

**The Impact of Learning and Development on Employee
Performance in Irish universities during the COVID-19 Pandemic
- a case study in University College Dublin (UCD), National
College of Ireland (NCI) and IBAT College.**

BY

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ABSTRACT

Learning and development is critical for effective and efficient results in the educational system, Ireland has considered the educational sector a significant system in the country, due to the current outbreak certain adjustments were made to still provide learning opportunities for students and this had a great effect on employees. Adapting to change and being productive with the new development was a huge task for some employees, campus learning was moved to remote learning, and learning and development became a question of the day. Employees struggled with adjusting to the technological development and delivering effective learning services and still making it interesting and interactive as it was on campus. The interviews conducted in this survey show how different employees reacted and the institutional reaction to talent development. In this research organisations were concerned about retaining talent and creating strategies and the employees aligning to it to achieve organisational goals.

DECLARATION

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CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In the face of closures to stop the spread of the coronavirus, educational institutions around the world are gradually turning to online learning. Both students and teachers have benefited from online training. They accept that "in-person" instruction is more effective than online instruction (Jaschik & Lederman, 2018), but they have reservations about online education's ability to help students reach and achieve equitable course goals and learning outcomes due to technological and pedagogical challenges. Lecturers can be sceptical about whether online learning encourages adequate communication between students and instructors and reaches students who are historically underserved (Jaschik & Lederman, 2018). Furthermore, as online learners, they often lack instruction, leaving them unable to provide students with a rich learning experience (Cicco, 2013; McQuiggan, 2012). Employers has taken good advantage of this and has introduced the importance of remote learning. Though it has its effects but have proved to be a solution to curbing the problems of physical meetings.

As a result, quality control plays an important role in educational institutions. The poor standard of education has a negative impact on organizational success. Significant quality levels among institutions are generally focused on the quality of education, infrastructure, staff capacity, a pleasant working atmosphere, and other important educational facilities (Y.,Absah, et al, 2019). For successful outcomes, the work environment is dependent on the location of teaching, the departmental political environment, relationships with students and teachers, and teaching facilities. Furthermore, Poor working conditions and the inability to use the appropriate resources to communicate information, particularly in an ever-changing world, contribute to worker stress and lower organizational efficiency (Collie et al, 2012; Jung and Shin, 2014). Gajendran & Harrison (2007) states that Remote Learning has exposed workers to the ability to change and optimize their own work environment; thus, it will improve their job performance. The time and expenses they need to invest on jobs will also be avoided when working out of their office. It also provides a sense of independence that makes workers happier and thereby affects their success at work. Their job motivation becomes stronger as workers work from home because of two major reasons: productivity

and personal life. Employees find it easy to improve their efficiency when they can escape traffic congestion and travel costs as they telecommute, and they can also have nicer options.

UCD was established in 1854 with the mission of contributing to the expansion of Ireland via technology and development, as well as the study of people, society, business, economy, culture, languages, and the creative arts. UCD is one of Europe's top survey institutions, with a dynamic mode of action that includes undergraduate teaching, masters and PhD training, research, innovation, and community engagement. They have obtained several of the most prestigious European honours, including the European Research Council, with national-leading results. Also, International accreditations for UCD degrees in Veterinary Medicine, Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Regional and Urban Planning, and Engineering have been granted by the world's major professional organizations. Their dedication to innovation and entrepreneurship acknowledges the significance of active engagement and cooperation to capitalize on cutting-edge research and development results (ucd, 2015).

National College of Ireland (NCI) has led the way in learning innovation for more than fifty years, revolutionizing education in the process and producing noteworthy results(access college, 2021) The university prides itself on meeting the current and future demands of the global leaders and high potential of the surrounding city campus, A four-star rating was also given to NCI in the categories of Employability, Facilities, Social Responsibility, and Inclusiveness, with the maximum five stars(top universities, 2021). NCI is a university for campus learning and employees (academic staff) are trained towards delivering the best method of learning to students prior to the pandemic, however, the pressure to learn a new pattern to delivering same top-notch learning is on the employees and the students as well.

IBAT College was founded in Dublin in 2004, IBAT is a pioneer in creating a system of education that can innovate and evolve at the same rate as business and technology; a model that emphasizes the highest level of learning and focuses on providing people with the ability and skills they need to advance in their chosen career and train up as needed to stay competitive in their field. Global University Systems, one of Europe's leading private university and college companies, purchased the college in 2016. This allows businesses to expand the market reach of their programs by utilizing GUS' international education network, which spans more than 60 countries and helps to diversify the array of programs accessible.

IBAT College Dublin has partnerships with over 400 private firms, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) around the country, including both small and medium-sized indigenous businesses and global multinationals. One of the most important goals is to guarantee that students have a pleasant, beneficial, and interesting experience during their time in school (IBAT college, 2021).

Employee ability and competency growth is the focus of talent development. Employees can advance their careers by taking advantage of learning opportunities and tools provided by their employers. Other than conventional training and development, talent can be produced in a variety of ways. Coaching, work shadowing, seminars, mentoring, and other methods may be used to achieve it (highlands company, 2017). When considering Talent Management, educational institutions and other private companies are frequently found to be inefficient in recruiting, sustaining, stimulating, improving, and replacing workers (Davis, 2007). Recently, it has been a primary success driver in the growth of educational organizations. Employee expertise and TM skills of school administrators also provide basis for the effectiveness of educational organisations (Cross, 2007; Davies&Davies, 2011). However, the shortage of talented leaders and staff in schools has led to a battle between the schools working in the field; and schools have developed "talent pools" that will take them into the future, particularly those that embrace an understanding. Furthermore, the fact that such schools are the ones that teachers and managers want and choose is an important question, particularly in today's competitive market (Davies and Davies, 2011; Lewis, & Heckman, 2006).

1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this research is to study the impact of learning and development on academic staff in the educational sector during the coronavirus outbreak.

The objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To provide a critical review of the effects of learning and development on employees.

Literature review will be essential to this research as it will be facilitated with existing knowledge on theories, critiques and research findings that will provide guidance for the research.

2. To identify the benefits of remote learning on Irish education.

A critical analysis of remote learning and resources in place to support remote learning.

3. To examine employee productivity in Irish education during the covid-19 pandemic
To develop insight of the needs and challenges faced by employees that affected productivity.
4. To analyse organisational performance in the educational sector during the pandemic.
A critical analysis on performance of employees during the disease outbreak.
5. To present a set of conclusions and recommendations for remote learning as a way of improving Learning and development on employee performance.

This final objective is important to complete the research as it involves the data analysis and discussion to the conclusion of the study.

1.3 RESEARCH CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

There is a clear need for research on the premise that school leaders can create successful schools as teachers, or that effective schools can produce skilled leaders and staff.

The subject of developmental learning has gained the attention of both corporations and higher education institutions across the globe over the past decades. In addition, the battle for professionals and the evolving nature of work have made this a strategic concern. Although the discussion has made waves in the business sector, transnational higher education is falling behind, and structures tend to be required to sustain both national and foreign branch campuses. However, this study goes beyond debates on learning and development and its terminology, focusing on the effects it had on organisations during a disease outbreak and the impact it has on staff, as well as how L&D is understood and implemented, as well as the major issues that arise in this field and how they are addressed.

1.4 OUTCOME OF THE STRUCTURE

The research question and objective would be answered in this Research. It seeks to find the impact learning and development has had on employees (academic staff) in Irish education in the cause of the pandemic.

1.5 RESEARCH STRUCTURE

This research is divided into five chapters and each area is synchronised and focused on answering the research question.

Chapter 1: this includes the introduction which discusses the aim and objectives, as well as the context of the research.

Chapter 2: this includes the literature review which focus on the secondary research related to the topic, this describes the effect of learning and development, its definitions on employee performance and the impact it has on employees during the pandemic.

Chapter 3: this forms the methodological approach, which explains how the primary research was carried out and how the data was analysed. This chapter also covers ontology, which informs epistemology, as well as methodology and processes.

Chapter 4: It contains a data analysis that provides a summary of the results from the primary study, which consisted of in-depth unstructured interviews. It addresses the coding and trends that emerged from interviews with seven academic staff members in the Irish educational field, as well as how the results relate to the research goals.

Chapter 5: includes conclusions and results that show a comparison of the literature review with data analysis, main findings, and study recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A secondary research study on learning and development is presented in this chapter, aided by established information on hypotheses, criticisms, and research findings on the impact of learning and development on academic staff in Dublin. This chapter provides a summary of what has been learned so far.

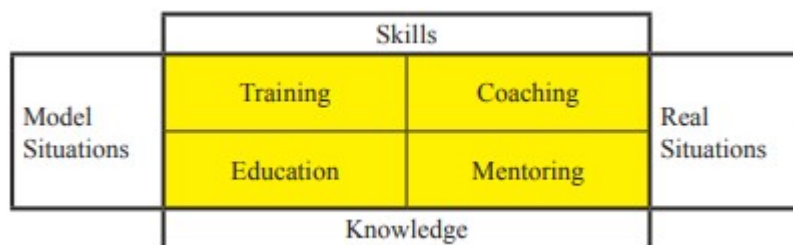
The chapter is divided into three sections; the first explains the definitions of learning and development and its impact on organisational performance in the Irish educational sector, the second focuses on the employee productivity in Ireland during the COVID -19 pandemic and the third is to discuss the correlation between learning and development and its strategy and how it affected the academic staff in Ireland.

2.2 LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

2.2.1 Definition

The managerial team's primary focus has shifted to the development of personnel competencies. Organizations understand the value of learning in the creation and operation of their business. The word "talent" has been translated into "capital" by some philologists, which may also be associated with others, such as human capital. The concept of "talent" and its meaning have been studied in the field of management by a variety of researchers. It can be related to exceptional abilities either intellectually, creatively, or in specific skill areas. Talent includes traits such as motivation, entrepreneurship, learning and a strong dedication. Talent can be termed as professional or developmental learning. When it comes to identifying talent, it is important to remember that intrinsic traits are not enough. In cases where self and professional development is needed in organisations especially with the current demand for it, organisations need to figure out ways to build employees to be able to achieve organisational goals. Commitment and the previously mentioned motivation are the keys to successful organisations. The duty of the management is to identify willing and ready talent in their subordinates. K. Haller acknowledged hardworking employees (Tabor, 2013). He built this model around intellectual work abilities like intuition, memory, creativity, and fantasy, as well as the capacity to concentrate, associate, and reason rationally as well as

deliver quality. The classification of developmental learning, on the other hand, is based on (Pocztowski, 2008): originality and variety of abilities, connection with the organization's goals, and a type of ability. This concept is growing day by day and organizations need to be able to identify and use their "effectiveness" effectively. Because of current technology advancements, learning is no longer confined to a single location and increasingly necessitates the presence of both professors and students. Because to current equipment such as computers, smartphones, internet networks, and others, learning can now be done even when distance is a barrier. (Bali, 2019; Temelli, ahin, and Kartal, 2020; Lever-Dufy & Mcdonald, 2008; Temelli, ahin, and Kartal, 2020; Lever-Dufy & Mcdonald, 2008). Learning and development activities help the organization achieve its goals by improving the skills and capacities of individuals and teams. Learning serves as a path to development and is a key element for business organizations seeking to achieve their goals, gain a competitive advantage, and, most importantly, generate a more engaged and motivated workforce. Kroupa (2014) defines learning and development as "the ways of developing, educating, evaluating, and motivating staff." Kroupa emphasizes that a person needs to be competent enough in a specific role and be willing to learn and develop both personally and professionally; the techniques are explained in the matrix below.



(Kroupa ,2014)

Due to intense competition and a variety of other factors that affect the labour market, it is challenging for modern businesses to acquire the greatest possible employees in a country. The ability to manage the power and competency of individuals working in an organization, either directly or indirectly, is referred to as the process of L&D inside an organization. The practice is more than just finding the right individual for the right job at the right time. It encompasses a much broader area, such as initiatives to improve employee skills and to effectively develop and nurture those skills to achieve desired results in terms of higher employee performance and goal achievement (S. white, 2019). Adam Smith noticed that developing human capital in an organization through education, training, and practice improves the organization's effectiveness and profitability, as well as society's overall wealth. Learning and development is a systematic process that aims to improve an employee's skills,

knowledge, and competency so that they can perform better at work. Learning is concerned with the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Development is the process of increasing and expanding one's knowledge to achieve one's development objectives (Digitalhrtech, 2020). It aims to improve or modify people's or groups' behaviour by sharing knowledge and insights that help them do their jobs better or cultivating attitudes that help them perform better (Lievens, 2011). An L&D strategy,

This is not limited to recruiting the appropriate individual at the right moment, but it also includes uncovering your employees' hidden and peculiar abilities and developing and nurturing them to achieve the desired results, Organizational L&D is more than just attracting the best people in the market; it is a continual process that includes sourcing, hiring, developing, retaining, and promoting them while satisfying the organization's requirements (P. Juneja, 2021). according to the CIPD, will address the organization's performance needs through developing all personnel. In practice, it might concentrate on persons regarded as high-performing or high-potential ('talent'), who are crucial to long-term success. Mentoring programs involving senior leaders, in-house development seminars, and project-based learning are common examples. The epidemic has presented L&D professionals with new problems and underlined the importance of adaptable tactics. To satisfy the evolving demands of their employees, L&D teams must collaborate closely with senior managers and other human resource specialists. Two prominent difficulties are the problem of developing people who work remotely or on furlough, as well as the challenge of ensuring equal access to learning through technology. Only where there is a measurable advantage to the organization is spending on learning and development encouraged. This may not always imply a 'bottom line' business advantage. Involving employees in a lifelong learning journey could be viewed to boost productivity with a motivated workforce (CIPD, 2020).

Learning and development includes recognizing multiple approaches that generate complexity to form a coherent whole. It is a tool for creating and carrying out some coordinated operations that firms require to attract and retain competent and effective employees. (Armstrong, 2006). Despite changes in the global economy, Staff turnover remains a big challenge for enterprises. Keeping excellent people is critical to market leadership and growth. Organizations that do not retain their best people risk losing out to competition. The emphasis is now on developing employee retention programs and methods to attract, develop, retain, and engage high-quality employees (P. Juneja, 2021).

2.2.2 IMPACT OF L&D ON ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN EDUCATIONAL SECTOR

An effective performance measuring system is required for the implementation of a talent management program in an institution. Using this type of system, talented individuals with high capability and hidden or open competencies should be identified and introduced (Saadat et al, 2016). Organizations that invest in talent management see capital gains on investment, and as a result, there are a variety of skills in the firm. In this state, they can profit from a healthy and engaged workforce, which aids in the development of organisational performance (Maali Tafti& Tajuddin, 2008). Training and development activities are very important for the HR Department, and it all depends on developing talent, because it is critical to know your trainees so that they can grasp the actual ability and aptitude towards the organization's advancement and success.

The quality of the working environment is referred to as the organizational atmosphere. Individuals contribute significantly to business outcomes when they are recognized and appreciated by the organization. A vibrant organizational climate is formed by factors impacting employee views, such as leadership quality, decision-making process, and staff appreciation (Garg, Talwar, 2017). Students are treated as customers by educational institutions, who must be provided with great services to remain satisfied and learn well. Teachers, as agents of service provision, continue to be an important component in the implementation of quality management and quality perception in educational organizations (Bhalla, 2013). Therefore, Employees must be trained to ensure that service quality is maintained. Adequate training reduces the likelihood of errors and enables teachers to better approach students to answer their doubts and transfer knowledge in a more constructive manner, leading to higher levels of satisfaction. (2007, Houston).

Employee performance improves because of training and development. Employee performance is critical to an organization's success. Training is essential for competent and demanding business in this worldwide era (Karim, 2019), It proves to be a criterion for improving the workforce's ability to achieve organizational goals. Training is seen as a valuable tool for dealing with changes brought on by technology innovation, such as market competitiveness, organizational restructuring, and, most significantly, improving employee performance. Because of the quick rate of technical and global growth, businesses are today confronted with new challenges. Technological improvements have necessitated the development of talents and capabilities required to do a specific task. All organizations require more sophisticated and efficient training programs to address these difficulties. (Karim, Md & Choudhury, Musfiq & Bin Latif, Wasib, 2019). Learning has always been focused on increasing employee and organizational productivity. While this is still true today, learning now has a broader influence and adds to employment. Employees are unlikely to stay with the same company for an extended period in today's work environment except they are important to the organization and the position is beneficial to their professional advancement. Knowledge may easily

become obsolete in the digital age. This means that the skills and personality traits that people bring to their jobs may become outdated. Employees would stay informed and prepared for change by taking advantage of learning and development opportunities (Sophia Wichtowska, 2019). Employees are trained on the job or through specialist in-house training programs. To improve, refresh, or develop certain skills of personnel, outside training may be used. In the development of HR, training and development functions are linked to build skills as well as basic aptitudes, resulting in continuing personal progress and organisational development. (Sasmita Nayak, 2018).

Furthermore, the importance of training and development in human resource management cannot be overstated. For improved performance, it is critical for organizations to hire skilled and capable people, and people will be more than competent if they have the necessary knowledge and skills. It would provide employees with possibilities to further their careers and obtain higher positions in the firm.

2.3 EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY IN IRELAND DURING THE COVID -19 PANDEMIC

Productivity refers to how effectively and efficiently a company's resources are used. Time, people, material, information, knowledge, financial, and energy are examples of these resources. Simply put, productivity is the ratio of input to output. It assesses how effectively and efficiently a company uses inputs like materials, machines, labour, and capital to produce outputs like goods and services. Whether an organization is political, social, or technological in nature, extra-ordinary capabilities, working efficiency, training capacity, better work-related attitudes, and more output are constantly demanded from their employees. According to Krett, [2010], these expectations necessitated a drastic break from the status quo, resulting in the development of an effective performance management system as a basic for monitoring employees' productivity to ensure conformity with standards, as well as a practice that assists companies in connecting employer goals to personal goals. It is thought to be a crucial source of a company's growth and competitiveness, and as such, it is a key piece of statistical data for various company comparisons and performance reviews.

Staff performance is synonymous to an organisational success; therefore, it is so important to spend time, energy, and money wisely on employee productivity administration. Management should ensure that the proper conditions and procedures are in place at the organization to promote job satisfaction. As a result, it will have a beneficial impact on how devoted and productive staff are, and an organization that can secure a productive workforce

will be able to remain competitive in the business even in an evolving situation (Abdulraheem, I. and Sanusi, S. I., 2020).

2.3.1 PRODUCTIVITY IN THE EDUCATIONAL SECTOR

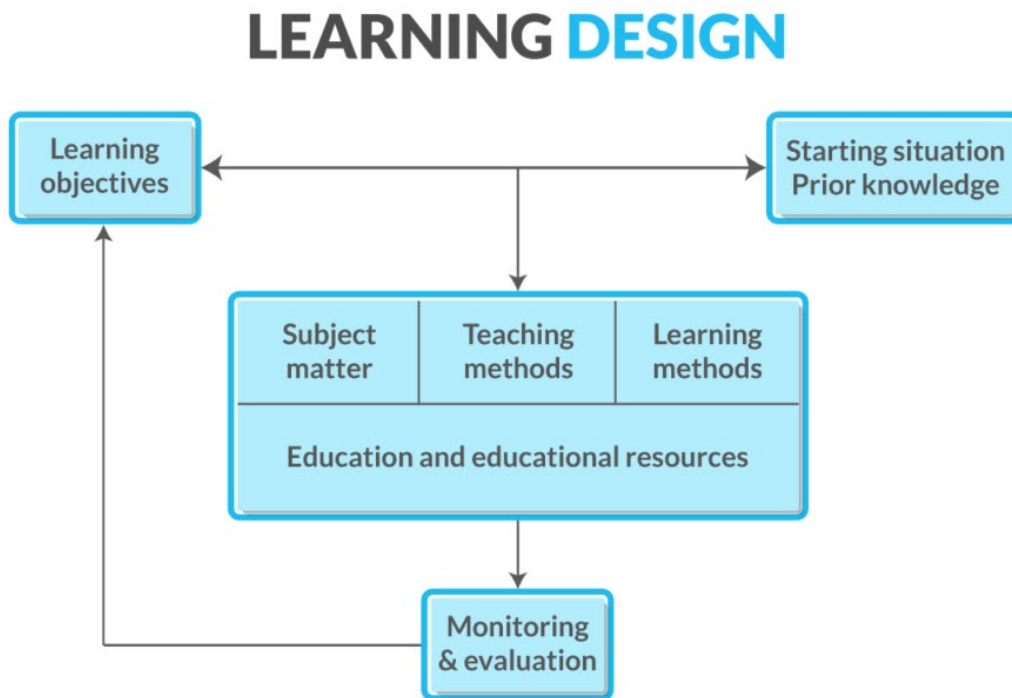
Teachers must be able to use digital technology to assist in the preparation of learning materials that may later be accessed by students to preserve the quality of educational services from classroom learning methods to online-based learning. However, it must be accompanied by suitable support facilities to carry out remote teaching methods. (Zein, 2016; Zacharo, Marios, & Dimitra, 2018, sowiyah, 2021). According to Adi Gaskell (2020), productivity has remained steady during the pandemic, with some enterprises even increasing productivity. Indeed, many people have found that working from home has increased their performance because they can create an environment that suits them. The key to maintaining productivity despite the outbreak is for organizations to manage their employees' limited time, talent, and energy before Covid-19.

The relative productivity of organizations is best explained by these three factors(Eric Garton,Michael Mankins, 2020): The amount of time each employee must devote to productive work each day, free of interruptions from excessive e-mail, superfluous meetings, or bureaucratic processes and procedures; The skills and abilities that each employee can offer to their position, as well as how an organization's greatest talent is deployed, paired, and directed; and the amount of time and effort each person is willing to devote to their work and the company's, clients', and other stakeholders' success. Furthermore, to maintain or boost productivity levels attained in organizations, you must provide your employees with the appropriate tools. To do so, you must make a slight mental shift and consider your home area in the same manner you consider your workplace environment.

2.4 ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY

The most important thing HR can give an employer is a firm that succeeds in the economy, and methods to achieve this should be in place. Van Gelder and colleagues (ENG) developed a paradigm called Pedagogical Analysis that begins with the organizational situation and prior knowledge, from which learning goals and objectives are defined. This is utilized as a source of information for the subject matter, teaching methods, and learning

methods and activities, all of which lead to a certain outcome that is tracked and assessed. The aims and objectives are revised because of this analysis (Digitalhrtech, 2020).



As seen above, four phases are outlined that must be completed to produce a successful learning and development process (Digitalhrtech, 2020):

1. To evaluate training needs, the first step is to analyse the beginning scenarios and past knowledge. We do not want employees to learn only for the sake of learning; instead, we want them to learn to build new operating model. Furthermore, you must assess where the organization wishes to go and what talents are required to get there. It comes because of analysing organizational analysis (both short- and long-term goals), Identifying the most relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes for employee productivity and satisfaction through a function, task, or competence analysis, and Personal analysis - evaluation of performance.
2. The second stage is to define learning objectives. Training requirements must be transformed into learning objectives. These goals serve as the foundation for developing the training's content and methodology. As a result, training objectives become more explicit and measurable. This aids in the establishment of a successful learning and development program aimed at strengthening these capabilities.

3. The instructional material and learning approach are determined in the third phase. This is where you make decisions on training materials, instructional methods, and learning activities. This is frequently done in collaboration with an external trainer/professional, and ideally with the trainee's cooperation.
4. Monitoring and evaluation are the final stages of the learning process. In this phase, the learning objectives are assessed, as well as the effectiveness of the learning. Employee feedback is gathered and analysed, with changes made for future learning activities.

It is evident that L&D is required in this changing era, and though implementing it might be difficult, having it in place can improve organizational performance, increase competitiveness and adaptability, and aid in the achievement of strategic goals. It can have a good impact on the organization when activities are planned, linked with organizational goals and strategy, and actions are reviewed.

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter shows a blend of academic research about learning and development, its impact on employee productivity during the pandemic, organisational performance, and a connection between these areas. Even though the pandemic has had an impact on learning and development in the educational sector, the literature shows that it is still important in universities, affecting both employees and students, allowing for increased competitiveness and adaptability, as well as aiding in the achievement of organisational goals. L&D can have a positive impact on organizational performance when it relates to organizational goals and its activities are assessed. The findings from the interviews with lecturers and professors from various universities would be found in chapter 4 to verify if what the literature indicates is relevant in a realistic situation.

CHAPTER 3

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The goal of this chapter is to set the stage for the main research that will be discussed in the next chapter. It focuses on the effect learning and development has had on the academic staff and how they were able to still deliver learning services effectively. This instrument approach to the resolution of the problem by discovering patterns with further research. This chapter also covers ontology, which influences epistemology, and methodologies. It explains how the primary data was gathered and who was interviewed for it. To comprehend how the researcher reached at both the final findings and conclusions, an explanation of how the data was analysed is required. To demonstrate the study's obstacles, ethical issues and research limitations were presented.

3.2 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this research is to study the impact of learning and development on academic staff in the educational sector during the coronavirus outbreak.

The objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To provide a critical review of the effects of Learning and Development on employees.

Literature review will be essential to this research as it will be facilitated with existing knowledge on theories, critiques and research findings that will provide guidance for the research.

2. To identify the benefits of remote learning on Irish education.

A critical analysis of remote learning and resources in place to support remote learning.

3. To examine employee productivity in Irish education during the covid-19 pandemic

To develop insight of the needs and challenges faced by employees that affected productivity.

4. To analyse employee-employer performance during the pandemic.

A critical analysis of the influence of trainings/ resource management on performance.

5. To present a set of conclusions and recommendations for remote learning as a way of improving Learning and development on employee performance.

This final objective is important to complete the research as it involves the data analysis and discussion to the conclusion of the study.

3.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research has a main question:

How did Learning and development affect the performance of employees in Irish universities during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Other questions are.

- What are the effects of these L&D's initiatives on the employee behaviour?
- What are the ways of retaining employees in these organizations?
- Does learning and development have a part to play in employee's productivity in an organisation during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- How did learning and development affect the employee and employer's performance during the pandemic?

3.4 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

H1: There are notable effects of L&D on employee performance.

H2: There is a significant effect of L&D in achieving the organization's goals and objectives.

H3: There is a significant effect of utilizing an inclusive approach in organizations.

H4: There is a significant effect of learning and development on Academic staff during the covid19 pandemic.

H5: There is a significant effect of learning and development initiatives on employee productivity during the covid-19 pandemic.

3.5 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY AND APPROACH

Qualitative research has a unique ability to generate a knowledge base on which further research can be built; these approaches may be particularly valuable in providing insight and understanding to improve intervention, design, and assessment (Swords, L., Hennessy, E. and Heary, C., 2021). This research has a place a strong emphasis on the social

and human aspects of study, with a particular interest in how the employees see the current situation (Lanka, E, Lanka, S, Rostron, A & Singh, P, 2021).

According to Jupps (2006), “epistemology is an area of philosophy concerned with the potential, nature, origins, and limits of human knowledge,” it explains that there are several ways to get this kind of research; logically, empirically, intuitively, etc. these can be gotten based on the information gathered and how it would be analysed, for this research, interviews were conducted and participants were interviewed based on what they noticed and how they have been affected positively or negatively.

Many voices and many more past, present, and future dialogues arise in contextual and living discussions, in which actions and meanings emerge (Bakhtin, 1981), interviews were conducted for the purpose of getting the desired information which can be critically analysed and these are varied, changeable, and always anchored in time, place, and in relation to others (durability), study focuses on how people understand and build shifting versions of social "realities" and identities on an ongoing basis (Cunliffe, A. L. (2010).

3.6 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

Researchers can read between the lines and comprehend the participants' point of view through in-depth interviews and qualitative analysis. Instead of following a fixed set of questions, the purpose of the interviews is to find major themes among the individuals. (Macdonald & Headlam, 2008); The interviews were conducted via zoom and Microsoft teams. Before taking part in the study, all participants received participant information through email and were given the option to discuss their perspectives on the study as well as ask the researcher questions. Interviews were scheduled at the participant's convenience (Simpson, A. et al, 2021). At the start of the interviews, verbal informed consent was obtained and recorded. Seven interviews were conducted between June 2021 and July 2021 (zoom: 2 participants, Microsoft teams: 6 participants). the meeting ranged from 21 minutes to 54 minutes.

Seven lecturers from three different universities were interviewed on their views on learning and development and how it has affected their job during the COVID-19 pandemic. They were asked their views on the possible causes of unproductivity in the educational sector and the various initiatives that could be used in this time. Potential interviewees were reached via email and LinkedIn contacts (by sending a message with an invitation to participate in the study) and told of the study's confidentiality, as required by Ireland's Data Protection Act 2018. There was no specific preplanning for the questions as it was a semi-structured interview, there were list of topics and sub-topics that

were used to form the questions to ask the participants, these topics were related to reviewed literature as well as the researcher's views and experiences as a student and some questions were cut from the research objectives and questions. The researcher led the conversation asking questions and keeping the conversation with the participant, the meeting was recorded and transcribed to ensure the data is secured. The interview started with general questions (such as how long the participant has been at the institution and what they enjoy about their job) before moving on to the educational sector and the pandemic. As the discussion progressed, the researcher shared the topic's subject and purpose to make it easier and more relatable for the lecturer.

3.7 SAMPLING

Sampling is used because it is frequently impossible to investigate the complete population. The conclusions reached are meant to be generalized. As a result, the sample must be representative of the entire population. The adoption of correct sampling methods is the best way to accomplish this. The sample must also be of sufficient size (Chittaranjan Andrade, 2020). However, the researcher needs to interview persons who have a strategic position in the organization for the research component of Learning and Development contribution to an organizational strategy. 7 interviews were conducted, and these participants were lecturers from three different institutions, below are the Interview questions asked during the interview.

- Do you think there is a need for learning and development in the educational sector? And why?
- Concerning the pandemic, do you think it affected learning and development in universities, if so, how?
- Considering the effect that the COVID-19 has had on universities and the need for lecturers to still deliver learning services to students, do you think that certain learning and development initiatives would positively affect employee productivity? and how?
- What are the possible ways of retaining employees in the educational sector especially with the current outbreak?

Appendix 1 shows an illustration of one of the interviews conducted.

3.8 PARTICIPANT’S PROFILE

There were seven research participants (two females, five males), from three institutions, they were interviewed, and their profile is shown in Table 1. The names of participants were changed to maintain their anonymity.

S/N	NAME	INSTITUTION	SEX	LENGTH OF CAREER	DEPARTMENT	RANK
1	Academic Staff 1	IBAT College	F	2 Years	Marketing	Lecturer
2	Academic Staff 2	IBAT College	M	11 years	Learning and Development	Lecturer
3	Academic Staff 3	UCD	M	30 years	Applied Economics	Professor
4	Academic Staff 4	NCI	F	3 Years	Business -HRM	Lecturer
5	Academic Staff 5	NCI	M	7 Years	Computing	Lecturer
6	Academic Staff 6	NCI	M	6 Years	HRM- Dispute Resolution/ L&D	Lecturer
7	Academic Staff 7	NCI	M	12 Years	HRM/L&D	Lecturer

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analysed afterwards. Notes were also made in the margins and established themes, which allowed me to categorize them. After that, the data was compared, contrasts were found, and the correlations between variables were investigated. It was examined to solve the Research Question and objectives, as well as to connect the findings to the literature review.

The data was organized into categories based on the research objectives, and then various themes that emerged throughout the interviews were applied to them. A sample of the data analysis is shown in Table 2. Quotes were used to construct the code, which was then used to identify distinct themes. Accordingly, each theme was given to one of the four study objectives. I detailed the respondents' perspectives and quoted some of their most enlightening quotes for each theme. I noted similarity and contrasts in the participants' responses to several L&D-related topics. The most important findings, which directly address the Research Question and present a framework that I constructed, were included in the 'findings' section.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

It is necessary to adhere to ethical issues; the researcher must inform participants about all research activities and obtain informed consent from them before beginning study activity; this is so that they are aware of what they are putting themselves into. They can determine whether they want to participate in the study if they are informed of its objective (H. Bhasin, 2020). As part of the consent and confidentiality, the interviewees were kept anonymous, and their profiles were disclosed to in this research.

3.11 LIMITATIONS

There were some limitations during this research.

Due to the pandemic and restrictions with movement and lockdown rules in the country and various universities as well as time constraints, it was hard to access as much lecturers as desired and the restriction on movement made it hard to reach them as everyone worked from home. As a result of this, I was unable to have more than 7 interviews. In-depth surveys and their qualitative analysis allow me to comprehend the participants' practical experiences and compare them to the theory. The data is influenced by personal experiences, values, and opinions; hence the findings cannot be generalized using this method.

3.12 CONCLUSION

This chapter clearly explains how the research data was analysed and where it is gotten from. Interviewed seven participants who are lecturers for more than 2 years and from three institutions in Ireland, with strong profiles in lecturing and experience teaching during the COVID-19 Pandemic hence, they have enough information and findings relating to this research. Notwithstanding some research limitations, the data was carefully and accurately analysed; interview questions were identified and allocated to answer the research objectives. I believe that the careful approach taken during the interviews contributed to the high quality of the analysis and the usage of appropriate methods.

CHAPTER 4

4. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter shows the findings from the interviews with lecturers and professors of learning and development in Ireland. This shows the various views and experiences about L&D and how it affects their employee productivity during the COVID-19 Pandemic, it also evaluates, compares, and contrasts their various perspectives as they spoke from different universities, experiences, and reactions from the institutions and students, this also related with the literature review and academic research.

This chapter first discusses the participant's views and thoughts on learning and development, and extends to L&D in Ireland and since the pandemic began. The body of this analysis gives answers to five (5) of the research objectives and all the research questions stated in the methodology.

4.2 RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS' PROFILES

All participants are lecturers/ senior lecturers /professors in three different universities in Ireland: National College of Ireland, University College Dublin and IBAT College. Staff 3 is a professor in UCD for 30 years, another (Staff 2) is a lecturer in Learning and Development in IBAT College for 11 years, Staff 5 is a lecturer in computing in NCI, three lecturers in NCI are lecturing in Human resource management and business and from Ireland, one lecturer began teaching in Brazil before moving to Ireland. The in-depth profile is outlined in Appendix 1.

4.3 PARTICIPANT'S VIEWS OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

It's critical to figure out what interviewees know or mean by learning and development before you can properly analyse the interviews and answer the study questions. This was initially analysed in the literature review from secondary research. They all talked on their professional backgrounds and how long they have been lecturing, they also spoke on

how lecturing has been since the beginning of the pandemic. Some of which was characterized by L&D's objective and scope.

Learning and development topics mentioned in the interviews.

Leadership Development	Employee Relations	Professional Development/trainings
Technological development	On the Job Training	Performance Appraisal
Collaborative group learning/ workshops	Learning systems	Management Learning

4.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 1: TO PROVIDE A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE EFFECTS OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT ON EMPLOYEES.

4.4.1 LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN IRELAND DURING THE PANDEMIC

The participants gave their views on learning and development, Staff 2 says isn't just a subject but a lifestyle, a way of life, an attitude, an approach, a mindset, and a psychology. It has different elements in which it is prescribed, especially with students; they have their view and response to learning and development, but as a lecturer you are to figure out what you have, don't have as well as what you need to meet the required. He says it is important to know the reason behind your mission, what you plan to get from it, and the core capabilities and core requirements needed. Staff 4 says it is an evolving process where individuals at different levels despite their status or experience can have a lifelong learning within the environment, they find themselves. It is also good to evolve developmentally, to stay

commitment to what you are doing as well as developing yourself to develop others. it plays both formally and informally. Staff 3 sees L&D as a way of or pattern of passing information in the best way possible, it is also a practical process of learning for both the student and the lecturer. Staff 5 has same view with staff 3 and adds that in both real-life experience and educational environment, both parties have a part to play in learning and development.

Staff 2 explains that everyone differs in both delivering and receiving information so getting students to understand what we're trying to achieve (result) is referred to learning and development. Furthermore, as a lecturer it is more than just giving lots of information and teachings and majority of the class population are confused. It becomes more practical when everyone including the employee has a goal to reach and modify the requirements to suit personally and collectively. In addition, L&D is more practical and psychological, your mind must be involved in it to deliver quality services and enhance productivity.

Find below the themes discussed in this section.

- Approach to lecturing during the pandemic
- Learning and development in Ireland

4.4.2 PARTICIPANTS APPROACH TO LECTURING IN THE PANDEMIC

“Teaching has changed a lot from when I started teaching, a stick of chalk on a blackboard were the most advanced technology we had was an overhead projector and now teaching is so different because it has accelerated and can be used in ways that we never dreamed of doing before. So, it is difficult probably to keep up with all of the developments in teaching technology”. Staff 3.

Different lecturers had their experiences on how the pandemic affected their job and delivering learning services as usual to students, Staff 3 who has been lecturing for over 30 years found it hard to depend and work with technology as that was the only option, however he had to deal with no longer seeing students walk in and out his office and moving to attending zoom meetings and turning cameras on. Other participants had same experiences. Staff 7 was in shock but found it hard to understand how to have lecture materials online and deliver it along with assessments, discussions as well as exams online. Also, Staff 7 had difficulty with teaching and keeping students interested in the class, according to him that

was almost impossible because 80 percent of people behind the cameras are on their bed or on the couch struggling to listen and take notes, so he made attempts to make the class interesting like asking questions and wanting everyone to participate and be actively involved.

Staff 5 was not new to online learning because NCI has been having remote learning in certain courses, but the pandemic was intense because it involved everyone, his concern was for students that were not used to learning from home, it would breed little or no participation or interest from them and that could be daunting for the educational system. He also appreciates learning and development because both students and staff make extra efforts to recreate a personal experience to get the desired result. Staff 2 emphasizes that if an employee does not have learning education, he/she would not know how to change in a learning and teaching environment, this shows how involved one needs to be especially in giving vital information.

Staff 1 says online teaching requires more hard work and time and there was not training made ahead so everyone tries to meet up with the world activities. Other issues came up like connectivity which was a major concern for some students and even lecturers. Staff 6 spoke on the need to do the best lecturers could do to give the best learning services and although there is an effect that comes with change because there had to activities put in place online to give the right services, and it got better as the year progressed.

This says how learning and development affected the students and most especially employees, it obviously had its effect on everyone, and they all reacted differently. This was able to answer and meet the goal of this objective which explains that employee's views to persistent qualities of a business and how they embrace and support new ideas and change, as well as provide resources for innovative efforts, are referred to as innovation (West & Richter, 2008, Sung, SY & Choi, JN, 2014).

4.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 2: TO IDENTIFY THE BENEFITS OF REMOTE LEARNING ON IRISH EDUCATION

During the interviews, questions were asked to know how they were able to deal with online learning especially in Ireland, participants shared their positive and negative experiences; ranging from connectivity to technology to building meeting rooms on zoom/Microsoft teams app and adjusting to this new normal and how they were able to find a

common ground beneficial for both students and academic staff. This objective seeks to analyse the various ways resources were put in place to improve the remote learning.

Below are the topics discussed in this section.

- Adapting to change
- Organisational performance
- Managing change

4.5.1 CHANGE MANAGEMENT/ DEALING WITH CHANGE

Some participants were successful with receiving and adjusting to change, some had a lot of difficulties with working completely online. Staff 3 says *there not much change from before the pandemic and now it is made intensely which makes it less productive because students were actively involved and ready to use PowerPoint in their presentations in the campus compared to now*. He added that the major difference would be the human/social interaction with colleagues, discussing about non- academic activities and bumping into school mates/lecturers on campus. He also said for some courses that require full time on-site learning like science, physics, and the rest it would need many adjustments, however, economics and other literature courses would have to deal with working with strictly remote learning. Staff 4 saw this switch as a really daunting task, like she said *“It was really daunting and in fact was quite intimidating, but we were very fortunate in National College of Ireland. The college was proactive in putting together a program to give me the basics, but honest to God, it was the absolute basics. L&D was seen as a more critical in this time because while they were giving me the skills, I needed to share my knowledge, I in return was giving them my knowledge so that they understood the topics that we were covering.”* She said she had to switch from all the articles and presentations that was planned to be given in the classroom and the students were helping and teaching, this sounded like a test of competence, but it shows the need for Learning and development for both the lecturer and student. Staff 1 saw the frustration on international students who have come from different parts of the world to have a campus experience but was disappointed. She said it was a lot of adjustments and there was not enough training and preparation beforehand, but it was all for a good course.

Staff 2 said the change was evident and his adoptive requirement was to find ways to make it more interesting and interactive for the students receiving the information and that

was a lot of work. Staff 7 had a lot of concerns on how to move from the older technology to a newer style and method of teaching, he had to deal with how to make the online environment comfortable for students; staff 7 explained how he created channels on Microsoft teams and that was a huge task, there were also issues with connectivity and technological adjustments like forgetting to switch on the recordings or not know how to share screens in a zoom meeting. Also, the social interaction would not be the same as campus learning – *“it was a tough situation being resilient and preparing us to work in such environment because we were missing the contact with colleagues in the same way as you were missing the contact with peers.”*

“I took it on myself with regard to the students to change something significantly, because we were no longer in a physical environment with the students like the classrooms and in the college.”

I decided to put up a welcome message on my Moodle page and to make it somewhat personal to the students welcoming them and trying to diffuse any anxieties that they might have in common to undertaking this module, which was leading and managing, of course.”

Staff 7 emphasized the need for him to make remote learning beneficial and effective as much possible, he wanted to be virtually and emotionally involved as everyone was isolating as most students were bored sitting in front of a camera all day. He believed most of the students needed to a sense of belonging to a community and saw it critical to build a social relationship online.

Staff 5 says in his opinion *“Students are not really set up for an online learning environment before the pandemic, so I think it was more challenging, because students would tend not to participate at all unlike the actual face to face education, and I think I found that very much disengaged.”* He went further to say *“compared to before the pandemic, it's more engaged and I think it might be because we feel that we have to recreate the personal experience, there's more of an effort from both sides. Not only lectures, but also from students to engage more because there has been very little face to face contact, so I think it's overall for me that learning experience has been positive, and I found that it can be very engaging, and it does take certain deliberate efforts.”*

Though there were more reactions at first than actions, but every academic staff saw the need to adjust to the current situation and make the most of it, the goal was to still deliver learning services and be effective and that needed a, lot of work from both ends. All

participants had difficulties adjusting to the new change and there was no pattern to follow so they chose what works for them and which would suit their students and be beneficial to both(lecturers) and students.

4.5.2 ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

The various schools had a part to play in proffering solutions for their employees, as employees follow a system to attain company goals, a well-designed control system would boost organizational performance. It also helps with the invention, adoption, and implementation of new ideas, processes, products, or services that benefit employees and customers (Dhiona Ayu Nani and Dina Safitri, V. A., 2021). The universities in this research have really helped participants in their various ways and put certain policies in place to ease the burden on their employees. Staff 4 is glad NCI can help with the basics of using Microsoft teams and how the school organised with the IT team to ensure every lecturer has a basic knowledge of how to carry out their work. Staff 3 said *“UCD did quite a lot of surveys to talk to students about how they were affected by the pandemic, and they found out that the students weren't able to put up with online teaching and what they really missed was simply the day-to-day interaction with their classmates and also with lecturers.”* This shows that the institution’s efforts to adjust with the organisational policies to achieve its primary goal.

Staff 5 says, *“NCI specifically addresses the use of Microsoft teams and are constantly giving us seminars and the best tips on using the technology and arranging the content so there's a lot of a lot of work internally going on around the need to improve online learning and development”*. Staff 2 on the other hand says the university (IBAT college) aims to create a remote learning environment that is immersive and would not have any loss for not being in the classroom and the school has been working hard towards it.

4.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 3: TO EXAMINE EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY IN IRISH EDUCATION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Below is a list of topics and themes that would be discussed in this section.

- Employee satisfaction
- Alignment with strategy
- Employee engagement – self-motivation

4.6.1 EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE/ SATISFACTION

Performance is measured by how well an employee performs their work responsibilities and completes their assigned tasks. It refers to the output's efficacy, quality, and efficiency. It is also a factor in determining how valuable an employee is to the company. Employee education and core skills both improve employee creativity, which has a significant impact on employee performance (Sinaga, O., Lis, M. and Razimi, M. S. A., 2019).

Educational system has accepted the new normal globally and employees should start seeing the positive impact of the remote learning, this global pandemic has affected every sphere of the world hence there is a lot of adjustments to make which was discussed in literature (Karim, 2019). Staff 7 wanted to do what would work for him to make teaching easier and more engaging. His response to employee productivity was to figure out ways and strategies that would suit the students, like turning cameras on during the lecture, conversations, and questions from the students, he says *“The online experience of teaching online has actually provided opportunities nationally and potentially on a global perspective rather than having to be necessarily present in a classroom in Dublin.”* Staff 7 sees the positive part of not jumping busses or trains and being productive and be relaxed while at it. All participants agree with the school of thought that each lecturer needs to know what works for both them and their students, employees need to know how to make the most of their lectures, prepare mentally, virtually, academically, and socially for the lecture with the aim of achieving the purpose of giving the information.

4.6.2 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Staff 2 sees himself as being self-motivated and able to find easy ways to provide learning opportunities for himself and his students. Employees are more likely to implement their learning in the job instantly since they are more engaged and encouraged to do so. Staff 4 expressed the disappointment when students are not responding in lectures, and she found ways to motivate herself and look out for what works for the students and what could interest them. The level of engagement and motivation determines how they could improve social interaction even online which would aid maximum.

4.6.3 ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGY

Staff 6 was pleased with the plan and rule put in place by the school to ease tension, there were several deliberations on the best social media platform to use for remote learning, also there were deliberations on how to make the online lecture interesting and worth staying here, staff 7 spoke on how he forgets to turn the recording or how to use certain options on the teams app. Staff 4 gives the school its credit of helping immensely in the time that was needed and how she was able to adjust easily and go with the decisions and strategy of the university. They believe that to realize the company's goal, each piece of work must be created in accordance with the plan.

4.7 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 4: TO ANALYSE EMPLOYEE-EMPLOYER PERFORMANCE DURING THE PANDEMIC.

This objective gives a critical analysis of the influence of trainings/ resource management on performance and answers the question on how employees manage and improve resource management on employee productivity. The interviewees response to this was the need to initiate the idea of evaluations personally or collectively.

4.7.1 PERFROMANCE EVALUATION

Employers can use the performance evaluation process to observe and coach each employee's performance. Self-evaluations are frequently necessary for a positive performance rating. It's utilized to see how productive the company has been and what areas need to be improved (S.M. Heathfield, 2019). Staff 2 would say *“lecturers core capabilities would have to change to meet the new dynamic environment in which they are now delivering the message, and universities have to see that and maybe add that to their checkbox list of things they're looking for in lectures, questions like How good are you on zoom? How good are you a Microsoft teams? How dynamic is you in a classroom? How can you stimulate an interest of students?”* Evaluations were needed for participants to identify underlying issues that pose to stop achieving the organisational goals. The interviewees all had same thought of how self-evaluation was significant in employee productivity.

4.8 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 5: TO PRESENT A SET OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REMOTE LEARNING AS A WAY OF IMPROVING LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE.

A critical analysis on performance of employees during the disease outbreak.

This objective identifies the certain learning initiatives adopted by employees to aid effective performance during the pandemic. Participants had their various options, some are flexibility, communication, feedback, and others. The themes/topics discussed in this research are as follows.

- Employee retention – retaining talent
- Learning initiatives – Flexibility
- Communication and collaboration - feedback

4.8.1 EMPLOYEE RETENTION

Employees gain a sense of success and belonging in a straightforward workplace, and the firm benefits from a more grounded and stable workforce. Employee Retention is a strategy for encouraging employees to stay with the company for as long as possible. Employee retention is crucial for an organization's work and efficiency, especially considering the uncertain job opportunities that have arisen because of global development (Monica, B. S. And Reddy, G. S.,2020). The educational sector was and is still crucial and require employees to deliver learning services, two third of the interviewees for this research spoke on the need for institutions to pay attention to their staff and they have been helpful, these universities pay attention to their lecturers and would not want to lose any of them as there is a high demand on the educational industry. Staff 3 says one of the great ways of retaining talent in this time is for institutions to intensify training for employees on online learning and provide resources to make it easier at home like laptops, headset, and others, hence building a reliable competency for online training. In staff 7's words *"it is critical for all employers to promote good work life balance to avoid people burning out and destroying the professional and personal lives along the way."*

4.8.2 LEARNING INITIATIVES: FLEXIBILITY

“Actions are the most effective way possible, it's reaching out to colleagues to say that you're struggling with, you know a particular topic or you're struggling with a particular approach or your study, or you're struggling getting student engagement and you're reaching out to them to see whether or not they can give you their insights as to what's worked in the past for them so you know it's a constant and evolving thing, more like a flexibility perspective.” Staff 4.

Four of the interviewees shared their thoughts on the need for employees to be flexible with their learning and job as lecturers, there is an evolving which is inevitable, staff 2 called these positive effects of the pandemic; ability to change and adapt to new technology, he said lecturers should be ready for any type of adjustments that may put some present software in extinct. They will evolve as trainers and make the higher demands on these software systems and using much more user-friendly online tutorial techniques. Staff 7 saw the ability to switch from having meetings and webinars on site to online and everyone seems to be comfortable with it now, the interviewees showed how important it is for employees and even employers to be ready to adjust and adapt to new developments, they have been successful with it and that is a positive effect to organisational performance. Staff 1 said this affects both sides of the coin; the students especially the international students who had their expectations of campus learning, but they have adjusted and are accepting the benefits of it. Staff 5 also said it is a tool for retaining talents, these strategies create effective and productive learning opportunities.

4.8.3 HYBRID MODEL OF LEARNING

Five of the participants disagreed to a complete campus learning any time soon, staff 6 would say *“the new development has come to stay”* and everyone has adjusted their minds and abilities to it, they accepted the blended learning approach where undergraduate levels go back to campus while higher levels remain online, two interviewees highlighted that it may be courses that require more of practical like science, medicals and others that should resume physical learning. This shows how participants in this research and other academic staff have come to accept this new development and use it to enhance productivity.

4.8.4 COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

Increased communication, feedback, and collaboration were highlighted by some research participants as part of L&D strategies. Some interviewees use tools to bring employees and students together for this reason, and they also encourage feedback, which allows for growth and productivity. They spoke on how they saw communication with students as a major tool to be effective in the job, some created channels for the students to discuss in smaller groups, there were times where the students were free to discuss and share their views on the topic. Staff 2 explained how lecturers need to understand what works for their students, its more than just delivering the message but how they receive the message. Feedback sessions are crucial especially from students, it shows you are open to listen and learn from your mistakes and willing to communicate better- feedback is key to learning and development. Employee's mode of communication is vital for productivity in the educational sector, interesting moments like debates on a general topic go a long way.

There are certain negative effects to this, two of the interviewees pointed out the fact that some lecturers and students are too shy or unable to turn on their cameras or unmute during class, this makes learning a bit difficult and boring. Another would be language barriers; some accents are hard to understand, and people might find it hard to listen properly, staff 2 gave a suggestion regarding this for students to turn on their captions to ease this problem.

4.9 CONCLUSION

The data analysis chapter provided a comprehensive review of the participants' perspectives on L&D and their teaching experiences throughout the epidemic. It demonstrated the positive and negative implications of their differing viewpoints, the majority of which were supported by literature. It was advantageous to identify some initiatives that benefited an employee's productivity, particularly amid the global development. However, as stated in the research limitations section, the findings cannot be generalized due to the small sample size of seven participants. Participants, on the other hand, provided recommendations about how to make L&D more effective in the new global shift that would add to the dissertation's final conclusions.

CHAPTER 5

5. CONCLUSIONS AND FINDINGS

5.1 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Because the literature in this field is limited, the goal of this dissertation was to develop a new insight of L&D from a strategic perspective. Its purpose was to address the research Question of how L&D affected employee performance in Irish institutions during the Pandemic. The literature evaluation and data analysis in this study provided comprehensive answers to the question. This chapter highlights the solution to the problem, as well as the significant findings and a new conceptual framework for the knowledge domain. The dissertation offers perspectives on L&D, as well as the importance of L&D in universities and during pandemics. It describes a variety of initiatives and assesses their strategic value to the educational sector.

The study generated several unexpected results. It was predicted that when asked about their reactions to switching to remote learning and adjustment, the respondents would talk about how they were able to accomplish it on their own and how employees need to improve their technology skills to stay on the job. The findings reveal that the focus is not just on the personnel, but also on the students and the organization; their retention, motivation, and competence, as well as their ability to adapt to change while still producing high-quality products and meeting goals more effectively.

The participants have showed in this research that learning and development is a lifestyle for all lecturers and is needed in the educational sector, it is possible to adjust to the new development and build core capabilities to produce effective results. Their views have been analysed to provide the advantages as well as the disadvantages surrounding the effects of remote lecturing and the findings are related as all interviewees are willing to adjust and adapt to the new development and find positive ways to provide learning services to the students. During the interviews, the participants discussed nearly all the statements or best practices described in the literature study. Employees must communicate and create greater learning opportunities for students, according to both the literature and the interviewees.

The literature review and the interview show how the organisation/ institution has a part to play in creating learning opportunities for the employees, that is needed for organisational success, and they will be effective (as stated in the literature review). One of the negative effects spoken by the interviewees and not mentioned in the literature review was how students were most times not interested in the online classroom and do not participate in the lecture, some cases would be connection issues and inability to join the lecture.

The most significant aspect in being effective, according to both literature and participants, is aligning L&D efforts with organizational goals; The interviewees added that employees need to know what works for them, the organisation, and the students. Furthermore, the participants concluded that aligning with the organisational strategy would be beneficial and would make learning services easier as they (institutions) have been helpful during these times. Employee retention is connected to planned careers, according to research and interviews. The interviewees, however, disagree with the literature and believe that employee satisfaction and participation have an impact on retention (according to the literature, retention improves performance).

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS/COSTINGS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Because the L&D knowledge area is relatively new in academic research, it is recommended that further research be done on the subject. Furthermore, because its strategic applicability is limited, more academics and institutions should explore it. Although this thesis contributed to the research, it is recommended that the topic be further developed. Since it was only seven participants that was interviewed, it is suggested to use a larger sample size, interviewing more lecturers and experienced members of the educational sector. Also, this research was conducted in three tertiary institutions, it is recommended to access and interview more Irish universities in the parts of Ireland (or beyond depending on the size of the research).

Furthermore, allowing for a longer time frame for further research will be useful. I worked on the dissertation research for four months on a portion basis. It is suggested that the time for future study be extended to a minimum of 6 – 7 months and that extra hours be set aside each week for secondary and primary research. This will ensure that the data gathered and analysed is more precise, and the results may be more informative. A longer time frame will allow more people to participate in the interviews, and the quality of the interviews will improve.

Due to the demand for learning and development in the educational sector, there is an urgent need for organisations to provide employees with the adequate number of trainings and development. Furthermore, there would be financial costings associated with this, there would be trainings, workshops and technological developments needed to upskill the staff. Employee benefits can be evaluated here, which can lead to increased employee satisfaction, improved interpersonal relationships, a sense of unity, and other positive opinions. It can help organisations improve their work culture, employer brand, retention, and dedication.

5.3 CONCLUSION

The reason for this research was to understand how effective Learning and development is to employees in the educational sector and the organisation and how certain initiative will bring productivity, the findings show that there is a positive impact of L&D on employee productivity and the organisation have positively helped these employees develop personally and professionally. This research not only solved the research question, but it also filled a gap in the literature because the connection between L&D and strategy was and tends to be limited. According to the findings, when L&D activities are of high quality, organizational performance and employee satisfaction can increase. L&D has the potential to improve the organisation's productivity and competitiveness.

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PERSONAL LEARNING STATEMENT

This research study has given me insight to the educational sector in Ireland. It is and continues to be an area for both academic and non-academic staff in the educational sector. Not only have I received academic knowledge, but I've also developed extensive research, writing, and critical thinking skills. Through the qualitative viewpoints of the participants, I was able to gain useful insights on learning and development and its effects during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I'm delighted I chose something that interests me and applied it to a topic that I found most intriguing during my HRM course (learning & development). This made the thesis easier and interesting; I noticed the pandemic had a huge impact on the employees in the educational sector, lectures, assessments, exams and even research was done online, and I feel it was a concern for the employees who had to teach and provide adequate and quality learning services to the students, it also showed the importance of learning and development, trainings, and professional/technological development for lecturers/employees. Most lecturers that were interviewed spoke on how they had to learn on the job, and even get help from students during the lecture.

If I had chosen a topic that I didn't understand, I believe the project would have been more difficult. There are certain things I would like to change in my next research. One is to enhance my time management capabilities; Throughout the project, I felt that I took too long to complete certain things that could have been completed in a more effective manner, even though the deadline was near. Long periods of time passed between working on the project, especially during the second semester, when I was preoccupied with work and other school modules.

My supervisor's counsel and questions prompted me to reconsider my approach and the contents offered for my study, and I am glad for that. I believe I could have written a better and more enjoyable article if I had better and more pronounced time management and organizational skills, but this has once again encouraged me to reflect on my own shortcomings and other pertinent areas. However, working on this dissertation has been an interesting and worthwhile learning experience for me, and I hope that the readers will find my research useful in some way.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW WITH PARTICIPANT

Scholarstica Ukachi Irem-Oko: Thank you for joining me in this meeting. I really appreciate it. Thank you. This is just a general chat about your views on learning and development and to discuss your experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please tell me how you started your job in NCI and how is it going?

Participant: So I started with National College of Ireland three years ago. I had spent a long time in academia, so I worked as a part time lecturer in UCD, which is one of the other universities here in Dublin, and I've done that for a number of years, and my children were then in secondary school, you know, so they're getting a little older and I wanted the opportunity to work more. So, I reached out to the Dean of the Business School and chatted with her, and she just gave me the opportunity to come on board with National College of Ireland in a full-time position and I've been there since 2018. I'm program director for the undergraduate degree in Human Resource Management. I also lecture general areas of human resource management on a postgraduate level and on an undergraduate level and my experience with National College of Ireland has been incredibly positive, you're in very close proximity to your colleagues and that gives you great opportunity to be able to work well and develop your skills based on the requirements for a National College of Ireland students.

And then for me as well a huge thing until the pandemic was my opportunity to be very closely involved in day-to-day student activity. So not just in lecturing, but also being able to see students daily as I come through the college as I go into the canteen. Having an open-door policy so students can drop into me at any time, and then also to be able to work with students who are just starting their journey in education.

Scholarstica Ukachi Irem-Oko: OK, could you please tell me your idea or what you know about learning and development?

Participant: Well, from an academic perspective, there's so much there and I teach quite a bit on learning and development, but on a more human level, I think learning and development is an evolving process where individuals at every level their respective of their role irrespective of their responsibilities, need the opportunity to continue to have lifelong learning within the role within the environment. Within the culture that they find themselves. And there is the need to evolve developmentally so that they continue to have good engagement so they continue to feel committed to the organization so that they can bring out the best in other people. I suppose I'm looking at it from the perspective of being a lecturer, so I think that development is critical.

It is about being good at what you do and ensuring that people have the best possible outcomes, I think learning and development is critical informally and formally, I think you need to have both.

Scholarstica Ukachi Irem-Oko: I want to know do you think there is a need for learning and development in the educational sector and why?

Participant: The need for learning and development in education is critical.

I mean, one of the things that I realized when I was in usage for several years is that I had this passive learning and development that went on consistently because I was surrounded by very senior, very experienced Professionals and were not just brilliant as lecturers, but as researchers and they were brilliant at process. They understood student engagement, So I had the opportunity to learn from them directly.

Maybe you know the level for undergraduate students is quite different. They are varied. Backgrounds are quite different, but the struggles are all the same, you know and so you must become very good at being able to read your audience and very good at ensuring that you're targeting what you do at the appropriate level for the appropriate people.

Actions are the most effective way possible, so that would be just an example on the formal side. On the informal side, it's like reaching out to colleagues to say that you're struggling with a particular topic or a particular approach or your study, or you're struggling getting student engagement and you're reaching out to them to see whether they can give you their insights as to what's worked in the past for them, so you know it's a constant and evolving thing, and that is critical.

Scholarstica Ukachi Irem-Oko: So, considering the pandemic right now, do you think the pandemic affected learning and development in the universe is and how?

Participant: It did indeed, so I just remember back to March 20th I was in the College, we were sent home that afternoon and the very next Thursday and, on the Saturday, I was starting a block with an MBA group. We were going to be together for four intensive weeks. I had never delivered a virtual lecture in my life. It was really daunting and in fact was quite intimidating. Now we were very fortunate in National College of Ireland. The college and the IT team was proactive, and I had the opportunity that very day on the Thursday before I went home to sit down in a lab.

They were proactive in putting together a program to give me the basics, but honest to God, it was the absolute basics. I had planned my entire four weeks already. I would have had my presentations, my case studies, and my articles. I would have had the structure for each lecture in terms of how I would

introduce it, what it would entail. All of that was kind of, useless because I had no idea how this was going to work on a screen.

There were 25 people on the other side, and they literally were helping me to open the presentation. You know they were telling me what to do. There were teaching me how to share my screen. It was that bad and I thought I don't even can be in the room with them, but I have to say the learning and development became critical because you know.

Even while they were giving me the skills, I needed to share my knowledge, I in return was giving them my knowledge so that they understood the topics that we were covering. But in addition to that, learning and development in the college really ramped up. And there were videos available to us immediately. You know there were places I could go to access materials that would teach me what I needed to do. Without that, it would have been a complete and utter disaster, and I can't overemphasize how ahead of the game National College of Ireland was relative to some of the other universities and colleges where I had colleagues and I was talking with them, and they just weren't getting the same levels of support that we were seeing with National College of Ireland.

Scholarstica Ukachi Irem-Oko: Considering the effect that COVID has on universities and the need for lecturers still deliver learning services to students, do you think the learning and development initiatives would positively affect employee productivity and how?

Participant: Yes, it positively affects productivity. You have less time wasted if you understand the process and you understand the technology. The technology didn't work and so I had to prerecord all of my PowerPoint presentations and then upload them, but when I did that it failed so I had spent like something like three and half days recording my presentations, the voice overs and then when I upload them into the National College of Ireland system, it erased everything that I had done so it was lost and It was really not positive, but then when I had the opportunity to review those online tutorials and spend time with people real time. It almost became seamless. Unfortunately, you still have the reality of not being able to get a knowledge of where people were struggling or where people were confident. There's not an easy fix for that, but certainly with improved learning and development and improved opportunity to practice there would be changes.

Scholarstica Ukachi Irem-Oko: I will agree with the fact that there a balance. That's because some lecturers really battled with being productive in this time, and it's good that from then to now they still Productivity and that's most important.

Participant: I would say I struggled it with it myself to be honest. I think that people get a bit burnt

out so you can imagine looking at a blank screen for four hours and you can't leave your chair neither do you have an idea whether anybody is on the other side. Because this happened a lot during my teaching. Feedback is very important because we're human social creatures, so I could see how, depending on the type of group that you're working with, the time would either go quite quickly and be, you know, quite engaging, or indeed it could drag on, and that I could see how that could have an adverse effect on levels of productivity.

Scholarstica Ukachi Irem-Oko: what are the possible ways of retaining talent in the educational sector with the current outbreak?

Participant: In terms of retention, I think you must listen to what your current staff have to say and if what would be coming back from that is that people enjoyed the flexibility that came through. At least a mixed medium where you might be in in the college sometimes and deliver live lectures versus being able to do it from anywhere and still be productive. Then to retain talent you need to make sure that people isolated, so you need to make sure that you are looking at all those basic principles around employee engagement. You know from a communications perspective, a social perspective at developmental perspective and a flexibility perspective.

Scholarstica Ukachi Irem-Oko: Finally, do you think the schools would go back to on site? Do you think the possibility for schools to go back on-site full time?

Participant: I do believe so; I think that one of the things that we've learned through the pandemic is that there are many ways to achieve the outcomes that we want at a university level. A little bit like what you said around retention of staff. If you want to continue to thrive in terms of student numbers, then your model needs to adjust and needs to facilitate individuals who want a masters from a university in Ireland, but don't necessarily want the costs associated with living in Ireland, which is very expensive and becomes a barrier. But I do believe that for undergraduate level there will be a return campus. I think it's going to continue to be like a hybrid model or blended learning where maybe you have some time together because. Learning is quite critical from an academic side, at least, to be able to be in person with your students, I think I would like to have that flexibility.

Scholarstica Ukachi Irem-Oko: OK perfect that's everything from my side. Thank you so much for staying with me and I've learned a lot. Thank you.

Participant: Good luck with the work and take care.

Scholarstica Ukachi Irem-Oko: Thank you and Bye.

APPENDIX 2: EMAIL TO PARTICIPANTS

Hi

My name is Scholarstica Irem-Oko, and I am currently doing my master's program in Human Resource Management at the National College of Ireland.

For my thesis, I am conducting a research on "The effect of learning and development on employee performance in Irish education during the COVID-19 pandemic".

I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss your experiences during these times. I am especially interested in your views regarding how the pandemic affected your job role especially moving to remote learning and steps that was taken to ensure that learning is delivered effectively.

I assure you that it would be very brief and looking to host the call via zooms or Microsoft Teams.

Every insight you have/share would be greatly appreciated.

I look forward to hearing from you on when it'll be convenient to have a chat.

Thank you so much.