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1. Introduction

The recent recession in Ireland has had dramatic effects across the business world. Organisations have witnessed many changes and have had to adapt to a new environment. The area of training and development is a critical component for many organisations in their overall performance. However in light of economic upheaval the training and development functions within many organisations have suffered.

The aim of this research is to discover how senior managers view the impacts of the recession on training and development in Ireland and to identify problems they have had to face and how they have managed through the recession and beyond.

2. Research question and focus

This research will aim to discover the ways in which managers in Irish business are managing the training and development function within their organisations while under the pressures of an uncertain economic climate. The research will provide insights into the training and development function and how it has changed. The perspective of senior managers is considered and presented in the primary research findings.

The research question:

How has the recession in Ireland impacted on how senior managers view training and development?

Sub questions

Do managers cease training, reduce or increase training as a result of the recession?

Is there now more focus on using training to fulfill short-term goals?

To what extent has the focus on personal and professional development diminished?

To what extent has the recession generated more creative ways of meeting training and development needs?

3. Literature Review

A summary of key themes and authors as presented in the literature review. Training and development is a broad research area and key authors reviewed include Swinney (2007), Schuler (2000), Garavan et al (2003), Felstead et al (2011) Kennett (2013) and Coget (2011).

McHale (2012) and Fitzgerald (2014) present views on the impacts of the recession in Ireland while Roche et al (2011) add to the date with specific relation to human resources.

The alignment of training and development to organisational strategic objectives is very apparent in the literature with Hutchinson (2013) Schuler (1992) and Barron (2003) all supporting this view.

Cairns (2012) and Shenge (2014) present the importance of effective training while Phillips (2009) and Carrigan (2010) add to the debate on creativity and innovation in training.

Training and development can be viewed as a nonfinancial reward, Sammer (2011) and Kahn (1990), Lipman (2012) and Lowenstein (2006) present views on employee engagement.

4. Methodology

The research methodology adopted by the researcher



5. Key Findings

Key findings emerging from the research are:

A trend has emerged where organisations are moving away from external training towards internal training.

All managers interviewed agree to the importance of continuing to train during a downturn in the economy.

Aligning training and development to the strategic objectives of the organisation is universally accepted as best practise.

Managers view the provision of training as a nonfinancial reward during tough economic times.

Innovation and proactive thinking have led to creative training methods which managers have often discovered to be very effective and often economical

6. Discussion

The training and development function is valued by managers interviewed as purported by Garavan, Horgan and Cahir-ODonnell (2003) however a current issue that is repeatedly highlighted by managers is the concept of 'getting more for less'. But managers are in agreement that it is important to continue training during a recession.

Aligning training to the strategic objectives of an organisation is viewed by managers to be of critical importance, particularly in light of the recession as a means to gain firm specific human capital as outlined by Neirotti and Paolucci, (2013).

There is a trend towards the increased use of internal training among the managers interviewed and this would appear to support the literature where HR Focus (2009) and IBEC (2013) point to an increasing focus on internal training practices.

The recession it seems had prompted organisations to be more creative in providing training. Organisations are cross training employees from different departments. Experienced staff are sharing their knowledge and training others within the organisation. Barriers are being broken down and greater transparency among departments is forming.

While managers interviewed represent various different industries in Ireland, there are a wide range of training and development issues facing organisations and as such the researcher's conclusions cannot be generalised.

Subjectivity and time constraints of the MBA pose other limitations to the research. However this research could be useful for further research into a larger population or for a specific industry or sector and as a base to research lessons learned from the recession in Ireland.