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Colin Hughes
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A Study of Training and Development (T&D) in the Irish Financial Services Sector

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Thesis submitted for fulfilment of the award of
Master of Philosophy Degree
(MPhil)

Dublin Institute of Technology

Supervised by:
Eoghan O'Grady

School of Marketing

August 2006

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis which I now submit for examination for the award of Master of Philosophy degree (*MPhil*), is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

This thesis was prepared according to the regulations for postgraduate study by research of the Dublin Institute of Technology and has not been submitted in whole or in part for an award in any other Institute or University.

The work reported on in this thesis conforms to the principles and requirements of the Institute's guidelines for ethics in research.

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Signature Colin Hughes Date 1/11/06
Candidate

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FDI:	Foreign Direct Investment
HRM:	Human Resource Management
PMGMT:	Personnel Management
SHRM:	Strategic Human Resource Management
RBV:	Resource Based View
HRD:	Human Resource Development
LTD:	Learning Training and Development
T&D:	Training and Development
CIPD:	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
ASTD:	American Society of Training and Development
FÁS:	Foras Áiseanna Saothair (Training and Employment Authority)
EGFSN:	Expert Group on Future Skills Needs
MCI:	Management Charter Initiative
LMS:	Learning Management System
QFA:	Qualified Financial Advisor
MNC:	Multi-National Corporation
ROI:	Return on Investment
PDP:	Personal Development Plan
CLO:	Chief Learning Officer
KSAs:	Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes
LTSI:	Learner Transfer Inventory System
SME:	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
OJT:	On the Job Training

“Learning is not compulsory – neither is survival”

Dr.W.Edwards Deming (1900-1993)

ABSTRACT

The proliferation of reports on ‘lifelong learning’ in recent years has brought to the fore the importance of workplace learning. In the present knowledge economy companies with highly knowledgeable and skilled employees have a competitive edge and organisational competitiveness has a direct effect on national competitiveness. The findings of recent reports (McIver 2004; Chisholm et al 2004; NCPP 2005) suggest that the Republic of Ireland ranks poorly in relation to her European neighbours when it comes to adult participation in lifelong learning. Additionally, out of 15 EU countries, learning in the workplace is least popular in Ireland (Chisholm et al 2004). These findings are quite worrying as Ireland’s attractiveness to Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is being slowly eroded due to high labour costs, vat rates and carbon taxes. Additionally, many countries have now introduced, or are planning to offer, lower corporation tax, a major attraction of Ireland to Multi-National Corporations (MNCs) in recent decades.

However, many organisations are primarily attracted to Ireland’s highly educated and skilled workforce and it is important that we remain competitive in this regard. For this reason it is essential that lifelong learning is encouraged. The workplace is central in this regard and Human Resource Development (HRD) departments have a primary responsibility in ensuring that individuals are trained and developed. However, the research conducted on Training and Development (T&D) is focused primarily on management and not employees – the recipients of T&D. This may explain the lacuna of research into the effectiveness of T&D in organisations, as information about T&D spend and the techniques used does not help in assessing effectiveness.

This study chooses to take a holistic approach (in focusing on various levels of employees) to T&D in the Irish Financial Services Sector and consists of four research objectives. These objectives seek to ascertain the importance placed on T&D, to assess the various T&D approaches used and to determine the drivers and barriers to employee involvement in T&D. The effectiveness of T&D in one organisation (Company A) is also assessed. There are a number of interesting findings to the study, and the results reflect positively on the respondent companies and on Company A, particularly from an employee point of view. These findings are presented in Chapter Eight and suggestions for industry and government, along with recommendations for further research, are outlined in Chapter Nine.

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

'The concept of lifelong learning has become increasingly topical throughout the last decade and is a significant factor underpinning initiatives to train and develop the skills of the workforce' (McIver 2004; 9). The proliferation of reports on 'Lifelong learning', in recent years have stressed the importance of individuals educating and developing themselves throughout school, college and into the workplace. This is particularly important in the workplace, as in the new economy, work is primarily intellectual and human capital is a key source of competitive advantage to organisations, maybe the only source (Laurence Prusak, IBM in Rosenberg 2001). Put simply 'in a knowledge economy companies that have the best talent win' (Hammonds 2005; 41).

The current emphasis on learning as a key to organisational effectiveness and prosperity has raised to prominence the significance of work-based learning (Antonacopoulou 1999). Work-based learning is especially important to Ireland's competitiveness. Since the introduction of the Single European Market, which brought increased competition, research (NCCP 2005; FAS 2005) has highlighted the need for Ireland to up-skill in order to remain competitive. Grimes (2003) claims that the resurgence of the Irish economy in the 1990's came about as skill levels made up for geographical disadvantages and attracted inward investment. In fact in the four years leading up to their report Forfás (2002) found that 57% of foreign-owned companies had ranked appropriate skills levels as the biggest driver to their investment in Ireland, with high levels of productivity outweighing low corporation tax or domestic wage restraints (Grimes 2003). However, a number of factors look set to reduce Ireland's attractiveness in the near future. Ireland's 21 percent VAT rate (on Business to Consumer (B2C) electronic transactions) is one of the highest in Europe and carbon taxes may, in the near future, be significantly higher also - due to Ireland's obligations under the Kyoto protocol (EGFS 2004). Additionally, with the advent of low corporation taxes being offered by many accession states (Slovakia, Poland, Latvia, Hungary and the Czech Republic) combined with the fact that countries such as China, Singapore and Puerto Rico already have low corporation tax rates – Ireland's attractiveness is being further eroded. Porter (1990) warned about Ireland's reliance on MNCs, suggesting the development of indigenous industries as a better long term alternative, yet this advice doesn't appear to have been heeded to a large extent. These factors coupled with high inflation, increasing wage demands and a poor transport infrastructure, have seen many companies relocating to other

countries (Motorola; Gateway; Fruit of the Loom; NEC; GN Resound; Littelfuse). In light of these factors the only viable strategy for Ireland is to move up the value chain (FÁS 2005).

Not only do policy makers in Ireland now seek to ensure that skill levels remain adequate to attract investment (Grimes 2003) but they must also ensure that skill levels are enhanced. Irish Government policy, the EU Lisbon Strategy and the recent Enterprise Strategy Group report all conclude that Ireland's future must be as a high-skills, knowledge-based economy (FÁS 2005). Recent findings indicate that urgent action needs to be taken on this matter. International research indicates that Irish adults have low participation rates in learning in relation to other countries (McIver 2004) - in fact Ireland currently ranks eight out of the EU15 on participation levels in lifelong learning (Chisholm et al 2004). Additionally the National Forum on the Workplace of the future (NCPP 2005) found that there are basic skill gaps in the provision of training and uneven investment in workplace training and lifelong learning. A significant proportion of employees are not currently receiving training despite employer rhetoric. These findings suggest that we may be eroding one of the last remaining advantages that we have over competing countries. Rapid changes need to be made in order to close the gap in skills. The development of an effective framework, which supports both individual and organisational involvement in lifelong learning, will improve Ireland's performance across all sectors and this must be tackled at the individual, organisational and national level (NCPP 2005).

On an organisational level, close attention must be paid to the area of Human Resource Management (HRM) and particularly to those HR functions, which involve employee/human capital development. The Human Resource Development (HRD) function is vitally important in this regard as, despite the importance of informal and incidental learning, formal Training and Development (T&D) remains among the most important learning processes. However it is not simply a matter of devoting financial resources to T&D, organisations must ensure that they are delivering effective T&D and that employees are welcoming of developmental opportunities. The approach which an organisation takes towards HRD will largely depend on their HRM philosophy and the importance that they place on employees.

The HRD function has undergone significant change in recent years with the introduction of a number of new approaches, at all levels of the Training and Development (T&D) cycle.

The competency approach, multi-source appraisals, coaching and mentoring and the increased emphasis on return on investment (ROI), as a means for assessing the effectiveness of HRD interventions, are among the most topical of these new approaches. Additionally, while training needs have increased significantly in previous years due to the rapidly expanding use of technology (Hughey and Mussnug 1997) technology has also contributed to the T&D process in the form of e-learning. With the incremental use of e-learning in organisational T&D numerous authors (Pailing 2002; Finnegan 2005; Pantazis (2002) have begun to question its effectiveness and usefulness and the take up of this concept, hailed as a panacea at one stage, has been slow.

The question remains, however, as to whether or not organisations are actually considering the determinants of successful learning for their traditional courses aside from in the design of e-learning, and if so, to what degree? These issues need to be explored. The proliferation of new techniques and practices may be resulting in a fall off in interest in the T&D cycle as a whole, with many organisations now so eager to implement e-learning, for instance, without looking at the learning principles in regard to this, or developing an obsession with Return On Investment (ROI) calculations without considering individuals in the process. As the focus of the majority of studies shifts to specific aspects of HRD the holistic (HRM) view is lost.

Additionally many companies employ excessively general approaches to T&D and in doing so fail to address urgent and specific requirements (Coulson-Thomas 2000). The individual is often overlooked when it comes to implementing T&D and despite the rhetoric of self-development, training and development policies remain focused on organisational needs (Antonacopoulou 1999). However, there is a trend emerging which seeks to position the learner at the fore or as the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) propose in the title of their report to 'focus on the learner' (CIPD 2003c).

Many of these current T&D issues may explain Ireland's poor performance as highlighted by NCPP and EU reports. This study seeks to examine T&D in the Irish workplace in a holistic manner, looking at various levels of the T&D cycle. The means by which organisations assess individual T&D needs (Level One) is explored as is the way in which T&D initiatives are designed and delivered (Level Two and Three). It is at this stage that e-learning's usage is examined - along with employee and management attitudes towards e-learning. Lastly, the

effectiveness of T&D programmes, as measured by the organisation and as perceived by employees (Level Four) is examined. The research seeks to identify whether there is a divide between what is prescribed in the literature, best practice so to speak, and what is actually occurring. It is not suggested that organisations should simply accept theories or principles of learning as givens or laws to be blindly acted upon - as doing so may affect future progress in the development of such theories (Dwyer 2004). Instead the study intends to examine which elements of the literature organisations are taking into account and the reasons why they choose not to implement prescribed methods. A further concern is Chisholm et al's (2004) finding that out of 18 European countries, learning in a working environment is least popular in Ireland. This study researches the drivers and barriers to employee involvement in T&D, as with a better understanding of these matters organisations and government can seek to address the issues which are preventing individuals from learning and concentrate on motivating them in the most effective manner.

The research is carried out in the Irish Financial Services sector, which is deemed an appropriate industry to look at for several reasons. This sector is fast becoming a world of the one percent margin, where employees need to be up to speed operationally, technically and behaviourally (Skillsoft 2003). Additionally, this sector has undergone significant change in recent years with a number of recent mergers and acquisitions, leaving a handful of large organisations competing fiercely in similar markets. Most importantly the sector plays a significant role in the Irish economy, employing over 76,000 employees and contributing €3.7 billion to the economy each year. The focus of the study was on both employees (recipients of T&D) and HR/HRD personnel (facilitators of T&D). This focus was warranted due to the neglect of employees in similar studies. Additionally, employees at all levels were surveyed, to overcome the neglect of 'lower level' employees in similar studies in favour of management grade recipients of T&D.

The study centres around four main objectives:

1. To investigate the importance placed on learning;
2. To identify the various approaches taken throughout the T&D cycle;
3. To determine the barriers and drivers to employee involvement in T&D;
4. To examine the effectiveness of T&D and to identify areas for improvement;

These objectives are discussed in detail in Chapter Seven.

1.2 Outline of thesis

This thesis is comprised of nine chapters, five of which comprise the literature review. These are now introduced briefly.

1.2.1 Chapter Two

This chapter introduces the concept of Human Resource Management (HRM) and discusses how, if at all, it differs from the Personnel Management approach to managing employees. A number of distinct conceptions of HRM are discussed, including the Best Practice and Best Fit approaches, concluding with an examination of the Resource Based View (RBV). Common to all of these approaches is the importance placed on employees as a source of competitive advantage and in particular the importance of Human Resource Development (HRD) in developing employees. The concept of self-directed learning is introduced, prior to an examination of the Training and Development (T&D) process. The remaining literature review chapters can all be linked to this process which runs from assessing needs (Chapter Three) to designing and delivering T&D (Chapters Four and Five) and measuring its effectiveness (Chapter Six). The various determinants of successful learning which will impact on whether the employees learn effectively - and many of which must be considered when designing courses or when choosing between delivery methods - are discussed in Chapter Four.

1.2.3 Chapter Three

The assessment of individual and organisational T&D needs is an essential stage in the T&D process. Individual and organisational needs are discussed at the beginning of chapter three before discussing a number of assessment approaches. These approaches range from comprehensive job analysis to problem-centred analysis and key task analysis. These approaches have been supplemented or replaced to a large extent in recent years with competency-based approaches. These competency-based approaches vary in definition and focus and link in with performance appraisals - both single and multi-source - which determine whether the person has certain competencies. They also link with personal development plans, which outline the actions to be taken following a performance appraisal review.

1.2.4 Chapter Four

Chapter four discusses, in detail, the various determinants of successful learning. The importance of setting clear objectives when designing courses is discussed as are the factors which motivate or prevent employees to participate in T&D activities. Many of these determinants are interlinked, as if an individual is involved in setting objectives, and/or sees what the objectives of an intervention are, they can see the relevance and beneficial nature of the intervention. This in turn can motivate learners as they are not likely to be motivated to learn material that they consider to be non-beneficial and/or irrelevant. The existence of a culture of learning in an organisation will also determine how successful learning is, as if the organisation is not committed to providing learning opportunities and do not encourage line managers to support T&D then employees might find it hard to get the time off or the support needed prior, during and after the learning event. The involvement of line managers and the support from senior management are indications of whether an organisation is practicing a true HRM approach. Additionally support from line managers is vital when it comes to the trainee applying what they have learned to their job. One of the main considerations discussed in the literature is the concept of learning styles and the idea that there are four types of learners who like to learn through different means. This is particularly important when considering the delivery methods used, the focus of chapter five.

1.2.5 Chapter Five

This chapter discusses the various delivery options available to organisations, from traditional classroom-based learning to on-the-job training and e-learning. Coaching and mentoring are discussed after traditional on-the-job training as new concepts, which are increasing in popularity. Despite the claimed differences in these approaches the two terms are used interchangeably and the activities of both are often so similar that it can be hard to distinguish between them. The main focus of this chapter is on e-learning. The justification behind this is that this method of delivery has received much attention in the literature in recent years and it seems to have as many critics as it does proponents.

1.2.6 Chapter Six

Chapter six considers the final stage of the T&D process i.e. measuring the effectiveness of T&D initiatives. It is quite important that T&D adds value to an organisation given the finances and time dedicated at all stages of the T&D process. This chapter centres around Kirkpatrick's four level framework, with a discussion on each stage and a focus on ROI as a

prescribed fifth stage of the evaluation framework. However ROI, while it is deemed vital by certain academics, has many critics who for the most part disagree that the benefits of T&D can actually be measured accurately and isolated from other factors which improve performance.

1.2.7 Chapter Seven

Following on from a five chapter literature review, chapter seven, the research methodology chapter, outlines the four objectives of the study and the techniques used to collect the relevant data. These objectives are linked directly to the previous chapters and the tools and techniques used are chosen after a detailed discussion on research paradigms, research methodologies and methods. A mixed method approach was chosen as factual information was required from a wide employee audience, for which a survey was deemed appropriate and also in depth information, views and opinions were sought from a small number of HRD personnel, for which in-depth interviews were deemed most appropriate. The interviews also served as a pre-cursor to the survey and as a way of ensuring that the content of the survey was appropriate. This chapter seeks to justify the use of the chosen methods and provides a detailed account of how the research was conducted and the limitations of the study.

1.2.8 Chapter Eight

Chapter eight analyses the findings of the research. Responses from both the interviews and the survey are discussed under the four research objectives set out in chapter seven. The survey was administered, for the most part, online and in some cases a hard copy was provided. The online survey tool conducted some primary analysis but the data was exported into SPSS to allow for more detailed analysis. The interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher and then analysed under a number of headings.

1.2.9 Chapter Nine

Chapter nine discusses the implications of this research for industry and academia. It makes recommendations for Company A and suggests areas which would benefit from further research.

CHAPTER TWO
HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (HRM)
AND
HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (HRD)

2.1 Introduction

It is argued that of all the resources available to an organisation, no one resource is as important and potentially beneficial as the employee and that Human Resource Management (HRM) is the corporate function with the greatest potential to drive business performance (Hammonds 2005). Organisational capability, the firm's ability to manage people to gain competitive advantage, is based on the premise that organisations do not think, make decisions, or allocate resources; people do (Ulrich and Lake 1991). This view, that people and not capital add the competitive edge, has become generally accepted (O'Keefe and Harrington 2001).

It was in the 1960's that the terminology surrounding the management of employees first changed, from 'Personnel Management' to 'Human Resource Management' (HRM). It is argued that this change brought with it an increased focus on employees as resources and assets to be developed rather than costs to be minimised as was previously the case. However, it is suggested by various writers on the topic that HRM may be merely a re-labelling of personnel management, "old wine in new bottles" (Legge 1995b: 36), or simply the discovery of personnel management by chief executives (Fowler 1987). Others argue, however, that HRM is distinct from personnel management in many ways (Torrington, Hall and Taylor 2002; Storey 1995). This chapter begins by exploring the two sides of the contentious HRM v personnel management debate. The various distinct conceptions of HRM are then outlined. Traditional HRM, with its roots in personnel management, centres on administrative efficiency and cost minimisation and could be said to be no different to personnel management. It is believed that it remains the most prevalent form of HR activity in most organisations. Strategic HRM is based on the belief that the closer the fit between HR strategy and organisational strategy (external fit) and between the various components of HRM (internal fit) the more effective an organisation will be. However there are those who believe that an organisation should have mandatory HR practices in place regardless of their size, industry or strategy. Proponents of this 'Best Practice approach' believe that only through a bundle of 'best practices' can organisations become really competitive. As the debate continued as to which approach was the best and with some people taking a middle ground and suggesting the integrated use of both approaches, the Resource Based View (RBV) emerged. The RBV suggests that in order to become competitive organisations should focus on internal resources and that valuable, rare employees are the key to

competitive advantage. The most obvious way of differentiating employees and making them valuable to an organisation is to train and develop them.

In fact learning, training and development are also of vital importance to the Strategic HRM (SHRM) and Best Practice approaches. It is recognised that learning is of paramount importance to organisations. It is seen as crucial to organisational success in today's constantly changing, uncertain business climate (Moingeon and Edmondson 1996). In business, learning is a means to enhanced workforce performance, including better products and services, lower costs, a more competitive position in the marketplace, greater innovation, improved productivity and increased market share (Rosenberg 2001). Due to the ease with which competitors can imitate organisational competencies, it is now necessary to develop competencies, which are less visible to competing organisations (Roche et al 1998). Increased knowledge and skills are examples of such competencies. These are two of the outputs of learning, which is now seen as the only sustainable source of competitive advantage. 'The only thing that gives an organisation a competitive edge...is what it knows, how it uses what it knows, and how fast it can know something new'(Laurence Prusak, IBM in Rosenberg 2001; 9).

Due to the importance placed on learning the area of Human Resource Development (HRD) has become the subject of much focus in recent years. However despite the claimed importance of HRD some organisations remain unconvinced. It is useful when examining an organisation's approach to HRD to relate back to the tenets of HRM, which emphasise the importance of employee development, line manager involvement and HR's link with strategy. These factors provide a holistic view of the importance an organisation places on employees, and their development, and whether they are practising a HR or personnel management approach. For this reason this chapter opens with a discussion around HRM and personnel management, outlining the tenets of both and using them to compare and contrast both approaches. Following a discussion on the various HR concepts the chapter concludes with a discussion on the importance of individual HRD and the process involved in facilitating employee learning through Training and Development (T&D). The T&D process is the focus of the remaining chapters.

2.2 Definitions

The 1960's signalled a change in the terminology surrounding the management of employees from Personnel Management to HRM (Miles and Snow 1984). Over the next few decades, most noticeably the 1980s and early 1990s, employers began to view employees in a different light. This change in focus was brought about by increased competitive pressures caused by deregulation and globalisation, and the influence of notable academics in the US and the UK (Fleming 2002). Anand (2001) suggests that Personnel Management is more focused on a production-based economy whereas HRM focuses more on a knowledge-based economy. This is particularly relevant today where many countries, most notably in Western Europe, are being forced to shift their focus away from manufacturing due to their inability to compete with cheaper labour in locations such as Eastern Europe and Asia.

Various debates exist in the literature as to whether HRM is different from Personnel Management and vice versa. If HRM is actually a distinctive approach then it is important to be able to define it and distinguish it from traditional Personnel Management (Guest 1987). The following quotes aid in this regard:

HRM is a distinctive approach to employment management which seeks to achieve competitive advantage through strategic deployment of a highly committed and capable workforce, using an integrated array of cultural, structural and personnel techniques
Storey (1995: 5)

Human Resource Management (HRM) is a strategic and coherent approach to the management of an organisation's most valued assets – the people working there who individually and collectively contribute to the achievement of its goals
Armstrong (1999: 3)

Human Resource Management (HRM) involves all management decisions and practices that directly affect or influence the people or human resources who work for the organisation
Fisher, Schoenfeldt and Shaw (2003: 7)

These quotes highlight the differing views which exist towards HRM. Storey (1995) notes that HRM is a distinctive approach to employee management, whereas Armstrong (1987) and Fisher, Schoenfeldt and Shaw (2003) do not differentiate HRM from Employee Management or Personnel Management. Storey (1995) and Armstrong's (1999) definitions

are similar, however, in that they both emphasise the strategic, coherent and integrative nature of HRM. Legge (1995b) also observes that the common view in virtually all definitions of HRM is that HR policies should be integrated with strategic business planning and used to reinforce an appropriate organisational culture.

However numerous authors (Armstrong 1987; Legge 1995a) question the need to differentiate between the two approaches. Armstrong suggests that 'HRM could be no more or no less than another name for personnel management' (1987: 32). Legge (1995a) also questions the difference between the two concepts arguing that HRM may be merely rhetoric used by three groups in particular (personnel managers, academics and line managers) seeking legitimacy in a hostile environment. Armstrong (1999) suggests that this re-labelling may not be such a bad thing as a new name may have been all that was needed to bring attention to the area, to aid, as Fowler (1987) suggests the discovery of personnel management by chief executives. Accompanying the argument that HRM may be simply a new title for personnel management is the suggestion that all too often people compare the normative or ideal models of HRM with the descriptive practice of personnel management. The argument made by numerous authors (Guest 1987; Legge 1989) is that if you compare like with like then the differences are few and the similarities many. If, for instance, you compare the normative statements of both HRM and personnel management you will find that both emphasise the importance of integrating HRM/ personnel management with organisational goals; both are vested firmly in line management and both emphasise individual development for both personal satisfaction and as contributory to organisational success (Legge 1989).

There is a body of thought, however, which views HRM as unique in many ways. Othman (1996), for instance, notes various differences. He states that HRM is proactive, strategic and that it values employees as a resource, whereas Personnel Management is reactive, tactical and treats employees as a cost. Guest (1987) clearly outlines the differences between the two concepts (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Personnel Management V Human Resource Management

	PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT	HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
TIME AND PLANNING PERSPECTIVE	Short term, reactive, ad hoc, marginal	Long Term, proactive, strategic, integrated
PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTACT	Compliance	Commitment
CONTROL SYSTEMS	External controls	Self control
EMPLOYEE RELATIONS PERSPECTIVE	Pluralist, collective, low trust	Unitarist, individual, high trust
PREFERRED STRUCTURES/SYSTEMS	Bureaucratic, mechanistic, centralised, formal defined roles	Organic, developed, flexible roles
ROLES	Specialist/ professional	Largely integrated into line management
EVALUATION CRITERIA	Cost minimisation	Maximum utilisation (human asset accounting)

Guest (1987: 507)

Storey (1995) proposes a twenty five item checklist contrasting personnel management and IR to HRM, the elements of which he states are stereotypical characteristics of both concepts. Some of these are common also to Guest's (1987) table yet Storey (1995) includes more detail. The common elements include the difference between compliance and commitment, meaning that employees under a personnel management system will aim only to fulfil those duties laid out in the contract, whereas within a HRM model employees will aim to go beyond their contractual obligations. The pluralism of employees under personnel management philosophy as opposed to the unitarism of HRM employees is also common to both tables. A unitarist approach is characterised by an organisation which seeks to create a shared vision between management and staff which fulfils organisational and employee needs (Anand 2001), again stressing the employee focus. However it is argued (Legge 2005) that a unitarist view may be naïve as it ignores inevitable conflicts of interest between management and employees and that in a capitalist framework, for example, there will be inherent conflict over the price of labour (Gunnigle et al 2006).

Other common elements are those around employee relations, integration, and flexibility of roles. Integration is without doubt one of the main issues in the HRM literature, to some the *sine qua non* of HRM. The involvement of line managers is also a key issue. A central belief

of the HR philosophy is that human resources are so critical for business success that their management is too important to be left to operational personnel specialists. Line managers are thus seen as crucial to the effective delivery of HR policies. Particularly important to this research is the difference regarding training and development. It is suggested by Storey (1992) that a learning culture is a characteristic of organisations practicing HR, with those taking a personnel management approach seeking instead to provide controlled access to courses. Interesting also is the belief that companies practicing a HR approach will adopt a unitarist philosophy where employee and organisational needs are both addressed. This issue is particularly important when it comes to decisions about which needs take precedence, discussed in detail in section 3.2.

The debate surrounding the similarities and differences between HRM and personnel management has been widely covered in the literature (Foot and Hook 1996). It would be logical to presume that when someone speaks of HRM that they are referring to an employee management function which bears the characteristics of HRM as described above. However there exist various distinct conceptions of HRM.

2.3 Distinct Conceptions

With an improved understanding of what exactly HRM entails it is important to examine the type of HR practices which exist in business today. There is much debate surrounding the best route to competitive advantage through HRM.

2.3.1 Traditional HRM

Traditional HRM, with its roots in Personnel Management, has a focus on worker productivity through discrete HR practices such as selection, job design and incentive pay practices. This response is one of carrying on as before, with personnel policies centring on administrative efficiency and cost minimisation (Guest 1990). Empirical research in this area has tended to focus on the link between these practices and various human behaviour and productivity variables (Christensen Hughes 2002). This type of HRM could be construed to be simply Personnel Management and Fisher, Schoenfeldt and Shaw (2003) note that the traditional approach is still the prevalent form of HR activity in most organisations. They refer to a 1998 survey conducted by the Hackett Group on 1050 companies, which found that professionals still devote less than one third of their time to strategic HR activities.

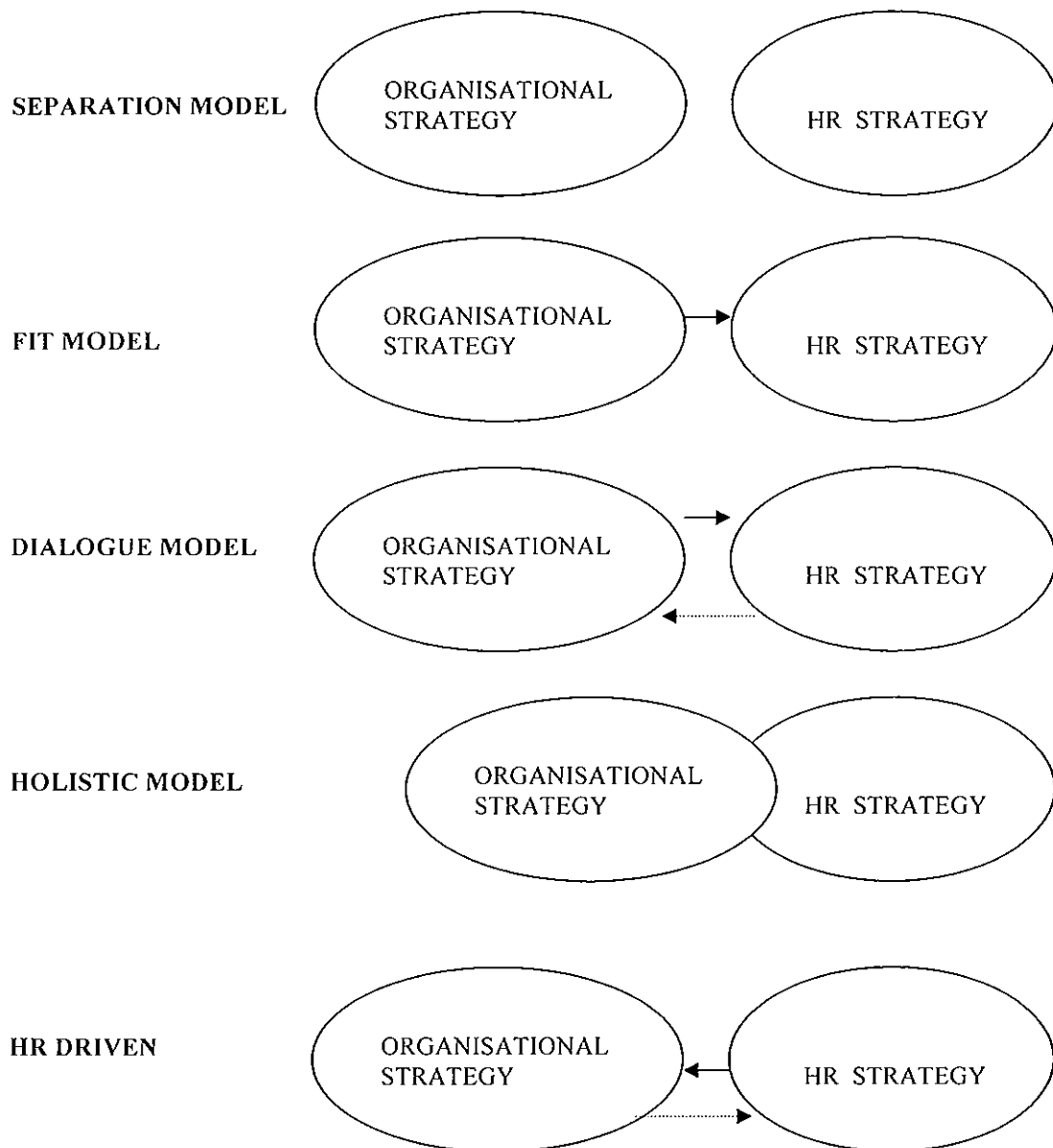
Traditional activities include those outlined by Armstrong (1999) which revolve around the four main functions of R&D, Finance, Production and Marketing (Fisher, Schoenfeldt and Shaw 2003).

2.3.2 Strategic HRM (SHRM)

Strategic HRM is also known as the 'Best Fit', 'Contingency' or 'External Fit' approach (Torrington, Hall and Taylor (2002) and could be seen to build on the integrative idea that an organisation's HRM policies and practices should 'fit' with their overall competitive strategy. 'If we accept a choice of business strategy, then by implication there should be a choice of personnel/ HRM policy to provide the best fit'(Guest 1990: 378). The argument is that the closer this fit the more effective the organisation will be, 'HR should be joined to business strategy at the hip' (Hammonds 2005; 43). Also Gasco et al purport that HR managers have a primary and not a secondary role in the strategic decision making process (2004). Additionally Cleland et al (2000) suggest that HR needs to be a strategic player and that the role of business strategist will be a key role for HR specialists in the future (Torrington, Hall and Taylor 2002). The relationship between HR and organisational strategy is likely to vary from firm to firm. HR strategy can be linked closely with, and actually drive, organisational strategy. However more often than not the HR function is left out of strategy formulation and is only involved in implementing strategy (Beaumont 1992; Lundy and Cowling 1996). There are various indicators of the role HR plays in strategy formulation, some as simple as whether the head of the HR department carries the title of director and whether he/she attends board level meetings (Foot and Hook 1996). The various depths of the relationship between Organisational and HR strategy are shown in Figure 2.1. This diagram shows that HRM can be completely uninvolved in strategy as in the 'separation model', a situation common to business 20 years ago but still existing in many small organisations today (Torrington, Hall and Taylor 2002). Alternatively business objectives can be cascaded down from senior management through functions, departments and teams as in the 'fit model'. In this instance employees are seen as central to the implementation of organisational strategy and thus HR strategy is designed to fit with this. Organisations in the 'dialogue model' have recognised the need for two way communication and some limited debate whereas under the 'holistic model' the organisation has realised that people are the key to competitive advantage and HR strategy becomes so critical that there is no strategy without HR strategy. At the top end of the scale HR strategy actually drives corporate

strategy, hence the title the 'HR Driven model'. This, according to Torrington, Hall and Taylor (2002) is where the organisation places HR strategy to the fore, realising that they need to build on their people strengths, an idea on which the Resource based view is based.

Figure 2.1: Potential relationships between organisational strategy and HR strategy



Torrington, Hall and Taylor (2002: 32)

There are many SHRM models put forward in the literature. Kane and Palmer (1995) portray the basic strategic HRM model which they state is widely accepted as the mainstream view.

Kane and Palmer (1995) suggest that the HR department has no involvement in the formulation of strategy, only in its implementation - as Hewitt puts it “when real strategy is in place the HR bit surely tumbles out, like night follows day” (1997: 23). This would support Beaumont (1992), and Lundy and Cowling (1996)’s views and would align closest to the Torrington, Hall and Taylor’s (2002) ‘fit model’ (Figure 2.1). Dessler (1999) purports an ideal situation to be one in which top management works interactively to formulate the business strategy which then provides the framework within which the HR activities must be integrated. Successful implementation of this system should produce the needed employee competencies and behaviours contributing directly to the effective implementation of business strategies and achievement of goals (Dessler 1999). According to Wright et al, HRM researchers have advanced that strategy should fit with three generic conceptual variables: HRM practices; employee skills and employee behaviours (1999: 210). Schuler and Jackson (1987) proposed that firms choose HRM practices, of which they have a menu, which will allow them to implement a chosen strategy. On employee skills it is assumed that different strategies require different types of people and according to Schuler and Jackson (1987) research has empirically associated managerial characteristics and various types of strategies. Lastly, they note that different strategies call for different role behaviours.

It is believed (Guest 1990; Legge 1995b; Armstrong 1999) that to achieve full strategic integration, not only should HRM be integrated with business strategy, but the various elements of HRM policy should also cohere. These two types of integration are respectively labelled external and internal fit by Baird and Meshoulam (1988). The notion of external fit (p14-23) has predominated in this chapter thus far, but it is also particularly important to consider internal fit. Following the suggestion by some authors (Woodward 1965; Burns and Stalker 1961; Leavitt; Galbraith 1977), that organisational success is determined by how well internal organisational components were integrated (including task, structure, technology, people, decision making processes, information), Baird and Meshoulam (1988) suggested that the same could be applied to HRM. ‘Not only must human resource management fit the organisation’s stage of development, but also the components of human resource management must fit with and support each other’ (Baird and Meshoulam 1988:122).

Despite the numerous arguments put forward in the literature for linking organisational and HR strategy, there are a number of critics. The difficulties of implementing this approach is questioned (Ogbonna and Whipp 1998; Schuler 199; Marchington and Wilkinson 2002;

Boxall and Purcell 2000) as is the seniority of HR representatives (Hammonds 2005) and the lacuna of empirical evidence for stating a direct link between SHRM on the one hand and a firm's performance on the other hand (Meuller 1998; Huselid 1995).

These are only some of the criticisms of this approach. A second approach believes that competitiveness can be achieved regardless of strategy choice, by implementing certain HR practices. This notion of bundling HR practices together is proposed by numerous authors including Miles and Snow (1984); Miles and Cameron (1982); Baird and Meshoulam (1988); Legge (1995) and Beardwell and Holden (2001).

2.3.3 Universal HRM

The universal approach focuses on achieving competitive advantage through the development of a highly committed, competent and motivated workforce, through the creation of a high-trust culture and high involvement practices (Christensen Hughes 2002). The belief behind this approach, also known as the 'best practice' approach (Torrington, Hall and Taylor 2002), is that every Company regardless of business strategy, Company size or industry should have certain mandatory HR practices in place. Referring to this bundling together of HR processes as 'horizontal integration', Armstrong notes that it is achieved by the use of shared processes, such as competence analysis and performance management and is most likely to happen if there is agreement between line managers and HR specialists on how these HR policies should be implemented (1999:46). The main elements of the best practice bundle, as summarised by Torrington, Hall and Taylor (2002), are as follows;

- The use of advanced selection methods
- A serious commitment to employee involvement
- **Substantial investment in training and development**
- The use of industrialised reward systems
- Harmonised terms and conditions of employment as between different groups of employees

Torrington, Hall and Taylor (2002: 27)

Marchington and Wilkinson (2002) add to this list; self managed teams / teamwork, a higher compensation contingent on organisational performance and most importantly, in their

opinion, employment security and internal promotion. Boselie et al (2005), on analysing 104 articles, list 26 different practices. The top four of these are training and development, contingent pay and reward schemes, performance management and recruitment and selection.

There is emerging empirical evidence that supports the universalist/ best practice perspective (Christensen Hughes 2002; Delery and Doty 1996) and recent research findings, which highlight strong main effects for the adoption of high performance work practices, lend credence to the best practice viewpoint (Huselid 1998: 635). However this theory also has its critics. Ogbonna and Whip (1999), for instance, argue that the internal consistency within such a model is extremely difficult to achieve due to the tension between flexibility and commitment. Sceptics also include Marchington and Wilkinson (2002) who cast doubts over the precise mix, their attractiveness to employees and their universal applicability, which may be problematic due to a lack of context within the best-practice model (Carter and Scarbrough 2001). Also given the vast number of 'best practices' available it is difficult to know which to follow (Carter and Scarbrough 2001).

2.3.4 The choice between Strategic and Universal approaches

Strategic HRM and Universal HRM, and the debate as to which one is the ideal, has dominated the HRM literature in recent years. Some authors favour one approach over the other yet some, such as Torrington, Hall and Taylor (2002), note that it is perfectly acceptable to take a middle ground and see validity in both approaches. Boxall and Purcell (2003) argue that the best fit discussion is artificial and dependent on individual perceptions and that both approaches might be right in their own way. Bamberger and Meshoulam (2000) maintain that both approaches are dependent on each other;

There may be a set of universal or best HR practices, but how this is implemented is likely to vary at the operational or business level and from firm to firm and will yield high performance only if they are aligned with one another and are consistent with units' overall strategic profile.

Bamberger and Meshoulam (2000: 179)

Therefore there must be integration between the individual Best Practice HR components, and implementation will depend on the firms' position such as their industry and their life stage. This view is supported by Guest (1990) who notes that;

The key HRM policy goals are those of high commitment, high quality, flexibility and strategic integration and only when a coherent strategy directed towards these four policy goals, fully integrated into business strategy and fully sponsored by line management at all levels is applied will the high productivity and related outcomes sought by industry be achieved

(Guest 1990; 2)

These are not the only authors to link internal and external fit together. Meuller (1998) notes that the use of high performance work practices and good internal fit should lead to a positive outcome for all types of firms and that firms who tailor work practices to their particular strategic and environmental contingencies should be able to realise additional performance gains. Whilst the debate between the 'best practice' and 'best fit' schools continues another discourse has begun to dominate the HRM literature. This differs from previous views in that its focus is predominantly on employees and their value to the organisation, and it could be seen as a build on the employee centred aspects of HRM.

2.3.5 The Resource Based View

The Resource Based View (RBV) is one of the more recent additions to the HRM literature. Built on the work of Penrose (1958) and discussed by authors such as Wernerfelt (1984), Barney (1991), Peteraff (1993) and Wright et al (1994), the RBV recognises that the strategic capability of a firm depends on its resource capability. In other words focusing on internal resources may lead to superior competitiveness. This focus on internal resources differs from the traditional concern with external environmental factors suggested by Porter (1980), whose work centred on firms' opportunities and threats. This traditional focus on the link between strategy and the external environment meant that there was little focus on the firms' resources and skills (Grant 1991).

Barney (1991) notes how Porter's (1990) work is built on two assumptions. Firstly it assumes that firms within an industry are identical in terms of the strategically relevant resources they control and the strategies they pursue. Secondly they assume that if heterogeneity was to develop in an industry that this would not last for long as resources are highly mobile and thus relatively easy to obtain. Barney (1991) suggests that organisations

obtain sustained competitive advantage by implementing strategies which build on strengths and capitalise on opportunities, whilst minimising threats and weaknesses. Sustained competitive advantage requires resources to have four attributes; value, rarity, imperfect imitability and lack of substitutes (Barney 1991), these are explained in detail below. Peteraff (1993) cites the reward of 'rents' to those firms with superior resources. She explains that firms who have superior resources will also have lower average costs than other firms and will have the capacity to earn supernormal profits as a result. It is imperative, she adds, that these superior resources stay limited in supply (rare) which highlights the necessity of imperfect imitability (that they cannot be easily copied) and imperfect substitutability (that they cannot be easily replaced), which Peteraff (1993) labels "ex post limits to competition". The last requirement she notes is that of "ex ante limits to competition", meaning that prior to superior resource achievement there must be limited competition for said resources. If the opportunity to acquire superior resources was widely known then the high profits would be eroded away by fierce competition.

These attributes, according to Kamoche (1998), apply to HR making the RBV particularly relevant to the analysis of HRM. Kamoche notes the importance of an organisation's ability to generate knowledge and collective learning which enables it to provide core products and services (1996:219). This has particular relevance to both organisational and individual learning, as learning is the medium through which individuals can increase their knowledge and develop skills/competencies in order to differentiate themselves from other organisations employees. Additionally, McCole et al (2000) state that employees' skills and competencies can differentiate an organisation - in a world where the relative standard of goods and services are easy to imitate.

Wright et al (1994), who were the first to apply RBV to HRM (Marchington and Wilkinson 2002), found that employees can be valuable to the extent that heterogeneity exists both in the supply of and in demand for labour. Rarity, they noted, occurs when there are skills shortages and inimitability exists as labour is potentially highly mobile, but it is expensive to move from one workplace to another. The resource based view is of considerable importance to HRM as it cements the link between HRM and strategy, which up until the RBV's introduction had never been so strong. However this concept does have its sceptics. Marchington and Wilkinson (2002) cite Boxall and Purcell (2000) who draw attention to the ease at which one could get carried away when speaking of differentiation between firms. They note that companies in the same industry will more than likely need some similar

resources in order to establish their identity and secure some legitimacy and that certain HR policies are necessary to even compete in some industries. However the RBV is only one potential HR focus, existing alongside the other aforementioned approaches. These will now be revisited with a focus on organisational competitiveness.

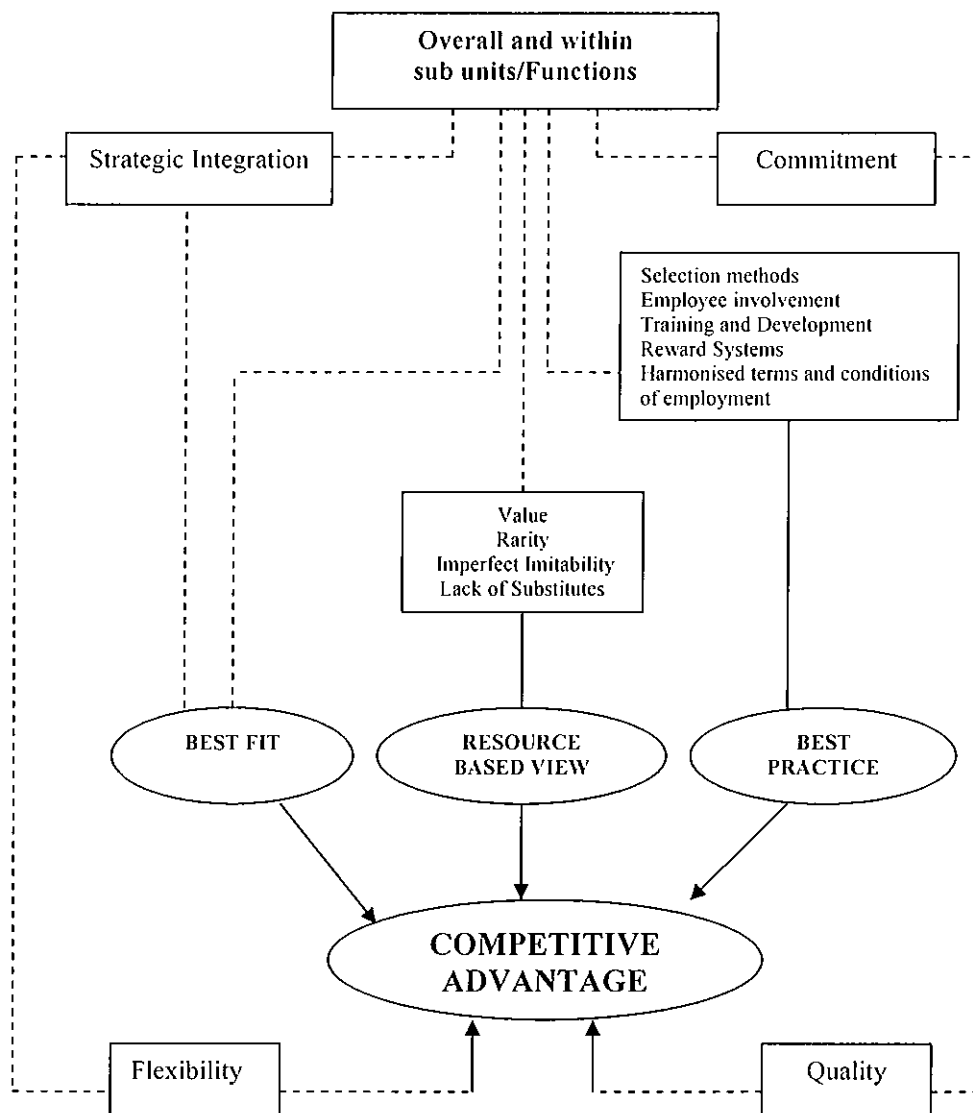
2.4 HR's Role in Competitive Advantage

In recent years there has been increased attention paid to HR's role in gaining competitive advantage and it is suggested that human resources represent the only enduring source of competitive advantage available to modern businesses (Fisher, Schoenfeldt and Shaw 1999). Figure 2.3 portrays the diversity of views about the structure of HRM and each of the elements that could constitute a competitive advantage. It is an amalgamation of the work of various authors, namely Guest's (1987) four key elements of HRM, Torrington, Hall and Taylor's (2002) elements of best practice, and Barney's (1991) resource based view. In an effort to remain focused only a brief description of each approach has been presented in this chapter. The reader is referred to the bibliography for detailed discussion on the various models underpinning these approaches such as Miles and Snow's (1978) 'Defender, Prospector and Analyser' companies, Kochan and Barocci's (1985) 'Life Cycle' models and Beer et al's (1984) 'Harvard model'.

It is not intended to suggest that all of the elements in Figure 2.3 should be combined to create a definite competitive advantage; it merely highlights the different approaches that exist in the literature. There may be an argument, however, that these approaches could operate side by side in order to gain a competitive advantage. Organisational sub units, for instance, may be governed by an organisationally wide set of HR practices, the 'best practice' in the organisation's opinion, or alternatively may operate independent of the other sub units and implement their own HR policies, whichever policies 'fit' them best. Guest's (1987) four key elements of strategic integration, commitment, flexibility and quality could be considered vital to the organisation as a whole or equally within individual sub units and should perhaps not be labelled as a 'best practice' approach in opposition to the 'best fit' approach. Whilst they are definitive elements, which should be common to organisations seeking a competitive advantage (Guest 1987) and they are common elements across HRM literature (Storey 1992; Legge 1995) they should maybe be aimed for either in addition to certain universal HR policies or alongside whatever HR policies an organisation deems

suitable for them. There is also the belief that if the employees in an organisation or sub unit can meet the four tenets of the RBV; value, rarity, imperfect inimitability, and lack of substitutes then a competitive advantage can exist. Ulrich and Lake (1991) support some of the tenets of the RBV when they list two essential components of competitive advantage as perceived customer value and uniqueness. They believe that perceived customer value, occurs when employees understand and meet customer needs and that uniqueness is present when the organisation develops capabilities that are idiosyncratic and non-imitable. This again shows a link to the RBV.

Figure 2.3: The various components of competitive advantage



2.5 Competitive advantage through Human Resource Development (HRD)

The discussion around HR and competitiveness is increasingly topical, as HR is forced to become more accountable. This in turn has resulted in a focus on individual HR functions in order to ascertain their importance. One HRM function, which is seen as an equally important discipline as HRM (Beardwell and Holden 2001), is Human Resource Development (HRD). HRD is a relatively new concept with a history of only around ten to fifteen years in the UK and it can be defined as ‘all those activities that seek to facilitate all forms of learning and development at all levels within organisations’ (Sambrook 2004; 611). The role of this function is particularly important, as increasingly the key source of competitiveness lies in an organisation’s ability to develop and use the skills of the workforce. Additionally HRD can help organisations achieve such HRM goals as high quality, flexibility and commitment (Garavan et al 2002; Morrow 2001) as listed by Guest (1987):

Employees who are highly trained and whose career development is effectively managed by the Company show high levels of commitment, are flexible, invariably multi-skilled and can make significant contributions to the quality of goods or services the Company offers, regardless of the level at which they operate.

(Morrow 2001; 84)

While HRD encompasses all forms of learning, formal and informal, two of its major aspects are formal training and development (T&D). It is evident that each of the HRM approaches discussed in section 2.3 pay credence to the importance of both training and development. SHRM is built on the belief that an organisation’s HRM policies and practices should fit their strategy. Whether HRM activity flows from strategy, as in Kane and Palmer’s (1995) model, or whether the HR function is involved in strategy formulation, as Gasco, Llopis and Gonzalez (2004) believe it should be, an organisation’s employees must be competent enough to implement the intended strategy. The universal approach also highlights the need for substantial investment in training and development, with Boselie et al (2005) listing it as the most important HR practice. Additionally the RBV highlights the importance of learning and development in creating valuable, rare employees.

In fact it is claimed (Cole 2002) that competitive advantage is based more on the knowledge and skills of employees than on any other factor. According to Maybey and Salaman (1995) competitive advantage will accrue to those organisations best able to exploit environmental opportunities and avoid threats and that the strategic management of human resources will assist organisations in this regard by generating the appropriate sorts of behaviours, attitudes and competencies from employees. Fisher, Schoenfeldt and Shaw (1999) agree in noting that the enhanced value of innovation in determining competitive advantage requires firms to attract, train and retrain employees of the highest quality.

The link between learning and competitive performance goes back many years. Hosley et al (1994) cite Pettigrew and Whip (1991) who highlight the link between competitive performance and a firm's ability to adapt to major changes in the environment and by implication in its level of learning. Dertouzos et al (1989) assent, noting that competitive advantage will accrue to organisations, which develop human resource policies that promote continuous learning, teamwork, participation and flexibility (Maybey and Salaman 1995). Thus learning, as a way of augmenting human capital is only one means of achieving a competitive advantage- although a particularly important one as today's business climate makes obtaining advantages in other areas increasingly difficult.

Central to many discussions on HRD is the topic of competencies, and executives are now turning to their Chief Learning Officers (CLOs) to improve the competency and productivity of employees and their contribution to organisational performance (Wisniewski and McMahon 2005). It is suggested in both the HRM and strategy literature that when a firm nurtures individual competencies, organisational competencies will be enhanced as a result (Murray 2003). In management and training the concept of competencies became a prominent topic of conversation in the late 1980s (Robotham 2004; Rowe 1995; Cheng et al 2002) as a response to organisational changes and to wider societal changes (CIPD 2005b). The need for greater flexibility in the provision of workplace learning has resulted in the more widespread use of competency approaches (Garavan and McGuire 2001) as has the usefulness of the competence approach in integrating HR strategy with business strategy (Heffernan and Flood 2000). It may be possible, claim Heffernan and Flood (2000), to integrate HR processes such as recruitment, training and development, performance management and rewards into business strategy (external fit as discussed in Chapter One) and to link them together (internal fit). This internal fit is facilitated because each process is

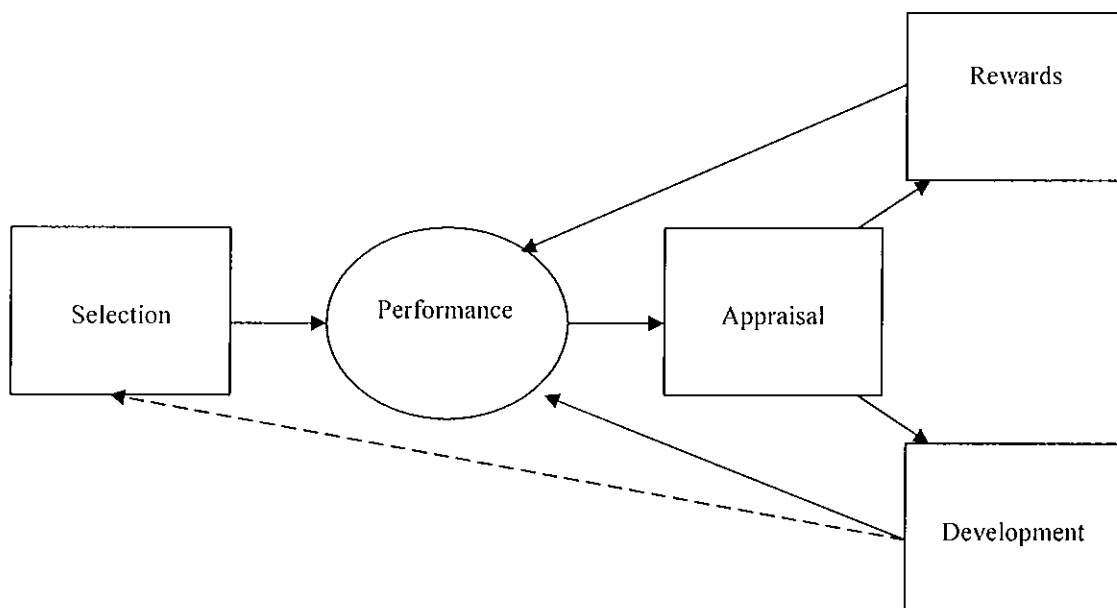
focused on the same key expectations and objectives and they give mutual reinforcement to each other (Heffernan and Flood 2000). The use of competency approaches in training and development is examined in further detail in Chapter Four.

There are numerous claims about the superior effectiveness of companies, who concentrate on training and development (T&D). Rosenberg (2001), for instance, cites a 1997 ASTD survey, which showed a correlation between average net sales and gross profit per employee and training expenditure. Similarly Becker and Huselid (1998) note that a skilled workforce will lead to higher operating performance and higher stock prices (Murray 2003). In fact it is claimed that in today's knowledge or information age it is imperative that organisations do not ignore the importance of learning; 'the dynamics of rapid change, heightened global competition and advancing technology mean that organisational success will be increasingly dependant on learning' (Baldwin, Danielson and Wiggernhorn 1997: 47). This dynamic environment is also stressed by other authors (Garavan et al 2002; Donovan, Hannigan and Crowe 2001) who assert that due to a quickened pace of change in business organisations are now forced to almost constantly up-skill and to develop a capacity to learn faster than competitors. Additionally it is claimed that modern organisations ignore learning at the cost of their present and future successes (Garrick 1994: 4), due to the importance of learning at all levels of an organisation in maintaining a competitive advantage (Hosley et al 1994). It has never been so important for companies to harness the power of learning as employees' knowledge and ability to learn are now key to competitive advantage (CIPD 2002; Donovan, Hannigan and Crowe 2001). Despite Savery and Luks' (2003) failure to find no evidence in the literature of the link between training and improved performance, they did find, in their analysis of an Australian government survey of 10,000 small to medium enterprises, that organisations involved in training were more likely to be profitable. In fact there are a number of reports which postulate a link between T&D and performance. Almeida and Carneiro (2006) estimate that an increase of 10 hours training leads to a .6 percent increase in productivity for an individual. A joint ASTD/Saba report (Bassi et al 2000) estimates the return on training is -.7 percent for companies not providing it and 24 percent for those providing it. The same report also draws links between the level of investment in training and a Company's stock price the following year. From an analysis of 575 publicly traded US companies in the period 1996-1998, the report claims that for every \$680 increase in training expenditure per employee total shareholder return (TSR) -which included stock price rise and dividends - increases the following year by six percentage points. Additionally when

ranked on training spend firms in the top half of this ranking had a TSR of 86 percent greater than those who ranked in the bottom end.

Figure 2.4 below shows the importance of employee development of all types. One can see from the diagram that employees are trained or developed when it is recognised, during their appraisal that they are lacking in knowledge or skills. This development then aids their improved performance, which in turn may lead to their selection for higher positions. Providing T&D to employees is not necessarily philanthropic as organisations realise that this will improve productivity, performance and knowledge development and will retain staff (Marchington and Wilkinson 2005).

Figure 2.4: The Human Resource Cycle



Fombrun, Tichy and De Vanna (1984: 41)

Smith (2004) also highlights benefits accruing from HRD as improved capability and effectiveness on the part of the individual (which in turns improves organisational productivity). Indirectly HRD can lead to improved staff morale (Smith 2004) and enhanced self-esteem or self worth (Noe 1986) of individuals whose knowledge and capabilities are augmented. Additionally, on an individual level, training can result in increased self-confidence and job satisfaction and enhances employees' feeling's of job security (Antonacopoulou 1999), which is likely to lead to increased commitment, a central goal of

HRM as discussed in section 2.2. This is hugely important in light of the discussion of best fit or best practice approaches to obtaining a competitive advantage as this is only achievable if employees remain with the firm (Paauwe and Boselie 2005).

Apart from the performance benefits and the softer employee satisfaction and retention benefits there are also other issues to consider. Motwani et al (1994) purport that there is a direct link between how much an organisation invests in its people and the view taken towards the quality of that organisations products or services. Harrison (1997) adds that stakeholders will not be willing to invest in organisations which do not hold positive attitudes towards T&D. These reasons combined with a strong increase in socially responsible investment among investors in recent years and accompanying appeals from the European Council, for organisations to be more socially responsible, (EC 2001) give organisations plenty of incentives to promote lifelong learning.

However despite the overwhelming claims in the literature of the importance of T&D and suggestions that the concept of skill be placed on a strategic level, the contribution that learning can make to strategy is often overlooked (O'Donnell and Garavan 1997) and many organisations do not look upon T&D in a favourable light. One way of assessing the view which an organisation holds towards T&D is to examine whether they are taking a strategic approach to managing employees. A strategic approach encapsulates many of the tenets of HRM as discussed above (section 2.2).

2.6 A HR or Personnel Management approach to Training and Development (T&D)

There are a number of ways in which to evaluate whether an organisation is practicing a HR or Personnel Management approach to HRD. The approach an organisation takes is important for a number of reasons. If an organisation values T&D it will seek to instill a culture of learning in which line managers are actively involved and employees are encouraged to learn, both through financial and environmental supports (including days off for T&D, adequate facilities and encouragement).

The attitude which the organisation takes towards employees is a key indicator as to the employee management approach taken by an organisation. If the organisation is truly practicing a HRM approach then they will seek to invest in and develop their staff as opposed to treating them as an expense. Also an organisation practicing HRM will strive for commitment from employees and not just compliance. They will aim to give the employees a sense of commitment to the organisation in a high trust relationship. This commitment and aforementioned investment in staff can come through providing training and development (T&D) opportunities to staff, aside from mandatory regulatory or compliance training, which they are required to give. HRM highlights the support of individual development for personal satisfaction and as a contributing factor to organisational success as a key characteristic of HRM (Legge 1989). Organisations who support employee development, which they envisage as being potentially useful in the future and which they may not see short term results from are also demonstrating a long term, proactive and strategic planning perspective, similar to HRM thinking.

The role of line management is one additional trait, which distinguishes between personnel management and HRM. This is of considerable importance to the success of T&D in an organisation and it may be detrimental if line managers do not support their employees' development. This is considerably important given the fact that responsibility is now shifting to line managers as coaches and trainers (Maybey and Iles 2001). According to Philips (1998) line managers have a number of responsibilities. They must:

- Partner with their employees in enrolling in learning solutions intended to improve business performance.
- When appropriate, discuss the learning solution with the participation prior to attendance or involvement to determine expected outcomes.
- Conduct a personal follow-up for the solution results.
- Reinforce behaviour after the solution has been implemented and provide positive feedback and rewards for successful application of the learning solution.
- Assist in the planned formal follow-up activities of the learning solution.
- Be proactive in identifying and removing barriers to the application of learning solutions.

(Philips 1998: 7)

These points highlight the importance of line manager involvement after the individual's needs have been addressed, from encouraging and supporting participation in T&D before, during and after the event. It must be remembered also that the manager plays an important role prior to this first point, in assessing the individual's needs - through informal chats with the individual, through observing them or through more formal measures such as Personal Development Plans (PDPs) or performance appraisal, which are dealt with in more detail in Chapter Three. If line manager support is absent employees' needs will either be inadequately ascertained or employees may be restricted by the amount of T&D development opportunities available to them (as their manager may not support them in the form of time off to study or attend courses). Also employees may be restricted from transferring what they have learnt through T&D to their job, due to their managers' intolerance of mistakes or unwillingness to grant time off to practice that which has been learnt. However, a lot of the responsibility for HR, aside from HRD duties, is being devolved to line management and there are significant barriers to their involvement such as a lack of time, more critical targets to meet, a lack of time and training and a lack of incentives given to them for taking on extra responsibility (Hailey et al 2005). In relation to the last point, in a recent study CIPD (2005a) found that only 17 percent of companies reward managers for developing their subordinates. The most frequently cited efforts made by the companies in the same study included, demonstrating the link between training and bottom line performance, involving staff in various training activities, linking training with HR and business practices, linking training to business objectives and educating and engaging managers through competency frameworks and coaching. CIPD (2005a) suggest that organisations should focus more on rewarding managers.

Another important tenet of HRM is integration. It is possible to assess whether an organisation practices a HRM approach to HRD if the HRD is integrated with the various other HR processes such as recruitment, performance management, pay, employee relations, health and safety, reward management, organisational development and staff relations (Armstrong 1999). The HRM notion of fit, notes that these activities should be integrated (internal fit) and that HR strategy should be linked to organisational strategy (external fit). Recently there has been recognition of the need to complement the qualities of employees with the needs of the organisation (Beardwell and Holden 2001). Such concepts require not only careful planning but also a greater emphasis on employee development.

The approach that an organisation takes towards individual and organisational learning and the policies which they implement as a result will depend on the importance, which they place on learning and the benefits which they believe will accrue from such a focus. According to Beardwell and Holden (2001) the recognition of the importance of human resource development in recent years has been heavily influenced by the intensification of overseas competition and the relative success of economies such as Japan, Germany and Sweden, where investment in employee development is emphasised. It has also come about due to technological development and organisational change they add. Whatever the reason the fact remains that some see HRD as equally an important discipline as HRM (Beardwell and Holden 2001), and thus HRD needs to be explored in further detail (issues of motivation, design and delivery are discussed in Chapters Four and Five).

2.7 An Individual focus on T&D

There has been widespread coverage of Senge's (1990) 'learning organisation' and on organisational learning in recent years and individual learning is central to both concepts (Lassey 1998; Senge 1990; Mumford 1991).

It is, however, impossible to conceive of a learning organisation, however defined, which exists without individual learners. The learning organisation depends absolutely on the skills, approaches and commitment of individuals of their own learning

(Mumford 1991: 24)

Torrington, Hall and Taylor (2002), in reference to organisational learning, note that it is only when an individual's learning has an impact on and interrelates with others that organisations' members learn together and gradually begin to change the way things are done. This again highlights the need for individual learning, as do the fields of intellectual capital and knowledge management, which share common ground with organisational learning in recognising the importance of knowledge to the success of the enterprise (Crossan, Lane and White 1999). However individual learning forms only part of the discourse on the learning organisation and knowledge management. Malhotra (1996) notes that a primary focus of the learning organisation discourse is on organisations with ingrained philosophies for anticipating, reacting and responding to change, complexity and uncertainty. Additionally Matzdorf et al (2000) list eleven characteristics of the learning Company, as adapted from Pedler et al (1996) and Burgoyne et al (1994). These characteristics include

those such as the ability to learn from other companies, treating strategy formulation as an ongoing learning process and the use of information technology for sharing knowledge. Due to the fact that individual learning is only a part of these fields and in an effort to remain focused the learning organisation and knowledge management are not discussed in detail in this thesis.

Bramley (1999) suggests that methods such as giving feedback of performance, individual development plans, the setting of learning objectives and goals, tasking for development and action planning will be more appropriate if carried out on an individual basis. This thesis is interested in individual T&D, facilitated through formal training and development initiatives, and how this occurs within organisations. There are a number of stages in the T&D process, which may differ within organisations, and the remainder of this thesis examines these stages in detail.

2.8 The Training and Development (T&D) process

There are various versions of the T&D process suggested in the literature. Harrison, for instance, outlines an eight step procedure:

1. Identify/ confirm needs.
2. Agree on the overall purpose and objectives for the learning event.
3. Identify the profile of the intended learning population.
4. Select strategy, and agree on direction and management of the learning event.
5. Select learners and produce detailed specification for the learning event.
6. Confirm strategy and design event.
7. Deliver event.
8. Monitor and evaluate event.

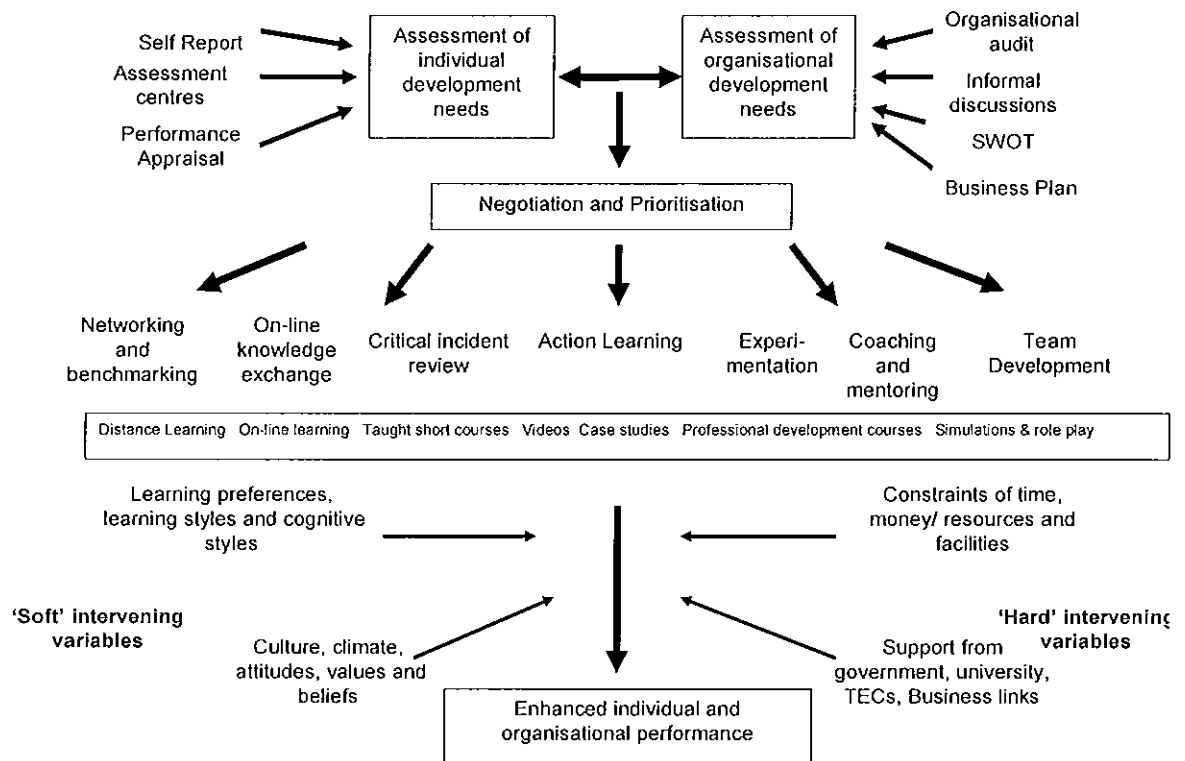
(Harrison 2000: 262)

Sadler-Smith et al (2000) provide a diagrammatic framework of the T&D process (Figure 2.5). This process, which is better thought of as cyclical, begins with an assessment of T&D needs. These needs must be negotiated and prioritised as invariably organisations do not have the resources to meet all of these needs. Also at this stage there may be conflict due to the mismatch between individual and organisational needs (as discussed in Chapter Three), again which may require negotiation. Next the organisation administers the T&D in the most

appropriate manner using the most appropriate blend of delivery methods available. The effectiveness of T&D is dependant upon a number of intervening variables, which Sadler-Smith et al (2000) label 'soft' and 'hard'. Soft intervening variables include aspects such as organisational culture, attitudes and beliefs towards T&D and learning and cognitive styles. Hard variables on the other hand can be broken down between potential barriers such as resources and time constraints and possible drivers such as government, business and university involvement/ support. It is hoped that T&D will lead to improved individual and organisational performance. However Sadler-Smith et al's (2000) model omits two important elements. Firstly the evaluation stage is not present. This is the stage at which the organisation assesses whether or not employees have been developed and/or whether they have used what they have learnt to improve their performance. Secondly the T&D model is best thought of as cyclical, as employees' needs should be assessed on a regular basis - preferably on a continuous basis, at which time the process begins again.

There are clear advantages in using a structured model for analysing the training process but they may represent an ideal state rather than the accurate and realistic picture of organisational practice. The logical and sequential flow is questionable and it is likely to be more ad hoc and proactive (Marchington and Wilkinson 2005). Trainees can become closed off from organisational needs and even though T&D may be efficient it may not be effective. In other words the training is assessed in relation to needs identified by trainers but not in relation to their contribution to business goals.

Figure 2.5: Learning, Training and Development model



Sadler-Smith et al (2000: 488)

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter began by examining the similarities and differences between Personnel Management and Human Resource Management (HRM). Whilst many believe that HRM is a new philosophy and differentiate it to its 'predecessor' under numerous attributes - including its strategic, integrated and employee centred tenets - others suggest that the normative statements of both philosophies are quite similar. The predominating belief is that, although many of the attributes are similar, there are still certain differences and that HRM represents, at least in theory, a new view distinct from Personnel Management.

The HR function has various responsibilities and related sub functions and the way in which these are managed and the HR policies that an organisation implements can differ immensely. HR is now seen as vital to gaining competitiveness in a dynamic, global and knowledge-based economy. This function is becoming increasingly important as employees

are now claimed to be one of the only remaining sources of competitive advantages, due mainly to the fact that other competitive advantages can be easily eroded or imitated. The centrality of employees to competitiveness has brought the importance of improving knowledge, skills and competencies to the fore and the onus is now on one HR function - Human Resources Development (HRD) - to facilitate improvements in performance. Organisations are also paying more attention to HRD as it is recognised that Training and Development (T&D) can have softer benefits such as increased commitment and job satisfaction, which lead to reduced attrition rates. However despite the perceived benefits of T&D some organisations are not totally convinced. It is possible to identify the approach taken by examining whether or not an organisation is taking a strategic approach to T&D, which follows many of the tenets of HRM.

The concepts of the learning organisation and collective organisational learning have received much attention in the literature in recent years. A key component of these concepts is individual learning. Individual T&D is managed through a process or cycle and common to all existing T&D processes are the three main stages of assessing T&D needs; designing/delivering T&D and assessing the effectiveness of T&D. These stages of the T&D process are explored in detail in the remainder of this thesis with the inclusion of determinants or principles of successful learning, listed by Sadler-Smith et al (2000) as soft intervening variables, which are important in both the design and delivery of T&D. The next chapter will focus on the assessment of needs. This is particularly important as organisations must be aware of the skills or knowledge gaps which exist amongst their employees and that consequentially may hamper their progress. This is also important from an employee perspective as individuals will be reluctant to learn if they do not see that a problem exists.

CHAPTER THREE
TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT (T&D)
NEEDS ANALYSIS

3.1 Introduction

Determining individual and organisational T&D needs is the first stage of the T&D process (Sadler-Smith, Down and Lean 2000; Reid and Barrington 1999; Harrison 1997). This stage is of huge importance and is one that organisations must not be tempted to ignore. The better the analysis of the need, the easier it will be to address and, specifically, in a way that will actually meet the business need in a cost-effective way (Bee and Bee 2003). Reid and Barrington (1999) cite a study by Welch (1998), which found that more than £100 million of public money was being wasted on irrelevant, unnecessary training of the UK police force. Police officers, due to a poor analysis of learning needs, were also missing out on training, which they vitally needed. This is just one example of poor learning needs analysis. Failing to develop an appropriately trained workforce can also result in other problems such as costly complaints and a poor image (Reid and Barrington 1999).

Organisations, as collections of individual employees, will invariably have various T&D needs. The challenge for the organisation is to discover what exactly these needs are and to decide which of the needs they can, or need to, address given their resources and strategic direction. Individuals' needs often conflict with organisational needs, as individuals seek to satisfy personal needs, whereas organisations aim to develop individuals in a way which creates maximum benefits for the organisation. Following a discussion on individual and organisational needs, this chapter examines the various approaches used by organisations when seeking to determine T&D needs. These range from job-based analysis to the competency-based approach and various types of performance appraisal. The chapter will focus on the latter two concepts as they have received much attention in the literature of late and because they are fraught with potential difficulties.

3.2 Individual and Organisational needs

The assessment of individual needs is essential (Robotham 2004; Roscoe 1992). The days of administering the same training to all employees, regardless of its usefulness and applicability to each individual, are gone (Wells 1997) and it may be inappropriate to adopt single approaches or strategies across groups of employees (Robotham 2004). The reality is that many courses are general and do not adequately address particular individual requirements (Coulson-Thomas 2000) and Baldwin and Ford (1988) note that the traditional 'spray' technique is no longer adequate. It may be useful to profile the training audience in order to paint an accurate picture of exactly who you are dealing with. This is particularly appropriate when dealing with large audiences, who will invariably be heterogeneous in nature (Christian-Carter 2005). This will be dealt with in Chapter Four where individual differences are explored.

There may be conflict, however, between organisational and individual needs (Forfás 2002; Beardwell and Holden 2001). These two groups will often have different objectives and plans for their training and development. Organisations will seek to develop individuals in such a way as to gain maximum utility from them, as the organisation is dependent upon the abilities of individuals to achieve its own objectives (Antonacopoulou 2000). Organisations, as such, tend to neglect the developmental needs of individuals as they are often very expensive to meet and they might not be seen to be important to bottom-line issues (Chiu et al 1999). There is also the fear that unless skills are specific to the organisation, competitor companies will poach staff (Mc Iver 2004; Jones 1996). Recent empirical evidence (Antonacopoulou 2001) found that quite often individuals are forced to go on irrelevant courses that their line manager has chosen. This is due to the limited power of the individual in the T&D process and the fear of refusing to go on courses. However personal motives outweigh work-related motives (Chisholm et al 2004) and individuals will often seek to develop themselves primarily, with the organisational needs taking a secondary role. Individuals will not be motivated to partake in T&D, which they do not view as beneficial to them and they will be more open to changes that they perceive as desirable (Knox 1988). On the other hand an individual focus may result in requests for training from every employee (Roscoe 1992). Both individual and organisational goals are socially negotiated and

both parties attempt to achieve their own goals while at the same time being influenced by the other (Antonacopoulou 2000).

A compromise must therefore be made and individuals must be convinced of the beneficial nature of organisationally pushed initiatives, or alternatively their needs must be adequately assessed and then adequately met. Resolving these conflicts by reconciling the needs of the individual with those of the organisation will benefit both parties (Beardwell and Holden 2001). Such a resolution is necessary if organisations are attempting to take a unitarist, HR, approach to T&D as discussed in section 2.2.

Therefore the focus on the training debate should be on how to balance the needs of the individual and the organisations as there is a danger that failing to address individual needs will lead to a demoralised workforce, which will hinder the growth of the organisation (Chiu et al 1999). This negotiation process claims Antonacopoulou (2000), is under researched and is something which she attempted to address with a particular focus on self-development. Self-development requires the individual to be involved at all stages of their development. At the needs analysis stage personal development plans (PDPs) and performance appraisal are often used, as they were before the advent of the self-development movement, yet empirical evidence shows varying attitudes towards their usage for the purposes of self-development. Smith (2004) notes that to develop self-directed learning skills specific strategies must be in place, which ensure that the individual has the opportunity to discuss, identify and pursue learning goals that have meaning to both them and their organisation. This may not be viable as it assumes that the individual will have the same needs as the organisation. Even so the opportunity to discuss these issues will go some way in negotiating a middle ground.

3.3 Self directed learning (SDL)

Learning-network theory distinguishes between four theoretical types of learning programmes, liberal, vertical, horizontal and external (Poell, Pluijmen and Van der Krogt 2003). A vertical programme entails linear planning of learning activities where the management develops policies, which are then translated into pre-designed learning activities and delivered to workers. In the horizontal programme the learning activities are not pre-designed yet developed from experience. An external learning programme is co-ordinated by external parties namely the workers' professional associations. Lastly a

liberal learning programme is individually orientated, moving from a push strategy to a pull strategy - or SDL model.

In the 1990s the role of HRD theoretically changed from delivering and organising training to a more liberal approach with a new focus on self-directed individuals (Poell, Pluijmen and Van der Krogt 2003) and a view has emerged at the societal level of the learner as an active participant in the learning process (Geertshuis et al 2002). SDL involves people taking responsibility for their own learning, identifying their own learning needs and how to meet them - often through the performance of everyday work - monitoring their own progress, assessing the outcomes, and reassessing their goals (Beardwell and Holden 2001). Essentially this means that they must become increasingly involved at all stages of the T&D process. According to Smith (2004) it is no longer the responsibility of training providers to decide issues concerning what is to be learnt, when, where, how and to what level of competency.

The importance of this notion of self-direction has been renewed by the emphasis placed on learning as a source of competitive advantage (Antonacopoulou 2000). Additionally employees have become increasingly concerned about their own performance and have recognised equipping themselves with new knowledge and skills as a survival strategy in a turbulent career world (Cheng and Ho 2001). Beardwell and Holden (2001) agree noting that individuals will have to take responsibility for their own learning to develop their employability, particularly as long term contracts are now a thing of the past.

However the practical implementation of this theory has not been strong and despite the rhetoric of self-development, training and development policies remain focused on organisational needs (Antonacopoulou 1999). Thus the vertical learning network predominates in organisations (Poell, Pluijmen and Van der Krogt 2003). Antonacopoulou (1999) points out that the old French word *trainer*, means to drag and that employers often drag employees along in a certain direction and that employees often attend courses because they are told to do so. Additionally Chisholm et al (2004) found that SDL does not attract the majority of Europeans. The slow change in focus may be due to several constraints and may suggest that the concept is fraught with difficulties (Antonacopoulou 2000). Poell, Pluijmen and Van der Krogt (2003) found

that managers and trainers alike often resented the change in focus, which sees added responsibility for the manager and a more consultant-like trainer role. It is claimed (Antonacopoulou 1999) that T&D is still, for the most part, inflicted on individuals in the belief that it will make them more competent or effective instead of actually advancing the development of the individual. The use of in-Company type courses, which are tailor made for organisations, worsens problems for individuals (Antonacopoulou 1999). It is also claimed that employees may not be enthusiastically seeking this form of T&D, that employees rarely make unprompted requests for training (EGFSN 2000). Additionally employees may prefer to learn through hands-on experience, through observation, mentoring or from practice (Smith 2004). Despite these criticisms, it is claimed that there has been a noticeable shift in T&D thinking from didactic teacher-centred and organisationally controlled learning to self-directed learning, where individuals take responsibility for their own learning (O'Connor 2004; Antonacopoulou 1999). This shift 'from training to learning' (CIPD 2003c:2) has gained recognition as a promising strategy due to the constantly changing needs of individuals and organisations (Antonacopoulou 2000) resulting in the need for responsive training, which can be implemented in a fast moving environment (Smith 2004). As with any new phenomenon, the adoption decision hinges upon the perceived benefits. Self-directed learning has a number of potential benefits for both the individual and the organisation. Antonacopoulou (2000) cites Temporal's (1984) list of advantages. These are as follows;

Advantages for the individual

Self-development can:

- Enhance self-confidence.
- Help develop latent abilities, which would improve work performance.
- Help individuals become more forthcoming and more prepared to speak their minds, thus potentially improving their problem solving abilities and providing them with a broader outlook.
- Encourage individuals to be more constructive in their relationships and motivate them to improve themselves.

Advantages for the organisation

Self-development can:

- Enable the organisation to keep up with the dynamics of change as it encourages managers to think about change and improvement positively.
- Encourage participation and potentially commitment by employees.
- Simplify individual/ management development and succession planning by clarifying individuals' strengths, weaknesses, expectations, ambitions, preferences and experiences.
- Improve selection and promotion decisions and make them more readily acceptable to employees who have contributed towards their own achievements
- Be a cost effective way of developing human resources.

(Temporal 1984 in Antonacopoulou 2000: 494)

The concept of self-directed learning has many different meanings and theoretical underpinnings. The self in the title may refer to a whole range of concepts including individual commitment, competence to learn alone, control of learning process, personal responsibility for learning and self-observing amongst others (Gruber 2001 as cited in Garavan et al 2002). Self-development and self-directed learning both emphasise that employee development must be driven by employees who recognise the need to develop themselves and who have the power to choose what to learn and how to develop themselves and thus the individual is placed at the forefront of the T&D process (Antonacopoulou 2000). Garavan et al (2002) note, however, that it may only be informal (learning from experience) or incidental (trial and error) learning that is self-directed. Nevertheless empirical evidence (CIPD 2003c) suggests that organisations feel that it is possible to move from a situation where employees expect training to one in which they take responsibility for their own learning and development. The use of development centres, open learning facilities, self-development plans and contracts help to contribute to the mutual development of both the individual and the organisation (Antonacopoulou 2000). Also it is argued (CIPD 2003c) that senior management support is vital. Making an effective business case for self-directed learning will help in this regard and predominant in making this case will be issues of reduced cost and improved performance. Smith (2001a) adds that in order to facilitate flexible learning, learning programmes must be developed in a way, which engages learners, and that

learners should be developed to become more self-directed and more effective at using a wide range of learning media.

Despite the many publicised advantages of SDL this theory is not without its critics. CIPD (2003c) list three reasons why this approach might not be a sensible policy. Firstly, they note, organisations will often require employees to learn certain things. Health and safety or compliance training are two examples. The training function must be seen to be meeting these essential obligations before adopting a self-directed learning approach. Secondly, if the learning is not undertaken then resources, that could be spent elsewhere, will be wasted. Lastly simply providing opportunities for employees to learn will not ensure that they do learn and they will need to be motivated and supported throughout.

In business learning, regardless of which HRD activity it stems from, is the process by which people acquire knowledge and skills in order to enhance their performance. Companies need people to work faster, better and smarter for both the individual's and the organisation's benefit (Rosenberg 2001). An organisation's view of learning will determine how it is carried out in that organisation. A utilitarian perspective, in which the organisation needs to link learning to strategy and treat employees in a quantitative way, will possibly result in a pre-dominance of narrowly defined short-term learning designed to contribute to bottom line performance, at the expense of developmental initiatives (Garavan and McGuire 2001). Recent empirical evidence supports this view in finding that individual's training needs were significantly constrained by the strategic needs of the organisation (Antonacopoulou 1999). This casts a doubt over whether or not there can ever be a true unitarist position.

The view which an organisation holds towards T&D has important links to their personnel policies. If an organisation claims to practice HRM as opposed to personnel management and thus considers employees as assets to be nurtured and developed yet show little encouragement for the development of said employees this is a contradiction in terms. This issue needs to be examined in further detail and these links need to be tested for consistency.

Training needs analysis (TNA), a common term in the literature, is the process which refers to organisations' collective activities that underpin decision making, particularly in relation to whether training can improve performance, who should receive training and training content (Clarke 2003). Training needs addressed through a TNA will relate to the individuals current job and will not focus on future job roles. However organisational wide TNA is complemented in many organisations by personalised TNA through the use of personal development plans (PDPs) and performance appraisals which, at least theoretically, deal with both employee training and development.

3.4 Assessment approaches

In highlighting individual T&D needs there are numerous approaches suggested in the literature. The selection of methods used will depend on numerous variables such as the time-scale, the number of people conducting the analysis, the size of the organisation, peoples' location and how information for other purposes is collected, stored and accessed (Roscoe 1992). Individuals will require training when there is a training gap, described as a gap between knowledge and skills (Roscoe 1992) and development when they are being groomed for a higher position or when deficiencies have been highlighted which require them to attend developmental programmes.

A brief description of a number of approaches used in identifying T&D needs follows, with contributions from various authors. The focus, however, is on competency-based approaches and performance appraisals as these approaches are gaining popularity in the literature and have replaced many older methods. As the T&D process is cyclical in nature measures of individual's performance, which evaluate T&D effectiveness as well as identifying needs, will also be discussed in Chapter Six. The approaches listed below outline the preliminary techniques used to identify generic job related Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes (KSAs), competencies and individual T&D needs as identified through a review of performance.

The comprehensive analysis aims to produce a comprehensive and detailed list or record of every task and sub-task that comprise the job, along with the skills and attitudes necessary to do the job (Buckley and Caple 1992). This may involve up to three stages depending on the approach, including a job description (Harrison 1997; Reid and

Barrington (1999), a job specification (Reid and Barrington 1999) and a training specification (Harrison 1997), the first two of which are also discussed separately to comprehensive analysis under job analysis (see Buckley and Caple 1992). According to Kenny and Reid (1986) there are certain criteria, which must be met before undertaking such analysis (Buckley and Caple 1992). These are as follows:

- The tasks are unfamiliar to trainees or potential trainees, they are difficult to learn and the costs of failure or error are unacceptable in terms of expenditure of money, time and human effort.
- Resources are available to carry out such analyses.
- The training programme that results from this approach will be used frequently and should, therefore, be cost effective.
- The tasks comprising the job are laid down in a tight and closely prescribed manner and the right way of carrying them out must be learnt and adhered to.
- Management understand and accept the need for this type of approach to be adopted.

(Kenny and Reid 1986 in Buckley and Caple 1992: 74)

The key task analysis is another approach which is often used in conjunction with a job analysis (Buckley and Caple 1992). It is used for more complex roles and involves a brief job description, followed by the selection of only the key or primary tasks within the job required by the individual (Buckley and Caple 1992). Its usage is somewhat contested in the literature. Kenny and Reid (1986) state that this approach has particular relevance to managerial or supervisory positions as a fully comprehensive analysis at this level would be too expensive and unwieldy to be viable. However, Reid and Barrington (1999) note that this approach may be more useful when assessing lower level employees as managerial roles, due to their unpredictability, may be too difficult and time consuming to examine specifically. The same authors list two conditions, for which this type of analysis is best suited, namely when the job consists of a large number of tasks (the simplest of which are assumed known) and when the job is changing in emphasis and a continuing need for prioritising tasks is necessary.

Another type of analysis, problem-centred analysis, is predominantly short-term, pragmatic and ad-hoc in nature (Reid and Barrington 1999). It involves defining problems and specifying the type of training, which would meet the employee's needs most effectively. It compliments the key task analysis approach when the employee needs to get to grips with a relatively few problematic areas (Harrison 1997) as attention is focused only on the aspects of performance that are below standard (Buckley and Caple 1992). The method may appear highly acceptable to subordinates but even though their success depends on diagnostic skills, expert knowledge of senior management is often used instead, resulting in quick-fix solutions, which do not meet learning needs (Reid and Barrington 1999). This technique is used when training has already been identified as the solution to the problem (Buckley and Caple 1992), as noted above it is important that the correct solution is identified.

These analytical approaches are by no means new and are only some of the most discussed techniques, others include learner-centred analysis; difficulty, importance, frequency (DIF) analysis; procedural analysis; hierarchical analysis; key points analysis; faults analysis; knowledge and topic analysis; manual skills analysis; social skills analysis; critical incident analysis and repertory grid analysis (Buckley and Caple 1992). Many of these techniques have been combined and are used within the performance appraisal interview. Additionally competency-based approaches which have replaced traditional TNA in many organisations, have come to fore. The focus will now turn to the competency-based approach before concentrating on performance appraisal.

3.4.1 The competency-based approach

The competency-based approach involves highlighting what is required to ensure effective employee performance. It is job and person-centred and aims to produce a statement of the class of role being studied. This may be a welcome substitute to TNA which can be problematic (Agut et al 2002) as training may not be the appropriate solution to poor performance and the person-centred analysis may ignore the job requirements to an extent. The competence approach came to age in the 1990s due to attempts to professionalise the previously adhoc nature of management training (Mabey and Iles 2001) and has been the subject of much focus in recent years (Sparrow and Bognanno 2001). The aim of this approach is to bring individuals to a carefully designed competence standard. This is described in terms of a demonstration of

competence by the individual, a performance criteria statement (describing the quality of the outcomes of successful performance) and range statements (outlining the breadth of competence required for the individual to be considered occupationally competent) (Reid and Barrington 1999). The fact that the competence approach is linked to behavioural learning and organisational outcomes differentiates it from previous approaches (Sparrow and Bognanno 2001).

This approach is useful, not least as a potential basis for performance-related pay, but critics have challenged the omission of learning processes stating that outcomes may be affected by the learning route and that this approach may be most useful when the actual need, the prescribed standards and training methods can be clearly linked (Reid and Barrington 1999). However competencies are more important than knowledge and skills for the successful performance of complex tasks. Many people are equal when it comes to knowledge or skill and in terms of attaining qualifications, work experience and work results but it is the employee's effort, enthusiasm, motivation and underlying self-image which distinguish between successful and unsuccessful workers (Bergenhengouwen et al 1996).

However, there is much uncertainty surrounding the use of the terms 'competence' and 'competency' (Cheng et al 2002) with the term competence being described as a buzzword, which is widely used but easily misunderstood (Rowe 1995). The term 'competence' has many meanings and as such is one of the most diffuse terms in organisational and occupational literature (Robotham 2004). It can be used not only to refer to aspects of the job but also to identify characteristics of people who do the job effectively (Dubois and Rothwell 2004; Robotham 2004). This latter view of competence is generally associated with the US approach. In the US a worker-orientated definition of competence is stressed, where generic competencies of high performers are outlined and not of individuals in certain positions (Garavan and McGuire 2001; Cheng et al 2002). This notion which is based on the idea that once these characteristics of highly performers have been identified that it should be possible to transmit these competencies throughout the workforce may be deemed useful (Heffernan and Flood 2000). However it is criticised for the simple reason that it can not be assured in all organisations that behaviours exhibited by today's superior performers will be equally effective in the future. To combat this, lists of competencies must be flexible and

capable of reflecting changes in the organisation's future direction (Cheng et al 2002). Also problematic is the focus of the US model on individual managers' characteristics, with no consideration of the organisation's contextual factors such as culture, marketplace and business environment (Stuart and Lindsey 1997).

The competing perspective is that of the UK 'work-based' competence in which the outputs associated with effective performance are stressed (Garavan and McGuire 2001). It looks at what a person who works in a given occupational area should be able to demonstrate. This approach may not be ideal as an effective demonstration of a managerial skill does not necessarily demonstrate that a manager has the necessary expertise to judge when and if the use of that competence is appropriate in another situation (King 1992 in Cheng et al 2002). Also there is often no attempt to assess a level of competence beyond whether the person is competent or not (Cheng et al 2002).

An alternative option is to use a multi-dimensional definition, in which the best of both approaches are stressed (Garavan and McGuire 2001; Cheng et al 2002). Each model has its own strengths and they should not be regarded as being mutually exclusive. Integrating the two models paints a more complete picture of competence (Cheng et al 2002).

The majority of discussions of the competence viewpoint focus predominantly on the individual. However the individual level is only one level at which competence is discussed, the other two being the organisation and as a tool for aiding communication between education and the labour market (Garavan and McGuire 2001). The organisational viewpoint, however, revolves for the most part around core competencies and the resource based view, both of which view the organisation as a collection of competencies (Garavan and McGuire 2001) thus again stressing the importance of individual competence.

The emphasis of UK competence-based assessment approaches is on proving that the individual is performing competently in their role (Rowe 1995). 360 degree competency assessment can be used before and after training in order to note key discrepancies, through focusing on the effectiveness of employees in producing essential work outputs or results on the job (Dubois and Rothwell 2004). The UK perspective is not concerned

with whether the learning has been acquired yet whether individuals can do what is required by their role or job function (output). How this is developed is unimportant (McCarthy and Garavan 2001), as the MCI point out it is not about a competent method yet a competent outcome (Rowe 1995). According to the MCI it is comparable to a driving test in that it compares the individuals' performance against specific management standards (Rowe 1995). According to Rowe (1995) competence should be measured by the following means:

1. Rationale – The candidate exhibiting clear objectives and methods for obtaining them.
2. Documentation – Evidence of competent performance.
3. Observation – An assessor should witness competent performance.
4. Third party testimony – Comments are obtained from work colleagues and customers.

(Rowe 1995: 5)

Behavioural indicators are one prescribed ways of identifying competencies. Each competency, it is claimed (Dubois and Rothwell 2004), will usually have between one and five behavioural indicators associated with it. These can be assessed through the approaches suggested by Rowe (1995), many of which require feedback from other parties. This demonstrates the links between the competence approach and performance appraisals. In order to measure whether individuals are competent and as a way of outlining the competencies which they have to acquire competency frameworks are usually used.

3.4.1.1 Competency frameworks

Competency frameworks originally consisted of mainly behavioural elements, or the softer skills involved in effective performance, but have become broader and now include more technical competencies (CIPD 2005b), this may explain the considerable variation in the number of competencies being used in competence frameworks, which range from between 21-30 and 300-400 in one study (Beardwell and Holden 2001). There has been a dramatic increase in the number of companies using competency frameworks (Beardwell and Holden 2001) and the literature suggests that organisation characteristics such as size, ownership and length of time in operation could have an

affect on the adoption of competency frameworks (Heraty 1992; Garavan 1994 cited in (Heffernan and Flood 2000).

Only measurable components should be included when designing a competency framework and the number of competencies should be kept to a minimum, aiming for no more than 12 for any particular role and they should be arranged into clusters to aid user accessibility (CIPD 2005b). Also the framework should contain definitions and/or examples of each competency.

3.4.1.2 Problems with the competence approach

Many of the problems with the competence approach may occur due to miscomprehension of the concept (Rowe 1995). The terms competences and competencies are used interchangeably even though they refer to different things (CIPD 2005b). Competencies refers to the behaviours, which employees must have to input into a situation in order to achieve high performance levels (US approach) whereas competence refers to a system of minimum standards which is demonstrated by performance and output, essentially the UK output viewpoint (Sparrow and Bagnanno 2001; CIPD 2005b). So essentially this confusion is centred on the UK V US debate.

Additional confusion may arise because of the many variations of the approach formulated by organisations, as they adopt and apply different systems to various levels within the organisation (Sparrow and Bognanno 2001). There is much debate surrounding the use of the competence approach at different levels and there is mixed opinions as to whom the competence approach is best suited. Rowe (1995) states that it may be more suitable to lower levels where tasks are more easily defined than the higher grades, yet Garavan and McGuire (2001) note that the competence approach also serves the needs of managers, thus eliminating status differences, which are present in the workplace, from HRD. It is also claimed that competence is a given and therefore characteristics such as emotion, attitude and cognition originate from innate abilities and cannot be learned (Garavan and McGuire 2001).

Additionally notions of control permeate competency approaches (Garavan and McGuire 2001), as they may have questionable value in conjunction with the more recent notions of individually focused learning or self-directed learning. The key is not

to think of competence-based approaches as alternative to knowledge-based methods, rather than an additional measure. Programmes should be designed so that competence models build on the knowledge ones, as the competence approach is work-based and not training-based (Garavan and McGuire 2001). In this way knowledge supports work, learning supports skill and theory supports practice (Rowe 1995). Cornford and Athanasou (1995) take workplace learning one step further in differentiating between competence and expertise. An expert is a person who not only knows but also has the ability to apply knowledge but what separates an expert from a competent individual is the fact that an expert can spot faults and also tell you how to fix them. However, the expert is seen to be superior to the competent person and is stressed as the next level. Discussion on experts has been thin in the literature and for these reasons this research has focused on the competence-based approach.

3.4.2 Performance appraisal and multi-source appraisal

Manager – employee performance appraisals are interviews held to discuss employee performance and suggest areas for improvement. Discussing T&D needs is only one part of the performance appraisal interview (McMahon 1999). Some (Scott 2001) suggest that a key component of this process is the creation of specific performance criteria or competencies to measure against, which again shows the link between the competence approach and performance appraisal. Traditionally performance appraisal was only conducted between an employee and their manager/ supervisor but this situation has evolved to one in which a manager is only one of a number of people, along with peers, subordinates, internal/external customers and the individuals themselves, who are in a position to evaluate individuals' performance. The change in focus from predominantly supervisor-led performance appraisal to involving a number of sources - which is known as 360 degree appraisal - grew from papers in the 1960s and early 1970s to gain currency in the late 1980s early 1990s (McCarthy and Garavan 2001). In fact there has been constant growth in the usage of 360 degree appraisal in recent years with 42 percent of CIPD respondent companies now using it for leadership development (CIPD 2005a).

This wider focus might have arisen from the various criticisms of the 'traditional' form of supervisor/ managerial performance appraisal. It might also be due to the growing complexities of modern organisations, which makes it difficult for line managers to

appreciate all of the dimensions of individuals' roles (Armstrong and Baron 2005). Additionally it is viewed as beneficial in that it forces individuals to be more self-aware, as it is harder to dismiss similar feedback from a number of sources (Ryan et al 2000).

Whilst theoretically very useful in assessing individuals' performance a number of potential problems also preside. Antonacopoulou (2000) highlights some employee criticisms of performance appraisal. According to the employees of three UK banks, this process provides guidance on the areas that they need to develop but during the process managers are expected to report on the activities which they have partaken in to develop themselves, and therefore are forced to come up with something. If employees do not demonstrate that they are doing something then their salary or career prospects could be affected (Antonacopoulou 2000). Perversely this may encourage otherwise lazy employees to partake in essential developmental activities.

Appraisals by subordinates and peers, and self appraisal have become common sources of feedback but appraisals by managers/ supervisors remain the most commonly used (McCarthy and Garavan 2001; Stone 2005). These various sources are now discussed in further detail.

3.4.2.1 Supervisor appraisal

Performance appraisals are essential in assessing the effect of training and development delivered during the previous period and also determining T&D needs in relation to future objectives. Appraisals can take many forms. They are broad-ranging, encompassing situations from setting performance objectives to counselling and selecting staff for transfer, promotion and training (Hunt 1997). It is suggested that appraisals should not be an annual event, yet more frequent (Wilson and Western 2000; Hunt 1997) as if they are only conducted once a year problems may escalate and affect the morale and productivity of various parties (Hunt 1997). If properly designed performance appraisals can help to determine individual objectives; how well these objectives are being attained; promotion and transfer requirements; and employee training needs. None of these issues should come as a surprise to either the individual or the manager as feedback should be administered throughout the year (Scott 2001).

Performance appraisals are easy to conduct when they are enjoyable, including when performance and potential are good, when superior and subordinates have an open relationship, when promotions or salary increases are abundant and when there is plenty of time to prepare and for discussion (Beer 1981). It is advisable that there should be two way communications (Gunnigle et al 2006) and that T&D needs are discussed separate to assessment, promotion and remuneration issues (Wilson and Western 2000).

However they can also be problematic. They are often poorly designed, over-ambitious and inadequately resourced using untrained staff and working with vague objectives (Hunt 1997). In fact Kikoski (1999) states that line managers are under prepared to handle the interview and reluctant to give negative feedback. McCarthy and Garavan's (2001) criticisms range from the general unpleasantness of the performance appraisal interview (as cited by Meyer 1991 and Lawler et al 1984), which may result in managers rushing the process in an ineffective way, to the difficulties in providing negative feedback (as cited by Folger and Cropanzano 1988). McMahon (1999) also cites a number of defects of the performance appraisal interview. He notes that managerial and staff hostility, conflicting objectives, ineffective interviewing, lack of follow up, failure to evaluate or review the system, complex paperwork and human judgement and subjectivity can all result in poor performance appraisal.

Fletcher (2001) purports that the results of performance appraisals are set against the backdrop of the relationships which exist between managers and subordinates. Additionally Cook (1995), although referring to performance appraisals for purposes other than highlighting training and development needs, claims that they suffer from many biases, factors which should not influence raters but do. These include the age, ethnicity, gender, physical appearance and attitudes/values of the ratee and whether they are in the rater's confidence. They also include raters' personal like/dislike towards the ratee and the impression that the rater gets of the ratee by the mannerisms, clothes or buzzwords that the ratee uses (Cook 1995). More recently it has been claimed that performance appraisal is a management techniques designed to reward employees whom management favour and punish those whom management dislike (Stone 2005).

However it is important to note that poor rater/ratee relationships and subsequent unfair appraisals can also affect other types of appraisal, including even self-appraisal where

an individual might have a negative or inflated view of themselves. Overall the difficulties inherent in the appraisal interview may be traced to the quality of the manager/ subordinate relationship (McMahon 1999 notes that a single rating may be more a rating of this relationship than anything else), the manner and skill in which the interview is conducted, the objectives the organisation has for the appraisal system, and the administrative system to which the appraisal system belongs (Beer 1981). Many of the aforementioned difficulties have resulted in the emergence of other appraisal sources, and the roles have even been reversed with managers changing from rater to ratee.

3.4.2.2 Subordinate appraisal

One of the major differentiating factors of the 360 degree approach is in its use of subordinate or upward (Jones 1996) appraisal, where the individual is assessed by their subordinates. This upward approach has been implemented by various organisations (see Bramley 1999 for one such example) but is still very much unused (Stone 2005). This may be because it is not as fitting to an autocratic management style as the traditional top down approach and because it remains an understudied area in the HRD literature and thus there is little to persuade practitioners in its adoption (Bernadin and Beatty 1987 as cited in McCarthy and Garavan 2001). Also it may result in popularity contests - where individuals attempt to gain favour with supervisors by scoring them favourably - and resentment by superiors of the fact that they are being evaluated by people below them who may not be qualified to do so - thus undermining their authority (McCarthy and Garavan 2001). On the positive side employee involvement like this may empower employees (Jones 1996) and enhance their sense of importance to the organisation, resulting in higher quality feedback (McCarthy and Garavan 2001).

Whilst Stone (2005) asserts that this process must be anonymous, Jones (1996) notes that anonymity can give employees the impression that honest feedback cannot be open, it can lead to personal unconstructive attacks and it cannot reinforce the barrier between subordinate and manager.

Research conducted by numerous sources (Hegarty 1974; Atwater et al 1995; Reilly et al 1996) has shown that performance can improve as a result of this process (McCarthy and Garavan 2001). However Rogers (1996) claims that feedback from subordinates is

of little value to managers as it doesn't tell them how to change. Managers will rarely act on such feedback and if they do it will only be a marginal action meaning that at best this process is not cost effective and at worst it is highly wasteful (Rogers 1996).

3.4.2.3 Peer appraisal

Another alternative to top down appraisal is peer appraisal. This approach has grown in popularity for various reasons such as the increased use of teamwork, and in particular self managed teams, and the growing concern about the appropriateness of traditional supervisory assessment (McCarthy and Garavan 2001). Peer appraisal is favoured due to its perceived effectiveness in accurately assessing performance. Peers are seen as the best judges of performance as they work closely with those concerned and they may know each others performance better than supervisors (Stone 2005). Increased involvement in such processes, while it can make employees feel part of the organisation, may also lead to various problems. Individuals may vie for popularity or may be afraid to give negative feedback. However peer pressure can also lead to improved performance, increase team members commitment and popularity (Stone 2005). However despite claims of good reliability and validity (Stone 2005) research into the area has shown conflicting results regarding employee acceptance of the approach (McCarthy and Garavan 2001).

3.4.2.4 Self-appraisal

Self appraisals are mostly used in organisations which promote a less authoritarian culture and which encourage employee participation and self-development (Stone 2005). It is argued that self-appraisal may be more effective than any of the aforementioned methods (Klimoski and London 1974 as cited in McCarthy and Garavan 2001). Individuals are also asked to self-appraise as it is believed that involving them in the process will increase their recognition of their need to change and thus motivate them to do so (Thornton 1968). This may overcome the barrier to individual involvement in T&D of 'not seeing there is a problem' cited by Mumford (1988) in Chapter Four. However the coverage of this approach in the literature lags behind alternative approaches (McCarthy and Garavan 2001), particularly self-assessment carried out in assessment centres (Franks et al 1999). This is despite reports of increasing usage as far back as 1968 (Thornton 1968). Research has, however, shown high acceptance of this approach and it is seen as an obvious method as employees will

self assess to a certain extent even if they are not formally required to do so (McCarthy and Garavan 2001). Involving the individual in the process can lead to greater perceptions of fairness, accuracy, acceptance and satisfaction with the system (McCarthy and Garavan 2001), greater self-awareness, greater learning and increased motivation (Ryan et al 2000). According to Thornton (1968) self-appraisals may be substituted for supervisory appraisals when the supervisor does not adequately know the work performance of the ratee. They are beneficial in this way as they deal with subordinates' concerns that their managers do not have an acceptable picture of them (Fletcher 2001). Also they may be combined with supervisor appraisals in an attempt to improve the process. The usefulness of gaining personal involvement depends on the relationship between the ratee's self-evaluation and their supervisor's appraisal of them (Thornton 1968).

A number of potential pitfalls may arise from self appraisal such as an increase in employee-supervisor tension, distrust or an increase in defensiveness (Ryan et al 2000). Conflict mainly occurs when self appraisals do not correlate with supervisor appraisals and when this happens similar conflicts to those experienced in the traditional appraisals will not be overcome (Thornton 1968). The same author found in his study of 64 managers that individuals generally disagree with their manager's assessment of their performance, believing that their performance is better than claimed by their manager.

Additionally many of the prescribed benefits may be speculative rather than definitive (Roberson et al 1993 as cited in McCarthy and Garavan 2001) and accuracy in particular is questionable as various studies have shown that individuals tend to give themselves undeservedly high scores (McCarthy and Garavan 2001). This is referred to as over-estimation, underestimation and perfect accuracy being the two other types of self-assessment error (Franks et al 1999). This inaccuracy has been disputed in the literature over the years. Thornton's (1968) research strengthened previous claims (Kirchner 1965; Parker et al 1959) that individuals tend to overrate themselves, while However Beer et al (1991) note that individuals will usually rate themselves lower than a supervisor would and Fletcher (2001) agrees that they might also be too modest.

Past studies have shown links between the individual's assessment and his level of success. Hogan (1991), as cited in Franks et al (1999), claimed that individuals whose

self-assessments were closer to the assessments of them made by their managers were more likely to be promoted. Additionally Thornton (1968) found that managers least accurate in their self-assessments were least likely to be promoted, perhaps this is due to the tendency of the less able to inaccurately self-assess or maybe it is because executives consider a subordinate less promotable if he disagrees.

3.4.2.5 Criticisms of multi-source appraisal

360 degree feedback is distinguished from traditional performance appraisal in so far as it is primarily a development tool and does not relate as much to issues such as pay and job assignments, transfer and promotion decisions (McCarthy and Garavan 2001). Although the process is sometimes useful for promotion purposes its major benefit relates to developmental progress, the focus of this chapter. It can be used to assess individuals T&D needs (McCarthy and Garavan 2001), and its effectiveness rests on the assumption that it can provide individuals with insights into their developmental needs (Ryan et al 2000), as well as assessing their performance after T&D. According to Greguras et al (2003) there are two implicit assumptions of multi-source appraisal in the literature. Firstly it is assumed that different rater sources provide different information and secondly it assumes that ratees attend to the performance information from each rater source. The same authors found, in their study of 216 managers, that ratees attend to performance information from supervisors, peers and subordinates for all of four performance dimensions tested (ability to lead others, overall performance, ability to build working relationships, general administrative performance). They also found that ratees take more heed of supervisor feedback than the other two, not surprising considering that their supervisor is more influential regarding their career, and that they attended to sources differently depending on the dimension in question.

The incremental value of providing ratees with feedback information from several different raters is unknown (Borman 1997 in Greguras et al 2002). Nevertheless, Ryan et al (2000) identify performance appraisal's usefulness at the job analysis stage, the competency approach and in predicting T&D needs relating to strategic plans for the future. However, as highlighted above, this appraisal tool is not without its criticisms. It must be remembered that it is not a panacea yet merely a valuable tool (Rands 2005). For instance if a source does not have the opportunity to observe behaviours or does not understand the requirements of a particular dimension, they might provide inaccurate

feedback and consequentially may misdirect the ratee's attention and subsequent behaviours (Greguras 1997). McCarthy and Garavan (2001) outline numerous prescribed advantages and disadvantages of this approach.

Figure 3.1: The advantages and disadvantages of multi-source appraisal

Advantages	Disadvantages
Enhanced 2 way communication (London and Beatty 1993; Garavan et al 1997; Bernadin and Beatty 1987)	Employees may feel threatened by the process (London et al 1990)
More effective work relationships (London and Beatty 1993; Garavan et al 1997)	Demotivation/ unhappiness from negative feedback (London et al; Kaplan 1993)
Increased opportunities for employee involvement (London and Beatty 1993; Garavan et al 1997)	Increased pressure both on management and on the individual's self concept (Beatty 1993)
Improved ability to uncover and resolve conflict (London and Beatty 1993)	Survey fatigue (Bracken 1996; Kaplan 1993; London and Beatty 1993)
Better received feedback as it comes from a number of sources (Garavan et al 1997)	May not change recipients behaviour or performance at all (Bernadin 1993)
Improved guide for self-development (Garavan et al 1997)	Fundamental flaws in the design of many 360° inventories (Moses et al 1993)
	Many 360° programmes divorced from organisational strategy/ competitive advantage (Schneier et al 1992)

McCarthy and Garavan (2001: 14-15)

Most of the points in the table above are self explanatory. It is important that the supervisor of the process is prepared to administer criticism as well as praise (Hesketh 2001) and it might be useful to prepare individuals by putting them in a positive frame of mind prior to negative feedback so that they are looking for solutions instead of going into a defensive position (Rands 2005). There are a number of important considerations regarding feedback, particularly receptivity of feedback, and little research has proved ratees desire and/or intention to use information from numerous sources (Greguras 1997). Ryan et al (2000) highlight one possible approach as seeking to identify recipient characteristics that might indicate a need for different approaches to providing feedback. Also in regard to the fundamental flaws, Moses et al (1993) cite problems such as the appraiser rating the individual against generalised trait based outcomes as opposed to concrete situations; a limited or non-existent frame of reference

for making judgements; individuals being rated by past performance; un-sufficiently equipped raters and an over reliance on the instrument designer's scoring system, factor analysis and data collection methods. These proposed flaws aside performance appraisals and particularly multi-source appraisals can be very advantageous in identifying numerous areas for improvement. These developmental issues are often recorded in a personal development plan (PDP).

3.4.3 Personal Development Plans (PDPs)

Lassey (1998) advocates the use of Personal Development Plans (PDPs), which allow the organisation to document the training and development objectives of the learner and monitor their progress. These may be integrated into an organisation's appraisal or assessment systems and, although they will differ across organisations, they should include the following:

- The agreed training and development needs.
- The performance goals of the learner.
- The training and development methods to be employed.
- The time scale.
- The evaluation of success criteria.

Lassey (1998: 100)

They may include formal training but will incorporate a wider array of developmental initiatives, self-managed learning, coaching, project work and job enlargement and enrichment (Armstrong and Baron 2005). According to Antonacopoulou (1999) PDPs are a key mechanism in facilitating the identification of individuals' training needs and are used within the performance appraisal process for this purpose. PDPs give learners increased control over what they want to learn and help ensure that they do not attend development courses which focus on skills which they already possess (Lassey 1998). PDPs will be most effective when they take a broader view of the individual and their future, as opposed to a focus on the individual's current job (Armstrong and Baron 2005).

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter sought to highlight the importance of effectively assessing individuals' T&D needs, the first stage of the T&D process. If analysis at this stage is ineffective then inefficiency, costly unnecessary training and demoralised staff can ensue. Organisational T&D needs exist alongside individual needs and there is often a conflict at this stage. This comes about because of organisations' tendency to neglect the developmental needs of individuals due to the associated expensive and the lack of importance of these needs to bottom-line issues. The focus on the training debate should be on how to balance the needs of the individual and of the organisation and the negotiation process through which this can be done remains under researched. It is suggested that specific strategies be put in place, which ensure that the individual has the opportunity to discuss, identify and pursue learning goals that have meaning to both them and their organisation. Providing this opportunity will at least be making some progress into bridging this divide.

There are various methods used at the needs analysis stage. These include comprehensive analysis, key task analysis and problem-centred analysis. However, many of these have been complemented or replaced by competency-based methods and performance appraisals. Competency based approaches, which are job and person-centred, aim to produce a statement of the class of role being studied. This may be a welcome substitute to traditional TNA methods in that training may not be the appropriate solution to poor performance for example and the person-centred analysis may ignore the job requirements to an extent. It may be most useful when the actual need, the prescribed standards and training methods can be clearly linked.

One method which bridges the divide between job related and individual goals/ needs is the performance appraisal interview. Traditional performance appraisal interviews between employees and their managers allow individuals to stress their personal developmental goals as well as giving managers an opportunity to suggest areas in which the employee might develop. The process of performance appraisal has been enhanced with the inclusion of peers, subordinates and internal/external customers as raters alongside the traditional manager rater. This change in focus might have arisen from the various criticisms of the 'traditional' form of supervisor/ managerial

performance appraisal which range from the general unpleasantness of the performance appraisal interview to the difficulties in providing negative feedback. Personal Development Plans (PDPs), which allow the organisation to document the training and development objectives of the learner and monitor their progress, are often integrated into an organisation's appraisal or assessment systems.

Once individuals' jobs have been analysed the needs to be addressed in training will then be known, it is at this stage that the developmental needs of the individual should also be considered and not just the mandatory training needs. These will then have to be prioritised between due to time, cost, social and political influences and organisational priorities (Buckley and Caple 1992). Once training content has been agreed upon, the training must be designed and delivered. There are a number of things which an organisation must take into account in this regard namely the determinants or principles of successful learning. These are now discussed in detail.

CHAPTER FOUR
DETERMINANTS OF SUCCESSFUL LEARNING

4.1 Introduction

Having assessed T&D needs organisations must be careful not to assume that it is simply a matter of choosing between the various delivery techniques available to them. There are many variables other than the quality of instruction that affect learning (Gagné et al 1992) and understanding the impact of individual differences of learning and learning transfer is critical in understanding what makes training effective (Baldwin and Ford 1988). This chapter examines those aspects, which the literature points to as fundamental considerations when designing and delivering T&D initiatives.

Following on from an analysis of T&D needs it is recommended that an organisation should then set clear objectives. These objectives will provide the learner with guidance and will provide a number of other potential benefits, including setting a benchmark against which the effectiveness of T&D can be assessed. Objectives provide goals and help in deciding upon methods and content (Sanderson 1992). Before objectives are decided upon, however, it is important to consider the target population; the employees at whom the T&D is aimed. Rogers (1996) proposes that aside from the general theories on learning and learning techniques, in order to facilitate learning within an organisation, awareness of certain key characteristics of adult learners is necessary (Maybey and Salaman 1995). Harrison (1997: 275) suggests that information on numbers and location; jobs and competencies; learning styles; skills; attitudes and motivation must be known whilst Gagné et al (2005) lists nine determinants of successful learning. These often overlap, for example to maintain attention and motivation, feedback and guidance are frequently combined (Buckley and Caple 1992: 148).

The emphasis of organisational development over individual development, as discussed in the previous chapter, means that individual differences are rarely taken into account (Antonacopoulou 1999). This is surprising considering there is no such thing as a typical trainee any more than a typical human being (Allen 1994). This is arguably a more important consideration in the teaching of adults (Andragogy) than in the teaching of children (Pedagogy) as adults, having lived longer, will have undergone more experiences (Dwyer 2004). Gunnigle, Heraty and Morley (2002) affirm that if we understand how an individual learns then we can improve how training and

development programmes are designed and delivered to that individual. The suggestion that it is learners, and not trainers, who learn, is quite valid as an individual cannot be forced to learn if they do not want to (Antonacopoulou 2000). Trainers/facilitators can only provide the necessary conditions, which will encourage and motivate learners (Buckley and Caple 1992). The rest is up to the learner. However, as noted above, providing the necessary conditions for learning requires a number of considerations. A number of these have been chosen for detailed examination. This list below outlines myriad factors which warrant consideration. These are outlined in this chapter with contributions from various authors.

Learners must:

- Understand the intended outcomes from a learning event (objectives).
- Have the ability to learn (aptitude/competence).
- Be in a supportive environment, free from threat (culture).
- Have a chance to practice what they have learned (practice).
- Receive feedback on their performance (feedback).
- Believe that what they learn will help them in real ways (relevance, beneficial).
- Be provided with the information they need to learn in several different ways (learning styles.)
- Receive praise when doing things well (feedback, recognition).

Adapted from www.arl.org

4.2 Learning objectives

Following on from needs analysis, setting learning objectives is the next stage of the T&D process (Harrison 1997). Objectives provide goals and help to decide upon methods and content (Sanderson 1992). Robert F Mager, the pioneer of objectives, proposed that sometimes all that is needed for successful learning is to give someone an objective (Langdon 1999). Gagné et al (1992) suggest that identifying the learning objectives will give the learner more ownership (Sanderson 1992) and set the learner's expectations relating to content and learning activities. Some objectives will be obvious to learners yet others will not. The belief is that if learners are aware of what it is that they are supposed to achieve then they can focus on this and seek feedback as to

whether or not they are meeting the intended learning objectives. Empirical evidence suggests that by simply making objectives available decreases learning time by up to two-thirds (Sanderson 1992).

Without clear objectives it is difficult to know what to assess (Hughey and Mussnug 1997) and programmes and processes must match learning objectives in order to be effective (Maybey and Salaman 1995). Also in their absence students may establish their own objectives resulting in possible inconsistency with the intended objectives (Gagné et al 1992). Additionally without careful consideration of the precise objectives of a learning intervention costly irrelevant activities may ensue (Harrison 1997). There are various considerations such as what the programme is expected to accomplish and under what time line (Duguay and Korbut 2002), what the employee is expected to know at the end of the process and the way in which they must demonstrate their learning and level of competence (Buckley and Caple 1992). If the employee knows what is expected of them at the end of training, whether it is to carry out a demonstration, conduct an appraisal or complete a questionnaire, it will help them focus (Roscoe 1992). This notion of writing learning outcomes is founded in behaviourist learning theory (Carlile and Jordan 2005).

It is suggested (Duguay and Korbut 2002) that objectives are best accomplished with direct input from team leaders and the training group (Dwyer 2004; Duguay and Korbut 2002). Dwyer (2004) also notes that adult learners must be responsible for their own learning and that they often know what they want to learn. For this reason, he adds, it is not appropriate to present learners with a set of objectives. Instead they should be involved in the formation of objectives and these objectives should be discussed at the beginning of the training session. Learners should not, however, set objectives on their own as in new, unfamiliar settings they may revert back to dependant child-like behaviour (Dwyer 2004). The designer of the learning event should also be involved at this stage, if they are not they should challenge objectives, which they feel are inappropriate (Harrison 1997).

Objectives can be grouped in numerous ways. Harrison (1997) groups them into final behavioural objectives and intermediate objectives. The first of these, also known as 'ultimate' (Sanderson 1992), 'criterion' or 'overall' (Harrison 1997) objectives, refer to

the outcomes achieved on completion of the event or the desired changes in the organisation (Sanderson 1992). Intermediate, interim, specific (Harrison 1997) or subordinate (Sanderson 1992) objectives outline the knowledge, skills and attitudes (KSAs), which should have been achieved by certain stages throughout the process. Both behavioural and intermediate objectives should indicate the skills, knowledge or attitudes the learner should acquire and the kind of content and methods of learning that will be appropriate (Harrison 1997). If objectives are clear then an evaluation of training effectiveness will be easier to conduct, in relation to these objectives (Appelbaum, Harel and Shapiro 1998). This again highlights the cyclical nature of the T&D process.

Although few would disagree that objectives are extremely useful, objections to their usage have been stressed in the literature (Buckley and Caple 1992). Initially objectives resulted in the need to extend, enlarge and introduce new training schemes, something which T&D professionals resented especially as this was costly and the effectiveness of training was and still is difficult to justify. Other objections highlighted by Buckley and Caple (1992) stem from the clinical and structured nature of objectives, which was seen by some as taking the soft or human touch out of training and the fact that tacit aspects of the training such as general interest, enrichment and educational material may be seen to be of little value, as they are not observable and measurable at the end of training. Finally other difficulties surrounding the use of objectives include difficulty in setting objectives; the questionable value of objectives; and the fact that trainees may not always demonstrate what they have learnt immediately after training (Buckley and Caple 1992). Langdon (1999) states that it is now time to replace objectives with alternatives that are more complete and concise for analysing the needs of performance. In fact Langdon (1999) suggests that competencies (discussed in section 2.5) are merely objectives masquerading as something new, serving no greater purpose and adding no greater level of effectiveness in analysis, design or communication adds. The alternative which Langdon (1999) proposes is the notion of 'performas'. He defines a performat as 'a prescription of the behaviour, standards, support, and noise elements of performance at the individual, work group, business unit, and process level of an organisation'. They may be used, he adds, to describe both the 'as is' and 'to be' requirements, describing fully the performance gap as a precursor to performance management. Despite Langdon's (1999) criticisms of objectives and his formulation of an alternative

(alongside other authors as cited by Langdon (1999)), objectives still dominate in the literature as a means of guiding T&D and evaluating its effectiveness.

4.3 Motivating learners: The Drivers and Barriers to T&D participation

The framework in Figure 2.6 and the many extant versions of the T&D processes outline the various stages through which T&D occurs. However many of them do not consider, in detail, the factors that actually drive or restrict employees from getting involved in T&D, in the first instance. This is particularly important in situations where employees are not formally required to attend training courses, (which is also problematic especially if they do not see the value of a particular programme). Two aspects of motivation should be considered. Firstly the motivation for individuals to learn and perform effectively when involved in T&D initiatives should be considered, as a 'soft intervening variable' as highlighted in Figure 2.6. However T&D professionals might also want to consider the factors that initially motivate individuals to partake in T&D initiatives. The drivers and barriers to participation in T&D should be a major consideration for modern organisations, as they seek to relinquish some of the control to individuals for their own T&D. Organisations might be forced to adopt a self-directed learning model, as is discussed in Chapter Three, in order to keep up with T&D demands, to reduce costs and to provide much more flexible and tailored learning to individuals. Without knowing what is stopping individuals from self-directing their T&D or what is motivating them to participate, organisations might not be taking the correct steps to creating a culture of Self Directed Learning (SDL). Additionally if today's business climate places a premium on learning then barriers to that learning assume even greater importance (Salaman and Butler 2001).

4.3.1 Drivers to employee participation in T&D

Motivation can be defined as that which energises, directs and sustains behaviour or performance (Buckley and Caple 1992). Trainees should have the motivation to learn (Russell 1998) as little useful learning will occur if the individual does not want to learn (Harrison 1997; Noe 1986) even if they have the ability. Studies have shown that higher levels of motivation to learn result in improved performance in learning (Quinones 1995) and it is suggested that employees with high levels of commitment to their career or work are likely to exert considerable effort in training as they intend to improve their

job performance (Cheng and Ho 2001; Rothwell and Arnold 2005). Motivational factors can be extrinsic or intrinsic (CIPD 2002). Extrinsic or external factors include better pay and professional qualifications whereas intrinsic factors are self-driven and include personal ambitions and the instinctive desire to understand and solve problems. They might want to increase their self-esteem or keep up to date with expertise (Maund 2001).

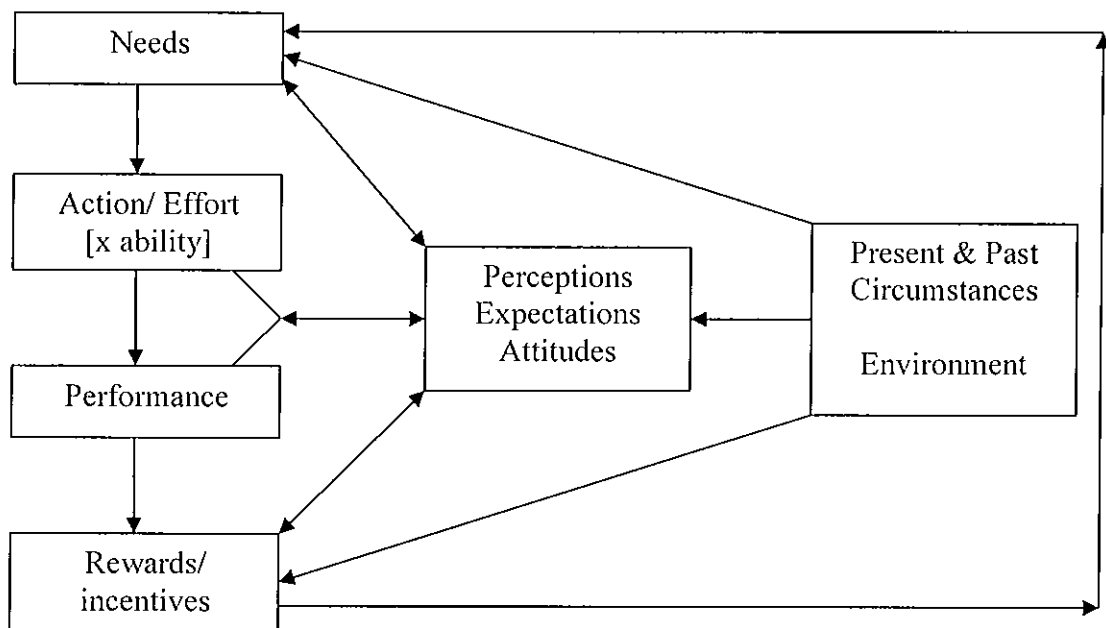
Promotion and the value placed on T&D by the organisation may also be central to motivating employees. In the absence of self-motivation, if there is little value placed by the organisation on professional qualifications and they do not reward learners for successfully developing themselves, employees might be reluctant to partake in T&D. Also if there are limited opportunities for promotion then employees will be far less motivated to partake in T&D (Antonacopoulou 2000).

Learning theories focus on various types of motivation. Behaviourist theories focus on external/ extrinsic rewards whilst cognitive theorists focus on intrinsic goal driven rewards (CIPD 2002). McCormick and Ilgen (1985), as cited in Buckley and Caple (1992), add imperfect intrinsic motivation, which is when intrinsic factors will motivate the individual to a certain extent at which point the individual will have to be extrinsically motivated to continue. It is, however, rare for people to be motivated only by intrinsic variables (Chisholm et al 2004) such as enjoying the activity or being interested in it and therefore trainers should attempt to motivate learners both intrinsically and extrinsically (Buckley and Caple 1992). Chisholm et al (2004) found that when training is required, advised or paid for, employees see it as more beneficial to their capabilities. This postulates the importance of stressing to individuals their need to develop (through needs analysis), the necessity of encouraging this development (line manager support), and the importance of providing financial supports (organisational support).

Most adults have concrete goals and have little patience with trainers telling them what they need to learn (Dwyer 2004). Byars and Rue (2000) suggest that if a training programme helps to achieve some of these individual goals then the learning process will be greatly facilitated. Gagné (1977) highlights 'social motivation' as important. This relates to the social situation in which the learners are placed including their social

needs, characteristics, problems and their relationships both with each other and with the trainers, all of which will affect their motivation. Maund (2001) also highlights social motivation, noting that interaction with other individuals is often a motivating factor. Bringing learners together into a cohesive group from the start and motivating them to learn as a collective entity rather than as a group of heterogeneous individuals is an approach used by many organisations (Harrison 1997). Buckley and Caple (1992) propose a model (Figure 4.1) outlining the various motivational factors.

Figure 4.1: Model of Motivation



Buckley and Caple (1992: 133)

In this model needs can be broken down into physical, safety, emotional individual, emotional social, intellectual and self-actualisation needs. The importance of needs (except for the physical, the nutritional aspect of which may be important) will depend upon the psychological make up of learners (Buckley and Caple 1992). Individuals will be more motivated to partake in learning activities which meet their needs, again stressing the importance of accurate needs assessment. This again raises the issue of individual versus organisational needs. Ideally an organisation should allow individuals

to address their specific needs. However organisations also have a bottom line and their primary concern will be for their strategic needs. Employees' attitudes or perceptions towards T&D are also important in this regard. If an individual does not perceive T&D to be effective, relevant to their job and worth their while then they may not be motivated to attend. Perceptions of ineffectiveness may stem from a view of the trainer/facilitator as incompetent or a dissatisfaction with the techniques used (as discussed in Chapter Six). Adult learners differ from younger learners in that they expect what they learn to be immediately useful (Knowles 1980) and research has frequently demonstrated that people are more motivated to learn when they see that the content is relevant to their job (CIPD 2004d). These issues should be central to the design and delivery of training and development.

4.3.2 Barriers to employee participation in T&D

There are various factors which may prevent individuals from partaking in T&D activities. Chisholm et al (2004) note that the least motivated learners tend to be old, low educated and female. This could explain O'Connell et al's (2003) finding that men are more likely to participate in training and that 25-39 year olds are more likely to receive training. However O'Connell's (2005) later research found that women and workers aged 35-44 show much higher levels of participation on all forms of education and training. Rothwell and Arnold (2005) also disagree with O'Connell et al (2003) and Chisholm et al (2004) on the gender issue, claiming that women have more positive attitudes towards CPD. These issues warrant further investigation.

Furthermore O'Connell et al (2003) found that higher educated workers and those with longer tenure are more likely to receive training. It is not clear from this research if certain groups are presented with more training opportunities or whether they are more motivated than others.

Beardwell and Holden (2001) note the importance of human resource developers being aware of the barriers, which stop individuals participating in T&D. They cite Mumford who listed some of these barriers as follows:

Table 4.1: Barriers to T&D participation

Barrier	Description
Perceptual	Not seeing that there is a problem
Cultural	The way things are here
Emotional	Fear or insecurity
Motivational	Unwillingness to take risks
Cognitive	Previous learning experience
Intellectual	Limited learning styles; poor learning skills
Expressive	Poor communication skills
Situational	Lack of opportunities
Physical	Place, time
Specific environment	Boss/colleagues unsupportive

(Mumford 1988: 26)

Vaughan and MacVicar (2004) found that a lack of time was the biggest barrier to learning, followed by family pressures and doing other things (with 54 percent, 29 percent and six percent of respondents respectively citing these as barriers). Only a minority of respondents reported other reasons, which included don't know what's available (four percent); too old; not interested; can't afford it; don't enjoy learning and don't need to learn for the job (all one percent). These findings are supported to an extent by Chisholm et al (2004) who found that lack of time off was the most cited barrier to participation (37% of respondents) with these time barriers stemming from a number of reasons such as family commitment, threat to leisure time, job commitments or being too old to learn. The amount of workers in Ireland who consider themselves too old to learn is significantly higher than the EU average but interestingly 29 percent of EU workers on average do not see any obstacle to future education and training (Chisholm et al 2004). This suggests that a high percentage of people do not see any barriers to personal development.

Although some of the factors listed above may be outside the organisation's control, they can directly influence many of them. For instance an organisation can provide the time, place and opportunities for the individual to learn and can create an environment which will support learning, one which flows through each level of the organisation.

There is widespread agreement among researchers, policy-makers and practitioners involved in lifelong learning of the importance in facilitating an acceptable working-learning-living balance in order to increase adult participation in learning (Chisholm 2004). Vaughan and MacVicar (2004) omitted questions relating to culture in their study but these are particularly important. Without a culture of learning, in which individuals receive support from their line managers and in which they are not motivated to learn, employees are unlikely to involve themselves in programmes. Additionally if they think that they might not be able to achieve the objectives of T&D programmes, they might refrain from participating, again stressing the need to support and motivate learners in order to reduce this fear of failure.

It is important for organisations to be aware of the drivers and barriers to T&D participation. No one theory of motivation is conclusive (Maund 2001) and so organisations must look at their employees in isolation. Comparative studies between and within groups of learners can potentially identify factors which may motivate or cause a lack of motivation (Gagné et al 1992). One such factor, as highlighted in Figure 5.1 is aptitude. This can also drastically affect the outcome of T&D initiatives.

4.4 Learners' aptitude or competence

Of all the variables likely to determine the outcome of a learning activity the most influential is probably the student's aptitude for learning, it is claimed to account for as much as 50 per cent of variations in learning outcomes such as verbal information, intellectual skills and cognitive strategies (Gagné et al 2005). Harrison (1997) highlights the importance of acquiring as much information as possible on the learner's level of competence. This is important as their ability should have a bearing on the principles and tactics employed in training programmes. If an individual has a disability, for instance, they might have to be given extra accommodations. Physical disabilities might require special equipment and mental disabilities may require a different delivery approach. Buckley and Caple (1992) propose that trainees of a lower ability usually prefer to move from concrete examples to general principles whereas trainees with a higher ability may prefer to work in the opposite order. On task complexity, those of a lower intelligence may prefer to learn in separate parts whereas more intelligent individuals can cope with learning as a whole. Additionally they note that unstructured

training may not be appropriate for those of low ability as they may be too easily distracted.

The old saying 'you cannot teach an old dog new tricks' has various implications on the effectiveness of learning. Learners should have the ability to learn (Russell 1998; Armstrong 1999) yet it is claimed (Buckley and Caple 1992; Reid and Barrington 1999) that the speed at which they learn decreases with age, as their short-term memory deteriorates and that their ability to carry out error-free complex cognitive tasks also decreases (Reid and Barrington 1999). Generally speaking, as learners age they find it increasingly difficult to grasp new material and the speed at which they learn reduces (Buckley and Caple 1992). These considerations are increasingly important as the workforce ages due to delayed retirement and the diminished availability of younger workers (Reid and Barrington 1999). The importance of age to HR professionals is evidenced by the innumerable references to this topic in academic journals and trade magazines such as ASTD's 'Training and Development' and CIPD's 'People management' publications.

However Beardwell and Holden (2001) note that this common stereotyping of older workers as having failing cognitive and physical abilities, as being inflexible, unwilling and unable to learn in new ways, may not be as serious as some suggest. They cite Trinder (1992) who suggested that performance is influenced as much by experience and skill as by age. Additionally Coleman (1990), as cited in Beardwell and Holden (2001) reports little or no decline with age in memory and learning. In fact it is claimed that age can actually be beneficial for employees. Armstrong (1999, 489) cites workers' experience as a key factor and Dwyer (2004) notes that mature learners generally have greater depth and a broader array of experiences, which the trainer can relate to in order to successfully engage the learner. Another example is provided by Pickard (1999), of B&Q who only hired workers over 50s in one store, which were very successful. These workers did not require longer or different training from other workers. Older workers often demonstrate this ability to continuously learn throughout life. This is especially important in Ireland as the population ages and the retirement age is raised due to the depletion of state pension reserves and the high cost of living, meaning that people cannot retire as early as in previous times.

Armstrong-Stassen and Templer (2004) suggest that there is little effort being made by organisations at present to accommodate older learners, through considering the methods used, the environment and the learning styles and the needs and preferences of these workers. Training for this category of employees is often limited or restricted, which could be problematic as the workforce ages and people's working lives lengthen, as previously mentioned. Chisholm et al (2004) found that whilst 80 percent of 15-24 year olds claim to have learned something in the last year, this number reduces to 14 percent for those aged 55 or over. This may be for a number of possible reasons. It is possible that older workers' levels of competence are not being considered, that they are not being offered courses, that they do not want to attend courses or that their learning styles are not being accommodated. These issues warrant further research.

Prior learning may have a huge affect on employees' knowledge, skills and aptitudes. In fact Gagné et al (1992) note that much of new learning is about building on what we already know. However it is very unlikely that a group of individuals will have similar prior knowledge (Illeris 2004). Nevertheless the International Data Corporation (IDC) note that it is important to see what learners have previously learned in order to determine whether the skill level achieved in prior training is adequate (Duguay 2002) and whether they have the prerequisite, which will allow them to skip topics already mastered. This, they note, will provide more targeted learning. Harrison (1997) suggests making past learning and current mindsets an aid to the learning process and it is important to remember that past educational, occupational or instructional experience may have an affect on learners' outlook (Buckley and Caple 1992).

4.5 Culture of learning

The nature of learning and the way in which it takes place in an organisation is largely determined by the culture of the organisation (DiBella, Nevis and McGould 1996; Antonacopoulou 2000). The individual learner can be helped or hindered by the organisation for which they work (Antonacopoulou 1999). Two of the biggest barriers to learning are lack of time off and lack of support from line managers, which are linked when the line manager is responsible for time off (Marchington and Wilkinson 2005). The environment, therefore, can be a powerful influence (Mumford 1991; Reid and Barrington 1999) and thus there must exist an atmosphere, which supports learning

(Marchington and Wilkinson 2005) and its transfer to the workplace (Reid and Barrington 1999). Fostering a culture, which promotes learning and where employees assist each other in developing themselves, will have many benefits (Lassey 1998) and has a direct link to competitive advantage (Marchington and Wilkinson 2005).

Increased motivation, leading to increased productivity, is one benefit of a learning culture, as is a competent workforce leading to fewer mistakes and improved working practices and lower operating costs. Lassey (1998) notes also that a culture of learning will lead to a happier work-force and as a result lower staff turnover. As part of encouraging learning in an organisation employees should have a quiet area to study and should have access to adequate materials (Gagné et al 1992). Lassey (1998) suggests that a learning resource centre should be set up, which would provide everything that staff would need to study and learn. Accessibility is vital and the resource centre could be in house or in a nearby university, the latter of which could prove to be far more cost effective. Instrumental in the design of the centre will be considerations such as workstations and furniture, equipment (such as pc's, photocopiers and printers) and resources (such as books, articles, videos, cd-rom's). Finally according to Lassey (1998) employees should be introduced to the centre and given all the information that they might need to utilise the resource.

Attitudes towards learning are vitally important in this regard (Reid and Barrington 1999). The view, which senior management and employees in an organisation hold towards T&D, will influence its usage level and effectiveness. If stakeholders, including senior management, do not perceive T&D to be important and value adding then they will not be willing to invest money in it (Harrison 1997). Also without the support of senior management line managers will not be supportive of T&D, again linking back to the need to foster and support T&D.

Despite the case for learning put forward in the literature, as discussed in Chapter Two, there exist organisations who do not value learning. Cunningham (1999) identified four organisational approaches to T&D, apathetic, reactive, bureaucratic and strategic. Apathetic firms, who are usually small, regard spending money on T&D as wasteful or actually harmful. There is a fear in these companies that as a result of T&D, individuals will become more marketable and that in order to survive in times of economic hardship

they should focus on other activities such as more aggressive selling. This results in an absence of any type of learning culture, minimal coaching and mentoring and haphazard unrewarded learning. Extreme 'reactive' organisations are similar to 'apathetic' companies, yet they can be very supportive of T&D. T&D might only be provided at the request of the employee and in a very hit and miss way with little evaluation of courses. Bureaucratic organisations according to Cunningham (1999) have large training budgets and run courses internally, externally or both. Employees' levels within the organisation often necessitate their attendance on a course and training is the dominant T&D activity, with little formal emphasis on job-based learning such as mentoring, projects and secondments. Regional office employees are often resentful towards head office driven training, which usually comes about as a result of the organisation averaging the needs of the entire Company as identified in a mechanistic questionnaire-based needs analysis. The level of employee which gets access to T&D should not be overlooked. Many organisations make the majority of T&D available to their more senior employees. For instance a 2005 Hay group study found that only about half of all workers below manager level believed that their Company took a genuine interest in their well being (Hammonds 2006). Lastly 'strategic' organisations were found to be a minority in Cunningham's (1999) research. These organisations, of all sizes, are characterised by organisations with a board level commitment to T&D. Senior management in these companies respect HRD personnel, who are usually energetic, able, committed and care about the organisation, and regularly call upon their expertise. These organisations look for a direct linkage between business needs and learning activity, pragmatically supporting learning methods which met specific needs.

Aside from organisational attitudes, individuals' attitudes towards T&D will also affect their willingness to participate. If employees do not see T&D as important to their job then they will not be willing or motivated to partake. The effectiveness of development centres, for instance, is claimed to be dependant upon the assessee's perception of the process (Appelbaum, Harel and Shapiro 1998). Employee personality and self-efficacy are important in this regard as they might affect their willingness to accept their shortcomings and to be open to learning (Antonacopoulou 2000). Employees will see T&D as important if the relevance and benefits are stressed to them and this in turn will affect their motivation to learn, again stressing the interweaving nature of many of the determinants of successful learning.

The approach that an organisation takes to managing its employees can have a huge affect on its culture. The HRM philosophy, as discussed in Chapter Two, promotes an investment in employees and advocates training and development as a part of this investment, regardless of which HRM approach is adopted (Best fit, Best practice, RBV). This view of employees as resources to be developed also stresses the importance of line management in all aspects of HRM. Consequently it may be said that the nature of involvement of line managers in HRD and the attitudes of senior management towards HRD and their actions in this regard, such as the provision of large HRD budgets, the involvement of HR personnel at the strategic level and the provision of learning facilities, are indications as to whether an organisation is following a HRM approach.

4.6 Presenting the Content/ Flow of the programme

Buckley and Caple (1992) believe that the sequencing of the training material is an obvious but often neglected consideration. The ordering of content will make a critical difference to the ease at which people learn, they add. The flow of training programmes is also important in this regard. Byars and Rue (2000) suggest that segments should be structured so that the individual can see not only its purpose but also how it fits in with other parts of the programme; segments should build upon earlier segments. The training should follow a logical and rational order as this will aid recall (Buckley and Caple 1992).

Psychologists continue to debate the appropriateness of delivering courses in one part or in separate sessions (Beardwell and Holden 2001). Employees need and want to learn according to their schedule and not the schedule of the organisation (Rosenberg 2001) and leaders will want to ensure that the employee is focused on completing the training in best sequence (Duguay 2002). Byars and Rue (2000) suggest that it is often helpful to give employees a brief overview of the job and then divide the job into sections for in depth instruction. Evidence suggests that whole training may be advantageous when the learner is highly intelligent; when practice is distributed, rather than massed, and when the training material is high in task organisation but low in task complexity (Naylor and Briggs 1963 as cited in Baldwin and Ford 1988). There are trade offs to be made between deciding whether training should be given on consecutive days or at longer intervals. Byars and Rue (2000) advise the latter approach but managers, they say,

almost always want to get employees out of training and into a productive job as quickly as possible. Hughey and Mussnug (1997) assent that organisations often choose to administer lengthy sessions instead of spreading training over several sessions, just to get it over with. This may be problematic as individuals can only absorb two to three hours of meaningful content per day and the rate decreases exponentially as the number of training days increases (Hughey and Mussnug 1997). Reay (1994) believes that workers should be allowed to work at their own pace, whatever suits them as an individual. Beardwell and Holden (2001) suggest that where the complexity and organisation of courses are high whole methods appear superior but when either of these is low then part methods are superior in most cases, when both of these are low then part or whole are equally successful.

4.7 Practice, Repetition and Retention

Built on the old adage 'practice makes perfect', Byars and Rue (2000) propose that repetition develops facility in performance almost always enhancing learning. Debriefing at the end of a session can be useful in embedding learning and can be the most valuable part of any trainer's toolkit (Cotton and Tanner 2005). It tests learning and refocuses on learning objectives, builds confidence in participants of their knowledge/ skills and can stimulate behavioural change (Cotton and Tanner 2005). Practice also reinforces learning until the behavioural patterns become habitual (Harrison 1997). It is necessary to practice in order to transfer material from short-term memory to long-term memory (Reid and Barrington 1999; Gagné et al 1992). A learning curve is useful in this regard. It conveys the time that it takes to achieve mastery of what is to be learnt and will vary greatly depending on the difficulty of the task, the characteristics of the learner and the spacing and duration of sessions (Harrison 1997).

Gagné et al (1992) adds that eliciting performance provides the opportunity for feedback, which allows for confirmation of comprehension. Reay (1994) notes that people will invariably make mistakes and that this is healthy. They should be allowed fail in order to then learn from these mistakes, again highlighting the need for a supportive culture. The belief that practice makes perfect, whilst being a well supported adage may not be exactly true. Buckley and Caple (1992) assert that sheer repetition is

not enough to enhance performance and retention; a learner may be constantly practicing the wrong way. That is why it is important for individuals to be presented with feedback to let them know if what they are doing is correct. The notions of repetition and feedback are central to behaviourist thinking (Carlile and Jordan 2005), and the expectation of positive feedback will motivate employees to achieve.

4.8 Providing Feedback

Reinforcement is a key feature of the behaviourist view. Actions can have either positive or negative consequences (Byars and Rue 2000). Positive consequences include praise, recognition, better assignments and extrinsic rewards (Baldwin and Ford 1988). These can help motivate an individual to learn and to transfer their skills to their job. According to Mumford (1986) the expectancy theory provides the most appropriate model for their learning to learn approach, working on the premise that the expectation of reward is a crucial variable.

Feedback influences the learning process and it is vital if learners are to learn effectively (Buckley and Caple 1992), particularly in relation to development centres where accurate and precise feedback can lead to better performance (Appelbaum, Harel and Shapiro 1998). There should be feedback outlining the correctness or degree of correctness of the learner's performance. It also helps in setting goals for what remains to be learnt. The goals, however, should not be too difficult so as not to cause discouragement. Gagné et al (1992) stress the importance of continuously reinforcing learning progress and of assessing progress and Reid and Barrington (1999) assert that it should be as prompt and specific as possible.

However Buckley and Caple (1992), in highlighting the importance of considering the specificity and amount of feedback, warn that too much feedback at an early stage may overload and confuse the learner. It is generally recommended, they add, that limited feedback should be given early on, which should be increased in specificity in line with competence before gradually reducing and withdrawing it completely as the skills to be learned become more established. It must be remembered however that a learning event does not end once the learner has demonstrated correct performance (Gagné et al 1992) and it must also be remembered that knowledge of mistakes does not guarantee that any action will be taken. Suggestions of how to administer feedback are quite varied and the

optimal specificity of feedback may be dependant on the trainee and their stage of learning (Baldwin and Ford 1988). Debriefing can be useful in offering feedback in ways which engage all learning styles (Cotton and Tanner 2005).

4.9 Learning styles

Numerous authors suggest a link between learning styles and learning success (Kolb 1984; Honey and Mumford 1986; Ament 1990; Kolb and Kolb 2005). Learning styles are important both in the design and delivery of learning (Robotham 2004) and are an important consideration for trainers with the increasing use of technology aided instruction (Buch and Bartley 2002). The belief is that if individual's learning styles can be determined then learning programmes can be provided in such a way as to accommodate each style. Smith (2001a) opines that a focus on learning styles and what works for the individual separates the programmes that fail from those that are still going strong. However (Robotham 2004) states that it is not clear whether it is better to match courses with learning styles or aim for a deliberate mismatch, the latter of which may force individuals to increase learning versatility or may cause them to mentally opt out. Kolb (1984) and Honey and Mumford (1986) are the most revered authors on the subject of learning styles. Kolb (1984) built on the idea of experiential learning, first suggested by early 20th century scholars such as Kurt Lewin, John Dewey, Jean Piquet, William James, Carl Jung, Paulo Ferwire and others, proposing Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), which defines learning as the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (Kolb and Kolb 2005). The suggestion is that people learn through having an experience, reviewing the experience, concluding from the experience and then planning new experiences. There are two types of experience and similarly two ways in which to transform the experience. A person may have a concrete experience or an abstract conceptualisation and they may then transform this through reflective observation or active experimentation (Figure 4.3). These four points make up an idealised learning cycle, where the learner touches all the bases – experiencing, reflecting, thinking and acting (Kolb and Kolb 2005).

Although the most effective learning occurs when the learner goes through each stage of the learning cycle, this is not always the case. Learners can start at any stage in the cycle

(Rodwell 2005) and some have preferences for particular stages and thus do not complete the cycle (Beardwell and Holden 2001). Individuals learn through their preferred phases of the cycle and thus choose between modes. This is where the notion of learning styles fits in with ELT, as individuals, according to Kolb (1984), have four predominating learning styles, Diverger, Assimilator, Converger and Accommodator, which make up the ELT model. A diverger learning style typifies someone with concrete experiences (CE) and reflective observation (RO) as dominant learning abilities. This means that they are best at viewing concrete situations from a number of alternative viewpoints, they are good at brainstorming and creating ideas and like to work in groups, they like to gather information, are interested in people and culture and they prefer to listen with an open mind and to receive personalised feedback (Kolb and Kolb 2005).

An assimilator has abstract conceptualisation (AC) and reflective observation (RO) as dominant learning capabilities. They have the ability to understand a wide range of information and put it into a concise, logical form. They are more focused on ideas and abstract concepts than on people and find theory more important than practical value and thus their preferred learning methods are reading, attending lectures, exploring analytical models and taking time to think things through (Kolb and Kolb 2005). Convergents have abstract conceptualisation (AC) and active experimentation (AE). They like practical ideas and theories and have the ability to solve problems and make decisions based on finding solutions to questions and problems. They prefer to deal with technical tasks and problems rather than social and interpersonal issues and they prefer to experiment with new ideas, simulations, laboratory assignments and practical applications.

The last remaining learning style suggested by Kolb is the accommodator, who learns best through concrete experiences (CE) and active experimentation (AE). They learn best from hands-on experience and enjoy challenging experiences. They tend to go by their gut feeling rather than a logical analysis and they rely more on people for information than on their own technical analysis.

Honey and Mumford (1986) succeeded Kolb in their discussion of learning styles. They listed four learning styles, Activist, Reflector, Pragmatist, and Theorist. Activists if

compared to one of Kolb (1984)'s learning styles would align best to the accommodator (Rodwell 2005) who likes to apply action-centred approaches to problems and who is usually found in marketing and sales jobs (Cole 2002). Activists differ significantly from reflectors. Reflectors seem to prefer to sit back and observe things. Unlike activists they will willingly analyse and interpret information and they welcome time to prepare, whereas activists prefer diverse activities which chop and change. The reflector is most similar to Kolb's (1984) 'diverger' who has a strong imagination and the ability to see situations from a variety of perspectives, a style usually associated with personnel managers (Cole 2002). Theorists like the content offered to be part of some system, model, concept or theory. They like to examine and explore said structure and the underlying methodology. They welcome structure and like to be challenged in complex situations by informed people. They are similar to assimilators and differ most to the activist who appreciates a less complex and less intellectual challenge. Like reflectors theorists learn well when a certain degree of analysis is required.

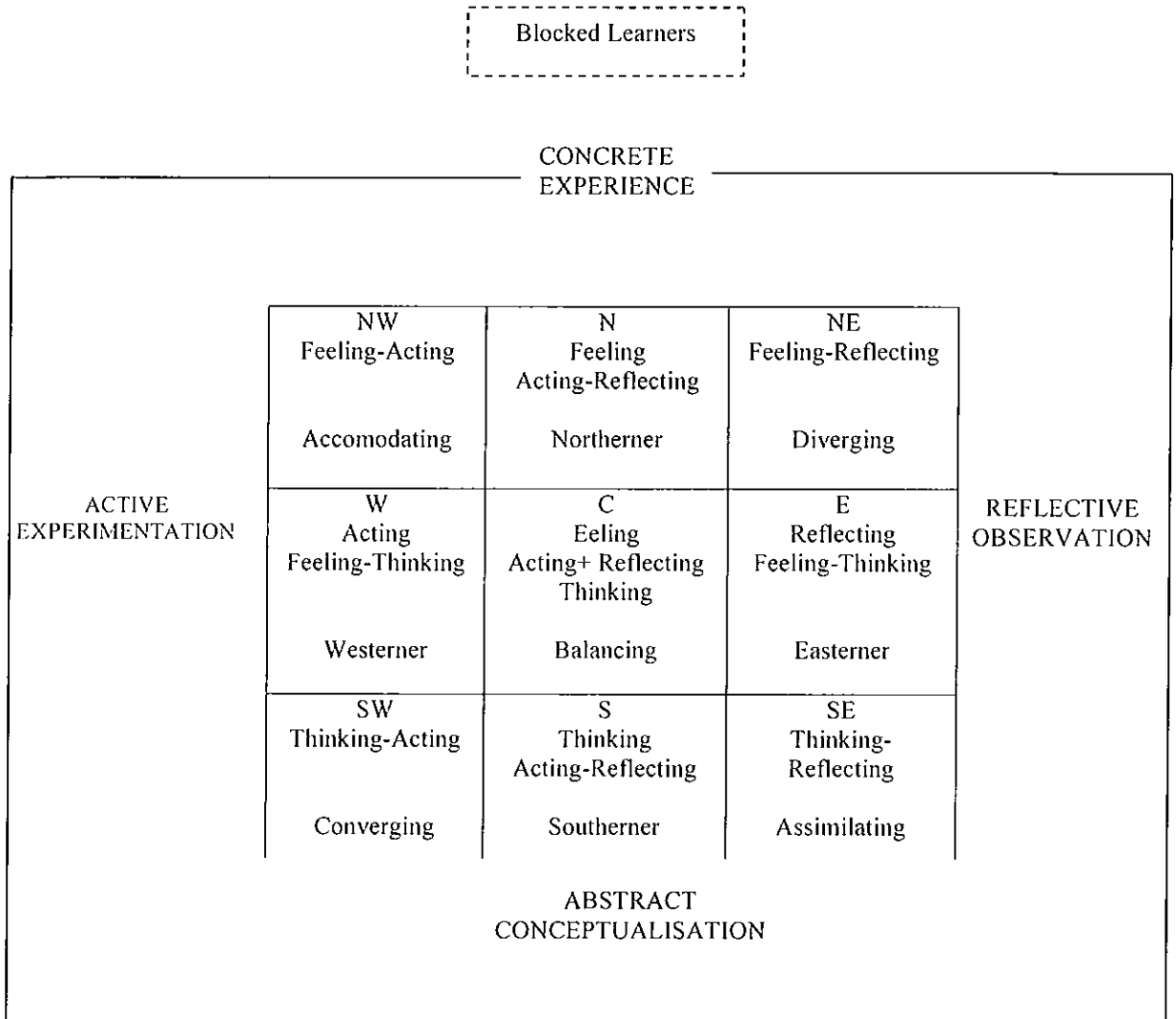
Pragmatists unlike theorists require a direct relevance between the content of the activity and their job. They are, as their title suggests, very practical people who see no sense in carrying out activities, which do not provide a beneficial outcome. They differ most to the reflector (Rodwell 2005) as like activists they like to try their hand at things and they like feedback from a respected source. Kolb (1984)'s 'converger' is similar in that he favours the practical application of ideas, a style characterised by many engineers.

It has been suggested that the original four learning styles can be expanded to nine styles and variations of the original styles have also been suggested, with Abby, Hunt and Weiser (1985) proposing the four learning styles of Northerner, Easterner, Southerner and Westerner and with Boyatis and Kolb (2002) adding a Balancing learning style, which integrates all the four methods (AC, CE, RO and AE) (Kolb and Kolb 2005). Aside from people that fall into one of the four suggested learning styles Clay and Mindrum (2003) include blocked learners, people who are stuck in their unwillingness to learn. These people may fall into this category due to a lack of motivation, a precursor of learning as discussed above. It is claimed by the 'Centre for Creative Leadership' that blocked learners make up thirty percent of all learners (Clay and Mindrum 2003), quite a worrying statistic and again backing up the vital

importance of companies compelling and motivating individuals to learn. Although this only describes an unwillingness to learn through formal learning activities, it may be presumed that these people still learn from everyday experience as every individual does.

However Honey and Mumford suggest that simply having experiences does not guarantee effective learning and that the experiences should be reviewed, conclusions should be drawn from this review and then action should be taken from these conclusions (Caple and Martin 1994). For this reason blocked learners are added to Kolb and Kolb's (2005) chart in Figure 4.3. They are positioned above concrete experience but outside of the box containing the other three actions as if they are blocked learners then concrete experience may occur in isolation. It is suggested that unblocked or receptive learners will follow concrete experience up with some combination of the other activities depending on their learning style and for this reason concrete experience appears on the edge of the box as it can affect blocked learners and receptive learners differently.

Figure 4.3: Learning styles



Adapted from Kolb and Kolb (2005: 198)

Organisations employ training and development for various conflicting reasons, ranging from operational and strategic reasons to major reorganisation efforts resulting from internal and external changes (Antonacopoulou 1999) and individual differences in learning styles are rarely taken into account (Sims 1990; Honey and Mumford 1982). It is also proposed that courses generally reflect the learning styles of course runners and not the learner's style (Honey and Mumford 1986). Ament (1990) notes that by the time we reach adulthood we have developed our own methods of learning and experienced trainers have developed their own teaching styles.

The learning styles approach is not without its critics. In fact it has been widely criticised (Robotham 2004). Individuals may choose a particular learning style and avoid (either consciously or unconsciously) situations which do not fall into their range. This has particular implications in light of the emergence of e-learning, which is suggested to be incompatible with many people's learning styles. This is discussed in Chapter Five. Caple and Martin (1994) suggest that finding out information on people's learning preferences may be better facilitated by simply asking the individuals about activities from which they have learnt well or badly in the past, asking them which delivery methods they prefer.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter sought to highlight a number of considerations for organisations when designing and delivering T&D initiatives. Individuals will have various levels of ability and will be of all ages, from various educational backgrounds and will be motivated by different things. Additionally they will have different preferences for learning and for the way in which courses or content are delivered to them. The organisation, if aware of individual differences and preferences, can attempt, at least theoretically, to take these into account when designing and delivering T&D. However individuals must also be open to learning and some people simply may not welcome T&D opportunities. For T&D to be successful the individual and the organisation must work together and make a joint effort. Once the principles of successful learning have been addressed as much as is possible in the design of a T&D event, the event must then be delivered. There are various means by which an organisation may do this and the methods chosen may very well depend upon the characteristics of the group of learners, who will attend the event. As discussed in this chapter, individuals will have certain preferences for T&D delivery, which organisations theoretically should take into account. However the organisation will have other considerations such as the costs involved with using certain methods, the timing of delivery and the effectiveness of techniques in facilitating learning. The potential for delivering T&D has been significantly enhanced with the proliferation of e-learning yet this method of delivery still lags behind traditional methods. The next chapter will seek to discuss the various delivery methods used by organisations with an emphasis on the e-learning and the reasons as to why its adoption has been slow to date.

CHAPTER FIVE
DELIVERY METHODS

5.1 Introduction

Organisations must choose to operate either a low cost operation or a high quality one with highly skilled and knowledgeable employees. Today's global manufacturers are under mounting pressure to increase productivity while reducing costs. This transfers to all areas of the organisation including T&D, thus organisations must strive to implement T&D in the most effective and efficient way possible. Organisations therefore must choose carefully between traditional off-the-job classroom based training, on-the-job training, coaching and mentoring, e-learning or a combination of all of these.

There are numerous variables, which organisations must consider when making this decision. There is no one best method for facilitating learning (Dwyer 2004) and choice of method will be influenced by the characteristics of the training group, the principles of learning (Harrison 1997), as discussed in Chapter Four, and the nature of the expected learning (Dwyer 2004). Harrison (1997) believes that this decision should also hinge upon the purpose and objectives of the event, and should also be a practical choice. Practical issues include costs and organisational climate. Senior management's views towards certain types of courses, both external and internal, will affect their choice as will information on the past effectiveness of methods and on best practice in similar learning events elsewhere (Harrison 1997). Christian-Carter (2005) lists the types of data which must be collected at the needs assessment stage and then considered in the design and delivery of T&D. This data includes gender, age, ethnic origin, education/qualifications, past experience, career path, job role/responsibility, length of time in job, employee status, location, working hours, working environment, disabilities and attitudes. Many of these data have been discussed in Chapter Four (age; aptitude; attitudes) as has job role, which was discussed in Chapter Three. Individuals' location and working hours will allow for the provision of T&D, which best suits their circumstances. An addition to this list would be information on the individuals' learning styles and many of the other factors will impact on these. It is suggested that it might be best to group employees according to these characteristics in order to improve T&D provision (Christian-Carter 2005). Essentially organisations must consider methods, which are most likely to achieve maximum stimulation and retention of learning (Harrison 1997).

This chapter begins with a brief discussion on the popularity of various methods. A more detailed discussion on coaching and mentoring follows before discussing on-the-job and off-the-job training. This leads into a focus on e-learning, one of the more recent delivery techniques to emerge. E-learning is claimed by some to be a superior alternative to traditional T&D delivery methods in terms of both cost and effectiveness. It is also claimed to be an invaluable support for self-directed learning as individuals can retrieve the exact information they need in a timely and effective way. However, e-learning is strongly criticised by some authors as ineffective and over celebrated. For these reasons, along with the fact that traditional methods have already been discussed in much detail in the literature over the years, a significant proportion of this chapter is devoted to a discussion on e-learning. The chapter concludes with a discussion on blended learning, where e-learning is used in conjunction with other methods.

5.2 Delivery options

There are numerous possible delivery techniques available to training professionals. It is unclear as to which is the most popular. Some claim it is on-the-job training (Tennant, Boonkrong and Roberts 2002) with 99 percent of organisations in the UK favouring this approach (CIPD 2005a). However a study in Hong Kong (Kirkbride and Tang 1990 in Cheng and Ho 2001) found formal management courses to be the most popular method of management, a preference which may be explained by a cultural preference for didactic teaching and learning styles. Additionally instructor-led classroom training is still the most popular in the USA (Dolezalek 2004; ASTD 2004). This variance might also be attributable to culture differences. The various techniques used by organisations are outlined in Table 5.1 alongside the percentage of organisations using each approach, as found from the CIPD annual Training and Development survey 2005.

Table 5.1: T&D Delivery methods

Method	Percentage Usage (%)
On the job training	99
External conferences, workshops and events	95
Formal education courses	93
Instructor-led training delivered off the job	90
Coaching by line managers	88
Audio tapes, videos and learning resources	81
Mentoring and buddying schemes	72
Job rotation, secondment and shadowing	71
Coaching by external practitioners	64
E-learning	54
Internal knowledge-sharing event	52
Action learning sets	27

CIPD (2005a: 8)

A number of these techniques are reviewed in further detail below; on-the-job training, traditional instructor led/ off-the-job training, coaching and mentoring and e-learning. There are numerous reasons for this focus. Firstly on-the-job training is one of the most commonly used techniques and is rated effective to very effective by 96 percent of employees (CIPD 2005a). Secondly e-learning usage is increasing, and future usage is expected to be quite high with 71 percent of organisations (CIPD 2005a) hoping to increase their usage, whilst traditional approaches appear to be remaining quite static. Additionally on an American basis over 28 percent of employee learning hours are delivered by technology based means, and is expected to increase to nearly one third in the coming year (ASTD 2005). The debate between traditional class-room based training and e-learning has escalated in previous years to a point where organisations are either choosing to use e-learning on its own, are using it as part of a blended approach or are abandoning it in favour of traditional methods. Underpinning these choices are perceptions about the effectiveness and efficiency of e-learning as compared to more traditional means. These issues are addressed in further detail (in section 5.2.3)

but firstly coaching and mentoring, which are often confused both in the literature and in practice, will be compared and contrasted in order to provide an understanding of these relatively new and increasingly popular techniques.

5.2.1 Coaching V Mentoring

Beardwell and Holden (2001) suggest that an effective form of T&D might involve using a senior or experienced worker who has been trained in instruction or training methods and whose teaching skills are co-ordinated with a developed programme linked to off-the-job courses. This type of instruction exists in the forms of coaching and mentoring, two methods, which have attracted a lot of attention in recent years. These two terms are often used interchangeably yet they are distinctly different methods.

Coaching is about improving skills and performance, usually for the individual's current job, and also to support career transitions (CIPD 2004d). Through structured dialogue, coaches bring an objective perspective to bring about sustainable solutions. Usually coaches are hired from outside the organisation but some organisations expect all line managers to operate in a coaching role. External coaches are usually only used for a minority of coaching activities in an organisation, possibly due to the cost of using them, which means that their usage is often reserved for senior-level or high-potential employees (CIPD 2004d). The use of coaches may be particularly beneficial to pragmatists who learn best when they have the chance to try out and practice techniques with coaching from an expert who can do the techniques themselves.

HR have a huge responsibility when it comes to understanding when coaching is appropriate, distinguishing between different types of coaching, in deciding whether internal or external coaches are more appropriate in given situations and in assessing the effectiveness of coaching (CIPD 2004d). The use of coaching has exploded in recent years with four fifths of UK organisations now using coaching. There are numerous reasons for this increase in popularity, including the quickened pace of business, time pressures and increasingly flatter organisational structures (CIPD 2004c). Coaching can meet diverse T&D needs and provide solutions in a just-in-time fashion, at suitable times. On an individual level coaching can address different learning styles and thus may be able to support more learners than traditional methods. It can also help

employees to take a more self-directed approach to learning (Berard 2005). It is about helping people to naturally work harder and smarter so that they can maximise their potential (Zweibel 2005). The aim of coaching is to help the 'coachee' to identify development needs, plan development activities and support personal problem solving (CIPD 2004d: 19). It is not about giving answers yet asking questions that will help the individual to communicate better with themselves so that they don't always need a coach (Zweibel 2005). Despite the media portrayal of coaching only being offered to senior executives, CIPD (2004d) found that coaching is in fact being used for the development of employees at many levels in the organisation and Zweibel (2005) says that of all the valid reasons for not enlisting the help of a coach, job status is not one of them.

Broadbent (2005) lists various forms of coaching including trainer coaching, manager coaching, consultant coaching, peer coaching and mentoring coaching, which are all used as supplementary activities to help people accomplish their work (Broadbent 2005). The use of the term mentor coaching, does not help an already confused literature. Mentors usually come from inside the organisation and will usually be experienced managers, who meet regularly with junior colleagues to help them perform better and groom them for career advancement (CIPD 2004c). They will not be the individual's line manager as with coaching and a junior colleague's relationship is usually more long-term with the mentor as opposed to the coach, as coaching relationships are usually short term and performance related (CIPD 2004d). Although mentors are sometimes labelled 'buddies' (Poe 2002), buddies actually play a distinct role (Pegg 1999), in simply helping new members to fit in. Pegg (1999) refers to sage like experienced managers who pass on knowledge as 'classic mentors'. Widespread differentiation would help to quell confusion.

Although the two terms are used interchangeably there are a number of differences between coaching and mentoring as evident in Figure 5.1. Mentors help people to climb the corporate ladder whereas (personal) coaches help people become what they want to be not what they want to do (Broadbent 2005). The focus of mentoring is on career and personal development (CIPD (2004d) thus it consists of developmental relationships which serve career-enhancing and psychological functions for the protégé (Beardwell and Holden 2001). However the focus of coaching is on developmental issues at work

and is a process of discovering an individual's own answers, leading to a plan of action whereas mentoring is about sharing expert knowledge and wisdom as required (Hearn 2005). The term mentoring is by no means a new one. Mentor was a friend to whom Odysseus entrusted the education of his young son before embarking on his epic voyages (CIPD 2004d). This may be an appropriate title as in organisations mentors are more experienced employees who guide, encourage and support younger or less experienced employees or protégés. The relationship is usually more informal than a coaching relationship (CIPD 2004d) and there may be elements of a father-son or mother-daughter relationship, whereby the mentor acts as an advisor and protector to the trainee (Beardwell and Holden 2001) to be called upon when needed (CIPD 2004d). Poe (2002) suggests that the two parties should be encouraged to actually become 'buddies' who meet outside work and maybe funding for this purpose would be useful.

Mentoring programmes are particularly useful for:

- Supporting a graduate intake or training scheme and developing high fliers or senior managers.
- Encouraging career advancement of women or those from minority groups.
- Nurturing employees with skills in short supply.
- Stimulating and fostering innovation in the organisation.
- Supporting managers in training or other learners in the organisation.

Beardwell and Holden (2001:312)

Studies have consistently shown that employees who are given mentors have high retention rates and are more productive as a result (Poe 2002). Mentors also benefit as the process challenges them to understand their jobs and the organisation. Mentors draw upon their own networks to give experience and support to their protégés and encourage them to develop networks of their own (Beardwell and Holden 2001) thus the practice and benefits cascade through the organisation. This practice will obviously be facilitated by a supportive learning culture and it is imperative that mentors are given the time they will need to work with mentees (Poe 2002). Additionally, adds Poe (2002), it may be a good idea to reward mentors and also to demonstrate the value that the organisation places on mentoring programmes.

Figure 5.1: Mentoring V Coaching

Mentoring	Coaching
Ongoing relationship that can last for a long time	Relationship generally has a set duration
Can be more informal and meetings can take place as and when the mentee needs some advice, guidance or support	Generally more structured in nature and meetings are scheduled on a regular basis
More long-term and takes a broader view of the person	Short-term sometimes time-bounded and focused on specific development areas/issues
Mentor is usually more experienced and qualified than the mentee. Often a senior person in the organisation who can pass on knowledge, experience and open doors to otherwise out-of-reach opportunities	Coaching is generally not performed on the basis that the coach needs to have direct experience of their clients formal occupational role, unless the coaching is specific and skills-focused
Focus is on career and personal development	Focus is generally on development/issues at work
Agenda is set by the mentee, with the mentor providing support and guidance to prepare them for future roles	The agenda is focused on achieving specific immediate goals
Mentoring resolves more around developing the mentee professionally	Coaching resolves more around specific developmental areas/issues

CIPD (2004d: 20)

5.2.2 On-the-job V Off-the-job training

On the job training (OJT) is often called ‘sitting with Nellie’ (Reid and Barrington 1999; Dubois and Rothwell 2004) and basically involves an individual learning from an experienced person as best they can, in a real life environment (Tennant, Boonkrong and Roberts 2002). It is advantageous as the concerns about learning transfer and environment are greatly eased and also because of its cost effectiveness and just-in-time nature (Van der Klink and Streumer 2002). This just-in-time nature refers to the fact that training can be delivered at an optimum time – for example immediately before the task is to be performed – and also that the trainee can practice immediately with immediate feedback. This method can also help to integrate an individual into the team (CIPD 2004a). Despite the difficulties in measuring the extent of its usage (due to the fact that much OJT happens as part of the individuals day-to-day work and is not recorded centrally) it is claimed to be the most frequently adopted method (Tennant, Boonkrong and Roberts 2002; CIPD 2005).

However it is not without its critics. Firstly 'Nellie' may not be trained adequately to teach the learner (Reid and Barrington 1999; Beardwell and Holden 2001). Secondly there is also a tendency to fit OJT in when it is convenient for office routine and not for learning. This may result in the training being given piecemeal, resulting in the individual getting a fragmented picture of the organisation or perversely too much training may be delivered at one time, for trainees to absorb. Also if immediate practice is not accompanied by feedback the trainee can feel neglected after the initial exercise (CIPD 2004a). Additionally a lack of structure may lead to the passing on of bad or even dangerous working practices (Beardwell and Holden 2001). However these criticisms do not include the simple fact that there might be a poor relationship between parties. They could be detrimental to the process as it might result in a reluctance on the part of the trainee to take advice off someone who they do not respect or it may cause a lack of effort on 'Nellie's' part to provide as beneficial guidance as they are capable of. It is also claimed that it is not possible to deduce whether OJT is an effective form of training and what the factors are that determine its effectiveness (Van der Klink and Streumer 2002). T&D (2004) go so far as to state that on-the-job training is rarely effective, because people cannot learn by merely watching people. One would hope however that trainees would not simply watch, but practice also.

Off-the-job training may provide an opportunity to widen the boundaries of instruction and allow for reflection on the trainees' daily routines (Vermeulen 2002) and is often helpful prior to on-the-job training (Tennant, Boonkrong and Roberts 2002). It may be delivered in modules with work-based projects and maybe coaching and mentoring in between (CIPD 2004c). Delivering in chunks may be favoured as it is easier to spare people from work in shorter periods and because it is increasingly proposed that people learn best in chunks, as discussed in the Chapter Four. However this may not always be possible and would cause serious disruption to numerous work days instead of just one. Also individuals' line managers may not want their staff being constantly removed from their daily duties. Traditional off-the-job training relies heavily upon transfer to the working situation. Its learning conducive environment and well trained, well organised instructors may be attractive to an organisation who may also favour the greater variety of training methods and the opportunity for emphasis of all four stages of the learning cycle (Reid and Barrington 1999). It is also a dynamic approach as the instructor is present to answer queries and give individual attention (Wehr 1988). Additionally

learners may benefit from access to peers and experts, afforded by this approach and the face-to-face atmosphere is deemed advantageous for complex problem-solving and concept/ theory development (Woodall 2004). Lastly course materials can be developed in a relatively short period of time and can be maintained or updated with relative ease (Wehr 1988), making it relatively easy for instructors to provide up to the minute, topical material. These reasons may explain why UK based financial services managers identified structured training courses provided by their organisations as the main, valid learning method (Antonacopoulou 1999).

However off-the-job training is often viewed by recipients and fellow employees as a waste of time and money (Beardwell and Holden 2001). This may be because the learning may not be easily transferred to the real situation. Case studies, which are often used for this purpose, may not accurately reflect the individuals work experiences and may not easily transfer to stressful real life problems (Reid and Barrington 1999) or the culture of the organisation may be one, which does not allow for easy transfer of newly acquired knowledge, skills or attitudes. These transfer issues will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six. Additionally the quality and effectiveness of offerings may vary between courses depending on the student mix, the individual instructors and the timing and location of courses, which may not be convenient for all learners (Wehr 1988). Travelling to courses can also be quite expensive in both time and financial terms (Woodall 2004) and also it may also be difficult to hold learners' attention especially when they are assuming a passive role with little interactivity (Woodall 2004). It is suggested that traditional modes of delivery have three main shortcomings. These are that:

1. An instructor can only be available to so many people at a time:
2. An instructor is not available anytime and anywhere to the learner:
3. An instructor may not be up to date with the most recent information and ideas:

(Vaughan and MacVicar 2004: 402)

The availability of instructors is quite an important issue as employees and managers quite often want to get their personal or subordinates' T&D needs met as quickly as possible. Training may be identified as a solution to poor group or team performance or on an individual level as a result of a poor performance appraisal review, which

highlights a number of areas in which an individual must improve. Additionally at certain times of year trainers are inundated with demands for T&D by employees who have performance reviews approaching, especially in those organisations where developmental activities, such as competency building are linked to pay, as noted in Chapter Two. Additionally the business environment is so dynamic with new information, new practices and new research findings emerging almost constantly, it may be beyond trainers' capability to keep up to date with all of these, especially if they are extremely busy trying to comply with innumerable requests for T&D. It has been claimed that a number of the financial and non-financial shortcomings of off-the-job training can be overcome by blending this approach with on-the-job training (Jacobs 2005) or by using e-learning. E-learning is a relatively new phenomenon which has been hailed as a panacea by some and as over-hyped by others. It is now examined in further detail before considering how it might be blended with traditional methods.

5.2.3 E-Learning

E-Learning is claimed by many to be a low cost, tailored and effective way of training employees to make them more productive. As stated in Chapter Two, employees today need to learn almost constantly and in ways that reflect their increasingly busy and mobile patterns of work (CIPD 2002). This can make e-learning an invaluable medium (Smith 2004). E-Learning is an increasingly commonly heard phrase in today's academic, industry and consumer circles. It appears to be a relatively new phenomenon evidenced by the fact that the first Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) and American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) surveys on e-learning were published as recently as 1999 and 2001 respectively. Some suggest, however, that we have had e-learning for years but only lately did someone put an e in front of it (www.eLearningHub.com).

E-learning is claimed to be spreading rapidly (Comacchio and Scapolan 2003; Gunasekaran, McNeil and Shaul 2002) with 17 percent of corporate training now delivered electronically, according to a 2003 Training Magazine survey and almost ten per cent of Irish companies spending 25 percent of their training budget on e-learning and almost one third spending between ten and 25 percent for the same purpose (CIPD 2003). The International Data Corporation (IDC 2001) estimate that the e-learning market will grow from \$6.6 billion dollars in 2002 to \$23.7 billion in 2006. The

potential benefits of e-learning and others are well documented. The literature is packed with claims from companies of substantial savings which they have made from e-learning. BT for example claim to be saving £12 million per annum since implementing e-learning in 2000 (People Management 2005).

However the rate of adoption has been slower than expected (Marchington and Wilkinson 2005). Early on there were numerous claims that e-learning was the ultimate panacea and by the end of the 1990's it was predicted to become one of the fastest growing knowledge based industries in the developing world, and the single most important transforming influence on education and corporate training and development (Sloman 2001). Many people have begun to question whether or not e-learning is actually learning as it is defined in the literature. Some academics (Prensky 2002; Honey 2001; Little 2001; CIPD 2004) opine that e-learning could be a misnomer that it may be no more than e-training, e-teaching or e-reading. Also it is often unclear as to whether the outcomes of e-learning delivered T&D, although they might be saving organisations money, are as effective as the traditional methods which they often replace.

5.2.3.1 Definitions of E-Learning

There is a plethora of conflicting views regarding what the term e-learning refers to. The American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) lists a host of different media through which one can learn. These include web-based learning, computer-based learning, virtual classrooms, and digital collaboration including the delivery of content via Internet, intranet/extranet (LAN/WAN), audio and videotape, satellite broadcast, interactive TV and CD-ROM. This is quite a wide ranging definition. Some definitions, however, view the use of these technologies to learn as distance learning and e-learning as solely learning through the internet (Gunasekaran, McNeil and Shaul 2002; Fry 2001; Rosenberg 2001; O'Donnell and Garavan 2004) and only one part of distance learning. There are also those who have labelled learning via electronic means virtual learning (Stonebraker and Hazletine 2004). For the sake of this research e-learning will be looked upon, in a wider context as Sambrook's definition of 'any learning activity supported by information and communications technologies – or ICTs (2003: 507).

Results from a recent online poll conducted by the CIPD (2005a) show that CD-ROMs (73 percent) are the most used e-learning medium, followed by generic modules (52 percent), customised modules (57 percent), asynchronous discussion sites supported by the organisation (19 percent), synchronous 'webinars' delivered by a subject expert (15 percent) and other (5 percent). These results represent a marked shift to custom built modules.

5.2.3.2 E-Learning drivers

There are various reasons as to why organisations might use e-learning in place of more traditional methods. Comacchio and Scapolan (2004) cite one of the reasons for adoption as 'bandwagon pressures', the belief being that organisations will feel pressurised to adopt as the number of adopters rises. When competitors have already adopted an innovation, such as e-learning, organisations might be fearful of not keeping pace and thus failing to remain competitive.

Another reason offered by the same authors for the adoption of e-learning is 'isomorphism', whereby managers' choice of e-learning is influenced by the professional community, with which they share common learning paths and social networks. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly some companies are seen as a reference models due to their success and thus companies follow their lead and adopt e-learning in suit of them. Secondly, due to the fact that companies cannot always evaluate the efficiency of returns on an innovation (increased efficiency, ROI) social factors - such as whether competing organisations have adopted e-learning - are relied upon to a greater extent (Comacchio and Scapolan 2004).

Additionally the shift in power and responsibility from organisations to individuals (Cross 1999) regarding T&D might also be a reason for this. If organisations are encouraging self-directed learning, where individuals take it upon themselves to guide their own T&D, then organisations can facilitate this in part by making e-learning tools freely available. However, these reasons aside, probably the most obvious reason for adopting any technological innovation, including e-learning, is for the potential benefits it may provide.

5.2.3.3 Benefits of E-Learning

Cost is the primary driver of e-learning (O'Donnell and Garavan 2004). Cost savings include reductions in travel expenses, opportunity costs of taking employees offsite and a reduction in the number of instructors and administrators (IDC 2001). The reduced use of classrooms is one of the most commonly cited of these (WBT 2004b; Nizar 2002). The reduced cost of developing training materials is also prevalent and the use of learning objects, chunks of materials used for various purposes, help out in this regard. Other rather obvious areas where companies utilising e-learning might save money are on the printing of bulky manuals, which become obsolete after being distributed, (Collins, Buhalis and Peters 2003) and on reduced travel expenses. However aside from reduced costs there are numerous other benefits of e-learning suggested in the literature.

5.2.3.3.1 Time Savings

It is believed that companies, by implementing e-learning, can save time in a number of different areas. WBT (2004b) cite two such areas. Firstly they mention time savings in speeding up the time performance of employees by delivering personal, just-in-time learning paths. Also they note that e-learning has the potential to reduce the development time of training materials by developing smaller chunks of learning and leveraging the existing investment in content in forms such as PowerPoint and Word.

Another plausible benefit of e-learning usage is suggested by Young (2002), who notes the time constraints and workloads of today's managers, which restrict them from partaking in any form of learning or training, even if they wish to do so. E-Learning allows them to take courses online without having to leave the office. The downside to this, however, is the fact that people may actually like getting away from work and socializing on training courses and indeed might benefit from the out-of-hours discussions (Nizar 2002). This may be seen to be increasing efficiency at the expense of effectiveness.

5.2.3.3.2 Flexibility

E-learning can deliver exactly what the learner needs, at the time when they need it, and in the form that they prefer. Vaughan and MacVicar (2004) found, in their study of employees in a large multinational bank, that e-learning was seen to be convenient as it

allowed people to work at their own pace, gain fast access to information and it also allowed them to keep up to date and satisfy individual interests and curiosity. Comacchio and Scapolan (2004), in concurring with this point, quote Greenagel (2002) who states that flexibility is gained mainly by asynchronous (non-live) delivery models which participants can complete regardless of time or place, using programmed instructions held on Company intranets, CD-ROM or other media. Flexibility can also be seen in the fact that e-learning can be implemented across multiple sites easily thus removing the problem of widely dispersed staff (Young 2002). An additional benefit of e-learning's flexibility is its contribution to the competence approach and self-directed learning. E-learning allows learners to access the exact information they need quickly and at minimal effort, without firstly having to trawl through un-required or irrelevant information. This is particularly relevant when employees are personally choosing what they want to learn.

5.2.3.3.3 Improvements of training quality

This is a contentious issue. There are many people who remain unconvinced of e-learning's potential to improve the quality of training, and 'the jury is still out' on whether the learning outcomes of e-learning courses are equal to the learning outcomes of traditional education courses at all (Rubenstein 2003: 38). Various studies, however, have reported improvements in learning outcomes as an advantage of e-learning. The ability of e-learning students to retain more information has been cited, in studies conducted by companies such as Cisco systems and in the literature by Collins, Buhalis and Peters (2003), who claim that employees can retain 30 per cent more information from an e-learning platform compared to ten per cent retained from traditional learning techniques.

A separate study by Cisco systems divided up 200 resellers such that half attended classes, labs and study groups whilst the other half took their training online and used remote labs and online discussion groups. They found that the e-learners had a ten percent better pass rate. Again this is presuming that all other things remained equal during the course of the study, which is not often possible to ensure. Sitzmann and Wisner (2005) in their meta-analysis of web-based training versus classroom instruction found that web and classroom based courses were equally effective when trainees were randomly assigned to courses. However their research suggested web-based training to

be more effective than classroom based training when teaching declarative/ procedural knowledge, on longer courses with little human interaction and high learning control. This is despite learners' actual preference for high levels of human interaction, short courses and limited learner control on web-based courses. These findings are important considerations for course designers who might also consider the fact that trainees might not always like what is best for them (Sitzmann and Wisner 2005).

5.2.3.3.4 Learning styles

It was suggested in section 4.10 that in order for learning to be successful individual learning styles must be adhered to. Homan and Macpherson (2005) highlight the lack of coverage of learning styles in the literature and note that it is questionable whether e-learning, which depends on self-motivation and self-instruction is suitable for widespread organisational use. There is however, some limited discussion of learning styles in the literature and it has been claimed that technology offers new capabilities to reconstruct learning around particular styles (Buch and Bartley 2002). KnowledgePool - an e-learning, IT and business skills Company – has expanded its Internet based training with the introduction of a preferred learning style evaluator through its training site. KnowledgePool, in a joint effort with Insights Learning and Development, offer the Insights Discovery System Evaluator and Report, which tests such variables as personality, decision-making and communication styles and from this provides students with knowledge of their preferred learning styles. With this knowledge in mind they can then offer each student a training service applicable to their learning style. This is one example of how e-learning can deal with individual learning styles in order to ensure effective learning.

5.2.3.3.5 Tracking and Compliance

E-learning can be very effective in tracking learning participation. The training activities of individuals can be monitored most effectively through the use of a Learning Management System (LMS). This tracking ability allows companies to monitor learners' progress. Knight (2004) notes that this can be done, without the acquisition of an expensive learning management system (LMS), by using a simple hit counter to track launches of each content or course from your intranet.

A Company, through the use of e-learning, can check, with ease, the level of training any particular individual has received. This can be beneficial when it comes to such matters as internal promotion, but the real benefit of tracking is compliance. Compliance is one aspect of e-learning which, depending on their industry, may be extremely important to an organisation. Healthcare, Financial Services and Pharmaceutical are just three such sectors which have stringent compliance measures in place. It is no surprise that industry white-papers (WBT 2004b; WBT 2004c) stress as important the ability of e-learning solutions to track compliance and the training which has been undertaken by each individual employee. One Company who has kept abreast of compliance through the use of e-learning is Deloitte and Touche. They called upon Knowledge=power (a UK based e-learning provider) to create and deliver a money laundering programme to train 7,000 staff and also to prove that this training had taken place. Employees were able to take this course in convenient chunks and they were then tested by games and exams, the results of which proved compliance in this area (Pailing 2002).

Another benefit of e-learning prescribed by many authors (Gunasekaran, Mc Neil and Shaul 2002; John Chambers in Galagan 2001) is greater productivity. The belief is that employees who utilise e-learning are much more productive when they return to work than others trained using traditional methods. Enhanced employee loyalty and increased profitability are also highlighted but the main advantages as highlighted in the literature are those cited above.

5.2.3.4 Negative Aspects of E-Learning

Along with having many supporters, e-learning also has its sceptics and whilst there is much discussion of advantages in the literature, disadvantages are given far less attention (Homan and Macpherson 2005). One of the main prescribed drawbacks of e-learning is its inadequacy in teaching soft skills (Pailing 2002), as Vaughan and MacVicar note, 'technology.... is not always an appropriate device for more practical learning such as social and interpersonal skills' (2004: 402).

Traditional education is purported to be necessary for such areas as applied and behavioural skills including interviewing, health and safety, motivation and decision-

making (Stonebraker and Hazeltine 2004). Some e-learning systems may be able to overcome this problem. IBM, for example, have developed character simulation programmes which allow for the testing of soft skills (Morton 2004). It remains to see how effective such systems will be. At present those of the opinion that e-learning is not suitable for teaching soft skills recommend a blended learning approach, which is discussed in section 6.2.4. Research suggests up to 80 percent dropout rates for e-learning programmes (Finnegan 2005) again portraying the fact that e-learning might not be as welcomed or beneficial as claimed. For this reason the negative aspects of e-learning must be explored in detail.

5.2.3.4.1 Costs

Whilst various potential cost savings pertaining to e-learning are highlighted in the literature, the preliminary costs of implementing e-learning can be quite high. An organisation may decide to develop their own e-learning software or they might decide to outsource this task. Either option can be quite expensive but organisations with large IT resources will more than likely be able to absorb some of these costs. Further expenditure might be required to purchase computers but again this may not be a problem for some organisations. Pailing (2002) argues that whilst start up costs may be a deterrent if organisations focus on what e-learning has to achieve, whether it is to fulfil regulatory obligations, cut down on new employees' induction by 50 per cent, or reduce classroom sessions from two-day courses to one-day courses, there is a good chance that they will see the cost benefit. This makes the initial costs easier to justify.

5.2.3.4.2 Isolation

Honey (2001) argues that expecting busy people to have the self discipline to concentrate on e-learning in what amounts to discretionary time is unrealistic and naïve and that even those who value learning will find themselves putting it off. This is mainly due to the isolating nature of e-learning. Despite Sitzmann and Wisner's (2005) findings, as a solitary experience e-learning is claimed to be a potentially lonely way of learning (Gunasekaran, McNeil and Shaul 2002) and without the use of classroom based on-the-job training students can be left with a view of e-learning as cold and impersonal (Nizar 2002). Additionally whilst Sitzmann and Wisner (2005) found web based learning to be most effective when the learner has control, this is dependant on students

possessing a high degree of self discipline (Collins, Buhalis and Peters 2003) and this may be detrimental to the effectiveness of the learning because of an inability of the learner to self motivate. Learner discontent may also occur due to the fact that the learning experience takes place away from the real job it may not apply to what happens in the workplace (Hills and Francis 1999). Knight (2004) notes that most online courses provide access to self-paced learning content with little, if any, opportunities for learners to communicate, collaborate or share knowledge with others. Interaction with tutors, other learners or supervisors may be beneficial in self-study e-learning programmes, in order to combat the likely fall off in attention (Buckley and Caple 1992). The solitary nature of e-learning may be most detrimental to activists who, it is claimed, learn least from activities where they are required to read, write or think on their own.

5.2.3.4.3 Technical

On the technical side of things e-learning can be susceptible to crashing computers (Vaughan and MacVicar 2004) and the often related band-width limitations. E-learning conducted through the use of the internet such as web based tutorials, blackboards, webinars (online seminars) to name a few, may require high speed internet access which many smaller companies may not have access to.

5.2.3.4.4 Content

Aside from the reasons cited above the area showing the highest levels of dissatisfaction is content (WBT 2004a), with several issues emerging such as variety, cost, support and quality of courses available.

....most e-learning companies specialize in technology infrastructure, technology services, or a combination of the two. Content tends to be recycled presentation notes and slides, or produced by so-called "authoring tools" that allow users to create their own. Either way, the expert teacher gets lost in the shuffle

Moussa (2000: 7)

This quote sums up the content problems quite well. Quality and creativity are problematic as much of the off-the-shelf e-learning material available is little more than online text books (Homan and Macpherson 2005). Rosenberg (2001) purports that

businesses need to deliver the right information to the right people at the right time, even though the content is constantly changing. He adds that if people are going to take time to learn then information must be well selected and organised for them to use.

5.2.3.5 E-Learning; a misnomer?

Pantazis (2002) describes e-learning as electronically delivered learning, training and development. Prensky (2002) argues, however, that much of the e-learning happening today is actually e-teaching and teaching he says does not guarantee learning. The contrast between the two, he asserts, is that teaching is carried out in full view of everyone, whilst learning happens in the privacy of one's mind. The crux of this argument is therefore that learning is an individual responsibility and that it cannot be guaranteed by a teacher or anyone else aside from the individual learner. This is not, however, telling us anything that we did not previously know. It was noted in Chapter Two that if someone is not interested and not motivated to formally learn then they will not do so. This holds true for any of the types of learning discussed above.

Prensky (2002)'s observation is, however, a very valid one as the learning aspect of e-learning is often doubted in the literature. Knight (2004), for instance, notes that most senior managers still associate e-learning with e-training. Little (2002) cites Ian Bentley of VEGA Skillchange, an e-learning provider, who notes that up to now the focus of web-delivered training in particular has been on the technology itself. This again strengthens earlier arguments made in relation to the importance of both good content and of concentrating on the learning aspect of e-learning.

When speaking of e-learning one must seek insight into what types of learning, if any, e-learning actually aids. "It's Learning with an e in front of it. If we spent more time thinking about the second part of the word than we do the first, then maybe we'd realise its potential a lot quicker"

(Pailing 2002: 155)

Maybe, for instance, e-learning is merely a useful means of delivering lecture content. The transfer of lecture notes into an electronic format may be only facilitating "e-reading" and not necessarily e-learning (Honey 2001; Finnegan 2005). This limited use of text pulled from books and classroom courses often comes about due to the lack of

band-with to facilitate a multi-media approach. Little (2001) agrees, noting that online PowerPoint slides and meandering expert notes do not represent a satisfying or cogent learning experience. This is however not aiding learning but merely dispensing large quantities of information in a didactic nature all the time overlooking the gap between knowing and doing (Honey 2001). Kearns (2005) adds that delivering existing classroom content on-line is e-training, the motivation for which is simply to reduce training costs, not enhance learning opportunities. This may be true yet organisations might also be doing so in an effort to promote self-directed learning by providing information for employees to access, an addition to the courses which they facilitate.

With some academics questioning the learning aspect of what is currently known as e-learning this raises the debate as to whether a difference exists between learning, training and development, all aspects of HRD. Some academics may claim that e-learning to actually e-education, e-development or even e-training. This debate does not justify detailed discussion as these critics may be correct because learning underpins all learning training and development activities in an organisation (Gunnigle, Heraty and Morley 2002) anyway.

A summary of the major advantages and disadvantages of e-learning, as cited by various authors, is provided in Table 5.2. Culture, as discussed in Chapter Three is then revisited with an emphasis on its importance to the adoption of e-learning.

Table 5.2: The advantages and disadvantages of e-learning

Advantages	Disadvantages
Cost effective medium especially when targeting large numbers of geographically dispersed employees	Set up costs can be extremely high
The technology offers the opportunity to integrate learning with work	An infrastructure needs to be in place for employees to use the system.
Enhances employee performance	Band-width limitations can be problematic and many organisations namely smaller organisations may not have access to high speed internet access. This can limit interactivity. Computers can crash.
Provides information just in time/ instantaneously	An assessment system needs to be put in place in order to assess what information employees are learning and to provide feedback to management on employee progress.
Can increase efficiency	Learning is impersonal, frustrating and lonely as there is often limited interaction with tutors/ teachers/ trainers.
Employees can learn at their own pace, even breaking up the learning experience into shorter time periods. Learning is 24/7.	Electronic communication requires specific skills which some employees, especially older ones may not have.
Access to the internet provides learners with access to the world's biggest library.	Tutor does not take sufficient feedback from students and hence limited diagnostics of learning.
Personalised learning allowing learners to learn in the style of learning best suited to them.	Students require a high level of self discipline, it's easy to waste time
Content is presented to everybody in the same way – consistent/ uniform	Does not apply to what happens in the workplace
E-learning content can be updated instantaneously	Some people especially older people will not have the IT skills, or will be too afraid, to use e-learning
Enables the tracking and documentation of learning activities especially when used with a LMS	Too often the focus in on the 'e' and not on the learning, designers get carried away with the media aspect at the expense of the effectiveness.
Can be combined with traditional forms of learning (blended approach)	In an attempt to be speedy and efficient many e-learning offerings are full of grammatical errors, typos and incorrect information
Reduces training time	There can be high dropout rates

(Miller 2005; Collins et al 2003; Honey 2001; Gunasekaran et al 2002; Hills and Francis 1999; Vaughan and MacVicar 2004; Pailing 2002; Knight 2004; Buch and Bartley 2002; Homan and Macpherson 2005; Young 2002).

5.2.3.6 Culture

Without employee motivation e-learning is not likely to be very beneficial. Sambrook (2003) found that for e-learning to be successfully adopted there needs to be a positive attitude among both employees and employers. The inclusion of employers by Sambrook (2003) highlights a point made by numerous authors. Henry (2001), for instance, suggests that successful implementation of e-learning requires the same management commitment as other mission critical organisational-wide initiatives. Gascó, Llopis and González (2004) also make an interesting point. They assert that whilst technology on its own will not motivate employees who are not keen on acquiring knowledge, it will facilitate the access to that knowledge. So in summary for successful e-learning implementation organisations must be aware, above all, that employees must be motivated to learn and that this is difficult without a culture supporting and promoting the importance of learning across the whole organisation.

Culture is imperative in Lea's (2003) opinion. Senior level buy-in is necessary in this regard due to the level of change whether cultural, procedural or organisational, which is necessary to deploy a successful e-learning programme. Rosenberg (2001) assents that given a negative learning culture and a quality e-learning initiative the culture almost always wins. Lea (2003) argues that if culture means improvements and training, as suggested in some definitions, then e-learning success rests on the ability to recognise the different cultures of learning between and within organisations. He proceeds to list some of the main questions that organisations must ask themselves if they are striving to attain successful e-learning adoption:

- What is the culture of learning?
- What is the age of the target market?
- How much time do people have?
- What tone of voice does the Company use?

Knight (2004) highlights the necessity of support for learners at all levels of the organisation. Points two and three above are particularly important ones. Fry (2001) cites Ernst and Young's chief knowledge officer, who pointed out that employees in an organisation can contain many generations, with different learning preferences

concerning the use of technology. Younger employees, for instance, would have grown up using computers yet older employees are not likely to be as computer literate. This is a major consideration when deciding which media to use. So while age is an important determinant of successful learning, for any T&D initiative, it is especially important in relation to e-learning.

Equally important to consider is how busy people are. If they spend a large proportion of their time in the office then they will be more likely to find time to use computers. If on the other hand they are not office based and are extremely busy then a short term PDA based course may be more suitable. This choice of e-learning offering is extremely important. Paynich (2003) cites Peter Chasse of e-learning magazine who warns of the importance of companies implementing technology from the learner's perspective again stressing the need for companies to develop lasting relationships with e-learning vendors.

Organisations will be reluctant to support e-learning usage in an organisation if the perceived disadvantages outweigh the perceived advantages. Additional to the negative aspects outlined above there are also other barriers to e-learning adoption.

5.2.3.7 Barriers to E-Learning adoption

Barriers to e-learning implementation include some of the disadvantages of e-learning as outlined in section 5.2.3.4. Set up costs relating to infrastructure and band-width limitations are major barriers. Sambrook (2003) also found, in her study of Welsh SMEs, lack of time and resources to be inhibiting factors. It was also highlighted in this study that it was often difficult to determine the cost of computer-based learning. The main barriers that she encountered were similar to those found in other studies such as Young's (2002) study of senior level executives within UK plc's. These are as follows:

- Lack of hardware.
- Lack of e-learning expertise.
- Lack of time.
- Lack of resources.
- Lack of trust.
- Difficulty in determining full cost of e-learning.

- Difficulty in terminology/ language.
- Not part of strategy.
- Cannot teach skills over the Web.
- It is a threat to the training department.
- Staff prefer external courses.

(Sambrook 2003:513; Young 2002:56)

Start-up costs are a common reason for non-adoption of innovations, especially amongst SME's. Pailing (2002) asserts that when times are tough the training budget is often first to be cut and it is a big risk for organisations to spend large amounts of money on a largely unproven innovation.

Band-width limitations are also particularly restraining, the missing link in the evolution of online learning according to Kae Clarke, creative director of Parity training (Hunt, 2002) and the biggest barrier to e-learning effectiveness, as cited by 28 percent of UK managers (CIPD 2005). The 2005 annual CIPD Training and Development study found a host of other barriers to e-learning effectiveness. These include, in order of the most frequently cited; limits of technology infrastructure (28 percent); ensuring learners have time and space to participate (23 percent); providing appropriate support for learners (11 percent); finding attractive, relevant and high-quality content (10 percent); gaining line manager support and commitment (9 percent); employee hostility towards e-learning (7 percent); motivating learners to complete courses (6 percent) and lack of basic IT skills in the workforce (5 percent).

If an organisation manages to overcome the various barriers discussed above they might then be under pressure from senior management to justify the money spent on e-learning. There is no reason why e-learning should deliver a less cost effective solution to traditional methods and the cost and quality tensions, which exist as a result of issues such as instructional design, technology and pedagogy, must be balanced if e-learning is to succeed in organisations (Homan and Macpherson 2005).

5.2.4 Blended Learning

Whether learning is conducted through the use of ICT or traditional methods it is generally accepted that people will only learn if they are willing and motivated to do so, you cannot make people learn (Foot and Hook 1996). With this in mind organisations, should attempt to establish individual learning preferences and use the e-technology to customize offerings accordingly (Honey 2001). There are some who believe that what works in the classroom also works in e-learning. Others, as highlighted above, doubt e-learning's ability to teach soft skills, noting that e-learning cannot be considered to be appropriate for all training situations (Jacobs 2005). E-learning, for example, can be a frustrating activity for those learners requiring the "increased touch" (WBT 2004a) of an instructor.

E-Learning will not meet all requirements and the classroom training that has proved a mainstay for most organisations will not be swept away by this technology. Certain skillsets, such as leadership and project management, cannot be taught properly via a purely electronic format

(Panucci 2002: 22)

Buch and Bartley (2002) investigated the relationship between learning styles and preference for training delivery mode. The study found an overall preference for classroom-based delivery regardless of learning style. Whilst many learners may favour the traditional approach, by choosing to ignore e-learning organisations will potentially lose out on its various strengths discussed above.

Blended learning provides a solution to this problem and this approach is now the dominant position advocated by practitioners as e-learning is not a complete replacement to traditional forms of T&D (O'Donnell and Garavan 2004). If properly understood blended learning has the potential to alter the whole learning process for the individual (CIPD 2003). Blended learning is defined by Smith as 'a method of educating at a distance that uses technology (high-tech, such as television and the internet or low-tech, such as voice mail or conference calls) combined with traditional (or, stand-up) education or training' (2001b:1).

Honey (2001) suggests that organisations must work out e-learning's distinctive competence and how it can complement other forms of learning. Knight (2004) agrees. She notes that blended learning is all about taking advantage of the strengths of each medium and supporting the weaknesses with other elements, using for example face to face events for networking, expert explanation of difficult concepts and honing of participant skills and leaving presentation of information, testing knowledge to the online part.

The magic is in the mix and it is important not to develop techno arrogance (Rosenberg 2001). In fact 94 percent of training managers opine that e-learning is more effective when combined with other forms of learning (CIPD 2005). To achieve the optimum balance between online, blended and classroom training best of breed e-learning programmes will assess and identify each type of training and the best method of delivery. It is important, however, that organisations invest in a blend specifically suited to their culture, business objectives and workforce (Trasler 2002). This mix should empower learners to achieve understanding of a given topic, become self-sufficient, improve their job performance and work towards supporting business objectives (Woodall 2004).

Blended learning also has implications for self-directed learning. An efficiently designed blended learning model, according to Woodall (2005), provides a fully learner centric environment, in which learners can move between informal to formal learning methods. Informal learning approaches allow for self-directed learning, in which the learner can choose to partake in certain learning initiatives for their own self-development. This is particularly important for individuals who require knowledge or information, which can be delivered through e-learning as opposed to an instructional need, which traditional training can deliver (Rosenberg 2001). This is particularly important considering that almost 70 percent of workplace learning is claimed to occur through informal activities (US Department of labour cited in Woodall 2004).

Masie (2003) suggests a comparison between blended banking and blended learning. He notes the fact that with the introduction of ATM machines there was a body of thought which predicted the demise of bank branches, as all transactions would eventually be carried out via ATMs. The underlying suggestion is that with the advent of e-learning

some people are of the opinion that it is some sort of replacement to traditional methods, which will replace traditional classroom based learning. At the early stages of ATM introduction there was also talk of ATM coaches to assist customers. This could be likened to online support which accompanies e-learning courses. The final point made is that bank branches did not go away as bank branches realised that blended banking was the answer. Blended banking allows customers to utilise ATMs for straightforward transactions and to make use of the branch for more complex transactions. This could be seen to mirror the use of e-learning for hard skills and knowledge with the continuing use of the expert tutor/trainer for soft skills.

Organisations, which are having the most success with e-learning, according to Woodall (2004) are those who are utilising a methodological approach. IBM, for instance, structure certain courses so that 80 percent of time is taken up with self-study activities with the remaining 20 percent reserved for leader-led classroom study.

5.3 Conclusion

Uncertainty exists as to which delivery techniques are used most. Recent findings suggest that employees rate on-the-job training as the most effective method, with traditional class-room based training only coming in as fourth choice (CIPD 2005a). This preference for on-the-job training is due, in part, to the increased transferability of that which is learned on-the-job. However there are many other techniques to consider. Coaching and mentoring have both grown in popularity in recent years, yet the interchangeable use of the two terms may prove problematic in the future. While none of these techniques are perfect delivery mechanisms, either is the latest and most discussed one – e-learning.

There is no doubt that e-learning has an important part to play in business (Gunasekaran, McNeil and Shaul 2002) and it is now accepted as an essential feature of training delivery (CIPD 2004b). It is questionable, however, whether it is worthy of being labelled a complete replacement to traditional learning methods thus far. It is argued by many that some traditional learning activities such as teaching soft skills (Vaughan and MacVicar 2004) are simply impossible to carry out via electronic means.

This by its very nature requires two people present and the learner cannot obtain the experience of real life interviews through a computer. Maybe once virtual reality programmes such as those developed by IBM are common place we can solve this problem. Until then organisations must continue to integrate traditional learning methods with ICT enabled learning in an intelligent way - whenever suitable - in order to ensure efficient and effective learning.

Mark Twain once said that if the only tool one has is a hammer then one tends to treat everything as if it is a nail. While a hammer has its obvious uses it should not be used to drive a screw. In the same sense e-learning, which may be useful for certain purposes, should not be used out of context and thus should be used for those activities to which it is suited. In much the same way that ATM machines and online banking have not yet replaced traditional banking via a branch, e-learning has not replaced traditional methods of learning via trainers.

The next stage in the T&D process, following on from delivery, is evaluation. The next chapter discusses evaluation in detail outlining the benefits of evaluation, the levels of evaluation and the barriers, which may prevent evaluation.

CHAPTER SIX
EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF T&D

6.1 Introduction

The assessment of T&D, if carried out effectively, can outline how employees feel about T&D and how courses might be improved. It can show the effectiveness of T&D in facilitating learning, it can ascertain whether the outcomes of T&D are transferred back to the workplace, and in turn how they impact on organisational performance. Knowledge of the impact of T&D on organisational performance is increasingly important as HRD practitioners are forced to become more accountable, with the performance perspective gaining a strategic importance for all stakeholders (Devaney 2005). While the need for rigorous evaluation is questioned by some (Sloman 2004) it is widely accepted that the evaluation of training effectiveness is one of the most critical steps in the training process. However while most training professionals realise the importance of evaluation this stage is often omitted. In fact most staff development workshops rarely include any form of formal evaluation (Dwyer 2004); it is the most forgotten stage in the training programme (Al-Athari and Zairi 2002).

This chapter seeks to examine issues pertaining to evaluation measures, as outlined in the literature. The importance of evaluation is discussed with a lead into the barriers to evaluation, which possibly explain why this stage is so often neglected. Kirkpatrick's (1957) four-level evaluation framework is then examined, as it is the most publicised of all evaluation processes. This begins by obtaining learners' reactions to courses, for the purpose of problem solving or suggesting improvements, before then evaluating what the participants have learnt, usually through tests. The third stage involves determining whether the learner has implemented anything which they have learnt into their role and the fourth stage seeks to ascertain whether there has been a notable improvement on organisational performance, which is directly linked to T&D. Kirkpatrick's work is criticised by some, most notably because it does not include a financial measure. Return on Investment (ROI), has been heralded as one suitable method, and has been added to the existing work in the form of a fifth level. However, numerous criticisms surround the use of ROI and there is huge uncertainty as to whether it can be effectively calculated, given the soft variables which have to be considered. All of these issues are examined in detail in this chapter.

6.2 Importance of evaluation

Being able to prove the effectiveness of T&D is important for a number of reasons. It justifies whether or not the training was worth the expense and time (Begingham 1997: 88) and whether courses meet learning needs (Gagné et al 1992). Recent empirical evidence suggests that T&D may not be resulting in learning due to a number of factors including; individuals' perceptions of the T&D process, lack of relevance, perceptions of irrelevant or impractical T&D and poor timing or delivery (Antonacopoulou 2001). Awareness of these factors is vitally important in order to ensure enjoyable, effective learning initiatives.

Organisations are concerned about the transfer of skills from the classroom to the workplace and the benefits of T&D to the organisation (Gagné et al 1992). In this era of accountability training managers eventually have to show the effectiveness of training in order to justify their position (Hughey and Mussnug 1997; Sanderson 1992; Kirkpatrick 2005; Devaney 2005). Additionally in a knowledge-based economy where workplace learning is crucial, many managers are shying away from investing in T&D due to a lack of data (Bassi et al 2000).

Evaluation allows for programmes to be revised so as to decide whether to continue with them, modify them (Kirkpatrick 2005) or even scrap them if needed. It also helps when deciding between alternative programmes (Mann and Robertson 1996). Increasing sales targets and pressure to be doing rather than learning also mean that training time is at a premium and thus must be utilised effectively (Meller and Mann 2001). It is not enough to be satisfied with the fact that training programmes are implemented as scheduled, without assessing effectiveness properly (Hamzah and Zairi 1996), especially considering the amount of money which is spent on T&D. According to Gauld and Miller (2004) US organisations spend anything from \$50 billion (Clark and Kwinn 2005) to \$70 billion (Lynch 1998) a year in workplace education and training and it is claimed (Chandler Macloed Group) that three-quarters of the organisations in Australia and New Zealand spend more than one percent of their payrolls for this purpose (ASTD June 2005b). However despite this huge spend, evaluation is often neglected by organisations. It is worth exploring the reasons behind this.

6.3 Barriers to evaluation

While most training professionals realise the importance of having a sound evaluation process this stage is not frequently carried out in a comprehensive or systematic manner (Marchington and Wilkinson 2005; Geertshuis et al 2002; Hashim 2001). In fact most staff development workshops rarely include any form of formal evaluation (Dwyer 2004); it is the most forgotten stage in the training programme (Al-Athari and Zairi 2002). Tennant, Boonkrong and Roberts (2002) cite a 1998 Education and Training survey, which found that only 35 percent of UK companies were measuring the effectiveness of their T&D programmes. Additionally only eight percent of 'Best' award winning companies, recognised by the ASTD as leading learning companies, evaluate the effectiveness of learning in terms of business impact (Surgrue and Kim 2004). There are numerous reasons as to why training may not be evaluated thoroughly. Many T&D professionals do not evaluate T&D programmes as they do not know how or what to evaluate (Mann and Robertson 1996). Sometimes it is just assumed that training is advantageous and other times it is not enforced by the organisation (Hashim 2001). Also evaluation may be seen to be expensive or risky as the results may indicate that a publicly endorsed programme is not meeting its objectives (Mann and Robertson 1996). Sanderson (1992) outlines various reasons as to why organisations are reluctant to evaluate such as:

- Evaluation is unnecessary. The beneficial effects of training are obvious.
- Evaluation is threatening. It may reveal inadequacies in trainers or that training is ineffective.
- Only rigorous and scientific evaluation is worthwhile. Such approaches are difficult or impossible to implement in real-life situations.
- Trainers lack the knowledge, skills and incentives to evaluate.
- End-of-course reaction sheets are sufficient and their contents demonstrate that training is effective.
- Evaluation will use scarce resources needed for the prime task of training.
- Evaluation would involve line managers and other non-training staff. It is difficult to get their support and cooperation.

Sanderson (1992: 126)

In relation to the threatening nature of evaluation, Al-Athari and Zairi (2002) argue that the evaluation process should actually lead to a building up of the training position and not a depletion of it. Interestingly it may often be the training departments themselves that encourage evaluation in order to prove that their training is worthwhile (Thomson 2005).

Information regarding the benefits of T&D is not widely available (White paper of HRD 1997; 33). A lack of knowledge of the benefits of training in relation to productivity and stock market performance leads to under investment in T&D projects (Descy 2005). This lack of knowledge may explain why, despite the extraordinary spend on training in seemingly good times, the training budget is one of the first budgets to be cut when times get tough (Hughey and Mussnug 1997; Tennant, Bookrong and Roberts 2002), thus if T&D is not linked to what the organisation sees as valuable, money will be re-invested elsewhere. The difficulty in proving T&D effectiveness is often argued as a major evaluation barrier and a return on investment (ROI) is often cited as a necessary measure. However this approach may be too difficult to measure due to the number of soft variables and not every senior executive needs the effectiveness of T&D to be proved to them anyway. These issues are revisited in further detail in section 6.5.1.

It is often claimed that the best time to plan evaluation is when analysing learning needs (Marchington and Wilkinson 2005; Buckley and Caple 1992) as this evaluation is necessary in order to improve the quality and effectiveness of courses - through feedback about the design and relevance of the course to the achievement of learning objectives. In fact it is claimed (Kearns 2005) that the single most important thing to consider about evaluation is to do it before training. Tennant, Boonkrong and Roberts (2002) assert that there should be consideration of evaluation even prior to the setting of objectives, again showing the integrated nature of the T&D process.

Various evaluation models have been proposed in the literature. The most publicised of all is now discussed in detail.

6.4 The Kirkpatrick Model

Kirkpatrick (1967) outlined four levels at which T&D can be evaluated - reaction, learning, behaviour and results. These labels have been given alternative labels by subsequent authors, such as learner reactions/reaction, satisfaction and planned action; learning achievement; transfer of learning/ application and implementation; and organisational results/ business impact respectively (Gagné et al 1992; Philips 1998). Labels aside, evaluation at all levels needs to be undertaken in order to form a full picture of training effectiveness (Marchington and Wilkinson 2005). The most important level of evaluation may differ according to the circumstances and the needs of different stakeholders. Trainers may be interested in how well they are performing in front of the group but the finance director may be concerned about the cost-effectiveness of training programmes (Marchington and Wilkinson 2005).

The Kirkpatrick model is a widely accepted view (Green 2002) and is used extensively (Alliger et al 1997), with 67% of US organisations using it according to ASTD (1997). Also since its development it has stimulated a number of supportive and conflicting models including those by Swanson and Holton (1999); Kraiger et al (1993) and Tannenbaum et al (1991) (Geertshuis et al 2002). It is important to look at each of Kirkpatrick's evaluation levels and subsequent alterations of the framework in detail in order to understand the advantages and disadvantages of each, and also the complexity of each approach.

6.4.1 Learner Reactions

Level one evaluation seeks participants' reactions on anything up to six factors (Morgan and Casper 2000) including reactions about the topic, speaker/trainer, schedule, testing process, materials and course structure. These are often measured using attitude questionnaires after a learning initiative. These questionnaires are commonly referred to as post course assessments or happy sheets, the latter of which Bee and Bee (2003) view as derogative. Whilst some claim that they are of little interest (Bramley 1999) and while Kearns (2005) argues that happy sheet are not evaluation, others note their usefulness. They can be used for three purposes; problem sensing; formative feedback - which highlights areas that might be revised and summative decision making – where a course or instructor is evaluated with the possibility of the course being cancelled

(Gagné et al 1992). Various authors suggest different timing for their distribution. Wynne and Clutterbuck (1991) suggest that they should be administered immediately after the training initiative, before post-course euphoria dissipates, whilst Bee and Bee (2003) believe that it is best practice to administer them during the programme, introducing and handing them out at the beginning and scheduling time for their completion.

Questionnaires of this type are a commonly cited method of evaluation (Wynne and Clutterbuck 1991; Bedingham 1997; Bee and Bee 2003) and the most frequently used (Bramley 1999) with 78 percent of organisations using this method according to ASTD (2002) or between 90-100 percent according to Philips (1998). In fact most evaluation stops at this level (Sloman 2004). They seek to determine how satisfied learners are with the learning experience and how effective they feel it has been in meeting their learning needs. It is important to determine how employees feel about courses as top management often make decisions about training on the basis of comments from participants (Kirkpatrick 1996).

There are a number of caveats to be considered when using this approach. Bedingham (1997) warns that relying on subjective judgements like this may cause problems as training staff that consistently score poorly may be criticised, even though the complexity of their topic may not have been taken into account. Asking for feedback from learners about the trainer may be quite a revealing process and trainers may not be ready to go through such an ordeal (Pont 2005). Trainers might be better off starting with some form of self-evaluation and/or integrating it with learners' and colleagues' perceptions in a 360 degree evaluation (Pont 2005). It is suggested that an appraisal of the training process should also be made by the training co-ordinator, director or other trained observer as combining this with trainee evaluations makes for a more effective overall evaluation (Kirkpatrick 1996). Wynne and Clutterbuck (1991) recommend trainer interviews as a means of assessing learners' perceptions of courses. This involves trainers interviewing former trainees to assess in detail the effectiveness of the training they have received. This process, note Wynne and Clutterbuck (1991), is most effective in a structured format where each person is asked the same questions. It also allows the trainer to gain more information than a questionnaire or form would yield as it allows probing and both closed and open ended questions.

Trainer observed behaviour and participant observation are also suggested (Wynne and Clutterbuck 1991) as possible means of determining how employees feel about training courses. Trainer observed behaviour is most valuable in relation to action based learning role plays and simulations. Feedback is essential, as repetition of sound behaviours cannot be expected without positive re-enforcement. Participant observation involves colleagues observing and giving opinions particularly regarding behaviours identified for the purposes of training experience, again feedback is essential (Wynne and Clutterbuck 1991). Bee and Bee (2003) outline four useful purposes for this type of assessment:

1. As part of a diagnostic process or audit trail it can help detect possible causes when a learning programme is not effective at one of the higher levels of evaluation (e.g. when monitoring behaviour on the job).
2. Can be argued that the learners themselves have best insight into the effectiveness of the intervention.
3. Intuitively if one feels that they have found a learning intervention enjoyable, satisfying and stimulating then it is more likely that they will be willing to put the new learning into action.
4. The participants will have the most relevant views on the quality of the venue, catering, accommodation etc.

Bee and Bee (2003: 168)

However despite its proposed usefulness this approach also has its weaknesses. Learners may not give honest feedback for fear of upsetting facilitators (Bee and Bee 2003). Also research suggests that there is a poor relationship between positive reaction-level assessments, learning and changes in job performance, and the transfer of learning into the workplace (Marchington and Wilkinson 2005; Alliger and Janak 1989; Alliger et al 1997; Bramley 1999). Learner happiness does not necessarily mean that the learning intervention will result in learning (Hale 2003; Kirkpatrick 1996) or will be effective in changing job behaviour or in meeting business needs (Bee and Bee 2003; Kirkpatrick 1996). Learners' reactions can depend on how much they like the trainer or whether they had a good time (Al-Athari and Zairi 2002). Alliger et al (1997), in their meta analysis of studies where reaction measures had been related to measure of learning and changes in behaviour, found that positive reactions did not relate to learning gains any

better than negative reactions. Additionally unhappiness may stem from challenging learning interventions, which may be effective (Bee and Bee 2003) and often the most effective learning is the most painful such as being thrown into the deep end in a new job (Hale 2003). If learners' do not like the instructor or feel unsatisfied then they might kill a good programme (Al-Athari and Zairi 2002). Also reaction evaluations are often poorly designed and thus yield minimally helpful information and the value of conducting evaluations is often overshadowed by this stage as they are not indicative of the overall successfulness of the course (Al-Athari and Zairi 2002).

Despite these criticisms this stage is important, as if employees do not like a course then they will be unlikely to make an effort to learn or pay attention to the issues discussed (Kirkpatrick 1996). Reaction evaluations, however, are not intended to be used in isolation. Some organisations have added an extra dimension to this level, asking participants to outline specific outcomes they plan as a result of their participation in the programme (Philips 1998). This is an advance on reaction measurements, which were not intended to be used in isolation yet in conjunction with other stages of the evaluation process. Alliger et al (1997), in their meta-analysis of the relations among training criteria, split reactions into affective reactions (whether the person liked the course) and utility reactions (whether there was likely to be an influence on performance, whether the training was practical or relevant). This latter classification was found to be more strongly correlated to learning or on-the-job performance (transfer) than affective reactions. Interestingly utility-type reaction measures were also found to be more correlated to transfer than measures of immediate or retained learning (level 2 evaluation). For these reasons Alliger et al (1997) suggests splitting level one evaluation into affective and utility with utility reactions being used to provide a better estimate of likely transfer. Subsequent to Alliger et al's (1997) research, Brown (2005) attempted to critically examine training satisfaction, which he felt had not been achieved by previous research, including that of Alliger et al (1997). Brown (2005) tested the affect of motivation on individuals' satisfaction with training and found that trainees who report intrinsic (such as believing training to be important, relevant, consistent with their values and enjoyable) motives for partaking in training showed higher satisfaction with training than those who were extrinsically motivated (motivated by external pressure from others or internal pressures to conform). However both types of motivation did positively correlate with satisfaction.

Each evaluation stage is more difficult and potentially more time consuming than the last, but if the time, money and expertise are available it is important to proceed through all four levels of evaluation (Kirkpatrick 1996). The next stages go some way to addressing some of the criticisms of the initial stage, discussed above, particularly relating to the effectiveness of the particular T&D intervention.

6.4.2 Learning

This level of assessment involves measuring how well learners have met the intended learning objectives (Gagné et al 1992). It is a common measure of evaluation used by 51% of US organisations (ASTD 1997). This can be facilitated through pre and post course tests, which will measure the gain in learning before and after (Bee and Bee 2003; Wynne and Clutterbuck 1991). These, note Wynne and Clutterbuck (1991) are an ideal measure as they help to decide what needs to be built on. Harrison (1997) assents, noting the importance of a before/after analysis in order to achieve any meaningful measurement. Pre-tests should be given at the start of the first class and the post-tests at the close of the last session (Kirkpatrick 1956).

One measure of evaluation at this level involves examining whether the learning objectives have been achieved. Evaluation often takes place at the end of the programme, in the form of a test. Bee and Bee (2003) outline the three attributes, which employees may be measured on as knowledge, skill and attitudes/ behaviours. Knowledge, they note, is often assessed using a self-complete questionnaire or an exam. It may be important to do this if an employee needs a certain level of knowledge to take on a new job/ duties. It is also useful to see the change in knowledge. Skill is usually assessed by observation and is depends on both the design of the observation process and form and the use of skilled observers. An assessment form will have all the elements to be measured and these will be assessed in turn. Assessment of interpersonal skills is generally less well-developed and difficult to do so it is often limited to knowledge assessments. If there is not a requirement for an individual to reach a certain skill level then skill will not be measured. Finally attitudes and behaviours are particularly difficult to measure as participants are too often aware of the answers that they should give. It is also argued that it is very difficult to change attitudes and what you are trying to change is the way people actually behave. This is often a long process

and one in which the results are best measured where the behaviours will operate i.e. in the workplace (Bee and Bee 2003).

Level two evaluation can show poor results for a small group or for employees in general. If it is a small group there may be reason/s such as the inappropriateness of the intervention for the learners involved, a poor fit between their learning needs and the learning offered, a negative approach to the learning by learners or a poor relationship between the facilitator and the learners (Bee and Bee 2003). If the target audience is assumed to be appropriate and the objectives are not being met then there are problems with the instruction (Gagné et al 1992). If results are poor in general it may be due to the performance of the facilitator(s), the learning methods used, the content/ level of the event or any combination of the three (Bee and Bee 2003).

If training personnel can prove effectiveness at this level, as well as the preceding level it will help to sell future programmes and will go some way in proving their usefulness to the organisation (Kirkpatrick 1996). Nevertheless it is important to note that this level is not without its limitations. Some refuse to count knowledge and skill tests as proper evaluation (Kearns 2005) while the majority of criticism surrounds the fact that tests do not assess what has been transferred just what has been learned (Bee and Bee 2003). Additionally organisations might be reluctant to use tests in case they have a negative effect on employee commitment (Morrow 2001). Alliger et al (1997) point out that although learners may have acquired knowledge they might not be able to use it on the job. The next level of evaluation is concerned with this transfer or application of learning back to the job.

6.4.3 Transfer of learning

The third level of Kirkpatrick's evaluation model focuses on the extent to which learners utilise what they have learnt on the job and the continuing application or 'maintenance' (Baldwin and Ford 1998) of that which is learned (Broad and Newstrom 1992). There is little point in developing skills and knowledge if they are not transferred back into the workplace; effective learning needs to achieve transfer from the artificiality of a training course to practical on the job application (Robotham 2004). In fact it is suggested (Maybey and Iles 2001) that training courses are no longer judged on knowledge and skills acquisition, but knowledge and skills application. Employees

often enjoy courses but are unable to utilise what they have learnt in their role. This failure to transfer is entitled the “transfer gap” (Vermeulen 2002). Despite the substantial investment in training, the information and skills that are learned may never actually be applied in the workplace (Donovan, Hannigan and Crowe 2001; Cornford and Athanasou 1995) and ensuring effective transfer is an enduring challenge (Antonacopoulou 1999). Cheng and Ho (1999) note that practitioners usually adopt a trial and error approach to transfer and it has been claimed that as little as ten percent of industrial training is transferred back to the workplace (Georgenson 1982 as cited in Mann and Robertson 1996). Antonacopoulou (1999) found that a significant proportion (38-73 percent) of UK based financial services managers were mostly not in a position to utilise the learning developed during training, and experienced difficulties applying the knowledge acquired.

Only 32 percent of organisations surveyed by ASTD (1997) claimed to be evaluating at this level. It is perhaps surprising that this level of evaluation is so infrequently carried out in a systematic way (Bee and Bee 2003; Geertshuis et al 2002) considering the money invested in training (Geertshuis et al 2002) and given the fact that concerns about the ‘transfer gap’ have been expressed since the 1950s (Mosel 1957 as cited in Baldwin and Ford 1988) and still abound today (Vermeulen 2002). It is also surprising considering that ensuring transfer is a training issue of paramount importance (Van der Klink, Gielen and Nauta 2001) and considering that HRD professionals would prefer to show management a much greater payoff from HRD activities (Broad and Newstrom 1992). A lack of transfer evaluation may be due to the fact that trainers have put all their efforts into needs analysis, design and delivery of training (Broad and Newstrom 1992) or the subject of transfer may get lost among the other three levels of evaluation (Kirkpatrick 2005).

There are various barriers to transfer cited in the literature. Broad and Newstrom (1992) rank in order of strength the numerous transfer barriers as identified by Newstrom (1986) as follows:

1. Lack of reinforcement on the job.
2. Interference from immediate (work) environment.
3. Non-supportive organisational culture.

4. Trainees' perception of impractical training programmes.
5. Trainees' perception of irrelevant training content.
6. Trainees' discomfort with change and associated effort.
7. Separation from inspiration or support of the trainer.
8. Trainees' perception of poorly designed/delivered training.
9. Pressure from peers to resist changes.

Broad (1986) in Broad and Newstrom (1992: 19)

Many of these barriers can be broken down into training input factors and work-environment characteristics (Baldwin and Ford 1988). Training input factors include training design and trainee characteristics. The major training design characteristics include the incorporation of learning principles (Baldwin and Ford 1988), as discussed in Chapter Four, including timing and delivery methods (Antonacopoulou 2004) and the relevance of the training (Vermeulen 2002; Baldwin and Ford 1988; Donovan, Hannigan and Crowe 2001; Antonacopoulou 2004; Broad and Newstrom 1992). It is worth noting that while the relevance of training may improve reaction level results, recent studies (Brown 2005) have found no correlation between utility reactions (or perceived relevance or practicality of the training) and transfer. Individuals must also be motivated to transfer what they have learnt back to the workplace (Van der Klink, Gielen and Nauta 2001; Broad and Newstrom 1992) and it is particularly important that trainees are encouraged early on to think about how they will apply what they have learned to their job (Knox 1988).

Trainee characteristics account for the most variability in training transfer scores. These include ability, skill and motivation (Donovan, Hannigan and Crowe 2001), all discussed in chapter five. Not all of these were found by Broad (1986) to be relevant. This may be due to the fact that trainees will be reluctant to attribute a lack of transfer to their ability or personality. Self efficacy is also claimed to be important for a number of reasons. Firstly it will affect an individual's motivation to change their behaviour (Mathieu et al 1993 in Van der Klink, Gielen and Nauta 2001) and secondly if trainees leave a programme with the belief that they can successfully perform tasks which they have been trained to do they will overcome obstacles more readily (Mann and Robertson 1996). The effects of self-efficacy have been well studied and it is clear that

individuals with high levels of confidence in achieving certain performance levels and behavioural change will be more successful when it comes to transfer (Cheng and Ho 1999). Self-efficacy has been empirically linked to pre-training motivation, training performance in various training programmes, post-training behaviour, transfer performance and skill maintenance (Cheng and Ho 1999). This highlights the importance of supporting and motivating employees throughout the T&D process so that they feel confident and believe in themselves.

Other factors affecting motivation were outlined by Cheng and Ho (1999) in their review of the transfer literature. They cite Tannenbaum et al (1991) who found that the level of employees' organisational commitment affects their view on the usefulness of training and the expected outcomes of training experiences, and that those with high levels of organisational commitment were more motivated prior to training and more effective when it came to transfer. Cheng and Ho subsequently found a positive correlation between career commitment and learning motivation and learning transfer (Cheng and Ho 2001). Additionally employees who were allowed input into the training decision were more likely to see the usefulness of training and thus were more motivated (Baldwin et al 1991; Clark et al 1993 and Mathieu et al 1992). Post training interventions such as feedback and relapse prevention also affect employees' motivation to transfer (Cheng and Ho 1999). Lastly age is also cited by Van der Klink, Gielen and Nauta (2001) as an important transfer factor. They cite Hastings (1994) who found a negative correlation between age and transfer and contradictory claims by Thijssen (1996) who claimed that older learners' experience may actually aid transfer. This is an important consideration given the ageing nature of the workforce attributable to older retirement ages.

Lastly work-environment characteristics include climatic factors such as supervisory or peer support, as well as constraints and opportunities to perform learned behaviours on the job (Baldwin and Ford 1988). A key issue that inhibits the transfer of learning is the fact that employees simply may not get the chance to demonstrate what they have learned (Gagné et al 1992) as they often return to the same inadequate workplace environment (Tennant, Boonkrong and Roberts 2002). Bramley (1999) cites a study by Sykes (1962) which found that employees returning to work after receiving training on participative management were hindered as senior managers had no intention of

supporting a participative management style. If employees know that they will not be able to apply what they learn through T&D to their job then this may affect their motivation to learn, especially if the individuals are pragmatists who, it is claimed, learn best when they are given immediate transfer opportunities. Work-environment characteristics have received additional coverage since Baldwin and Ford's (1988) classification. Holton et al (1999) developed the Learning transfer system inventory (LTSI), which listed 16 factors that influence transfer. These are grouped into motivation, ability, work environment and trainee characteristics (Donovan, Hannigan and Crowe 2001).

The formula which Noe and Schmitt (1986) suggest determines transfer is [Trainability = f (Ability, Motivation and environmental favourability)]. Similarly Bramley (1999) outlines the barriers to transfer into a simple equation; performance = (some function of) Ability * Motivation * Opportunity. These equations describe the inhibiting factors quite well, as trainee characteristics and training design concern ability and motivation and work-place characteristics decide on whether they have the transfer opportunities.

Intervening transfer variables can have positive and negative effects and must be taken into consideration (Bee and Bee 2003). The culture of the organisation is important in this regard. The organisation must be one, which will support learners who come back to their job with new knowledge, skills and attitudes (Harrison 1997). Support from line managers is particularly important. Employees may either receive little support or alternatively they may receive additional coaching or learning those in favourable organisational climates are more likely to apply new knowledge to work settings (Baldwin and Ford 1988). Noe and Schmitt (1986) claim that pre-learning motivation affects learning outcomes and post learning motivation affects behavioural change, again highlighting the importance of motivation and support at all levels. Peer support is also important in a cultural sense as if the learner intends to implement the new ideas but their peers are not enthused by such ideas or do not behave similarly, then the learner may revert back to their old ways (Bee and Bee 2003). In other words learners should be enabled and encouraged to use their new learning in the workplace (Harrison 1997).

Being allowed to practice what has been learned through training and development is imperative as trainees need to practice and learn more in their work context so as to internalise what they have learned (Vermeulen 2002) and thus employees must be allowed to make mistakes without the fear of serious repercussions. Full transfer means that with practice on the job, the individual's level of skill will increase beyond the level attained by the end of the training process (Broad and Newstrom 1992). This again highlights the importance of organisational support at all levels of the T&D process and specifically highlights the need for a culture in which employees are not afraid to make mistakes in order to learn from them and improve their performance. Employees will be reluctant to attempt new things, learned in training, if they will be reprimanded for doing so. This is particularly important for those with a converger learning style who prefer to learn by trial and error, (Buch and Bartley 2002) as they must be allowed to fail safely when attempting to effectively transfer training outcomes back to the workplace.

There are a number of transfer aids prescribed in the literature. Antonacopoulou (1999) suggests the use of action plans and a more consistent follow up. Post-training interventions such as goal setting and feedback may also be used (Baldwin and Ford 1988). Thomson (2005) suggests encouraging participants to write themselves a letter outlining what they intend to do, which can then be posted back to them at a future date to remind them. Additionally pre-course discussion with one's boss, followed by subsequent boss sponsorship (Huczynski and Lewis 1980 as cited in Baldwin and Ford 1988) will aid transfer, again showing the importance of line managers. However ambiguity surrounds the exact supervisor actions which employees deem to be supportive (Baldwin and Ford 1988) and this is something which needs to be researched in further detail. With this information interventions could be developed to change management behaviour in order to improve support prior to training (Baldwin and Ford 1988).

Both the context of training and work are important. Some focus on the context of training to improve transferability, others highlight the importance of the work context (Vermeulen 2002). If there are poor performance-level evaluation results and the learning level results were fine then it would suggest that specific factors in the workplace or personal to the individuals that hampered the transfer of learning back to

the job. It could also be that the learning is not relevant to their jobs (Antonacopoulou 1999) or that those particular learners should not be sent on certain learning interventions in the first instance.

Gagné et al (1992) also note that as the outcomes of HRD activities are often vague and ambiguous, it may be difficult to single out learning outcomes as the only reason for improved performance. To overcome this problem Wynne and Clutterbuck (1991) suggest the use of two helpful measures, namely management de-briefing and promotability. The first of these measures involves management reviewing the T&D process with trainees after the programme. A manager, in this regard can help review the learning and can help a trainee to understand how to apply it in the work situation. Wynne and Clutterbuck (1991) also suggest the use of questionnaires in identifying how and how well the learning has been applied. These questionnaires can be administered at various intervals after the training, three, six or twelve months, whatever is deemed appropriate. The value of using the second measure, promotability, depends partly on who is responsible for promotion within an organisation. If, for instance, promotion is a one off responsibility of line management then it is less valuable. However, if this is not the case and if people attending T&D programmes are not coming through in terms of promotions, questions must be asked. Alternatively if trainees are regularly promoted then this is a positive reflection (Wynne and Clutterbuck 1991).

Bee and Bee (2003) argue that a lot depends on whether the aim is to measure behaviours or skills on the job. These measures can involve the learner, the learners' manager/ colleagues/ staff (upward evaluation), customers or an external/ independent assessor (as discussed under multi-source appraisal – section 3.4.2). The most common approaches involve the learner, their manager or a combination of both. Externals are useful as they are usually skilled in the task and arguably more objective thus ensuring consistency of standards. The same authors suggest the use of observation, self-complete questionnaires and interviews to measure behaviour transfer. These techniques are also used in assessing T&D needs as they demonstrate how effective the employee is performing. The T&D process starts here and through this process identifies the issues or problems, which may be constraining the employee from performing to their full potential. Similarly after the employee has taken part in T&D, or at regular intervals during - which time the employee is expected to self-develop – their performance is

again analysed to see again what their T&D needs might be. Thus the T&D loop is completed.

Whilst ensuring transfer of training outcomes to the job is extremely important, this is only the first stage of transfer. The length of time that trained skills and behaviours are used on the job must also be considered. This is referred to as 'maintenance' by Baldwin and Ford (1988) who state that decreased motivation or skill decrements may cause the individuals usage of what was learned in training to decline. Also it must not be forgotten that whilst organisations might be successful in facilitating the transfer of knowledge and skills to the workplace these particular knowledge and skills may be inappropriate for an individual (Baldwin and Ford 1988) as their needs may not have been assessed effectively. This again highlights the need for proficiency at all levels of the T&D process.

Whilst it may be reassuring to see learners using what they have learnt via T&D in the workplace, the effect, if any, of this changed behaviour may still be unknown. This is what the final level of Kirkpatrick's framework focuses on, changed organisational outcomes as a result of T&D.

6.4.4 Business Impact

Today, organisational leaders want to know how participation in training programmes changes the knowledge, skills and attitudes of employees (level two) and how these changes impact on bottom-line results (Cornish 2002). For this reason training evaluation must demonstrate improved performance more than ever before (Hashim 2001). The fourth level of Kirkpatrick's evaluation framework seeks to determine whether there is a notable improvement in organisational performance, which is directly attributable to T&D activities. Bee and Bee (2003) note that level three and four are often carried out together and both provide information on the impact of learning to performance. The objectives of training programmes (as discussed in Chapter Four) can be stated in terms of desired outcomes such as lower costs, improved quality, increased production, increased customer satisfaction and lower rates of employee turnover and absenteeism. Whilst it is best to evaluate training programmes in terms of these outcomes (Kirkpatrick 1996) level four can be extremely difficult to measure. There

may be no clear and simple measures to employ or data might not be collected in a form that allows evaluation to take place. Also if only one group of employees in a department have been trained any potential achievement may have had very little overall effect (Marchington and Wilkinson 2005). Alliger et al (1997) attribute the dearth of published studies based on level four evaluation to these difficulties, stemming for the most part from organisational constraints, which limit the collection of data. Cornish (2002) questions the thoroughness of evaluation by firms who have actually claimed to evaluate at level three and four as the results of such evaluations are not generally available to review outside the organisation. Devaney (2005) also highlights the lack of research available on the impact of Company provided training, claiming that this highlights a field which has not yet matured.

There may also be many factors aside from training that may affect performance (Van der Klink and Streumer 2002; Kirkpatrick 1996; Philips 2000). Bramley (1999) highlights the impossibility of stating clearly the proportion of improvements, which come directly from training as opposed to those which stem from performance management, feedback on complaints or improved planning for example. Additionally he adds that interventions, which include management development activities, will also include uncontrolled aspects such as changes in attitudes and work patterns of supervisors and colleagues who become aware of what is happening and why (Bramley 1999). This may be the reason why so many training professionals don't even attempt to measure to this level (Philips 2000), with a mere 26 percent of organisations evaluating to this level (ASTD 1997).

It is important to track employee progress in order to show how the acquisition of skills and competencies have a positive impact on productivity and quality (Hughey and Mussnug 1997). However, evaluations of behavioural changes or criteria of organisational effectiveness are rarely carried out. This may be a matter of convenience, as gauging reactions is a lot easier (Bramley 1999). Hale (2003) notes, quite remarkably, that whilst it is often known that courses have no impact on job performance, there is nothing done about this as many companies conduct training purely for appearances sake. It may be presumed, however, that organisations also factor in intangible benefits accruing from T&D and that they are not just concerned with appearances.

6.4.5 Criticisms of the Kirkpatrick model

Whilst powerful in its simplicity and its ability to have people think about training evaluation criteria (Alliger and Janak 1989) and although the most widely used of all 50 or so (Hashim 2001) existing models for evaluating training effectiveness, the Kirkpatrick model is often criticised. Tennant, Boonkrong and Roberts (2002) claim that the model does not consider the measurement of certain critical issues prior to training such as objectives, contents and the equipment needed (ASTD 1998). It is also claimed that the model does not take into account major intervening variables, which affect learning, such as trainee readiness, motivation, design, reinforcement and particularly individual differences, the consideration of which were highlighted in Chapter Four as imperative (Donovan, Hannigan and Crowe 2001). Alliger et al (1997), in criticising Kirkpatrick's framework, point out its vagueness regarding results level criteria, noting that some indicators could be equally categorised as level three (behavioural) variables as they could level four variables.

Alliger and Janak (1989) identify three problematic assumptions of the Kirkpatrick model. Firstly they note that the levels are assumed to be arranged in ascending order of the information provided, yet it is not always certain that training is supposed to affect change. Secondly they note that causality between the levels is assumed, which is problematic as causality is difficult to prove or disprove and that levels one and two may be measured together. In fact the biggest criticism of Kirkpatrick's framework came from Holton (1996) who stated that it wasn't a model as there is no casual relationship between the levels (Stoel 2004). Also the levels are presumed to be positively correlated (Alliger and Janak 1989), which is problematic due to the lack of empirical research proving this (Hale 2003; Bee and Bee 2003; Brown 2005). Kirkpatrick, in responding to Holton's criticism, notes that he never actually called it a model, he simply called it the four levels (Stoel 2004). In fact Kirkpatrick (1996) himself also doubts the links between levels. Philips argues that correlating the levels adds no value anyway and that studies which criticise the four levels often add nothing to the literature and that they may stem from jealousy of Kirkpatrick (Stoel 2004).

There are numerous alternatives to the Kirkpatrick model suggested in the literature. Warr, Bird and Rackham's (1970) CIRO model is one such example. CIRO is an

acronym of the four levels; Context evaluation; Input evaluation; Reaction evaluation and Outcome evaluation (Sanderson 1992). This model's consideration of objectives and equipment in the context evaluation stage is seen as its key strength over the Kirkpatrick model. Its downside, however, is that the model does not measure behavioural change, which is a critical point (Tennant, Boonkrong and Roberts 2002). Holton (1996) also proposed an alternative model. His model, constructed from a weaving together of existing work in the area, is holistic in its approach in that it avoids the proposed weaknesses of the 'outcome' approaches such as Kirkpatrick's model, which assume simple relationships (Donovan, Hannigan and Crowe 2001). Holton's (1996) complex model suggested alternative strategies that might be used to develop practical evaluation tools (Donovan, Hannigan and Crowe 2001).

Philips (2000) lists a host of alternatives to the Kirkpatrick model (training for impact model; process output evaluation model; results orientated training model; six stage model; Training Value System model and the increased efficiency model) but notes that they are not true evaluation models as few demonstrate the steps required to evaluate results. Hale (2003) asserts that due to dramatic changes in organisational structure, cultures, technologies and training methods the Kirkpatrick model is now unworkable in practice and that the time has come to rethink evaluation methods. Dye (2002) agrees, arguing that whilst Kirkpatrick's (1959) model was sufficient for the state of the profession at that time, it has remained unchallenged for over 40 years and now needs to be updated. It is claimed that the time has now come for individuals to take responsibility for evaluation (Hughey and Mussnug 1997; Hale 2003) and that the responsibility for training should not rest solely with the trainer. This change in focus to trainee responsibility has been recognised by the more progressive companies (Hughey and Mussnug 1997) and signifies a particular change in evaluation to involving the individual more. This change in focus to a more self-directed learning approach may be occurring as organisations attempt to take some of the pressure off HRD professionals, save money by hiring fewer HRD professionals or seek to make T&D more relevant to individuals.

The four stages of T&D assessment discussed above may be construed as slightly soft in that they do not seek to determine a monetary value. This stands true for Kirkpatrick's model and for some of the alternatives to his work. The CIRO model, for example,

while covering a much broader view than Kirkpatrick's, in focusing on the context in which T&D takes place, fails to define the monetary value of training and development. This lack of hard data is a real drawback in proving training and development as a worthy business investment as HRD departments must now become more accountable and prove bottom-line effectiveness (Devaney 2005). Also as T&D is considered as a cost in many organisations, a personnel management type view, cost-effectiveness needs to be proven (Coulson-Thomas 2000).

6.5 Measuring the Cost effectiveness of Learning

Philips (2005) highlights proving cost effectiveness as imperative, and it is a hot topic of discussion at training conferences (Dust 2004). Learning projects often escape rigorous financial measurement, which can cause the learning budget to be cut quite readily if HRD professionals cannot prove a financial return but their colleagues in other functions can (Bee and Bee 2003; Coulson Thomas 2000). Quantifying the benefits of learning in monetary terms can be very challenging and most organisations struggle to do so (Allen 1994). The focus on financial returns can be problematic if the output of training is not measurable in these terms (Homan and Macpherson 2005). In theory it may be possible to identify and measure performance indicators but in practice this can be very difficult (Bee and Bee 2003).

It may be possible to quantify performance improvements such as; an increase in sales; an increase in productivity/ output; a reduction in wastage; a reduction in accidents/ equipment downtime; reduction in absence rates, labour turnover. However, as previously noted (section 6.4.4), it may be difficult to prove the extent to which T&D accounts for these changes. It is significantly easier to measure the direct costs of T&D. Direct costs can include such things as course fees, trainer/ consultant fees, costs of materials and equipment, hire of training venues, accommodation and travel. Indirect costs include the cost of work time spent by employees in partaking in T&D and the cost of personnel involved in administering and overseeing such programmes (Smith 2004). The opportunity cost of employees participating in T&D is more difficult to measure than direct costs but it must also be remembered that even when it is possible to cost the days spent and the number of courses taken this does not show the measurement of learning or business outcomes (Hale 2003).

Dust (2004) highlights various methods of before/after analysis including measuring on a per-student, per-skill point and a per-dollar basis. When measuring on a per-skill point basis, for example, if the average skill point increase was 10 and 500 people attended the course at a cost of \$20,000 then it cost \$4 to add a single skill point. This will allow an organisation to compare courses against each other. In terms of measuring the effectiveness of a training event in bringing students to a specific level of performance, Dust (2004) proposes a similar method as above. If for instance 125 students have reached the required level as a direct result of the training then dividing this number into the cost of the training will yield the cost of bringing a single employee to the required level.

Dust (2004) also suggests the use of an applicability ratio. This will show how skills align with business objectives. This ratio, by dividing the total cost of training by the number of people who have taken the course, will give the percentage of training costs, which apply to specific organisational objectives. For example if 60 people take a course linked to business objectives and 20 take one which is not at a cost of \$1,000 each, then the percentage of training costs applicable to specific business objectives is $(60 \times \$1,000) / (60 + 20) \times \$1,000 = 75\%$. Therefore the additional 25 percent of HRD spend might be for individuals' development, which could also be beneficial to the organisation, albeit in a less obvious way.

However this information, which Dust (2004) suggests is important is worthless unless the benefits (financial and otherwise) accruing from each additional skill point or from the applicability of T&D to business objectives are known.

6.5.1 Return on Investment (ROI)

The financial measure, which Hamblin (1974) and Philips (1991) suggest, is a Return on Investment (ROI). Given the expense of training, highlighted above, it is not surprising that people want to assess ROI (Thomson 2005) and Kirkpatrick agrees that it is an addition to his framework (Stoel 2005). Hamblin (1974) split the fourth stage of Kirkpatrick's (1959) model from organisational results to organisational results and cost benefit (Gagné et al 1992). This fifth level subsequently reinforced by Philips is something which today's training providers must be able to prove for training (Hashim

2001; Devaney 2005). Consequentially its usage is being driven by training departments seeking to justify their existence. ROI is being used globally in all types of organisations, for all types of programmes, to radically change the way programmes and solutions are designed, developed and delivered (Philips 2002). A tri-dimensional approach to ROI is even suggested (Devaney 2005) where returns at a Company, industry and national level are measured.

ROI, according to Philips (2005), is calculated quite easily by simply dividing earnings by the investment, with some hypothesis testing and correlations occasionally needed. This is calculated for between five and ten percent of programmes (Philips 1998). Kearns provides, what appears to be quite a straightforward ROI formula;

$$\text{Net ROI} = \frac{\text{Gross benefit from Training } \pounds - \text{Cost of Training } \pounds}{\text{Cost of Training } \pounds} * 100 \text{ percent}$$

(Kearns 2005: 63)

There are seven parts to this formula. These are;

1. Gross benefit achieved from training
2. Cost of training – all costs involved
3. Net benefit achieved – gross benefit minus cost of training
4. Cost of training below the line – so that it can be shown as a return on the original training cost or investment
5. Net ROI – the monetary return on the original investment after the cost of training is paid back or recouped
6. Multiply by 100 per cent – this converts the Net ROI monetary amount into a percentage return on the original investment
7. Payback period in years – not actually shown in most ROI calculations, usually the assumption that the benefit will be accrued in one year, if however you wish to assume that the same benefits continue in future years then you must multiply by the number of years chosen.

Kearns (2005: 63-64)

While the formula might be easy to use once all the data has been collected the difficulty lies in trying to actually calculate the gross benefit. Philips (2005), whilst advocating the use of ROI, admits that the difficulty lies in proving these monetary benefits in a credible way. To overcome this problem estimates are often used, but only when there are no other methods readily available. As estimates may be unreliable, they are adjusted and understated to take account of any potential error (Philips 2005). Kearns (2005) argues that if accountants are prepared to guess at amortisation costs or marketing directors are prepared to guess about market share then trainers should be able to guess the potential benefits from training.

Philips (2002) lists numerous drivers of ROI calculation. These include client demands, competition for scarce resources, 'at risk' funding, consequences for ineffective programmes, linking to strategic initiatives, top executive requirements, growth in training budgets, the need for balanced measures (supplementing other evaluation levels) and a desire to contribute. She also claims that companies using ROI are typically large in size with budgets for comprehensive evaluation. Additionally if there is already a measured focused environment (i.e. already using balanced scorecard, economic value added (EVA) six sigma) the organisation will be more likely to adopt ROI. Also adopting companies are usually undergoing significant change, which often increases interest in bottom-line issues and a need for greater accountability (Philips 2002).

However the use of ROI is a contentious issue and there are conflicting opinions as to the importance of, and difficulty in, proving an ROI from T&D. Kruse (2003), for example, cites the fact that Jack Welch did not need an ROI spreadsheet to justify his decision to invest millions in General Electric's (GE) training facility. In Kruse's opinion, senior executives do not care about ROI as it is an imperfect science with too many variables, which a formula cannot measure. Thomson (2005) agrees, citing the fact that ROI is usually conducted at a single point in time and that it does not take changes in the internal/ external environment into account. The more the learning event is concerned with soft (behavioural) skills and issues the harder it is to measure (Harrison 1997) and ROI may be so wrapped up in environmental factors that it is impossible to separate and measure (Alliger and Ives 1989).

Dust (2004) goes so far as to rate ROI as perhaps the least meaningful measure of training effectiveness, stating that it is not indicative of the contribution that training makes to an organisation. In relation to measuring e-learning effectiveness, Kruse (2002) opines that an ROI may only be measured when directly replacing a classroom-based intervention with an e-learning offering. An empirical example is provided by Bramley (1999) of an organisation who, through motor driving courses for staff, reduced their motor accident related expenses. This again is an obvious cost saving and a return on investment, yet as T&D benefits are argued to be predominantly intangible, with too many variables involved, the benefits may be simply too difficult to measure (Smith 2004). While not totally against financial indicators, Kruse suggests that chief learning officers (CLOs) should not hinge their justification for using innovative methods on solely difficult to prove methods, but rather they should also pay attention to softer elements, such as improved behaviours and likely business impact. Kearns (2005) notes that many professionals are unwelcoming to ROI as they do not believe that it can capture all the soft intangible benefits that results from training. Additionally some professionals are unwelcoming towards ROI as they do not wish to see their professionalism, creativity and innovative practices reduced to such a rigid, simple formula. However this criticism is a misunderstanding (Kearns 2005) as measuring ROI is not the only benefit that can be gained from using ROI and the discussion about ROI should be used as a positive and constructive element of training analysis and design.

However Kearns (2005) does note the importance of the concept of ROI stating that if the board believes in ROI then they will not endorse a programme which does not intend to provide a bottom-line, organisational benefit with a clear payback. Additionally ROI provides a much firmer footing for a learning strategy than simply deciding that individual development is an end to itself and worthy of resources, as this makes it difficult to prioritise where you spend the money (Kearns 2005). He believes that eventually every T&D function will have to address ROI.

According to Dust (2004) there is only one way of proving a bottom line affect of training. In order to do this it would be necessary to conduct an AB test or a control group where two identical projects would be run, one with training and one without. However this is unlikely to happen as it would be extremely difficult to find two identical projects and two groups of people with identical competencies. Kearns (2005)

doesn't recommend using control groups, noting the impossibility of keeping an organisation still while trying to observe changes. Additionally making serious decisions based on such a test, if management were to allow it in the first place, would be risky (Dust 2004). Control groups are surprisingly scarce among the studies devoted to ROI evaluation and there is minimal detail provided by authors in the HRD field on how to apply control groups (Wang and Wang 2005). The limited use of this approach might be due to the fact that HRD professionals are not very scientifically orientated, that they are rarely willing to express evaluation approaches as experiments in the eyes of senior management. Also it might be due to the extant level of misunderstanding regarding the application of control groups (Wang and Wang 2005).

HRD specialists may choose not to measure HRD effectiveness for a number of other reasons aside from the difficulty in doing so. There is a common fear of anything number based in T&D departments (Philips 2002) and training personnel might be fearful of collecting data which may show their programme as ineffective, resulting in budget cuts (Smith 2004). Philips notes that ROI is just one measure that demonstrates the value of training, something which he has to keep reminding people of (Stoel 2004). It should be part of an evaluation puzzle, which also includes collecting data at the other levels of evaluation discussed above, operating standards and guidelines - which support a systematic methodology and conservative approach to ROI evaluation - and case applications and practices. These should be brought together to implement an ROI methodology (Philips 2002).

Philips (2005) also states that most of the criticisms of ROI come from people who simply do not understand it or how it is used in an organisation. His ROI contributions are criticised, similarly to Kirkpatrick's and Hamblin's work for omitting evaluation at the start. Leaving evaluation to the end means viewing it as a mechanistic process (Kearns 2005), and could be seen to contravene the cyclical nature of T&D.

Smith (2004) adds that arguments over the complexity of T&D evaluation are difficult to maintain as, if T&D is important enough to merit investment then it is reasonable that an ROI should be measured and demonstrated. However as it takes time and resources to conduct a comprehensive ROI study, it is not feasible to do it for every training programme. To overcome some of the barriers, ROI should be implemented as a

process development tool and not as a performance evaluation tool (Smith 2004). This will help as people are usually not keen to develop a tool, which could potentially reflect poorly on them (Philips 2005). Kearns (2005) notes another use for the ROI formula as a management tool. He notes that as all training and development is based on a hypothesis, that if we train person 'a' to do activity 'b' then it should result in outcome 'c'. ROI can help in testing this hypothesis. For instance if a customer service course is ultimately designed to help improve sales and this message is not communicated to the employees then the ROI focus has already identified problems (Kearns 2005).

Dust's (2004) claim, that the biggest problem with ROI is the word 'investment', is an extremely interesting one and one which links back to the Human Resource Management (HRM)/ Personnel Management (PM) debate highlighted in Chapter One. If learning is to be seen as an investment then some sort of return will be expected (Bee and Bee 2003). Dust (2004) cites Peter Drucker who stated that Marketing and Innovation make money and that everything else is an expense. Dust (2004), in turn, argues that training is not an investment yet an expense, quite a common view (O'Connor 2004), which is in line with PM thinking. Human capital, he argues, is not an investment as it does not involve adding capital to the organisation. Smith (2004) disagrees with this view and states that HRD is actually an investment in the development of the individual, the organisation and society. For this reason, he argues, an ROI must be proven.

Harrison (1997) lists three measures of performance as financial performance, strategic performance and organisational effectiveness. Organisations primarily concerned with short term financial measures, such as ROI, are not likely to invest significantly in HRD. Those organisations using strategic or effectiveness measures are more likely to make long-term commitments. This again links back to whether the organisation takes a personnel management view of the employee as an expense or a HRM view emphasising the importance of developing employees and of the integration of HR into strategy. Kearns (2005) concludes this argument quite well in noting that ROI is a much abused and misused formula and that the key to using ROI is knowing its weaknesses as well as its strengths; its capabilities and limitations; how to use it and when not to use it. One additional consideration surrounding this debate is the fact that financial measures, whilst featuring strongly in a shareholder analysis, may be only one of the requirements

for survival, as stressed under stakeholder analysis. Stakeholder theory holds that organisational survival also depends on the ability of the organisation to legitimise its existence towards society and relevant stakeholders, including employees. This is important as it touches on the organisation's responsibility to the individual (Paauwe and Boselie 2005), which is an important consideration for organisations when examining the individual versus organisational needs T&D divide, as discussed in Chapter Four.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter sought to critique the final stage of the learning process. The final stage of evaluating the outcomes of HRD initiatives is increasingly important given the tightening of budgets and the increased levels of accountability placed on HRD professionals. Despite this and the fact that a huge amount of money is spent on organisational HRD there is often little or no evaluation carried out. There are a number of reasons for this including uncertainty about what and how to evaluate, difficulties in carrying out rigorous evaluation, the time and resources needed to do so and the fear of the outcomes of evaluation reflecting badly on HRD staff.

This chapter has encapsulated many of the extant links between evaluation and the other stages of the T&D process. There is little point in assessing needs and delivering T&D in an ineffective way if what has been learned is not transferred back to workplace. There are various things which will impact on and prevent transfer including training input factors and work-environment characteristics. Learning principles, as discussed in Chapter Four should be considered when designing and delivering training as should timing and delivery methods and the relevance of the training. Additionally individuals must be motivated to transfer what they have learnt back to the workplace and should be encouraged at the early stages of a course to think about how they will apply what they have learned to their job.

Additionally recent studies have found a positive correlation between career commitment and learning motivation and learning transfer. Research has also found that employees who are allowed input into the training decision are more likely to see the usefulness of training and thus are more motivated to transfer what they have learned again strengthening the argument made in Chapter Four for more individually focused

T&D. Furthermore the inclusion of work-environment characteristics (including climatic factors such as supervisory or peer support as well as constraints and opportunities to perform learned behaviours on the job), in the range of factors which can impact upon transfer reiterates the importance of learning conducive environments and a culture of learning as discussed in Chapter Four, again showing the clear links between different stages of T&D.

If learning is actually transferred, it must result in improved organisational performance. Organisations continually seek to discover whether there is a notable improvement in organisational performance, which is directly attributable to T&D activities. The thoroughness of evaluation by firms who have actually claimed to evaluate at level three and four is questioned by some as the results of such evaluations are not generally available to review outside the organisation.

The presence of an emphasis on cost-effectiveness when evaluating T&D will depend very much on whether employees are thought of as assets to be developed (as in HR philosophy) or whether they are viewed as a cost to be minimised (as in PM thinking), as discussed in Chapter Two. If organisations take the latter view of employees and seek to minimise costs then they might be much more likely to seek a cost benefit analysis. Proving this cost effectiveness is beneficial for all organisations as if HRD departments cannot prove a financial return but other functions can then there is the danger that funds will be allocated to other areas and HRD's allocation might be reduced.

However quantifying the benefits of learning in monetary terms may be possible to do in theory but in practice it can be very difficult, if not impossible. Return on Investment (ROI), or level five evaluation, is a contentious topic and it is arguable whether it is possible to measure, given the various soft factors and also whether there is a need for such financial measures. It is even argued that ROI might be the least meaningful measure of training effectiveness. Also because it is measured at a single point in time it is argued that it does not adequately account for changes in the internal/ external environment. To overcome the difficulties concerning soft variables estimates are often used, but only when there are no other methods readily available as they may be unreliable. In summary it is suggested that organisations primarily concerned with short term financial measures, such as ROI, are not likely to invest significantly in HRD.

However those organisations using strategic or effectiveness measures are more likely to make long-term commitments, again linking back to implications of whether organisations take a personnel management or HRM view towards their employees.

The final stage of the T&D process was examined in this chapter, although some may not like to order the stages due to the cyclical nature of T&D. Throughout this chapter and previous literature review chapters a number of key issues arose, which need to be empirically examined. These issues are outlined in further detail in the Chapter Seven where the methods used to conduct the research are also examined.

CHAPTER SEVEN
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

7.1 Introduction

The importance of people to organisational success is strongly emphasised in the literature. In today's highly competitive business climate employees are seen as a key element of organisational success. There are two means of achieving a highly competent and highly skilled workforce. Firstly organisations may choose to recruit such people, already skilled and sufficiently competent. Alternatively they may choose to develop such competencies themselves via training and development (T&D). There is widespread agreement that organisations should be looking to do the latter (Morrow 2001) and with an increasing emphasis on cost efficiency many organisations do so and in turn, as with every other business activity, attempt to achieve their T&D objectives as effectively and efficiently as possible. The literature provides detailed information on T&D implementation, listing techniques that can/should be used at each stage of the T&D process and outlining a number of ways of evaluating the effectiveness of such efforts. These issues were examined for this study under four research objectives. The various stages in the research process are outlined in appendix A. The two main stages included interviews with HRD managers in five organisations and an employee survey in one such Company, referred to as 'Company A'. Justification for choosing these methods is provided throughout this chapter. The focus of this study is warranted due to the claims that training may not result in learning (Antonacopoulou 2001) and due to the lack of in-depth evaluation being carried out by organisations at present, which makes it questionable whether the real benefit of T&D to individuals and organisations is known. It may also be beneficial for an independent person to research these matters, as quite often there is a fear within employees of revealing the inadequacies of training to the organisation (Antonacopoulou 2001). Following on from a discussion of the research process the chapter concludes by outlining the limitations of the study.

7.2 Objectives

This research focused on a number of levels and there were four main objectives. These were as follows:

1. To investigate the importance placed on T&D
 - a. Sub Objective One: To investigate the importance placed on T&D by organisations.

- b. Sub Objective Two: To investigate the importance placed on T&D by individuals.
2. To identify the various approaches taken throughout the T&D cycle and attitudes towards these.
3. To determine the barriers and drivers to employee involvement in T&D.
4. To examine the effectiveness of T&D and identify areas for improvement.

These objectives are examined in detail below with a lead into a discussion on the chosen sector and the respondent companies. Following this is a detailed explanation of research paradigms and the methods used to gather the data for the purposes of this study.

7.2.1 Objective 1: To investigate the importance placed on T&D

This objective comprised of two sub-objectives. It was deemed important to assess the strategic nature of T&D in each organisation, for the purposes of evaluating whether there is industry commitment to T&D, as is claimed in the literature that there should be. The importance which senior management places on T&D is one factor, if not the most important, that signifies whether or not there is a strategic approach taken towards T&D. This also has wider economical implications, as for Ireland to remain competitive high levels of workplace learning are imperative. It was also deemed necessary to investigate the importance which individuals place on T&D, as no matter how much organisations seek to promote learning amongst the workforce, no learning will occur if employees do not see the benefit in T&D and are not motivated to participate. These sub objectives are now discussed in detail.

7.2.1.1 Sub Objective 1: To investigate the importance organisations place on T&D

Despite the fact that comparative international research has shown that the skill of individual workers are a critical contributing factor in creating competitive advantage, employers in many countries have a negative attitude towards investment in skills and training (Descy 2005). For this reason it was deemed important to assess the importance that organisations place on T&D, as evidenced by how strategic their approach was. This was ascertained at the interview and survey stage. Organisational attitudes towards T&D were assessed in a number of ways.

It was useful to determine these through using the tenets of HRM as a guideline. Firstly a number of questions were asked in the interviews relating to the attitudes of senior management towards T&D in HRD managers' eyes and examples were sought for any opinions given. It was ascertained at this stage whether HR and HRD were linked with strategy and the organisation considered employees as expenses to be minimised or assets to be developed, both tenets of HRM. Additionally it was asked whether the emphasis was on training, which the organisation was required to provide (either through compliance or general operating necessity), or whether it took a more long term view of developing employees for jobs in the future, another tenet of HRM. As individuals' needs are often overlooked in favour of organisational needs, HRD managers were asked the extent to which individuals' needs were considered – whether there was a unitarist or a pluralist view taken. Information about the learning facilities, time-off allowed for T&D and both financial and non-financial supports was sought and it was asked at both interview stage and in the survey whether an atmosphere of learning was present in the organisation.

The survey was also used to assess whether Company A was perceived by its employees to place an importance on learning. It is worth noting that no attempt was made to assess the effectiveness or strategic nature of T&D in the other respondent organisations in a detailed way. This was only believed to be possible through a dual focus on employees and HR personnel as employees' perspectives on the effectiveness of T&D design and delivery and the links, if any, between HRD functions is needed to ascertain conclusive evidence.

7.2.1.2 Sub Objective 2: To investigate the importance *individuals* place on learning

Motivational theory suggests that no meaningful learning will occur unless learners see the benefits and relevance of learning opportunities. A number of questions were asked of Company A's employees, which sought to ascertain how welcoming they were to T&D opportunities and how beneficial and relevant they thought T&D to be.

7.2.2 Objective 2: To identify the various approaches taken throughout the T&D cycle and attitudes towards these

The methods used at the various stages in the T&D process were determined at the interview stage. Respondents were probed for information about certain topical methods, the uptake of which is claimed to be large in other countries but is unknown in Ireland. These include competency approaches, e-learning, self-directed learning (SDL) multi-source/ 360 degree appraisal, coaching, mentoring and ROI evaluation. They were asked for their opinions on these methods, how useful they have proven and their future plans in relation to usage. This information is important as the value of many of these techniques is contested in the literature. Opinions about evaluation and ROI in particular are varied and given the growing importance of Web-based instruction it is important to understand whether or not this instructional form is effective and what conditions limit or enhance its effectiveness (Sitzmann and Wisner 2005; 196). Similarly it is important to assess the perceived effectiveness of other techniques so as to inform the literature and provide information to organisations thinking of adopting such methods. Information was also sought at this stage in relation to the extent that T&D is provided internally and externally and their views on this. In order to assess the extent to which individual factors were considered in the design and delivery of T&D, respondents were asked at interview stage whether they accounted for individual differences such as learning styles, age and previous knowledge when designing and delivering T&D. These are discussed under the determinants of successful learning section in Chapter Two where many authors cite their impact on the effectiveness of T&D.

Again the survey was used to examine these issues in relation to Company A.

7.2.3 Objective 3: To determine the barriers and drivers to employee involvement in T&D

Information about drivers and barriers to employee T&D involvement has been sought in other studies. Chisholm et al (2004) note that the least motivated learners tend to be old, low educated and female and O'Connell et al (2003) found that men are more likely to participate in training. However due to the lack of employee focused research this information remains largely unknown in an Irish context. This information is important particularly in light of Chisholm et al's (2004) recent finding that out of 18 European countries learning in a working environment is least popular in Ireland.

HRD managers were asked what they thought the drivers and barriers to employee involvement in T&D were. Employees in Company A were also asked questions in relation to these drivers and barriers so that an employee view could be ascertained and in order to make comparisons between this view and the view of Company A's HRD department.

7.2.4 Objective 4: To examine the effectiveness of T&D and identify areas for improvement

By probing HRD managers throughout the interviews a number of areas emerged within which they felt improvements could be made. Additionally employees in Company A were asked a number of questions through the survey in order to attain their opinions on the effectiveness of a number of levels of the T&D process. They were asked a number of general questions on T&D such as whether T&D meets their needs, the relevance of T&D to their job, whether they had time to absorb what they had learned, whether the level at which T&D was delivered was suitable, whether trainers could hold their attention and whether courses were structured effectively. They were asked how well they felt needs were assessed (needs analysis stage), whether the delivery of T&D suited the way in which they learned (delivery stage) and the extent to which they transferred what they had learned to their job (evaluation of effectiveness stage).

Once objectives are decided upon a researcher must then, if he/she has not already, choose a sector in which to conduct the research. The chosen sector will be discussed below with a justification for this choice. A detailed review of research methodology and its various components follows, before an outline of the process used to research the aforementioned topics.

7.3 Choice of Sector

This research was conducted in the Irish Financial Services sector. This sector is in a constant state of change, with numerous acquisitions and takeovers in recent years (e.g. Irish Life merging with TSB; Company C acquiring First Active and then been acquired by Royal Bank of Scotland, Bank of Scotland Ireland purchasing the majority of ESB's facilities) requiring much restructuring. Additionally there has been with a myriad of new entrants into the market in recent times (Barclays Bank, MBNA, COMPANY E commercial banking, RaboDirect, Tesco financial services, Northern Rock) and significant downsizing and outsourcing of staff and functions (Bank of Ireland). This

sector is heavily regulated, by the Irish Financial Services Regulatory Authority (IFSRA), and the mandatory training requirements of organisations in this sector are extremely high. Circumstances such as these have resulted in personnel changes, regarding recruitment and turnover, and the introduction of new systems, all reasons for increases in training expenditure (IBEC 2000). The financial services sector makes a significant contribution to the Irish economy. According to the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC), this sector employs over 51,000 direct and 25,000 indirect employees, contributing five percent to annual GDP and €3.6billion to the economy. Due to the widely heterogeneous nature of organisations in the financial services sector, it was decided to concentrate on a group of organisations which shared common characteristics. Those with commercial banking arms were chosen as they employ large numbers of staff and as many global financial services organisations have small scale operations in Ireland, and would not have established T&D departments.

Previous T&D research has focused on financial services in other countries (Vaughan and MacVicar 2004; Bond and McCracken 2004; Antonacopoulou 1999; Antonacopoulou 2000) and some have included the Irish financial services sector in their studies (Vaughan and MacVicar 2004). There is, however, a lack of holistic research into T&D with a specific focus on the Irish Financial Services sector. Some studies have focused on Irish organisations but have been too small to isolate definitive sectoral affects (O'Donnell and Garavan 2004). Furthermore the Financial Services sector has been highlighted as one of the leading e-learning adopters (WBT 2004a/b; O'Donnell and Garavan 2004), one focal point of the study.

Numerous studies have investigated e-learning usage in detail in various sectors. Organisations such as the Irish Chambers of Commerce, the CIPD and the ASTD have conducted such research on an Irish, UK and US basis. Numerous academic researchers, as cited in the previous chapters, add to the literature. However the majority of the aforementioned research does not focus on individual sectors, choosing instead to span numerous industries. A need for research into specific sectors exists so that usage levels can be contextualised in relation to the emphasis on T&D in a given sector. Usage levels of certain techniques or the attitudes towards T&D will inevitably depend on the method or level of T&D provision. For instance low e-learning usage might not be significant in a sector with little or no emphasis on T&D, yet if a sector which places a

huge value on T&D does not use e-learning, then this raises questions about the usefulness of this method.

McCole et al (2000) note that the financial services sector, as a growth sector of the future, is knowledge intensive and requires higher skills levels. Additionally it is claimed (Antonacopoulou 2000) that banks have realised the critical importance of decisions regarding human resources especially those in relation to development. However both of these studies (McCole et al 2000; Antonacopoulou 2000) were carried out in the UK and it was deemed important to examine this on an Irish basis, to see what value Irish financial services organisations place on the development of individuals.

7.4 Respondents and the Sampling process

This type of research has been called for by authors of similar studies. Sadler-Smith, Down and Lean (2000), whose research was conducted across three business sectors in the UK, point out a limitation of their research as the fact that it was conducted with managers and not recipients of training. Additional studies into specific areas of this study also focused on management level employees (Antonacopoulou 1999; Vaughan and MacVicar 2004; Rodwell 2004; Donovan, Hannigan and Crowe 2001; Bramley 1999; IBEC 2000) something which this research attempted to resolve, through a focus on employees at various levels. In today's competitive business climate training and development should not be limited to management grade employees and consequently all recipients should be targeted when seeking views on the effectiveness of training and development.

The fact that CIPD and IBEC studies look at the application and adoption of techniques and rarely seek to ascertain employees' perceptions on T&D is also a cause for concern for two main reasons. Firstly the success and adoption of a number of potentially beneficial T&D techniques (self-directed learning; e-learning; multi-source appraisal) depend on employees attitudes and feelings or perceptions towards them. Additionally there is concern over how to accomplish learning in organisations (O'Keefe and Harington 2001). A focus on individuals allows for the investigation of the drivers and barriers to T&D participation, an important issue for organisations who focus on employees as a source of competitiveness and particularly important in the light of self-directed learning, where individuals, as opposed to the organisation, drive T&D usage.

It is claimed that European employees in higher organisational positions, especially men, are offered more opportunities to T&D (Chisholm et al 2004) and are more likely to participate. By focusing on individual employees it was possible to ascertain whether this claim holds true in an Irish context and whether there were significant differences between demographic groups when it comes to such things as organisational commitment, views on the value of T&D and barriers and drivers to T&D participation.

The sampling frame used for this research was the 'Irish Bankers Federation's (IBF) list of member organisations. The companies on this list were screened for suitability, and as a result a number of companies were deemed ineligible due to the fact that they were simply small offices of foreign owned companies and do not conduct extensive T&D. Each of the remaining organisations were contacted, firstly via phone and then with an informative email outlining the details of the study. Unfortunately only five organisations were willing to participate in the study and of these only three companies were willing to participate in the employee survey. However of these three only one company, actively encouraged their staff to complete the survey. However, while the majority of companies refused to participate, five respondent companies were deemed adequate considering the exploratory nature of the research. This is in line with numerous studies, which have used one (van Veldhoven 2005; Vaughan and MacVicar 2004), three (Antonacopoulou 1999, 2000) or four (Bond and McCracken 2004) financial services organisations. A second interview was also conducted in Company A to obtain more detailed information on e-learning usage.

Purposive sampling was used in order to ensure that some of these organisations were small and that the majority were large, as it is suggested that larger organisations have more sophisticated HR departments and place more emphasis on T&D than smaller organisations (Garavan 1994 in Heffernan and Flood 2000; O'Connell et al 2003). For this reason it seems reasonable to assume that larger organisations would in turn be reliant upon implementing effective T&D. Additionally Company size has been identified as a major determinant of the adoption of a number of T&D practices such as ROI (Philips 1998), competency-based approaches (Garavan 1994 in Heffernan and Flood) and e-learning (EC 2003; O'Donnell and Garavan 2004), and this study investigated both areas of usage and attitudes towards such concepts. Furthermore larger organisations often have larger T&D budgets and for this reason there would

presumably be pressure on HRD departments to justify their budget and to prove that their T&D is cost efficient and effective.

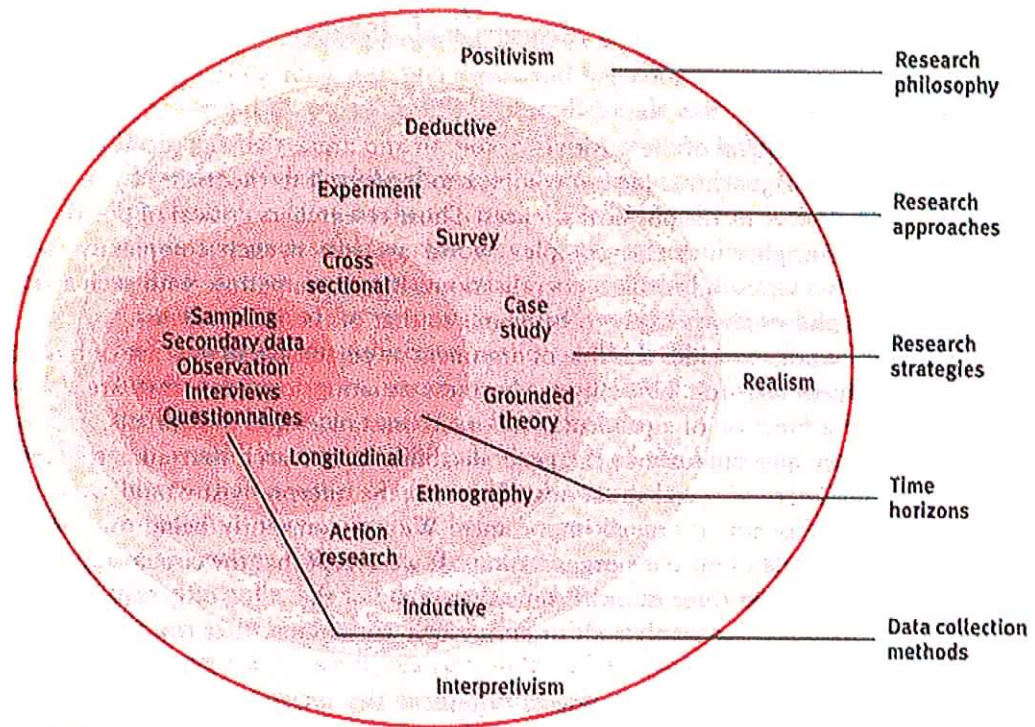
The process through which this research took place is examined below but only after careful attention has been paid to issues of research methodology, which underpin any research activity. These issues centre on paradigmatic choices which in turn depend on the researchers views of the social world (ontology) and knowledge (epistemology).

7.5 The Research process

Before undertaking any research it is important for the researcher to educate themselves around the important components of research such as the various paradigms and the general theory which underpins research (research methodology) and thus decide which tools or techniques are most suitable for their particular research (research methods). The research methodology is a plan of action, which shapes the choice and use of particular methods and links them to desired outcomes (Crotty 1998). The methodology used for any specific piece of research should aim to facilitate the purpose or objectives to be achieved in undertaking the research (Gill and Johnson 1991). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) note that methodology is one of three components which makes up a paradigm, ontology and epistemology being the other two. Crotty (1998), however, positions methodology as flowing from one's theoretical perspective or paradigm. He does note, however, that ontological and epistemological issues emerge together to inform the theoretical perspective/ paradigm. Stemming from the methodology are the methods. In essence methodology refers to the theory of how research should be undertaken (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2003) and methods refer to the techniques and procedures used in the process of data gathering (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001). Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003) describe the research process as an onion, with the layers representing the various stages through which a researcher must proceed in the course of their research. The first layer of the onion, in Figure 7.1, involves choosing a paradigm. This is an important decision and various elements will affect the researcher's choice. There are various extant paradigms and much debate surrounding the use of each. A cognisance of the methodological paradigms debate is vital in order to appreciate why decisions regarding methods can be highly controversial (Amaratunga et al 2002). An individual's choice of paradigm will stem from their ontological and epistemological beliefs, thus it is important to discuss paradigms in relation to these.

Ontology and epistemology will now be discussed with a lead into the various paradigmatic choices, available to researchers.

Figure 7.1: The Research Process Onion



Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003: 83)

7.5.1 Ontology

Ontology is concerned with views of the social world, with the very nature or essence of the social phenomena being investigated (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001). Basically it is concerned with 'what is' (Crotty 1998). There are various different ontological perspectives which believe the world to be made up of some of the components of the following non exhaustive list:

- People, social actors.
- Bodies, subjects, objects.
- Minds, Psyches.
- Rationality, emotion, thought, feeling, memory, senses.
- Attitudes, beliefs, views.

- Self, individuals.
- Cultures, societies, groups, producers, consumers.

(Mason 1996: 11)

A person might, for instance, believe culture to be the most important aspect whilst another individual might see attitudes as the all important element. There are two opposing ontologies, which predominate in the literature; the nominalist/ objectivist ontology and the realist ontology. Someone with a nominalist/ objectivist ontology believes that general terms have no corresponding reality either in or out of the mind being mere words whereas a realist ontology believes that the external world is made up of hard, tangible structures (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001). These competing ontologies are often confused in the literature (Crotty 1998) and will be revisited after a discussion on paradigms. Following on from a review of one's ontological perspective(s) must be an analysis of their epistemological stance.

7.5.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is the theory of knowledge and is concerned with what the individual regards as evidence of things in the social world. It concerns the very basis of knowledge, its nature and forms, and how it can be acquired and communicated to other human beings (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001). Epistemology asks us how we know the world (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). An individual's epistemology should be consistent with their ontological perspective as these emerge together (Crotty 1998). Deep consideration of their epistemological position will allow a researcher outline what research data/ information would generate acceptable knowledge/ evidence about what they see as important in the social world (their ontology). Mason (1996) warns, however, that it is important to distinguish between questions regarding the nature of knowledge and how research is generated. A particularly central issue in this context is the question of whether the social world can and should be studied according to the same principles, procedures and ethos as the natural sciences (Bryman 2001). In other words it is questionable whether it is possible to identify and communicate the nature of knowledge as being hard, real, and capable of being transmitted in a tangible form, or whether knowledge is of a softer, more subjective kind based on experience and insight of a personal nature. It depends on whether the view is taken of knowledge as something which can be acquired or as something to be experienced (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001). The implications of this are thus; if one views knowledge as hard

and objective and tangible then one will take an observer role and methods of the natural science. To see knowledge as subjective and unique, however, imposes on researchers an involvement on their subjects and a rejection of the ways of the natural scientist (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001). These issues are central to the paradigm debate discussed in section 7.5.3. The choice of a research topic should follow on from the researcher's ontological and epistemological considerations (Mason 1996). Furthermore Mason (1996) notes that the topic should tie in with the previous two beliefs and often makes these beliefs obvious. A study of racist attitudes in institutions, she notes, shows an ontology which believes institutions to be as/more important than individuals and an epistemology which believes that the information on attitudes is knowable, that it is possible to generate knowledge/ evidence about them. This research focused on both organisational and employees' views, as the employee viewpoint is as important as that of management. It is possible that Training and Development (T&D) policies could differ from the actual practices and for this reason T&D professionals could not be the sole focal point of this study. Both objective and subjective knowledge were deemed important. Employee involvement was required in order to obtain a widespread objective and managers were needed to get subjective attitudes and opinions.

7.5.3 Paradigms/ Theoretical Perspectives

Paradigms are defined by Kuhn as 'universally recognised scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners' (1962: viii). There have been countless debates, spanning many decades, on the subject of paradigms. It is important that a researcher is aware of the various paradigms before beginning their research and that they are knowledgeable enough in the area to form their own opinion as to which paradigm they believe to be superior. Guba and Lincoln (1994) note that an individual's choice of paradigm represents simply the most informed and sophisticated view that the individual has been able to devise, given the way they have chosen to respond to the three defining questions of ontology, epistemology and methodology. Choice of paradigm is therefore an individual one and cannot be said to be incorrect. Supporters of specific paradigms must argue the use of their preferred choice rather than attempt to prove that it is a superior paradigm (Guba and Lincoln 1994). Hammersley (1995) notes that social scientists have drawn the conclusion from

Kuhn's (1970) work that all knowledge is founded on assumptions which are arbitrary from a rational point of view and thus paradigm choice is a matter of taste or politics.

There are various paradigms discussed in the literature, each one with its own set of beliefs and followers. The two paradigms most often cited in the literature are positivism and interpretivism, the former being the founding scientific research paradigm from which all others developed. Table 7.1 outlines the various names by which they are also known. These, in turn, can be broken down into a number of subsections, as outlined in Table 7.2. However these subsections are often confused in the literature and whilst these might be different strands of interpretivism or positivism they are quite often used as pseudo names for these paradigms. A notable example of this is the interchangeable use of the terms interpretivism and phenomenology. Paradigms are now discussed in detail, before comparing and contrasting each one and outlining the paradigm which was chosen for this research.

Table 7.1: Paradigm labels

Positivism	Interpretivism	Post-modernism
Quantitative	Qualitative	Critical Theory – Neo-Marxism, feminism, materialism, participatory inquiry/ broken down between post-structuralism, and a blending of the two Pragmatism
Objectivism	Subjectivism	
Scientific (paradigm)	Constructivism	
Experimental(ist)	Naturalism	
Traditionalist	Humanism	
Hypothetico deductive	Post-Positivism	
Social constructionism	Inductive	
Empiricist		
Empirical analytical		

(Easterby-Smith et al 1991; Creswell 1994; Guba and Lincoln 1994; Kavanagh 1994; Gill and Johnson 1991; Collis and Hussey 2003).

Table 7.2: Paradigm subsections

Positivism	Interpretivism
Logical positivism	Phenomenology
The received view	Existential phenomenology
Logical empiricism	Ethnography
Modern empiricism	Symbolic Interactionism
Neo-positivism	Hermeneutics
Foundationalism	Constructionism
	Grounded Theory
	Conceptual description
	Thematic analysis
	Ethnomethodology
	Ethnoscience

(Goulding 1999; Hudson and Ozanne 1988; Denscombe 2002)

7.5.3.1 The Positivist paradigm

Auguste Comte (1798-1857) is accredited as making the first self conscious proclamation of the positivist view (Hughes et al 1993; Kvale 1996; Hammersley 1995). Comte's positivism began as a positive deviation reacting against religious and metaphysical speculation and stressing a return to observable data (Kvale 1996). It held a number of axioms or beliefs, as outlined below, which became the basis of the early positivistic view:

- Reality consists in what is available to the senses.
- Philosophy is parasitic on the findings of science.
- The natural and human sciences share common logical and methodological principles.
- There exists a fundamental distinction between fact and value.

Hughes et al (1993; 375)

Comte's view on positivism has been tweaked and re-evaluated on a constant basis over the years. Crotty (1998) notes 12 variations, and positivism is a paradigm which still to this day predominates in science.

Some modern authors list the elements of positivism as follows:

- Views the world as external and objective.
- Observer is independent.
- Focus on facts.
- Looks for causality and fundamental laws.

Easterby, Smith et al (1991:27)

There are many different views on what exactly positivism is in a research setting, some difficult to grasp. The simplest comparison this author has found is provided by Calder, Philips and Tybout who describe it as similar to a lab setting where variables can be controlled (1981). Positivism concerns attempts to predict and control behaviour (Kvale 1996). This view is based on the basic positivistic premise that reality is divisible and fragmentable; therefore allowing precise accurate measurements and observations of the world (Bagozzi 1980, Burrell and Morgan 1979; Morgan and Smirich 1980). Therefore the goal of positivism is to 'attempt to offer explanations of reality which are empirically verifiable' (Cantrell 1993:3), universal truths which hold true for everyone. Positivists are those people who prefer working with an observable social reality to obtain an end product which has law-like generalisations similar to those produced by the social and natural sciences.

However this view has received much criticism over the years. The de-humanising aspect or the extent to which quantification and computation, statistical theory and method are used is criticised and there are fundamental questions as to whether or not people can be studied as objects.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001) cite a number of other author's criticisms which include:

- The fact that the universe is not a mechanism but an organism (William Blake - poet).
- Its' misleading view of the human being (Hampden Turner).
- Its objectivity (Kierkegaard) and imposition of rules of behaviour and thought.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001: 17- 18)

This last point is the subject of much debate and one of the major criticisms in the literature surrounds the notion of objectivity (Hudson and Ozanne 1988). Humans react to the knowledge that they are being studied, which may not be a problem for the natural scientist but which is certainly problematic in social science, and additionally the knowledge produced can feed back into the situation and distort it (Denscombe 2002). Positivists also face problems of induction, as a universal statement cannot be verified by a finite number of observations and therefore universal laws are unachievable (Hudson and Ozanne 1988). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001) include the fact that positivism fails to take into account peoples' ability to interpret their experiences and represent them to themselves and that the findings of positivistic social science are often said to be so banal and trivial that they are of little consequence to those for whom they are intended. Social scientists have recognised the drawbacks of positivism and have challenged the desirability of this approach (Denscombe 2002). In fact widespread dissatisfaction with the axioms of this paradigm gave rise to *post-positivism*, many of the views of which were in direct opposition to those held by positivists.

7.5.3.2 Post Positivism

Post-positivism is a modified (Denscombe 2002) and less arrogant (Crotty 1998) form of positivism. It evolved when followers of positivism, including Werner Heisenberg and Niels Bohr, called into question claims of certitude and objectivity - claims upon which positivism was founded (Crotty 1998). Ironically a lot of the traditional positivists, who favoured the quantitative nature of positivism, shared with post-positivists common beliefs about certain tenets of post-positivism (Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998). Quantitative methodologists, according to the same authors, actually wrote about and provided empirical evidence for some of the tenets of post-positivism in the 1960-1980 time period. Crotty (1998) suggests that positivist science does not represent the everyday world we experience; instead it is an abstraction from the real world which is not well-organised and systematic but uncertain and ambiguous. It is for these reasons that post-positivism emerged. However the opposition to positive sciences by post-positivists is not welcomed by some, as is seen by some as an attack on reason and truth (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). The next stage in the paradigm conflict saw new radical paradigms emerge, as theorists borrowed from post-positivism and added

dimensions of their own to the models (Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998). These paradigms are sometimes known as constructionism, interpretivism or naturalism. According to Denscombe, interpretivism is an 'umbrella term for a range of approaches that reject some of the basic premises of positivism' (2002:18), these are listed in Figure 8.3. Some scholars tried to marry off positivism and post-positivism to co-exist in peace, but Lincoln and Guba (1985) then set up a series of contrasts, which made it clear that the two paradigms could not be compatible (Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998).

7.5.3.3 The Interpretivist paradigm

Interpretivists refute the positivistic claim that only one world exists. They are of the disposition that reality is constructed (Cantrell 1993). So where positivists believe that reality is objective, interpretivists believe that reality is socially constructed, that all human knowledge is developed, transmitted and maintained in social situations (Berger and Luckman 1967). Thus different realities exist because of different individual and group perspectives. Interpretivists conceive that people should not be studied out of context or reduced to variables, as natural science and positivism tend to do. The goal of interpretivism is understanding behaviour (Bryman 2001) not explaining or predicting it as positivists strive to do. The interpretivist paradigm, whilst proposed by some as a superior option to positivism, is not without its critics and these critics have wasted little time in pointing out what they regard as its weaknesses (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001).

One of the major criticisms of the interpretative approach surrounds empathetic identification, where an attempt is made to understand the thoughts of another. This is considered nonsensical by Hudson and Ozanne (1988) due to an individual's inability to experience the thoughts of another and the difficulties in validating this approach. Simply having a mental experience does not guarantee comprehension of that experience. Additionally Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001) state that while it is certain that knowledge of peoples' intentions is necessary to understand their actions, this surely cannot be said to comprise the purpose of a social science. Giddens (1976), as cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001) also argues that no specific person can possess detailed knowledge of anything more than the particular sector of society in which he participates. Therefore, they add, there still remains the task of making into an

explicit and comprehensive body of knowledge that which is only known on a partial way by lay actors themselves. Hudson and Ozanne (1988) also question the ability of researchers to bracket their biases and social/cultural backgrounds noting that cultural boundaries of the group under study may also lack clarity as the boundaries may be amorphous and changing. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001) also cite (Mead 1934) who highlights the fact that supporters of the anti-positivist stance are criticised for having gone too far in abandoning scientific procedures for verification and in-turn for giving up hope of making useful generalisations about behaviour. The degree of uncertainty associated with this approach can be uncomfortable for many researchers as the level of subjectivity involved makes possible the existence of contradictions and internal inconsistencies (Denscombe 2002). This may explain many post-positivists' choice for holding on to some of the tenets of positivism and not abandoning it completely. This notion of holding a dual view of paradigms has grown in recent years with many people now embracing a pragmatic viewpoint.

7.5.3.4 Pragmatism

Researchers should find a paradigm which best suits the nature of the research (Saunders et al 2000). Pragmatism, introduced by Charles Peirce in 1878, rejects the forced choice between positivism and interpretivism instead opting to embrace both points of view (Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998) and in so doing settles metaphysical disputes which otherwise might be interminable (www.marxists.org). Pragmatists believe that the purpose of the research, and not philosophical issues, should dictate the methods used. However positivists and post-positivists argue that what they do is good science, free of individual bias and subjectivity and they see postmodernism, including pragmatism, as an attack on reason and truth (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). This view may explain why, according to Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998), theorists differentiating between positivism (including post-positivism) and constructivism/interpretivism do not usually include pragmatism as a third point of comparison, even though the two paradigms do not cover all paradigmatic possibilities. Pragmatism, along with realism, revived the notion of coexistence, with methodologists such as Datta (1994) citing valid reasons for coexistence. The postmodern era, which pragmatism belongs to, doubts, according to Laurel Richardson (1991), the existence of a single paradigm which has a privileged place aloof from all other paradigms (Denzin and Lincoln 1994).

A major tenet of Howe's (1988) concept of pragmatism is that quantitative and qualitative methods are compatible. This means that researchers can make use of both methods in their research, which is of major benefit. Guba and Lincoln (1994) support this in noting that both qualitative and quantitative methods may be used with any research paradigm. They also note, however, that while mixing methods may be appropriate mixing paradigms may not and to do so would be similar to asking for a compromise between the view that the world is flat and the view that the world is round. Nonetheless the concept of pragmatism has created much dialogue, evidenced by the emergence of a number of texts on mixed methods, discussed in section 8.5.6. This mixing of methods stems from the pragmatist's belief that the research questions, and not the purity of an ontological or epistemological stance, drive the research (Denscombe 2002). This justifies the use of whatever methods are necessary to answer the questions at hand, including mixed methods.

7.5.3.5 The chosen paradigm

It seems from reading the literature that people have chosen one paradigm over another and that positivists and interpretivists have wasted much time and energy discrediting each others beliefs, for far too long. Bauer and Gaskell (2000) consider the epistemological battles between qualitative and quantitative researchers as polemical, verbose and unproductive. Hammersley (1992) also argues that the distinction between qualitative and quantitative is of limited use. The pragmatic approach is quite useful, as it realises the fact that each paradigm has its own uses and that a researcher's choice of paradigm will depend on the task at hand. Although the theory states that positivism and interpretivism are incompatible in terms of their basic beliefs, in practice social researchers pick and choose from the array of methods at their disposal, be they qualitative or quantitative (Denscombe 2002), they are complementary and supportive approaches to the conduct of research (Baker 2001: 390). Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003), for instance, note that business and management research is often a mixture of both positivism and interpretivism and Hammersley (1992) highlights the fact that a large proportion of research reports combine both statistical and verbal analysis. Additionally Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2001) argue that a researcher may focus on specific techniques or alternatively they might mix or vary their approach. This, they state, is up to the individual researcher and will depend on preferences, available resources, constraints and the issues they wish to research.

For these reasons and due to the necessity of using a mixed methods approach, to gain in-depth information from managers (qualitative interviews) and widespread opinions of employees (quantitative), in order to answer the research objectives, a pragmatic approach was taken. The mixed methods approach is discussed in further detail in section 7.5.6.

Figure 7.3: A summary of the Paradigms

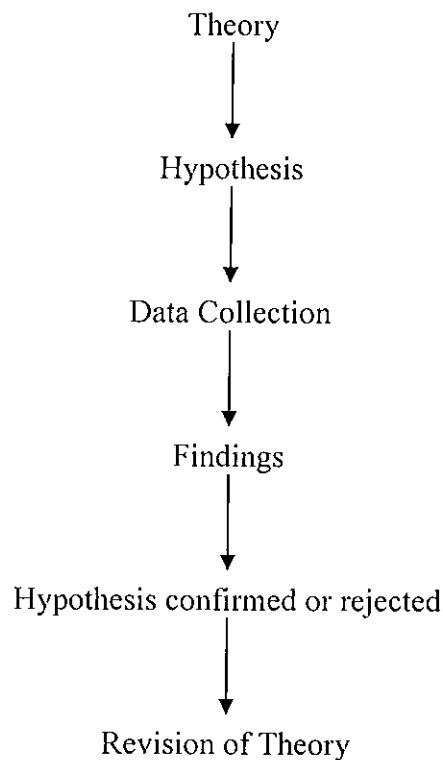
	Axiology	Ontology	Epistemology	Methodology
Positivist	<p>“Explanation” via consumption under general/natural laws and mechanisms</p> <p>Discovery of laws and generalisations which allow prediction and control</p>	<p><u>Realism – One reality?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - objective, tangible - single - fragmentable - divisible - External - Measurable - Convergent 	<p><u>Dualist / objective.</u></p> <p>Investigator and investigated assumed independent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -nomothetic -time free -context-independent -lawlike regularities 	<p><u>Experimental and manipulative;</u></p> <p>Questions and hypotheses stated and subject to empirical testing for verification.</p>
PostPositivist	<p>Explanation, Prediction and Control</p>	<p><u>Critical Realism;</u></p> <p>Reality exists but it’s imperfectly apprehendable due to flawed human intellectual mechanisms.</p>	<p><u>Modified dualist/objectivist Dualism</u></p> <p>abandoned, objectivity remains a regulatory deal. Replicated findings are probably true but subject to falsification</p>	<p><u>Modified experimental/manipulative;</u></p> <p>Natural settings, attempt to determine meanings and purposes of actions, increased use of qualitative techniques.</p>
Interpretivist	<p>“Understanding” and Interpretation social structures and the meanings given to phenomena</p>	<p><u>Relativist–Multiple Realities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - socially constructed - holistic - contextual - local - voluntaristic - proactive - subjective - divergent 	<p><u>Transactional and subjectivist.</u></p> <p>Interactive linking between investigator and investigator (no privileged point of observation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - idiographic - time-bound - context dependent 	<p><u>Hermeneutical and dialectical.</u></p> <p>Social constructions interpreted through hermeneutical techniques and compared and contrasted through dialectical interchange.</p>
Pragmatism	<p>Values play a large role in interpreting results</p>	<p>Accept external reality. Choose explanations that best produce desired outcomes.</p>	<p>Both objective and subjective points of view.</p>	<p>Quantitative and qualitative.</p>

(Hudson and Ozanne 1988; Guba and Lincoln 1994; Cantrell 1993)

7.5.4 Deductive V Inductive research

The next layer of Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill's (2003) research onion addresses the choice between two contrasting approaches to research, namely the deductive and the inductive approaches. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001) trace the roots of deductive reasoning from Aristotle up until the Renaissance, at which time the method became unsound as empirical evidence was replaced as a method of proof by the amount of authorities one could quote. The credo of the deductive viewpoint is that through a sequence of formal steps of logic, a valid conclusion can be deduced from valid premises. It involves the reading of literature in order to identify theories and hypotheses which are then tested through research. Deductive theory represents the commonest view of the nature of the relationship between theory and social research (Bryman 2001).

Figure 7.4: The Process of deduction



Bryman (2001: 9)

The deductive process appears linear but it may not be (Bryman 2001) as researchers' views of theory may change after analysing collected data, due to newly published

theoretical findings or because the relevance of data for a theory may become apparent after the data have been collected (Bryman 2001). Francis Bacon, critical of deductive reasoning, proposed the notion of inductive reasoning. Bacon argued that pre-conceived notions biased the conclusions and instead proposed an objective method which involved studying a number of individual cases, which would then lead to a hypothesis and eventually to a generalization (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001).

The inductive approach suggested involves exploring the data obtained through research and then developing theories from this data. This approach, according to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003), requires the researcher to have an extensive existing knowledge of the area. A common misconception of grounded theory, a prominent inductive approach, is that the researcher is expected to enter the field ignorant of any relevant theory and literature (Goulding 2005). This can never happen according to Glaser and Strauss as 'no sociologist can possibly erase from his mind all the theory he knows before he begins his research' (1967: 253).

Bacon's inductive method was eventually followed by the inductive-deductive approach which combines Aristotelian deduction with Baconian induction (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001). Hammersley (1992) asserts that all research involves both deduction and induction as we move from ideas to data as well as from data to ideas. Even if researchers lack a clear set of hypotheses at the start of their research their ideas cannot help but be influenced by their prior knowledge of the literature and by their repertoires of lay knowledge, including political values, previous research and common sense experience (Brannen 1992).

A deductive approach was the approach taken in this research project as the author did not have an extensive knowledge of the area prior to the commencement of the research and also because it was felt to be the best approach considering that highly inductive and loosely defined studies are considered (Miles and Huberman 1984:27) to be a waste of time when the phenomena being investigated is understood, as in this case of this research. While this research made use of research objectives as opposed to hypotheses, the approach was similar to that outlined in Figure 7.4.

Once the type of research has been decided upon it is then time to decide which approach to take. There are two types of research method which the researcher must either choose between or combine, qualitative and quantitative.

7.5.5 Qualitative V Quantitative Research

Qualitative research is the method of choice for the interpretivist camp, with positivists favouring quantitative methods. This is the level at which paradigms are most commonly distinguished from one another (Brannen 1992). However pragmatists, according to (Tashakkori and Teddlie1998), believe that either qualitative or quantitative methods are useful and depend on the research question. Guba and Lincoln (1994) agree when they note that both methods may be used appropriately with any paradigm.

Bryman (1992) outlines the range of labels which have been become synonymous with the two methods.

Figure 7.5: Qualitative and Quantitative Research

<i>Quantitative</i>	<i>Qualitative</i>	<i>Authors</i>
Rationalistic	Naturalistic	Guba and Lincoln (1982)
Inquiry from the outside	Inquiry from the inside	Evered and Louis (1981)
Functionalist	Interpretive	Burrell and Morgan (1979)
Positivist	Constructivist	Guba (1990a)
	Naturalistic-ethnographic	Hoshmand (1989)

Bryman (1992: 58)

The labelling of qualitative research as a soft science and the accompanying perceptions of quantitative followers that qualitative research lacks precision may not be grounds to dismiss the qualitative approach. Hammersley (1992) highlights the fact that increased precision may not always be of value as the level of precision in a qualitative project is often sufficient and the likely costs of achieving greater precision are not always justified. Additionally Goulding (2005) notes that qualitative research is no longer viewed as being soft or speculative as it was in the past. Kvale (1996) argues that qualitative methods are not merely some new soft technology added to the extant hard

methods, yet they involve alternative conceptions of social knowledge, reality and truth in social science research.

The treatment of data is suggested (Brannen 1992) to be the most important difference between the paradigms. The focus of each method differs also. According to Brannen (1992) the qualitative researcher is said to look through a wide lens, searching for patterns of inter-relationships between a previously unspecified set of concepts, while the quantitative researcher looks through a narrow lens at a specified set of variables. Thus the aim of quantitative research is to infer a characteristic or a relationship between variables to a parent population whilst qualitative research's goal is to investigate concepts and categories in detail without worrying about their incidence and frequency, mining the terrain rather than surveying it as quantitative does (McCracken 1988).

Miles (1979) lists a number of benefits of using qualitative research. Qualitative data are attractive as they are rich, full, earthy, holistic, real, valid, allow for chronological flow, suffer little from retrospective distortion and offer a far more precise way to assess causality than quantitative correlations (Miles 1979:590). Additionally in a consumer society an extensive knowledge of the experiences, meanings, feelings, desires and lifestyles of consumers is essential for the design and marketing of consumer goods (Kvale 1996:71), which surely justifies its usage. Collecting qualitative data, however, can be quite a laborious task as can the write-up, coding, and analysis. Additionally the rules and guidelines are not well formulated in comparison to quantitative methods (Kvale 1996) particularly in relation to methods of analysis (Miles 1979).

The debate between the two might, however, be unnecessary as the utility of qualitative and quantitative methods depends on their ability to answer the research questions asked. Some proponents of qualitative research highlight its use in conjunction with quantitative methods. Hakim (2000) claims that the bias towards quantitative studies is wrong as no single study can be used to make universal assumptions. Guba and Lincoln (1994) also note that quantitative approaches prevent, because of their narrow focus, general applicability of the findings as the results would only be relevant in similar laboratory type settings. They argue that qualitative data can redress this imbalance. This mixed methods viewpoint is now discussed in detail.

7.5.6 Mixed Methods

Social scientists have come to abandon the choice between qualitative and quantitative data instead favouring a combination approach that makes use of the most valuable features of each (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001). Quantitative and qualitative approaches can be combined in various ways including the 'two phase', 'the dominant less dominant' and the 'mixed methodology'. The two phase approach involves a quantitative phase and a qualitative phase where the two paradigms are clearly separate. The dominant less dominant approach involves one dominant method with the other method used for a small part. Lastly a mixed methodology approach involves paradigms possibly being mixed throughout and it uses the advantages of both paradigms. It does however require a detailed knowledge of both paradigms (Creswell 2003).

There is a distinct tradition in the literature on social science research methods that advocates the use of multiple methods (Jick 1979: 1). There are various arguments put forward in favour of a mixed methods approach and there is a strong suggestion in the research community that quantitative and qualitative research is best thought of as complimentary (Amaratunga et al 2002). Mason (1996) opines that neither methodology is a unified body of philosophy; method or technique which they are sometimes seen to be, whilst Brannen (1992) notes that the mixing of methods is acceptable as both are atheoretical, which is not surprising considering the overlap in their respective logics of enquiry. Furthermore Hakim (2000) adds that dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative research may break down due to improved data-analysis packages, which make it easier to analyse all forms of data.

Brannen (1992) outlines three ways in which multiple methods can be employed. The first instance is where each method is used for different research problems and the second is where they are used for the same research problem. Whilst some authors strongly oppose the mixing of research methods (McCracken 1988) others believe that both methods often complement each other in a research project, for various reasons. McCracken (1988), for instance, highlights the complementary nature of the two methods. He notes that it is imperative to remember that qualitative research findings are intended not to represent the world at large yet only to highlight the complicated character, organisation and logic of culture. To see how widely the results pertain to the

rest of the world one would have to utilise quantitative methods. McCracken (1988) advises that one must keep in mind the fact that the two research approaches represent different sets of intellectual habits and frames of mind, when proponents of one approach seek to belittle or judge the other.

Bauer and Gaskell (2000) also prescribe a mixed methodology approach to a single study as it has a number of key benefits and this, note Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998), is not a lone view. Various authors propose a compatibility between the two approaches (Howe 1988) noting that they can form an enduring partnership (Reichardt and Rallis 1994). Conducting preliminary qualitative research for instance will often prepare the researcher for further quantitative research by providing background information on context and subjects, acting as a source of hypotheses and aiding scale construction (Bryman 1992). Insights gained from qualitative interviewing allows for piloting of research questions (Brannen 1992) thus facilitating the improvement of quality in survey design and interpretation (Bauer and Gaskell 2000). This role as a precursor is more often than not the case (Brannen 1992). Used in this way qualitative research will ensure that the questions which the researcher intended to ask are suitable and logical.

The two methods can also be used in the opposite order. Often the issues which emerge from quantitative research, especially exploratory research, can then be investigated in depth by utilising qualitative techniques, perhaps a covert means of interpreting and clarifying quantitative data (Brannen 1992). Used in this way the quantitative research sketches a picture which qualitative research can then colour-in in detail providing the depth and content which a mere sketch does not allow. This analogy also highlights the fact that one method does not replace the other but can complement it very effectively. Bryman (1992), for instance, notes how qualitative research can help to explain the relationship between two variables identified by quantitative methods. Researchers must be careful, however, when integrating different methods and must consider the analytical and logical implications of doing so (Mason 1996). Additionally both quantitative and qualitative methods can be equally important to a study and thus they neither act as a facilitator to the other, yet seek out different information, of equal importance to the study.

Pragmatists argue that a false dichotomy exists between qualitative and quantitative methods and that researchers should make the most efficient use of both paradigms. It is advantageous to a researcher to combine methods to better understand the subject being tested or explored (Creswell 2003). The body of methodology texts which attests to the existence of the two separate paradigms is much larger, however, than the body of literature which guides researchers in conducting multi-method research (Brannen 1992). There are many critics to the mixed methods viewpoint and there is still considerable disagreement over certain fundamental issues such as the possibility of integrating the two approaches (Bryman 1992). Brannen (1992) cites Fielding and Fielding (1986:31) who highlight the naivety of the assumption that a combination of the two methods ensures the validity of data. She also highlights the fact that much of the arguments against the integration of the two approaches stem from the epistemological divide, which underpins many of the distinctions between the two methods.

Bryman (1992) whilst warning of the potential dangers of combination, and whilst stressing that mixed method studies are not always superior, does note that the advantages of integrating quantitative and qualitative research will be so overwhelming that the doctrine and restrictive views of writers who deprecate the virtues and accomplishments of combined research will be gradually eroded. Jick (1979) lists some of the considerations of using such an approach as:

- Replication, which is often considered a necessary step in scientific research, is difficult and often nearly impossible.
- A multi-method approach, like other approaches is of no use with the wrong question.
- Each method should be represented in a significant way and stronger or more appropriate methods must be justified and made explicit.
- A mixed method approach may not be suitable for all research purposes and various constraints (time, costs) may prevent its usage.
- A multi-method approach demands creativity from its user -- ingenuity in collecting data and insightful interpretation of data.

Jick (1979: 610)

A mixed approach was deemed suitable for this study. While the interviews helped in the construction of the survey and there was some overlap, in terms of both methods being used to satisfy certain objectives, the survey also had distinct uses, which were in no way related to the interviews. Employees' views on T&D were sought through the survey, something which was not possible when speaking to HRD managers. This approach is consistent with similar published studies (Vaughan and MacVicar 2003; Colgate 1998; Antonacopoulou 2000). Each of these studies were conducted in the banking/ financial services sector. Antonacopoulou (2000) utilised a mixed methods approach for a similar study into self-directed learning in three UK banks, arguing that the organisation's perspective was enhanced with the employees' perspectives. This view is supported by Jick (1979) who notes the usefulness of mixed method approaches in capturing a more complete and holistic portrayal of the subject matter.

7.5.7 Research Tools

There are numerous options available to both the qualitative and quantitative social science researcher. Quantitative researchers can avail of survey/ questionnaires whilst one to one interviews, group interviews/ focus groups, ethnography and participant observation make up the qualitative armoury. Guba and Lincoln (1981) describe interviewing as the backbone of qualitative research and in the empirical social sciences qualitative interviewing is a widely used methodology for data collection.

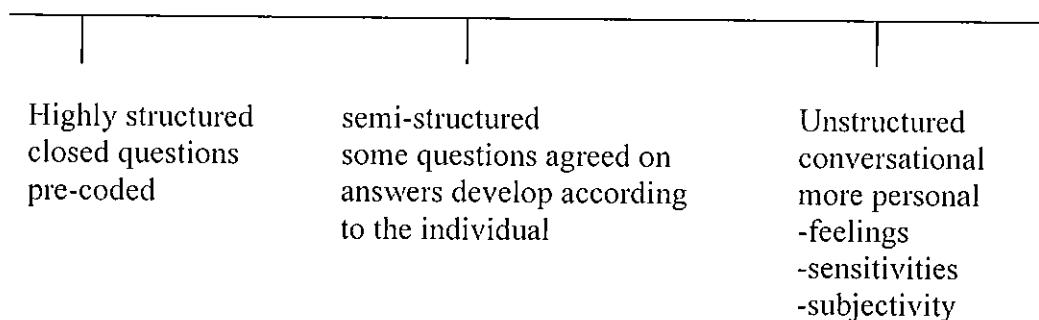
7.5.7.1 Interviews

There are numerous types of interviews. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001), citing various sources, list assorted interview types including standardised interviews, in-depth interviews, ethnographic interviews, elite interviews, life history interviews and focus groups (LeCompte and Preissle 1993); semi structured, and group interviews (Bogdan and Biklen 1992); structured interviews (Lincoln and Guba 1985); exploratory interviews (Oppenheim 1992); informal conversational interviews, interview guide approaches, standardized open-ended interviews and closed quantitative interviews (Patton 1980). These can be placed on a continuum ranging from highly structured to unstructured. However Mason (2002) notes that the term unstructured interviewing,

which is a commonly used phrase, is a misnomer as no research interview can be completely lacking in some kind of structure.

In structured interviews the interviewer formulates questions beforehand based upon a preconceived framework and definition of the problem whereas in unstructured interviews the interviewee provides the content of the interview and consequentially the structure and definition of the problem (Cantrell 1993). Interviews may also be labelled formal or informal. In the formal interview set questions are asked and the answers are recorded on a standardised schedule. With less formal interviews the researcher can modify the order of questions, change the wording, explain the questions or add to them. In the completely informal interview the researcher will have a number of key issues which he/she raises in conversational style (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001).

Figure 7.6: The Interview Continuum



Wisker (2001:167)

It is the depth interview which receives the most attention of all the interview types. Bauer and Gaskell (2000), when speaking of depth interviews, refer to semi structured type with a single respondent, lasting normally one to one and a half hours. The real purpose of qualitative research, they note, is not counting opinions or people but rather exploring the range of opinions, the different representations of the issue. Depth interviews of this sort are a very useful tool as they allow the researcher to probe for further detail, for instance when seeking explanations or when looking to uncover deep rooted feelings.

Semi-structured depth interviews were chosen as the best method of accessing the information required from HRD managers. A theme sheet was used (see appendix b) to ensure that all the key topics were covered but this was not followed rigidly as participants were allowed to speak out of sequence about topics if they so wished. An attempt was made to ask the questions in order, for ease of analysis, but due to the overlapping nature of the questions this did not always happen. This somewhat systematic gathering of data was only one of the advantages of using interviews. Interviews also allowed for the probing of answers and this allowed for the gaining of insights and opinions of T&D practices and methods. Interviews are also useful in that they allow the researcher to gather descriptive data in the subjects own words and to access the unobservable, 'to walk in the head' (Cantrell 1993; 12) so to speak. The choice of the interview method was consistent with the researcher's ontological view that HRD managers' knowledge, views and understandings, interpretation, experience and interactions are meaningful properties of the social reality in which this study was set. Mason (2002) lists other reasons why researchers might use the interview method and many of these were appropriate to this research. One might choose this approach because:

- You have an epistemological position which allows that a legitimate or meaningful way to generate data on these ontological properties is to talk interactively with people, to ask them questions, to listen to them, to gain access to their accounts and articulations, or to analyse their use of language and construction of discourse.
- Your view of the ways in which *social explanations and arguments* can be constructed lays emphasis on depth, nuance, complexity and roundness in data, rather than the kind of broad surveys of surface patterns which, for example, questionnaires might provide.
- You choose this method pragmatically because the data sought may not be available through any other means.
- Qualitative data may add a dimension to your research, perhaps in some sort of triangulation or mixed methods approach.

(Mason 2002: 63-66)

The use of the interview was a pragmatic choice as it was vital in both helping to construct the questionnaire and in satisfying specific research objectives. One of the main reasons for choosing to use interviews was because detailed answers and opinions were sought and probing was necessary. This ability to probe is one of the major advantages of the interview as is the ability to seek insights into current usage and potential future developments. Whilst interviews are useful for a number of reasons and have many advantages, they also have disadvantages and can be problematic. The advantages and disadvantages of this method are outlined in Figure 7.7. All efforts were made to minimise the disadvantages and the interviews ran without any problems.

Figure 7.7: The advantages and disadvantages of the interview

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can move back and forth in time to construct the past, present or to predict the future; • Can access the otherwise inaccessible; • Can probe complex answers; • Can clarify questions; • Can check observational information, reflections and emerging theories with members of the setting; • Can gather information somewhat systematically; • Can gain new insights and perceptions; • Can collect answers to all questions, some of which may be left blank on a questionnaire; or because someone hung up during a phone interview; • Can use props and visual aids; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The interviewer might not fully understand the ‘local language’; • For a variety of reasons the informant may omit important detail – maybe due to uncertainty around anonymity/sensitive information; • An informant may view situations through ‘distorted lenses’ and provide an account which is misleading and not open to checking or verification; • Highly reflective of interviewee’s perceptions and biases; • Can be biased by the demographic of the researcher – age, sex; • Dependant upon the respondent’s ability to recall; • Affected by interviewee’s physical and emotional state; • Affected by reactions to and interaction with the interviewee; • Dependant in large part upon the interviewing skills of the researcher; • Can be more expensive than surveys.

(Cantrell 1993; Becker and Greer 1957; Zikmund 2003: 200-1)

7.5.7.1.1 Selection of respondents and the number of respondents

According to Bauer and Gaskell (2000) there is no one method of selecting respondents for qualitative inquiries. Asking the question; how many interviews are required, they note, invites the response, how long is a piece of string? The reality is 'it depends'. It depends on numerous things such as the nature of the topic, the number of different milieus (natural groups) that are considered relevant and on the resources available. One must remember that more interviews do not necessarily result in better quality or more detailed understanding. The first principle of respondent selection is "more is less" (McCracken 1988) and quality and not quantity must be the essential determinant of numbers (Oppenheim 1996). Bauer and Gaskell (2000) support this belief citing two reasons;

- 1) There are a limited no. of versions of reality, experiences may be shared by people in the same social milieu.
- 2) It is essential to almost live and dream the interviews and to be able to recall each setting and respondent and the key themes of each interview. This would be extremely difficult if one was to conduct a large number of interviews. It is important that the researcher is able to remember the emotional setting and tone of each interview as this type of information is lost in textual record.

The issues around selecting participant organisations were discussed in section 7.4. Five interviews were deemed appropriate to gain an insight into the importance that financial services organisations place on employee learning and to build a picture of the methods currently being used for training and development. This is in line with previous research (section 7.4) and time constraints did not allow for additional interviews. As previously mentioned (section 7.5.7) interviews are not the only option open to researchers. The survey, which is also a commonly used method, is now discussed in detail.

7.5.7.2 The Questionnaire/ Survey

The development of sampling theories in the early part of the twentieth century (Hakim 2000) and the widespread use of surveys in polling opinion on political issues (Baker 2001) have ensured the survey's existence as one of the most widely used methods of data collection in social and business research.

The term questionnaire can take many forms. Oppenheim (1996) uses the term to cover postal questionnaires, group or self-administered questionnaires and structured interview schedules such as telephone interviewing. The questionnaire as a quantitative tool is used primarily for measurement rather than in depth investigation as the interview. According to Baker (2001) its many uses include fact finding, determining attitudes and opinions, understanding and predicting behaviour by asking people, representative of the population, questions. Various techniques are used to gather such information including attitude scales, rating scales, projective techniques and open ended questions. Postal questionnaires are one of the most common types of survey. The advantages and disadvantages of this approach are almost a mirror image of the interview, the advantages of one being the disadvantages of the other and so forth (Oppenheim 1996). The main advantages and disadvantages are outlined in Figure 7.8.

Figure 7.8: The advantages and disadvantages of the Postal survey

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Low cost of data collection in comparison to other methods such as personal interviews or telephone surveys; 2. Low cost of processing; 3. Avoidance of interviewer bias; transparent and accountable; 4. Ability to reach respondents who live at widely dispersed addresses or abroad; 5. Surveys can be repeated; 6. Multi purpose, can be used for almost all social science disciplines and research topics - flexible; 7. Collection of both quantitative and qualitative data; 8. Amount of information that can be 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Generally low response rates, and consequent biases; 2. Unwillingness of respondents to provide the desired data; 3. May be unsuitable for respondents of poor literacy; for the visually handicapped, the very old, people with language difficulties or for young children (under ten); 4. Cannot correct misunderstandings or probe, or offer explanations/help; 5. Potential for response bias where respondents intentionally or unintentionally misrepresent the truth, it may be that they give answers which they think the

<p>collected;</p> <p>9. Conformity to specifications of scientific research – logical, deterministic, general, parsimonious and specific.</p> <p>10. Allow the respondent to complete in their own time, so that they can think about answers.</p>	<p>researcher will want to hear;</p> <p>6. No control over the order in which questions are answered, no check on incomplete responses, incomplete questionnaires or the passing on of questionnaires to others;</p> <p>7. No opportunity to collect ratings or assessments based on observation;</p> <p>8. Less depth and quality than a depth interview – should only be six pages long.</p>
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(Oppenheim 1996: 102; Hakim 2000; Baker 2001: 387; Zikmund 2003: 212-14)

A more recent alternative to traditional survey methods such as telephone, mail or person is the internet/web-based, questionnaire. An internet survey is a self-administered questionnaire which is posted on a website and has many advantages over traditional methods. They are less costly to administer and collect and allow a researcher to reach a larger audience, they are less time consuming to analyse, are more interactive and more aesthetically pleasing and they may allow for more sophisticated lines of questioning (Zikmund 2003). They are seen by many survey researchers as being the ‘wave of the future’ (Zikmund 2003: 221). However they do have some disadvantages. Not everyone has access to the internet and some people have limited computer skills, for these reasons people might have a preference for paper-based surveys. Further difficulties may arise when collecting data as some computers may not be compatible.

Part of the focus of this study was on employees and their perceptions of the T&D process in their organisation. This choice was due to the neglect in the literature of employees as highlighted above. Additionally numerous authors (Wright and Boswell 2002; Boselie et al 2005) highlight the importance, when measuring HR, in distinguishing between HR policies and actual practices, as experienced by employees.

For this reason it was deemed important not only to ask senior HRD personnel what policies and procedures they followed or used but also to ask employees if these procedures actually happened, in their opinion, and to assess their views on various HRD initiatives. This was important as little is known about the actual implementation of HR practices and employees opinions of them (Paauwe and Boselie 2005: 71). According to Truss (2001) it is essential to explore not only practices, which are being implemented, but also how they are enacted by line management and the HR department and how they are received by employees. As perception of HR practices vary between employees, managers and HR professionals (van Veldhoven 2005) a focus on employee grade, manager grade and senior personnel management made it possible to explore these issues. Surveys are increasingly being used for this purpose (van Veldhoven 2005) and inline with their usage in similar studies (Vaughan and MacVicar 2004) they were deemed appropriate for this study. This choice was also influenced by the low overall cost of surveys and as it was an appropriate means of collecting information from employees who work at different locations, including from their home.

A single business unit of one of the respondent organisations was chosen for the employee survey. Company A's 'corporate business' unit has 300 employees (there are 5000 employees in the entire organisation. This focus is in keeping with similar studies (Vaughan and MacVicar 2004 surveyed 58/3000 employees). In selecting survey respondents stratified sampling was used so as to get a mix of employees, supervisors/assistant managers and managers.

Many of the difficulties described in Figure 7.8 were avoided in this study by using an online survey provider in conjunction with the postal questionnaire. This allowed for the design and distribution of the survey via an e-mailed link. It was ascertained whether or not respondents had access to the internet and whether the survey worked within their system. Some organisations do not allow staff to access external websites, only intranets but this was not an issue in this instance. However a paper-based version of the survey was also e-mailed to respondents. These were printed off, completed and returned. In this way anonymity was ensured as it was for employees who were sent the link to the online survey, as these were not traced. The same link was sent to all respondents and the website recognised each person's computer as a separate respondent, which was

suitable as all surveys were completed at work. Non-response error was also minimised by designing the survey in such a way so that if an individual exited from the survey prior to completion simply clicking on the link would bring them back to where they left off. This facility was not communicated to respondents initially as it was felt that they might complete it in one sitting if they did not have knowledge of it. However employees were informed of this feature at a later stage so that those who had not completed the survey fully would realise that they had some of it completed already and that it would not take long to finish.

There are a number of ways of distributing a questionnaire. Oppenheim (1996) discusses self - administered questionnaires where a senior person distributes a questionnaire to staff/ pupils/ patients. The purpose of the inquiry is explained and then the respondent is left alone to complete the questionnaire. This method ensures a high response rate, accurate sampling and a minimum of interviewer bias. A similar approach was deemed most appropriate for this research as senior training managers were interviewed at stage one of the research it was possible to request them to pass on questionnaires randomly to employees (by e-mail) and ask them to complete them as soon as possible. The danger of this approach is the potential introduction of bias by the senior figure distributing the questionnaires to lower level staff (Oppenheim 1996), so in this case the training manager was asked not to try to influence the employees' answers and to ask them to be completely honest. The original e-mail which each manager sent, containing the link was also forwarded to the researcher so as to ensure no attempts were made to bias the research at this stage. The email to respondents also contained a letter explaining the nature and importance of the study and the fact that it had not originated from within their organisation. It was hoped that by stressing the external nature of the study that the response rate would be higher. The importance of not biasing the survey results was stressed to the training manager as were the potential implications of bias to the results. It was in the organisations' interest to provide unbiased data as it provided more accurate results.

7.5.7.2.1 Types of questions

There are two main formats of survey questions, open-ended and closed. Open ended questions allow the respondent considerable freedom to express their thoughts in their own opinion (Chisnall 1992), yet these answers will be constrained by the amount of space allowed for the answer Oppenheim (1996). Closed questions are those for which

the respondent is given a choice of answers, which they must highlight in some way, either orally or visually by marking, circling or underlying. Much of discussion about these two question types can be summarised in their advantages and disadvantages;

Figure 7.9: Open V Closed questions

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Open	Freedom and spontaneity of answers Opportunity to probe Useful for testing hypotheses	Time consuming for respondent Time consuming for interviewer Coding may be slow and unreliable
Closed	Require little time No extended writing Low costs Easy to process Makes comparisons easy Useful for testing hypotheses Less interviewer training	Loss of spontaneity Answer categories biased May be too crude May irritate respondents

(Oppenheim 1996: 115)

Closed questions take the form of dichotomous (yes/no), multiple choice (where a number of alternative answers are provided) or scales. Scales can be used to measure a number of different categories including quality, importance, interest, satisfaction, frequency and truth (Zikmund 2003: 312). A number of numerical type ordinal scales were used in this study, where numbers represented their position, most notably for frequency and satisfaction. Likert scales are a commonly used method which allow the respondent to state the extent to which they agree or disagree with a carefully constructed question and these were also used in this study. The researcher was aware of other tools such as semantic differential scales, constant sum scales, staple scales and graphic rating scales but favoured the use of the previously discussed alternatives coupled with a number of open ended questions to allow for expansion on certain topics. The use of seven point scales was a personal preference of the researcher and it also allowed for the collapsing of variables, which received low response rates, if necessary. The choice surrounding the amount of points to use depends on the usefulness to a specific topic and is a matter of sensitivity at the operational level (Zikmund 2003:325). Additionally some questions required the inclusion of a no-opinion category; this was for those people who had not experienced certain elements,

which were being measured. One of the golden rules of conducting surveys is to keep them as short as possible. The survey used in this study contained 27 questions plus six demographic questions, 36 in total. This amount of questions is small in comparison to some studies such as Hailey et al's (2005), which contained 137 questions. Despite claims that there is little research that actually supports the commonly held view that shorter questionnaires are better (DeVaus 2002) it was decided to keep the survey as short as possible in an attempt to acquire a high response rate. Nine of the 27 questions were open ended. The ability to collect open-ended qualitative answers alongside scales is a huge advantage of the survey over other methods (Figure 7.8). It allowed for respondents in this study to express their views in detail and to expand on closed questions. The survey took an average of twelve minutes to complete, which could be traced through the website and through feedback from HRD managers.

7.5.7.2.2 Piloting/ Pre-testing

An important part of questionnaire design is piloting/ pre-testing. Zikmund refers to these as 'trial runs with a group of respondents for the purpose of detecting problems in a questionnaire's instruction or design (2003:229). Questionnaires do not just appear in a perfect form, they have to be created, adapted and developed after many trial runs (Oppenheim 1996). This may involve re-writing questions several times or changing their sequence or style of composition (Chisnall 1992). It may be possible to borrow or adapt questionnaires from other researchers (Oppenheim 1996), something which this researcher has done, looking to similar studies for suitable scales and general questionnaire design. It must be ensured, however, that borrowed aspects are applicable to the research at hand. For the research at hand questions from a number of sources were used (various CIPD studies; Vaughan and MacVicar 2004) and were applicable as the research was similar in content and focus.

Piloting is often eliminated due to time or cost pressures (Zikmund 2003) but ideally almost every aspect of the survey should be piloted (Oppenheim 1996). This can be time consuming and expensive but ignoring this stage could potentially be very costly to the research. A researcher must be careful not to assume that a questionnaire used in one country will be applicable to another location or even that one will be suitable to use in the same country for the second time (Oppenheim 1996). For this reason the survey used in this study was piloted extensively with academic/research professionals and

with similar respondents to the main enquiry as recommended (Zikmund 2003). The pilot respondents were asked to critically analyse the questionnaire and were useful in suggesting changes in phrasing, structure and sequence in particular. From piloting the questionnaire it was also found that preferences on format varied and that access to external websites might prove problematic. Consequentially it was deemed necessary to include a paper-based questionnaire with the online version.

7.6 Analysis

The analysis stage of any research project is quite important. An ongoing theme in and Bryman and Burgess (1994) is that analysis should not be a separate stage, yet an ongoing process. Additionally Denzin and Lincoln (1998) state that analysis begins at the design stage as data is reduced through the choice of questions and sample. This was certainly the case in this study, as substantial thought was put into the design of the objectives and the questions which underpinned each objective. Each objective consisted of a number of themes which in turn were addressed by asking a number of questions.

The qualitative part of this study, the research interviews, were recorded on a digital voice recorder and transcribed by the researcher. While it is possible to use a third party to transcribe interviews, it was felt that this process would help the researcher to gain a better familiarity with the data – this was certainly the case. Once transcribed the interviews were then read in a number of stages. Firstly, each interview was read in total. Next all of the relevant information on each theme was extracted and outlined under the appropriate objectives. As the interviews were semi-structured, respondents' coverage of a number of themes were not confined to singular points in the interviews. For this reason the interviews were re-read as a whole to ensure that all of the information on each theme was analysed and that none was omitted. The analysis of the qualitative interviews involved constant movement from the original transcripts to the new document (in which the information was structured under the themes and objectives).

In analysing the quantitative part of this study, an online survey provider (www.surveymonkey.com) was used. This survey provider automatically performed some basic descriptive analysis. However it was decided to use SPSS for a number of

reasons. Not all of the surveys were completed online, as some respondents chose to make use of the paper-based option. Also SPSS allowed for more in-depth analysis. While frequencies and cross tabulations were utilised in analysing the findings of the survey other methods were also tested for usefulness. Correlations were run on a number of sections of the survey but did not offer any benefits, above the analysis which was already conducted. Additionally Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was also run for a number of questions, but again it was felt that this only made the analysis more difficult to understand, without adding anything extra. The fact that more advanced statistical techniques did not benefit this study may be due to its highly descriptive nature.

7.7 Limitations of this study

The fact that employees in only one organisation completed the survey, means that the results cannot be extrapolated to other organisations. This is unfortunate as involvement from other organisations would have given a more rounded view of factors including barriers and drivers to employee participation in T&D, how welcoming employees are towards T&D and their attitudes towards certain T&D methods. It might also have afforded some insight into the effectiveness of T&D provision in other companies (aside from Company A) possibly an underlining reason for the unwillingness of many organisations to take part.

As with any survey there is also the chance that the people who completed this study hold more favourable views towards T&D and that those employees who have very negative attitudes towards T&D did not participate. However the diversity of answers, especially through the open ended answers, suggest that people with both positive and negative attitudes towards T&D took part.

This study was limited by time constraints on the part of both the researcher and the respondents. A cut off point for gaining access had to be decided upon and on reflection the analysis of a number of employee surveys would have been very time consuming and would have severely delayed the completion of the study. Financial issues did not arise due to the use of an online survey provider and the fact that the research was conducted first-hand by the researcher.

Issues of uncertainty surrounding the organisations' commitment to T&D and the link between HRD and strategy might have been better addressed through a focus on senior executives, alongside HRD personnel and employees.

Due to the broad and exploratory nature of the study it was not possible to explore many issues in detail. Depth was also restricted due to the fact that the respondent organisations were at the early stages of adopting a number of T&D methods. However while these factors meant that only surface findings were discovered in certain areas, the findings highlight a need for future research on various topics.

7.8 Conclusion

Following on from a review of the literature, discussed in chapters one to six, this chapter began by outlining the necessity of this research project. There are numerous reasons why this research was deemed necessary most notably due to the lacuna of research into learning, training and development (T&D) in an Irish context and specifically the dearth of research into T&D in the financial services sector. Additionally as a heavily regulated, customer focused industry the financial services sector relies heavily on training and development to meet regulatory demands and to maintain an excellent level of customer service. Some respondent organisations were purposively large as the likelihood of adopting many of the modern T&D methods is thought to increase with size. Centring around Saunders et al's (2003) research on this chapter discussed ontology and epistemology with a lead into paradigms and the paradigm debate. A pragmatic, mixed methods approach was deemed appropriate for the research at hand as detailed information on training professionals' views and experiences was sought alongside widespread employees' views, which justified the use of a survey. The survey was distributed via the internet so as to eradicate many of the difficulties associated with traditional postal surveys, such as the lead time and the difficulties and costs involved in distributing and collecting same. The information was collected from the interviews and surveys and the data was analysed by traditional methods under the research objectives and by SPSS. The findings and the analysis of these are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER EIGHT
FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

8.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the information collected, through both the research interviews and the employee survey, and use it to answer the four research objectives introduced in Chapter Seven. The chapter is split into two sections. The first section involves an examination of the information collected through interviews with HR/ HRD managers. This section answers two objectives plus one sub objective. It fulfils Objective one: Sub Objective one 'To investigate the importance placed on T&D by organisations', Objective two 'To identify the various approaches taken throughout the T&D cycle and attitudes towards these' and Objective three 'To determine the barriers and drivers to employee involvement in T&D'.

Section two analyses the employee survey conducted in Company A in relation to both the literature and the findings from the interview with both Company A's HR manager and their HRD manager, in an effort to see if employees' views correlate with those of the HRD department. This section fulfils all four research objectives from an employee perspective.

8.2 Objective 1: To investigate the Importance placed on T&D

8.2.1 Sub Objective 1: Investigate the importance placed on T&D by organisations

In order to fulfil this objective it was deemed appropriate to revisit the HR versus personnel management debate, discussed in Chapter Two. One of the key differentiating factors between a HR approach and a personnel management approach to managing people, as stressed in the literature, is the importance placed on individuals. It is claimed (Guest 1990, Storey 1992) that companies following an HR approach place an emphasis on T&D - particularly development as opposed to mandatory training. Companies practicing HR adopt a long term, proactive, strategic and integrated approach to managing employees, they focus on maximising their assets and line management play a huge role in employee management (Guest 1990). Additionally these companies focus on learning as opposed to offering structured access to courses (Storey 1992).

The attitudes that companies hold towards T&D are important as they are likely to affect decisions regarding investment in T&D and the support that they give to employees both directly and through line management. Additionally investors are now beginning to look at these attitudes (Harrison 1997) and may not be willing to invest in companies that hold negative attitudes. Organisations also have an obligation to facilitate lifelong learning, for the good of both individuals and the economy.

A number of questions were asked at the interview stage in an effort to ascertain which approach respondent organisations took and consequentially the importance they placed on T&D. Specific questions were asked at the interview stage on the existence of a learning culture, the amount of days given to employees for T&D purposes, the learning facilities, the emphasis on development over mandatory training, the attitudes of senior executives towards T&D, and whether the organisation considered employees to be expenses to be minimised or assets to be developed. The answers to these questions are outlined below.

8.2.1.1 Existence of a learning culture

The existence of a learning culture gives some indication as to the importance placed by an organisation on T&D. If senior management deem learning to be vitally important they will seek to instil an ethos of learning amongst all employees.

Company E describe themselves as '*originally being a very traditional bank which bought in expertise*'. However this is changing and the recent recruitment of a large number of people from a non-banking background means that a culture of learning, which at the moment is not present, will have to be instilled in employees. According to both Company B and Company C, employees should be the judge of whether a learning culture exists. Company B feel that if employees were asked the answer would be positive as they are well supported in their T&D both financially and otherwise. However Company C believe that the answer would probably be no. Efforts are being made at present to increase learning across the organisation and embed a learning culture and create a learning organisation. Company A believe that the majority of people in the organisation are bought into learning and are very supportive but there are still pockets that would be cynical about it. Company D answered no to this question immediately. There is the feeling that, whilst employees in the past would have jumped

at T&D opportunities, employees today feel as if their degree is enough and therefore have little desire for further development.

8.2.1.2 *Advantages of T&D*

The importance placed on T&D by an organisation will inevitably stem from how beneficial they feel it is. There are huge differences in parts between Company's attitudes to T&D. Company A, for instance, *'have six month milestones and there is always a milestone for training expert staff, managers are very much aware of the commitment that the organisation has to staff'*. Conversely, at Company D, HRD ranks quite low in importance. The Company's primary concern is on departments which bring in money such as the mortgage department or commercial department and as HRD is viewed as an expense function it receives far less attention. This indicates, to some extent the focus that organisations have on T&D.

The attitudes of HRD personnel were sought at interview stage in an effort to ascertain how beneficial they feel T&D to be. Although it is presumed that these respondents, as they work in this area, will believe in HRD it was interesting to note what they thought were the primary benefits were and if they saw any secondary benefits.

Two benefits which 'immediately spring to mind' for Company E are firstly minimising the risks from a regulatory point of view, mis-selling for example, and secondly retention. It is particularly important that junior staff see the time and money invested in them as this, in their opinion, will determine how long that they keep them for. This is less important at higher levels, they feel, as senior employees have made the move for life. Company B's HRD manager believes that the purpose of T&D is simply to improve performance or to change behaviour, which in turn should lead to improved productivity and increased profits. Company A believe that the primary advantage of T&D is to improve the knowledge and skills of the organisation and to help achieve business objectives. It was only when Company A and Company B were probed that they mentioned periphery benefits such as retention. Similar to Company E's belief, there is a perception at Company A that people are retained when they see the level of investment in them and that it was very obvious from the latest 'Top 50 great places to work' that employees are aware of the investment that the organisation is willing to place in them. Company C and Company D also make the link between investment in

employees and retention. It is believed at Company C that providing developmental opportunities to employees helps to engage and retain them. Company D feel that development in particular produces employees who are custom made for the job and additionally that development sometimes allows staff to see how good they are at something and therefore realise their potential. It is thought that senior management in Company D do not see the advantages of T&D in that they are not shown to them, in terms of improved performance. However if they are provided with a reasonable justification as to why the HRD department are spending money then they are actually very forthcoming. This shows the importance of being able to justify expenditure on T&D and the case for this would surely be augmented if organisations were able to prove the benefits of T&D to senior management, an issue discussed in section 8.3.7.

8.2.1.3 *Emphasis on Development over Training*

The focus of organisational T&D gives an indication as to the importance placed on learning. A focus on mandatory training, with little emphasis on development, may signify an organisation which does not see the benefits of further development and which only seeks to fulfil regulatory responsibilities or to ensure that employees have the basics required for their role. Alternatively an organisation which sees the benefits of further learning is more likely to pay a lot of attention to developmental activities.

As part of the competency system at Company B developmental competencies feature strongly, thus an indication that the organisation is focused on development. Additionally their educational policy focuses on people who want to develop themselves and as such employees undertaking degrees at present, in such disciplines as marketing and psychology, are encouraged and supported.

Development, according to Company E, is something which they are starting to become very focused on and something which their parent Company is very anxious about. The focus at Company E is starting to shift from regulatory training to ongoing development as their parent Company is very keen that they move in the direction of staff development, talent management and succession planning. These approaches are also common to Company C who are seeking to develop individuals into higher grade employees.

It is up to employees at Company A to use their five T&D days in the best way possible. There are compulsory courses which employees must attend but after that they may choose to undertake developmental activities with the remainder of their days. However corporate business also have objectives to train and develop staff to become experts, which goes beyond mandatory training.

At Company D training dominates and they attempt to problem solve rather than develop. This said the organisation will also look at certain categories or ranks of employees who may be underperforming and seek to develop them. This can also happen on an individual basis if employees approach HRD.

Companies seem to be dedicating time to development as well as training and some are seeking to make development more of a focus. However Company B may be more structured than the others, as a result of their competency-based system.

8.2.1.4 Level at which development is aimed

The focus of the literature appears to be predominantly on managerial HRD, and lower ranking employees seem to be ignored to an extent. A 2005 hay group study found that only half of workers below the manager level believed that their Company took a genuine interest in their well being (Hammonds 2005). If the majority of developmental activities are aimed at managerial levels then this focus may be justified. However if this is not the case then academics should surely refocus on employees at all grades. Whilst development seems to feature quite highly on many of the organisations' HRD agendas it is important to ascertain the level at which this development is aimed.

All five of the respondent companies feel that development is available to all levels of employee. While Company B employees at an assistant manager grade or above would be more likely to attend an external developmental course this is not a purposeful thing and is not as a result of a class system. As managers have a lot of responsibility they often need more specialist training. However it very much depends on the job and junior people often have to attend external developmental courses also. In Company A external consultants are provided for employees at all levels and are not restricted to managerial level. This suggests that the focus of the literature may be unjustified,

especially considering the importance of T&D for all levels of employees in order to ensure competitiveness and social inclusion.

8.2.1.5 *HR's link with strategy*

There is uncertainty in the literature as to whether or not HR is involved in strategy formulation. While it is claimed that HR should be linked with strategy (Hammonds 2005) and that HR managers have a primary and not a secondary role in the strategic decision making process (Gasco et al 2004) it is also claimed that more often than not the HR function is left out of strategy formulation and only involved in its implementation (Beaumont 1992, Lundy and Cowling 1996). Two of the major indicators of HR's involvement in strategy formulation is whether the head of HR carries the title of 'director' and whether they attend board level meetings (Foot and Hook 1996).

The HR directors, as they are so called, in Company E, Company B and Company C all sit at the strategic committee level and are involved in formulating business strategy. Three years ago when Company B's strategy was last organised one of the key change programmes was a HR strategy called 'Best people', which was given a significant budget and included alongside other business strategy initiatives. The people agenda in Company A is also deemed to be as equally important as the business agenda with the HR director having a key input into major business decisions.

According to Company C, HRD and strategy are 'intrinsically linked' and the concepts of leadership development; talent management and performance management are coming to the fore of the business' strategy. However at Company D there is not the same importance placed on HRD, in fact it would be 'quite low in importance in the general scheme of things'. The strategic development of Company D has been halted as they are seeking to de-mutualise as soon as possible and for this reason they have not formulated a ten year plan. Falling in between these two is Company A. At present there is not a long term view of HRD in Company A. A short to medium term strategy has only recently been put in place to get the 'initial steps bedded down', with a view to looking at a longer term strategy from mid next 2006. This initial short to medium term approach is necessary; the HRD department feel, in order to ensure that there is

discipline around the processes and procedures and to guarantee consistency among managers in their approaches to T&D.

The importance placed on the people agenda in these organisations and HR's link with strategy; seem to resemble Torrington, Hall and Taylor's (2002) dialogue or holistic model. However these findings come from interviews with HR personnel and if Hammonds is right and 'HR is a lot less involved in strategy than it thinks' (Hammonds 2005) then the HR directors in these organisations may not be as involved as they believe. This issue is of paramount importance as the respect and the importance shown to HR gives a good indication of the importance a Company places on HR related issues, including T&D.

8.2.1.6 Asset V Expense

The respondent's all feel that their organisations treat employees as assets to be developed, a tenet of HR, which differs from the personnel management objective of cost minimisation. The inclusion of the HR director at the 'strategic committee level' ensures that employees are treated as an important asset at Company E. They also support this claim by mentioning the fact that their advertisement campaigns are all centred on employees as opposed to supporting sporting events as some of their major competitors do. Company B claim to 'definitely treat their employees as assets' citing the size of their training budget – which is believed to be a good indicator of this (IBEC 2004), their free education policy for all members of staff and the amount of time invested in T&D activities as evidence of this. Additionally the presence of the Company B's HR director on the executive management board ensures that there is 'none of this knocking on the door cap in hand can we have a few bob for training'. The chief executive of Company B's whole philosophy is around people, which the training manager feels quite lucky about.

Company A also cite a considerable T&D budget as evidence of the treatment of employees as assets to be developed. Company C explain that they are trying to engage their employees and ensure that they will stay with the organisation. One of the major components which engages people, they believe, is development, something which they are actively attempting to provide through a number of talent management, leadership development and succession planning initiatives. Company D, as a small player with a

lot of larger competitors, admits that everything in the Company has to be treated as an expense to be minimised. They do claim, however, that employees are treated as assets in so much as this is possible, but highlight the vital importance to them of ensuring that all activities add value rather than simply putting ‘bums of seats’. This again highlights their personnel management approach to HR issues.

8.2.1.7 *Line manager involvement*

Another prescribed tenet of HRM concerns the involvement of line managers. HRM is believed to differ from personnel management because of the importance of line manager involvement in HR issues (Storey 1992; Guest 1987) such as HRD. The importance of line managers’ specific contribution to HRD has been highlighted by a number of authors (see Philips 1998) and this is an increasingly important issue as responsibility is now shifting to line managers as coaches and trainees (Maybey and Iles 2001).

Organisations were asked whether their line managers played an active role in this regard and it seems that the majority of companies are not entirely satisfied with this level of involvement.

Company B *‘would love to say’* that line managers are as involved as they need to be, but they are not. The feeling amongst the HRD department is that they are seen to be solely responsible for training and development, when in actual fact it is really down to the individual and their line managers. The importance placed on HRD by line managers at Company B is often low. However Company B’s HRD manager feels that line managers, at Company B and in other organisations, simply send people on courses and tick off the relevant boxes with little or no additional involvement.

At Company E the initial discussion about HRD occurs between an individual and their line manager, prior to approaching the HRD department with a request for T&D. This involvement at the needs analysis stage is also common in Company A and additionally line managers in Company A are concerned with the transference of learning back to the workplace. Part of Company E’s new strategy is around devolving a lot of the responsibility for employee development to line managers. This approach has already been implemented in Company C. Following a move from the traditional approach to

personnel management to a more strategic HR approach line managers at Company C are now responsible for a lot of the traditional HR administrative functions. Their responsibilities include holding regular one to one meetings and coaching sessions with employees in order to track their development and give a mid year performance rating. However line managers are still not as involved in certain areas of the business as Company C would like particularly in relation to pre-work and course follow up. These are the same areas which Company B are trying to improve upon.

8.2.1.7.1 Hampering line manager involvement

There are significant barriers to line management's involvement in HRD cited in literature. These include a lack of time, more critical targets to meet, a lack of time and training and a lack of incentives given to them for taking on extra responsibility (Hailey et al 2005). Respondents were asked what they thought was hampering line manager involvement and a number of Hailey et al's (2005) findings were supported.

According to Company B's HRD manager, time pressures - related to the chaotic nature of management - are the number one barrier. These could be only perceived pressures of time, created in their heads, but nonetheless they are present, he adds. Company C's HRD department also recognise time pressures as a barrier. It is felt that a lack of education about the process of learning and learning transfer may also hamper line management involvement at Company B. Additionally Company B line managers may choose not to involve themselves in HRD as they do not see it as their job. This is a problem also cited by Company D where line managers often assume development as training's responsibility and Company E where the perception is that they getting paid to bring in the budget or whatever their role and not the softer side of management. At Company D line managers often fail to adequately convey T&D needs to the HRD department, which is problematic as HRD has to then take responsibility for this. The current attitude amongst line managers at Company E is 'it's a HR problem therefore you have to have the answer'. Company E are trying to move from this 'fix all' service to an advisory role. This problem of responsibility, which was not cited by Hailey et al (2005), appears to be major problem in all of the respondent companies.

There are efforts being made in some organisations to increase the level of line management's involvement. People management development is a strategic competency

for line managers in Company B and one which they are rewarded for, so it is hoped that they will play an active role in their employees' T&D, for their own benefit as well as the organisations. There are also attempts being made at Company B to involve line managers more pre course and particularly post course.

There is a mindset change happening in Company A at present as line managers, as part of a new approach, are now being shown the benefits of HRD and they are also required to meet with HRD personnel on a monthly basis at which time they are supported and also asked for their support on the T&D agenda. Additionally Company E aim to put a HR structure in place which will support line managers as their level of responsibility for T&D increases. These are positive developments and possibly ones that other companies could learn from.

8.2.1.8 *Integrated nature of HR*

The HR literature stresses that integration between HR functions, termed 'internal integration', signifies an organisation which is practising HR as opposed to personnel management. The level of integration amongst respondent organisations HR functions shows which approach they are taking. This is particularly important as if T&D is not linked to promotional opportunities, which is seen as a key motivating factor (Antonacopoulou 2000) then employees might not see the link and might be demotivated to participate. The level of integration between HRD and other departments also gives an indication of the centrality of HRD within the HR department.

Company E are currently restructuring as they are not happy with the level of integration between functions. On a day to day basis the HRD department do not have information on recruitment, with the exception of their graduate programme where HRD personnel maintain a presence at the recruitment stage in order to get an idea of the skill sets coming through and in order to link new recruits with the point of contact in the business. It is intended to bring this level of integration across the board. Additionally the new competency approach, which the Company plans to implement, will allow for concrete links with promotion, as the number of competencies that an individual has can be easily compared with the number required of someone in the position for which they are recruiting.

At Company B there is already a high level of integration between recruitment and selection and HRD. Recruitment and selection personnel help in delivering the orientation programme, which aims to familiarise new recruits with the organisation. Additionally the competency-based system ensures that there are links between the two departments as competency based role descriptions and interviews are used at the recruitment stage and all training programmes are competency based. Nobody from HRD sits in on the interviews as they prefer to sit down with the recruitment and selection team and go through each new hire one by one to make sure that they agree with the recruitment choices. Additionally the fact that competency achievement is rewarded shows a level of integration between HRD and pay and reward.

At Company A efforts have been made recently to integrate HRD more with HR strategy. Additionally the links with promotion have been strengthened in the recent past, with greater efforts now being made to communicate to unsuccessful promotional candidates areas in which they need development, in order for them to become eligible. Furthermore, successful candidates are told why they got the job and the areas in which they are still weak. Company A are also reviewing their whole induction process at present and are researching best practice around the industry in order to put something in place which will better align HR and T&D. As part of HRD's obligation to have an induction programme within three months of people joining, they are notified when people are joining and at what level they are joining at so that support can be arranged from day one. Similarly when people leave, HRD are notified so that they can update the training system.

As Company D are a small organisation and the HR functions are situated next to each other there is a lot of integration. However there is no specific plan under which recruitment personnel approach HRD to inform them of a new hire, and the level that they are at, and as such it is often left until the induction stage for HRD to ascertain this information and fill any T&D gaps that there might be. Their HRD manager believes that if HRD personnel could attend interviews or meet with recruitment and selection then this could save a lot of work and would ensure that HRD were better informed prior to induction training.

These findings are largely positive, as they signify that organisations are attempting to strengthen the link between T&D and promotion. The use of competency-based systems appears to make this linkage much easier.

8.2.1.9 *Facilities*

The provision of facilities for employees to train and develop and to self-direct their own learning is an indication of an organisation's commitment to learning. These facilities might include the provision of courses on a dedicated intranet site, subscriptions to informative websites, or websites which host courses, and/or the existence of a dedicated learning centre, with books, computers and sufficient equipment for learning purposes. Additionally organisations who do not provide adequate facilities may not be encouraging employees to self-develop.

With the exception of Company D all of the respondent companies have an intranet site, through which employees can access courses. Company B also provide courses through a newly launched digital TV station. Company B, Company A and Company C also have impressive group learning centres. Company A are still trying to familiarise employees with this centre and encourage its usage, as they are not happy with the uptake to date. They have introduced employees to the facilities, as is suggested by Lassey (1998). Employees can borrow books from this learning centre and they can also access the Company intranet. Through this intranet employees have access to a number of courses and a pocket book series, which covers different topical issues each month.

Company D, in keeping with its low cost focus; do not have a dedicated space for employees to learn. Employees can, however, request the use of a meeting room if required.

8.2.1.10 *Number of T&D days per employee*

The number of days given for T&D purposes is said to reflect an organisations commitment to T&D (IBEC 2004). Company E employees do not have a set number of days for T&D. However, HRD are committed to facilitating everybody's first priority for T&D and it is left to the manager to ensure that the individual has prioritised properly and that other needs are satisfied on the job if possible. However there is no

upper limit on T&D and employees on the graduate programme receive a lot of T&D, about 20 days in their first year and about 12 in their second year. Similarly Company D do not have a set number of days instead they calculate the average T&D budget per employee and seek to provide it on this basis. However money not spent by certain employees may be made available to others should they so desire. Both Company B and Company A promise to provide all of their employees with at least five T&D days. This is driven directly by Company A's chief executive, again portraying the importance placed on T&D by the organisation. Company A employees might often receive more than five days and ten or twelve days is not uncommon. However Company A do recognise that employees can not be asking to go on every single course although some people are '*training happy*'. The reason for this, aside from obvious time and financial constraints, is that they must be given the time to put what they have learnt from previous courses into practice.

These findings suggest that organisations are supporting employees' development. However the attitude of line managers might be a barrier in this regard as they must be willing to support employees' requests to take time off.

8.2.1.11 *Rewards for self-development*

In chapter four motivational factors for employee involvement in HRD were discussed. Although people are motivated by intrinsic factors such as personal ambitions they are also motivated by extrinsic factors such as better pay and career advancement. The aforementioned findings of positive links between T&D and promotion are positive. Financial rewards are also an important extrinsic motivating factor and it was deemed important to ascertain whether organisations offered any type of financial reward for employees partaking in T&D.

Company B, Company C, Company E and Company A all fund developmental initiatives. This is positive considering Chisholm et al's (2004) finding that employees are more motivated when T&D is paid for. Company A operate an educational loan system through which they provide the funding for employees wishing to partake in developmental courses. This applies mainly to business related or industry related courses and the loan is deducted from the employee's salary on a monthly basis. If

candidates are successful then the fees are refunded back to the employee and if the course is particularly relevant to their job there may be a cash prize also.

While Company A's bonus policy applies more to educational courses Company B have realised that financial rewards are always a motivating factor for individuals and so provide financial rewards to employees for reaching certain levels of competence, which in turn help them to do their job better. Company C also reward individuals for self-development with learning bonuses. These are given to people when they acquire college or industry relevant qualifications, because the organisation benefits from having qualified employees. At Company E pay is not related to development at present and this is something which they are reviewing. Pay is linked with objectives, and T&D might be required to achieve certain objectives, but there is no direct link. Similar to the other organisations they do provide funding for business related courses and a bonus for successfully completing said course. However this only applies to long term training such as CPD and not day to day competencies as in the case of Company B.

8.3 Objective 2: To identify the various approaches taken throughout the T&D cycle and attitudes towards these

The extent to which organisations provide T&D internally and externally was ascertained at the interview stage, as was the approach to T&D taken by each organisation. Companies can choose between a self-directed learning process, a supply-led method, or a combination of the two. Additionally the methods used at each of the various stages in the T&D process were determined under this objective. Respondents were probed for information about certain topical methods, the uptake of which is claimed to be large in other countries but remains virtually unknown in Ireland. These include competency approaches; e-learning; multi-source/ 360 degree appraisal; coaching and mentoring; and ROI evaluation. These issues are important in assessing the current state of T&D in the financial services sector.

8.3.1 Provision of T&D

The provision of T&D differs substantially amongst respondent organisations. Company E outsource almost all of their T&D and as such only have a two person HRD team. However Company B and Company D run about 70 and 90 percent, respectively, of their T&D courses internally. Company C provide all training for their banking

operation and support functions internally and Company D tend to outsource only when they are too busy to run a specific course themselves.

In relation to management development programmes both Company B and Company A outsource some of these but run most of them internally. Company A have a management development section, which runs courses across the group. While outside consultants are only used in Company A for rare training requests, management development is typically outsourced by Company C to a number of preferred suppliers, many of whom are recommended by their parent Company.

There are a number of factors to consider when choosing to outsource or deliver T&D. Company C are very much involved in the development of course content to ensure that it is specific to the Company. Company E, when asked whether they monitored external providers in order to ensure quality, noted that managers sometimes sit in on training. They are aware that other companies who operate a similar model often send a member of the HRD team on training, but feel that this can have repercussions, as employees are likely to question the presence of HR personnel 'they may feel restricted in what they can divulge because when learning and development sits in HR you do have to battle with the fact that, well is this going to end up somewhere in a file'. They feel that if they tell employees that they are there to monitor the performance of the trainer then employees might question the ability of the trainer. The rationale in outsourcing training in the first place was that they would not have to employ a number of trainers and that external provision would allow for the asking of awkward questions by employees. However on courses which have been ran internally there has been an open atmosphere, again posing the question as to which is the best path for organisations to follow, the outsourced model or the internal provision approach. This shows that both approaches have their merits and more in-depth research may suggest the situations in which each approach works best.

8.3.2 Self-directed Learning (SDL)

It is noted in the literature that - due to busy schedules, diverse needs, and so as to better customise T&D - the time has now come for employees to self-direct their own learning. Employees are motivated to learn things which interest them and, although certain courses are mandatory, individuals must be encouraged to recognise the need for self development and to arrange this development themselves. However it is claimed

that despite a noticeable change from didactic type T&D to SDL training and development policies remain focused on organisational needs (Antonacopoulou 1999). It is also claimed that employees may not be enthusiastically seeking this form of T&D and that they rarely make unprompted requests for training (EGFSN 2000). One of the main barriers to SDL may lie with HRD personnel as they often resent the change in focus, which sees a more consultant-like trainer role (Poell, Pluijmen and Van der Krogt 2003). For these reasons it was thought necessary to investigate HRD's opinions on SDL and on the extent to which employees were self-directing their own learning as opposed to organisations attempting to force it upon them.

Employees at Company E direct their own learning and are encouraged to do so. Company E deliberately went for this approach instead of a supply led method as they did not want employees to simply go to a list and say 'oh *I'll have some of that*'. They actually wanted employees to think of the direction that they wanted to go in. There is uncertainty as to the extent to which this strategy has worked and as such it is currently under evaluation.

Company B's HRD department sometimes receive calls from individuals who are looking to develop themselves, although this is not very common. The individual's '*first port of call*' in this instance should be their line manager so this shows that perhaps employees do not feel that they can approach their line manager. This again signifies that line managers may not be encouraging employees to further their development. The extent to which employees contact HRD directly depends on the relationship that individuals have with this department. Company B note that employees are actively encouraged to self direct their own learning and this encouragement is evidenced by the organisation's provisions of up to date learning facilities.

There is going to be a cultural change in Company C whereby self-directed learning is going to come more to the front. This will be helped by the introduction of an online learning architecture, which is currently being developed. Company D, like Company A, have an element of self-directed and some supply-led learning, which they impose. The individuals in Company D who are a little more motivated tend to do quite well in terms of the amount of T&D opportunities they get.

On the whole individuals in the respondent organisations appear to be slow to direct their own learning, which lends support to the report by EGFSN (2000). The notion that the majority of individuals will self-direct and that the organisation will not have to actively encourage them to get involved is unrealistic according an Company's training manager. This contradicts CIPD's (2003b) suggestion that organisations feel that it is possible to move from a situation where employees expect training to one in which they take responsibility for their own learning and development.

Self-directed learning is hugely advantageous for HRD as they do not have to spend their time coaxing people (Company B, Company A). Company A refer back to the learning theory in discussing this, mentioning also that if individuals want or see the need to learn and are willing to invest the time then there is a much better chance of there being transfer back to the workplace. Similar advantages were cited by other respondent organisations that cited the time savings and referred to the fact that SDL increases motivation and relevance and in turn aids transfer. Additionally it saves HRD hassle as they can't cope with demand. It is worth noting that respondent organisations did not suggest any other benefits such as keeping pace with change, simplifying T&D, improving selection and promotion decisions, or cost savings (Temporal 1984). This may be due to the fact that SDL has not taken off yet and they do not see other possible benefits yet. However HRD personnel appear to be in favour of SDL and it is being actively pushed by some organisations. However the take up appears slow and some feel that it cannot completely replace traditional methods and that employees may have to be encouraged more. Smith (2004) notes that to develop self-directed learning skills, specific strategies must be in place, which ensure that the individual has the opportunity to discuss, identify and pursue learning goals that have meaning to both them and their organisation. A further look at how needs analysis takes place (Section 8.3.4) will ascertain whether respondent organisations are facilitating SDL, through a two way TNA process which allows for the communication of individual's needs.

8.3.3 Competency-based approaches

The competency-based approach is widely discussed in the literature. There are two predominant types of competency-based approaches, the UK/output approach and the US/behavioural approach, and these approaches can be used at various levels of the

T&D cycle. Respondents were asked about their use of the competency-based approach and the level(s) at which it is used.

At present the competency approach is used in Company E for selection and promotion. It is not used for performance management practices or at the needs analysis stage. However the competency approach is work in progress at the moment and because it is present in the UK operation (the location of Company E's parent Company) from a regulatory perspective, Company E intend to introduce it. The intention is to introduce a '*training and competency policy procedure*' in the branch network with all the checks and balances in place to minimise the risk of mis-selling. At the moment the HRD department is concentrating on the top level of the bank, chief executives and associate directors, and the competencies that they are expected to have.

Company A have recently piloted a new training matrix which contains competencies and processes knowledge with ten teams across the business. It will now be rolled out to all teams by year end. This matrix contains a coding system ranging from 'no knowledge' (of something which they will need knowledge of) to 'in training', to having 'completed training' (but is yet to be labelled competent), to 'competent', to 'so competent or proficient that they can mentor others'.

Company and Company C appear to be ahead of the other three organisations in their usage of the competency based approach and use it for all levels of staff. Company B' competency system contains three types of competencies, strategic, foundational and developmental competencies and spans the T&D cycle, from needs analysis to evaluating individuals' level of competence.

8.3.3.1 UK V US perspectives

Respondent companies were asked to describe the type of system they were using and the reasons for doing so. This informs the literature, as the competency approach used by specific organisations is seldom identified in the literature.

Company E follow a behavioural competency approach, which is much in line with the US approach. The intention is to move away from saying '*you are my top seller*' to

saying *'you are my top seller because you interact with customers very well'* in other words because of your characteristics. This approach allows the organisation to look at the differences in what people, who achieve at different levels, do. Company C also follow a behavioural approach and state *'that's what competencies are'*. Company B on the other hand view output as the important aspect as outputs and not characteristics can be *'cross pollinated'*. Company B' training manager can understand that people might want to replicate the behaviours and characteristics of top performers yet as he says *'its like asking me to play soccer like Diego Maradona you might write down how he does it and characterise it and turn it in to behaviours, I can't do it. But if you say to me put the ball in the back of the net I'll put the ball in the back of the net'*. How you do this is not important, he adds, once it is not done in such a way as to harm the brand of the organisation. For instance a seller may not be able to replicate the persuasion, charisma and personality of a top seller yet they may be able to work harder and get in front of more people. This is okay, he notes, once they do not annoy a hundred customers who then close their accounts, so there has to be certain parameters.

Company A advise a mixture of the two approaches *'...if you're purely focused on output then I think that your just focused really on the task really that the person has completed and not necessarily on the individual and the other way then your loosing out on the task'*. It is about striking a balance they note.

The competency approach is not without its problems. Company E's training manager says that the competency approach, used for promotional purposes, may be viewed negatively depending on whether someone gets the job or not. Additionally people tend to hide behind the results of the test and managers do not have to take ownership as they can just cite the results. Also she says that *'if an employee disagrees fundamentally with the results of a test then it is very difficult to say no actually that's not how it is on the job so culturally we have a difficulty with it'*. Company B's training manager thinks that sometimes competencies can be over elaborated and confusing and that there is often too many of them. It can be difficult to achieve all of these as he notes *'...I look at my job and its quite simple and then I look at my competency framework and say how many... who is the army of one that's going to do this'*. This suggests that organisations may not be taking the advice in the literature of keeping the number of competencies uncomplicated and to a minimum of 12 (CIPD 2005b).

8.3.4 Training needs analysis (TNA)

HRD managers were asked about the techniques used to ascertain T&D needs, the first stage of the T&D cycle, as discussed in Chapter Three. They were asked about the usage of 360 degree feedback and whether organisational or individual needs take precedence. Information was also sought as to whether there were efforts made to bridge the gap between bottom line needs and individual needs as it is claimed that the satisfaction of individual needs motivates employees.

This year Company E conducted an organisational wide T&D survey, something which Company B do on an annual basis. The fact that these surveys are conducted proves the importance placed on TNA in these organisations. Company A describe the TNA process as ‘vitally important’ citing the fact that ‘without this, people could go on courses which they don’t need’. Additionally Company D and Company A both cite the fact that the TNA process allows you to dig deeper to find the underlying needs. Time management training is a common misnomer amongst employees. Company E and Company A both cite instances whereby employees requested time management training when in fact it wasn’t what they needed. In order to minimise the chance of this happening managers, when they request training, are asked what they see themselves doing differently as a result of that training. Speaking with managers to ascertain needs is particularly important, according to Company E’s training manager, with the outsourcing model that they use. Company D also state that an individual’s participation at this stage gives some indication as to their eagerness to attend T&D initiatives.

Each year individuals undergo performance appraisal reviews with their line managers in Company B, Company A, Company E and Company C. Company E note that there are two purposes of this evaluation; to ascertain what employees need to do their current job and to find out where they see themselves going in the next year. This is fed into a personal development plan (PDP) which contains information on their needs, their priorities, the type of training (off the job or coaching) they need and the expected outcome. This is a two way process according to all of the respondents and in Company A employees were even involved in designing the performance review system, which has been recently overhauled. Additionally in Company E employees, through an annual PDP, outline with their manager what needs they have, what their priorities are, what kind of training they feel is suitable and what outcomes they expect. Company B

in replying to a question relating to employee involvement in needs analysis replied *'well they are absolutely involved the personal development plan is a two way process yeah'*. These findings signifies that organisations are encouraging SDL by ensuring that the individual has the opportunity to discuss, identify and pursue learning goals that have meaning to both them and their organisation (Smith 2004).

Company B's training needs analysis is both proactive and reactive. It is proactive in the sense that they conduct the annual organisational wide TNA survey and it is reactive as employees approach the HRD department with requests after they conduct performance appraisals. The introduction of the performance management system, which is competency based, saved much time and effort as there are pre-defined T&D needs for each employee. Company C take a different approach. Their HR consultants go out to business and diagnose needs. They then come back to the HRD department and ask for a remedy. At present Company C are conducting focus groups with senior executives to find out what the gaps in leadership are and what they can do to address these needs. The training needs analysis stage does not seem to be as well structured at Company D as in other companies. The HRD department wait for requests for T&D and sometimes get people to fill in a questionnaire of a TNA form. Additionally the HRD department might talk to employees to make sure they understand how advanced a course really is, but this is the extent to which TNA is conducted.

8.3.4.1 360 degree appraisal

360 degree appraisal or multi-source appraisal is receiving much attention in the literature to date. The traditional approach to receiving feedback only from line managers has now been replaced in many organisations with a system which incorporates feedback from peers, subordinates, customers and line superiors. The usage of this approach is under researched and so this study sought to evaluate the extent of its usage and the attitudes towards this phenomenon, which potentially account for both current and future usage levels.

Company E have used 360 degree appraisal for their leadership development programme with the top three tiers of management. The sources used were peers, subordinates, managers and external providers and a pre-requisite of attending was that

participants got feedback from at least eight sources. Customers, through mystery shopping, are one source of feedback noted by Company B and Company A. At Company B the annual survey also includes a section for employees to give feedback on their manager but there is no peer evaluation. While Company B's training manager feels that the anonymity of multi-source feedback is advantageous he also cites the subjective nature of the process as problematic '*the biggest disadvantage is people of perception and its hard to know really what the objective gripe is*'. 360 has always been controversial, according to Company B, and a lot of organisations in his opinion are afraid to introduce it as '*you don't want an open forum for people bitching about their boss you know*'. Despite the current talk of 360 in Company B their training manager has serious reservations about it and notes that '*its one of them things that might stay in text books*'.

Following a successful 360 pilot recently Company A are now rolling it out to senior management. They hope to complete this roll out by year end and then it will be rolled out to all levels. (common method of roll out). The system involves up to two line managers, peers and subordinates up to a maximum of 12 sources.

8.3.4.2 Individual V Organisational Needs

As suggested by McIver (2004) there is a certain element of concern amongst respondent companies regarding employees, which they have developed, moving to competing organisations. For this reason Company E impose that there has to be a very key link between HRD and retention. If an individual receives assistance in getting accountancy qualifications, for instance, it is with a view that they move into finance at some point in the future. So while it may be personally driven the organisation has to gain from it and the HRD department try to look at every request in terms of how it will help an employee to meet their objectives and whether it is linked to organisational objectives. This concern is also held by Company D who feel that if they spend a lot of money on developing staff that they will take that development elsewhere. This is particularly worrying for a self-labelled '*cost driven organisation*' which seeks to train and develop employees primarily for the organisation's needs. Company E's focus on development, through their talent management activities, ensures that high potential individuals are given the opportunity to progress their careers in tandem with their

requirements to avoid them going elsewhere. It recognised at Company E that attrition is inevitably going to be close to ten percent so they are attempting to ensure that they are losing the right ten percent. Providing opportunities to high potential individuals keeps them motivated and loyal.

At Company B the business benefit also comes first. There is the realisation that if HRD was becoming less and less strategic then they would be turning into an independent people development business like FÁS. However individual and organisational needs do not have to be mutually exclusive as people are developed along the way and whilst some HRD is specific to the Company others such as management development courses make people more marketable, whilst also adding value to the business. The performance appraisal system is a two way process where an employee has the chance to outline their needs, which are then fed into a PDP alongside the necessary competencies, for their position, and signed off by the manager. Additionally as individual needs are fed into a central system, needs which are common to a number of people can be addressed in a group setting.

At Company A the focus of HRD has traditionally been on individual needs and the Company is now trying to align HRD more to business needs. Now there has to be, to some extent, a business case for T&D requests. This differs quite remarkably from Company C's efforts to focus on individual needs. Recent employee surveys at Company C have a feeling amongst employees that the majority of HRD is organisationally orientated and not necessarily for the purposes of personal development. This has prompted Company C to run a number of work life balance initiatives which employees could attend to receive advice from nutritionists and lifestyle experts. These were pitched to employees as personal development and *'not another organisational ploy to get them to work harder'*. These initiatives were an indication of the fact that, while training aims to affect the bottom line, there is also an acknowledgement of the need for personal development.

At Company D HRD is conducted very much from the Company's perspective with the board indicating the direction in which they want HRD to go. This said there are also individual requests throughout the year which are facilitated where possible. These

findings are quite diverse in that while the majority of companies are attempting to meet organisational needs, some are attempting to focus on individual needs.

8.3.5 *Determinants of successful learning*

Chapter Four examined the various individual factors, which can impact on the effectiveness of T&D. In order to assess the individual factors which are considered, HRD managers were asked whether they accounted for individual differences such as learning styles, age, previous knowledge, and objectives, when designing and delivering T&D. The extent to which these are measured is claimed to have an impact on the effectiveness of T&D.

8.3.5.1 T&D objectives

Respondents were asked the importance that they placed on objectives and the extent to which objectives are clearly communicated to employees. Additionally they were asked whether or not individuals had the opportunity to set their own objectives, the advantages and disadvantages of this and of objectives in general.

Within Company E's outsourced model it is expected that external trainers communicate learning objectives. Often objectives would be set in the pre-course questionnaire and communicated at the beginning of the course. At the beginning of a course employees are also given a chance to set their own objectives. This is in line with Dwyer's (2004) suggestion that adult learners must be responsible for their own learning, that they should be involved in the formation of objectives and that these objectives should be discussed at the beginning of the training session. It is quite important, in Company E's view, that objectives are adequately set '*to ensure that the objectives of the business are being reflected in the business of the course*' and so that employees are aware that the parameters of the course also have to be set, so that employees know what exactly the course will cover and are not be expecting more than that. This is of particular importance when a course can only run for one day and certain areas have to be skipped over. Company B also recognises the importance of objectives and note that '*the learning objectives drive everything*'. They add that they highlight what's in it for the employees and the organisation and that trainers are coached around the setting of these objectives. Objectives are particularly important at Company B as they get T&D recognised by the business people. When they are showed learning

objectives they understand that '*training is not just about ticking off the boxes its about making sure people are comfortable selling the product*'. Individuals at Company B are not as involved in setting objectives as their training manager would like them to be, yet similar to Company A learners at Company B are in fact given the opportunity to add to the pre-defined objectives at the start of the course. Although some people do not do this it can become obvious during the course that they have objectives. Trainers would usually write these down, perhaps not on the list of objectives, and would make sure to revisit them. Company A have a similar exercise at the beginning of courses where they ask participants to outline what they hope to get out of the course, their concerns about attending the course and what they hope to offer. Learners are encouraged to suggest things, which they think should be covered.

Pre-course evaluation sheets are being rolled out to the remainder of courses in Company A that didn't previously have them. They set out the objectives of the course and allow people to pre-evaluate themselves in terms of their knowledge levels prior to the course. Managers at Company A are also expected to have pre course discussions with employees to re-emphasise the reason why they are attending the course. This allows for the reinforcement of needs prior to a course, again further motivating the individual as to why they should partake. The training evaluation committee when interviewing employees ask them about the occurrence of these discussions with their manager as a check up.

Company D hold a similar view of objectives to the others companies, noting that they always tell staff what they are going to do on a course and what they should be able to do at the end of the initiative. These can then be checked at the end of the course to ensure that all objectives are met. In terms of individuals setting their own objectives, Company D note that more experienced people are generally more clued in about their requirements from a course and bring a list of questions that they need answered. Junior employees need to be given more direction in this regard.

There are a number of objections to the usage of objectives stressed in the literature (Buckley and Caple 1992). Company B cite the time needed to 'measure them' as a disadvantage. Measuring the fulfilment of objectives is a concrete method of evaluating whether a T&D initiative has succeeded in its purpose, and the fact that Company B

cites this as a problem suggests that they might not be committed to measuring the effectiveness of T&D. This is a concern as HRD departments, as all HR departments must increasingly become more accountable (Devaney 2005). However this is an evaluation issue and will be covered in more detail under objective two. The other companies do not see any disadvantages in getting people to set their own objectives.

8.3.5.2 Learning styles

It is claimed in the literature that individual learning styles are rarely taken into account (Sims 1990; Honey and Mumford 1982). However these claims were made over ten years ago and it is interesting to investigate whether this is still the case.

Company E do not presently consider individuals' learning styles but they are keen to implement this soon, after receiving information from their parent company. Company B actually include a copy of Honey and Mumford's learning styles inventory in the letter of contract, which they send to new employees. The information from this then goes into the individuals' training staff record but it is not always taken into account when designing and developing courses. Also a lot of courses are already designed and there is little time to redesign and develop courses. The delivery of courses can, however, be personalised in order to accommodate people with differing learning styles. Conversely Company A state that learning styles are very much incorporated into the design of courses so as to ensure a balance of approaches to suit all needs. For example there might be a combination of exercises, discussion groups and course notes. They do not however seek to ascertain individual's learning styles prior to courses. An exception to this would be on their management development courses where they include a number of modules on learning styles in order to give people an understanding of different styles to help them in their team work. Company D do not specifically look at learning styles but do attempt to ensure that they are pitching the course at the right level and that individuals understand the material.

8.3.5.4 Course structure

Organisations have to be realistic in terms of how they structure their courses (Company E). With geographically dispersed employees it is not possible to ask someone to travel for five hours in order to attend a one hour course. For this reason Company E try to avoid one day interventions in favour of two consecutive days, or they may bring

learners in for one day and then, after sending them away with an action point, bring them back a week or a month later. They can then be asked if what they have learnt has worked on the ground before building on that and moving on to the next point. One day courses may not be broken up any further but they can be made as interactive as possible so as to hold participants' attention. Company B are well aware of the need to hold people's attention and have a twenty minute rule whereby there is interaction every twenty minutes. Company B still need to look at whether courses can be split in different ways such as splitting a two day consecutive course into two days in separate weeks or four half days. There seems to be varying opinions amongst learners and managers in this regard. Some favour getting all of the training out of the way as soon as possible whereas some prefer to split it up. For instance a number of Company B employees from a previous course, when asked what format they wanted the course to take, all chose four half days over two full days. However at the feedback stage they said that they should have chosen two days. Company B' training manager claims that a lot of the courses around today are too long, noting '*...I'll stick my neck out and say the majority of them (courses) all around the country could be cut by 50 percent without losing any advantage...*'

On the other hand at Company A attendance on courses tends to be higher when a course is broken into two half days as opposed to one full day, as people can usually commit to half days more easily. It suits part-time workers, of which there are many in Company A, and people like the opportunity to go off and practice things before returning to a course. Company A managers do not seem to object much to employees being absent for two days if required but they would be more supportive of one full day. This she feels is because managers know that the HRD department is working in partnership with them. This is a positive comment as it is an indication that the culture of learning at Company A may be transferring to managers. Company A are trying to adapt courses at present but venue availability and logistics can be problematic as can the cost and the fact that some courses just can not be efficiently split into smaller components.

8.3.5.5 Feedback

Company E line managers do not provide feedback to employees on T&D issues as much as their HRD department would like. It is recommended that managers sit down

with subordinates within a week of course completion but sometimes this does not happen. Company E and the training provider of one current initiative have sat down with the management team and informed them of the employees undertaking and advised managers to sit down on a one-to-one basis with their employees and give them support and space to develop. They then intend to sit back down with the managers to check the employees' progress and to see what has changed and what they have observed. This appears to be a positive direction for Company E to move in but as noted already line manager buy in is vital to the success of T&D and may be a challenge for Company E in this instance.

Company C's external training providers provide them with feedback on individuals who have attended courses. They also supply 'progress reports' for courses involving more senior managers. The purpose of these calibration workshops is to ascertain if an individual needs to attend a development course.

8.3.5.6 Aptitude

Learner aptitude is perhaps the most important determinant of successful learning (Gagné et al 2005). However none of the respondent companies factor in aptitude or previous education. Company B cite time pressures as the reason for this and they, along with Company E cite the difficulties in factoring in previous education due to the level of diversity amongst employee's educational backgrounds. Experience is factored in to some extent. An awareness of experience allows Company E to earmark individuals who might be able to skip the first part of a session because of their attendance on a similar course in the past. When Company B trainers print off a list of course participants this allows them to identify the individuals who they will have to keep interested and/ or whose experience they may be able to draw upon for the benefit of the class. Relating to mature learner's broad array of experiences is something which Dwyer (2004) encourages as it helps to engage the learners, and in Company B's case it also helps to engage other learners. This may be beneficial in showing other learners the relevance of certain material as they may pay more respect to the opinions of more experienced colleagues. In Company A the only reason they look at an individuals experience is to ascertain the courses which they have previously attended in order to ensure that they do not deliver similar material to them.

None of the respondent organisations factor is age, in the design or delivery of T&D. This, combined with the fact that organisations are not factoring in individual learning styles supports Armstrong-Stassen and Templer's (2004) suggestion that there is little effort being made by organisations at present to accommodate older learners, through considering the methods used, the environment and the learning styles, needs and preferences of these workers. The lack of a personalised focus is unsurprising considering the previously mentioned time constraints. However Pickard's (1999) findings that older workers did not require longer or different training from other workers might suggest that a special focus is not warranted for older workers. However if age and aptitude are not being assessed, organisations might also be ignoring the special needs of people with learning disabilities, of which there are many in society and who do need special accommodations.

8.3.6 *Delivery methods used*

The way in which T&D is delivered is changing, with the advent of e-learning and the change in focus away from traditional methods. Respondents were asked about a number of different delivery methods including e-learning, traditional classroom based learning, on the job training, coaching and mentoring.

The dominant form of formal training in Company E, Company B and Company D is instructor led classroom based training, the most popular method in the US (Dolezalek 2004; ASTD 2004). However Company B's HRD manager notes that this is not, in his opinion, where most of the learning takes place – most learning probably takes place on the job. The reason for the high usage levels of classroom based courses may be down to the fact that people can learn more quickly in class, as there are no interruptions, and that they can experiment using exercises with trainers available to them the whole time. It is worthwhile noting that this is perhaps also a major reason for the slow adoption of e-learning, as it does not suit all learning styles and some people need to ask a lot of questions.

On the job training, which is often claimed to be the most popular form of T&D (Tennant, Boonkrong and Roberts 2002; CIPD 2005), appears to be coming to the fore across participant organisations. In Company A, where there is a lot of this type of training, the system has been formalised and is now reported. 'Cold facing' - where

individuals from certain departments go into other departments - is used in order to give employees a wider knowledge of organisational processes. The time spent on this activity is recorded and reported at the end of the year for auditing purposes. This may be going some way in addressing the criticisms, outline in Chapter Four, that this type of T&D is delivered piecemeal, when convenient for the organisation and not measured.

On the job training could be seen to be a step away from full job rotation, which is used extensively in Company A. In fact job rotation is actually part of their HR strategy and the aim is to rotate up to 10% of staff annually. This can happen through promotion or transfer. Although Company E are only really looking at moving towards job rotation at the moment they still have an element of it and have recently swapped associate directors with their counterparts in different functions, as an experiment. This approach links in with the Company's talent management system as it is a method of providing internal job opportunities. Likewise Company D, while not having a set target for job rotation, encourage the practice in certain departments amongst employees in similar roles.

While classroom based training and methods such as on the job training and job rotation are long established and familiar methods, a number of recent approaches to training and development have only started to gain attention in recent years. These include coaching, mentoring and e-learning.

8.3.6.1 Coaching and Mentoring

Due to the interchangeable use of the terms coaching and mentoring, as highlighted in Chapter Five, these techniques are included in the same section for analysis purposes.

The current use of the term 'buddy programme' to describe their current coaching system is proving problematic for Company B at present. Some people do not like the American terminology and the Company is thinking of changing 'buddying' to 'coaching' next year. Under the current system there are a number of trained coaches throughout the organisation and line managers, having all gone through a coaching programme, are also expected to coach and mentor their staff as a result of the 'performance appraisal performance management system'. It is important to note that

Company B use the terms coaching and mentoring interchangeably, something which Company A also do.

Company A's HRD manager, when remarking on Company A's use of these techniques, notes that 'coaching and mentoring is something that we are only starting to step into now'. One of the first uses of coaches was last year where newly appointed consultants (line manager grade) had coaching sessions with their manager to identify the differences between their old and new roles, and the challenges they were facing in their new position. Apart from line managers acting in an informal coaching capacity on a day to day basis, internal and external coaches are also used. There are eight senior managers in group HR who act in a coaching capacity to people across the organisation and a number of managers also have external coaches at present.

Line managers in Company C provide coaching to employees. The Company have not considered using a 'buddy system' yet, where an employee's coach might be different to their line manager, although this has been brought up recently by an employee who came from an organisation with a system such as this in place. This employee noted that it was beneficial to have a coach who was separate to an employee's line manager as sometimes employees do not feel comfortable discussing certain issues with their line manager. Participants on senior courses are sometimes given a mentor by an outside source. It is worthwhile noting that Company C's use of the term 'buddying' refers to coaching by individual other than the coachee's line manager whereas Company B simply refer to coaching as buddying. This demonstrates the confusion in terminology.

Company D's HRD manager notes that Company D do not currently practice mentoring but they do practice coaching on a short term, ad-hoc basis. This shows that they actually differentiate between coaching and mentoring. When asked if they differentiate between the terms Company E's HRD manager replied *'yes and no.....coaching and mentoring all tend to get blended they mean the same thing if you're more senior you're a mentor if you're junior you're a coach'*. This differentiation on the grounds of the provider is similar to Company B' description who use line managers as coaches and whose only mentoring programme consisted of graduates being mentored by senior managers. This view differs from Company A's interpretation that *'coaching is basically where you're sitting down, the person knows the answers themselves so your*

just extracting the information and leading them through a path that will get them to there...where mentoring is just when you know the person needs a bit of direction'. This is the only accurate differentiation given by any of the respondents. If organisations are not accurately differentiating between the two concepts, surely line managers and employees cannot be expected to do so.

8.3.6.2 E-learning

There are many conflicting reports about the use of e-learning and although its usage has increased significantly in recent years it has not grown to expected levels (Marchington and Wilkinson 2005). It was deemed important to explore the usage levels of e-learning amongst respondent organisations and to investigate the drivers and barriers to e-learning adoption.

As mentioned previously (section 8.2.1.9) four of the five respondent companies have e-learning courses available to employees. Company E have roughly 100 courses through an agreement with 'Intuition Web', a UK based Company, who have purchased courses through a London university. The problem with these courses is that they are very much geared towards the English market, which means that Company E are not getting full use of what they are paying for. This may also be problematic relevance is an important driver of T&D participation (CIPD 2004d; Buckley and Caple 1992). Company E are looking towards other providers at present as they intend to move to using distance learning, which will reduce the necessity to take people off the job. The proposed new system will host support material and quickly accessible information, rather than full courses. This is deemed to be particularly useful as employees can log in and get some information on interview tips, for instance, prior to an interview. It is felt that support materials such as these will be extremely useful *'when someone has to cancel a course as they will give employees a snapshot of what they missed'*.

Company B have support materials for courses which are delivered in different ways through their intranet. They have also recently launched a digital TV station, which hosts a number of learning programmes. This is accessible through their intranet. Anti money laundering and other compliance courses are hosted on the digital TV station,

which allows the Company to keep records and send assessments back, which is *'really good'*, they add.

Company A had an anti-money laundering course designed for them by a particular organisation who then sold it to others. They have also built pieces of e-learning themselves such as cd's on the sales process and have an ECDL course, a customer service programme and some soft skills programmes, which don't get much usage. They also have 30-40 pocket management books, one topic per month, which are available through their intranet. They have looked at bringing in an in-house content builder but despite the providers claims that it was as easy as putting together a PowerPoint, this wasn't the case. They feel that *'home made material looks homemade'*, which would put users off. They are still looking into such packages, which would allow them to design their own online training facilities, which could then be downloaded into their learning centre. The cost of one such programme that they are looking into at present is only two thousand euros. The corporate business section of Company A have a target to conduct compute literacy tests in order to ascertain the level at which employees are at, prior to the roll out of computer based courses in 2006. They have set up an online training system on windows XP, which they intend to roll out sometime in 2006. All of this activity signifies that Company A are intelligently attempting to utilise e-learning only when it is suitable and that they are not blindly adopting packages.

Company C, when asked about e-learning, mentioned cd-roms that they offer as pre-course work. This, along with the fact that Company A also do the same, indicates that cd-roms are considered to be e-learning pieces.

Company D are really only testing e-learning at the moment and have manuals and information hosted on there but no courses.

8.3.6.2.1 Benefits of E-Learning

Company A cite the usefulness of e-learning from an evaluation perspective. It may be used to determine baselines prior to courses and then to follow up with a test to check how effective the course has been. However it is not certain how beneficial Company A's limited e-learning usage has been. They, like Company B, do not measure the take up of e-learning. Some courses at Company A are compulsory so the costs of not doing

them are the main issue, not the benefits which may arise from them. The benefits could be calculated however by comparing the costs of courses prior to their introduction in an electronic format with the current costs, but this is not done. The organisation cites a lack of time as the reason that they do not currently do this. They might simply assume that this system is cheaper or they may not be concerned with proving cost efficiencies as if this was forced upon them they would surely have to comply.

8.3.6.2.2 Barriers to E-Learning usage

The primary barrier for Company E is culture. If employees are sitting at their desk completing a tutorial, or searching for something of interest, then it appears to some that they have time on their hands and that they can be given work to do. Company B's HRD manager, although noting that it is too early to say for definite, foresees perceptions as a barrier - that employees might think that if they log in they will be seen to be watching television and their managers will '*kill them*'. Company E overcame this for their graduates by putting them in a separate room. Company B also feels that time will be a major barrier and that line managers will not allow their staff the time to take courses. This again signifies that line managers at Company B are not bought in to T&D.

Company E's HRD manager does not see any technical barriers to e-learning usage as she says '*if an organisation makes the choice to go down that route it would be for the right reasons and then the technology behind it would actually follow*'. This, however, is not the case in Company A who cite band-width limitations and the lack of pc capability as significant barriers. The lines into the Company's bank branches are quite poor and are often taken up with more business critical information. Additionally 90 percent of pcs do not have sound cards. This shows that despite the technological advances in recent years some companies may not be ready for full scale e-learning roll out. Company B's HRD manager, whilst stating that there would be no excuses for technical limitations, notes that accidental or temporary technical problems are always possible.

Company A's HRD manager also mentions space as a barrier, as employees do not want to partake in e-learning activities at their desk where phones are hopping all around them. This is solved to a certain extent with the provision of a staff learning centre. He

also names content as a barrier as it is hard to get professional looking content when you build e-learning pieces yourself they can look amateur and when you buy the content in it can be really expensive. Additionally material that is bought in can go out of date very quickly. Company A describe some material, especially on leadership and influencing as *'just awful'* as it is from an American or English perspective and it does not transfer culturally.

According to Company A's senior training, one of the main reasons that e-learning has not taken off to the extent that it should have *or 'was threatening to a number of years ago'* is because it requires a particular learning style, which does not suit everybody. He adds that despite the fact that designers say that they apply learning theory in the design of e-learning it doesn't come across that way. Also it is a *'nightmare'* at the moment trying to get employees to complete a short money laundering course so employees just wouldn't do a course that was to take weeks or months (Company A). This, however, may be down to the fact that they have no self motivation to complete legislative courses apart from the fact that they are imposed on them. This is relevant to all courses whether online or offline. If individuals are interested in a topic this will motivate them and they will be much more likely to participate fully.

According to Company A's senior training manager any material that a Company intends to transfer to an e-learning format needs to be *'stable in its content'* because *'it's just too bloody costly to go and make this stuff'*. A recent quote for one hour's worth of pretty rich material was twenty five thousand pounds sterling, which as he notes is very expensive unless a large number of employees are going to use it for a long period of time.

8.3.6.2.3 Drivers of E-Learning Usage

According to Company A's senior training manager the key driver of e-learning usage is cost. However it is not just simply a matter of providing something at a lower cost, e-learning courses need to be efficient and there needs to be a measurable proof of learning. This signifies Company A's concerns about proving the effectiveness of T&D. When asked if the fear of other companies gaining potential advantages over them by using e-learning was a driver for them to adopt Company A's senior training manager replied *'I mean we talk to our counterparts in the other organisations anyway and some*

of them talk a good game but when you actually get under the skin of it my sense of it is that they are all... in the exact same position as we are in'. This comment may have some basis as none of the companies seem to be much further along in the adoption process.

8.3.6.2.4 Future e-learning usage

It is claimed that e-learning usage is set to increase significantly in the next few years (CIPD 2005a). When asked if e-learning would be used in the future to cut training time down Company E's HRD manager replied '*yeah considerably, absolutely*'. However according to Company A's senior training manager '*the tide has passed*' on e-learning because of the economies of scale issue and that organisations are now saying that e-learning is grand for certain things but that its usefulness is limited.

He also thinks that there is a huge opportunity around the compliance agenda as Company A do not have sufficient numbers to justify a large scale investment in e-learning. However with a number of courses, such as the Qualified Financial Advisor (QFA) diploma, common to all financial services employees, organisations might consider sharing the cost of material. As Company A's senior training manager asks '*why isn't that done centrally by IFSRA and the costs then shared by ourselves and the other financial services institutions whether they be banks or life companies*'. Somebody did approach Company A with a similar proposal some time ago but they wanted them to pay upfront for all the development costs and then sell it on to others. This suggests that there may be huge commercial opportunities for e-learning providers.

8.3.7 Evaluating the effectiveness of T&D

The interview stage was used to assess whether or not there was a measurable benefit attributable to T&D and if so how was this measured/ proven. Respondents were asked the level of evaluation which existed in the organisation and their feelings about, and usage of a number of different measures, most notably return on investment (ROI).

At Company E the culture is such that if people are not happy with the way a course is going they will voice their opinion, '*a lot of the time too quickly*', before the trainers has had a chance to cover something. Happy sheets are handed out and these are followed up within a week. Additionally feedback tends to '*trickle*' through when employees

discuss a course with their manager. This however is dependant on the relationship that a manager has with the HRD department and whether they felt they could pick up the phone and make a complaint.

When asked about the importance they placed on evaluation the respondents' answers ranged from *'very important'* (Company A) to *'hugely important'* (Company D) and *'extremely important'* (Company B). Company A's HRD manager noted its importance in ascertaining whether a particular course was worth the investment, in demonstrating to participants what they have actually learnt, as this is not always obvious to them, and in reporting the benefits of T&D back to the business. Respondents' claims provide support for other authors in this field (Hashim 2001) who claim that evaluation is not enforced by organisations. The realisation by HRD professionals of the importance of evaluating the effectiveness of T&D perhaps explain why senior management are not currently pressurising HRD departments to carry out rigorous evaluation. As Company B' HRD manager notes *'.....I think you'll probably find and you have found anyway that most training people do care about evaluation because nobody wants to do a job that has no purpose'*. This is mirrored by other respondents who agree that they, and not senior management, are driving evaluation as Company A note *'...no they don't have to because I see it myself'*.

Company D's HRD manager is sure that management would like to see *'what kind of value for their buck they are getting'* but is unsure where it lies on their priority list. Perhaps proof of the effectiveness of T&D would help to secure more investment from senior management. Company A's HRD manager thinks that the Company would like to see a return on investment. At the moment there is a big drive on ensuring quality, value for money and that the learning is transferring itself back to the workplace.

8.3.7.1 Levels of evaluation

Respondent companies were asked the level to which they evaluate training and development. The classifications used when explaining the levels of evaluation to respondents were Kirkpatrick's four levels, with the inclusion of ROI as level five. Although this framework has many critics, proposed alternatives also have their drawbacks. Kirkpatrick's version is well publicised and it was felt that it would be easier to measure and communicate with respondents. Discussions at interview stage

focused predominantly on transfer, business impact and ROI as these areas are quite problematic and evaluation is less frequently conducted at these levels. Business impact and ROI are discussed in the same section due to the level of inactivity at these levels and also due to the fact that ROI cannot be completed without firstly measuring a business impact and also because proving the business impact directly attributable to T&D is often one of the major difficulties in proving an ROI (Kearns 2005).

8.3.7.1.1 Reactions (level one) and Learning (level two)

All of the respondent companies measure employees' reactions (level one evaluation). This is unsurprising given that it is the most common form of evaluation (Bramley 1999; Philips 1998). This is useful according to Company D's training manager as it helps to look at training history when reviewing salaries and because it provides an excuse to speak with new recruits to see how they are settling in. Company B collect information at this level under three headings; was it effective, efficient, and was it enjoyable. Company B' HRD manager feels that is important to have two way feedback as people often feel like they are rating the merits of the learning and development strategies that the Company use when in fact they are evaluating how effective the training was. On this matter he adds that this has to be done in such a way so as to ensure that the participants learn what the course was designed to teach them and that the best practice way is not always the best means of doing this. However this may be a reason for poor reports at this stage under the heading of 'was it enjoyable?'. This supports the view (Hale 2003; Bee and Bee 2003) that the most effective learning may not always be the most enjoyable. Although their external suppliers would supply 'happy sheets' evaluation is an area which Company C have not addressed well themselves until recently. Recently interviews have been conducted with staff who has attended developmental courses at different levels and the employees were asked to give an effectiveness rating and to judge how effective the course was in satisfying learning objectives in particular.

In order to test learning (level two evaluation) all of the respondent organisations claim to use tests when testing harder skills such as compliance. Softer skills are not measured as much. Respondent companies use role plays for this purpose but these role plays are not formally measured and the course progress is often not recorded. Situation drops are also used in Company B in order to test participants' comprehension of theory.

Company A use pre-initiative and post-initiative (after one month) questionnaires, on which an employee shows their level of agreement with a number of statements on their ability. Managers are also involved at this stage.

8.3.7.1.2 Transfer (Level three)

Neither level one nor level two measure if employees use what they have learned on the job and the effects of this usage of their performance. Due to their importance the remainder of this section will focus on these issues. Transfer of learning back to the workplace is an important issue, especially in the financial services sector as recent research (Antonacopoulou 1999) found that a significant proportion financial services managers experienced difficulties applying what they had learnt in training, to the job. Company C, as part of the aforementioned employee interviews, actually asked senior respondents if they brought the learning back to their daily work and what could support them in doing so. Transfer is something that Company E's HRD manager feels that she will have to start looking at as this is not done presently. There is a plan to measure this in relation to customer service levels but for the most part transfer is probably done quite subjectively, in that an employee's manager would comment on a change in their figures - but this is not done formally.

Company B use '*learning transfer cards*'. These are pieces of paper with details of the course written on them which are sent to an individual's line manager prior to a course. Then these are reviewed during the course and there are three transfer time outs whereby the content of the course is reviewed and turned into measurable actions that can be used in the workplace. Encouraging employees to think about early on like this is encouraged in the literature (Knox 1988). This shows the importance that Company B place on transfer and of re-enforcing the relevance of a course to employees as Company B' HRD manager notes '*...if I'm saying to you I don't know why I'm here, all throughout the programme, then you really should send me back to work for my own sake*'. In terms of measuring transfer, following a long debate as to whether a qualitative or quantitative measure would be best, a compromise was reached. Under the proposed system HRD emphasise to the line manager what they should expect of an employee after they have returned from a course in quantitative terms and then the employee is also phoned and asked whether they are transferring. This process proved beneficial as employees really appreciated the follow up from HRD and HRD really felt like they

were making a contribution. Unfortunately however the process has not been maintained. Company B blame this on time constraints but maintain that this is just an excuse and is self critical when he notes '*..but then again if we're not standing up for doing things right then who is going to do them*'.

Company A interview twenty five percent of course attendees six weeks after the end of a course. This informal interview with someone from the '*training evaluation committee*' who is not a member of the HRD department allows employees to speak openly about the course. The use of the training evaluation committee in this way also combats some of the disadvantages of delivering courses in-house, the very disadvantages that Company E tried to get away from in choosing an outsourcing model. This follow up is only a recent development and has been only been implemented on courses since the beginning of the year. Company A also speak to line managers to see if employees have transferred what they have learned back to the workplace.

Company C have considered doing a mini 360 with trainees' subordinates, and their manager to see if they have noticed a difference in the individual's behaviour or an improvement in their performance, but this has not been done to date.

When asked what they thought the barriers to transfer were the respondents all emphasised the lack of line manager support. Company E and Company A both noted specifically that not enough managers had a conversation with employees when they returned from courses. This again shows the importance that line managers play in T&D and the negative affects they can have.

8.3.7.1.3 Business Impact (Level four) and ROI (Level five)

When asked about the impact of T&D, on the bottom line and measuring an ROI, the respondents, for the most part, appeared cynical. Company E's HRD manager noted that it is only ever going to be a casual link that can be made between training and the bottom line, a major difficulty cited in the literature of conducting level four evaluation. Sales and customer service are two of the easiest roles through which to measure the result of training (Company B). However mystery shopping reports and levels of complaints, which can be easily measured before and after training to see the difference,

are subjective and therefore potentially misleading (Company B). The organisational benefit of some courses can be measured as if someone who takes a leadership course changes for the better as a result of that course then six months later his staff survey result should go up as staff should be happy that they are being led and managed more efficiently. What Company B's HRD fails to mention is that this survey is based on employees' views of their managers and therefore is also subjective. He does mention, however, that *'why you never get a direct link is because you come back to always always people's interpretations, people's subjective interpretations you just can't get away'*.

Company B are not in the return on investment (ROI) stage at present and as such are not attempting to measure percentage increases in performance as a result of T&D. He adds that people as assets can not be quantified in accounting terms and that he is not sure whether a return on investment is possible. In order to calculate an ROI a team of people with the sole purpose of calculating an ROI would be required. Unfortunately time is not given, or made, for such a calculation (Company B).

Company A would like to use customer service indices to account for any direct results of T&D. However for Company A or other respondent organisations to do this they would require a monetary value on customer service indices. If an organisation could agree such a value then training departments would be able to prove an ROI much more readily. Company A's HRD manager seems to be slightly confused about ROI as she says that she plans on comparing pre-course and post- course evaluation sheets as part of an ROI calculation. She admits the complexity involved in calculating ROI stating that *'you nearly need to be an Einstein to figure it out'*. Yet she says that she intends to keep it as simple as possible because HR people in general tend to get lost in figures. This description given by Company A would not be an ROI calculation, however, as it is not numerical but qualitative.

Company E's HRD manager laughed at the very mention of ROI noting that she didn't even want to think about it. She notes that it is so difficult to actually say tangibly what an organisation has gained from a particular investment in T&D. The benefits are more likely to be measured in terms of retention because there is a causal effect there. This

again would be okay if respondent organisations knew the extent of the effect of T&D provision on retention levels.

Regardless of whether companies are attempting to prove monetary returns or an ROI on T&D yet, it is felt by a number of the respondents that this will soon be a necessity and as Company B' HRD manager notes, *'when the organisation tightens its belt the eye will move to T&D'*. Two defining quotes summed up the respondents attitudes towards ROI. Company B' HRD manager said *'... I always ask the question if this can be done then why isn't it being done yet - is it because it can't be done?'*. This highlights the doubt amongst practitioners about the possibility of calculating an ROI. Company C, in noting, *'at the moment it may be just a bit too far down on the priority list'* show that whether they have a fear of figures or whether they think that ROI just cannot be calculated, coupled with the fact that senior figures are not pushing for such a calculation, HRD personnel have no immediate intentions of calculating an ROI and are not likely, to unless they really have to.

The fact that senior executives are not pushing for an ROI calculation could be down to a number of things. They might believe in T&D and might not need further proof of its beneficial nature, or they too might be either afraid of figures or unconvinced as to the possibility of calculating an ROI.

8.4 Objective 3: Determine the drivers and barriers to employee involvement in T&D

Due to the number of potential drivers and barriers to employee involvement in T&D, it was felt necessary to ask HRD personnel what they thought encouraged or restricted employee involvement. This was important to ascertain as these should be of particular interest to organisations, as they seek to promote self-directed learning in an effort to keep up with T&D demands, reduce costs and provide much more flexible and tailored learning to individuals. If organisations are not aware of the factors which drive and prevent employee participation in T&D they might not be taking the correct steps to creating a culture of Self Directed Learning (SDL).

8.4.1 Drivers of T&D participation

There are a number of drivers to training and development outlined in the literature. These include both intrinsic and extrinsic barriers and a mixture of both.

Company E think that the drivers for their employees' involvement in HRD are mostly around promotional opportunities whereas Company B feels that individuals get involved due to a realisation that they need to. This need might be realised by the individual when they change jobs or as a result of a performance appraisal review, when they score very poorly on a certain aspect of their job and realise that they have to address this. A lot of the T&D in Company A also happens because individuals, as a result of staff rotation and changing career paths, see that they need it. Company D lists a number of things which drive individuals in this regard. The fact that jobs are becoming less and less secure drives people to develop themselves as does peer pressure and the need to look good, compulsory training which they need to attend in order to remain working in the industry and genuine interest in self development. It is interesting that only one respondent noted the fact that employees might be interested in self-development. Perhaps if more organisations realised this then they might make more efforts to provide courses which interested individuals and met their personal needs.

It was also asked at this stage whether the organisation did anything in particular to motivate employees to learn. At Company E employees are automatically motivated due to the amount of promotional opportunities and the fact that career paths are visible to people. Company B often stress the opportunity to meet people from other departments when sending out an invitation to a course, this can be a big driver especially considering that they might get to meet up with people that you might have started with and not seen much since. The fulfilment of social needs in this way is suggested by Gagné (1977) as a key motivating factor. Periphery benefits can be quite significant, as Company B's training manager noted '*...the benefits of the communication sometimes between two departments who are at cross purposes or so it seems that can be brilliant and that can far outweigh actually learning benefits*'.

Succession planning and related job rotation is often a motivating factor for employees to learn according to Company A and whilst this, as previously mentioned, is sometimes

coincidental it is also a purposeful move on the part of the Company. As the Company will only consider people for positions, who demonstrate the necessary skills and competencies, this is a motivating factor for employees to self develop *'the theme too to actually support people who've actually invested the time to develop themselves'*.

8.4.2 Barriers to T&D participation

The barriers to T&D from Company E's point of view are time and job pressures. This is particularly evident at the moment as the Company is restructuring and as teams are short people and have to do more than their usual workload. They believe, as Company C do that in a lot of instances people would like to attend T&D initiatives but simply don't have the time. These beliefs are echoed by Company B who also add that people sometimes do not know what they want, they want to develop but do not know how. Additionally they sometimes have low growth needs, with family issues taking precedence over individual development, or they do not know what is available to them. Company B also believe that staff are sometimes prevented from attending T&D courses because their manager does not believe in training and will not allow them to attend. This last point, despite the fact that Company B actually reward managers for aiding in the development of their subordinates, suggests that some managers simply do not see the value of T&D or that they are not aware that they are rewarded for developmental competencies. However they may be aware of this reward system but simply do not consider it worth their while to take on extra work.

The barriers cited by Company D are quite different. They feel that employees might be afraid that the Company will not pay for the training, which is important as training is often very expensive. Additionally some employees might feel that they have reached their ceiling in a particular organisation and thus there is no point developing themselves further in that organisation. It is quite surprising that Company D is the only organisation to mention commute times as a significant barrier. However this is a barrier to development which occurs outside of the nine to five working day, as a lot of staff are quite happy to attend initiatives during working hours. If employees have partners and/or children time can be a huge issue especially as their commutes tend to be longer as people move out of the city to the suburbs in search of reasonably priced housing.

Organisations are attempting to overcome these barriers to an extent. Company A cite work levels as a barrier and additionally they think that sometimes employees might not feel that the initiative was worth the investment in time. In order to overcome the time barrier and following on from suggestions made by employees to the 'training and evaluation committee', Company A now seek to deliver courses in one day as employees feel that they can attend a one day course a lot easier than they can a two day course. Company D's HRD department have been working very hard in recent years to encourage employees to ask for training as the worst that they can be told is no and as mentioned Company B reward managers for helping subordinates to develop. This overcomes the lack of managerial support barrier.

8.5 Conclusions on Section One

8.5.1 Objective one findings

The information collected in relation to objective one suggests that respondent organisations, for the most part, hold very positive attitudes towards T&D. The one exception would be Company D, where HRD ranks quite low in importance. This is due to the fact that the organisation prefers to focus on activities which will bring in revenue. Although Company D's training manger is quite passionate about the need for T&D, she appears to be limited primarily by financial constraints. Also the lack of a learning culture within the group signifies again that employees are not actively encouraged to develop themselves. The lack of e-learning interventions or a learning centre and the reactive nature of T&D in this organisation, also signify the fact that the organisation does not place much importance on T&D.

The other organisations provide financial support to employees and provide successful learners with learning bonuses. They also allow for time off and motivated employees can avail of extra time off if requested. The facilities offered to employees, in the form of learning centres and access to online courses, appear to be quite adequate and allow for SDL. The focus of respondent companies' T&D provisions is, for the most part, on development as well as training and is not confined to managerial level. A number of respondent companies are actively trying to improve the T&D process by encouraging further line management involvement in T&D and by strengthening links to promotion, a key motivating factor to employee involvement.

With the exception of Company D, who are a self-proclaimed cost-driven organisation, all of the companies take, or are attempting to take, a strategic approach to T&D, as classified by Cunningham (1999). This is evidenced by their board level commitment and the links between T&D and organisational needs. If compared to Torrington Hall and Taylor's (2002) classifications they might lie somewhere between the dialogue and holistic models. It is difficult to state the involvement for certain without more in-depth research.

However despite the many positive findings in relation to T&D in many of these companies, there are also problems. Learning cultures are by no means present in all of the respondent organisations, although they recognise that efforts have to be made to improve this. Line manager involvement is also a notable problem. Without the encouragement of line managers at all stages of the T&D process, employees will not feel that they are being supported in their development. If respondent organisations are serious about T&D and place a large importance on staff development then they must provide an environment which is conducive to learning. This includes improving line managers' performance in the T&D process, which appears to be quite less than adequate at present.

8.5.2 Objective 2 findings

Company B and Company C appear to be ahead of the other three organisations in their usage of the competency based approach and use it for all levels of staff. Others are piloting it at present, beginning with senior staff. There are varying approaches taken to the competency approach, behavioural, output or a combination of the two. Although it has been useful to Company B in tying together many levels of the T&D process it may also be problematic particularly when used for promotional purposes. Organisations may also be over-elaborating and over complicating the competency process.

All of the respondents recognise the importance of the TNA process. While four of the five organisations use annual performance appraisals - which are two way and give employees the chance to express their needs - at Company D the board primarily decides the direction in which they want HRD to go. Two of the respondent organisations conduct organisational wide T&D surveys in addition to their annual

appraisals and Company B even give space for employees to give feedback on their manager. Company E have used 360 on a limited basis and Company A are rolling it out to senior management at present. However there are many doubts about the usefulness of 360.

The majority of organisations are concerned about employees, once developed, moving to other organisations and as such try to ensure that there are key links between individual and organisational needs. However some believe that individual and organisational needs do not have to mutually exclusive. While Company A are now trying to align HRD more to business needs, Company C are trying to prove to employees their dedication to individual development.

When compared to that which is prescribed in the literature respondent organisations could be doing a lot more in relation to some determinants of successful learning. While all of the respondents see the importance of objectives to individuals, to senior management and for evaluation purposes, individuals could be more involved in setting these objectives. This involvement increases relevance and gives learners a sense of control. The fact that employees in many of the respondent organisations get the chance to set objectives is a positive finding.

Only one organisation measures individuals' learning styles but they do not use this information in the design of courses. Time is a barrier in doing so, as is the fact that many courses are already designed. Respondents stress the importance of considering learning styles when delivering courses and these findings suggest that as the various types of learning styles are already known then it may be more important to deliver courses in such a way that accommodates these styles. If courses are being delivered differently for this reason then they are essentially being re-designed.

There is much uncertainty as to the best way in which to structure courses. Efforts are being made to reformat courses and in some cases to shorten courses. It is believed that many existing courses across the respondent organisations may be unnecessarily long.

Organisations could improve their HRD in relation to feedback and considering the aptitude of learners. Respondents admit that feedback is not as good as it should be. There are intentions to improve this but this is completely dependant on line managers.

Time pressures and diversity are commonly cited reasons for respondents not considering people's backgrounds when delivering courses to them. This may not be a major issue and respondents do attempt to use individuals experience in a way which will benefit the group and keep learners engaged. However there are potential problems due to the fact that individuals' aptitude and age are not considered. This means that older workers, who may have special needs, and people with learning disabilities might not be getting the accommodations which they require. However the fact that recent findings (Pickard 1999) suggest that older workers do not require longer or different training from other workers, means that this issue needs to be investigated further.

In relation to delivery, classroom learning dominates, with on the job training increasingly in popularity. Some organisations are even trying to formalise their on the job training provisions, to accurately measure its occurrence. Although it is encouraged by respondents job rotation is not used to a large extent in the majority of organisations, although Company A aim to rotate ten percent of employees per annum.

There appears to be much confusion amongst respondent organisations when it comes to coaching and mentoring. The terms are used interchangeably and the label 'buddying' is used for different purposes by respondents. While the use of coaching is starting to increase in respondent organisations - through line managers, internal and external coaches, or a combination of all three – mentoring is not frequently used. The fact that only one organisation accurately described the difference between coaching and mentoring, as prescribed in the literature, is worrying and suggests that this confusion may be rife among organisations' employees.

E-learning does not appear to have taken off in respondent organisations to a large extent, and it is used only for testing knowledge or providing information to employees. There are myriad factors cited by respondents which may be limiting its usage. These include issues relating to cost, content, technology, culture, time, space and learning styles. The fact that some organisations cite technical limitations, despite the advances in technology in recent years suggests that organisations may not be ready for intense e-learning adoption. Additionally organisations appear unsure as to the uptake of e-learning and do not appear to be measuring this.

Level one evaluation dominates in respondent organisations. Tests are used to measure knowledge and while role plays are used to test skills there appears to be no formal system around this in any of the organisations. Company B are the only organisation that appear to be making significant efforts to measure the transfer of T&D. However these efforts have not been maintained. Concerns about the casual links between T&D and the bottom line and worries about subjectivity may explain why organisations are not measuring the affect of T&D on performance. They are not measuring an ROI either and some have no intentions of doing so. Concerns over the complexity of ROI calculations and the time required appear to be the main barriers. While none of the respondents are being pressurised to prove the effectiveness of T&D at present they claim that this is because there is no need for downward pressure as they want to prove effectiveness themselves. However many feel that the pressure may soon be on them to do this.

8.5.3 Objective three findings

The majority of respondents believe that employees partake in T&D because their role demands them to or in order to advance their career. Company D cite additional factors such as a lack of job security, peer pressure and is the only respondent organisation to include interest in self-development as a driver. This is interesting as if organisations only believe that employees are driven by other factors they will not attempt to stress the benefits of self-development when promoting T&D initiatives. It is worth noting that incentivisation was not mentioned by any of the respondents despite the fact that the majority of them pay learning bonuses to employees. This may be because they only see this as a secondary motivating factor.

A lack of time is the number one barrier cited by respondents. While most respondents focused on job pressures others indicated time pressures relating to lengthy commute times. Family pressures were also noted by a number of respondents. However some of the respondents' comments are an issue of concern. Company B cited uncertainty around the availability of T&D as a barrier to participation and issues relating to employees not actually knowing what they want. It is up to line managers or coaches to help employees decide what they want and all employees should know where to find information on course availability, if they don't then HRD should surely address this

issue. Also a lack of support from line managers, cited as a barrier by Company B, highlights once again that organisations are aware of the problems relating to line managers. These issues need to be resolved.

The next section analyses the results of the employee survey conducted in Company A in relation to the responses given by HR personnel and in relation to the literature.

SECTION TWO

Analysis of employee survey and interviews in Company A

8.6 Introduction to Section Two

The first section of this chapter consisted of an analysis of interviews conducted with HRD managers in five respondent organisations. The remainder of the chapter outlines the findings from the employee survey in Company A. The employee questionnaire was completed by 64 employees in total, 28 males and 36 females. 33 respondents were classified as 'other employees' with 10 'assistant manager' grade and 21 'manager/senior manager' grade respondents. Further information on respondents is provided in appendix f. The findings from this survey are compared and contrasted to the responses given by Company A's HR/ HRD managers in order to see if employees' and HRD management's views correlate. Additionally these findings are compared to both theory and the findings of previous studies, as discussed in the five literature review chapters.

This section is again structured around the four research objectives as introduced in Chapter Seven, with the exception that this section, unlike the first part of this chapter, uses employees' views to answer the objectives and as such can fulfil the second sub-objective of the first research objective 'To investigate the importance placed on T&D by employees'.

8.7 Objective 1: To investigate the Importance placed on T&D

8.7.1 Sub objective one: To investigate the importance organisations place on T&D

A number of questions were asked in the employee survey in an effort to ascertain whether the organisation's actions signify that they place a high level of importance on learning. Employees views were analysed in light of the comments made at the interview stage by the Company's HRD manager.

The findings of the employee survey are very encouraging for Company A. In reference to the facilities, which the organisation provides for the purposes of learning, Company A's HRD manager states that the organisation is still trying to familiarise employees with the group learning centre and encourage its usage - they are not happy with the uptake to date. The majority of employees (82.9 percent) feel

that the learning facilities are adequate, a good sign for the organisation, and support for their claims of supporting learning. Additionally the organisation's claims that a learning culture exists is supported by the fact that 89.1 percent of respondents feel that learning is encouraged in their organisation and 84.4 percent of employees feel that there are adequate opportunities for personal development and growth. These findings are added support for the view that this organisation values and supports learning.

It is suggested that many organisations make the majority of T&D available to their more senior employees (Hay group 2005 as cited in Hammonds 2005) so this was deemed important to investigate. This suggestion is supported by the findings of this study. 90.5 percent of managers/senior managers agree with the statement 'My organisation's T&D provisions meet my learning needs', whereas this level of agreement reduces to 80 percent for assistant managers/supervisors and 69.8 percent for employees. Additionally, in stating their agreement with the statement 'learning is encouraged in my organisation', 100 percent of managers/senior managers agree, a figure which reduces to 90 percent for assistant managers and 81.8 percent for employees. Finally in response to the statement 'there are adequate opportunities for personal development and growth in my organisation' 95.3 percent of managers/senior managers agree, 90 percent of assistant managers agree, yet only 75.8 percent of employees agree. This is conclusive evidence that senior employees feel that they are afforded more opportunities and encouragement to learn than other employees. These findings support those of previous studies (Hammonds 2005).

It is also suggested that high ranking males (as opposed to females) are more likely to be offered opportunities to learn (Chisholm et al 2004). However the findings of this study do not support this. In fact 70 percent of female managers or senior managers strongly agree that learning is encouraged in their organisation, whereas only 27.3 percent of male managers/senior managers strongly with this statement. Additionally 40 percent of female manager/senior managers strongly agree that there are adequate opportunities for personal development and growth in their organisation, in comparison to 18.2 percent of males in the same position.

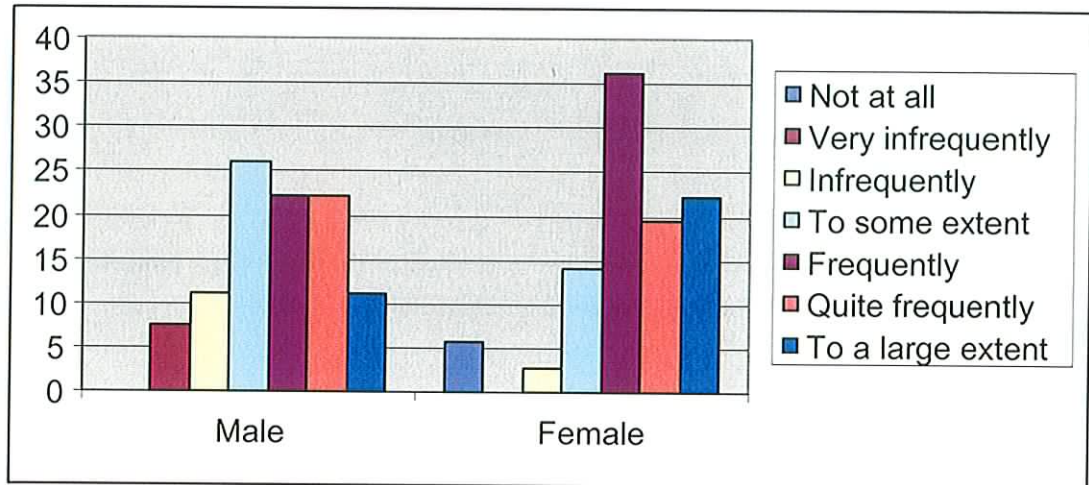
8.7.2 Sub objective two: To investigate the importance placed on T&D by employees

Aside from the importance placed on learning by the organisation it is also useful to ascertain the importance of learning to individuals. Regardless of the extent to which an organisation encourages learning, individuals need to welcome, and preferably seek out, learning opportunities. As discussed in Chapter Four, individuals must be self motivated as they cannot be forced to learn. The findings are positive in this regard as 93.6 percent of respondents welcome T&D opportunities which they believe will help them to learn and 87.3 percent of employees actively seek out T&D.

Previous studies have found that the least motivated learners tend to be old and female (Chisholm et al 2004) and that younger male employees are more likely to receive training (O'Connell et al 2003). The findings of this study do not support these previous studies as female respondents to this study appear to be more welcoming of T&D. 94.5 percent and 92.5 percent of female and male employees respectively agree with the comment 'I welcome T&D which will help me learn', which shows no significant difference. However 88.9 percent of female employees agree or strongly agree with this comment, whereas only 77.7 percent of males agree or strongly agree with this comment. Additionally 3.7 percent of males strongly disagree with this statement whereas no females strongly disagree. The percentage of females who actively seek out T&D opportunities is also higher than that of males (91.6 percent and 81.4 percent respectively) (Figure 8.1) and the percentage who seek it out to a large extent is also higher (22.2 percent and 11.1 percent respectively). This contradicts previous findings that females are less motivated to participate in T&D.

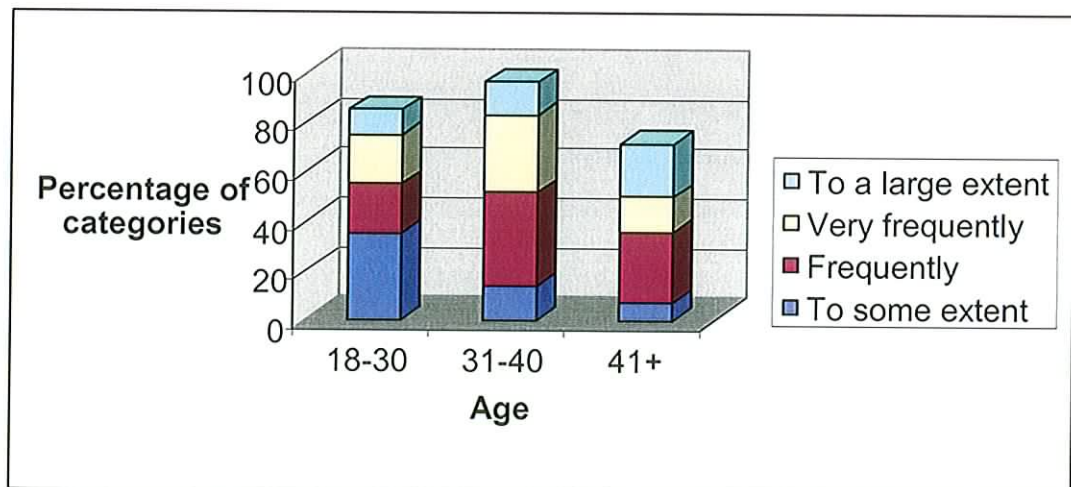
In relation to external learning activities 33.3 percent of males are currently involved in learning activities external to their organisation, yet only 17.6 percent of females are involved in external learning activities. This suggests that females might only be more welcoming to workplace activities or it may signify that females are not interested in external courses as they participate in so many courses in work already.

Figure 8.1: Extent to which respondents actively seek out T&D by Gender



In relation to age, the highest percentage of respondents who strongly agree with the statement 'I welcome T&D which will help me learn' are in the 31-40 age category (60 percent). Although 100 percent of 18-30 year olds agree with this statement, 90 percent of 31-40 year olds and 92.9 percent of 41+ year olds also agree. It can not be interpreted from these findings that older people are less welcoming towards T&D. In fact the percentage of people who actively seek out T&D to a large extent is higher in the 41+ age bracket than in the other two (21.4 percent as opposed to 13.8 percent for 31-40 year olds and 10 percent for 18-30 year olds) (Figure 8.2) and although 85 percent of 18-30 year olds actively seek out T&D, as opposed to only 71.4 percent of 41-50 year olds, 41 percent of the former group state that they seek it out to some extent, the weakest of the positive answers.

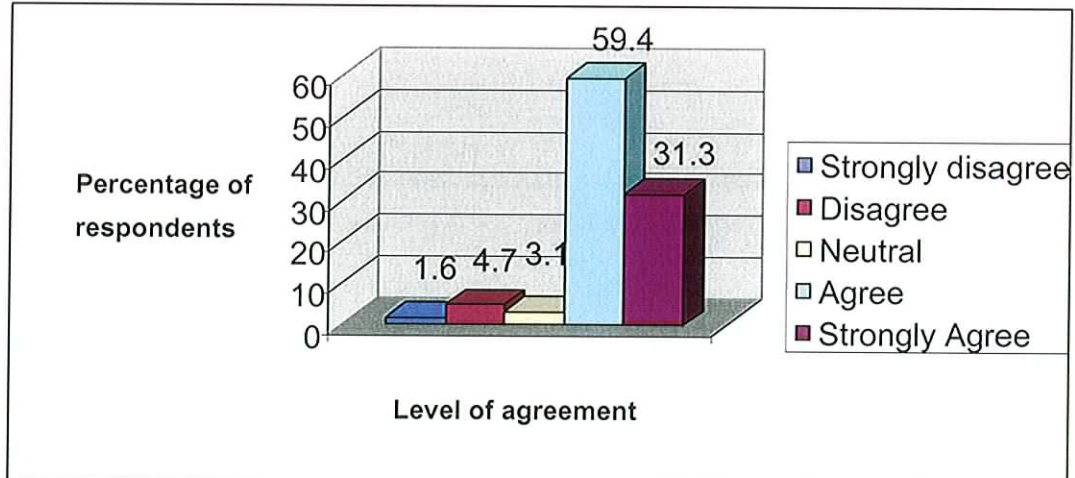
Figure 8.2: Extent to which respondents actively seek out T&D by Age



Previous findings have suggested that employees with a high commitment to their career or work are likely to exert considerable effort in training as they intend to improve their job performance (Cheng and Ho 2001; Rothwell and Arnold 2005). 90.7 percent of employees agree that they are committed to their organisation (with 31.3 percent stating that they are strongly committed) (Figure 8.3) and the median score given was six (with 7 representing strongly agree) again an encouraging finding for the organisation. This high level of commitment may be linked to the fact that, as in the HRD manager's opinion, employees are aware of the investment that the organisation is willing to place in them. This, they note, was highlighted by the findings of the recent top 50 companies to work for survey (conducted by the 'Great Place To Work Institute'). The most committed employees are over 41 years of age and are with the organisation for over 16 years, with no statistical difference in gender. This suggests that commitment increases with tenure.

81.9 percent of employees that seek out T&D activities to a large extent agree or strongly agree with the statement that they are committed to their organisation and 36.4 percent of employees who actively seek out T&D to a large extent strongly agree with the statement that they are committed to their organisation, which support previous findings on the links between commitment and T&D.

Figure 8.3: Commitment to the organisation



Despite the claims of 82.9 percent of respondents that the learning facilities are adequate, 81.3 percent of them disagree with the statement 'I visit the learning centre

frequently'. This signifies that either the organisation has a lot more work to do in encouraging the use of the learning centre or that employees simply dislike this learning environment. The comment from one employee who noted that '*...employees could maybe visit learning centre in pairs once a month*' suggests that some people might be put off by the solitary nature of the experience and the group learning might help to alleviate some of this loneliness.

8.8 Objective 2: To identify the various approaches taken throughout the T&D cycle and attitudes towards these

The findings from the employee survey were compared with those from the interview with Company A's HRD manager in order to ensure that the techniques, which the HRD manager claims are used, are actually used or that employees are aware of the use of these techniques. This is important as policy does not always equal practice and there is often a disconnect between employer and employee views.

8.8.1 Needs Analysis

According to Company A's HRD manager pre-course evaluation sheets are being rolled out to the remainder of courses in Company A that didn't previously have them, which allow people to pre-evaluate themselves prior to the course. However 48.2 percent of respondents state that pre-course evaluation sheets are not used. This signifies that the roll out may only be in its early stages. Written tests are not used according to 91.4 percent of respondents.

Company A's HRD manager claim's that each year individuals undergo performance appraisal reviews with their line managers and that these are then fed into a Personal Development Plan (PDP). However according to 13.8 percent of employees performance appraisals by managers/supervisors are not used at all and only 10.3 percent say that they are used to a large extent, quite worrying considering that this is the dominant form of needs assessment. Managers at Company A are also expected to have pre-course discussions with employees to re-emphasise the reasons why they are attending the course. According to Company A's HRD manager this allows for the reinforcement of needs prior to courses, again further motivating the individual to

partake. Taking this informal meeting into account and in case managers discuss needs in a less formal atmosphere to the performance appraisal, respondents were also asked whether a meeting with their manager was used to discuss their needs. Nearly one fifth (19 percent) of employees feel that their managers do not meet with them at all to review their training needs. Additionally only 12.1 percent of respondents stated that their manager meets with them on an individual basis 'to a large extent' to assess their needs, again quite a worrying finding for the organisation. Managers are obviously not even doing this on a group basis as 43.9 percent of employees say that this does not happen at all. Additionally 14 percent of employees note that PDPs are not used at all to assess their training needs and only 14 percent state that they are used to a large extent. This is of concern considering that PDPs are the primary mechanism for recording needs. However 82.5 percent of employees state that PDPs are used, which signifies that most managers may in fact be fulfilling their obligations in this regard. In fact PDPs are the most used method of needs assessment, followed by performance appraisals with managers.

50 percent and 41.4 percent of employees respectively say that coaching and mentoring are used to assess their T&D needs. These findings are encouraging for the organisation considering the fact that these methods have only been used 'in the last year or so'. The similarity in responses for these methods perhaps signifies that employees do not fully differentiate between the two.

8.8.1.1 360 degree appraisal

Company A's HRD manager stated that 360 degree feedback is undergoing a limited pilot at the moment. This is supported by the fact that only a small number of respondents acknowledged the use of peer, subordinate and customer appraisals in assessing their T&D needs (6.9, 12.3 and 8.8 percent respectively). It was considered useful at this stage to investigate employees' views towards 360, considering its impending introduction. 52.3 percent of respondents feel that 360 is a good idea, citing the fact that it would provide an objective or more rounded view and that they may see a training need that hasn't been highlighted before. One respondent summed this up citing that *'no-one is self aware enough to be able to see all of there own weaknesses or area's which need the most work. Also each of the above's*

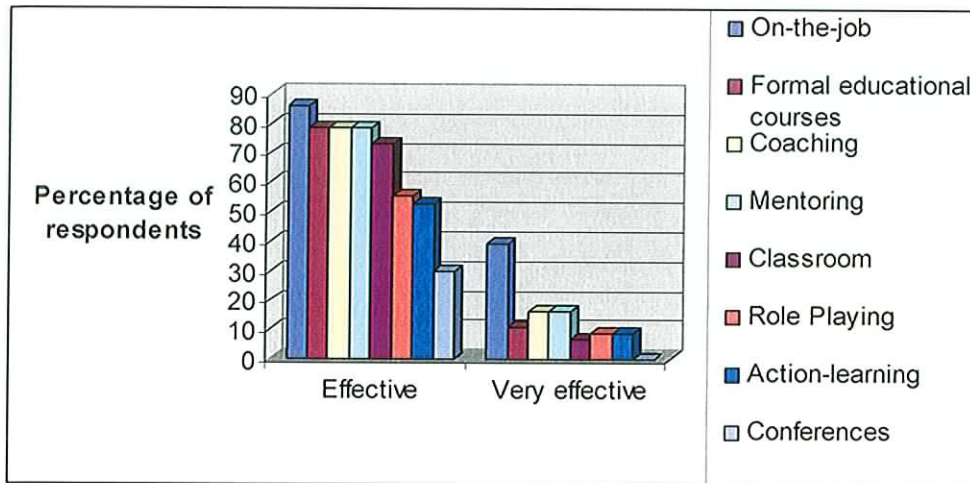
experiences with the person are going to be different and so they will see different aspects of their work and personalities’.

However many respondents expressed concerns with this process claiming that it could lead to a confrontations or bad feelings among colleagues or subordinates. Some even claimed that they had seen the bad side affects of this technique; *‘I have seen others deeply hurt by this when some feedback by subordinates was not given with positive intent’.* There were also doubts that others would be a better judge of their needs *‘No as they would not be sufficiently aware of my training needs to give input’.* One senior manager supported this feeling in noting that the *‘peoples perception of what I should be involved in as a Senior Manager is very different to my actual role’* and another said that people don’t always know exactly how you normally perform, your level of responsibility or role within the Company. Although described as a *‘potential minefield’* by one employee responses were mostly positive, and employees seemed to think that it could work if it was delivered in a very sensitive way.

8.8.2 Delivery Methods

On-the-job training is the most popular form of delivery, with 85.8 percent of employees rating it as effective. This supports the CIPD’s (2005a) findings. It rates higher than any other form of delivery with 39.3 percent of employees rating it as very effective, which is far higher than the same rating given for classroom training (7.1 percent), formal educational courses (10.9 percent), role playing (8.9 percent), coaching (16.4 percent) and mentoring (16.4 percent). The most popular means of delivery are outlined in Figure 8.4. Despite the preference for class-room based learning in the US and despite the fact that this is the most frequently used method in Company A, respondents showed a preference for four other techniques. The least effective method of T&D is seen to be conferences. The similarity of responses for coaching and mentoring again may signify that employees do not differentiate between these methods.

Figure 8.4: The effectiveness of delivery methods



In response to the open ended questions on the best mix of delivery methods, many respondents cited a preference for classroom-based learning with role plays and/ or on-the-job training. One employee thinks that there should be a much larger mix *‘classroom based with some CD roms/role play and then learning extended to workplace with mentoring or coaching’*. Another’s was quite similar *‘listening, followed by practical exercises to assess learning, followed by reinforcement of the learning, and then maybe a test or assessment to ensure the learning is complete. Follow up to this is on the job practice at doing the process or practicing the soft skill’*. Common to the majority of responses to this question was the notion of practicing what they learn either through role plays or on-the-job training, and putting what is learned into practice *‘Classroom with on the job training should follow to put the material into practice immediately’*. Considering these findings it is no surprise that on-the-job training is favoured by respondents, as it overcomes transfer barriers (Van der Klink and Streumer 2002) and helps employees to use what they learn as they learn.

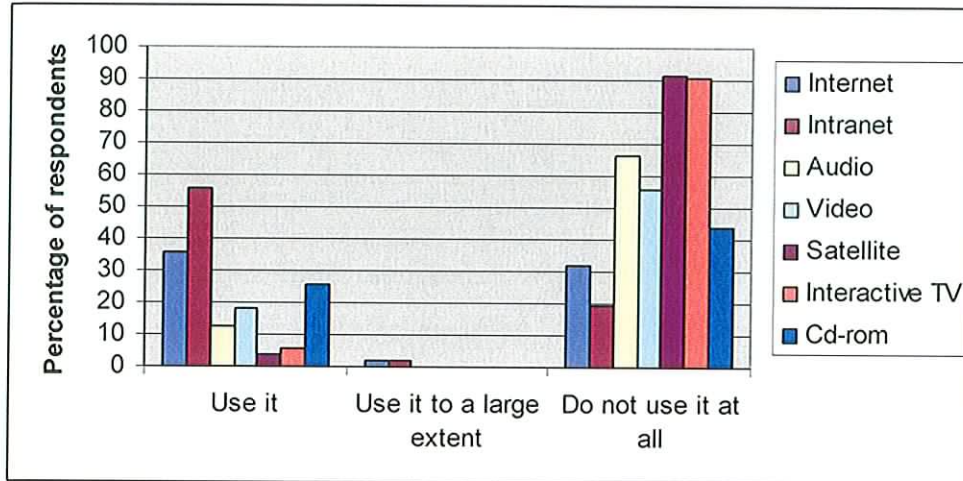
8.8.2.1 E-learning

Due to the numerous delivery methods included under its title, e-learning is analysed separately to the traditional methods, discussed above. The single most effective form of e-learning, according to respondents, is video-based learning (16.7 percent) with a mix of a number of approaches seen as the most effective (22.2 percent). This may be because a mixture of methods appeals to more learning styles. The least

effective according to employees is audio-based (7.8 percent). The e-learning medium that employees are least familiar with is cd-roms with 6.3 percent of employees stating that they are not familiar with them. Among the people who are familiar with cd-roms there are mixed opinions, as 26.6 percent see them as effective and 37.6 percent see them as ineffective. Internet based learning, which many e-learning commentators regard as the only type of e-learning, is rated ineffective by 39.1 percent of respondents, compared with only 32.8 percent who rated it as effective. This finding is quite interesting, especially considering the fact that 43.7 percent of respondents also rate intranet based learning as ineffective, compared to 34.5 percent who rate it as effective. Despite the e-learning hype in recent years, these figures show that employees do not rate their current e-learning provision as effective. In fact only 3.6 percent and 1.8 percent of respondents respectively rate the internet and the intranet as very effective.

Due to the lack of knowledge about e-learning usage rates it was deemed important to ask employees about this. The intranet is the most used e-learning medium with 55.4 percent of respondents using it to learn (Figure 8.5). This is followed by the internet (35.7 percent), cd-roms (25.4 percent), video (17.9 percent), interactive TV (5.4 percent) and satellite broadcasts (3.6 percent). Although over a half of all respondent use the intranet, total e-learning usage is quite low. Only 1.8 percent of respondents use the intranet to a large extent, with 19.6 percent not using it at all. Similarly only 1.8 percent of respondents note that they use the internet to a large extent and 32.1 percent say that they do not use it at all. No respondents claim to use any of the remaining e-learning media to a large extent. However the number of respondents who do not use the other media at all are quite high (Audio-based learning - 66.1 percent, videotapes - 55.4 percent, satellite broadcasts - 91.1 percent, interactive TV - 90.9 percent, cd-rom's - 43.6 percent). These findings suggest that employees are not using e-learning and that many do not rate it as an effective learning medium. This perception of ineffectiveness may be a barrier to usage, but there are also a number of other potential barriers.

Figure 8.5: E-learning usage rates



8.8.2.1.1 Barriers to e-learning usage

37.5 percent of respondents rate the variety of e-learning in their organisation as ‘ok’. 10.7 percent rate the range as very limited and only 1.6 percent rate it as very broad. While this might suggest that the organisation might want to consider their range of courses, only 53.6 percent of respondents note that lack of relevant courses is not a barrier to e-learning usage and only 7.4 percent say that is a large barrier (Table 8.1).

The largest barrier cited by respondents is a lack of encouragement from manager/supervisor, again highlighting the important role that managers have in promoting, and ensuring participation in, T&D. The lack of interactivity and the solitary nature of e-learning are the second and third largest barriers, as cited by respondents. This suggests that employees’ limited use of e-learning might be down to the type of learning involved, which might not suit a lot of individuals’ learning styles.

‘Bad experiences’ is the least cited barrier, and 51.9 percent of respondents stating that it is not a barrier at all. This may suggest that respondents have negative perceptions of e-learning but that they have not actually had too many negative experiences. Bad reports from others is the second least commonly cited barrier for using e-learning with 41.5 percent stating that is not a barrier at all and with a further 35.8 percent not seeing it as a major barrier.

Table 8.1: Barriers to e-learning usage

Barriers	Barrier	Large barriers
	%	%
Lack of encouragement from manager/supervisor	60.4	3.8
Lack of interactivity	59.3	7.4
Solitary nature/ lack of other learners	56.5	1.9
Lack of relevant courses	46.4	7.4
Lack of encouragement from trainers	44.6	5.6
Lack of facilities	35.6	5.8
Unsuitable conditions	28.3	7.5
Bad reports from others	22.6	0
Bad experiences	18.6	5.6

Respondents dismiss the majority of barriers in that 51.9 percent and 43.4 percent rate bad experiences and unsuitable conditions as not being barriers at all. Lack of facilities is also dismissed by 23.1 percent of respondents as not being a barrier at all, which again suggests that facilities are perceived by employees of Company A as being quite adequate.

In answering the open ended question many employees cited the difficulty in concentrating as a barrier to e-learning usage; *'I allow things to distract me and do not complete the programmes in the time frames I should complete them in'*. Other difficulties include the fact that it might not be as *'easy to set time aside and find suitable locations as it is to turn up at an organised course'* and the *'difficulty in absorbing information or staying motivated while interacting with a computer'*. The level of distraction was also a commonly cited problem. These suggest difficulties aside from the traditional barriers to T&D participation, which is not a positive finding for proponents of e-learning.

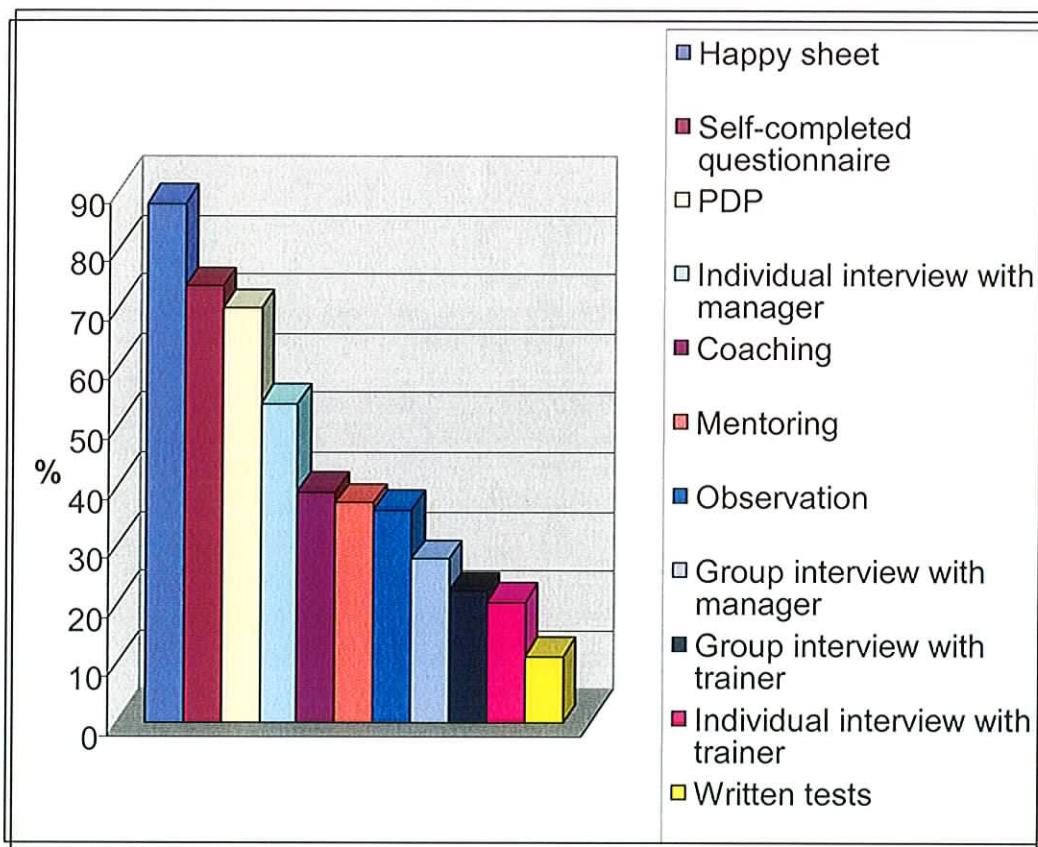
8.8.3 Evaluation of effectiveness

Happy sheets are by far the most used form of evaluation (Figure 8.6) with 87.5 percent of respondents claiming that they are used and 37.5 percent of respondents noting that they are used to a large extent. This supports the organisation's claim that they are the most used medium for assessing effectiveness and again supports claims made in the literature (Bramley 1999; Philips 1998). The second most used appear to be a self-completed questionnaire, with 11.3 percent of respondents noting that they

are used to a large extent. This, however, could be seen to be the same as a happy sheet so caution should be taken when considering this figure. Group and individual interviews with trainers are the least used mediums with 50 percent and 44.4 percent of respondents respectively noting that they are not used at all.

Company's training manager noted that twenty five percent of course attendees are interviewed six weeks after the end of a course. This informal interview with someone from the 'training evaluation committee' who is not a member of the HRD department allows employees to speak openly about courses. 20.4 percent of respondents claim that this method is used to some extent to evaluate the effectiveness of courses, which is slightly below the figure cited by the organisation. This may be due to certain employees not partaking in T&D since the commencement of the informal interviews.

Figure 8.6: Methods used to assess effectiveness



The fact that 29.6 percent of employees state that individual interviews with managers are not used at all to assess the effectiveness of T&D, combined with the

fact that only 1.9 percent note that they are used to a large extent, is again quite a concern and signifies that some managers are not fulfilling their T&D obligations. There are no respondents who feel that coaching or mentoring are used to a large extent to assess the effectiveness of T&D and the fact that the response figures for these two methods are again quite similar, suggests that respondents do not differentiate between the two.

8.9 Objective 3: To determine the barriers and drivers to employee involvement in T&D

8.9.1 Barriers

Vaughan and MacVicar (2004) found that a lack of time was the biggest barrier to learning, followed by family pressures. Only a minority of respondents in their study reported other reasons, which included (don't know what's available; too old; not interested; can't afford it; don't enjoy learning and don't need to learn for the job.

Vaughan and MacVicar's (2004) list of barriers were used in this study, along with a number of Mumford's (1998) barriers. Barriers attributable to a lack of ability on the learner's part such as poor communication skills and learning skills were omitted as it was felt that respondents would not provide honest answers and these attributes might be offensive.

This study, like Vaughan and MacVicar's (2004), also found a lack of time to be the largest barrier, cited by 78 percent of respondents (Figure 8.7). However this was followed by 'a lack of interest' and 'don't know what's available', which is in contradiction to Vaughan and MacVicar's (2004) findings. The smallest barrier cited in this study was 'don't enjoy learning', cited by only 5 percent of employees. However on examining the percentage of respondents who rated the barriers on whether they were large barriers to their participation in T&D (as opposed to whether they were a barrier at all) a slightly different picture emerges. While 'too busy' remains the largest barrier, family pressures is also cited as a large barrier by nearly one tenth of employees. While this does not appear to be a major concern with 71.7 percent of respondents not seeing family pressures as a barrier, organisations may

have to find a way to aid employees' work-life balance. This is particularly important considering the fact that commute time for workers are increasing, due to inflated house prices and a need for many employees to relocate outside of large cities.

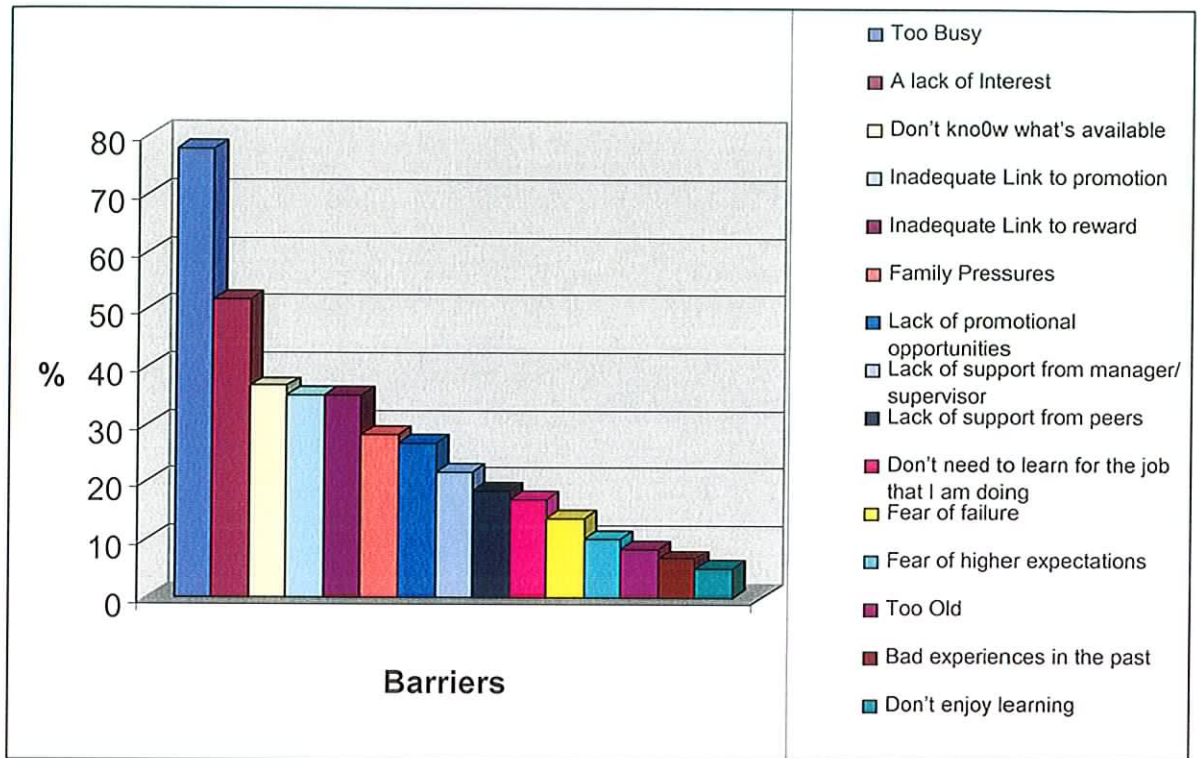
The fact that a lack of interest was cited as a large barrier by five percent of respondents combined with the fact that over half employees see it as a barrier is a worrying finding because, as highlighted in Chapter Four, learners must have an element of self-motivation for meaningful learning to occur. Interestingly 31.7 percent of employees do not see this as a barrier at all. Additionally 'Don't enjoy learning' is the smallest barrier which indicates that people do actually like to learn. 70 percent of respondents cite this as not being a barrier at all and only 5 percent say that it is a barrier. These findings suggest that while the majority of respondents enjoy learning some may have no interest in the T&D activities initiatives organised by their Company.

According to Chisholm et al (2004) the amount of workers in Ireland who consider themselves too old to learn is significantly higher than the EU average. 'Too old' was cited by only 8.3 percent of employees as a barrier to their participation in T&D and no respondents cited age as a large barrier. In fact 68.3 percent of employees cited it as not a barrier at all. However when analysed against respondent age, 25 percent of respondents over 41 years of age considering themselves too old to learn, quite a high percentage.

It is suggested that in the absence of self-motivation, if there is little value placed by the organisation on professional qualifications and they do not reward learners for successfully developing themselves then employees might be reluctant to partake in T&D. Interestingly 'inadequate link to promotion' and 'inadequate link to reward' were found in this study to be the joint fourth most commonly cited barriers to T&D participation. However 73.3 percent of employees note that a lack of promotional opportunities is not a barrier, suggesting that the majority of individuals see a career path but maybe feel that T&D participation is not rewarded and unhelpful in pursuing promotional opportunities. Lack of support from other people does not seem to be a barrier to employee participation in T&D. 78.3 percent of respondents do not see a lack of support from managers as a barrier and 81.6 percent of

respondents do not see a lack of support from peers as a barrier at all.

Figure 8.7: Barriers to employee participation in T&D



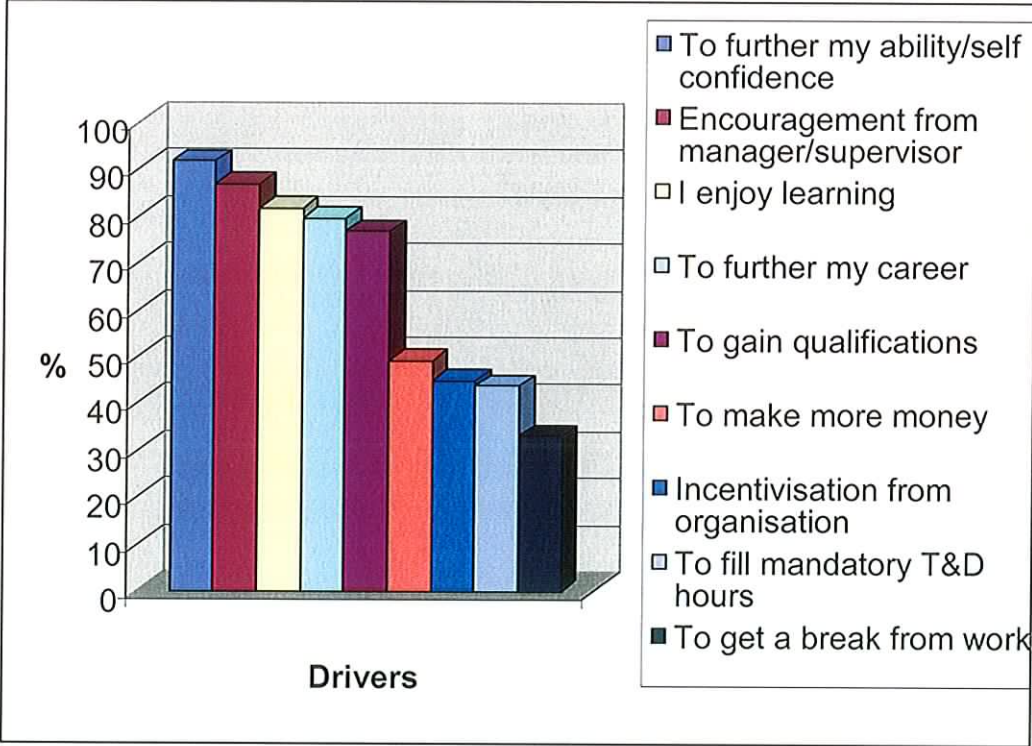
8.9.2 Drivers

By far the biggest driver of T&D Participation amongst respondents is 'to further my ability/ self confidence' – cited by 91.6 percent of respondents (Figure 8.8). While a lack of encouragement is not a barrier to T&D participation, the presence of encouragement certainly appears to be a driver and is cited by 86.7 percent of respondents. Additionally 16.7 percent state that it drives their participation to a large extent. 81.6 percent of employees state that they partake in T&D because they enjoy learning and one third of respondents state that this drives their participation to a large extent. This lends support to the fact that it is the least cited barrier to T&D participation and again suggests that perhaps T&D activities do not interest a large percentage of employees. 'To further my career' and 'to gain qualifications' are the fourth and fifth biggest drivers to participation, with 79.6 and 76.7 percent of respondents listing these as drivers.

These findings suggest that individuals are motivated by a mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. With the exception of gaining qualifications the majority of drivers are intrinsic in nature. Financial factors such as incentivisation and making more money do not appear to be major drivers. 54.9 percent of employees stated that incentivisation it is not a driver, with only 5 percent citing it as a large driver. In fact 18.3 percent state that it is not a driver at all. Additionally ‘to make more money’ is cited as a driver by less than half of all respondents and only 6.8 percent said that this drives their T&D participation to a large extent. These findings suggest that while there are certainly elements of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as suggested by Chisholm et al (2004), respondents are driven more by intrinsic factors.

The two least significant drivers of employee participation in T&D are ‘to get a break from work’ and ‘to fill mandatory T&D hours’, which proves that individuals are driven for their own reasons - to benefit themselves.

Figure 8.8: Drivers of T&D participation



8.10 Objective 4: To examine the effectiveness of T&D and identify areas for improvement

In order to assess the effectiveness of Company A's T&D processes a number of general questions were asked, along with questions about all levels of the T&D cycle.

8.10.1. Methods of needs analysis

Company A's HRD manager notes that performance appraisal by managers is the primary method of needs analysis. However only 10.3 percent of respondents state that their managers assess their needs to a large extent through a performance appraisal interview and 13.8 percent of them say that their managers do not discuss their training needs at all during performance appraisals, which is quite an alarming finding. Also quite worrying is the fact that 14 percent of employees note that Personal development Plans (PDPs) are not used at all at the needs assessment stage, as this is the primary method of recording needs. 14 percent of them claim that PDPs are used to a large extent.

8.10.2 Individual V Organisational Needs

Company A state that they have an element of self-directed and some didactic learning, which they impose and that although the focus of HRD has traditionally been on individual needs, the Company is now trying to align HRD more to business needs and their has to be, to some extent, a business case to T&D requests. 78.1 percent of respondents believe that their organisation meets their T&D needs and 12.5 percent strongly agree that their needs are met with a median score of 6 (7 being strongly agree). Additionally when asked in another way 'how well do you think that your T&D needs are assessed', 79.3 said that their needs were assessed effectively (median of 5).

While this suggests that needs analysis in Company A is quite effective from an employee perspective there appears to be room for improvement. According to 87.2 percent of employees T&D development would be improved if they were better aligned with their work needs (Table 8.2). In fact almost one fifth of respondents strongly agree with this statement. Additionally 84 percent agree that T&D would be

better if aligned more with personal needs. This is surprising given that individual needs have been normally focused on. Additionally 79.3 percent of employees think that T&D would be improved if it had more relevance to their day to day duties and one employee noted that ‘most of the courses I have done don’t affect my job’. This again stresses that T&D could be more suited to their work needs.

The fact that 62.9 percent feel that a better choice of courses would improve T&D perhaps signifies that a wider range of courses would in some way help in meeting a wider variety of needs. In fact one employee suggested that they would prefer if the range of courses were changed or added to every few years and another suggested that ‘rather than making a standard list of courses available where people are just picking from that each staff member should have a meeting with their manager to identify areas that need improvement & areas of interest for the individual should be used to identify the areas training is required / desired & then send to training & they list the courses that cover these areas’. 28 percent of respondents felt that more input into choosing courses to attend would be beneficial. A number of these highlighted the benefits of personal selection of T&D courses in increasing relevance and probability of the training having a positive effect. This finding again suggests that employees are not given adequate say in choosing courses to attend and that the performance appraisal may not be, as claimed, a two way process.

Table 8.2: Potential improvements to T&D

Improvements	Agree %	Strongly Agree %	Median
Better alignment with work needs	87.2	19	5
Better alignment with personal needs	84	7.9	5
More relevance to day to day duties	79.3	15.9	5
Better rewards	77.1	11.5	5
More feedback from trainers	76.1	6.3	4
Better re-enforcement of material	74.2	9.7	4.5
Clearer objectives	68.4	3.2	5
More feedback from manager	66.2	9.7	4
Better structured courses	63.5	1.6	4
Better choice of courses	62.9	12.9	4
Better delivery of courses	58.7	1.6	4
Better trainers	49.9	1.6	3.5

More support from manager	46	7.9	3
Better facilities	41.3	1.6	3

8.10.3 Principles/ determinants of successful learning

It is believed that for T&D to be truly effective, an organisation must take the principles of successful learning (as discussed in Chapter Four) into account. These principles, help to ensure positive learning experiences and increase participation levels.

Gagné (1992) lists gain attention as an important determinant of successful learning. Trainers are effective in gaining and holding attention according to the majority of respondents (68.8 percent) and bad experiences in the past are not a barrier according to 93.3 percent of respondents. This indicates that they have had good experiences, which is a good sign for the organisation. Additionally courses are not too advanced for 79 percent of employees. In fact 31.3 percent of respondents strongly disagree with the statement ‘Often courses are too advanced for me’, which suggests that T&D courses are being pitched at the right level.

The necessity of practicing during T&D, in order to transfer material from short-term memory to long-term memory is stressed in the literature (Reid and Barrington 1999; Gagné et al 1992) as is the importance of de-briefing at the end of courses in order to embed learning (Cotton and Tanner 2005). The majority of employees (55.5 percent with a median score of 3) disagree that there is enough time to absorb material learnt in training. Only 1.6 percent agrees strongly that there is adequate time, whereas 11.1 percent strongly disagree with this statement. This suggests that more time could be spent, at the end of T&D activities, on ensuring effective transfer of information. If learners leave without fully absorbing material then transfer is far less likely.

Company A suggest that learning objectives are really important and at the beginning of courses participants are asked to outline what they hope to get out of the course, their concerns about attending the course and what they hope to offer. This system appears to be working as 82.9 percent of employees (with a median of 5) agree that they are aware of the learning objectives of courses which they attend.

Company A note that their attendance tends to be higher when a course is broken into two half days as opposed to one full day because people can usually commit to a half days easier. It also suits part-time workers of which there are many in Company A and additionally people like the opportunity to practice things before returning to a course. 73 percent of employees agree that courses are structured effectively.

Company A state that learning styles are very much incorporated into the design of courses so as to ensure a balance of approaches to suit all needs. For example there might be a combination of exercises, discussion groups and course notes. 71.4 percent of employees feel that the delivery of T&D suits the way in which they learn. However the preference amongst employees is for on-the-job training whereas the dominant delivery method is classroom based. This issue needs to be addressed.

8.10.4 Facilities/ Delivery

Only 41 percent of employees disagree that better facilities would improve T&D and 14.3 percent answer 'not at all' to the statement that better facilities would enhance T&D. This again suggests that Company A's learning facilities are adequate.

The feedback from respondents in relation to the delivery of T&D is largely positive. 73 percent of respondents agree that courses are structured effectively, with a median score of five (with 7 representing strongly agree). Additionally 71.4 percent of respondents agree that the delivery of T&D suits the way in which they learn (with a median score of five) and 12.7 percent strongly agree with the same statement.

Also on the issue of trainers 68.8 percent of employees agree that on courses trainers are able to hold their attention, with a median score of five. However almost 50 percent of respondents (49.9 percent) feel that better trainers would improve T&D.

8.10.5 Transfer

At the moment there is a big drive on ensuring quality, value for money and the transferral of learning back to the workplace. 85.2 percent of employees state that they get to apply what they have learned, yet only 5.6 percent feel that they get to transfer

learning to a large extent. The median score of 4.5 suggests that there is room to improve transfer. Although 63.9 percent say that their manager meets with them to discuss transfer, only 12.7 percent say that they meet them quite frequently, again stressing the fact that some managers may not be aiding their employees' development as much as possible.

There are numerous transfer barriers outlined in the literature and these relate to training input factors and work-environment characteristics (Baldwin and Ford 1988). A lack of relevance of T&D material to participants' jobs was found to be the largest transfer barrier (Table 8.3). This is surprising considering the previously cited finding that 69.3 percent of employees state that T&D is relevant to their job. However only 3.7 percent of respondents cite this as a large barrier and the majority of respondents who cite this barrier say that it is a barrier to 'some extent', the weakest of the positive answers. This is supported by a median score of 4. However this finding combined with the fact that over half of all respondents cited a lack of practical application as a transfer barrier, suggests that trainers could potentially spend more time demonstrating to employees how they could transfer what they have learned.

It is probably not surprising that a lack of time is cited as a transfer barrier by almost 60 percent of respondents, given that this is also the largest barrier to T&D participation. Additionally interference from the work environment is listed by Broad (1986) as the second largest transfer barrier.

Table 8.3: Barriers to transfer

Barriers	Barrier %	Large Barrier %
Lack of relevance	68.5	3.7
Too busy	59.4	1.9
Lack of practical application	55.6	5.6
Lack of support from manager	34	5.7
Lack of encouragement from trainers	26	1.9
Lack of support from peers	22.7	1.9
It will not benefit me to do so	18.9	0
Poorly designed/delivered material	16.7	0
Uncomfortable with changes in my job	9.4	0

Lack of support and encouragement from managers is cited as a barrier by over a third of respondents. This is unsurprising as a lack of reinforcement on the job and a non supportive organisational culture are both cited as large barriers by Broad (1986). It is also unsurprising as line management support has been cited as poor at virtually every other stage of T&D. A lack of encouragement from trainers is the fifth largest barrier to respondents, which suggests that perhaps measures could be taken by trainers. The fact that only 16.7 percent of respondents cite poorly designed or delivered material, suggests again that the delivery of T&D in COMPANY A is quite good. Lastly the fact that less than ten percent of respondents cite discomfort with change as a barrier, is positive, as this is the sixth largest transfer barrier, as cited by Broad (1986). On a positive note the results show that there are no major barriers as no more than 3.7 percent of respondents cite any factor as a large barrier.

8.10.6: Benefits perceived by employees

The largest perceived benefit of T&D is the fact that it makes employees more knowledgeable with 86.7 percent of employees agreeing with this statement (Table 8.4) followed by the fact that it helps them to do their job better (79.7 percent). In fact four out of the six benefits all relate to personal development, with the remaining two barriers scoring significantly lower. This supports the finding that individuals are intrinsically motivated and they do not think that T&D helps their promotional chances or gains them favour with superiors.

8.10.7: Links to reward and career development

It is suggested that for T&D to be truly effective there needs to be integration between functions (Maybey and Salaman 1995). The findings of the employee study suggest that the links between T&D and career development need to be strengthened. The fact that only 40.8 percent of respondents agree, and only 3.7% strongly agree, that T&D helps their promotional chances is slightly worrying. If employees do not see the link between T&D and their career paths then they will be less motivated to partake in T&D. A number of respondents used the open ended questions as an opportunity to voice their opinions as to what would improve T&D. The link between T&D and career progression appear, in the opinion of a lot of respondents, to be quite weak. The following are comments made by respondents:

1. 'Clearer career paths would make for clearer training goals'.
2. 'More focus on training needs for career progression to prepare a person for the next steps as well as current role'.
3. 'Tends to be self assessment or manager appraisal. Focus could be more on describing the skill set required for career development and to use this as T&D agenda..'
4. '..more linking of training needs to career plan..'
5. '...identify specific goals and areas for improvement with a view for promotion..'

These points combined with the fact that 35 percent of respondents cited 'inadequate link to promotion' as a barrier to T&D participation suggests that the organisation could make improvements in this area. This is of vital importance in seeking to motivate people to develop.

8.10.8: Links to reward and career development

77.1 percent of respondents believe that better rewards for T&D such as a qualification or a certificate would improve T&D. This is quite a high figure and 11.5 percent think it would improve it to a large extent. The fact that 86.7 percent of respondents are driven by encouragement and 76.7 percent are motivated by qualifications also suggests that respondents need recognition for their efforts.

Table 8.4: Benefits of T&D

Benefits	Agree %	Strongly agree %
More knowledgeable	87	25.9
More effective	79.7	16.7
More productive	77.8	16.7
More confidence	77.8	20.4
Helps promotional chances	40.8	5.6
Favour with superiors	22.3	3.7

8.10.9 Support

While 76.1 percent of employees feel that more feedback from trainers after courses would be beneficial, only 6.3 percent say that this would improve it to a large extent.

In relation to managerial support, more support from managers both before and after

courses would improve T&D practices. 45.8 percent of employees feel that more support from managers prior to courses would be an improvement. This again suggests that pre-course meetings, which managers are supposed to have with subordinates, are not taking place to the extent that Company A would like. The following selection of quotes go some way in describing employee's reaction towards managers and show that they feel that managers could be a lot more helpful:

General

1. 'Sometimes you are encouraged to take a course by a manager. When the day comes to actually do the course and miss time in work management are often less supportive'.
2. 'More time needs to be spent with your manager identifying gaps in your skills and a plan needs to be put in place to address these'.
3. '..... it is really left to me to assess my needs. Input from my Manager is totally lacking'.
4. 'Review course in detail & assess the improvement as a result of the course'
5. 'Meet me specifically to discuss training rather than general progress'.
6. 'Re: T&Draise it during 1-2-1's. Has never been mentioned in the past'.

These comments suggest that some employees are being completely let down by their managers. Point two suggests the absence of a PDP while point five and six suggest that performance appraisals are not being used to assess needs.

What would improve transfer

1. '.....assessment with manager & team afterwards - what visible improvements are there'.
2. 'Line manager support and assessment of development needs'
3. 'Start recognising that my Training and Development is partly his responsibility'.
4. 'Ask me how course went, keep note of it. About a week/month later ask me am I using the skills I learnt. If not, question why not. If I am not getting the opportunities to use the skills, my manager should help arrange the opportunities. No point in spending time and money on courses if there are no behavioural changes.'
5. 'Review learning points and reinforce them when they see me putting them into action'
6. 'Regular inclusion at 1 to 1 meetings with line manager and tie into development/leadership programme'
7. 'Looking at previous year objectives and what was achieved and what is the focus of current year'
8. 'Have meetings soon after the course to discuss how it has helped and their opinion on how to implement what I have learnt and see how I think I should apply what I have learnt to see if I am going in the right direction with it'

These comments call for managers to take more responsibility and for them to become more involved in T&D. They also signify that employees are actually concerned about transfer and they want to improve their performance. Respondents also suggested a number of ways in which managers could help in relation to TNA.

What would improve TNA

1. Interview with trainer/manager
2. More discussion at manager level
3. Use of PDP
4. More independent conversations with managers of how I feel courses would help me
5. Maybe managers should be used for assessment, to see where you stand on training needs
6. (360) I think this should be done by a manager

Some of these comments are again quite worrying and signify an absence of PDPs and managerial involvement at the TNA stage.

8.11 Conclusion

The first part of this chapter comprised of an analysis of the information collected through the interviews with the HR/ HRD managers of five companies. This information was analysed around the four objectives which were first introduced in Chapter Seven. Its main purpose was to build a picture of T&D in the Irish Financial Services sector and to assess respondents' reactions to, and opinions of, a number of topical methods and issues. The findings suggest that respondent organisations, for the most part, place an emphasis on T&D and value employees as assets to be developed. There also appears to be widespread board level support for T&D, although the degree of this support varies. The findings also suggest that issues concerning line management's involvement in T&D and the lack of evaluation need to be addressed. As many of the respondent organisations are at the early stages of adopting T&D techniques such as coaching and mentoring and e-learning, it is difficult to comment on success levels at the present time. In section two, information from the employee survey was then compared and contrasted to the information collected through interview with Company A's HRD manager and senior training manager. The findings have mostly positive implications for both the Company and industry in general. One positive finding for the organisation is the fact that a very high percentage of their employees (90.7 percent) are committed to the organisation. Additional positive findings for the organisation and industry (if

reflective of other organisations) are the fact that employees for the most part (93.6 percent) are very welcoming towards T&D which will help them learn; 78.1 percent believe that their T&D needs are met, 71.4% believe that T&D is delivered in a way which suits their learning style. However a number of issues have emerged, which warrant further commentary. Line management do not appear to be fulfilling their T&D related duties and the transfer of learning back to the workplace is quite inadequate.

Indeed a number of issues have arisen from both stages of the study, which have wider implications for anyone interested in the T&D arena, including the negative findings pertaining to e-learning and the fact that simple line manager encouragement is a major driver of T&D participation for 86.7 percent of respondents. Employee views are especially insightful given the lacuna of research which focuses on employees, as opposed to organisations in general. The next chapter seeks to extrapolate from these findings in making a number of recommendations both in terms of future actions of both organisations and government and in relation to further research into related areas.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by outlining the difficulties faced by the researcher while conducting this research, which mainly centre around access. It then highlights the contribution that this research has made to the literature before making recommendations to industry, government and researchers for future work in this area. The chapter concludes by suggesting a number of potential areas for further research identified throughout the course of this study.

10.2 Difficulties with conducting this research

While conducting this study the author encountered a number of problems. The sector choice was based on the findings of previous research and the author's previous experience of working in the sector. Additionally it was presumed that, as a highly regulated and dynamic industry, the financial services sector would be highly dependant on T&D and that they would be willing to participate in studies such as this one. However access to this industry proved extremely difficult. The majority of organisations contacted were willing to participate, in the form of an interview with a HRD representative. However, only three organisations were willing to participate in the 'employee survey' section of the research. A number of organisations gave no reason for their refusal to participate, yet others cited recent changes in senior HRD management and re-organisation of the HRD department as reasons. Several organisations also cited as a reason the fact that employees were already asked to complete surveys on a frequent basis as the financial services sector was a very popular focus for both undergraduate and postgraduate research. Interestingly two organisations openly admitted that they were apprehensive about the results that might come from such a survey. Although this may not be a surprising finding, it is a worrying one. If organisations do not have confidence in their T&D provisions it suggests that they might not be very effective.

Initially the survey was administered to a number of organisations yet only one of these organisations (Company A) actively pushed the survey and helped in its collection. Without requests from management very few employees in the other companies

completed the questionnaire. This may be due to the aforementioned survey fatigue, which should be a consideration for future researchers.

10.3 Contribution to the literature

This study differs from much of the extant research due to its focus on both employees and HRD personnel. This dual focus allows for cross referencing and helps to identify areas in which there may be problems, which HRD personnel are unaware of. This is not done to a large extent in the literature as employees are rarely included in similar studies. It is imperative that in the future more research focuses on employees at all levels and not just managers, as has been the dominant focus to date. The focus on employee grade has allowed for the identification of barriers and drivers to T&D participation and for the capture of employees' views on a number of areas, including 360 appraisal, e-learning and the effectiveness of delivery methods. While the findings of this research support some previous studies they contradict others and in doing so they highlight the need for further research.

The omission of non-managerial employees from other studies might influence the results of these studies, especially considering the differences in perceptions towards T&D opportunities found in this study, as discussed in section 8.7.1. These positive attitudes towards T&D by management grade employees may lead researchers to believe that all employees hold similar positive views, when in fact senior employees are afforded more opportunities to partake in T&D. The focus of the literature on primarily managerial grade employees may be also unjustified, considering the importance of T&D for all levels of employees in order to ensure competitiveness and social inclusion.

This study captured employees' views on multi-source appraisal and highlighted some concerns which they have. It also asked employees to rate delivery methods on their effectiveness. This is particularly important in relation to e-learning as this study, unlike many others, was able to gauge the barriers to e-learning usage and identified a lack of encouragement as the primary barrier. This combined with the fact that 'bad experiences' is the least significant barrier suggests that more encouragement is needed

and that the content and design of e-learning systems may not be the main barrier to its usage.

The administration of this study in one sector allowed for a more detailed focus than previous studies. One of the benefits of this was in the identification of techniques being used and in determining how advanced this usage was. It appears from the findings that a number of financial services organisations are only at the early stages of adopting competency-based approaches, multi-source assessment and e-learning. The fact that an industry so reliant on T&D makes limited use of e-learning and is still encountering numerous barriers to its usage, suggests that Irish organisations, with the exception of Irish-based Multi National Corporations (MNCs), either may not be ready for e-learning, or may remain unconvinced of the benefits. Additionally the fact that evaluation, in an industry so reliant on T&D, is rarely carried out in a detailed way is a cause for concern. If these organisations, many of whom are quite large, are not in a position to evaluate the benefits of workplace learning, perhaps due to a lack of time or uncertainty in how to do so, less resourceful companies, who may not place such an importance on T&D are also likely to be avoiding evaluation. This is a concern, considering the increasing need for the HR function to be more accountable and the importance of proving returns, particularly in the financial services sector where many of the organisations (respondent companies) feel that they will soon be under pressure to justify their budgets.

This study was intended to be both exploratory and descriptive, as is evident by its broad nature. It has taken a more holistic approach to T&D (a HR approach) and as a result its main contribution is in the identification of a number of areas for further research and in making recommendations to Company A. These recommendations are made on the basis of employee and HR feedback (from all five companies) and they are supported by both the literature and the author's views on how best they might be achieved.

10.4 Recommendations for Company A

The findings of the employee survey are mainly very positive, particularly in relation to the design and delivery of T&D. For example 89.1 percent of employees feel that learning is encouraged in Company A and 84.4 percent say that they have adequate opportunities for personal development and growth. The findings are also positive in relation to the provision of T&D, with 82.9 percent of employees stating that the learning facilities are adequate, 78.1 percent believing that their T&D needs are met, 79 percent suggesting that courses are not too advanced and 71.4 percent believing that the delivery of T&D suits the way in which they learn. Other positive findings include the fact that 82.9 percent of respondents are aware of the learning objectives of courses which they attend and 73 percent believe that courses are structure effectively.

However despite these positive findings a number of issues were identified, which Company A need to examine. These are as follows;

- 1. Better alignment of T&D to work and personal needs**
- 2. Better choice of courses**
- 3. Review the competence of trainers**

Caution should be taken with these first three finding as individuals will often seize any opportunity to find fault with processes. Although respondents expressed satisfaction with the assessment of their needs and the relevance of T&D, they also suggested that T&D could be improved in relation to these areas. 87.2 percent and 84 percent of respondents believe that T&D would be improved if it was better aligned with their work needs and personal needs respectively.

Additionally although over 50 percent (51.5 percent) of respondents say that better trainers would improve T&D with a median score of three point five (with one meaning that better trainers would not improve T&D at all and seven signifying that better trainers would improve T&D to a large extent). This, supported by the fact that only one point six percent of respondents state that better trainers would improve T&D signifies that the majority of respondents are happy with the current trainers.

In relation to a better choice of courses, 75.8 percent of respondents believe that this would improve T&D, with 12.9 percent stating that it would improve T&D to a large extent. Again this has a median of four, which is the middle value. This means that respondents are divided on this issue. It is advised that these issues should be reassessed in detail by the organisation.

4. More time to be spent in absorbing material and practicing skills prior to returning to work

This was identified by employees as an area for improvement. Only 28.5 percent of employees believe that there is enough time spent on this during T&D and 83.9 percent of respondents feel that better re-enforcement of material would improve T&D, with 9.7 percent of these believing that it would improve it to a large extent. The actions taken on courses in this regard can have an affect on relevance and transfer. If employees do not have time to adequately practice and/or absorb the material then money has been wasted and T&D has not been successful. Perhaps more effective debriefing would help resolve this matter. Debriefing helps to test knowledge and refocuses on learning objectives, building confidence in learners about their knowledge and skills (Cotton and Tanner 2005). Practice is also helpful in this regard as it reinforces learning until the behavioural patterns become habitual (Harrison 1997), it helps to transfer material from short-term memory to long-term memory (Reid and Barrington 1999; Gagné et al 1992) and it creates the opportunity for feedback (Gagné et al 1992).

5. Review methods of delivery

Despite the fact that employees find on the job training to be by far the most effective, which supports previous research (CIPD 2005a), classroom-based T&D predominates. Company A seem to be tackling this issue in their efforts to formalise on the job training. These efforts need to be continued. Additionally numerous employees cited, through open ended questions, a preference for mixed delivery methods and a particular preference for practicality and relevance. They also rated conferences as the least effective method of T&D delivery. These issues require further research in order to determine the best mix of methods for employees at large. Essentially organisations must consider

methods, which are most likely to achieve maximum stimulation and retention of learning (Harrison 1997).

6. Spend more time demonstrating the relevance of material taught on courses and show learners how to transfer learning

95.2 percent of respondents believe that T&D would be improved if it was more relevant to their day to day duties, with 15.9 percent of respondents feeling that it would improve it to a large extent. This may have adverse affects on employee motivation as research has frequently demonstrated that people are more motivated to learn when they see that the content is relevant to their job (CIPD 2004d). This is particularly important to learners with a pragmatist or converger learning style. If employees know that they will not be able to apply what they learn through T&D to their job then this may affect their motivation to learn.

However because of this perceived lack of relevance employees are encountering difficulties using what they have learned through T&D on the job. In fact a lack of relevance is the most cited transfer barrier, with 68.5 percent of respondents listing it as a barrier and with 3.7 percent citing it as a large barrier. Additionally 55.6 percent of employees feel that a lack of practical application is a transfer barrier, with 5.6 percent citing this as a large barrier. These issues need to be resolved as time and money are being wasted if employees are not benefiting from T&D initiatives. It is particularly important that trainees are encouraged early on to think about how they will apply what they have learned to their job (Knox 1988). Transfer cards and transfer 'time-outs' similar to those used in Company B (section 8.3.7.1.2) may be used for this purpose.

A lack of transfer appears to be the major issue in Company A as only 5.6 percent of respondents state that they get to transfer what they have learned through T&D to a large extent. It might also be a good idea to give employees on the job training after classroom based courses in order to help learners to apply what they have learned. Thomson (2005) suggests encouraging participants to write themselves a letter outlining what they intend to do, which can then be posted back to them at a future date to remind them. This might be useful for Company A.

A key issue that inhibits the transfer of learning is the fact that employees simply may not get the chance to demonstrate what they have learned as they often return to the same inadequate workplace environment (Tennant, Boonkrong and Roberts 2002). A supportive climate is key in this regard as it is imperative that employees are allowed to practice, what has been learned through training and development, in their work context so as to internalise what they have learned (Vermeulen 2002) and thus employees must be allowed to make mistakes without the fear of serious repercussions. This emphasises the need for trainer and line manager support. Additionally pre-course discussion with one's boss, followed by subsequent boss sponsorship (Huczynski and Lewis 1980 as cited in Baldwin and Ford 1988) will aid transfer. Almost 40 percent of respondents (39.7 percent) cite a lack of support from their manager as a transfer barrier. However it is claimed (Baldwin and Ford 1988) that ambiguity surrounds the exact supervisor actions which employees deem to be supportive. This is something which Company A need to research in further detail.

7. Strengthen the links between T&D and promotion and career paths

The fact that 73.3 percent of respondents state that a lack of promotional opportunities is not a barrier (to their participation in T&D) while 42.6 percent of employees disagree that T&D helps their promotional chances means that while respondents might see promotional opportunities in their organisation, they do not feel that T&D will help them to avail of these opportunities. This can be problematic as if there are limited opportunities for promotion then employees will be far less motivated to partake in T&D (Antonacopoulou 2000). Linking T&D and career paths may be easier to facilitate in a fully functional competence based system, as individuals would be able to view jobs that they would like to apply for and see the competencies that they have to obtain in order to be considered for those jobs. Although COMPANY A are attempting to make this link already and while they make an effort to communicate to unsuccessful candidates why they did not get a job/promotion, it appears that respondents cannot see these links clearly. Perhaps an awareness campaign would help in this regard.

8. Motivate employees by removing barriers and providing better rewards

A lack of time was highlighted as the biggest barrier to T&D participation, which supports previous research findings (Vaughan and MacVicar 2004; Chisholm et al (2004). Company A, and indeed all organisations, need to make a conscious decision as to whether they are going to address this issue. If they value T&D then they must seek to promote flexible working arrangements and a shared workload so that employees are not hindered by a lack of time. This is an important issue to deal with as industries become even more competitive and employees are forced to commute long distances. Helping employees with their work life balance by bringing experts in to advise employees, as Company C have done, might help in this regard.

In some organisations (Company B) employees are rewarded for reaching certain levels of competence and this may be considered. Increased motivation could be facilitated through the use of a combination of internal and external certificates and rewards. 77.1 percent of employees feel that T&D would be improved if there were better rewards such as qualifications or certificates. This suggests that the organisation should accredit in-house courses so that employees feel a sense of achievement.

9. Improve the level of line manager involvement

Line managers' involvement appears to be less than acceptable at every stage of the T&D process. Some of them are not holding performance appraisal interviews with their employees, as evidenced by the fact that 13.8 percent of employees say that these interviews are not used at all and with only 10.3 percent stating that they are used to a large extent to assess their needs. In fact almost one fifth of employees (19 percent) note that their manager does not meet with them at all to discuss their training needs. Additionally PDPs are not being used to the extent which they are expected. 14 percent of respondents say that they are not used at all while only 14 percent say that they are used to a large extent.

Also line managers do not appear to be holding pre-course or post-course meetings to help ensure relevance and transfer respectively (as discussed in

point six) and they are not monitoring employees' performance sufficiently or giving them feedback. Efforts are being made to increase this involvement, such as showing managers the beneficial nature of T&D initiatives. Perhaps these efforts could be complemented by other efforts. One option would be to reward managers for developing their employees, which may be facilitated by making people development a competency, as Company B have done.

It is imperative that line managers encourage individuals to partake in T&D as 86.7 percent of respondents cited encouragement from manager/supervisor as a driver to their participation in T&D. Post T&D line managers need to help employees to transfer what they have learned through T&D back into the workplace, as discussed in point six.

10. Make T&D available to staff at all levels

The findings suggest that managers and senior managers are given more opportunities to partake in T&D and in doing so they support previous research (Hay group as cited in Hammonds 2005). Employees were asked to indicate their level of agreement with three statements; 'My organisation's T&D provisions meet my learning needs', 'learning is encouraged in my organisation' and 'there are adequate opportunities for personal development and growth in my organisation'. The level of agreement with all three statements was higher amongst managers/senior managers than it was amongst assistant managers, and in turn assistant manager agreement was higher on all three than employees' level of agreement. In relation to the statement 'My organisation's T&D provisions meet my learning needs' the level of agreement fell from 90.5 percent (manager/senior manager) to 80 percent (assistant manager) and 69.8 percent (employee). For the statement 'learning is encouraged in my organisation' the agreement levels fall from 100 percent (manager/senior manager) to 90 percent (assistant manager) and 81.8 percent (employee). Finally the levels of agreement fell for the statement 'there are adequate opportunities for personal development and growth in my organisation' from 95.3 percent (manager/ senior manager) to 90 percent (assistant manager) and 75.8 percent (employee). This could be a serious problem to Company A as non-managerial employees could feel isolated and their commitment to the organisation could be affected as a result.

11. Measure e-learning usage

None of the respondent organisations are currently measuring e-learning usage. This is an area which Company A could improve upon, as the take up of e-learning needs to be known before investing any further money. This could be accomplished using either specialist software or simple surveys. Usage at the moment, as cited by both HR personnel and employees appears to be quite low. However these might not be the case in other organisations/industries. If this is the case then organisations can be safe in the knowledge that their limited e-learning provision is adequate. However if e-learning is being used by a large proportion of the workforce, then the existing systems can be maintained and improved. Company A should seek to encourage the use of their learning centre and its facilities. Again this may require working hours to be more flexible.

12. Conduct further research in six months to one years time

Research needs to be conducted for a number of reasons:

- a. To see if employees' needs still being addressed or if organisational needs have taken precedence. This is important as the organisation seeks to align more to organisational needs. It is important not to completely focus on organisational views as this will de-motivate employees and could have knock on affects.
- b. To measure the incidence levels and satisfaction with coaching and mentoring, 360 appraisals and the competency based system in order to assess their effectiveness and identify potential areas for improvement.
- c. To see if the efforts being made to improve line manager support – including showing them the beneficial nature of T&D and other actions suggested above – are successful (research should be conducted six months to one year after the introduction of newer methods). These line management issues might also be investigated through further use of the established training evaluation committee.

10.5 Recommendations for industry and government

The aforementioned areas of concern for Company A may be helpful to other organisations in identifying potential problems and suggesting ways to overcome these. If a lack of time prohibits organisations from designing and re-designing courses, from deciding between an internally or externally delivered T&D approach and from

choosing between a self-directed learning model and a traditional supply led model, perhaps they should look at the possibility of outsourcing these tasks, or conducting them in conjunction with external experts.

Uncertainty surrounds the best way to structure courses. It is suggested that many courses could be shortened without any adverse affects. This should be looked at as time is the biggest barrier to T&D participation. However it is important to ensure that none of the benefits are lost. Perhaps organisations might also look at providing more short courses in conjunction with some e-learning material that learners can take away and do before returning to the course. Additionally the notion of allowing employees to return to work and then bringing them back for another session, whilst solid in theory might need to be handled in a more structured way. The use of on the job training or the availability of members of the HRD team or trained coaches to help trainees apply what they have learned could greatly improve the process. While these methods are used separately they might be better combined.

Additionally there appears to be little differentiation between coaching and mentoring amongst HRD staff in respondent organisations. Responses from the Company A employee survey highlight a lack of comprehension among employees also. Organisations must differentiate between these two methods and communicate this difference to employees so that they are aware of the purpose of each method and so that internal coaches and mentors know their duties in this regard.

The findings of the Company A employee survey suggest that employees prefer on the job training. However this preference might not be true of all financial services employees. Organisations should seek to determine which techniques employees prefer, as delivering T&D in a way which employees like will encourage further participation. If, as in the case of the respondent companies, the predominant form of T&D is formal classroom based delivery, yet the preference is for something different, this may be making the difficult process of motivating employees to participate in T&D even more complex.

10.5.1 E-Learning

Due to the time constraints and the constant pressure on employees, a greater shift to self-directed learning, preferably accessible by electronic means, is needed. Mandatory training and development, forced upon employees by legislation/ compliance should be delivered in this way as much as possible as should additional personal development. It is likely that the level of pressure on employees, especially in certain industries, will only increase into the future and commute times in Ireland are not likely to reduce significantly in the near future either. A possible alternative to workplace T&D is home-based T&D whereby employees who do not have access to a computer in their home, can borrow, or receive grants to buy, laptop computers with adequate capabilities for online T&D activities. This alternative would compliment the increasing emergence of the e-workplace/ distance workplace, whereby employees work from home where they have remote access to their organisation's IT systems and broadband internet access. In order for organisations to successfully increase their online T&D provision a number of factors have to be considered. Firstly the IT infrastructure must be able to handle the hosting of rich, interactive material, potentially held on a Learning Management system (LMS). The fact that some respondent companies still cite band-width limitations and soundcard issues as problems in 2006 is quite worrying. Likewise in order for employees to be able to work and learn from home, broadband has to be rolled out nationwide. Recent OECD figures estimate that Ireland has 6.7 broadband subscribers per every 100 citizens, a ranking of 23rd out of 30 OECD countries (OECD 2005). This poor rating is blamed on a number of factors, the most prominent being high costs resulting from a lack of competition in the market (Broughan 2005; www.techcentral.ie). NCPP (2004) suggest that there must be responsibility for lifelong learning at national level – surely this is one issue which the government must improve upon in this regard.

In order to increase the popularity of e-learning amongst employees, they must be encouraged to use it. A lack of encouragement was cited by Company A's employees as the biggest barrier to e-learning usage, followed by a lack of interactivity and the solitary nature of the medium. The quality of e-learning initiatives must dramatically improve and the cost of such initiatives must fall in order to achieve widespread adoption. This is happening already and the switching of a huge proportion of T&D to

an e-learning format (Cisco systems, Prudential, BT) is evidence of this. Perhaps a dedicated government agency could be established with the primary purpose of designing e-learning courses which could be taken by employees in certain industries, or indeed across industries. These courses could be designed in conjunction with industry bodies. The lack of face to face communication, which is a barrier to many learners, as it does not suit their learning style, may be overcome through the use of interactive/talking programmes whereby learners feel like they are talking to an individual. This may facilitate the learning of softer skills such as interview or sales techniques. However these type of systems are quite new and rather expensive. With e-learning offerings constantly increasing in interactivity it is hoped that they will soon become affordable.

10.5.2 Line managers

One of the major problems faced by financial services organisations, and indeed cited by other sectors (CIPD 2005a) is the lack of involvement of line management in learning initiatives. It is vital that this problem is resolved as line managers are important at all levels of their subordinates' development, from motivating them in the first place to readying them for courses and showing them the relevance of courses, to encouraging them to give 100 percent whilst learning, right through to encouraging and supporting the transfer of what they have learnt back to the workplace. In fact 86.7 percent of respondents to the Company A's employee survey listed support by line managers/ supervisors as a driver to their involvement in T&D.

Despite efforts by respondent companies to reward managers for developing their subordinates and portraying to them the benefits of T&D, line managers' involvement appears to be less than satisfactory. Perhaps the rewards provided to them should be re-evaluated (as suggested by CIPD 2005a) or perhaps the benefits of T&D to them and their targets should be made clearer. The extent to which subordinates' T&D benefits the team's performance and as a result enhances the managers' achievements will depend on the link between T&D and business issues. HRD departments must continually strive to affect the bottom line.

The impact of initiatives with managers such as weekly meetings to stress the importance of particular learning interventions to their subordinates performance and/or financial rewards should be measured or managers should be asked as to their impact.

10.5.3 Proving the effectiveness of T&D

Although there is no pressure on HRD respondents to measure the effectiveness of T&D, they note that this is likely to change soon. HRD departments must be able to prove concretely the effectiveness of T&D. The answer to this may be an ROI calculation, but this seems to be too difficult and is not welcomed at present by a lot of HRD professionals. The problematic issue of proving the soft benefits of T&D must be addressed and if a standard ROI formula is not felt to be suitable then each organisation, industry or country must agree upon an easily explained and comprehensible formula for evaluating T&D. Perhaps the benefits of mandatory training such as anti money laundering courses should not be sought in the form of an ROI calculation yet the cost savings of these initiatives should be proven. Additionally periphery benefits of T&D, such as networking and employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention should be stressed. Government action is needed in this regard. If government could help come up with a system of proving the effectiveness of T&D, which companies don't have the time or resources to do, then this could be used as a template for myriad types of companies' HRD departments to show the effectiveness of T&D and justify budgets. This template could be a mixture of hard and soft benefits. The various claims of T&D effectiveness in the literature, may not be enough to convince companies of the beneficial nature of T&D. This may be because many HRD professionals are too busy to read trade publications or academic journal articles or it may be due to a mistrust of the sources of these claims, as departments might often seek to overestimate the benefits of an initiative which they seek funding for. A widely publicised template or set of guidelines from the government, with a number of authentic testimonials from Irish companies, might go a long way in helping HRD departments to convince their organisations of the benefits of T&D. This in turn would increase the levels of expenditure on workplace T&D.

10.5.4 Competency approach

Ideally companies using certain approaches such as the competency approach should be compared with those who have not yet adopted it or organisations should introduce such approaches in stages so that the progress can be measured. It is not advisable for organisations to introduce such approaches on the basis of limited pilots or because of good reports from other organisations in other sectors or even countries.

10.5.5 Collaboration between banks to train people using e-L - QFA.

Company A's senior training manager feels that there is a huge opportunity around the compliance agenda as Company A do not have sufficient numbers to justify a large scale investment in e-learning. However with a number of courses, such as the Qualified Financial Advisor (QFA) diploma, common to all financial services employees, organisations might consider sharing the cost of material. At present employees across the financial services sector sit similar exams and sharing the cost of an online provision of these courses would not impinge at all upon any one organisation's competitiveness.

10.5.6 Coaching V Mentoring

There are no clear distinctions made in many of the organisations between coaching and mentoring. If these delivery methods are to be used for full effectiveness then HRD professionals should be fully aware of the differences between coaching and mentoring and should know when to apply each method. Organisations must ensure that these are differentiated between and that they are implemented appropriately.

10.6 Recommendations for Further Research

The differences between workers aptitudes and feelings towards T&D could be investigated further. Uncertainty remains in the literature as to whether older workers require longer or different training from other workers and the findings of this study do not suggest that older people are less welcoming of T&D. While respondents over 40 years of age seek out T&D twice as much as 18-30 year olds, 25 percent of those over 40 consider themselves too old to learn. This latter point is particularly important in Ireland as the proportion of Irish people who consider themselves too old to learn in Ireland is higher than the EU average (Chisholm et al 2004). Detailed research across a

widespread sample of older workers needs to be conducted in order to determine if age needs to be factored in if so how this may be accommodated. To date this research has, for the most part, been conducted on a small scale (Pickard 1999). This research is very important in light of the fact that individuals are now working for longer and because the workforce in Ireland is ageing.

The literature also provides mixed findings surrounding the motivation of female workers. It is claimed by some that females are less motivated (Chisholm et al (2004; O'Connell et al 2003) and by others that they are more motivated (O'Connell 2005; Rothwell and Arnold 2005). Again widespread research must be conducted on this issue as for organisations and economies to remain competitive all employees must continually up-skill and increase their knowledge.

10.6.1 HR and Strategy

With the exception of Company D, all of the respondent companies asserted that HR had a large role to play in organisational strategy. However it is claimed that 'HR is a lot less involved in strategy than it thinks' (Hammonds 2005). This is an important issue as the level of importance placed on HR related issues by senior management is likely to influence their dedication to HR matters such as T&D. Further research might seek to identify from other evidence, including interviews with senior executives and documented strategies, the role that HR actually plays in strategy formulation. This research might be best conducted across a number of industries in order to identify those industries which place the most importance on T&D.

10.6.2 Extension of similar studies

The findings of this research are quite positive for the financial services sector. With the exception of Company D, all of the respondent companies appear to place an emphasis on T&D at senior level and seek to develop employees. There are also adequate financial and technological supports in place for employees' development. However the support given by line managers could be improved and this is one thing which organisations in this industry must seek to address immediately.

It would be beneficial if this study was extended to other financial services companies and indeed other industries in order to see if the results of the survey of Company A employees mirror employees' views in general, or whether these results are limited to Company A. There were many interesting findings which might be tested for consistency. For instance the fact the 95.3 percent of respondents welcome T&D opportunities and the fact that females are more welcoming of T&D than males and actively seek out T&D to a larger extent than their male colleagues, could be tested in other organisations. The finding also suggest a preference amongst employees for on-the-job training. This could be researched across industries on order to ascertain if this is in fact the preferred delivery method. The various drivers and barriers to T&D participation could also be researched to ascertain whether or not they are given similar rankings and whether motivators are mainly intrinsic, extrinsic or a mixture of both.

As mentioned in section 10.2 a number of companies refused to co-operate in this study for the fear of the opinions which their employees might express about T&D. If Ireland is seeking to promote lifelong learning, responsibility must be taken at all levels. Rolling out this study to other financial services companies and indeed to other industries would help to ascertain the type of companies which are investing in T&D, their size, their industry and their nationality. This is particularly important for indigenous industries, considering that despite Porter's (1990) warning, Ireland has become heavily dependant upon Multi National Corporations (MNCs) with over one thousand foreign MNCs employing almost 130,000 people in Ireland (Gunnigle et al 2006). A failure to maintain adequate skill levels may erode one of the remaining competitive features that Ireland has. The government must make more stringent efforts to promote workplace learning and to encourage companies to do the same. Similar studies such as this conducted across industries and on a regular basis would identify sectors which are failing to adequately train and develop staff. However these studies need to be conducted with senior management, HRD departments and recipients of T&D. Studies which exclude the recipients of T&D cannot possibly get an accurate picture of T&D provision.

It would be of particular benefit to extend this study to a mixture of organisational demographics as Company D, was found in this study to hold a less positive view towards T&D in general. It would be interesting to examine whether this was common

to all small companies, or if Company D is an exception. If the former is the case, government interventions might be necessary in order to rectify the situation.

10.7 Concluding Comments

This study sought to fulfil four main research objectives and in doing so gathered a significant amount of information. It takes a different approach to previous studies, and makes recommendations for the respondent companies, industry in general and government. While the findings are mostly positive, with respondent companies, for the most part, valuing T&D, there are exceptions. Common problems related to a lack of line management support, poor e-learning take up, uncertainty as to certain techniques and an inability or unwillingness to conduct in-depth evaluation must be addressed. Additionally HRD departments could be better integrated in order to cement the relationship between T&D and rewards and career progression. A genuine lack of interest on the part of certain learners might also be a reality and if so this needs to be investigated in order to rectify the situation. While individuals have to be responsible for T&D and ideally should self-direct their own learning to a larger extent, the onus is on industry and government to facilitate. These groups should both seek to increase the levels of T&D and improve upon T&D provisions, in order to make them more accessible and more attractive to individuals.

If Ireland is to remain competitive on skills and knowledge levels a concerted effort is needed, especially by government as industry often do not have the time, resources or dedication to facilitate lifelong learning in an adequate manner. This is one of many studies which suggest the need for change. It is time to stop talking and start acting. Although “Learning is not compulsory – neither is survival” (Dr.W.Edwards Deming 1900-1993).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: STAGES IN RESEARCH PROCESS

Stage 1: Literature Review

Stage 2: Pilot Interviews

June 2005: David Wyatt (Trainer)
July 2005: Senior HR manager Company A
July 2005: Thomas Smith (Operations Director electronic Business School of Ireland (EBSI))
August 2005: Mareeda Tracey (Director: Bluechip Training Solutions)
August 2005: E-learning provider (Net-G)
August 2005: Member of Learning and Development: AIB Capital Markets

Stage 3: Interviews

September 2005: Senior HR manager: Company A
October 2005: Training Manager: Company D
October 2005: HR manager & Learning and Development Manager: Company E
October 2005: HRD representative: Company C
November 2005: HRD manager: Company B
November 2005: HRD manager: Company A

Stage 4: Administration of Survey

Stage 5: Analysis of Findings

Stage 6: Writing of report

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Chapter 1: HRM V P.MGMT

Are employees treated as an expense to be minimised or an asset to be developed?

So would you say that individuals are trained and developed for personal satisfaction or for organisational success? Or for a mix of both?

How important is HRD to organisational goals/ strategy?

Link between HRD dept and strategy or HR in general and strategy. Strategy decided and then fed down or involved in strategy formulation?

Is there a proactive/ strategic/ long term view of HRD in the organisation or a reactive/ short term (meeting current needs) focus? – HRD strategy?

Is HRD controlled by the organisation or by the individual?

Are trainers predominantly responsible for training or do line managers play a significant role? What is the extent of line management's involvement?

What is the level of integration between HRD and other HR functions – give examples? Pay/ rewards, recruitment & selection, HRP

Chapter 2: Learning, Training and Development

- Main advantages of LTD to organisation?
- What importance does the organisation place on development as opposed to mandatory training?
- Is there a culture of learning in the organisation? How so?
 - Number of T&D days per employee?
 - Learning supported by senior management/ line management?
 - Atmosphere of learning amongst employees
- Extent of T&D delivered externally/ internally? Advantage of this?
- Barriers and drivers for individuals
- Is learning self-directed? T&D actively sought by staff? To what extent?
 - Barriers/ Drivers to self-directed learning?
 - Encouraged by the organisation?
 - Benefits of self-directed learning to organisation/ individuals?

Chapter 3: Analysis of needs

- Importance of this stage?
- What techniques are used to assess needs? Interviews/observation.
- Is this done on an individual basis or by role/ position/ critical incident/problem centred/ performance appraisal/ competence?
- What is the level of employee involvement? Does this differ by seniority?
- How important do you think employee involvement is?
- Performance appraisals used?
 - Is 360° feedback used? or what sources of appraisal are used.
 - To what extent is 360 used (i.e. for what levels)
 - What advantages/ disadvantages do you see in this approach?
- Are development centres used?

- There is inevitably a divide between individual and organisational T&D needs. Are you attempting to overcome these? If so in what way and to what extent?

Competency Methods

Usage level?

Whats pushing usage?

Advantages of use?

Whats hampering usage?

Usage for what staff – management and above? Lower?

What approach? – UK: outputs assoc with effective performance or US: inputs/ characteristics of competent people/ excellent performers? Reason for choice?

Problems with the approach?

Chapter 4: Determinants of successful learning

Are objectives always clearly formulated and communicated to employees at all levels?

Importance of objectives?

Would you set interim objectives or ultimate/final?

Any advantage/disadvantages of setting objectives?

Involvement of individuals at this stage? Advantages of this?

How individualised is LTD? How much involvement does the individual have?

When planning HRD interventions does the organisation factor in;

- Learning styles – how nb? Sought for all levels? Considered in designing/ delivering courses?
- Motivation – what motivates them to learn? How does org motivate them to learn? Rewards/ encouragement/ recognition?

- Nb of previous knowledge
- Aptitude or competence
- Structure of courses – spread out or packed in?
 - Benefits of each?
- Feedback – before during and after? Type of feedback from whom?
- Methods used for re-inforcement, embedding learning during training? Debriefing?
- Age?

Is there a learning development centre? What facilities are available?

Chapter 5: Delivery methods

What are the most used methods (in order)?
Why is this?

On-the-job training used much?
Job rotation?

Coaching and mentoring?
Used?
Considered the same or different?
To what extent?
For what levels of staff?

E-Learning

Any ICT activity which supports learning

- Usage levels?
 - For what purposes does the organisation use e-learning? Training/development?
- What barriers did the organisation come up against when implementing e-learning? Have these changed? Have you overcome these?
- Drivers (advocates? Senior management, benefits?)
- Is there a blended approach to learning?
- Advantages and disadvantages?
- Variety of offerings?

Attitudes towards e-learning

What is senior management's attitude towards e-learning?
What are employee's attitudes towards e-learning?

Blended approach

Examples

Success

Chapter 6: Determine whether LTD activities are evaluated

- How is evaluation? Is there pressure from senior management or driven by HRD department?
- In what way is LTD evaluated? To what level? Kirkpatrick model or others?
- Is 360° feedback used?
- How often is this done? For all courses?
- What stops further evaluation?

Transfer

- Have you measured the %?
- What are the barriers in your opinion?
- How have you overcome these in the past? (follow up sessions?, during training – delivery, encouragement)
- How do you intend to do so if at all?
- How involved are line managers in this regard?

Impact on organisational results

Do they measure this?

Have you seen results – performance – output, quality

Is this possible? i.e. is it possible to directly attribute performance to LTD?

What is your opinion on Kirkpatrick's model? (Criticisms)

ROI

- Is there a drive to calculate an ROI? From whom – senior mgmt/ HRD dept?
- Have you calculated an ROI or attempted to do so?
- If not do you plan to calculate an ROI in the future?
- What challenges do you/ have you face(d) in evaluation? Overcoming these?

APPENDIX C: RESPONDENT LETTER



February 2006

Dear Respondent,

The accompanying survey is part of a Masters by research (MPhil), which I am currently completing at Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT). To complete my Masters I require a high response rate from this survey. I understand that you probably have a busy schedule but I would really appreciate your co-operation.

The answers which you give will remain anonymous as I do not ask for your name. The survey will also be completed by a number of other financial services organisations and the goal is to assess the effectiveness of training and development (T&D) as seen by employees and to suggest improvements.

Preferably the survey should be completed in one sitting but if this is not possible, simply clicking on the original link will take you back to where you left off. Please ensure to fill in all relevant sections especially the personal details section as this is vital for analysis purposes.

Thanks again for your cooperation

Colin Hughes

Colin Hughes
Room 4033
Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT)
Aungier St
D2

Ph: 01-4023041/ 0876447722
E-mail: colin.hughes@dit.ie

APPENDIX D: PAPER-BASED SURVEY



DUBLIN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA ATHA CLIATH

ESTABLISHED 1887

MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATION

Irish Financial Services Training and Development (T&D) Survey 2005

By

The School of Marketing
Dublin Institute of Technology

Thank you in advance for your participation in this survey. Please be assured that all responses will be strictly confidentially.

If completing in pen please circle the appropriate responses.
If completing using a computer please highlight the appropriate responses in a different colour font.

Please return to the postal/ e-mail address below. If you have any problems with the survey please contact me.

Colin Hughes
Room 4033
Faculty of business
Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT)
Aungier St
Dublin 2

Ph: 01-4023041
E-mail: colin.hughes@dit.ie

Section 1: Attitudes towards Training and Development (T&D) in my organisation

Q1: Please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements;

	Strongly Disagree		Neither agree or disagree			Strongly Agree	
I am committed to the organisation that I currently work for	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I welcome training and development (T&D) opportunities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My organisation's training and development (T&D) provisions meet my learning needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am always aware of the learning objectives of courses which I attend	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am adequately involved in setting these learning objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
T&D activities/courses which I attend are always relevant to my job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The learning facilities* in my organisation are adequate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>*Learning facilities include such aspects as a learning centre, training rooms, access to computer/ web-based materials etc.</i>							
I visit the learning centre frequently	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
There is enough time to absorb/ practice material learnt in training before returning to work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Often courses are too advanced for me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Courses are structured effectively	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have the opportunity to choose the T&D activities/courses in which I partake	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Strongly Disagree		Neither agree or disagree			Strongly Agree	
Learning is encouraged in my organisation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
There are adequate opportunities for personal development and growth in my organisation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The delivery of T&D suits the way in which I learn	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
On courses trainers are able to gain and hold my attention	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q2: Please expand on any of the statements which you feel strongly about citing reasons/ examples for your answers.

Q3: To what extent would the following improve Training and Development (T&D) activities in your organisation?

	Not At all		To some extent			To a large extent	
Better alignment with my work needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Better alignment with my personal needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
More relevance to my day to day duties	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Better facilities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Better choice of courses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
More support from my manager/ supervisor before courses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
More feedback from my manager/ supervisor <i>after</i> courses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Not At all		To some extent			To a large extent	
More feedback from trainers <i>after</i> courses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Better structured courses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Clearer objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Better Trainers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Better rewards such as a qualification or certificate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Better delivery of courses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Better reinforcement of material prior to returning to work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Other (please specify)

Q4: To what extent do you actively seek out Training and Development (T&D) opportunities?

Not At all		To some extent			To a large extent	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q5: Do you feel that it would be beneficial if you had more say in choosing Training and Development (T&D) activities/courses to attend?

Section 2: Drivers and Barriers to Training and Development (T&D)

Q6: Indicate the extent to which the following may prevent you from participating in Training and Development (T&D).

	Not At all		To some extent			To a large extent	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A lack of interest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Family Pressures	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Too Old	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Too Busy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Don't know what's available	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Don't need to learn for the job I am doing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Don't enjoy learning	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Bad experiences in the past	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Inadequate link to promotion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Inadequate link to reward system	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Fear of higher expectations of me after T&D	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lack of promotional opportunities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Fear of failure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lack of support from manager/ supervisor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lack of support from peers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Other (please specify)

Q7:

Indicate the extent to which the following encourage you to partake in Training and Development (T&D).

	Not At all			To some extent			To a large extent
Encouragement from manager/supervisor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Incentivisation from organisation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To further my ability/ self confidence	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To make more money	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To further my career	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To gain qualifications	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I enjoy learning	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To get a break from work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To fill mandatory T&D hours	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Other (please specify)

Section 3: Assessment of my Training and Development (T&D) needs

Q8: To what extent are the following methods used to evaluate your Training and Development (T&D) needs?

	Not At all		To some extent			To a large extent	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pre – course evaluation form	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Written tests	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Individual</i> interview with trainer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Group/team</i> interview with trainer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Individual</i> interview with manager	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Group/team</i> interview with manager	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Performance appraisal by manager/ supervisor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Performance appraisal by peers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Performance appraisal by subordinates (people who work below you)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Performance appraisal by customers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Self-completed questionnaire	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Personal Development Plan (PDP)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Coaching	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mentoring	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Other (please specify)

Q9: How well do you think that your particular Training and Development (T&D) needs are assessed?

Not At all		To some extent			To a large extent	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q10: How might this assessment be improved, if at all?

Q11: Do you think that getting colleagues, customers and subordinates to assess your needs would be beneficial and why?

Q12: What is the extent of your involvement in assessing your Training and Development (T&D) needs?

Not involved		To some extent			Very involved	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q13: What do you see as the benefits, if any, of assessing your own Training and Development (T&D) needs?

Section 4: Training and Development (T&D) delivery methods

Q14: How effective do you judge the following Training and Development (T&D) methods to be?

	Not familiar with	Very Ineffective		Neither ineffective or effective			Very Effective	
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Classroom based	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
On-the-job training	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Formal educational courses	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Conferences	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Role playing	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Coaching	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mentoring	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
CD ROMs	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Internet	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Intranet	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Video-based	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Action learning	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Other forms of Computer-based learning	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Audio-based learning	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A mix/ blend of some of the above approaches	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q15: Which mixture of delivery methods, if any, have you found useful in the past?
Please give an example where possible...

Q16: How much of a say do you have in choosing between delivery methods?

Not
involved

To some
extent

Very
involved

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Section 5: E-Learning

** By the term e-learning we are referring to any Training and Development (T&D) delivered by Internet, intranet, audio and videotape, satellite broadcast, interactive TV or CD-ROM.*

Q17: To what extent do you use the following delivery methods to learn in your current organisation?

	Not At all		To some extent			To a large extent	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Internet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Intranet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Audio	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Videotape	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Satellite broadcast	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Interactive TV	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
CD-ROM	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q18: How would you describe the range/ variety of e-learning courses in your organisation?

Very Limited			Ok	Very Broad			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Q19: What stops you from using e-learning more?

	Not At all		To some extent			To a large extent	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Same reasons stated for not partaking in (T&D) in general (Q5 above)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lack of relevant courses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Bad reports from others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Solitary nature/ lack of other learners	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lack of encouragement from manager/ supervisor to do so	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lack of encouragement/support from trainers to do so	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lack of interactivity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Bad experiences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Unsuitable conditions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lack of facilities (PC capabilities such as sound or video, quiet space to study etc)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Other (please specify)

Section 6: Results/Outcomes of Training and Development (T&D)

Q20: To what extent are the following methods used to evaluate the effectiveness of Training and Development (T&D) activities?

	Not At all		To some extent			To a large extent	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Post – course evaluation form/ happy sheet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Written tests	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Individual interview with trainer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Group/ team interview with trainer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Individual interview with manager/supervisor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Group/team interview with manager/supervisor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Self-completed questionnaire	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Personal Development Plan (PDP)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Coaching	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mentoring	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Observation of learners when they return to work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Other (Please specify):							

Q21: To what extent do you get to apply what you have learned through Training and Development (T&D) to your job?

Not At all		To some extent			To a large extent	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q22: To what extent do the following stop you from using what you have learnt through Training and Development (T&D) in your job?

	Not At all		To some extent			To a large extent	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lack of relevance to my job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lack of practical application to my job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lack of support from colleagues/ peers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lack of encouragement from manager/ supervisor to do so	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lack of encouragement from trainers to do so	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It will not benefit me to do so	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am uncomfortable with changes in my job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am too busy to do so	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The material is poorly designed/delivered	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Other (please specify)

Q23: How often does your manager/ supervisor meet with you to discuss the transfer of Training and Development (T&D) to your job?

Not At all		Sometimes			Quite frequently	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q24: What could your manager/ supervisor do to help you better apply what you have learnt through Training and Development (T&D) to your job?

Q25: What could your organisation do to help you apply what you have learnt through Training and Development (T&D) to your job?

Q26: Please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree		Neither agree or disagree			Strongly Agree	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
T&D makes me more productive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
T&D helps me do my job better	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
T&D makes me more knowledgeable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
T&D gains me favour with superiors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
T&D helps my promotional chances	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
T&D gives me more confidence	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Other (please specify)

Section 7: Personal Details

This information is for analysis purposes and, like the information above, will be treated confidentially

Please circle the appropriate response

Age

18-30

31-40

41-50

51+

Gender

Male

Female

Role/Position

Senior manager

Manager

Assistant manager

Team leader

Supervisor

Other

employee

Company name:

Area/ department:

Number of years with current organisation:

Are you currently involved in learning activities external to your organisation?
Please list..

Do you intend to partake in any learning activities external to your organisation in the near future?

Thank you again for your participation in this study. If you have any further comments which you would like to make regarding Training and Development (T&D) in your organisation either related or unrelated to previous questions please do so in the space provided below.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

APPENDIX E: LIST OF JOURNALS

Academy of Management & Education
Academy of Management Executive
Academy of Management Review

BACIE Journal
British Journal of Industrial Relations

Career Development International

Education and Training
Educational Researcher
European Journal of Marketing

HRM Journal
Human Organization
Human Relations
Human Resource Development International
Human Resource Development Quarterly
Human Resource Management Journal

Industrial and Commercial Training
International Journal of Lifelong Education
International Journal of Manpower

Journal of Applied Psychology
Journal of Consumer Research
Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation
Journal of European Industrial Training
Journal of General Management
Journal of Management
Journal of Management Development
Journal of Management Studies
Journal of Managerial Psychology
Journal of the American Society of Training Directors May/June (predecessor of T+D)
Journal of Training and Development
Journal of Workplace Learning

Leadership and Organisation Development Journal
Learning and Training Innovations
Library Management

Management Decision
Management Learning

Online learning
Organizational Dynamics

Personnel Management

Personnel Psychology
Personnel Review

Qualitative Marketing Research: An International Journal

Sloan Management Review
Strategic management Journal

The International Journal of Public Sector Management
The learning Organisation
The Magazine for Leaders in Higher Education
The marketing review
Training and Development
Training and Development Journal
Training for Quality

Work study International

APPENDIX F: PROFILE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-30	20	31.3	31.3	31.3
	31-40	30	46.9	46.9	78.1
	41-50	14	21.9	21.9	100.0
	Total	64	100.0	100.0	

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	male	28	43.8	43.8	43.8
	Female	36	56.3	56.3	100.0
	Total	64	100.0	100.0	

Role/ position

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Manager/Senior manager	21	32.8	32.8	32.8
	Assistant/manager/team leader/ supervisor	10	15.6	15.6	48.4
	Other employee	33	51.6	51.6	100.0
	Total	64	100.0	100.0	

Area/department

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Marketing	6	9.4	21.4	21.4
	HR	2	3.1	7.1	28.6
	Sales	2	3.1	7.1	35.7
	Actuarial	2	3.1	7.1	42.9
	Finance	5	7.8	17.9	60.7
	Legal	1	1.6	3.6	64.3
	Claims	3	4.7	10.7	75.0
	IT	3	4.7	10.7	85.7
	Other	4	6.3	14.3	100.0
	Total	28	43.8	100.0	
	Missing	System	36	56.3	
Total		64	100.0		