HR & Disability: Policies & Practice in Adult Education Institutes in Dublin and the Surrounding Area

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Declaration

I, Daniel Luke Coghlan, declare that this research is my own unaided work except where referenced and cited accordingly acknowledging those whose work has been used to support this research.

It is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the MA HRM degree at Dublin Business school.

It has not been submitted before, in whole, or in part for any degree or examination at any other

Signed………….   Date……………..

Contents

Abstract

There are 600,000 people within Ireland who have a disability, this equates to roughly 13% of the population, and Dublin was among the top counties with a 14.9% disability rate. The purpose of this paper is to discover how HR processes work in tandem with people with disabilities who are in employment in both the public and private adult educational sector within Dublin and the surrounding area. In fact very little literature exists on the subject of HR processes and disability within the private sector in Ireland so this paper hopes to be a stepping stone to the insight to such processes as lined out within the content of this paper.

Using inductive qualitative methods to gather and analyse the data, the researcher searched for themes linking processes between the institutes to unearth exactly how practice within these organisations work. Inductive through to deductive grounded theory were the steps to which the researcher moved from literature to deducing and interpreting findings.

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<u>Acknowledgements</u>

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background & Reasoning for Topic Area

The research, which will be undertaken as part of the fulfilment of the educational course in Human Resource Management for Dublin Business School (DBS), was originally conceived of in reaction to the lack of literature which addresses the area alluded to in the tentative title, above. While a great deal of legislation, policies and articles have been written about HR very little to none has been conducted which takes as its point of departure the actual, everyday practice of people working within adult education, and in the context of disability, in Ireland.

According to figures from the CSO, published along with the Bill of Health in April 2011 there are 600,000 people within Ireland who have a disability, this equates to roughly 13% of the population, and Dublin was among the top counties with a 14.9% disability rate. With such a large number of people falling under the category of being disabled, this research intends to find out how organisations in Dublin, specifically those involved in adult education, interact with employees who have disabilities through their policies and practices with an intent to discover how they differ, if at all, from their normal practices. The area of disability and employment has been debated about for decades and recently as referenced by Deirdre O'Connor, Chair of the Congress Disability Committee in July 2013, a report by the Economic & Social Research Institute found that from the period between 2004 and 2010 there was 'an intense focus on disability issues' but they found that this did not translate into the area of employment.

1.2 Approach to Study

This research will be conducted using a inductive qualitative approach. The reason which lies behind the decision to pursue a qualitative approach concerns the uniquely social character of the way in which policy is mediated by practitioners, i.e. through social undertakings: consultations, advisory sessions and through less formal channels. By approaching the topic in this way the researcher hopes to gain an expert insight into the practices of these organisations as they are carried out as well as

through formal interviews on the topic which will help enhance knowledge within this field. A qualitative approach will allow greater details in the information to shine through (contextual specificity, in-situ decision making, characterisation of the reaction of involved parties) than other approaches. Key persons were identified with extensive knowledge of the topic in question that work in the topic area and using in depth interviews would be the most logical discourse for gathering the day to day policies and practices of each of their organisations due to the vast amount of data required. Further to this, grounded theory was used as a research strategy, which will be discussed later in the text.

1.3 Organisation of Dissertation

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 will examine all literature that is written about disability and employment within Ireland as well as comparing it to some international literature. They will be broken down into sub sections and writings on each HR process will be looked at to see how they are dealt with in terms of disability in the organisations researched. The chapter will also inspect the current legislation within Ireland and Europe that would affect Irish organisations employing staff with disabilities. Continuing on to Chapter 3, this will attempt to justify the selection of the research methodology as well as well as methods of data collection and analysis. Furthermore this chapter contains the research objectives and question. Chapter 4 will then organise research findings and enter into a discussion of such. Chapter 5 is the conclusion and recommendations in which the researcher will review and analyse the research conducted. Further chapters (6 & 7) will contain the bibliography and appendices respectfully.

1.4 Scope & Limitations

Due to the lack of literature in reference to the subject title, most of the articles, journals etc. within the literature review will be looking at disability within organisations within Ireland and Dublin possibly as well as on the international scene. These writings may possibly be in reference to businesses outside of adult education as within Ireland and the EU, most organisations in the private sector will fall under the same legislation when considering staff with disabilities. Each organisation

will be asked about their recruitment processes, performance management, training & development. As mentioned in the research methods; other limitations could possibly be the choice of the research choice and strategy meaning the difficult task of discerning the reliability and validity of qualitative data. Choosing grounded theory, which this research does, will also bring forth the assumption that themes will be found in the data collection and analysis, something that can be difficult to identify if the research is not incredibly experienced in the field of topic. To ensure this is not the case, the researcher will conduct a literature review prior to the data collection, something which certain theorists believe should happen after data collection when using a grounded theory strategy, the reasons for not doing so will follow in the chapter 'Grounded Theory & the Literature Review'.

1.5 Contributions

In undertaking this research it is hoped that previously unidentified (in accessible literature) HR processes within adult education institutes when concerning staff with disabilities will be brought to light. Previously there has been insight due to various guidebooks on the HR processes when concerning disabled staff but no such literature when looking into adult education. Furthermore, within the private sector in Ireland there is very little literature on any of these HR processes in any industry or business area and it is hoped that from the findings within this research ideas or theories can be formed for future research. The objectives, which are listed in the Research Methods chapter, line out exactly what assumptions the researcher gained from reviewing literature from other sources when considering HR practices both nationally and internationally when dealing with staff with disabilities. It is hoped that from these objectives, relevant data can be found from each source which will then be a basis for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Employment & Disability

As mentioned in the previous chapter according to figures from the CSO, published along with the Bill of Health in April 2011 there are 600,000 people within Ireland who have a disability, this equates to roughly 13% of the population, and Dublin was among the top counties with a 14.9% disability rate. The Disability Act of 2005 defines disability as:

> *"a substantial restriction in the capacity of the person to carry on a profession, business or occupation in the State or to participate in social or cultural life in the State by reason of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment."*

When looking at the breakdown of disabilities in Ireland, the Bill of Health from 2011 lists physical disabilities as one of the highest with 41.1% followed by a difficulty with learning, remembering and concentrating which totals 23% of those people with disabilities. Other disabilities included in the report are psychological or emotional conditions (16.1%), deafness or a serious hearing impairment (15.5%), intellectual disabilities (9.7%) and blindness or serious vision impairment (8.7%). Other disabilities not mention but which include chronic illness numbered 46.2% of the roughly 600,000 (see appendix) people with disabilities in Ireland. When taking a look at the participation of disabled people in the workforce, the figure from 2011 numbered at 162,681 which equates to roughly 30% of the number of disabled persons in Ireland. This figure may be disproportionate considering there is a large number of over 65 year olds included in the number mentioned within Ireland so of the total of 542,277 people aged 15 and over with a disability, 112,502 or 20.7 per cent were at work. This compares with 50.1 per cent for the overall population aged 15 and over who were employed at the time of this census. Any way it is looked at, there is a significant difference in the number of disabled people employed in Ireland when compared to the general workforce.

According to the European Commission, people with disabilities are poorer than other citizens within the EU. As a result of these findings, and to combat this inequality, the European Disability Strategy

2010-2020 which enables 'persons with disabilities to have the right to participate fully and equally in society and economy' was introduced on the 15th of November 2010. They go on to say that 'by signing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the EU and every member state EU countries have committed themselves to create a barrier-free Europe'. This of course includes Ireland, having acceded to the 'Acquis Communitare' and by joining the EU in 1973 (European Common Law system thereby agreeing to implement decisions taken at the EU level) and this shows that the EU are serious about rectifying this imbalance and that organisations within these countries must take the issue of disability more seriously when conducting business. The main issues regarding this research and HRM are in the areas of education and employment. The European Disability Strategy goes on to state that the rate of employment for people with disabilities is currently around 50% within the EU. To further increase this number the European Commission has promised to 'develop active labour market policies, make workplaces more accessible, develop services for job placement, support structures and on-the-job training', any one of which could have implications for HRM. The EU has also committed itself to supporting those people with disability to gain access to mainstream education and promote learning. Legislation shows that the EU is proactively seeking to raise the standards of living for disabled people both within the workforce and in the field of education.

Within Ireland, the Disability Act of 2005 is the framework within which government legislation seeks to support the social inclusion of people with disabilities. Other government legislation, which will have a direct impact on this research, is the Employment Equality Act 1998, the Equal Status Act 2000, the Equality Act 2004, the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 and the Comhairle (Amendment) Bill of 2004. According to a guide released in conjunction with the Disability Act of 2005 by the Department of Justice, this act ensures 'access to public buildings, services and information as well as sectoral plans for six key Departments which will ensure that access for people with disabilities will become an integral part of service planning and provision'. The Act also places an obligation on public bodies to be pro-active in employing people with disabilities

and restricting the use of information from genetic testing for employment, mortgage and insurance purposes.

The Disability Act of 2005, according to the CIB, 'sets out the legal obligations of public service bodies to promote and support the employment of people with disabilities. Under Part 5 of the act, 3% of jobs in public service bodies are reserved for people with disabilities'. This has implications for HR staff within the public sector as they legally must ensure that they are consistently staffed with this quota. The National Disability Authority (NDA) state, in their most recent report on the compliance to part 5 of the Disability Act 2005, that 'the public service as a whole reached 3.3% in 2012 sustaining the progress recorded in 2011 when the reported figure was 3.1%'. It goes on to state that even though the number of workers in the public service has dropped overall, they have seen in increase in people with a disability being hired. According to the CIB, it is the Public Appointments Service who recruit staff to civil service and other public service bodies but the input of HR within public colleges may be required to ensure that their needs are met through enforcing equality policies and by providing relevant training to the workforce on issues such as disability awareness as well as health and safety issues that may crop up. The public sector has stringent laws on the employment of people with disabilities but in the private sector they are less so. The Disability Federation of Ireland, which is an 'advocate for the voluntary disability sector supporting organisations to enable people with disabilities' work in conjunction with Adare Human Resource Management to offer HR services to certain non-profit organisations. Engaging in social research in a context like this could yield insights into how smaller businesses, which don't have a dedicated HR department, might construct policies and procedures in order to help facilitate workers with disabilities. While in public education, as mentioned previously, there are strict policies in place to but in some smaller private colleges it is possible that they may outsource certain requirements, such as policy making, and have a smaller number of staff to enforce the outcomes.

2.2 International Disability & HR

Outside of Ireland a comparative survey of 800-plus private sector and 400 federal-plus federal sector organisation representatives in the USA, by Bruyère, Erickson and VanLooy (2000), undertaken for Cornell University sought to find the role of HR in managing disability in the workplace. From the results yielded they 'suggest that both private and federal sector employers are responding to their respective disability non-discrimination legislation by making accommodations needed by applicants and employees with disabilities'. They also showed that in the private sector it was mostly HR that made the decisions concerning the accommodation of people with disabilities while in the public sector it was the decision of the supervisor of each disabled employee. Elsewhere in the report both private and federal sectors stated that they found most of the difficulties they encountered from accommodating those suffering from visual or learning disabilities. Quite importantly, for the private sector especially, both sectors found that the cost of training, supervision and accommodation of these employees was 'not a significant barrier to the employment and advancement for persons with disabilities'. During the survey they found that 'both groups expressed an interest in gaining further information or training regarding accommodations for persons with mental-health disabilities', showing that they are open to further facilitation of employment to people who have more severe disabilities. A series of implications for effective workplace policies and practice emerge from the findings of the survey which include 'providing a centralised organisational structure to facilitate accommodation in the workplace' as well as 'establishing a relationship with local community agencies that can help with recruitment of qualified candidates with disabilities and also in the identification of appropriate accommodations'. The study also showed that 'having policies and practices that minimise discrimination in the recruitment and hiring processes as well as ones that that promote career and promotional opportunities for workers with disabilities' will also help to create an effective and equality friendly workplace.

According to further, and more recent, research conducted by Lengnick-Hall, Gaunt and Kulkarni (2008) undertaken to discover the reason for very low employment rates of disabled people in America, they found that there were a number of reasons that employers did not look very favourable

on candidates with disabilities. The researchers approached 38 executives across various industries and geographic regions. In their findings they mention that 'when employers talk about diversity in general they seem to focus on diversity defined as race/ethnicity and gender'. They also list a series of concerns that people with disabilities tend to generate when considering them for employment. They are namely that they lack knowledge, skills and abilities; they may not be able to perform physically demanding tasks, increased costs, accommodations, safety problems as well as potential lawsuits for discrimination which would affect the image of the organisation. When these concerns were investigated they found that productivity among employees with disabilities equalled and in some cases surpassed that of employees without a disability. They also found that any extra costs of hiring an employee with a disability 'may entail additional costs to employers, but evidence to date suggests that these costs are usually minor and unlikely to tip the benefit versus cost assessment away from hiring that labour source'. They also mention that people with disabilities do not experience more accidents in the workplace as well as no friction between workers with disabilities and those without. In essence they quote that people with disabilities are overlooked and underutilised by employers and labels them 'an untapped human resource'.

International legislation in other countries differs to that in Ireland. For example in Germany, Kock (2004) writes that their laws are stricter for both public and private sector insofar that they must adhere to a hiring rate for people with severe disabilities totalling 5% of their workforce if that workforce employs more than 20 people. This was brought about in their Disabled People Act (2002) which also states that should an organisation fail to conform to this law, they will be fined €105 monthly when they fail to meet the quota but have over 3% of their total staff with disabilities , €180 if 2 – 3% and €260 if under 2%. Kock points out that most employers in Germany at this time did not comply with this workforce quota and instead opted to pay the levy. He also states that the quota in the year 2000 had only reached 3.7% nationally of the entire workforce, similar to that of Ireland. A more recent study from Waldschmidt and Lingnau (2008) found that 'from 2002-05 the overall occupation quota had risen from 3,8% to 4,2%; in the private sector it amounted to 3,7%, and the public service had a quota of 5,7%; federal authorities were the best players with a quota of 7,3%.

These figures show a much higher rate of employment than Ireland. Their laws would affect the Human Resource Departments by making it essential to hire people with severe disabilities, something that may require creative thinking during job analysis and other recruitment processes.

2.3 People Resourcing

According to Armstrong (2012), people resourcing, which is often known as 'employee resourcing' or sometimes as simply just 'resourcing' is 'the term used to cover employment activities that ensure the organisation has the people it needs, and deals with employee turnover and absenteeism issues'. It includes activities organisations undertake, also referenced by Armstrong such as workforce planning, recruitment and selection, attracting and retaining people, managing employee turnover, absence management and talent management. From the beginning, we can see that these general processes can change with the consideration of people with disabilities. For example if we take a look at workforce planning, in Australia the Anti Discrimination Act 1977 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 ensure that people with disabilities are fairly treated and considered during the recruitment stage, as does Ireland's Employment Equality Act 1998, which states that in relation to access to employment 'an employer shall not discriminate against an employee or prospective employee and a provider of agency work shall not discriminate against any agency worker'. This legislation protects people with disabilities and enforces organisations to consider their potential employment fairly or perhaps face legal consequences. The public service in Ireland has a 3% quota of workers with disabilities which was mentioned earlier, and this would have to be mentioned and accommodated during workforce planning process.

Once workforce planning has been dealt with the recruitment and selection begins, according to Armstrong (2012), recruitment is 'the process of finding and engaging the people the organisation needs' while selection is 'that part of the recruitment process concerned with deciding which applicants or candidates should be appointed to jobs'. When thinking of these processes in terms of disability, there is a large amount of literature regarding the equality of the candidates involved. According to Juliette Alban-Metcalfe, who prepared a paper entitled 'Effective Leadership and

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Organisational Culture for the Recruitment and Retention of People with Disabilities in the Irish Public Sector' (2008) on behalf of the National Disability Authority (NDA):

'...equality and diversity cannot thrive without a culture in which there is thoughtful consideration by people of their actions and behaviours and the way that they those actions will impact on others. This needs to be explicit from the initial contact people may have with an organisation, such as service provision or job advertisements, through recruitment and selection, and into day-to-day practice in the way people behave in the organisation.(p3)'

They suggest that from the offshoot that a business must stamp their measures on equality as early as the job advertisements. Alban-Metcalfe (2008) also go on to mention that requirements of the job should be firmly in place before any recruitment take place so as to attract candidates who apply will be able to know for sure that they are physically or mentally aware of the degree of work involved with the prospective job, this should be done without excluding any social group within Ireland on Equality grounds. Alban-Metcalfe (2008) cited Linley, Harrington and Hill (2005) when it was mentioned that 'it is increasingly argued that the nature of job analysis has also changed since jobs themselves are no longer necessarily clusters of similar tasks but often collections of activities' (p20). Alban-Metcalf (2008) goes on to then to cite Page and Boyle (2005) in which it is presented that during the recruitment and selection process, the job takes centre stage and recruiters try to fit a candidate to a job without thinking of the potential of each individual candidate. They do this by using their past experience to judge their suitability for the prospective job. According Linley et al (2005), they should focus more on the potential abilities of the candidate than their past work experience. Alban-Metcalfe (2008) then mentions that:

'Given that people with disabilities tend to have had less opportunity than non-disabled candidates to demonstrate their capability through a clear job history, it seems that such an approach to recruitment and selection, as well as benefiting the organisation as a whole, would increase the chances of recruiting people with disabilities, and thus enabling them to harness their capabilities in a meaningful way' (p24).

It seems that this advice is not necessarily being followed, especially in the private sector as experience always seems to trump any other qualities when searching for employment. But in terms of equality, this is certainly best practice.

The interview process can be a very discriminatory step within the recruitment process. According to Pilbeam and Corbridge (2010), interviewers do not take long at all to decide whether or not they want to employ a candidate and in some cases a matter of minutes and that 'the remainder of the time is spent confirming these first impressions' (p195). This is one amongst many possible biases in the interview process. Others mentioned are the horns or halo effect, which could certainly affect a potential disabled candidate as their disability could be the single reason that they get the job or not. The projection of the interviewer's characteristics could potentially be a problem concerning a potential interview. Perhaps the interviewers themselves have a disability and would look favourably on candidates with disabilities or maybe more negatively if such an occasion arose. Expectancy could also be an issue. Should the interviewer be aware of the candidate's disability prior to meeting them, perhaps due to access to partial candidates information, it may sway their questioning during the interview process or perhaps bring a number of other biases in. Pilbeam and Corbridge (2010) mention that stereotypical assumptions are one of the greatest flaws in the interview process and unfortunately when interviewing for jobs, people with disabilities tend to be looked at unfavourably in terms of seeking employment. Alban-Metcalfe (2008) suggests a way around this is by using competency-based interviewing as it 'is key way in which to minimise bias by requiring the interviewers to focus on job-related factors, and avoid straying into unrelated issues with a candidate'. If this form of interviewing was adopted by organisations looking to engage in the recruitment of people with disabilities or at least ensure equality during the recruitment process, it would be fairer and perhaps highlight the potential of disabled candidates. Alban-Metcalfe (2008) also suggests interviewer expectations need to be monitored and controlled perhaps through some sort of disability awareness training. The Department for Education and Employment in London suggest that this should include 'the importance of making no assumptions about ability, and focusing on capabilities rather than on candidates' possible performance restrictions' (2003). Another point made by Alban-

Metcalfe on behalf of the NDA was that on an attempt should be made to include a disabled person on each selection panel to help ease candidates with disabilities but also to give a more diverse judgement on each interviewee. This would not only aid the person being interviewed but might also give more credibility to the selection process should it ever be criticised by the candidate or by an outside source. A mandatory requirement when interviewing people with disabilities for a role in the public sector is that they must be facilitated in terms of accessibility, something which is not a requirement within the private sector. The HSE, in their guidebook entitled 'Guidelines on the Equal Opportunities Aspects of Employing People with Disabilities in the Health Service', mention a case taken against the East Coast Area Health Board when a candidate arrived on the day of her interview, having notified the staff of her need for wheelchair facilities, arrived to find the wheelchair ramp blocked and the lift broken. The candidate stated that this constituted discrimination as it affected her ability to perform during her interview and she was awarded compensation and the Equality Officer ordered the employer to draw up a code of conduct for future scenarios. In the private sector, the government has no legislation making it mandatory for private organisations to make their buildings accessible to the disabled but in Dublin the Dublin Access Unit in Dublin City Council has been inviting all private business owners to improve accessibility, mostly to generate tourism but it also would affect working standards in each facility. To date they have over 1,000 organisations signed up to improve conditions throughout their facilities so as they can meet an acceptable standard for people with disabilities to avail of.

Something that Alban-Metcalfe (2008) as well as other sources mention when recruiting people with disabilities is that a pre-employment medical assessment should be a requirement. In the public sector the HSE say that if an employee has moved from the interview stage and a medical condition is found that would not necessarily have implications on the person to complete their role within the organisation but if it should they state:

'Where the person has an impairment or disability which may impact on his/her ability to do the job, the onus is on the employer to make "reasonable accommodation" to facilitate that person. The

person must be able to render regular and efficient service and discharge the duties of the job albeit with "reasonable accommodation" provided by the employer.'(p10/11)

As an example of this the HSE, in their guidebook to managing staff with disabilities, mention the case of a Computer Component company who hired a person on a temporary contract but was offered a fulltime position subject to a medical examination. Upon finding that the employee had epilepsy, the contract was cancelled. The Labour Court found that this person was let go purely due to their disability and that the organisation failed to engage in any form of "reasonable accommodation", such as finding out how the work this employee was involved would affect their disability if at, which resulted in a case being taken against them. These are situations that would fall under the responsibility of HR staff and management to avoid. Within the guidebook, the HSE references a list of "reasonable accommodations" that could be undertaken for staff with disabilities such as a change to working hours, providing adaptive keyboards, phones etc, allocating parking or allowing absences for rehabilitation.

As mentioned in the introduction, there seems to be very little literature regarding the actual practices of HR where implementation of their policies and procedures to staff and students with disabilities in adult education is concerned. A number of colleges have policies regarding their stance toward students or staff on their website such as Dublin College University (DCU) who say 'Dublin City University is committed to providing equality of opportunity to people with disabilities in all aspects of employment'. The university states that they are actively engaging in recruitment which 'will not discourage those with disabilities'. They go on to state that interviews will be led by the HR department in consultation with the Disability Service. This involves creating job designs, advertisements, screening, short listing and engaging in interviews in a manner which is tailored to suit the needs of a candidate with a disability by means of ensuring wheelchair accessibility for potential employees, by omitting certain biased criteria during the job design process and by making interpreters available for testing or assessment.

Looking outside of education to other organisations, Radio Telefis Eireann (RTE) state on their website that 'People with disabilities are entitled to apply for any post in RTÉ for which they are qualified and to have their applications considered on the basis of their abilities, qualifications and suitability for the work in question. It is the person's ability to do the job that counts'. They continue on to say about their recruitment and selection phase that 'In relation to recruitment and selection process of persons with disabilities appointments will be made on merit using fair and accountable means of selection that conform to best practice'.

2.4 Training & Development

Training effectively begins when an employee begins his or her first day of work. Employee orientation or "onboarding" according to Dessler (2013) 'involves more than what people realise'. It helps a new employee feel welcome; it gives them basic information about their new organisation, helps them to understand the organisation and integrates them into the culture of the business. Workway and Hatton and colleagues (2007), written on behalf of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the Irish Business and Employers Confederation, say that the orientation process for people with disabilities is crucial as many leave their jobs in the early phase due to lack of induction. They say that this phase is crucial in assessing both the needs of the disabled employee and the 'appropriate accommodation and ongoing support' of co-workers and management. Orientation, therefore, while an important process generally facilitated by the Human Resource Department, plays an even larger role when applied to a worker with disability. It should also be mentioned that type of disability may play a factor in the decision to adopt a certain form of induction, as for example Workway (2007) mention that sufficient time should be given when inducting an employee with disabilities and they must be supplied with appropriate training materials such as Braille or large print amongst others.

In terms of opportunities and availability of training and development for people with disabilities Alban-Metcalfe (2008) mentions in the report for the NDA on a previous report that:

'In a study of managers with a disability working in the public sector in the UK, the accessibility of, and encouragement to take up, training and development opportunities were found to have the strongest links with career satisfaction, of the many factors measured (Alban-Metcalfe, 2004a) (p33)'

This finding proves that it is essential that training is promoted to all employees throughout an organisation and facilitate access to such as it is an important factor not only to employees with disabilities but to the majority of staff. According to further study by Alban-Metcalfe (2008), she found that managers with disabilities were less likely to report that they sought training than those managers without disabilities and that their line managers do not encourage them to do so as much as they would non-disabled personnel. The HSE, NDA and the Workway guidebooks all suggest that employees with disabilities should be given equal opportunity in terms of access to training.

Alban-Metcalfe (2008), in her work for the NDA, presented that due to the fact disabled workers are not approaching line managers for training or vice versa, there are important implications for culture and leadership. The culture of the organisation should promote the desire to engage in training and development to all staff, not just those with disabilities. Furthermore, to solidify this culture there needs to be some initiative and action done by the leadership of the organisation. Gunnigle, Heraty & Morley (2011) state that managers hold the ability to 'unlock the potential of other core factors of production' as they 'influence the return an organisation gets from its investment in human and material capital' (p255). Leadership in this case, according to the Alban-Metcalfe (2008) in her journal for the NDA, should take responsibility to ensure that line managers are properly encouraging staff to partake in training and development as well as giving staff the ability to approach management when they believe they require further training. Workway (2007) also suggest that mentoring should be considered for new employees with disabilities in which they could assist with work related issues as well as interact during work related social activities. They also suggest that employees with disabilities, once integrated into the organisation could perhaps become mentors themselves and further add their experience so that the culture of the organisation may benefit. This way they would be creating a more diverse organisation and the culture of which would become more open and accommodating to future potential employees in every social grouping.

It is not just only staff with disabilities that require training, as several sources such as Workway (2007), the NDA report (2008) and the HSE report (2006) mention that it is essential that an organisation engages in equality and diversity training so as to promote it into their culture. There can be some problems when engaging in such training with staff as Kitchin et al (1998) point out when they interviewed people with disabilities who were taking part in disability awareness meetings within their organisations in Donegal:

'Many of the respondents were not just critical of the courses, but also of the trainers themselves. Complaints generally related to their lack of disability awareness which manifested itself in patronising and al-knowing attitudes, misconceptions of people's capabilities, and a school-like atmosphere where the disabled person is `talked- down to' rather than engaged' (p10)

While an old report, issues such as this could arise within an organisation today and damage the image an employee with disabilities has of their employer. The trainers must be educated and managers must ensure that proper measure are put in place so as this form of training can be nothing but beneficial to staff and to the employees with disabilities. Organisations such as the National Council for the Blind in Ireland (NCBI) provide awareness training for companies wishing to promote diversity awareness amongst their staff and they state that the 'aim of disability awareness training is to remove some of the communication, attitudinal and physical barriers that prevent people with sight loss from fully participating in society'. Other organisations work in conjunction with the NCBI such as Deafhear and The Irish Wheelchair Association so they can give an all round and precise training course.

A recommendation that is made by the NDA regarding further practices in recruitment for public bodies is that they should partner with other organisations, even those in the private sector to further develop and pool ideas and resources in terms of recruiting people with disabilities into their organisations

When creating a training or development plan, a short description of the process given by Dessler is "ADDIE" or, when explained in full - analyse the training need, design the overall training program,

develop the course, implement the training and then evaluate the course's effectiveness. If a person with disabilities should be taking part in the training event, HR or the person responsible for organising the training may need to alter the plan to accommodate them while designing and developing the course. For instance, the CIPD suggest that e-learning:

'…offers disabled learners new ways to learn, as it can easily be adapted to different learning styles, speeds and communications formats. For example electronic text, unlike printed text, can be 'read' by people who are blind or dyslexic and by those who can't hold a book or turn pages (p1)'

E-learning would allow disabled people the opportunity to heighten their involvement in the organisation, the CIPD say that most people realise that disabled staff are under-utilised and that e-learning can become a tool to help rectify this.

Workway (2007, p50) put forward the point of retraining a person who becomes injured in an accident while in employment. Should this affect their ability to complete the tasks which they previously had no issue with, they can be retrained in an alternative method or perhaps redeployed within the organisation. Workway (2007) also suggest in relation to Dessler's ADDIE, that a number of topics should be mentioned before commencing with the development of a training course such as whether or not the employees with disabilities have been consulted on their need for training, if it is possible for the person to understand or have the ability to complete the training course, it is important to explain variations within the course clearly, there must be appropriate support for the person with disabilities, find out whether the person requires extra time or different facilities to complete the training, they should contact a local supported employment office for details of supports for training issues and finally, they should assess the cost of the training and validate whether or not it should go ahead. Furthermore they also mention that should a person with a disability be an expert in the type of training the staff is to engage in, they should consider designating him or her as a trainer during the course.

2.5 Performance Management

Traditionally performance management has revolved around the assessing of performance followed by the allocation of reward (Torrington, Hall, Taylor & Atkinson, 2011). We can then see effective performance as being the result of interaction between ability and motivation. Torrington et al (2011) continue on to say that in performance management it:

'...is increasingly recognised that planning and enabling performance have a critical effect on individual performance, with performance goals and standards, appropriate resources, guidance and support from the individual's manager all being central.' (p264)

Hutchinson (2013) says that performance management is 'frequently criticised as a rigid top-down system imposed by management'. This gives an unflattering view of a one sided barrage of reviewing and criticism that would alienate employees at lower levels. Instead Hutchinson states that 'at the operational and individual level performance management is better viewed as a process or continuous cycle that links various HR activities together' (p40). Performance management should be a flexible process with information flowing both ways, not just from top to bottom and it should include a wide array of practices such as coaching and mentoring, reward, training and development, performance appraisals and feedback, talent management, job design and induction.

Alban-Metcalfe for the NDA (2008) writes that line managers play a crucial role in creating a culture of performance within an organisation so should an occasion arise that a manger may be discriminatory, even subconsciously; it could affect a worker with disabilities. According to research done by Alban-Metcalf (2004b) evidence was found that in a study of line managers and their performance reviews to their subordinates, white male bosses were discriminated more against female employees as well as black and minority ethnicities. According to Mullins (2010)this process of judging or perceiving other people and giving them characteristics, maybe completely unjustifiable and as mentioned earlier, perhaps subconsciously, is known as attribution theory. This is something that could also come in to play in the recruitment and selection phase, and other biases mentioned earlier could also affect the performance management process such as stereotyping or the halo effect.

Another study, this time from the UK, Capita and Institute for Employment Studies (2001) found that line managers rated staff with a similar demographic higher than those outside of their grouping.

The suggested path around this problem according to Alban-Metcalfe (2008) is that managers are trained in the effects of attribution theory so as to avoid such discrimination during the performance management process. To avoid any prejudice, the line manager must carefully explain any criticisms of performance that may arise throughout their employment in a constructive two-way conversation in which learning is encouraged. Organisations are also encouraged to raise the frequency of performance appraisals to up to four times per year so as to monitor staff with disabilities progress and ensure that they are performing to standard. It must be important to also state that more regular performance appraisals are also encouraged for staff without disabilities and not used as a pretext for monitoring staff with disabilities alone but it the added ability to have face to face talks with staff with disabilities would be an added bonus. An Australian government initiative, Job Access, suggests that should a line manager become aware that an employee's productivity is diminishing due to a mental illness, they must be approached as soon as possible and if necessary, the employer or line manager should find alternative accommodations or flexible practices that may be available to them or if failing so, they should encourage the employee to take sick leave or seek medical attention.

Feedback is one of the most crucial parts in the process of performance appraisal (Hutchinson, 2013). If it is delivered in the correct fashion it can work wonders in motivating an employee and improving their productivity. Feedback can reinforce behaviours that the organisation is searching for as well as enhance the performances of the individual. A report from Alban-Metcalf (2004a) found that managers with disabilities were less likely to receive constructive, critical feedback from their superiors than managers without disabilities.

The NDA, suggest in a guidebook entitled 'Retaining Employees who Acquire a Disability' that performance management and the revision of poor performance can actually act as an indicator that an employee may have a disability that is unbeknownst to themselves or perhaps one that has developed

over time. If this could then be dealt with in a manner that would benefit both the employer and employee and potentially boost performance.

2.6 Employment Relations

The government of Ireland enforces equality through its legislation and according to Wallace et al (2013) the 'Employment Equality Acts 1998 – 2004 enable a claim to be made where the complainant is alleging he/she is performing equal work but is being paid less on ground of sex, marital status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race or membership of the Travelling community'. They reference these as the 'nine grounds'. In section 35 of the Employment Equality Acts 1998 – 2004 it is stated that it is not unlawful for an employer to pay a different rate to an employee with a disability "by reason of that disability, the employee is restricted in his or her capacity to do the same amount of work (or to work the same hours) as a person who is employed to do work of that description but who is without that disability." In other words if a person with a disability cannot physically complete the same amount of work or working hours due to their disability, the employer is not obliged to pay them the same as someone who works a standard weekly amount.

The term 'employment relations' can generally be used instead of the alternative 'industrial relations' as according to Rose (2008, p4) the latter term 'denotes an exclusively collective orientation to the employment relationship…while employment relations concentrate upon the relationship which employees as individuals have with their employers'. Either way the topic generally studies processes and issues that can affect both employers and employees. A great deal of legislation has been looked at in previous chapters; these laws would clearly have an impact on the relations between staff and their employers. As well as various forms of government and European legal systems there are other important institutions that can greatly affect employment relations. Trade unions such as the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) can influence employee and employers to various extremes. Rose (2008) follows on to mention that employment relation cases can make headlines in every country through events such as strikes, redundancies or discrimination cases. In relation to recruitment, examples have been given at how potential employees with disabilities brought cases to court due to

discrimination. Within Ireland a report from Russell, Quinn, King and McGinnity (2008) entitled 'The Experience of Discrimination in Ireland' found that people with disabilities were at the highest risk of general discrimination in Ireland, in terms of transport, health etc but this fact also transcends into the workplace as according to Russell et al (2008):

'Disabled people are much more likely to report work-related discrimination than non-disabled people. This is true of discrimination in work, where twice as many disabled people reported discrimination (9 per cent disabled versus 4.6 per cent non-disabled). It is also true of looking for work, where more than twice as many disabled people reported experiencing discrimination' (p15)

These figures show there is an a serious problem when concerning the employment relations with workers with disabilities, something that HR staff within an organisation need to be fully aware of. There has been failure in the past to settle disputes regarding people with disabilities, one of which occurred in NUI Galway in June 2014. As reported by The Journal.ie, a lecturer won €81,000 on grounds on discrimination against gender, family status and disability. The case was brought before the Equality Tribunal and where the court was told 'she was brought into a HR meeting where she was told that the university saw her as being in a non-academic teaching role'. She argued the opposite and with evidence of discrimination she won the case. This is an example of how relations between the employer represented by the Human Resource Department and the employee, in this case suffering from a disability, completely failed. The case reported in the People Resourcing chapter in which a an employee was let go due to epilepsy set a standard in 2001 as being the first successful case under the Employment Equality Act of 1998.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

3.1 Introduction

Research is defined by Saunders (2009) as 'something that people undertake in order to find out things in a systematic way, thereby increasing their knowledge' (p.5). In this chapter, the method of data collection will be explained as well as the reasoning for carrying out the research using the method of choice.

This chapter will look at the research area, contain the research question as well as sub questions; it will examine the research philosophy, the research approach, the research strategy and the research choice. The chapter will also examine the findings of the data collection method and present conclusions. Finally, ethical issues as well as limitations will be discussed and analysed within this paper.

3.2 Research Area

The researcher came to the conclusion of the research area though a combination of rational thinking and creative thinking (Raymond, 1993, cited in Saunders et al, 2009) which combines the rationality of examining the researchers own strengths, looking at past projects and searching through literature with the creative aspects such as brainstorming, exploring personal preferences and keeping notebooks (p25). The research area therefore was drawn upon from the amalgamation of both styles of thinking as disability and HR are both interests to the researcher and through note taking and brainstorming, this research was created. Furthermore this option of combining rational and creative thinking was chosen to avoid as Jankowicz (2005, cited in Saunders et al, 2009) mentions, 'the absolute panic because nothing in which you are interested or which seems suitable has come to mind' (p25).

3.3 Research Question

Saunders et al (2009) put forward the importance of defining clear research questions and it essential when drawing clear conclusions from the data that has been collected. 'The extent to which you can do that will determine largely by the clarity with which you have posed your initial research questions' (p32). The research question is the basis of the entire research, it is imperative it is well constructed so Clough and Nutbrown (2002) created a 'Goldilocks test' to decide if a research question were to be 'too big', 'too small', 'too hot' or 'just right'. Questions which are too short run the possibility of being insufficient when gathering data, if they are too big they may require extensive research, research which may be beyond the capability of the researcher. If a topic is referred to as too hot, the subject matter may make potential respondents feel uncomfortable with the questions asked or may make them less like to willingly divulge information required for the research. According to Clough and Nutbrown (2002), research questions that are 'just right' are 'just right for investigating at this time, by this researcher in this setting' (p34). It is through these ideas and recommendations that the primary research question proposed by the researcher is:

How are HR policies and practices concerning staff with disabilities implemented by organisations in adult education sector in Dublin and the surrounding area?

As Saunders et al (2009) advised, the researcher consulted peers, professionals in the area and lecturers before continuing with the chosen topic. Ultimately this is the question that this research hopes to answer. From the literature reviewed there has been little to no previous research projects which take an examination of this kind as their point of departure in the context of adult education. Research has been conducted and carried out, and examined here in the literature review above, concerning legislation, guidelines, company policies but few have examined the exact point at which the putting into practice of this legislation occurs within adult education in Dublin. There are no projects, which meet the researcher's satisfaction, which deal with the contextual specificity of how this legislation is enacted.

3.4 Research Objectives

The research question is a general base on which more questions were generated. Saunders et al (2009) refers to these as 'research objectives'. They stem from the research question and according to Saunders et al (2009, p34) 'are more generally acceptable to the research community as evidence of the researcher's clear sense of purpose and direction'. Before these research objectives were written, the researcher ensured their validity through extensive research of literature concerning the topic area, the research objectives were then worded as follows:

- Compare job analysis, description and person specification of the institutes and discover differences, if any, for staff with disabilities and those without
- Determine how each institute advertises a role within their organisation
- Discover various interviewing methods and techniques used by each institute and contrast them to find differences for candidates with disabilities
- Determine the importance of orientation for a new member of staff and differentiate procedures for staff with disabilities and those without
- Discover HR procedures for staff when engaging in training and development processes and how they differ for staff with disabilities
- Ascertain whether the institutes partake in a disability awareness program and find out how it is facilitated
- Learn how the performance management process is conducted within each institute and contrast practice for staff with disabilities
- Discover if the institutes actively counter discrimination within the institute through HR processes
- Determine the importance of HR (or HR processes) when acting as a communicator between employees and management
- Compare and contrast research objectives in both public and private adult education institutes

Connecting this research to the practices performed by the HR departments concerned is important so as to validate this study. If an organisation does not have a dedicated HR department the person responsible for implementing the policies will be sought, for example in various institutions within education, an Equality Officer or Disability Officer may take on the duties for the HR Department or at least be consulted for best practice. It is also important to differentiate between different types of adult education organisations as they have various legislative priorities which govern and dictate their practice and, therefore, it is assumed that their practices may vary. Whether practice by the HR department can remain the same regarding certain policies, when applied to staff, or whether it is indeed the HR department's sole responsibility to do so must also be determined.

3.5 Research Philosophy
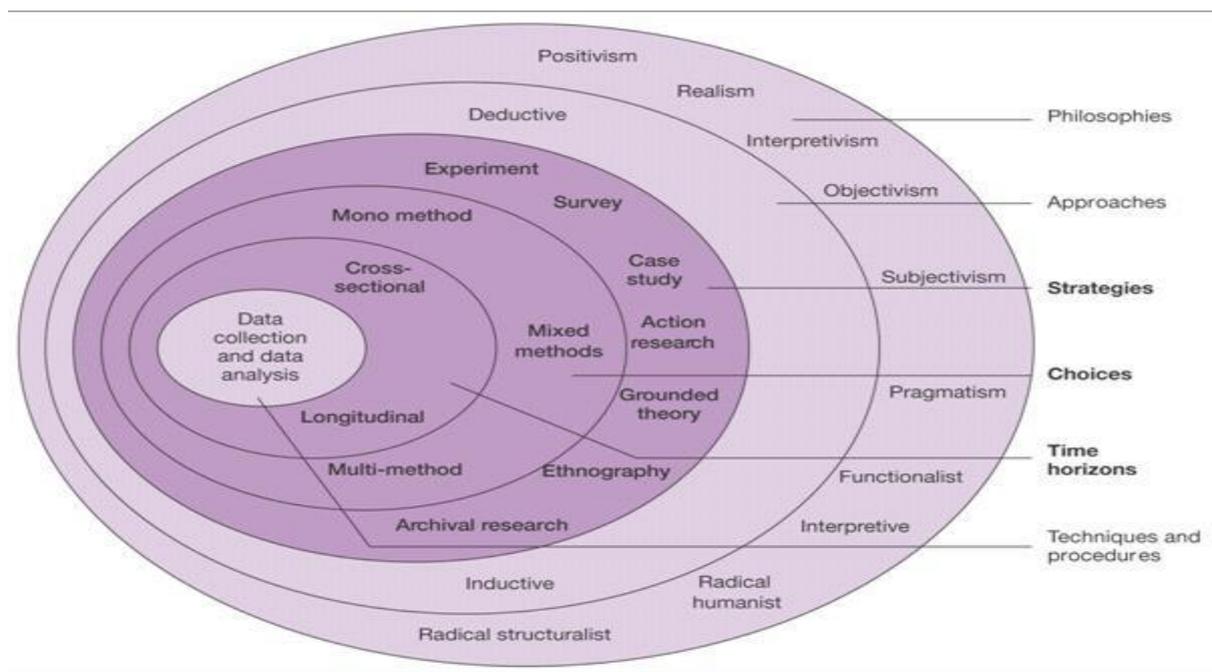
Figure 1 - The Research Onion - Saunders (2009)

According to Saunders (2009) the research philosophy that each study adopts 'contains important assumptions about the way in which you view the world (p108)'. When looking further in the research philosophy, Johnson and Clark (2006) point out that which Saunders et al. (2009) back up which is that the research strategy, methods and philosophy are closely tied together as once a certain philosophy is chosen, it shapes the research strategy and has a lasting effect on not only how we

conduct our research but on how we comprehend the data we receive throughout the research itself. Saunders (2009) visualises this by comparing two types of researchers, one who is searching for facts, the other feelings and attitudes. They will not only differ in strategies and methods chosen but also in what is useful to their research.

Using Saunders et al's (2009) research 'onion' (Figure 1), we can see that research philosophies are the outer layer and in a sense, they are a base on which to build research. To conduct this research a number of philosophies mentioned in the onion were considered. When considering a pragmatic philosophical approach; the idea of ontology according to Saunders et al (2009, p110) 'raises questions of the assumptions researchers have about the way the world operates' and since epistemology is concerned with 'truth' rather than 'how to' we must recognise that the research question asked is not being based on any assumptions and instead seeking knowledge of the inner workings of institutes within adult education, the researched adopted an alternative view. Positivism like pragmatic thinking suggests that there should be an emphasis on objectivism where as quoted by Remenyi (1998, p32) a researcher choosing to adopt positivism would encourage the research to rather 'working with an observable social reality and that the end product of such research can be law-like generalisations similar to those produced by the physical and natural scientists'. Within this research, some answers that will be encouraged from respondents will be quite subjective in form. This is to gather expert opinion on processes within HR departments in adult education.

The complexity of this research requires that the interpretive angle be acknowledged by the researcher; even though the depth and contextual specificity are the objects of study it is ultimately contingent upon the research to interpret what they mean. According to Neill (2006), 'the underlying assumption of interpretivism is that the whole needs to be examined in order to understand a phenomena'. Saunders et al (2009) maintain that interpretivism:

"...[A]dvocates that it is necessary for the researcher to understand differences between humans in our role as social actors. This emphasizes the difference between conducting research among people rather than objects such as trucks and computers" (Saunders et al, 2009, p. 116).

In his understanding of interpretivism he continues to point out that a crucial element to the interpretive philosophy is that the researcher must consider assuming an emphatic stance insofar that it is very important to view the world from the vision of the research subjects themselves and to appreciate their perspectives. Though there is an argument by Hammersely (cited in Ruby Vine, no date) that using interpretivism does not allow for generalisations to be posited, because of the small population of subjects relative to its field, others have argued for its necessity, contending 'that the detail and effort involved in interpretive inquiry allows researchers to gain insight into particular events as well as a range of perspectives that may not have come to light without that scrutiny'.

3.6 Research Approach

Continuing through the research 'onion' seen in [figure 1] we move past the philosophy stage and into research approach. Theory is required in research and can be defined by using two distinctly different approaches. The first is deduction or 'testing theory', which Robson (2002) notes progresses through five stages. As cited in Saunders et al (2009) they follow as such:

- Deducing a hypothesis

- Expressing the hypothesis in operational terms, which propose a relationship between two specific concepts or variables

- Testing this operational hypothesis

- Examining the specific outcome of the inquiry

- If necessary, modifying the theory in the light of the findings

(Robson (2002) cited in Saunders et al (2009), p124)

Using a deductive approach, the researcher bases their results on logic. There is no room for basing anything on experience or observation and it is because of this reason a deductive approach would not suit this research. This is because of the fact that literature within the subject area is scarce and the literature reviewed within this dissertation is largely based on subjects connected to, but not identical

to the area. Therefore the researcher is entering into this research with an assumption of the subject matter. An inductive approach on the other hand uses premises based on assumptions to draw conclusions. Also known as 'building theory', the researcher has formulated assumptions or the outlines of a theory from the existing literature reviewed in chapter 2 of this project. Saunders et al (2009) points out that at the end of the study 'you may end up with the same theory, but...theory would follow data rather than vice versa as with deduction' (p126). It is through this reasoning that the researcher has decided to adopt **an inductive approach** to the research in order to presuppose and create questions to put forward to the research subjects. Another valid point in choosing an inductive approach is that the researcher is not entirely an expert in the subject matter and using this approach would allow for higher levels of tolerance throughout the research; a deductive approach requires in-depth and expert knowledge of the field and as mention in the introduction and earlier in this chapter, there is very little literature available concerning the specific subject of HR practices in adult education in Dublin and the surrounding areas. In saying this, the researcher will not ignore the fact that an amount of deductive research will be undertaken during the course of this research. Once the data has been taken from the research subjects, the research will use **a deductive approach** to decipher the results and process the information. Inductive and deductive research can generally go hand in hand, as if in an endless loop, this was taken into account when deciding on what approach to take.

The purpose of the research is also another consideration to take into account during this process. Saunders et al (2009, p138) puts forward that 'in thinking about your research question, you have inevitably begun to think about the purpose of your research'. In order to classify the purpose of research, three methods were put forward; exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. Saunders (2009) points out that a research question can have more than one purpose and Robson (2002) continues that these could perhaps change over time. According to Robson (2002) an exploratory study is an ideal way to find out 'what is happening; to seek new insights; to ask questions and to assess phenomena in a new light' (p59). Saunders et al (2009) relays that there are three ways of undertaking exploratory research:

- A search of the literature

- Interviewing 'experts' in the subject

- Conducting focus group interviews

(Saunders et al, 2009, p140)

Considering this research is a combination of a literature review and interviewing 'experts' in the subject matter, this dissertation will be based upon exploratory research. According to Robson (2002), the aim of descriptive research is 'to portray an accurate profile of persons, events or situations' (p59). This picture of descriptive research also connects it with the literature review within this dissertation as it requires the researcher to have a good understanding of the topic area before proceeding. Saunders et al (2009) say that should the research being conducted be underpinned by a descriptive purpose, it would more than likely be a forerunner to explanation. Explanatory studies are described by Saunders et al (2009) as studies that 'establish casual relationships between variables' (p140). Due to the subject matter in this research topic, there will be a considerable amount of explanatory studies within due to the nature of the HR processes involved. From literature read, research undertaken and past experience due to the researcher's employment background, there will be differences within these HR processes in which a 'casual relationship' will need to be explained through qualitative data analysis. Therefore this study will be an amalgamation of three forms of study – exploratory, descriptive and explanatory.

3.7 Research Strategies

According to Yin (2003), each of the research strategies that will be assessed can be used for exploratory, descriptive and explanatory research. Saunders et al (2009) points out, however, that some of these strategies are mostly used for inductive research while other are used for deductive research. Continuing on, Saunders says that it is imperative to understand that no strategy is inferior; rather a suitable one must be attained to commence the research in order to meet the objectives mapped out beforehand. To understand which strategy would suit this research best, it is important to understand each one. Saunders et al (2009) has defined seven research strategies which are as follows:

- Experiment

- Survey

- Case study

- Action research

- Grounded theory

- Ethnography

- Archival research

Firstly, while **experimental research** is used to answer 'how' and 'why' questions, which are the basis of the research within this dissertation, this form of research requires an introduction or manipulation of a dependent variable. Considering this dissertation is studying the practices of HR when concerning disabled staff, it may be seen as unethical to alter or manipulate any processes within HR relative to this topic. A **survey strategy** is generally associated with a deductive approach (Saunders et al, 2009), which immediately recognises elements within this research strategy that make it unfeasible. As mentioned earlier, in order to get the most detailed and precise responses for 'experts' within the area, only what little literature that was available to the topic was reviewed as well as supporting literature. In other words, if the researcher were to engage in the survey strategy, the questionnaire would be filled with assumptions of processes rather than facts, which would perhaps confuse respondents and they would be unable to give any details of processes. Furthermore due to the amount of research subjects available to the researcher being quite low due to the nature of profession required, a survey strategy would perhaps not achieve a large number of respondents making it difficult to contrast data. Robson (2002, p178) defines a **case study** as 'a strategy for doing research which involved an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence'. This form of research would be ideal for this research as it but due to time constraints alternative strategies must be looked at as in order to make full advantage of a case study strategy for research Creswell (2009) suggests that the data collection should be done over a long period of time in order to satisfy all criteria.

Continuing on through the research strategies, Saunders et all (2009) say that **action research** has been 'interpreted subsequently by management researchers in a variety of ways' (p147). According to Coghlan and Brannick (2005), one such way of this can entail that the researcher must be encouraged to find data in the research while partaking in actual processes within the organisation. Due to the relationship between the researcher and the primary data sources or research subjects within different institutes, this form of research strategy would not be suitable. It would also suggest that this form of research would be more suitable for researchers who are employees of the organisation being assessed as it would require first-hand experience of processes which many organisations, or in this case – educational institutes – would not disclose to the public. Furthermore, Saunders et al (2009) make reference the 'iterative nature of the process of diagnosing, planning, taking action and evaluating' (p147) of the action research strategy as seen in [figure 2].

Diagnosing

Evaluating
Action

Evaluating
Action
Planning
Action

Diagnosing

Diagnosing
Evaluating
Action

Taking
Action
Planning
Action

Planning
Action

Taking
Action

Taking
Action

Cycle 1

Cycle 2

Cycle 3
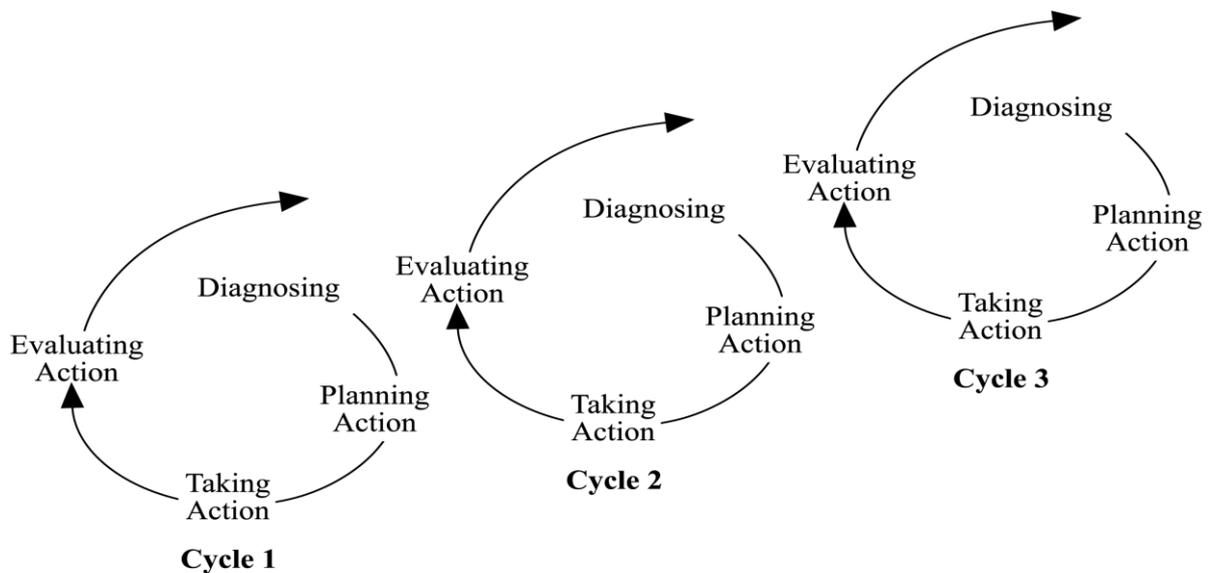
Source: Coghlan and Brannick (2001) p. 19

Figure 2 – Coghlan & Brannick – 2001

As with case studies, the repetitive and stretched out process of an action research strategy would not suit the time constraints within this research.

Grounded theory begins with a theoretical framework (Saunders et al, 2009) which is created from a number of sources or observations, which in the case of this research is the literature that has been reviewed prior to and deciding on the research strategies. This data taken from the observations then 'leads to the generation of predictions which are then tested in further observations that may confirm, or otherwise, the predictions' (Saunders et al, 2009, p149). Goulding (2002) suggests that using grounded theory is a useful technique for envisaging and explaining behaviours, a central theme to this research. More than just noting the processes within the Dublin and surrounding areas adult education HR departments for staff with disabilities; it is the researcher's mission, as laid out in the objectives, to discover best practice within the institutes which requires a largely interpretive stance from the researcher. Suddaby (2006) warns the researcher that it is important that they build up on their tacit knowledge of the subject to ensure they make the most of their data. Considering there is little literature available on the topic, the researcher availed of alternative secondary sources to do so. It also reaffirms the necessity for an inductive approach to research. Continuing on, another research strategy to look at is **ethnography**, which Saunders et al (2009) describe as 'emanating from the field of anthropology…the purpose is to describe and explain the social world the research subjects inhabit in the way in which they would describe and explain it' (p149). As a researcher must immerse themselves in the culture of an organisation to achieve success in evaluating data from the source, this form of strategy would not suit best yet the researcher made a conscious effort to gain as much insight from each of the research subjects over a shorter than desired time period so as to validate this research strategy. Saunders et al (2009) makes a point that a great deal of faith and trust must be struck with the research subjects and the researcher believes that due to former and current working relationships with two of the private colleges and an mindful effort to create a good relationship with other research subjects it enough to validate this form of research strategy, at least in part. Finally, **archival research** was considered by the researcher but due to restrictions on past administrative data from each organisation and the emphasis on current policies and practice, this form of research was not adopted. In conclusion, the researcher has based this research on **grounded theory**. The fact that it emphasises an inductive/deductive approach to data collection/analysis also figured in the researchers thinking.

3.8 Grounded Theory & the Literature Review

As stated in the sub-chapter before, grounded theory was used as a strategy in which to form this research. There have been various arguments between researchers as to the place of a literature review within a piece of research that employs such a strategy. Ideally a grounded theory strategy would begin with data collection in which theory is created and this in turn would be validated by further secondary research. In the case of this research, a literature review was conducted pre-data collection as it was used as a tool to bring forth the theory in the data collection and analysis stages.

The researcher read extensive literature on the topic of grounded theory and discovered various arguments supporting use of literature being reviewed before partaking in a grounded theory study. According to McCann & Clark (2003a, cited in Dunne, 2009, p116) it is commonly argued that grounded theory 'is an effective research strategy for topics which have been subject to relatively little research and about which there is a paucity of knowledge'. They continue on to ask the question 'how can this paucity of knowledge be ascertained unless an initial review of literature is undertaken?' (p116). In terms of this research, the researcher has found that there was no literature available to give insight on how exactly how HR processes are being conducted within these institutes and therefore has concluded that a literature review must be done before entering into the data collection and analysis phase. The researcher is not testing a hypothesis but expecting theory to come forth from the data collection and analysis itself and merely using the literature review as an aid in the process. This falls in line with the thinking of Glaser & Strauss (1967), who pioneered the idea of grounded theory.

3.9 The Research Choice

After choosing a topic, it is quite simple to then skip straight to exactly how to gather the data, such as through questionnaires or interviews. Before engaging in any form of research, the researcher understands that it is important to be able to explain why this form of data collection suits the project being undertaken. Two terms, according to Saunders et al (2009) which are almost synonymous with business research and research in general are **qualitative** and **quantitative** data. Quantitative, according to Saunders (2009) 'is predominantly used as a synonym for any data collection technique

or data analysis procedure that generates or uses numerical data' (p151). On the other hand Hollensen (2010) defines qualitative data as 'providing a holistic view of a research problem by integrating a larger number of variables but asking only a few respondents' (p181). This research will employ a **qualitative** method in order to ensure that the research question posed above can be meaningfully and adequately addressed. Another view of qualitative research has been defined by Denzin and Lincoln, (2005) as:

'[A] situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible… [Q]ualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p3)'

By studying 'things in their natural settings' it was hoped that proper insight into practices within the organisations HR departments could be yielded and it was conducted in manner which will cause the least amount of interruption/disruption. As dealing with policy making and implementation is highly contextualised (snap decisions can be made while others require a tailor-made solution) in-depth interviews were employed as best practice when conducting this qualitative research and are here conceived of as being especially well positioned to assess the contextual factors involved.

The researcher investigated the validity of using a quantitative method to the research and while quantitative data will be evident within the research itself - such as employee numbers, disabled staff numbers etc. – it is not relevant enough to contribute to answering the aforementioned research question. The researcher also takes into account that a **multiple method** choice can be undertaken in which case is it possible to, as Saunders (2009) suggests, collect data using both quantitative and qualitative data. There is four ways that this can be achieved, firstly by engaging in a **multi-method quantitative study** in which various quantitative methods are used to gather data and analyse it using the quantitative statistical procedures. **Multi-method qualitative study** uses the same method but using qualitative techniques; so perhaps a combination of in-depth interviews with semi-structured

interviews. Finally, **mixed method research** uses, as Saunders et al (2009, p152) says entails, 'quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques and analysis procedures'. **Mixed-method research** uses both qualitative and quantitative data but does not mix the two while **mixed-model research** may use qualitative collection techniques but a quantitative analysis method. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) mention that mixed-model research is perhaps the most useful way of answering the research question should it be possible to do so.

For the purpose of this research, the researcher has adopted a **mono-method** by using one form of qualitative data collection and using the same method for analysis. The researcher came to this conclusion due to the fact that, firstly quantitative data had been ruled out due to the nature of the question; very little of the required data would be numerical in nature and the small amount that is would not be relevant to the study, only used to set a background as to envisage the research (employee numbers etc.). Secondly, the researcher engaged in in-depth interviews, as mentioned earlier, with the research subjects in order to gain as much data required from each source. These were semi-structured in nature to allow any changes during the interview should a topic of interest arise.

3.10 Time Horizons

According to Saunders et al (2009) it is necessary to look at research and decide whether or not it is necessary to take a 'snapshot' of a certain point in time or take several 'snapshots' over a longer period of time. By engaging in what Saunders described as only one 'snapshot' we are using a **cross-sectional** time horizon while the latter, which is done over a longer period of time, is **longitudinal**. Both qualitative and quantitative methods can be used for both but each would be used for different types of research. Cross-sectional takes on a form of research such as survey strategy, so they may be 'seeking to describe the incidence of a phenomenon or to explain how factors are related in different organisations' (Saunders et al, 2009, p155). On the other hand longitudinal research can identify change, development or perhaps both within an organisation.

Evaluation Criteria	Cross-Sectional Design	Longitudinal Design
Detecting Change	-	+
Large amount of data collection	-	+
Accuracy	-	+
Representative sampling	+	-
Response bias	+	-
A "+" indicates a relative advantage over the other design, whereas a "-" indicates a relative disadvantage.		

Figure 3 - Malhotra and Birks (2006, p76)

We can see from [figure 3] which is taken from Malhotra and Birks (2006, p76) that there are

advantages and disadvantages to choosing either style of research. For example, using a cross-

sectional form of research it is impossible to detect change or perhaps - and actually most likely -

collect a large amount of data. Accuracy can be skewed due to a short period of time allowed to

evaluate the data collected. However, it is suggested that due to the nature of the cross-sectional

research that with this style of research there will be an advantage when considering representative

sampling and response bias. While mentioning this, it is due to time constraints within this research,

also considering the fact that a 'snapshot' of this moment in time is required to answer the research

question as well as objectives that the project was conducted using a **cross-sectional** form of research.

It is emphasised by Saunders et al (2009) that cross-sectional studies can, and generally do, involve

qualitative methods to research.

3.11 Reliability & Validity for Qualitative Research

Before delving into the methods of collecting data, it is imperative to keep in mind the importance of

backing up findings in research. Saunders et al (2009) remind us that it is necessary that our work can

stand the test of scrutiny and he states that the best way to go about doing this is to minimise the

chances of coming to an incorrect conclusion from the research. As stated by Rogers (1961, extracted

from Raimond, 1993):

'Scientific methodology needs to be seen for what truly is, a way of preventing me from deceiving myself in regard to my creatively formed subjective hunches which have developed out of the relationship between me and my material' (p55)

In order to reduce the chances of arriving at an incorrect conclusion, the researcher understands that it is important to understand and apply reliability and validity to the research design. Many studies have stated that both of these are generally associated with quantitative research, but Golafshani (2003) suggests that these can be applicable to qualitative research as well by suggesting 'reliability and validity are conceptualised as trustworthiness, rigor and quality in qualitative paradigm'. Firstly, to further understand why; we will look at both reliability and validity in more detail. Reliability is explained by Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, Jackson & Lowe (2008, p156) by asking three questions:

- Will the measures yield the same results on other occasions?
- Will similar observations be reached by other observers?
- Is there transparency in how sense was made from the raw data?

Robson (2002) then puts forward the idea that there are four threats to deciphering the reliability of data. First, subject or participant error which Saunders et al (2009) suggests could be attributed to how data gained from an employee on a Monday morning may differ if they were asked on a Friday afternoon. Saunders (2009) then suggests that an ideal time must be found in order to null the chances of this affecting the data. For this project, the researcher attempted to organise all interviews at times when it was felt the participants would fell most at ease and not disrupt their own time schedules. Subject or participant bias could find the observer gathering data from interviewees who may say what they think their boss wants them to say. This can be counteracted by being more vigilant while conducting interviews, and perhaps ensure the candidate of anonymity, which in the case of this research, was done for each participant. Observer error could cause problems during research, for example, should there be more than one person conducting interviews, there could be three styles of drawing information from the participant which would confuse matters. Saunders (2009) suggests having a high degree of structure during the interview can avoid this. Seeing as this research will be

using semi-structured interviews being conducted by only one interviewer, observer error will be lessened. Finally, observer bias points out how if there is more than one person analysing the data, there may be more than one conclusion. Again, this is not necessarily a problem due to only one researcher.

Validity, according to Saunders et al (2009) 'is concerned with whether the findings are really about what they appear to be about' (p157). Robson (2002) mentions threats to validity that would affect qualitative research; for instance, the history may come into play. Should a participant involved in an interview have gone through troubling times at work or perhaps had a run in with management just before they are due to be interviewed, this may cause fabrications within the data gained due to their mood. This is quite difficult to notice but the researcher will remain vigilant during the data analysis and interview stages. Testing means that should a participant believe that he or she is being tested during the interview, it may skew the data received by the researcher. To guarantee this does not happen, the researcher will repeat the anonymity of the participant and ensure that they are not being tested. Morality, according to Saunders et al (2009) 'refers to participants dropping out of studies' (p157). Generally this is over long periods of time when conducting research so is not applicable to this project. Ambiguity about casual direction could be a potential problem within qualitative research. This means that it is unclear which factor is driving which, for example Saunders et al (2009) suggest that it may become confusing for the researcher if poor performance ratings were causing negative attitudes to appraisals or if negative attitudes towards appraisals were causing poor performance ratings. This ambiguity will be avoided by applying semi-structured interviews so as to allow the researcher the opportunity to clarify responses given from the participants.

3.12 Research Sampling

According to Uma Sekaran(2003) there are two forms of sampling when it comes to research; these are probability sampling and non-probability sampling. It involves methods in which sampling can be restricted or unrestricted (probability sampling), by which is meant a more simple random sample

(unrestricted) or complex approach (restricted). While, according to Sekaran (2003)'non-probability sampling fit into the broad categories of convenience sampling and purposive sampling'. (p278).

This research will use non-probability sampling or what is also known as non-random sampling. This is due to the fact that it is open to an opportunity to, as Saunders et al (2009) put it, 'select samples based on your own selective judgement' (p233). Probability sampling on the other hand it generally used for research done on larger scales in which a more general response is acceptable. Generally, it is used for survey based research and considering this research is qualitative in nature, it has been put aside. Looking deeper into non-probability sampling, purposive sampling will be adopted for this research. Saunder et al (2009) suggest that this form of sampling will allow the researcher to use their own judgement to decide on who will be asked to participate in the study. Considering the amount of third level colleges in Dublin and the surrounding area, there will be few colleges which would be able to, and currently are, employing people with disabilities. Therefore 'experts' with knowledge of HR practices within these institutes who have encountered situations involving employees with disabilities would be quite a small sampling to choose from. Saunders et al (2009) say that there are other types of sampling which fall under the category of non-probability sampling such as quota, snowball, self-selection and convenience. Similar to all, except quota sampling, purposive has a low likelihood of the sample being representative of the amount of 'experts' within the perspective field. Although it is assumed that public colleges within Dublin and the surrounding areas will follow the same or almost identical practices in terms of HR and therefore it should not be a factor. Saunders et al (2009) also suggest that purposive sampling is more focused on unusual or special topics, which regarding HR practices, this may be the case. It also ensures that costs are kept to a reasonable and sustainable level. It is for these reasons that a non-probability purposive sampling method will be adopted for this research.

In order to gain access to the relevant stakeholder the researcher is in contact with a member of staff in a current place of employment and identified five others in other outside organisations. They are either HR Directors or Operations Managers with HR responsibilities with organisations that deal with adult education or College Directors who take on the responsibilities of HR. In the public

college, an Equality Officer in one and a Disability Officer in the other were contacted and both had knowledge of the processes relevant to answering the research question. Each party was contacted either by phone or by email and all responded accepting an interview.

The type of sampling involved is purposive sampling as stated earlier. Out of a number of colleges within Dublin, choosing the persons who was interviewed was based on their roles within their company and knowledge of this particular area. The people are fit for a specific purpose within the organisation and match the description of an ideal candidate to be interviewed.

3.13 Data Collection

For this research project, the researcher collected data using secondary research which can be seen in Chapter 2. As explained in the introduction, this data contains literature in relation to the research question, not directly connected due to the fact that very little literature exists concerning policies and practices of Human Resource Departments in adult education within Dublin and the surrounding areas for staff with disabilities. Furthermore the researcher gathered more precise data through qualitative primary research. The secondary research gives advice and current practice of various organisations (public, private, Irish and international) on how policies and practice should be implemented within an organisation when employing staff with disabilities. It is using this secondary research that assumptions were made on the policies within the institutes within Dublin and the surrounding area. The primary research, therefore, answers the research question itself as well as the objectives following.

3.13.1 Secondary Research

The secondary research has many advantages according to Saunders et al (2009). Using it within research can save time, money as well as other resources. It can also bring forward unforeseen discoveries, which in the case of this research helped the researcher to amend and form certain research objectives. It was through secondary research that the literature review was formed and it gives credence to the topic itself. By studying existing findings and research on matters closely related to this topic, the researcher was able to get a working understanding of policies and practice within

the certain organisations and then make assumptions regarding the aforementioned policies and practice within educational institutes both public and private.

3.13.2 Qualitative Primary Research

As mentioned previously, five in-depth interviews took place during the summer with the intention of finding data on the practices as they are carried out within five adult education organisations, namely two public colleges, both with staff of over 500 who must conform to the governmental regulations of having at least 3% staff on board with disabilities as well as three private colleges with staff of 35 plus, who currently employ or have employed staff members with disabilities. Having already chosen to conduct interviews, as a method of approximating social circumstance, the style of the interview itself needed to come into question. Regarding all of the colleges identified a formal semi-structured and face to face interview on a one to one basis was conducted. Using a semi-structured interview process will allow for an explanatory conversation to take place over and above a yes/no, like scale type interview.

Using a quantitative method would not necessarily be feasible for the types of questions asked within the interview. They would be in-depth questions about policies and practices to which only a small number of people in each field would have the ability to answer. The nature of the data gathered itself also actively disincentives generalisation as it has the effect of disembedding the source of knowledge from which it is derived; furthermore, practice is not something which can be generalised given that there is considerable variation in the types of people who require assistance.

Due to the sensitive nature of the data many of the interviewees felt uncomfortable disclosing information about certain processes or procedures within their organisation an honest and ethically sound approach was adopted (see also the section which expressly examines the role ethics plays within the work). According to Shenton and Hayter (2004), this is tactic four, among a number of others, by which to gain entry to an organisation with a view to conducting research. This tactic allows the research population to be more comfortable about the answers they give; reminding them of the confidentiality agreement also helped settle them further. In addition to this tactic, it is

absolutely imperative for the researcher to demonstrate professional suitability which would allow the researcher to break down barriers and to connect with the interviewee who would be a consummate professional regarding stature within the organisation. A further tactic to be borne in mind, which is mentioned by Shenton and Hayter is to remain receptive to any suggestions offered. As the research took place during the summer there was certain social commitments to which the identified interviewees had to to attend. That being said it was possible to change the form of communication, as mentioned previously, and the researcher was open to any suggestions put forward by the interviewee but eventually all face to face interviews were conducted. As well as this, the identified persons have extensive knowledge within the area of research, should they suggest changes to the work it would only be wise to consider their opinion.

The questions asked, to each of the candidates identified, revolved around implementing policies during human resource management practices. For instance, the researcher hoped to find out how many particular policies that may have been either created by the organisation or through government or EU legislation are applied to HR processes such as recruitment and selection, training, performance management etc. It was assumed each college would have similar policies but if they had differed in certain areas so this is another reason why the semi-structured interview technique was chosen, so as to allow the researcher to adapt the mode of questioning where applicable.

3.14 Data Analysis

'Qualitative data is likely to be characterized by their richness and fullness, based on your opportunity to explore a subject in as real a manner as is possible' (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012, p546). This quote points out that because, unlike quantitative data, we are analysing words not numbers; they can have several different meanings and explanations, many more than the more simplified numerical data. According to Saunders et al (2009) 'qualitative data refers to all non-numeric data or data that have not been quantified and can be a product of all research strategies' or in other words it 'is based on meanings expressed through words'.

An inductive approach was used in the research approach as there was little literature to draw upon when creating questions for the research participants. For the data analysis an inductive approach will also be used, as Miles and Huberman (1994, cited in Saunders et al, 2009) suggest that 'doing analysis' consists of three synchronised sub-processes. Firstly 'data reduction' summarises and simplifies the data so as to compress it. Secondly 'data display' concerns the organisation of the data into various visual displays, which Miles and Huberman refer to as matrices and networks. These allow the researcher to make relationships and highlight key findings in the research. The final stage to these sub-processes is drawing and verifying conclusions from the research. Parts of Miles and Hubermans work will be drawn on when analysing the data of this research, namely the data reduction and drawing and verifying conclusions.

Saunders et al (2009) have also identified further inductively based analytical procedures within the research processes. These include template analysis, template analysis, grounded theory, discourse analysis and narrative analysis. To analysis the data that was brought forth from the semi-structured interviews the research has drawn on the qualitative analytic abilities of the grounded theory. Allan (2003) puts forward some strengths that can be availed of when choosing grounded theory for data analysis:

- It is an effective approach to build new theory and understand new phenomena

- There is a high quality of the emergent theory

- Emergent research design reflects the idiosyncratic nature of the study

- Findings and methods are always refined and negotiated

- Requires detailed and systematic procedures for data collection, analysis and theorizing

- The resulting theory and hypotheses help generate future investigation into the phenomenon

- Requires the researcher to be open minded, and able to look at the data through many lenses

- Data collection occurs over time, and at many levels, helping to ensure meaningful results

Collis & Hussey (2009) describe grounded theory as having three categories, namely open coding which identifies themes within the research data, axial coding which envisages connections between

themes and sub-themes and finally selective coding which Saunders et al (2009) describe the use of it as 'the integration of categories (themes) to produce a theory' (p509). Coding was used in this study through a variety of ways, mostly by the repetitive listening to the interview tapes as often as possible. Note taking also occurred during the interview stages and the transcription of the data followed soon after. It was during these processes of coding that it began to become familiar and themes emerged with relative ease to the researcher. Weston et al (2001) compare this action of repetitively immersing oneself in the data as continually 'zooming in and out'. It is while continually 'zooming in and out', the researcher will be able to identify key themes within the data and relate them to each other as well as investigating them individually.

3.15 Ethics

Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 122) mention that 'ethical issues arise at a variety of stages in business and management research'. The policies of each organisation had to be respected by the researcher as well as the individual privacy of those being interviewed. As the topic is centred on disability there was an added incentive to be more ethical due to the fact certain members of staff may be uneasy disclosing information on individual employees. Each prospective participant within the research was informed of the kind of information necessary to the completion of the research and can decide on whether or not they would like to participate. Bryman and Bell (2011) say informed consent:

'means that prospective research participants should be given as much information as might be needed to make an informed decision about whether or not they wish to participate in a study. Covert observation transgresses that principle, because participants are not given the opportunity to refuse to cooperate' (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 133).

The privacy of all those involved will be respected and any agreements made with the participants will be kept by the researcher. They will have every opportunity to remove themselves from involvement with the research if they so wish and any publication will not happen without their consent.

3.16 Limitations

Time was expected to be the primary limitation of this research and due to season the research took place in it was difficult to find candidates to interview as many had personal commitments to which they were dedicated to. Due to the short timeframe, every opportunity to gather data was taken and attempts to acquire candidates for interviewing began as early as possible. Creating transcripts took also take some time and after consultation with the researcher's supervisor, it was suggested that only a few should be transcribed. The researcher therefore chose to transcribe one public college and one private college text. Personal bias were a concern during the interviews due to the fact that extensive research was conducted and that personal views on disability may change and result in conflict during practices that may be conducted within some organisations due to the fact disability and HR is of significant interest to the researcher.

The researcher also encountered situations in which respondents would initiate contact but be very forthcoming to disclose information, be it for professional or legal reasons. It was because of this that the researcher was also decided on the relatively small number of research participants but it is believed that, due to the modest number of colleges within the Dublin region and its surrounding areas in both public and private education, the selection is a reliable source of data.

Chapter 4: Findings & Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will exam the themes that emerged from the data collection and subsequent analysis using a grounded theory approach. One transcript will accompany this paper; from a public institute but the details of each individual participant and the organisations in which they work are kept private, as are the remaining transcripts and recordings. They are only subject to disclosure should the relevant authority deem it necessary and upon consultation with the researchers supervisor this was agreed. Therefore to maintain best ethical and confidential practice, the participants will be referred as follows:

- **Public College A**

  This is large public institute which employs over 800 staff members in various roles. The person of contact was an Equality Officer who has experience working with HR to ensure that there it equality throughout each process. Employees with disabilities make up 3.5% of staff within the institute.

- **Public College B**

  Another large public institute with over 450 academic staff plus 300 support staff. The person of contact in this institute was the Disability Officer who had knowledge of HR processes within the institute and was consulted on a number of policies and practice by the HR department. Employees with disabilities make up over 3% of staff within the institute.

- **Private College A**

  This is a private third level educational organisation employing over 40 academic staff and another 40 support staff. In this college the researcher was able to contact the HR Director/Operations Manager to engage in an interview with. They currently have two staff members with disabilities that are known to management and have employed people with disabilities in the past.

- **Private College B**

This private college specialised in English Language Teaching (ELT) but offered courses in FETAC and HETAC which were available to the general public. They had a staff of 35 in total. The Director/Owner of the college was approached for an interview as they were responsible for HR processes within the institute. They have one staff member with disabilities known to management and have employed people with disabilities in the past.

- **Private College C**

  The final private college employs a total of 48 staff members, currently none of which have disabilities disclosed to the Operations Manager (with whom the interview was conducted), but the researcher was assured that they had in the past.

The literature review has created a basis for the questions that were asked during the interview and therefore the sub-chapters following will present the respondents answers under each heading in relation to the literature review. It is presented as such so as to relate the themes discovered during the data analysis back to the literature review in order to validate them or perhaps raise further questions and an opportunity for further research.

4.2 People Resourcing

4.2.1 Job Analysis

There were several themes that came forth in terms of people resourcing, all colleges both private and public do not engage in what is termed 'positive discrimination', the process in which a diverse workforce is created by the organisation intentionally through means of very selective recruitment. Two of the colleges, Public College A and Private College C stated the words 'positive discrimination' during the interview while the others referred to it in another sense. The respondents all openly agree that a role in their organisation, as well any other organisation should go to the person who fits the job description best and in doing so they must be objective when conducting a job analysis. Furthermore they again all mention that they would never change or alter a job description or person specification should an employee with a disability apply but the respondents from the public colleges suggested that they would engage in and make 'reasonable accommodation' if at all possible.

This term 'reasonable accommodation' was first seen by the researcher during the literature review when it was stated by Alban-Metcalfe (2008) as suggesting that this would be best way to give an employee with a disability a fair chance at performing without it involving too much cost for the organisation. This being so however, they did put forward that the 'reasonable accommodation' that they make for the employee must not be so excessive as to alter the function of the role and is meant in terms of providing alternative location, adaptive equipment or alternative technologies if needed. In fact, an interesting finding was the fact that those working in private education were all unaware of the specifics of government grants available to cater for staff with disabilities. While two respondents out of three were aware that there were offers by the government they had never conducted any investigation and the third respondent was unaware that they existed. Legislation plays a big role in this situation as public institutions are required to make alterations for existing and future disabled staff members but for the private sector, it is not a requirement.

4.2.2 Advertisements

When adverting a role the private institutions use a variety of methods such as using job websites or job boards, industry related magazines, social networks, FAS/Intero advertisements, word of mouth, head hunting as well as promoting roles internally within the organisation. All respondents stressed that they advertise roles so as to promote equality but may highlight if the job would be unsuitable for people with disabilities through listing responsibilities or duties thoroughly and in so doing, ensuring the potential candidates have enough information to choose whether or not to apply for the position. They furthermore suggest that should an employee with a disability apply they would consider their application carefully. Within the public colleges, advertisements for roles within the institutes are sourced to a department outside of the college within the Higher Education Authority (HEA). Therefore there is little process within the institute itself that would constitute people resourcing but the respondent from Public College A, the Equality Officer, mentioned that during the recruitment and selection phase every care is taken to ensure it is an equal process.

4.2.3 Interview Methods

Following on with the theme of 'positive discrimination', all colleges again responded that they would not make any changes to the style of questioning for an interview should a candidate with a disability apply. Private College A stressed that 'it must be totally fair and the style of questioning within the interview would also have to apply to people with disabilities'. Private College B insisted that they 'consider all candidates against the same criteria' and would therefore ask candidates about their job history and education. Private College C concurred with the two other private colleges in stating that the interview process must be 'fair for all' and would not ignore the perhaps less extensive job history that a disabled employee may have. The emphasis on equality counters what Linley et al (2005) stated, as researched for the literature review in which it is suggested that employers should perhaps look less extensively upon the job history when interviewing an employee with disabilities. As mentioned in the previous sub-section, both Public College A and Public College B outsource their recruitment to other public departments outside of the institutes but both the Equality Officer and Disability Officer from each college respectfully stated that allowances may be may should the candidate be one with a disability. This is in terms of making 'reasonable accommodation' as stated earlier as unlike private colleges they are also by law obliged to provide a candidate with disabilities with certain support which they may require such as an interpreter for the deaf or an alternative location for an interview.

Interestingly all private colleges seemed confident enough that they were well trained to avoid the pitfalls when conducting an interview. While perhaps they may not have heard terms related to biases such as the 'halo' and 'horns' effect as referenced to by Pilbeam and Corbridge (2010) within the literature review, they seem confident that such biases would be avoided when conducting an interview. As suggested they all attempt to have more than one person on an interview panel to lower such cases, except in the instance of Private College B, who stated that for many positions within the institute, the line manager was solely responsible for interviewing potential candidates. Both public colleges have enlisted the help of an organisation known as Kanchi, a society which is set up to

promote disability awareness within business, to assist management and all those who sit on interview panels so as to ensure that equality is ongoing throughout the process.

Furthermore when a candidate was chosen all Private Colleges stated that they have never conducted a medical exam as the employees they had with disabilities were fully capable of fulfilling their duties but in Private College B, the Director of the college mentioned that should an employee have a disability that they believed could potentially prevent them from fulfilling their job, they may ask the candidate to take part in one to ensure their viability for the position on offer. Both respondents from the public colleges stated that it may be essential to complete a medical exam to progress to employment for some positions due to the nature of the job but other than that it would be unusual to ask a potential applicant to complete a medical but in the case of permanent roles it would be more so.

4.3 Training & Development

4.3.1 Orientation

Every institute taking part within the research said that it is essential not the underestimate the importance of orientation during the employment phase. From writings researched during the literature review, it was concluded by Workway (2007) among others that orientation is an essential when inducting an employee with disabilities as many leave employment within the first few months due to not being initiated into the workforce with care. From the literature read it was suggested that an employee with a disability should perhaps have the orientation process tailored to fit them, something which each college, including the public colleges said they did not partake in. the interviewee from Private College A stated that 'orientation is very important and the employees take part in it straight away' but they mentioned that it would not be tailored should an employee have a disability. Private College B said that it is important that the employee becomes 'familiar' with the college and its processes but again stated that an employee with a disability would not receive a very different orientation method to other employees and only perhaps give them more time to settle in and ensure they are aware of safety procedures and in a example given, they had to instruct a person who was deaf on how to use a vibration device should there be a fire drill or emergency. Private College C

said that nothing more would happen than the employee be given an employee handbook and instructed through procedures during the orientation process. Within the public colleges, Public College A and B stated that orientation happens once a year for all academic staff members as they are continually updating on new techniques and styles of learning as well as new academic literature. Public College A also mentioned that managers within the institute were given guidelines on how to provide 'reasonable accommodation' as mentioned within previous sub-chapters for new employees during the orientation process. One thing to point out in the findings is that when asked, no college (public or private) said that they took advantage of the mentoring as mentioned by Workway (2007) within the literature review. Workway (2007) suggested that this could be a key tool in retaining staff members with disabilities early on.

4.3.2 HR & Training

When asked whether it is more common for all staff members to ask for training or if it is generally something management requires its employees to attend, most the majority of colleges stated that it depended on the department. All academic staff members within the private colleges were required to attend Continuous Professional Development (CPD) courses due to the constant renewal of academic learning styles and literature; this was touch upon by the public colleges in the previous sub-chapter. This would mean that in terms of academic staff members, management would approach staff and inform them they must attend. Public College A & B also stated that management themselves are required to undergo extensive training, especially in terms of equality and diversity practices as mentioned previously. Private College A stated that the HR process of training is 'a two way street' and that it is not just up to management to provide training, but it must also be sought. Private College B mentioned that they 'encourage all staff members to upskill' and that they would always be open to suggestions should a staff member approach them with a training request. They also mentioned that a number of online training courses are offered to the support staff members such as in IT, first aid and safety training among others. Also; outside of orientation, Private College B put forward that they engage in mentoring during training processes by encouraging staff members to assist one another and sometimes allocating time and a pairing for this. They stated that they do this irrespective whether or

not a staff member has a disability. Private College C said that other than the occasional mandatory CPD for academic staff, most of any other form of training has come from the request of staff members. The public colleges have declared that should an employee with a disability require training they ensure that they have adequate facilities to do so and encourage online learning programs.

Workway (2007) mentioned that it should be the responsibility of management to offer and encourage staff members with disabilities the chance to engage in any form of training and while each college says that they are open to any ideas brought to they, neither public nor private colleges have stated that they would pursue an employee with a disability specifically and encourage them to do so. In the research conducted by Alban-Metcalf (2004a), it was seen that staff members with disabilities are less likely to approach management for their training needs and perhaps this is why management should bear responsibility. However, each private college did state that they would and have made accommodations for a staff member with disabilities when concerning the facilities required. Private College C went on to mention that these would be done but only after considering the financial cost of such.

Finally, when asked whether or not disability awareness training had taken place within the organisation all but one private college stated that there had. Private College C revealed that they believed the college was too small and although having employed people in the past with disabilities, they felt it was an unnecessary cost. Private College A and Private College B stated that the disability awareness training, which was part of an overall equality training scheme was conducted in-house by either the HR Director or a staff member within management. They put forward that they believed that they were given adequate training from a third party to do so. In the study by Kitchin et al (1998) mentioned in the literature review, it was found that by conducting a disability awareness program in-house by an employee within the organisation, the disabled employees themselves were open to a 'school-like atmosphere' in which they were talked down to and patronised. Public College A and Public College B also both mentioned that the disability awareness program was in-housed but that the staff members conducting the training, which included the Equality Officer and Disability Officer

from college A & B respectfully, were put through rigorous training schemes by Kanchi as mentioned previously.

4.4 Performance Management

When asked whether management were trained in conducting performance appraisals, all colleges both public and private assured the researcher that they were. Private College C stated that although there was training involved it was mostly received from other job experience and that any manager within the organisation was not purposively training within Private College C itself unless they so requested. When asked about the frequency of the performance appraisals, Private College A said that they are conducted at least once a year for all staff and that this was the same for staff with disabilities. Private College B said that they conducted appraisals twice a year and that this was the same for staff with disabilities but those working in English Language Teaching had more frequent assessments or teacher observations due to the nature of the business and regulation from governing bodies. Private College C stated that performance appraisals were conducted once a year and this would be the same for an employee with a disability. Both public college contacts stated that they were unsure of exactly how often performance appraisals were conducted for employees let alone those with disabilities as it was the duty of the line manager to conduct such processes. They did mention that they ensured that the processes were fair through training programs for line management.

As Hutchinson (2013) stated within the literature review, feedback during the performance management process is essential. Alban-Metcalf (2008) suggested that the frequency which with this is given should be increased so as to monitor the progress of not only staff members with disabilities, but the staff as a whole. Within the colleges it seems that there is no emphasis on increasing the amount of appraisals per year.

Public College A stated that 'if done properly, a performance appraisal can create a good rapport with employees and facilitate trust' which would be a good mind set considering that there may be employees with disabilities that have not been disclosed to management. As the Australian government initiative, Job Access put forward; the performance appraisal can actually help identify

disabilities that may have surfaced amongst staff members and identifying these could be key to both the staff members and the organisations welfare.

All private college respondents responded that during the performance appraisal, each staff member regardless of if they have a disability or not should be reviewed on expectations not outcomes. This echoes earlier findings in the people resourcing sub-chapter in which they reiterate that the employee should be capable of achieving the outcomes laid out by the job description. They all put forward that should an employee with a disability hold a position within their organisation they should be able to fulfil their duties. Only one of the colleges, Private College C mentioned that they would provide 'reasonable accommodation' should an employee suffer a disability while being employed with the organisation. Private College A stated that sometimes if an employee suffers a disability while working with an organisation that sometimes an exit strategy might suit both the employee and the organisation equally best and that it is through the performance management system that this could be discussed with an employee.

4.5 Employee Relations

All representatives of each college interviewed stated that they actively combat discrimination against all those who fall under the 'nine grounds' not just people with disability. Two private colleges however (B & C) mentioned that they could perhaps do 'a bit more' in terms of ensuring staff members are up to date and knowledgeable of Equality Acts but stated that it was because no issue had arisen in the past that they felt it not necessary to instil this way of thinking among staff members as it was already there. In the case of Private College B, they have stated that they took part in an equality training session but it was some time ago and they have taken on more staff members since. Private College C answered that they would generally just follow legislation in terms of each of the HR processes when it would concern disability; but they would actively discourage discrimination in a perhaps more informal rather than other institutes which were interviewed. Private College A stated that in terms of combating discrimination they ensure that they have a strict disciplinary procedure and said that in some cases bullying can be seen as gross misconduct, especially if it is in terms of the

'nine grounds'. Both public colleges are actively engaged in quashing discrimination within the workplace and unlike all three private colleges have roles within the business (Equality Officers and Disability Officers) who are in place to assist should any occasion arise within the organisation. Currently they are in communication with the other national colleges within Ireland to create a guide on managing employees with disabilities in the workplace; unfortunately this guidebook is to be published after the deadline of this paper and therefore could not be consulted.

The final objective within this research was to find out exactly how those institutes with an active HR department saw them as a key point of communication between employee and employer. All colleges with an active HR department (Private College A, Public College A & B) stated that it is essential that an employee has a place to go should they not be able to approach management. Furthermore Private College A reported that to act as a good communicator; a positive relationship must be struck between themselves and employee as well as themselves and the employer. Public College B put forward that by creating equality through their policies and emphasising this through communication it can drive positive change and create further awareness; this was something reiterated by Public College A. Those colleges without a dedicated HR department (Private College B & C) stated that should an occasion arise that may cause conflict within the organisation; they would consider outsourcing their HR duties in terms of employee relations due to the fact that further issues of conflict may arise.

Chapter 5: Conclusions & Recommendations

This research was a process of discovery; hence the real reason thy grounded theory was chosen as the research strategy of this paper. While the processes were in place in the institutes, they were largely unscripted in literature and merely guidelines were available, which was perhaps the driving force behind the decision to act upon this research. The purpose of this research was to therefore uncover and exam themes related to the HR processes within these institutes using an inductive approach while also analyse the findings using a deductive approach; this was all in the hope that this research using grounded theory could perhaps invoke further research into the area, although by actually engaging in such research it was found that there is plans afoot to press on with such among the national colleges within Ireland.

However by conducting this interview using a qualitative method, and as discussed in a previous sub-chapter, one of the limitations for this type of research could possibly be the reliability and validity of the data. It is open to interpretation from many angles by different researchers. Also, perhaps since there was a smaller than would be preferable sample of 'experts' in this exact topic to choose from and due to a mixture of time constraints, period of research; a number of limitations come into play. The researcher, however, attempted to minimise these limitations by ensuring data was received from prominent and well establish institutes with interviewees who altogether have much experience within the field.

It seems that today that equality awareness is gathering momentum within all organisations, not just third level educational institutes. The research objectives and question lead to a series of questions which amalgamated in semi-structured interviews and from the data analysed, each college says that they would consider each candidate with a disability equally and only judge them on their merits in terms of suitability for the job. Furthermore, in recruitment and selection phases public colleges seem to be well ahead of private colleges in terms of ensuring equality of all potential disabled candidates. While it may be for the reason that little candidates with disabilities apply to private college, very few had made themselves aware of the process in dealing with a candidate who had a disability. Even

currently, those that employ people with disabilities have little knowledge of certain governmental grants that they could avail of.

In other processes such as training and development, the majority of private colleges do not approach staff members, let alone staff members with disabilities, to avail of training outside of what it built into their contract. It must be know that Alban-Metcalf (2004a) discovered in her research that people with disabilities are less likely to approach management with interest in training and this should be looked closely at. The same consideration should be taken into account considering the matter of performance management. All colleges seem to respond verbally that they actively support people with disabilities in the workplace, whether or not they have employees themselves who are disabled, but from matching the research objectives and research question, there seems to be a vast difference when comparing practices within public and private colleges. Public colleges have structures as well as staff who support HR in terms of policy making and ensuring equality. Perhaps because this is left to the smaller departments of private colleges, the consideration of employees with disabilities in adult education within Dublin and the surrounding areas may have become lost a touch.

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Chapter 7: Appendices

Transcript of Public College A (Equality Officer):

Q: Do you do a job analysis for staff?

A: Yes, for every job that's advertised here we do a detailed job description. The line manager or head of department would work through a template that we would send them on analysing what type of work is being done in terms of competencies, so it would be broken up into the skills that are required, the specific job knowledge that is required and the behaviours and attitudes. So it would be split into those three broad competency umbrella framework and then under each of those they would identify for each job what's the knowledge, what's the skills, what's the behaviour that is required.

When somebody is looking for a job in whichever dept, they sit down and think about the job under those three headings because the need to be able to be objective from the very outset when they write the job description. The best way to anchor yourself and be objective is to say, what knowledge is needed for this job, what skills are needed and what are the particular behaviours. Do you need someone who is able to work under pressure, or somebody who has good planning. You have broken it down into specifics which you can measure somebody against and each candidate is then measured against the same criteria.

Q: If you have an applicant with a disability, you need to follow the three percent rule. If you are aware of their disability, would you look less extensively at their job history or would you consider them the same as other applicants?

A: Yeah, we would consider them the same because we don't engage in positive discrimination, so every candidate would be compared the same. We don't even compare candidates against each other, we compare the candidate back against the knowledge, skills and behaviours...candidates are compared against the job.

On the three percent rule in the public sector, the disability requirement, we would, the Higher Education Authority would each year return our statistics on how many employees we have in the organisation with disabilities, so we do back it and monitor it to ensure we maintain our three percent minimum.

Q: How would you advertise those roles?

A: We wouldn't advertise roles, we would go out and we literally count within the organisation how many people we have that have disclosed that they have a disability. So rather than writing jobs specifically for people who have a disability, all the jobs are advertised in relation to the competencies that are required and in each year we audit ourselves to make sure that we are maintaining a three percent compliance with the disability requirement across the organisation.

Q: And it always usually falls over three percent?

A: It does. So that would be in terms of the Higher Education Authority. That would be all the universities in Ireland and all the higher education institutes. They would all make this return every year, so each one of the universities and the I.T.s, they are conducting a disability audit every year. If you check out maybe the HEA website you might get some information on that. The HEA would come to us and they would say to us 'we are doing the audit s let us know how many people within your organisation at the moment have a disability'.

Q: In the interview stages would you make changes for a person with disabilities?

A: We would. Once they advise us that they have a disability we would make changes, in terms of wheelchair access, or if they needed an interpreter, whatever it was, once they disclose their disability we would make allowances for that.

Q: Would all employees have to take a pre-employment medical exam?

A: All employees for permanent roles have to do a medical exam.

Q: If a disability was found, would you make alterations in the job description?

A: We wouldn't make changes to the job description but if it was found that somebody had a disability we would make a reasonable accommodation for whatever they needed to do the job. The fact that a disability was even uncovered in a medical, unless that disability is going to significantly impact them negatively doing their job, if they are not going to be able to do their job, the offer of employment would still stand. You would never withdraw the offer based on somebody having a disability.

Q: With regard to training and development, how important is orientation for new employees?

A: We do orientation once a year usually around September. We are about to embark on a big change in relation to how we manage employees with disability. Part of that change will be updating our disability policy and a raft of training in relation to managers in how they handle requests from employees for reasonable accommodation. There will also be retraining for decision makers in relation to how they promote and recruit so a lot of positive changes in how we handle requests for reasonable accommodation, how we retain people with disabilities, how we recruit people with disabilities; a lot of that we think will come through the training and making people aware of their behaviours and how they interact with people with disabilities so that they are treated fairly. We are going to be issuing guidelines for managers on how to, for example, run through the whole process of requesting reasonable accommodation, assessing a workstation etc. We will be doing training on guidelines for employees on how they request and disclose and the whole area of confidentiality. There is some very good guidelines that have been set out and we are working through them at the moment. There is going to be guidance for managers, guidance for the employees, in relation to day-to-day management and in relation to recruitment and selection.

Q: Would the orientation process change for staff with disabilities?

A: It would, depending on what accommodations they needed. Of course, if somebody needs any additional assistance or equipment that would all be taken into account.

Q: Would it be more common for staff to approach management and request training or is it something that management request the staff to attend?

A: I would say it differs in different departments because we don't have a formal performance management system in place yet. If that was in place then you probably would see more formal requests agreed by the manager and the employee coming into HR. We don't do that so it is nearly on an operational basis that if someone needs to be trained up in something then it will be requested. Having said that, when we launch the equality, diversity and disability training it will be mandatory for all managers to go and it will be mandatory for all people who sit on an interview panel. It is to build awareness in terms of equality and disability and for recruitment and selection to ensure that there is equality and to ensure that an objective decision is made and that everybody is measured against the same criteria.

Q: Who would do your disability and awareness programmes? Is it someone from the HR department or would it be outsourced?

A: It will be someone from the HR department. I will be going to Kanchi to be trained so I can see myself delivering to the managers but we have also developed with the Irish Universities Association, the equality network, an online learning programme and that will be launched in September/October. It will be the guidelines for managing disability and the e-learning programme on how to manage people with disabilities and awareness.

Q: How many people are employed in Maynooth in total? Would there be many positions suitable for people with disabilities?

A: Any position would be suitable for someone with a disability because we would try and make a reasonable accommodation for them. I can't think of any particular role that would exclude anybody. There isn't any physical type work in our environment that might preclude someone from doing a particular job.

On the total number of employees there are about 850 here.

Q: You said there isn't a proper performance management system in place yet?

A: Yes, it is not in place yet but it will be coming in place eventually.

Q: In the future when it is in place will the managers be trained in how to effectively conduct a performance appraisal?

A: Yes, that will be very important. It will be a key part of it.

Q: Would HR do that?

A: Yes, HR will do that.

Q: How often will they be conducted?

A: I'm not sure as I am not involved in the area and I know it is under review at the moment.

Q: In your opinion, do you think managers should be more lenient on staff members with disabilities during the evaluation process?

A: I'm not sure lenient would be the right word I think if you are doing performance management correctly then each person should be measured against the goals and objectives that have been set. I think the goals and objectives for all employees should be set to what the job requires and what they are able to deliver. There is no point in setting unrealistic expectations for people and unrealistic goals. I think the key is when you are dealing with employees with or without disabilities that your are setting goals and targets that they can achieve and that you give them the training and development to give them the skills so that they can achieve them so that when you go to measure at the other end or review that rather than being lenient you are measuring against a set of criteria that you both agreed, the manager and the employee.

Q: If it happens that an employee suffers disability while in employment, how important is the performance management system in monitoring it?

A: I think it would be very important. Sometimes performance management, if it's done properly, can facilitate communication between the employee and the manager and they build up a rapport and trust and confidence and I think is very important around disability for getting people to disclose; particularly if I don't have a disability today but I may have a disability tomorrow, am I willing to

disclose it. It could be in mental health so may not be blatantly obvious that I have a disability. Performance management facilitates trust if it's done properly, between the employer and the employee and it provides time and a space for them to talk and I might be more willing to disclose to my manager if I see that they are fair, my performance is fairly evaluated and I have a rapport and we get on. As opposed to my performance never being reviewed and no performance management system being in place and I have the type of manager that doesn't interact with me that often. I am quite detached from that person so I might be more suspicious about disclosing to that person. That is just my personal opinion.

Q: People with disabilities are the most discriminated class within Ireland. Are there any measures being taken within your organisation to combat this?

A: From the work that is going on with the Connectability project we are trying to create awareness right through the organisation with all employees, with all decision makers in how to retain employees with disabilities and how to support employees with disabilities. Connectability is the project that is being carried out by the seven universities in Ireland.

Q: How important is the role of HR in acting as a communicator between employees and their managers?

A: I think it is very important. The fact that we have an equality policy, guidelines, disability policy and guidelines, at the very start I think that creates awareness of how people should behave. HR produces policies, guidelines and training; I think that is a positive change in the organisation.

Q: In Germany, instead of the three percent rule, they have a five percent rule across the public and private sectors and if an organisation does not comply they are fined monthly. What is your opinion on this and do you think that this would work in Ireland?

A: I think that it would work in the public sector. I think some organisations would already be at five percent. Organisations won't necessarily work to get the minimum; they will work to get the best people in, regardless. I think five percent is realistic definitely for the public sector. For the private

sector I think it would be harder to encourage them to do it but fines are one way of doing it. In terms of corporate social responsibility, naming and shaming is another way of doing it.

Q: Do you know what the percentage is in Maynooth?

A: I think it is three and a half percent but that is of the people that we know about. In terms of disclosure, we don't know if everybody has disclosed. If they did they would be accommodated.