

An empirical study on the impact of recession on training and development in small to medium sized firms in Ireland

MBA(HRM)

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An empirical study on the impact of recession on training and development in small to medium sized firms in Ireland.

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DECLARATION

I, Sara Naqi Mirza, declare that the work contained in this dissertation is entirely my own and that all sources used have been acknowledged as per the requirements.

Signed:.....

Date:.....

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ABSTRACT

Employees are regarded as assets to a firm. Training and developing them so that they can contribute towards the success of a firm should be paramount.

Though, with the economic upheaval , and with pressures mounting on firms to survive, it is widely assumed that these techniques and initiatives have taken a back seat, and rather is the first area to face budget cuts.

The researcher has tried to investigate this school of thought. This research looks at the SMEs with in Ireland . SMEs have always been regarded very important , heavily contributing towards the Irish economy , which has been so badly hit in the past few years because of recession.

Hence, this research is a study about the impact of recession on training and development within Irish SMEs.

The researcher takes a qualitative approach towards data collection and through means of interviews conducted on managers and employees found that firms who are looking to survive and are in a financially strained position are cutting down expenditure in every area and not just T&D, where as firms who are able to still perform well in the recession situation have maintained their training initiatives, although the focus in on providing customer service training.

The research discusses that recession has not been particularly hard on T&D , but rather every area of the business. It also discusses how T&D is not the only element to provide motivation to employees but elements like recognition and progression are considered extremely important by employees.

The findings provides new insights to the literature that is already present and can be investigated further with a larger sample size.

Key words: Training and Development (T&D) , motivation , recession , SMEs

Excellence is an art won by training and habit

~ Aristotle

CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Ireland has been under the influence of an acute recession over the past few years. Effects of recession have been felt across a variety of business sectors and sizes. (Roche et. al ,2009 , pp.15).

The effect of the financial crisis on the Irish economy has been immense.

Irish economy is heavily reliant on Small to Medium sized (SMEs) firms which account for 99.8% of the enterprises . (Irish times, 2012).

Over 70% of the people in Ireland are employed by SMEs , and with over 115,000 job losses (between 2008 to 2011) with in the SMEs , they have been affected the most by recession. (Irish times , 2012)

With most SMEs being indigenous , non exporting firms they rely heavily on domestic demand which has decreased over the past few years due to a decrease in disposable income. (Department of finance , 2012)

This reduced demand resulted in increased competition between SMEs for survival.

When such a scenario occurs for firms , where they compete for survival due to a financially strained situation pressures for cost cuttings increase both internally and externally. (Cain et. al , 2011 , pp.2)

To deal with this situation management balances budgets by cutting down on training and development initiatives that they feel are needless. (Minton.Eversole,2010 cited in Cain et.al ,2011, pp.3).

Though Cain et. al ,2011,pp4 argues this idea and while doing so quotes Coleman,2009

" Engagement, morale and motivation increases through training and development programs and companies end up making more money"

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

Ireland's economic crisis is one of the most serious in its history. There's no doubt that the current economic, fiscal and banking problems are one of the severe among any developed nation .
(Roche,2011,pp.33)

Though, it was claimed by the government that the country is emerging out of recession but recent articles from the Irish Times seem to suggest a different story.

According to an article from Irish Times (2013) statistics from the CSO (Central Statistics Office) suggests that the country is pushing itself back into the gloomy climate of recession.

The stats from the first quarter of 2013 shows that the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) has gone down by 0.6%. The main reasons cited for this were decrease in exports and a sharp reduction in consumer spending.

Consumer spending is an important element to consider while determining the success or failure of a SME.

Since most of the SMEs are non-exporting firms, domestic spending power is immensely important to them and recession has greatly affected that.

This research is useful especially in 2013 as recession is still ongoing and SMEs are still struggling to deal with the situation . (European Commission Report , 2012).

1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of this research is to find out what impact recession has had on training and development in Irish SMEs which are so important and contribute heavily to the economy.

Has it been negatively compromised or have HR managers embraced it to develop their human capital?

This research will therefore, be able to provide with an insight as to how SMEs are dealing with training and development during this financial crunch.

Have the techniques changed in any way from the pre -recession situation and how is T&D being carried out in 2013.

This study is also interesting as it brings together the importance of developing human capital to the success of a SME during a tough economic situation.

This research will also talk about what factors motivate employees?

Questions like is it only T&D that have a major influence on the motivation of employees or other factors have an effect too will be answered.

These objectives will be achieved through conducting a series of interviews on four companies. The researcher look to interview two managers , preferable HR, or a manager responsible for T&D in the SME (since many SMEs do not have a well developed HR department, an HR manager is usually absent) and two

employees to get a balanced perspective on how and to what extent has recession affected T&D and employee motivation in SMEs.

1.4 SUITABILITY OF THE RESEARCHER AND INTEREST OF SUBJECT AREA

The researcher is suitable to conduct this research due to a keen interest in HRM, holding strong background knowledge of the domain, the researcher can analyse and understand the data with great depth.

The researcher has always been inclined towards working for SME's, making this research all the more interesting for the researcher.

This research will undertake a qualitative research approach and with strong theoretical and analytical skills, the researcher is well suited for this research.

The researcher will be based in Ireland for the major part of this study which makes it easier to collect fresh data from relevant sources.

1.5 RECIPIENTS OF THIS RESEARCH

The recipient of this study is firstly, DBS to whom this study will be presented along with my supervisor Ms. Gay White. It is under them that this research will be carried out.

Other than DBS and my supervisor, HR professionals and Irish SMEs can also be benefitted by this study.

1.6 LEARNING STYLE OF THE RESEARCHER

The learning style model developed by Honey & Mumford (1986) describes four styles of learning. "Activists", "Reflector", "Theorists", and "Pragmatists". Even though this model was originated from the work of Kolb (1984), the words used to describe each stage by Honey & Mumford (1986) were different.

The researcher recognizes itself as a "theorist". The researcher during the course of this research took logical steps after indulging in a thought process, assimilating different facts, concepts and theories along with paying great attention to details.

The research methodology was also in line with the learning style. Qualitative studies require the researcher to be detailed, and perceive every situation as unique, to be able to handle large amount of data collected and be able to shape it up in the form of a theory.

Refer Appendix A for different learning styles.

1.7 LIMITATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE RESEARCH:

The sample size of this research is four which is very small considering the no. of SMEs present in Ireland. This is one of the major limitation of this research but due to time constraint conducting this research with a larger sample size could not have been possible.

Though, this research can form the foundation for many future researches on the same topic with a larger sample size or quantitative methods.

All of these are discussed in detail later in the dissertation.

This study will contribute towards a qualitative research in the domain of human resources within SMEs. There is little qualitative literature present on SMEs and this research will add to that. This research will find out how and to what degree has recession affected T&D within the Irish SMEs; and what is being particularly prioritized in 2013.

The various gaps in the literature identified and filled are discussed in the later chapters of the dissertation.

1.8 ORGANISATION OF THE DISSERTATION

The disposition of the thesis is as follows:

1. INTRODUCTION:

It focuses on the nature of the problem, research aim and suitability of the researcher to conduct this research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

This chapter will dig deep into importance of SMEs in Ireland along with the extant literature on T&D. This chapter will also identify the various gaps in the literature that this research intends to fill.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This chapter will justify the rationale for using a qualitative approach to this research. The various layers of the research onion will be described in detail along with the rationale of making the appropriate choices. This chapter ends with discussing the ethical stance of the researcher during the course of data collection.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS:

This chapter discusses the approach taken towards analysing the data. It will also present the findings of this research. It will show how these findings have filled the gaps in the literature.

5. DISCUSSION:

This chapter looks to discuss the findings in detail as well as compare and contrast it with the literature that already exists.

It will also look into the various limitations of this research.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

This will drive a conclusion with a summary of the findings along with the scope of further research. A few recommendations to the SMEs are also provided in this chapter.

7. REFLECTIVE REPORT ON LEARNING AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT:

It takes through the researcher's journey of learning during the process of undertaking this MBA program and particularly this dissertation. The skills that the researcher gained are also highlighted in this part of the thesis.

8. BIBLIOGRAPHY

9. APPENDIX

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

To explain the importance of this research , it is necessary to look upon the influence of SMEs in Ireland, followed by the impact of recession on them, leading to Training and Development and how it has been linked to motivation and productivity along with its contribution to the success of a firm and lastly the effect of recession on these techniques.

2.1 IMPORTANCE OF SMEs IN IRELAND

Small to medium sized firms commonly known as SMEs can be defined in a variety of ways usually in terms of employment or turnover.

Eurostat and CSO (Central Statistics Office) defines SMEs as a firm with less than 250 employees . The European Commission defines it as " enterprises which employees persons fewer than 250 , have a turnover not exceeding 50m Euros and an annual balance sheet total with not more than 43 M euro".

According to a report on SME lending market in Ireland , 2013 micro firms are classified as firms with a turnover of less than or equal to 2 million Euros. Small firms between 2 million Euros to 10 million Euros where as medium were reported to be the ones with a turnover between 10 million Euros to 50 million Euros.

With still over almost 200,000 small to medium sized firms operating in Ireland, and with an average of almost 12,000 new businesses setting up each year, the SME sector is off immense importance. (Irish Business and Employers Confederation , 2011,pp.18)

SMEs without a doubt contribute to the majority of the business community. Central Statistics Office (CSO) 2012, agrees with the figures suggested by IBEC , 2011 and states that there are in general over 199,000 active SMEs. According to a report by European Commission (2012) on SMEs in Ireland , they state that there are 154,489 enterprises (excluding the fishing , mining and agricultural sector.) Out of these 137,669 are micro (employs less than 10 person) , 14,168 are small (between 10 and 50 employees) and 2,652 are medium sized. (between 50 and 250 employees).

Hence, SMEs form almost 99.8% of the Irish enterprises , with the rest 0.2% being larger enterprises.

SME's in Ireland contributes to 69% of the total employment which is higher than other EU member states. This shows the importance and impact of SMEs with in Ireland. The Central Statistics Office (2012) stated that SME's in Ireland accounts for, 69% of private sector employment with 52% of the total turnover and 51% of the Gross Value Added.

Out of the 69% employment that SMEs offer , micro firms contribute 27.2% , small firms employ 23.1% where as the rest 18.8% comes from medium firms.

Although, the 0.2% that accounts for larger enterprises present with in Ireland are responsible for employing the rest 31% workers, as suggested by a report on the SME lending market in Ireland (2013).

Even though, Ireland has a reputation of being a highly global economy the statistics suggest differently when it comes to the SME sector.

According to a report on "Assistance for small to medium enterprise- the SME sector Ireland (2013) , 64% of the private sector work force in Ireland are employed by the indigenous non- exporting firms, and out of this 64% , 56% were reported to be working for non exporting , indigenous SMEs.

These statistics suggest that Irish SMEs plays a vital role to generate employment.

A breakdown of persons engaged , turnover and Gross Value Added (GVA) between the SME and non-SME enterprises reveals that small to medium sized construction enterprises contribute to 95.3% of employment , where as almost three quarter of the workers employed in Distribution and services work in SMEs.

If looked on a turnover basis , SMEs contributed to 81% of the total turnover in the construction sector and 73.1% in the distribution.

Excluding the industrial sector which is dominated by larger companies in manufacturing , the other three sectors i.e.: construction, distribution and services contribute to over 50% of total GVA.

The table below provides a summary of the statistics produced by CSO (2010) comparing the SME and the non SME sector in accordance with the percentage of employment , turnover and GVA.

	Persons Engaged		Turnover		GVA	
	SME	Non-SME	SME	Non-SME	SME	Non-SME
Industry	56.5%	43.5%	32.4%	67.6%	28.1%	71.9%
Construction	95.3%	4.7%	81.0%	19.0%	85.0%	15.0%
Distribution	73.1%	26.9%	73.1%	26.9%	69.4%	30.6%
Services	73.7%	26.3%	46.2%	53.8%	53.2%	46.8%

FIGURE : 1 BUSINESS ECONOMY IN IRELAND : SME % VERSUS NON SME % BY SECTOR.

SOURCE: CENTRAL STATISTICS OFFICE (CSO)

The above literature suggests why SMEs have always been regarded as a major contributor towards sustainable economic growth in Ireland.

In spite of this there have not been adequate studies done on the SME sector regarding Human resources citing a gap which this study will contribute to.

2.2 IMPACT OF RECESSION ON SMEs.

Irish economy has undergone immense changes following the global financial crisis post 2008. The GNP (Gross National Product) and GDP (Gross Domestic Product) fell by 14% and 11% respectively between 2008 and late 2011. (Lawless et.al , 2012, pp.4).

Unemployment increased from 4.8% to 14.8% during this period. Since SMEs account for around 70% of the total employment , financial and employment crisis was largely felt in this segment. (Lawless et.al , 2012, pp.4).

The construction sector in Ireland which is heavily dominated by SMEs is seen to have been strongly affected. According to a report by European Industrial Relations Observatory (EIRO) on "SMEs in the crisis" , there were over 25,369 job losses experienced solely by this sector. These statistics were agreed by a report on "Lending market in Ireland" (2013) which further stated that employment in this sector fell by 21% during 2007 and 2010. This when compared to larger firms was almost the double. Larger enterprises experienced a drop of 12.1% compared to the 21.9% in SMEs.

Because SMEs rely more on domestically provided credit than compared to larger firms or MNCs , the financial sector difficulties were felt more strongly by the SMEs. (Lawless, et al. ,2012 , pp.4 , Department of Finance, 2012)

As a result post 2008 , the net job destruction rate has been significantly high among SMEs. Though reports from the European Commission (2012) shows that the no. of enterprises and employment rates have been stabilized post 2011 but it still has a long way to reach up to the pre-crisis peak.

Another reason why SMEs have been hit more strongly by recession than larger firms is due to their over dependence on domestic demand which is experiencing lows in terms of disposable incomes , retail sales and

high saving rates. High unemployment which has been mostly contributed by the SMEs have led to the above mentioned consumer sentiments. (Economic assessment of SMEs sector in Ireland , 2012 , pp. 3)

This was also agreed by a report issued on " The Irish SME lending market , (2013) which suggested that the financial crisis in the past five years have heavily taken a toll on the SME sector.

The reason is SMEs with in Ireland are highly dependent on the domestic demand and consumer confidence which have been absent from the Irish economy in the past few years.

Another major reason that was singled out in the report was that most Irish SMEs are non exporting firms, heavily dependent upon the domestic situation. Sectors with growth potential such as manufacturing or Information and Communication are mostly dominated by the larger enterprises.

The various sectors where SMEs are indeed present in bulk such as retail , construction , accommodation , food , real estate or motor trade requires high consumer confidence. With the situation prevailing with in Ireland, households are looking to increase their savings in an attempt to reduce their debts and hence are very skeptical about making transactions in the above mentioned sectors. These trends have undoubtedly added to the problems of the SMEs in terms of turnovers and hence profitability.

These theories have been verified by the latest Index reports (2013) which reported that the year 2012 ended touching the lowest consumer sentiment index since 2008. This also suggests that the confidence remains fragile within the consumers.

Central Statistics Office (CSO) also suggests that the Accommodation and Food sector , so heavily dominated by the SMEs employs 91% of the total people employed in this sector and contribute to 88.8% of the total Gross Value Added. This sector comprising of hotels, bars and restaurants have especially suffered a decline due to decreased disposable incomes, all adding up to recession being particularly harsh on SMEs.

SMEs are no doubt , vital as they promote immense economic growth , innovation and job creation.

In order, to contribute to the economy as much as they are expected to SMEs require access to adequate finance. (Report on SME lending market in Ireland, 2013).

A report on SMEs in Ireland ,2011,pp.18 by IBEC also adds up to this idea and mentions that funding is an issue for SMEs as the banking sector is not yet operating the way it did pre- recession.

They further add that one of the reasons for the large quantity of SMEs in Ireland was due to the easy access to finance until 2007.

Reports produced by the European Commission and the Department of Finance (2012) also argues that Irish SMEs receive less state aid with high interest rates and due to this lack of finance SMEs are suffering the most in recession.

CSO survey done on "Access to finance " (2011) reveals that there has been a significant cut in the percentages of loans that are accepted by the banks. According to what the figures suggest by 2010, among those seeking bank loans only 74% are seen to be successful , compared to a very high percentage of 98% in 2007.

The European Commission (2012) claims that conditions to acquire loans from banks have been eased post 2011, with percentage of rejected loans decreasing , Department of finance (2012) contradicted these claims and stated that evidence has been found that rejection rates of granting loans have indeed increased in spite of the growth rate of the particular firm. Even if loans are sanctioned the interest rates are usually very high due to the high risk involved.

It was also stated that it has been due to foreign firms exiting Irish market because of high risks involved pertaining the financial situation of the country.

According to a survey conducted by the European Central Bank , highly depending on overdrafts and trade credit is one of the main reason as to why Irish SMEs are facing this time of financial stress.

Though, to deal with and improve the situation , Irish government is seen to be taking a lot of steps.

Budget (2013) issued by the Department of Finance reveals various tax proposals intended to support SMEs with their cash flow position, helping them create demands in new markets abroad and incentivizing them to create jobs.

Along with this, the Credit Review Office (CRO) also vows to help the Irish SME sector in dealing with problems associated with accessing finance from banks as well as extending a reviewers team to consider the declined loan applications in depth.

The government has also extended the pool of lenders to ensure SMEs can be funded properly.

A few such funding supports are Enterprise Ireland, Loan guarantee schemes and Micro finance fund. (Budget 2013- Department of Finance, 2013).

Labor productivity has always been an issue for the Irish SMEs . This statement is apparent from the statistics that the Central Statistics Office (2012) produces which states that SMEs contribute to 52% of the

turnover and Gross Value Added which is very much less compared to the 69% of the employment they are responsible for.

Even though, many studies and reports present statistics about low productivity in the SMEs there exist a gap in the literature citing the lack of qualitative studies to explore the reasons behind low productivity or different factors that could lead to an increase in efficiency and performance of the employees with in SMEs.

There can be a variety of reasons contributing to low productivity. This research has looked up on one aspect of training and development and linked it to how they have or have not contributed to the success of the Irish SMEs post recession.

This leads us to ask why and to what extent is training and development important in context of a firm's survival when facing a financial crisis.

2.3 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT.

The importance of T&D and its importance towards nurturing human capital has been recognized over the years by several authors.

Investing in developing employees' skills, knowledge and abilities can prove to be vital for organizations. (Bardkuvas and Dysvik, 2009, pp.229) .

This has been agreed by Nadeem , 2010, pp. 208 who mentions that organizations looking to achieve sustainability will look to strengthen their employees skills and education that will enable them to use resources more efficiently.

He further adds, to survive in these competitive times , an employee needs to be professionally strong in order to meet the level of expectations and fulfill his/her job responsibilities.

In order to do so, they need to constantly expand their skill horizon for which training is necessary. Hence, training is commonly defined " as the planned intervention that is designed to enhance the detriments of individual job performance". (Truitt, 2011, pp.3)

T&D can also be defined as a set of planned effort taken by a company to facilitate an employee's job related competencies . (Ciarniene and Kumpikaite , 2008, pp.1)

Chen et. al ,2004 ,pp.32 also mentions that training not only helps in enhancing the skills that they may be lacking but will also reduce the anxiety within the employees ,that is brought on by work demands.

These competencies are a cluster of knowledge, skills and behaviours that can be applied in their day to day activities, and are critical to their job performance . (Ciarniene and Kumpikaite,2008,pg2)

This view has been agreed by Leopald(2009) who says that human resources in a firm are not just a sum of people, rather a sum of KSA's they possess and bring to the organization.

(Truitt, 2011,pp.3) also adds to this ideology and says that skills, employees bring to the organisation can help a firm achieve its goals and objectives.

Several authors also talk about the importance of developing human capital through both formal and informal training opportunities. According to Bowling (2007) and Truitt (2011 , pp.2) if this talent is developed and nurtures over time can provide a firm with sustained competitive advantage. This idea has been supported by Pool and Pool (2007 , pp.353) and Mullen (2007) who further says that training and development initiatives increase an employee's engagement in the firm which positively affects his/her psychological contract. This means training can add value to a firm through having a motivated and committed workforce which can lead to a firm having increased productivity and better performance.

This concept has been further discussed in the review more deeply.

Satija, 2010, pp.25 mentions that the rise in training needs in the recent years have been seen due to the ongoing process of technological advancements ,along with high competition in the market which requires a highly skilled workforce . These constantly changing demands require leaders to both timely and effectively train their employees to have a sustained competitive advantage.

It is seen that normally employees do possess the skills and capabilities but do not have the sufficient practical knowledge to deal with work place issues.

This gap can be filled with training sessions.

Training can be provided at all levels, for instance at entry levels such as induction training , junior level or managerial levels.

This research will try to find out which techniques are given more importance in 2013. Are these techniques different with every firm according to the nature of services they provide, or is there a degree of similarity between these initiatives?

To depict the importance of training in an organization Longnecker(2007, pp.364) talks about an example

where in a CFO questions its line manager about overspending on training initiatives and raises doubts over the tendency of employees leaving the organisation after being trained, and in reply the manager shows his/her concerns over their staying within the firm untrained.

There still isn't sufficient literature which provides us with qualitative data concerning whether managers tend to remain on a back foot when it comes to providing training due to fear of employees leaving and going on to work for other organizations minimizing their return on investing or do they continue to provide training?

The context of this research is SMEs in Ireland. There has been very less research done on training and development techniques prevailing in SMEs which identifies a conceptual gap as well as a contextual one. This study will however look into the aspect of different training and development techniques adopted by the SMEs in Ireland and the extent to which they effect the performance.

Many authors have presented studies on how T&D techniques aligned with the overall firm's strategy can improve performance.

Chi et.al (2008 , pp1969) cites Semler ,1997 , Leepak &Snell (1999) , Delery &Doty, 1999 and Garcia,2005 all agrees that implementing strategy directed training will maximize the effectiveness of training as well as improve a firm's performance.

A little literature that is present linking T&D and SMEs in general says that they are exposed to fewer resources than compared to larger firms and to remain competitive they should invest more in training programs if they are to gain sustainable advantage over their competitors.. (Chi et al. ,2008,pp. 1971)

He also cites (Kitching and Black burn ,2002) discussing how talented human resources with good exposure to training can help SMEs foster learning and improve performance.

Though according to a report by the European Commission on a Guide to training in SME's (2009), even if SMEs provide staff with adequate training they are quick to leave to join larger enterprises for more wages. This and the lack of finance have resulted SMEs providing more of informal skill development or at the most on the job training.

Does this mean with the addition of challenging times they have further narrowed down their T&D budget?

This review indicates that there is little research prevalent linking training and development and its effect in determining SMEs performance. There is also a gap existing relating T&D directly to motivation and productivity of employees in SMEs.

Refer Appendix B for different T&D methods in place within organizations.

2.4 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT IN RECESSION.

The unit of analysis in this research is recession. The aim of this study is to research about the outcome i.e.: T&D in context to SMEs in Ireland.

In a recession situation , where firms are struggling to survive, cost cutting is common. From earlier literature on SMEs in Ireland we know that accessing finance and raising capital has become very difficult for SMEs (European Commission, 2012)

Cain et.al (2011,pp.1) in his study on "Keeping training alive in a recovering economy" talks about how pressures on organisational leaders mount as soon as a dip in the economy is experienced.

In putting forward this view he cites Minton.Eversole (2010) , Coleman (2009) ,Paradise &Mosley (2009) and Taylor (2010) who all supports this view and says that ,management balances these budgets by eliminating T&D programs thus taking a short term approach to the crisis.

Mohram &Worley , (2009) agrees and says that even though training can lead to increased productivity but due to increased pressures from shareholders, managers are likely to fund those activities that yield immediate results.

According to a study done of thirty HR managers from Dublin, Cork and Gallway on firms of every size revealed that indeed training budgets are cut or at the most partial training is provided. (Roche et.al ,2011,pp.15)

(Brunello ,2009,pp.2) says one reason to cut down on T&D initiatives is also because recruitment freezes in firms during crisis period. It is by nature un experienced employees that require more training and as recruitment ceases average expenditure on training falls as well.

These views are contrasted by the literature provided by several authors that states that it is indeed investment in T&D that can yield firms success in turbulent times. It can ensure lasting competitiveness and helps a firm meet their strategic goals and objectives. (Chi et.al ,2008,pp.1971)

This is agreed by the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (2010) who in their paper "T&D in Recessionary times" mentions aligning training and development along with the strategies of the organisation is also very important. (IBEC, 2010)

They mention that T&D techniques should be such that helps employees gaining those skills which will help them deal with the uncertainty recession brings, and adds on to those KSAs which can fulfill the mission of the company. If, such training is provided an organisation will actually be better placed to grow and can also expand with in this period.

Strategic T&D can also help an organisation redefine its strategies in line with the current economic situation. Once new strategies have been laid , such T&D initiatives can be taken which maximizes the return on investment by enhancing those skills with in employees which will bring maximum profit to the business. For example : customer service, selling etc.

IBEC(2010) also points out how in order to deal with one of the worst recession training the front staff becomes all the more important as they are the ones closest to the customers.

To maximize the effectiveness of training programs follow ups once training is over are also necessary.

Matt Buttell in his paper " The recessions real cost to T&D methods" (2009) written in context with U.S talks about how in an attempt to reduce costs and maximize short term profits T&D methods are sacked arguing that there is no room for such expenditure.

But in doing so, HR managers fail to recognize that when the effects of recession will finally wear off, employees will lack the necessary KSAs which can yield a firm negative implications in the future.

Many experts argue that T&D methods help employees in growing and nurturing to be ready to take up the role of future leaders.

Truitt ,2011,pp.3 says not developing employees can place a firm in less than a competitive position and survival becomes difficult.

Undeveloped employees will cost a firm especially in a scenario of financial crisis as the human capital will not possess the necessary skills and motivation to perform the job well and in order for a firm to come up with products consumers want to spend their hard earned money on. (Sheridan , 2010, pp.25)

This view was supported by Mohram and Worley (2009), Weber(2009) and Calvin(2009) who all says that stressful times should be met head on and indeed is the optimum time to make use and develop the innovative talent of employees to gain a competitive edge.

Sunley (2009) in his article "Developing people in tough times" talked about the need for creative training techniques such as job rotation and cross training to develop leadership qualities of employees.

Townsend(2013) also emphasizes to counter such a scenario, organizations should be creative and implement cheaper techniques such as web training or "train and trainer" techniques where in an attempt to save up travelling costs a small team is sent off for training who returns to train up the rest of the staff.

Though, not much literature prevails on how SMEs have adapted their training techniques. This research looks to see if any of such cheaper methods are also adopted by SMEs.

These leadership qualities and team development training initiatives are essential to nurture leaders for tomorrow that can raise an organisation out from the depths of recession. (Cain et.al ,2011,pp.8)

Agreeing to this statement many authors have talked about the importance of succession planning.

Townsend(2013) in his paper "Training and Development in the great recession" sheds light on the fact that businesses need to consider that turnover rates within firms will experience an increase in the coming years as baby boomers retires. Hence, planning strategically to equip the new generation with the necessary skills to fill up those positions smoothly is necessary in order to maintain a sustainable competitive advantage.

In an organisation where training is being sacked, human capital cannot be developed , this results in a firm's inability to adapt to the changing environment and develop future leadership.

The effects of such choices tends to show up in five to ten years. (Townsend, 2013)

Irish Business and Employers Confederation (2010) in explaining the importance of T&D in recessionary times also agrees with Townsend(2013) regarding the importance of training and talks about how the American Southwest airlines gained back their profitable position when many other competitors were seen going out of the business.

The , then CEO Herb Kelliher recognized the importance of T&D and resisted cutting budgets , instead claiming that it is extremely crucial to the success of the business. As a result, T&D budgets were actually increased and keeping the morale of employees was paramount to the management.

Agreeing with Herb Kelleher's ideology IBEC (2010) further adds that making effective use of the existing talent and enhancing their skills are one of the most important task for training professionals in today's business environment.

They also mention that a strong leadership is necessary to maintain the enthusiasm and energy within the employees as they fear job security.

If employees can believe in their line managers and are not insecure about keeping their jobs , it can benefit the firm in terms of a much more productive workforce.

Another reason to increase T&D during economic recession is because of increased downsizing. This increases the expectations from the employees to perform various tasks and hence, training becomes all the more important.

Through this literature it is evident that there is minimum research done on training and development particularly in SMEs .

The different techniques they had in place before the crisis compared to what is being implemented today is yet to be explored. This research will look to gather data on such questions to fill such gaps.

There has been literature saying that there has been low productivity within the SMEs. Questions like what are reasons for it and the link it can have with T&D have also never been answered.

Apart from this there is a gap in the literature when it comes to studying the impact recession has had on T&D initiatives in Irish firms. No one has brought these three variables together. This research will look to answer these questions to fill these gaps.

2.5 EFFECT OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT ON MOTIVATION AND PERFORMANCE

There is a huge amount of literature prevailing that emphasizes on the importance of a motivated workforce.

Motivation is often defined as the " inner drive that compels behavior" .(Nadeem, 2010, pp.207).

Guay et.al ,2010,pp.712 defines motivation on similar lines describing it as the reasons underlying behavior of an employee.

The competitive environment requires an organisation to possess a high - caliber workforce if they look to attain their goals.

There have been several HR practices that are adapted by firms in order to gain that competitive advantage over their rivals . (Bouris and Sahinidis,2007,pp.62)

The resource -based theory of competitive advantage regards employees as assets or "internal resources" that can add to a firm's ability to gain competitive advantage.

Training can be one such investment in their employees by the organisation which can lead to a firm's better performance. (Dola and Noor, 2012,pp.24).

They further add to the literature saying that effective training programs will enable the employees to be more open towards the changing environment and working techniques. This will help them to be more motivated to learn these skills ,resulting in the organisation to better adapt to the environmental changes.

This idea is also agreed by (Nadeem, 2010,pp.209) who adds that training will enhance employees' skills and knowledge that are so important to deal with the challenges of today's work environment. He also argues that if a firm looks to survive and wants to sustain its excellence , keeping employees up to date with skills, should be paramount as they should be able to multi task and work in different departments.

Many scholars have linked T&D to motivation and increased job satisfaction that has a positive effect on organisational performance.

It is often said that at a basic level training offered to employees will help them in fulfilling their job responsibilities. (Ehrhardt et.al , 2011,pp.480)

But if looked deeply upon the advantages of training it can bring about long lasting benefits such as a positive change in employee attitudes towards their work resulting in higher motivation, job satisfaction and organisational commitment. (Ehrhardt et.al ,2011,pp.481, Graham & Nufukha,2010)

Even though past studies linking training to organisational commitment have been insignificant but the scant literature that prevails says that the mere presence of T&D techniques with in an organisation can motivate the employees providing them with a sense of belongingness towards the firm . (Ehrhardt et.al , 2011, pp.481 , Giaque and Rosenterra, 2010 , Nadeem, 2010,pp.207)

On a basic level, authors have explained the link between T&D to that of motivation arguing that when employees' see their firm providing them with training which could help them throughout their career irrespective of which organisation they work for, this builds up a higher level of motivation within them.

Nadeem, 2010,pp.209 adds to the literature by arguing that employees always require training to narrow down their deficiency in skills. Training can enhance those skills which they feel to be lacking and regard as important to be effective in their current jobs as well as to build up their confidence in taking up further responsibilities.

If constant training is provided and the deficiency of skills is kept to a bare minimum , employees feel highly interested and confident in doing their job.

This results in higher motivation , productivity and an improved organisational performance.

2.5.1 SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

Another contradicting ideology that has been used in order to explain the link between training and motivation is the social exchange theory.

According to this school of thought , as and when organizations invest in their employees , employees respond by showing better results and positive attitudes towards the organisation.

(Bardkuvas and Dysvik, 2009,pp.229 , Ehrhardt et.al,2011,pp.483) agrees to this ideology and further adds that when individuals enter into these exchange processes of receiving T&D initiatives from the organisation they reciprocate in positive ways, as they regard it as an obligation on their part.

This will improve the understanding between both parties leading to high performance and a highly committed workforce. (Bardkuvas and Dysvik, 2009,pp.229 , Lee and Bruvold,2003)

Such techniques result in a positive relationship between the both parties and employees look to perform better in their given jobs.

If a successful relationship is indeed built ,both parties can develop feelings of commitment towards one another.

According to Miller et.al ,2011,pp.484 individuals still tend to built up psychological contracts with an organisation and will maintain a relationship with them. If such a contract is established employees will portray positive and helpful behavior , with increased commitment and productivity.

He further suggests that receiving adequate and effective training can be one such input from the organisation on the basis of which this exchange relationship can be built.

He also mentions that if employees perceive the training given to them as comprehensive , it will be interpreted as an act of commitment suggesting that he/she is regarded as important to the firm.

Bardkuvas and Dysvik ,2009,pp.230 agrees to this and adds further that employees response to this act of commitment by their firm through increasing their productivity and performance.

They feel the organisation is concerned about their career , wants to invest in them and that their career is not static and in fact growing. This results in the development of positive feelings and a sense of belongingness.

Even though the developmental investments may make the employee increasingly attractive to the outside business world , the trust portrayed by the organisation in the employee satisfies the need for autonomy within them which results in increased motivation.

A contradicting view to this school of thought where social exchange theory has been used as to why T&D leads to motivation was provided by Dola and Noor ,2012,pp.13.

They agreed that even though training interventions will help trainees to improve performance by motivating them and creating job satisfaction but the reason for it is that it creates an environment and facilitates exchange of ideas and knowledge sharing.

They further add that indeed it is the sharing of knowledge that makes them confident in delivering a better performance.

Even though, scholars have agreed that T&D activities lead to motivation and increased job satisfaction , they also argue that each individual may perceive the value and effectiveness of such initiatives differently.

Their perceptions may differ in accordance with the environment or situations prevailing.

For example : The unit of analysis of this research is recession. In such a situation where job security is seen to be low within employees , investing in employees may be perceived as more motivational than if compared to normal situations. Hence, in such situations training maybe seen as a more useful vehicle to enhance employee behavior rather than as a mere skill developing function. (Miller et.al , 2011, pp.484)

Even though theory suggests that training increases organisational performance there is still lack of practical evidence validating the theory.

This research will fill this gap by looking into the SME sector to find out whether training does help or not.

2.5.2 TRAINING : A SOURCE OF INTRINSIC OR EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION?

Many scholars have linked training to motivation.

Though, authors have contradicted each other as to whether training can be perceived as a source of extrinsic motivation or intrinsic.

Intrinsic motivation is traditionally defined as "doing an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some external reward". (White, 1959)

Though, in contrast extrinsic motivation is defined as "the construct that pertains whenever an activity is done in order to attain some separable outcome". (Ryan and Deci, 2000,pp.7)

Bardkuvas and Dysvik,2009,pp.232 argues that employees that are intrinsically motivated will benefit more from the developmental activities that are provided.

Since, intrinsically motivated employees are more involved with their job they will be able to reciprocate this investment on to them in a better way by increasing their work effort and the extent to which they use the newly developed skills. (Vansteenkiske et.al ,2007 as cited in Dysvik et. al ,2009,pp.232)

Though in these competitive and financially strained times, training maybe viewed by employees as a means to develop their skills further in order to increase their chances of survival , or receiving a better salary through climbing up the organisational ladder.

Though, this aspect is still to be researched. This research will however, find out in these crunch times , training can intrinsically motivate employees or they perceive training as a source of increasing their chances to promotion.

2.6 IMPORTANCE OF "EFFECTIVE" TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES:

As seen from the above literature provided, authors believe that there exists a link between training and job satisfaction leading to motivation and improved productivity,

However, training can only yield these benefits if the techniques offered to the employees are perceived to be effective and off value to them.

Dola & Noor, 2012,pp.15 argues that for training to be effective it should be:

(i) in line with the needs of the organisation

(ii) trainees should portray their interest towards it, i:e they should have the motivation to learn

(iii) and most importantly, there should be a transfer of learning.

According to Alvarez et.al, (2004) training effectiveness largely depends upon effectively carrying the task of needs analysis with in an organisation.

This includes identifying the learning styles of the employees and then providing them activities that suit their style. If, this is done the outcome can maximized.

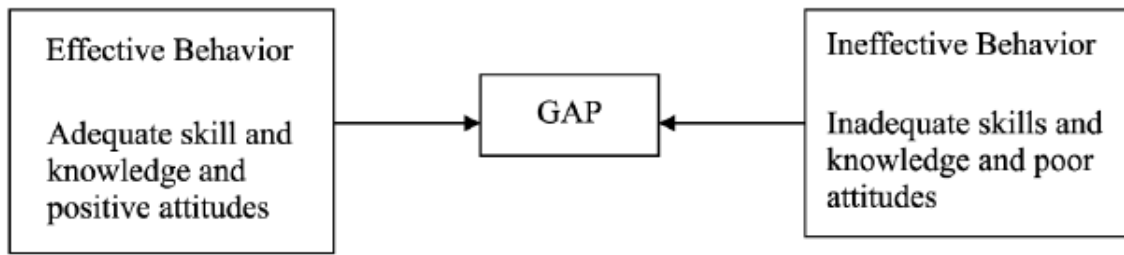
This should be followed by analyzing what exactly needs to be learned , i:e identifying gaps in the knowledge and skills with in the workforce.

The importance of effectively identifying gaps is also agreed by (Bouris &Sahinidis,2007,pp.64 , Chen at.al, 2004, Kanelopoulous&Aktivos,2006) that if those skills that are regarded as necessary by the employees are not covered by the training initiatives and developmental opportunities provided, employees will feel less competent, will lose the motivation to learn, thus minimizing the outcome of training. This all can result in employees leaving the organisation or field altogether increasing their turnover rates.

Rowden &Connie (2005) also says that implementing such training techniques that can narrow the gaps between the skills possessed within the workforce and the skills required to cope up with the challenges of today's work pressures will result in training achieving its desired outcome as well as will be able to satisfy and motivate the employees.

These motivated employees can better satisfy the needs of the customers.

Hence, effectiveness and value of training provided will determine the amount of satisfaction , employees draw from the initiatives.

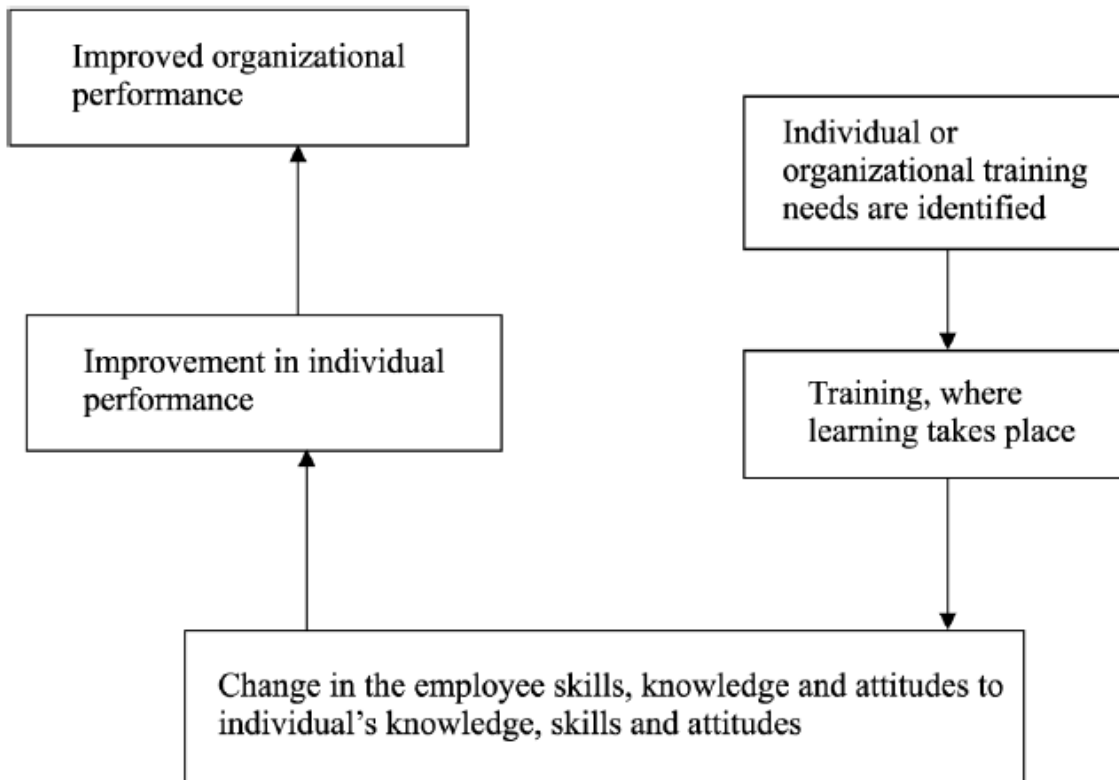


Source: Swart *et al.* (2005, p.190)

FIGURE 2: Identifying a Gap and need for Training

He further adds that once these gaps have been identified such training interventions have to be adopted that can bridge those gaps.

How these bridging of gaps will lead to a better organizational performance has been explained through the Bramley's individual model of training.



Source: Swart *et al.* (2005, p.192)

Swart et.al , 2005,pp.192 agrees with this ideology that the first step to providing successful training should be the identification of training needs followed by providing such initiatives that actually result in learning. Only then, an improved organizational performance will be experienced.

Though this model assumes that an employee's KSA's along with their attitudes and behavior , can be altered by training interventions.

However, in reality this may not happen, and the lack of productivity with in an employee may not be due to lack of training but due to other elements such as culture or structure.

Wright & Geroy (2001) have mentioned how management styles can influence the degree of effectiveness of a training program.

This ideology was also adopted by Bardkuvas & Dysvik,2009,pp.229 who argued that if developmental opportunities are adopted by organizations , employees feel more control over their careers through learning new skills and competencies and this will satisfy the need for autonomy within them.

Dola & Noor, 2012, pp.26 further adds that management structures where employees are given the freedom to experiment their new skills and opportunity to apply them at their own pace will experience a higher rate of return on their training investments.

According to Fisher et.al , (1996) if training needs are not analysed properly , organizations may end up giving training for the wrong reasons and with an inappropriate program design which can de motivate employees for future training initiatives.

The second point which can influence the degree to which training is effective is the trainee's motivation. According to Dola &Noor, 2012, pp.26 , the personality and traits of the individual also matters and the value of training may be perceived differently accordingly.

In regard, to the last point they further add that usually the transfer of training is not immediate and employees should be given time to incorporate their newly developed skills.

Apart from these three points, authors have also discussed the importance of post-assessment of training programs.

If organizations seek follow-ups and feedbacks from its employees or even link training programs as pre requisites to promotion or performance appraisals, will help in employees better inclined towards learning and undertaking training. (Dola &Noor,2012,pp.26 , Tews&Tracey,2008)

Though, theory suggests , but it is yet to be discovered whether organizations do that in actuality or not. This research will also find evidence within the SMEs as to whether any such techniques are adopted or not.

From the above literature , it is evident that training is supposed to be given immense importance within the organizations but there is little practical evidence present that illustrates that.

There is literature present that contradicts theory with reality and says that the overall benefit an organization can achieve through training and up skilling their employees is somewhat undermined because of this era of increased employee mobility . (Cheramie et.al, 2007).

There is also a gap in the literature prevailing , as to if SMEs are hesitant to invest in their employees due to the scare of them leaving their organization after improving their skills and value.

All this becomes more interesting with the recession situation prevailing and employers expected to justify their expenditure.

CHAPTER 3:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to Whisker(2001), "research is all about asking and beginning to answer questions seeking knowledge and understanding the world and its processes".

Methodology is explained as the way knowledge is gained, theories are generated and tested, and the relationships that stems from the theoretical perspectives and research problems.

(Blaikie,2004,pp.12.)

Ghuri (2005) argued that research methodology is concerned with the structure and design of the study, data collection method and sampling.

There are a variety of methods a researcher has at its disposal , though the quality of research will depend on how well the identified methods fits the research. (Saunders et.al , 2009 , pp.154-55)

The researcher has indulged in a qualitative study with no preconceived notions and formulated the questions keeping the nature of the chosen method in mind.

3.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

"It is not the answer which enlightens , but the question"

- Eugene Ionesco

Hickman & McInnes, 2011,pp.4 mentions when trying to formulate research questions for a qualitative study, the researcher should aim to investigate human experiences which can be subjective.

The aim should be to explore participants meaning and understanding. These studies often yield non- standardized answers and usually lack generalisabilty.



Figure 4: Developing a research question for qualitative study

Source: McInnes&Hickman , 2011, pp. 7.

The figure above explains exactly how the researcher drew the research questions. There was a lot of thinking involved to find an area where the researcher's passion lied. This was followed by a lot of reading and discussions with various tutors , which led to exploring more areas which could be read in depth and finally coming up with a research proposal.

Biken &Bogden,2007,pp.70 argues that a research question should be such that can be directly investigated with the research tools in hand.

Maxwell,2005,pp.75 mentions that many reseach questions are best answered using particular data collection and analysis methods and are more appropriate for certain epistemologies.

As mentioned by Hickman&McInnes,2011,pp.11 a reseach question should be able to fill the gaps identified through the review of the literature and also provide a logic , rationale and justification of asking the question.

The questions mentioned below which this research will answer will look to do the same.

1. How has the recession affected the Irish SMEs in terms of training and development ?

The rationale for asking this question is to know how has recession been accepted by the Irish SMEs.

Has it forced SMEs to further cut down on T&D or are they investing in it appropriately to develop their human capital.

The answer to this research question will help in filling the gap in the literature concerning all the three variables. i.e recession , T&D and Irish SMEs.

2. How is Training and Development done in 2013?

This question enabled the researcher to dig into the present T&D initiatives in place in today's time. This also enabled the researcher to know about the previous T&D approaches , and how had they changed since then.

The gap in the literature where there is no research done showing how and to what extent have SMEs changed their approach towards T&D was filled through this research.

3. What are the effects of these impacts / changes in techniques on the human capital in Irish SMEs ?

Depending on the techniques they have adopted and whether T&D has been embraced to develop the human capital or compromised or a mixture of both , this question aimed to study the impact it has had on the human capital (employees) in the firm. How has it affected their morale and motivation, the effect it has had on their productivity leading to the impact on the firm's performance.

This will fill the gap by providing information on the direct link between T&D and motivation , productivity and the affect on SMEs performance.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

If a researcher wishes to carry out a research two methodologies will be at his/her disposal.

Either qualitative research can be under taken or quantitative methods can be adopted. In some studies a mixture of both methods are also preferred by researchers.

Qualitative research is characterised by its aim which concerns making sense of some aspect of social life , and its methods will focus on generating words rather than numbers as data for analysis. (Patton & Cochran , 2002 , pp.2)

Quantitative methods aim to measure something usually in numbers. (Patton & Cochran , 2002 , pp.2). This is agreed by Corbetta (2003) who says qualitative research is open , interactive with soft ,rich and deep data where as quantitative research is structured with hard data.

Qualitative research aims to answer what , how , and why rather than "how much" or "how many"? (Patton & Cochran , 2002 , pp.3)

This study will use qualitative research as the methodology to gather data.

Cochran & Patton ,2002, pp.3 says if the questions are qualitative the best way to go about a research is qualitative.

Cresswell (2007) also agrees and says using the right approach will increase the validity of a research.

The aim of this study is to research T&D in SMEs and the effect recession has had on them.

Every SME can have a different perspective or a different approach to go about it and cannot be generalised. Cochran & Patton , 2002, pp.7 says when a researcher intends to explore different perspectives or deeply analyse a particular process qualitative methods are the most appropriate.

Adopting qualitative methods for research enabled the researcher to get views of the sample size without aiming to standardize the outcomes.

One of the reason to adopt qualitative methods was also the researchers own belief that situations maybe handled or perceived differently by humans. In the case of this research the researcher firmly believed that each and every SME may take the recession situation followed by its effect on T&D differently , some as a way to further nurture their human capital and some as a way to save up money and limit their expenditure.

Hence, when the research questions are open and broad and every case can be analysed differently ,as the case for this research , adopting a qualitative method fits the research properly.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Having a sound research design in order to carry out a quality research is very important.

A weak design will result in poor collection of data or a research with low validity and reliability.

Research design has been an area where authors have contradicted each other.

Crotty (2007) says that research design can be broken down into epistemology , theoretical perspective , methodology and methods.

Saunders et.al (2007) labels a model named the "research onion" and further classifies into six layers.

To explain the research design for this study "the research onion" has been adopted and every layer will be discussed in detail along with the rationales of choosing the respective approach.

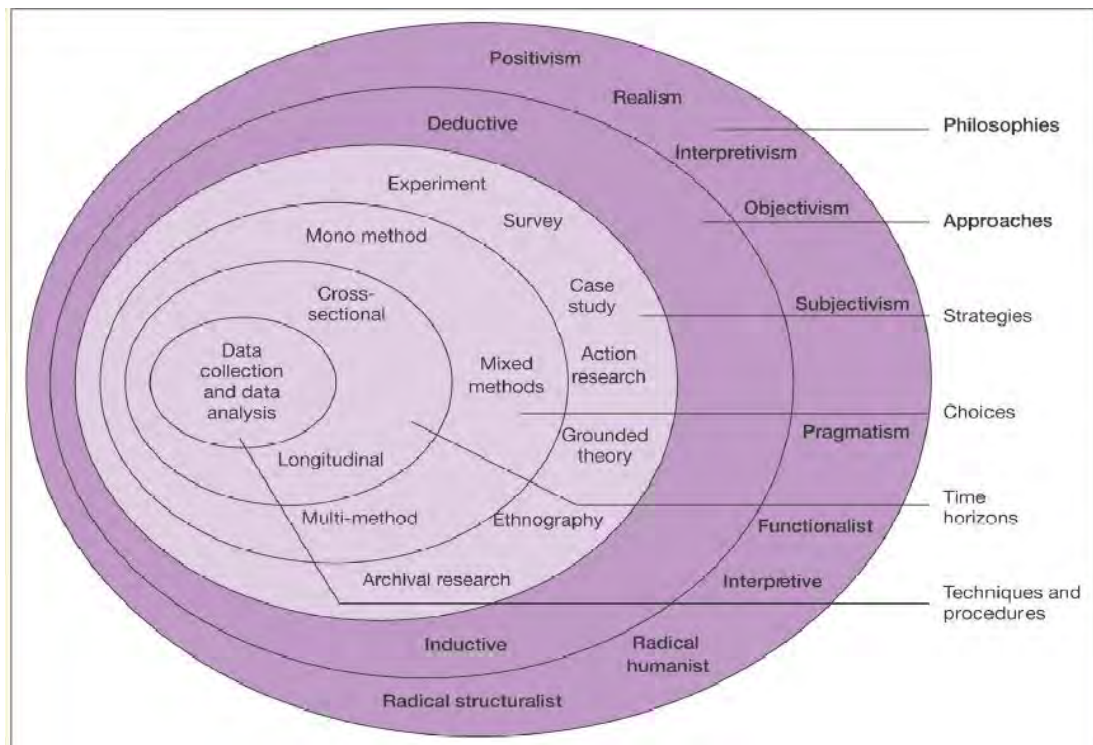


FIGURE 5: THE RESEARCH ONION

SOURCE: Saunders et.al,2009,pp.108

3.3.1 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

The term research philosophy relates to the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge. (Saunders et.al ,2007 , pp.102)

The research philosophy a researcher adopts contains assumptions about the way they view the world. (Saunders et.al ,2007 , pp. 102)

It will also determine the research strategies that will be chosen by the researcher to gather and interpret the data in order to answer the research questions. A research concerned with numerical data will have a different approach to the one concerned with feelings and attitudes (Saunders et .al , 2009, pp.108) . The researcher chose the approaches keeping all of that in mind.

Philosophy underpins two major ways of thinking.

3.3.1.1 EPISTEMOLOGY - INTERPRETIVISM

It concerns as to what constitutes acceptable knowledge in a field of study. (Saunders et. al ,2007,pp.104).

Some researchers look to collect information objectively where as some believe every person has its own perceptions of situations.

It further consists of three major paradigms.

Positivist which is defined as working with a social reality and an end product which can be generalized. (Remenyiet et. al ,1998 , pp.32).

Bryman &Bell (2007) related this epistemological approach as that of the one imitating natural sciences. They further added that the researcher needs to have a mindset where he/she can come up with a "law-like" end product.

This approach was not adopted by the researcher as the aim of this research was not to come up with generalisable outcomes but rather try to deeply understand and analyse the perceptions and the different effects recession has had on the T&D aspects with in SMEs.

Realist is another epistemological position which relates to scientific inquiry , and to the fact that knowledge is socially created and is a result of social conditioning .(Saunders et.al , 2007 , pp.106)

Realism is similar to positivism and it assumes that a scientific approach towards the development of knowledge can be taken. (Saunders et.al ,2009,pp.114)

The epistemological position chosen for this research is that of interpretivism. It advocates the fact that the world is too complex to generalize and researcher needs to understand different human minds. (Saunders et.al, 2007 , pp. 108)

This position was the most appropriate as the nature of this research is such that the outcome of it cannot be generalised.

For e.g.: Every SME may sense the situation differently , and hence the impact of recession on to the T&D initiatives can be completely different. Some SMEs may find it a reason to develop their human capital to gain competitive advantage and others may not. Hence, there can be multiple realities and interpretations , making this position the most suitable.

As an interpretivist the researcher tried to understand and analyse the different perspectives.

As Saunders et.al ,2009 pp.116 mentions a researcher with an interpretivist approach has to understand the subjects and world from the point of view of those being researched. According to him "not only business situations are complex but they are also unique". (Saunders et.al ,2009,pp.116)

The researcher completely agrees with Saunders ideology and started the research with a mindset of having no perceptions approaching every SME, expecting the possibility of unique and differing outcomes.

3.3.1.2 ONTOLOGY - SUBJECTIVISM

It is concerned with the nature of reality and what exists. (Saunders et.al , 2007 , pp.109).

The two aspects of onto logy can be objectivism and subjectivism.

Objectivism is defined as having a specific object or structure to adhere to. (Saunders et.al ,2007 , pp. 110)

An objectivist would believe that the social entities exist independent of the social actors in it. (Saunders et.al,2009, pp.110)

The researcher did not find this approach appropriate to implement in this particular research as the researcher's stance and belief was indeed that every individual managing the SME may have a unique way in dealing with recession and associating importance with T&D.

This research undertook the other approach which is of subjectivism.

Subjectivism is based on different perceptions and viewpoints created by socially interacting. (Saunders et. al ,2007 , pp. 110)

The researcher will indulge in interactions with the employees and managers to understand the different viewpoints and will look to analyze them instead of generalising the findings.

The researcher believes that social actors (managers and employees the researcher has studied) in this case , may all act and place different interpretations to the situation which may be a result of their perception of the world.

For e.g.: to search for answers like if the changes in the T&D techniques due to recession if any, have affected employees morale or motivation in any way, a subjectivist approach of the researcher helped to understand that every employee may be motivated in a different way.

Some employees may associate extrinsic benefits to motivations and may not be effected by aspects of T&D at all.

This style was also appropriate as it supported the interpretivist approach and saw every situation differently, as required by nature of the research questions.

3.3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH : INDUCTIVE

The extent to which the researcher understands the theory being researched and the types of research questions that are formulated determines the research approach that will be taken. (Saunders et.al , 2009,pp.124)

The second layer of the onion talks about choosing a research approach. The two types of approaches in here are deduction and induction.

Deductive approach is related to scientific research that is subjected to rigorous tests. (Collis and Hussey cited in Saunders et, al ,2007, pp.114)

A deductive approach would have required the researcher to make a series of assumptions and educated guesses, come up with a hypothesis and then testing it on a fairly larger sample to generalize the findings or come up with "law-like" outcomes, which would not have been an appropriate approach considering the qualitative research questions the researcher came up with.

The approach for this study is inductive.

This approach enabled the researcher to build a theory , get a feel of what's going on and understand the nature of the problem.(Saunders et.al , 2007,pp.114). This research requires deep analysis and building linkages and relationships between variables rather than reaching a quantifiable, definite answer.

For e.g.: To answer how is T&D done in 2013, the ways and initiatives can differ according to different SMEs.

Choosing an inductive approach enabled the researcher to gather data about the different T&D initiatives in different SMEs and then analysed them and came up with a theory. The aim behind choosing this approach in contrast to a deductive approach was to give the researcher a chance to understand that techniques and initiatives may differ according to the needs of the organisation.

This is accepted by Saunders et.al , 2009, pp.126 as they mention that an inductive approach is particularly concerned with the contexts in which events or decisions take place.

Inductive approach also complements the interpretivist as well as the subjective stance the researcher has taken.

3.3.3 RESEARCH STRATEGIES : CASE STUDY

According to Yin(2003) as cited in Saunders et.al , 2009, pp.141 certain strategies are best suited to a deductive approach and some to inductive.

He also adds that the strategy the researcher chooses will be guided by the research questions as well as the researcher's own philosophical underpinnings.

The seven different research strategies in place according to (Saunders et.al, 2007 , pp.136-38) are:

Experiments : enables researchers to study causal links to know how one change can effect another.

Surveys: obtain standardized data usually using questionnaires.

Action Research: This strategy combines data gathering and facilitation of change.

Grounded research: predicts and explains different behaviours.

Ethnography: looks at the world as social subjects in a way that they would describe it.

Case study:

Robson (2002,pp.178) defines "case study as a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomena within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence."

This is the main chosen strategy for this research.

Saunders et. al ,2007,pp.139 says that case study method is suitable if you wish to gain a rich understanding of the context and different processes associated with it.

This method is suitable considering the nature of the research.

Researcher aimed to study four SMEs through interviewing two managers and two employees. This meant the researcher studied multiple cases rather than adopting a single case.

The rationale behind taking this approach was to be able to compare and contrast the different findings and try to develop common grounds and patterns.

This method allowed the researcher to analyse the firms separately.

The researcher was able to compare findings or common themes that emerged from the data gathered (Saunders et.al , 2007 , pp.140) from the SMEs.

Archival Research was also used in this study but to a certain extent. This refers to looking at the past data .(Saunders et.al , 2007 , pp.142) . In comparing different T&D initiatives from the past and present this strategy helped a little.

Taking a case study approach helped the researcher gain a deep understanding of every case and treat it as unique which was the essence of this research.

Using this strategy also helped the researcher gain knowledge about "how" and "why" rather than "how many" which are usually gained through a survey.

In contrast, and experiment approach was not adopted , even though it allows a researcher to draw up causal links (Saunders et.al,2009, pp.143) but in the form of definite , generalisable answers which the researcher did not aim for this study.

3.3.4 RESEARCH CHOICE

The fourth layer of the onion talks about the research choice the researcher made.

The three choices the researcher could choose from were:

Mono methods , Multi methods and Mixed methods respectively.

Mono method is a single data collection technique. (Carran and Blackburn cited in Saunders et.al ,2007,pp.145).

Mixed methods are used when a researcher make use of both quantitative and qualitative methods for conducting the study.

This research adopted the third way i.e.: adopting a multi method approach. This term refers to a combination of more than one data collection technique but has to be either qualitative or quantitative.

The researcher will be using a qualitative multi method approach (Tashakori & Teddlie, 2003 cited in Saunders et.al ,2007 , pp.145) where in interviews as well as observations will be used as a data collecting tool.

A combination of both interviews and observations increased the credibility of the research as interacting along with judging the body language, observing the gestures helped the researcher to relate the authenticity of what the interviewee is conversing.

A mixed method approach was not adopted because of two reasons.

This study was highly time constrained and could not have allowed the researcher to indulge in two types of data collection methods and secondly the nature of the research questions were highly qualitative.

3.3.5 TIME HORIZON

It depicts the amount of time the researcher has to conduct the study.

It can be either cross-sectional which is referred to as a "snap shot" and done in a particular time or longitudinal i.e taking a longer term study and approach to conduct the research. (Saunders et.al ,2007, pp. 148)

The time horizon for this study was cross-sectional. This was because the study had to be completed in a span of 12 weeks.

As Saunders et.al (2007, pp.148) refers many case studies are based on interviews which are studied for a relatively shorter period of time. This study looked to do the same with the intention of making the best use of the time and to do so the first task the researcher indulged into after reading a sufficient amount of literature was data collection.

3.3.6 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

3.3.6.1 DATA COLLECTION

The means of data collection for this study was interviews and observations, i.e though a multi-method approach.

The interviews were conducted on four SMEs.

The idea was to interview two HR managers or people in positions in charge of the T&D within the firm if the company did not have a HR manager in place, and two employees who are the recipients of the T&D initiatives.

Hence, among the managers interviewed, one was an HR manager (Referred to as Manager A throughout the next chapters) of a leading courier company (X) with in Ireland.

Company X had a total of nine branches with in Ireland with a head count of about 270 people.

T&D in this company was being carried out with in the local branches itself.

The second interview was conducted on a retail management company (Y) operating in the convenience and forecourt sectors.

The interviewee was a financial controller within the firm but was also overlooking the duties of an HR manager that included being responsible for the different T&D initiatives in place within the firm.

Company Y had about 110 staff members , with eight branches with in Ireland. Most of the T&D took place in the head office as compared to Company X.

The researcher also interviewed two employees to gain their perspective.

Employee A was working in the food sector. The company operated in fast moving consumer goods. (FMCG)

The company had over 370 stores over twenty-one (21) different counties with in Ireland and employed around 20-40 employees within every branch.

General training was being provided within the local branch itself but for other trainings such as Health and Safety etc employees were sent to the head office.

Employee B comparatively worked for a smaller firm, with the no. of staff not exceeding the count of 15. This company operated in retail sales within the food and beverage stores. Training in this company was provided within the branch itself. The company did not have any other branch around Ireland.

Interviews were recorded where as the interviewer (the researcher) kept on taking any short notes to pen down any observations made.

Before the researcher could proceed onto the interviews he/she had to indulge in the process of sampling.

There are a no. of ways a researcher can choose a sample.

There can be either a non- probability sample which can further be categorized as the following.

Convenience or an easily accessible sample . According to Shenton &Hayter (2004) if a researcher can approach companies through personal contacts it is indeed an invaluable and ensured way of gaining access.

The second type of sample a researcher has at its disposal is a quota sample, which includes choosing respondents according to a quota that has being established.

The third type of sample is Judgmental / purposive. This involves picking up a representative sample for the study thought as being the most informative.

There can also be snowball sampling which relies on creating chains through social networking. This is usually suitable for quantitative studies where a large no. of respondents are required to fill out the surveys.

A non-probability sample was chosen for this study which was a mixture of convenience (as those SMEs were chosen which were either available through personal contacts or which the T&D head within the ISME (Irish Small to Medium sized Association) directed the researcher to) and purposive (as those who were interviewed also had the necessary information needed to gather the data).

Hence, the sample size for this research was four companies.

Four companies represented the 200,000 SMEs operating within Ireland.

This sample size suited the study as it was cross-sectional and hence ,highly time constrained.

Refer Appendix C for the Interviews guides of Managers and Employees.

3.3.6.2 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Sellers ,1998,pp.2 qualitative research provides a researcher with a much deeper understanding of the research problem.

Though it is often said that analyzing the collected data appropriately determines the quality of the research.

Saunders et,al,2009,pp.551 mentions that qualitative data analysis allows a researcher to draw a theory out of the data.

Though, this part is often seen as the most difficult part of the research.(Cochran &Patton,2002,pp.24)

There are different ways of doing it.

Thematic , Descriptive and a more in-depth approach can be taken.

Though, thematic is regarded as the most appropriate (Cochran&Patton,2002,pp.24) and will be adopted for this research.

Thematic analysis is where all the data will be looked upon to identify and common themes emerging from it. (Cochran &Patton,2002,pp.25)

Themes are defined by Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp.10 as "capturing something important about the data in relation to the research question, and representing some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set."

The procedure for analyzing the findings started from transcribing the data from the four interviews and observations made.

This was followed by reading the transcriptions again and again to get a basic feel of the information being discussed.

This resulted in the researcher's improved understanding of what the interviewees meant and wanted to convey.

This led to the next stage of cross-comparing the findings from the four interviewees to try to find and come up with any sorts of codes that can be applied to the data.

This was followed by coding the data by going through each and every line and writing the codes on the edges of the transcript to ensure that the researcher does not just do an extraction of the data but a comprehensive analysis.

In relation to this stage Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp.10 suggests that an important question a researcher needs to consider here, is what counts as a pattern or theme?

He further adds, that the themes usually emerge when instances are found a no. of times in the data set, but care has to be taken that an increased no. of times a certain data is prevalent does not necessarily mean it is an important theme.

According to them, a researcher's judgment would play an important role in here.

The researcher took care of all this while analyzing the data.

These stages were adopted from Cochran & Patton, 2002, pp.25 and are discussed further in the next chapter.

3.4 RESEARCH ETHICS

Ethics are defined as the appropriateness of a researcher's behavior in relation to the rights of those being affected or targeted by the work. (Saunders et al, 2009)

As a researcher, there are responsibilities towards your research participants (Patton & Cochran, 2002, pg 5). There are certain ethical considerations and rules the researcher should abide to.

According to Childress and Beauchamp (1983) ethical concerns have four principals; and during the course of this study the researcher adhered to these rules.

- 1) Autonomy: Researcher made sure the rights of anyone involved in the study were respected.
- 2) Non- Maleficence: No harm was done to any participant.
- 3) Beneficence: This study was conducted with good intentions and meant no bad to anyone.
- 4) Justice: There was no inequity or partiality.

Apart from this Consent and Confidentiality (Patton & Cochran, 2002) was considered, making sure who ever participates agreed without being pressurized and if desired full anonymity was provided to the participants throughout the study; during every stage.

The participants had the full authority to withdraw during the data collection phase; and findings will be provided to those who desired ,shortly after the submission of this dissertation . (Saunders et. al, 2009)

The ethical stance taken during this research was “situational” which refers that some breaking of rules were unavoidable to know the current phenomena “ (Dalton, 1959).

The researcher observed the interviewees which they might not have been fully aware of to get the correct sense or deep analysis of what they are saying. If this aspect was explained in detail to the interviewee; he/ she might not have been completely comfortable and may have become conscious which could have affected the degree of openness and the amount of information shared.

The different ethical stances in place are discussed in Appendix D.

CHAPTER 4:
DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 DATA ANALYSIS

Palton (1987) defined data analysis as a process of reducing large amounts of data in the form of story followed by a process of interpreting it.

He indicated that the process of analysis embeds three main features:

1. Organizing the data
2. Reducing it through summarization and categorization
3. Lastly, coming up with themes in the data that can be identified and linked.

The researcher followed these three main steps highlighted by Palton (1987) to analyse the data collected through semi-structured interviews and observations.

To carry out the first step of organizing the data , the researcher transcribed the interviews.

This enabled the researcher to have a printed format of the data to proceed on to the next step.

The next step involves the process of reducing the data, which required the researcher to read and reread the data several times.

To efficiently carry out this step the researcher summarized the transcribed data and then read it several times in order to get a feel of the similarities and differences among their responses.

According to Kawulich,2004,pp.100 and Lecompte & Schensul,1999 it is a good idea to create summaries when analyzing the data as it helps the researcher to make better sense of the data collected.

This enabled the researcher to come up with a narrative of the data which helped in organizing thoughts about the results which further led to coming up with patterns without generalizations which is the essence of qualitative studies.

This made it easier for the researcher to come up with "codes" or categorization of the data.

Bernard,2000,pp.439 describes this as an "inductive code development" process where in the researcher requires to transcribe the data , and read it several times to come up with codes.

To form a theory from the data collected, there can be three types of approaches to coding according to Straus&Corbin (1990).

- Open
- Axial
- Selective

They defined axial coding as a process of relating subcategories to a category. Selective coding was explained as selecting a core category and forming categories around the core.

The approach most suitable for this research was "open coding" . This allowed the researcher to identify concepts and similar events or ways of looking at situations by the interviewees and then grouping them to form categories.

This allowed the researcher to come up with "patterns" or themes.

DeSantis & Ugariza (2000) described "theme" as an abstract entity that brings about meaning to an experience that has occurred several times and looks to capture the pattern into a meaningful whole.

Few codes that were given to the data collected for this research were:

- nature of services of firms
- customer expenditure
- customer service
- effective training
- recognition
- customer value and importance

Themes emerging from these codes are discussed in the next part of the chapter.

According to Jones & Janerick ,2000. pp.387 mere interviews and observations are not enough, the researcher should be able to interpret the beliefs and behaviours of the participants as well. Hence, the creativity and artistry of the researcher is also necessary.

The researcher should be able to develop a deep understanding of the story that emerges from the words of the participants and especially the context with in which they occur.

The researcher tried to apply this phenomena while analysing and hence, a key code that emerged while coding the data was also "personal opinion" .

After successfully completing this procedure the researcher presents the findings or the themes that are apparent from the data collected.

4.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.2.1 RESEARCH QUESTION NO. 1

How has the recession affected the Irish SMEs in terms of T&D?

The basic rationale for asking this question was to know how has recession been accepted by the Irish SMEs.

The in depth interviews done on the managers revealed that recession has not been particularly harsh on T&D , with in the SMEs. Firms that regarded T&D initiatives as important before 2008 still regards them necessary and continue to invest in them.

Manager A and Manager B both claimed that size of the firm has nothing to do with recession being particularly harsh on them but in fact it is the reduction in customer expenditure that has affected their business.

The extent to which training is provided highly depends on the nature of the services. If the nature of the business is such that does not require staff training as absolutely necessary , it may not be that important to the firm.

For e.g. Manager A claimed that training was not given much importance pre-recession , though what ever was provided was easily approved compared to now. Manager A further claimed that *"it is not just T&D but every claim that has to be justified , whether it is stationary, salaries or training."*

Manager B discussed how training was always an integral part as the nature of the business requires staff to be highly trained in dealing with customers and a lack of doing so can cost them severely, in terms of the number of claims that can come up against them. This trend is continued or even increased a little after recession as customer spending has largely decreased *and "customers do not want to leave a chance to sue them and earn easy money"*.

Hence, the themes that are strongly apparent from the above evidence is :

- nature of services plays an important role in deciding the amount and importance of T&D with in the SME.
- There continues to be a trend with in firms, if they regarded T&D initiatives as important before recession came in they continue to do so and vice versa.

- the size of the firm does not contribute towards recession being particularly hard on SMEs , it is rather the decreased customer expenditure that has hit them hard.

Employees seem to suggest a similar story claiming that training was never paramount to their firm and it's the same even after recession . Employee A claimed that *"staff was always left on their own to learn which made it a lengthy process"*.

Employee B on one instance answered that his organisation always look to recruit experienced staff so they do have certain basic training and the firm does not have to provide more.

Another theme that appeared from the findings suggested that the overall financial situation of the firm in the past few years have a huge role in accepting the recession situation.

Manager B claims that because they carry out their monthly management accounts and try to control costs , they are able to earn good profits and are indeed trying to expand. Good profits also help them in investing adequately in T&D as the top management have always recognized its benefits.

This also suggests that there is also a degree of personal opinion about T&D involved when it comes to allocating budgets even if a difficult financial situation prevails.

In contrast, Manager A's firm is in a survival mode as the last year was particularly tough on them which the manager blames on *"customer constantly looking for better value"* given the firm provides services.

Hence, a decrease in revenue is experienced resulting in the need to be strict with every expenditure.

This suggests that every firm has a different situation and it cannot be generalised to a definite answer on how SMEs will deal with the recession situation or how it has affected T&D in their organisation , which is also the reason to indulge in qualitative studies.

4.2.2 RESEARCH QUESTION NO. 2

How in T&D done in 2013?

The rationale for having this as the research question was to know the current T&D initiatives in place today and to what extent have they deviated from the pre-recession situation.

The findings suggest that the priority as of now is to provide staff with statutory training.

Importance of customers have emerged strongly from the interviews. Hence, providing customer service training is deemed necessary and is not regarded as something extra ordinary. In fact managers believe to survive in this climate , training that leads to better customers service is essential.

Compliance training is also given a lot of importance. Due to an increase in the no. of audits from bodies like Health and Safety (HSC) and National Safety Council Ireland (NSCI) providing proper training about the rules and regulations have become all the more important.

Training is prioritized for the front desk as they are the ones dealing with customers on a daily basis.

Manager claimed that "*Statutory training is the priority , anything more than that is based on who asks for it and how it will benefit the business*".

The data clearly suggested that every firm has a different situation to deal with and training is provided in accordance with the services and needs of the firm.

Company X being in a more financially strained situation due to a difficult past year is very strict even about providing basic training and wants to make sure that right training is provided to the right people. Hence, a training need analysis is regarded as important.

Company Y earning good profits and being in a financially stronger position can afford to have programs such as "*management retail diplomas*" for their managers.

A common theme that emerged from here is that the amount of investment a company does especially in developmental initiatives also depends on their financial situation.

Both Managers A and B as well as the employees suggested that in fact there has not been much change in the T&D initiatives pre and post recession.

According to Manager A, their firm is still in a survival mode and trying to justify every spend they make.

Training was never emphasized in Company X even when the situation was better.

For Company Y , training (especially customer service training)was always a priority and still is though the budget and initiatives remains the same.

Employees perspective on this is no different. They are experiencing the same amount of training with the same initiatives and see no improvement in budgets or activities with improving times.

The only difference is the degree of importance given to statutory training and compliance due to the increasing strictness of rules.

To conclude, the main themes that emerged that answers this research question suggests:

- Providing statutory training and compliance is high on the agenda

- Focus has been the most to provide training that helps in dealing with customers and improve their customer service.
- T&D techniques and initiatives depends on the financial situation of a firm
- There has not been much change in the pre and post recession techniques with the budget still almost static.

4.2.3 RESEARCH QUESTION NO. 3

What are the effects of these impacts/changes in techniques on the human capital in Irish SMEs?

This question stems and is dependent on the findings of question no. 2. The rationale behind this question was to find the link T&D has on motivation and productivity leading to the performance of SMEs.

The data from employees suggest that if sufficient T&D measures are taken their performance can and will improve. According to Employee A "staff is left on their own to learn" . Instead if initiatives such as providing a mentor could be instated , this can be a valuable technique.

Employees suggested that effective training seems to motivate them more which includes proper follow ups and feedbacks on the training sessions.

But since T&D initiatives have not changed pre and post recession , there have not been a change in their motivational levels because of T&D.

According to Employee A "*if an employee is good , he/she will keep performing well* " .

Even though data suggests that motivation has a positive impact on productivity , only T&D does not motivate them , instead it is recognition at work that is more motivating.

If they feel a lack of career growth and recognition they would think about going for another job and leaving the firm.

Hence, T&D is not the only factor that has an effect on the motivation and productivity rather recognition and career progression are also immensely important from the employees' perspective.

The managers perspective suggests that staff morale has gone down but lack of training has to do nothing with that but indeed it is the lack of bonuses and extrinsic rewards that has affected their motivation.

Managers believe that training is a "*two-way* " traffic as quoted by Manager A.

Managers of both companies believed that it helps in developing the individual which is beneficial for them but it also helps the organisation to achieve their goals.

Manager A suggested that according to her personal experience from previous jobs as well training helps in employees being more productive and motivated as they believe the firm is investing in them. She suggested that *it can be a very good retention strategy*.

Company X would like to invest more in training if budgets allow in the future as Manager A believed that if someone works long enough for your company and have the necessary knowledge about your firm, developing such employees can build future leaders for your firm.

Manager B linked providing training as a means to develop the KSAs within the employees as their firm prefers internal recruitment and emphasizes a lot on internal promotions. Manager B believed that this opportunity of promotions brings about a sense of security within the employees that their career is not static and results in motivation , higher productivity and an increased return on their investment in T&D activities.

The theme that is apparent is that training does have a positive impact on motivation and productivity although ,the reasons can be perceived differently by different HR managers and people in control.

Lack of T&D initiatives alone is not a de motivating factor, and does not lead in employees leaving the firm but a lack of recognition and progression are more apparent reasons that the exit interviews seems to suggest.

Similarly, working environment plays an important role apart from T&D in retaining and motivating employees.

Manager A claimed that "*not just T&D , friendly working environment can help in staff retention and motivation especially for the Generation X employees.*"

Another theme that appeared on which both employees and managers firmly seem to agree is that if an employee wants to perform well, and "*have the hunger in them to succeed*" , T&D initiatives will be more beneficial to them.

Manager A also claimed that the extent to which T&D has an effect on the motivational levels also has to do with the fact that how well educated the employee is.

According to Manager A, employees who do not hold a professional degree and works for unskilled jobs are not demanding in terms of T&D and are more focused on retaining their jobs especially in these recessionary times where as fresh graduates or those who have gone through an educational system prefers to seek more developmental and training initiative that can boost their career. And hence, accordingly are motivated by T&D initiatives.

CHAPTER 5:
DISCUSSION

5.1 DISCUSSION

The researcher while choosing qualitative methods was aware of the fact that the research findings cannot be generalised.

Each firm can deal with the situations differently and the personal opinions of the top management about the importance of T&D counts a lot.

In spite of this , there were certain themes that appeared both from the managers perspective and some from the employees.

Some of these themes and patterns were in contrast with the extant literature that is present on T&D and which is discussed earlier in Chapter 2 while some further contributed and confirmed with what the authors have to say.

The main objective of this research was to find out to what extent has T&D been effected within the SMEs as a result of budget tightenings during recession.

The findings suggested that recession has not been particularly hard on T&D , in fact it is every area of the business that has been effected equally.

In reality, there exists a trend within the firms. The data collected by managers and employees collectively suggests that firms that provided and regarded T&D as important during good times still continue to do so and vice versa.

These themes are in contrast with the literature discussed in 2.4 "Training and Development in Recession" where authors like Cain et.al ,(2011),pp.1 , Coleman ,(2009) , Minton.Eversole (2010), Paradise &Morley (2009),and Taylor(2010) all argued that as and when a recession situation comes in reducing T&D budgets is the first choice of the top management.

It was earlier discussed in 2.2 , that SMEs are experiencing a lot of funding issues and access to loans have become all the more difficult due to their size and hence, the high risk associated with them. (Report on SME lending market in Ireland,2013 , SMEs in Ireland,2011,pp.18 , Department ofFinance,2012 , Irish Business and Employers Confederation,2012).

But the in depth interviews done with the managers revealed that they have not encountered problems in accessing loans as long as their accounts show the correct situation of the firm.

The managers went onto claim that indeed it is not the rejection of loans or lack of funding due to which recession has been particularly hard but rather their overdependence on the domestic demand , which has decreased drastically over time.

The findings reveal that customers are constantly seeking better value and since two out of the four firms investigated were service oriented , this aspect has been particularly harsh on them.

Though, these claims adds on to the literature present on SMEs which claims that one of the reason of recession being particularly harsh on them is decreasing consumer disposable income which results in them seeking better value for their hard earned money spent.

Authors discussed the importance of strategic T&D and the idea of carrying out those training initiatives which will bring benefit to the firm. This concept was particularly emphasized by IBEC (2010) in their report on "T&D in Recessionary Times".

Findings of this research agrees to this literature and suggested that training initiatives provided to maximize customer service skills with in employees are paramount as customers are regarded as the most influential element if a business has to survive in today's climate.

Hence, maximum training initiatives taken are those which will improve the employees skills to deal with customers along with the absolute necessary statutory and compliance training.

Another point that the research findings suggest which again confirms the literature in the report provided by IBEC(2010) is that indeed it is the front staff that is provided the maximum training as they are the ones dealing with customers face to face on a daily basis.

Townsend(2013) talked about how firms are adapting cheaper methods to save up on travelling costs , the research shows that in deed cheaper techniques are being thought of and firms usually ask the already trained employees to train up the new trainees in an attempt to save up the costs of hiring external trainers.

Along with this most of the training is on the job to save up on travelling costs. Even though, those employees interviewed referred "*mentoring*" should be a good technique to adopt but those SMEs who were not very keen on providing training even during good times continue to do so and no such initiatives are being taken as of now.

A report by the European Commission (2009) on a Guide to Training in SMEs suggested that research shows that even if SMEs provide adequate training to its employees they are quick to

leave to join larger enterprises , as soon as they get a better package , and this is one of the reason why managers remain on a back foot to provide training.

This statement was observed to be very confidently contradicted by both the managers interviewed for this research.

They claimed if the firm and the top management regards training as important , they will continue to provide it even if the employees leave the firm soon after. Manager A claimed that personally he/she won't be hesitant but would imply repayment of a certain amount if the employee leaves the firm early, where as Manager B was very stern in stating that till the time the employee is working for their firm and considering how important customer service is to their company , due to the nature of the business they cannot afford having an untrained employee exposed to the customer.

T&D has been extensively linked to motivation, job satisfaction and productivity. (Refer Chapter no. 2.5)

According to Ehrhardt et.al ,2011,pp.480-482 and Graham&Nufukha,2010, T&D initiatives can help in motivating employees and up skilling them results in higher confidence in their job leading to a better performance.

Though, there existed a gap in the literature considering SMEs in particular in a recession situation.

The findings from this research yielded data that adds on to similar theories but with a few more insights.

First of all, the data reveals that T&D initiatives only do not motivate the employees, factors like recognition at work , progression in their career, and promotions are as or in certain scenarios more important elements that lead to motivation and subsequently followed by higher productivity.

Employee A went on to say that even though training initiatives can improve performance but being a good employee he/she will continue to work hard and strive to improve their productivity in spite of training provided or not. But recognition holds a lot of importance and to a certain extent is the main determinant when it comes to motivation.

Though according to Manager A , in his/her personal opinion training helps in providing a feeling within the employees that organisation invests in them and hence could prove to be an excellent retention strategy.

But, also not to ignore the fact which both the employees and managers seems to suggest that in today's climate if an employee gets a better opportunity with better extrinsic rewards , they will be quick to leave the job irrespective of whether T&D initiatives are in place or not.

Hence, motivation derived from extrinsic rewards have a bigger role to play in contributing to job satisfaction than T&D initiatives especially considering the recession situation.

Another interesting in sight and a new contribution to the literature that emerged from the managers perspective was that employees who are working in unskilled jobs or for some reason not able to complete their studies and hence, do not hold a professional degree tends to be less demanding in their T&D needs and do not associate motivation with training but rather with aspects like the nature of the work or the working environment.

This compared to the graduates who have invested in earning a degree are seen to be more passionate about progression and constantly developing their skills or career growth.

Managers and employees also suggested that how beneficial training is also depends on the individual and their hunger and how passionately they want growth in their career.

Dola &Noor,2012,pp.15-26 , Alvarez (2004) , Bouris &Sahinidis ,2007,pp.64-68 , Chen et.al ,(2004) , Kanelopoulous &Atkivos(2006) and Swart et.al (2005) have all done extensive work on the importance of having effective training practices to yield maximum benefit from their investment in training.

Research findings suggest that indeed it is essential for SMEs to base their training initiatives according to the current requirements and hence a lot of training initiatives in place are those that facilitate improving customer service skills within the employees so that their products and services can provide better value to the customers which is so important for the success of the firm or even to survive in the current climate as customers are constantly looking for better value due to low spending powers.

This becomes particularly important for SMEs as they are mostly non exporting firms and completely depends on the domestic demand.

Apart from this , to maximize learning from training initiatives it is highly recommended and is indeed practiced by SMEs according to the findings to have follow ups and feedback sessions in place.

From the managers perspective this enables a firm to know whether employee is gaining from the training being provided and are they able to reciprocate the new knowledge acquired in their job responsibilities.

From an employees' perspective , follow ups and asking for feedbacks such as if they would want something else to be added in the way training is being provided, or any particular technique that they prefer will make them feel as important and hence, the transfer of learning will be maximized.

This research contradicted some of the literature and confirmed some. It also brought up some new insights which will be discussed in "further research".

5.2 LIMITATIONS

Every research tends to have limitations. A researcher can try to eliminate them to make the study more reliable and valid.

Reliability of a study refers to the reproducibility of the findings whereas validity is the extent to which findings are accurate. (Anderson, 2010, pg 141).

External validity (Saunders et al, 2009,pg 158) can be a limitation for this research. The sample size for this research was four, which means four firms were representing the whole of the Irish SME sector and this can be a small, " non-representative " sample. Hence, the case of external validity can come in. This is also referred to as generalisabilty. (Saunders et al, 2009, pg 158).

Generalising this research to all Irish SMEs can be contradictory.

Reliability can be tested by doing follow up research using different methods. This process is also known as triangulation (Anderson, 2010, pg 141). Other limitations also includes the interviewers (researchers) skill as it can affect the quality of the research.

As the interviewee's wished to keep their identity confidential during this research, it can sometimes be problematic to present findings in a comprehensive manner. (Anderson, 2010, pg 141).

Kvale(1996, pg 84) mentions that “ interviewing is closer to art than to standardized social science method”.

Hence, the researcher's skills were very crucial while interviewing. There is a personal bias being introduced here. The sample size being chosen were those SMEs that were easily accessible, due to personal contacts or favors from associations like ISME. It may be so, that they do not possess the relevant information.

Experience of the researcher in conducting research also affects the credibility and quality of the research (Goldstein, Understanding the self-critical for Qualitative Research).

This was the first attempt of the researcher to conduct an in depth interview, hence, the inexperience could have come in while making observations, judging the body language or the ability to initiate the interviewee to share more information.

In case of this research, the researcher lacks experience which can have an influence. The researcher's way of dressing, presenting, conducting the whole interview can affect the openness to which the interviewee answers questions. (Goldstein, Understanding the self-critical for Qualitative Research)

CHAPTER 6:
CONCLUSION AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 CONCLUSION

It is evident from the research that the nature of the services a firm is providing and the perspectives of the top management regarding the contribution of T&D towards the development of the human capital along with the extent to which adopted practices can lead to the success of the firm are very important in deciding how recession will affect the practices.

If the managers always regarded T&D as an important practice even before the recession situation prevailed , they continue to do so and regard it important.

On the other hand , if providing training was never a priority for a firm, they still do not look to provide these initiatives.

Apart from this, the financial situation of a company is also closely related to the amount of T&D that is provided. For e.g.: Company Y is still doing well even in these recessionary times and hence are providing adequate amount of T&D whereas its different in Company X as it claims to be in the survival mode.

Though, what is interesting to consider is that Company Y owes a big part of its success to training its employees in order to deliver a good customer service which is regarded as so important for the success of their firm considering the nature of their business.

Company X on the other hand , did not cut down the budget but never had an adequate sum allotted to T&D initiatives. Now, the situation does not allow then to increase it even if the HR manager thinks it can motivate and retain employees. But a question that can be asked here is that ,is lack of training pre recession the reason why Company X is not able to perform better in these times?

Previously, customer didn't seek so much value in their services and they were able to manage their operations well even without adequate training measures.

There still was not sufficient literature present that provided qualitative data concerning whether managers of SMEs remained on a back foot when providing T&D to employees fearing they would go on to join the larger enterprises. This research contributed to that knowledge stating that this is not the case.

Managers still provide T&D , as they believe they cannot take the risk of having un trained employees till the time they are in their company.

Customers have become too critical of the products and services and it's no longer about customer satisfaction but in the current scenario it's about "customer delight". If the customer is not satisfied they are quick to switch to competitors , who will give them better value for their money.

The findings suggest that the main types of training initiatives in place today are customer service training, statutory and compliance training which has become all the more important or indeed an absolute necessity in today's climate with the rules and regulations becoming stricter with frequent audits especially from the Health and Safety departments.

Some initiatives to develop employees such as offering courses such as "retail management diplomas" are still in place though approval of such programs have become difficult for those SMEs specially who do not invest more in T&D initiatives compared to the pre-recession situation.

According to employees as well as managers T&D does help in getting employees more motivated and enables them to perform well but it is not the only factor.

Recognition at work and progressing in their career is equally important for employees. Without recognition , even adequate training does not seem to help them in increasing their productivity to its full extent.

An interesting point made was that training alone does not retain employees. Though, managers agreed that T&D initiatives do act as a good retention strategy but employees regarded recognition and career growth as much more important factors and revealed if they are a good performer they continue to perform in spite of the recession situation or lack of training initiatives.

Another gap in the literature that was identified was the ability of T&D techniques to intrinsically motivate employees or they just perceive it as a chance to gain promotion.

The findings revealed that the chances of promotion up skilling and training leads to , can act as an intrinsic motivator, but considering the recession situation , employees regard extrinsic motivators such as bonuses , pay rises as more important. Even if training is provided in a firm , a better package from another company will not stop an employee from leaving and taking up that job. This relates to the fact that training does not necessarily increase organisational commitment within employees especially considering this recession situation.

Motivation , employees derive from training is also dependent on how effective the given training is.

Both the employees and managers agreed that follow-ups , feedbacks and a proper needs analysis , all contribute towards effective training which maximizes the return on the training investment.

For e.g. In a recession situation many organisation have trained their employees on the importance of customer services and the proper ways of dealing with customers in difficult situations.

It rather motivates the employees more and maximizes the transfer of learning if employees are ensured that training and up skilling form pre requisites for future promotions. It assures them that they could be the one in line for the next opportunity bringing in that feeling of career growth.

All these new insights can be researched further and this aspect is discussed in more detail in the next section.

6.2 FURTHER RESEARCH

T&D is an important part of the domain of human resources.

There are a lot of further research that can be done which can add valuable information to the existing literature.

First of all, the findings of this research, can be investigated further to increase the credibility and validity of the research using quantitative methods.

A larger sample size can be used which will make the research more profound.

The context of this research was Ireland, similar research can be conducted using different contexts , especially that of European countries to compare and contrast the extent to which recession has affected T&D with in SMEs in their countries.

Similarly, the unit of analysis can be altered to larger enterprises to see how has recession affected T&D in their organizations.

Further research can be done to explore more about the link between motivation and recognition that came out so strongly in the research findings.

Another area that can be explored is the link between the financial situation of a firm and the training budget.

It would be interesting to know that if a firm is in survival mode, will that have an effect on the training budget or firms that regard T&D as essential will still keep this budget paramount.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering T&D is one of the factors that leads to motivation within employees it was seen that some SMEs still do not place as much importance on it.

Employees cited that more techniques like mentoring can help them in being more productive at work.

The researcher felt many SMEs still do not have a well developed human resource department to provide and implement the right training.

The researcher realised this in the process of trying to approach SMEs for interviews where many of them could not participate since they did not have a proper HR department or any training in place.

If management can invest more in their human resource department it would help them in taking more initiatives.

Firms that did not prioritize training in the past when the situation of the country was good are usually the ones still not investing in training and now circumstances do not allow them to do so.

But with this situation where customer spending has decreased and their demands have increased in terms of product and service value, the need for training has increased but they lack the efficient system and a HR department to take care of this aspect.

Hence, SMEs need to improve their HR department if better T&D initiatives have to be implemented.

Managers also, need to link training to rewards such as further promotions which can make an employee more interested in training itself and will maximize the benefits of training through higher motivation as well as satisfy the need for recognition and career progression. If this link is

explained properly to the employee , their need to look for better jobs can be reduced as they will see better salaries and extrinsic rewards coming their way in the future.

A SME should be proactive rather than reactive. This requires having a clear strategy that they can pursue through good and bad times. To survive these recessionary times they require a solid balance sheet which even the interviewee's suggested. If they do not have high amount of debts over them , acquiring funds would not pose any problems for them.

Customers are the most important element than can determine their success or failure; hence, spending in customer service training will indeed provide them with a competitive advantage through building strong customer relationships , which even the findings suggest.

CHAPTER 7:
REFLECTION AND SKILL
DEVELOPMENT

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Reflection or "to reflect" can be defined as thinking profoundly about an experience that can improve your understanding or changes the way the researcher looks at a certain event.

This report will help the researcher reflect on the experiences , undertaking this dissertation , what was learned from it and what is being taken forward into the future.

The researcher will reflect on the four key aspects of process, sources, formulating the dissertation itself and lastly and according to the researcher's personal opinion the most important of all , the own self learning and development process.

7.2 REFLECTION

7.2.1 REFLECTION ON THE PROCESS

The researcher always had a keen interest in the domain of human resources which earlier led to the decision of taking it up as the stream for the MBA program.

The researcher always intended to come up with a topic which was closely related to the stream of HR. Hence, the initial process of thinking had already started as soon as the researcher started with the MBA program.

The domain of business studies was not new to the researcher. Already holding an honors degree in business administration along with a two year teaching experience of A levels business studies, it did not take very long for the researcher to decide that T&D is one area which has been off interest to the researcher all along.

Another reason was that the researcher was well aware of the various concepts in HRM and T&D along with motivation has always been attractive topics since they deal with human nurturing and psychology in which the researcher holds keen interest.

Initially, as the researcher started reading about T&D and motivation, it was realised that motivation was a very well researched and an extremely vast topic , but T&D is one aspect where there is still scope for research especially when it comes to exploring the link between T&D and motivation.

This led to the researcher exploring more about T&D.

More in depth reading led the researcher to find more relationships such as how has the ongoing recession affected T&D within firms.

Since, the researcher wanted to do something in the context of Ireland, SMEs were the first choice due to their immense importance within the country. A little research into SMEs in Ireland and the researcher knew that even though they are immensely important , there is lack of research in this area regarding T&D.

The time for this research was a limitation. Therefore, the sample size had to kept small. The researcher knew that even though one or maximum two interviews can be conducted through personal contacts, rest will have to be approached.

In retrospect, an area where the researcher could have improvised was to start the process of approaching the potential participants for the interviews from around the submission of the proposal. Even though the researcher started the process in June, it took almost 20-25 days to get their approval to participate in the research.

There was a lot of information about recession and T&D mostly in general and not in the context of Ireland available as secondary resources , but all that information had to be refined to fit in to the designated word count of the literature review.

Finding sufficient and relevant information on all the three variables together was difficult. Hence, the researcher changed the technique and instead tried to link two variables together. For e.g. SMEs and Ireland , T&D and SMEs , T&D and motivation etc.

The researcher came across much more relevant information this way.

The first and foremost research tool that was used was the DBS database but the researcher must agree that GOOGLE SCHOLAR has indeed been used quite a lot to search relevant material too.

Journal articles were paramount, though the researcher referred to some books from the DBS library , in order to form the background knowledge but those resources were not actively used in the dissertation.

The researcher found that Journal articles provided all the relevant up to date information required and with the time constraint , reading books would have consumed a lot of time.

Considering the importance of SMEs with in Ireland, it was indeed surprising to know that there's still a lack of literature around it.

It was also surprising to read about how T&D has been an issue and how strongly it has been related to recession.

7.2.2 REFLECTION ON SOURCES

The topic areas had to be researched in detail. Areas such as T&D in general has the most amount of literature already present. With every literature being read ,the researcher made sure that notes were taken of anything that was of relevance in context with the dissertation.

This helped the researcher to compare and contrast the literature in a comprehensive manner for the review.

Notes that were made were cited then and there so that the researcher does not miss any in text citation while writing the review and does not have to waste time in referring back to the journal while writing.

The researcher was able to find a good amount of literature on the topics that were required to be explored for the review in accordance with the research questions. Once the research questions were formulated it was clear for the researcher which topics were to be explored more and dug deep into for the literature.

Reading past dissertations seemed to make things more clearer and seemed promising but the researcher decided not to dwell too much into them. The main reasons for not doing so were first of all, it would have been very time consuming and secondly, the researcher wanted to maintain a unique style not influenced by any specific way of writing or approaching the thesis.

Since, the researcher was inexperienced, and this was the very first attempt towards a proper dissertation , it was wise to skim through past dissertations to get an idea of the format, but reading too much of it would have influenced the researcher's own work.

Finding literature on topics such as effect of recession particularly on SMEs, or statistics about SMEs itself, the researcher had to dig into a lot of official reports from sources like the Department of Finance, European Commission etc. On many instances , these reports had insights about

unemployment rates and its effect on motivation with in employees which were helpful for the literature review concerning motivation and T&D .

Hence, it was an amalgamation of all the resources , with in the discipline of T&D , HR or even sources outside of it.

7.2.3. REFLECTION ON DISSERTATION FORMULATION

The resources used supported the dissertation in a lot of ways. They formed the foundation of the thesis. The knowledge gained through these resources helped to find gaps in the literature upon which research questions were built.

It would not be wrong to say that a major part of the thesis depended on the knowledge generated by these resources.

Once the research questions were formulated , the interviews could be done.

The findings were a mixture of insights that were new as well as contained information that confirmed the literature.

For e.g. the findings suggested that there is a trend that exists on how important T&D is to SME and recession has not affected the basic importance of it. This aspect was new if compared to the past literature.

Interesting and surprising insights such as how employees that hold a professional degree are more demanding towards T&D techniques rather than those working for unskilled jobs.

This is one area which can be even further researched to add valuable literature to the domain of T&D.

Another surprising finding that emerged was the link between financial situation of a firm and the amount of T&D provided. Though, the sample size was small and research cannot be generalised there still emerged a theme which suggested that the SMEs which are financially strong are providing adequate amount of T&D rather than those in survival modes.

And lastly, what seems relevant to discuss here is, that T&D is not the only preferred area to face the heat rather if a firm is in a difficult situation it is every spend that has to be justified. Many

authors suggested that T&D was the first and foremost area to face the brunt in any crisis situation , though the findings contradicted the literature.

These findings are already discussed in chapter 4.2 and 5.1.

As the researcher mentioned earlier, this is just one example of the several insights and contradictions with that of the literature mentioned in detail in the earlier chapters.

To come up, with these insights , the researcher went through a rigorous procedure of transcribing the data, followed by coding and analysing it in order to come up with the common pattern and themes.

Though, this procedure proved to be helpful for the researcher as it allowed to become immensely familiar with the information , making handling and balancing the findings easier.

7.2.4 REFLECTION ON YOUR OWN LEARNING

This aspect of the report is regarded as the most important of all as this has to deal with the learning the researcher takes into the future.

Maple and Webster (1980) defined learning as " a process through which one's behavior changes on account of experience".

If seen in retrospect the graph of learning has been increasing from the start of the MBA program up to this dissertation .

In the light of the four approaches to learning by Smith (2003) which are behaviorism (to understand and connect) , cognitivism (create and evaluate) , constructivism (analyse and apply) and connectivism (recognize and connect), the researcher has juggled starting from the stage of behaviorism and cognitivism where there was the ability to understand the concepts up to the stage of constructivism and connectivism.

During the course of this thesis, the researcher tried to analyze and apply different concepts on SMEs specifically, as well as attempted to connect different findings and the causal relationships they can have with each other.

This MBA also helped the researcher to move from a solitary learning style where working alone was always preferred to that of social, due to group working or during the various interactions with fellow students discussing each other's topics.

When a researcher requires to reflect on its work Kolb's learning cycle (1984) is a very useful tool. Kolb's experiential model moves through a cyclical four stage learning cycle.

These four stages include concrete experiencing (CE - feeling) , reflective observation (RO- watching) , abstract conceptualization (AC- thinking) and active experimentation (AE- doing).

The act of feeling and watching results in a learner to diverge (CE-RO). Indulging in watching and thinking (RO-AC) which should be the next step in the learning cycle is referred to as assimilating the information leading to thinking and doing (AC-AE), and this takes the researcher to the last stage of doing and feeling again (AE-CE). Hence, the process of learning goes on.

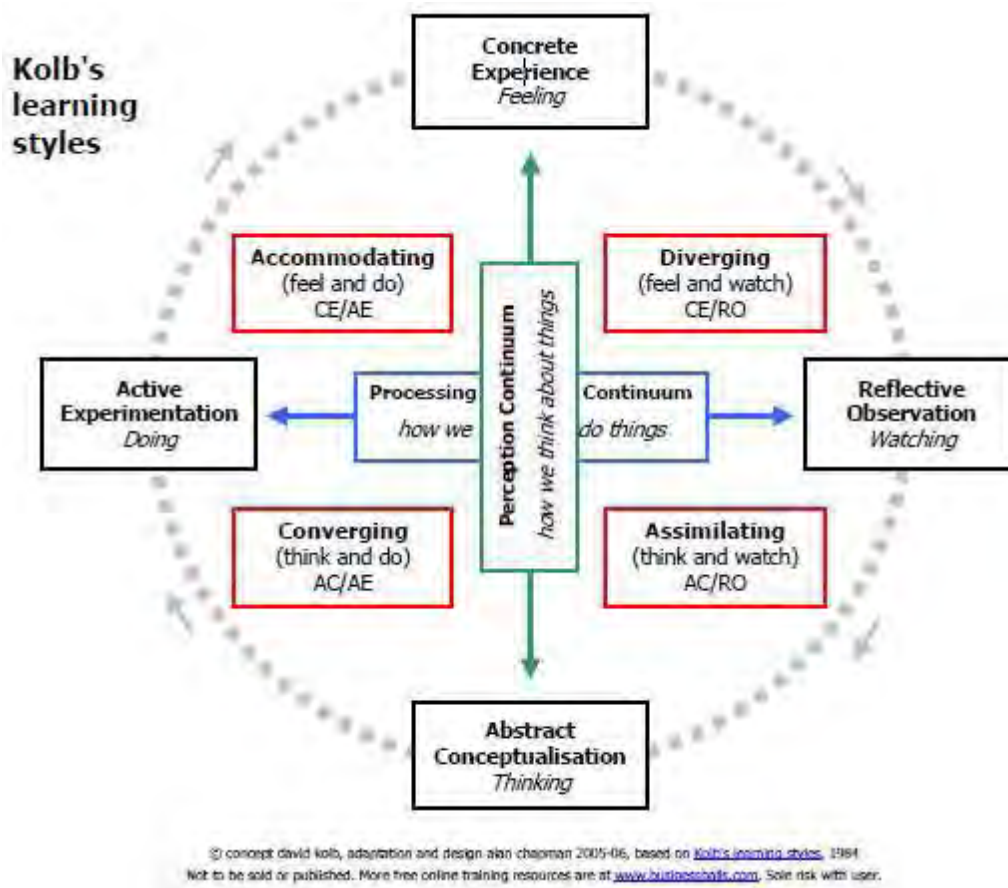


FIGURE 6: KOLB'S LEARNING STYLES

SOURCE: CHAPMAN (2010)

The researcher has moved through this cycle several times during the course of this dissertation. From the stage of merely feeling about some concept to be included to reading more about it , thinking more deeply about the appropriateness of the topic and then to deciding whether to implement it or not.

Refer Appendix G for the researcher's SWOT analysis.

7.3 SKILL DEVELOPMENT

This research has enabled the researcher to develop skills to a great extent, Some of the skills that were acquired or enhanced are mentioned below.

(1) Cognitive Skills:

There was a lot of knowledge acquisition throughout the course of this dissertation. Learning and reading deeply about T&D , recession and Ireland itself increased the knowledge base of the researcher tremendously.

(2) Critical and Analytical Skills:

Handling so much information allowed to researcher to judge the value of information as everything could not have been included due to the word limit. This helped the researcher in gaining critical skills which will be helpful in the future.

Primary information collected had to be analysed, and conclusions had to be drawn which required good analytical skills. To acquire them the researcher even read a lot of material about analysing data. This research have none the less definitely made the researcher better in analysing data.

This skills will be helpful in the future as the researcher hopes to work as an HR analyst.

(3) Research and Investigative Skills:

Indulging in the process of a qualitative research methodology , picking up and reading adequate journals and literature from other relevant sources have all helped in enhancing research and investigative skills which will also be helpful to conduct future researches.

(4) Communication Skills:

Communication skills have improved immensely as the researcher had to conduct interviews which positively affected the oral skills and writing the whole thesis also helped in improving the written skills.

(5) Interpersonal Skills:

During the course of conducting interviews, the researcher had to interact and explain the research to many people in order for them to agree to be a part of it. Interviews required patiently listening to what the interviewees had to say as well as initiating conversation on many instances. All these experiences resulted in increasing the interpersonal skills of the researcher to take in to the future., which will be of help for the professional life.

(6) Personal Management Skills:

The researcher has always been motivated when it came to studies , but lacked proper time management skills. But as this research was highly time constrained, managing the time properly was a necessity, and even though it could have been done better, the researcher still learnt a lot about getting tasks done in particular time frames. No doubt, the researcher will be able to manage researches better in the future.

(7) Self-awareness:

This aspect was highly taken care of while interviewing the participants. Care had to be taken that anything the researcher said should not be personal or hurt anyone's sentiments. Being emotionally aware of the situation , words that the researcher used while conversing, all improved the skills around being more self aware and handling the situation well.

The various skills mentioned were picked up from Cameron (2005).

There are a no. of skills especially like Information and Communication Technology skills or Numeracy and quantitative skills which could not be enhanced due to the nature of the research being qualitative. The researcher would want to further take up researches with quantitative methodologies to enhance these skills.

7.4 CONCLUSION

To conclude, the researcher is content with the way the research has been conducted in the given resources and available time. The researcher would not change much if given a chance at this point. The only thing that can be improved for the future is how the researcher manages time. Time could have been managed a little better. For e.g. the process of finding interviewees could have been started earlier , but since the researcher was inexperienced and this was the first attempt, the researcher could not realize that it can be a very time consuming process. None, the less , the research was finished on time and the researcher takes this as a lesson for the future to conduct many more researches in a comprehensive manner.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:

DIFFERENT LEARNING STYLES:

Apart from the "theorist" style that the researcher adopts there exists three other learning styles as put forward by Honey and Mumford (1986)

ACTIVISTS are the ones who like to seek challenge in their learning. They are open minded people who get bored with the act of implementation. They are the ones who believe in actually doing things and are rather impulsive.

REFLECTORS are those who do not like to be rushed into decision making. They usually take a back seat, observe and analyse things deeply. They like to work with data both past and present to come up with reports that can help them make a decision.

PRAGMATISTS like practicality. They prefer putting ideas into the real world. They like to experiment things and are quick to act. They avoid getting into long discussions.

APPENDIX B : T&D TECHNIQUES USED WITHIN ORGANIZATIONS

There are several T&D methods available. The use of a particular method depends on the training needs and objectives. Training methods can be classified into two categories:

I. On-the-Job Methods

This refers to the methods of training in which a person learns a job by actually doing/performing it. A person works on a job and learns and develops expertise at the same time.

1. Understudy

In this the employee is trained by his or her supervisor. The trainee is attached with his or her senior and called understudy or assistant. For example, a future manager might spend few months as assistant to the present manager.

2. Job rotation

This refers to shifting/movement of an employee from one job to another on regular intervals. This technique is particularly famous with the SMEs.

3. Special projects

The trainees' may ask to work on special projects related with departmental objectives. By this, the trainees will acquire the knowledge of the assigned work and also learn how to work with others.

4. Experience

It refers to learning by doing. This is one of the oldest methods of on-the-job training. Although this is very effective method but it also very time-consuming and wasteful. Thus it should be followed by other training methods.

5. Committee assignment

In this, the trainees become members of a committee. The committee is assigned a problem to discuss and make recommendations.

6. Coaching & Mentoring:

In this, the supervisor or the superior acts as a guide and instructor of the trainee. Sometimes an external coach is hired. This involves continuous evaluation and support. Effectiveness of this method largely depends on the skills of the coach.

II. Off-the-Job Methods

These methods require trainees to leave their workplace and concentrate their entire time towards the training objectives. In the off-the job methods, the development of trainees is the primary task. Off-the-job training methods could include:

1. Special courses and lectures

These are the most traditional method of developing personnel. Special courses and lectures are either designed by the company itself or by the management/professional schools. Companies then sponsor their trainees to attend these courses or lectures. These are the quick and most simple ways to provide knowledge to a large group of trainees.

2. Conferences and seminars

By attending conferences and seminars, trainees try to look at a problem from different angles as the participants are normally from different fields and sectors.

3. Selected reading

This is the self-improvement training technique. The persons acquire knowledge and awareness by reading various trade journals and magazines. Most of the companies have their own libraries. The employees become the members of the professional associations to keep abreast of latest developments in their respective fields.

4. Case study method

This technique was developed by Harvard Business School, U.S.A. It is used as a supplement to lecture method. A case is a written record of a real business situation/problem faced by a company. The case is provided to the trainees for discussion and analysis. Identification and diagnose of the problem is the aim in case study method. Alternate courses of action are suggested from participants.

5. Programmed instruction/learning

This is step-by-step self-learning method where the medium may be a textbook, computer or the internet. This is a systematic method for teaching job skills involving presenting questions or facts, allowing the person to respond and giving the learner immediate feedback on the accuracy of his or her answers.

6. Brainstorming

This is creativity-training technique, it helps people to solve problems in a new and different way. In this technique, the trainees are given the opportunity to generate ideas openly and without any fear of judgment. Criticism of any idea is not allowed so as to reduce inhibiting forces. Once a lot of ideas are generated then they are evaluated for their cost and feasibility.

7. Role-playing

In this method, the trainees are assigned a role, which they have to play in an artificially created situation. For example, a trainee is asked to play the role of a trade union leader and another trainee is required to perform the role of a HR manager. This technique results in better understanding of each other's situation by putting foot in other's shoes.

8. Vestibule schools

Large organizations frequently provide what are described as vestibule schools a preliminary to actual shop experience. As far as possible, shop conditions are duplicated, but instruction, not output is major objective." A vestibule school is operated as a specialized endeavor by the personnel department. This training is required when the amount of training that has to be done exceeds the capacity of the line supervisor; a portion of training is evolved from the line and assigned to staff through a vestibule school." The advantage of a vestibule school is specialization.

9. Apprenticeship training

Apprenticeship training is a structured process by which people become skilled workers through a combination of classroom instruction and on-the-job training.

10. In-basket exercise

In this technique, the trainees are provided background information on a simulated firm and its products, and key personnel. After this, the trainees are provided with in-basket of memos, letters, reports, requests and other documents related with the firm. The trainee must make sense out of this mass of paperwork and prepare memos, make notes and delegate tasks within a limited time period."

11. Business games

Business games involve teams of trainees. The teams discuss and analyse the problem and arrive at decisions. Generally, issues related with inventories, sales, R&D, production process, etc. are taken up for consideration.

12. Behavior modeling

This is structured approach to teach specific supervisory skill. This is based on the social learning theory in which the trainee is provided with a specific model of behavior and is informed in advance of the consequences of engaging in that type of behavior.

13. Sensitivity (T-group) training

In this type of training, a small group of trainees consisting of 10 to 12 persons is formed which meets in an unstructured situation. There is no set agenda or schedule or plan. The main objectives are more openness with each other, increased listening skills, trust, support, tolerance and concern for others. The trainers serve a catalytic role. The group meets in isolation without any formal agenda. There is great focus on inter-personal behavior. And, the trainer provides honest but supportive feedback to members on how they interacted with one another.

14. Multiple management

This technique of training was first introduced by McCormick, President of McCormick & co. of Baltimore in 1932. He gave the idea of establishing a junior board of directors. Authority is given to the junior board members to discuss any problem that could be discuss in senior board and give recommendations to the senior board. Innovative and productive ideas became available for senior board.

-Adopted from

Management.com

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE:

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE MANAGERS:

QUESTIONS

1. How important is T&D to your firm in today's time?
2. How important was it before 2008?
3. How has recession affected your firm generally?
4. Do you think recession has been particularly hard on you because of the size of your firm?
5. Have you had to cut down the T&D budget?

6. How much of the budget has been compromised? (50%, or all together)
7. What factors led to the reduction of the budget?
8. Have you experienced pressures from the top management to compromise T&D to balance budgets?
9. How did you revise your strategies regarding T&D initiatives?
- 9 b: Were any of these initiatives aligned with the organizational strategy?
10. Were any particular technique prioritized?
11. Have the budgets allocated for T&D improved overtime?
(as the recession situation is improving)

12. What are the different T&D initiatives in place today?
13. What were the T&D techniques pre recession situation?

14. How and to what extent have they changed from the pre crisis situation?
15. What role do you think as HR manager T&D plays in the performance of your employees?
16. How important is developing human capital to your firm?
17. In what ways, in your opinion can T&D effect an employee's motivation and productivity?
18. How would you describe the rate of turnover in your firm?
19. What do you think the reason could be?
20. Do you conduct exit interviews ?
21. If yes, what pattern do they seem to suggest?
22. Are you as a firm hesitant to invest in T&D because of any of those reasons?
23. How would you sum up the effect of recession and financial tightening on the amount of T&D provided to employees?

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE EMPLOYEES:

1. How much emphasis does your firm in your point of view places on T&D in today's time?
2. In your point of view , is the T&D provided by your firm sufficient?

3. What are the different ways in place right now?
4. What were the different ways pre recession?
5. Which T&D technique do you think is the most effective?
6. Is there anything more you would like to be added?
7. Has there been any effect on your motivational levels due to recession?
8. If it has changed, what could be the reason for that?
9. Do you think you are more productive if you are better motivated at work?
10. Does training motivate you?
11. Do you think Training and Development initiatives have decreased post recession?
12. Have you experienced any improvements in those initiatives as the country is coming out of recession?
13. How important is career growth and development to you in the present situation?
14. How will you rate your development and nurturing in this firm?
15. If an opportunity comes up in the future will you prefer working for a larger enterprise?

APPENDIX D: ETHICAL STANCES

DIFFERENT ETHICAL STANCES:

Apart from Situational which is chosen by the researcher for this study there can be :

UNIVERSALISM:

This stance will require the researcher to never break any ethical precepts. Breaking of any rule is wrong in moral sense and harmful to social research. (Bryman and Bella ,2011, pp.124)

ETHICAL TRANSGRESSION

(Punch,1994,pp.91) observes that some dissimulation is intrinsic to social life. This stance believes that if the researcher is completely honest with the people about his activities they are bound to hide some information which can be valuable to the research. (Bryman and Bella,2011,pp.124)

ANYTHING GOES

Denzin (1968) suggests that social researchers can study anyone in any setting provided the work has a 'scientific' purpose, does not harm participants, and does not deliberately damage the discipline. (Cited in Bryman and Bella,2011,pp.124)

APPENDIX E: REQUEST EMAIL TO COMPANIES

The following is the email sent to many companies requesting to interview their HR manager (if exists) or any of their employee.

Hi,

My name is Sara Mirza and I am a student of MBA (Human Resources) in Dublin Business School.

I am doing a research based thesis on this interesting and current topic of "Effect of recession on training and development in Irish SMEs."

I will be undertaking qualitative research (interviews) from HR managers and employees. My sample size is four companies.

I can provide you with more information about the nature of my study which will be of interest to SMEs.

It will be of great help if I can interview the HR manager of your firm or any of the employee.

I guarantee complete confidentiality and anonymity to the company or anyone interviewed. A confidentiality agreement will be issued by my school.

I am open to coming down to your office and discuss my thesis or any requirement from your side in detail.

Waiting for your reply.

Regards,

Sara Mirza

APPENDIX F: CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENTS

MANAGER A:

**Dublin Business School
Company Security Clearance and Confidentiality**

Name: SARA N. MIRZA

Dissertation Title: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE EFFECTS OF RECESSION ON TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT IN IRISH SMEs.

**Company Security Clearance
Please initial as appropriate**

1. We agree that the student(s) may undertake a dissertation of the nature indicated above and that he/she/they will be given access to appropriate information sources within our Organisation
2. We agree that copies of the finished project will be made available for assessment by staff of Dublin Business School, Liverpool John Moores University and External examiners.
3. We request that the completed dissertation be treated as confidential and not used for any other purposes other than assessment

Company Name: Nightline Logistics Group
Signed: Emma Keogh
Position: HR Manager
Date: 14 June 2013

Note to Student:

Please ensure that the original signed copy of this form is forwarded to the Postgraduate Programme Co-ordinator (Dr. Nicole Gross) and a copy of this form also be attached to the Dissertation Submission.

MANAGER B:

**Dublin Business School
Company Security Clearance and Confidentiality**

Name: SARA NAQI MIRZA

Dissertation Title: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF RECESSION
ON TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT IN IRISH SMEs.

**Company Security Clearance
Please initial as appropriate**

1. We agree that the student(s) may undertake a dissertation of the nature indicated above and that he/she/they will be given access to appropriate information sources within our Organisation
2. We agree that copies of the finished project will be made available for assessment by staff of Dublin Business School, Liverpool John Moores University and External examiners.
3. We request that the completed dissertation be treated as confidential and not used for any other purposes other than assessment

Company Name: PELCO LTD (CUSMAN ASLAM)

Signed: [Signature]

Position: FINANCIAL CONTROLLER

Date: 17/06/2013

Note to Student:

Please ensure that the original signed copy of this form is forwarded to the Postgraduate Programme Co-ordinator (Dr. Nicole Gross) and a copy of this form also be attached to the Dissertation Submission.

EMPLOYEE A:

Name: Sara N. Mirza

Dissertation Title: An Empirical study on the effects on recession on Training and Development in Irish SMEs.

Company Security Clearance
Please initial as appropriate

1. We agree that the student(s) may undertake a dissertation of the nature indicated above and that he/she/they will be given access to appropriate information sources within our Organisation
2. We agree that copies of the finished project will be made available for assessment by staff of Dublin Business School, Liverpool John Moores University and External examiners.
3. We request that the completed dissertation be treated as confidential and not used for any other purposes other than assessment

Company Name: Londis

Signed: Naveen

Position: Cust care associate

Date: 1/07/2013

Note to Student:

Please ensure that the original signed copy of this form is forwarded to the Postgraduate Business Programme Coordinator and a copy of this form also be included in the Dissertation.

EMPLOYEE B:

Dublin Business School
Company Security Clearance and Confidentiality

Name: SARA N. MIRZA

Dissertation Title: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE EFFECTS OF RECESSION ON TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT IN IRISH SMES.

Company Security Clearance
Please initial as appropriate

1. We agree that the student(s) may undertake a dissertation of the nature indicated above and that he/she/they will be given access to appropriate information sources within our Organisation
2. We agree that copies of the finished project will be made available for assessment by staff of Dublin Business School, Liverpool John Moores University and External examiners.
3. We request that the completed dissertation be treated as confidential and not used for any other purposes other than assessment

Company Name: in marketing

Signed: [Signature]

Position: Marketing Trainee

Date: 06/25/12

Note to Student:

Please ensure that the original signed copy of this form is forwarded to the Postgraduate Programme Co-ordinator (Dr. Nicole Gross) and a copy of this form also be attached to the Dissertation Submission.

APPENDIX G: PERSONAL SWOT ANALYSIS

Personal SWOT analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self motivator• Strong minded• Ambitious• Interpersonal skills• Hard working• Good research skills• Committed to my work• Passionate about my subject• Strong knowledge of my domain• Good with theory (helpful to undertake a qualitative research)• Good with theory (will be helpful considering my career choice)• Multiple perspective approach• Strong knowledge of the domain of Human Resources• Learning skills• Good writing skills• Multiple perspective approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tendency to lose focus• Not very organized• Can leave things for last minute• Time management• Not extremely good with technology• Does not take much initiative in striking conversations with others (can be a problem while conducting interviews)

<p>(complements undertaking qualitative research)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambitious 	
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope of more research • same research can be conducted in a no. of ways by the researcher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to get access to respondents • Priorities might change and the researcher might not be able to conduct many researches