerial skills
- Extremely confident
- Very confident
- Somewhat confident
- Slightly confident
- Not at all confident
10. At the time you completed your bachelor’s degree requirements, how confident were you with regard to entrepreneurial skills?

- [ ] Extremely confident
- [ ] Very confident
- [ ] Somewhat confident
- [ ] Slightly confident
- [ ] Not at all confident

11. Which of the following best describe how you spent most of your time immediately after you graduated with your bachelor’s degree? (Check all options that apply)

**During the first year after graduation, I spent most my time:**

- [ ] In employment
- [ ] Doing various temporary jobs
- [ ] Pursuing further studies / professional training
- [ ] Travelling
- [ ] Seeking work
- [ ] Caring for a family member/child
- [ ] Doing nothing

Other (please specify)

[ ]

**Current Occupational Status**
12. How well did your experience at [university name] prepare you for your post-graduation plans?
- Extremely well
- Very well
- Somewhat well
- Slightly well
- Not well at all

Please explain your answer:

13. Which of the following categories best describes your current employment status?
- Employed - working full-time/part-time
- Self-employed
- Professional education & further academic studies
- Not employed - seeking employment
- Not employed and not seeking employment

GRADUATES IN EMPLOYMENT

14. When did you first start looking for employment?
- Prior to completing my bachelor's degree
- At the time of completing my bachelor's degree
- After completing my bachelor's degree
- I did not look for a job
15. After graduating with your bachelors degree, how long did you look for work before obtaining your first job?
- Obtained job before completing requirements
- Obtained job without looking
- Less than 1 month
- 1-3 months
- 4-6 months
- 7-12 months
- Over 12 months

16. Was this your only job offer, or did you have others as well?
- Yes - This was my only job offer
- No - I had one other job offer as well
- No - I had two other job offers
- No - I had three or more other job offers
17. Which of the following did you consider as your top three criteria when applying for your first job after completing your bachelor’s degree?

- Salaries and benefits
- Opportunities for career growth/development
- Related to my special skills
- Related to my course or field of study
- Tolerance to religious practices
- Multi-cultural work-force
- Opportunity to travel
- Proximity to residence
- Telecommuting arrangements such as ability to work from home or remotely
- Flexible work schedule
- Other

If your desired criteria are not listed above, please provide your option(s) below:

[ ]

Page 8
18. What strategies did you use to look for your first job after completing your bachelor's degree? (Check all strategies that apply).

- I applied for advertised vacancies
- I contacted employers to inquire about vacancies
- I advertised/posted my professional skills on job-search sites
- I was approached by employers
- I attended job fairs
- I enlisted the help of the career/placement office of my college/university
- I enlisted the help of university staff and/or my professors
- I applied through contacts I established during my undergraduate years
- I received referrals from personal connections/contacts (e.g. parents, relatives, friends)
- I joined my family's company or business
- I started my own business
- I networked with alumni
- My internship transformed into a full-time job
- I continued my job as a working student

Other (please specify)

---

19. When you first started looking for a job, in which sector did you want/hope to be employed?

- Public service or government institution (includes Government Owned and Controlled Corporations)
- Non-government or non-profit organization
- Private sector
- I prefer to be self-employed

Other (please specify)
20. Are you still employed at your first job?

- Yes
- No

If no, please state your reasons for changing:

[Blank space for answer]

21. To what extent did you experience the following problems during the search for your first employment after graduating from [Institution Name]? (Please rate applicable options)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>To a high extent</th>
<th>To some extent</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not being well connected professionally</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of required qualifications</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of required experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of jobs in my field of specialization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers asking for bribes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribalism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender discrimination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability discrimination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22. How satisfied are you with your current employment?

- Extremely satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Slightly satisfied
- Not at all satisfied

Please explain your answer:

[Blank space for answer]
### SELF-EMPLOYED GRADUATES

23. Which of the following situations best describes the nature of your self-employment?

- [ ] I opened my own business
- [ ] I joined my family/relative's business
- [ ] I am an independent consultant
- [ ] I provide professional services (e.g. tutorial, book-keeping, computer repair)

Other (please specify)

### GRADUATES NOT IN EMPLOYMENT

25. Please state the reason(s) why you are not in employment.

### FACILITATING TRANSITION
26. Which of the following resources/activities did you use or participate in while pursuing your bachelors degree at Illinois?
(Check all that apply)

- [ ] Attended colloquium talks
- [ ] Attended professional networking initiatives
- [ ] Participated in the mentoring program
- [ ] Attended presentations to learn about resume writing, interviewing skills, and/or other career-related topics
- [ ] Attended employer information sessions
- [ ] Spoke with a Career Counselor/Coach about interest areas and/or career direction
- [ ] Participated in the life skills program
- [ ] Participated in mock interviews with a Career Counselor/Coach
- [ ] Participated in on-campus interviewing with potential employers
- [ ] Attended a career fair (either on or off campus)
- [ ] Joined a club, professional society or organization at Illinois related to your career field of interest

Other (please specify)

27. Which sources did you consult the most when making preparations for your post-graduation plans? (Check all that apply)

- [ ] Illinois Career Services office
- [ ] Online Career Services (not affiliated with Illinois)
- [ ] Job Fairs
- [ ] Networks I made during my Internship
- [ ] Illinois Academic department or faculty
- [ ] Employer Websites, Newspapers or trade publications
- [ ] Employer agencies
- [ ] Professional organization
- [ ] Friends/family
- [ ] Illinois Alumni Association office

Other (please specify)
28. Did you experience any training on entrepreneurship while at pursuing your bachelor's degree?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please explain how your training on entrepreneurship influenced your decisions when pursuing your post-graduation plans.

29. Do you think your experience at prepared you adequately for the workforce?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

Please explain your response

30. In order of importance, what are the three main challenges you have experienced with regard to attaining your post-graduation plans?

1.
2.
3.
31. Who are the three most influential people in your life who have supported you as you pursue your post-graduation plans
(Please list them below in terms of their relationship with you e.g. Mother, Father, professor etc)
1. 
2. 
3. 

32. Think back to your transition. What do you think would have helped you transition better?

33. What advise would you give to college seniors or recent graduates regarding making the transition from college into the 'real world'

Overall transition experience

34. Overall, how would you rate your success in attaining your post-graduation plans?

- Highly Successful
- Successful
- Somewhat Successful
- Somewhat Unsuccessful
- Not Successful

Please explain your answer:

Demographics
35. Where do you currently reside?
- I reside in Kenya
- I am abroad
If abroad, please indicate the country

36. What is your nationality?

37. What is your age?

38. What is your gender?
- Male
- Female

39. What is your marital status?
- Married
- Not married
40. Please provide the following information about your parents using the drop down menu in each column. If your parents are retired, indicate what their occupations prior to retirement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest educational attainment</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you selected 'Other' for the Occupation category, please specify in the space provided below.
Appendix D Preliminary Analysis by Question

**Question 3:** At the time you completed your bachelor's degree requirements, what were your immediate post-graduation plans?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What were your immediate post-graduation plans?</th>
<th>N=135</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To get employed full-time</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To start my own business</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To enroll in graduate or professional school</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To study or work abroad</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To become a homemaker (e.g. house wife etc.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had no idea at that point</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other comments:** Some hoped to get a promotion in their current employment (4); to relax and take time off (2); continue with their current employment (3); and make a career change using the newly acquired skills (2).

**Questions 4-10:** At the time you completed your bachelor's degree requirements, how confident were you with regard to the following skills?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How confident were you with regard to the following skills?</th>
<th>Extremely confident</th>
<th>Very confident</th>
<th>Somewhat confident</th>
<th>Slightly confident</th>
<th>Not at all confident</th>
<th>Total N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional knowledge and skills</td>
<td>21 14</td>
<td>67 45</td>
<td>44 30</td>
<td>13 9</td>
<td>4 3</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal communication skills</td>
<td>60 40</td>
<td>70 46</td>
<td>19 13</td>
<td>2 1</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written communication skills</td>
<td>50 34</td>
<td>72 49</td>
<td>23 15</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer skills</td>
<td>45 30</td>
<td>81 54</td>
<td>22 15</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical/problem solving skills</td>
<td>20 14</td>
<td>85 58</td>
<td>40 27</td>
<td>2 1</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerial skills</td>
<td>16 11</td>
<td>56 38</td>
<td>58 39</td>
<td>13 9</td>
<td>6 4</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurial skills</td>
<td>13 9</td>
<td>34 23</td>
<td>56 38</td>
<td>23 1</td>
<td>22 15</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 11:** Which of the following best describe how you spent most of your time immediately after you graduated with your bachelor's degree? (Check all options that apply)

**During the first year after graduation, I spent most of my time:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I spent most my time:</th>
<th>N=140</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In employment</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing various temporary jobs</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pursuing further studies / professional training</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travelling</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking work</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring for a family member/child</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additional responses indicated under “Other” include: Pursuing an internship (3); preparing for graduate school (1); brainstorming the next move (1); preparing to start my own business (2); and volunteering (2).

Question 12: How well did your baccalaureate university experience prepare you for your post-graduation plans?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How well did your university experience prepare you</th>
<th>N=144</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely well</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very well</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat well</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly well</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not well at all</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please explain your answer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How were you prepared?</th>
<th>N=52</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course work encouraged me to be open-minded &amp; think-globally</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The curriculum developed my knowledge, skills &amp; abilities professionally</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My degree skills were aligned/relevant to my work &amp; the real-world</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University experience developed my professional soft-skills</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared me academically for the outside world</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Senior Year Experience seminar provided me with fundamental preparations</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The multicultural experience of the institution prepared me professionally</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internship program (and project) provided a foundation for the workforce.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided a good foundation to pursue graduate school</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracurricular activities developed my leadership and interpersonal skills</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work simulations prepared me for my career</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was able to secure a job and adjust to the requirements of the job</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instilled a set of moral values such as environmental consciousness and littering</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided resources helpful in the job searching process</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 13: Which of the following categories best describes your current employment status?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current employment status</th>
<th>N=147</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed - working full-time/part-time</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional education &amp; further academic studies</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not employed - seeking employment</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not employed and not seeking employment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note: Questions 14 - 22 were addressed to employed graduates only

**Question 14: When did you first start looking for employment?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When did you first start looking for employment?</th>
<th>N=104</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prior to completing my bachelor's degree</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the time of completing my bachelor's degree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After completing my bachelor's degree</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I did not look for a job</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 15: After graduating with your bachelor's degree, how long did you look for work before obtaining your first job?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How long did you look for work before obtaining your first job?</th>
<th>N=102</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obtained job before completing requirements</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtained job without looking</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 month</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 months</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6 months</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-12 months</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 12 months</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 16: Was this your only job offer, or did you have others as well?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Was this your only job offer?</th>
<th>N=102</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes - This was my only job offer</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No - I had one other job offer as well</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No - I had two other job offers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No - I had three or more other job offers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 17: Which of the following did you consider as your top three criteria when applying for your first job after completing you bachelor’s degree?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your top three criteria when applying for your first job</th>
<th>N=96</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salaries and benefits</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for career growth/development</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related to my special skills</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related to my course or field of study</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerance to religious practices</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-cultural work-force</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Opportunity to travel 12 12
Proximity to residence 7 7
Telecommuting arrangements such as ability to work from home 4 4
Flexible work schedule 16 16
Other 1 1

Other: To find something I am passionate about (1); to find a challenging job (1); to get a job promotion based on the newly acquired skills (2); to secure a job that would provide a better work place experience (3).

Question 18: What strategies did you use to look for your first job after completing your bachelor's degree? (Check all strategies that apply).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What strategies did you use to look for your first job</th>
<th>N=94</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I applied for advertised vacancies</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I contacted employers to inquire about vacancies</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I advertised/posted my professional skills on job-search sit</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was approached by employers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I attended job fairs</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enlisted the help of the career/placement office of my college/university</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enlisted the help of university staff and/or my professors</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I applied through contacts I established during my undergrad</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I received referrals from personal connections/contacts (e.g. parents, relatives, friends)</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I joined my family's company or business</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I started my own business</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I networked with alumni</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My internship (or volunteering) transformed into a full-time job</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I continued my job as a working student</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The qualitative responses in this question were integrated into the table. After reviewing each of the responses, the researcher observed that they were aligned to the options provided in the table.

Question 19: When you first started looking for a job, in which sector did you want/hope to be employed?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preferred sector</th>
<th>N=98</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public service or government institution (includes Government owned and controlled corporations)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-government or non-profit organization</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private sector</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I prefer to be self-employed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 20: Are you still employed at your first job?

Are you still employed at your first job? N=102 %
Yes 50 49
No 52 51

If no, please state your reasons for changing.
Responses in this section were open-ended. After review of each of the responses, the researcher summarized them into seven principle themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for changing your first job</th>
<th>N=50</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To pursue career growth opportunities</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To seek better working conditions (better pay, job satisfaction etc.)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I got a better job offer</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My job contract ended (e.g. internship)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To seek a more challenging experience</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The company was not promising (e.g. going out of business)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking better future prospects</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 21: To what extent did you experience the following problems during the search for your first employment after graduating? (Please rate applicable options)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent did you experience the following problems:</th>
<th>To a high extent</th>
<th>To some extent</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not being well connected professionally</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of required qualifications</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of required experience</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of jobs in my field of specialization</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers asking for bribes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribalism</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender discrimination</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability discrimination</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 22: How satisfied are you with your current employment?
How satisfied are you with your current employment?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Satisfaction</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely satisfied</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very satisfied</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat satisfied</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly satisfied</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all satisfied</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions 23 and 24 were specifically addressed to self-employed graduates.

**Question 23:** Which of the following situations best describes the nature of your self-employment?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Self-employment</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I opened my own business</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I joined my family's/relative's business</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am an independent consultant</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 24:** What motivated you to start your own business as opposed to seeking employment? (Open-ended question)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I saw a business opportunity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could not find a job (or job scarcity)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I started my business while still in school</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like to be independent and in control of my destiny</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like to grow my own business rather than others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I did not like my internship experience</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I did not have money for graduate school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I needed a means to survive in graduate school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 25 was addressed to graduates who were NOT in employment.

**Question 25:** Please state the reason(s) why you are not in employment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have not found a full-time job</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have not found a job</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am pursuing further studies</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My contract ended</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I have not found the right job 1 3
I am taking a break, doing volunteer work 1 3
I am seeking a career change 1 3
I am on an internship 1 3
I am considering pursuing self-employment 1 3

Questions 26-33 were addressed to all participants

Question 26: Which of the following resources/activities did you use or participate in while pursuing your bachelor’s degree at [university name]?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources/activities used or participate in while pursuing your bachelor's degree</th>
<th>N=135</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attended colloquium talks</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended professional networking initiatives</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in the mentoring program</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended presentations to learn about resume writing, interviewing skills, and/or other career-related topics</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended employer information sessions</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoke with a Career Counselor/Coach about interest areas and</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in the life skills program</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in mock interviews with a Career Counselor/Coach</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in on-campus interviewing with potential employ</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended a career fair (either on or off campus)</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joined a club, professional society or organization at [university name]</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Other: Work study (1); sports (1).*

Also:
- Four respondents indicated that they did not use any of the resources/activities proposed because they were working students.
- Two indicated that none of the options provided applied to their transition.

Question 27: Which sources did you consult the most when making preparations for your post-graduation plans? (Check all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources consulted the most when making preparations post-graduation plans</th>
<th>N=138</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[University name] Career Services office</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Career Services (not affiliated with [university name])</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Fairs</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networks I made during my Internship</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 28: Did you experience any training on entrepreneurship while at [university name] pursuing your bachelor's degree?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did you experience any training on entrepreneurship?</th>
<th>N=144</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If yes, please explain how your training on entrepreneurship influenced your decisions when pursuing your post-graduation plans?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How did your entrepreneurship training influence you</th>
<th>N=22</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am pursuing self-employment as a career</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced my with communication and organizational skills</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am planning to start a business in the near future</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipped me with skills analyze my job search process</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped me develop and focus on my career goals</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences from the course informed my graduate studies</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Question 29: Do you think your experience at [university name] prepared you adequately for the workforce?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did your university experience prepare you adequately for the workforce? N= 141</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not know</td>
<td>8</td>
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</table>

Question 30: In order of importance, what are the three main challenges you have experienced with regard to attaining your post-graduation plans?
**Question 31:** Who are the three most influential people in your life who have supported you as you pursue your post-graduation plans.

*First Influence*

- Nuclear Family: 49%
- University Officials: 18%
- Spouse: 10%
- Extended Family: 5%
- Self: 2%
- Mentor: 9%
- God: 3%
- Friends: 8%

*Second Influence*

- Nuclear Family: 38%
- University Officials: 20%
- Friends: 13%
- Mentor: 9%
- Self: 1%
- Extended Family: 7%
- Work Associates: 5%
- Clients: 2%
**Question 32:** Think back to your transition. What do you think would have helped you transition better?

![Third Influence Chart]

**Question 33:** What advice would you give to college seniors or recent graduates regarding making the transition from college into the 'real world'?

Majority of the responses in this section (41 respondents) emphasized the need for graduates to acquire work experience and exposure through seeking for internships and jobs while still school. Some of the suggestions
given included: attend professional courses, apply for trainee positions, seek membership in professional journal societies, pursue volunteer opportunities and take up leadership positions. The rationale given for engaging these strategies was that some of the opportunities would later transform into full-time jobs, equip the graduate with practical work skills or serve as a stepping stone to more desirable jobs.

*Consult/seek all the information and knowledge you can on the work environment from multiple sources.* Twenty-eight (28) respondents offered this advice. This includes seeking information from the career office, Senior Experience seminar, course advisers, family and lecturer. Respondents also proposed attending interview workshops, job fairs, work simulations and resume writing workshops as additional resources. These resources would provide information that helps the graduate plan their career paths better; identify what they want; understand the cultural values at play in the workplace and environment. This information also helps students to package their skills and proactively promote their competencies to potential employers. This also gave them an advantage over their peers.

*Be focused on your career goals—know your mission, vision and goals.* Seventeen (17) respondents proposed this advice. This included identifying a degree program that aligns with one's career goals and maintaining a career focus especially in the fourth year by proactively engaging resources they promote one's career plans.

*Establish networks with alumni, college mates and potential employers.* Seventeen (17) respondents emphasized the need to develop strong social networks that will serve as a support base when making the transition. This network will help the graduate understand the job market and industry with ease and provide guidance in pursuing one's professional goals.

*Be open-minded on career paths.* Respondents (16) proposed this advice and encouraged students to view every opportunity as a stepping stone to another. They urged the need to focus on training and skills development versus salary and benefits.

*Be prepared for challenges beyond what was covered in your classwork.* Respondents (15) urged students preparing for the workforce to maintain a strong will and have a “thick skin” as they prepare for the workforce. They argued that the work environment presents many challenges that are not taught in their academic experiences and therefore, called on college seniors and recent graduates to be innovative and resilient as they make the transition.

*Set realistic expectations.* Thirteen (13) respondents advocated for this theme. Respondents emphasized the need to research on one's desired career so as to have a clear idea of what it looks like in reality and then align one's expectations to this reality. This goal also requires one to know their environment.

*Discover yourself—know your strengths and weaknesses.* Respondents (11) advocated for the need to have a clear understanding on one's abilities, in order to use this knowledge to their benefit. The understanding helps the graduates to believe in themselves, maintain confidence, aim higher and have the right attitude.

*Consider creating employment instead of seeking employment.* Ten (10) respondents indicated this theme. Given the levels of unemployment and job scarcity in the country, respondents proposed the need to consider self-employment as a career option prior to graduating from school.

Get a career mentor early—to guide you (4)
Get involved in school extracurricular activities & have fun in campus—(3)
Be patient and at your best at all times—do not give up (8)
Be disciplined and hardworking in school—(7)
Remain positive and start small—seven (7) respondents. They cautioned that the first two years are difficult and slow in securing employment. Letters of regret are not failure. Adhere to the bottom up approach.

Find your passion and go with it—Five (5) respondents. Don’t jump into anything.
Do not get complacent in the event you get a job—Two (2) respondents. Consider having an exit strategy.
**Question 34:** Overall, how would you rate your success in attaining your post-graduation plans?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate your success</th>
<th>N=134</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highly Successful</td>
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<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Successful</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Unsuccessful</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Successful</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>