

From Activity to Impact: Evaluating the Role of Learning and Development in Driving Organizational Performance in Nigerian Organizations

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Article History	Abstract
Original Research Article	<p><i>This study examines the role of Learning and Development (L&D) in driving organizational performance, with a specific focus on Nigerian organizations. In recent years, there has been a growing shift from activity-based evaluation of training programs to outcome-driven performance models, requiring organizations to demonstrate the tangible impact of L&D initiatives. Despite increased investment in employee training, many organizations continue to face challenges in aligning learning interventions with business objectives and measuring their effectiveness. This study adopts a qualitative approach, relying on secondary data from academic literature, industry reports, and professional insights to explore the relationship between L&D and organizational performance.</i></p> <p><i>The findings reveal that while L&D has the potential to enhance employee productivity, engagement, and overall organizational effectiveness, its impact is often limited by factors such as inadequate training needs assessment, lack of structured evaluation frameworks, weak strategic alignment, and limited management support. The study further identifies emerging best practices, including the adoption of data-driven learning strategies, integration of digital technologies, and the promotion of continuous learning cultures, as critical to improving the effectiveness of L&D initiatives. The study concludes that for L&D to serve as a true driver of organizational performance, it must be repositioned as a strategic function with a clear focus on measurable outcomes. It recommends that organizations adopt performance-based evaluation models, strengthen leadership involvement, and build HR capacity in measuring learning impact.</i></p> <p>Keywords: Learning and Development, Organizational Performance, Human Resource Management, Employee Productivity, Nigeria, HR Strategy.</p>
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Introduction

Over the course of the last few decades, the function of Human Resource Management (HRM) has undergone a considerable transformation, transitioning from a role that was primarily focused on personnel and administration to one that is now a strategic partner in the success of the organization. As a result of this transformation, Learning and Development (L&D) has evolved into an essential instrument for businesses to enhance the capabilities of their employees, encourage innovation, and preserve their edge over their competitors. Due to the fact that the global business landscape is becoming more knowledge-oriented and dynamic, businesses are required to make investments in continuous learning systems in order to equip their

employees with the skills and competencies that are relevant to their jobs.

Throughout the course of its existence, learning and development (L&D) has been considered a supplementary function that largely focuses on the planning of training sessions, workshops, and seminars. It was common practice to evaluate success using activity-based metrics, such as the number of training programs that were carried out, the percentage of participants, or the number of hours that were devoted to training. Despite the fact that these indicators provide useful administrative data, they do not fully reflect the impact that learning interventions actually have on the

performance of the organization. A huge mismatch has emerged as a consequence of this, between learning and development programs and the tangible effects those initiatives have had on productivity, efficiency, and overall business success.

In recent times, there has been a shift away from performance monitoring that is centred on outcomes and toward assessment that is related to activities. It is becoming increasingly common for organisations to demand that learning and development operations produce quantitative value by establishing a correlation between learning activities and key performance metrics. These indicators include staff productivity, job performance, innovation, and the growth of the organization. The transformation that has taken place is a comprehensive evolution in Human Resource Management, which places an emphasis not only on activities and processes, but also on measurable outcomes and strategic influence. According to Garavan et al.'s research from 2020, learning and development is no longer considered a supplementary activity but rather a potential driver of efficiency within an organization.

In spite of the growing recognition, a great number of organisations, particularly those located in developing nations such as Nigeria, continue to struggle with demonstrating that their learning and development initiatives are effective. According to Hendrawan et al. (2024), there are instances in which training programs are carried out without a full awareness of the requirements of the organization or with an adequate integration with the goals of the business. As a result of this misalignment, general training programs are usually implemented, which do not effectively target individual performance issues. The consequence of this is that businesses see a decrease in the returns on their investments in training, which in turn encourages corporate leaders to have a negative attitude about the effectiveness of learning and development techniques.

The organisational environment in Nigeria presents a number of challenges that make learning and development less effective than it would otherwise be. Inadequate assessment of training needs, inadequate alignment of human resource strategies with organisational objectives, and a lack of rigorous frameworks for evaluating learning results are some of the obstacles. Other constraints include limited financial and technological resources. Furthermore, a large number of organisations continue to operate within traditional HR frameworks, viewing training as a routine duty rather than a strategic investment on their part. This not only puts a limit on the influence that learning and development can have, but it also reduces its ability to dramatically improve the performance of the organization.

A big obstacle is the difficulty in estimating the return on investment (ROI) of learning and development (L&D) programs. This is an issue that is substantial. According to Link et al. (2022), the effects of learning are typically indirect and prolonged, in contrast to the implications of other business processes, which can be easily quantified after they have occurred. Consequently, this makes it more difficult for human resources professionals to provide conclusive evidence about the effectiveness of training programs. As a consequence of this, a great number of companies rely on superficial measures that do not truly depict the positive influence that learning and development has on the success of the organization. This problem is made worse by the absence of robust evaluation systems, which makes it more difficult to track progress, identify areas of weakness, and implement improvements.

Recent developments, on the other hand, point to a progressive shift toward learning and development techniques that are more strategic and influenced by data (Nyathani, 2023). The implementation of performance-based evaluation systems, which place an emphasis on results rather than activities, is becoming increasingly common in organisations. According to Eden et al. (2024), there is a rising emphasis on the linking of educational activities with organisational strategy, the use of technology to enhance the delivery of learning, and the promotion of a culture that places an emphasis on continuous learning. These developments indicate that there is a growing realisation of the necessity to re-establish learning and development as a vital catalyst for the performance of the organization, rather than merely a performing function that provides support.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the impact that Learning and Development has on the performance of businesses, particularly those that are located in Nigeria. The research investigates the degree to which learning and development programs are aligned with the objectives of the company, analyses the primary challenges that hamper the success of these programs, and highlights creative techniques that have the potential to amplify the impact of these programs. For the purpose of elucidating how learning and development (L&D) could improve worker competence and organisational outcomes, the study makes use of previously published material and professional perspectives.

Additionally, this research makes a contribution to the ongoing discussion regarding the strategic significance of human resource management in contemporary organisations (Mahadevan & Schmitz, 2020). It emphasises the importance for businesses to utilise more systematic and evidence-based learning techniques by highlighting the change from activity-based learning and development to

impact-driven learning and development. Consequently, it highlights the importance of integrating learning and development into the broader plans of an organization. This will ensure that learning interventions are both methodically developed and aligned with the objectives of the business.

According to the findings of the study, human resource professionals and executives in organisations can benefit from its practical implications. In order to accomplish this, it is necessary to shift one's viewpoint from viewing training as an expense to viewing it as a strategic investment that has the potential to generate big advantages. This demands the construction of thorough evaluation procedures, improved coordination between human resources and other business divisions, and increased participation from leadership in learning programs. It is possible for businesses to improve the effectiveness of their learning and development activities and achieve sustainable performance increases if they are able to resolve these challenges.

The significance of learning and development in the modern-day environment of organisations is of the utmost importance. In a time that is characterised by rapid advancements in technology, globalisation, and shifting expectations for the performance of workers, the ability to learn and adapt has emerged as an essential component for achieving success. According to Garavan et al. (2024), business organisations that fail to make investments in efficient learning systems put their competitive standing in jeopardy. On the other hand, organisations that implement strategic learning and development are more likely to thrive in an environment that is highly competitive.

The purpose of this study is to examine the concept of Learning and Development as a strategic requirement for the growth and sustainability of an organization, rather than merely as an operational activity. Establishing a basis for reevaluating how companies create, execute, and evaluate their learning and development programs within Nigeria and beyond is made possible by the establishment of a connection between learning initiatives and performance objectives.

Literature Review

Learning and Development (L&D)

Learning and Development (L&D) is progressively becoming a crucial element of modern human resource management. It prioritises the augmentation of employees' knowledge, skills, and competencies to improve the organization's operational efficacy (Hazaparu et al., 2025). This encompasses a variety of planned and unstructured activities, including formal training programs, workshops, coaching, mentorship, and ongoing professional

development initiatives. Experiential learning, digital platforms, and workplace-based learning systems exemplify contemporary learning and development (L&D) tactics that encourage individuals to persist in acquiring new skills (Mkhize & Reddy, 2025). These complement the conventional methods of learning and growth.

Scholarly perspectives contend that learning and development (L&D) should not be confined to discrete training events; instead, it ought to be integrated into the organisational culture as a continuous and intentional activity. This transition indicates that a growing number of individuals recognise that businesses function in highly dynamic environments, necessitating adaptability and innovation. Consequently, learning and development are vital to provide employees with the necessary competencies to address evolving market demands, rising technologies, and competition.

Learning and development is increasingly viewed as a proactive endeavour that anticipates future skill needs rather than simply addressing current deficiencies. This forward-looking strategy perceives learning as a catalyst for change, empowering firms to develop workforces that are resilient and adaptive. This strategy posits that learning and development (L&D) enhances both individual employee growth and the organization's long-term performance and sustainability (Mustafa & Lleshi, 2024).

Organizational Performance

Organisational performance is how well an organization meets its goals and objectives in a timely and effective way (Akpa et al., 2021). Historically, performance assessment has relied on financial metrics including profitability, revenue growth, and return on investment (Indraswono, 2021). Nevertheless, modern methodologies embrace a more comprehensive viewpoint that includes both financial and non-financial indicators.

Non-financial measures such as employee engagement, customer happiness, innovation, and operational efficiency are increasingly acknowledged as essential factors influencing organisational performance (Kotane & Kuzmina-Merlino, 2011). This wider view shows that intangible assets, especially human capital, are very important for getting good results. The abilities, expertise, and attitudes of employees have a direct effect on how productive they are, how good their service is, and how well the company can adapt to change.

In this setting, organisational performance is not just determined by structural or technological considerations; it is profoundly influenced by the skills and dedication of the personnel. As a result, investments in developing human capital, especially through L&D programs, are considered as necessary for improving overall performance and staying

ahead of the competition (Hoichuk & Lyubomudrova, 2024).

L & D and Organizational Performance Nexus

Human resource and organisational studies have looked into the link between Learning and Development and how well an organization does. Consistent empirical data indicates that well-structured and efficiently executed learning and development projects can result in substantial enhancements in employee productivity, job performance, and the overall effectiveness of the business.

Training programs that are in line with the goals of the company help employees learn the skills and knowledge they need, which closes performance gaps and makes things run more smoothly (Tanima, 2023). Furthermore, L&D programs enhance employee motivation and engagement, as individuals who recognise chances for growth and development are more inclined to exhibit elevated levels of commitment and job satisfaction.

Even if these benefits are possible, it is hard to find a clear and measurable correlation between L&D activities and performance outcomes. A lot of businesses still use input-based metrics, such as how many training sessions were held or how many people took part, which don't really show how learning interventions really worked. This has caused continuous arguments about whether training programs are worth the money and how much L&D helps a company succeed.

Learning outcomes are hard to measure since they are indirect and long-term (Staus et al., 2021). Changes in behaviour, performance, and organisational outcomes may not be immediately evident, complicating the direct attribution of changes to specific learning and development programs. This shows that we need stronger, outcome-based evaluation frameworks that can accurately measure how learning affects how well an organization does.

L&D in the Nigerian Context

In Nigeria, the efficiency of Learning and Development is affected by a number of structural, economic, and organisational issues. Many businesses don't have enough resources to create and carry out full training programs. Budgetary constraints frequently lead to diminished investment in employee development (Demmke, 2017), whereas insufficient access to contemporary learning technologies hinders the implementation of novel training methodologies.

Another big problem is that there isn't a systematic way to figure out what training needs are. In a lot of cases, L&D programs are put into place without a full understanding of the exact abilities needed to solve problems at work. Because of this, training programs are often too general and

don't fit with the employees' jobs or the organization's long-term goals. As a result, these kinds of interventions have very little effect on performance.

Also, the connection between L&D and the organization's strategy is typically weak (Wardhani et al., 2025). Some companies understand how important it is to help their employees grow, but they don't always make sure that learning programs are in line with the company's overall goals. This gap makes L&D less strategically important and makes people think of training as a normal part of work rather than a necessary investment.

The situation is made worse by the lack of organised procedures for monitoring and evaluating. Organisations can't tell how well their training programs are working or make data-driven decisions to make them better if they don't have clear metrics and ways to give feedback. This lack of responsibility makes things less efficient and diminishes the overall effect of L&D on how well the organization does (Iroha et al., 2024).

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Human Capital Theory, which provides a foundational framework for understanding the relationship between Learning and Development and organisational success. This idea says that spending money on education, training, and skill development makes people more productive and adds value to the economy, which helps businesses succeed.

From this perspective, employees are seen as valuable assets whose abilities may be improved by deliberate investment in educational programs. By improving employees' skills and knowledge, businesses can become more efficient, encourage new ideas, and gain a long-term competitive edge. This backs up the main point of the study, which is that L&D is strategically important for improving the performance of an organization.

Human Capital Theory stresses the importance of aligning investment decisions with expected outcomes. In the field of L&D, this means that training programs need to be created and evaluated based on how well they can show measurable improvements in performance. Companies that use this technique are more likely to get the most out of their investment in people.

The method stresses the need to keep learning and changing in a world that is changing quickly. As businesses face more and more complicated and unstable situations, the ability to develop and use their human capital becomes an important aspect in their success. This backs up the claim that Learning and Development should be seen as a strategic function that directly improves how well an organization works.

Approach

This study employed a qualitative research methodology to examine the influence of Learning and Development (L&D) on organisational performance within Nigerian entities. The qualitative method is considered appropriate as it enables an extensive examination of existing knowledge, perspectives, and practices regarding L&D and its impact on performance results. The research underscores the analysis of patterns, themes, and insights derived from existing literature and professional discourse rather than depending on quantitative data. The research employs data sourced from secondary materials, including academic journals, industry reports, textbooks, and various professional publications in Human Resource Management. These works provide a thorough and reliable foundation for understanding both the theoretical and practical dimensions of L&D.

The data collection comprised a methodical review of relevant literature, emphasising the identification of principal themes, persistent issues, and gaps in the existing knowledge base, particularly within the Nigerian context. The study employs thematic analysis as its data analysis method, enabling the organization and interpretation of material into meaningful categories. This method identified and rigorously examined patterns related to the alignment of learning and development (L&D) with organisational objectives, factors affecting its effectiveness, and the emergence of best practices. This analytical technique ensures that the outcomes are consistent, contextually relevant, and capable of supporting informed decisions on the strategic role of L&D in enhancing organisational performance.

Discussion

The examination of current literature indicates a notable transformation in organisational perceptions and assessments of Learning and Development (L&D). Historically, the performance of Learning and Development (L&D) was evaluated using activity-based measures, including the quantity of training sessions held, attendance rates, and hours of engagement. Nonetheless, these indicators have demonstrated inadequacy in accurately reflecting the true value of educational initiatives. Modern organisations are progressively embracing outcome-oriented strategies that emphasise the influence of learning and development on employee performance, productivity, and overall organisational success. Despite this transition, numerous Nigerian organisations continue to function inside the conventional model, thereby constraining the strategic impact of Learning and Development. An essential determinant of efficacy is the extent of alignment between L&D activities

and organisational objectives (Bangura & Lourens, 2025). When alignment is present, training programs typically target specific performance deficiencies and significantly enhance corporate results. Conversely, misplaced initiatives frequently lead to resource wastage and negligible impact. Moreover, obstacles such as insufficient training needs assessment, minimal leadership engagement, budget limitations, and the lack of systematic evaluation frameworks persistently impede the efficacy of Learning and Development in numerous organisations (Zajac et al., 2021).

Despite these limitations, the study identifies new best practices that are progressively transforming L&D into a strategic performance driver. Organisations are progressively adopting data-driven learning methodologies that facilitate the assessment of training needs, the monitoring of progress, and the evaluation of outcomes with more efficacy. The incorporation of digital technology, such as e-learning platforms and virtual training tools, has enhanced accessibility and flexibility, rendering continuous learning more attainable (Huda, 2024). Moreover, there is an increasing focus on cultivating a culture of continuous learning, when employees are urged to enhance their skills consistently rather than depending exclusively on intermittent training sessions. Leadership engagement has been recognised as a crucial success component (Hussain et al., 2023), as organisations that actively involve management in learning and development efforts typically attain superior outcomes. These developments underscore the necessity for HR professionals to reframe L&D as a strategic role, emphasising measurable effect and linking learning efforts with organisational objectives to improve overall performance.

Conclusion

This study has analysed the impact of Learning and Development (L&D) on organisational performance, focusing specifically on the Nigerian environment. The findings indicate that while Learning and Development (L&D) is increasingly acknowledged as a crucial element of Human Resource Management, its complete potential is still not fully leveraged in several organisations. A significant concern identified is the persistent dependence on activity-based training methodologies, where success is evaluated by participation rates and the quantity of programs conducted, rather than by measurable enhancements in performance. This methodology constrains the strategic significance of L&D and solidifies its image as a cost center rather than a catalyst for organisational expansion.

The report underscores the ongoing misalignment between L&D programs and organisational goals, together with the deficiency of comprehensive assessment frameworks to assess impact. The problems, along with insufficient needs assessment, limited leadership engagement, and resource limitations, diminish the effectiveness of several training programs. The report highlights a steady transition towards more strategic and data-driven methodologies, wherein organisations are increasingly concentrating on outcomes, incorporating technology into learning processes, and fostering continuous development. In conclusion, for L&D to significantly enhance organisational performance, it must be redefined as a strategic role that prioritises impact, alignment, and ongoing improvement inside Nigerian organisations.

Recommendations

1. Organizations should ensure that all Learning and Development (L&D) programs are closely aligned with their strategic objectives. Training interventions must be designed to address specific organizational needs and performance gaps, thereby directly contributing to business goals and overall effectiveness.
2. There is a need to move beyond activity-based metrics and adopt outcome-driven evaluation systems. Organizations should measure the impact of L&D initiatives using key performance indicators such as employee productivity, efficiency, and engagement to determine their real value.
3. Before implementing any training program, organizations should conduct thorough needs assessments to identify actual skill gaps. This will ensure that L&D initiatives are relevant, targeted, and capable of delivering measurable improvements in performance.
4. Active participation and support from leadership are critical to the success of L&D initiatives. Management should not only endorse training programs but also encourage and reinforce the practical application of acquired knowledge and skills within the workplace.
5. Organizations should utilize digital learning technologies to enhance the accessibility and effectiveness of training programs while promoting a culture of continuous learning. Additionally, HR professionals must develop strong competencies in data analysis and performance measurement to effectively evaluate and communicate the impact of L&D initiatives.

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