An exploration to study the perception of the Generation Y in the services sector on the importance of Learning & Development on their career growth.

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Submitted to the National College of Ireland   August 2017

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<u>Abstract</u>

This research is a humble effort to explore the perception of Generation Y who are the future of the workforce on the importance of Learning & Development on their career growth. This research also studies various sub-objectives such as the essence of the term career, career pathing of the Gen Y, employer's and the employee's role in the employee's career growth and the role L&D plays. Semi-structured interviews as a part of Qualitative method was adopted to gather rich data and have a deeper understanding of the topic while letting the respondents provide their opinions freely. Further, a thematic analysis was followed to let existing and new themes emerge from the data. The respondents chosen for the study were Generation Y working full time in the services sector in the city of Dublin and this was done in order to gather niche data relevant to one sector. However, the sample was not random and the responses were low.

Following the analysis, it emerged that learning and development has an important role to play in the career growth of the Gen Y. It was found that learning and development enables the employees to holistically develop both professionally and personally and greatly help them advance in their career. Apart from these some new themes emerged as well, leading to greater insights into the subject.

Key words: Generation Y, Learning and development, Career Growth

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<u>Acknowledgement</u>

This research is in partial fulfilment of the Master's degree which has been a very challenging, but a fruitful process. It would not have been possible without the support of various people who have continuously extended support to me in this endeavour.

First, I would like to thank my supervisor Caitriona Hughes whose insight and expertise has been very crucial in guiding me in the completion of the thesis. Next, I would like to thank my parents and my family who have constantly supported me and motivated me in the most difficult and stressful times.

I would also like to thank the participants for taking their time out and participating in my research, my colleagues, classmates and friends for supporting me and being there for me in the whole process. I am extremely grateful to them all.

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Generation Y – Gen Y

Generation X – Gen X

Learning and Development – L&D

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction:

Generation Y (born between 1980-2000) are the future of the workforce and are critical as they form a larger number than any of the previous generations (PWC,2011). They are a highly demanding cohort whose demands are indicative mainly towards their career growth and development. Merchant Jr (2010) believes that this cohort is a very career conscious and are very mobile if their career needs are not met. A survey by Deloitte (Kwan, Neveras, Scwartz, Pelster, Erikson and Szpaichler, 2011) also found that for the Millennials it is the lack of career progression that makes them look for alternative employment. Further, Ismail and Shein Lu (2014) indicate that this generation look for companies that provide career development opportunities and paths.

Due to the global expansion in economy it has become necessary for organizations to ensure that employees are being provided with ongoing learning and development opportunities (Egan, Yang and Barlett, 2004). Supporting and assisting employees career growth and opportunities are valued by both the organization and the employees which ultimately help in achieving organizational goals. While, careers today are shifting from traditional life time employment to more contemporary approaches such as boundary less and protean careers. Boundary less careers was coined by Arthur and Rousseau and basically defies the traditional bounded career where one would delve into one particular type of career. While Protean careers was coined by Hall and it basically means to take charge of your own career and the values emphasized are freedom, growth, continuous learning, self-development and personality (Korsakiene and Smaliukiene, 2014). Careers today have become very individualistic and each development activity is now being considered as a career experience for employees (Van Der Sluis and Poell, 2003). Simultaneously, Learning & Development (L&D) is continuously evolving and is always in a chase mode to update itself to meet the needs of the organization (CIPD, 2015). It is becoming increasingly important because the job seekers are more inclined towards organizations that provide L&D interventions which will in turn support their career growth (Valcour,2014). It was thus that the researcher decided to study the importance L&D has on the career growth of this generation as these elements have not been studied earlier together.

Once the researcher identified key literature and provided insights on the various elements of the research the researcher then followed a qualitative analysis to be able to derive rich and in-depth information from the respondents. Qualitative analysis helps in studying participant's meanings and relationships to develop frameworks which could lead to the emergence of some theories (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012). Semi-structured interviews were adopted as a part of the qualitative analysis. The questions for the interview were developed by the researcher based on the main research topic, the literature review and the themes that emerged from the literature. There were also follow on or additional questions apart from the questions devised to get richer and deeper data. Ethical issues were kept in mind as well throughout the process of the research as well. Further, thematic analysis was adopted to decipher the data collected and the findings presented and discussed. The researcher has also provided certain practical implications or recommendations regarding the study in the later stages of the research and ethical issues were dealt as well.

The aim of this research is to understand the perception of the Generation Y (Gen Y) on the importance of Learning and development (L&D) on their career growth. The researcher also aims to study other objectives such as the essence of the term career to Gen Y, if the Gen Y have a career path mapped out for themselves, who is in charge of their career development and the role of L&D on their career. The sample chosen were the Gen Y working full time in the various fields in the services sector such as finance, IT, retail, hotel etc. The services sector in Ireland has been regarded as the best performing economy in the European Union for many years now especially after the Brexit (The Irish Times, 2017) and thus, the researcher decided to choose the sample from the services sector and also found the interviewees accessible. This research would also be of importance to the employers and L&D specialists in this sector as it provides information and emerging themes on the importance of L&D on the career aspect of Gen Y which in turn is important for the organizations to realize and work on, to enable their employees be satisfied in their work and also be useful to retain them. This will become more clearer in the forthcoming chapters.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction:

This chapter is all about understanding what this research is going to delve into. According to Quinlan (2011), literature refers to research that has already been carried out by other authors, researchers or academicians and the results already been published. It is the duty of the author to understand the perspectives of previous research and critically analyse it while identifying gaps in those studies (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2008).

This research is going to focus on the perception of Generation Y on the importance of learning & development for their career growth. Though there have been various independent studies on L&D and Career Development of employees, the author was unable to find these components being studied before together. Thus, the author hopes to find interesting insights emerging from the research undertaken. This chapter will provide the reader insights about Generation Y, their characteristics, what L&D is, its importance and how it affects the career growth of the employees.

Generation Y (Gen Y):

Though the Y in the Generation Y stands for youth, James Rowell believes that the reason why Generation-Y are called so, is because they always ask WHY! (Allen, 2011). But first, what is a generation? There are 2 perspectives to generations: social forces perspectives or the cohort perspective. The social forces perspective refers to social groups that share a similar history while a cohort perspective refers to a group of people born in the same time period (Lyons and Kuron,2014). While according to Cole, Smith and Lucas (2002) simply put, a generation is a combination of being in a similar age cohort and sharing similar values and beliefs which apply to the whole group. Typically, there has been division of 4 generations namely, traditionalists (prior to the World War II), baby boomers (1945-1960), Generation X (1960-1980) and Gen Y (1980-2000) (Lyons and Kuron,2014). Though there has been an on-going debate about the exact age group of the Gen Y (Mhatre and Conger,2011) for the purposes of this paper Gen Y will be considered as the cohort born in the given period between 1980-2000 (Cole et al., 2002; Polevoi, 2012; PWC, 2011).

The focus of this study is on Gen Y also known as the Millennials (Cole et al., 2002), GenMe by Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman and Lance (2010) and fussy job-hoppers by Budd (cited in Treuren and Anderson,2010) among many other names. Millennials are critical to the workforce as they form a larger number than any of their previous generations. In addition, it has been estimated that by 2020 Gen Y will be about 50% of the global workforce (PWC,2011).

How are they different?
While the previous generations are struggling with new technology their children are already tapping away at the computers (Cole et al.,2002). Further, these Millennials are quick in gathering data and communicating by various means like internet, tv, smart phones and social media while many in the previous generations prefer staying away from these. Gen Y are also considered to be risk takers whereas Gen X tend not to be (Mhatre and Conger,2011). Where Gen X are more pessimistic, the Gen Y are quite opposite and sport the 'anything is possible attitude' with a positive approach towards life. Gen Y are also considered more loyalty-lite (PWC,2011) than their previous generation counterparts and the reason cited is due to the need to achieve their career aspirations and goals (Mhatre and Conger,2011).

According to a survey by Arnstein (2016), it was found that Millennials required more guidance and are more motivated by rewards and recognition than previous generations. The business times (2011) mentions that work is a fulfilment for Gen Y while it is considered as a challenge for Gen X. Another difference cited is that Gen X are used to being on time, do as they are told and even take work home. On the contrary, Gen Y defy these practices (Allen,2011). From the above points, it emerges that there are a lot of stark differences between the previous generations and Gen Y.

Characteristics of the Gen Y in the workplace:
Howe and Strauss (2000) indicate that Gen Y are regarded as a positive but a highly misunderstood cohort. Correspondingly Koster (2013) believes that Gen Y have been largely negatively stereotyped by their previous peers but, actually have a lot to offer in the work environment. It has been stated that Gen Y are said to be more demanding, have high expectations, lack self-awareness (Arnstein,2016), are lazy and filled with a sense of entitlement (Gelbart and Komninos 2012), are fussy job hoppers (Budd,2008:

cited in Treuren and Anderson, 2010) loyalty-lite (PWC,2011), arrogant (O'Donnell,2014) and consequently high maintenance but, cannot be ignored as they are the future of the workplace (PWC,2011).

This generation's goal is not to land in a job but to find meaning in the work they do, they will not have 3-4 jobs but will have 3-4 careers until they find what they are looking for. Further, they expect the organization and the L&D to help them in their endeavour in finding meaning in their work. In addition, they expect to be trained technically and learn skills which are of interest to them (Buahene,2010).

The PWC report (2011) found that this generation is loyalty-lite and expect to have up to 5 employers in their life. Conversely, Polevoi (2012) states that they will be loyal if the organization is loyal to them and that is if the organization helps in showing a clear path for the career aspirations of the employees. This is also supported by Ababneh (2013). But, Gen Y believe that the best way to advance their career is to switch jobs frequently and are continuously on the lookout for new opportunities and as a result are being called continuous candidates (Burke,2016). In contrast, Kwan, Neveras, Scwartz, Pelster, Erikson and Szpaichler (2011) found that though Gen Y have intentions to switch early, the most aggressive job seekers are actually Gen X where at that time 58% were seeking new employment!

Some other features of the PWC report (2011) are that to this generation; work-life balance is more important than pay, they want to move up the ladder faster, would like to work overseas at some point in their career, prefer having feedback regularly and due to these and many other factors, there are generational tensions prevailing in organizations between Gen Y and their previous counterparts. In addition, the report also mentions that Millennials get attracted to those employers who provide good training and development as they insist on continuous learning. Another feature present in the report was that Gen Y would love to work with strong mentors and coaches or interact with those on senior management level. It also mentions that a mix of classroom instruction, self-study, coaching and group learning would be ideal training programmes for Gen Y. But these programmes should have clearly defined structure and objectives regarding what is to be achieved. Moreover, it also emerges that for Millennials the

most preferred employer would be the one that appeals to their career and lifestyle aspirations (Ware,2014).

In the report by Kwan et al. (2011) it was also found that promotion and job advancement are one of the top 3 reasons to retain Millennials. Another finding by the Manpower Group (2016) is that 62% of Millennials believe that if they lose their current job they can easily find another one soon enough; this fact emphasises the positive nature of Gen Y. Also, contradictory to Millennials previously being mentioned as lazy by Gelbart and Komninos (2012) the report by Kwan et al. (2011) suggests that the millennials work extremely hard and longer as well.

Further, Lynda Gratton (2013) a writer of the future of work, feels that there is a nervousness around Gen Y and wonders if they are really different from the other cohorts? She unravels the 3 paradoxes about this cohort. First, short term focus but are committed to work; Second, tech savvy but also prefer face to face for appraisals or career discussions; Third, recognition mongers such as promotion and recognition, but would like it in the form of feedback or career discussions. Gratton (2013) finally concludes that the organizations need to let the voices of Gen Y be heard, be connected to them and invest meaningful time and resources. She also stresses that to understand this generation it is important to listen to them.

Gen Y in Ireland:
As this research is based on Gen Y in Ireland, it is imperative to understand if Gen Y possess similar characteristics in Ireland. Though there has not been significant research about Gen Y in Ireland, a few glimpses from some studies are mentioned below. From a Gen Y survey conducted by Deloitte in 2011 (Kwan et al., 2011) the below features emerged: 73% believed that career opportunities are more important to them than salary (although salary was not far away) while work life balance is integral to their career and social activity is equally important well. Newenham (2014) found that it is important to show Gen Y that the organization is interested in them and that can be shown by holding career conversations. 52% of Gen Y said that they would love to work abroad and that they would job hop until they find the perfect job. The above-mentioned data shows that there are similarities among Millennials globally.

Positive effects to the organization by understanding Career needs of Gen Y:

It has been repeated in the literature that career aspirations, growth and development are truly important to Millennials and the organization that provides fulfilment of their career growth will be the most sought-after employer, otherwise Millennials are bound to job-hop. The study by De Hauw and De Vos (2010) suggested that managers should be more focussed and keen towards Millennial's career development as it can otherwise have negative effects on the organization. They further indicate that to understand Millennials' career expectations, it is imperative to understand the major career framework – the anticipatory psychological contract. This refers to their pre-employment beliefs before they join any organization, such as: work-life balance, social connections, career advancement, meaningful work, training and development.

The Manpower Group (2016) also provide some tips for dealing with Gen Y to retain them. Millennials should be advised about the career opportunities for advancement present in the organization. Opportunities can be created for them to enhance their skills, focus on their career plans regularly and have short term reviews of their work and have career-flexibility offered to them. These above-mentioned tips will help organizations keep Millennials longer while satisfying their career needs.

Learning:

Very famously said by Alvin Toffler, US Social Commentator – "The illiterate in the year 2000 would not be an individual who cannot read and write, but the one who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn" (Taylor and Furnham, 2005, p. 207). Learning can be defined as the process of increasing knowledge and skills and developing our attitudes or beliefs so that we have the opportunity for increased choice (Clifford and Thorpe, 2007). Over the years, it has transformed into 'knowledge for its own sake' (Ben-Hur, Jaworski and Gray, 2015) or an "environment" and an "experience," leveraging experts, content, and materials sourced and recommended by external communities as well as by other employees and internal experts said Pelster, Haims, Stempel and Van der vyver (2016).

Previously, what one would learn would be for life. But today, knowledge can become redundant quickly (Ferrarzzi,2015). Thus, as stressed by Cholli, Sreeraj and Kaur (2016) - in this fast-paced environment one needs to be able to learn and unlearn quickly to survive. Employees who adapt to these changes quickly can encourage their career growth with continuous learning. This is possible through continuously developing new habits and behaviours and foregoing the old ones (Rahman, Rahman, Ali and Khan,2016) as people today have greater access to information and more opportunities to learn than ever before (Little,2016).

Further, Malcolm Knowles came up with 6 assumptions about what motivates adult learners as these will help the organization engage employees in learning: (Beevers and Rea,2010)

> Adults need a reason to learn something
> Adults need to undergo experiences
> They need to be responsible for their decisions
> They want to learn something that is relevant for their personal life.
> Adult learning is centred around problems in the workplace.
> The learners prefer internal rather than external motivators.

Informal learning is another approach which focuses on learning based on business relationships to develop professionally. Brookfield (cited in Campana, 2014) suggested that learning does not take place only in a formal environment but is inclusive of informal learning such as self-learning, networking, social interaction and working in teams. Further, it is stressed that maximum learning occurs through informal methods which increases efficiency in the workplace. Informal learning can be defined as – learning through experiences, guiding, coaching, mentoring etc.

While Leslie, Aring and Brand (1998) insist that informal learning is very relevant to the workplace and helps not only in acquiring knowledge but also applying it. Situated learning is another means to learn through everyday participation and activities. Case studies by Lave and Wenger have suggested about how newcomers learn more through interacting with experts and participation in various activities than through formal L&D (Campana,2014).

Employees today also believe that 'Learning curve is the Earning curve' and most employees demand learning opportunities (Pelster et al.,2016). Not only can learning opportunities and support provided by organizations help in attracting, motivating and retaining employees, but they also make the employees feel wanted, valued and respected in an organization (Lancaster and Di Milia, 2014).

Development:
"Development is equated with knowledge acquisition, understanding new things, enhancing appreciation of people and the ability to recall effectively" (Sofo, 1999, p.36). It also includes training, education and learning.

A development need is the gap which lies between the current and required performance and it can be addressed by creating individual development plans. This will also motivate employees and ensure that the organization is interested to take into account personal needs and work towards it. These plans can also be embedded into the employee's work and this way the employee can take responsibility of his own development (Clifford and Thorpe,2007). Development can even occur by observation, by taking action and risks or by reflecting on actions that could be correct or mistakes. It is also believed that development can happen through experiences (Sofo,1999).

In research by Lancaster and Di Milia (2014), the results suggested that for organizations to be able to positively impact employees' growth they should focus on: good quality and relevant development programmes, the content of the programmes should be relevant to the employees work and senior management should be dedicated to the development process of the employees.

Hosmer (2015) believes that investing in employee development has an upward beneficial impact on the organization. 3 major considerations are undertaken for employee development: abilities and skills - their current skills and what they require; organizational skills - needs of the organization; and employee interests on career goals - their future ambitions and plans for development. These development considerations can help in engagement, retention, development of individuals and the organization. Thus, employee development can be seen as a proactive strategy.

Fig 2.1: Aligning skills and interests with organizational needs. Hosmer (2015) p. 3

Importance of L&D:

Learning and Development (L&D) though individually explained, together focuses on helping employees gain new skills leading to productivity (CIPD, 2017). But learning and development can be distinguished. It is believed that learning is about gaining knowledge while development includes learning and prepares one to be something (Joy-Matthews, Megginson and Surtees, 2004). While Sofo (1999) argues that learning is a process of making mistakes while development is when you avoid those mistakes.

According to CIPD (2017), L&D's purpose is to improve individual and organizational performance by aligning their strategies to achieve a common goal. This is also supported by the Benchmark report 2015 (Little, 2016). L&D is important because the job seekers are more inclined towards organizations that provide L&D interventions which will in turn support their career growth (Valcour,2014). It was also seen earlier that most Millennials argued for L&D interventions (Buahene,2010) and if there is no L&D it would negatively affect the organization (PWC,2011). Without L&D it would not be possible to tackle the ever-changing environment, and the employee turnover trend (CIPD Podcast, 2016). Living in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environment makes it even more important for L&D professionals (CIPD, 2015).

L&D is continuously evolving and becoming multifaceted and it needs to keep updating itself to serve the needs of the organization (CIPD, 2015). Discussed in the podcast by CIPD (2016) regarding the shift L&D is going through, some key trends emerged: L&D needs to support organizations worldwide as companies are dispersed and employees are very mobile; new technology is always around the corner and it is imperative to stay up to date with it and use it for L&D purposes; availability of an abundance of data is

making it difficult for employees to screen relevant information; and that L&D is a function for all employees in an organization as opposed to only leadership. With newer trends come challenges. Some points that emerged in the 17th CIPD Annual Survey was: one could provide learning interventions but it should also be known how it connects to their roles and whether it has helped improve performance, new tools keep trending and L&D professionals should be able to utilise those for the better purpose; it also said that one should have an eye on the future and analyse how the coming generations need to be handled (CIPD,2015).

While Dillon (2017) suggests that the speed and complexity of the workplace puts pressure on L&D's ability to be able to provide meaningful and timely support. L&D today is always in chase mode as it needs to support many functions of the organization. It is also being challenged by the employees and the owners as well. As a result, it now needs to change its ways and adapt a holistic approach. JD Dillon (2017) a learning strategist who has put in 15 years of effort to design and implement learning and performance strategies for big global organizations came up with a practical approach to address challenges facing employee development via learning. As argued by him, a layered learning approach will address the needs of the modern challenges facing L&D as each layer only strengthens the other. The layers are as follows: (Dillon,2017)
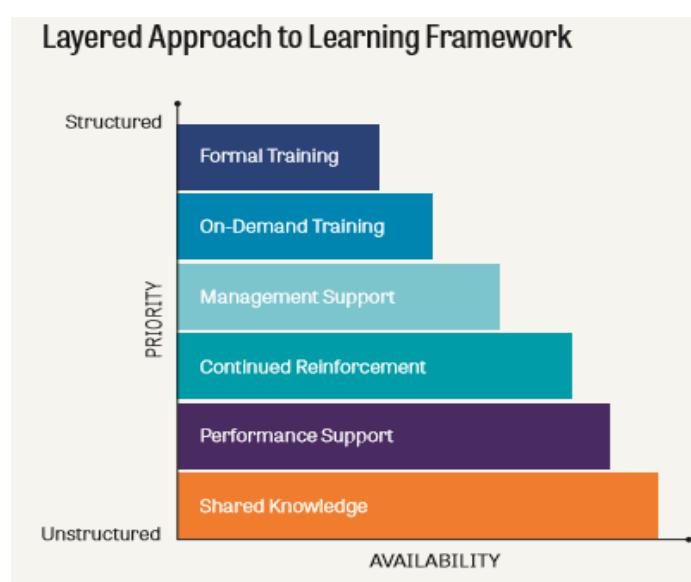

Fig 2.2: Layered approach to Learning Framework. Dillon (2017) p. 44.

- ➢ Shared knowledge: Shared knowledge is very important for any individual or an organization in this wide and globally connected world and for this there should be easy access to information. It is argued that this will also reduce formal training. It is also important to have good technological access to make shared knowledge a success.

- ➢ Performance support: shared knowledge is good, but not enough. the next important thing would be support. To answer queries which were unanswered from employees, there should be mechanisms to provide that, such as an electronic performance support system.

- ➢ Continued reinforcement: it is important that employees know what information they should use or retain or which they should check out when necessary. That is why reinforcement is critical. Some measures such as personalised and adaptive technology can be introduced by L&D so that there is long term retention of knowledge which has an impact on their role. This way the employees can look up what is necessary at the point of time.

- ➢ Manager support: It is evident that the manager is crucial to an employee's development in an organization and their role is essential. L&D can provide day-to-day support to managers by helping them better coach in the moment of need.

- ➢ On-demand training: This refers to the kind of training when employees want to widen their horizons and go outside of the gamut of training provided by the organization. These could be in the form of online courses, video series or instructor led events.

- ➢ Formal training: It is suggested that formal training be provided only to the employees who need it, as it interrupts the flow of work. But unlike before, formal training can be used in conjunction with the other modern tactics.

According to Dillon (2017) it is best to start at the base of the framework and progress to layers which support the employees best. It becomes imperative to align the tactics consistently according to the needs to achieve best results.

Further, just like in Maslow's hierarchy needs, employees today are very interested in the personal growth needs which is their road to self-actualization. Thus, employees would like to be a part of such organizations which help in attaining one's personal

goals. They would prefer both extrinsic and intrinsic learning which includes not only technical and professional learning but also holistic approaches to learning which can help improve the individuals. They would also like if the organization would take into account their needs while planning for learning and development training (Ginante,2015).

Career orientation:

According to SHRM (2015), in the 20th century there was no thought about career choice or career progression and it was dictated by social status, family, tradition and gender. In that period, employees were loyal and would stay in one organization until retirement, but today it is a thing of the past and individuals are in charge of their own career ladder.

A talent 2020 survey by Deloitte (Kwan et al., 2011) found that the top reason for Millennials to look for alternative employment was lack of career progression. This was also supported by further research conducted by Penna (Ross,2014). But employees in organizations today who are at ease with technology are able to find information for themselves which can also chart out methods for their own career development (Little,2016) as they are also very career conscious (Merchant Jr, 2010). Job hopping has become a trend to fulfil career goals (Little,2016). This argument shows that Millennials are influenced by their career progression which is either provided by the organization or they will fend for themselves by moving on.

While Camps and Rodriguez (2011) argue that employees will stay committed to those employers who have invested in them. It is also backed by Ababneh (2013) that if organizations invest in the career development of employees then employees tend to stay, increase their commitment, perform well and accomplish organizational objectives. However, this may seem contradictory to the notion of job hopping to advance in their career as previously mentioned by Little (2016). Also, previously it was assumed that employees just want to go up the career ladder vertically. But today it is not only about moving vertically but also horizontally or whichever adds meaning to the work performed (Merchant Jr, 2010). In fact, traditional approaches towards career have been replaced by more contemporary approaches such as Boundaryless and Protean careers (Korsakiene and Smaliukiene, 2014).

According to Palade (2010) an individual's career is based on subjective factors which depend on the individual such as their personality and interests while the objective factors depend on the organization and the environment.
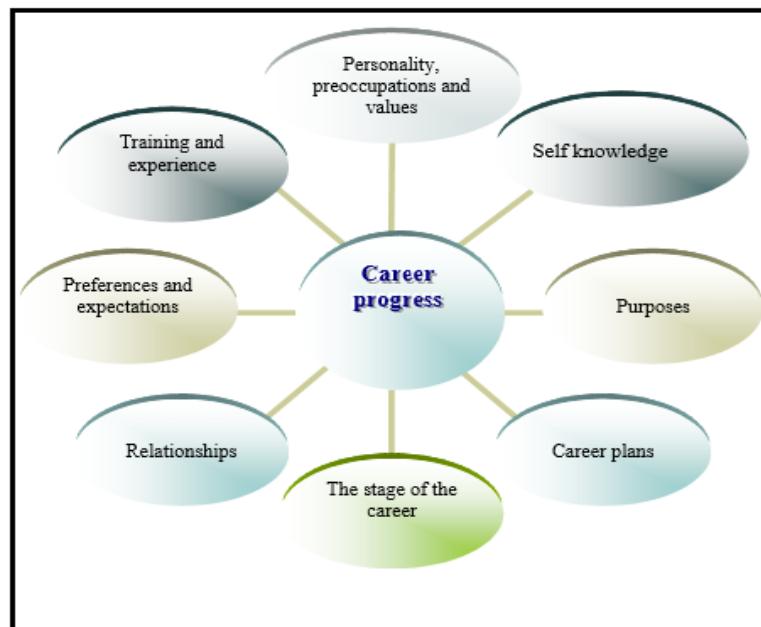

Fig 2.3: Subjective Factors. Palade (2010) p. 127

Fig 2.4: Objective Factors. Palade (2010) p. 127

From the above figures, it can be analysed that there are many similarities between this model and the needs of Gen Y as explained in the earlier sections. For example: most of the millennials expect good relationship with their seniors and be able to learn from them, they are well involved with their career plans, rely on developing themselves and want to keep learning through training and experiences. While from the objective factors, it is well established that they prefer an organization that would invest in an employee's L&D and an organization that has interest in their employees and have career planning strategies in place.

Relation between L&D and Career Development:
There are various methods through which L&D can be provided to enhance the career growth of employees (Clifford and Thorpe,2007): coaching: a one to one technique where one applies skills and knowledge already learnt to a present piece of work; delegation: where an employee is empowered to perform duties provided by the supervisor; e-learning: the type of learning that is provided by using electronic means; mentoring: this is different from coaching and helps an employee improve a particular skill which in turn improves performance; networking: which in a sense is making connections and links to share knowledge; on the job training: a traditional but very relevant method where the employee is taught how to perform the task while working; self-study: where one learns through seeking information oneself. These were some of the techniques useful for L&D and one can choose various methods to provide L&D.

A more contemporary approach to the unrest among the employees, are the career development programs. These help employees fulfil their individual needs while continuing to provide services to the organization. Most importantly the development plans must align with business objectives while catering to the needs of the employees as well (Merchant Jr,2010).

But it is argued by Merchant Jr (2010) that career development is not about "getting ahead", instead it is getting to be the best one can be and stand in an organization where they can contribute to the goals of the organization. It is also believed that these career development programs have emerged as a result of the changing nature of the workforce such as work-life balance, diversity, focus on quality, changes in technology, employee motivation and retention (Merchant Jr, 2010).

Career paths and ladders can also be used as tools to retain employees and achieve organizational goals (SHRM,2015). While Cao and Thomas (2013) argue that career paths will be more effective if used in conjunction with the company's overall development systems. They have also developed a career pathing process which includes creating a career map which shows different possible positions and roles in one's career.
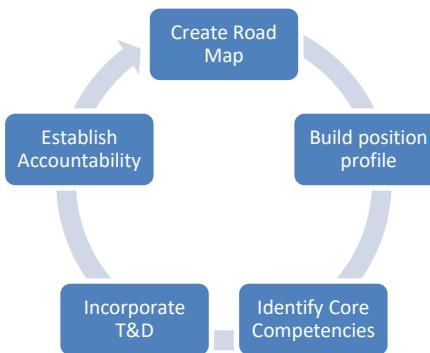
Fig: 2.5 – Career Pathing Process. Cao and Thomas (2013)

One needs to create position profiles which help in differentiating among job roles and their requirements. Next one should identify competencies which show differentiating behaviours and can help in analysing oneself. Then the organizations can link career paths with employee development by providing opportunities for training and development. The final step would be to ensure that the process stays effective and is accountable.

Hosmer (2015) created an Employee Development Process Map as he suggests that career development is crucial for the organization. This map helps in understanding where you are now and what you should do next.

- The first step involves setting career aspirations and looking at the future. For this the manager needs to set up a meeting with the employee and talk to them regarding their career aspirations while keeping the organization's position in mind.
- The second is to assess the needs, strengths and goals of the employee. This can be done by an informal question session, performance reviews or a 360-feedback mechanism.

- Once the previous step is fulfilled, the next step is to identify the areas for strength and development.
- This will help create a plan which involves setting goals, listing of activities, identifying resources, determine success criteria and establish target dates.
- Finally comes the implementation which falls on the employee whether he/she has put it into action. The manager can check if there is progress, can provide support, motivation and encouragement to the employee.

Fig: 2.6 - Employee Development Process Map. Hosmer (2015) p.6

It is now important to reiterate the fact that business objectives must align with the needs of the employee, otherwise there will not be a good return on the time and money invested in the learning and development programs. Second, it is also important to have conversations with employees regarding their career aspirations. For these the below points need to be accepted and performed by the organizations (Ross,2014).

➢ Formalising career development: Most organizations do not have a formal career development approach. This leads to employees being unaware of their future development and prospects within the organization. This goes back to the fact cited earlier, that lack of opportunity is the major reason for employees to leave

an organization. Instead this method will help in retention as employees would be aware that there are mechanisms within the organization that can help them. It is important to keep in mind that it should be natural and positive and not an awkward mechanism to put in place. Also, this stresses that communication should be focussed upon.

> Career conversations: Employees do require guidance from their managers or L&D to make career decisions. Managers need to be aware of the business plans and situation of the company in order to advise the employees in the right direction. Managers also need to be wise and confident to hold these conversations with employees. They can be prepared or be provided with training by the L&D to do so.

> Frequency of career conversations: In the research by Ross (2014), it was found that 41% of Millennials prefer having feedback at least once a month. But this would lead to high consumption of time as formal procedures are longer. Instead, managers could have informal chats with employees regarding their performance as well as career moves or progression. This could save time and also provide employees with career talks which could encourage employees that the organization is interested in them.

By making employees a part of this process and getting to understand their career aspirations will help in aligning the organizational strategy and individual needs and reengage employees with the organization.

Also, as previously mentioned, in this changing environment it is also necessary to continuously develop and improve the L&D programs. Below are some methods through which this can be done (Ferrazzi,2015):

> Managers should be willing to coach their employees despite the busy schedule.
> There should be awareness that L&D needs are short lived and change continuously.
> Employees take charge of their own career development.
> Employees should have flexible learning options.

> ➤ Different learning styles should be adopted for different cohorts of people.

Thus, it can be seen that it is important to balance employee needs and career aspirations with the organization's current scenario and its future.

Conclusion:
Through the literature it was found that Gen Y, a cohort that is a highly misunderstood one (Howe and Strauss, 2000) is the future of the workplace and it is necessary to understand this cohort and take measures to provide career growth and development. It can be concluded that there is clearly an opportunity for L&D professionals to help plug this talent and this generation by creating more compelling opportunities and focussing on their career development (Ross,2014).

A theme can be considered as an extraction from the literature (Javadi and Zarea, 2016). It is important to identify themes in order to analyse data which is collected. From the above literature following themes emerged: Career consciousness of the Gen Y and their involvement in their career progression, Employer's role in the career growth of the Gen Y, Gen Y's interest in their career growth and the role of L&D in their career. Based on the themes that emerged combined with what the researcher wants to find out, set of questions will be derived for the interviews. Once the interviews are conducted the data will then be analysed and the themes studied. Now, the researcher will explain the research methodology that was used and why.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH QUESTION AND METHODOLOGY

Research Question:

The main objective of this research is to understand the perception of Gen Y on the importance of L&D on their career growth. This objective was formulated by the researcher due to the interest in the subject L&D and the trend of the importance of Career to an individual of this generation.

Research objective 1: To understand the essence of the term Career to Gen Y?

As is stated in the literature, Gen Y are more interested in a job that is meaningful to them (Buahene,2010), are career conscious (Merchant Jr, 2010) and if not provided with right career progression they tend to find organizations that do so (Mhatre and Conger,2011). This emerging theme of how career conscious the Gen Y are intrigued the researcher to understand what career actually means to the participants.

Research objective 2: Do the Gen Y have a career path mapped out for themselves?

As mentioned in the literature that career path can be used as a tool to fulfil the career objective of the Gen Y (SHRM,2015). It was intriguing to the researcher pertaining to the previous objective, if the Gen Y are really career conscious, then do they have a career path for themselves?

Research objective 3: Who is the major stakeholder regarding the Career Development of Gen Y?

On the one hand, it is believed that the most preferred employer to the Gen Y would be the ones that provide a career growth and development path and are supportive of their career (Ware, 2014) while on the other hand it states that today individuals are in charge of their own career ladder (SHRM, 2015). Thus, the researcher wanted to find out what the respondents believe to be the most involved in their career development.

Research objective 4: To understand what the role of L&D is for Gen Y.

It was mentioned by Buahene, 2010 that L&D can help the Gen Y in finding meaning in their work. While Valcour, 2014 says that today the employees are more inclined towards L&D when they join any organization. Thus, the researcher wanted to find out how important would L&D be for the respodents.

Methodology:

Introduction:

This chapter will help the reader understand why research is undertaken, the research philosophy behind it, the approach used, the methods adopted, the process of analysis and the limitations it entails in regards to the existing research question and the literature. It critically analyses why the relevant methods were chosen and how it has been incorporated into the study. It also explains the participant's profile and if any ethical issues are involved which need to be taken care of.

Why do Research?

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012) define research as a process that is undertaken to find out answers in a systematic way and thus increase knowledge. The authors believe that the process has to be systematic, not based on beliefs and the whole process should provide meaningful insights. In practical terms, it is about identifying a problem, understanding the problem, finding and collecting information by knowing who to ask and what to ask and then interpreting it (Adams, Khan and Raeside, 2014).

Further, research is conducted either to understand phenomena one is not aware of or to enhance what one already knows. It is also critical to create a distinction between research methods and research methodology. Research methods refers to the techniques which are used to gather and analyse data while a research methodology is the science or philosophy behind the research (Saunders et al., 2012).

Research Philosophy:

Research philosophy refers to the development and nature of knowledge. It can also be termed as the assumption to how you view the world and these assumptions inspire your research strategy (Saunders et al., 2012). Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2008) believe that there are three reasons why it is important to understand philosophy:

- First, to clarify research methods or the over-all research strategy to use.
- Second, to understand the different methodologies and understand the nuances of each
- Third, be creative in use of methods which one might not have used before.

Mkansi and Acheampong (2012) argue that there are incoherent classifications of research philosophies which add to the dilemma of researchers and particularly students. They believe that there are a number of studies which have different views on these, common themes are present but there is no consensus in unity of classifications. According to Saunders et al. (2012), there are two ways to think about research philosophy and each will shape and influence the research process, they are Ontology and Epistemology. Ontology and epistemology cannot be separate from business research. They will delve into ways through which research questions are formulated and developed (Bryman and Bell, 2007).

Ontology refers to the nature of reality and consists of two aspects: objectivism and subjectivism. The former suggests that social entities are present in reality which are independent of social factors whereas the latter indicates that perceptions and actions of the social factors help in defining social phenomena. For this study subjectivism would be more appropriate as it deals with the perceptions of social entities.

Epistemology is considered as to what is acceptable knowledge (Saunders et al.,2012) but Bryman and Bell (2007) argue whether the social world can be studied with the principles of natural sciences. Epistemology is further divided into Positivism and Interpretivism. According to Easterby-Smith et al. (2008), the key idea behind positivism is that it should be measured objectively. Further, positivism is criticised on the grounds that the social world of business cannot be measured objectively and it is then that interpretivism emerged. According to Saunders et al. (2012), interpretivism advocates that there are differences in human roles concerning the social factors and it is the researcher's role to interpret these roles according to the meaning provided. It is also argued by them that interpretivism is highly appropriate in business, management and HRM fields as these entail social elements and it helps in understanding their point of view. Thus, in this research interpretivism was adopted as the researcher needed to understand the respondents' perception and positivism would not help in doing so as it is more objective in nature.

Research Approach:

It is important to analyse the approach your research will delve into as there is a relationship between theory and research in terms of the strategy. There are basically two approaches namely deductive and inductive. A deductive approach is used when the conclusion is derived from a set of premises or assumptions (Saunders et al., 2012). In contrast, in an inductive approach, the researcher infers the implications of the findings which are based on the theory (Bryman and Bell, 2007). In simple words, an inductive approach refers to observing the world and coming to a generalisation. The observation reveals patterns or trends which then helps in introducing a general theory. It has been said that inductive approach was largely being replaced by the deductive approach in the 20th century. While, in the deductive approach first the general prepositions are made which are then put to test (Adams, Khan and Raeside, 2014).

Bryman and Bell (2007) mention that deductive approaches are more suited to quantitative methods while inductive approaches are more suited to qualitative research. Further, deductive approaches are criticised by inductive approach followers as deductive methods are very rigid and there is no scope for alternative phenomena to arise (Saunders et al., 2012). This piece of research is about understanding the perception of employees and thus inductive approach is more suitable than a deductive approach as data is first gathered and is then formed into theory.

Research Methods:

There are typically two main methods to research which are: qualitative and quantitative methods which can be distinguished in various ways. Quantitative methods deal with numbers while qualitative method is a data collection technique which generates non-numerical data or basically words. In qualitative methodology, there is more involvement of the researcher who can better understand the point of view of the study and is in direct contact with the respondent. Whereas, in quantitative research there is no direct contact with the respondent (Graue,2015). Quantitative research is very structured whereas qualitative research can be unstructured so that emerging concepts can be enhanced. Quantitative studies provide hard data which basically refers to carefully measured criteria whereas qualitative data provides a rich and deep understanding of the response provided by the participant. In qualitative data, one can create a good rapport with the respondent whereas in quantitative data the researcher may be unaware of the

participant. Above mentioned are the basic distinctions between the two but they cannot be considered as hard and fast distinctions (Bryman and Bell, 2007).

To gain a further understanding of qualitative method it should be noted that it studies participant's meanings and relationships to develop frameworks which could lead to the emergence of some theories (Saunders et al., 2012). The researcher is also able to get a point of view of the participant wherein the participant is not confined or limited to time or expressions. The data collected is also rich and deep which is a benefit to the researcher. But each method has its criticisms; qualitative research is too subjective in nature and relies wholly on the response of the respondent. Also, as qualitative study is taken in smaller numbers than quantitative research there is the problem of generalization. The data collected is also unstructured (Bryman and Bell, 2007).

There is no consensus about which type of method should be used for which question, but according to Jankowicz (2000) it depends on the research problem. For this research, qualitative methodology was adopted; as the researcher wanted to understand the perception of the respondents, this method was more suited as it would help the researcher gather rich data and give the respondent an opportunity to express their opinions freely. It would also help in the emergence of new themes or theories not predicted by the researcher.

Further, to gather data under qualitative methods, interviews (structured, semi-structured and unstructured) and focus groups are used. The researcher has applied the use of interviews (semi-structured) in this research and the reasons why are mentioned below. Other alternative methods such as surveys which are usually concerned with a deductive approach were not used as they allow for standardised data collection and to compare variables but there is no scope to delve deeper into the thoughts of the interviewees (Saunders et al., 2012).

Semi-structured Interviews:
A research interview refers to a conversation between two or more people wherein the interviewer asks questions for a specific purpose to which the interviewee is willing to respond. Further, interviews provide valid and reliable data which is relevant to the research (Saunders et al.,2012). For this research, semi-structured interviews were used;

here, the researcher has a list of themes emerging from the literature and specific topics to be covered (Bryman and Bell, 2007). However, these interviews are called non-standardised (Saunders et al., 2012) as each interview conducted may differ from the other. In some interviews, certain questions may be omitted because they would have already been answered in another question or the order changed according to the situation of the interview, and sometimes additional questions may be asked on the basis of what is answered by the respondent. Thus, this interview process is said to be flexible (Bryman and Bell, 2007).

The researcher then adopted both face to face and telephone interviews for this research. In face to face interviews the participants can be observed and a rapport can be built while, in a telephone interview the respondent cannot be observed but it offers convenience (Quinlan, 2011). The interviews were also recorded after seeking the permission of the interviewee and guaranteeing them that their responses would be regarded as anonymous.

The questions for the interview were developed by the researcher based on the main research topic, the literature review and the themes that emerged from the literature. There were also follow on or additional questions apart from the questions devised to get richer and deeper data. But sometimes, it was done to get the interviewees on track if they were deviating from the main theme.

Sampling:
Sampling refers to the selection of a subset from the whole population, wherein probability or non-probability approach of sampling can be used. For the purposes of this research, non-probability sampling method was adopted i.e the sample was not randomly chosen. Convenience sampling, one of the non-probability sampling methods was used which refers to the kind of sampling that is accessible by the researcher. However, this method does not provide full representation of the population. The researcher also used snowball sampling where people known to the participants were interviewed as well (Bryman and Bell, 2007).

Participants' Profile:

Generation Y (born between 1980-2000) were the main target of this research. The reason why Gen Y were chosen and not Gen X is because Gen Y are going to be the future of the workforce as mentioned in the previous chapter and it is critical to understand their behaviours and perceptions. Though interviewing Gen X would have given broader and comprehensive data, the researcher believed that Gen Y's opinions and perceptions are more relevant to the topic.

The number of participants interviewed were 8 (4 telephone and 4 face to face) and all the interviews were audio recorded. The participants hailed from the services sector; a particular sector was chosen to get niche data instead of generalised data from all sectors and the participants from the services sector were accessible to the researcher as well. The participants in the research were all Gen Y working full time in financial, banking, consultancy, hospitality, retail and IT services. Some of the participants were recent graduates while some at executive level. The ages captured were mostly between the ages of 20-32 which was good because it provided views from individuals of different ages within the same cohort. But the researcher was not able to interview anybody between the age of 32-37.

Qualitative Data Analysis:

It is necessary to analyse qualitative data to understand the phenomena that emerges from gathering the data. In qualitative data analysis, it is crucial for the researcher to understand subjective meanings which are uncovered from the respondents as the researcher is also subjectively involved with the data (Quinlan, 2011). Just like in quantitative methods, even in qualitative research the process of analysis starts with coding (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Open coding refers to the data being divided into conceptual units. Once coding was done, thematic analysis was followed. This approach extracts meanings and concepts from data and records themes that emerge. Also, it is said that themes and codes are used interchangeably but actually themes are an outcome of coding (Javadi and Zarea, 2016). Once the data was collected the author formalised them into themes that emerged in tandem with the literature and also analysed if new themes emerged which are presented in the forthcoming chapters.

Ethical issues in Research:

Ethics is referred to as the standards of behaviour that guides one's conduct in the process of research (Saunders et al., 2012). Whether it is quantitative or qualitative it is important to be aware of the ethical considerations (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). It is also the moral responsibility of the researcher while conducting research. Ethical responsibility should be considered from the selection of the topic itself. Also, it should be noted that there is a difference between ethical and legal considerations. Not everything that is legal is ethical. The next most sensitive relationship is between the researcher and the participants. It is argued that participants should be fully informed about the research and should not be coerced to take part in the research. The researcher should also use appropriate techniques for the research and it should be made available to the stakeholders. In addition, the findings of the research need to be fair and accurate while the strengths and weaknesses of the report should also be disclosed (Ghauri and Gronhaug,2005).

Further, as this is a qualitative piece of research, it entails many ethical considerations. First, are the kind of questions asked whether they are too personal in nature or which the interviewees may be reluctant to respond to. Second, the way it is asked, whether it could be leading or asked in a blunt way. Third, the upkeep of confidentiality and anonymity of the information provided by the interviewees and last, the most crucial one is the informed consent of the interviewees which means they are well aware of their participation (Mason,2006) and also the fact that their interviews are going to be recorded for analysis. These previous points have been well kept in mind by the researcher and duly followed.

Limitations:

Though Interviews are considered as one of the best methods for gathering data, it has its limitations (Easterby- Smith et al., 2008). In general, interviews lack generalisation- as it is usually a small sample and in this case semi-structured interviews were used with 8 participants only. Thus, it cannot be believed that the whole population would have the same perception. Validity also may be another issue as it cannot be confirmed if the researcher has gained true and fair information. There could also be bias from the interviewee while answering questions as well as from the interviewer by asking leading questions or influencing the respondent through their tone. Reliability is another

issue, as the interviews are semi-structured. The response would depend on the path the interview takes and sometimes the order of the questions changes or some questions are omitted. However, these limitations can be overcome if the researcher is well prepared. The researcher should be well versed with the topic, analyse themes and prepare questions and the location of the interview should be appropriate as well (Saunders et al.,2012).

Apart from the above-mentioned points the researcher also faced time constraints and thus had to undertake few face to face interviews and few telephone based interviews. While using the telephone based interviews there was a lack of voice clarity sometimes, but it did not cause any major issue. The sample was also not random and convenience sampling was used. Thus, the researcher was unable to tap the entire population of Gen Y in the services sector and also could not provide generalised findings.

Conclusion:
Once the reader is aware of why this research was undertaken and the methodologies and techniques used, now left is its application. In the forthcoming chapters, the methods used will be clearer which involves findings and analysis continued with the discussion of the interviews undertaken.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction:

In the previous chapter the author has identified the methodology to answer the research objectives set out by the author. In this chapter, the author will present the findings that emerged from the interviews in tandem with what the researcher set to find out, the literature and if any new findings or themes have emerged. This will be done by following a thematic analysis to answer the research questions.

But first, though the questions were aimed at understanding the importance of L&D on Gen Y's career many defining characteristics of the Gen Y emerged from the interview which support the literature on Gen Y. Many of the interviewees mentioned that the Gen Y tend to be quick learners by providing examples such as recently joining the organization but being able to grasp the system in place quite easily. The interviewees also agreed that they easily understand and adapt technology while the other generations look to them for help if need be, which was previously mentioned by Cole et al. (2002) and PWC (2011) in Chapter 2.

An interesting but divided approach emerged regarding Job-Hopping. Some of the interviewees did favour the job-hopping attitude stating that it may help in advancing their career while some did not. The majority agreed that they would not stay in a company for very long. Some even mentioned that *they have no Loyalty to the organization whatsoever and would leave if they find a better opportunity elsewhere.* This previous statement very strongly represents that the Gen Y are loyalty-lite (PWC, 2011; Mhatre and Conger, 2011).

Social interaction was also a major point discussed by most employees stating that it is easier to communicate and gel well with the Gen Y as the other generations seem more reserved and defensive. One of the interviewees mentioned about travelling to get more experience while one of the interviewee's background reveals that he has travelled in terms of work to a few countries until now which supports the point made in the PWC Report (2011) and Irish Times (2014).

Few of the respondents mentioned that they believe that the supervisor's presence is of significant importance at workplace, because if they need guidance then they could reach out to them immediately. While even reward and recognition is of immense

importance to a few of the interviewees as they want to be recognised for the work they contributed (Gratton,2013). These above-mentioned points are supported by Arnstein (2016).

In the literature, it has been mentioned by many authors (Ross, 2014; Gratton, 2013; PWC, 2011) that feedback is essential to the Gen Y. But an interesting point emerged through the interviews that Gen Y not only want to receive feedback and criticism but also want to be able to give back or express their feedback or criticism to the employer or manager as well.

Many interviewees did mention that money was not the top most priority but it is somewhere among the top 5 of their needs. While work life balance did come among the top 3 in the list for a few of the interviewees. It also emerged from the interviews that the Gen Y are very individualistic in nature and a majority of the interviewees consider themselves to be responsible and influential towards their career. It also emerged that protean and boundary less careers very well adapt to the Gen Y.

The Analysis:
Main Objective: To understand the perception of Gen Y on the importance of L&D on their career growth.

Sub-Objective 1: To understand the essence of the term Career to Gen Y.

For some career is a priority, a long-term goal or happiness, but it is very prevalent in their lives. Merchant Jr. (2010) indicated that the Generation Y are very career conscious and demand personal growth and career development. Career consciousness refers to being aware of one's skills, abilities and goals which will have an impact on the career. Interestingly, it was quite evident in the interviews that this theme seemed very prevalent. The respondents had different ways of expressing what career meant to them, but it stood out in each one.

According to Participant 2 *To me Career is the best I can be personally and professionally. I want to do something that stands out from others. Be it a behaviour, attitude or a skill it should be different from the others. I also think it is necessary to be a specialist in something which gives you an advantage and also makes you more attractive in the market.*

While for participant 3: *Career to me is to be able to get a job anywhere I want and am comfortable in those shoes. These will relate to the skills and abilities that I have and that is why I like to keep learning and acquiring skills so that I can say I have done this and that. For example, I would love to say that I am really good and adept at Microsoft office and it can be an advantage to find jobs.*

But participant 5 says that career needs may vary according to age. *At this point in my life career is really important to me maybe because I'm young, while later there may be other priorities.* She also says that *it is the end result that's important and I want to be successful and do something different as well and definitely improve myself and gain experience along the way.*

For participant 6 it is about achieving personal goals. *The kind of work I do should help me achieve my personal goals regarding my career. In this competitive world developing career means everything and I would take any opportunity that helps me perform better. I even think that career is about where you are, what you are and where you want to be and this can be uncovered by analysing your skills and abilities.*

Apart from career consciousness various other themes emerged from the interviews. The interviewees believed that career is something very personal to them and links directly to their happiness and goals. It provides them with personal satisfaction. A new theme that arose is that 'specialisation' could be an important aspect for the Gen Y for their career growth. If provided with the right L&D towards that specialisation, it can be of benefit to them in their career growth.

While participant 5 provided with a new interesting insight about how the meaning of career can differ with age and priorities which has not been mentioned in the literature. Career also meant being successful and different from others. In conclusion, each had a different way to express what career means to them but it is very much essential in their lives.

Sub-Objective 2: Do the Gen Y have a career path mapped out for themselves?

Though this element has not been discussed in the Gen Y literature, the researcher was interested to find out if the interviewees have a path mapped out for themselves. It was found that majority of the interviewees had no strict career path mapped out for themselves. However, most did have a certain idea as to where they want to be but were not sure about how they were going to reach that goal. Buahene (2010) suggests that the Gen Y's goal is all about finding meaning in the job they do and do not want to cap it on a particular path or designation. If they are unhappy, not challenged or not involved in the work they do they would leave and find something more meaningful.

When asked if the participant has a career path mapped out, Participant 8's response was *No! Not at all. I have not planned anything. Because for me it is more about taking the opportunity as it arrives and I don't want to rush into anything. If I find something that may be of interest to me then I would apply.*

Similarly, Participant 1 also says *I am not a planner at all. I am happy at the place I am in the moment but later if I realize I do not enjoy it anymore or am not challenged then I may decide to move.* This response strengthens the argument that it is more about meaningfulness of the work or career rather than just being in a job.

Participant 4 makes an interesting comment regarding the career plan. He says*: Well I would say that I just have a starting plan but no end because I want to keep growing. I don't want to cap it at a particular point. It will also depend on what the company has to offer me and what I can offer to them. But yes, I do have a plan which doesn't really have an end yet.*

While Participant 7 is more rational and says: *Career is my priority and I would like to call myself an ambitious person. Yes, I do have a plan in the sense that I know what field or what job I exactly want to be doing. But the problem is that there are so many external factors that affect me getting into that job such as competition, role availability and various other factors.*

From the responses of the interviewees, it was evident that they are not completely aimless. Most did have a rough idea of what they wanted to be doing but were also

willing to let other factors and circumstances be involved in their decision. Also, the responses link back to the positivism of the Gen Y. Most of the interviewees were quite positive about their career goals and did not want to limit them (Manpower group, 2016).

A theme emerging from the responses is that they would move to another job quite easily if they find what they are looking for or are unhappy in their current job. This can be termed as Job-Hopping, where in Little (2006) mentioned that Job-Hopping has become a new trend to fulfil career goals. But, there is a split in the responses among the interviewees. Half of the interviewees are supportive of job hopping while in contrast the other half were against the idea of Job-hopping.

Participant 6 considered job-hopping as a *cliché* and does not believe in it. Similarly, Participant 4 says that the benefits of Job-Hopping are minor than major. While, Participant 2 and 3 are against the idea of Job-hopping because they believe that it would reflect badly on the CV and shows that one lacks commitment to the organization.

Whereas, Participant 5 believes that it is alright to Job-Hop when you are younger than when you are older. And Participant 7 and 8 say that *they have no Loyalty to the organization whatsoever and would leave if they find a better opportunity elsewhere.* While participant 1 believes that she sees no harm in Job-Hopping and if there are circumstances if you need to do then go ahead.

Sub objective 3: Who is the major stakeholder regarding the Career Development of Gen Y

From the literature review it emerged that Employer's and Employee's role are the two aspects that are responsible for the career development of Gen Y. It has been mentioned that an organization that caters to the needs of the career growth of Gen Y tend to be the most preferred employer (Ware, 2014). However, SHRM (2015) argue that today employees are in charge of their own career development. But through the interviews, it was gathered that there is a mixed response regarding who is responsible for the Career Development of the employees. Some believe that it is themselves while majority of the

interviewees believed that both the employer and the employee are responsible in certain proportions and situations.

According to Participant 1: *I believe that at work the employer is in charge of my career development because of the opportunities and training and development they provide.* Another theme that emerged was taking the initiative and asking for what the employees require in terms of L&D. she mentions that: *I also think we have to take some effort on our own, as in if you require any L&D related to your career then ask for it, like how me and my team did at the beginning in areas where we needed more attention.* This was also emphasized by participant 3.

My career growth depends on myself as well as the supervisor. I think it is important to have a good relationship with your supervisor because they can guide you and they basically know you and can tell your positive and negatives which can help you in your career. But at the same time, imagine if you are part of the company and you find that the company is growing and you are not, then there is no thrill and you are just a person in the company but not really contributing. This is where I feel that L&D plays an important role as this can provide you with opportunities to grow and help you contribute and in the end, satisfy you and your career growth. (Participant 4)

2nd Participant's response supports Camps and Rodriguez (2011) and Ababneh's (2013) argument that employer's investment in career development is very important. However, the participant also believes it is herself that is in charge of her career development. She says: *I believe that an employer should invest in the employees and their career and if they do then I would stay a good few years in the organization. But I am the one who in charge of my career development because it is me who decides what I have to do in my life.*

Participant 5 strongly believes that: *It is me who is in charge of my career development because I think it is my responsibility to handle my life. Yes, various factors do influence the decision such as friends and family, my supervisor and the general workplace but if I want to develop myself I will have to put in effort.* Similarly, participant 6 *says that it is the organization or manager who can inspire your career but it is my individual discretion that matters.*

A theme that emerges is the relationship between the employee and employer. But, less than half of the respondents agreed that it is important to have a good relationship with the employer because they are the ones who can help in shaping you. This theme was also evident in Palade's (2010) subjective factors for career progress and in Dillon (2017). While, a new theme emerging in the role of employee is 'initiative' wherein the employees make an effort to ask from their employer for their own career development and next is the role of L&D in career development as it provides opportunities for one to grow as mentioned by participant 4.

It also emerged from the interviews that not only Career Development but there are various other factors that the employees look for when they join an organization which has an impact on the career of the employee. This can be traced back to the anticipatory psychological contract (De Hauw and De Vos, 2010). Majority of the employees required challenging and innovative roles from their employer. This was the first and foremost requirement of the employees. Apart from the above-mentioned, a few participants mentioned that open door policy and open communication is a must as well.

The most important to me is the open-door policy. I should have the freedom to ask questions for things I don't understand or even suggest things which may come to my mind and be heard. It is alright if they say no to the suggestion but I would like to know why, so that I fully understand. (Participant 2)

I want to be in a place where they can give and take criticism. If I am doing something wrong I want them to tell me and vice versa and I also mention this in all my interviews as well and is very important to me. This will definitely help me develop and become better at what I do. (Participant 8)

Participant 4 and 7 mentioned that reward and recognition is important to them for the contribution they make respectively. Participant 7 says: *I would like to be in an organization where I would like to keep learning, am provided with opportunities, shared responsibility and recognition. There should also be reward for if I have significantly contributed to the organization because that is one thing that keeps me motivated and to keep performing better.*

While participant 4 and 6 stress that company's culture, performance and policies such as diversity, fairness, treated with respect are vital to their choice of organization. And less than half participants even mentioned work life balance. It was also found in the interviews that salary or pay was an important factor but more or less on the third rung.

A new theme emerging here is the 'give and take criticism'. The Gen Y believe that it is not only crucial to receive criticism on their performance, but they should also be able to criticise their employer for if they feel there needs improvement in some area.

Sub-Objective 4: To understand what the role of L&D is for Gen Y.

It was unanimously agreed by all participants that Learning is continuous and majority of the employees learn something new almost every-day. It is supported by Cholli et al. (2016) that if one learns continuously then it can help in their career growth. It was also found through the interviews that to advance in their career most employees required L&D. They mentioned that most organizations did not have fixed career development programs or rigid L&D for the employees. But, very few agreed that managers did have career conversations with their employees however they were mostly short-term. Some respondents even mentioned that though they do not have proper L&D in place if required their employers will definitely provide them with it.

For me L&D begins from the time I join the organization. It starts with knowing about the company, its values, its people and about growing with the company. By contributing to the company, I can grow myself as well and that's why I want to keep learning. And yes, I have had career conversations with my employer where I have told the areas I am interested to learn and I did receive the required L&D for those. (Participant 4)

If I want to advance in my career I think L&D is extremely important because it provides you with certain skills and tools that helps you in handling situations and perform well. My employer had provided us with lot of intensive training when I first joined the organization and even provided us with more when we have asked them for it. I consider it important because this learning is both for professional and personal learning as well and stays with you for life. (Participant 1)

Similarly, Participant 6 says that *in this competitive world you have to keep updating yourself. Everyone cannot be fully skilled when they join an organization. Once they join, they need to understand the work and then fill in the shortfalls through L&D. If you do not you cannot survive in an organization. Not only that, L&D even adds value to yourself and to the organization and can greatly help you to advance in your career.*

Participant 5 and 7 believe that Feedback is an important aspect of L&D programs. Participant 7 says that *if there is only L&D then there is no point as there is no method to check if it has been effective and thus I think feedback should be provided with L&D as well.*

It emerged through the interviews that L&D plays an important role to advance in their career. It is something of value which is more important than other measures as L&D stays with you for lifetime. It also emerges that feedback is an important aspect of L&D. Though this was also supported by PWC (2011), Gratton (2013) and Hosmer (2015) in his Employee Development Process Map, the context differs. For the Gen Y, they believe that feedback and L&D go hand in hand. Without feedback the purpose of L&D is lost. This would be constructive to the career of the employees as well. It also emerged from the interviews that employees do not want to learn only for the purposes of performing at work but want to develop personally as well. This means that they require a holistic approach to learning and not only for the purposes of work.

The most suitable methods of learning for Gen Y?

Most of the employees stressed on learning on the job and by practically doing it, while less than half of the participants believed that classroom learning suits them the most.

According to Participant 3 *The world is ever changing and I think you have to keep learning because things may become outdated soon. Regarding the methods, I am a Big fan of classroom learning such as seminars and lectures because there is proof that you have done it and you can say that you have done it. Though on the job learning is quite important as well because you can practically apply what you have learnt but for me formal learning is the best.*

Participant 7 also agrees that *the most important for me is formal education. But I also think learning from observing, learning through people and experiences are really important as well. That is why L&D and continuously updating yourself is very important for your career. Things like an internship may help as well. For example, I was just telling my colleagues the other day that - if I hadn't done the internship that I did before then I wouldn't be able to do this job at all. So, I think it is important to put yourself in a learning position and then apply it and it will definitely be useful for your career.*

Participant 6 believes that *I believe that there is no one way of learning. You are learning at all times through different methods but most suitable to me is informal. In fact, you may not realize but you would still be learning and you will only realise later when you analyse the situation.*

While Participant 2 mentions that apart from on the job and learning through people or experiences, Job Shadowing would be the best way for her to learn. *I believe that formal learning is only 10% of learning and the most suitable to me is learning on the job and through people but the best would be if I could shadow somebody. It would also be nice if I have a strong leader who can guide me and who I can ask a lot of questions and is willing to answer my queries as well*.

The theme that emerges from the interviews is that learning is continuous. This was also well documented in the literature. All the respondents believed that learning happens on a continuous basis and some even mentioned that they try to learn something new every day. Like participant 7 mentioned that learning through people in important and this was also supported by Dillon (2017) regarding the Shared learning process. Most of the participants stressed on informal learning which has been supported by Campana (2014) and Leslie et al. (1998). Next, a new theme that emerged was about job shadowing as a method to learn which has not been mentioned in the literature. But, the participant also mentioned about having a strong leader would help her learn better which has been found in the PWC report (2011).

Conclusion:
From the responses of the interviewees and the laid-out research objectives a thematic analysis was followed. From these a number of existing themes from the literature and new themes emerged. These have been pointed out here. While, in the next chapter these findings will be explained in more detail following a critical discussion.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction:

In this chapter, the author will present the overall findings of this research and critically analyse if they link to the literature on the subject. In the previous chapter a number of themes emerged which were in tandem with the literature but a few new themes emerged as well. These will be discussed here.

This research set out to broadly identify if L&D is important for career growth to the Gen Y, for which the interviewees unanimously agreed that L&D is an extremely important aspect of their career and plays a crucial role in their development. But, the author had a number of other objectives to study which would collectively give an idea of how L&D is important for career growth.

First, the author wanted to understand how essential career is to the Gen Y. From which it emerged that career is a priority, long term goal, happiness, personal satisfaction for most interviewees which supports the idea of career consciousness found in the literature (Merchant Jr, 2010). A new and important finding that emerged was that career importance also depends on age and priorities in life. The respondent suggests that at a younger age there may not be many priorities and that would be the right time to make a career for yourself, whereas later you may have a different priority such as a family and your focus may shift from your career. This aspect was not found in the literature and was an interesting thought. Though this cannot be considered as relevant to all participants or the cohort as each may have their individual take on this. But, this finding should be noted by the employers and they can accordingly provide L&D to their employees considering the age and the position in life.

Specialisation was another theme that emerged. One of the respondents said that *I also think it is necessary to be a specialist in something which gives you an advantage and also makes you more attractive in the market.* This could be considered as an important aspect for L&D specialists. The employees could be provided with career counselling or career conversations to identify the area they would like to specialise in and provide L&D in those areas. This could help employees develop a career path for themselves.

Next, considering that the Gen Y are very career oriented and career conscious as mentioned in the literature, the author was interested to find out if the Gen Y had a

career path mapped out for themselves. It was surprising to find that the majority had no career path for themselves. Though most had a rough idea of what they wanted to do but were not sure as to how or when they would achieve that. They are also patient enough to let opportunities show up and are very positive in nature. For example, participant 8 says *for me it is more about taking the opportunity as it arrives and I don't want to rush into anything.* From the responses, it also emerged that only half the respondents were willing to job hop while the other half were against the idea of job-hopping. This finding is contradictory to Little's (2016) statement that today, job-hopping is a trend to fulfil career goals. Respondents even mentioned that job-hopping does *not lead to stability*, it *reflects bad on the CV* and it would make difficult for an *employer to invest* in you. While some respondents agreed that have no loyalty to a company at all and would move on to be something better if they find it. This aspect was very prevalent in the literature (PWC,2011).

There were mixed responses when asked about who is in charge or who plays a major role regarding the career development of Gen Y. It emerged that the career decisions lie in the hands of the respondents, but majority of the respondents agreed that both the employer and the employee are responsible for the career development. For example, participant 1 says that *I believe that at work the employer is in charge of my career development because of the opportunities and training and development they provide.* While another participant states that *It is me who is in charge of my career development because I think it is my responsibility to handle my life.* This statement is also supported by SHRM (2015) who mentioned that the employees are in charge of their own career development. It also emerged here that it is *initiative* that is important to some respondents who believe that they have to take the effort to ask for their career development.

There also emerged the emphasis on the relationship between the employer and employee (Palade, 2010). Some respondents believed that it is important to maintain strong relationships with your immediate boss or supervisor because they are the ones who oversee you and will know about your positives and negatives and can help you shape your path. This is prevalent in the Layered learning approach of JD Dillon (2017). He mentions that employer support is crucial for the L&D of an employee. Thus, it can

be seen that there is a divided approach regarding the career development aspect which is visible in the literature as well.

A new theme regarding feedback emerged here. According to the respondents not only should they receive feedback but also should be able to do the same with their employer. They believe that even the employees should be allowed to provide feedback or be able to criticise their employer if need be. This has not been spoken about in the literature and is an interesting finding. This even links back to the open-door communication that some respondents mentioned about. Though this is not directly related to L&D or career growth of the employee it can be important for an employer to notice this point.

It was then agreed by majority of the participants that L&D helps one to update themselves and add value to the organization and the work they do. They also agreed that it is extremely important for them to advance in their career because without L&D one cannot last in their role. One participant even mentioned that L&D begins from the time one joins in an organization and is a continuous process. It was also noted that the Gen Y believed that with L&D feedback is a really important aspect. The literature showed that constructive feedback is important to the Gen Y (Ross, 2014; Gratton, 2013; PWC, 2011). But, from the interviews it became clearer, to the respondents that L&D without feedback is of not much use. For example, one respondent mentioned *if there is only L&D then there is no point as there is no method to check if it has been effective and thus I think feedback should be provided with L&D as well.* This point is to be noted by employers and L&D providers that if feedback is provided after providing L&D it can help the participants to measure if the L&D has been effective.

It was also noted through the interviews that most of their employers do not have a formalised career development mechanism and most of them have not had career conversation with their employers but there was not much enthusiasm regarding that topic among the Gen Y whereas in the literature there is emphasis on the aspect of career conversations (Ross, 2014). But, from the overall responses of the participants it does emerge that if career development is important to them then having a formal career development process or have career conversations would be of significance to them. It was also interesting to find that the respondents believed that L&D was not only for

professional purposes or to grow within their career alone but also to develop themselves personally.

Next, it was evident through the interviews that L&D is considered as a continuous process by the respondents. Majority of the respondents believed that learning is continuous and it is well established in the literature as well (Rahman, 2016). Regarding the methods of training it was noted that less than majority of the respondents preferred formal methods of learning. While, most of the respondents believed in informal methods and learning on the job which was supported by Campana (2014) and Leslie et al. (2003). One respondent mentioned about job shadowing as a means of learning and about having a strong mentor (PWC, 2011) or guide to help her learn and guide her.

Conclusion:
Through the above discussion it can be seen that various existing and new themes emerged. These can be of significant importance to the employers to analyse as to what the Gen Y are looking for from their employers and employment. The above-mentioned points have also been critically analysed by the author and some practical implications mentioned. Further, in the next chapter the overall meaning and contribution of this research will be discussed.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion:

Learning and development can be considered as a career experience for employees. In this uncertain environment employers need to be able to provide employees with tools that are meaningful to them. It has been previously mentioned in literature as to how important a career is to Gen Y and a meaningful tool such as L&D can be extremely useful for them to grow and develop. Taking an overall perspective of the research, it can be concluded that L&D is an important aspect of the career growth of Gen Y. It has been reiterated through the literature and through the interviews as well. It was also seen from the previous chapters that many key themes emerged, some of which are very relevant to the research question while some are peripheral in nature and have been discussed. However, it can be said that there are some findings which are different from the existing literature and some which compliment them.

A new aspect that emerged was that career importance differs with age and priority in one's life. This point has not been mentioned in the literature but can be of importance to the employers to understand the kind of L&D or career path of the employees. The respondents also mentioned about specialisation. It emerged that L&D can help them specialise and provide them with an advantage over the others in the market while it also satisfies the employee as well by increasing their confidence.

It was then surprising to note that the respondents had no career path mapped out for themselves considering that the Gen Y are extremely career conscious and career oriented. It would also be interesting to understand why and could be useful for further research. There also emerged a divided approach regarding job hopping wherein some mentioned that they do not favour job hopping while some respondents mentioned they would job hop if need be. Whereas in the literature there was emphasis on job hopping as a trend to fulfil career goals.

Regarding the role of employer or employee on the career development, it emerged that majority believed that both employer and employee are responsible. However, some respondents believed that to enhance their career development they have to take initiative and ask for what they require in terms of their career development. They also emphasised that there should be good relationship between the employer and the

employee for holistic learning. A new theme that emerged was that the respondents believed that not only should they receive criticism but also should be able give the same back to the employer. This could be an advancement of the open-door communication which is well documented in the literature and through the interviews as well.

To answer the main research objective, it emerged that the respondents believe that to advance in their career L&D plays a crucial role. It adds value not only professionally but personally as well and this can help them along their future. They believe that L&D provides them with some skills and opportunities that can greatly impact on their career and can help them tackle situations as well as fill in the shortfalls. It was also found that learning has to be continuous in this competitive environment and there is a need to constantly update yourself.

The researcher has been able to establish that L&D is an important aspect in the career growth of Gen Y. However, the researcher was unable to measure how or why it is important effectively. It also appears to be a broad topic and the researcher could have focussed on only one aspect of L&D or a framework relevant to career growth. Further, the researcher only interviewed the Gen Y but was not able to interview other generations or employers on their comments of the topic.

According to the researcher, on this topic even a quantitative analysis would be successful as the impact of L&D on career growth could be studied but, because the researcher wanted to get rich information out of the respondents, qualitative method was chosen. The research could also be carried on different sectors such as a public sector or even a particular field such as finance or IT etc to get even more niche data.

The research that was conducted did provide some interesting findings which could be studied further. For example, career pathing as a L&D or career developmental tool would be an area that could be studied further. The importance of career conversations or formal career development to the health of employees' career and the kind of L&D interventions that would be most useful could be studied as well. It would also be interesting to study the employer's attitude or perspective towards the employees' career development. Overall, this research did provide good insights to some aspects of

career growth and development of Gen Y and these findings would be of importance to employers and L&D specialist in the services sector to understand what aspects of L&D could be more suitable to the Gen Y because they are the future of the workforce and it is imperative to understand their needs and demands.

Recommendations:

From the research, it is evident that L&D plays an important role in the career of Gen Y and all the participants yearn for L&D from their employer. It does look like most of the employers have not been able to provide proper L&D to the respondents and thus the researcher has some recommendations to make.

The author recommends that L&D be provided according to what area the employee would be interested in as this could be of future importance for the employee in career terms. A plan or an Employee development process map (Hosmer,2015) could be made with the employee regarding the kind of L&D he is looking for, the budget and the intervals at which it could be required. For example, an employee working in the finance field would require training regarding an update of policies every 4-6 months. This can be in a presentation form and be done either by an employee itself or a senior. This would not be very expensive or time consuming. It should also be noted that if the employees are provided with L&D over the weekends then it becomes necessary to pay the employees for that as well unless otherwise agreed. Now this would depend on the salary of the employee. But, it can be assumed that for an entry level role an hourly rate of pay would be between 13-15 Euro per hour in the services sector.

Feedback from L&D seemed to be an emerging theme among the respondents. Once a particular L&D intervention is provided the employer can in the form of a questionnaire or a conversation find out about the usefulness of the program and if it is beneficial for the growth of the employee. This can be done after every session of the program wherein the employee can fill in the positives and the negatives of the L&D provided. This can be of importance to the employer. If the employees believe that there is not much benefit of the program then the type of L&D can be removed thus saving time and money for the organization.

The researcher also suggests that the employer help the employees in mapping a career path for them. It was seen from the interviews that majority of the respondents had no career path mapped out for themselves and that could be a reason that they could jump for opportunities outside if they find them. Thus, if the employers want to retain the employees, career path can be one of the L&D intervention that can be used to help employees become more focussed and at the same time help them achieve their career goals. This could be a time-consuming and a costly process for the employer when he has other important things to do but it can make the employee feel that the employer is interested in them and give them an aim to work for. Either the supervisor or manager could carry out this leading to no further cost or a professional career counsellor could be brought in to do so. This could be done on an hourly basis over a few days or a few weeks as suitable by the employer and the employee. Normally it would take about 6-12 hours and about 100-200 Euro per hour per person for the counsellor fee. Also, it could be added that this service is available only to employees who have served a minimum number of years (say 1-2 years) with the employer. This can ensure that employees don't take the benefit in the first year and then decide to leave and also it would reduce the cost to the employer.

<u>Personal learning statement</u>

This piece of research is in partial fulfilment of the MAHRM course. I have benefited from this experience on various levels. It has enlightened me with the importance of research, time management, planning and execution and I am glad I was provided with this opportunity. However, it has been a challenging one and required focus, determination and commitment.

The area of L&D has always been an interesting one to me because of its purpose. It exists to help employees grow and develop to their full potential. Its necessity became clearer through this research. Further, as a career oriented individual, it seemed interesting to me to study on how L&D would affect the career aspect of the employees. But, through the process of the research I did realize that I could have focussed on certain aspects of L&D alone or measured the importance or impact of L&D on career growth. However, this research has provided a few interesting insights which can also be used for further research. As I myself hail from the Gen Y cohort, this research did help me view the perceptions of other fellow mates from the same cohort. It was interesting to see the similarities in thoughts but also dissimilarity in some thoughts such as their view on job hopping. It was also interesting to note that the majority of the respondents had no career path mapped out for themselves. There could be further research on this aspect to understand why, because it has appeared in literature and through the interviews that the Gen Y are very career conscious and career oriented and thus it seemed surprising to me that majority had no career path mapped out. But overall, it has emerged that the Gen Y do believe in continuous learning and emphasize the importance of L&D on their career growth to help them develop professionally and personally.

As a novice in research I did face difficulties at various points in the whole process. First, was to identify the exact problem that I wanted to study for which I had to study various topics and also got help from the lecturers; Second, it also took time for me to get to grips with it to understand the process and manage time; Third, to source the interviewees wasn't easy but I received help from my friends and classmates and was able to go ahead and fourth was to get all of it together and complete it finally. But, I

believe I could have handled it better if I had planned it in a systematic way and studied thoroughly before diving into it, this way I could have done it with less pressure. But in the end my effort has paid off and I also owe my supervisor for her invaluable guidance, my employer for letting me take time off work and my parents and friends for their continuous support. Through this research I have also acquired skills involved in a research at this level. This experience has also increased my self-confidence and developed my independent learning which will definitely help me in my future endeavours.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Interview Questions:

1. Can you describe your workplace interaction with your colleagues from different generations?
2. Can you describe the attributes of your ideal employer / organization?
3. What do you look for when you apply for a position in an organization?
4. What does Learning and Development mean to you?
5. What are the methods through which you learn and how often do you learn?
6. What motivates you to learn?
7. What does Career mean to you and how important is it in your life?
8. What is the most important aspect of your career for you?
9. What do you think is the best way for you to advance in your career?
10. What are the factors influencing your career growth?
11. Where would you like to be in the next 5 years?
12. Do you have a career path mapped out for yourself? If so, can you broadly discuss?
13. Who is the most influential person in determining your career path?
14. Who is in charge / control of your career development?
15. To what extent do you consider your organization to be supportive of you in your career development?
16. What are the key trigger points that may drive you to look for opportunities outside the organisation.

<u>Appendix 2</u>

Interview Consent Form:
This form was provided to the participants in the face to face interview. While the telephone interview participants were advised over the phone.

Through this form I understand the elements involved to take part in the research project 'An exploration to study the perception of the Generation Y in the services sector on the importance of Learning & Development on their career growth' by Chhaya Choraria.

- I have voluntarily taken part in this research and have been briefed about its purpose and objectives.
- I understand that my identity will be regarded as anonymous and my responses used for research purposes only.
- I understand and agree that my interviews will be recorded for research purposes only.
- I understand I can ask questions at any point in the study.
- I understand that I can leave at any point in the interview if I have to do so and can refuse to answer certain questions if I find it unsuitable.

I hereby consent to participate in this study.

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____