The Adoption of a National Human Resource Development Standard: The Role of Internal and External Pressures

Aileen Carmel Murphy B.Ed. (Hons) M.Sc.

Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Limerick

Research Supervisor: Professor Thomas Garavan

Submitted to the University of Limerick May 2016
Declaration

I declare that this thesis represents my own work.

_________________________________________

Aileen Murphy
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following people:

My supervisor Professor Thomas Garavan for his insight, guidance and encouragement throughout the process

Dr. Richard Hayes, Head of School of Humanities and Mr. Ray Cullen, Head of Department of Languages, Tourism and Hospitality for their support

Mr. J.J. Casey for his assistance with the statistical analysis

Mr. Tony Dunbar from Foras Áiseanna Saothair

Mr. Fergal O’Byrne, Ms. Michelle Browne and Ms. Patricia Whelan from the National Standards Authority of Ireland

I would like to acknowledge the support of my family and friends throughout
Dedication

In memory of my parents Evelyn and Daniel who gave me such strong foundations

My husband Jim for his love and understanding

My children Evelyn and James who are a source of joy and inspiration
Abstract

This study investigates the internal and external pressures which explain the adoption or non-adoption of the Irish human resource development standard among organisations. National governments use a variety of strategies and policy measures to encourage organisations and individuals to invest in human capital. A National human resource development standard (NHRD) is one such measure. This research moves beyond the dominant view in the literature that organisations adopt practices for rational reasons. This is the first study to utilise institutional theory to explain the adoption of a NHRD standard. Organisations that had adopted the Irish NHRD standard and non-adopter organisations were surveyed. The results of the logistic regression analysis show that there are some notable differences between adopter and non adopter organisations. This study makes some important contributions as it offers empirical evidence that some relationships between adoption of a NHRD standard and independent variables do exist. The research model and associated hypotheses advances the theoretical understandings of the internal and external pressures which explain the adoption of a NHRD standard. The results provide a new means of understanding organisations’ responses to the internal and external pressures in the adoption of a NHRD standard. This study adds to a currently sparse literature on the adoption of a NHRD standard.
Illustrations

Tables
2.1 Comparison of HR and related standards......................................................37
2.2 Cumulative number of adoptions of ETP 1996–2005.................................50
2.3 Number of new adoptions of ETP 2006–2013.........................................50
2.4 Evaluation of adoption rationales..............................................................76
3.1 Ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods..............................99
3.2 Philosophical assumptions of positivism.................................................100
3.3 A Comparison of nomothetic and ideographic research methods – a continuum......................................................................................101
3.4 Positivist principles and interpretivist principles......................................103
3.5 Hypotheses and measures table...............................................................111
4.1 Sample characteristics...........................................................................126
4.2 Inter-correlation analysis.........................................................................132
4.3 Logistic regression: Explaining the adoption of Excellence Through People......................................................................................136
5.1 Key findings

Figures
2.1 Research model.........................................................................................83
Appendix B1 Singapore Business Excellence Framework............................225
Appendix B2 Singapore Business Excellence Certifications and Award.........226
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANSI</td>
<td>American National Standards Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEMs</td>
<td>Business Excellence Models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSI</td>
<td>British Standards Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIPD</td>
<td>Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>Corporate Social Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFQM</td>
<td>European Foundation for Quality Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETBs</td>
<td>Education and Training Boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETP</td>
<td>Excellence Through People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FÁS</td>
<td>Foras Áiseanna Saothair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDA</td>
<td>Food and Drug Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDI</td>
<td>Foreign direct investment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FET</td>
<td>Further Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPWP</td>
<td>High Performance Work Practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRD</td>
<td>Human Resources Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRM</td>
<td>Human Resources Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRPA</td>
<td>Human Resources Policy Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBEC</td>
<td>Irish Business and Employers Confederation’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and communication technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDA</td>
<td>Industrial Development Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIFRS</td>
<td>International Financial Reporting Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIP</td>
<td>Investors in People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIPUK</td>
<td>Investors in People UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IITD</td>
<td>Irish Institute of Training and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISO</td>
<td>International Organisation for Standardisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LECs</td>
<td>Local Enterprise Companies (Scotland)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSCs</td>
<td>Learning and Skills Councils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNCs</td>
<td>Multi-national corporations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHRD</td>
<td>National Human Resource Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHRDS</td>
<td>National Human Resource Development Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD</td>
<td>People Developer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE</td>
<td>People Excellence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SABPP</td>
<td>South African Board for People Practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAI</td>
<td>Social Accountability International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHRM</td>
<td>Strategic Human Resource Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMEs</td>
<td>small to medium-sized enterprises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOLAS</td>
<td>An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQA</td>
<td>Singapore Quality Award</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQC</td>
<td>Singapore Quality Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T&amp;E Agency</td>
<td>Training and Employment Agency Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T&amp;EC</td>
<td>Training and Enterprise Councils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TQM</td>
<td>Total Quality Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VECs</td>
<td>Vocational Educational Committees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Contents

Abstract .................................................................................................................................. iv  
Illustrations ............................................................................................................................. v  
Abbreviations ......................................................................................................................... vi  

Chapter 1  Introduction ............................................................................................................... 1  
1.1 Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 1  
1.2 Study Context....................................................................................................................... 1  
1.2.1 The Irish Context ........................................................................................................... 2  
1.2.2 Global Context .............................................................................................................. 5  
1.3 Definition of Standards ....................................................................................................... 7  
1.3.1 National and International HRM and HRD Standards ................................................... 8  
1.4 Research Question and Rationale ...................................................................................... 9  
1.5 Thesis Structure ................................................................................................................. 14  
1.5 Conclusion .......................................................................................................................... 16  

Chapter 2  Literature Review .................................................................................................. 17  
2.1 Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 17  
2.2 Global Trend Towards Increased Standardisation of Organisational Practices .......... 19  
2.3 Types of Standards .......................................................................................................... 23  
2.4 National and International HRM and HRD Standards ...................................................... 29  
2.5 Effectiveness of NHRD Standards .................................................................................... 30  
2.6 Adoption and Diffusion of NHRD Standards ................................................................... 44  
2.6.1 Adoption of ETP .......................................................................................................... 48  
2.7 Rationales for Adoption of HR Standards ....................................................................... 51  
2.7.1 The Rational Rationale ................................................................................................ 51  
2.7.2 The Strategic Choice Rationale ................................................................................... 54  
2.7.3 The Psychodynamic Rationale .................................................................................... 57  
2.7.4 The Cultural Rationale ................................................................................................. 59  
2.7.5 The Political Rationale ................................................................................................. 63  
2.7.6 The Dramaturgical (Rhetorical) Rationale ................................................................... 65  
2.7.7 The Institutional Rationale .......................................................................................... 67  
2.7.8 Evaluation of Adoption Rationales .............................................................................. 80  
2.8 Research Model ............................................................................................................... 81  
2.8.1 Internal Business Factors Influencing the Adoption of a NHRD Standard .............. 84
Chapter 3  Study Methodology

3.1 Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 97
3.2 The Study Context .............................................................................................................. 97
  3.2.1 Research Question and Rationale ............................................................................... 98
3.4 Approaches to Research .................................................................................................... 99
3.5 Methodological Approach ............................................................................................... 100
3.6 The Research Instrument ................................................................................................. 103
3.7 Measures .......................................................................................................................... 105
  3.7.1 Control Variables....................................................................................................... 105
  3.7.2 External Factors and Adoption .................................................................................. 105
  3.7.3 Internal Business Factors and Adoption ................................................................... 108
3.8 The Study Sample ............................................................................................................. 118
3.9 Fieldwork .......................................................................................................................... 118
3.10 Data Analysis .................................................................................................................. 119
3.11 Conclusion ...................................................................................................................... 121

Chapter 4  Findings

4.1 Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 123
4.2 Sample Characteristics ................................................................................................. 123
4.3 Inter-correlation Analysis ............................................................................................... 129
4.4 Hypothesis Testing ......................................................................................................... 133
4.5 Conclusion ........................................................................................................................ 136

Chapter 5  Discussion Chapter

5.1 Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 137
5.2 Contribution of this Study ............................................................................................. 137
5.3 Key Contributions ......................................................................................................... 140
5.7 Study Limitations ....................................................................................................... 155
5.8 Recommendations for Future Research ........................................................................ 156
5.9 Implications for Practice .............................................................................................. 161
5.10 Conclusion .................................................................................................................... 162

References ................................................................................................................................. 163

Appendices ................................................................................................................................. 197
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix A: The Emergence of HR Standards</th>
<th>197</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B: Singapore Business Excellence Framework</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C: Original Excellence Through People Standard</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D: 2004 Revision of Excellence Through People Standard</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E: Excellence Through People 1000:2012</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F: Adopter Questionnaire</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix G: Nonadopter Questionnaire</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix H: Cover email to respondents</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1  Introduction

1.1 Introduction
The purpose of this thesis is to investigate internal and external pressures which explain the adoption or non-adoption of the Irish national human resource development (NHRD) standard among organisations. This chapter outlines the context for the study and key concepts are explained. The research question and rationale for the research are presented. This study moves beyond the dominant view in the literature that organisations adopt practices for rational reasons. The institutional theory literature provides a valuable set of theoretical concepts that help conceptualise the adoption of a NHRD standard. This study is the first to utilise institutional theory to explain the adoption of a NHRD standard. The chapter closes by outlining the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Study Context
National governments use a variety of strategies and policy measures to encourage organisations and individuals to invest in human capital. A NHRD standard is one such measure. NHRD standards have been introduced by their respective governments in order to improve economic competitiveness by investing in the workforce. To date three countries have developed NHRD standards, Ireland, the UK and Singapore. The UK was the first country to develop a NHRD standard called Investors in People (IIP) in 1991. Ireland launched Excellence Through People (ETP) in 1995 and Singapore launched People Developer (PD) in 1997. In addition, 19 countries have a licence agreement to operate the UK NHRD standard. Very little research has been conducted on ETP even though it has been an important NHRD initiative in Ireland for the past 20 years. This study contributes to filling this research gap. In this study an empirical approach has been used to fill a research gap in the literature by examining and explaining the factors that influence the adoption of a NHRD standard. The research model developed for this study highlights the role of a multiplicity of factors that explain the adoption of a NHRD standard.

Numerous studies have focused on the adoption and diffusion of organisational practices, spanning many disciplines and focusing on industry, organisational, and
individual-level analyses. This study moves beyond the dominant view in the literature that organisations adopt practices for rational reasons. The institutional theory literature provides a valuable set of theoretical concepts that help conceptualise the adoption and diffusion of a NHRD standard. This study is the first to utilise institutional theory to explain the adoption of a NHRD standard. This study proposes a research model to explain adoption of ETP using institutional theory as the theoretical lens. The research model incorporates institutional processes such as normative and mimetic isomorphism, to explain adoption of a NHRD standard. The extent of our knowledge of how these various sets of factors interact with each other is relatively poor. NHRD standards are increasingly used by countries to raise the level of professionalisation of the HRD function and to ensure that organisations are actually attending to the development of HRD policies and practices that enhance the development and retention of human resources (HR) and contribute to competitive advantage. Organisations that adopt and implement human resource development (HRD) standards are in a position to sustain superior performance. NHRD and training agencies seek widespread adoption of national standards. The next section continues by placing ETP in the National context.

1.2.1 The Irish Context

The Irish NHRD model is characterised as transitional, with the dominant approach being coordination between social partners and an interventionist role by government. Policies are derived from a tripartite approach with the government coordinating the development of NHRD initiatives at National level. The central plank of economic policy has been to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) to Ireland (Garavan et al., 2009). By the 1990s there was recognition that national training policy lacked cohesiveness and had not sufficiently supported industry needs. National training strategies tended to emphasise training the unemployed (Gunnigle et al., 2011). The Culliton Report was published in 1992 and stated that the provision for workplace training in Ireland was inadequate and recommended that FÁS (Foras Áiseanna Saothair, the national training agency) provide greater support for the employed. It also observed that the recession of the 1980s resulted in a skills gap and insufficient investment in HRD. FÁS launched ETP in 1995. The standard was designed to integrate with ISO 9000 and the people management element of Business Excellence Models
(BEMs). ETP is partially based on European Foundations for Quality Management (EFQM) criteria, specifically in the areas of leadership, policy and strategy, people management and satisfaction.

The Irish Government published a White Paper on HRD in 1997 which emphasised the need for improved organisational HRD and the contribution quality awards can make in this regard. The paper highlighted that ETP is the Irish Government’s first attempt to accredit organisations that have achieved excellence in HRD. The aspiration to link ETP to other awards, so that Irish companies can progress towards international awards also featured. In 2000 the Irish Government’s operational programme for employment and human resources development highlighted the need to increase the adoption of ETP. This programme identified ETP as having ‘the potential to act as a significant point of leverage’ in enhancing productivity and competitiveness in Irish companies (Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, 2000, p. 71). The report also stated that grants to companies would focus on achievement of recognised standards, setting up formal training functions where one does not exist, and upgrading existing HRD functions. Reddington (2003) found the standard to be well regarded among organisations. While assessment was considered comprehensive, concern was expressed about the high scores and that it is hard to fail. This caused motivational challenges and made improvements difficult to demonstrate in subsequent audits. ETP was revised in 2004 and expanded into a HRM standard which could be awarded at three levels: standard, gold and platinum. The desire to cultivate large companies, particularly multinationals, was significant in developing ETP into a full HRM standard.

During the Celtic Tiger years Ireland had high levels of economic growth and full employment. The effects of the global financial crisis were particularly severe in Ireland as excessive bank lending led to a property bubble. The subsequent recession and banking guarantee resulted in a crisis in the public finances which led to the European Union/International Monetary Fund bailout in 2010. At the height of the recession unemployment levels reached 15 per cent. The recession resulted in people seeking more education and training and postponement of entry to the labour market. The government also promoted education and training as a labour activation measure to assist people out
of unemployment. Reform of the public sector was part of the austerity measures introduced by the government. FÁS was dissolved and new structures were put in place. FÁS was under the aegis of the Department for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and had a dual mandate. In addition to being the national training agency it also had responsibility for the unemployed. Responsibility for the unemployed was transferred to the Department of Social Protection which launched Intreo as a single point of contact for all employment services in 2012. The Further Education and Training Act which was enacted in 2013 brought sweeping changes to the Further Education and Training (FET) sector. Under this legislation FÁS was dissolved and SOLAS (An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna – the Irish Further Education and Training Authority) was established. A key objective in the establishment of SOLAS was to strengthen the FET sector. SOLAS was tasked with developing and giving strategic direction to the further education and training sector. In the past, planning for further education was a separate activity to planning for training. Greater integration and more cohesive planning is now enabled across the FET sector through SOLAS. Historically, further education was provided by the Vocational Educational Committees (VECs). Under the Education and Training Boards Act 2013, 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) were established to manage training delivery. These ETBs were formed from an amalgamation of the 33 existing VECs and 16 FÁS training centres. Both SOLAS and the ETBs report to the Department of Education and Skills (SOLAS, 2014a; SOLAS, 2014b).

FÁS ceased administering ETP by 2011. On the 1st of January 2012 ETP was transferred from FÁS to the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI). The NSAI is responsible for a variety of other standards including ISO standards. Like FÁS the NSAI is under the aegis of the Department for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. When responsibility for ETP was transferred to the NSAI the standard was revised and aligned to a greater extent with the ISO process. In 2012 Excellence Through People 1000:2012 was published. The full integration of ETP into the NSAI’s systems was finalised in 2013. ‘Excellence Through People is a strong driver towards the human resource management strengths that the economy will need if we are to gain long-term competitiveness and productivity advantages’ (NSAI, 2012b, p. 26). The NSAI and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) launched the Excellence in
People Development awards in 2014 to recognise HR initiatives. These awards are designed to complement the ETP accreditation scheme. Organisations must submit a project introduced within the last two years demonstrating a direct link to one or more of the core sections of ETP 1000:2012 (National Standards Authority of Ireland, 2014). In February 2012 the Irish Government launched the first annual action plan for jobs containing 280 measures to rebuild the economy and create employment. In these annual plans ETP was identified as a means of building competitive advantage by aligning workforce skills with enterprise needs. ETP was seen as a means of assisting companies develop best HR practice in order to improve talent development and retention. ETP was considered a particularly important tool in promoting and supporting ‘the adoption of structured up-skilling and development systems for existing staff’ (Department for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, 2012; Department for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, 2013, p. 77). The next section places the Irish NHRD standard in the wider global context.

1.2.2 Global Context

Globalisation, the emergence of the knowledge economy, and the adoption of new technologies by organisations have brought more focus on the contribution of human resources to competitiveness and performance. Human resources are increasingly considered to have the potential to provide sustainable competitive advantage (Barney and Wright, 1998; Boxhall and Purcell, 2011; Harrison and Kessels, 2004). An important dimension of HR capability enhancement concerns investment that organisations make in HR development (HRD) or training and development. As organisations and economies seek to grow and compete in a knowledge-based economy, HRD is expected to play a more strategic role in organisations (Garavan, 2007; Garavan et al., 2009; Holland et al., 2007). National governments are also preoccupied with the level of skill in the labour force and investments in training and development. There are, however, debates concerning who should make the investment – government, employers, or employees. The evidence showing a growing link between investment in bundles of HRD activities and organisation and country competitiveness continues to evolve; however, there is still a lot of scepticism about the value of HRD investments.
McLean (2004, p. 269) argues that there is an ‘emerging emphasis’ on defining HRD as a national, well-planned investment that has the potential to enhance the human capital of a country (Keeley, 2007; Smith, 2006) and enable it to meet a range of national economic and social objectives (Luo, 2006). Organisations and countries do, however, encounter difficulties in ensuring that training and development investments and HRM/HRD practices are a central part of the corporate and national agendas. Countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and Ireland have struggled to bring a level of coherence to national training and development policies and practices. Aspects of training and development in these countries are considered fragmented and frequently focused on basic-level skills rather than on advanced skill development. Training and development is also a frequently ad hoc and cost-driven activity (Hoque, 2003; McKeown and Teicher, 2006; Smith, 2006; Smith et al., 2002). The social partners in these countries are in agreement concerning the need to invest in training and development; however, the extent of investment is not at the level desired.

National governments use a variety of strategies and policy measures to encourage organisations and individuals to invest in human capital. These include training guarantee schemes, financial incentives for investment in management skills, levy-grant schemes for sectors that do not train, and national training or HR standards (Karpin, 1995; Luo, 2006; Mendel, 2006). National training and development standards are the particular focus of this thesis. Scott (2014) argues that the development of standards and certification processes constitute a clear instance of institutionalised normative and cultural control. Market-related factors, enhanced customer service, greater efficiency, and a kick-start for improvement in training and development are highlighted as the key reasons for national standards and the achievement of accreditation by organisations (Brown and Van Der Wiele, 1997; McAdam and McKeown, 1999). Joo and McLean (2006, p. 234) suggest that organisations seek to be deemed an ‘employer of choice’. This attribution confers a number of important advantages, including a positive image, greater competitiveness, and a strong signal to prospective employees that the organisation is committed to investing in people capability. Accreditation makes that which is essentially internal more visible to the external environment. Certification potentially confers external legitimacy on HRD and training and development practices.
It also suggests that the employer is socially responsible and committed to investing in its employees (Grugulis, 2007). The next section defines standards.

1.3 Definition of Standards

Brunsson and Jacobsson (2000) suggest that national standards act as general advice for prospective adopters. They articulate minimum standards that must be met to receive accreditation from a professional organisation. Scott (2014) suggests that accreditation is a primary indicator of legitimacy. The underlying principles of standardisation are ‘universalism, rationality, and homogenization to an extreme degree’ (Loya and Boli, 1999, p. 192). A NHRD standard is universalistic in that best practice in HRD is prescribed for organisations which promotes homogeneity. Casile and Davis-Blake (2002, p. 181) define accreditation standards as ‘standards that must be met in order to receive the “seal of approval” of a professional organisation’. Corbett and Yeung (2008, p. 1) use the term metastandard ‘loosely to refer to standards that apply to broad processes (rather than individual products) and to entire families of such process standards’.

Furusten (2000, p. 71) defines management standards as ‘standards on how to design and manage organisations’. The International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) defines a standard as follows: ‘A standard is a document that provides requirements, specifications, guidelines or characteristics that can be used consistently to ensure that materials, products, processes and services are fit for their purpose’ (ISO, 2015). Brunsson et al. (2012, p. 616) state that: ‘A standard can be defined as a rule for common and voluntary use, decided by one or several people or organisations’. The authors identify three key characteristics of standards. Firstly, standards contain explicit rules and so differ from implicit social norms. Secondly, standards are voluntary. Thirdly, standards can be applied broadly and so are intended for general use. For the purposes of this thesis a NHRD standard is defined as an explicit statement which codifies HRD knowledge and practice. In addition, NHRD standards are for generic use, are voluntary and entail accreditation. The next section outlines the emergence of national and international HRM and HRD standards.
1.3.1 National and International HRM and HRD Standards

National governments, like organisations, look to other countries for HRM and HRD policies and practices that are perceived as successful. To date, a number of countries have developed national HRM or HRD standards. These include the United Kingdom, Ireland, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the USA. The UK, Ireland and Singapore have all implemented NHRD standards. These three NHRD standards were introduced by their respective governments in order to improve economic competitiveness by investing in the workforce. National HRM (NHRM) standards have been developed in the UK, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and America. There are also International HRM (IHRM) standards under development by the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO). NHRM and IHRM standards aim to provide organisations with a common set of fundamental HR practices.

NHRM and IHRM standards many of which have HRD components have been developed by those in the HRM field. Standardisation poses a number of dilemmas for the field of HRD. Firstly, standards propose stability, uniformity and auditing. Whereas, change and flexibility are inherent in HRD in order to support individual and organisational development. Secondly, the extent to which the adoption of standardised HRD practices across cultures is appropriate. Thirdly, the purpose of standard and whether the approach is rules based or principles based. Fourthly, what standards will mean for the content and delivery of HRD education around the world (Anderson, 2015).

Globalisation has to a large degree driven the need for international HR standards. Heras-Saizarbitoria and Boiral (2013a, p. 52) suggest that management standards generally are becoming ‘a global regulation tool’. Another reason for the emergence of HR standards is the need for legitimacy. HR standards can potentially confer external legitimacy on organisations. Furthermore, HRM/HRD standards can offer organisations who seek to be viewed as an employer of choice a signalling tool to potential employees. Standards diffuse more easily than norms. The development of HRM/HRD standards can represent a vehicle for governments, professional associations and standardising bodies to encourage further diffusion of HRM and HRD norms among organisations.
NHRD standards in particular were introduced by their respective governments in order to improve economic competitiveness by investing in the workforce. The role of MNCs is identified as influential in the emergence and internationalisation of HR standards. Organisations adopt HR standards for both technical and non-technical reasons.

This section placed ETP in both the Irish and global context. Standards were defined and a definition of a NHRD standard was presented. The emergence of national and international HR standards was outlined. It is clear from the literature that HR standards have been adopted by a growing number of organisations worldwide and new standards continue to emerge. The next section presents the rationale for this research study.

1.4 Research Question and Rationale
The research question that this thesis answers is as follows: What are the internal and external pressures which explain the adoption or non-adoption of the Irish NHRD standard? In this study an empirical approach has been used to fill a research gap in the literature by examining and explaining the factors that influence the adoption of a NHRD standard. This study adds to a currently sparse literature on the adoption of a NHRD standard. The research model developed over the course of this study highlights the role of a multiplicity of factors that explain the adoption of a NHRD standard. Numerous studies have focused on the adoption of organisational practices, spanning many disciplines and focusing on industry, organisational, and individual-level analyses. This study moves beyond the dominant view in the literature that organisations adopt practices for rational reasons. The institutional theory literature provides a valuable set of theoretical concepts that help conceptualize the adoption of a NHRD standard. There have been several calls in the literature to integrate institutional theory into HR research (Batt and Banerjee, 2012; Delbridge et al., 2011; Kuchinke, 2000; Paauwe, 2009). This study is the first to utilise institutional theory to explain the adoption of a NHRD standard. Factors suggested by institutional theory are relevant because they enhance the legitimacy of the practice and reduce perceived risks associated with adoption of a NHRD standard. This study provides empirical data that not only contributes to academic debate in terms of understanding a firm’s likelihood to adopt a NHRD standard but also has important implications for policy makers.
Policy makers view the adoption of organisational practices as important drivers of industrial and national competitiveness (Leseure et al., 2004). In fact the UK government was the first to develop a NHRD standard precisely because of such concerns (Finegold and Soskice, 1988; National Economic Development Council, 1984). NHRD standards were introduced by their respective governments in order to improve economic competitiveness by investing in the workforce. The research model proposes that internal business factors and external factors influence the adoption and non adoption of a NHRD standard. The extent of our knowledge of how these various sets of factors interact with each other is relatively poor. NHRD standards are increasingly used by countries to raise the level of professionalisation of the HRD function and to ensure that organisations are actually attending to the development of HRD policies and practices that enhance the development and retention of HR and contribute to competitive advantage. Organisations that adopt and implement HRD standards are in a position to sustain superior performance. NHRD and training agencies seek widespread adoption of national standards. This is the first significant study of the Irish NHRD standard which has been in existence for 20 years.

Researching NHRD has considerable value in terms of informing national policy and contributing to national improvement (McLean, 2004). Interest in the potential of HRD to contribute to societal level outcomes is a very recent development (McGuire et al., 2012). This study can inform NHRD policy regarding how organisations respond to external HRD standards. This study contributes to the knowledge base of NHRD by offering empirical evidence of the internal business factors and external factors which explain the adoption and non-adoption of a NHRD standard. The central aim of NHRD standards is to assist organisations in the improvement of employee training and development, in order to achieve business goals. Providing NHRD standards diffuse widely and deliver at the levels of the individual and the organisation in the way they espouse, national socio-economic benefits could then ensue.

Many standards have been developed encompassing an increasingly wide range of management areas. Anderson (2015, p. 2) states that “Standardisation represents a “new frontier” for HRD”. Despite their pervasiveness and importance, management standards
are relatively understudied (Teerlack and King, 2006; Corbett and Yeung, 2008; Timmermans and Epstein, 2010). Exactly why and how these standards disseminate is relatively poorly understood. Literature explaining adoption of management standards is scarce with a limited number of empirical studies (Delmas and Montes-Sancho, 2011; Gavronski et al., 2008; Marimon et al., 2006; Pekovic, 2010). ‘Once one considers that literally millions of organisations worldwide are directly impacted by such meta-standards, it is surprising that not more scholarly research exists on most of these standards’ (Corbett and Young, 2008, p. 1). Indeed, Timmermans and Epstein (2010, p. 70) state that ‘the study of standardisation remains an underappreciated framework for the analysis of many core aspects of modernity’. This study contributes to the standards literature by examining the area of HRD as it relates to standards. This study is important as it provides empirical evidence of the factors explaining the adoption and non-adoption of a HRD standard. This study provides a comprehensive review of NHRD, NHRM and IHRM standards. The analysis of these standards leading to a categorisation is a further contribution of this study to the HRD/HRM literature and the standards literature.

Mol and Birkinshaw (2009, p.1269) state that ‘The literature focusing on why firms introduce new management practices contains gaps’. They have called for more empirical research on the adoption of management practices. Bryson et al., (2007) have highlighted that the lack of attention paid to the adoption literature in the HR field has resulted in little understanding of why HR practices have spread unevenly and/or ubiquitously. This study draws from the extensive literature on the adoption of organisational practices. There have been calls in the literature to extend the objectives of HR research and provide greater explanation rather than descriptive or prescriptive accounts (Boxhall et al., 2007; Delbridge et al., 2011). For example, Boxhall et al., (2007, p.4) state ‘……that the fundamental mission of the academic management discipline of HRM is not to propagate perceptions of ‘best practice’ in ‘excellent companies’ but, first of all, to identify and explain what happens in practice. Analytical HRM privileges explanation over prescription’. This study is important as it provides empirical evidence of the factors explaining the adoption and non-adoption of a HRD standard. In addition adoption rationales are evaluated. For each rationale the key
proposition is explained, the implication for adoption of HR practices analysed and limitations presented. This represents a further contribution to the literature and future research on adoption of HR practices.

HR research has tended to focus on the micro-level and utilise theoretical frameworks consistent with SHRM perspective of the organisation as an atomistic actor. Relatively little attention has been paid to the wider institutional environment (Delbridge et al., 2011). An extensive review of almost 1000 HR articles from leading US and UK management journals from 1996 to 2008 showed that theoretical development in HR research is relatively limited. Most studies utilised two broad theoretical paradigms. Firstly, micro-theories of organisational behaviour and individual motivation, affect or cognition. Secondly, strategic choice perspectives utilising human capital theories, the resource based view of the firm and contingency theory (Batt and Banerjee, 2012). Ardichvili (2015) states that most existing HRD studies draw from a narrow range of theories such as learning and development theory, social psychology or mainstream economics.

There have been many calls for HR research to engage with the wider context (Batt and Banerjee, 2012; Delbridge et al., 2011; Jackson and Schuler, 1995; McGuire et al., 2012; Paauwe, 2009; Subramony, 2006; Williamson and Cable, 2003; Woodall, 2006). McGuire et al., (2012, p. xxxviii) state that ‘There is a great need to understand HRD in its social context. We appear to have forgotten that HRD is a system of interdependent parts that interact to produce a set of outcomes. The social embeddedness of HRD has to a degree, been lost in the debates that surround the notion that HRD can be designed and implemented by individual firms independent of their context. There is a need to understand HRD in its wider context, including global, national social and employment contexts’. This study utilises institutional theory as the theoretical lens which is under used in HR research. This study contributes to academic debate by linking institutional pressures and internal business factors in order to provide a more a comprehensive understanding of the adoption of a NHRD standard. The study provides empirical evidence on the influence of normative and mimetic institutional pressures on the adoption and non-adoption of a NHRD standard.
Institutional theory was selected as the theoretical lens for its integrative approach which typically incorporates rational, political and cultural dimensions (Grint, 1997). Furthermore, the institutional perspective also integrates contextual aspects such as subjectivity and discourse (Sturdy, 2004). Institutional theory ‘provides a holistic view of various factors shaping the development of organisations and organisational forms’ (Ardichvili, 2015, p. 1). Institutional theory is widely used to explain how organisations and individuals act. Kuchinke (2000, p. 279) has highlighted that it seeks to explain individual action within a collective system. Scott (2014) views the rise of institutional theory within organisational analysis as a continuation of open systems theory which began in the 1960s. Open systems theory emphasises the importance of the wider environment within which organisations operate (Scott, 2003). The new institutionalism in organisational analysis has ‘a distinctly sociological flavour’ (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991, p. 11) and has its origins in the seminal work by Meyer and Rowan (1977).

Rogers (2003) argues that initially organisations make rational choices to gain technical advantages; however, institutional theorists cast doubt on rational actor explanations. Organisations may make choices not because they are optimal but because they are appropriate. Technical arguments appear to have limited value in explaining the diffusion of HRM practices. HRM practices offer considerable technical benefits; however, they are underused by organisations. Johns (1993) suggests that the institutional argument is important in explaining the low level of adoption of HRM practices. Monahan et al. (1994) have suggested that, although there are many rational reasons for adopting training and development practices, technical benefits alone are insufficient in explaining why they are adopted by a large number of organisations. The institutional perspective is complementary to technical reasons in explaining adoption and diffusion of practices (Scott, 1987). Ketokivi and Schroeder (2004) found that institutional theory explained much more variance in the adoption of managerial practices than either structural contingency or strategic contingency theories.

Institutional theory takes the view that as an increasing number of organisations adopt a practice, it acquires value beyond its technical characteristics or requirements. Scott et al. (2000, p. 237) suggest that organisations ‘need social acceptability and credibility’ to
survive. They strive for legitimacy, which Suchman (1995, p. 574) defines as ‘a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions’. This suggests that for a NHRD standard to become legitimate, many organisations need to adopt the standard. This study proposes a research model to explain adoption of ETP using institutional theory as the theoretical lens. The research model incorporates institutional processes, such as normative and mimetic isomorphism, to explain adoption of a NHRD standard. A survey research method was used to investigate the relationships among, normative isomorphic influences, mimetic isomorphic influences and internal business factors. The extent of our knowledge of how these various sets of factors interact with each other is relatively poor. The next section outlines the structure of the thesis.

1.5 Thesis Structure
This thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 1 has provided an introduction and a context for the current study.

Chapter 2
The literature review firstly examines the global trend towards increased standardisation of organisational practices. Management standards are defined and the process of standardisation is examined. Different types of standard illustrated with examples are provided. National and international HRM and HRD standards are evaluated. Factors influencing the adoption of standards are considered. Particular attention is given to the adoption of NHRD standards as this is the main focus of the thesis. The chapter progresses by evaluating various adoption rationales which influence organisations when selecting HR practices. This section begins with the rational, strategic choice, psychodynamic, political, dramaturgical (rhetorical) and cultural rationales. Following this is an in-depth analysis of the institutional rationale which is the main theoretical lens selected to examine adoption of the Irish NHRD standard. The chapter concludes by proposing a research model to explain the adoption of a NHRD standard. The research model identifies the internal and external pressures which are important in the adoption or non-adooption of a NHRD standard. Following from the literature review undertaken,
and an examination of the research model, the hypotheses that have been derived are presented.

**Chapter 3**

This chapter outlines the theoretical and philosophical factors that influenced the choice of research design used in this thesis. The choice and rationale for the research methods employed in this thesis are considered. A survey research method was used to investigate the relationships among the variables. The research instrument development process is set out and each of the variables and scale items investigated in the study are described. A self-administered survey was used to collect data from organisations which had adopted ETP. An adapted version of this self-administered survey was used to collect data from organisations which had not adopted ETP. The fieldwork undertaken is described. Finally, the models used for measuring and examining the hypotheses and data analysis are presented.

**Chapter 4**

This chapter sets out the results of the statistical analyses which were conducted on the data using the SPSS software package. The statistical analyses utilised include Pearson chi-square test, inter-correlation analysis and logistic regression. The chapter begins by examining the sample characteristics and the inter-correlation analysis. Following this the results of the logistic regression are presented. A logistic regression was performed to ascertain the effects of control variables, external variables and internal business variables on the likelihood that ETP was adopted.

**Chapter 5**

This chapter begins by discussing the contribution of this study to existing knowledge. The key findings from the empirical investigation are presented. The levels of support for each of the hypotheses are discussed. The limitations of the study are described with suggestions for addressing them. Recommendations for future research are discussed. Finally, implications of the study for practice are discussed.
1.5 Conclusion

The introduction chapter outlined the context for the study and explained key concepts. The research question, research gap and the rationale for the research were presented. Finally the structure of the thesis was outlined.
Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction
Globalisation, the emergence of the knowledge economy, and the adoption of new technologies by organisations have brought more focus on the contribution of human resources to competitiveness and performance. Human resources are increasingly considered to have the potential to provide sustainable competitive advantage (Barney and Wright, 1998; Boxhall and Purcell, 2011; Harrison and Kessels, 2004). An important dimension of HR capability enhancement concerns investment that organisations make in HRD or training and development. As organisations and economies seek to grow and compete in a knowledge-based economy, HRD is expected to play a more strategic role in organisations (Garavan, 2007; Garavan et al., 2009; Holland et al., 2007). National governments are also preoccupied with the level of skill in the labour force and investments in training and development. There are, however, debates concerning who should make the investment – government, employers, or employees. The evidence showing a growing link between investment in bundles of HRD activities and organisation and country competitiveness continues to evolve; however, there is still a lot of scepticism about the value of HRD investments.

McLean (2004, p. 269) argues that there is an ‘emerging emphasis’ on defining HRD as a national, well-planned investment that has the potential to enhance the human capital of a country (Keeley, 2007; Smith, 2006) and enable it to meet a range of national economic and social objectives (Luo, 2006). Organisations and countries do, however, encounter difficulties in ensuring that training and development investments and HRD practices are a central part of the corporate and national agendas. Countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and Ireland have struggled to bring a level of coherence to national training and development policies and practices. Aspects of training and development in these countries are considered fragmented and frequently focused on basic-level skills rather than on advanced skill development. Training and development is also a frequently ad hoc and cost-driven activity (Hoque, 2003; McKeown and Teicher, 2006; Smith, 2006; Smith et al., 2002). The social partners in
these countries are in agreement concerning the need to invest in training and development; however, the extent of investment is not at the level desired.

Organisations use HR management and development strategies in a recruitment and retention strategy. Given the war for talent and the scarcity of well-qualified HR in the labour market, organisations are focusing on make rather than buy options when it comes to people development. Shortages of internationally experienced managers are cited as a key issue for newly internationalised firms (Shen and Darby, 2006). Scullion and Collings (2006) highlight that organisations are introducing various mechanisms to address skill shortages. There is growing global competition for highly talented employees, particularly among multinational corporations (MNCs). As a result employer branding is becoming increasingly important in order to attract and retain high-performing employees (Farndale et al., 2010). Joo and McLean (2006, p. 234) suggest that organisations seek to be deemed an ‘employer of choice’. This attribution confers a number of important advantages, including a positive image, greater competitiveness, and a strong signal to prospective employees that the organisation is committed to investing in people capability. Accreditation makes that which is essentially internal more visible to the external environment. Certification potentially confers external legitimacy on HRD and training and development practices. It also suggests that the employer is socially responsible and committed to investing in its employees (Grugulis, 2007).

The literature review firstly examines the global trend towards increased standardisation of organisational practices. Management standards are defined and the process of standardisation is examined. Different types of standards, illustrated with examples, are provided. National and international HRM and HRD standards are evaluated. Factors influencing the adoption and diffusion of standards are considered. Particular attention will be given to the adoption of NHRD standards as this is the main focus of the thesis. The chapter progresses by evaluating various adoption rationales which influence organisations when selecting HR practices. This section begins with the rational, strategic choice, psychodynamic, political, dramaturgical (rhetorical) and cultural rationales. Following this is an in-depth analysis of the institutional rationale which is
the main theoretical lens selected to examine adoption of the Irish NHRD standard. The chapter concludes by proposing a research model which incorporates institutional processes such as normative and mimetic isomorphism to explain adoption of a NHRD standard. This study analyses the internal and external factors which may influence the adoption or non-adoption of ETP. Following from the literature review undertaken and an examination of the research model, the hypotheses that have been derived are presented.

2.2 Global Trend Towards Increased Standardisation of Organisational Practices

There has been an increase in standards and standardisation worldwide which organisations and governing authorities have found appealing (Jang, 2006; Mendel, 2006). Indeed Power (1997) considers that the modern world has become an audit society. International standards are playing an increasingly important role in the world’s economy. International organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and the World Trade Organisation increasingly demand the harmonisation of standards. Not only has there been an increase in the number of standards, there has also been a change in the quality of international standards. Initially the main purpose of international standards was to harmonize technical issues to ensure compatibility across countries. Now international standards are being applied to an increasing number of management areas, giving rise to the impression of an increasingly homogenized world dominated by international rules (Storz, 2007). Heras-Saizarbitoria and Boiral (2013a) consider that management standards are by their very nature broad and can encompass BEMs like the EFQM as well as international norms and guidelines in industries like accountancy. ‘Somewhere between glorified globalisation and dark dehumanisation, each standard achieves some small or large transformation of an existing social order’ (Timmermans and Epstein, 2010, p. 83).

Heras-Saizarbitoria et al. (2011) state that there is no clear consensus in the literature explaining the heterogeneous adoption of standards in industrialised countries. To date, many standards have been developed encompassing an increasingly wide range of management areas, such as quality management e.g. ISO 9001, environmental management e.g. ISO 140001, corporate social responsibility (CSR) e.g. SA 8000, and
beyond compliance health and safety standards e.g. OHSAS 18000. Since Uzumeri’s (1997) seminal article most academic literature now refers to these Management System Standards as metastandards. Corbett and Yeung (2008, p. 1) use the term metastandard ‘loosely to refer to standards that apply to broad processes (rather than individual products) and to entire families of such process standards’. Furusten (2000, p. 71) defines management standards as ‘standards on how to design and manage organisations’. The definition given by Brunsson, Rasche and Seidl (2012, p. 616) is as follows: ‘A standard can be defined as a rule for common and voluntary use, decided by one or several people or organisations’. The authors identify three key characteristics of standards. Firstly, standards contain explicit rules and so differ from implicit social norms. Secondly, standards are voluntary. Thirdly, standards can be applied broadly and so are intended for general use. Uzumeri (1997, p. 26) states ‘most metastandards have emerged since 1992. For the first time, small groups of experts can change management practice in thousands of firms. This rate of innovation dwarfs most (perhaps all) previous efforts at changing management practice’.

Boiral (2001, p. 80) states that ‘the development of management standards is part of the growing globalization of the world economy, which requires the adoption of international standards that facilitate exchanges and communication between countries’. Heras-Saizarbitoria and Boiral (2013a) suggest that organisations adopt management standards as a self-regulation tool in an increasingly globalized world. Terlaak (2007, p. 969) states that certification standards have the potential to ‘create order without law’. Management standards have emerged to fill the transnational regulatory void. For example International Accountability Standards (IAS) such as SA8000, ISO 14001 etc. emerged as tools to fill governance gaps in social and environmental domains that increased globalisation has created (Gilbert et al., 2011; Rasche, 2010). The literature on transnational governance often describes management standards as soft law with ‘soft’ highlighting the voluntary nature of standards while ‘law’ implies that there are consequences for non-compliance (Sandholtz, 2012).

O’Rourke (2006, p. 899) states that ‘a new class of governance institutions has emerged that involve private and non-governmental stakeholders in negotiating labour, health and
safety and environmental standards, monitoring compliance with these standards, and establishing mechanisms of certification and labelling that provide incentives for firms to meet these standards’. Standard development has been facilitated by the establishment of both national and international standard setting non-governmental agencies. The power of government standardising bodies has declined while the power of industry and private sector standardising bodies has grown (Timmermans and Epstein, 2010). Standards were primarily developed at national level up until the early 1980s. However, national level standard setting has declined remarkably over the past two decades. In addition, there has been a dramatic growth in the number of international and regional standards (McSweeney et al., 2008). Private sector standard setting agencies may be able to fill a transnational regulatory void but only with the engagement of other stakeholders who can ‘(re)contextualize standards according to local requirements’ (Botzem and Dobusch, 2012, p. 756). Standardising bodies (e.g. ISO, SAI) often simply maintain a standard and are not responsible for enforcement. Auditing and accreditation is managed by a separate agency (Mendel, 2001; Terlaak, 2007).

Heras-Saizarbitoria and Boiral (2013, p. 50) state that ‘Standardisation of management systems and its end product, metastandards, constitute a clear example of a multidimensional phenomenon which has implications of an extremely varied nature’. Timmermans and Epstein (2010, p. 71) define standardisation as ‘a process of constructing uniformities across time and space, through the generation of agreed-upon rules’. Botzem and Dobusch (2012, p. 738) define standardisation as ‘a process in which the formation of standards and their subsequent diffusion are shaped by actors and closely interrelated’. Standards span many areas, facilitate operations working together across distance or heterogeneous metrics and are typically backed up by external bodies such as the state, professional associations or trade associations. Standard development is in essence a social action as most are built collectively and require buy-in from multiple stakeholders in order to be relevant (Timmermans and Epstein, 2010). Uzumeri (1997, p. 26) states ‘metastandards are emerging as an interconnected and interrelated network’. ‘The creation of standards can thus be thought of as the meeting of numerous parties with the aim of obtaining legitimate coordination, comparability, and compatibility across contexts’ (Timmermans and Epstein, 2010, p. 75).
Recent literature highlights an interesting inconsistency. On the one hand standards have become ubiquitous with considerable consequences for both individuals and organisations. On the other hand standards are highly contested and volatile and only become authoritative under particular conditions (Botzem and Dobusch, 2012). Timmermans and Epstein (2010, p. 74) state that ‘Standards’ objectivity, universality and optimality are hard won victories that can be heavily contested by third parties lobbing accusations of bias and politicisation’. The process of standard development can result in the selection of the lowest common denominator of possible choices. Standards may be negotiated between the stakeholders involved or simply be an acceptance of how things are already in practice for most. Power relations are also important with the possibility that the strongest participant will prevail. Being part of the standard setting process can offer advantage in terms of influencing the outcome (Timmermans and Epstein, 2010). When metastandards are written this content becomes the prevailing discourse among stakeholders of what is good enough in a particular practice area. ‘Once entrenched, a metastandard will be hard to remove. This raises an obvious scenario where management innovations are driven not by empirical experience, but by strong political processes that seek to control the conceptual content of the published standards’ (Uzumeri, 1997, p. 32). In their review of IIP, Bell, Taylor and Thorpe (2002b) state that the meaning attributed to a standard is dynamic and is negotiated between the administrative body and the personnel within organisations. The desire to cultivate large companies particularly multinationals was significant in developing ETP into a full HRM standard when it was revised in 2004, for example (Reddington, 2003).

Botzem and Dobusch (2012) conceptualise standardisation as a process perspective emphasising the importance of input legitimacy and output legitimacy. The first stage of standardisation is standard formation and the second stage is standard diffusion. In the case of standards like International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), their formation is typically inclusive with open deliberations and collaboration among stakeholders. Input legitimacy is created as a negotiated or consensus standard emerges from this process. Output legitimacy is created through high adoption rates. Subsequent diffusion creates a feedback loop which further strengthens output legitimacy. The authors propose that a recursive relationship exists between standard formation and
diffusion as standard revision could potentially lead to a redistribution of power among stakeholders. In standard revision there could be a trade-off between the two forms of legitimacy for example if there were decreased openness or participation in the revision process, input legitimacy could be reduced or replaced by output legitimacy. Timmermans and Epstein (2010) state that a lot of standard development work occurs during implementation and that one outcome can be the formation of more standards. A clear example of this is ISO 10018 which was developed in 2012 to assist organisations in implementing the people involvement element of ISO 9000.

2.3 Types of Standards
There are many ways of categorising standards. One distinction is between technical and non-technical standards. Indeed the main purpose of international standards initially was to harmonize technical issues to ensure compatibility across countries (Storz, 2007). In this case one tends to become dominant as multiple technical standards are generally considered counterproductive (Genschel, 1997). On the other hand the development of non-technical standards is very fragmented with multiple standards coexisting (Gilbert, Rasche and Waddock, 2011; O’Rourke, 2006; Reinecke et al., 2012). As highlighted in the previous section, these non-technical standards encompass a wide variety of domains such as HR, quality management, CSR, environmental management, accountancy, etc. Standards can also be categorised as either process or outcome orientated. Standards such as ISO 9001 regulate quality processes within and between organisations without specifying outcomes (Brunsson et al., 2012). Outcome standards require specific measurable outcomes (Power, 1997). As standardised processes may not necessarily lead to the desired consequences, process standards are increasingly being linked to outcomes thus blurring the distinction between the two types (Banta, 1992; Brunsson et al., 2012).

A further categorisation is between de jure and de facto standards. De jure standards are the result of a steered process of decision making typically undertaken by a committee (e.g. ISO standards) (Brunsson et al., 2012). De facto standards occur through market processes when most potential adopters adopt the same standard which subsequently becomes difficult to deviate from. A much cited example in the literature is the
QWERTY typewriter keyboard (David, 1985). Again this distinction may not be clear-cut. A de jure standard can become institutionalised to such an extent that it becomes de facto (Brunsson et al., 2012). Even if this happens, standardising bodies typically insist on the ‘voluntary’ nature of de jure standards (Mendel, 2001).

Gilbert et al. (2011) propose a very useful categorisation of International Accountability Standards around four main clusters: principle based standards, certification standards, reporting standards and process standards. Principle based standards provide a guideline for action which aims to shape organisational behaviour by providing a set of foundational values. For example UN Global Compact is comprised of ten fundamental principles covering human rights, workers’ rights, anti-corruption and environmental sustainability. Participating organisations submit an annual Communication on Progress which reports on progress made on the ten principles. The UN Global Compact does not enforce or measure performance of participants. Certification standards such as SA8000 and ISO 14001 do however involve monitoring and verification against predetermined criteria. This third party auditing provides external stakeholders with a degree of assurance that standards are being met. Reporting standards such as the Global Reporting Initiative is a standardised framework providing guidance on social and environmental reporting. Process standards such as ISO 26000 and AA1000 define methods and processes that organisations can use to develop a corporate accountability framework. These four categories of standard are not mutually exclusive and many overlaps exist. For example SA8000 is both a certification and a process standard. Similarly, the Global Reporting Initiative is both a reporting and a process standard (Gilbert et al., 2011).

De Colle et al. (2014) suggest that CSR standards’ development should encompass both general principles and specific performance outcomes in order to be optimally effective. In addition stakeholder engagement should be incorporated into the process. Standards in professions like accounting are typically a combination of principles and processes. National cultures are a significant influence on standards. European countries usually prefer principles based standards, however American standards tend to be rules based, due to the litigious nature of the country (Hickman, 2014). The need for consistent
practice which standards drive is more important in some fields than others. The need for comparable financial statements to facilitate cross-border trade in an increasingly global context has driven the adoption of international accounting standards. The development of HR standards is trickier as the field is less technical and requires a greater degree of flexibility and creativity than many other standardised fields (Hickman, 2013). NHRD standards which have been in existence since the 1990s are certification standards and combine principles and processes. Increasingly NHRD standards incorporate outcomes. The next section will further illustrate the growth of standardisation within management areas by taking examples from the areas of quality management, corporate social responsibility and accountancy. Particular attention will be given to the reasons for increased standardisation in these areas.

The ISO 9000 series of standards is considered to be the first global metastandard. ‘Until the arrival of ISO 9001, most managers had never encountered a metastandard’ (Uzumeri, 1997, p. 26). It is a generic management standard which exemplifies international consensus on what constitutes good practice in quality management systems (Hudson and Orvisksa, 2013). ISO 9001 is one of the most influential global standards and has been adopted by more than one million organisations (1,129,446) in 187 countries (ISO, 2014a). This standard has to a large degree formed the template on which other standards are modelled. Overall, management standards share many similarities including the process by which they are developed, their design and implementation. A particularly important feature of management standards is third party auditing and certification (Heras-Saizarbitoria and Boiral, 2013a). The resulting documentation can be burdensome and a source of irritation for organisations. However, it is essential for cost effective auditing. In fact, metastandards are designed to create a situation whereby it is easier to implement the standard than try and escape auditor detection by creating a fake paper trail (Uzumeri, 1997).

ISO 9000 is an example of a process standard and is therefore concerned with the process by which quality is managed, and does not specify outcomes (Brunsson et al., 2012). So rather than being a quality standard per se, ISO 9000 is a management control procedure which involves documenting the design, production and distribution processes
ISO 9000 has increasingly become a necessity to gain access to markets for both commercial and institutional reasons (Boiral, 2003). Corbett and Yeung, (2008, p. 1) state that in some cases certification has become a necessity, ‘a passport for business’ in order to access global supply chains. Corbett (2006) suggests that ISO 9000 diffused from Europe to other regions as European customers pressured their foreign suppliers to attain certification. In order to prevent the standard becoming an export barrier many suppliers outside of Europe adopted ISO 9000. Therefore, competitive pressures exerted by customers through global supply chains are significant in partially explaining the widespread diffusion of ISO 9000.

In short, earning a metastandard certificate is attractive because it promises to be a cost-effective way to stay in stakeholders’ good graces or gain a place on a customer’s bid list. In an increasingly competitive global economy, where customers and stakeholders have burgeoning choices and diminished time, this is apparently sufficient reason to propel the dramatic emergence and growth of metastandards.

(Uzumeri, 1997, p. 30)

Increasingly, International HR managers are being given responsibility for CSR in MNCs (Briscoe et al., 2009). CSR is an area that has seen the introduction of a bewildering array of standards such as Social Accountability 8000 (SA 8000), ISO 26000, the Global Reporting Initiative, Fair Labour Association’s standards, AccountAbility 1000 (AA 1000), Ethical Trading Initiative and Global Compact. These standards are voluntary and are described as soft law. CSR standards bridge governance gaps where hard law either doesn’t exist or is weakly enforced (Rasche, 2010). Boxhall and Purcell (2011) state that a key reason for the adoption of social accountability standards by organisations is the independent verification provided that ethical work practices are being implemented. The development of social accountability standards has been driven to a large extent by MNCs with operations in developing countries where there is often a deficit of labour and other standards (Cotton, 2010).
Some reasons why MNCs adopt CSR standards include the reduction of risk, consumer and investor pressures, enhanced marketplace reputation and greater ability to attract and retain employees (Briscoe et al., 2009). MNCs in the clothing and footwear sectors in particular are increasingly concerned about work practices along the supply chain. These companies do not want their reputations and brands damaged by contractors who exploit workers in underdeveloped countries (Boxhall and Purcell, 2011). In the clothing sector it has become an increasingly mandatory practice to monitor suppliers against internal codes of conduct and international labour standards in order to maintain consumer confidence (Stigzelius and Mark-Herbert, 2009). When designing and allocating loans, the world’s development banks utilise the International Labour Organisation’s core labour standards (Croucher, 2010). The World Trade Organisation comes under constant pressure from industrialised countries, particularly from the USA and the European Union, to link labour standards and human rights issues with tariff reductions (Briscoe et al., 2009). Increasingly, MNCs are externalising employment through outsourcing and employing fewer people directly. Employment practices along the supply chain, particularly in developing countries, are likely to differ considerably from the parent company. In order to ensure compliance with labour standards across boundaries MNCs are increasingly seeking third party certification (Croucher, 2010).

SA 8000 is important in this context as it was the first auditable standard promoting labour rights internationally (Gilbert et al., 2011; Rasche, 2010). SA 8000 is also considered one of the strictest self-regulating CSR standards particularly with regard to child labour (Haunschild et al., 2008). SA 8000 has been adopted by over 3,400 organisations employing 1,905,898 people across 74 countries (SAI, 2014). Social Accountability International was established in 1997 to develop standards and systems to protect workers’ rights. Following consultations with human rights organisations, business interests, trade unions, etc., Social Accountability 8000 (SA8000) Standard was published in 1997. SA 8000 is governed by an independent body, Social Accountability International (SAI) based in New York. This is a multi-stakeholder advisory board made up of experts from governments, NGOs, employers groups and trade unions. SAI seeks to improve workplaces by the use of voluntary standards which are independently verified and through public reporting. SA 8000 is based on key International Labour
Standards, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations convention on the Rights of the Child. The SA 8000 certification was modelled on ISO standards and includes a mechanism whereby workers can make a complaint about non-compliance. An organisation achieves SA 8000 accreditation following a successful audit by an accredited audit agency (SAI, 2008). Croucher (2010) questions if any of these types of standards can be truly independent as organisations are paying fees and are therefore customers of the auditing body. In addition, audits are isolated events simply representing a snapshot in time (Croucher, 2010; O’Rourke, 2006).

There has been increased global convergence in the accounting industry. The accounting industry has long been structured on a national basis due to the existence of country specific accounting standards and professional licensing boards. This convergence has been facilitated by the recent development of international accounting standards, equity listing on multiple exchanges and the growing prevalence of accounting information technology systems. The development of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) has been driven to a large extent by MNCs who want to obtain financing worldwide and list their equity on multiple exchanges. The development of international accounting standards has taken a relatively long time. The International Accounting Standards Committee Foundation was established in 1973 (Campbell and Helleloid, 2011). IFRS were first adopted by developing countries. In 2005 the EU made IFRS adoption mandatory for EU-listed public companies. This was an important development as it meant that almost a third of the world economy would now be using this standard. ‘The EU decision provided momentum towards a single standard throughout the world by promoting a domino effect within other countries’ (Kotlyar, 2008, p. 234). The likelihood is that the USA will adopt IFRS eventually. American MNCs and the big four public accounting firms are in favour of adoption of IFRS. These developments have already led some accounting firms to change their approach to HRM and the way in which work is organised. This shift is likely to gather momentum, changing the structure of accountancy firms and outsourcing more tasks to cost effective countries (Campbell and Helleloid, 2011). IFRS are now required or permitted by almost 120 countries (International Financial Reporting Standards, 2015).
This section reviewed the growth of standardisation within management areas taking examples from the areas of quality management, CSR and accountancy. ISO 9001 has been a particularly influential global standard. This standard has to a large degree formed the template on which other standards are modelled. Particular attention was given to the reasons for the growth of management standards. Management standards have emerged to fill the transnational regulatory void. The role of MNCs was identified as influential in the increase of standards. MNCs have a requirement for a common set of organisational practices which can be implemented across countries. The increase in outsourcing across various functional areas has further accelerated this trend. Other reasons why organisations adopt management standards include third party verification, the reduction of risk, consumer and investor pressures, enhanced marketplace reputation, and greater ability to attract and retain employees.

2.4 National and International HRM and HRD Standards
National governments, like organisations, look to other countries for HRM and HRD policies and practices that are perceived as successful. To date, a number of countries have developed national HR or HRD standards which are evaluated in table 2.1. These include the United Kingdom, Ireland, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the USA. A common feature of these HR standards is that they are market led and voluntarist in nature. The UK, Ireland and Singapore have all implemented NHRD standards. These three NHRD standards were introduced by their respective governments in order to improve economic competitiveness by investing in the workforce. The effectiveness of NHRD standards is discussed in the next section.

Since 2009 the Society for Human Resource Management under the auspices of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) has spearheaded a drive to establish organisational level HR standards. The aim is to eventually turn these American HR standards into a global ISO HR standard (Society for Human Resource Management, 2013a, Society for Human Resource Management, 2013b; Starner, 2013). In 2010 a joint Australia and New Zealand National HRM Standard was established called Human Resource Framework NS HRF-101:2010 by HR Coach Group, a private professional services company. In 2013 the South African Board for People Practices (SABPP),
which is the national HR professional body, launched a National HR Management Standard. The British Standards Institute (BSI) published a HR standard entitled BS 76000 Management System for valuing people in organisations – Requirements and guidance for use in 2015. NHRM and IHRM standards aim to provide organisations with a common set of fundamental HR practices. A detailed account of the emergence of National and International HRM and HRD standards can be found in appendix A.

NHRM and IHRM standards many of which have HRD components have been developed by those in the HRM field. Standardisation poses a number of dilemmas for the field of HRD. Firstly, standards propose stability, uniformity and auditing. Whereas, change and flexibility are inherent in HRD in order to support individual and organisational development. Secondly, the extent to which the adoption of standardised HRD practices across cultures is appropriate. Thirdly, the purpose of standard and whether the approach is rules based or principles based. Fourthly, what standards will mean for the content and delivery of HRD education around the world (Anderson, 2015).

2.5 Effectiveness of NHRD Standards
There are some differences in the design and delivery of the Irish, UK and Singapore NHRD standards as can be seen from Table 2.1. However, what they seek to achieve is the same. These standards were introduced by their respective governments in order to improve economic competitiveness by investing in the workforce. These initiatives are market led and voluntarist in nature. NHRD standards are certification standards and combine principles and processes. Increasingly NHRD standards include outcomes. As can be seen from table 2.4 this outcome orientation is most explicit in the Singapore NHRD standard which includes a results criterion. This results criterion is allocated 450 points and so is much more heavily weighted than the other criteria. NHRD standards seek to link investment in HRD with improved organisational performance. The central aim of NHRD standards is to assist organisations in the improvement of employee training and development, in order to achieve business goals. This has remained the core aim through the various revisions that have been undertaken for each of the standards. NHRD standards also aim to create a culture of continuous improvement in
organisations. NHRD standards require organisations to formulate a business plan linked
to an employee development plan. Organisations are also required to conduct a review
and evaluate the results.

These standards have the potential to contribute to HRD at three levels: the individual,
the organisation, and society. Individuals receive training and development, resulting in
greater competence and possibly enhanced opportunities. Organisations benefit from an
up-skilled workforce, and the development of a culture of continuous improvement.
Providing NHRD standards diffuse widely and deliver at the levels of the individual and
the organisation in the way they espouse, national socio-economic benefits could then
ensue. There is a paucity of literature on the Irish and Singapore NHRD standards. There
is however, a substantial body of literature reviewing the UK standard which will be
draw upon in reviewing the effectiveness of NHRD standards. IIP is reviewed and
revised every three to five years, so linking past studies to the current standard is
challenging. IIP was developed to improve competitiveness and in response to numerous
reports that stated that the UK’s workforce had fewer skills compared to other developed
industrial countries. IIP is viewed as a critical element of the government’s policy to
create a society committed to a philosophy of lifelong learning resulting in personal and
economic growth (Freyer, 1997; Freyer, 1998). Taylor et al., (2004, p. 29) state that
linking HRD to organisational performance is ‘the central raison d’être of the state-
supported IIP initiative’. The Leitch Report identifies IIP as a key means of increasing
skills and productivity.

Alberga et al., (1997) consider that IIP is based on three untested assumptions. Firstly,
there are standards of best practice which can be determined. Secondly, particular HR
practices are directly related to organisational performance. Thirdly, all types of
organisations, regardless of size, industry or stage of growth should adopt ‘best
practices’. The authors also highlight the methodological difficulties in determining
causality between IIP and improved organisational performance. Indeed much of the
literature cautions against attributing evidence of higher organisational performance and
profitability to IIP accreditation (Berry and Grieves, 2003; Down and Smith, 1998;
Gibb, 2008; Grugulis and Bevitt 2002; Hillage and Moralee, 1996; Smith, 2009; Smith
et al., 2014). There is some evidence to suggest that the reported performance and differences between accredited and non-accredited organisations may be due to the nature of the organisations adopting rather than IIP itself. Organisations that adopt IIP may already be successful and engaged in good HRD practices (Bell et al., 2001; Down and Smith, 1998; Grugulis and Bevitt, 2002; Rayton and Georgiadis, 2012; Rix et al., 1994; Tamkin et al., 2000). Smith (2009) suggests that organisations may implement changes which enhance performance and then adopt IIP subsequently. The IIP badge can also be important in order to achieve post-hoc recognition of existing good training and development practices (Smith et al., 2014; Smith and Stokes, 2015).

Lee (2004) states that IIP has raised the profile of HRD at both a national level and an organisational level. Cox and Spires (2002) suggest that growing awareness of IIP has led to increased adoption of formal HRD structures among UK organisations from the mid 1990s. Cho and McLean (2004, p.384) state that IIP has “….. placed the HRD function on the agenda of large corporations, although it does not easily meet the needs of SMEs”. Sadler-Smith et al., (1999) consider that IIP put training evaluation on the agenda of HR practitioners. Employer interest in attaining external accreditations like IIP and ISO 9000 has resulted in the introduction or revamping of performance management systems in organisations. A formal appraisal scheme with a significant personal development element can be used as evidence of investment in people (Bach, 2013). Harrison (2005) considers that IIP has been the most successful of the UK’s vocational education and training initiatives regarding employers’ involvement and the business partnership process. Thomsom et al., (2001) suggest that IIP has been the most influential of the UK government’s training initiatives in that a commitment to purposeful training is a requirement for the whole organisation. IIP offers organisations a framework for HRD and HRM policies and can lead greater investment in skills, potentially resulting in performance improvements (Bourne et al., 2008; Tamkin et al., 2008). IIP provides a framework which can facilitate benchmarking, organisational change and development. When implemented effectively the framework can act as a powerful tool for embedding TQM principles and practices in organisations (Stewart, 1999).
Hoque (2003) found that, in general, training practice was better in IIP accredited organisations than non-accredited organisations. Employees were more likely to be multi-skilled and induction programmes were more likely to be present. Employees received more training days and were more likely to have discussed their training needs with a superior. In a subsequent study Hoque (2008) found a broadly similar positive relationship between training activity and IIP accreditation. It is too simplistic to surmise that better training practices are a result the IIP standard, as organisations may apply for accreditation in order to recognise existing good practice (Bell et al., 2001; Down and Smith, 1998; Grugulis and Bevitt, 2002; Hoque, 2003; Rayton and Georgiadis, 2012; Tamkin et al., 2000). However, Hoque (2008) found greater evidence of inequality to disadvantaged groups in IIP accredited organisations compared to non-accredited ones. He suggests that this could be due to the explicit emphasis in the standard linking training with business need. In a UK context in particular this could result in the provision of HRD for an elite group of core employees rather than the whole workforce, resulting in a ‘training apartheid’.

In comparing IIP accredited organisations with non-accredited organisation, Bourne and Franco-Santos (2010) suggest that IIP enhances management capabilities leading to improved business performance. In the IIP accredited organisations the research reported stronger organisational culture, more effective management development practices, and greater managerial autonomy. The researchers suggest that IIP contributes to creating a performance focused environment where employees have a better understanding of their goals and how they contribute to the organisation. A Confederation of British Industry (2008) survey found that most senior executives found IIP helpful irrespective of the size of their firm. There were 735 respondents to the survey with 51% of these participating in IIP. The IIP respondents were positive about the benefits of the standard with the main benefits in the softer areas. Over half 52% viewed the key benefit of IIP as improved staff morale.

While the overall view is that IIP is a successful initiative, it is not a panacea and difficulties remain especially among SMEs (Gibb, 2008). Initially, the adoption of IIP in the UK was slow, however momentum built up and the standard diffused widely in the
UK and internationally. Hoque et al., (2005) contrast the approach at a national level in the UK and the Netherlands in the delivery of IIP. In the Netherlands IIP was specifically targeted at sectors with little history of HRD such as small firms and older traditional industries like metalwork and machining. The aim of the Dutch government was to bring these sectors up to a basic level of workforce development. In the UK, by comparison, large and prestigious organisations were initially targeted to give the standard credibility and create a bandwagon effect. Therefore organisations most in need of support with HRD practices were least likely to receive encouragement to adopt the standard.

Spilsbury et al., (1995) suggest that Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) were ‘cherry-picking’ employers by targeting large companies who had many IIP requirements already in place. The fact that Training and Enterprise Council funding was linked to numbers of IIP adoptions achieved was likely to have been a significant factor in this regard. Down and Smith (1998) found that many IIP accredited organisations had good HRD practices in place prior to adopting the standard and little change was required to attain the award. The authors conclude that companies with poorer procedures were least likely to become involved with the standard. A considerable gap exists between targets set and adoption of IIP, which has called both the standard itself and its role in NHRD policy into question (Gibb, 2008). IIP may simply be a badge of recognition resulting in poor value for government spending (Centre for Enterprise, 2003). Ram (2000) suggests that acquiring the IIP badge can occur in order to secure work from major clients and for marketing purposes. There is also some evidence that organisations fulfil the standards requirements in a perfunctory manner (Bell et al., 2002b; Ram, 2000). Harrison and Kessels (2004) suggest that rather than IIP, company level training provision might be better provided for by increasing the training role of unions, a government initiative which has had some success.

There is considerable debate in the literature about the value of IIP to SMEs. Smith and Collins (2007) state that there is considerable variation across the SME sector leading to difficulties in matching IIP requirements with the requirements of highly individualised SMEs. Hoque and Bacon (2006) found that IIP had little effect on training in the SME
sector when comparing accredited organisations to non-accredited organisations. The most significant difference was that non-managers were more likely to have discussed their training needs with their supervisor in accredited SMEs. However, there was no evidence of higher levels of training activity. In the pharmaceutical industry a high proportion of small companies chose not to be re-accredited as the effort required outweighed the benefits. There was also a view that the standard was inappropriate in such a high skill sector (Jagger and Aston, 2000). However, when small firms do adopt IIP they experience greater effects more quickly than larger companies (Cox and Spires, 2002; Hillage and Moralee, 1996). The Confederation of British Industry (2008) states that small firms need assistance to attain IIP and this should be the focus of government policy into the future. Thomson et al., (2001) suggest that IIP is a positive influence on management development, particularly among small organisations seeking to expand.

Bell et al., (2002b) examine the meaning conveyed by the IIP badge which is comprised of two parts, the laurel wreath which symbolises victory or distinction and the inscription ‘Investors in People’. The authors consider that this caption regards people as quantifiable assets and thus places IIP firmly in the hard HRM arena. The authors suggest that there is an inherent contradiction between the hard evidence based nature of IIP and the soft process based nature of the learning organisation. Grugulis and Bevitt (2002) suggest that IIP may actually hamper organisational development through the introduction of overly rigid structures. Alberga et al., (1997, p. 58) concur, stating that the standard ‘favours organised learning rather than organisational learning’. Rayton and Georgiadis (2012) state that IIP is a top-down approach to HRD focusing on the ‘hard’ attributes of training that can be evaluated easily by external assessors. Smith et al., (2014) suggest that IIP may not offer reputational value in recruitment and retention as employees are largely uninfluenced by whether an employer is accredited or not. Smith and Stokes (2015) highlight the perceptual and reputational limitations of IIP on employees, the labour market and customers.

Garavan and Gubbins (2006) highlight the strengths and weaknesses of ETP. The standard has a strategic focus as training objectives are linked to organisational needs. The importance of training evaluation is acknowledged and there is some employee
involvement. However, there is an implication in the design of the standard that
documentation in the form of training plans and objectives are more important than the
actual delivery of the programme. In addition, the standard inhibits creativity. Garvan et
al., (2009) suggest that ETP provides a framework which can contribute to the
development of a learning culture. In addition, the standard can potentially nurture
employees and contribute to effective diversity management.
### Table 2.1 Comparison of HR and related standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of standard</th>
<th>Type of standard</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Substance of standard</th>
<th>Governance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellence</td>
<td>Irish NHRD Standard</td>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>The standard comprises of the following 6 criteria:</td>
<td>Launched by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through People</td>
<td>Certification standard</td>
<td>development</td>
<td>- Business Planning and Continuous Improvement (170 points)</td>
<td>FÁS in 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000:2012</td>
<td>Generic standard</td>
<td>in order to achieve business needs</td>
<td>- Effective Communication and People Engagement (170 points)</td>
<td>and transferred to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>- Leadership and People Management (170 points)</td>
<td>the NSAI in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>improvement</td>
<td>- Planning of Learning and Development (190 points)</td>
<td>2012.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Evaluation of Learning and Development (140 points)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Human Resource Systems and Employee Wellbeing (160 points)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investors in People</td>
<td>UK NHRD standard Certification standard with 4 levels: IIP Accredited IIP Silver IIP Gold IIP Platinum</td>
<td>Employee development in order to achieve business needs Continuous improvement</td>
<td>The framework is comprised of the following principles and process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Leading</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Leading</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Leading and inspiring people</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Leading and inspiring people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Living the organisation’s values and behaviours</td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Living the organisation’s values and behaviours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Empowering and involving people</td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Empowering and involving people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Supporting</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Supporting</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Recognising and rewarding high performance</td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Recognising and rewarding high performance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Improving</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Improving</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Delivering continuous improvement</td>
<td></td>
<td>8. Delivering continuous improvement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People Developer</th>
<th>Singapore NHRD standard</th>
<th>Workforce management to</th>
<th>Organisations must meet the following 7 criteria:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Leadership (120 points)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>|                  |                         |                         | Standards, Productivity                         |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>standard</td>
<td>Certification standard</td>
<td>achieve high performance</td>
<td>Customers (90 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Generic standard</td>
<td>Continuous improvement</td>
<td>Strategy (60 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>People (150 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Processes (70 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge (60 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Results (450 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and Innovation Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BS 76000:2015 Management System for Valuing People in Organisations – Requirements and guidance for use</td>
<td>UK NHRM standard Certification standard</td>
<td>Establishment of an HRM system within organisations</td>
<td>A framework for:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Generic standard</td>
<td></td>
<td>Improved organisational flexibility and resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Developing and empowering people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Promoting transparency, accountability, sustainability and effective governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Successful change management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Enhancing communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Demonstrating organisational commitment to valuing employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>BSI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South African National HRM standards</td>
<td>South African NHRM standard Certification standard Generic standard</td>
<td>Outlines the minimum HR standards to build a workforce that will achieve organisational objectives Professionalisation of the HRM field</td>
<td>Contains 13 standard elements in a quality assurance process: Plan, Implement, Review and Improve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Plan</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Implement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SABPP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American National HR standards</td>
<td>American NHRM standards</td>
<td>Certification standard</td>
<td>Establishment of a uniform set of basic HR standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communicate common job elements such as roles, responsibilities, reporting arrangements, knowledge, skills and experience required. Human Resource Metrics Panel (Dashboard) is a draft standard which proposes to identify a minimum collection of HR metrics and measures necessary within effective organisations. Turnover Metrics Definition is a draft standard Organisational Diversity and Inclusion Program is a draft standard which proposes to establish a minimum set of effective components of a diversity programme. Diversity Metrics Panel is a draft standard which proposes to identify a minimum collection of diversity metrics and measures for an effective diversity programme. Lead Diversity/Inclusion Professional is a draft standard which proposes to identify the minimum knowledge, skills and abilities desirable in an organisation’s diversity practitioner.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| ISO | IHRM standards | The standards aim to:  
| Certification standard | Cultivate an efficient and consistent approach to HR operations.  
| Generic standard | Harmonise disparate practices and provide guidance to HR practitioners. | The following standards are currently under development:  
| | | ISO/NP 30400  
| | | Human Resource Management – Terminology  
| | | ISO/DIS 30405  
| | | Human Resource Management – Guidelines on recruitment  
| | | ISO/NP TR 30406  
| | | Management by sustainable employability of staff  
| | | ISO/AWI TS 30407  
| | | Human Resource Management – Cost-per-hire  
| | | ISO/CD 30408  
| | | Human governance – Human dimension as a fundamental part of the overall corporate strategy - Guidelines  
| | | ISO/NP 30409  
| | | Human Resource Management – Workforce planning | ISO/TC 260 was formed following a submission from ANSI proposing that ISO develop international HRM standards. |
2.6 Adoption and Diffusion of NHRD Standards

The adoption and diffusion of NHRD standards within a country depend largely on the actions of individual organisations and their willingness to adopt the standard. Adoption is defined as ‘a decision to make full use of an innovation as the best course of action possible’ (Rogers, 2003, p. 21), whereas diffusion focuses on communication of the number of adopters over time. Adoption focuses on organisations with certain characteristics, which are receptive to the standard and therefore seek accreditation. Diffusion focuses on understanding how the standard spreads and what characteristics of the standard lead to its widespread acceptance. A small number of organisations may adopt a standard; however, for it to be a value in the national context, it needs to be adopted by a large number of organisations. Standards are more easily diffused than norms. Organisational activities which relate to internal processes such as HRM practices are difficult for external partners to observe. The certification inherent in standards partially overcomes this (Terlaak, 2007). Terlaak (2007), for example, suggests that standards have two characteristics that make their diffusion easier: They are written and they entail accreditation processes. Although these characteristics are acknowledged, there is a significant gap in understanding concerning how NHRD standards are both adopted and diffused. This thesis addresses this knowledge deficit through the use of concepts derived from institutional theory. A research model has been developed that analyses the internal business factors and external factors which may influence the adoption or non-adoption of a NHRD standard. The research model incorporates institutional processes such as normative and mimetic isomorphism, to explain adoption.

National governments use a variety of strategies and policy measures to encourage organisations and individuals to invest in human capital. These include training guarantee schemes, financial incentives for investment in management skills, levy-grant schemes for sectors that do not train, and national training or HR standards (Karpin, 1995; Luo, 2006; Mendel, 2006). National training and development standards are the particular focus of this thesis. Scott (2014) argues that the development of standards and certification processes constitute a clear instance of institutionalized normative and cultural control. Market-related factors, enhanced customer service, greater efficiency,
and a kick-start for improvement in training and development are highlighted as the key reasons for national standards and the achievement of accreditation by organisations (Brown and Van Der Wiele, 1997; McAdam and McKeown, 1999). Brunsson and Jacobsson (2000) suggest that national standards act as general advice for prospective adopters. They articulate minimum standards that must be met to receive accreditation from a professional organisation. Scott (2014) suggests that accreditation is a primary indicator of legitimacy. The underlying principles of standardisation are ‘universalism, rationality, and homogenisation to an extreme degree’ (Loya and Boli, 1999, p. 192). A NHRD standard is universalistic in that best practice in HRD is prescribed for organisations, which promotes homogeneity. Casile and Davis-Blake (2002, p. 181) define accreditation standards as ‘standards that must be met in order to receive the “seal of approval” of a professional organisation’.

Scott (2014) reports that state agencies and professional associations can be critical in conferring legitimacy on organisations. These authorities often use accreditation as a primary indicator of legitimacy. While standards bodies propose rationality and voluntary involvement by organisations many standards become a requirement. ‘Lower-level actors find it virtually impossible to reject standards because doing so is seen as irrational – they would be limiting their access to world markets and technologies to a fatal degree’ (Loya and Boli, 1999, p. 193). Standardising bodies need to convince prospective adopters of the value of the particular standard advocated (Brunsson and Jacobsson, 2000). Strang and Soule (1998, p. 271) view the state to be a change agent which facilitates the diffusion of new practices through a range of means from ‘coercive mandates to cheerleading’. The development of a NHRD standard represents a vehicle for governments to encourage further diffusion of HRD norms among organisations. The White Paper highlights the need to increase the uptake of ETP as does the operational programme for employment and HRD (Department of Enterprise and Employment 1997; Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment 2000). According to Scott (2014), it can sometimes be more useful to examine the diffusion agent rather than the attributes of adopters. The perception of ETP could have been impacted upon negatively because it was delivered by FÁS. Reddington (2003, p. 11) refers to ‘the contamination of the product by its association with FÁS whose reputation is not always highly
regarded’. This study also found that there was widespread dissatisfaction with the promotion of ETP to the general public and staff.

Organisational ownership characteristics are important. Casile and Davis-Blake (2002) found, in the context of adoption, that private sector organisations were more responsive to technical factors, whereas public sector organisations were more responsive to institutional factors. Public sector organisations are quicker to respond to changes in the normative environment than private sector organisations. Private sector organisations focus on efficiency gains, whereas public sector organisations focus on legitimacy issues. Scott (1987, p. 502) argues that public organisations are ‘not compelled to conform but voluntarily seek out the attention and approval of the authorising agent’. Public sector organisations were more likely to adopt government-supported HR practices, such as grievance procedures, affirmative action, and internal labour market arrangements, than private sector organisations (Dobbin et al., 1988; Dobbin et al., 1993). Hoque (2003) has suggested that public sector organisations are more likely to be IIP accredited than private sector workplaces. The factors determining the adoption of a NHRD standard are, therefore, different for private and public sector organisations. Firstly, public sector organisations are more likely to adopt a NHRD standard than private sector organisations. Secondly, the rationale for adoption will be different for public and private sector organisations. Public sector organisations are more likely to adopt a NHRD standard for institutional rather than technical reasons. Whereas private sector organisations are more likely to adopt a NHRD standard for technical rather than institutional reasons. The rationale for adoption is also likely to differ for early and later adopters. Early adopters are more likely to adopt a NHRD standard for technical reasons. Late adopters are more likely to adopt a NHRD standard for legitimacy reasons (Murphy and Garavan, 2009).

Organisational size is an important characteristic in explaining the adoption of a NHRD standard. Large organisations have greater access to resources, are more differentiated, and have greater public visibility than small organisations (Davis and Kalleberg, 2006; Renuka and Venkateshwara, 2006). Monahan et al., (1994), for example, found that large organisations were, first, more likely to offer training opportunities and, second,
more likely to offer a greater variety of training than smaller organisations. Garavan et al., (2008) found that large organisations had more extensive training and HRD practices than smaller organisations. Bartram (2005) found that small organisations are less likely to adopt HRM practices than medium or large firms. Early UK NHRD standard adopters tended to be large organisations with more than 200 employees (Smith et al., 2002), whereas diffusion among small businesses was poor (Hoque et al., 2002).

A perception exists that IIP may be inappropriate in smaller organisations (Hill and Stewart, 1999; Hoque et al., 2005; Ram, 2000). The uptake of IIP among organisations with 10–49 employees is extremely low. The UK government launched a scheme in 1997 to develop new approaches to increase penetration of this sector (DTZ Pieda Consulting, 1999). Similar research findings were revealed for Australia (Lansbury and Macdonald, 1999). Research investigating small business engagement with IIP found that size and expansion are important. Companies involved were relatively larger therefore requiring greater structure, with a particularly important tipping point for adoption being 20–30 employees. In addition, they were either in a growth stage or aiming to grow (Centre for Enterprise, 2003). Standards can give organisations guidance on where to direct their attention when managing a particular domain. This is particularly the case for SMEs who cannot afford departments in every management area (Rasche, 2010). Therefore NHRD standards could potentially be especially beneficial for SMEs to adopt. However HRD within SMEs is poorly understood. Nolan and Garavan (2015) suggest that the uniqueness of SMEs is not sufficiently taken into consideration. Insufficient attention is paid to organisational characteristics other than size when explaining HRD in this context. The influence of key stakeholders, particularly the owner manager, and the agency of employees are insufficiently considered.

This section focused on the adoption and diffusion of NHRD standards. Organisational activities which relate to internal processes such as HRM practices are difficult for external partners to observe. The certification inherent in standards partially overcomes this. Standards are more easily diffused than norms. The importance of legitimacy was highlighted. Market-related factors, enhanced customer service, greater efficiency, and a
kick-start for improvement in training and development were highlighted as the key reasons for national HR standards and the achievement of accreditation by organisations. The development of HRM/HRD standards can represent a vehicle for governments, professional associations and standardising bodies to encourage further diffusion of HRM and HRD norms among organisations. NHRD standards in particular were introduced by their respective governments in order to improve economic competitiveness by investing in the workforce.

2.6.1 Adoption of ETP
Table 2.2 outlines the cumulative number of adoptions of ETP from 1996 to 2005. From 2006 onwards there was a change in how ETP adoptions were recorded in the annual reports from FÁS. Instead of providing a total number of adoptions, which was previously the case, only new adoptions were recorded. As can be seen from Table 2.3 in 2006 new adoptions were broken down into standard, gold and platinum accreditations. Table 2.3 also illustrates the numbers of new firms adopting ETP and the number of reassessments from 2007 to 2010. There are no figures available for ETP adoptions for 2011 as FÁS ceased providing the ETP service. The standard was transferred to the NSAI as of the 1st of January 2012. As can be seen from Table 2.3 there were 35 firms accredited to ETP 1000:2012 in 2012 and 2013.

There are currently 102 organisations registered as ETP 1000:2012 accredited. There are eight organisations which have applied to become ETP accredited with one putting their application on hold for the moment. A further 44 companies have been quoted with the cost of becoming accredited to the ETP 1000:2012 standard. Another 18 are quite keen to become accredited. Another 50 may consider accreditation in the future. There are 138 organisations that have not yet made a decision with regard to continued involvement with the standard. Forty seven companies have decided not to continue involvement with the standard and one certificate has been withdrawn. There is one international accreditation of ETP which is the Ministry of the Interior, General Directorate of Human Resources in Abu Dhabi in 2013 (National Standards Authority of Ireland, 2013).
As can be seen from Table 2.3 ETP is still somewhat in a state of transition from FÁS. The number of ETP accredited organisations has fallen. However, the backdrop has been an unprecedented economic crisis, the pinnacle of which was the European Union/International Monetary Fund bailout in 2010. Due to recession, organisations in Ireland underwent considerable retrenchment. Budgets across many functional areas including HRD were cut to a minimum. Many companies went out of business. The Irish government cut public spending substantially as part of the austerity measures to rectify the public finances. When the standard was transferred to the NSAI, training grants had been cut and the cost of ETP auditing for companies was much higher. This is in contrast to previous government policy which was to provide grants to companies to achieve recognised standards, set up formal training functions where one does not exist, and upgrade existing HRD functions (Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, 2000).
Table 2.2 Cumulative number of adoptions of ETP 1996–2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of adoptions</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>588</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: FÁS Annual Reports 2000–2005

Table 2.3 Number of new adoptions of ETP 2006–2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of new adoptions</td>
<td>58 standard 18 gold 9 platinum</td>
<td>59 adoptions 80 reassessments</td>
<td>57 adoptions 65 reassessments</td>
<td>41 adoptions 69 reassessments</td>
<td>29 adoptions 37 reassessments</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: FÁS Annual Reports 2006–2010; National Standards Authority of Ireland Annual Reports 2012–2013
2.7 Rationales for Adoption of HR Standards

In this section various adoption rationales which influence organisations when selecting HR practices are evaluated. Organisations adopt HR standards for both technical and non-technical reasons. In their systematic review of the literature on the adoption of promising practices Leseure et al., (2004) found evidence of both push and pull factors which may converge or conflict. In some cases, adoption was motivated by an organisational need to address a performance gap. In other cases normative pressures by regulators, customers or suppliers triggered the adoption. Sturdy (2004) highlights that separating adoption rationales is problematic both empirically and theoretically. The author outlines three main difficulties in categorising the literature on adoption rationales. Firstly, boundaries of any field are highly permeable. Secondly, labels can be somewhat arbitrary. Thirdly, empirical studies rarely rely on a single rationale. Daniel et al., (2012) state that when organisations are adopting new practices, the individuals involved may not be explicitly aware of the rationales that contribute to adoption. The authors further suggest that the adoption of practices is likely to involve the interaction of a number of rationales which may serve different purposes.

The next section evaluates the following adoption rationales: the rational, strategic choice, psychodynamic, political, dramaturgical (rhetorical), cultural and institutional rationales. An in-depth analysis of the institutional rationale is provided because it is the main theoretical lens selected to examine adoption and diffusion of the Irish NHRD standard. Institutional theory was selected for its integrative approach which typically incorporates rational, political and cultural dimensions (Grint, 1997). Furthermore, the institutional perspective also integrates contextual aspects such as subjectivity and discourse (Sturdy, 2004). Institutional theory explains much more variance in the adoption of managerial practices than either structural contingency or strategic contingency theories (Ketokivi and Schroeder, 2004). An evaluation of each of the rationales can be found in Table 2.4.

2.7.1 The Rational Rationale

The dominant view found in the diffusion literature to explain the dissemination of innovations is that actors make rational choices to gain technical advantage (Rogers,
The rational perspective mirrors models of decision making and focuses on finding a solution to a given organisational problem. This is typically achieved by using formal planning techniques, analytical tools, models, frameworks, targets, measures, metrics, etc. Inherent in the rational perspective is that managers are logical and in control. The rational view proposes that actions are taken because they are optimal. This approach has limitations however, as rationality is at best bounded, making optimal decisions in complex organisations impossible. Instead, managers settle for an acceptable solution thus making a satisficing decision (March and Simon, 1958).

Metastandards may even legitimize a satisfying approach to management practices. An often overlooked aspect of standards is that they cannot encapsulate best practice, as improvements can always be made. Therefore, metastandards are satisfying solutions as they establish what is good enough. ISO 9001 is the first successful effort to apply a satisficing methodology to a management area. The global success of ISO 9001 demonstrates that satisficing adopters are both plentiful and utilise similar satisficing criteria in the area of quality management. This logic also implies that optimising stakeholders will not be satisfied with standards. In fact, there are two competing ways of evaluating any management system. First, models that are good enough for satisfying stakeholders. Second, models which aspire to create better management systems. Traditional perspectives on quality emphasized consistency and are therefore a satisficing approach. TQM perspectives seek continuous improvement and are therefore an optimizing approach. ‘By recognizing that satisficing and optimizing are separate concepts, managers may find it easier to sort out conflicting notions of standards. If the distinction is fully applied, future managers may come to see their management systems from both perspectives simultaneously’ (Uzumeri, 1997, p. 31).

The rational perspective can usefully explain adoption decisions when there is low uncertainty (Abrahamson, 1991). March (2006) highlights that managers use a rational approach to decision making when the problem is perceived to be simple. However, when the problem is perceived to be complex, managers utilize a greater range of rationales. Strang and Macy (2001) propose adaptive emulation, a synthesis of rational and institutional perspectives. Boundedly rational managers, under pressure to perform,
attempt to learn using incomplete and biased information from their own experience and successful peers. Success stories are prominent in the business discourse on innovation. Organisations respond to perceived performance gaps by imitating successful peers. This adaptive emulation can explain both convergence of practices and transitory fads. If the adopted practice doesn’t result in anticipated performance outcomes, dissatisfied firms may abandon the practice and seek an alternative.

Battisti and Iona (2009) found that traditional economic factors such as firm size, ownership and competitive pressures could only partially explain the adoption of management practices. Mol and Birkinshaw (2009) state that while new practices are often adopted to address performance concerns, satisfying choices rather than optimizing ones are typically made. Ketokivi and Schroeder (2004) suggest that managers search for solutions primarily in their local environment because of bounded rationality and time constraints. The rationale perspective has become particularly relevant empirically due to concern with establishing returns from new practices and scepticism of fads. The rational view is widespread in the numerous studies seeking to establish a causal link between adoption of particular management practices and organisational performance (e.g. Huselid, 1995). The rational view dominates prescriptive studies (Sturdy, 2004).

Daniel et al., (2012) found that the rational rationale is present in the majority of adoptions as it has an important role in enabling employees to justify an adoption to others. This rational factor may be identified by the individuals involved before the adoption or they may formulate a post-rationalisation afterwards. Haidt (2001) suggests that individuals often use emotions in making choices and subsequently use logic to justify their decision afterwards. Power (1997) reports that rational behaviour can lead to inadvertent and counterproductive consequences such as oversimplification of activities in order to make them measurable, focusing only on the measurable, inspection overload, increased costs, etc. Drori et al., (2006, p. 16) state that ‘organisations wear the protective armor of rationalisation and formalisation’. The intensification of liberal market ideals has led organisations to assume a greater familiarity with the wider social context which produces and disseminates a huge variety of standards and norms on organisational rationality (Jang, 2006). A NHRD standard is an example of a formalised
rational practice. NHRD standards are professed to result in improved organisational performance and are therefore proposed as being a rational organisational response.

Abrahamson (1996) highlights the importance of norms of rationality and progress in the adoption and diffusion of management techniques. Norms of rationality are societal expectations that managers will use techniques that are the most efficient to achieve important goals. Norms of progress are societal expectations that managers will use new and improved techniques. Together, these norms of rationality and progress create the need for a stream of management techniques that organisational stakeholders consider rational and progressive and which managers can adopt in order to appear to conform to these norms. Rather than studying a single management technique Abrahamson and Eisenmann (2008) studied the interaction between recurrent waves of five employee-management techniques. They examined management by objectives, job enrichment quality circles, total quality management (TQM) and business process reengineering. In each case rational language dominated at the beginning, shifting gradually to more normative language over time, suggesting a management fashion trend across the techniques. Management fashion trends are brought about by successive waves of language promoting adoption or abandonment of particular management practices. Changes in language over time differentiated each technique from its predecessor creating a sense of progress from the earlier to the later fashions. Taken together these trending practices have important and cumulative effects on how management techniques are enacted in organisations. Indeed, the employee-management techniques investigated ‘generate fundamentally different mechanisms for managing employees, with sometimes massive consequences for employees caught up in the swings’ ebb and flow’ (Abrahamson and Eisenmann, 2008, p. 743).

2.7.2 The Strategic Choice Rationale

Competitive pressures require organisations to invest in HRD. The greater the drive to achieve sustainable competitive advantage, the more likely that an organisation will invest in bundles of HRD practices that make a difference in the competitive arena. There is considerable evidence from the literature that competitive pressures are important in the adoption of HR practices. The fundamental premise of strategic human
resource management is that human capital can be a source of competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Barney and Wright, 1998; Boxhall and Purcell, 2011). The strategic approach to HRM focuses on selecting internally consistent policies and practices that build human capital which contribute to the achievement of organisational goals (Jackson and Schuler, 1995; Schuler and Jackson, 1987). Garavan (2007, p. 27) defines strategic HRD as a ‘coherent, vertically aligned and horizontally integrated set of learning and development activities which contribute to the achievement of strategic goals’. While alignment is an important aspect of the strategic HRD literature there is little empirical evidence of its attainment in practice. Practitioners depict alignment as a recursive process involving dialogue and negotiation, participation in various organisational planning processes, the use of metrics and benchmarking. Alignment is a challenging endeavour and HRD practices may sometimes be passively rather than actively aligned. Both conceptual and practical challenges to HRD alignment are depicted in the literature (Anderson, 2009).

The central aim of NHRD standards is to assist organisations in the improvement of employee training and development, in order to achieve business goals. This has remained the core aim through the various revisions that have been undertaken for each of the standards. NHRD standards were introduced by their respective governments in order to improve economic competitiveness by investing in the workforce. NHRD standards require organisations to formulate a business plan linked to an employee development plan. Taking the Irish NHRD standard as an example, Section 1g states that ‘The human resources strategy should support and be aligned to the business strategy’ (National Standards Authority of Ireland, 2012c, p. 6). Alberga et al., (1997, p.47) state that “IIP seeks to operationalise HR strategy and show how training strategy should be linked to business strategy”. NHRD standards seek to link investment in HRD with improved organisational performance. The performance paradigm dominates both the literature and practice (McGuire et al., 2012; O’Donnell et al., 2006). In an extensive review of almost 1000 articles Batt and Banerjee (2012) found that the most common research question was the relationship between HR and performance. McGuire et al., (2012, p. xxxiii) state that “Demonstrating that HRD can make a contribution to organisational performance represents a research holy grail…….”
The SHRM perspective assumes that the set of HRM practices that a firm adopts will affect organisational performance (Huselid, 1995; Huselid et al., 1997; McDuffie, 1995). Most SHRM theories place emphasis on causal relationships between HR practices and organisational performance. However, research to date has failed to provide compelling evidence in this regard. Performance based HR practices may be too difficult to define and therefore challenging to measure with high reliability and validity in empirical studies (Sekiguchi, 2013). While strategic contingency theory can inform how organisations should fit with the environment, it fails to explain phenomena. Institutional theory explains much more variance in the adoption of managerial practices than either structural contingency or strategic contingency theories. Due to bounded rationality managers may mimic others in the adoption of organisational practices which could result in a mismatch between strategy and actual operations (Ketokivi and Schroeder, 2004). Foley et al., (2012) found that organisations with a SHRM orientation were more likely to adopt high performance work systems. Terlaak (2007) suggests that firms will adopt standards for strategic reasons when the benefits outweigh the costs. Qi et al., (2013) infer that the decision to adopt international management standards may be a strategic response to stakeholder pressure.

In their systematic review of 117 empirical studies Nolan and Garavan (2015) found significant research gaps in HRD among SMEs. For example, adoption of HRD practices in SMEs is poorly understood. The authors propose that strategic choice theory, upper echelons theory and complex resource based view could provide particularly important research insights in the adoption of HRD practices among SMEs. Strategic choice theory is a particularly good fit in the SME context for a number of reasons. The strategic choice rationale assumes the existence of a dominant coalition directing both the choices and actions of the firm. This view acknowledges the key role of the owner-manager. The strategic choice perspective also acknowledges the important role of other key decision makers and the influence of environmental factors. The personal background of owner managers and their understanding of issues facing the business inform management decisions they make. Owner managers tend to prefer informal HRD practices as they have often learned in an experiential fashion themselves. Upper echelons theory is a useful theory to better understand how owner manager
cognition influences HRD choices. Upper echelons theory proposes that owner
managers make decisions about HRD based on personalised understandings of the
strategic circumstances they deal with. The complex resource based view suggests that
the informal nature of HRD in SMEs could actually be an important resource. The
complex resource based view posits that the strategic approach of SMEs is very
emergent with strategies under a constant state of revision as experience is gained.
Therefore an informal approach to HRD could give greater flexibility and agility
resulting in competitive advantage (Nolan and Garavan, 2015).

2.7.3 The Psychodynamic Rationale

The psychodynamic rationale focuses on managers’ need to reduce anxiety and secure
their identity therefore causing a departure from rationality. There is considerable
variety in the literature in how this rationale is utilised, ranging from a general treatment
of existential anxiety to the use of specific concepts from psychoanalysis (Sturdy, 2004).
The psychodynamic view typically focuses on emotionally informed, often impulsive
adoption decisions, without due consideration being given to the likely effectiveness of
the practice for the organisation (Jackall, 1988). Grichnik et al., (2010) found that
emotional influences can increase irrational behaviour in the adoption of organisational
innovations. The psychodynamic rationale focuses on how emotions and existential
anxiety influence decisions and thus it acts as a counter to the objective evaluation often
assumed in the rational perspective. However, decision makers are often portrayed as
susceptible and undiscerning, willing to adopt anything, particularly if others are doing
so. The psychodynamic view tends to neglect contextual factors. The psychodynamic
approach has been very influential because of its challenge to the rational view (Sturdy,
2004).

In addition, psychodynamics is often used to account for the transitory nature of many
managerial practices. Adoption decisions are based on emotionally informed views
rather than used to address an organisational need, which can account for the short life
span of many organisational practices (Gill and Whittle, 1993; Jackall, 1988). This view
is consistent with management fashion theory. Abrahamson and Fairchild (1999) suggest
that environmental changes can cause performance gaps in organisations leading to
widespread anxiety. This creates a demand for techniques to close the performance gap thus eliminating the source of anxiety. Gill and Whittle (1993, p. 287) state that ‘the pervasiveness of management by panacea has deeper underlying causes, probably rooted in the psychodynamics of organisational life’. Paradoxically, this results in managers wanting ‘to be seen to be using some new technique both before and at the same time as everyone else’ (Huczynski, 1993, p. 187). Ketokivi and Schroeder (2004) suggest that management fashion theory is best considered from a psychological perspective. Indeed, Abrahamson (1996, p. 271) states that ‘fashions are in demand because they satiate individuals’ psychological needs’.

Recent research explores the interplay between emotion, entrepreneurial behaviour and adoption of practices (e.g. Cardon et al., 2012; Foo, 2011; Grichnik et al., 2010). Entrepreneurship is particularly suitable for the study of affect as it is an extreme emotional context within which choices are made. Substantial emotions are generated due to uncertainty, time pressures, personal and family consequences, etc. (Cardon et al., 2012). Foo (2011) examined the effects of trait and state emotions on entrepreneurs. Trait emotions are personal inclinations to feel particular emotions while state emotions are elicited by events. The author found that entrepreneurs perceived less risk when either angry or happy. Both of these emotions are associated with greater outcome certainty and control. Entrepreneurs perceived more risk when fearful or hopeful, both of which are associated with greater outcome uncertainty and less control of outcome. Therefore entrepreneurs with high trait fear could be too risk adverse, while entrepreneurs with high trait happiness might take needless risks. As strong emotions influence decisions, entrepreneurs should postpone decision making when experiencing these feelings. Podoynitsyna et al., (2012) found that the presence of mixed and conflicting emotions in entrepreneurs increases risk perception. In addition, the emotional reactions of entrepreneurs change as they transition from being novice entrepreneurs to serial entrepreneurs. As entrepreneurs become more experienced they learn to engage more with both conflicting emotions and positive emotions such as hope and happiness. They also learn to ignore anger. The authors highlight that positive emotions have different effects on entrepreneurs’ perception of risk, with hope being associated with risk taking and happiness associated with risk aversion.
Welpe et al., (2012) suggest that subjective evaluation of choices is just as important as objective evaluation. Subjective evaluation is to a large extent related to emotional experiences. In particular fear decreased the tendency of entrepreneurs to exploit opportunities whereas both joy and anger increased opportunity exploitation. An important finding was that these effects exist even when the likelihood of success and profit are controlled for. Hayton and Cholakova (2012) consider that the Affect Infusion Model (Baron, 2008; Forgas, 1995) is the most advanced framework for understanding the role of emotion in decision making. The authors draw on this framework and suggest that cognition and affect are interwoven in a recursive process influencing the choices entrepreneurs make. They call for the integration of emotion, usually considered a source of irrationality with entrepreneurial cognition in order to provide a more holistic view of entrepreneurial rationality.

2.7.4 The Cultural Rationale

The cultural rationale emphasises the diffusion of organisational practices across boundaries such as geographic, sectoral, organisational or indeed functional, noting that culture ‘serves as a barrier or, sometimes a bridge to adoption’ (Sturdy, 2004, p. 167). In the diffusion of practices across international joint ventures the key barrier is often national cultural incompatibilities between partners, ‘many of the problems lie not in structural barriers’ but in the ‘socially embedded nature’ of the knowledge being transferred’ (Lam, 1997, pp. 974–975). MNCs play a particularly important role in the diffusion of HR practices across countries. There are four main approaches in the literature to explain MNCs’ approach to International HRM: 1) global homogeneity, whereby global best practices in HR are adopted worldwide; 2) ethnocentricity, where HR practices of the parent company home country are imposed on subsidiaries; 3) local isomorphism, where MNCs adapt their practices to reflect host country culture; and 4) duality, where MNCs face conflicting pressures between global integration on the one hand and local adaptation on the other (Brewster et al., 2014). A key issue in International HRM is balancing the pressures of global integration and local responsiveness (Sparrow et al., 2014). In Ireland the attraction of FDI has been central to economic policy for over 50 years. Consequently, there are a large number of MNCs particularly from the USA in Ireland. These MNCs are important carriers of HR
practices. MNCs have contributed to establishing HRM in a more central role within the management of organisations. HR practices have also diffused from MNCs. These include techniques such as selection testing, performance related pay, training and development methods, 360-degree feedback, High Performance Work Practices (HPWPs), trade union avoidance, etc. (Gunnigle et al., 2011).

McDonnell et al. (2014) examined the HR practices among MNCs in Ireland and found no obvious evidence of an U.S. style global best practice HR model emerging. In fact they found considerable differences in the HR practices of Irish owned firms compared to U.S. owned MNCs. They also found considerable similarity in HR practices between Irish and UK owned MNCs. Parry et al., (2008) investigated the HR practices of U.S. owned MNCs through Hall and Soskice’s (2001) varieties of capitalism lens. There was considerable variation depending on whether U.S. owned firms were operating in liberal market economies (e.g. U.S., U.K. Australia) or coordinated market economies (e.g. Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden). For example, trade union recognition, formal consultation and collective communication provision were very prevalent among coordinated market economies compared to liberal market economies. Sophisticated selection was much more prevalent in liberal market economics compared to coordinated market economies. The study highlighted the importance of context as a determinant in the adoption of standardised or localised HR practices.

Sparrow et al., (2013) examined global talent management within a global bank and a professional services firm. They found that global talent management is complex with considerable variation in the global integration-regional responsiveness balance for different elements of global talent management practice. Therefore, the authors propose that a micro-component approach to the study of global integration-regional responsiveness balance in global talent management practices is most appropriate. Talent management like many other HRM practices in an international context has originated from an ethnocentric Anglo-Saxon viewpoint. However, a universalistic approach may not fit in some contexts. Some studies have shown that an individualistic approach to talent management which focuses on an elite core of employees is challenging to existing management practices in collectivist cultures. There can also be a
cultural unwillingness to making specific people stand out within the firm. Management practices in central and eastern Europe vary considerably from the Western model. So far, there is little to indicate that Polish practices are converging with the Anglo-Saxon model (Skuza et al., 2013; Valverde et al., 2013). German SMEs place high importance in adopting an inclusive approach to talent management where most or all employees are targeted. Retention of employees and investing in HRD are key priorities for German SMEs in order to attract talent and avoid skills shortages. This reflects the wider German NHRD context which has a long term developmental orientation. This evidence from the German SME sector contrasts sharply with MNCs, where most talent management research has focussed. MNCs tend to favour a more elitist approach where a select group of high potential employees are considered talent (Festing et al., 2013).

Battisti and Iona (2009) found that organisations with foreign ownership are more likely to adopt a wider range of management practices. Kostova and Roth (2002) suggest that the diffusion of new practices from headquarters to MNC subsidiaries is likely to cause considerable uncertainty as practices are socially constructed in the parent country and might thus be viewed as alien in the host country. In examining the diffusion of e-HRM from a US-based MNC to its Irish and German subsidiaries, Burbach and Royle (2014) infer that the German institutional environment is less conducive to the adoption of e-HRM than Ireland. Lack of customizability can negatively impact e-HRM diffusion. Foley et al., (2012) found that country of origin effects causes considerable variation among MNCs in the adoption of HRM practices. The research highlighted the importance of the relationship between headquarters and subsidiaries. Sophisticated HRM practices such as high performance work systems are more likely to be adopted when headquarters closely monitor the development of subsidiaries.

Som (2007) suggests that foreign firms may adopt local HRM practices in order to compete more effectively in the host country. This is also consistent with Brewster, et al., (2008) who highlight that subsidiaries of MNCs are likely to adopt similar HR practices to the countries in which they operate. The HRM practices that MNC subsidiaries adopt are influenced by both the need for internal consistency and local isomorphic pressures. In order to compete effectively MNC subsidiaries need to provide
HRD opportunities that are comparable to local competitors. Normative and mimetic pressures influence subsidiaries to adopt the HRM practices of local competitors when there are clear local norms which affect front line employees. Whereas HRD practices that affect executives are more influenced by the need for internal consistency and therefore resemble the parent company (Rosenzweig and Nohria, 1994). Therefore, UK IIP accredited subsidiaries operating in Ireland may also adopt ETP for this reason.

Sturdy (2004) suggests that to a greater extent than other rationales, the cultural view is most concerned with the particular form of an organisational practice. This has important implications for the internationalisation of IIP and the potential development of international HR standards. Daniel et al., (2012) report that cultural considerations shape how an organisation implements practices rather than being a determining factor in adoption. Therefore, the cultural perspective is an influencing rationale for all adoptations. Kidger et al. (2004) highlight the importance of flexibility of approach when organisations are adopting IIP to allow for differences due to size, sector, technology, etc. The authors found that the need to take cultural factors into account is increased further when IIP is adopted by countries outside of the UK. IIP needed to be operationalised differently when the Netherlands adopted the standard. For example, indicators had to be reinterpreted due to differences in the education systems. The idea of the badge was less important to the Dutch. Training and promotional material was modified to appeal to the pragmatic Dutch nature. Regarding champions, the emphasis within Dutch companies was quite different. ‘In the UK they may talk about appointing a “champion” to drive the process. This person is given a high profile. In the Netherlands this would signal the person out, which would make it a job no one would want to take on’ (Kidger et al. 2004, p. 509).

Doellgast and Gospel (2013) state that outsourcing is increasing both in scale and in scope which has considerable implications for the management of human resources across increasingly diverse supply chains. Cultural distance may increase uncertainty resulting in organisations seeking greater control over the management of people. A particular challenge for organisations is ensuring compliance when promoting a shared set of practices across boundaries. The use of standards which have third-party
certification such as ISO 9000 and industry specific standards are increasing in popularity for this reason. Subcontractors also face challenges in adapting their internal HRM practices particularly when they are dealing with multiple clients with varying requirements. Finally, MNCs are increasingly outsourcing the HRM function which further drives the standardisation and benchmarking of HR practices across countries.

2.7.5 The Political Rationale

The political rationale considers that organisational practices are adopted to secure or consolidate power. In addition, the political perspective draws attention to how practices and the means by which they are disseminated are contested. Ideas and practices that diffuse widely tend to stem from the powerful. Currently, that means that management practices mostly originate in and diffuse from the west particularly the USA with MNCs playing a key role. Asymmetrical economic power relationships between organisations and their subsidiaries and along the supply chain influence diffusion levels (Sturdy, 2004). As discussed earlier in the chapter, MNCs have been a key driver in the development and diffusion of standards in a variety of areas such as HRM, CSR and accounting. Benders and Vermeulen (2002) found that political influence was an important factor in successful adoptions. In particular they highlight the importance of having a strong champion with political power to deal with issues arising during adoption. Burbach and Royle (2014) infer that micro-political power relations and resistance to change are key factors which affect adoption of e-HRM.

Koski and Järvensivu (2010) state that micro-politics and the divergent interests within and between organisational actors is an under researched area. The authors suggest that micro-politics with its related conflicts and resistance plays an important role in the low adoption of high performance work systems. Organisational innovations are negotiated and shaped through political processes. In addition to fitting with sociotechnical work systems, workplace practices must also fit with informal sociopolitical practices because otherwise they will not be put into practice. Therefore, instead of being merely recipients of high performance work systems, workers may exert considerable agency in shaping and implementing practices. With regard to employee resistance, multi-skilling was difficult to resist openly as it is usually associated with positive discourses such as
individual development. However, employees resisted its adoption and devised silent counteractions to training attempts by managers. There have been a number of calls in the literature for a more pluralistic perspective in HR research that acknowledges the political nature of the employment relationship (e.g. Delbridge et al., 2011; Janssens and Steyaert, 2009; McGuire et al., 2007). Paauwe (2009) also calls for a more balanced approach to HR research that pays greater attention to employee concerns. Nolan and Garavan (2015, p. 7) state that ‘in the main, studies do not address employees’ perceptions and responses to HR practices’. They highlight that HRD recipients are overlooked due to an overreliance on the managerial perspective.

In relation to IIP, Hoque et al., (2002, p. 7) suggest adoption ‘may be as much about internal organisational politics or inter-organisational networking as about perceived benefits’. Bell et al., (2001) suggest that the decision to adopt IIP can be a complex micro-political process influenced by the career interests of the managers involved and shaped by political-organisational circumstances. Decision to adopt tended to be made by a senior manager who then delegated the task of implementation often to the HR professional. For some HR managers this was an imposition. However, many HR practitioners used IIP to legitimise the HR function and to raise its profile within the organisation. HR practitioners also welcomed IIP at a personal level as a tool for career development and a means of increasing professional and personal status within the organisation. “The personal justification for involvement with the initiative thus became a form of opportunistic, post hoc rationalisation” (Bell et al., 2001, p. 203). The current IIP standard includes a champions programme to recognise exemplar organisations and the ambassador programme to recognise people who championed and implemented IIP within the organisation. These programmes can offer the HR professional and indeed senior managers a platform from where they can network and achieve recognition. Sturdy (2004) highlights that political accounts tend to generalise the adoption process by focussing on structured interests and outcomes rather than context. Therefore the political rationale has limited ability to explain different patterns of adoption and why some practices diffuse while others do not.
2.7.6 The Dramaturgical (Rhetorical) Rationale

The dramaturgical (rhetorical) rationale focuses on the use of successful rhetoric by suppliers, for example consultants, management gurus, academics, etc. Diffusion is largely viewed as an uncontested one-way process towards gullible managers. However, this rationale does highlight the importance of interaction and the discourse through which much management knowledge is produced. The rhetorical view can neglect broader issues of power and cultural context (Sturdy, 2004). Som (2007) suggests that management consultants have been influential in the adoption of SHRM practices by organisations in India. The Netherlands uses a network of management consultants as IIP advisors who are important in the diffusion of the standard in the Netherlands (Kidger et al. 2004). Management fashion creates a market for rhetoric which champions rational and progressive management techniques. Mass media can reach broad audiences and can draw widespread attention to rhetoric championing particular management techniques (Abrahamson, 1996). Barley and Kunda’s (1992) key article suggests that managerial discourse fluctuates between rational and normative accounts. Spell and Blum (2005) found that changes in the tone of publications can predict adoption patterns even when taking strategic choice and environmental factors into account.

W. Edwards Deming’s appearance on television in America fuelled the widespread adoption of Quality Circles and TQM in the USA. Best Employer Studies lists are another example that appear in high profile publications such as Fortune magazine. Management gurus often use the book publishing industry to disseminate rhetoric for management techniques they are promoting (Huczynski, 1993). Peters and Waterman’s In Search of Excellence is one such example. Rhetoric for HR and NHRD standards is also disseminated this way, with examples such as Investors in People Explained, by Taylor and Thackwray, and The 100 Best Companies to Work for in America, by Levering and Moskowitz. Another important source of rhetoric is the use of success stories from adopter originations, the case studies of which are used in brochures, on websites, at conferences and networking events. Therefore, organisations that adopt HRM and HRD standards actively participate in the discourse, generating and disseminating rhetoric about these standards. When organisations achieve a NHRD
accreditation like ETP they often seek to publicise this by issuing a press release and posting updates on the company’s website and Facebook pages. Bell et al., (2002) suggest that the cachet of a quality initiative is influenced by the prestige of other awards, which is in turn influenced by the status of companies that have attained them. The reputation of a NHRD standard can be increased through its association with prestigious companies.

Upham et al., (2007) highlight the benefit of a unified and consistent rhetoric in offering knowledge communities a common language and understanding, allowing for a more efficient exchange of ideas. Gold and Smith (2003) emphasise the importance of rhetoric in creating a positive case for the adoption of HRD. They suggest that standards like IIP can play an important role in providing a rationale, a framework and a positive language for HRD, which may then lead to action. Even after a decision to adopt HRD has been made, persuasion is essential to bring others on board and deal with resistance. Abrahamson and Fairchild (1999) suggest that rhetoric can act as an impetus for the adoption of new managerial practices. Classic rhetoric has three main types of persuasive appeal, which are pathos, logos and ethos. Pathos justifications appeal to the emotions of the audience, are often passionate and may entreat the listener’s self-interest. Logos justifications use logic and reason to appeal to the mind. Ethos appeals to moral and ethical sensibilities. Ethos justifications focus on socially accepted norms with emphasis on the common good rather than the individual (Aristotle, 1991).

Leiringer and Cardellino (2008) highlight the significance of champions as key informants of a new practice to the wider organisation. In their research, the authors found that champions used similar rhetorical strategies when framing the message they wanted to get across throughout the adoption and diffusion process in order to generate acceptance and buy-in from the workforce. Initially champions used pathos appeals, such as a response to productivity issues or fears of losing customers, to initiate the adoption of an organisational practice. Pathos justifications tended to be initially persuasive but unsustainable in the long-run. Champions then turned to logos appeals often citing efficiency and effectiveness arguments. Finally, in all cases ethos appeals were used to demonstrate how customers had benefitted from the adoption.
The theoretical foundations of HRD initiatives have largely focused on the nature of models, principles and theories. However, practitioners can often question the benefit of these. Practitioners can more easily take on board these ideas when packaged as an initiative such as the learning organisation and other frameworks of organisational learning which promise improved competitive advantage. Initiatives such as competency frameworks, Management Charter Initiative standards and IIP are then ‘sold’ through the use of rhetoric. In the case of IIP, 84% of organisations stated that rhetoric influenced their decision to adopt the standard. The main sources of information were TECs (86%), consultants (71%), popular management journals (62%), and management courses (61%) (Reynolds and Ablett, 1998).

Lawless et al., (2011, p. 265) highlight that discourse approaches to HRD can create a ‘discursive space’ challenging dominant discourses and facilitating the emergence of a more critical discourse. Discourse analysis is a social constructionist approach which contrasts with the more prevalent positivist, rational perspective. Multiple discourses characterise HRD within organisations. These competing discourses evolve over time from daily communication practices with a dominant discourse eventually emerging. Performance and learning are two prevailing discourses regarding the perceived purpose of HRD. The performance discourse centres on individual development for the purposes of achieving performance outcomes. The learning discourse centres on individual development and the creation of an organisational culture that facilitates and encourages learning. The importance of context cannot be overstated in order to understand discourse. ‘HRD discourses are embedded in local organisational context but also in a much wider context such as national culture, academic debate, the press, television and literature’ (Lawless et al., 2011, p. 271). McGuire et al., (2007, p. 132) state that ‘HRD has been talked into existence, and many argue that language remains the principal method through which HRD can be developed’.

2.7.7 The Institutional Rationale

Institutional theory is widely used to explain how organisations and individuals act. Kuchinke (2000, p. 279) has highlighted that it seeks to explain individual action within a collective system. Scott (2014) highlights three pillars of institutions: regulative,
normative, and cultural-cognitive. The regulative pillar emphasises rules that are enforced by a higher authority, such as national governments using legislation, regulations, and national standards. The normative pillar highlights the role of social beliefs, norms, and values, whereas the cultural-cognitive pillar focuses on meaning, which is socially constructed through the interaction of internal interpretation processes within the external cultural environment. Neoinstitutionalism tends to emphasize the cultural-cognitive pillar of institutions, which is considered to be particularly important in explaining diffusion. Regulative and normative influences appear to have greater significance in explaining adoption. Taylor and Parkinson (1998), for example, have suggested that the adoption of the UK IIP standard conformed to an S-curve theory. The initial take-up of the standard by organisations was slow, followed by a sharp increase, and then a tapering off.

The institutional rationale takes a macro level and comparative approach to the emergence and adoption of management innovations (Birkinshaw et al., 2008). Algaraja and Li (2015) investigated the emergence, rise and decline of corporate universities drawing from institutional theory. Rather than being a passing fad, corporate universities are better understood as an ongoing reconfiguration of HRD. Corporate universities evolved from training and development. Over time the corporate university label became less meaningful and so was replaced by newer forms of HRD such as talent management. Mendel (2006) has suggested that the diffusion of organisational practices is initially influenced by the institutional and cultural framework within which organisations operate and subsequently through an organisation’s position and relationship with other actors.

Institutional theory proposes that an organisation’s responsiveness to new business practices and standards is influenced by both technical and institutional factors. Casile and Davis-Blake (2002, p. 180) define technical factors as ‘key aspects of task environments and of organisations’ technical areas, that are related to economic fitness and include key resources, dependencies and market forces’. Rogers (2003) argues that initially organisations make rational choices to gain technical advantages; however, institutional theorists cast doubt on rational actor explanations. Organisations may make
choices not because they are optimal but because they are appropriate. Technical arguments appear to have limited value in explaining the diffusion of HRM practices. HRM practices offer considerable technical benefits; however, they are underused by organisations. There is a need for increased research on the contextual features explaining the adoption of HRM practices (Subramony, 2006).

Johns (1993) suggests that the institutional argument is important in explaining the low level of adoption of HRM practices. Monahan, Meyer, and Scott (1994) have suggested that although there are many rational reasons for adopting training and development practices, technical benefits alone are insufficient in explaining why they are adopted by a large number of organisations. The institutional perspective is complementary to technical reasons in explaining adoption and diffusion of practices (Scott, 1987). Institutional theory tends to underestimate broader power relations. In addition institutional theory tends to be deterministic underplaying idiosyncratic actors that don’t fit the overall aggregated pattern (Sturdy, 2004). The institutional perspective focuses on the preconditions under which innovations emerge and are subsequently adopted. The role of human agency is not directly considered (Birkinshaw et al., 2008).

Institutional theory takes the view that as an increasing number of organisations adopt a practice, it acquires value beyond its technical characteristics or requirements. Institutional theory assumes that managers satisfice in order to attain legitimacy and conform to external norms (Eisenhardt, 1988). Scott et al., (2000, p. 237) suggest that organisations ‘need social acceptability and credibility’ to survive. They strive for legitimacy, which Suchman (1995, p. 574) defines as ‘a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions’. This suggests that for a NHRD standard to become legitimate, many organisations need to adopt the standard. Alberga et al., (1997) found that a critical factor in enhancing the legitimacy of the UK IIP standard was its widespread adoption by organisations. A key driver in the diffusion process is bandwagon pressure, where the sheer numbers of adopters cause other organisations to adopt without evaluating the efficiency or effectiveness of the practice (Abrahamson and Rosenkopf, 1993). Sekiguchi (2013) suggests that
bandwagons are self-reinforcing because the larger the bandwagon, the greater the number of organisations wanting to join. Spell and Blum (2005) suggest that organisations are more likely to adopt Employee Assistance Programmes when competitors have them due to institutional pressures and the need for legitimacy.

Isomorphism is central to the explanatory value of institutional theory. Two particular types of isomorphism are of relevance in the context of a NHRD standard: competitive and institutional. Hannan and Freeman (1977) argue that organisations become isomorphic with one another because of rational responses to similar environmental conditions. DiMaggio and Powell (1983), in contrast, emphasize the importance of organisational interconnectivity resulting in isomorphism. They suggest three mechanisms: coercive, normative, and mimetic. Coercive isomorphism comes about through formal and informal pressures being exerted on organisations. Some countries have mandatory rules concerning expenditure on training and the provision of particular types of training – for example, safety training. Coercive forces have limited relevance in explaining the adoption and diffusion of a NHRD standard. Normative and mimetic isomorphisms are likely to have more relevance. In the adoption of standards much research on MNCs has emphasised the importance of social factors and trade relationships rather than efficiency considerations which results in cross-national isomorphism (Corbett and Yeung, 2008). It is important to acknowledge that coercive, normative and mimetic isomorphic pressures lack independence and may intermingle in an empirical setting. As DiMaggio and Powell (1983, p. 150) state ‘the typology is an analytic one; the types are not always empirically distinct’. Burns and Wholey (1993) emphasise the difficulty in differentiating between normative and mimetic forces.

2.7.7.1 Normative isomorphic influences
Normative isomorphism highlights the role of professionalisation, which results in organisations becoming more homogeneous. This occurs through the establishment of formal norms and the development of networks. Palmer et al., (1993) highlight the role of social contagion whereby proximate organisations use one another as reference points when deciding whether to adopt a particular practice or not. Organisations may be directly linked through social cohesion and indirectly linked through structural
equivalence. Social cohesion has particular relevance because it explains why organisations choose practices that are appropriate to their social system (Guler et al., 2002).

Organisations are influenced by the linkages they have in the wider environment. Oliver (1991, p. 171) argues that ‘highly interconnected environments provide relational channels through which institutional norms can be diffused.’ Bell et al., (2001) suggest that having a senior manager on the local TEC board was an important driver in the organisational decision to adopt IIP. Perri et al., (2006, p. 5) define an interorganisational network as ‘any moderately stable pattern of ties or links between organisations or between organisations and individuals, where those ties represent some form of recognizable accountability (however etiolated and overridden), whether formal or informal in character, whether weak or strong, loose or tight, bounded or unbounded’. The networks that an organisation participates in will influence the organisational practices it will adopt. Myriad organisations comprise an organisation’s total network. In the context of a NHRD standard, these include employer associations, business associations, Chambers of Commerce, HR professional associations, industry sector bodies, international and national accreditation bodies, NHRD agencies, and trade unions. Therefore organisational participation in inter-organisational networks is likely to be positively associated with adoption of a NHRD standard. Greenwood, Suddaby and Hinings (2002) highlight the influential role of professional associations in legitimating change by facilitating the discourse through which change is negotiated and reframing professional identities to external audiences. This is particularly relevant in the development of HR standards. The Society for Human Resource Management initially provided the stimulus to develop international HR standards with the CIPD entering the debate later with an alternative approach.

The extent of the professionalisation of HRD specialists represents an important factor in explaining the adoption of a NHRD standard. Scott and Meyer (1994) have argued that the American Society for Training and Development acted as a significant stimulus in the HRD arena. They contend that organisations with employees who are members of professional HRD associations are more likely to develop structured training
programmes and adopt HRD practices that are associated with professionalisation. Examples of normative HRD practices include training-needs analysis, HRD evaluation, performance management reviews, trainers’ training, and personal development plans. HRD specialists will continue their professionalisation through participation at professional conferences and informal networking with peer professionals. Professionalisation also occurs through HRD specialists changing jobs and moving to new organisations. Where they have worked in a NHRD-accredited organisation, they are likely to try and achieve the standard in their new organisation. Therefore, the greater the degree of professionalisation of the HRD specialist, the more likely it is that an organisation will adopt a NHRD standard. Furthermore, the greater the experience of the HRD specialist in another NHRD accredited organisation, the more likely it is that an organisation will adopt a NHRD standard.

The extent to which an organisation is embedded in a social context where accreditation is important will explain both the adoption and diffusion of a NHRD standard. In the non-HRD context, research highlights how this context operates. Casile and Davis-Blake (2002) found, for example, that business schools were more likely to seek accreditation if they operated in a social context where accreditation was deemed to be important for their legitimacy. Organisations that adopt a NHRD standard are likely to have another external award such as ISO 9000 (Cox and Spires, 2002; O’Connor, 1998; Training and Evaluation Services, 2003). Therefore the more an organisation is embedded in a social context in which accreditation is important, the more likely it is to adopt a NHRD standard.

2.7.7.2 Mimetic isomorphic influences
Mimetic isomorphism comes about because of uncertainty, as a result of which organisations imitate one another. Brunsson et al., (2012) state that standards are comprised of decontextualized rules which facilitate mimetic isomorphism. As a result imitators do not need to examine in detail a particular management area, they need only to comply with a standard’s requirements. Bell et al., (2002a) assert that while many organisations become involved with IIP as a means of differentiation, some are simply mimicking practices adopted by others. Drori et al., (2006) suggest that organisational
archetypes develop over time because they focus on who they should emulate. Mimetic isomorphism also occurs between structurally equivalent organisations. Burt (1987) suggests that structurally equivalent actors are identically positioned in the social structure, and they have similar relations with other parties. Social cohesion and structural equivalence are considered complementary explanations in the diffusion of organisational practices.

Normative and mimetic isomorphisms occur through important linkages and reference groups. Erickson (1988) found that in conditions of uncertainty, actors seek normative guidance from reference groups via a process of social comparison. Galaskiewicz and Wasserman (1989) found that organisational linkages are also important in determining which organisations will be imitated. Both direct and indirect network ties between boundary-spanning personnel are also important. Organisations mimic actors they trust. Guler et al., (2002) found that social cohesion can contribute to mimetic isomorphism as well as to normative isomorphism. ‘Organisations tend to model themselves after similar organisations in their field that they perceive to be more legitimate or successful’ (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, p. 152). The diffusion of organisational practices tends to be rapid among the same categories of organisations (Strang and Meyer, 1993). Organisations observe and mimic reference groups, such as organisations with whom they are directly tied, those of a similar size, those in the same industrial sector, or those in a particular geographic region (Davis and Greve, 1997; Goodstein, 1994; Guler et al., 2002; Scott, 2014). Hoque (2003) found that in the UK independent organisations not part of a group were less likely to adopt IIP.

Large organisations provide particularly compelling reference groups for other large and small organisations to imitate (Davis, 1991; Haveman, 1993). The diffusion literature emphasizes the importance of the spatial proximity of actors in the dissemination of innovations (Strang and Soule, 1998). In examining family-friendly work practices, for example, Goodstein (1994) found that mimetic isomorphism was strongest when organisations were both in the same industrial sector and geographically proximate to each other. Burns and Wholey (1993) attribute diffusion in particular geographic regions to normative forces rather than responses to local competition. If an organisation is in
frequent contact with other accredited organisations, it is more likely to adopt a NHRD standard, and it is also more likely to retain it. Imitation occurs between structurally equivalent organisations in the same industry.

Imitation will occur even in the absence of direct contact between organisations. Structural equivalence highlights the role of symbolic communication among competitors. As a practice becomes ubiquitous in an organisation’s comparison group, adoption becomes normative, irrespective of technical gains (Davis, 1991). Structurally equivalent industries are those with similar patterns of relations with suppliers and buyers. Members of a particular industry can be seen as more or less structurally equivalent (Davis, 1991, p. 595). In respect of IIP, Hoque (2003) found that diffusion of the standard was highest in the hospitality, utilities, finance, wholesale and retail-trade sectors. There are two possible reasons for this. Firstly, the importance of customer service within these industries may have been a contributing factor to the uptake of the standard. Secondly, the need to train new staff in basic skills due to the high staff turnover in many of these sectors has resulted in the development of formal training programmes which made it easier to fulfil IIP requirements.

Mimetic isomorphism occurs when organisations considering whether to adopt a NHRD standard look to successful and prestigious reference groups. Organisations imitate successful and prestigious organisations (Burns and Wholey, 1993; Haveman, 1993; Scott, 2014). The UK government, for example, initially targeted large and prestigious organisations to establish the legitimacy of IIP and create a bandwagon effect (Hoque et al., 2005). Strang and Meyer (1993) found that organisations observe both their competitors and role models advocated by independent bodies such as the United Nations and the International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2000). These bodies ‘promote the homogenisation of their members around models of progressive policy’ (Strang and Meyer, 1993, p. 492). Likewise, the American Society for Training and Development in the USA and the CIPD in the UK and Ireland advocate organisational archetypes with exemplary HRD practices to their members (Luo, 2006). Organisations that appear in national Best Companies to Work For lists are perceived to be prestigious. Organisations in the general population imitate their practices. This has significant implications for the
diffusion of a NHRD standard because organisations that aspire to be listed as a ‘best company to work for’ are recommended to attain the NHRD standard to improve their HRD systems. Therefore, accredited organisations that are perceived to be successful influence other organisations in the general population to adopt a NHRD standard. Furthermore, accredited organisations that are perceived to be prestigious organisations influence other organisations in the general population to adopt a NHRD standard.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Key proposition</th>
<th>Implication for adoption of HRD Practices</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rational rationale</td>
<td>Focuses on the cognitive and evaluative characteristics of management processes. Mirrors models of decision making and focuses on finding a solution to a given organisational problem. Assumes that managers are logical and in control. Proposes that actions are taken because they are optimal. Assumes adopted practices will be effective for the organisation.</td>
<td>Relevant empirically due to concern with establishing returns from new practices and scepticism of fads. Relevant in the majority of adoptions as it has an important role in justifying an adoption. Can usefully explain adoption decisions when there is low uncertainty or when the problem is perceived to be simple.</td>
<td>There is considerable variation in the extent to which the bounded nature of rationality is acknowledged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic choice rationale</td>
<td>Focuses on human capital as a source of competitive advantage. Emphasises vertical alignment between HR strategy and Theoretically, HRD practices are adopted if they are internally consistent and/or fit with the environment.</td>
<td>Can inform how organisations should fit with the environment but fails to explain phenomena. Assumes a causal relationship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
business strategy. Horizontal integration between HR activities is also emphasised. Assumes the HRD practices adopted will affect organisational performance.

external environment.

between adoption of HR practices and organisational performance. Empirical research has failed to provide compelling evidence in this regard.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychodynamic rationale</th>
<th>Focuses on managers’ need to reduce anxiety and secure their identity. Acknowledges that emotions and existential anxiety influence decisions and thus act as a counter to the objective evaluation often assumed in the rational perspective.</th>
<th>Used to account for the transitory nature of many managerial practices. Adoption decisions are based on emotionally informed views rather than to address an organisational need, which can account for the short life span of many organisational practices</th>
<th>Decision makers are often portrayed as susceptible and undiscerning, willing to adopt anything particularly if others are doing so. The psychodynamic view tends to neglect contextual factors.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural rationale</td>
<td>Focuses on how cultural meaning can facilitate or hinder adoption.</td>
<td>Relevant in all adoption decisions as organisational culture as well as national culture is considered. Highlights the need for practices to be</td>
<td>In an HR context this rationale tends to neglect issues relating to power such as the employment relationship. The structural nature of diffusion can be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dramaturgical (rhetorical) rationale</strong></td>
<td>Focuses on the powers of persuasion and the marketing of ideas. Draws attention to the supply side of the relationship.</td>
<td>Highlights the importance of interaction and the discourse through which much management knowledge is produced. Important in creating impetus and a positive case for the adoption of HRD. Important in dealing with resistance.</td>
<td>Diffusion is largely viewed as an uncontested one way process towards gullible managers. Can neglect broader issues of power and cultural context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political rationale</strong></td>
<td>The political perspective focuses on the instrumental use of ideas and the role and influence of different actors.</td>
<td>The political perspective draws attention to how HRD standards and the means by which they are disseminated are contested. Practices that diffuse widely tend to stem from the powerful. Micro-politics can either</td>
<td>Limited ability to explain why some practices diffuse while others do not, or to explain different patterns of adoption. Tends to neglect contextual issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutional rationale</strong></td>
<td>The institutional perspective focuses on organisations attaining legitimacy through new ideas. Institutional theory assumes that managers satisfice in order to attain legitimacy and conform to external norms. Isomorphism is central to the explanatory value of the institutional rationale.</td>
<td>Integrative approach which incorporates culture, discourse, subjectivity, power relations and market forces in adoption decisions. Facilitates comparative and historical analyses while allowing for variation due to context. Variation in the depth and breadth of adopted practices is acknowledged.</td>
<td>Tends to be deterministic. Underestimates broader power relations and human agency.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.7.8 Evaluation of Adoption Rationales

This chapter evaluated various rationales which either separately or combined may influence the adoption of HR standards by organisations. Each individual rationale has limitations. Therefore adoption of practices tends to be multidimensional encompassing both managerial evaluation and social influence. Multiple perspectives can be usefully employed by taking a contingent approach (Sturdy, 2004). For example the rational perspective can usefully explain adoption under conditions of low uncertainty (Abrahamson, 1991) or when the problem is perceived to be simple (March, 2006). This section finishes by summarising the key ideas of these rationales as they relate to HR standards. These are the rational, strategic choice, institutional, psychodynamic, political, dramaturgical (rhetorical) and cultural rationales. The rational rationale highlights the technical benefits of HR standards and also plays an important role in justifying adoption decisions to others. The strategic choice rationale focuses on human capital as a source of competitive advantage and emphasises alignment between HR strategy and business strategy. HR practices are adopted if they are internally consistent and/or fit with the external environment. The psychodynamic rationale focuses on managers’ need to reduce anxiety. In this case, the adoption of HR standards may be to alleviate anxiety, generated, for example, by performance gaps within organisations. The dramaturgical rationale focuses on the use of successful rhetoric. Gold and Smith (2003) emphasise the importance of rhetoric in creating a positive case for the adoption of HRD standards.

The political rationale considers that HRM/HRD standards are adopted to secure or consolidate power. Bell et al., (2001) suggest that HR practitioners use IIP to legitimise the HR function and to raise its profile within the organisation. At a personal level IIP can act as a tool for career development and a means of increasing professional and personal status within the organisation. In addition, asymmetrical economic power relationships between organisations and their subsidiaries and along the supply chain influences diffusion levels (Sturdy, 2004). The role of MNCs was identified as influential in the emergence and internationalisation of HR standards. The cultural rationale emphasises the diffusion of organisational practices across boundaries. MNCs have a requirement for a common set of HR practices which can be implemented across
culturally diverse contexts. The increase in outsourcing across various functional areas has further accelerated this trend. The growth in outsourcing the HRM function has particularly driven the need for global HR standards.

Institutional theory proposes that an organisation’s responsiveness to new business practices and standards is influenced by both technical and institutional factors. The institutional rationale takes the view that as an increasing number of organisations adopt an HR standard it acquires value beyond its technical characteristics or requirements. Isomorphism is central to the explanatory value of institutional theory. Normative and mimetic isomorphisms are particularly relevant in the adoption of HR standards. Normative isomorphism highlights the role of professionalisation, which results in organisations becoming more homogeneous. This occurs through the establishment of formal norms and the development of networks. Mimetic isomorphism comes about because of uncertainty, as a result of which organisations imitate one another. The institutional perspective is complementary to technical reasons in explaining adoption and diffusion of practices.

2.8 Research Model

Of the adoption rationales reviewed in the previous section institutional theory was selected as the theoretical lens for this study. The research model illustrated in Figure 2.1 identifies the internal business factors and external factors which may explain the adoption or non-adoption of ETP. The research model incorporates institutional processes such as normative and mimetic isomorphism to explain adoption. The internal factors that are considered influential in the adoption of a NHRD standard are as follows: growth orientation, strategic differentiation, presence of a HR department, investment in training and development (T&D) and senior champions of NHRD standard adoption. As can be seen from Figure 2.1, the external factors that are considered important are competitive pressures, external benchmarking, the influence of T&D practices of other firms, relationships with FÁS and relationships with institutional actors. The control variables are organisation size, organisation sector, organisation age, geographic proximity, organisation ownership, legal status of organisation and unionisation. The theoretical concepts incorporated into the research
model are now explained. The research model proposes that the adoption of a NHRD standard results from the interaction internal and external factors. Following from the literature review undertaken in this study and an examination of the research model employed here, the hypotheses that have been derived are presented.
Figure 2.1 Research model

Internal Business Factors
- Growth orientation
- Differentiation of business strategy
- Presence of HR department
- Investment in T&D activities
- Senior champions of NHRD standard adoption

External Factors
- Extent of competitive pressures
- External benchmarking by firm
- Influence of T&D practices in other firms
- Relationships with FAS
- Relationships with institutional actors

Adoption/non-adoption of NHRDS

Control Variables
- Organisation size
- Organisation sector
- Organisation age
- Geographic proximity
- Ownership of organisation
- Legal status of organisation
- Unionisation
2.8.1 Internal Business Factors Influencing the Adoption of a NHRD Standard

The following internal business factors are considered important in explaining adoption of a NHRD standard: the nature of strategic objectives, in particular, growth orientation; a differentiation business strategy; presence of a HR function; investment in training and development and the presence of senior champions for NHRD standard adoption.

Organisational expansion necessitates a greater formalisation of HR systems, particularly where small firms are concerned. NHRD standards can potentially assist in this regard. In the UK companies that had already prioritised HRD and wished to grow were most likely to engage with IIP (Cox and Spires, 2002; Centre for Enterprise, 2003). Thomson et al., (2001) suggest that IIP is a positive influence on management development particularly among small organisations seeking to grow. In Ireland the HRD manager of a call centre stated that:

> We sought the training standard (Excellence Through People, Ireland) because things were quite loose. We had experienced high growth in our business; however, our systems have not grown with them. We needed proper documentation and best practice procedures. The process of accreditation and the work that went into it helped us to achieve those objectives.

(Garavan et al., 2012, p. 882)

Likewise IIP can be useful for firms undergoing rapid change and expansion. For example, a building firm which was growing rapidly, needed to formalise HR practices across the organisation to ensure consistency. The group training manager stated that:

> The most useful element for us was the external audit, which questioned staff very cleverly to gain information on how we were treating them. We could not have gained this by any of us talking to them. [The] feedback report and presentation kicked us into action….I think having an external view from someone who was completely independent was the most beneficial aspect.

(Confederation of British Industry, 2008, p. 47)
Klass et al., (2010) found that organisations with growth objectives were more likely to adopt human capital programmes. In the standards literature, Terlaak and King (2006) found that ISO 9001 was more likely to be adopted by organisations that were growing. The following hypothesis is therefore suggested:

**Hypothesis 1.** The stronger the growth aspirations of a firm the more likely it will adopt a NHRD standard.

The competitive stance of the organisation and the competitiveness of the business will affect the adoption of a NHRD standard. Organisations that pursue a cost leadership strategy are less likely to invest in training and development and pursue accreditation of their HRD practices. Schuler and Jackson (1987) found that organisations that pursue a differentiation strategy are more likely to invest in training and development. Mabey and Finch-Lees (2008) report that organisations that pursue differentiation strategies are more likely to invest in a more comprehensive and deep set of HRD practices. Organisations that face environmental uncertainty and pursue a differentiation strategy have a greater need for highly skilled, committed employees who can operate with discretion. Under these conditions organisations are more likely to adopt human capital programmes (Klass et al., 2010). The widespread adoption of TQM in Ireland may reflect the strategic reorientation from cost leadership to high value added competitive strategies (McCartney and Teague, 2004). Wang and Verma (2012) found a positive relationship between differentiation strategy and the adoption of some work-life balance practices such as employee assistance programmes and wellness programmes. The authors also found that a cost leadership business strategy is negatively related to the adoption of these practices. Likewise, Bikfalvi et al., (2014) found that organisations pursuing a differentiation strategy are more likely to adopt teamworking compared to cost leadership firms.

Pekovic (2010) suggests that service organisations adopt ISO 9001 for the external signalling effects of quality improvement it provides. Organisations pursuing a differentiation strategy are more likely to adopt high involvement work practices. However, adoption is not exclusively the preserve of organisations that base their
competitive advantage on differentiation. Firms pursuing a cost leadership strategy may also adopt high involvement work practices in order to improve performance (Ordiz-Fuertes and Fernández-Sánchez, 2003). Grover (1993) found that generic strategy was not linked to adoption behaviour. Adopters and non-adopters of ICT pursued both cost leadership and differentiation strategies. The following hypothesis is therefore suggested:

**Hypothesis 2.** Firms that pursue a differentiation business strategy are more likely to adopt a NHRD standard.

Particular characteristics of the HR function are important in explaining the adoption of a NHRD standard. Davis and Kalleberg (2006) state that organisations with a HR department are more likely to experience normative isomorphic pressures. Urbano and Yordanova (2008) found that the adoption of HRM practices was positively associated with the presence of an HR department. The existence of an HR department is positively associated with the adoption of practices such as performance management, job descriptions, equal opportunities practices, and processes related to employee voice (Dobbin et al., 1993; Scott, 2014). Scott and Meyer (1994) found that organisations with HR departments are more likely to implement structured training programmes. HR expertise is also important in explaining the adoption of a NHRD standard. HR experience will focus on the competence of specialists in HRD processes. The long-term success and continued growth of a NHRD standard in an organisation will be related to the availability of skilled HRD professionals and their understanding of the operation and implementation of the standard (Roberts and Hirsch, 2005).

HR practitioners can have a pivotal role in the adoption of HPWPs due to their ability to influence a number of contextual factors. The innovativeness of HR practitioners and their perceptions of the relative importance of individual and contextual factors can influence the adoption of HPWPs. Critical differentiating factors between HPWP adoption and non-adoption are the networking skills of the HR practitioner, innovation conducive climates, the role of the HR function, and organisational leadership. The critical individual factor influencing the adoption of HPWPs may be networking skills.
HR practitioners with good networking and communication skills are able to develop productive relationships with key organisational constituents. This is essential to gain top management support and organisational consensus for the adoption of HR practices. HR practitioners that recognise the value of an organisational climate conducive to innovation are more likely to devote resources to creating and maintaining them. Organisations with these climates are more likely to be open to the adoption of new organisational practices such as HPWPs. HR practitioners seeking to foster legitimacy for the HR function are more likely to be involved in the adoption of HPWPs (Murphy and Southy, 2003). The following hypothesis is therefore suggested:

**Hypothesis 3.** Organisations with a HR function are more likely to adopt a NHRD standard.

Unsurprisingly, IIP accredited organisations tend to have higher investment in training compared to non-accredited organisations. In particular, both the incidence of training and training duration are higher in IIP adopter organisations compared to non-adopters. Despite this, 29% of respondents working in IIP accredited organisations did not receive any training in the 12 months prior to the 2004 Workplace Employment Relations Survey being conducted. However, the corresponding figure for non-IIP accredited organisations was considerably higher at 41% (Hoque, 2003; Hoque, 2008). The literature suggests that adopters of standards such as ISO 9001 invest in training and development (McAdam and McKeown, 1999; Quazi and Jacobs, 2004). Indeed lack of training is a barrier to ISO 9001 certification (Quazi and Padibjo, 1998). Likewise, adequate workforce training is necessary for successful adoption of TQM (Martínez-Lorente et al., 2000). The following hypothesis is therefore suggested:

**Hypothesis 4.** The greater investment by a firm in training and development the more likely it will adopt a NHRD standard.

The literature highlights the importance of having senior champions in the workplace for a practice to be adopted (e.g. Premkumar, 2003; Premkumar and Roberts, 1999; Rogers, 2003; Strang and Soule, 1998; Teo et al., 2007; Thong, 1999). Top management support for and commitment to HRD are critical to both adoption and retention of the standard
Top management support is considered critical in creating a climate that is supportive of HRD and that commits the necessary resources to the adoption and implementation of the standard. Garavan (1995) found that top management recognise that HRD can act as a strategic lever in implementing organisational strategy and achieving organisational objectives. Yap (1989), for example, has suggested that top management take a broader perspective and identify business opportunities that can be secured through the adoption of a NHRD standard. Visible top management support represents an important signal to both internal and external stakeholders concerning the value placed on investment in HRD. It is likely that the continued success of the NHRD standard within the organisation will require continued top management support. Successful adoption of the standard will require that those responsible for HRD work with a range of stakeholders to ensure effective implementation of the standard. Top management support will be significant in dealing with resistance to the standard and resolving conflicts that may arise.

Benders and Vermulen (2002) highlight the importance of having a strong champion with political power to deal with issues arising during adoption of practices. Daniel et al., (2012) suggest that management practices are adopted more quickly in organisations for political and dramaturgical reasons when champions are present. In relation to IIP, the need for a workplace champion is well documented (Alberga, 1997; Bell et al., 2001). Alberga (1997) found that 70% of organisations that had maintained the momentum for the standard had an internal champion who promoted it in the workplace. In larger organisations, the IIP activist tended to be an HR or training manager, whereas in smaller organisations, it was the managing director (Bell et al., 2001). Grace (2003) suggests that the uneven diffusion of performance pay within the subsidiaries of a MNC was in part due to the ‘championing’ HR manager leaving the company. The implementation of the initiative lost momentum as a result. Grover (1993) found that internal push, in the form of top management support and championship was the strongest predictor of ICT adoption. Champions are important in providing the initial idea and influencing the adoption decision. Champions of ICT systems tended to be senior executives. ICT adoption is strongly dependent on a high degree of sustained and active top management support.
Likewise, in the adoption of ISO 9001, Poksinska et al., (2002) found top management commitment was essential as certification takes considerable time and effort. Beck and Walgenbach (2003, 2005) found that organisations most likely to adopt ISO 9001 had both a strong top management influence and strong customer influence on quality control. Top management may be influenced by customer conceptions of rational models of organising and therefore adopt these. Thus consumer influence may be transmitted and amplified through top management in the adoption of ISO 9001. In the case of SA 8000 top management commitment greatly facilitated both adoption and implementation (Stigzelius and Mark-Herbert, 2009). Top management support is also a major determinant of successful TQM adoption (Martínez-Lorente et al., 2000). Klass et al., (2010) suggest that leaders within larger SMEs may be more aware of their dependence on their workforce, and as a result they may be more likely to adopt HRD programmes in response to environmental and competitive pressures. In comparison, leaders within small SMEs may perceive greater control across the organisation. These leaders are more likely to respond to environmental and competitive pressures by personal activity and direct control over operations rather than adopt human capital programmes. The following hypothesis is therefore suggested:

**Hypothesis 5.** The greater the presence of senior champions of NHRD standard adoption the more likely an organisation will adopt a NHRD standard.

### 2.8.2 External Factors Influencing the Adoption of a NHRD Standard

Competitive pressures require organisations to invest in HRD. The greater the drive to achieve sustainable competitive advantage, the more likely that an organisation will invest in bundles of HRD practices that make a difference in the competitive arena. There is considerable evidence from the literature that competitive pressures are important in the adoption of HR practices. Foley, Ngo and Loi (2012) found that organisations with a Strategic Human Resource Management orientation were more likely to adopt high performance work systems. Ordiz-Fuertes and Fernández-Sánchez (2003) found that organisations in very competitive environments were more likely to adopt high-involvement work practices. Kalleberg et al., (2006) found the adoption of job rotation and performance related pay were were significantly related to competitive
pressures suggesting mimesis. Spell and Blum (2005) suggest that organisations are more likely to adopt Employee Assistance Programmes when competitors have them, due to institutional pressures and the need for legitimacy. Regarding commitment-orientated HRM practices, firms are more likely to adopt where there is international competition and a relatively high degree of integration between HRM strategy and business strategy (Roche, 1999). Competitive pressures are an important factor in the adoption of alternative dispute resolution practices in Ireland. Intense competitive pressure means that organisational adaptation is a high priority. To be successful organisations must continually upgrade employee skill levels and product strategies. Organisational change can place a burden on employees, potentially leading to demotivation and disgruntlement. A significant number of organisations have adopted brainstorming and intensive communications in order to address this (Teague et al., 2011).

There is considerable evidence in the literature suggesting that competitive pressures are a significant factor influencing organisations to adopt standards such as ISO 9001 and ISO 14001. For example, external factors such as customer demand and public image are important in the adoption and diffusion of ISO 9001 (Boiral, 2011; Darnall and Edwards, 2006; Heras-Saizarbitoria et al., 2011; Pekovic, 2010). Qi et al., (2013) found that organisations facing more hostile competition were more likely to adopt ISO 9001 in order to gain competitive advantage. Corbett (2006) suggests that ISO 9001 diffused from Europe to other regions as European customers pressured their foreign suppliers to attain certification. In order to prevent the standard becoming an export barrier, many suppliers outside of Europe adopted ISO 9001. Therefore, competitive pressures exerted by customers through global supply chains are significant in partially explaining the widespread diffusion of ISO 9001. Competitive pressures are also an important factor in the decision to adopt ISO 14000 (Darnall, 2006; González-Benito and González-Benito, 2005; Jiang and Bansal, 2003; Welch et al., 2002). Competitive pressures are also important in ICT adoption (Grover; 1993; Grover and Goslar, 1993; Teo et al., 2003) The following hypothesis is therefore suggested:
**Hypothesis 6.** The greater the competitive pressures experienced by the firm the more likely it will adopt a NHRD standard.

The need to externally benchmark is an important reason for the adoption of a NHRD standard (Training and Evaluation Services, 2003). Indeed, one of the reasons for the development of NHRD standards in the first place was to create a benchmark for training and development practice. Drew (1997, p. 429) describes benchmarking as ‘a related set of activities which support and enhance strategies of imitation and/or collaboration’. Ollier-Malaterre et al., (2013) highlight that benchmarking contributes to normative and mimetic pressures. HR professional bodies such as the American Society for Training and Development in the USA and CIPD in the United Kingdom and Ireland benchmark the HRD practices of high-performance organisations and advise other organisations to benchmark theirs using these standards. Garavan et al., (2012) suggest that benchmarking can contribute to the emergence of a universal set of HRD practices as organisations imitate practices that are considered effective and confer legitimacy.

Benchmarking was significant in explaining the adoption of innovative HR practices related to an ageing workforce. “…… looking out at peers may be more enticing for organisations examining the relevance of innovative HR practices than looking up at regulations or down at the bottom line” (Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013, p. 1388). SüB and Kliener (2007) found benchmarking to be significant in explaining the adoption of diversity management practices in Germany. Kraus et al., (1999) suggest that benchmarking mediates the effects of a challenging external environment on the adoption of high involvement human HR practices. In order to attain institutional legitimacy and to remain competitive in a changing environment, adopters of high involvement HR practices are imitated using benchmarking. The intensely competitive nature of the medical devices industry in Ireland contributed to the adoption of e-HRM in the sector. Key competitors in the sector benchmark one another’s HR practices. In addition, many of the medical devices companies are clustered in the West of Ireland further amplifying mimetic forces (Burbach and Royle, 2014). Braunscheidel and Hamister (2011) found evidence of mimetic isomorphic pressures in the adoption of Six Sigma. The authors suggest that firms imitate successful Six Sigma adopters like
General Electric and Motorola in the hope of reaping performance benefits. However, Teague, Roche and Hann (2011) found no evidence of imitation of best practice exemplars in the diffusion of alternative dispute resolution practices in Ireland. Lonti and Verma (2003) suggest that the promotion of benchmarking by the Canadian government in the public sector encourages mimetic isomorphism.

When choosing which organisations to benchmark against, Still and Strang (2009) found two interorganisational relationships to be of particular importance. Firstly, executive migration, which occurs when a manager moves from one company to another, forms an important cohesive tie. Employees transfer organisational practices from one workplace to another when they change jobs. This migrant creates a link between two companies which others can cross thereby filling a ‘structural hole’. Secondly, the status of an organisation is an important consideration when identifying a benchmarking partner. High status organisations such as those appearing in the Fortune 100 were frequently benchmarked. Components of prestige can include financial success, past achievements, future expectations, size, awards achieved, press coverage, etc. However, prestige is greater than just a sum of its parts. When recruiting benchmarking partners, firms which were prestigious in a general sense were most influential. In the case of an organisation that is itself elite Still and Strang (2009) found that benchmarking partners selected were mostly outside its own industry. The following hypothesis is therefore suggested:

**Hypothesis 7.** The greater the extent of external benchmarking the more likely it will adopt a NHRD standard.

Much of the literature emphasises mimetic isomorphic pressures arising from other organisations in the adoption of organisational practices. Davis and Kalleberg (2006) found that organisations which pay a lot of attention to the training practices of other organisations are significantly more likely to adopt family friendly work practices suggesting mimetic isomorphism. Indeed, Greve (2009) reports that valuable innovations will diffuse slowly if organisations cannot observe easily which other organisations have adopted and what their experience has been. Johns (1993) suggests that imitation is driven by managerial interest in comparing the practices of their own
organisations with those of others. Dasborough and Sue-Chan (2002) report that in deciding to outsource recruitment activities, organisations imitate others in the sector that are perceived to be successful. However, Grover (1993) found weak support for competitor scanning as an explanatory variable in the adoption of ICT. Similarly, Delmas and Montiel (2008) found that competitor’s behaviour in the chemical sector does not influence the adoption of ISO 14001.

In the adoption of flexible benefit plans the role of other organisations is very significant. In Holland flexible benefit plans have diffused in clusters. Organisations that observe many similar organisations offering flexible benefit plans are more likely to adopt flexible benefit plans themselves. By comparison, organisations that see few flexible benefit plans adopters around them are less likely to adopt. This suggests mimetic effects (Hillebrink et al., 2008). Barringer and Milkovich (1998) also suggest that scanning competitors’ practices leads to institutional pressures to adopt in the case of Flexible benefit plans and self-managed work teams. Kang and Yanadori (2011) found that organisations were likely to adopt performance-related pay for legitimacy reasons when the practice had diffused widely in their industrial sector. The following hypothesis is therefore suggested:

**Hypothesis 8.** The greater the sensitivity of a firm to training and development practices in other firms the more likely it will adopt a NHRD standard.

Organisations are more likely to adopt new professional standards if they have close ties to the body setting the standards. Casile and Davis-Blake (2002, p191) state “….organisations that have a strong tie to a social actor that defines professional standards are likely to comply with new standards”. Adoption of ISO 9000 is higher in firms that have received public financial support. Institutional theory posits that adoption of organisational practices are are increasingly determined by expectations of external claimant groups. ISO 9000 signals conformity with beliefs regarding rational organisational practices to public funding bodies (Beck and Walgenbach, 2005). The following hypothesis is therefore suggested:
**Hypothesis 9.** The stronger an organisation’s links to a national training agency, the more likely it is to adopt a NHRD standard.

Organisations are influenced by the linkages they have in the wider environment. Oliver (1991, p. 171) argues that ‘highly interconnected environments provide relational channels through which institutional norms can be diffused.’ Professional association membership was significant in explaining the adoption of environmental management accounting, indicating normative pressures (Jalaludin et al., 2011). Professionalisation is widely cited as a source of normative isomorphic pressure in the institutional theory literature. Therefore the extent of the professionalisation of HRD specialists represents an important factor in explaining the adoption of a NHRD standard. Scott and Meyer (1994) have argued that the American Society for Training and Development acted as a significant stimulus in the HRD arena. They contend that organisations with employees who are members of professional HRD associations are more likely to develop structured training programmes and adopt HRD practices that are associated with professionalisation. Bell et al., (2001) suggest that having a senior manager on the local TEC board was an important driver in the organisational decision to adopt IIP. The relationships that an organisation has with institutional actors will influence the organisational practices it will adopt. In the context of the Irish NHRD standard, these institutional actors include employer associations, business associations, Chambers of Commerce, HR professional associations, industry sector bodies, international and national accreditation bodies, NHRD agencies etc. The following hypothesis is therefore suggested:

**Hypothesis 10.** The greater the number of relationships with institutional actors (industry bodies, accreditation bodies, professional associations, FÁS etc.) the more likely a firm will adopt a NHRD standard.

This section proposed a research model which incorporates institutional processes such as normative and mimetic isomorphism to explain the adoption of a NHRD standard. Following from the literature review undertaken and an examination of the research model, the hypotheses that have been derived were presented.
2.9 Conclusion
This chapter has examined the global trend towards increased standardisation of organisational practices. Management standards were defined and factors influencing their adoption and diffusion were considered. National and International HRM and HRD standards were evaluated. Particular attention was given to the adoption and diffusion of NHRD standards as this is the main focus of the thesis. Organisations adopt HR standards for both technical and non-technical reasons. The chapter evaluated various adoption rationales which influence organisations when selecting HR practices. This section assessed the rational, strategic choice, psychodynamic, political, dramaturgical (rhetorical) and cultural rationales. An in-depth analysis of the institutional rationale was undertaken as this is the main theoretical lens examining adoption and diffusion of the Irish NHRD standard.

Key themes have been identified which have contributed to the emergence of national and international HRM and HRD standards. There has been a global trend towards increased standardisation of organisational practices generally including the areas of HRM and HRD. Globalisation has to a large degree driven the need for international HR standards. Another reason for the emergence of HR standards is the need for legitimacy. HR standards can potentially confer external legitimacy on organisations. Accreditation makes that which is essentially internal more visible to the external environment. Furthermore, HR standards can offer organisations seeking to be viewed as an employer of choice a signalling tool to potential employees. The role of MNCs was identified as influential in the emergence and internationalisation of HR standards. MNCs have a requirement for a common set of HR practices that can be implemented across culturally diverse contexts. The increase in outsourcing across various functional areas has further accelerated this trend. The growth in outsourcing the HRM function has particularly driven the need for global HR standards.

Given that NHRD standards are the particular focus of this thesis, an evaluation of their effectiveness was then undertaken. The chapter concluded by proposing a research model to explain the adoption and diffusion of a NHRD standard. The research model incorporates institutional processes such as normative and mimetic isomorphism, to
explain adoption of a NHRD standard. Following from the literature review undertaken and an examination of the research model, the hypotheses that have been derived were presented.
Chapter 3  Study Methodology

3.1 Introduction
This chapter begins by outlining the study context. The research question and rationale is discussed. The chapter goes on to explain the theoretical and philosophical factors that influenced the research approach. The methodology employed in this study is discussed. A survey research method was used to investigate the relationships among, normative isomorphic influences, mimetic isomorphic influences and internal business factors. The extent of our knowledge of how these various sets of factors interact with each other is relatively poor. The research instrument development process is set out and each of the variables and scale items investigated in the study are described. A self-administered survey was used to collect data from organisations who had adopted ETP. An adapted version of this self-administered survey was used to collect data from organisations who had not adopted ETP. The fieldwork undertaken is described. Finally, the models used for measuring and examining the hypotheses and data analysis are presented.

3.2 The Study Context
National governments use a variety of strategies and policy measures to encourage organisations and individuals to invest in human capital. A NHRD standard is one such measure. NHRD standards have been introduced by their respective governments in order to improve economic competitiveness by investing in the workforce. To date three countries have developed NHRD standards, Ireland, the UK and Singapore. The UK was the first country to develop a NHRD standard called Investors in People (IIP) in 1991. Ireland launched Excellence Through People (ETP) in 1995 and Singapore launched People Developer in 1997. In addition, 19 countries have a licence agreement to operate the UK NHRD standard. There is a paucity of literature on the Irish and Singapore NHRD standards. Very little research has been conducted on ETP even though it is has been an important NHRD initiative in Ireland for the past 20 years. This study contributes to filling this research gap. In this study an empirical approach has been used to fill a research gap in the literature by examining and explaining the factors that influence the adoption of a NHRD standard. The research model developed for this
study highlights the role of a multiplicity of factors that explain the adoption of a NHRD standard.

Numerous studies have focused on the adoption and diffusion of organisational practices, spanning many disciplines and focusing on industry, organisational, and individual-level analyses. This study moves beyond the dominant view in the literature that organisations adopt practices for rational reasons. The institutional theory literature provides a valuable set of theoretical concepts that help conceptualize the adoption and diffusion of a NHRD standard. This study is the first to utilise institutional theory to explain the adoption of a NHRD standard. This study proposes a research model to explain adoption of ETP using institutional theory as the theoretical lens. The research model incorporates institutional processes such as normative and mimetic isomorphism, to explain adoption of a NHRD standard. The extent of our knowledge of how these various sets of factors interact with each other is relatively poor. NHRD standards are increasingly used by countries to raise the level of professionalisation of the HRD function and to ensure that organisations are actually attending to the development of HRD policies and practices that enhance the development and retention of HR and contribute to competitive advantage. Organisations that adopt and implement HRD standards are in a position to sustain superior performance. NHRD and training agencies seek widespread adoption of national standards. The next section discusses the research question and rationale.

3.2.1 Research Question and Rationale

The research question that this thesis answers is as follows: What are the internal and external pressures which explain the adoption or non-adoption of the Irish NHRD standard? Growth orientation, differentiation of business strategy, presence of a HR department, investment in training and development (T&D) and senior champions of ETP adoption are the internal factors considered influential. External factors that are considered influential are competitive pressures, external benchmarking, the influence of T&D practices of other firms, relationships with FAS and relationships with institutional actors.
3.4 Approaches to Research
The philosophical assumptions that researchers make impact on methodology choice. The research terms ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods are defined in Table 3.1. Ontological assumptions are concerned with the fundamental nature of the phenomena under investigation. Ontology has to do with views about the nature of reality. In essence is the ‘reality’ under investigation external to the person and therefore of an objective nature or is it a product of the person’s mind? Associated with ontology is epistemology which is the study of criteria by which we determine what constitutes warranted knowledge; in other words how to assess whether a claim is true or false (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). This study adopts a realist ontology which assumes an objective view of the social world. The associated epistemology is in essence a positivistic frame of reference. Accepting a particular epistemology typically leads to choosing methods that are characteristic of that perspective. The central tenet of positivism is that the social world exists externally and should be measured by objective methods (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Positivist epistemology is essentially based on the traditional approaches found in the natural sciences (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Table 3.2 outlines the philosophical assumptions of positivism.

Table 3.1 Ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ontology</th>
<th>Philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Epistemology</td>
<td>General set of assumptions about the best ways of inquiring into the nature of the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Combination of techniques used to enquire into a specific situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>Individual techniques for data collection, analysis, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Easterby-Smith et al., (2012, p. 18)
Table 3.2 Philosophical assumptions of positivism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumption</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>the observer must be independent from what is being observed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value-freedom</td>
<td>the choice of what to study, and how to study it, can be determined by objective criteria rather than by human beliefs and interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causality</td>
<td>the aim of the social sciences should be to identify causal explanations and fundamental laws that explain regularities in human behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis and deduction</td>
<td>science proceeds through a process of hypothesizing fundamental laws and then deducing what kinds of observations will demonstrate the truth or falsity of these hypotheses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operationalisation</td>
<td>concepts need to be operationalised in a way which enables facts to be measured quantitatively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reductionism</td>
<td>problems as a whole are better understood if they are reduced into the simplest possible elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalisation</td>
<td>in order to be able to generalise about regularities in human and social behaviour it is necessary to select samples of sufficient size, from which inferences may be drawn about the wider population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-sectional analysis</td>
<td>such regularities can most easily be identified by making comparisons of variations across samples.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Easterby-Smith et al., (2012, p. 23)

3.5 Methodological Approach

This research adopted a nomothetic approach which espouses the use of deductive logic. Table 3.3 highlights the characteristics of nomothetic methods compared to ideographic methods. Deduction involves the development of a conceptual and theoretical structure followed by the formulation of hypotheses which are then tested through empirical observation. Hypotheses are untested assertions which make predictions about the relationship between concepts. Therefore abstract concepts must be operationalised in order to test them empirically. This involves defining concepts by laying down rules for making observations in order to determine when an example of the concept has empirically occurred. Consistently using the same rules for a concept and standardising the recording of results should lead to a reliable measure of the concept. The outcome of operationalisation in this way is the ability to test hypotheses through comparison with the data collected (Gill and Johnson, 2010).
Table 3.3 A Comparison of nomothetic and ideographic research methods – a continuum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nomothetic methods emphasise</th>
<th>vs</th>
<th>Ideographic methods emphasise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Deductive testing of theory</td>
<td>vs</td>
<td>1 Inductive development of theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Explanation via analysis of causal relationships and explanation by covering-laws (called etic or <em>erklären</em>)</td>
<td>vs</td>
<td>2 Access to, and description of, subjective meaning systems and explanation of behaviour through understanding (called emic or <em>verstehen</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Generation and use of quantitative data</td>
<td>vs</td>
<td>3 Generation and use of qualitative data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Use of various controls, physical or statistical, so as to allow the rigorous testing of hypotheses</td>
<td>vs</td>
<td>4 Commitment to research in, or access to, everyday settings, whilst minimizing the disruption caused by the research to those being investigated so as to preserve the natural context in which the behaviour arises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Highly structured research methodology to ensure replicability by other scientists and as a result of 1, 2, 3 and 4</td>
<td>vs</td>
<td>5 Minimum structure to ensure 2, 3 and 4 (and partially as a result of 1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A methodological continuum

| Laboratory experiments, quasi Experiments, some action research, Surveys | Mixed methods, some action research, qualitative methods e.g. Surveys ethnography |

Source: Gill and Johnson (2010, p. 65)
A positivist approach involves analysing quantitative data using statistical techniques to produce quantifiable and possibly generalisable conclusions. Positivism emphasises the importance of studying social and organisational realities as scientifically as possible, mirroring the research approach of the natural sciences. Positivism focuses on collecting facts and then explaining the relationships among sets of facts. On the other hand an interpretivist approach assumes that it is not possible to achieve an objective understanding of the world. The assumptions of this approach are based on hermeneutics, which is the study of the theory and practice of interpretation. This views social context as an integral influence on human experience that is therefore less predictable and generalisable than the positivist approach. Therefore the focus is on interpreting human experience. Table 3.4 below summarises the differences between positivist and interpretivist principles (Anderson, 2013). Survey methodologies are associated with positivism as they seek patterns and causal relationships. The main strengths of positivism and quantitative methods are that they can provide wide coverage of a range of situations. They are also fast and economical. They can provide significant rationale for policy decisions particularly when statistics are aggregated from large samples. Surveys allow for analysability, generalizability and replicability. In terms of weaknesses, quantitative methods tend to be inflexible and artificial. They are not very effective in understanding processes or meaning that people attribute to actions. As quantitative data tend to represent a snapshot in time, it can be difficult for policy makers to infer future courses of action (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012).

For this study a detailed research model with derived hypotheses was developed prior to testing. Consistent with the nomothetic approach, a quantitative, cross-sectional survey research design was utilised to collect data. Cross-sectional surveys (also called inferential surveys) aim to establish relationships between variables. This involves isolating the factors involved and identifying the main dependent and independent variables (also called predictor variables). Cross-sectional surveys involve selecting different units in various contexts and examining how other factors measured at the same time vary across these units (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). The next section explains in detail the measures employed in this study. Much of the research on adoption and diffusion of managerial practices by organisations utilises a quantitative approach.
This research aims to develop generalisations to explain the factors which influence the adoption and diffusion of a NHRD standard.

**Table 3.4 Positivist principles and interpretivist principles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positivist principles</th>
<th>Interpretivist principles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Work from scientific principles</td>
<td>• Knowledge is constructed by human beings as they make sense of their environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Analyse phenomena in terms of variables</td>
<td>• Analyse phenomena in terms of issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Start with theory and test/refine theory with data</td>
<td>• Researchers cannot be wholly dispassionate – they are involved and will influence situations to various degrees (often unintentionally)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Data should be collected by ‘dispassionate’ researchers</td>
<td>• Flexibility may be required to allow the emphasis of the research to change as the process unfolds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A highly structured research process should be used</td>
<td>• Preference for qualitative data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Theories can be used to predict future relationships and behaviours</td>
<td>• Generating ‘rich’ data is as important (or more important) than the ability to generalise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Preference for quantitative data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Validity and reliability of data are important for formulating generalisable data conclusions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Anderson (2013, p. 56)

### 3.6 The Research Instrument

The research model developed over the course of this study highlights the role of a multiplicity of factors that explain the adoption and diffusion of a NHRD standard. This study analyses the internal business factors and external factors which explain the adoption or non-adoption of ETP. Growth orientation, differentiation of business strategy, presence of a HR department, investment in training and development (T&D)
and senior champions of ETP adoption are the internal factors considered influential. Competitive pressures, external benchmarking, the influence of T&D practices of other firms, relationships with FÁS, and relationships with institutional actors are the external factors considered important. The problem of empirically separating mimetic and normative effects is acknowledged in the literature. A key purpose of this study is to identify the variables that distinguish an organisation that adopts ETP from one that does not adopt ETP. Therefore, in order to understand adoption behaviour the research design included both ETP adopters and nonadopters. Two questionnaires were used in this study; one was used to survey ETP adopter companies and had 51 questions. An adapted version of this, which also had 51 questions, was used to survey organisations that had not adopted ETP. The dependent variable, decision to adopt ETP was measured as a dichotomy coded so that 1 = did adopt and 2 = did not adopt. The adopter questionnaire can be found in Appendix F and the non-adopter questionnaire can be found in Appendix G.

Both the adopter and non-adopter questionnaires consisted of five sections. Section A sought to collect information on the organisations adoption/non-adoption of ETP. Section B sought to collect information on the companies’ affiliations to standards bodies and other organisations, while Section C sought information specifically on the companies’ relationship with FÁS. Section D sought to collect information on the profile of the person with primary responsibility for implementing ETP while Section E sought to collect information on the profile of the company. Content validity was established through the extensive process of item selection and refinement in the development of the questionnaires. The items used for measuring the constructs were derived from operationalisations used in prior empirical studies where possible. Some items had to be adapted to suit the research context of ETP. Where pre-existing measures were not available, new measures were developed based on an extensive review of the literature. Where scales were used for both pre-existing measures and new measures responses were given on a four point Likert scale which ranged from one (representing strongly agree) to four (representing strongly disagree). A mid-range option representing ‘neither agree nor disagree’ was not included giving a forced choice selection. An open question where respondents could supply any additional comments was included at the end in
both questionnaires. Questionnaire items were also subjected to extensive pretesting. Both questionnaires were piloted and feedback obtained on wording, structure, sequencing and overall presentation. Subsequently, minor changes were made to improve wording and layout of both questionnaires. The reliability of the constructs was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha.

3.7 Measures

The next section discusses in detail the measures employed in this study beginning with the control variables. Then the measures utilised for the external factors and internal business factors are discussed. These measures can be found in table 3.1.

3.7.1 Control Variables

The next sections detail the control variables utilised. In the case of organisational size, organisation sector, organisation age, geographic proximity, organisation ownership, legal status of organisation, and unionisation Garavan and Heraty’s (2001) measures were used. Organisational size was an open question where organisations inserted the number of people they employed. Garavan and Heraty’s (2001) 18-item measure was used to categorise organisations by sector. Garavan and Heraty’s (2001) four-item scale was used to identify the organisation’s nationality. Sample items include: ‘Irish Owned’ and ‘US Owned’. In addition, Garavan and Heraty’s (2001) four-item scale was used to identify the legal status of the organisations. Sample items include: ‘Private Company’ and ‘State Body’. Garavan and Heraty’s (2001) dichotomous measure was used to establish if there were recognised trade unions in the organisation. Training and Evaluation Services’ (2003) measure was used to identify the age of the company. This was an open question which asked respondents to state the year the company started trading. A measure to identify geographically proximate companies was developed for this study. Respondents were asked an open question to identify the town/city in which the organisation is located.

3.7.2 External Factors and Adoption

Mimetic isomorphic pressures were measured by the extent to which competitive pressures and sensitivity to HRD practices in other firms contributed to adoption of ETP.
Competitive pressures are used as a measure of mimetic isomorphism in the institutional theory literature (e.g. Barringer and Milkovich, 1998; Basaglia et al., 2009; Hillebrand et al., 2011; Jalaludin et al., 2011; Kalleberg et al., 2006; Liu et al., 2010; Teo et al., 2003). Competitive pressure was measured by slightly modifying a measure by Tan (1997). The term ETP was inserted instead of Human Resource Information Systems. Tan (1997) used a five-point Likert scale and this study used a four-point scale with anchors ranging from 1-strongly agree to 4-strongly disagree. Scale item:

- ‘Competitors’ adoption of ETP places pressure on our organisation to adopt ETP’

Mimetic isomorphism is also measured by whether organisations pay attention to the practices of other organisations (e.g. Davis and Kalleberg, 2006; Zorn et al., 2011) Davis and Kalleberg (2006) measure mimetic isomorphism using a four-point Likert to identify the extent to which organisations are attuned to the HRD practices of other firms. In this study Davis and Kalleberg’s (2006) measure of mimetic isomorphism was changed from ‘To what extent does (organisation) pay attention to the training practices of other organisations’ to a dichotomous measure ascertaining the sensitivity of of a firm to the training and development practices of other firms.

Scale item:

- ‘Does the organisation pay attention to the HRD practices of other companies?’

Mimetic and normative isomorphic pressures were measured by identifying whether organisations engaged in external benchmarking. Ollier-Malaterre et al., (2013, p. 1375) state that “The benchmarking logic, stemming from institutional isomorphism (and more specifically from the mimetic and normative mechanisms of institutional isomorphism), focuses on how an organisation compares to other organisations in its field”. Benchmarking is frequently used as a measure of mimetic isomorphism in the institutional theory literature (e.g. Kauppi, 2013; Lonti and Verma, 2003; SüB and
Kliener, 2007; Tuttle and Dillard, 2007). In this study organisations were asked if they conducted formal benchmarking for which they had a dichotomous choice of yes or no.

Measures of normative isomorphic pressures were developed for this study through the identification of relationships that accredited organisations have with other actors. Specifically for this study, relationships with institutional actors were measured by identifying linkages with the state training agency, accreditation bodies, industry sector bodies and professional associations. Casile and Davis-Blake (2002, p191) state “….organisations that have a strong tie to a social actor that defines professional standards are likely to comply with new standards”. A number of measures for normative isomorphic pressures via relationships to the state training agency were developed for this study. Firstly, a dichotomous measure to ascertain whether organisations availed of FÁS services was utilised. A dichotomous measure to ascertain whether organisations received training grants from FÁS was also utilised. This was followed by a five-item scale to ascertain the amount of training grant received for respondents who answered yes.

Regarding linkages to accreditation bodies, organisations were asked if they had standards other than ETP using an 11-item scale. Respondents could tick as many items as applied. Sample items include:

- ISO series of standards           Please specify________________
- Six Sigma
- Occupational Health and Safety Management System - OHSAS 18001

In addition, two measures were used to ascertain normative isomorphism via linkages with professional organisations. A dichotomous yes/no question measured whether the organisation had ever received the IITD training awards. This was followed by a dichotomous yes/no question which measured whether the organisation had ever received the CIPD training awards. Professionalisation is widely cited as a source of normative isomorphic pressure in the institutional theory literature. Therefore the extent of the professionalisation of HRD specialists represents an important factor in explaining
the adoption of a NHRD standard. Scott and Meyer (1994) have argued that the American Society for Training and Development acted as a significant stimulus in the HRD arena. They contend that organisations with employees who are members of professional HRD associations are more likely to develop structured training programmes and adopt HRD practices that are associated with professionalisation. In this study the Training/HR specialist’s relationship with institutional actors such as professional associations is measured using a dichotomous question asking if they are a member of a professional association. This is followed by a four item scale asking them to identify the professional association of which they are a member. Sample items include the IITD and CIPD.

Measures of normative isomorphism via social cohesion were developed for this study through the identification of linkages that accredited organisations have with industry bodies. A nine-item scale was developed to measure relationships with industry bodies. Respondents could tick as many items as applied. Sample items include:

- ‘Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC)’
- ‘Industrial Development Authority (IDA)’
- ‘Enterprise Ireland’
- ‘Chamber of Commerce’

3.7.3 Internal Business Factors and Adoption

The literature review chapter highlighted that the following internal business factors are considered important in explaining the adoption of a NHRD standard: growth orientation, nature of strategic objectives, presence of HR department, investment in HRD and the presence of senior champions of NHRD standard adoption.

Growth orientation was measured using Cox and Spires’ (2002) measure. This was a 4-item scale where respondents were asked to tick one item only. Sample items include:

- ‘Stay the same size’
- ‘Grow rapidly’
Strategic objectives were operationalised by utilising Porter’s (1980) widely applied typology. According to this typology organisations compete by either becoming the lowest cost provider of a product or service (cost reduction strategy) or by differentiating themselves from competitors through product quality or innovation (differentiation strategy). For this study eight scale items from Dess and Davis’s (1984) 21 item instrument were modified slightly to measure these different business strategies. Responses for all the scale items were on a four-point scale with anchors ranging from 1-strongly agree to 4-strongly disagree. The scale reliability is 0.927. Sample items include:

- ‘To develop innovative product(s)/service(s)’
- ‘To provide products at prices below those of competitors’ prices’

Presence of a HR function was identified using Davis and Kalleberg (2006) dichotomous measure: ‘Does your company have a HR department?’ Investment in HRD was measured by using Garavan and Heraty’s (2001) six-item scale measuring the number of formal training days per year by category of employee. Responses for all the scale items were on a six-point scale with anchors ranging from None to >12. Sample item:

**Supervisors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>&lt;1 day</th>
<th>1–3 days</th>
<th>4–7 days</th>
<th>8–12 days</th>
<th>&gt;12 days</th>
<th>Total:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Garavan and Heraty’s (2001) measure of training expenditure as a percentage of payroll was also used. Responses measure were on a five-point scale with anchors ranging from <0.5% to >5%.

The following measure of senior champions of NHRD standard adoption was developed for this study:

- ‘Who was/were the principle decision maker(s) in adopting ETP?’

Respondents could tick as many items as applied.
Table 3.5: Hypotheses and measures table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Name</th>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Scale Item</th>
<th>Who Developed By</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisation size</td>
<td>How many people does your organisation employ?</td>
<td>How many people does your organisation employ?</td>
<td>Garavan and Heraty (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation sector</td>
<td>What is your organisation’s main business activity?</td>
<td>What is your organisation’s main business activity?</td>
<td>Garavan and Heraty (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing, Financial Service Food, Drink &amp; Tobacco,</td>
<td>Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing, Financial Service Food, Drink &amp; Tobacco,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic proximity</td>
<td>In what town/city is your company located?</td>
<td>In what town/city is your company located?</td>
<td>Developed for this study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership of organisation</td>
<td>In relation to ownership in which of the following categories does your company belong?</td>
<td>In relation to ownership in which of the following categories does your company belong?</td>
<td>Garavan and Heraty (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Irish Owned    US Owned    UK Owned    European Owned Other</td>
<td>Irish Owned    US Owned    UK Owned    European Owned Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal status of organisation</td>
<td>What is the legal status of your organisation?</td>
<td>Garavan and Heraty (2001)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private Company</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi-state</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State Body</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trust/Friendly Society/ Co-operative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unionisation</th>
<th>Do you have a recognised trade union(s) in your organisation?</th>
<th>Garavan and Heraty (2001)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**External Factors and Adoption**

**Mimetic Isomorphic Factors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competitive Pressures</th>
<th>The greater the competitive pressures experienced by the firm the more likely it will adopt a NHRD standard.</th>
<th>Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements (1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Disagree 4=Strongly Disagree)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Competitors’ adoption of ETP places pressure on our organisation to adopt ETP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tan (1997)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence of</th>
<th>The greater the sensitivity of a firm to</th>
<th>Does the organisation pay attention to the HRD practices of</th>
<th>Adapted from</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does the organisation pay attention to the HRD practices of</td>
<td>Adapted from</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
T&D practices training and development practices in other firms the more likely it will adopt a NHRD standard.
other companies?
Yes No

Mimetic and Normative Isomorphic Factors

External Benchmarking The greater the extent of external benchmarking the more likely it will adopt a NHRD standard.
Does the organisation use formal benchmarking to assess its performance?
Yes No

Normative Isomorphic Factors

Relationships with FÁS The stronger an organisation’s links to a national training agency, the more likely it is to adopt a NHRD standard.
Does your company avail of FÁS services?
Yes No
Which if any of the following FÁS services does your company avail of?
Recruitment Services
Small Firms Cluster Programme
Competency Development Programme
One Step up
Jobs Ireland
Disability Awareness Training Programme
EURES European Placement System
eCollege
Apprenticeship or Traineeship Programme

Developed for this study

[387x52]112
Other

Does your organisation receive training grants from FÁS?
Yes    No

How much do these training grants amount to annually?
< €5000  €5000-€9000  €10,000-€14,000
€15,000-€20,000   >€20,000

Relationships with institutional actors
The greater the number of relationships with institutional actors (industry bodies, accreditation bodies, professional associations, FÁS etc.) the more likely a firm will adopt a NHRD standard

Is your company involved with any of the following organisations?
Irish Business and Employers Confederation
Small Firms Association
Irish Small and Medium Enterprises
Industrial Development Authority
Enterprise Ireland
Industrial Sector Body
County Enterprise Board
Chamber of Commerce
Local Business Networks

Does your organisation have any of the following standards either currently or previously?
ISO series of standards    Please specify__________
EFQM/Business Excellence
Hygiene Mark
The Q Mark
FDA Approval
Investors in People
Six Sigma
Occupational Health and Safety Management System
- OHSAS 18001
Internal accreditation system
Best company to work for in Ireland
Industry Specific Standard
Other

Are you a member of a professional association?  
Yes  No

What professional association are you a member of and for how many years?

CIPD
IITD
Industry body
Other

Has your company ever received the IITD training awards?  
Yes  No

Has your company ever received the CIPD training awards?  
Yes  No
## Internal Business Factors and Adoption

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Growth orientation</th>
<th>The stronger the growth aspirations of a firm the more likely it will adopt and NHRD standard.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How would you describe the overall growth objectives of your organisation at the time of adopting ETP?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cox and Spires (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Get smaller Stay the same size Grow moderately Grow rapidly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Differentiation of business strategy</th>
<th>Firms that pursue a differentiation business strategy are more likely to adopt a NHRD standard.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How important are the following items in determining the business strategy of this company? (1=very important 4=not important)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dess and Davies (1984)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                                      | To improve the quality of product or service
|                                      | To develop innovative product(s)/service(s)
|                                      | To switch quickly between production of different product/service requirements
|                                      | To produce products/services for the higher-priced segments of the market
|                                      | To develop new techniques and methods to market our products
|                                      | To penetrate/develop new markets
|                                      | To provide products at prices below those of competitors’ prices
|                                      | Cost containment Other                                                                          |
Presence of HR department | Organisations with a HR department are more likely to adopt a NHRD standard.
---|---
Investment in T&D | The greater investment by a firm in training and development the more likely it will adopt a NHRD standard.

Does your company have a HR department? Yes No

Davis and Kalleberrg (2006)

How many days formal training per year does each employee receive?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Category</th>
<th>Average number of days formal training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semi skilled/unskilled</td>
<td>0 &lt;1 day 1-3 days 4-7 days 8-12 days &gt;12 days Total:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors</td>
<td>0 &lt;1 day 1-3 days 4-7 days 8-12 days &gt;12 days Total:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft/Technician</td>
<td>0 &lt;1 day 1-3 days 4-7 days 8-12 days &gt;12 days Total:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical/Admin</td>
<td>0 &lt;1 day 1-3 days 4-7 days 8-12 days &gt;12 days Total:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional/technical specialists</td>
<td>0 &lt;1 day 1-3 days 4-7 days 8-12 days &gt;12 days Total:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Management</td>
<td>0 &lt;1 day 1-3 days 4-7 days 8-12 days &gt;12 days Total:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Garavan and Heraty (2001)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Senior champions of NHRD standard adoption</th>
<th>The presence of both a workplace champion and top management support the more likely an organisation will adopt a NHRD standard.</th>
<th>As a percentage of payroll, how much does your company spend on training annually?</th>
<th>Who was/were the principle decision maker(s) in adopting ETP?</th>
<th>Developed for this study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;0.5%</td>
<td>0.5%-1%</td>
<td>&gt;1%-&lt;2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.8 The Study Sample

The term population refers to a whole set of entities whereas the term sample refers to a subset of those entities. Evidence gathered from a sample is used to make generalisations about the entire population (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). There were two target populations for this thesis. Firstly, ETP accredited organisations and secondly non-accredited organisations. The key informants were identified as the ETP coordinator among adopter organisations. In the case of nonadopter organisations the key informants were the HRD/HRM practitioner for larger firms and owner managers or line managers for smaller firms. When the field work was being conducted there were 593 ETP accredited companies. Given the relatively small size of this population it was decided to survey all accredited organisations. To achieve this, a detailed contact list of accredited organisations was obtained from the Excellence Through People Unit in FÁS, who also gave permission to conduct the research. Ethical approval was granted by the Kemmy Business School Research Ethics Committee to a student who utilised the questionnaires in completion of a Masters degree. This student surveyed both adopter and non adopter organisations in the Mid West region resulting in 33 usable responses from accredited organisations and 24 from non-accredited organisations.

3.9 Fieldwork

As described in the previous section all 593 ETP accredited companies were surveyed. Firstly, adopter organisations attending the annual ETP networking day organised by FÁS were surveyed. Secondly, adopter organisations not at the event were subsequently surveyed by email. The researcher distributed and collected completed questionnaires at the ETP networking day organised on the 21st October 2008. In order to avoid duplication, delegates were instructed to complete one questionnaire per organisation. Announcements were made at intervals throughout the day by FÁS personnel requesting that delegates complete and return questionnaires. By the end of the event 52 completed questionnaires were returned. Following the conference the remaining accredited organisations were surveyed. The ETP coordinators were telephoned in advance and the questionnaires were distributed by email. The cover email, which can be found in Appendix H, gave a short overview of the research purpose, assurance of confidentiality, and contact details should the respondent have any queries. Three reminder emails were
sent spaced two to three weeks apart. There were 145 usable responses from the email survey. Overall, 230 usable adopter questionnaires were returned giving a response rate of 39 per cent.

Once data collection from the adopter organisations was completed the non-adopter organisations were surveyed in mid 2009. Non-adopter organisations were selected at random from the telephone directory, taking care to match the profile of the non-adopter sample with the adopter population on dimensions such as ownership, size, industry sector, etc. Organisations were telephoned in advance of distributing the questionnaires to make them aware of the purpose of the research and to gain cooperation in completing the questionnaires. The organisations that agreed to participate were then emailed the non-adopter questionnaire. The cover email, which can be found in Appendix H, also gave a short overview of the research purpose, assurance of confidentiality, and contact details should the respondent have any queries. Three reminder emails were sent spaced two to three weeks apart. In total 590 non-adopter organisations were surveyed which was a similar size to the adopter group. 140 usable questionnaires were returned giving a response rate of 24 per cent. Overall, the adopter and non-adopter sample size was 1,183. There were 370 usable responses in total giving a response rate of 31 per cent. The respondents were not significantly different to the overall distribution of firms in Ireland. Given that the entire population of ETP adopter firms were surveyed and the high response rate attained, the respondents are considered representative of the population.

3.10 Data Analysis
This section describes the statistical analyses which were conducted on the data using the SPSS software package. The statistical analyses utilised include Pearson chi-square test, inter-correlation analysis and logistic regression. The appropriate statistical analysis to use to test for association between two variables depends on the measurement scale. Where two category variables are measured on nominal scales a chi-square test is used to test for association (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). A chi-square test was conducted to assess whether there was a relationship between the sample characteristics and the decision to adopt ETP.
An inter-correlation analysis can be used to test the strength of association between any pair of variables. The resulting correlation coefficient is a figure between 1 and -1. If the correlation coefficient is 0 there is no association between the variables. If the correlation coefficient is 1 there is a perfect positive association between the variables and if it is -1 there is a perfect negative correlation between the variables. The Pearson correlation coefficient tests the strength of the positive or negative correlation between the variables. The correlation coefficient needs to be below .05 in order to be considered statistically significant (Dewberry, 2004). An inter-correlation analysis was conducted on nineteen variables which were organisation size, organisation sector, organisation age, organisation location, legal status of organisation, organisation ownership, employee unionisation, extent of competitive pressures, external benchmarking, external training and development awards, impact of training and development practices of other firms, availed of FÁS services, secured FÁS training grants, relationship with institutional actors, extent of differentiation in business strategy, growth objectives of firm, presence of HR department, investment in training and development by firm, champions of training and development standard adoption.

Logistical regression analysis was also employed in this study. Logistic regression is used in order to predict a categorical dependent variable from two or more continuous or dichotomous predictor variables (Dewberry, 2004). Logistic regression employs binomial probability theory where there are only two values to predict (i.e. probability is 1 rather than 0). In this study the dependent variable is ETP adoption, coded so that 1 = did adopt and 2 = did not adopt. It is necessary to use logistic regression when the dependent variable is categorical and the independent variables are categorical or a mix of continuous and categorical. Logistic regression determines the effect of multiple independent variables presented simultaneously in order to predict membership of one or other of the dichotomous dependent variables. Logistic regression also provides knowledge of the relationships among the variables and their relative strength. Logistic regression produces a coefficient B, which measures each independent variable’s partial contribution to variations in the dependent variable. The Wald statistic summarises the strength among variables. The Exp(B) value indicates the increase in odds if there is a one unit increase in a selected variable when other variables are controlled. The goal of
logistic regression is to predict membership of a particular category using the most parsimonious model (i.e. equation). Cases that belong to a particular category will have a very high calculated probability that they will be assigned to that category, e.g. adopter or non-adopter. This also allows new cases to be classified with a reasonably high level of accuracy (Burns and Burns, 2008).

Logistic regression analysis was utilised because it provides a detailed description about the relationships between the dependent and independent variables. In this study a logistic regression was performed to ascertain the effects of control variables, external variables and internal business variables on the likelihood that ETP was adopted. A total of eighteen factors were entered in the logistic regression. Firstly, seven control variables were entered which were organisation size, organisation sector, age, geographic proximity, ownership, legal status, unionisation. Secondly, six external variables were entered which were extent of competitive pressure to adopt, external benchmarking by firm, training and development practices in other firms, availing of FÁS services, FÁS grant support, relationships with institutional actors. Thirdly, five internal business variables were entered which were growth orientation, differentiation of business strategy, presence of HR department, investment of training and development activities and senior champions of training and development standard adoption.

3.11 Conclusion
This chapter has outlined the study context. The research question and rationale was discussed. The chapter explained the theoretical and philosophical factors that influenced the research approach. The methodology employed in this study was discussed. A survey research method was used to investigate the relationships among, normative isomorphic influences, mimetic isomorphic influences and internal business factors. The research instrument development process was set out, and each of the variables and scale items investigated in the study were described. A self-administered survey was used to collect data from organisations which had adopted ETP. An adapted version of this self-administered survey was used to collect data from organisations which had not adopted ETP. The fieldwork undertaken was described. Finally, the
models used for measuring and examining the hypotheses and data analysis were presented.
Chapter 4  Findings

4.1 Introduction
This chapter sets out the results of the statistical analyses which were conducted on the data using the SPSS software package. The statistical analyses utilised include Pearson chi-square test, inter-correlation analysis and logistic regression. The chapter begins by examining the sample characteristic followed by the inter-correlation analysis. The logistic regression is then examined. Finally the level of support for each of the hypotheses is reported.

4.2 Sample Characteristics
Table 4.1 illustrates the sample characteristics. Overall, there were 370 respondents. Of these 62.1% (n=230) had adopted ETP and 37.8% (n=140) had not adopted ETP. In relation to ownership 68.3% were Irish owned followed by 11.6% in US ownership and 9.1% were UK- or European-owned. Regarding legal status, the vast majority at 67.2% were in the private sector, 10.2% were state bodies 5.1% were a Trust/Friendly Society/Co-operative and 4.5% were semi-state bodies. A significant majority of 62.4% of respondents had an HR department. Regarding size, organisations with <100 employees were the most prevalent with 46.7% of respondents falling into this category, 15.4% had over 1000 employees, a further 14.8% had 201–500 employees, 10.8% had 101–200 employees and the remaining 8.1% had 501–100 employees. A training spend of 2–4% of payroll was the most commonly cited with 34% of respondents falling into this category, 19.1% had a training spend of 1–2%, 15.4% had a training spend of >5%, 11.8% had a training spend of 0.5–1% and finally, 9.7% had a training spend of <0.5%. Regarding business activity 27.2% were in consulting, 14.3% were in the public sector and 9.1% were in financial services and manufacturing respectively. Overall 34.8% were located in Dublin, 16.7% were in the Mid-West, 14% were in the South-West and 13.2% were in the South-East. In relation to growth objectives, 60.2% intended to grow moderately, a further 12.7% wished to grow rapidly, 16.2% wanted to stay the same and only 2.9% intended to get smaller. A considerable majority of 60.5% engaged in formal benchmarking. A small minority had received HR awards with 9.7% being recipients of
IITD awards and 7.2% recipients of CIPD awards. A sizable majority of 60.5% availed of FÁS services and a further 60% were in receipt of FÁS training grants.

A Pearson chi-square test was undertaken to assess if there was a relationship between the sample characteristics and the decision to adopt ETP. As can be seen from Table 4.1, the Pearson chi-square value is significant in the adoption of ETP for training spend (Significance = 0.000), growth objectives (Significance = 0.024), location (Significance = 0.000), business activity (Significance = 0.001), formal benchmarking (Significance = 0.013). It is of note that relationships with FÁS are important with the Pearson chi-square value statistically very significant for both availing of FÁS services (Significance = 0.000), and receipt of FÁS training grant (Significance = 0.000). Interestingly, the Pearson chi-square value is significant for IITD awards (Significance = 0.004) but not CIPD awards (Significance = 0.859). The Pearson chi-square value is also not significant for number of employees (Significance = 0.231), presence of an HR department (Significance = 0.879), Ownership (Significance = 0.484) and legal status (0.423).

As can be seen from Table 4.1 there are some differences in the sample characteristics of adopter and non-adopter organisations. In relation to training spend adopter organisations spend more on training than non-adopters. Overall, the most frequently cited training spend was 2–4% of payroll with 25.1% of adopter organisations with this expenditure compared to only 8.9% of non-adopter organisations. In addition, at the higher end of the training spend scale which was >5% of payroll, 11.8% were adopter organisations compared to 3.5% which were non-adopter organisations. At the lower end of the training spend scale which was <5% 7.2% were non-adopters as compared to just 2.4% which were adopter organisations. Regarding growth objectives more adopter organisations at 44.7% wanted to grow either moderately or rapidly compared to 28% of non-adopter organisations. Regarding business activity, consulting was the most frequently cited by respondents at 27.2%, which broke down to 17.5% being adopter organisations and 9.7% being non-adopter organisations. The next most commonly cited business activity was the public sector at 14.3% which broke down to 10% being adopter organisations and 4.3% being non-adopter organisations.
Overall, 36 organisations which represented 9.7% of respondents had an IITD award, the vast majority of whom were adopter organisations at 8.1% while only 1.6% were non-adopter organisations. There was a slightly lower number of organisations in receipt of a CIPD award at 27, which represented 7.2% of respondents, comprising 4.5% of adopters and 2.7% of non-adopters. Overall, a substantial majority of organisations at 60.5% engaged in formal benchmarking which broke down to 35.9% being adopter organisations and 24.5% being non-adopter organisations. Similarly, a significant majority of organisations at 60.5% availed of FÁS services which comprised 38% adopter organisations and 22.4% of non-adopter organisations.

Table 4.1 Sample characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of employees</th>
<th>Adopter (N=230)</th>
<th>Non-adopter (N=140)</th>
<th>Total (N=370)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;100</td>
<td>219/59</td>
<td>136/36,4</td>
<td>355/95,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101–200</td>
<td>103 (27.8%)</td>
<td>70 (18.9%)</td>
<td>173 (46.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201–500</td>
<td>26 (7%)</td>
<td>14 (3.7%)</td>
<td>40 (10.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501–1000</td>
<td>41 (11%)</td>
<td>14 (3.7%)</td>
<td>55 (14.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000+</td>
<td>16 (4.3%)</td>
<td>14 (3.7%)</td>
<td>30 (8.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson chi-square = 5.604  Significance = 0.231

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training spend</th>
<th>Adopter (N=230)</th>
<th>Non-adopter (N=140)</th>
<th>Total (N=370)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;0.5%</td>
<td>208/90,7</td>
<td>126/33,8</td>
<td>334/90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.5–1%</td>
<td>9 (2.4%)</td>
<td>27 (7.2%)</td>
<td>36 (9.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1–2%</td>
<td>20 (5.4%)</td>
<td>24 (6.4%)</td>
<td>44 (11.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2–4%</td>
<td>42 (11.35%)</td>
<td>29 (7.8%)</td>
<td>71 (19.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;5%</td>
<td>93 (25.1%)</td>
<td>33 (8.9%)</td>
<td>126 (34%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson chi-square = 39.419  Significance = 0.000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Growth objectives</th>
<th>Adopter (N=230)</th>
<th>Non-adopter (N=140)</th>
<th>Total (N=370)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Get smaller</td>
<td>3 (0.8%)</td>
<td>8 (0.2)</td>
<td>11 (2.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth Strategy</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Overall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay the same</td>
<td>44 (11.8%)</td>
<td>16 (4.3%)</td>
<td>60 (16.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grow moderately</td>
<td>135 (36.4%)</td>
<td>88 (23.7%)</td>
<td>223 (60.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grow rapidly</td>
<td>31 (8.3%)</td>
<td>16 (4.3%)</td>
<td>47 (12.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Pearson chi-square = 9.431  Significance = 0.024*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presence of HR department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Pearson chi-square = 0.024  Significance = 0.879*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irish owned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US owned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK owned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European owned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Pearson chi-square = 3.459  Significance = 0.484*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legal status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust/Friendly Society/Co-operative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Pearson chi-square = 3.876  Significance = 0.423*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>225</th>
<th>138</th>
<th>363</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dublin</td>
<td>62 (16.7%)</td>
<td>67 (81.1%)</td>
<td>129 (34.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midlands</td>
<td>30 (8.1%)</td>
<td>3 (0.8%)</td>
<td>33 (8.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-West</td>
<td>37 (10%)</td>
<td>25 (6.7%)</td>
<td>62 (16.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Count (Row %)</td>
<td>Column 1 (Column %)</td>
<td>Column 2 (Column %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-East</td>
<td>13 (3.5%)</td>
<td>3 (0.8%)</td>
<td>16 (4.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-West</td>
<td>10 (2.7%)</td>
<td>1 (0.2%)</td>
<td>11 (2.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-East</td>
<td>22 (5.9%)</td>
<td>27 (7.2%)</td>
<td>49 (13.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-West</td>
<td>42 (11.3%)</td>
<td>10 (2.7%)</td>
<td>52 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>9 (2.4%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>9 (2.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (0.2%)</td>
<td>1 (0.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (0.2%)</td>
<td>1 (0.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson chi-square = 51.532  
Significance = 0.000

**Business activity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Count (Row %)</th>
<th>Column 1 (Column %)</th>
<th>Column 2 (Column %)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, forestry and fishing</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>5 (1.35%)</td>
<td>5 (1.35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food, drink and Tobacco</td>
<td>8 (2.1%)</td>
<td>12 (3.4%)</td>
<td>20 (5.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>6 (1.6%)</td>
<td>8 (2.1%)</td>
<td>14 (3.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing, publishing and paper products</td>
<td>3 (0.8%)</td>
<td>4 (1%)</td>
<td>7 (1.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronics</td>
<td>3 (0.8%)</td>
<td>3 (0.8%)</td>
<td>6 (1.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>4 (1%)</td>
<td>1 (0.2%)</td>
<td>5 (1.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale trade</td>
<td>2 (0.5%)</td>
<td>5 (1.3%)</td>
<td>7 (1.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail trade</td>
<td>10 (2.7%)</td>
<td>6 (1.6%)</td>
<td>16 (4.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel and tourism</td>
<td>4 (1%)</td>
<td>3 (0.8%)</td>
<td>7 (1.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitality</td>
<td>8 (2.1%)</td>
<td>6 (1.6%)</td>
<td>14 (3.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial services</td>
<td>17 (4.5%)</td>
<td>17 (4.5%)</td>
<td>34 (9.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>27 (7.2%)</td>
<td>7 (1.8%)</td>
<td>34 (9.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer services</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>3 (0.8%)</td>
<td>3 (0.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical and pharmaceutical</td>
<td>14 (3.7%)</td>
<td>6 (1.6%)</td>
<td>20 (5.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemicals</td>
<td>3 (0.8%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>3 (0.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (0.2%)</td>
<td>1 (0.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public sector</td>
<td>37 (10%)</td>
<td>16 (4.3%)</td>
<td>53 (14.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultancy</td>
<td>65 (17.5%)</td>
<td>36 (9.7%)</td>
<td>101 (27.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11 (2.9%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>11 (2.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ITD Awards</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>30 (8.1%)</td>
<td>6 (1.6%)</td>
<td>36 (9.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>186 (50.2%)</td>
<td>131 (35.4%)</td>
<td>317 (85.67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CIPD Awards</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>17 (4.5%)</td>
<td>10 (2.7%)</td>
<td>27 (7.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>199 (53.7%)</td>
<td>126 (34%)</td>
<td>325 (87.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formal benchmarking</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>133 (35.9%)</td>
<td>91 (24.5%)</td>
<td>224 (60.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>63 (17%)</td>
<td>74 (20%)</td>
<td>137 (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Avail of FÁS services</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>141 (38%)</td>
<td>83 (22.4%)</td>
<td>224 (60.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>61 (16.4%)</td>
<td>77 (20.8%)</td>
<td>138 (37.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FÁS training grant</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>141 (38%)</td>
<td>83 (22.4%)</td>
<td>224 (60.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>61 (16.4%)</td>
<td>77 (20.8%)</td>
<td>138 (37.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Pearson chi-square = 43.575, Significance = 0.001*

*Pearson chi-square = 8.277, Significance = 0.004*

*Pearson chi-square = 0.032, Significance = 0.859*

*Pearson chi-square = 6.141, Significance = 0.013*

*Pearson chi-square = 12.164, Significance = 0.000*

*Pearson chi-square = 22.023, Significance = 0.000*
4.3 Inter-correlation Analysis

Table 4.2 displays the means, standard deviations and correlations among the study variables. An inter-correlation analysis was conducted on nineteen variables which were organisation size, organisation sector, organisation age, organisation location, legal status of organisation, organisation ownership, employee unionisation, extent of competitive pressures, external benchmarking, external training and development awards, impact of training and development practices of other firms, availed of FÁS services, secured FÁS training grants, relationship with institutional actors, extent of differentiation in business strategy, growth objectives of firm, presence of HR department, investment in training and development by firm, senior champions of NHRD standard adoption. As can be seen from table 4.2 there is no violation of multicollinearity, since there is no correlation above 0.7 among the independent variables. In addition, there are a number of statistically significant correlations which will be discussed next.

There is a correlation of .31 between external benchmarking and relationships with institutional actors which is statistically significant at the 0.001 level. The implication of this is normative isomorphic effects. Normative isomorphism is also suggested by the correlation between external benchmarking and external training and development awards (r = .21, p < 0.01). Mimetic isomorphism is suggested by the correlation between external benchmarking and extent of competitive pressures and impact of training and development practices of other firms (r = .26, r = .14, respectively p < 0.01). External benchmarking is also positively correlated with investment in training and development by firm (r = .27, p < 0.01). This study shows that organisations that externally benchmark are more likely to have relationships with institutional actors, attained external training and development awards, experience competitive pressures, pay attention to the training and development practices of other firms and invest in training and development themselves.

There are a number of important correlations between extent of competitive pressures and other external factors. In particular there is a correlation of .34 at the 0.001 level between extent of competitive pressures and relationships with institutional actors. This
could suggest that in order to respond to competitive pressures organisations seek out relationships with institutional actors. External factors correlated with extent of competitive pressures that are statistically significant at the 0.01 level are external training and development awards, impact of training and development practices of other firms, availing of FÁS services, \( r = .14, r = .27, r = .21 \), respectively. There is a correlation between extent of competitive pressures and investment in training and development by firm \( r = .39, p < .001 \). This suggests that organisations invest in training and development in order to be competitive. There is a correlation of .46 between competitive pressures and presence of a HR department at the 0.001 level. Internal business factors that are correlated with extent of competitive pressures at the 0.01 level are growth objectives of the firm and champions of NHRD standard adoption \( r = .32, r = .21 \), respectively.

Rather unsurprisingly, presence of a HR department is correlated with organisation size, investment in training and development by the firm and impact of training and development practices of other firms \( r = .29, r = .31, r = .17 \), respectively \( p < .01 \). Organisations with a growth orientation are more likely to invest in training and development as demonstrated by the correlation of .31 at the 0.01 level. Attaining external awards is correlated with investment in training and development by the firm, impact of training and development practices of other firms and relationships with institutional actors \( r = .22, r = .11, r = .23 \), respectively \( p < .01 \). Securing FÁS training grants is correlated at the 0.01 level with organisational size, external training and development awards, impact of training and development practices of other firms, availing of FÁS services and investment in training and development by firm \( r = .29, r = .27, r = .21, r = .67 \), respectively. Availing of FÁS services is correlated at the 0.01 level with presence of a HR department and investment in training and development by the firm \( r = .14, r = .39 \) respectively. Organisation size is correlated at the 0.01 level with external benchmarking, external training and development awards, availing of FÁS services, relationships with institutional actors \( r = .19, r = 14, r = .21, r = .18 \), respectively. Legal status of the organisations, organisation ownership and employee unionisation were not correlated with any other variable.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Organisation Size</td>
<td>196.45</td>
<td>29.11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Organisation Sector</td>
<td>3.71*</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Organisation Age</td>
<td>14.67</td>
<td>7.21</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Organisation Location</td>
<td>2.61*</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Legal status of organisation</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Organisation ownership</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Employee unionisation</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Competitive pressures</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 External benchmarking</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>.19**</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 External T&amp;D awards</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>.14**</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.14**</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Impact of T&amp;D practices of other</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>.10*</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.10*</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.14**</td>
<td>.11**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>9th</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td>11th</td>
<td>12th</td>
<td>13th</td>
<td>14th</td>
<td>15th</td>
<td>16th</td>
<td>17th</td>
<td>18th</td>
<td>19th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Availed of FÁS services</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>.10**</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.1*</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>.17*</td>
<td>.17*</td>
<td>.24*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Secured FÁS training grants</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.13*</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.23*</td>
<td>.21*</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>.67**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Relationships with institutional actors</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.34**</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.23**</td>
<td>.22*</td>
<td>.24*</td>
<td>.17*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Extent of differentiation in business strategy</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.10*</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Growth objectives of firm</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Presence of HR department</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.46**</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>.17**</td>
<td>.14**</td>
<td>.16*</td>
<td>.12*</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Investment in T&amp;D by firm</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>.17*</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>.19**</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>.27*</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Champions of NHRD standard adoption</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.10*</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>.14*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level  
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level  
*  Correlation is significant at the 0.05
4.4 Hypothesis Testing

While the previous statistical tests are informative a logistic regression provides a detailed description about the relationships between the dependent and independent variables. As can be seen from table 4.3 a logistic regression was performed to ascertain the effects of control variables, external variables and internal business variables on the likelihood that ETP was adopted. A total of eighteen factors were entered in the logistic regression. Firstly, seven control variables were entered which were organisation size, organisation sector, age, geographic proximity, ownership, legal status and unionisation. Secondly, six external variables were entered which were extent of competitive pressure to adopt, external benchmarking by firm, influence of training and development practices in other firms, availing of FÁS services, FÁS grant support, relationships with institutional actors. Thirdly, five internal business variables were entered which were growth orientation, differentiation of business strategy, presence of HR department, investment of training and development activities and senior champions of training and development standard adoption.

The logistic regression analysis confirms that there are some notable differences between adopter and non adopter organisations. The model explained 63.1% (Nagelkerke $R^2$) of the variance in NHRD standard adoption. As can be seen from table 4.3 all of the external factors are significant in explaining the adoption of ETP. In particular external benchmarking by the firm is significant at the 0.01 level while the other external factors are significant at the 0.05 level. Regarding internal business factors three are significant at the 0.05 level. These are growth orientation, investment in training and development activities and senior champions of training and development standards adoption. Finally, three control variables were significant at the 0.05 level. These are organisation size, geographic proximity and ownership. The next section will report the results as they relate to the hypotheses beginning with the internal factors and following with the external factors.

Hypothesis 1 stated that the stronger the growth aspirations of a firm the more likely it will adopt a NHRD standard ($B = 0.421^*$, Significance = 0.004). Therefore hypothesis 1
Hypothesis 2 stated that firms that pursue a differentiation business strategy are more likely to adopt a NHRD standard ($B = 0.621$, Significance = ns). Therefore hypothesis 2 is rejected. Hypothesis 3 states that organisations with an HR department are more likely to adopt a NHRD standard ($B = 0.446$, Significance = ns). Therefore hypothesis 3 is rejected. Hypothesis 4 states that the greater investment by a firm in training and development the more likely it will adopt a NHRD standard. ($B = 0.197^*$, Significance = 0.000). Therefore hypothesis 4 is accepted. Hypothesis 5 states that the presence senior champions of NHRD standard adoption the more likely an organisation will adopt a NHRD standard ($B = 119^*$, Significance = 0.000). Therefore hypothesis 5 is accepted.

Hypothesis 6 states that the greater the competitive pressures experienced by the firm the more likely it will adopt a NHRD standard ($B = 0.197^*$, Significance = 0.000). Therefore hypothesis 6 is accepted. Hypothesis 7 states that the greater the extent of external benchmarking the more likely it will adopt a NHRD standard ($B = .279^{**}$ Significance = 0.000). Therefore hypothesis 6 is accepted. Hypothesis 8 states that the greater the sensitivity of a firm to training and development practices in other firms the more likely it will adopt a NHRD standard ($B = 0.171^*$, Significance = 0.000). Therefore hypothesis 8 is accepted. Hypothesis 9 stated that the stronger an organisation’s links to a national training agency, the more likely it is to adopt a NHRD standard. Two measures were used to test this which was whether respondents availed of FÁS services ($B = 0.199^*$, Significance = 0.000) and received FÁS grant support ($B = 0.278^*$, Significance = 0.000). There was a positive association with both of these measures and NHRD standard adoption. Therefore hypothesis 9 was accepted. Hypothesis 10 states that the greater the number of relationships with institutional actors (industry bodies, accreditation bodies, professional associations, FÁS etc.) the more likely a firm will adopt a NHRD standard ($B = 0.058^*$, Significance = 0.05). Therefore hypothesis 10 was accepted.

Overall regarding the internal factors there was support for hypotheses 1, 4 and 5. Therefore, organisations which are growth oriented, invest in training and development activities and have senior champions of NHRD standard adoption are more likely to
adopt ETP. There was no support for hypotheses 2 and 3. Therefore, pursuit of a differentiation strategy and presence of an HR department are not associated with adoption of ETP. All of the external factors were found to be significant in the adoption of a NHRD standard. These are competitive pressures, external benchmarking, the influence of T&D practices of other firms, relationships with FÁS, and relationships with institutional actors. Therefore hypotheses 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 were supported.

Table 4.3 Logistic Regression: Explaining the adoption of Excellence Through People

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Controls</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation size - logged</td>
<td>.119*</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation sector</td>
<td>.077</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>1.276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age logged</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>.157</td>
<td>1.206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic proximity</td>
<td>.122*</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>1.241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>.194*</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>0.991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal status</td>
<td>-.057</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.148</td>
<td>1.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unionisation</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>1.077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External Factors and Adoption</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extent of competitive pressures to adopt</td>
<td>.197*</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External benchmarking by firm</td>
<td>.279**</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and Development practices in other firms</td>
<td>.171*</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availing of FÁS services</td>
<td>.199*</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FÁS grant support</td>
<td>.278*</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with institutional actors</td>
<td>.058*</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>1.070</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Internal Business Factors and adoption

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>p-value 1</th>
<th>p-value 2</th>
<th>p-value 3</th>
<th>p-value 4</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p-value (t)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growth orientation</td>
<td>.421*</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.1721</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiation of business strategy</td>
<td>.446</td>
<td>.095</td>
<td>.562</td>
<td>.841</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of HR department</td>
<td>.621</td>
<td>.046</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>1.258</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment in T&amp;D activities</td>
<td>.197*</td>
<td>.046</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.951</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior champions of NHRD standard adoption</td>
<td>.119*</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.126</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Model $\chi^2 = 76.721$

Pseudo $R^2 = .631$

$n = 370$

Notes: The dependent variable in this analysis is NHRD standard adoption coded so that 1 = did adopt and 2 = did not adopt.

*<0.05; **<0.01; ***< 0.001

### 4.5 Conclusion

The chapter began by examining the sample characteristic followed by the intercorrelation analysis. The logistic regression was then examined. Finally the level of support for each of the hypotheses was reported. Overall regarding the internal factors here was support for hypotheses 1, 4 and 5. Therefore, organisations which are growth oriented, invest in training and development activities and have senior champions of NHRD standard adoption are more likely to adopt ETP. There was no support for hypotheses 2 and 3. Therefore, pursuit of a differentiation strategy and presence of an HR department are not associated with adoption of ETP. All of the external factors were found to be significant in the adoption of a NHRD standard. These are competitive pressures, external benchmarking, the influence of T&D practices of other firms, relationships with FÁS, and relationships with institutional actors. Therefore, hypotheses 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 were supported.
Chapter 5  Discussion Chapter

5.1 Introduction
This chapter begins by discussing the contribution of this study to existing knowledge. The key findings from the empirical investigation are presented. The levels of support for each of the hypotheses are discussed. The limitations of the study are presented with suggestions for addressing them. Areas for future research are proposed. Finally, implications of the study for practice are discussed.

5.2 Contribution of this Study
In this study an empirical approach has been used to fill a research gap in the literature by examining and explaining the factors that influence the adoption of a NHRD standard. This study adds to a currently sparse literature on the adoption of a NHRD standard. The research model developed over the course of this study highlights the role of a multiplicity of factors that explain the adoption of a NHRD standard. Numerous studies have focused on the adoption of organisational practices, spanning many disciplines and focusing on industry, organisational, and individual-level analyses. This study moves beyond the dominant view in the literature that organisations adopt practices for rational reasons. The institutional theory literature provides a valuable set of theoretical concepts that help conceptualize the adoption of a NHRD standard. There have been several calls in the literature to integrate institutional theory into HR research (Batt and Banerjee, 2012; Delbridge et al., 2011; Kuchinke, 2000; Paauwe, 2009). This study is the first to utilise institutional theory to explain the adoption of a NHRD standard. Factors suggested by institutional theory are relevant because they enhance the legitimacy of the practice and reduce perceived risks associated with adoption of a NHRD standard. This study provides empirical data that not only contributes to academic debate in terms of understanding a firm’s likelihood to adopt a NHRD standard but also has important implications for policy makers.

Policy makers view the adoption of organisational practices as important drivers of industrial and national competitiveness (Leseure et al., 2004). In fact the UK government was the first to develop a NHRD standard precisely because of such
concerns (Finegold and Soskice, 1988; National Economic Development Council, 1984). NHRD standards were introduced by their respective governments in order to improve economic competitiveness by investing in the workforce. The research model proposes that internal business factors and external factors influence the adoption and non adoption of a NHRD standard. The extent of our knowledge of how these various sets of factors interact with each other is relatively poor. NHRD standards are increasingly used by countries to raise the level of professionalisation of the HRD function and to ensure that organisations are actually attending to the development of HRD policies and practices that enhance the development and retention of HR and contribute to competitive advantage. Organisations that adopt and implement HRD standards are in a position to sustain superior performance. NHRD and training agencies seek widespread adoption of national standards. This is the first significant study of the Irish NHRD standard which has been in existence for 20 years.

Researching NHRD has considerable value in terms of informing national policy and contributing to national improvement (McLean, 2004). Interest in the potential of HRD to contribute to societal level outcomes is a very recent development (McGuire et al., 2012). This study can inform NHRD policy regarding how organisations respond to external HRD standards. This study contributes to the knowledge base of NHRD by offering empirical evidence of the internal business factors and external factors which explain the adoption and non-adoption of a NHRD standard. The central aim of NHRD standards is to assist organisations in the improvement of employee training and development, in order to achieve business goals. Providing NHRD standards diffuse widely and deliver at the levels of the individual and the organisation in the way they espouse, national socio-economic benefits could then ensue.

As highlighted in the literature review many standards have been developed encompassing an increasingly wide range of management areas. Anderson (2015, p. 2) states that “Standardisation represents a “new frontier” for HRD”. Despite their pervasiveness and importance, management standards are relatively understudied (Teerlack and King, 2006, Corbett and Yeung, 2008; Timmermans and Epstein, 2010). Exactly why and how these standards disseminate is relatively poorly understood.
Literature explaining adoption of management standards is scarce with a limited number of empirical studies (Delmas and Montes-Sancho, 2011; Gavronski et al., 2008; Marimon et al., 2006; Pekovic, 2010). ‘Once one considers that literally millions of organisations worldwide are directly impacted by such meta-standards, it is surprising that not more scholarly research exists on most of these standards’ (Corbett and Young, 2008, p. 1). Indeed, Timmermans and Epstein (2010, p. 70) state that ‘the study of standardisation remains an underappreciated framework for the analysis of many core aspects of modernity’. This study contributes to the standards literature by examining the area of HRD as it relates to standards. This study is important as it provides empirical evidence of the factors explaining the adoption and non-adoption of a HRD standard. This study provides a comprehensive review of NHRD, NHRM and IHRM standards. The analysis of these standards leading to a categorisation is a further contribution of this study to the HRD/HRM literature and the standards literature.

Mol and Birkinshaw (2009, p.1269) state that ‘The literature focusing on why firms introduce new management practices contains gaps’. They have called for more empirical research on the adoption of management practices. Bryson et al., (2007) have highlighted that the lack of attention paid to the adoption literature in the HR field has resulted in little understanding of why HR practices have spread unevenly and/or ubiquitously. This study draws from the extensive literature on the adoption of organisational practices. There have been calls in the literature to extend the objectives of HR research and provide greater explanation rather than descriptive or prescriptive accounts (Boxhall et al., 2007; Delbridge et al., 2011). For example, Boxhall et al., (2007, p.4) state ‘……that the fundamental mission of the academic management discipline of HRM is not to propagate perceptions of ‘best practice’ in ‘excellent companies’ but, first of all, to identify and explain what happens in practice. Analytical HRM privileges explanation over prescription’. This study is important as it provides empirical evidence of the factors explaining the adoption and non-adoption of a HRD standard. In addition adoption rationales are evaluated. For each rationale the key proposition is explained, the implication for adoption of HR practices analysed and limitations presented. This represents a further contribution to the literature and future research on adoption of HR practices.
HR research has tended to focus on the micro-level and utilise theoretical frameworks consistent with SHRM perspective of the organisation as an atomistic actor. Relatively little attention has been paid to the wider institutional environment (Delbridge et al., 2011). An extensive review of almost 1000 HR articles from leading US and UK management journals from 1996 to 2008 showed that theoretical development in HR research is relatively limited. Most studies utilised two broad theoretical paradigms. Firstly, micro-theories of organisational behaviour and individual motivation, affect or cognition. Secondly, strategic choice perspectives utilising human capital theories, the resource based view of the firm and contingency theory (Batt and Banerjee, 2012). Ardichvili (2015) states that most existing HRD studies draw from a narrow range of theories such as learning and development theory, social psychology or mainstream economics.

There have been many calls for HR research to engage with the wider context (Batt and Banerjee, 2012; Delbridge et al., 2011; Jackson and Schuler, 1995; McGuire et al., 2012; Paauwe, 2009; Subramony, 2006; Williamson and Cable, 2003; Woodall, 2006). McGuire et al., (2012, p. xxxviii) state that ‘There is a great need to understand HRD in its social context. We appear to have forgotten that HRD is a system of interdependent parts that interact to produce a set of outcomes. The social embeddedness of HRD has to a degree, been lost in the debates that surround the notion that HRD can be designed and implemented by individual firms independent of their context. There is a need to understand HRD in its wider context, including global, national social and employment contexts’. This study utilises institutional theory as the theoretical lens which is under used in HR research. This study contributes to academic debate by linking institutional pressures and internal business factors in order to provide a more a comprehensive understanding of the adoption of a NHRD standard. The study provides empirical evidence on the influence of normative and mimetic institutional pressures on the adoption and non-adoption of a NHRD standard.

5.3 Key Contributions

This study makes some important contributions as it offers empirical evidence that some relationships between adoption of a NHRD standard and independent variables do exist.
The research model and associated hypotheses presented in Chapter 2 advances the theoretical understandings of the internal and external pressures which explain the adoption of a NHRD standard. Normative and mimetic institutional pressures are important in explaining the adoption and non adoption of a NHRD standard. The logistic regression analysis confirms that there are some notable differences between adopter and non adopter organisations. The model explained 63.1% (Nagelkerke $R^2$) of the variance in NHRD standard adoption. All of the external factors entered in the logistic regression are significant in explaining the adoption of ETP. In particular external benchmarking by the firm is significant at the 0.01 level suggesting normative and mimetic pressures. The other external factors entered in the logistic regression are significant at the 0.05 level. These external factors included relationships with institutional actors and relationships with FAS which suggests normative isomorphic pressures. Extent of competitive pressures to adopt was also entered in the logistic regression and was significant at the 0.05 level suggesting mimetic isomorphic pressures. Regarding the internal factors identified in the research model, this study found that growth orientation, investment in training and development and the presence of senior champions were positively associated with adoption of a NHRD standard. Presence of a HR department and pursuit of a differentiation strategy were not found to be associated with the adoption of a NHRD standard. The results provide a new means of understanding organisations’ decisions regarding the adoption of a NHRD standard. In this respect, the findings are broadly consistent with other literature that has documented the influence of certain factors in the adoption of both HR practices and organisational standards. This section continues by discussing the hypotheses.

There was support for hypothesis 1 that the stronger the growth aspirations of a firm the more likely it will adopt a NHRD standard. In the standards literature, Terlaak and King (2006) found that ISO 9001 was more likely to be adopted by organisations that were growing. Klass et al., (2010) found that organisations with growth objectives were more likely to adopt human capital programmes. Organisational expansion necessitates a greater formalisation of HR systems, particularly where small firms are concerned. NHRD standards can potentially assist in this regard. In the UK companies that had already prioritised HRD and wished to grow were most likely to engage with IIP (Cox
and Spires, 2002; Centre for Enterprise, 2003). Thomson et al., (2001) suggest that IIP is a positive influence on management development particularly among small organisations seeking to grow. In Ireland the HRD manager of a call centre stated that:

We sought the training standard (Excellence Through People, Ireland) because things were quite loose. We had experienced high growth in our business; however, our systems have not grown with them. We needed proper documentation and best practice procedures. The process of accreditation and the work that went into it helped us to achieve those objectives.

(Garavan et al., 2012, p. 882)

Likewise IIP can be useful for firms undergoing rapid change and expansion. For example, a building firm which was growing rapidly, needed to formalise HR practices across the organisation to ensure consistency. The group training manager stated that:

The most useful element for us was the external audit, which questioned staff very cleverly to gain information on how we were treating them. We could not have gained this by any of us talking to them. [The] feedback report and presentation kicked us into action….I think having an external view from someone who was completely independent was the most beneficial aspect.

(Confederation of British Industry, 2008, p. 47)

There was no support for hypothesis 2 which was that firms that pursue a differentiation business strategy are more likely to adopt a NHRD standard. The competitive stance of the organisation and the competitiveness of the business will affect the adoption of a NHRD standard. Organisations that pursue a cost leadership strategy are less likely to invest in training and development and pursue accreditation of their HRD practices. Schuler and Jackson (1987) found that organisations that pursue a differentiation strategy are more likely to invest in training and development. Mabey and Finch-Lees (2008) report that organisations that pursue differentiation strategies are more likely to invest in a more comprehensive and deep set of HRD practices. Organisations that face environmental uncertainty and pursue a differentiation strategy have a greater need for
highly skilled, committed employees who can operate with discretion. Under these conditions organisations are more likely to adopt human capital programmes (Klass et al., 2010). The widespread adoption of TQM in Ireland may reflect the strategic reorientation from cost leadership to high value added competitive strategies (McCartney and Teague, 2004). Wang and Verma (2012) found a positive relationship between differentiation strategy and the adoption of some work-life balance practices such as employee assistance programmes and wellness programmes. The authors also found that a cost leadership business strategy is negatively related to the adoption of these practices. Likewise, Bikfalvi et al., (2014) found that organisations pursuing a differentiation strategy are more likely to adopt teamworking compared to cost leadership firms.

Pekovic (2010) suggests that service organisations adopt ISO 9001 for the external signalling effects of quality improvement it provides. Organisations pursuing a differentiation strategy are more likely to adopt high involvement work practices. However, adoption is not exclusively the preserve of organisations that base their competitive advantage on differentiation. Firms pursuing a cost leadership strategy may also adopt high involvement work practices in order to improve performance (Ordiz-Fuertes and Fernández-Sánchez, 2003). Grover (1993) found that generic strategy was not linked to adoption behaviour. Adopters and non-adopters of information and communication technology (ICT) pursued both cost leadership and differentiation strategies. Likewise this study found that generic strategy was not linked to adoption of a NHRD standard. A possible explanation is that a NHRD standard could provide organisations pursuing a cost leadership strategy that may have minimal HR resources with a cost effective means of implementing training and development activities.

There was no support for hypothesis 3 that organisations with an HR department are more likely to adopt a NHRD standard. However, much of the literature emphasises the importance of the presence of an HR department in the adoption of HR practices. Davis and Kalleberg (2006) state that organisations with a HR department are more likely to experience normative isomorphic pressures. Urbano and Yordanova (2008) found that the adoption of HRM practices was positively associated with the presence of an HR
The existence of an HR department is positively associated with the adoption of practices such as performance management, job descriptions, equal opportunities practices, and processes related to employee voice (Dobbin et al., 1993; Scott, 2014). Scott and Meyer (1994) found that organisations with HR departments are more likely to implement structured training programmes. A possible reason that there was no support for this hypothesis is that a high proportion of adopter respondents were small organisations and so would not have a HR department. There were 103 adopter respondents with less than 100 employees which represented 47% of adopter organisations. Indeed, small organisations may adopt ETP in order to assist them in managing and developing their human resources. Rasche (2010) suggested that in the case of SMEs who cannot afford departments for every management function, standards may be particularly useful in offering guidance on managing a particular area.

HR practitioners can have a pivotal role in the adoption of HPWPs due to their ability to influence a number of contextual factors. The innovativeness of HR practitioners and their perceptions of the relative importance of individual and contextual factors can influence the adoption of HPWPs. Critical differentiating factors between HPWP adoption and non-adoption are the networking skills of the HR practitioner, innovation conducive climates, the role of the HR function and organisational leadership. The critical individual factor influencing the adoption of HPWPs may be networking skills. HR practitioners with good networking and communication skills are able to develop productive relationships with key organisational constituents. This is essential to gain top management support and organisational consensus for the adoption of HR practices. HR practitioners that recognise the value of an organisational climate conducive to innovation are more likely to devote resources to creating and maintaining them. Organisations with these climates are more likely to be open to the adoption of new organisational practices such as HPWPs. HR practitioners seeking to foster legitimacy for the HR function are more likely to be involved in the adoption of HPWPs (Murphy and Southy, 2003).

There was very strong support for hypothesis 4 that the greater investment by a firm in training and development the more likely it will adopt a NHRD standard. This is broadly
consistent with the literature. Unsurprisingly, IIP accredited organisations tend to have higher investment in training compared to non-accredited organisations. In particular, both the incidence of training and training duration are higher in IIP adopter organisations compared to non-adopters. Despite this, 29% of respondents working in IIP accredited organisations did not receive any training in the 12 months prior to the 2004 Workplace Employment Relations Survey being conducted. However, the corresponding figure for non-IIP accredited organisations was considerably higher at 41% (Hoque, 2003; Hoque, 2008). The literature suggests that adopters of standards such as ISO 9001 invest in training and development (McAdam and McKeown, 1999; Quazi and Jacobs, 2004). Indeed lack of training is a barrier to ISO 9001 certification (Quazi and Padibjo, 1998). Likewise, adequate workforce training is necessary for successful adoption of TQM (Martínez-Lorente et al., 2000).

There was support for hypothesis 5 which was that the presence senior champions of NHRD standard adoption make it more likely an organisation will adopt a NHRD standard. This is broadly consistent with the literature which highlights the importance of having senior champions in the workplace for a practice to be adopted (e.g. Premkumar, 2003; Premkumar and Roberts, 1999; Rogers, 2003; Strang and Soule, 1998; Teo et al., 2007; Thong, 1999). Garavan (1995) found that top management recognise that HRD can act as a strategic lever in implementing organisational strategy and achieving organisational objectives. Top management support for and commitment to HRD are critical to both adoption and retention of a NHRD standard (Thomson et al., 2001; Training and Evaluation Services, 2003). The presence of senior champions is considered critical in creating a climate that is supportive of HRD and that commits the necessary resources to the adoption and implementation of the standard. Yap (1989), for example, has suggested that top management take a broader perspective and identify business opportunities that can be secured through the adoption of a NHRD standard. Visible top management support represents an important signal to both internal and external stakeholders concerning the value placed on investment in HRD. It is likely that the continued success of the NHRD standard within the organisation will require continued top management support. Successful adoption of the standard will require that those responsible for HRD work with a range of stakeholders to ensure effective
implementation of the standard. Top management support will be significant in dealing with resistance to the standard and resolving conflicts that may arise.

Benders and Vermeulen (2002) highlight the importance of having a strong champion with political power to deal with issues arising during adoption of practices. Daniel et al., (2012) suggest that management practices are adopted more quickly in organisations for political and dramaturgical reasons when champions are present. In relation to IIP, the need for a workplace champion is well documented (Alberga, 1997; Bell et al., 2001). Alberga (1997) found that 70% of organisations that had maintained the momentum for the standard had an internal champion who promoted it in the workplace. In larger organisations, the IIP activist tended to be an HR or training manager, whereas in smaller organisations, it was the managing director (Bell et al., 2001). Grace (2003) suggests that the uneven diffusion of performance pay within the subsidiaries of a MNC was in part due to the ‘championing’ HR manager leaving the company. The implementation of the initiative lost momentum as a result. Grover (1993) found that internal push, in the form of top management support and championship was the strongest predictor of ICT adoption. Champions are important in providing the initial idea and influencing the adoption decision. Champions of ICT systems tended to be senior executives. ICT adoption is strongly dependent on a high degree of sustained and active top management support.

Likewise, in the adoption of ISO 9001, Poksinska et al., (2002) found top management commitment was essential as certification takes considerable time and effort. Beck and Walgenbach (2003, 2005) found that organisations most likely to adopt ISO 9001 had both a strong top management influence and strong customer influence on quality control. Top management may be influenced by customer conceptions of rational models of organising and therefore adopt these. Thus consumer influence may be transmitted and amplified through top management in the adoption of ISO 9001. In the case of SA 8000 top management commitment greatly facilitated both adoption and implementation (Stigzelius and Mark-Herbert, 2009). Top management support is also a major determinant of successful TQM adoption (Martínez-Lorente et al., 2000).
There was strong support for hypothesis 6 that the greater the competitive pressures experienced by the firm the more likely it will adopt a NHRD standard. Competitive pressures require organisations to invest in HRD. The greater the drive to achieve sustainable competitive advantage, the more likely that an organisation will invest in bundles of HRD practices that make a difference in the competitive arena. There was strong support for hypothesis 6 that the greater the competitive pressures experienced by the firm the more likely it will adopt a NHRD standard. There is considerable evidence from the literature that competitive pressures are important in the adoption of HR practices. Foley et al., (2012) found that organisations with an SHRM orientation were more likely to adopt High Performance Work Systems. Ordiz-Fuertes and Fernández-Sánchez (2003) found that organisations in very competitive environments were more likely to adopt high-involvement work practices.

Kalleberg et al., (2006) found the adoption of job rotation and performance related pay were significantly related to competitive pressures suggesting mimesis. Spell and Blum (2005) suggest that organisations are more likely to adopt Employee Assistance Programmes when competitors have them due to institutional pressures and the need for legitimacy. Regarding commitment-orientated HRM practices firms are more likely to adopt where there is international competition and a relatively high degree of integration between HRM strategy and business strategy (Roche, 1999). Competitive pressures are an important factor in the adoption of alternative dispute resolution practices in Ireland. Intense competitive pressure means that organisational adaptation is a high priority. To be successful organisations must continually upgrade employee skill levels and product strategies. Organisational change can place a burden on employees, potentially leading to demotivation and disgruntlement. A significant number of organisations have adopted brainstorming and intensive communications in order to address this (Teague et al., 2011).

There is considerable evidence in the standards literature suggesting that competitive pressures are a significant factor influencing organisations to adopt standards such as ISO 9001 and ISO 14001. For example, external factors such as customer demand and public image are important in the adoption and diffusion of ISO 9001 (Boiral, 2012;
Corbett, 2006; Darnall and Edwards, 2006; Heras-Saizarbitoria et al., 2011; Pekovic, 2010). Qi et al., (2013) found that organisations facing more hostile competition were more likely to adopt ISO 9001. Competitive pressures are also an important factor in the decision to adopt ISO 14000 (Darnall, 2006; González-Benito and González-Benito, 2005; Jiang and Bansal, 2003; Welch et al., 2002). Competitive pressures are also important in ICT adoption (Grover, 1993; Grover and Goslar, 1993; Teo et al., 2003). As highlighted in the methodology chapter competitive pressures are frequently used as a measure of mimetic isomorphism in the institutional theory literature (e.g. Barringer and Milkovich, 1998; Basaglia et al., 2009; Hillebrand et al., 2011; Jalaludin et al., 2011; Kalleberg et al., 2006; Liu et al., 2010; Teo et al., 2003).

There was very strong support for hypothesis 7 which was that the greater the extent of benchmarking the more likely it will adopt ETP a NHRD standard. The need to externally benchmark is an important reason for the adoption of a NHRD standard (Training and Evaluation Services, 2003). Indeed, one of the reasons for the development of NHRD standards in the first place was to create a benchmark for training and development practice. HR professional bodies such as the ASTD in the United States of America and CIPD in the United Kingdom and Ireland benchmark the HRD practices of high-performance organisations and advise other organisations to benchmark theirs using these standards. Ollier-Malaterre et al., (2013) highlight that benchmarking contributes to normative and mimetic pressures. Garavan et al., (2012) suggest that benchmarking can contribute to the emergence of a universal set of HRD practices as organisations imitate practices that are considered effective and confer legitimacy.

Benchmarking was significant in explaining the adoption of innovative HR practices related to an ageing workforce. “…… looking out at peers may be more enticing for organisations examining the relevance of innovative HR practices than looking up at regulations or down at the bottom line” (Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013, p. 1388). SüB and Kliener (2007) found benchmarking to be significant in explaining the adoption of diversity management practices in Germany. Kraus et al., (1999) suggest that benchmarking mediates the effects of a challenging external environment on the
adoption of high involvement HR practices. In order to attain institutional legitimacy and to remain competitive in a changing environment, adopters of high involvement HR practices are imitated using benchmarking. The intensely competitive nature of the medical devices industry in Ireland contributed to the adoption of e-HRM in the sector. Key competitors in the sector benchmark one another’s HR practices. In addition, many of the medical devices companies are clustered in the West of Ireland further amplifying mimetic forces (Burbach and Royle, 2014). Braunscheidel and Hamister (2011) found evidence of mimetic isomorphic pressures in the adoption of Six Sigma. The authors suggest that firms imitate successful Six Sigma adopters like General Electric and Motorola in the hope of reaping performance benefits. However, Teague et al., (2011) found no evidence of imitation of best practice exemplars in the diffusion of alternative dispute resolution practices in Ireland. Lonti and Verma (2003) suggest that the promotion of benchmarking by the Canadian government in the public sector encourages mimetic isomorphism.

There was support for hypothesis 8 that the greater the sensitivity of a firm to training and development practices in other firms the more likely it will adopt a NHRD standard. This suggests mimetic isomorphism. Much of the literature emphasises mimetic isomorphic pressures arising from other organisations in the adoption of organisational practices. Davis and Kalleberg (2006) found that organisations which pay a lot of attention to the training practices of other organisations are significantly more likely to adopt family friendly work practices suggesting mimetic isomorphism. Johns (1993) suggests that imitation is driven by managerial interest in comparing the practices of their own organisations with those of others. Indeed, Greve reports that valuable innovations will diffuses slowly if organisations cannot observe easily which other organisations have adopted and what there experience has been. Dasborough and Sue-Chan (2002) report that in deciding to outsource recruitment activities, organisations imitate others in the sector that are perceived to be successful. However, Grover (1993) found weak support for competitor scanning as an explanatory variable in the adoption of ICT. Similarly, Delmas and Montiel (2008) found that competitor’s behaviour in the chemical sector does not influence the adoption of ISO 14001.
In the adoption of flexible benefit plans the role of other organisations is very significant. In Holland flexible benefit plans have diffused in clusters. Organisations that observe many similar organisations offering flexible benefit plans are more likely to adopt flexible benefit plans themselves. By comparison, organisations that see few flexible benefit plans adopters around them are less likely to adopt. This suggests mimetic effects (Hillebrink et al., 2008). Barringer and Milkovich (1998) also suggest that scanning competitors’ practices leads to institutional pressures to adopt in the case of flexible benefit plans and self-managed work teams. Kang and Yanadori (2011) found that organisations were likely to adopt performance-related pay for legitimacy reasons when the practice had diffused widely in their industrial sector.

There was support for hypothesis 9 which was that the stronger an organisation’s links to a national training agency, the more likely it is to adopt a NHRD standard. Two measures were used to test this which was whether respondents availed of FÁS services and received FÁS grant support. There was a positive association with both of these measures and NHRD standard adoption suggesting normative isomorphic pressures. Organisations are more likely to adopt new professional standards if they have close ties to the body setting the standards. Casile and Davis-Blake (2002, p191) state “….organisations that have a strong tie to a social actor that defines professional standards are likely to comply with new standards”. Adoption of ISO 9000 is higher in firms that have received public financial support. Institutional theory posits that adoption of organisational practices are are increasingly determined by expectations of external claimant groups. ISO 9000 signals conformity with beliefs regarding rational organisational practices to public funding bodies (Beck and Walgenbach, 2005).

Hypothesis 10 that the greater the number of relationships with institutional actors (industry bodies, accreditation bodies, professional associations, FÁS etc.) the more likely a firm will adopt a NHRD standard. This suggests normative isomorphic pressures. Organisations are influenced by the linkages they have in the wider environment. Oliver (1991, p. 171) argues that ‘highly interconnected environments provide relational channels through which institutional norms can be diffused.’ Professional association membership was significant in explaining the adoption of
environmental management accounting, indicating normative pressures (Jalaludin et al., 2011). Professionalisation is widely cited as a source of normative isomorphic pressure in the institutional theory literature. Therefore the extent of the professionalisation of HRD specialists represents an important factor in explaining the adoption of a NHRD standard. Scott and Meyer (1994) have argued that the American Society for Training and Development acted as a significant stimulus in the HRD arena. They contend that organisations with employees who are members of professional HRD associations are more likely to develop structured training programmes and adopt HRD practices that are associated with professionalisation. Bell et al., (2001) suggest that having a senior manager on the local TEC board was an important driver in the organisational decision to adopt IIP. The relationships that an organisation has with institutional actors will influence the organisational practices it will adopt. In the context of the Irish NHRD standard, these institutional actors include employer associations, business associations, Chambers of Commerce, HR professional associations, industry sector bodies, international and National accreditation bodies, NHRD agencies etc.

Table 5.1 Key findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>Previous Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis 1. The stronger the growth aspirations of a firm the more likely it will adopt a NHRD standard.</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
<td>Cox and Spires (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Centre for Enterprise (2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Terlaak and King (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Confederation of British Industry (2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Klass et al., (2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Garavan et al., (2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( B = 0.446, p = 0.562 )</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis 2. Firms that pursue a differentiation business strategy are more likely to adopt a NHRD standard.</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
<td>Schuler and Jackson (1987)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Grover (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>McCartney and Teague (2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis</td>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>B Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 3.          | Organisations with an HR department are more likely to adopt a NHRD standard. | B = 0.621, p = 0.071 | Rejected | Dobbin et al., (1993)  
Klass et al., (2010)  
Pekovic (2010)  
Wang and Verma (2012)  
Bikfalvi et al., (2014) |
| 4.          | The greater investment by a firm in training and development the more likely it will adopt a NHRD standard. | B = 0.197*, p = 0.000 | Accepted | Schuler and Jackson (1987)  
Grover (1993)  
Quazi and Padibjo (1998)  
McAdam and McKeown (1999)  
Hoque (2003)  
Quazi and Jacobs (2004)  
Mabey and Finch-Lees (2008)  
Klass et al., (2010)  
Hoque (2008) |
| 5.          | The greater the presence of senior champions of NHRD standard adoption the more likely an organisation will adopt a NHRD standard. | B = 1.19*, p = 0.000 | Accepted | Yap (1989)  
Grover (1993)  
Garavan (1995)  
Alberga et al., (1997)  
Strang and Soule (1998)  
Thong (1999)  
Premkumar and Roberts (1999)  
Bell et al., (2001)  
Thomson et al., (2001) |

* Significant at the 0.05 level.
Hypothesis 6. The greater the competitive pressures experienced by the firm the more likely it will adopt a NHRD standard.

\[ B = 0.197^*, p = 0.000 \]
| Hypothesis 7. The greater the extent of external benchmarking the more likely it will adopt a NHRD standard. | **Accepted** | Heras-Saizarbitoria et al., (2011)  
Teague et al., (2011)  
Boiral (2012)  
Foley et al., (2012)  
Qi et al., (2013)  
Burbach and Royle (2014). |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$B = .279^{**}, p = 0.000$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Hypothesis 8. The greater the sensitivity of a firm to training and development practices in other firms the more likely it will adopt a NHRD standard. | **Rejected** | Grover (1993)  
Johns (1993)  
Rosenzweig and Nohira (1994)  
Barringer and Milkovich (1998)  
Dasborough and Sue-Chan (2002)  
Davis and Kalleberg (2006)  
Som (2007)  
Brewster et al., (2008)  
Delmas and Montiel (2008)  
Hillebrink et al., (2008)  
Greve (2009)  
Kang and Yanadori (2011) |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$B = 0.171^*, p = 0.000$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Hypothesis 9. The stronger an organisation’s links to a national training agency, the more likely it is to | **Accepted** | Casile and Davis-Blake (2002)  
Beck and Walgenbach (2003) |
|---|---|---|
adopt a NHRD standard.

Availing of FÁS services: \( B = 0.199^*, p = 0.000 \)

FÁS grant support: \( B = 0.278^*, p = 0.000 \)

Hypothesis 10. The greater the number of relationships with institutional actors (industry bodies, accreditation bodies, professional associations, FÁS etc.) the more likely a firm will adopt a NHRD standard.

\( B = 0.058^*, p = 0.004 \)

*p < 0.05

**p < 0.01

This section has presented the key findings from the empirical investigation. The levels of support for each of the hypotheses were discussed. The next section goes on to discuss the implications for practice.

5.7 Study Limitations

Like all research, this study has some limitations which future research can build on. The first and perhaps the most important is the difficulty in establishing causal relationships between the dependent variable (adoption of a NHRD standard) and the independent variables. This limitation is widely acknowledged in the adoption literature where much of the empirical work involves going back through time to examine possible causes and relationships between variables. The issue of causality can be better addressed in longitudinal designs. Secondly, diffusion of a NHRD standard is constantly changing. This study is cross-sectional in nature, therefore the findings hold at a given
point in time but do not address the dynamic nature of adoption of a NHRD standard. As quantitative data tend to represent a snapshot in time, it can be difficult for policy makers to infer future courses of action. Again a longitudinal study design could address this issue. A longitudinal series of cases would be useful in examining how adoption and implementation of a NHRD standard is influenced over time. This would facilitate further exploration of the shifting internal and external pressures which affect adoption decisions.

Thirdly, a limitation of this study is that all data are collected from a single source. In the case of adopter organisations all information was provided by the NHRD co-ordinator, and in the case of non-adopter organisations all information was provided by the person with responsibility for training and development. The perspectives of other organisational stakeholders such as top management, line managers and employees were not measured. Given that all information was provided by the same category of respondent, the study may be subject to common method bias. Our understanding of the adoption of a NHRD standard would be enhanced by further research which examined the perspectives of multiple informants. This would provide a richer and more complete view of both adoption and implementation of a NHRD standard. Examining employees’ views and experiences of a NHRD standard would have particular value. Indeed the perspective of employees tends to be under researched in the adoption of management practices. Despite the limitations this study provides a useful research model to examine differences in the adoption of a NHRD standard. The next section makes recommendations for future research.

5.8 Recommendations for Future Research

This study has some important research implications. The research model proposes to illustrate a series of relations that may constitute a source for the generation of ideas that allows for developing future lines of research. The research model could be adapted to examine the adoption of many other HR practices and organisational standards. Also, while this study was conducted in an Irish context, there are potentially fruitful lines of research for other countries with distinct national institutions and business contexts. The present study could be replicated in other countries. There is considerable scope for
cross-country research which would take national, institutional, and cultural differences into consideration. Little research has been conducted on the internationalisation of IIP which has been adopted by 19 countries to date. A notable exception is Kidger et al. (2004) who examined how IIP was transferred from the UK to the Netherlands. Where HR standards are international, such as IIP, research on variations in adoption levels across countries would be useful. In addition, a comparative study of IIP, ETP and PD, which are all government initiated NHRD standards and share a common purpose, would be valuable.

A comparison of Ireland and Singapore would be particularly interesting. Frances Ruane (2015) who was director of the Economic and Social Research Institute made interesting observations about Ireland and Singapore. In the 1960s both Ireland and Singapore were almost unique in creating open economies to attract FDI. These economic policies were driven out of necessity. Both are small countries with few natural resources. Ireland was facing a decline in employment in agriculture and Singapore was facing a decline in jobs linked to British trade. This focus on FDI gave both countries early mover advantage in the pharmaceutical and ICT sectors which have grown more rapidly than most other sectors in the past 20 years. There have been many Irish government visits to Singapore since the late 1980s seeking to understand its success. A likely factor to have facilitated consistent and coherent policy development in Singapore is that the People’s Action Party has been in power since the foundation of the state in 1965. Singapore celebrated the 50th anniversary of its independence in 2015. This was being marked by a public discourse about the challenges facing Singapore over the next 50 years. This is in marked contrast to Ireland at a similar point in time. While economic policy changed dramatically around the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the state, there was no public discourse about values or the range of challenging issues that Singapore is currently engaging with (e.g. replacing the one-party state, inequality, immigration, etc.).

As Ireland progresses through the ‘decade of centenaries’, there is surely something in what Singapore is doing that we might usefully consider? Is it not time to consider our societal values – how we weigh up the common good relative to the individual’s rights – as we explore the long-run challenges we
face? As growth returns, we should have the confidence to explore the larger questions about the society and economy we are leaving for our children and grandchildren.

(Ruane, 2015, p.27)

Nolan and Garavan (2015) highlight that there is a lack of HRD research in different national and cultural contexts compounded by considerable variation in the subject matter investigated. Within the HRD literature international HRD is the most significant research gap (McGuire et al., 2012). As highlighted in the literature review chapter standards are attracting increasing attention particularly at a transnational level. Botzem and Dobusch (2012, p. 737) state that ‘Standards’ ability to structure interorganisational relations makes them particularly suitable to study rule-making at the transnational level, both empirically and conceptually’. Management standards have emerged to fill the transnational regulatory void. Therefore, NHRD standards particularly lend themselves to international and cross country comparative research. NHRD standards are particularly suited to conducting multi-level analysis. The extended case study is a valuable method for operationalising such research.

This study has focused on the data that seeks to explain the differences between NHRD adopter and non-adopter organisations. Further research could examine the differences in adoption rationales among NHRD adopter organisations. For example, the literature suggests differences in adoption rationales among early and later adopters. Organisations that are early adopters are more likely to adopt a NHRD standard for technical gains, whereas organisations that are late adopters are more likely to adopt a NHRD standard for legitimacy reasons. In addition, the literature suggests that different factors influence adoption of organisational initiatives among public and private sector organisations. Public sector organisations are more likely to adopt a NHRD standard for institutional rather than technical reasons. Private sector organisations are more likely to adopt a NHRD standard for technical rather than institutional reasons. Furthermore, it is desirable to conduct longitudinal studies with multiple informants that can deal with the issues of causality and common method bias.
More generally, the adoption literature would benefit from more empirical research examining a wider range of rationales. For example, very little research has been conducted using the political rationale. Micro-politics and the divergent interests within and between organisational actors is an under researched area (Koski and Järvensivu, 2010). There have been a number of calls in the literature for a more pluralistic perspective in HR research that acknowledges the political nature of the employment relationship (e.g. Delbridge et al., 2011; Janssens and Steyaert, 2009; McGuire et al., 2007). Paauwe (2009) also calls for a more balanced approach to HR research that pays greater attention to employee concerns. Nolan and Garavan (2015, p. 7) state that ‘in the main, studies do not address employees’ perceptions and responses to HR practices’. They highlight that HRD recipients are overlooked due to an overreliance on the managerial perspective.

Apart from some notable exceptions (Bell et al., 2001; Hoque et al., 2002), there is very little consideration of the political rationale in the adoption of a NHRD standard. Conducting case study research in particular offers the potential for rich empirical evidence of the political forces at play in the adoption and implementation of a NHRD standard within an organisation. An ethnographic approach of participant observation is a particularly appropriate research method when little is known about a phenomenon. This approach could offer insights as to how the implementation of standards may be contested. It would be interesting to analyze the role of different interests, the agency of workers and the informal organisation. Examining any resistance would also be interesting. However, gaining permission from research sites to conduct participant observation research would be challenging.

Heras-Saizarbitoria and Boiral (2013b) state that there is a clear knowledge gap regarding the internalisation of meta-standards. The authors have called for more empirical studies to examine the perceptions of various stakeholders in the adoption and internalisation of management standards. Therefore a particularly fruitful research area would be to conduct empirical research on the internalisation of a NHRD standard. A qualitative study would be valuable and could potentially lead to identifying differences in the implementation of a NHRD standard. An analysis of the factors that foster
internalisation rather than symbolic adoption would be beneficial. This would assist managers anticipate employees’ reactions to adoption of a NHRD standard. This type of research could add a lot of value by examining how and when different attitudes to a NHRD standard are formed. This in turn would assist HRD practitioners to plan and manage adoption more effectively.

Furthermore, the role of the dramaturgical rationale has received relatively little attention in the adoption of management practices. Some research utilizes neo-institutional theory to highlight how media and other sources of discourse exert normative pressure on managers regarding organisational practices. Management fashion theory in particular seeks to examine the influence of discourse on organisations. However, whether or how discourse is correlated with the adoption of organisational practices has received relatively little attention (Spell and Blum, 2005). Lawless et al., (2011) have called for greater use of discourse analysis within HRD. Despite the importance of language and communication to HRD practice, discourse analysis is seldom used by HRD practitioners in their daily work or in business settings more generally. Furthermore, HRD text books say very little about HRD from a discourse perspective. However, discourse analysis can challenge dominant HRD discourses and facilitate the emergence of a more critical HRD discourse. Investigating diverse stakeholder accounts of HRD could uncover a common account or mixed accounts. This approach can give voice to those who may be excluded or suppressed, such as employees (Lawless et al., 2011). Therefore, discourse analysis would be a valuable lens with which to examine the adoption of HRD practices.

Timmermans and Epstein (2010) have called for further empirical research on the consequences of standards in distinctive social domains. The field of HRD is well suited to this, given that NHRD standards have been in existence for decades. This type of research has considerable implications for practice, as it could offer a valuable contribution to the more recent debate on the development of HR standards. Timmermans and Epstein (2010) have also called for research into the creation and enforcement of standards. Again the relatively recent and considerable activity that has
been examined in this study renders the HR standards a particularly fruitful domain of research. The next section discussed implications for practice.

5.9 Implications for Practice
This study suggests implications for NHRD policy makers. We need to more fully understand organisational responses to normative and mimetic forces in the environment. An enhanced understanding will enable policy makers to be more informed concerning how organisations respond to external HRD standards. The development of an HRD standard represents a strategy to enable the diffusion of HRD practices among organisations, but its effectiveness is not fully understood. NHRD standards are prescriptive in nature; they adopt a ‘one size fits all’ approach and have difficulty accounting for organisational differences. This study highlights the potential limitations of such an approach. This line of reasoning suggests that a NHRD standard, to be effective, should adopt a best-fit rather than a best-practice approach. Standards need to be sensitive to institutional and cultural characteristics as well as the technical reasons that organisations may have for adopting such a standard.

Murphy and Garavan (2009) suggest that in the initial stage of adoption, organisations focus on whether a NHRD standard confers significant technical benefits. These benefits must be clearly articulated and should be relevant to organisations. National policy makers and national training agencies need to forge strong links with professional bodies, industry sectors, and general business bodies to ensure that they promote and champion the standard. Successful adoption and diffusion is premised on the standard being adopted by successful and prestigious organisations for it to diffuse mimetically. State agencies therefore need to target prestigious organisations in each sector in the initial stages of adoption. As the number of organisations achieving accreditation increases, the process of diffusion will occur through structural equivalence. Successful adoption and diffusion of such a NHRD standard is critical to its overall legitimacy. Therefore, it is important that HRD scholars and practitioners more fully understand how such standards add value to organisations, to countries, and to the discipline of HRD.
HRD practitioners have consistently struggled to demonstrate that what they do adds value to organisations. The challenge is to demonstrate that a NHRD standard can add financial value to the organisation in terms of the quality of employees it helps the organisation to recruit and retain, and the value of HR to the strategic success of the organisation. Senior management will be concerned that a NHRD standard adds to the reputation of the organisation. These are challenging issues for which there is no immediate solution. The design of HRD and HRM standards has considerable implications for practice. At the level of policy what is codified and certified matters, as this influences whether and how standards guide desired firm behaviours. This study highlights that diverse rationales are at play in the adoption of management practices. Daniel et al., (2012) highlight the importance of being able to identify these rationales in practice in order to assist managers’ understanding of the complexities in the adoption process. Managers can then plan and manage adoption more effectively.

5.10 Conclusion
This chapter has discussed the contribution of this study to existing knowledge. The key findings from the empirical investigation were presented. The levels of support for each of the hypotheses were discussed. This study makes some important contributions, as it offers empirical evidence that some relationships between adoption of a NHRD standard and independent variables do exist. This study found that the internal factors which explain adoption of a NHRD standard are firm growth orientation, investment in training and development and the presence of senior champions of NHRD adoption. The presence of an HR department and pursuit of a differentiation strategy were not found to be influential in the adoption of a NHRD standard. This study found that all of the external factors identified in the model were positively associated with the adoption of a NHRD standard. These are extent of competitive pressures, external benchmarking, the influence of T&D practices of other firms, relationships with FÁS, and relationships with institutional actors are the external factors which explain the adoption of ETP. The limitations of this study and recommendations for future research were discussed. The implications of the study for practice was also discussed.
References


Berry, C. and Grieves, J. (2003) To change the way we do things is more important than the certificate on the wall: Does Investors in People represent an effective intervention strategy for organisational learning?, *The Learning Organisation*, 10(5): 294–304.


National Standards Authority of Ireland (2012a) Annual Report 2012, Dublin: NSAI.


Appendices

Appendix A: The Emergence of HR Standards

A.1 Introduction
This appendix provides background information on the emergence of HR standards. HR standards have been adopted by a growing number of organisations worldwide and new standards continue to emerge. This section begins by briefly reviewing Business Excellence Models (BEMs). Then the NHRD standards ETP, IIP and PD are examined. The recent development of national HR standards in America, Australia/New Zealand, South Africa and the UK are outlined as well as the proposal for international ISO HR standards.

Total quality management (TQM) in particular has been an important influence on the development of management standards, many of which have a significant HR component. National governments have actively encouraged organisations to adopt TQM practices particularly by establishing Business Excellence Models. National BEMs tend to be the foundations that NHRD standards are built upon. BEMs value HR issues and have many features in common including employee oriented approaches, employee deployment and HR results (Zink, 2008). NHRD standards may be aligned with BEMs. As can be seen from Appendix B, the Singapore NHRD standard is a niche standard explicitly aligned to the Singapore Quality Award criteria for HRD and HRM. BEMs are widely considered to be an operational framework for TQM (Bou-Llusar et al., 2009; Dahlgaard-Park, 2011).

According to Hudson and Orviska (2013), when standards are being developed a single, generic standard which can potentially benefit all organisations usually emerges. These standards are reached by consensus and are often a compromise between interested parties. NHRD standards are an example of a consensus standard as they are developed by representatives from government, employers, trade unions and professional bodies. NHRD standards are comparable to TQM standards except they focus on human capital investment and the application of good HRD practices (Boselie, 2010). A common feature of standards including NHRD standards are regular revisions; IIP is reviewed
and revised every three to five years for example. The next section reviews NHRD standards beginning with ETP.

**A.2 Excellence Through People**

The Irish NHRD model is characterised as transitional with the dominant approach being coordination between social partners and an interventionist role by government. Policies are derived from a tripartite approach with the government co-ordinating the development of NHRD initiatives at national level. The central plank of economic policy has been to attract FDI to Ireland (Garavan et al., 2009). By the 1990s there was recognition that national training policy lacked cohesiveness and had not sufficiently supported industry needs. National training strategies tended to emphasise training the unemployed (Gunnigle et al., 2011). The Culliton Report was published in 1992 and stated that the provision for workplace training in Ireland was inadequate and recommended that FÁS (the national training agency) provide greater support for the employed. It also observed that the recession of the 1980s resulted in a skills gap and insufficient investment in HRD. The Irish Government launched a NHRD standard Excellence Through People (ETP) in 1995. The aim of ETP is to assist organisations in the development of their human resources in order to achieve business goals. The standard was designed to integrate with ISO 9000 and the people management element of Business Excellence Models. ETP is partially based on EFQM criteria, specifically in the areas of leadership, policy and strategy, people management and satisfaction. The national training agency FÁS, was responsible for the design and delivery of ETP.

The Irish Government published a White Paper on HRD in 1997 which emphasised the need for improved organisational HRD and the contribution quality awards can make in this regard. The paper highlighted that ETP is the Irish Government’s first attempt to accredit organisations that have achieved excellence in HRD. The aspiration to link ETP to other awards, so Irish companies can progress towards international awards also featured. Initially FÁS targeted companies with good HRD practices in order to establish the award, and as a result larger firms predominated. FÁS approached three organisations in each of the ten regions in which it operated, seventeen of which were interested in participating in the standard. The Irish government’s operational programme for
employment and human resources development 2000-2006 highlighted the need to increase the adoption of ETP. This programme identified ETP as having ‘the potential to act as a significant point of leverage’ in enhancing productivity and competitiveness in Irish companies (Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, 2000, p. 71). The report also stated that grants to companies would focus on achievement of recognised standards, setting up formal training functions where one does not exist and upgrading existing HRD functions.

During the Celtic Tiger years Ireland had high levels of economic growth and full employment. The effects of the global financial crisis were particularly severe in Ireland as excessive bank lending led to a property bubble. The subsequent recession and banking guarantee resulted in a crisis in the public finances which led to the EU/IMF bailout in 2010. At the height of the recession, unemployment levels reached 15%. The recession resulted in people seeking more education and training and postponement of entry to the labour market. The government also promoted education and training as a labour activation measure to assist people out of unemployment. As part of the austerity measures the government undertook reform of the public sector. FÁS was dissolved and new structures were put in place. FÁS was under the agesis of the Department for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and had a dual mandate. In addition to being the national training agency it also had responsibility for the unemployed. Responsibility for the unemployed was transferred to the Department of Social Protection which launched Intreo as a single point of contact for all employment services in 2012. The Further Education and Training Act, enacted in 2013, brought sweeping changes to the FET sector. Under this legislation FÁS was dissolved and SOLAS was established. SOLAS was tasked with developing and giving strategic direction to the further education and training sector. A key objective in the establishment of SOLAS was to strengthen the FET sector. In the past, planning for further education was a separate activity to planning for training. Greater integration and more cohesive planning is now enabled across the FET sector through SOLAS. Historically, further education was provided by the Vocational Educational Committees. Under the Education and Training Boards Act 2013, 16 ETBs were established to manage training delivery. These ETBs were formed from an amalgamation of the 33 existing VECs and 16 FÁS training centres. Both
SOLAS and the ETBs report to the Department of Education and Skills (SOLAS, 2014a; SOLAS, 2014b).

FÁS ceased administering ETP by 2011. On the 1st of January 2012 ETP was transferred from FÁS to the National Standards Authority of Ireland. The NSAI is responsible for a variety of other standards including ISO standards. Like FÁS the NSAI is under the aegis of the Department for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. ‘Excellence Through People is a strong driver towards the human resource management strengths that the economy will need if we are to gain long-term competitiveness and productivity advantages’ (National Standards Authority of Ireland, 2012b, p. 26). In February 2012 the Irish government launched the first annual action plan for jobs containing 280 measures to rebuild the economy and create employment. In these annual plans ETP was identified as a means of building competitive advantage by aligning workforce skills with enterprise needs. ETP was seen as a means of assisting companies develop best HR practice in order to improve talent development and retention. ETP was considered a particularly important tool in promoting and supporting ‘the adoption of structured up-skilling and development systems for existing staff’ (Department for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, 2013, p. 77).

Indeed, more generally, the government highlights the growing importance of standards to organisations and the economy. For example, the 2015 plan sets out to establish a working group to produce proposals aimed at organisations in Ireland highlighting the benefits of adopting standards to enhance management capability and international competitiveness. International management standards such as ISO 9001 were identified as a means of assisting indigenous firms to respond to competitive pressures. The plans highlighted the need for greater adoption of environmental standards such as ISO 14001, ISO 50001 (Energy management system) and the Green Hospitality Award. The NSAI was tasked with developing an Irish expert group for standards and best practice in Lean, Business Process Reengineering and Six Sigma. The intention is to link with corresponding international groups developing ISO 13053 and other standards in this area. Participation in the development of international technical standards in ICT was also prioritized. The agency was also given responsibility for increasing participation by
Irish organisations and researchers in relevant international standards expert groups. The plans seek to maximize Irish researchers’ input to emerging standards. Irish based MNCs are encouraged to participate in both national and international standards committees in order to build local capability and access advance market and technological intelligence (Department for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, 2012; Department for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, 2013; Department for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, 2014).

A.2.1 The Original Excellence Through People Standard
The original standard comprised of six criteria which are discussed below. The scoring system comprised of 1,000 points covering 47 questions (see Appendix B). An organisation interested in achieving the award attends a one-day briefing session where FÁS advisors explain the requirements of the standard. The organisation then carries out a self-assessment of its training and development plans. This allows the company to identify and correct any areas for improvement before applying for the award. When being audited by FÁS assessors, documentation is examined and employees are interviewed. The assessor’s recommendation is submitted to the approvals board, which is made up of members from the Irish Employers Congress (IBEC), the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the Department of Enterprise and Employment, who decide whether to award the Excellence Through People standard or not. A successful organisation is accredited for a year after which time it must undergo reassessment. This section goes on to describe the elements of the original standard in detail.

The first section of the standard requires organisations to have a business plan and clear objectives. This section has an allocation of 150 points. There is a necessity to take market, technological, financial, legislative and human resource requirements into account. A review mechanism which allows for performance against the plan to be evaluated is a stipulation. The categories of employees involved in the preparation of the plan and the review process is also considered. If organisations have other quality assurance systems in place, such as ISO 9000, points are awarded. The second section involves the preparation of organisational training plans and has the greatest weighting at 250 points. A written training policy which is approved by senior management and
circulated to staff is required. The organisation must have a written training plan linked
to the business plan, which covers all categories of employees. The training plan needs
to be based on the identification of training needs and standards of performance must be
agreed with employees. A review process for the training plan is required, as well as a
plan for performance appraisal. In addition, points are allocated for having a training co-
ordinator. The expenditure on training is also awarded points with FÁS recommending
three per cent or more of payroll costs.

The third section is a review of training which was allocated 120 points. Training must
be reviewed to assess the impact on job performance. Training assessment systems and
certification of training are examined under this section. Information on actions carried
out as a result of the review is required. The fourth section examined implementation of
training and is quite heavily weighted at 240 points. This involves written training
programmes with clearly defined training objectives linked to work performance.
Individual training objectives are expected to take place on an agreed basis with
employees. The extent to which the training objectives were achieved is reviewed. The
qualifications of trainers are taken into account. In addition, points are allocated for the
number of staff actually trained compared to targets in the training plan. The fifth
section reviews training and development records and is given a low weighting at 40
points. Points are allocated for maintenance of training and development records signed
by each employee and their supervisor. The final section is employee communication
and involvement, which is allocated 200 points. Evidence of employee communication
and involvement is required. Suitable mechanisms include staff meetings, notice boards,
suggestion schemes, newsletters and open-door management policies. Reddington
(2003) found the standard to be well regarded among organisations. While assessment
was considered comprehensive, concern was expressed about the high scores and that it
is hard to fail. This caused motivational challenges and made improvements difficult to
demonstrate in subsequent audits. ETP was revised in 2004 and expanded into a human
resource management standard which could be awarded at three levels: standard, gold
and platinum. The desire to cultivate large companies, particularly multinationals, was
significant in developing ETP into a full HRM standard. This chapter continues by
reviewing the 2004 revision of the ETP standard.
A.2.2 Revised Excellence Through People Standard 2004
ETP was revised in 2004 and expanded into a human resource management standard with eight criteria, discussed below, which were allocated 1,000 points. A detailed breakdown of the criteria that needed to be achieved at each of the three levels can be seen in Appendix C. The main changes recommended were that ETP needed to be more outcomes focused with a greater emphasis on business improvement. There needed to be a greater linkage between learning and development and business goals. In addition, improvements were required in the areas of evaluation and management and leadership. Furthermore a recruitment and selection criterion was introduced. A section on employee wellbeing was also introduced which incorporated greater reference to disability in the standard. The 2004 revision represented a significant shift in emphasis as the original standard focused almost solely on training and development. Another change in the 2004 revision was the introduction of differentiation within the standard. ETP could be awarded at three levels which were standard, gold and platinum. Organisations seeking further stretch could choose to meet extra evidence requirements beyond the core criteria. In order to attain gold accreditation 26 prescribed evidence requirements beyond the standard were needed. In the case of platinum accreditation a further 25 prescribed evidence requirements were needed beyond the gold award. This section goes on to describe the elements of the revised standard in detail.

The first criterion was business planning and quality improvement which was allocated 150 points. The original standard also had business planning as its first criterion and also awarded 150 points for this section. However there was a significant difference in the introduction of the levels and the allocation of points. The first 75 points were at the standard level, the next 35 were at gold level and the last 40 at platinum level. Another difference between the original standard and the revision was a more explicit emphasis on quality improvement. At the standard level organisations had to demonstrate that they operated a quality improvement programme. At the gold level organisations had to show that they had achieved another certification such as ISO 9001, EFQM, Quality Mark, FDA approval, Environmental Certification or other sector accreditation. At the platinum level organisations had to show how they used improvement tools such as the Balanced Score Card, Six Sigma, Total Quality Improvement, etc., to communicate and
motivate employees to focus on key business objectives. There was also a much greater emphasis on outcomes particularly at the platinum level, e.g. organisations were required to demonstrate how benchmarking led to sustained continuous improvement of business performance. The second criterion was effective communication and people involvement which was allocated 125 points. This required organisations to demonstrate that there was a communications policy and mechanisms in place which kept people informed and supported an open and inclusive culture. The third criterion is leadership and people management which was allocated 150 points. There was a significant emphasis on formal performance review in this section at all levels.

The fourth criterion is planning of learning and development which was allocated 100 points. Like the original standard this required organisations to have a learning and development plan directly linked to business objectives covering all categories of employees. Like the original standard, points are awarded for having a designated co-ordinator for staff learning. In addition, employees are expected to be able to describe the learning methods available to them and how they contribute to the learning needs analysis. The first 60 points are at standard level for evidence of these activities. There are an additional 20 points at gold level. These are awarded if the learning and development plan is amended in line with change, if the learning and development plan includes team development needs and management development, if the learning co-ordinator has a professional qualification, e.g. CIPD, Irish Management Institute, IITD, National University of Ireland, etc. There are a further 20 points at platinum level if individual development plans exist for staff, if employees can describe how the organisation plans their development outside of normal job related activities and for the use of skills/competence matrices. The fifth criterion is training and lifelong learning which is allocated 150 points. Points are allocated for having learning programmes in place for job categories and individuals, induction, implementation of learning activities identified in the learning and development plan and development of trainers. The sixth criterion is review of learning which is allocated 100 points. This section requires organisations to review and evaluate learning.
The seventh criterion is recruitment and selection which was allocated 100 points. As highlighted earlier the addition of this section was a significant departure from the original standard. This section requires organisations to have recruitment and selection policies and procedures in place in line with legislative requirements. People with recruitment and selection responsibilities need to be able to provide examples of development they have received to support them in this role. There needs to be accurate job descriptions, person specification and/or assessment criteria for all advertised positions. The last criterion is employee wellbeing which was allocated 125 points. This section covers health and safety in greater detail than the original standard. There is considerable emphasis on equality which is a difference from the original standard and reflects legislative changes.

**A.2.3 Excellence Through People 1000:2012**

When responsibility for ETP was transferred to the NSAI in 2012 the award was revised. This process involved FÁS, the CIPD, Engineers Ireland and the NSAI. The objective was to reflect international HR best practice. While ETP remained an HRM standard there was a greater focus on learning and development. The standard was aligned to a greater extent with the NSAI’s existing suite of standards and in particular with ISO processes. ETP is potentially an important tool to facilitate employee buy-in to change management which is an integral component of ISO 9001. Accredited organisations requested a more user friendly system while still providing sufficient stretch for all organisations. ETP reverted to a single level standard based on 1,000 points with fewer questions. The revised ETP standard comprises of six criteria, a detailed breakdown of which can be seen in Appendix D. There is greater specificity of the evidence required for each criterion. The differentiation was also dropped and the standard reverted back to a single level based on 1,000 points. However, many of the elements at gold and platinum levels have been retained in ETP 1000:2012. An annual audit was also introduced as part of a three year registration cycle. In 2012 Excellence Through People 1000:2012 was published. The full integration of ETP into the NSAI’s systems was finalised in 2013 (National Standards Authority of Ireland, 2012a; O’Byrne, 2011).
The first section is business planning and quality improvement which is allocated 170 points. Many of the requirements are quite similar to section one of the 2004 revision of the standard. However, ETP 1000:2012 has a much more strategic focus. A notable difference is the requirement that the human resources strategy be aligned with the business strategy. As well as describing the planning process employees are also expected to describe the mission, vision and values of the organisation. Continuous improvement continues to be central to the standard. The value of benchmarking and/or networking activities is highlighted in order to conduct comparative analysis which can lead to improved performance. The second section is effective communication and people engagement which is allocated 170 points. This is broadly similar to the 2004 standard with most standard, gold and platinum elements being incorporated into ETP 1000:2012.

The third section is leadership and people management, which is allocated 170 points. This focuses on formal performance reviews, learning needs analysis, learning methods, leadership development, employee development, employee motivation, employee recognition, succession and career development planning. The fourth section is planning of learning and development which is allocated 190 points. Criteria 4a states ‘The organisation has a learning and development policy which shows a direct link to the organisation’s objectives and its commitment to employee development’ (National Standards Authority of Ireland, 2012c, p. 8). This is the central tenet of a NHRD standard. This has remained constant through each of the revisions of not just ETP but also the UK and Singapore NHRD standards. The fifth section is evaluation of learning and development which is allocated 140 points. The final section is human resource systems and employee wellbeing which is allocated 160 points. Organisations need to demonstrate that there are appropriate policies and procedures in place for all aspects of the business such as recruitment and selection, health and safety, equal opportunities, etc. Most of the employee wellbeing section of the 2004 standard is retained. In addition organisations are required to have a corporate social responsibility policy. There is also a requirement for human resource information, systems and compliance with legislative obligations in this regard.
The NSAI and the CIPD launched the Excellence in People Development awards in 2014 to recognise HR initiatives. These awards are designed to complement the ETP accreditation scheme. Organisations must submit a project introduced within the last two years demonstrating a direct link to one or more of the core sections of ETP 1000:2012. These awards are aimed at ETP accredited organisations, firms considering adopting ETP and any organisation that can demonstrate achievement under one or more of ETP’s core sections. Winners are selected on their ability to demonstrate substantial performance improvements (National Standards Authority of Ireland, 2014).

A.2.4 Implementing ETP

Achieving ETP certification is a complex process. Organisational stakeholders need to be committed to implementing the standard. Top management support is particularly critical. Having a workplace champion to drive the implementation is also a key success factor. Considerable investment in resources is required. As can be seen from the previous section effective communication has been a significant component of each version of ETP. So, effective implementation will need significant investment in communication. All stakeholders in adopting organisations need to understand the requirements of the standard. Some organisations set up an ETP steering group. Focus groups may be formed as a means of eliciting employee views. Organisations then conduct a self-assessment comparing learning and development policies and practices currently in place against the standard. Organisations can then compile a gap analysis leading to actions in order to meet the requirements of the standard. There needs to be clear communication about the actions that need to be followed through on with specific timeframes. There also needs to be clarity about who is responsible for each action. An ETP assessor conducts an assessment which leads to a report and recommendations. This may highlight areas where the organisation has been less successful in meeting elements of the standard. It typically takes at least a year of intensive preparation to achieve accreditation.

This section placed ETP in the Irish NHRD context. The Irish NHRD standard ETP was launched in 1995 to improve organisational HRD and up-skill the workforce and increase national competitiveness. The Irish government’s operational programme for
employment and human resources development highlighted the role ETP could potentially play in enhancing industrial competitiveness. The report also emphasised the need to increase the adoption of ETP. The annual action plans for jobs which were devised to rebuild the economy and create employment also identified ETP as a means of building competitive advantage by aligning workforce skills with enterprise needs. This section also reviewed changes to the Irish NHRD landscape including the dissolution of FÁS, the setting up of new structures and the allocation of responsibilities. The ETP standard was explained in detail, outlining the criteria to achieve the original standard and its two revisions. Particular attention was drawn to changes in the standard when revised. The next section outlines the approaches to research in this thesis.

A.3 Investors in People
In 1981 the UK government published a White Paper which described a new training initiative based on ‘standards of a new kind’. In the UK the National Training Task Force was set up in 1988 following the publication of a government White paper entitled ‘Employment for the 1990s’. The National Training Task Force had two tasks, firstly to establish the Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) which were designed to provide a market led, employer driven approach to training. TECs were private companies with two thirds of the board comprised of senior managers from the local private sector. Their second task was to develop a strategy to encourage employers to invest in the skills of the workforce. This strategy took nine months to develop and resulted in the Investors in People (IIP) standard. The standard was based on an investigation of the HR practices of ‘best’ employers’ (Alberga et al., 1997; Bellet al., 2001). The UK government launched a NHRD standard, Investors in People in 1991 to improve industrial competitiveness. IIP was one of a number of initiatives developed in response to unfavourable comparisons during the 1980s between the performance of UK and other advanced industrial nations countries particularly Germany and Japan. Much of this comparative analysis suggested that greater investment in training and higher skills levels in these countries led to improved company performance and greater national competitiveness (Finegold and Soskice, 1998; National Economic Development Council, 1984; Prais and Steedman, 1986; Prais and Wagner, 1988; Steedman and Wagner; 1987).
IIP had four key components which were commitment, planning, action and evaluation. Organisations seeking to adopt the standard were assessed using 23 indicators. Assessment was based on the organisational processes implemented to comply with the standard. The evidence required was a paper based portfolio and interviews with a sample of employees and managers (McLuskey, 1999). The National Training Task Force had four years to complete its task and was disbanded in 1992. In 1993 a new body Investors in People UK (IIPUK), a private limited company was established to oversee the standard. IIPUK was partially funded by the Department for Education and Employment, and the Secretary of State appointed the board members (Bell et al., 2001). Reid et al., (2004, p. 41) suggest that ‘its positioning in the private sector could indicate an acceptance by government that employers do not welcome the idea of assessment by the public sector’. However, at local level the practical delivery of the standard to organisations was the responsibility of Training and Enterprise Councils in England and Wales, the Local Enterprise Companies (LECs) in Scotland and the Training and Employment Agency (T&EA) in Northern Ireland. The TECs, LECs and T&EAs were able to provide financial incentives to encourage organisations to adopt IIP. This financial assistance was possible because the TECs, LECs and T&EAs were able to build up funding reserves and cross-subsidise activities (Hoque et al., 2005). In 1997 the UK government launched a scheme to develop new approaches to increase the adoption of IIP by small firms (DTZ Pieda Consulting, 1999). The international expansion of IIP commenced in 1997. Australia was the first country to enter into a long term licencing agreement to run IIP in 1999. The Netherlands completed an IIP pilot in 1999 and entered into a ten year licence agreement in 2000 (Hoque et al., 2005).

A considerable number of changes were made to IIP when it was revised in 2000. The number of indicators was reduced from 23 to 12 and a requirement to demonstrate equality of opportunity in employee development was introduced. The language was simplified and paperwork reduced. The assessment criteria were refocused from processes to outcomes and the accreditation process was made more flexible to suit different types of organisation. Subjective measures on soft HRD matters like motivation were also incorporated. The rationale for the changes was to ensure that IIP was accessible to a wide variety of organisations particularly small companies who
might not have internal HR expertise. The standard also had to remain a challenge for accredited organisations (Gibb, 2008).

In 2001 the delivery mechanisms for IIP in the UK were overhauled resulting in considerable fragmentation. The TECs were dissolved and replaced by Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) for larger organisations, and the Small Business Service for SMEs (Hoque et al., 2002; Hoque et al., 2005). In 2002 the UK government through The Small Firms Initiative allocated £30m. to encourage smaller companies to adopt IIP (Centre for Enterprise, 2002). This initiative ran until 2006 and provided financial support to small firms (5–49 employees) worth £1,250 to conduct a skill needs analysis. This assisted small firms to develop a skills strategy linked to improved business performance which was required for IIP accreditation (Confederation of British Industry, 2008). In 2002 the IIP Profile framework was launched as a continuous improvement tool in order to provide more challenge for organisations. The Profile framework provided a more in-depth assessment tool comprising of four levels of attainment for each indicator. Organisations could choose to be assessed against the IIP standard (i.e. level 1) or against the IIP Profile framework. In 2002 IIPUK launched two standalone models, the Recruitment and Selection model and the Work Life Balance model. These were followed by a standalone Leadership and Management model in 2003 (Harrison, 2005).

The Department for Education and Skills published a White Paper in 2003 entitled ‘21st Century Skills: Realising our Potential’ which emphasised the role of IIP in up-skilling the workforce and improving productivity. In 2003 IIPUK signed a long term licence agreement with FÁS to offer IIP accreditation to organisations in the Republic of Ireland and a pilot project was run in 2001–2 (Investors in People, 2003). By 2004 IIP had been extensively revised with the number of components reduced from four to three and the number of indicators reduced from twelve to ten. The new components were plan, do and review (Investors in People, 2004). In 2009, IIP launched a new approach to working with the framework whereby organisations can choose to be accredited to the standard and beyond to IIP Bronze, IIP Silver and IIP Gold (Investors in People UK, 2009a). The Investors in People Health and Wellbeing Good Practice Award was
launched in 2010 to recognise organisations that are making a commitment to the health and wellbeing of their employees (Investors in People UK, 2010). The IIP standard has been adopted by over 15,000 organisations in more than 70 countries (Investors in People International, 2015b). Currently, the following 19 countries have a license agreement with Investors in People International who manage the IIP standard outside the UK: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bermuda, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Finland, Gibraltar, Greece, Kazakhstan, Hungary, Netherlands, New Zealand, Philippines, Romania, South Africa, Sweden, Turkey and The United Arab Emirates. Additionally, IIP can be adopted by organisations in countries that do not currently have a licensed partner. In these cases Investors in People International gives support and provides ‘global expertise delivered with a local focus’. In total IIP is delivered in 79 countries in 31 languages (Investors in People International, 2015a; Investors in People International 2015b).

IIP has undergone a number of revisions resulting in a more focused approach where firms can use IIP criteria in line with business priorities selected by the organisation (Stewart et al., 2013). Organisations have a number of options in how they use IIP. Organisations can simply get advice and guidance from IIPUK in which case they are described as ‘working with’ IIP. This may be a suitable approach for small firms, for example. The IIP framework is comprised of the three core components of plan, do and review which were broken down into ten indicators. The plan component required four strategic indicators and was followed by four action focused indicators to assist organisations implement plans. The review component had two indicators to evaluate results and to feed into the continuous improvement cycle. In order to be IIP accredited organisations must undergo assessment and meet 39 evidence requirements. Additionally, the framework provides for further stretch for organisations if they so choose. By meeting additional evidence requirements from the ‘Your Choice’ section of the framework, organisations can opt for further accreditations beyond the standard. There is no predetermined order of evidence requirements that organisations must follow, however, organisations are recommended to select evidence requirements most relevant to business goals. Bronze accreditation requires 26 evidence requirements, silver accreditation requires 76 evidence requirements and gold accreditation requires 126 evidence requirements (Investors in People UK, 2009b).
IIP was again revised and the sixth generation of the standard was launched in 2015. The core components of plan, do and review were replaced by leading, supporting and improving which are broken down into nine indicators as can be seen from table 2.5. The four levels of certification are retained but renamed accreditation, silver, gold and platinum. A performance model with four levels underpins the nine indicators which charts how organisations can continually improve and attain higher levels of certification. The four levels are Developed, Established, Advanced and High Performing. At the Developed level the principles and practices are in place and are understood by all. At the Established level employees are actively engaged in the consistent application of the principles and practices. At the Advanced level employees take ownership of the principles and practices and actively drive positive outcomes. At the High Performing level principles and practices are fully integrated with wider activities. In order to become IIP accredited, organisations must achieve all nine indicators at the Developed level. To become IIP Silver accredited a further seven out of nine indicators at the Established level must be attained. To become IIP Gold accredited organisations must attain all nine indicators at the Developed and Established levels and a further seven out of nine at the Advanced level. IIP Platinum accreditation requires all nine indicators at the Developed, Established and Advanced levels and seven of the nine indicators at the High Performing level. A significant change in the new standard is the inclusion of an online employee survey as part of the assessment. Criteria for employee sample size are based on organisational size and number of units (Investors in People UK, 2015). Additionally, there is an IIP Champions programme to recognise exemplar organisations that have fully integrated the framework. There is also an Ambassador programme recognising the individuals who championed and implemented IIP within the organisation (Investors in People UK, 2009a).

With regard to how IIPUK is funded, half comes from the Government with the remainder earned through commercial activities. The LSCs have responsibility for reaching adoption targets set by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills among organisations with 50 employees or more. While LSCs are responsible for marketing, the delivery of IIP is the responsibility of the Business Link network. The most significant difference between the TECs and LSCs in terms of their ability to
achieve IIP targets is that LSCs cannot provide financial subsidies to encourage organisations to adopt the standard (Hoque et al., 2005). By comparison the TECs were able to provide up to 100% subsidy to organisations involved in accreditation of IIP (Hoque et al., 2002). The Small Business Service is responsible for both marketing and delivery of IIP among small organisations. At government level overall responsibility for IIP lies with the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills; however the Small Business Service is part of the Department for Trade and Industry (Hoque et al., 2005).

A.3.1 The Internationalisation of Investors in People
The UK NHRD standard has been adopted by over 15,000 organisations in more than 70 countries (Investors in People International, 2015b). Hoque et al., (2005) state that the internationalisation of IIP has been driven by two factors. Firstly, MNCs who have accreditation for UK operations are seeking recognition for overseas sites. Secondly, national governments and training agencies adopt IIP in order to improve competitiveness and reap economic benefits. The Dutch government, for example, considered that investment in HRD in the workplace was essential to improving national competitiveness and adopted IIP to achieve this end (Kidger et al., 2004). Regarding the internationalisation of IIP, the UK government owns the standard and IIPUK is accountable for international strategy. The standard is managed internationally by an international development consortium. National governments and training agencies seeking to use IIP must first run a pilot where a number of organisations are taken through the accreditation process. Following the pilot, countries can enter a long term licensing agreement with IIPUK. The pilot also provides local case study material for marketing purposes (Hoque et al., 2005).

Kidger et al. (2004) argue that the internationalisation of the IIP standard highlights a willingness to learn from other countries and the universality of the contribution of training and development practices to organisational performance. Standards can be transferred to different countries; however, there is a requirement for modification to account for national, institutional, and cultural differences. The authors question whether IIP should become an internationally recognised HRD standard or be a template that
other countries could tailor to suit their own context. Hoque et al., (2005) suggest that the internationalisation of IIP could create a number of tensions. Exporting IIP could be regarded as giving up a source of competitive advantage given that its original purpose was to improve UK industrial competitiveness. The internationalisation could be jeopardized by IIPUK’s insistence that the standard is applicable regardless of contextual factors. Partner countries are not allowed to remove any element of the UK version to allow for cultural or socio-economic variations. Neither can the name Investors in People be translated into the local language. Initially, UK case studies were used in the Netherlands, but they were subsequently abandoned as they were found to be inappropriate in the Dutch context. However, partner countries are allowed to add to the standard. Additionally, some countries that have adopted IIP, like the Netherlands and Germany, have frameworks of training to which the UK could aspire. Indeed Boselie (2010) suggests that the lack of a good collective system for HRD in the UK caused major difficulties as employers were reluctant to invest in their employees. The government sought to address this through IIP.

This section reviewed the UK NHRD standard IIP which was launched in 1991 to improve industrial competitiveness. Since then IIP has been adopted by over 15,000 organisations in more than 70 countries. Currently, 19 countries have a license agreement with IIPUK. Additionally, IIP can be adopted by organisations in countries that do not have a licensed partner. The literature highlighted that the internationalisation of IIP has been driven by two factors. Firstly, MNCs who have accreditation for UK operations are seeking recognition for overseas sites. Secondly, national governments and training agencies adopt IIP in order to improve competitiveness and reap economic benefits. This section highlighted that the internationalisation of the IIP standard highlights a willingness to learn from other countries and the universality of the contribution of training and development practices to organisational performance. Standards can be transferred to different countries; however, there is a requirement for modification to account for national, institutional, and cultural differences.
A4 The People Developer Standard

Singapore has achieved an exceptional degree of integration in its National Vocational Educational and Training system. Where Singapore particularly differs from other countries is in its national policy framework which is strategic and takes a long-term developmental outlook. Singapore’s HRD agenda is constantly upgraded and refocused in line with economic development needs (Harrison and Kessels, 2004). As early as 1979 the Singapore government established the Skills Development Fund to encourage employers to invest in their workforce. The Singapore government also encourages organisations to adopt ISO 9000 and the Singapore Quality Award (SQA) (Quazi and Jacobs, 2004). The Productivity Standards Board in Singapore has the pivotal role of providing the infrastructure for QM similar to the Union of Japanese Scientists and Engineers and JSA in Japan. Since the beginning of the 1990s the Productivity Standards Board has introduced a number of TQM initiatives to improve quality and productivity. In addition Singaporean organisations adopt international quality standards such as ISO 9000 extensively (Yong and Wilkinson, 2001).

The Singapore Quality Award was developed in 1994 and was modelled on Japan’s Deming prize, the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and the European Quality Award. The Singapore Quality Class (SQC) scheme was launched in 1997 to recognize organisations that have achieved a commendable level of performance on the SQA framework (Standards, Productivity and Innovation Board, 2013). The NHRD standard, People Developer (PD) was launched in 1997 following two years of field testing in 55 organisations recognised for their exemplary HR practices. PD accredited organisations have part of their training costs subsidised by the Skills Development Fund. To be eligible organisations must be committed to the development of the entire workforce, implement training and career plans, and monitor HRD activities (Osman-Gani, 2004). As can be seen from Appendix A the current Singapore Business Excellence standard is an overarching framework within which there are nine certification and award programmes. There are two holistic certifications which are the SQC and the SQC STAR. The SQC recognises organisations that have met the standard and achieved at least 400 points. The SQC STAR recognises organisations that have made further improvement and achieved at least 550 points. There are also two business excellence
awards which are the SQA and the SQA with special commendation. There are three niche level certification standards focusing on people, innovation and service which are key enablers of business excellence. There are also two business excellence awards which are the People Excellence (PE) Award and the Innovation Excellence Award. The Singapore BEM is a universal framework suitable for all organisations (Standards, Productivity and Innovation Board, 2015b). This section continues by elaborating on the emergence of the current BEM framework and niche standards. The section finishes by reviewing the PD standard in greater detail.

The Singapore government has also sought to develop innovation capability among Singaporean organisations in a number of ways. In 2001 the People Excellence (PE) Award and the Singapore Innovation Award were launched. In 2002 the SQA criteria were revised to include requirements for innovation and the Singapore Innovation Class was launched to recognise organisations that have developed their capability in innovation. The Singapore Service Class scheme was launched in 2003 to recognise organisations that have developed their service capability. In 2004 these numerous certifications and awards were integrated under the umbrella of the Singapore BEM. In 2006 the SQA with special commendation was introduced. In order to assist SMEs on the Business Excellence Journey the SMART (SME Management Action for Results) initiative was introduced in 2006. This initiative provided funding for SMEs to engage consultants to assist in the development of management systems. Another initiative for SMEs, The Business Excellence Mentoring Programme was introduced in 2007. Under this scheme SMEs on the business excellence journey are paired with exemplar organisations as mentors. The BEM framework was revised in 2008 and the SQC STAR was launched to recognise organisations that have achieved at least 550 points (Standards, Productivity and Innovation Board, 2010a; Standards, Productivity and Innovation Board, 2013).

In 2009, Standards, Productivity and Innovation Board Singapore was chosen by the Asian Productivity Organisation as its first Centre of Excellence for Business Excellence. In this role Singapore has assisted over 20 countries who are members of the Asian Productivity Organisation establish their BEMs and quality awards frameworks. A
revised BEM framework was launched in 2015 with the following seven criteria: Leadership, Customers, Strategy, People, Processes, Knowledge and Results. The niche standards now examine the exact same seven criteria and therefore have been aligned even more explicitly to the BEM (Standards, Productivity and Innovation Board, 2015b). The certification process was simplified for all organisations and in particular for SMEs. There is a greater emphasis on on-site assessments instead of documentation. As a result an SME should now be able to fill out a Business Excellence application form in half the time. In addition one-to-one coaching from Business Excellence assessors is available for organisations to assist them through the process (Standards, Productivity and Innovation Board 2014). The PD standard is non-prescriptive in that organisations are encouraged to formulate and implement flexible and creative approaches to meet the requirements of the standard while taking into account the specific context of the organisation and the environment it operates in. There is a requirement to demonstrate a learning and improvement focus throughout the organisation. To this end organisations are required to formulate plans, implement plans, evaluate progress and implement improvements. There are currently approximately 300 People Developer accredited organisations in Singapore. The People Excellence Award is awarded annually to one or sometimes two organisations (Standards, Productivity and Innovation Board, 2015).

This section reviewed the Singapore NHRD standard PD which was launched in 1997 to encourage investment in workplace HRD. PD is designed as a stand-alone standard aligned to the Singapore Quality Award criteria for HRD and HRM. The literature highlighted that Singapore has achieved an exceptional degree of integration in its National Vocational Educational and Training system. Where Singapore particularly differs from other countries is in its national policy framework which is strategic and takes a long-term developmental outlook.

**A.5 Human Resource Framework NS HRF-101:2010**

In 2010 a joint Australia and New Zealand National HRM Standard was established called Human Resource Framework NS HRF-101:2010 which is outlined in Table 2.5. HR Coach Research Institute convened a committee in 2009 comprised of industry
representatives to develop this standard. The HR Coach group is a private professional services company with approximately 60 offices across Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea (HR Coach Research Institute, 2010).

A.6 Development of American National HR Standards
The most significant recent development in relation to HR standards is the proposal for international ISO HR standards which is being driven by the American Society for Human Resource Management. This body is the largest professional association for HR practitioners in the world with over 200,000 members. The Society for Human Resource Management was established in 1948 and assumed its present name in 1989. Its remit is to be influential in advancing the HR profession, provide resources to the HR community and to ensure that HR practices make a difference in organisations (Farndale and Brewster, 2005). Since 2009 the Society for Human Resource Management under the auspices of the American National Standards Institute has spearheaded a drive to establish organisational level HR standards. ANSI was established in 1918 to supervise the development of voluntary consensus standards in America. Deb Cohen of the Society for Human Resource Management has stated ‘What you are looking for is to have an agreed way of doing something, agreed by people who know the industry and the needs of the organisations they work for. Even though there are different laws and cultures in different countries, I’d say about 80% of HR is HR whether you’re in the US, India or the UK’ (Jacobs, 2013, p. 1).

The first HRM standard to meet ANSI approval was the Cost-per-hire standard in 2012. This was followed by approval for a Performance Management standard in 2013. As can be seen from Table 2.5, HR standards currently under development are Workforce Planning, Job Description, HR Metrics Panel, Turnover Metrics Definition and three standards covering diversity. The aim is to eventually turn these American HR standards in to a global ISO HR standard (Society for Human Resource Management, 2013; Starner, 2013). The Society for Human Resource Management established task forces made up of HR professionals, academics and consultants to develop voluntary national level HR standards. When an HR standard is drafted it goes through two public review periods. In 2012 the Society for Human Resource Management withdrew a proposed
standard entitled Human Resource Indices for Investors following opposition from the business community particularly from the Human Resources Policy Association (HRPA), a Washington based lobby group. In the first public review for this standard the HRPA wrote to the Society for Human Resource Management requesting that the standard be withdrawn stating that ‘The members of our Association were taken aback that the Society for Human Resource Management would propose yet another significant new regulatory burden’ (Bloomberg BNA, 2012, p. 10).

The HRPA has not commented on the approved or other draft HR standards except to say that ‘HRPA supports the use of HR metrics internally to support the HR function’ (Starner, 2013, p. 3). The proposed Human Resource Indices for Investors standard has been discontinued. The purpose of the now discarded standard was to assist investors value an organisation’s human capital. This standard would have required organisations to provide information on five main areas of human capital. The first area, expenditure on human capital, would have required organisations to provide quite detailed information on their spend on employees, such as number of employees, payroll costs, HRD spending, etc. The other four areas were employee retention rates, leadership depth, leadership quality and employee engagement. Commenting on the US standards David Ulrich (quoted in Hickman, 2014) stated

> I get a little worried about standards because there are so many variables that go in and I don’t think we have the data to make them yet. We have professional groups who want some degree of consistency going to the lowest common denominator. What can we measure? Cost per hire. So what? What business leader is saying that’s the dominant thing I want from HR, to reduce the cost of hiring somebody? I think the [principles approach] is better.

He also suggested that indices measuring how well the HR function is performing against a set of criteria might be more valuable.
A.7 Proposed ISO HR Standards

In 2010 the American National Standards Institute (2010, p. 2) put forward a proposal to ISO for the development of international ISO HRM standards which ‘would offer broad, coordinating guidance to HR practitioners and harmonize disparate practices for the benefit of organisations and their employees’. While these standards would complement the Code of International Labour Law, a collection of ILO conventions and recommendations, the focus would be on standardising organisational HRM practices rather than workers’ rights. Where consensus based standards or codes already exist, the ISO technical committee will avoid that HR area, harmonise with the existing standard, or adopt an established standard as an ISO standard (American National Standards Institute, 2010).

ISO/TC 260 was subsequently formed and met for the first time in Washington in 2011 where it was decided to establish a working group to collect and develop terminology which could be used by TC 260 in the development of HRM standards. At the second meeting of ISO/TC 260 in Melbourne in 2012 a sustainable employability task group was formed to revise the draft standard ‘Management by sustainable employability of staff’. In both of these cases a call for experts to assist was subsequently issued. Participating countries were requested to nominate an expert, and observing members who wanted to nominate an expert were requested to become a participant (ISO, 2012a; ISO, 2012b). There are 23 countries currently participating and another 18 observing. Ireland represented by the NSAI is among the observing countries (ISO, 2014b). Each country participating on ISO/TC 260 appears to have its own distinctive view of what constitutes good HR practice. Wilson Wong of the UK CIPD suggests that the European perspective of HR standards is principle-based and more values focused than the American cost driven approach (Jacobs, 2013). In addition, emerging economies are concerned about the potentially bureaucratic nature of the standards which could affect competitiveness. As can be seen from Table 2.1 in chapter 2 there are six HRM standards currently under development. The new standards would specify the minimum approach and measurement necessary to perform essential HR tasks. According to Wilson Wong of the UK CIPD ‘if multinationals adopt these standards and require
suppliers to do the same, there will be a seismic shift in the profession, and we don’t know if it will be for the better’ (Jacobs, 2013).

This section reviewed the development of National HR standards in the USA. The Society for Human Resource Management under the auspices of ANSI has spearheaded a drive to establish organisational level HR standards. Two standards have so far been approved with a further six under development. The proposed Human Resource Indices for Investors standard has been discontinued. The aim is to eventually turn these American HR standards into a global ISO HR standard. The new standards would specify the minimum approach and measurement necessary to perform essential HR tasks.

A.8 BS 76000 Management System for Valuing People in Organisations – Requirements and Guidance for Use
The BSI published a draft HR standard entitled BS 76000 Management System for valuing people in organisations – Requirements and guidance for use in November 2014. Technical committee HCS/1, Human Capital at the BSI developed the standard which was open for public consultation until January 2015. BS 76000 specifies high-level strategic requirements for valuing people in the workplace. This in turn facilitates the improvement of its people strategy and performance. The standard is intended to be generic and applicable regardless of size, industry and whether in private, public or voluntary sectors. The standard does not specify performance criteria or prescribe specific HR practices. Instead, organisations can develop their own contextually appropriate approach (British Standards Institute, 2014). BS 76000 is principle based not rules based and focuses on outcomes rather than processes. A challenge with principle based standards is their enforceability, as principles can be open to interpretation. The finalised standard is likely to be available by early summer 2015 (Hickman, 2014). BS 76000 is likely to be controversial as HR has not experienced standardisation to the same extent as other professions (Jacobs, 2014).

A.9 South African National HR Management System Standard
In 2013 South Africa launched National HR Management system standard comprising of 13 elements grouped by the quality assurance model of Plan, Implement, Review and
Improve (see Table 2.5). The standard incorporates an audit framework for HR practice in addition to a benchmarking service. The standards were developed by the South African Board for People Practices (SABPP) which is the national HR professional body. The standards have also been adopted by Zambia and Zimbabwe with Namibia, Kenya and Mauritius expressing interest. The development process consisted of three phases. The first phase involved designing the overall framework which incorporated 13 elements. Each component was defined, objectives were set for each element, and broad implementation guidelines were drawn up. The second phase involved detailing how the standard could be implemented in the workplace. The third phase involved developing 30 professional practice standards (e.g. succession planning, career development, on-boarding, employee engagement, etc.) which flowed from the 13 overall standard components. A National HR academy was established to provide capacity building opportunities in the 13 standard areas (Meyer 2013; SABPP, 2015a; SABPP, 2015b).
Appendix B: Singapore Business Excellence Framework

Figure B1: Singapore Business Excellence Framework

Source: Standards, Productivity and Innovation Board (2014, p. 4)
Figure B2: Singapore Business Excellence Certifications and Awards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BE CERTIFICATIONS</th>
<th>BE AWARDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≥ 400 points</td>
<td>≥ 700 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BE certifications recognise organisations for meeting standards of good performance and for their commitment to business excellence.</td>
<td>BE awards recognise organisations for outstanding management capabilities and for achieving world-class standards of performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥ 550 points</td>
<td>≥ 800 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOQ STAR recognises SOQ organisations that have made further improvement in their business excellence journey. It motivates SOQ organisations to push for higher levels of performance.</td>
<td>SOA SC recognises past SOA winners for scaling greater heights of excellence and sustained global leadership.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Standards, Productivity and Innovation Board (2014, p. 9)
Appendix C: Original Excellence Through People Standard

1. REVIEW OF ORGANISATION PLANS AND OBJECTIVES (150 Points)

(a) Does organisation prepare plans for its operations? (20 points)

(b) Does the organisation plan cover a specific period? (20 points)

(c) Does the organisation plan take recognition of market, technological, financial, legislative and personnel/human resource requirements? (20 points)

(d) Is the organisation plan divided into departmental plans, with specific objectives and targets? (20 points)

(e) Is a review period and mechanism for the plan in operation? (20 points)

(f) Is the performance against the plan evaluated? (20 points)

(g) What categories of employees are involved in the preparation of the organisation/departmental plans and in the review process? (10 points)
(h) Does the organisation have ISO 9000, Quality mark, FDA, ISO 14001 or other Certification? (please specify) (20 points)

2. PREPARATION OF ORGANISATION TRAINING PLAN (250 Points)

(a) Does the organisation have a policy on training approved by the Chief Executive / Managing Director? (15 points)

(b) Does an organisation training plan exist for the period under review? (20 points)

(c) Is the training plan based on the overall organisation plan? (20 points)

(d) Does the organisation training plan cover all categories of employees? (20 points)

(e) Have standards of performance been set and agreed with employees? (15 points)
(f) Is the training plan based on the identification of needs of individuals and groups of employees? (20 points)

(g) What is the involvement of employees in the preparation of the organisation training plan and the review process? (20 points)

(h) Have priority areas been highlighted in the organisation training plan? (15 points)

(i) What is the review period and mechanism for the plan? (20 points)

(j) Has the training plan for the organisation/department been approved by the Chief Executive/Managing Director? (15 points)

(k) What performance review systems are in operation? (15 points)

(l) Does training take account of the health and safety of employees? (20 points)
(m) Does the organisation have a training manager/co-ordinator? (20 points)

(n) What is the gross training cost/investment as a percentage of salaries/wages? (20 points)

3. REVIEW OF TRAINING (120 Points)

(a) What validation criteria are outlined for training activities? (20 points)

(b) Are training activities validated against the above criteria? (20 points)

(c) How does the validation process check that the training affects job performance? (20 points)

(d) What action is taken as a result of the review process? (20 points)

(e) What assessment systems are used for training activities? (20 points)
(f) What training activities are assessed and certified? (20 points)
4. IMPLEMENTATION OF TRAINING (240 Points)

(a) Are written training programmes available both for individuals and for the job categories? (40 points)

(b) Are the training objectives clearly defined? (40 points)

(c) Are the training objectives lined to work performance? (40 points)

(d) Have individual training objectives been set and agreed with employees? (20 points)

(e) To what extent were the training objectives achieved? (20 points)

(f) Have those implementing the programme had suitable development in training and in the subject matter concerned? (40 points)

(g) How many people were trained in comparison with the training plan? (40 points)
5. TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT RECORDS (40 Points)

(a) Are records of training and development activity maintained for each employee? (20 points)

(b) Are training and development records signed by/accessible to the employees? (20 points)

6. EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION & INVOLVEMENT (200 Points)

(a) What structures exist to facilitate effective internal communication? (25 points)

(b) What structures exist to facilitate employee involvement? (25 points)

(c) Does the organisation operate a quality improvement programme? (20 points)

(d) Is team work in operation in the organisation? (20 points)
(e) Does the organisation provide training for teams? (20 points)

(f) What other methods are used to facilitate involvement and communication? (20 points)

(g) Does the organisation have a policy on employee involvement approved by the Chief Executive/Managing Director (20 points)

(h) What methods does the organisation use to obtain employee feedback? (20 points)

(i) What action has been taken as a result of feedback received to date? (20 points)

(j) What involvement have employees had in the design and follow-up of feedback systems? (10 points)
Appendix D: 2004 Revision of Excellence Through People Standard

EXCELLENCE THROUGH PEOPLE
STANDARD 2004

STANDARD/GOLD/PLATINUM CRITERIA
& POINTS ALLOCATION
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Core Criteria</strong></th>
<th><strong>Suggested Points</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Planning and Quality Improvement</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective Communication and People Involvement</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership and People Management</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning of Learning &amp; Development</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and Life Long Learning</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment and Selection</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Wellbeing</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Points:</strong></td>
<td><strong>1000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**CRITERIA: BUSINESS PLANNING AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The organisation has a documented Business Plan which sets out its</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>measurable goals and objectives and takes into account external factors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g. Market, technological, financial, legislative and human resource</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>requirements.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation can show how it cascades relevant sections of its</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Plan down to departmental/team plans and individual plans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with measurable goals and targets.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation can show that it reviews its Business Plans on a</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regular basis and communicates changes to staff.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People at all levels in the organisation can describe what the business</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>objectives mean for their job.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation can show that it operates a quality improvement</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>programme.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation’s Business Plan includes specific strategies for staff</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning and development.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation can show that it has achieved relevant quality standards/certification e.g. ISO 9001, EFQM, Quality Mark, FDA, Environmental Certification or other sector accreditation.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People involved in benchmarking activities can describe the development</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they have undertaken to support them in their role.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation can show that it develops effective teamwork in its</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quality improvement programmes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation can show how it uses improvements tools e.g. Balanced</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score Card, Effective Customer Service, Six Sigma, Total Quality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement etc, to communicate and motivate its people to focus on the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>key goals and objectives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation can show how its approach to Business Planning is</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>improving its performance and demonstrates people involvement in the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>process.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation can show how quality improvement programmes have</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>improved its performance.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation effectively uses technology to improve the quality of</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>its products/services.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation can show that it uses effective internal and external</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>benchmarking activities and such activities show a sustained and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>continuous improvement in its business performance.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>150</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**CRITERIA: EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND PEOPLE INVOLVEMENT**

- The organisation has a communications policy and mechanisms which keep people informed on a regular basis and support an open and inclusive culture. 40
- The organisation can show that groups of employees are kept informed in an effective manner e.g. departmental groups, teams, Staff Representative Committees, Trade Unions etc. 20
- People can describe how they contribute to the organisation’s communications 5
- People can describe how they are encouraged to share their learning outcomes with fellow team members. 10
- The organisation uses evaluation methods to measure the effectiveness of its communication systems. 10
- The organisation encourages and adopts a partnership approaches with staff. 10
- The organisation carries out a regular review of staff attitudes and implements actions as a result. 10
- Staff can describe their involvement in improvement activities identified as a result of attitude reviews. 10
- The organisation has a clearly defined Community Policy, understood by all staff, and can show that it encourages and supports people in contributing to community involvement activities. 10

*Total* 125
**CRITERIA: LEADERSHIP AND PEOPLE MANAGEMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managers can describe how the organisation plans and implements development to enhance their skills in line with the Business Plan and can provide examples of how they have applied the learning acquired.</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation can show that all people and Managers undergo a formal Performance Review at least once per year and can provide examples of how the review has impacted on their success in their job.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers and people can provide examples of how they have been developed to participate effectively in a Performance Review discussion.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People have clearly defined job objectives with measurable goals and targets.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation can demonstrate to all people that it values them as individuals and their input into business success.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups of people have clearly defined team/department objectives with measurable goals and targets.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation can show that all managers and people undergo a formal and interim Performance Review each year.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation can show that its management Performance Review process is effective at measuring the progress of Managers carrying out their staff development responsibilities.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation effectively communicates its key selection criteria for management positions in order to facilitate internal promotion opportunities.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People throughout the organisation can describe how their manager is effective at motivating them.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People can describe how they contribute to the Performance Review of their line Manager.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation can show improvements made to their Performance Review as a result of people feedback.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation has clearly defined competencies which underpin Manager and people performance.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation has a clear vision and values which directly link to the Performance Indicators at individual, team and organisational levels.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation can show that it has an effective succession planning and career development plan in place.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation can show that changes to its business Plans have an effect on Manager and people competencies where applicable.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation can show that its approach to leadership and people management is effective at improving performance.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>150</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**CRITERIA:** PLANNING OF LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The organisation has a learning and development policy and plan which shows a direct link to the business objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The organisational learning and Development Plan covers all departments, grades of staff, priorities and overall costs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>People can describe how they contribute to the Learning Needs Analysis and the range of learning methods available to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>People can describe the objectives for learning and development planned for them at their performance review and how they fit with individual, departmental and organisational objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>The organisation has a designated person responsible for the co-ordination of staff learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>The organisational Learning and Development Plan includes team development needs and has a specific category for management development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>The person responsible for the coordination of staff learning holds an appropriate professional qualification e.g. CIPD, IMI, IITD, NUI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>The organisation can show that the plan is amended / adjusted in line with organisational, staff and other changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Individual personal development plans exist for all staff which can be linked to departmental, team and organisational development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>The organisation can demonstrate its use of skills/competence matrices to support the planning of individual and team development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>People can describe how the organisation plans their development as individuals outside their normal job related activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**: 100
**CRITERIA:**  
**TRAINING AND LIFELONG LEARNING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning programmes are in place for job categories and individuals</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation can show that it effectively inducts new staff and provides effective support for staff transferred/promoted to new roles</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line Managers can describe how they contribute to the induction of new or transferred / promoted people.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation can show that the majority of the learning activities identified within its learning and development plan have been implemented and can show the use of accredited programmes in its delivery of learning and development.</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation can show that trainers are suitably developed in training techniques.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People can describe how they have contributed to the evaluation of their induction.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People can describe how they are effectively developed prior to the implementation of new or revised processes within the organisation.</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation has physical resources dedicated to the provision of learning activities e.g. training rooms, learning library, centre for learning etc.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation can show sustained and regular improvements in the quality of learning and development delivery and activities.</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation can show that each new staff member is provided with effective guidance and support through the use of experienced colleagues, mentors, buddies etc.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total** | **150**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA:</th>
<th>REVIEW OF LEARNING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- The organisation can show that evaluation criteria are set out for planned learning and development activities and that such activities are assessed and certified where applicable.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Managers can provide examples of how they assist staff to evaluate the outcomes of learning activities at individual, team and organisation levels.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- People can describe how learning and development activities have impacted on their performance and their team’s in the organisation.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Senior Management can describe how they evaluate the impact of staff learning and development on the performance of the organisation and what actions they take as a result.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Managers can describe development that they have received in setting objectives and evaluating learning and development activities</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The organisation can show improvements to Management approaches made as a result of learning and development activities.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The organisation can show behavioural changes achieved as a result of staff learning and development and that such changes have been documented.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The organisation can show that it used evaluation approaches e.g. Kirkpatrick’s Model/Philip’s Model to establish outcomes that influence improved performance.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total** 100
### CRITERIA: RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The organisation can show that its recruitment and selection policies are in line with all current and relevant legislation and also demonstrate a commitment to non – discrimination, accommodating diversity and promoting equality.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with recruitment and selection responsibilities can provide examples of development that they have received to support them in their role.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation can show that it has up to date and accurate job descriptions, personnel specifications and/or assessment criteria for all positions being advertised.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation can show that recruitment interview notes and scoring documents are retained in a confidential location.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation can show that its approach to recruitment and selection has contributed to its performance.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation can show that it uses a range of relevant assessment tools in its recruitment and selections processes.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation has an effective skills/competence framework for people participating in selection interviews.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation can show that it takes a strategic approach to recruitment and selection in support of its business objectives.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total** 100
**CRITERIA:**

**EMPLOYEE WELLBEING**

- The organisation can show that it conforms with all relevant and current health and safety legislation.  
  - 10

- Managers can describe their responsibilities for health, safety and wellbeing of their staff and have received appropriate development.  
  - 15

- The organisation has an Equal Opportunities Policy which addresses diversity, equality and disability and which has been effectively communicated to people throughout all departments and locations.  
  - 10

- The organisation has specific strategies to ensure that all employees have equality of opportunity to have their learning needs reviewed and supported and people can describe approaches taken.  
  - 10

- The organisation completes regular reviews of its policies and practices which support the needs of a diverse workforce and people with disabilities.  
  - 10

- The organisation can show that it develops individuals and teams in support of problem solving health and safety issues.  
  - 10

- The organisation can define its strategies which support staff wellbeing.  
  - 5

- The organisation can show that it develops Managers, Trainers and employees in support of an awareness around and of skills in relation to issues of non-discrimination, accommodating diversity and promoting equality.  
  - 5

- The organisation has complaints, appeal and review procedures to facilitate equality of opportunity.  
  - 5

- The organisation can show it measures staff perception on its approaches to health and safety, equality and wellbeing.  
  - 5

- The organisation has an appointed person who has responsibility for Equal Opportunities which includes planning and reviewing practices and policies and which facilitate the needs of a diverse workforce of people with disabilities.  
  - 5

- The organisation has a proven track record for hiring people with disabilities or actively encouraging their recruitment.  
  - 5

- The organisation provides learning and information aids in alternative formats for people with disabilities.  
  - 10

- The organisation can show that the facilities it uses provides ease of access for employees and job applicants who have physical and/or sensory disabilities.  
  - 10

- The organisation can show that its wellbeing strategies contribute to the success of its performance.  
  - 10

**Total**  
- 125
Business Improvement Model

1. Business Planning & Continuous Improvement: 170 Points
2. Effective Communication & People Engagement: 170 Points
3. Leadership & People Management: 170 Points
4. Planning of Learning & Development: 190 Points
5. Evaluation Of Learning & Development: 140 Points
### Criteria

**1a** The organisation has a documented business plan appropriate to the business needs.

The plan sets out its measurable goals and objectives and takes into account external factors, e.g. marketing, promotion, technological, financial, legislative, environmental, facilities and human resource requirements.

### Evidence Required

Business plans available for review – written and/or observed.

Key considerations for inclusion in your business plan:

- Intended outcomes, what are you going to do, and when?
- Business analysis e.g. SWOT, technical and competitive factors that may affect you.
- Strategies – how you intend to achieve your outcomes.
- Human resources plans.
- Marketing and promotional plans.
- Financial plans and budgets.
- Quality plans.
- Technical plans.
- Legislative plans.
- Environmental plans.
- Information, communications and technology plans.

**1b** Employees can describe the planning process as well as the mission, vision and values.

- Employees involved in the business planning process can describe their contribution.
- Verbal evidence that employees are familiar with the organisation’s mission, vision and values.

**1c** The organisation can show how it cascades relevant sections of its business plan down to departmental, team and individual plans with measurable goals and targets.

- Employees can describe how the business plan is communicated to them at team and/or individual level.
- Examples of internal communications systems, e.g. employee briefings.
- Your communication mediums may include:
  - Team briefings.
  - Department and functional meetings.
  - Team away days.
  - Presentations to employees.
  - E-mails and SMS.
  - Intranets.
  - Notice boards.
  - Newsletters.
  - Social media.
  - Brochures and booklets.
- Employees need to understand team and/or organisational objectives.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Evidence Required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1d** The organisation can show that it reviews its business plans on a regular basis and communicates changes to its employees. | › Evidence of systematic review process in place, may include monthly or quarterly management meetings. All changes to objectives and targets either organisational, departmental or team should be identified as evidence of this process.  
› Employees can describe the review process and how changes are communicated to them.  
› Minutes of review process meetings.  
› Any other relevant documents to demonstrate business plan reviews and communication of same to employees. |
| **1e** The organisation can show that it operates a quality management system.  
Where appropriate the organisation can show it has achieved relevant quality standards, certification, e.g. ISO 9001, OHSAS 18001, Quality Mark, FDA, or other appropriate sector accreditation.  
The organisation can show it uses continuous improvement tools, e.g. balanced score card, six sigma etc, to communicate and motivate employees to focus on the key goals and objectives. | › Documentary evidence of quality management system in operation.  
› Employees can describe how the quality management system operates.  
› The organisation will need to show evidence of a quality improvement programme and how it links with the business goals.  
› The organisation will need to show how employees are involved in the quality improvement programmes either on an individual or a team basis.  
› Certificates of relevant quality standards available for verification. |
| **1f** The organisation can show that it uses effective internal and external benchmarking and/or networking activities to conduct comparative analysis and that such activities contribute towards efforts for continuous improvement in business performance. | › Top management can provide documentary and verbal evidence to show that the organisation has benchmarking and/or networking information demonstrating a sustained and continuous improvement in its performance, e.g. benchmarking results against best practices, competitor and/or market analysis.  
› Employees can describe how internal and external benchmarking activities are carried out and the impact on the organisation, e.g. employees can articulate the benchmarking approaches used and how the outcomes from these activities are used to improve performance. |
| **1g** The human resources strategy should support and be aligned to the business strategy. | › The organisation can demonstrate an alignment of these strategies, e.g. aligned sales and market growth plans corresponding with human resource needs (hiring, development, training). |

**Points Summary**  
170 points
## Effective Communication & People Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Evidence Required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2a</strong> The organisation has a communications policy and mechanisms, and can show that groups of employees are kept informed in an effective manner, e.g. individuals, departmental groups, teams, representatives, committees etc.</td>
<td>&gt; Employees throughout the organisation can describe the communication processes in place and how they are kept informed, e.g. one to one meetings, departmental meetings, team meetings, newsletters, committees, notice boards, e-mails, SMS, intranet, forum meetings etc.  &gt; Evidence of a written policy includes support for employee engagement and is in compliance with appropriate legislative requirements, e.g. European Directive for organisations with operations in different EU countries.  &gt; Documentary evidence to show methods of communications in use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2b</strong> The organisation measures the effectiveness of its communications systems.</td>
<td>&gt; The organisation will need to provide examples of how they evaluate the effectiveness of the communications processes, e.g. employee attitude and opinion surveys, internal focus groups, communication review groups.  &gt; Evidence that the feedback provides relevant information regarding the organisation's approach to communications.  &gt; The organisation can clearly identify what are the most effective and preferred methods for communicating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2c</strong> The organisation carries out a regular review of employee opinions and implements actions as a result.</td>
<td>&gt; Documentary evidence to show the organisation regularly reviews employee opinions and implements actions as a result, for example:  - its performance appraisal system  - the use of focus groups  - the use of problem solving groups  &gt; The organisation conducts formal employee attitude and opinion surveys on a regular basis.  &gt; Employees can describe their involvement in the design of these surveys  &gt; The organisation can show how it effectively communicates the findings from such initiatives to employees and what actions are taken as a result.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2d</strong> Employees can describe their involvement in improvement activities identified as a result of the employee attitude reviews.</td>
<td>&gt; Employees can give examples of how they have been involved in improvement activities resulting from attitude reviews.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Points Summary**: 170 points
SECTION 3

Leadership & People Management

**Criteria**

3a. The organisation can show that all employees undergo at least one formal performance review per year and can provide examples of how the review has impacted successfully on them.

3b. Employees can describe how they contribute to the learning needs analysis and an understanding of the range of learning methods available to them for learning and development.

3c. The organisation has a system in place which supports leadership development.

3d. The organisation can demonstrate to all employees that it values them as individuals and their input to business success.

**Evidence Required**

- Evidence of completed performance reviews.
- Employees can describe how their formal performance review takes place.
- Verbal evidence confirming that performance discussions have impacted on the individual’s performance.
- Evidence that the performance review process is consistently applied.
- Employees can describe the value of performance appraisal.
- The organisation can show that employees undergo interim performance reviews.
- The learning and development plan should reflect the development of all employees involved in the performance review process, e.g. appraisers and appraisees.

- Verbal evidence of how the learning needs analysis takes place and how employees input to this process.
- Verbal evidence to indicate the learning approach.

- The organisation can show that a system for leadership development is available, e.g. mentoring, coaching, learning and development programmes, 360° feedback, talent management and succession planning systems.
- Verbal evidence from employees describing how they have received leadership support and development.
- This development should form part of the learning and development plan and records.

- Employees can provide examples of how the organisation values their input.
- The organisation can give examples of how employee input has contributed to continuous improvement or goal attainment.
### Criteria

| 3e | Employees can provide examples of how their managers motivate them, and recognise their contribution to the success of the organisation, e.g. performance appraisal, objective setting and recognition. |
| 3f | The organisation has clearly defined competencies underlining and supporting employee performance and development. |
| 3g | The organisation can show that it has effective succession and career development planning in place. |
| 3h | The organisation effectively communicates its key selection criteria for management positions to facilitate, where appropriate, internal promotion opportunities. |

### Evidence Required

| 3e | The organisation can show the range of approaches it uses to recognise employees input, e.g. reward and/or recognition systems, learning and development supports and methods of acknowledgement for good performance. |
| 3f | How are competencies developed and then linked in to development plans. |
| 3f | Evidence of competency frameworks in place. |
| 3f | Employees can describe how competencies are used and their usefulness. |
| 3g | The organisation will need to show how their competency frameworks link to the organisation’s objectives. |
| 3g | Written evidence of these plans in place. |
| 3g | Senior management can describe their approach to succession and career planning, e.g. internal promotions, job enrichment, performance management and job rotation etc. |
| 3h | The organisation will need to show examples of how the succession and career planning has worked. |
| 3h | Written evidence of selection criteria for management positions. |
| 3h | Verbal confirmation that appropriate employees have received the selection criteria for management positions. |
| 3h | The organisation will need to show how they include selection criteria in their internal advertising of management positions. Advertising may be by documents, notices, e-mails, intranet etc. |

### Points Summary

| Points Summary | 170 points |
### Section 4

**Planning of Learning & Development**

**Criteria**

| 4a | The organisation has a learning and development policy which shows a direct link to the organisation's objectives and its commitment to employee development. |
| 4b | The organisation has a learning and development plan which is directly linked to the business plan. It covers all departments, employee categories, teams and indicates priorities, course providers, schedules and overall costs. |
| 4c | The organisation can show that each new, transferred or promoted staff member is provided with effective induction, guidance and support through the use of experienced colleagues, mentors, buddies, development programmes etc. |
| 4d | The organisation can show that people involved in delivering learning and development programmes are suitably qualified in training techniques and delivery (applies to internal and external trainers) |
| 4e | The organisation maintains records for each employee of their learning and development, training, experience and other actions necessary to achieve competence. |

**Evidence Required**

| 4a | Learning and development policy appropriately approved. |
| 4b | Detailed learning and development plans in place. |
| 4c | A structured induction is available for new, transferred and promoted employees. |
| 4d | Evidence of formal training and appropriate certification that trainers have received for their specific role. |
| 4e | There must be a system in place, electronic or paper, to demonstrate this. |

**Points Summary**

190 points
SECTION 5
Evaluation of Learning & Development

Criteria

5a  A structure for learning and development programmes is in place.

Evidence Required

- Written programmes for all learning and development activities whether internal, external or private time study which is supported by the organisation must be available. The structure of these programmes must conform to systematic training specification, e.g. details of programmes showing course aims, SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timed), training dates, target audience, course provider bibliography, duration and copyright.
- You will need to show that all your learning and development programmes conform to a structured specification.

5b  Employees can describe how they have contributed to the evaluation of their induction and/or orientation.

Evidence Required

- Employees will be able to describe how their induction and/or orientation was evaluated and their input to that process. This process should form part of the learning and development plan and records.
- Documentary evidence of feedback on the induction process.
- Evidence of improvements made to the induction process as a result of feedback.

5c  The organisation can show that evaluation criteria are set out for planned learning and development activities and that such activities are assessed and certified where applicable.

Evidence Required

- Written and verbal evidence of evaluation criteria are set out for planned learning and development activities. This may include course assessment sheets, questions, tests, demonstrations, projects, samples, etc.
- Where appropriate, evidence of certification that is linked to the National Framework of Qualifications.
- Do the evaluation criteria clearly show the outcomes of the learning activity?

5d  Managers can describe development that they have received in setting SMART objectives and evaluating learning and development activities.

Evidence Required

- Verbal evidence from managers describing the development and support they have received in objective setting and evaluation skills. This development should form part of the learning and development plan and records.
### Criteria

| 5e | The organisation can show behavioural changes achieved as a result of staff learning and development and that such changes have been documented. |
| 5f | The organisation can show that it uses evaluation approaches, [e.g. Kirkpatrick's or Phillip's Model etc.] to establish outcomes that influence improved performance. |
| 5g | Employees can describe how they are encouraged to share their learning outcomes with fellow team members |
| 5h | Senior management can describe how they review and evaluate the impact of learning and development on the performance of the organisation and what actions they take as a result. |

### Evidence Required

- Written and verbal evidence of behavioural changes achieved as a result of employee learning. This may relate to increased confidence, improved communications, project management, team working, changed behaviour etc.
- Employees will be able to describe how such changes have taken place and their impact on themselves and the organisation.
- Written evidence and results of the use of evaluation methods.
- Confirmation of the understanding of these methods from appropriate employees.
- Employees can provide examples of how they are encouraged to share the outcomes of their learning with colleagues, e.g. team meetings, presentations.
- The organisation has a written policy addressing the transfer of learning and development.
- Written and verbal evidence from senior managers describing how they review and evaluate the impact of learning and development on the organisation, preferably supported by a documented procedure.
- Verbal evidence from senior managers showing that they clearly understand the costs and benefits of learning and development to their organisation.

### Points Summary

| Points Summary | 140 points |
SECTION 6

Human Resource Systems & Employee Wellbeing

Criteria

6a

The organisation can show that appropriate policies and procedures are in place to support all aspects of the business, e.g. health and safety, recruitment and selection, etc. These policies and procedures are in line with current and relevant legislation and also demonstrate a commitment to non-discrimination, diversity and equality promotion.

Evidence Required

› Written declaration of compliance with relevant legislation or policies and signed by the senior manager.
› Evidence that health and safety statement and policy are available and effectively communicated to all employees. Evidence that risk assessments are being carried out, records of consultation with all employees are available.
› A trained health and safety committee in place, along with minutes of regular meetings. This training should form part of the learning and development plan and records. A proven track record of addressing health and safety issues.
› Named person responsible for health and safety with appropriate training supports. The training supports should form part of the learning and development plan and records.
› Recruitment and selection procedures for employees involved in interviews and storage of associated documentation.
› Written, verbal and observed evidence of Interview notes and scoring documents retained in a secure and confidential location. Examples of the range of assessment tools in use, e.g. assessment centres, aptitude tests, presentations etc.
› Written governance and/or ethics policies.
› Employee can provide evidence of how they are aware of these policies and the corresponding impacts on them and the organisation.

6b

The organisation has an Equal Opportunities Policy which addresses diversity, equality and disability.

Evidence Required

› The organisation will need to ensure that equality policies cover the nine grounds named in the equality legislation i.e. gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, race, sexual orientation, religious belief, membership of the travelling community and have sections on recruitment, pay, working conditions, staff training and discipline and have procedures to address incidents of discrimination, e.g. grievance and disciplinary procedures.
› Employees can describe what the equality policies and procedures cover.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Evidence Required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **6c** The organisation completes regular reviews of its policies and practices. | › The review process should consist of an examination of the organisation’s policies, procedures, practices and review mechanism.  
› Written evidence of reviews have taken place.  
› Evidence of document controls steps in place. |
| **6d** The organisation can define its approaches to supporting staff wellbeing. | › Written and/or verbal evidence of strategies which support employee wellbeing, e.g. family friendly policies, ergonomic assessments, employee assistance programmes, flexible working arrangements etc.  
› Employees confirm their understanding of these strategies. |
| **6e** Managers can describe their responsibilities for the health, safety and wellbeing of staff. | › Evidence from managers describing their responsibilities and training received. This training should form part of the learning and development plan and records.  
› Employees can confirm this is happening.  
› Documented responsibilities in manager’s job descriptions, etc. |
| **6f** The organisation can show that it measures staff perception on its approach to health, safety, wellbeing and equality. The records of data and results of monitoring and measurement are sufficient to facilitate subsequent corrective action and preventative action analysis. | › Written evidence of questionnaires, responses and/or focus groups.  
› Employees can describe how the organisation measures perception.  
› The organisation will need to show that the measures used and results are displayed effectively throughout the whole organisation. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Evidence Required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6g The organisation can show that the facilities it uses provide ease</td>
<td>› Observed evidence of levels and types of accessibility and supports within</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of access for employees, visitors and job applicants who have physical,</td>
<td>organisations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intellectual and/or sensory disabilities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6h The organisation has a defined Corporate Social Responsibility</td>
<td>› Evidence of a written corporate and social responsibility policy in place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy, understood by all employees and can show that it encourages</td>
<td>› Employees can describe their understanding of the corporate and social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and supports employees in contributing to community involvement</td>
<td>responsibility policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activities.</td>
<td>› Employees can describe how they contribute to community activities and how their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>organisation supports them in doing so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6i The organisation has appropriate human resource information,</td>
<td>› Appropriate application systems, e.g. time and attendance records, payroll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communications and technology systems in place.</td>
<td>details, employee records, performance management, learning and development,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>employee intranets etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>› Evidence that the systems are supported by information, communications and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>technology usage policies, e.g. data protection, email usage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>› The organisation can demonstrate that they are embracing social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>applications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6j The organisation practices data protection and data</td>
<td>› Evidence of good systems and/or processes for storing human resource records,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confidentiality measures.</td>
<td>confidentiality treatment of these records and employee file information.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Points Summary** 160 points
Appendix F: Adopter Questionnaire

SECTION A

ORGANISATION’S ADOPTION OF EXCELLENCE THROUGH PEOPLE (ETP)

1. Who is responsible for implementing ETP in your organisation? (Tick all that apply)

- Head Office
- Owner Manager
- CEO
- Director
- HR Manager
- T&D Specialist
- Line Manager
- Other please specify

2. Who was/were the principle decision maker(s) in adopting ETP? (Tick all that apply)

- Head Office
- Owner Manager
- CEO
- Director
- HR Manager
- T&D Specialist
- Line Manager
- Other please specify

3. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements (1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Disagree 4=Strongly Disagree)

- Top management enthusiastically supports ETP
- Top management has allocated adequate resources for the adoption of ETP
- Top management is aware of the benefits of ETP
- Top management actively encourages human resource personnel to use ETP in their daily tasks

255
ETP is perceived as a priority within my organisation
1 □  2 □  3 □  4 □

ETP is perceived positively within my organisation
1 □  2 □  3 □  4 □

My organisation spends an adequate amount of money on ETP
1 □  2 □  3 □  4 □

4. To what extent did the following factors influence the decision to apply for ETP? (Please rank the top 3 reasons)

To formalise HR systems □
To assist in staff recruitment and retention □
To improve perception of company as employer □
To improve training and development □
To improve business performance □
To increase customer satisfaction □
Part of company’s HR strategy □
External Benchmark □
Other □  Please specify

5. To what extent did following types of organisation influence the decision to apply for ETP? (Please rank the top three reasons)

Organisations which you consider successful have ETP □
Organisations which you consider prestigious have ETP □
Organisations in the same geographic area have ETP □
Organisations in the same industrial sector have ETP □
Organisations with which your firm has ownership ties have ETP □
Similar size organisations have ETP □
Competitors have ETP □
Customers have ETP □
Suppliers have ETP □
Other □

6. When did your organisation decide to adopt ETP? Year _______
7. Did your organisation use any external advice or help to attain the standard?

Yes □  No □

If you answered NO to question 7 please SKIP to question 9

8. Which of the following bodies did you seek advice from? (Tick all that apply)

FÁS □
Enterprise Ireland □
County Enterprise Board □
Irish Business and Employers Confederation □
Irish Small and Medium Enterprises □
Small Firms Association □
Industry Sector Body/Professional body □ Please specify
Consulting Firm □ Please specify
Other □ Please specify

9. Do you intend retaining the Excellence Through People standard?

Yes □  No □  Don’t Know □

SECTION B  ORGANISATIONAL AND STANDARD AFFILIATIONS

10. Does your organisation have any of the following standards either currently or previously? (Tick all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Currently</th>
<th>Previously</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ISO series of standards</td>
<td>Please Specify</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFQM/Business Excellence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hygiene Mark</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Q Mark</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDA Approval</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investors in People</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six Sigma</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Health and Safety Management System</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- OHSAS 18001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal accreditation system</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best company to work for in Ireland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry Specific Standard</td>
<td>Please Specify</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Please Specify</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. Does your organisation intend attaining any of the following standards in the future? (Tick all that apply)

ISO series of standards
EFQM/Business Excellence
Hygiene Mark
The Q Mark
FDA Approval
Investors in People
Six Sigma
Occupational Health and Safety Management System - OHSAS 18001
Internal accreditation system
Best company to work for in Ireland
Industry Specific Standard
Other

Please Specify
Please specify
Please Specify

12. Does the organisation use formal benchmarking to assess its performance?
Yes ☐ No ☐

If you answered NO to question 12 please SKIP to question 14

13. What does the organisation benchmark against? (Tick all that apply)

Competitors ☐
Industry sector averages ☐
Successful companies in industrial sector ☐
Prestigious companies in industrial sector ☐
Successful companies outside industrial sector ☐
Prestigious companies outside industrial sector ☐
Other ☐

14. Does the organisation pay attention to the HRD practices of other companies?
Yes ☐ No ☐

If you answered NO to question 14 please SKIP to question 16

15. How important are the following types of organisations in determining which HRD practices are implemented in this company? (1=Very important, 2=Important, 3=Not Very Important, 4=Not important)

Competitors ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Organisations which you consider prestigious ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Organisations which you consider successful  
Organisations in the industrial sector  
Organisations in the geographic area  
Organisations with which your firm has ownership ties  
Organisations of the same size

16. Is your company involved with any of the following organisations  
(
*Tick all that apply*
)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Currently</th>
<th>Previously</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Firms Association (SFA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Small and Medium Enterprises (ISME)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Development Authority (IDA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprise Ireland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Sector Body</td>
<td><em>Please specify</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Enterprise Board</td>
<td><em>Please specify</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td><em>Please specify</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Business Networks</td>
<td><em>Please specify</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SECTION C  FÁS**

17. Does your company avail of FÁS services?  

Yes ☐ No ☐

If you answered **NO** to question 17 please **SKIP** to question 19

18. Which of the following FÁS services does your company avail of?  
(
*Tick all that apply*
)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Currently</th>
<th>Previously</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Firms Cluster Programme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competency Development Programme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Step up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs Ireland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Awareness Training Programme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EURES European Placement System</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eCollege</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship or Traineeship Programme</td>
<td><em>Please specify</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. Does your organisation receive training grants from FÁS?  

Yes ☐ No ☐
If you answered NO to question 19 please SKIP to question 21

20. How much do these training grants amount to annually?

< €5000 □  €5000-€9000 □  €10,000-€14,000 □  €15,000-€20,000 □  >€20,000 □

21. Does your company supply FÁS with goods or services? Yes □  No □

If you answered NO to question 21 please SKIP to question 23

22. Please rate the importance of FÁS as a customer to your company. (1=Very Important, 2=Important, 3=Not Very Important, 4=Not Important)

1 □  2 □  3 □  4 □

SECTION D PROFILE OF PERSON WITH PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF ETP

23. Gender: Male □  Female □

24. To what age group do you belong?

Under 30 □  30-39 □  40-49 □  50-59 □  60+ □

25. What is the highest level of qualifications you have attained?

Secondary □  Certificate □  Diploma □  Primary Degree □  Post Graduate Degree □  Other □ Please specify
26. What is your position within the organisation?

Owner □
CEO □
Director □
HR Manager □
T&D Specialist □
Line Manager □
Other □ Please specify

27. Are you a member of a professional association?  Yes □  No □

If you answered NO to question 27 please SKIP to question 29

28. What professional association are you a member of and for how many years?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional association</th>
<th>Number of years membership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CIPD</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IITD</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry body</td>
<td>□ Please specify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>□ Please specify</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

29. Have you worked in another organisation that was:

Excellence Through People accredited  Yes □  No □
Investors in People accredited       Yes □  No □

30. How did you first become aware of ETP?

FÁS □
CIPD □
Enterprise Ireland □
IITD □
County Enterprise Board □ Please specify
Media Advertising □
Other Employers □
Don’t Remember □
Other □ Please specify
SECTION E  COMPANY PROFILE

31. What is your organisation’s main business activity?

- Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
- Food, Drink & Tobacco
- Engineering
- Printing, Publishing & Paper Products
- Electronics
- Construction
- Wholesale Trade
- Retail Trade
- Travel and Tourism
- Hospitality
- Financial Services
- Manufacturing
- Consumer services
- Medical & Pharmaceutical
- Chemicals
- Utilities
- Public Sector
- Consultancy
- Other

- Please specify

32. In relation to ownership in which of the following categories does your company belong?

- Irish Owned
- US Owned
- UK Owned
- European Owned
- Other

- Please specify

33. What is the legal status of your organisation?

- Private Company
- Semi-state
- State Body
- Trust/Friendly Society/ Co-operative
- Other

- Please specify

34. What is the organisational status of your company?

- Headquarters
- Subsidiary
- Branch
- Independent/Single Site
- Franchised Site
- Other

- Please specify
35. Are the CEO/directors of your company board member(s) of other companies?
   Yes ☐   No ☐   Don’t Know ☐

36. In what town/city is your company located? ____________________________

37. What year did your company start trading? ____________________________

38. How important are the following items in determining the business strategy of this company? (1=Very Important, 2=Important, 3=Not Very Important, 4=Not Important)

   1  2  3  4
   To improve the quality of product or service
   To develop innovative product(s)/service(s)
   To switch quickly between production of different product/service requirements
   To produce products/services for the higher-priced segments of the market
   To develop new techniques and methods to market our products
   To penetrate/develop new markets
   To provide products at prices below those of competitors’ prices
   Cost containment
   Other (please specify) ___________________________________________________

39. Which of the following statements best describes your company’s business? (please tick one)

   A single product or service that accounts for more than 90% of sales ☐
   A number of products and services but one of these accounts for between 70% and 90% of sales ☐
   A number of products and services but no single one of these accounts for more than 70% of sales ☐
   A range of unrelated products and services ☐
   Don’t know ☐
40. Which of the following statements best describes your company’s strategy towards its most important product, service or brand? (please tick one)

- Adapted significantly to national markets
- Adapted to different regions of the world but standardised within them
- Standardised globally
- Don’t know

41. How would you describe the overall growth objectives of your organisation at the time of adopting ETP?

- Get smaller
- Stay the same size
- Grow moderately
- Grow rapidly

42. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements (1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Disagree, 4=Strongly Disagree)

- It is a strategic necessity to use ETP in the workplace
- Competitors’ adoption of ETP places pressure on our organisation to adopt ETP
- Our organisation actively keeps track of new HRD initiatives by competitors

43. Does your company have a HR department? Yes ☑ No ☐

44. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements (1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Disagree, 4=Strongly Disagree)

- All human resource personnel have received ETP training
- There is at least one ETP expert in the organisation
- Human resources personnel’s understanding of ETP is good compared with other organisations in the industry
45. Do you have a recognised trade union(s) in your organisation? Yes ☐ No ☐

46. How many people does your organisation employ? _______________________

47. How many days formal training per year does each employee receive?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Category</th>
<th>Average number of days formal training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semi skilled/unskilled</td>
<td>0 ☐ &lt;1 day ☐ 1-3 days ☐ 4-7 days ☐ 8-12 days ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors</td>
<td>0 ☐ &lt;1 day ☐ 1-3 days ☐ 4-7 days ☐ 8-12 days ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft/Technician</td>
<td>0 ☐ &lt;1 day ☐ 1-3 days ☐ 4-7 days ☐ 8-12 days ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical/Admin</td>
<td>0 ☐ &lt;1 day ☐ 1-3 days ☐ 4-7 days ☐ 8-12 days ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional/technical specialists</td>
<td>0 ☐ &lt;1 day ☐ 1-3 days ☐ 4-7 days ☐ 8-12 days ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Management</td>
<td>0 ☐ &lt;1 day ☐ 1-3 days ☐ 4-7 days ☐ 8-12 days ☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

48. As a percentage of payroll, how much does your company spend on training annually?

<0.5% ☐ 0.5%-1% ☐ >1%-%<2% ☐ >2%-%<4% ☐ >5% ☐

49. Has your company ever received the IITD training awards? Yes ☐ No ☐

50. Has your company ever received the CIPD training awards? Yes ☐ No ☐

51. Do you have any other comments?
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire

265
Appendix G: Nonadopter Questionnaire

SECTION A ORGANISATION’S NON ADOPTION OF EXCELLENCE THROUGH PEOPLE (ETP)

1. Are you aware of the FÁS excellence Through People standard? Yes☐ No☐

   If you answered NO to question 1 please SKIP to question 3

2. How did you first become aware of ETP? (Please tick one)

   FÁS ☐
   CIPD ☐
   Enterprise Ireland ☐
   IITD ☐
   County Enterprise Board ☐ Please specify
   Media Advertising ☐
   Other Employers ☐
   Don’t Remember ☐
   Other ☐ Please specify

3. Has your organisation ever been involved with ETP? Yes☐ No☐

   If you answered NO to question 3 please SKIP to question 5

4. For what reason(s) did you cease involvement with ETP? (Please rank the top 3 reasons)

   No benefit to the organisation ☐
   Too expensive ☐
   Pursuing other standards instead ☐
   Systems have slipped and it would be too difficult to get back to the standard ☐
   Pursuing other standards instead ☐
   Change in management ☐
   Too time consuming ☐
   Too bureaucratic ☐
   Other ☐ Please specify

266
5. Is your organisation considering adopting ETP in the future? Yes ☐ No ☐

If you answered NO to question 5 please SKIP to question 11

6. How likely is it that your organisation will adopt ETP? (Please tick one)

- Almost Certain ☐
- Very Likely ☐
- Possibly ☐
- Fairly Unlikely ☐
- Highly Unlikely ☐
- Don’t Know ☐

7. Who within your organisation will decide on whether to adopt ETP? (Tick all that apply)

- Head Office ☐
- Owner Manager ☐
- CEO ☐
- Director ☐
- HR Manager ☐
- T&D Specialist ☐
- Line Manager ☐
- Other ☐ Please specify

8. To what extent did the following factors influence the decision to apply for ETP? (Please rank the top 3 reasons)

- To formalise HR systems ☐
- To assist in staff recruitment and retention ☐
- To improve perception of company as employer ☐
- To improve training and development ☐
- To improve business performance ☐
- To increase customer satisfaction ☐
- Part of company’s HR strategy ☐
- External Benchmark ☐
- Other ☐ Please specify ☐
9. To what extent did the following bodies influence the decision to apply for ETP? (Please rank the top 3)

- FÁS
- Irish Institute of Training and Development
- Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
- Best company to work for competition
- Industry/Professional body
- Enterprise Ireland
- County Enterprise Board
- Consulting Firm
- Other

10. To what extent did following types of organisation influence the decision to apply for ETP? (Please rank the top three reasons)

- Organisations which you consider successful have ETP
- Organisations which you consider prestigious have ETP
- Organisations in the same geographic area have ETP
- Organisations in the same industrial sector have ETP
- Organisations with which your firm has ownership ties have ETP
- Similar size organisations have ETP
- Competitors have ETP
- Customers have ETP
- Suppliers have ETP
- Other

11. Why has your organisation decided not to adopt ETP? (Tick all that apply)

- We already have efficient training practices
- Company too small
- We do not know enough about ETP
- ETP is too time consuming
- ETP is too bureaucratic
- We do not do any training
- ETP would supply any benefit to the organisation
- ETP is not compatible to the industry
- Other

Please specify
### SECTION B ORGANISATIONAL AND STANDARD AFFILIATIONS

12. Does your organisation have any of the following standards either currently or previously? *(Tick all that apply)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Currently</th>
<th>Previously</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ISO series of standards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFQM/Business Excellence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hygiene Mark</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Q Mark</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDA Approval</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investors in People</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six Sigma</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Health and Safety Management System</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- OHSAS 18001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal accreditation system</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best company to work for in Ireland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry Specific Standard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. Does your organisation intend attaining any of the following standards in the future? *(Tick all that apply)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Currently</th>
<th>Previously</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ISO series of standards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFQM/Business Excellence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hygiene Mark</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Q Mark</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDA Approval</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investors in People</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six Sigma</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Health and Safety Management System</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- OHSAS 18001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal accreditation system</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best company to work for in Ireland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry Specific Standard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. Does the organisation use formal benchmarking to assess its performance?
   Yes [ ]  No [ ]
If you answered **NO** to question 14 please **SKIP** to question 16

15. What does the organisation benchmark against? (Tick all that apply)

- Industry sector averages
- Competitors
- Successful companies in industrial sector
- Prestigious companies in industrial sector
- Successful companies outside industrial sector
- Prestigious companies outside industrial sector
- Other *Please specify*

16. Does the organisation pay attention to the HRD practices of other companies?  
   Yes [ ] No [ ]

If you answered **NO** to question 16 please **SKIP** to question 18

17. How important are the following types of organisations in determining which HRD practices are implemented in this company? (1=Very important, 2=Important, 3=Not Very Important, 4=Not important)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Organisation</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competitors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisations which you consider prestigious</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisations which you consider successful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisations in the industrial sector</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisations in the geographic area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisations with which your firm has ownership ties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisations of the same size</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. Is your company involved with any of the following organisations (*Tick all that apply*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Currently</th>
<th>Previously</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Firms Association (SFA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Small and Medium Enterprises (ISME)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Development Authority (IDA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprise Ireland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Sector Body</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Enterprise Board</td>
<td></td>
<td>Please specify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td></td>
<td>Please specify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Business Networks</td>
<td></td>
<td>Please specify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>Please specify</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

270
SECTION C  FÁS

19. Does your company avail of FÁS services? Yes☐ No☐

If you answered NO to question 19 please SKIP to question 21

20. Which of the following FÁS services does your company avail of? (Tick all that apply)

Recruitment Services ☐
Small Firms Cluster Programme ☐
Competency Development Programme ☐
One Step up ☐
Jobs Ireland ☐
Disability Awareness Training Programme ☐
EURES European Placement System ☐
eCollege ☐
Apprenticeship or Traineeship Programme ☐ Please specify
Other ☐ Please specify

21. Does your organisation receive training grants from FÁS? Yes☐ No☐

If you answered NO to question 26 please SKIP to question 28

22. How much do these training grants amount to annually?

< €5000 ☐ €5000-€9000 ☐ €10,000-€14,000 ☐ €15,000-€20,000 ☐
>€20,000 ☐

23. Does your company supply FÁS with goods or services? Yes☐ No☐

If you answered NO to question 23 please SKIP to question 25

24. Please rate the importance of FÁS as a customer to your company. (1=Very Important, 2=Important, 3=Not Very Important, 4=Not Important)

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐
SECTION D  PROFILE OF PERSON WITH PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

25. Gender:  Male [ ]  Female [ ]

26. To what age group do you belong?

Under 30 [ ]
30-39 [ ]
40-49 [ ]
50-59 [ ]
60+ [ ]

27. What is the highest level of qualifications you have attained?

Secondary [ ]
Certificate [ ]
Diploma [ ]
Primary Degree [ ]
Post Graduate Degree [ ]
Other [ ] Please specify

28. What is your position within the organisation?

Owner [ ]
CEO [ ]
Director [ ]
HR Manager [ ]
T&D Specialist [ ]
Line Manager [ ]
Other [ ] Please specify

29. Are you a member of a professional association?  Yes [ ]  No [ ]

If you answered NO to question 34 please SKIP to question 36

30. What professional association are you a member of and for how many years?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional association</th>
<th>Number of years membership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CIPD [ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IITD [ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry body [ ]</td>
<td>[ ] Please specify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other [ ]</td>
<td>[ ] Please specify</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
31. Have you worked in another organisation that was:

Excellence Through People accredited  Yes ☐  No ☐
Investors in People accredited  Yes ☐  No ☐

SECTION E COMPANY PROFILE

32. What is your organisation’s main business activity?

Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing  ☐
Food, Drink & Tobacco  ☐
Engineering  ☐
Printing, Publishing & Paper Products  ☐
Electronics  ☐
Construction  ☐
Wholesale Trade  ☐
Retail Trade  ☐
Travel and Tourism  ☐
Other  ☐  Please specify

33. In relation to ownership in which of the following categories does your company belong?

Irish Owned  ☐
US Owned  ☐
UK Owned  ☐
European Owned  ☐
Other  ☐  Please specify

34. What is the legal status of your organisation?

Private Company  ☐
Semi-state  ☐
State Body  ☐
Trust/Friendly Society/Co-operative  ☐
Other  ☐  Please specify
35. What is the organisational status of your company?

- Headquarters
- Subsidiary
- Branch
- Independent/Single Site
- Franchised Site
- Other Please specify

36. Are the CEO/directors of your company board member(s) of other companies?

- Yes
- No
- Don’t Know

37. In what town/city is your company located? ____________________________

38. What year did your company start trading? ______________________________

39. How important are the following items in determining the business strategy of this company? (1=Very Important, 2=Important, 3=Not Very Important, 4=Not Important)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To improve the quality of product or service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To develop innovative product(s)/service(s)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To switch quickly between production of different product/service requirements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To produce products/services for the higher-priced segments of the market</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To develop new techniques and methods to market our products</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To penetrate/develop new markets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To provide products at prices below those of competitors’ prices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost containment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Please specify</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
40. Which of the following statements best describes your company’s business? (Please tick one)

A single product or service that accounts for more than 90% of sales
A number of products and services but one of these accounts for between 70% and 90% of sales
A number of products and services but no single one of these accounts for more than 70% of sales
A range of unrelated products and services
Don’t know

41. Which of the following statements best describes your company’s strategy towards its most important product, service or brand? (Please tick one)

Adapted significantly to national markets
Adapted to different regions of the world but standardised within them
Standardised globally
Don’t know

42. How would you describe the overall growth objectives of your organisation at the time of adopting ETP?

Get smaller
Stay the same size
Grow moderately
Grow rapidly

43. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements (1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Disagree 4=Strongly Disagree)

It is a strategic necessity to use ETP in the workplace
Competitors’ adoption of ETP places pressure on our organisation to adopt ETP
Our organisation actively keeps track of new HRD initiatives by competitors
44. Does your company have a HR department?  Yes ☐  No ☐

45. Do you have a recognised trade union(s) in your organisation? Yes ☐  No ☐

46. How many people does your organisation employ? _______________________

47. How many days formal training per year does each employee receive?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Category</th>
<th>Average number of days formal training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semi skilled/unskilled Supervisors</td>
<td>0 ☐ &lt;1 day ☐ 1-3 days ☐ 4-7 days ☐ 8-12 days ☐ Total: 0 ☐ &lt;1 day ☐ 1-3 days ☐ 4-7 days ☐ 8-12 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors</td>
<td>0 ☐ &lt;1 day ☐ 1-3 days ☐ 4-7 days ☐ 8-12 days ☐ Total: 0 ☐ &lt;1 day ☐ 1-3 days ☐ 4-7 days ☐ 8-12 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft/Technician</td>
<td>0 ☐ &lt;1 day ☐ 1-3 days ☐ 4-7 days ☐ 8-12 days ☐ Total: 0 ☐ &lt;1 day ☐ 1-3 days ☐ 4-7 days ☐ 8-12 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical/Admin</td>
<td>0 ☐ &lt;1 day ☐ 1-3 days ☐ 4-7 days ☐ 8-12 days ☐ Total: 0 ☐ &lt;1 day ☐ 1-3 days ☐ 4-7 days ☐ 8-12 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional/technical specialists</td>
<td>0 ☐ &lt;1 day ☐ 1-3 days ☐ 4-7 days ☐ 8-12 days ☐ Total: 0 ☐ &lt;1 day ☐ 1-3 days ☐ 4-7 days ☐ 8-12 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Management</td>
<td>0 ☐ &lt;1 day ☐ 1-3 days ☐ 4-7 days ☐ 8-12 days ☐ Total: 0 ☐ &lt;1 day ☐ 1-3 days ☐ 4-7 days ☐ 8-12 days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

48. As a percentage of payroll, how much does your company spend on training annually?

<0.5% ☐  0.5%-1% ☐  >1%-%<2% ☐  >2%-%<4% ☐  >5% ☐

49. Has your company ever received the IITD training awards? Yes ☐  No ☐

50. Has your company ever received the CIPD training awards? Yes ☐  No ☐

51. Do you have any other comments?
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire
Appendix H: Cover email to respondents

Dear Respondent,

My name is Aileen Murphy and I am a lecturer in Waterford Institute of Technology. I am currently undertaking a PhD in the University of Limerick under the supervision of Professor Thomas Garavan. Our research investigates factors influencing the adoption and diffusion of the FÁS training standard called “Excellence Through People”.

I would greatly appreciate if you could take a few minutes to fill out the attached questionnaire. Completed questionnaires can be returned to amurphy@wit.ie All replies are confidential. Should you wish to hear more about this research or its findings please drop me an email.

Many thanks for your assistance with our research,

Aileen Murphy,
Lecturer,
Department of Languages, Tourism and Hospitality,
Waterford Institute of Technology,
Cork Road,
Waterford.
E mail: amurphy@wit.ie