

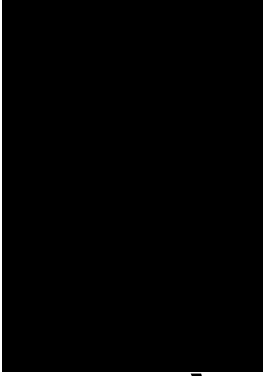
**EXAMINING THE INFLUENCE OF UPSKILLING AND RESKILLING
ON ORGANISATIONAL ADAPTABILITY IN GOVERNMENT
ORGANISATIONS IN ABU DHABI**

Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was conducted in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by a specific reference in the text. No part of this thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other educational institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University of Gloucestershire.

Rabaa Amer Al Amry



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Date: 3rd Oct 2024

DOI 10.46289/YXZP2549

Acknowledgement

I extend my deep gratitude and acknowledgments for the research paper that I am submitting today. I would like to dedicate this research paper to my husband. His patience, courage, and dedication to encourage me to study still serve as a great source of inspiration for me in all that I do.

I acknowledge his influence in my life and his impact on my academic pursuits. This research paper is dedicated to him, which will continue to guide me in all that I do.

I would like to express sincere gratitude to my supervisors Dr. Sandra Schlick and Dr. Douglas Yourston for constant guidance, support, constructive criticism and valuable insights throughout my DBA journey.

Furthermore, I would like to extend my thanks to all those who generously shared their time and knowledge to participate in the interviews. Their contributions have enriched the findings of the research and provided important perspectives on the upskilling and reskilling in the UAE.

Lastly, I would like to thank my extended family for their unwavering love and support, which has been a constant source of strength and inspiration throughout this endeavor.

Thank you all for your assistance in completing this thesis.

Abstract

Research into upskilling and reskilling in the Middle East and from a governmental perspective is limited. Academic studies have ranged from those conducted in North America and Europe, which have provided a rich source of information, but the majority are from the commercial world, and have neglected the public sector. There has also been an acknowledgement that there have been only a few studies conducted in the region, and that the current focus has neglected this sector usage of upskilling and reskilling. Based on the lack of theoretical understanding from an Abu Dhabi public sector perspective, there was a need to initially draw on the researcher's professional experience, then the study was informed by the existing academic knowledge to conduct a qualitative study. Reflecting this existing gap, the aim of this study investigated the influence of upskilling and reskilling on the adaptability of governmental organizations in Abu Dhabi.

The main study using an interpretivist methodology in the form of semi-structured interviews, investigated the experiences and perceptions of 7 human resource experts based in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector. The participants were initially asked to complete a pre-interview protocol which was informed by the current academic debate which was related to achieving organisational adaptability through upskilling and reskilling. The findings of the study were gathered until saturation was reached and then interpreted using a thematic approach.

The study's first key finding is the acknowledgement that there is theoretical and empirical evidence to indicate that the Abu Dhabi governmental sector does use the upskilling and reskilling techniques effectively, however there are some areas of weakness. There was the acknowledgement amongst the human resource experts that the benefits and influence of upskilling and reskilling needed to be carefully reflected on. This included the need to have an emphasis on promoting of employee well-being, using upskilling and reskilling training to address future rather than current skills gaps, and be less reliant on the training needs analysis. The second key finding of the study is that with the emergence of a hybrid online environment, that the learner's individual learning experience needs to reflect this. There was a recognition that external training providers could be used more effectively. The final key finding related to the absence of any established or formalised mentorship scheme. The experts acknowledged the adult learner needed to have the opportunity to practice and reinforce their learning.

In conclusion, this thesis provides a deep and rich conceptual insight, knowledge and understanding for human resource practitioners and academia as to upskilling and reskilling usage to achieve organizational adaptability in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector. The first contribution of the study includes the importance that the human resource experts need to incorporate all facets of upskilling and reskilling including the promotion of the employee's well-being, through to identifying future skills gaps and the usage of external training providers. The second contribution relates to the need for less reliance on a training needs analysis and instead use learning data analytics to assess future training needs. The final contribution is associated with the need for adopting a mentorship program.

Keywords: upskilling, reskilling, organizational adaptability, mentorship

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGES	Attention, Generating, Emotions, Space
AI	Artificial Intelligence
COVID19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
HR	Human Resources
HRM	Human Resource Management
RBV	Resource-Based View
TAMM	Government entity in Abu Dhabi
TNA	Training Needs Analysis
UAE	United Arab Emirates

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the background and the rationale for this professional doctorate which has been informed by the experiences of the researcher. To achieve this, the Chapter will provide an overview of the study together with a rationale for the need to conduct this research project. The chapter will then set out the aim and objectives of the research project, before presenting the remaining chapters of the study. Before proceeding, the chapter will set out the researcher's initial professional reflections, which will be used to inform the study.

1.2 Initial professional reflections and problem statement

I work in an organization which is responsible for the training within all governmental bodies in Abu Dhabi. As a part of this professional experience and background, I am aware of the training practices and outcomes used throughout the sector. This includes the usage of upskilling and reskilling initiatives.

From my professional experience, I have seen that Abu Dhabi governmental bodies have taken employee upskilling and reskilling very seriously. This is demonstrated by the large annual budget allocated, indicating the government's commitment to support the constant development of its employees. I have seen how the human resource teams in these Abu Dhabi governmental bodies have designed, created, and then implemented their training provision. These programs have often been informed by conducting a systematic training needs analysis and drawing on historical performance management data. However, the ultimate decision as to upskilling and reskilling remains the responsibility of the departmental manager.

To emerge more recently in these Abu Dhabi governmental sector has been the increasing usage of new technology and the trend towards more hybrid remote working and learning practices. This has led me to identify areas in which upskilling and reskilling programs may not be as effective, or not being recognized as to its full potential. For example, with adult learners, the individual while being trained to acquire a new skill set, also needs the opportunity to practice this knowledge,

and therefore needs this facilitated. There also seems to be a more reactive usage of upskilling and reskilling as opposed to projecting forward to determine future training needs. Finally, the researcher has identified that possibly some of the decisions as to upskilling and reskilling are informed by the operational and departmental manager using the training needs analysis rather than using more data driven analytics.

1.3 Overview of the study

From the outset, this study has been informed and influenced by the researcher's professional background of working in the Abu Dhabi government department responsible for upskilling and reskilling to achieve adaptability within this sector. Based on the observations and reflections of the researcher, the study will focus on whether upskilling and reskilling initiatives in the Abu Dhabi government sector have been effectively used and understood. Part of the motivation of the researcher has been to determine whether the Abu Dhabi government is meeting the UAE's focus on the Future of Work initiative which is focused on ensuring the country's workforce is prepared for the challenges of the future.

To emerge from the researcher's initial observations and reflections has been whether the current human resource practices are designed to identify whether upskilling and reskilling is used to proactively enable employees to gain the necessary skills and knowledge, therefore achieving organizational adaptability? As a theme, organisational adaptability can be seen as to how the workforce is able to respond to changes and new opportunities, whereby avoiding possible crises by being prepared through being proactive (Mutebi et al., 2020). Therefore, organisational adaptability is the ability for an organisation to realise the need for change and then be prepared to adapt to the changing environment (Abukhait et al., 2020; Karman, 2019). In changing and adapting means that the workforce therefore must have the skills and knowledge to be adaptive, therefore able to meet the customer or community needs. However, to become adaptive, the organisation needs to have strategies in place to create and promote an agile working environment, through which a continuous creative and innovative workplace can be cultivated. This may include enabling the workforce to have transferable skills, or alternately the organization may be forced to hire new adaptable people with the correct skills (Abukhait et al., 2020; Karman, 2019). But the question which this study intends to understand is how the Abu Dhabi governmental sector is achieving organizational adaptability, as currently there is limited

research which has been conducted in the Middle East, and even less on how governmental entities are achieving organizational adaptability.

With upskilling and reskilling, these two training initiatives have emerged as potential strategies to enable an organization to achieve organisational adaptability. However, to date most of the research has been focused on the commercial sector, and less on governmental organizations. Upskilling involves the improving of the skills and capabilities of employees through conducting learning and development programs. These programs can be conducted in house or externally depending on the organization's training strategy (Agha, 2022). The concept of upskilling occurs when employees gain new skills, abilities or upgrade their current knowledge base. In contrast, reskilling refers to developing employees to learn new skills beyond their existing knowledge or competences, to meet future needs. Therefore, in reskilling, employees acquire new information, skills, and abilities, so they can perform work in other areas different from their existing expertise.

Both upskilling and reskilling are the responsibility of the human resource department. However, through the researcher's professional observations, while the human resource department are responsible for identifying the gaps in the existing and future skills and expertise within the workforce, often these initiatives are in response to current gaps and potentially not for future organizational needs. This led the researcher to question whether upskilling and reskilling initiatives are effectively meeting the governmental sector's goal for organisational adaptability. There are also the benefits associated with upskilling and reskilling which can enable employees to be prepared to respond to changes while motivating the individual to recognize the organization's commitment to them (Deepa et al., 2021). In achieving this, the workforce can meet the challenges of the future, while perceiving that the organization is committed to their own professional development and career. This can lead to a reduction in lower levels of staff turnover, while potentially improving the employee's well-being, which can exist when there are organizational changes. Again, the outcome can lead to the employees having a profound and positive effect on their holistic well-being, fostering a sense of professional development and expertise. Ultimately, there can be an enhanced level of job satisfaction and increased self-assurance, through the reduction of stress and tension in the workplace. However, while clearly important, from the researcher's professional perspective the theme of employee well-being may

be a topic which has been neglected or overseen by the Abu Dhabi governmental entities and the human resource team.

Finally, the researcher has also seen that while there was potential evidence to indicate that the workforce in the Dhahi governmental sector is being upskilled and reskilled, there may be strategies which are not being effectively used. This includes whether the learning strategies are reflective of the adult employee's learning style, how are the upskilling and reskilling programs informed and by who, and finally, to what extent has the emergence of the hybrid workplace impacted on the employee?

1.4 Research context

The theoretical background and context of this study which is focused on upskilling and reskilling of employees working in Abu Dhabi governmental entities, is in response to the need for businesses or organizations to be more adaptable to change (Kodama, 2019). Part of the rationale for this study is based on the recent Abu Dhabi government's activities for adopting an upskilling and reskilling strategies to address the potential skill shortages in the UAE, but also to ensure that the workforce is fully prepared to meet future challenges. This initiative has been partly informed and driven by the recent introduction of TAMM. TAMM, which translates from Arabic to be 'consider it done' has been designed to provide guidance to all governmental services as to delivering future services to the community. This TAMM or 'consider it done' ethos represents the intention of the sector as to how it provides superior customer service through meeting the community's future needs. To achieve this, the Abu Dhabi government has introduced service centres with the state-of-the-art unified digital ecosystem encompassing all its government departments and services including healthcare, housing, education, and in the case of this study the Department of Finance.

From the perspective of this study, the introduction of TAMM along with the UAEs Future of Work initiative has resulted in the training department which services all governmental departments, needing to provide upskilling and reskilling programmes based on their individual entity's needs. For the researcher who works in the training department, the TAMM platform has assisted in providing a comprehensive overview of the budgetary needs and training requirements for each entity, so that the upskilling and reskilling programmes can be devised to meet the future needs for each governmental department. The value of TAMM to the researcher's department and

this research project, lies in its ability to identify the number of public sector entities requiring their employees to be upskilled and reskilled, by determining which programs and resources are needed to meet these needs. As a result of this, TAMM has been used in this study as a vehicle to inform the project as to identifying potential participants and gatekeepers who are experts in the field of upskilling and reskilling, which will be presented in Chapter Three, section 3.7.2.

Like any organisation, for the Abu Dhabi government, there are challenges which are both internal and external, which has led to the need for human resource management to utilise more adaptable strategies to address the challenges associated with the changing environment by being more adaptable and flexible in their operational activities (Akhtar, 2018; Muddaha et al., 2018). Therefore, organisations including in the Abu Dhabi governmental entities need to ensure through its human resource activities that the workforce possess the necessary skills (Waxin & Bateman, 2016). Part of this change can be gained through the development of existing employee skill sets to enable and enhance their capabilities of adapting to the changes (Shela et al., 2021; Barasa et al., 2018). From a professional perspective and drawing on the researcher's role in the Abu Dhabi government responsible for the administration of employee training, one of the main reasons for the study was identified early on, was as to whether the current human resource policies for upskilling and reskilling are effectively preparing employees in the Abu Dhabi governmental service to be ready for future changes, and what criteria is used to determine the effectiveness of these programmes. To address these themes and questions, the central aim of the study is present below:

1.5 The Aim of the Study

Being focused on upskilling and reskilling of employees working in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector, the central premise of the research project is based on understanding the perceptions and experiences of human resource experts as to the need for the organization's adaptability to change through upskilling and reskilling. Therefore, to achieve this, the aim of the study is: *to investigate the influence of upskilling and reskilling on the adaptability of governmental organizations in Abu Dhabi.*

1.6 Research objectives

To achieve this aim, the study set out to achieve the following research objectives:

Research objective one

- Related to the literature review as presented in Chapter Two, to critically identify and present the current academic debate and theory associated with the usage of upskilling and reskilling training initiatives.

Research objective two

- Related to the methodology as presented in Chapter Three: to critically analyse from the qualitative interviews the perceptions of human resource experts in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector as to the upskilling and reskilling training programmes.

Research objective three

- Related to the discussion as presented in Chapter Five: to critically evaluate and assess the extent to which upskilling and reskilling techniques are used in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector.

Research objective four

- Based on the central contribution of the study, as presented in Chapter Six, to present a new critical insight into how upskilling and reskilling techniques could be effectively used in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector.

1.7 Research Questions

To address the aim and the research objectives as presented above, the following questions were created, which were informed by the researcher's professional experience of working in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector, responsible for the administration of employee training:

RQ1: What is the current usage of upskilling and reskilling activities used in Abu Dhabi government entities?

RQ2: What are the influences on upskilling and reskilling initiatives on adaptability in Abu Dhabi government organisations?

RQ3: What strategies are associated with upskilling and reskilling when enhancing organisational adaptability in Abu Dhabi governmental departments?

1.8 Thesis structure

This section outlines the structure of the remaining chapters of this study.

Chapter Two: Literature review. Informed by the researcher's professional experience, this chapter critically reviews the existing literature which is focused on investigating the usage of upskilling and reskilling training techniques to achieve organizational adaptability. This will include relevant theories and models to contextualise and underpin the concept of organizational adaptability. These theories and models will include the dynamic capabilities' theory, the future of work, resource-based view of learning, and organisational adaptability theory to provide a rich theoretical background to contextualise the study. The chapter will then proceed to review the central purpose of the project, the role of upskilling and reskilling on organisational adaptability and the methods of achieving this construct in a governmental organization, including in Abu Dhabi. Leading from this, the attributes associated with upskilling and reskilling will be investigated which will include setting out the current academic debate which will form the basis of developing the conceptual framework for this study and inform the research questions, which will be presented at the end of the chapter.

Chapter Three: Methodology. The chapter commences with the debate as to the various philosophical paradigms available for any research project before justifying the decision to use a qualitative research strategy by conducting semi-structured interviews, through following an interpretivist approach to analyse the data. Before the interviews commenced, the participants were asked to complete a pre-interview protocol, which was used to inform the main study.

The sample of the main study consisted of seven human resource experts who were based in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector. The chapter will include how the pilot interview informed the main study, the connection of the research questions to the main theory which was set out in the literature review. Leading from this, the chapter will then present the coding strategy which was based on using a thematic approach. Being an interpretivist study, the research project will present how the robustness of the study was maintained through ensuring it was authentic, dependable,

and trustworthy. Finally, the limitations of the research project are presented from a methodological perspective and then the ethical implications of the study are presented including the assurance of anonymity of the participants and their right to withdraw.

Chapter Four: Findings. This chapter is dedicated to present the findings of the study but was initially informed by the researcher's professional background and observations. This strategy led to the chapter being grouped around three themes: the current usage of upskilling and reskilling, the influence of upskilling and reskilling on adaptability and finally, the strategies associated with upskilling and reskilling to enhance organizational adaptability. Under the first theme, the current usage of upskilling and reskilling, the study found that the experts recognized the importance of enabling the workforce to be adaptable and ready to accept change, to meet the changing needs of the organisation and finally to motivate employees. This last category was paradoxical as the mental well-being for the experts was an overlooked benefit associated with upskilling and reskilling. This was also the case as to using upskilling and reskilling to fill or meet potential skills gaps, along with enabling employees to accept change and to be innovative. The next theme: the influence of upskilling and reskilling again was informed by the professional experience of the researcher. The interview data identified five emerging categories, which included enhancing employee capabilities and preparing the workforce for disruption and uncertainty, which was aligned to both the current debate and the researcher's professional observations. However, there were also four categories which were originally recognised as being omitted, neglected, or not seen as of primary importance: upskilling and reskilling being used for enhancing employee engagement, the influence on leadership creativity and innovation, the means to mitigate risk including not having the correct skills in the workplace when needed, and finally, the positive influence on employee well-being.

The final theme was associated with the strategies linked with upskilling and reskilling. Seven themes were identified which was informed from both the current academic debate and the professional experience of the researcher. This included the usage of the training needs analysis and performance management strategies, but also the inclusion of adult learning techniques together with the emergence of a hybrid working and learning environment. To emerge from the findings and reflective of the professional perspective of the researcher was the absence of a

proactive usage of external training partners, the incorporation of mentorship to reinforce the adult's learning experience, and the need for further data driven learning analytics.

Chapter Five: Discussion. The chapter provides the theoretical underpinning of organizational change and learning theory, which draws on the concepts presented in the literature review as to the future of work, resource-based perspective theory, organizational adaptation theory, and the AGES model. The chapter then focuses on the core themes associated with upskilling and reskilling including the necessity for being fully informed as to the usage of the training needs analysis, along with performance management strategies. The chapter discusses the debate around the emergence of hybrid working and learning and the challenges associated with ensuring that the adult learner and their learning style is fully recognized and understood. Leading from this, the chapter sets out the debate associated with the role of upskilling and reskilling on the various employee outcomes such as their mental well-being, levels of engagement, satisfaction, and staff retention, which although initially neglected or seen as not being of primary importance, was acknowledged of needing to take higher precedence. The chapter also provides the debate as to the importance of external training providers, mentorship and data driven analytics, which in this study, the Abu Dhabi governmental bodies had failed to recognize or use.

Chapter Six: Conclusion: Presents the conclusion of the research project. The Chapter will set out how the study achieved the aim and objectives of the research project, before presenting the contribution to academic theory and business practice, which is fundamental for a professional doctorate. This conclusion includes the need for future engagement with external providers, the necessity to establish a mentorship program to reflect the adult's learning style and the need to use upskilling and reskilling more strategically, including the usage of data driven analytics. Finally, the Chapter presents the limitations, and recommendations for future research.

1.9 Chapter summary

This chapter has set out the background and the rationale for this professional doctorate. Informed by the experiences of the researcher, this chapter has provided an overview of the study together with a rationale and background for the need to conduct this research project. This rationale and background for the study was informed by the researcher's professional background and observations while working in the Abu Dhabi government training department who are responsible for providing upskilling and reskilling programmes. Based on these observations and

reflections of the researcher, the study is focused on determining whether upskilling and reskilling initiatives in the Abu Dhabi government sector have been effectively used and understood, as the government is now focused on meeting the UAE's focus on the Future of Work initiative whereby ensuring the country's workforce is prepared for the challenges of the future. To achieve this, the aim of the study is to *investigate the influence of upskilling and reskilling on the adaptability of governmental organizations in Abu Dhabi*.

Based on this aim, the chapter has set out the four research objectives which are aligned to the aim of the project along with the structure of the thesis, the literature review, the methodology and the findings, the discussion, and finally the business and academic contributions. To achieve the aim the following research questions were asked:

RQ1: What is the current usage of upskilling and reskilling activities used in Abu Dhabi government entities?

RQ2: What are the influences on upskilling and reskilling initiatives on adaptability in Abu Dhabi government organisations?

RQ3: What strategies are associated with upskilling and reskilling when enhancing organisational adaptability in Abu Dhabi governmental departments?

To achieve the aim and address the research questions, the main study will involve conducting seven interviews with human resource experts using semi-structured interviews to gather the richness of their experiences and perceptions.

Finally, this Chapter has presented in the last section, an overview of the remaining chapters together with key aspects of each chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the theoretical background of the study through critically reviewing the current academic debate related to the associated theories and models of upskilling and reskilling to enhance organisational adaptability. In achieving this, the chapter will present the current theoretical debate and associated themes, but also draw on the researcher's professional experience to contextualise the content from an Abu Dhabi governmental perspective. The chapter will commence with a rationale for conducting a narrative literature review compared to adopting a systematic approach (section 2.2), which aligns with the underlying philosophy of the study. The chapter will then present the debate associated with the underpinning models and concepts related to organizational change, which includes organisational adaptability (section 2.3.1), the dynamic capability theory (section 2.3.2), the theory behind future of work (section 2.3.3), resource-based theory (section 2.3.4), and finally the AGES model of learning, which will be used to contextualise the adult learning experience (section 2.3.5). Based on these underpinning theories, the chapter will then focus on the upskilling and reskilling when achieving organisational adaptability, as presented in section 2.4. This section will also present the associated strategies used to identify skill gaps, such as through the usage of a training needs analysis, and performance management techniques. The chapter will then proceed to present the associated debate in section 2.5, as to the emergence of the hybrid workplace along with the associated challenges, which will include the concept of adult learning, the importance of mentorship, and the usage of technology and data analytics. Finally, to consolidate the chapter, the research gaps and conceptual framework of the study will be presented together with the research questions which will inform the main study.

Before proceeding, it is necessary to understand the theme of organisational adaptability. As a concept, organisational adaptability associated as to how an organisation is facing an increasingly rapid, dynamic, and changing environment which includes shifts in internal and external influences which can occur unexpectedly therefore requires a workforce which is adaptable (Chowdhury et al., 2019). These external influences can include changes in political, economic,

socio-cultural, technological, legal, environmental, and infrastructural forces, which are out of the direct control of the organisation, but still has a significant effect (Mohsin et al., 2020; Bushe, 2018; Camilleri, 2018). These external environmental influences can bring about significant changes to the operational environment and its related activities, which requires a responsive, proactive, and fully trained workforce (Badini et al., 2018; Shtal et al., 2018). Unlike external influences, internal forces tended to be organisationally controllable. Such internal influences can include aspects such as the value system or protocols being used, organisational culture and structure, human resource activities, and the style of leadership (Badhurudheen, 2018). Since organisations do not operate in a vacuum, the influence of these internal and external facets and their potential influence on the operational activities, decision making, performance and overall business outcomes should not be underestimated, and ought to be fully understood through the organization (Valencia, 2021; Wahab & Mohd Nazri, 2019).

Due to these internal and external influences, the dynamism of the business environment requires the organisation to be adaptable to the changing conditions by adopting flexibility in their operational activities and decision-making so timely actions can be taken to ensure that the business can survive and succeed in continuously evolving through adaptation (Akhtar, 2018; Muddaha et al., 2018). These rapid changes in the business environment requires organisations to be able to respond rapidly, like for example the development of new products and services, changes to existing processes, while responding to new trends in customer expectations (Schulze & Pinkow, 2020; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). Therefore, organisational adaptability refers to the extent to which an organization can adjust its human resource activities to achieve its objectives through ensuring that the workforce possesses the necessary skills (Kodama, 2019). Since organisational adaptability is a complex process, there are attributes which can affect employees, leadership, and the culture of the organisation, which need to be fully understood (Jahn & Koller, 2019). From a human resource management perspective which is the focus of this study, the role in enhancing organisational adaptability is evidenced through utilising the workforce's capabilities and skills through transformation whereby enabling the organisation to change or to be more adaptable (Chatterjee et al., 2022; Magsi et al., 2018). Part of this change is through the development of human capital which enables and enhances employees' capabilities of adapting to the changing environment whereby enhancing the resilience of the organisation (Shela et al., 2021; Barasa et al., 2018). From a professional perspective and drawing on the researcher's role

in the Abu Dhabi government, one of the themes identified early on in this study was whether the current human resource policies are designed to recognize that through initiatives like upskilling and reskilling were proactively assessed as to whether employees are prepared and ready for change, a theme which will be explored later in this project.

The theoretical background of this study is focused on upskilling and reskilling of employees working in Abu Dhabi governmental entities in response to the need for the business or organization adaptability to change. The relevant theoretical concepts are discussed in this chapter including organisational adaptation theory, the concept of dynamic capability, trends in future work, resource-based view theory, and finally, the AGES model of learning. The reason for the focus initially on theory associated with organizational change and adaptability is to theoretically underpin the rest of the chapter, then inform the main study's interview questions, but then theoretically contextualize the study's discussion chapter. The chapter then proceeds to explore the central purpose of the study, the role of upskilling and reskilling on organisational adaptability and the methods of achieving this construct in an organization, including in Abu Dhabi. Leading from this, the attributes associated with upskilling and reskilling are investigated to set out the current academic debate which will form the basis of developing the conceptual framework for this study and inform the research questions. The conceptual framework presents the focus of the main study, a comparison of the Abu Dhabi government activities compared to the current academic debate, to identify the effectiveness of the upskilling and reskilling strategies adopted, and those which are potentially not recognized.

Before proceeding to explore the current theoretical background to organizational change and adaptability, it is necessary to justify the approach adopted as to how the literature review was conducted.

2.2 The rationale for conducting a narrative literature

In conducting a literature review, a fundamental question which needs to be determined is which strategy should be selected and followed. In selecting whether a traditional narrative or a systematic review approach should be adopted, the decision tends to be based on critically mapping out, evaluate, and then review the existing literature to develop a research framework which will inform the research questions (Tranfield et al., 2003). The approach or the style of the literature review whether it is systematic, or narrative is a difficult decision, but needs to be made.

A narrative approach to a literature review is seen as the traditional method which has been traditionally associated with business and related research studies. Using a traditional approach does not set out the methodology, the search protocol adopted, and the outcomes of the search when conducting the review. Instead, the traditional or narrative literature review if conducted correctly, can provide a critical analysis of recent publications and up-to-date knowledge related to the theme(s) being researched, without dedicating part of the chapter to the search protocol and methodology adopted in the review of the literature (Cipriani & Geddes, 2003). The benefits of using a narrative or traditional strategy can enable the researching of a wide range of academic themes as the process is not bounded by the researcher needing to establish predefined journals or search protocols, and instead provides a comprehensive and general focus on the central debate being studied. However, what a traditional review does not provide is a justification as to the decisions made in the searches conducted, including around the relevance and validity of the sources used (Collins & Fauser, 2005). Instead, a narrative review tends to be more intuitive based on the researcher's preferences and strategies, (Johnson, 1989), therefore able to cover broader questions compared to a systematic review.

In contrast to the traditional / narrative approach, a systematic review was originally used in medical research but has been adopted in management studies. A systematic approach requires careful planning which is then executed throughout the entire literature research process and is documented in the literature review chapter (Collins & Fauser, 2005). This systematic process involves the usage and then documenting the keywords, the sources or journals used or rejected, then presenting the number of 'hits', the frequency of outcomes, those rejection criteria along with listing of relevant literature and quality of the results which are then rated.

While this systematic approach is more logical, the strategy does have several major disadvantages which can affect the results for searching existing literature, which can influence ultimately the project (Bell & Bryman, 2007). One of the key areas of limitations is that the systematic literature review is more representative of a quantitative study, as it reports on the frequency of results or outcomes, which does not reflect the methodology of this qualitative research project. Furthermore, by focusing only on one type or kind of evidence, this can lead to important literature remaining undiscovered if the prescribed search parameters are not defined correctly (Dixon-Woods et al., 2005).

Reflecting on the above, the literature review for this study was conducted using a narrative / traditional approach. For this study, there was a need to avoid the potential risk of using inappropriate keywords searches, and then missing important academic knowledge, or going off on a tangent. Instead, the literature review was not focused on predefined criteria, but did address the potential weakness of the traditional approach. To achieve this, the study adopted certain elements of the systematic review including using a planned approach and not simply following a random strategy (Tranfield et al., 2003; Collins & Fauser, 2005), therefore this literature review was carefully planned to ensure that a broad search area of current literature was covered. The search parameters used included keywords such as upskilling, reskilling, organizational adaptability, adult training and learning, and workplace learning. This broad strategy can also be seen with the next section dedicated to the theoretical literature related to organizational change and adaptability.

2.3 Theoretical models and concepts related to organizational change and adaptability

There is an array of insightful theories and models available to underpin the central theme of the study in relation to upskilling and reskilling strategies. These theories and models selected which include the dynamic capabilities' theory, the future of work, resource-based view of learning, and organisational adaptability theory, which commences this section, provides a rich theoretical means to contextualise the focus of the study.

2.3.1 Organisational adaptation theory

Organisational adaptation theory was proposed by Sarta et al. (2021) to describe the concept as the 'intentional decision-making process' used by its organizational members which results in actions which attempts to decrease the gap of knowledge between the organisation and its operational environment. For Sarta et al. (2021), the authors identified the need for knowledge modification as a means to respond to changes in the current environment. However, upskilling and reskilling is not explicitly researched by Sarta et al. (2021) revealing a potential gap in the current literature related to organizational adaptation theory. However, there is an important aspect recognized in the theory which this study intends to use. This aspect is related to the intentional decision-making process of identifying the environmental forces which can affect the organization which can be internal or external. In contextualizing this, Podsakoff et al. (2016) noted that these environmental influences can be either controllable (internal) or uncontrollable

(external), offering both opportunities and challenges depending on the response. The intention to change or to continue with existing practices can therefore affect the outcome of the organization, which can ultimately lead to the success or failure of meeting customer needs.

As a concept, the organisational adaptation theory also introduces four domains associated with the construct, that of intentional, relational, conditioned, and convergent (Qureshi, 2019). The intentional aspect of the organisational adaptability has its origins in the workforces' knowledge, awareness, and acceptance of environmental influences which in turn affect the decision-making process as to how to react to the changes in the organisation, what to anticipate, then how to respond to these changes (Lewis, 2020). It has been evidenced that the deliberate effort to upskill and reskill employees not only enhances their adaptability but also empowers them to contribute effectively to the decision-making process, fostering a culture of continuous learning and innovation within the organization. The next category, the relational aspect of organisational adaptability recognizes the organisation, and its environment can have a direct influence on each other, and that operational activities do not operate in isolation, therefore there is a need to ensure the workforce is fully trained through reskilling or upskilling (Maan et al., 2020). Then there is the conditioned aspect of organisational adaptability involves acknowledging that environmental characteristics are informed by an organisation's actions and responses and is therefore dependent on how well trained the workforce is. Lastly, the convergent aspect of organisational adaptability is focused on the intention to adapt and seek to reduce the gap between the operation and the environment, therefore the concept is based on providing a closer linkage to the existing environmental characteristics, and the potential training needs for the future (Qureshi, 2019). Since organisational needs to change and adapt, employees must also be developed so that they remain capable to meet future changing organisational needs (Khaksar et al., 2020), even though employee development outcomes remain dependent on internal and external factors. In relation to this study, these four dimensions indicate how important it is for an organisation to be adaptable in providing a workforce which is adequately trained to be able to respond to unforeseen changes. There is also the need to recognize that operational activities do not operate in isolation, therefore employees must be fully trained to respond effectively to future challenges. To achieve this, there is the necessity for future training requirements to be accurately determined and assessed. However, from a professional perspective, the question which emerges is to what extent are these dimensions recognised and acted on in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector.

To address this question, which has been informed by the researcher's professional experience, the adaptation theory has a relevance for this research project, as the intention is to study the influence of upskilling and reskilling initiatives on the adaptability of government organisations in Abu Dhabi to a changing environment. The rationale is based on how organisational adaptation theory can contextualize the role of organisational members in the planning and executing of the responses to change. Organisational members, including employees, tend to be responsible for the actions taken in response to these environmental challenges and changes. To respond to these changes, employees need to have the flexibility, agility, and skills to enable and achieve organisational adaptability (Karman, 2019). Maan et al. (2020) supported this importance of employees possessing the capabilities and adaptable skills, whereby being able to respond in a timely and effective manner. The theory is also suitable for this study, due to its ability to identify intentional actions and decisions which are made in response to external and internal changes, through possessing the necessary skill sets (Santoro et al., 2021).

Therefore, organisational adaptability theory reflects the workforce's capabilities to respond to change based on their skills and competencies which are directly connected to their knowledge base (Qureshi, 2019). For Lewis (2020) to achieve this, the organisation must continuously develop their employees to enhance their adaptability skills to meet the dynamic nature of the changing external and internal environment. The theory of organizational adaptability can conceptualize the need for constant development of employees to ensure that the individual is able to possess the necessary skills to respond to change.

2.3.2 Dynamic capabilities theory

The next construct is the dynamic capabilities theory which was proposed by Teece et al. (1997) and later updated by Matarazzo et al. (2020) which recognises the necessity for organisational abilities to be able to identify, integrate, develop and reform internal and external expertise to be able to adapt to rapid change or changes. The integration of innovation, digital transformation, corporate entrepreneurship, and organizational behaviour significantly increases the theoretical underpinnings of the dynamic capabilities' framework (Teece, 2023). However, the basic framework provides a useful to understand the needs of skills development of employees. To contextualise this concept, Teece et al. (1997) contended that the theory is based on the capacity

within the organisation as to the response to change, through the workforce's capabilities and skill sets, which is illustrated below in Figure 2.1.

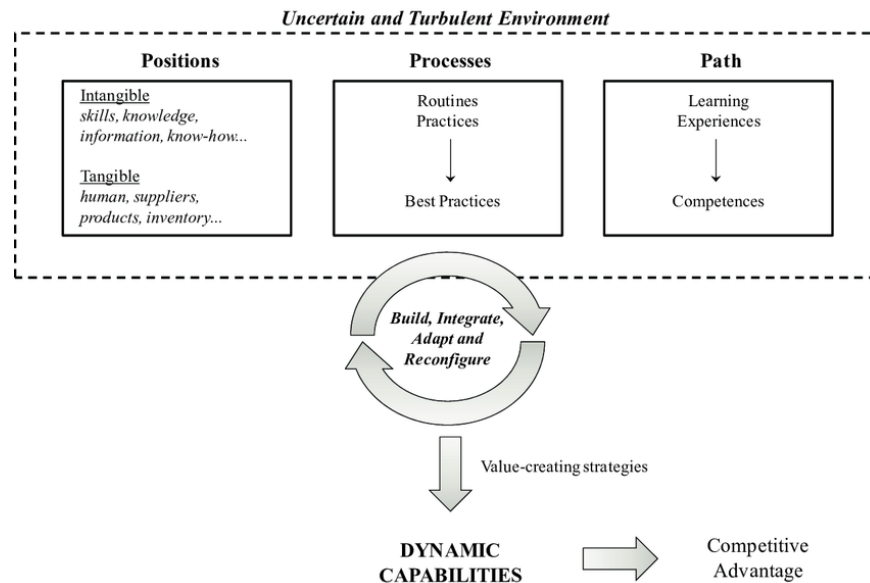


Figure 2.1: Dynamic Capabilities

Source: (Teece et al., 1997)

In explaining the model of Teece et al. (1997), Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) then Matarazzo et al. (2020) characterized the concept of dynamic capabilities as the process of revising existing resources to enable the organisation to adapt to new and existing changes. In contextualising this, it is necessary to understand that the dynamic capabilities are the result of adjustments made to existing resources which are made in response to new strategies to achieve the objectives based on responses to change (Siems et al., 2021; Schoemaker et al., 2018). For Khaskar et al. (2020) the authors contended employees must be developed so that the individual is able to meet the future challenges and changes, through possessing knowledge-based skills therefore enhancing their productivity. Therefore, the concept of the dynamic capabilities can create a new competitive advantage which differentiates the organisation from its competitors (Ferreira et al., 2020; Fainshmidt et al., 2019) or from a governmental perspective, meeting future customer or community needs. Past studies including Sandberg (2021) considered the dynamic capabilities theory as being a mechanism to manage inflexibility in resources, and that the existing processes

can be transformed to meet new challenges and demands. The usage of dynamic capabilities theory can also be potentially used to change or initiate transformational processes whereby changing how the organisation adapts (Sandberg, 2021; Haarhaus & Liening, 2020). Therefore, the concept of dynamic capabilities can be seen as being relevant when an organization responds to change through transformational strategies. In the context of this study, the question which emerges is whether the concept of dynamic capabilities theory is being applied in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector, and if so to what extent? This is particularly important when reflecting that the theory of dynamic capabilities is applicable and can be directly linked to managing human resources or capital. Lewin and Teece (2019) in contextualising this linkage, by stating that the theory can be linked human resource management practice and motivational theory, which indicates how important the human resource aspect is for an organisation in achieving adaptability.

But there are also potential challenges when applying the dynamic capabilities theory, as there is potential conflict in operational requirements which can cause tensions when pursuing or meeting organisational objectives, which can also impede the development of dynamic capabilities (Conboy et al., 2020). These organisational tensions can occur between management or leaders and employees, such as the degree of flexibility, control, and collaborative activities. The challenges are often associated with finding a balance between organisational objectives, attaining a work-life balance and general mental well-being of employees (Khaksar et al., 2020). These tensions have led to Khaksar et al. (2020) and Wendra et al. (2019) to highlight the need to have more research on human resource dynamic capabilities and its relevance to human resource management theory, to provide businesses with a framework to effectively navigate evolving environments and balancing the conflicting demands within the workforce, which this project intends to study.

Reflecting above it could be argued that the dynamic capabilities of the management of human resources are a significant attribute associated with attaining and meeting customer expectations and external challenges, which can be attained through providing a strategic and continuous learning experience resulting in enhanced skills and abilities within the organisation (Al-Hawary & Al-Rasheedy, 2021). Tsou and Chen (2020) independently confirmed that human capital development or learning is vitally important for dynamic capabilities which can result in higher

levels of innovation as employees possess the correct skills and knowledge in generating new ideas and applying these to innovate. Employees' skills are therefore needed to be continuously updated and revised to reflect changes to enable the organisation to adapt and evolve. As a concept, dynamic capabilities theory can be linked with upskilling and reskilling as indicated by Chowdhury et al. (2019), who insisted that the need for decision makers in an organization, like human resource management, need to recognize the importance of dynamic capabilities and then upskill the workforce to address the need for organisational adaptability. Abrantes et al. (2021) agreed and noted the need for the establishment of employee upskilling and reskilling programs which should be understood, prioritized, and then acted on.

The dynamic capabilities theory is relevant to the present study as to the influence of upskilling and reskilling on organizational adaptability. The theory emphasises an organisation's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies to address rapidly changing environments effectively. In the context of the study, upskilling and reskilling initiatives represent crucial internal competencies that contribute directly to an organization's dynamic capabilities. By continually developing the skills and knowledge base of employees, organizations enhance their capacity to adapt to new technologies, market demands, and competitive landscapes.

2.3.3 Future of work model

Arguably the employment landscape is evolving at an increasingly rapid rate, and therefore it has become critical to be aware of and to understand these changes, including around human resource management. Part of these rapid changes and the transformation which has resulted in shifts in working practices can be attributed to a series of external events, such as the global recession in 2009, a series of wars, and the COVID-19 outbreak, which have had a significant influence on business activities including future working practices (Benanav, 2020). In response, companies have needed to increasingly adapt, which has included the emergence and now increased reliance on new technology, changes in working practice, including the increased trend to a more mobile and virtual workforce (Santana & Cobo, 2020). This has led to many organisations shifting away from the conventional business practice to be more digitally orientated, but has been sped up with the recent COVID-19 pandemic, which has seen a transformational shift in the future of work, including the emergence of new skills, capabilities and competences through to changes in the

working environment, and the styles of leadership / management (Spencer, 2018; Collings et al., 2021). As noted by Collings et al. (2021), and earlier by Brynjolfsson et al. (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic brought about restrictions of movement through the global lockdown which forced governments and organisations to shift from office-based work to remote, hybrid and home-based working. This change brought about new challenges for management, such as how to motivate employees when they were away from their immediate supervisors, ensuring that there was a commitment to work, through how to conduct upskilling and reskilling training and development programs, while also ensuring that there was a balance between work and personal life, and how to address the reported occurrences of the trend in employee social detachment.

Reflecting this, clearly the landscape of work has become a new challenge for organisations, leadership, and management along with their employees (Lund et al., 2021), however the expectations from the role of human resource management has remained the same, including the responsibility to improve the performance and address identified skills gaps through upskilling and reskilling initiatives (Couch et al., 2021). This transformation in the workplace has led to several theories and models to emerge from academic literature, including around the area of upskilling and reskilling (e.g., Lang & Triantoro, 2022; Billionniere & Rahman, 2022; Abe et al., 2021), which has led to Malhotra (2021) to propose the future of work model to represent this. Malhotra (2021) in developing this model provided a holistic perspective to capture the characteristics of future work, which represents the opportunities along with the associated challenges. The model also captures the need for learning and development, together with how individual employee engagement can be achieved, whereby attaining improved organisational performance, as shown in Figure 2.2 below. This theme of employee engagement, satisfaction and retention is a theme which was originally identified by the researcher, as to whether these facets are recognised by the human resource managers working in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector as being important for achieving organizational adaptability. The model shows how organisations and employees are expected to adapt and be ready for future challenges through the redesign of employees' working practices and activities.

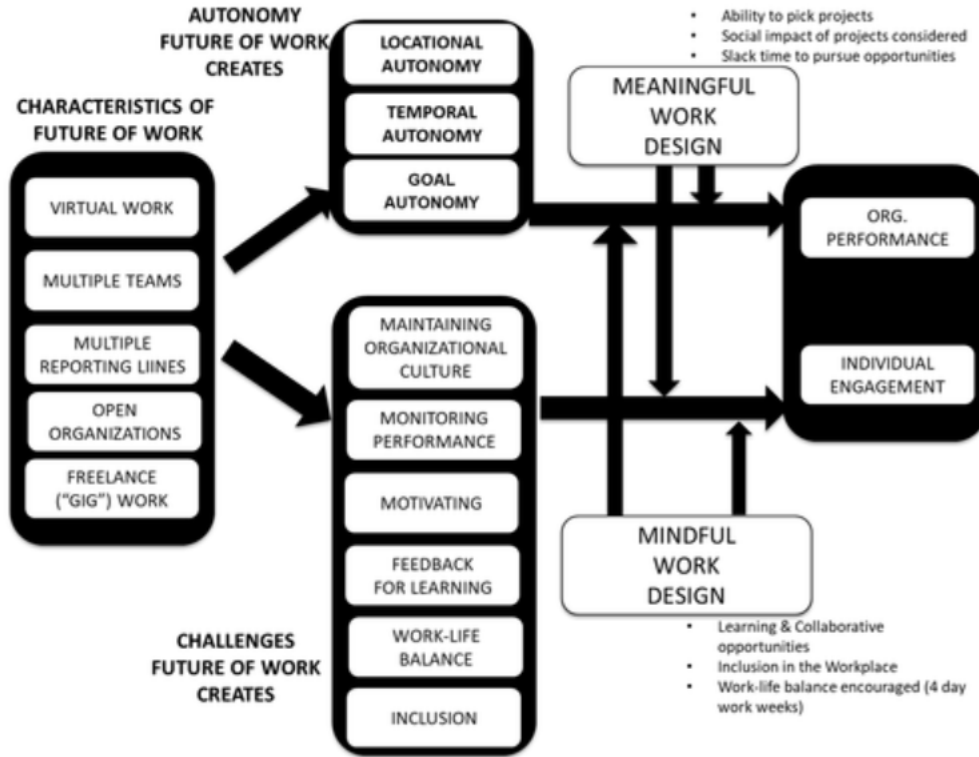


Figure 2.2 Future of work model

Source: Malhotra (2021)

Malhotra's (2021) model of future of work is applicable to this study, due to the ability to identify the major changes which could happen in the workplace and the organisation, along with how employee activities need to change or be adopted in response. These changes are based on internal and external environmental influences which illustrates how human resource management needs to continuously enhance the workforce through upskilling and reskilling to adapt to these changes. The model also shows the importance associated with feedback to the learner and how it can motivate the individual.

2.3.4 Resource-based view theory

The next theory to critically review is the resource-based view (RBV) which was designed to capture how resources are used to assess the performance of the learner (Dzandu et al., 2023). The configuration and utilisation of resources allows the organisation to function and can provide a critical insight into potential efficiencies and strategies which can meet customer expectations. The RBV is an interdisciplinary strategy which is resource-based, focused on established key

management functions, such as marketing, general business, ethics, economics, and human resource management. The focus of RBV is based on the organisation's internal resources, which includes those attributes which are invaluable, scarce, or cannot be substituted (Barney, 2001), therefore the resource-based perspective makes the organisation identify specific core skills, which are essential. To achieve this, the theory identifies the value of the resources possessed by the organisation then focuses on the long-term requirements, by acknowledging the strategic resources which are scarce and difficult to imitate. The theory argues that organisations must work towards developing their dynamic capabilities by strengthening and enhancing their strategic resources including their employees (Davis & Simpson, 2017).

The theory provides guidance to adopt a more proficient method to acquire and become more effective through the utilization of resources (Collins, 2021). The theory distinguishes four kinds of *resources* which can enable the organisation to meet its strategic goals, namely identifying valuable resources, finding those which are rare or scarce, recognizing those difficult assets which cannot be imitated, and finally, recognizing those non-substitutable resources (Florea et al., 2020). These resources will be investigated in further depth below commencing with valuable resources.

Based on the resource-based view theory, the concept of valuable resources can enable an organisation to determine opportunities but also identify potential threats and challenges, therefore a workforce can become a valuable resource when developed through upskilling and reskilling initiatives, to achieve the strategic goals and objectives of the organization (Liao & Hui, 2021). A highly skilled workforce is therefore strategically important not only for accomplishing short-term goals but also for navigating the constantly changing business environment. The next category is the importance associated with the intentional development of the workforce through upskilling and reskilling, which can serve to address possible risks and challenges. As to rare or scarce resources, these resources represent those assets which are difficult to be acquired or gained, which can include employees possessing certain skill sets and knowledge (Hitt et al., 2016). When employees are trained to be innovators, these individuals are no longer seen as being operationally functional or centric but possess certain skills which are unique and difficult to imitate or acquire, therefore become a rare resource for an organisation (Dubey et al., 2019; Alrhaimi & Mugaleh, 2017). Through upskilling and reskilling, employees

can possess new skills and knowledge, but also have a strong sense of commitment and loyalty to the organization, reinforcing them as being a unique asset that is difficult to easily replace, acquire or imitate, therefore being a motivational tool. This adds an additional layer as to the understanding the importance of upskilling and reskilling the workforce by highlighting the relevance of employee engagement and motivation, reflecting the necessity for creating a responsive organizational environment to develop and train employees for the future. Finally, non-substitutable resources are the assets which cannot be acquired at any cost (Zhao & Fan, 2018). Those employees, particularly those with specialized training or subject matter knowledge, can be classed as assets that cannot be obtain, regardless of the cost. This highlights the strategic necessity of creating an environment in the organization that enables and develops distinctive skills beyond the normal workforce development programs, making these employees indispensable.

Resource-based view theory has been graphically depicted by Bamgbade et al. (2019), as shown below in Figure 2.3. Figure 2.3 illustrates the link between the strategic resources of the organization and how the development of future capabilities of its employees can be attained.

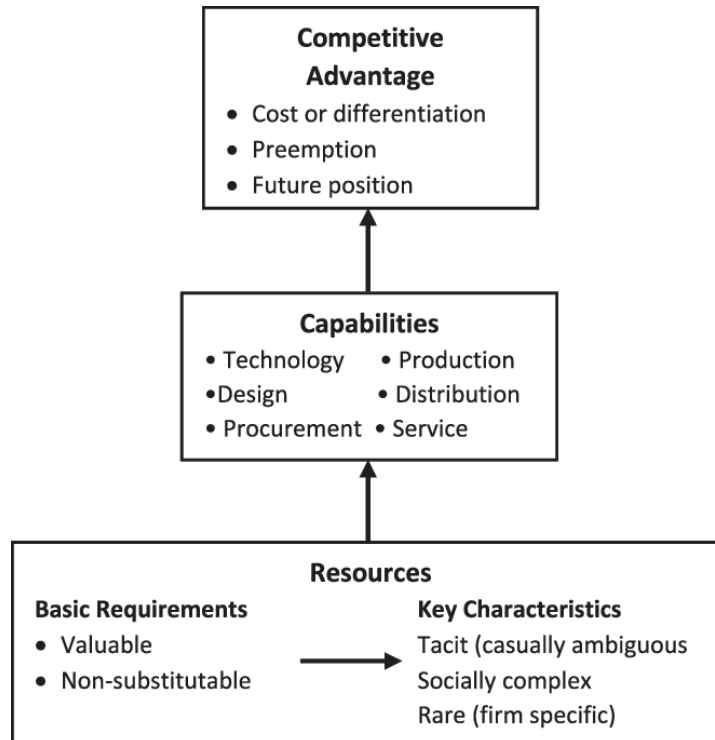


Figure 2.3 Resource-based view theory

Source: Bamgbade et al. (2019)

The theory and the figure above of the resource-based view provides an illustration as to how to enhance the skills of employees to transform them to be vital assets. Although the model does have its application in other fields of management, such as finance and information technology, the concept represented above does have relevance to this study, as human resources are a major asset for an organisation which can be developed, which in the context of this project can be achieved through upskilling and reskilling, therefore can be captured and represented in the resource-view based theory.

2.3.5 AGES model of learning

Although not specifically related to organisational change, the concept is still relevant to understand the theoretical background to this study. Learning is a complicated process due to the complex behavioural, psychological and personality dimensions of an individual, which is represented in the AGES model (Davachi et al., 2010). With the speed of change and the unpredictability of business and customer's needs, it is difficult to teach the individual everything which is important before they enter the workplace, therefore there is the need to upskill and reskill the learner during their working life. Therefore, it is imperative for employees to continuously to learn, which requires an embedding continuous learning ethos in the workplace. To reflect and capture this, Davachi et al. (2010) framed four standards from a neuroscience perspective to represent how to design and deliver the learning and development initiatives for upskilling and reskilling employees (Figure 2.4).

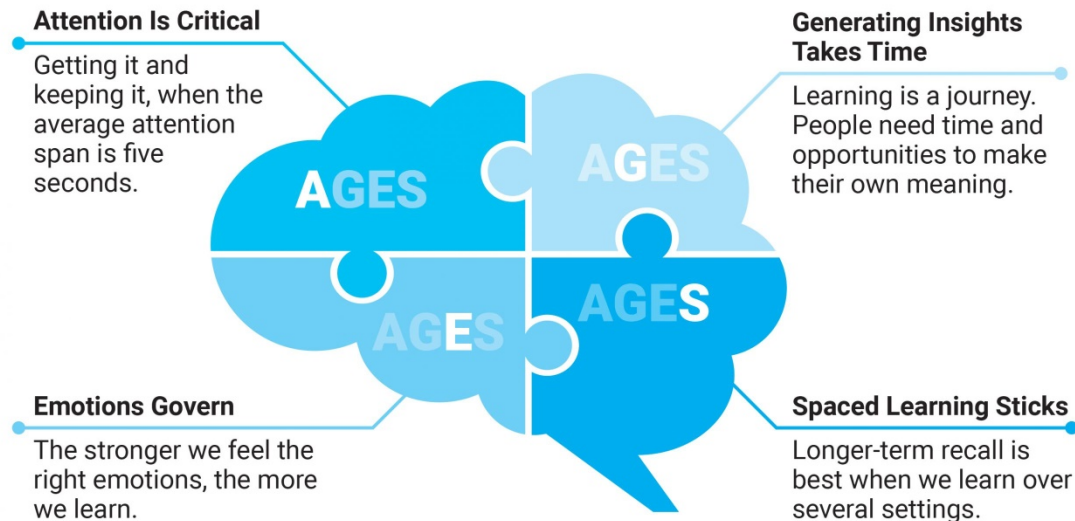


Figure 2.4 AGES Learning Model

Source: (Davachi et al., 2010)

The AGES learning model provides the means to identify the various aspects considered critical in designing and delivering learning initiatives such as upskilling and reskilling for employees. The process of upskilling and reskilling can be complicated and therefore must be designed and delivered effectively. The challenge is that employees often learn in different localities and environments, and the program needs to reflect this. There are also the psychological and personality differences as to the learning styles of each learner which can make the design of upskilling and reskilling programs complex. Therefore, the organisation needs to design and deliver the reskilling and upskilling programs to reflect the employee's uniqueness to improve their current level of knowledge and competencies. The AGES model can therefore provide a linkage to learning and the environment in which the process operates in. The acquisition of learning needs also to be aligned with the organisation's strategy for adaptability. The model can also be used to theorize how human resource management designs and delivers the upskilling and reskilling training by using the four domains. To understand this in the context of upskilling and reskilling, the next section will focus on the role of these training programs in relation to organisational adaptability.

2.3.6 Summary of the relevant organizational theoretical concepts

This section has presented the academic and theoretical debate around firstly organisational adaptation, which is central to this study and the need for employees to possess skills required for the future. Leading from this, the dynamic capabilities, the future work, and resource-based view models have been presented to contextualise the study, before presenting the AGES construct of how an individual learns and some of the associated barriers.

The various constructs provide a robust insight as to the relevant theories associated with upskilling and reskilling the workforce. The first concept, the organisational adaptation theory, provided four distinct domains, that of intentional, relational, conditional, and convergent, which can be used to represent how an organisation is able to be adaptable in response to changes. The theory reflects how the capabilities of the workforce can respond to the changing environment, through acquiring new skills and competencies which are interconnected to their existing knowledgebase. The next concept was the dynamic capabilities theory, which seeks to represent how organizational abilities can be enhanced or improved by identifying, integrating, and developing the existing skills and knowledge within the workforce to adapt to rapid change. This concept provides a means to transform the organization through transformational strategies, where both human resource management and motivational practices inform upskilling and reskilling initiatives in response to organizational needs. Unlike the organisational adaptation and the dynamic capabilities theories, the future of work model represents how an organization needs to consider how the dynamics in working practices have shifted towards seeking a more work-life balance approach in the workplace, while also being prepared for the future challenges. In representing this, the future of work model provides a holistic viewpoint which captures the learning and development of the employee while redesigning the existing working activities and practices. The next concept is the resource-based view, which is focused on how the resources are used to determine the learner's performance. To achieve this, like the organizational adaptation theory, there are four distinct domains or resources, which enables the organisation to determine what skill sets are needed. This includes reviewing which resources are invaluable, from a perspective of being unable to imitate, acquire or replace these individuals or employees. The final concept reviewed was the AGES model of learning. The AGES model, unlike the others' four theoretical constructs, represents how the learning process can be achieved. This

includes the psychological and personality differences of the learner, which is then reflected in the reskilling and upskilling programs. While these theories are informative and can theoretically contextualise the upskilling and reskilling initiatives, the question is whether the experts in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector are aware of these constructs, and to what extent are they applicable?

While it should be noted that these theoretical concepts have provided a critical insight into how an organization based in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector can understand change and the potential consequences if not managed correctly through the employees not being prepared with the correct skills sets, to emerge from the section was the questions surrounding whether employee engagement, satisfaction and retention is recognised by the human resource managers working in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector as being important for achieving organizational adaptability. This theme of the importance associated with employee engagement is important as it can have a direct and indirect influence on the meeting organizational adaptability, along with indicating the organisation's commitment to the workforce. This includes setting out the organisational values to foster future growth whereby heightening engagement levels and employee motivation (Patil & Rana, 2021). While these theoretical concepts will not be used directly to inform the main study, these constructs will be used to contextualize the outcomes of the interviews later in the discussion chapter. The dynamic capabilities model adds an additional layer to the strategic insight, emphasizing the need for organizations to proactively shape their capabilities in response to changing environments. The AGES learning model complements this by providing a practical framework for designing effective upskilling and reskilling programs, through considering the diverse learning styles and environments in which employees operate in. Integrating these theories enriches the exploration of upskilling and reskilling within the study, offering a holistic perspective that encompasses organizational strategy and the individual learning processes.

2.4 Upskilling and reskilling in organisational adaptability

Organisational adaptability is the ability to respond to new opportunities and to avoid possible crises through being prepared or being proactive (Mutebi et al., 2020). As a concept, organisational adaptability can be defined as the ability of an organisation to realise the need for change and then exploit or capitalise the opportunities in a changing environment (Schulze &

Pinkow, 2020), which may not be fully recognized or realized in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector. Schulze and Pinkow (2020) noted that those organisations which are adaptive can have a higher opportunity to meet customer needs through adopting an adaptable and transformative workplace by rapidly responding to changes through upskilling and reskilling initiatives. To become this adaptive organisation, there are various strategies which have emerged from the literature, such as creating an agile working environment, providing continuous creative and innovative initiatives, developing transferable skills, hiring adaptable people, and encouraging upskilling (Abukhait et al., 2020; Karman, 2019; Satra et al., 2021). What is unclear from a professional perspective of the researcher who works in the Abu Dhabi government department who are responsible for training, is whether there is an awareness to the extent to which upskilling and reskilling programs can generate an environment for creativity and innovation amongst its employees.

2.4.1 The need and influence for upskilling and reskilling

This section will address research objective one, which is focused on assessing the need for upskilling and reskilling by reviewing the current academic debate. Upskilling and reskilling have emerged as a major strategy which can be used to achieve higher levels of organisational adaptability (Agha, 2022; Rangaswamy, 2021; Mustafa et al, 2021). As a concept, upskilling and reskilling can enable the organisation to cultivate a workforce which is adept, knowledgeable and adaptable to manage future challenges, whereby being able to navigate the changing workplace landscape, which includes in the government sector (Falkner et al., 2022). Upskilling involves improving the skills and capabilities of employees through conducting learning and development programs (Gasteiger et al., 2021), which are often informed by techniques such as training needs analysis and performance management solutions. Paul (2023) noted that upskilling and reskilling training programs are often targeted as to provide further training and development options, which often includes enabling employees to enhance their existing skills, including problem-solving and decision-making through to communication attributes. Earlier, Roberts (2021) highlighted that upskilling and reskilling programs can enable the individual to acquire the essential skills, which can lead to the creation and development of a pool of employees with the required capabilities and knowledge which can be drawn upon when needed. For both Paul (2023) and Roberts (2021) this can also enhance employee's potential leadership skills, which can be effective when needing to

be adaptable. Takács et al. (2021) also noted that upskilling and reskilling can also enhance leadership capabilities of employees but also their adaptability skills through being more innovative and creative. As a concept, upskilling occurs when employees master new abilities or upgrade their current skills and knowledge base. In contrast, reskilling refers to developing employees to learn new skills beyond their existing knowledge base to meet future needs (Zahidi, 2020). Therefore, in reskilling, employees are equipped with new information, skills, and abilities, so they can perform work in other areas different from their existing expertise. Again, this information to inform the reskilling programs can only be attained through conducting techniques such as through the training needs analysis.

Both upskilling and reskilling are considered as significant strategic responses to environmental changes in an organization and is seen as one of the key responsibilities of the human resource department. As noted above, the human resource department are responsible for identifying the gaps in the existing and future skills and expertise within the workforce, and then takes the appropriate strategies to meet these needs (Saharan, 2020). There are two ways in which the human resource department fulfils these organizational gaps, by either through hiring new personnel or by developing existing employees, such as with upskilling and reskilling programs (Bibi et al., 2018). Although the organisation has the choice to hire new employees with the necessary skills, which can be costly, and due to the uncertainty of the labour market, recruiting new individuals can make this option uncertain and unpredictable when needed. In contrast, the other option is to develop and train existing staff. Upskilling or reskilling an existing employee can be a more effective approach to respond to changes in a timely manner. Through following an upskilling and reskilling strategy can assist in ensuring existing employees are prepared to respond to changes while motivating the individual due to the perceived commitment of the organization (Deepa et al., 2021). To achieve this, upskilling and reskilling needs to firstly be designed to prepare employees to possess the correct future skills and knowledge through assessing their current skills, and secondly to be adaptable, since employees need to be continuously upskilled and reskilled, therefore requires a degree of flexibility to promote an adaptable working culture (Agha, 2022). Agha (2022) in illustrating this, included examples from the UAE to see how businesses had trained their staff to be better prepared to respond to changes. While the study of Agha (2022) was informative, the focus was on commercial businesses, and neglected the experience of upskilling and reskilling initiatives in government organizations in the UAE and Abu Dhabi.

Rangaswami (2021) stated that an organisation needs to upskill and reskill their workforce so that the individual employee possesses the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies needed. For Gomathi et al. (2021), this can provide a clear career path and routes for personal advancement by increasing job satisfaction through providing the opportunities to acquire new skills indicating the organisation's commitment to their employees. Apart from enhancing the organisational adaptability, upskilling and reskilling is as noted above, can promote employee motivation and satisfaction, while extending the individual's tenure of employment, therefore making them a valuable resource to be utilised when adapting to changing circumstances (Chukwidi et al., 2018; Dewi et al., 2022). For Abe et al. (2021) the authors emphasized that through adopting upskilling and reskilling initiatives can empower employees to have a profound effect on their holistic well-being, fostering a sense of professional development and expertise. This perspective of Abe et al. (2021) is expanded on by Seshasai and Balaji (2023) who stated that upskilling and reskilling can have a notable positive effect on employee's well-being. For Seshasai and Balaji (2023) when employees receive organisational support through professional development to acquire new skills, they often experience increased contentment and confidence, which overall can improve the individual's well-being. This therefore can lead to enhanced job satisfaction and increased self-assurance, consequently reducing stress and tension in the workplace. However, while clearly important, from the researcher's professional perspective the theme of employee well-being may be a topic which could be neglected or overseen by the Abu Dhabi governmental entities and human resource management.

Upskilling and reskilling training programs can also enable innovative activities, which for Tsou and Chen (2020) can lead to the acquisition of new ways of thinking creatively, devise new problem-solving approaches, and handle complex situations more adeptly. These enhanced competencies need to exist by fostering an innovative culture, whereby empowering staff members to introduce novel concepts and methods but are informed by upskilling and reskilling training programs. A potential solution in providing the necessary content for upskilling and reskilling training programs, as advocated by Vinayan et al. (2020) was the establishment and usage of a partnership with external training providers. Part of the rationale for the usage of the external experts is that they can offer a broad range of learning materials, along with a more holistic contemporary industry insight. This proposal was supported by Sohimi et al. (2019) who highlighted the importance of collaboration with external training providers, as they can provide

more up-to-date content, due to their expertise. Closely aligned to the usage of external providers, is the theme and trend of providing training content and delivery online. Training providers along with some organizations and academic institutions have embarked on various online developmental staff provision offering a diverse range of courses and programs, which can address the trend now of employees wanting to work and learn remotely (Sofia et al., 2023). Xerri et al. (2022) noted that the emergence of digital learning platforms, expert external instructors and relevant educational materials can enable the organisation to provide the employee with the necessary skills. However, Xerri et al. (2022) also indicated the need for accurate assessment of training needs and the importance associated with mentorship programmes. The question which then emerges is whether the Abu Dhabi governmental entities and the human resource management team are proactively using external providers, online provision along with offering internal mentorship. But for this to be effective, there is a need to determine the potential skills gaps in the workforce, which can only be assessed through assessing the individual's performance and by conducting a training needs analysis.

2.4.2 Training needs analysis (TNA)

As mentioned above; to determine the correct skills, training needs analysis is a key human resource management technique. As a tool, the training needs analysis also referred to as TNA, is designed to engage in the identification of learning and development needs of its employees based on the organizational internal and external environment. The TNA process involves an in-depth and complete investigation of developmental needs throughout the entire organisation (Mamun, 2021). As a construct, the training needs analysis is a strategy to determine those gaps in skills between existing employees and the future needs of the organisation. Therefore, the activity of the training needs analysis, reviews and assesses the performance of the employees and then links these with the future needs to determine whether and what training is required. For Syahrir et al. (2021) the training needs analysis to be effective needs to draw on and be informed by a performance management methodology to assess employee developmental needs. However, Syahrir et al. (2021) also noted that the usage of performance management as a mechanism needs also an effective compensation component, so that when performance gaps are addressed through the employee's engagement with upskilling and reskilling initiatives, the individual receives some form of recognition.

Therefore, the training needs analysis can be seen as a technique to investigate and determine gaps and identify new skills, competencies and knowledge needed by employees, which is then used to guide the learning and development process (Jira et al., 2022), as represented in the AGES construct. Therefore, the training needs analysis is an important facet for informing upskilling and reskilling initiatives for several reasons, including revealing gaps in existing and future skills (Akther et al., 2018). Since the training needs analysis allows the ability to determine the actual training needs of employees, the organisation can create a targeted training plan to meet the identified gaps. This was confirmed by Johnson et al. (2020) who noted that a training needs analysis can provide various cost benefits. In reaching this conclusion, Johnson et al. (2020) focused on the cost benefit analysis of using a training needs analysis, identified to be effective there is a need to have clear learning objectives and training materials.

Furthermore, the training needs analysis can allow the organisation to have a deeper insight into new learning opportunities through assessing various approaches based on the needs of the individual and organization (Singh, 2018), which can be used to design upskilling and reskilling initiatives. The question which does emerge is whether the Abu Dhabi governmental human resource management actively seeks to determine potential skill gaps, and if the training needs analysis is used for this purpose. This is particularly important when reflecting on Păceșilă and Colesca (2019) who noted where training needs analysis is not effectively used, employees tend to possess poor adaptable skills therefore unable to meet future challenges. But to be effective, the process of conducting a gap analysis between existing and future organizational needs must involve a comprehensive assessment, which is undertaken across multiple criteria, including from an employee performance perspective, drawing on future strategic goals of the organisation, and identifying internal and external environmental gaps. From these potential gaps, existing performance of employees can be compared with planned outcomes which can help the organisation to determine which current and future skills are needed (Al Karim, 2019). A gap analysis can also be used to identify internal and external environmental challenges, and then compare existing skills of employees with these outcomes (Mayombe, 2021), and again enable specific training programs to be created, and enable organizational adaptability to be achieved (Livingstone et al., 2020).

Based on above, the training needs analysis is considered as a major pre-requisite of employee

learning and development through which continuous learning opportunities and initiatives can be developed (Hofman & van der Gaast, 2019). However, interestingly, despite the subject being extensively studied, there has been little academic research being conducted into the theme of training needs analysis and its applicability and adoption in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector from an upskilling and reskilling perspective to achieve organizational adaptability.

2.4.3 Performance and employee development

Much like the usage of the training needs analysis, performance reviews are used by an organization and the human resource department to provide the means to determine different facets in the operation, including for the purpose of compensation, promotion, together with training and career development (Lam'ah & Rofaida, 2022). Performance review process provides the means to precisely establish the performance of every employee which is gathered through regular, informal, and/or formal feedback as to their progress and performance (Rudman, 2020). The evaluation of employees' performance and their contribution towards meeting organisational goals result in identification of development opportunities (Nduati & Wanyoike, 2022). The company's ability to track its employees' performance will allow the organization to determine whether additional assistance training is needed, and the type of training required, for example whether that is upskilling or reskilling.

To achieve this, employee performance standards must be linked to the strategy and objectives of the organization, with the goals being set reflecting the employee's professional development and those of the organization. The basis for professional and personal development is centred on performance reviews and feedback of the employee from supervisors and other stakeholders (Taufek & Mustafa, 2018). A systematic approach can assist in determining talent gaps and enables the connection of learning plans to particular skills or attributes needed. From this, a tailored employee development plan can make sure that staff members acquire the required talents, skills and learning resources to meet the future demands (Zreen et al., 2020).

2.4.4 Summary of human resources management tools and techniques

This section has presented the current academic debate which was originally informed by the theory associated with organizational change, adaptability and learning theory. This has included the importance of upskilling and reskilling in relation to achieving organizational adaptability. To

understand and determine the current workforce skills sets and those needed for the future, there is the need for an organization and human resource management to use various tools and techniques such as conducting regular training needs analysis while also reviewing the performance and development of employees. However, while these practical tools and techniques are seen as an effective means to determine upskilling and reskilling requirements, what is unclear from a professional perspective of the researcher who works in the Abu Dhabi government department who are responsible for training, is while many of these techniques are used, is whether there is an awareness to the extent to which upskilling and reskilling programs can generate an environment for creativity and innovation amongst its employees when establishing and running upskilling and reskilling programs.

The changing in the organizational environment and needs

With any learning and development program including upskilling and reskilling, the training initiative needs to be carefully aligned with the organizational needs and strategy, and this should include the expectations of the customer's needs (Biginas et al., 2020; Cotter et al., 2018; Nosulich & Mukan, 2020). The responsibility of training, learning and development is mainly that of the human resource department, which tends to be focused on ensuring the effectiveness of the workforce to meet the challenges of change through upskilling and reskilling activities are designed to reflect the organization's strategic goals, and not simply the current needs.

An organization can be affected by external and internal influences which can bring about change. The external environmental influences can include political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental dimensions, which are often out of the control of organization, but needs to be proactively responded too in timely manner (Nandonde, 2019; Khan et al, 2019). The economic environment can influence the organization's access to resources often from a financial perspective, which can determine whether there are sufficient funds or the need to revise and change the strategic direction of the organization, which requires the workforce to respond to the change (Thongsri & Chang, 2019). The social environment is associated with aspects such as changes in demographics and the culture dimension of society or the community which can also have a direct effect on the activities in the organization, which can be linked to the customer and the workforce's attitudes and beliefs (Docì et al., 2022). Unlike the social dimension, the technological influences are increasingly becoming more dominant in an organization. This

includes the extent to which the organization and customer are dependent on technology (Wang et al., 2020). Increasingly, there has been a shift towards hybrid working and associated online activities, which has presented its own challenges, including how to ensure that the workforce is fully prepared to meet the future digital challenges. The legal and environmental dimension are the last two aspects which can directly and indirectly contribute towards organizational change and the need for the workforce to be upskilled and reskilled. This includes changes in laws and regulations, which means that the organization must adapt and change to adhere to new statutory requirements (Lang et al., 2021). A recent example would be the changes brought about with the 2020/21 COVID-19 pandemic, which saw countries responding through lockdowns, which came about with new laws being passed to restrict the movement of people which led to remote working, and the increased dependence of information technology and digital solutions (Agrawal et al., 2020). Finally, environmental forces including acting sustainably has resulted in an organization having to adopt and adapt to new and innovative solutions to meet increasing demands imposed by society, government, and necessity (Majid et al., 2020). All these external dimensions have led to organizations needing to adapt to these external changes, which can only be achieved through a workforce possessing the correct skills and knowledge.

Unlike the external dimensions, the internal facets are more influenced and informed by the organizational activities. Often these internal dimensions are informed by the operational activity, therefore can be seen as under the control of the organization. This can include how the organization intends to meet customer expectations or achieve its mission and objectives, but is also influenced to an extent by external attributes (Pathiraanage, 2019). Reflecting this, any internal dimension can also bring about change, which also needs the workforce and resources to be correctly trained to possess the necessary skills (Adam, 2020).

Based on above, the potential influence of these external and internal dimensions can bring about change and force the organization to respond, which therefore needs to be reflected in the learning and development activities of an organization (Garavan et al., 2019). To achieve this, any upskilling and reskilling initiatives needed to be designed to ensure that the organization can meet the challenges of the future whether they are internal or external (Biginas et al., 2020).

2.5 The emergence of the hybrid workplace

The next section will focus on the challenges associated with the changes in the organization,

including in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector, and how reskilling and upskilling programs can be used. Since the acquisition of new talented employees can be both time consuming and costly, which is increasingly challenging when the recruiting landscape has seen a limited supply of talent, organizations are now focused on developing and nurturing internal employees (Zhang et al., 2021). To achieve this, human resource practices and models have evolved over time, which has also been transformed with recent technological innovations and the outcome of the COVID-19 pandemic which witnessed the rapid emergence of a hybrid working environment for employees. The hybrid working environment has seen the emergence of a blend of in-office and remote working practices being offered to employees, whereby providing the opportunity to work flexibly by using an adaptable working solution (Gratton, 2021). The concept is based on enabling and allowing employees to physically work in the office or workplace, along with working remotely in a different location, which is often home-based. The hybrid working environment has also come about with advances in new technologies, which have provided fast and unhindered communication enabling individuals and teams to work remotely (Fayard et al., 2021). This has included technology which has enabled communication through video calling, chat software, document and screen sharing, and related tools. With the emergence of the hybrid working environment, employees have become more independent whereby providing a better balance between work and personal life, which can lead to greater motivation, therefore building a more productive, motivated, and stable workforce (Aroles et al., 2019).

There are however challenges associated with the hybrid working model, particularly around the theme of upskilling and reskilling. The hybrid working model can lead to organisations to misinterpret the skills which are needed, as employees may be incorrectly trained or possess the wrong skills, for example in technology competencies, as their work cannot be physically observed if working remotely (Malikk et al., 2022). Related to this, is also the identified challenge associated with new technology as to the need for employees to be constantly upskilling their knowledge to keep up to date with the rapid developments in the various technologies and working practices. Another challenge of upskilling and reskilling in a hybrid working environment is how the individual learns, and whether the training provision should be in-person or conducted in a virtual learning setting, but this requires identifying the learning style of the employee (Papi et al., 2021), which is represented in the next section. While the hybrid working environment can enable the employee to have the flexibility of remote working, this does not mean that learning styles are as

flexible. The individual learning experience to be effective therefore needs to be based on the learning style of the adult learner, which may be achieved through conducting reskilling and upskilling programs remotely, online, or physically in person, but is depended on the learner.

2.5.1 Adult learning and the individual learning styles

With adults, including in a workplace setting, when an individual learns, the approach tends to be related to behavioural changes, adjustments or alterations in attitude, knowledge, and abilities, which is informed by a specific experience (Sudria et al., 2018). Stander et al. (2019) contended that learning is a process and an activity, rather than a result or a target. As a concept, adult learning is more than just remembering, it is about involving and engaging in experiences. Therefore, learning outcomes are the product of the learning process, which typically shapes the learner's understanding and knowledge of a subject. Razzak et al. (2019) highlighted that the learning style of the individual often has a direct influence on the motivation to learn. Where the individual is interested in the theme or topic being studied their motivation to learn is heightened. Learning outcomes, as defined by Dantas and Cunha (2020), can be seen as being experiences which enable the individual to acquire or change their existing skill sets and abilities. Moser and Zumbach (2018) focused on the influence of the individual's learning style and concluded that any training program needs to be designed to be aligned to the learner. Therefore, to be effective, the learning programs need to be specifically designed to reflect the adult learner, and their learning style (Fahlevi et al., 2020). The learning style influences how different individuals acquire new skills and knowledge, while also determining the most effective training format. Therefore, understanding the learning style of the individual is relevant when considering upskilling and reskilling of employees in a *workplace* or organizational setting. But as noted above, for the learning experience to be effective, consideration must be given to how an adult learns. Adult education and learning can be complicated due to the behavioural, psychological and personality characteristics of both the educator and the learner (Usanov & Qayumov, 2020). As a concept, learning and development in an organizational setting is also influenced by the diverse range of employees learning styles, which needs to be considered so ensuring that the upskilling and reskilling training programs are effective throughout the entire organization (Derler et al., 2019). Therefore, it is important that the instructional methods used are effectively designed, planned, and delivered. To achieve this, it is necessary to understand the adult learning process (Black & Wiliam, 2018). But for adult learners,

the learning experience can be influenced by the location and the setting, including in the workplace or remotely. For Billet (2002) workplace learning is different from a formalized educational setting, since employees learn and apply their knowledge at the same time in their professional setting or workplace, as opposed to an abstract theoretical perspective (Lyons & Bandura, 2020). Therefore, learners in a workplace setting can gain new skills and knowledge, before given the opportunity to put into practice what has been learnt, hence why this approach is referred to as work-based learning (Downs et al., 2018). Through using a variety of methods in a workplace setting, the employees can learn through experiencing various contextual skills and experiences first-hand rather than from a theoretical perspective only (Bowling & Henschke, 2020). Therefore, workplace learning for adults can provide an invaluable learning experience since it is designed to provide the actual knowledge and skills needed for the future workplace. Drawing from a professional perspective, workplace-based training does provide the best learning experience for adults, but what does emerge from the context of this study, is which format does the Abu Dhabi governmental sector adopt, for example being conducted internally or externally and why?

To be effective, upskilling, and reskilling employees require the organisation to adopt appropriate adult learning strategies which encourage work-based learning, through which critical thinking can be cultivated, encouraging problem-solving and an adaptability mindset amongst employees (Edifor et al., 2021). Work-based adult learning also requires the learning process to be a social activity which supports the learners to gain the skills and knowledge which reflects their surroundings. This can include learning programs which include collaboration with their peers through concepts such as mentorship, which will be explored in the next section. Finally, adult learning needs to be sufficiently flexible, which enables employees to have a learning experience which is designed around the individual employee (Kettle, 2013). An effective adult learning strategy for upskilling and reskilling also requires the learner to be allowed to reflect on their experience and then apply or practice what has been learnt, in the actual setting (Nottingham, 2017). Again, what does emerge from the literature and observed by the researcher is the extent to which adult learning theory is important when designing and implementing upskilling and reskilling programs. But do these techniques such as mentorship and the need for individualized training programs have been adopted in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector?

2.5.2 Mentorship

As mentioned above, adult learning particularly in the workplace can benefit from a range of strategies design around how an adult learns, including the use of mentors. The concept of mentorship has emerged from the literature review, as an important strategy in enhancing the transfer of skills and knowledge in an organisational setting. As a concept, mentorship involves experienced employees who serve as a guide and support for those less-experienced colleagues, particularly in the context of their professional development (Germain, 2020). Mentors can bring a wealth of knowledge, competencies, and insights to the learning experience, playing a substantial role in helping their mentees to acquire new skills to effectively navigate the challenges associated with the acquisition of new skills (Tenakwah, 2021). This was supported earlier by Akinla et al. (2018) who argued that peer mentoring can result in professional and personal development, as it can enable the individual to require the skills to enhance their adaptability. The implementation of mentorship programs can foster a supportive learning environment where employees are encouraged to seek guidance, ask questions, and receive valuable constructive feedback, through enhancing the learning journey of the employee in a workplace setting (Nunan et al., 2023). Through using the concept of mentorship, mentors can identify areas that require further upskilling or reskilling needs of their mentees, through devising personalized learning strategies, and provide consistent encouragement as the learner's progresses. Drawing on the researcher's professional background, this study intends to determine whether mentorship is fully understood as an important facet associated with upskilling and reskilling.

2.5.3 Technology and data analytics

As seen with the debate as to the emergent of hybrid working, technological advancements have increasingly been adopted in businesses and organisations, which has presented the challenge of ensuring their workforce possesses the latest technology-based knowledge and skills (Jacobs & Pretorius, 2020). Technology is now being utilised in various functions of business including finance, accountancy, procurement, product development and in the field of human resource management. As organizations become increasingly technologically dependent throughout their operational activities, there is a greater need for employees have the latest skills needed to effectively use the technologies to enhance their performance and productivity (Bruun & Krause-Jensen, 2022). Therefore, there is a need for upskilling and reskilling in technology. To achieve

this, writers such as Attatsitsey and Osei-Bonsu (2021) noted that due to the continuous advancement of technology has placed organisations under constant pressure to keep up with the latest developments and advancements. The use and reliance of technology in the various operational activities has been accelerated by COVID 19 which forced organizations to be digitalized and use technologies for their operational activities (Czifra & Molnar, 2020). This has led to an increased dependence on technology, which has resulted in organisations being forced to continue certain practices brought about by the pandemic such as hybrid working or meeting customer expectations through online solutions.

Technology has also infiltrated into areas such as learning and development, with the emergence of interactive technologies, which can disseminate learning of new skills and knowledge in an organisational and educational setting, but virtually (Szilard et al., 2018). Through this medium, employees learning, and behaviour can be evaluated in real-time, whereby permitting the human resource experts to monitor learning experience as it occurs (Kensbock & Stöckmann, 2021), and when used in an upskilling and reskilling context can provide another method to deliver the learning experience. Closely aligned to the theme of technology is also the emergence of data-driven learning analytics and how this concept can enhance how human resource management can determine or assess employees' skills and knowledge, through providing accurate real-time data. Data-driven learning involves the usage of data analytics to understand employees' specific learning needs, monitor their progress, and make informed decisions regarding upskilling and reskilling strategies, which can be conducted through using online learning resources (Jaiswal et al., 2022). Through the utilization of learning analytics and the associated feedback systems, organizations can tailor training content to address individual skill gaps and accommodate diverse learning styles of the employees, ensuring the training is relevant and effective (Amer-Yahia, 2022). Data-driven learning analytics can also assist in employees to become actively engage in upskilling and reskilling programs through the usage of a diverse range of resources tailored to the learner's needs, including access to digital learning platforms, expert instructors, and relevant educational materials (Agha, 2022). These resources can be externally or internally provided. With external training provision, these resources tend to provide an informed, and delivered using up-to-date training techniques and methods, which are not influenced by the organization. However, the training tends to be more generic and often not tailored to the specific industry needs but may be beneficial as the content can be broad, whereby addressing future unidentified needs

or gaps. The question which does emerge, is whether the concept of data-driven learning analytics is fully understood and applied in the Abu Dhabi government when implementing and assessing the effectiveness of upskilling and reskilling initiatives when achieving organizational adaptability.

2.5.4 Summary of hybrid working, the learning style of the adult, usage mentoring, technology, and data analytics

This section has provided a critical review of new and emerging trends in many organizations including in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector, which have made the theme of upskilling and reskilling important to fully understand. This has included the emergence of the hybrid working environment which has been brought about or accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic together with technological advances in connectivity. The hybrid working environment has created the challenge for human resource teams and organizations as to how to assess and determine future training needs when the employees are working remotely. Linked to this, is also how the training provision can be delivered effectively as adult learners and their learning styles needs to be carefully considered and understood. This section of the chapter highlighted the need to understand whether the adult learning experience can be effectively conducted online, remotely or in person, and the extent to which this provision can be provided in a format which permits the adult learner to practice their new skills, which is fundamental to adult learning acquisition. Based on this debate, the question which emerged that was informed by the researcher's professional background was as to whether the Abu Dhabi government sector and its human resource management teams are aware of the potential challenges and opportunities of using external or internal upskilling and reskilling provision and the benefits of establishing a mentorship strategy to enhance the upskilling and reskilling provision. Furthermore, the section also asked as to the extent to which Abu Dhabi government sector recognizes the need to inform upskilling and reskilling initiatives by drawing on adult learning theory.

2.6 Research gaps and conceptual framework

As this study is focused on investigating the influence of upskilling and reskilling on the adaptability in Abu Dhabi governmental organizations, this chapter has set out the current academic understanding as to upskilling and reskilling, which has also been informed and

influenced by the researcher's professional experience and background. To emerge from the chapter are the following themes and questions, which will be investigated later in this qualitative study. Firstly, from a professional perspective and drawing on the researcher's role of working in the Abu Dhabi government, is whether the current human resource policies are designed to recognize that through initiatives like upskilling and reskilling there is a need for proactively assessing whether employees are prepared and ready for change, and whether there are gaps in existing knowledge and abilities, which is presented in Figure 2.5 under Theme One. Secondly to emerge from the literature review and informed by the researcher's experience, was the theme related to employee engagement, satisfaction and retention. This theme, as presented in Theme Two, was originally identified by the researcher, as to whether these facets are recognised by the human resource managers working in the Abu Dhabi government as to the influence as being important for achieving organizational adaptability.

Next to emerge from the chapter was whether the upskilling and reskilling initiatives used in the Abu Dhabi governmental bodies are informed and designed around the well-being of the employee, so that the individual possesses the correct skills to meet future challenges effectively. Closely aligned to this, was the question as to whether there was an awareness amongst human resource managers as to how the upskilling and reskilling training programs were designed, and the need for constant assessment to identify potential skills gaps as customer needs and expectations are rapidly changing. The last theme to emerge from the literature review was the relevance of ensuring that the training provided was reflective of the adult learner. This included whether external or internal training provision provided in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector was fully understood. This also encompassed the understanding of the relevance of incorporating mentorship into these training initiatives and the need for up-to-date information generated from data-driven learning analytics. This is reflective in the third and final theme associated with the effectiveness of upskilling and reskilling.

These emerging themes and potential gaps are illustrated in Figure 2.5 which presents a conceptual framework representing the current academic debate associated with upskilling and reskilling. The model also shows those potential gaps in Abu Dhabi governmental human resources management practices and understanding of upskilling and reskilling, which will provide the basis for the main study's interview questions, which will be presented below in

section 2.7. The conceptual framework, as presented below in Figure 2.5, shows under the first emergent theme, the association of needing to upskill and reskill the workforce to achieve organisational adaptability. To emerge from the literature review has been the research of Agha (2022), and Rangaswami (2021) who contended that an organisation can achieve adaptability through adopting upskilling and reskilling initiatives. Part of the need for upskilling and reskilling can be attributed to the acceptance that organisational change is inevitable, which has led to Deepa et al. (2021) to conclude that organisations have needed to understand and plan for change. For Rangaswami (2021) organisations have needed to upskill and reskill their workforce so that the individual employee possesses the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies needed, while Agha (2022) contended that any upskilling and reskilling program needs to be designed to prepare employees to possess the correct future skills and knowledge, but then are continuously monitored to ensure that the working culture remains adaptable. The meeting of changing needs in the organisation as noted by Sharan (2020) means that the organisation must motivate their employees through upskilling and reskilling them, which for Chukwidi et al. (2018), can extend the individual's tenure of employment, therefore retaining this valuable resource to be utilised when adapting to future changes. This led to the creation of the first research question which was focused on determining the current usage of upskilling and reskilling activities within the Abu Dhabi government entities.

The second theme was focused on the influence of upskilling and reskilling associated with adaptability. Aligned to the influence of upskilling and reskilling when ensuring the organisational adaptability were key authors including Billionniere and Rahman (2022), who focused on preparing employees for future of work, while also enhancing the capabilities of employees (Lang & Triantoro, 2022; Satra et al., 2021). Closely connected to preparing employees for the future challenges and skills needed, was the necessity of preparing the workforce for disruptive times (Abe et al., 2021). Closely associated with this, was the necessity for increased innovative practices and thinking (Tsou & Chen, 2020), who noted that upskilling and reskilling can lead to the acquisition of new ways of thinking creatively, the ability to devise new problem-solving approaches, and handle complex situations more adeptly including around technological solutions (Kensbock & Stöckmann, 2021). Finally, there is the meeting of future customer needs, as societal changes are rapidly changing (Antonioli & Della Torre, 2016). From above the following research question was devised as to the influences on the upskilling and

reskilling initiatives adopted by the Abu Dhabi government organisations to achieve adaptability.

The third theme as presented below in Figure 2.5, is related to the effectiveness of upskilling and reskilling. To emerge from the literature was the identified need for the usage of conducting a training needs analysis (Amin, 2022), which includes the recognition of a methodology which accurately measures the performance of the workforce and employee (McConnell & Schaninger, 2019; Syahir et al., 2021). With the shift and changes in the workplace, was also the emergence of the hybrid working environment. For upskilling and reskilling to be effective, there is a need to establish and maintain a supportive hybrid working environment (Malik et al., 2022). However, part of the challenge, as presented in the literature review has been the acknowledgement and recognition that adult learning techniques need to be established including the opportunity for the learner to practice (Eidifor et al., 2021). This also includes the consideration that the individual can have different learning styles, therefore, the upskilling and reskilling programmes need to reflect and accommodate this. To emerge from this debate was the question as to what strategies were associated with upskilling and reskilling when enhancing organisational adaptability within the Abu Dhabi governmental departments.

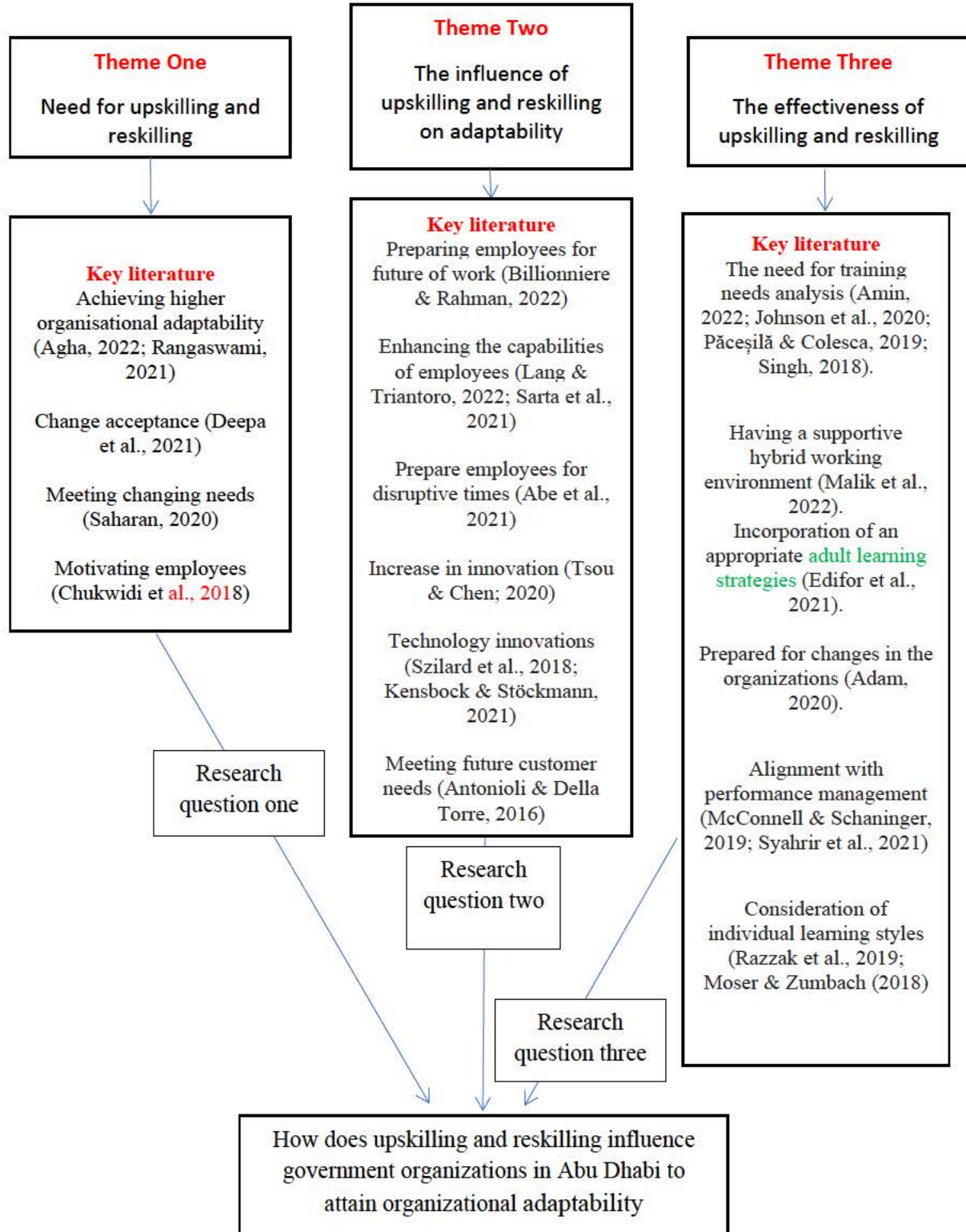


Figure 2.5: Conceptual framework with gap identification

2.7 Research questions

To emerge from the current academic debate and as presented in Chapter One, are the research questions which have been informed by the researcher's professional experience of working in the Abu Dhabi governmental entity for administrating employee training, the following research questions were created:

RQ1: What is the current usage of upskilling and reskilling activities used in Abu Dhabi government entities?

RQ2: What are the influences on upskilling and reskilling initiatives on adaptability in Abu Dhabi government organisations?

RQ3: What strategies are associated with upskilling and reskilling when enhancing organisational adaptability in Abu Dhabi governmental departments?

2.8 Chapter summary

The central purpose of the study is to investigate the influence of upskilling and reskilling on the adaptability of governmental organizations in Abu Dhabi. To achieve this, this chapter has presented the current academic debate as to the themes associated with upskilling and reskilling, together with organizational adaptability. The chapter provided the theoretical underpinning of organizational change and learning theory, drawing on the concept of future of work, resource-based perspective theory, organizational adaptation theory, and the AGES model, which has then been elaborated on with the presentation of related themes including the theory behind organizational adaptation and the need for upskilling and reskilling, before proceeding to present the underlying theories associated with organizational change and learning. These theories have presented the underlying theories associated with the upskilling and reskilling. The organisational adaptation theory represents how an organisation can be adaptable in response to change, through the acquisition of new skills and competencies which are interconnected to their existing knowledgebase. The dynamic capabilities theory represented how the organizational abilities can be enhanced or improved by identifying, integrating, and developing the existing skills and knowledge within the workforce to adapt to rapid change through adopting transformational upskilling and reskilling initiatives and strategies. The future of work model

represents how an organization needs to consider how the dynamics in working practices have shifted towards seeking a more work-life balance approach in the workplace, while also being prepared for the future challenges. This includes providing a holistic viewpoint which captures the learning and development of the employee while redesigning the existing working activities and practices. In contrast, the resource-based view, is focused on how the resources are used to determine the learner's performance and to ensure that the resources needed are provided. This includes assessing which skill sets are needed. The final concept reviewed was the AGES model of learning, which is focused on the psychological and personality differences of the learner, which is then reflected in the reskilling and upskilling programs.

The chapter has been focused on core themes associated with upskilling and reskilling including the necessity for informed and fully understood training needs analysis, along with performance management. The literature review has also introduced and reviewed the debate around the emergence of hybrid working and learning and the challenges associated with ensuring that the adult learner and their learning style is fully recognized and understood. The need for upskilling and reskilling was seen as a strategic response to the changes and challenges due to the rapid shifts in the business and operational environments. The human resource department responsible for the upskilling and reskilling are required to ensure that the workforce possesses the necessary skills, knowledge, and competencies. This also includes promoting and motivating the workforce whereby ensuring that the individual remains in the organization and is productive. To determine the required training, this chapter has focused on the importance of conducting a training needs analysis (TNA) which is seen as a key human resource management tool. Part of this process is to determine the required skills and knowledge needed for the future, which was closely related to the AGES construct, when determining these requirements, then as to how these can be met. Interlinked to this, was the theme of performance and employee development. In ensuring that the upskilling and reskilling programmes are effective, all training programmes need to be aligned to the strategic objectives of the organisation, where the performance of the employee meet the organisational goals.

The chapter has also focused on the emergence of the hybrid workplace, which is closely associated with the future of work construct. The hybrid workplace has led to the emergence of a blend of in-office and remote working practices, whereby offering a flexible or adaptable

working environment. From a reskilling and reskilling perspective, this new development has meant that training initiatives and programmes have become more challenging due to the advent of remote working practices. Finally, the chapter has focused on adult learning theory, which was closely associated with the AGES model. To be effective, upskilling, and reskilling practices need to reflect on how adults learn, and now include the emergence of remote working practices. Closely associated with this challenge, is the recognised need for work-based adult learning theories to be incorporated into upskilling and reskilling programmes through the usage of relevant adult learning techniques like enabling the individual to practice along with the usage of mentorship. Mentoring includes providing the learner with a supportive environment, where the individual is encouraged to seek guidance and constructive feedback, while gaining a personalised learning experience. Finally, the chapter has critically reviewed the emergence of technology and data analytics. Learning analytics and feedback has enabled organisations to address individual skill gap requirements, whereby ensuring that the training is effective when upskilling and reskilling. These technological advances can provide real-time data to monitor and assess the learner's progress, as the upskilling and reskilling programmes progress whereby ensuring their effectiveness and relevance. But the question which emerges is whether this is being effectively implemented in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the qualitative methodology adopted together with a rationale and justification as to the strategies and approaches used. This will include in section 3.2 the research philosophy of the study, which will compare the two major perspectives, justifying why this study is qualitative in nature. In section 3.3, the research strategy and approach will be set out, including why a qualitative strategy was most suitable to study upskilling and reskilling in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector. The research methods of the study are presented in section 3.4, again providing a comparison of the different strategies used, but then justifying why this study adopted an interpretivist approach. Leading from this, section 3.5 will provide a justification of the data collection strategy, which will include the development of the interview questions, and how they are informed by the existing literature. The data analysis of the study of using a thematic approach is then critically presented in section 3.8, before the outcome of the pilot and main study is set out (section 3.9 and 3.10). Finally, the chapter will provide a justification as to how this qualitative study was validated (section 3.11), including the trustworthiness, authenticity, and confirmability, before the research limitations (section 3.12) and ethical guidelines followed by the study are justified (section 3.13).

The previous chapter has presented the current academic debate, which has included identifying the existing gaps in the literature which have informed the study's research questions. In presenting this debate, the first research objective was addressed, as it was focused on critically assessing the needs of upskilling and reskilling in Government organisations in Abu Dhabi. From the literature there was evidence that there are numerous upskilling and reskilling requirements as a means to achieve higher organisational adaptability (Agha, 2022; Rangaswami, 2021), being able to respond effectively to change (Deepa et al., 2021; Saharan, 2020), through to motivating employees (Chukwidi et al., 2018). The literature review has also addressed the theoretical background associated with the second research objective; to evaluate how upskilling and reskilling can inform the adaptability in Government organisations in Abu Dhabi. The literature has demonstrated a variety of upskilling and reskilling attributes such as preparing employees

for future work (Billionniere & Rahman; 2022), through to strategies related to enhancing the capabilities of employees (Lang & Triantoro, 2022; Sarta et al., 2021), preparing individuals for unseen events (Abe et al., 2021), through to creating an innovative environment (Tsou & Chen; 2020). Finally, the previous chapter also provided the theoretical context to the third research objective which was focused on how to improve upskilling and reskilling to enhance adaptability of employees in Abu Dhabi's Government organisations. In demonstrating this, the previous chapter referred to various theories such as dynamic capabilities, the future work model and AGES learning theory, along with reviewing previous studies to reveal various success factors needed to determine the effectiveness of upskilling and reskilling such as the importance of using training needs analysis to inform future provision (Amin, 2022; Johnson et al., 2020; Păceșilă & Colesca, 2019; Singh, 2018), creation of a support hybrid working environment (Malikk et al., 2022), incorporate appropriate adult learning style (Edifor et al., 2021), considering changing needs of organisations (Adam, 2020), incorporate technology (Szilard et al., 2018; Kensbock & Stöckmann, 202), alignment with performance management (McConnell & Schaninger, 2019; Syahrir et al., 2021) and consideration of individual learning styles (Razzak et al., 2019; Moser & Zumbach (2018). Through conducting the literature review as presented in section 2.7, there was an identified gap as to the experiences of upskilling and reskilling from an Abu Dhabi's government organizational perspective. To discover and gain new information about this phenomenon and to generate new critical insights, the study adopted a qualitative approach which is presented and justified later in this chapter. However, it needs to be recognised that a well-defined and clearly articulated research methodology is required for any project since the process entails complex actions and steps to collect and then analyse the data (Mukherjee, 2019). Furthermore, each research project tends to be distinct in how it should be conducted, as to how the study was carried out (Pandey & Pandey, 2021). To achieve this, the research methodology is presented in this chapter, along with the research philosophy, the approach adopted, the methods for implementing the actual study, the sampling strategy, data analysis process, the validity and reliability of the project, and finally the ethical considerations and limitations.

3.2 Research philosophy

Understanding and knowing how to gather and analyse the data is the central aspect of research philosophy, which is seen as the method of knowing how knowledge is created (Dougherty et

al., 2019). A novel theory or by offering a solution to a particular problem determines how knowledge can be developed and what kind of understanding is needed (Al-Ababneh, 2020). When conducting research, it is necessary to have a philosophy that is aligned to the researcher's preconceptions of how the world works, through their ontological position. Through reflecting and following the researcher's positionality, a researcher can choose the best study plan and data gathering and analysis techniques (Albert et al., 2019).

To attain understand and achieve this, the epistemology of the researcher is needed to be understood then used to determine the research philosophy, as it sets out how the researcher can generate and establish knowledge using appropriate procedures, the type of empirical data used, and then analysing the outcomes, whereby achieving the study's aim (Figuerola, 2019; Zhang, 2018). To generate the empirical data, there are several research methodologies which can be adopted which include the positivist, interpretivist, and interventionist approaches, which a researcher could adopt (Bonache & Festing, 2020; Hope et al., 2019; Naidoo, 2019). These methodologies are briefly compared below along with the selected approach adopted in this study.

Table 3.1: Comparison of three philosophies and their selection/ rejection for present study

Research Philosophies	Properties	References	Selection and justification
Positivist	- Discusses the measurable underpinnings of social reality - Independent and autonomous social agents - Measurable by quantitative techniques - Using quantitative techniques, hypotheses are tested	Greasley and Thomas (2020), Alharahsheh and Pius (2020), Coleman (2019).	Rejected The philosophy is rejected since there is not enough research in the field and because it cannot gather previously undiscovered constructs.
Interpretivism	- Examines the varying interpretations of social reality	Konadu-Osei et al. (2022),	Selected

	- Individual variations are recognised - Complex human knowledge is determined by empirical investigation. - To investigate the phenomenon, qualitative data is used.	Chipindi et al. (2020), Iosifides (2018), Don-Solomon and Eke (2018)	It was chosen because it views entities as social actors whose actions and perspectives should be included when researching a phenomenon.
Critical theory	- Critically assesses social processes - History forms the basis of social reality. - It is believed that social reality transforms and no new reality is formed	Goldman et al. (2018), Boveda and Bhattacharya (2019).	Rejected It is rejected because it holds that knowledge only comes from the past and the use of scientific techniques, and that it is impossible to learn about fresh structures.

Comparing the three main methodological strands of positivism, interpretivism, and interventionist thinking as presented by Bell, Bryman and Hartley (2022) is set out in Table 3.2 below, which sets out the three core research methodologies, the positivist, interpretivist, and the interventionist approaches. The positivist or the realist contends there is only a single deductive reality, which seeks an objective perspective to prove or disprove existing theory or knowledge. At the opposite end of the spectrum is the interpretivist, who sees that there are multiple realities which can only be viewed from an inductive and subjective viewpoint. Finally, the interventionist seeks to conduct their research from an active perspective, which can include a combination of subjective and objective or abductive techniques (Bell, Bryman & Hartley, 2022).

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Table 3.2: Comparison of the three perspectives (Creswell et al., 2003; Robson, 2024)

Belief	Positivist	Interpretivism	Interventionist
Ontological	There is just one reality, and the researcher and reality are not connected.	There are multiple realities, and the researcher and	The foundation of reality is based on creating change.

		realities are interdependent.	
Epistemological	Objectivity in light of the existence of a reality beyond what is comprehensible to humans	Using human experiences to create knowledge in a subjective manner	The phenomenon is governed by the social context, and the context determines its meaning through action and change.
Methodological	Observation-based information. analysis using quantitative information and statistical techniques	Participant-driven data collecting. Hermeneutically analysed qualitative data	To analyse the phenomenon, data derived from assumptions, values, and beliefs to bring about change or transformation.
Knowledge interaction	Subjectivity cannot be included, nor does a researcher have the authority to alter the phenomenon under study.	While examining a phenomenon, researchers can interfere with reality and take into account their personal opinions.	The goal of a researcher's to generated real data in an organisation.
Selection and justification	Rejected Existence of one reality is not considered appropriate to the impact of upskilling and reskilling on adaptability of government organisations in UAE and thus quantitative methods are not considered appropriate for this study	Selected Multiple realities are considered to be identified to reveal how upskilling and reskilling impact on adaptability of government organisations in UAE and thus qualitative methods are considered appropriate for the study	Rejected There changes has already occurred.

The research philosophy identified as being suitable for this study was adopting an interpretivism approach since the strategy can deep dive to investigate the social issues associated with upskilling and reskilling while also recognizing the autonomy experiences and perceptions of the individual (Pham, 2018). The interpretivism school of thought tends to operate under the assumption that social reality exists only in the mind of the individual, which shapes and informs their perceptions, which can be multifaceted (Konadu-Osei et al., 2022). Due to this, the methodology used to study needs to reflect this multifaceted nature associated with perceptions (Chipindi et al., 2020). Reflecting this, the researcher is compelled to acknowledge that individuals differ according to their experiences, understanding and knowledge, and that the subjectivity perspective of the issue must be considered (Iosifides, 2018). This consideration is reflective of the interpretivist philosophy, where social actors are presumed to be autonomous and independent, informed by their own opinion based on their background and experiences (Don-Solomon & Eke, 2018). The methodology encouraged the researcher to investigate the social actors' perspectives by considering their unique experiences based on the social topic being investigated. For this study, since government organisations in Abu Dhabi have adopted upskilling and reskilling initiatives, the individuals working in these entities had their specific experiences and observations as to the theme of adaptability. Included as acknowledged in the literature review, has been the recent experiences encountered by the COVID-19 outbreak which transformed the usage of adaptability. Furthermore, interpretivism is considered appropriate for this study based on the following reasons:

- There is limited research on the UAE government organizations as to upskilling and reskilling, therefore the existing theory in the locality would be hard to generalise. Heath (2021) contended that despite the existence of a national AI plan in the UAE government, there was an absence of information about upskilling and reskilling, making it challenging to generalise the current situation. Jain et al. (2021) also shared this perspective, and revealed a significant gap in the body of literature, but then called for a new insight to be generated, which is only possible through adopting an interpretivism approach.
- Given that subjectivism recognises the important connection between the social actors and the environment, the researcher was then able to understand the thoughts, perceptions and beliefs of the participants by following this approach rather than

seeking an objective meaning (Crowther & Thompson, 2020). By studying this phenomenon from an interpretivist perspective, the researcher gained a richer insight into the theme of upskilling and reskilling and then generate a new theory.

This summary above, is partly aligned to the first research objective, as to critically assessing the needs of upskilling and reskilling in the Abu Dhabi Government organisations, as the interpretivist methodology allowed the usage of human experiences and insights, while the positivist philosophy did not enable the collection or analysis of multiple realities associated with the identified needs which could be personal.

To address the second research objective of evaluating how upskilling and reskilling can influence the adaptability in the Abu Dhabi Government organisations, this theme needed to enable the participants to be able to reflect on and recall their individual experiences and observations, for example with the events surrounding the COVID-19 outbreak, and the emergence of adaptability in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector. Interpretivism provided an opportunity for the participants to convey multiple interpretations of their observations on the topic and share with the researcher their experiences.

Leading from addressing the first two objectives empirically, the third research objective of recommending strategies to improve upskilling and reskilling to enhance adaptability in the Abu Dhabi Government organizations, could only be achieved by generating new theory and insights rather than proving or falsifying existing knowledge or theory. Again, this could only be achieved through using a social constructivist, subjective and interpretivist approach, is explored in greater depth in the next section.

3.3 Research approach and strategy

A deductive or abductive approach were not chosen for this study because they do not allow for a thorough investigation of the topic, as the premise of the two strategies have a predefined or informed requirement (Young et al., 2019). This is because there is little information available on the influence of upskilling and reskilling in relation to adaptability of government organizations which are based in Abu Dhabi (Heath, 2021; Jain et al., 2021). To generate a new critical insight, it was necessary to adopt an inductive approach, as the strategy places a strong emphasis on gathering and analysing data to produce new theories including as to upskilling and

reskilling (Young et al., 2020). The inductive approach provides the researcher the flexibility to investigate new themes and not to be confined to existing knowledge and understanding (HR & Aithal, 2022).

Al-Ababneh (2020) argued that it is possible to think of the inductive approach as both a general mode of analysis and an underlying philosophy. The strategy offers the theoretical foundation to interpret the meaning, but also enables the perceptions and experiences not to be informed or influenced. The approach therefore offered a strategy for understanding textual information generated from the interviews in relation to assessing upskilling and reskilling strategies adopted in government organisations based in Abu Dhabi. However, for the researcher to adopt an inductive approach, there must be a research plan created that is informed by the study's objectives and research questions, which are also aligned with the philosophy that underpins the strategy (Tom, 2020), which is presented later in this chapter.

3.4 Research methods

After selecting the research philosophy and approach which was inductive, the next step was to determine the methods adopted by the researcher to ensuring that a robust and credible process was (Pandey & Pandey, 2021). Most research studies on upskilling and reskilling tended to analyse the data using both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Billionniere & Rahman, 2022; Wahab et al., 2021; Calonge, 2019). Reflecting this, Table3.3 summarises the justification for the selection of a qualitative methodology:

Table 3.3: Comparison between qualitative and quantitative methods

Attributes of comparison	Qualitative	Quantitative
Aim and purpose	• This approach allows to assess and interpret social interactions with the respondents about upskilling and reskilling • This allows to look into and fully comprehend the process of upskilling and reskilling • This allows to carry out a thorough and thorough contextualization, explication, and explanation of the data. • This allows to evaluate the opinions of the people who are impacted by the process of upskilling and reskilling	• This method is not considered appropriate since no cause-and-effect relationship needs to be evaluated • General understanding of the upskilling and reskilling is not needed but rather specific details about practices are needed. • This method is not considered appropriate since generalization is not sought. • There is no need to have access to precise measurements, quantify data, and verify theories
Approach	• Unstructured approach to collect data is justified to achieve research aims	• Structured approach to collect data is not considered appropriate due to the limitations of collecting in-depth data
Study sample	• It is justified since small sample identified by purposive sampling allows too deeply probe the respondents	• Not considered appropriate since large sample size which can be purposive or random allows for generalisation
Data collection	• Unstructured questions are used to collect detailed data to meet research aims	• Structured questions with options of answers provided to the respondents restrict the data collection and hence not appropriate for the research
Data Analysis	• Thematic analysis is considered appropriate due to its ability to retrieve maximum themes from the data leading to detailed interpretation	• Statistical analysis is not considered appropriate since it leads to generalization and not meeting the research aims

The social constructivist and inductive foundation for this research meant that the underpinning theory was expected to be created from the results and outcomes of the study. The final selection of using an interpretivist methodology emerged from following a social constructivist and inductive approach. The researcher had planned to use non-quantifiable techniques to gather and then evaluate the data, placing an emphasis on words and phrases rather than on numbers and figures, leading to descriptive data analysis to be conducted, without the usage of statistical techniques so that previously unknown knowledge can be identified. The selection of qualitative methodology can be justified as follows:

- Qualitative research was used to fully understand the perceptions and experiences of those who have participated in upskilling and reskilling programs, which can be challenging if the research was numerical based, and then used to generate new knowledge to inform and update an established process (Raskind et al., 2019). Therefore, for this study, a qualitative research approach was used as it enabled the researcher to better understand and explore the problems associated with upskilling and reskilling.
- The participant's perspective of upskilling and reskilling in the Abu Dhabi government organizations was unknown until the research was conducted. This was due to the lack of directly related existing knowledge associated with the theme in the organisation. By utilizing a qualitative methodology therefore enabled the examination of the various perspectives shared by the participants.
- As the current purpose of the study was to examine the current upskilling and reskilling procedures used in the Abu Dhabi's government organizations, it was necessary to consider the organizational perspective. As the research was focused on reskilling and upskilling to assist the organization to become more adaptable, it was necessary to take organizational context into account (Wood et al., 2020). Therefore, the qualitative approach enabled the researcher to develop a close contact with the numerous organizations being study, which can lead to a greater understanding of these unique and individual experiences.
- The outcome of upskilling and reskilling on the organization's ability to adapt can depend on whether there is a casual relationship between these two themes. When upskilling and reskilling strategies are instigated, this multifaceted interaction between

an organization's operations and the individual employee could emerge. For Lunch et al. (2019) although an experimental intervention could be used as a type of quantitative strategy, which can demonstrate the existence of a causal relationship, the challenge is would be around how to explain the causal relationship. Through adopting a qualitative strategy, the findings could be generated to contextualised the outcomes, and describe the correlations through the experience and perceptions associated with the organization's ability to adapt.

- The goal of the study was to improve the effectiveness of upskilling and reskilling then provide a critical insight into how these affects an organization's agility while assessing the effects of these on current working practices. Lunch et al. (2019) noted that the results of a qualitative analysis can provide a rich and personal insight into assessing existing organisational processes and strategies.
- While there have been previous studies conducted on upskilling and reskilling who have adopted a qualitative approach including Jaiswal et al. (2022), Sonia and Suryanto (2022) and Calonge et al. (2019), these projects provided arguably an effective strategy in gathering in-depth data. This further justifies the selection of a qualitative methodology for this study.

3.5 Data collection strategy

After selecting the case study as the research strategy for the present study, the next step was to decide on the data collection methods which serve the purpose of addressing the set research aims and objectives and allow to gain answers to the research questions since these acts as the indicator of success of research (Pelikan et al., 2021). Out of various qualitative options available i.e. semi-structured interviews, focus groups, observation, archival records, semi-structured interviews were selected for the present study because of the following reasons:

- The study, which is interpretive in nature, was appropriate to adopt the semi-structured interview technique since it allowed participants' insights to be examined and analysed in greater depth. Semi-structured interviews, according to Hammer & Wildavsky (2018), encourage participants to reflect in depth and be honest while sharing their ideas with the interviewer.

- A semi-structured technique was used to collect information about how upskilling and reskilling affect organizational adaptability, which allowed for more flexibility (Alamri, 2019). This can be achieved by identifying several measuring variables that have an impact on Abu Dhabi's government organizations' capacity for adaptation. The semi-structured interview strategy was chosen for the current study because it offers a compromise between a highly organised approach and an unstructured approach and allows for a flexible and encouraging means of eliciting the participants thoughts. Thus, participants were not restricted by offering them with structured questions nor would they be lost by using unstructured interviews.
- The participant's contribution was increased, and the researcher was able to more accurately assess their thoughts due to semi-structured interviews' removal of barriers to open communication. According to Kim et al. (2020), a semi-structured interview is a less intrusive technique that enables greater cooperation from the interviewer and respondents and allows for the unrestricted study of complicated subjects. Because this research was exploratory in nature and aims to analyse the survey findings to answer the research questions, a semi-structured technique is best because this approach was suitable for exploratory or explanatory research (Hosseini et al., 2016).
- Since the needs of upskilling and reskilling and their impact on organisational adaptability was found from previous literature in a non-UAE context, the semi-structured interview technique was considered appropriate to enable the Researcher to probe the research participants in a manner where these aspects could be asked, or the questions kept open-ended to allow to reveal newer constructs which were not previously known. Thus, semi-structured interview approach was considered suitable to address research aims set for the present study.
- Finally, an important part of the research design in this study was to decide whether the research project was a case study. For Robson and McCartan (2016) a case study is an approach used to study an individual, group, or an organisation like the Abu Dhabi governmental sector, but is also time and space dependent. For Bryman and Bell (2007) a case study is a very broad concept which is often misunderstood. In justifying this, Bryman, and Bell (2007) argued that the concept can be based on a single organisation like in the Abu Dhabi government sector, conducted in a unique location,

also like this study, or alternatively studying a person or single event. However, missing in this definition of Bryman and Bell (2007) is the importance of time along with space or locality. In explaining this, a key writer in the field of case studies is Yin (2003), who stated that the concept needs to fulfil one of the following criteria: a critical case, a unique event, something which is revelatory, a project which is a representative or typical phenomenon or being longitudinal in nature. For this study and following Yin (2003) and Robson and McCartan (2016) definition, the locality in the Abu Dhabi meets the criteria as to space or locality and potentially time. The rationale for this research being a case study, is based on the project being based only in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector, who have recently undertaken various upskilling and reskilling initiatives to meet the UAE's country's focus on the Future of Work, which is focused on ensuring the country's workforce is prepared for the challenges of the future. In undertaking this transformation, the governmental sector has introduced a unified ethos of TAMM, which translated from Arabic means 'consider it done'. Part of the TAMM initiative has included the introduction of a digital platform which enables access to all Abu Dhabi Government digital services located in one place, designed to support the Emirate's digital transformation to enable the government to offer superior customer service. However, with the introduction of this upskilling and reskilling initiative based on meeting the ethos of TAMM, to provide a superior customer or community service offered by local government, does present the challenge, as to whether the Abu Dhabi government sector is effectively training their employees to possess the necessary skills and knowledge for the future.

3.6 Alignment of research gap, research questions and methodology chosen

The research gap identified from the review of previous literature led to the development of research questions. The link between research gap, research questions and chosen methodology is explained in Table 3.4 below. The table format below sets out the research gap identified and presented in the literature review as to the usage of upskilling and reskilling. The identified research gaps then led to the emergence of the research questions. Each research question is presented together with the methodology adopted and the rationale for how the data was attained.

This presentation of the rationale also includes the rejection for alternative methodologies. Finally, the table sets out the alignment to the associated academic references, which are drawn from the current literature, as present in Chapter Two.

Table 3.4: Assessment of methodology chosen

Research gap identified from the literature	Research question addressing the gap	Link of the methodology with research gap and research question	References
Despite the extensive acknowledgement of need of upskilling and reskilling identified in the literature as discussed above, there is a gap found in the literature on the need of upskilling and reskilling in government organisations in Abu Dhabi.	RQ1: Why do Government organisations in Abu Dhabi need upskilling and reskilling?	The methodology selected was expected to enable the researcher to gain useful insights from the participants who had been part of upskilling and reskilling programs in Government sector in Abu Dhabi to reveal the needs of upskilling and reskilling in government organisations in Abu Dhabi. Any other method such as structured survey could not allow researcher to reveal insightful information. Although some factors may be similar to those facing government organizations in other nations to upskilling and reskilling (Agha, 2022), these factors may not be unique to Abu Dhabi. The unique context of Abu Dhabi necessitates a	Agha (2022), Rangaswami (2021), Deepa et al. (2021), Saharan (2020), Chukwidi et al. (2018)

		specific investigation to be conducted on the need of upskilling and reskilling, which is undertaken by this study through a case study approach.	
Despite the identification of numerous impacts of upskilling and reskilling on adaptation from the literature, there is no mention of impacts of upskilling and reskilling on adaptation in government organisations in Abu Dhabi	RQ2: How does upskilling and reskilling impact the adaptability in Government organisation in Abu Dhabi?	The review of previous literature revealed some key impacts of upskilling and reskilling on organisational adaptation such as preparing the workforce for the future, enhancing organisation's capabilities to steer through changes, (Deepa et al., 2021; Saharan, 2021), succeed in disruptive times and gaining competitive advantage. Since these impacts were non-contextual to public sector organizations in Abu Dhabi, the chosen methodology offered an opportunity to probe participants about their experiences and observations on how upskilling and reskilling impact organisational	Billionniere and Rahman (2022), Lang and Triantoro (2022), Sarta et al. (2021), Abe et al. (2021), Tsou and Chen (2020); Antonioli and Della Torre (2016)

		adaptability in their organisations. The sampling strategy selected ensured that respondents with appropriate insights were included in the research so that first-hand information on the impacts of upskilling and reskilling is gathered. The study also allowed the researcher to arrange a collective, self-reflective inquiry that participants in public sector in Abu Dhabi undertake to improve i.e., process of upskilling and reskilling.	
Despite identifying some key strategies to enhance the effectiveness of upskilling and reskilling in previous literature, there seems to be lack of research on how to enhance the effectiveness of upskilling and	RQ3: What steps on upskilling and reskilling should be adopted by Government organisations in Abu Dhabi to enhance their adaptability?	Upskilling and reskilling are noted to be complex processes involving wide range of factors which need to be considered for enhanced effectiveness (Lang & Triantoro, 2022; Sarta et al., 2021). Since the research scope is limited to the role of upskilling and reskilling in enhancing organisational adaptability in public	Amin (2022); Johnson et al. (2020); Păceșilă and Colesca (2019); Singh (2018), Malikk et al. (2022), Edifor et al. (2021), Adam (2020), Szilard et al. (2018), Kensbock & Stöckmann, (2020), McConnell and Schaninger (2019); Syahrir et al. (2021),

reskilling in government organisations in Abu Dhabi.		sector organisations in Abu Dhabi, the chosen methodology allowed to investigate the factors/ strategies considered important by people who has been part of upskilling and reskilling programs. These strategies are the appropriate to reveal information allowing to gain in-depth insights into the factors needed to achieve higher organisational adaptability through upskilling and reskilling (Billionniere & Rahman, 2022). Other methods such as survey would only to identify the level of significance without the knowing the logic behind the significance.	Razzak et al. (2019), Moser and Zumbach (2018)
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3.7 Data collection process

The complete research plan developed for the present research is given in Figure 3.1 below:

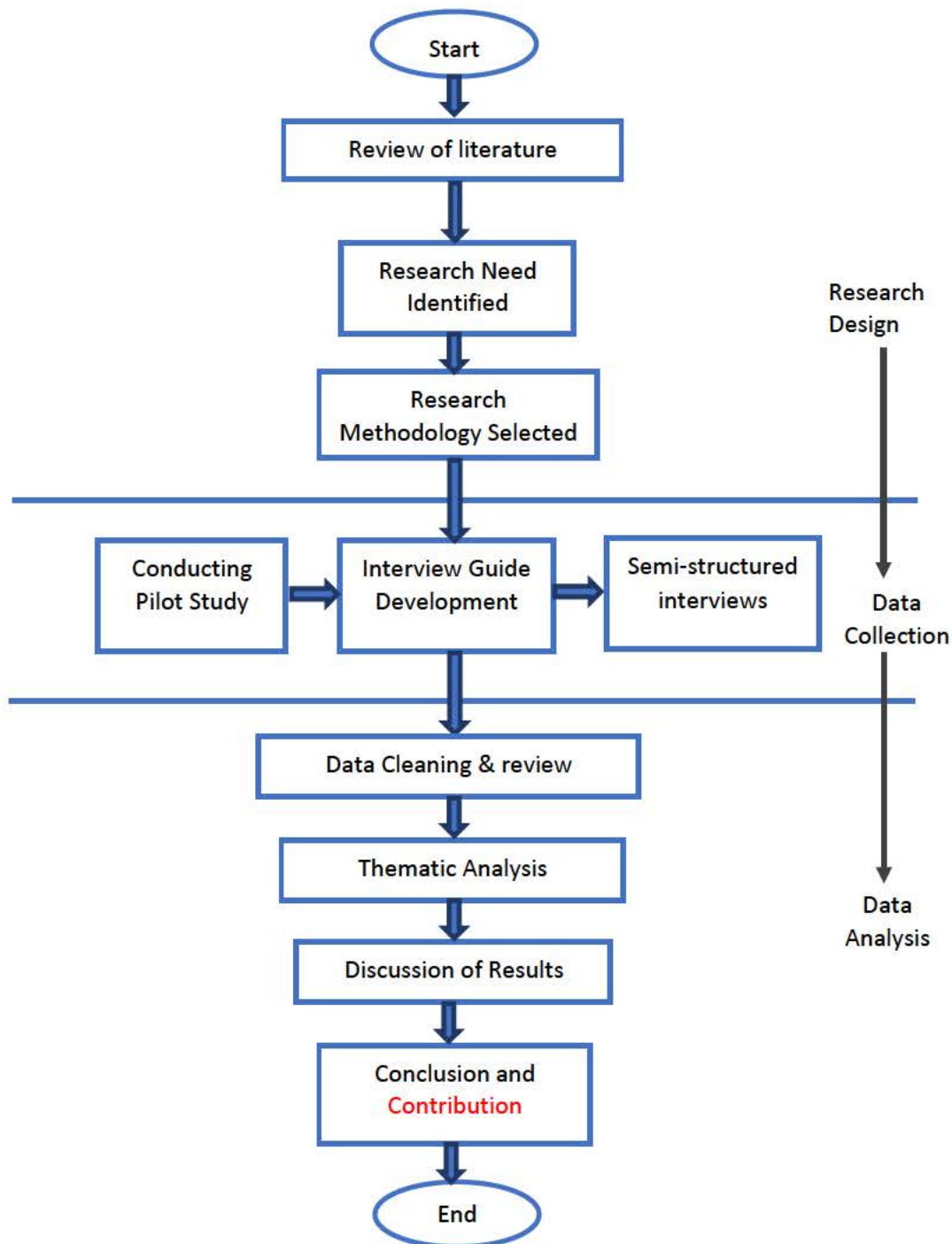


Figure 3.1: The research protocol

3.7.1 The development of the interview questions

An interview guide that followed a chronological order was given to the participants. The elements and themes of the interview were prepared with the assistance of the factors found in the body of existing literature on the subject, which also served as a reference for the development of interview questions that were explicitly aligned with the goals of the study. Open-ended questions were used to examine the viewpoints and knowledge that the participants had regarding the government organizations in the Abu Dhabi. Since all the questions were about Abu Dhabi, it was obvious that the information gathered concerned government agencies in the Abu Dhabi. The following table lists the 14 sub-themes resulting from 3 major themes that were used for the interview since these resulted from the review of previous literature:

Table 3.5: Themes and sub-themes used for the interview

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub theme</i>
Needs of upskilling and reskilling	Achieving higher organisational adaptability (Mutebi et al., 2020).
	Change acceptance (Thongsri & Chang, 2019)
	Meeting changing needs (Doci et al., 2022)
	Motivating employees (Downs et al., 2018)
Influence of upskilling and reskilling	Preparing employees for future of work (Nottingham, 2017)
	Enhancing the capabilities of employees (Edifor et al., 2021)
	Preparing employees for disruptive times (Chukwidi et al., 2018)
	Increasing innovation (Rudman, 2020)
	Gaining competitive advantage (Nandonde, 2019)

Recommendations to enhance upskilling and reskilling for organisational adaptability	Training needs analysis (Mamum, 2021)
	Support hybrid working environment (Zhang et al., 2021)
	Incorporate appropriate adult learning style (Sudria et al., 2019)
	Considering changing needs of organisations (Nosulich & Mukan, 2020)
	Incorporate technology (Jacobs & Pretorius, 2020)
	Alignment with performance management (Rudman, 2020)
	Consideration of individual learning styles (Stanter et al., 2019)

Table 3.6 presents the list of questions prepared and their alignment with the research questions.

Table 3.6: Interview questions and their link with the research question

<i>Research question</i>	<i>Interview question</i>	<i>Focus of the outcome</i>	<i>Key literature</i>
RQ1: Why do Government organisations in Abu Dhabi need upskilling and reskilling	What informed your organisation for the need upskilling and reskilling?	It was expected that public sector organisations in Abu Dhabi adopted upskilling and reskilling to achieve organisational adaptability	Agha (2022), Rangaswami (2021), Deepa et al. (2021), Saharan (2020), Chukwidi et al. (2018)
	How effective has been upskilling and reskilling programs?		
	Based on your experience, please rate the needs of upskilling and reskilling on level of importance and include any justifications in the right-hand column	It was expected that public sector organisations in Abu Dhabi needs would be revealed in terms of their importance	Agha, (2022), Rangaswami (2021), Deepa et al. (2021); Saharan (2020), Chukwidi et al. (2018)
RQ2: How does upskilling and reskilling impact the adaptability in Government organisation in Abu Dhabi?	How does upskilling and reskilling impact the adaptability your organisation?	Impact of upskilling and reskilling on organisational adaptability was expected to be found	Billionniere and Rahman (2022), Lang and Triantoro (2022), Sarta et al. (2021), Abe et al. (2021), Tsou and Chen (2020), Antonioli and Della Torre (2016)
	Based on your experience, please rate the impacts of upskilling and reskilling on level of importance and include any justifications in the right-hand column.	It was expected that impact of upskilling and reskilling on public sector organisations in Abu Dhabi needs would be revealed in terms of their importance	Billionniere and Rahman (2022), Lang and Triantoro (2022), Sarta et al. (2021), Abe et al. (2021), Tsou and Chen (2020), Antonioli and Della Torre (2016)

RQ3: What steps on upskilling and reskilling should be adopted by Government organisations in Abu Dhabi to enhance their adaptability?	What strategies could be adopted to improve the upskilling and reskilling program in your organisation to enhance their adaptability?	Recommendations to ensure upskilling and reskilling role in adaptability was expected to be found	Amin (2022), Johnson et al. (2020), Păceșilă and Colesca, (2019), Singh (2018); Malikk et al. (2022), Edifor et al. (2021), Adam (2020), Szilard et al. (2018), Kensbock and Stöckmann, (2020), McConnell and Schaninger (2019), Syahrir et al. (2021), Razzak et al. (2019), Moser and Zumbach (2018)
	Based on your experience, please rate the recommendations of upskilling and reskilling for adaptability on level of importance and include any justifications in the right-hand column.	It was expected that recommendations of upskilling and reskilling on public sector organisations in Abu Dhabi needs would be revealed in terms of their importance	Amin (2022); Johnson et al. (2020); Păceșilă and Colesca (2019); Singh (2018), Malikk et al. (2022), Edifor et al. (2021), Adam (2020); Szilard et al. (2018), Kensbock and Stöckmann, (2020), McConnell & Schaninger (2019); Syahrir et al. (2021); Razzak et al. (2019), Moser & Zumbach (2018)

3.7.2 The sampling strategy and the selection of the research participants

Since the research was focused on exploring the outcomes of upskilling and reskilling on the adaptability strategy adopted in Abu Dhabi Governmental organisations, the participants chosen for this study came only from the public sector, who had recently participated in or completed an upskilling and reskilling program. To be able to ensure the selection of appropriate participants for the study was achieved, the sampling strategy adopted was designed to focus on a small group of participants and generate the richness of the experiences and perceptions. The interviews for the pilot study were conducted between 30th and 1st May 2023 and the main from 2nd May 2023 to 15th June 2023.

The chosen sampling technique was a non-probability purposive sampling strategy, in which the research participants were chosen using the researcher's professional network along with the TAMM Portal, then assessed based on a predetermined selection criterion, rather than through random selection (Etikan & Bala, 2017). The purposive sampling can be justified as the researcher has an expertise and experience in the Abu Dhabi's public sector employees' upskilling and reskilling programs.

As mentioned earlier, an inclusion criterion was developed and applied to select the final participants. The participants needed to have participated in or completed recently an upskilling and reskilling program that was provided by the government. Both men and women were included in the sample and was not used as an exclusion criterion. Finally, the researcher ensured that there was no direct professional or managerial responsibility to the participants being interviewed.

While Boddy (2016) claimed that interviews should have a sample size between 20 and 30, and considered 25 participants to be a suitable number for reaching saturation point, this study originally intended to interview 30 individuals. To achieve this sample size, a list of 32 Government organisations and entities in Abu Dhabi were identified from the TAMM Portal and potential interviewees' contact numbers and email addresses were collected. The participants came from organisations included the Abu Dhabi Police, Department of Economic Development, Department of Health, Integrated Transport Centre and Abu Dhabi Chamber. It should be noted that the TAMM, was used by the researcher as a portal to access the participants, as the tool was extensively used in her place of work to determine potential training needs in the Abu Dhabi

Governmental sector. The employees in these organisations were then contacted by telephone and email and then asked about whether they have participated in or completed an upskilling and reskilling program recently which had been provided by the government. If the participants replied, they were then asked if they would consent to participate in the research. If and then consent was acquired, the data gather process was started based on the participants' availability. Despite extensive attempts on gaining potential participant's consent and trying to reach them for the interviews, eventually, the researcher was able to interview only seven participants. However, even though seven participants were interviewed, the data generated did reach theoretical saturation, the point at which no new themes had emerged (Hennink et al., 2018). The profile of the participants is presented in the next chapter.

3.7.3 Interview protocol

In the end, although a virtual meeting was offered, face to face interviews were conducted with all participants in accordance with their specific preferences. The participants were asked for prior consent through providing them with the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form. The participants were informed about the recording of the interview and the use of the data in the study. The interviews were conducted in English language to allow to consistency in interpretation which would not have been possible if the data was collected in Arabic, due to possible translation discrepancies. The interviews lasted for approximately one hour. An interview guide was used to conduct the interview allowing the researcher to collect the central purpose of the study but then the flexibility to explore new and emerging themes.

3.8 Data analysis

For the data analysis approach, two processes were used in this study to analyse the qualitative data. This included the cleansing of the data together with conducting an in-depth review of the transcripts, and finally the coding of the interviews using a thematic analysis.

- **Data cleaning and review:** The main goal was to check and then clean up the data as to what it represented while accurately capturing the interviewee's perceptions and experiences. As the interviews were read and then transcribed by the researcher, the process involved determining any unidentifiable words, phrases, or sentences from the recordings. Since none of these occurrences happened, no clarification was sought from the respective participant.

- **Thematic analysis:** In accordance with Li et al.'s (2018) recommendations, the data was analysed to identify emerging themes and patterns, which were then checked as to the connection to existing theory. This process continued until all the interview data had been reviewed multiple times. The process involved the generation of 14 sub-themes identified from the current literature to inform the ultimate coding strategy. From the coding process, themes identified from the literature generated three major headings, i.e. the need for upskilling and reskilling, the impact of upskilling and reskilling activities, and recommended strategies and approaches of upskilling and reskilling programs were identified. The coding of the research themes then involved the identification of emerging new patterns using NVivo.
- NVivo 14 was utilised for coding and analysis of the interview data, following an open and axial coding approach. This included the uploading the transcripts into NVivo which was then enabled the creation of nodes informed by the current academic debate before new codes were created.
- The coding strategy of using NVivo involved firstly uploading the transcripts, before determining the most effective strategy. The frequency of words was checked using the Word Frequency Query feature in NVivo, with words like Abu Dhabi being removed from the search parameters. Consideration was given to use the Auto Code feature, but was rejected as it automated the process, and instead a manual review of the interview data was adopted, where existing codes were created and then the transcripts checked for themes in the transcripts. These initial themes included adapting to change, accepting change, meeting the changing needs, and motivating employees.
- Where new codes emerged, these were analysed for relationships with existing codes. This led to the identification of 13 new needs, impacts and strategies of upskilling and reskilling in addition to 14 needs, impacts and strategies of upskilling and reskilling identified from review of previous literature.

3.9 Pilot study

One of the strategies followed was ensuring that the study was valid which was achieved through conducting a pilot study. The pilot study was a small-scale research project carried out as an experiment before the commencement of the main study to determine the effectiveness of the

research method and approach utilised. The pilot study can also be used ascertain to determine the extent to which the interviews can generate the richness of the data, while checking that the aim is being achieved (Gokce et al., 2021). The pilot study was also used to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the intended research method and enabled the researcher to make changes to the research tool by testing it on a smaller population and evaluating its effectiveness.

The pilot study was planned after developing the original interview guide which was informed by the current academic debate. The aim of the pilot study was to assess whether the interview questions developed for the research were able to generate rich, robust, reliable, and valid data, and whether the questions were correctly worded, and could meet the aim of the research. Three employees were selected to be part of the pilot study, one from each of the following organisations: the Abu Dhabi Police, Abu Dhabi Chamber and Abu Dhabi Healthcare Authority.

3.10 Outcome of the pilot study

The feedback from pilot study informed the researcher as to certain changes to the interview questions, including the wording of some of the questions used, making them more comprehensible and understandable for the participant. Part of the process also included reducing the number of questions asked, and the type of questions posed therefore ensuring that the interviewee was relaxed, while permitting them to explain their experiences and perceptions without feeling intimidated and without leading them on towards specific replies. The changes made are presented below in Table 3.7:

Table 3.7: Questions before and after feedback

Question before the feedback	Question revised after the feedback
To what extent do public sector organisations in Abu Dhabi adopt upskilling and reskilling to achieve organisational adaptability?	What informed your organisation for the need upskilling and reskilling?
To what extent do public sector organisations in Abu Dhabi adopt upskilling and reskilling to achieve change acceptance?	What informed your organisation for the need upskilling and reskilling?

To what extent do public sector organisations in Abu Dhabi adopt upskilling and reskilling to meet changing needs of the organisations?	What informed your organisation for the need upskilling and reskilling?
To what extent do public sector organisations in Abu Dhabi adopt upskilling and reskilling to motivate employees?	What informed your organisation for the need upskilling and reskilling?

Finally, the pilot study also enabled the researcher to rehearse the format of the interview and to practice asking open questions, been an active listener and then determine whether the interview should be conducted in English or Arabic.

3.11 Validity and reliability of the study

For any qualitative study, the findings, and the outcome of the project to be accurately represented and adequately robust means that there is a need to recognise that the usage of terms such as valid and reliable tends to be more associated with quantitative studies. Therefore, in this qualitative study, to be considered as sufficiently robust from a subjective perspective, the reader needs to be assured as to the authenticity of the data, and have a high degree of confidence of the data generated in a trustworthy manner. Part of this process included, that the researcher recognised that due to the small sample size used, a generalised assumption was not possible, therefore an inferred or generalised outcome could not be achieved. Based on this, this subjective study draws on more subjective terminology, including transformability, confirmability, authenticity, and creditability.

3.11.1 Authenticity and creditability

Reflecting on above, the usage of the term validation in this study was seen as not suitable, instead, the study focused on *authenticity*, which is essential for qualitative studies (Saunders et al., 2009). For a qualitative study to be authentic, it is also necessary to consider *credibility*, which is associated with the believability or trustworthiness of the findings. For this study to be credible, the findings accurately represented the experience and perceptions of those who have recently experienced upskilling and reskilling programs in Government organisations in Abu Dhabi, as

ensuring that the data was accurately captured and presented with authenticity. This was achieved by the interviews being conducted in English to ensure the data was accurately captured and coded.

3.11.2 Transferability

Closely linked to the themes of authenticity and credibility is *transferability*. Transferability is associated as to how future researchers can access the findings and then potentially use them for future research projects. However, being qualitative, this replication can be problematic, as, unlike a quantitative study which can be replicated, Baxter and Eyles (1997), argued that transferability is less important for qualitative studies compared to credibility and authenticity. While all research, needs to be robust, the data needs to be trusted, therefore the researcher must ensure that there was integrity as to the data generated from the perceptions of the participants. To achieve this, the study recorded the interviews so that during the analysis process, the data could be accurately reviewed. Furthermore, the transcripts were constantly reviewed and returned back to as to checking for additional new and emerging themes.

3.11.3 Confirmability

Finally, *confirmability* for a qualitative research project relates to the extent to which the findings accurately represent the perspective of the participants in the study compared to those of the researcher. To address this and ensure there is confirmability, Huberman (1995) stated that honesty, authenticity and truthfulness are vitally important to make the study sufficiently robust, particularly for qualitative research. To achieve this, the participants were asked to review the transcripts to ensure that the data was reliable and valid. As none of the participants requested to review the transcripts, the researcher instead constantly reviewed both the transcripts and the recorded interviews to ensure that the data was accurate. This process of constantly reviewing included at the transcription stage, then later during the coding of the findings, which followed the advice of Creswell and Miller (2000).

3.12 Research limitations

A key limitation of the study was associated with time, which potentially limited the project. Due to the participants' busy schedule, it became a challenge to reach the original quote of interviewees. However, the study was not focused on generating a generalised outcome which can be applied to the entire population, but rather to conduct a project to create a new theory

through the richness of the qualitative data. Even though 7 participants were eventually involved in the main study, the interviews reached saturation after the 5th participant, when no new themes had emerged.

3.13 Ethical considerations

The ethical requirements were carefully considered in the study's approach, data collection, and analysis stages. This included the anonymity of the participant therefore every effort was made to ensure that no personal or professional information was revealed as to the participant's identity. To achieve this, the participants names were changed, and their roles were generalised. The confidentiality of the participant data collected was another important consideration as presented by Pietilä et al., (2020). The researcher made sure that the data was correctly stored and was not used for any other purpose beyond this study, where the data was accessed only by the researcher. The data collected was also stored using an encrypted data remote storage device on the Cloud, to ensure that the data was secure and accessible.

All participants were asked to sign a consent form recognizing and approving the parameters of the research and their role in the process (Yusof et al., 2022). A participant information sheet was prepared with key information such as the research aim, reasons for selecting the participants including the selection criteria. Finally, as the study was audio recorded, the participants were asked for their consent to record the interviews, but also given the opportunity not answer any particular question, but also had the right to withdraw at any stage (Cychoz et al., 2020).

3.14 Chapter summary

This chapter has detailed the research methodology adopted for this project by presenting a justification for selecting an interpretivist approach which is inductive through using semi-structured interviews for the data collection strategy. The methodology adopted for the study is considered appropriate since it was aligned to the research objectives, with the first research objective of critically assessing the needs of upskilling and reskilling in Government organisations in Abu Dhabi, which required the understanding of the perceptions and experiences of those attending these programs.

The second research objective was centred on evaluating how upskilling and reskilling influenced the adaptability in Government organisations in Abu Dhabi. The methodology

allowed the researcher to understand the specific experiences of the participants associated with achieving an adaptability strategy within Abu Dhabi government organizations following attending an upskilling and reskilling program.

The chapter has also set out the interview protocol and how it was changed based on the pilot study, together with the profile of participants and selection criteria, which included the challenges of reaching the required quota for saturation. The data analysis of adopting a thematic approach was presented including the coding strategy, before setting out the study's validity and reliability strategy of ensuring that the data was authentic, dependable and trustworthy. Finally, the ethical dimension of the study together with the research limitations were presented including the recognition of the relatively small sample size used, but also the need for saturation to be achieved as opposed to a generalised inference.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the findings from the semi-structured interviews which were conducted throughout September 2023. The chapter in achieving this, will provide a comprehensive critical exploration of the participants' perspectives. The insights generated from the participants will contextualize their awareness of upskilling and reskilling, the practices which are followed, and the potential gaps related to upskilling and reskilling strategies in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector. To present the findings, the chapter will set out the three themes independently. The first theme which will be presented was related to the current usage of upskilling and reskilling activities. In addressing this theme, the findings were initially informed by the researcher's professional background and experience. From this a pre-interview protocol was created which was informed by the existing academic literature. This pre-interview protocol was then used to inform all interviews. The process also focused on potential gaps in reskilling and upskilling in the Abu Dhabi's governmental sector. Leading on from this, the focus shifted to understand the influence of reskilling and upskilling in the Abu Dhabi's governmental sector, which focused on identifying, then confirming and missing themes and gap. Finally, the last theme associated with the strategy which was linked to upskilling and reskilling will be presented, before a summary of the outcomes of the findings will be presented.

4.2 Theme One: the current usage of upskilling and reskilling activities

The first theme the study focused on was related to the current upskilling and reskilling activities which have been undertaken in Abu Dhabi's governmental bodies. The central purpose was to address through the first research question: what are the current and future usage of upskilling and reskilling training initiatives used in Abu Dhabi's government organisations? This question was initially based on four central themes informed by the current literature and the researcher's professional background of working in the Abu Dhabi governmental body responsible for employee training. The intention of this phase was to gain a critical insight into the effectiveness of existing upskilling and reskilling initiatives, through conducting semi-structured interviews. But

prior to the commencement of this phase, the interviewees were asked to complete a pre-interview protocol to prompt the individual to consider the important aspects related to the current upskilling and reskilling strategies, which could then act as a prompt and form part of the main interview process. The participants were asked to rank their perceived importance of four themes which had emerged from the current academic debate and were known to exist in Abu Dhabi's governmental bodies, as presented below in Table 4.1.

4.2.1 Pre-interview protocol theme one: current needs for undertaking upskilling and reskilling activities

The pre-interview protocol consisted of four core themes which was the initial focus of the first phase of the interview, as to the importance as to why the organization needs to upskill and reskill its employees, by asking the individual human resource expert to rank the theme based on the perceived level of importance, informed by their experience and professional judgment. These four themes were: achieving higher organizational adaptability, the relevance of change acceptance, meeting changing needs, and motivating employees, which is illustrated below in Table 4.1, together with the perceived level of importance and associated academic writers. The table below (Table 4.1) shows the themes initially explored, the number of responses related to the perceived level of importance for the participant, together with the related literature. It should be noted that the ratings only acted as a prompt for the main qualitative study, making the participants to reflect on these themes prior to the interview.

Table 4.1: The perceived level of importance of needing upskilling and reskilling

<i>Need of upskilling and reskilling</i>	<i>Number of responses indicating the level of importance</i>			<i>Key literature</i>
	<i>Perceived as important</i>	<i>Perceived as moderate</i>	<i>Perceived as limited</i>	
Adapt to changing environment	7			Shela et al. (2021), Barasa et al. (2018), Santoro et al. (2021) and Chukwidi et al. (2018).
To achieve change acceptance	6	1		Deepa et al. (2021) and Rangaswami (2021).

To meet changing needs of the organisations	6	1		Saharan (2020) and Zahidi (2020).
To motivate employees	3	4		Chukwidi et al. (2018) and Dewi et al. (2022).

All seven of the participants rated the adapting to a changing environment as being the most important of the four themes, which led to the interview focusing on how the changing environment has become critical in developing and initiating upskilling and reskilling strategies. This led to the questions in the interviews being focused on whether and how the organization had enabled organizational adaptability through upskilling and reskilling strategies through the acquisition of new skills and knowledge as industry trends and workplace dynamics evolve, as indicated by Shela et al. (2021), Barasa et al. (2018), Santoro et al. (2021) and Chukwidi et al. (2018).

The next highest ranking was related to achieve change acceptance amongst employees, where six of the participants considered this category as highly important. This ranking indicated that upskilling and reskilling are potentially essential to facilitate a change acceptance ethos or mentality within an organization. To achieve this, writers such as Deepa et al. (2021) and Rangaswami (2021) indicated the importance of organisational adaptability through upskilling and reskilling initiatives, with employees being acquiring new skills, to meet the organizational changes.

Ranked as equally important with achieve change acceptance, which was also ranked by six participants, was the relevance of meeting changing needs in an organization. This ranking indicates these human resource experts saw that the workforce needed to possess the necessary upskilling and reskilling attributes to meet the changing demands and objectives of the business, as advocated by Saharan (2020) and Zahidi (2020). For Saharan (2020) and Zahidi (2020), can enable the organisational adaptability to be achieved through upskilling and reskilling programs where the individual's development and organizational success are aligned to meet changing needs of the business or workplace environment.

As to the theme of motivating employees, three of the participants rated this as highly important, while four interviewees considered this as being of a medium importance. This variation in

responses suggests that while some participants viewed motivating of their employees through upskilling initiatives as important, others saw it as being moderately relevant. Therefore, the interviews in the main study were focused on whether the upskilling and reskilling initiatives can be effectively used as a motivator for employees, as advocated by writers including Chukwidi et al. (2018) and Dewi et al. (2022) or is better suited for meeting the challenges of organisational change.

4.2.2 Main interview findings associated with theme one: current identified perceptions towards upskilling and reskilling activities

Based on above, the next section will present the interview data related to these four existing themes, commencing with the adaptability to the changing environment. The initial questions were informed by the current academic literature and the emergent themes from the pre-interview protocol as presented above in Table 4.1. These themes included how the participants had experienced and managed adaptation strategies to the changes in the working environment, how employees accepted change, how proactive they were in meeting the changing needs in the organization and how they motivated employees. The opening questions commenced with asking each of the participants as to ‘what experiences’ or ‘what perception’ these individuals had to each of the themes. It should be noted that as the interview progressed follow-up questions were asked but based and informed by the answer of each of the participants.

4.2.2.1 Adaptation to changes in the working environment

Drawing on the pre-interview protocol, the seven interviews commenced with the focus on the first theme of how the changing environment has indicated that employees need to be prepared and adaptable, which can be achieved through upskilling and reskilling initiatives. This need for preparedness was seen with the viewpoint of the chief human resources officer, P2, who had over 13 years of relevant upskilling and reskilling experience, who acknowledged the importance as to long-term survival:

‘Staying adaptable is paramount for long-term survival and relevance in a rapidly evolving business landscape’ (P2).

This perspective of the changing landscape was extended to provide an example of the changes brought about with alterations in the regulatory requirements in the Abu Dhabi

governmental landscape, a theme identified by statutory requirements (Lang et al., 2021). This was illustrated by P3 a HR business partner, who had 6 years of experience in upskilling and reskilling, and noted:

‘The need for upskilling and reskilling became abundantly clear when we faced a significant change in our regulatory landscape. Our employees needed to be able to possess the correct skills and knowledge to change and adapt their working practices, without or with minimal disruption’ (P3).

The effect of these external forces was also indicated by P4, a HR manager, who drew on his 10 years upskilling and reskilling experience, along with the experiences of 2020-21. P4 recalled how the events of the COVID 19 pandemic had transformed the organization’s realization for the need for a proactive attitude towards embracing an upskilling and reskilling strategy:

‘It was the events around COVID-19. We realized that to keep pace with the ever-changing landscape of customer needs, especially after COVID-19, that we needed to have a workforce that could adapt quickly and respond to the changes in working practice, like with the [COVID-19] pandemic’ (P4).

Finally, P5, who drawing on their 16 years of experience, noted the changes internally in the organization, as he noted that the workplace has been transformed by technology and the reliance on this solution:

‘I have seen changes here also in the workplace. There has been an increasing reliance on information technology, which has meant that we have needed to change our working practices and training procedures. There has been a need to focus on future skills and not simply reskill employees for the current skill gaps and needs’ (P5).

4.2.2.2 Employee acceptance of change

The next theme which identified as importance from the pre-interview protocol was related to the employee’s acceptance of change. One of the participants who was in an adaptive leadership role,

P1, highlighted the important role which upskilling and reskilling training can have on adapting to change and its effect on minimizing the workforce's resistance to the new requirements:

‘Employees tend not to resist change if they are prepared and possess the correct knowledge and skills. What I mean is that they are adaptive, ready for the change, and even if they are resistant initially, they are aware of what is required and therefore are better prepared mentally to ultimately to adapt, rather than the change or event comes as a complete surprise and have no understanding as to what to do next’ (P1).

The link between the acceptance of change and upskilling and reskilling was also seen with the perspective of the chief human resources officer, P2:

‘Change is inevitable, and employees' ability to accept and embrace it can make or break an organization's effectiveness. The only way we can ensure that change is managed, if that is the correct word, is too pro-actively train our staff, with the future skills they need to have’ (P2).

For the HR business partner, P3, who possessed upskilling and reskilling experience noted that these attributes were essential:

‘The usage of upskilling and reskilling are crucial for successful implementation of organizational changes and initiatives’ (P3).

The opinion of P3 was confirmed by the HR Manager, P4, as he noted that when employees have new skills and knowledge, it enables the workforce to be more adaptable to change, and can embrace and adjust to the new requirements:

‘I can say that when our workforce is equipped with new skills, they can readily embrace change and tackle future challenges head-on’ (P4).

4.2.2.3 Proactive meeting of changing needs in the organization

Although not seen as important compared to the two previous themes, the next category which was informed by the literature review, which covered in the study were focused on preparing the employees to meet future organizational goals through the usage of upskilling and reskilling strategies. The participant in an adaptive leadership role, P1 revealed that in his government entity,

there was a need to ensure that employee upskilling was aligned with the changing needs of organization:

‘We usually link our upskilling and reskilling with the training needs of employees which again are aligned with the organizational requirements. Therefore, our upskilling and reskilling training tends to be effective in meeting the changes here’ (P1).

What is interesting however was whether these training needs for P1 were for the present or future organizational needs. In clarifying this, P1 was asked as to whether the upskilling and reskilling was designed for current or future needs. P1 indicated that the focus tended to be on current requirements:

‘We use a training needs analysis to determine our training needs then reskill or upskill those identified employees, so I suppose it is current rather than future. We are reactive sometimes and not as proactive as we would like to be, as change cannot be accurately predicted’ (P1).

This was further confirmed by the HR Manager, P4, who had 10 years of experience in upskilling and reskilling, who noted that training programs must be aligned proactive with changing needs of organizations for them to be effective:

‘We have tried to respond to changes through adopting a proactive upskilling and reskilling programs for our workforce. We also recognize that changes have resulted in us as a human resource department of needing to rapidly respond to new requirements or changes. Therefore, there are times that we need to respond rapidly, rather than preparing our employees proactively in advance. I would like to say we are proactive, but sometimes we are more reactive when responding to changes’ (P4).

There was a link between the upskilling and reskilling initiative which could be used to enable a diverse workforce to be created in the government entity, to support the changing needs in the workplace, which was indicated by the chief human resources officer, P2:

‘Through using upskilling and reskilling training programs this has help my organization to create and support a diverse inclusive environment for all employees.

We have tailored our upskilling and reskilling programs to meet the specific needs and career aspirations of all our employees, making the organization more inclusive' (P2).

This inclusiveness was also seen as benefiting the workforce from a well-being perspective, as P2 added that this focus of inclusivity also resulted in reducing stress and uncertainty:

'We have seen this proactive approach to creating a diverse inclusive environment to lead to a reduction in reported absenteeism and employees leaving' (P2).

For P5, who was a learning and development manager, with the most reskilling and upskilling experience amongst the participants, noted the importance of how employees could be better prepared:

As organizations evolve and refine their strategies, the skills required to meet their objectives also evolve. Upskilling and reskilling ensure that employees have the capabilities needed to contribute effectively to the organization's changing goals and priorities (P5).

4.2.2.4 Means to motivate employees

Although ranked lower compared to the other themes, as indicated in the existing literature, there was the recognition that upskilling and reskilling could motivate employees. The relationship of upskilling and reskilling as to employee motivation was illustrated by chief human resource officer, P2, who had over 13 years of relevant upskilling and reskilling experience:

'While important, motivation should be viewed as a byproduct of effective upskilling and not the primary goal' (P2).

For the HR business partner, P3 noted that the motivational attributes were essential, and more important perceived by P2:

'Motivating the workforce and employees is vital, and upskilling and reskilling can instil this. Motivation can lead to learning opportunities being taken up by the employees, enable the workforce to grow and develop their career, increase job satisfaction, and improve employee self-esteem. And of course, being prepared to meet the challenges of the future' (P3).

For P5, who was the learning and development manager, when employees are reskilled and upskilled are engaged in the process, the outcome can lead to enhance employee motivation, whereby increasing workforce engagement:

‘Providing opportunities for learning and development can boost employee morale and motivation. When employees see that their organization is investing in their professional growth and career progression, they are more likely to be engaged and committed to work, and in turn be more proactive when changes occurs’ (P5).

This was also captured by P6, how was in a leadership role and with 10 years in upskilling and reskilling. For P6, these two initiatives could motivate employees achieving the aim of the organization:

‘To ensure employees aim to achieve the company goals and work towards it there is the need to have upskilling and reskilling programs in place as this can become a motivator for them’ (P6).

As the interviews progressed at investigating the first theme related to the need for upskilling and reskilling initiatives, three themes which had emerged from the literature, but were known not to existing from the Abu Dhabi’s governmental training entity perspective were identified. These themes were, the need to proactively fill potential skill gaps, to enhance employee well-being through upskilling and reskilling, and finally provide the means to enhance innovative thinking. These interestingly were present in the current academic understanding, but were not presently recognized or acknowledged in the existing Abu Dhabi’s governmental bodies.

To illustrate this, Figure 4.1 shows the connectiveness of the known usage of upskilling and reskilling initiatives together with the recognized gap of this training application currently within the Abu Dhabi’s governmental organizations.

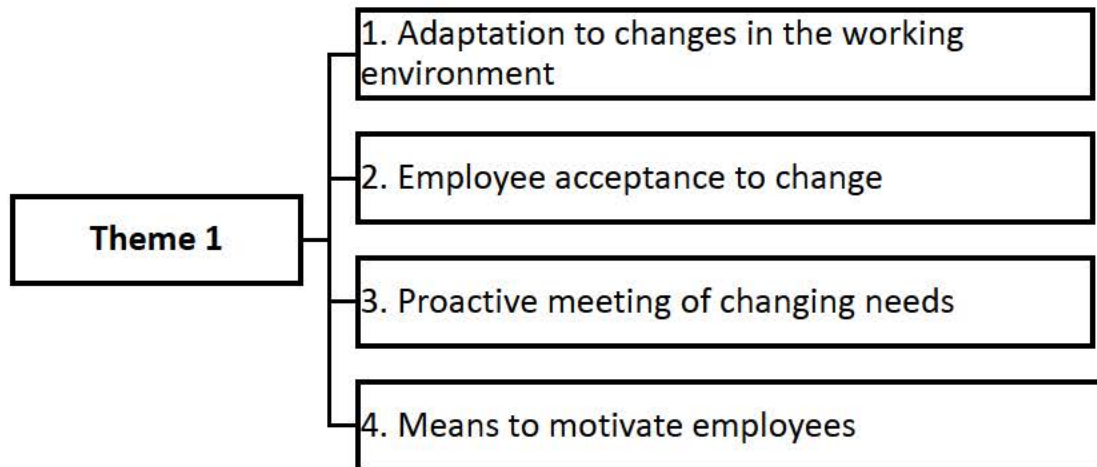


Figure 4.1: Clustering of the current usage of upskilling and reskilling activities associated with theme one: the need for upskilling and reskilling

Figure 4.1 shows the connections between the themes generated from the current reskilling and upskilling literature and the interviews. The existing categories of motivating employees, achieving higher organizational adaptability, meeting changing needs, and change acceptance through the usage of upskilling and reskilling strategies, while those categories were seen as not being currently applied. From the figure, it is possible to see that the enhancement of the employee well-being was aligned with the theme of motivation. The identified need for filling potential skills gaps from the literature was linked to achieving higher organizational adaptability, while enhancing innovation and creativity was seen as being related to change acceptance, as was meeting changing needs in the workplace.

4.2.3 Unfamiliar benefits of upskilling and reskilling activities in the Abu Dhabi's governmental bodies

This section will present those activities which from a professional perspective of the researcher were unfamiliar or did not exist in the Abu Dhabi's governmental sector but are seen from an academic perspective as important facets of upskilling and reskilling. It should be noted that although the theme of motivation was known to be a fundamental attribute associated with upskilling and reskilling, there was a potential gap of understanding as to the relevance and linkage of the employee's well-being.

Table 4.2: Unfamiliar benefits of upskilling and reskilling activities and existing theory

New Themes	Key literature
Employee well-being	Khaksar et al. (2020)
Filling or meeting potential skills gaps	Al Karim (2019)
Meeting the changing needs through employees accepting change, and enhancing innovation	Deepa et al. (2021); Tsou and Chen (2020)

4.2.3.1 Employee well-being

In the interviews, and closely aligned to motivating employees was the linkage to employee well-being, and the inter-connected how upskilling and reskilling initiative can enhance the individual's experience of positive emotions such as happiness and contentment. From the interviews, the findings indicated although not initially recognized as an important aspect of reskilling and upskilling, that the experts did see that employees felt motivated through the enhancement of their skills, which led to greater involvement, dedication, and commitment in their job roles. From the interviews, the influence and attributes associated with motivation and well-being including meaningful work, recognition, and chances for personal growth and development were identified as important intrinsic motivators.

This was illustrated by P3, the HR business partner who highlighted that where upskilling and reskilling initiatives had occurred, there were lower levels of reported stress and burnout amongst employees:

‘My organisation on reflection also uses upskilling and reskilling to enhance employee well-being since they provide individuals with the knowledge and tools needed to thrive in an ever-changing work environment. When employees feel competent and confident in their roles, they experience reduced stress and job insecurity, leading to improved mental health. Learning opportunities signal that the organization invests in their growth and career development, increasing job satisfaction and motivation’ (P3).

This perspective of P3 was supported by P2, who noted that the improving employee well-being through the right initiatives can also have a positive effect on motivation. For P2, Chief Human

Resource Officer, employees are better able to maintain their motivation and focus on their duties when they feel physically and emotionally engaged:

‘I suppose upskilling and reskilling does support employee well-being in my organisation. This sort of training intervention can alleviate stress by enhancing employees' confidence in their abilities and job security. When individuals possess the skills needed to excel in their roles and adapt to industry changes, they experience reduced anxiety about job stability. This increased confidence and reduced fear of job loss can contribute to lower stress levels. As employees achieve career growth and satisfaction through skill development, they experience a greater sense of fulfilment and pride, boosting job satisfaction’ (P2).

Interestingly, for all the participants there was a recognition of the benefit of upskilling and reskilling but also an acknowledgement that this was not necessarily a recognized or known benefit. From the findings, clearly a supportive workplace can generate a sense of community and job satisfaction, leading to improvements in motivation amongst employees. This includes fostering a sense of personal and professional fulfilment and elevating job satisfaction, while attempting to eliminate skill-related stress. However, to achieve this, there is a need for the Abu Dhabi’s governmental bodies to recognize this benefit and capitalize on it, making it a priority.

4.2.3.2 Filling or meeting potential skills gaps

To emerge from the interviews, was the recognized gap of awareness associated with filling or meeting existing and future skills gaps. From the existing literature, meeting these gaps in employees’ skills was seen as being both an enabler and a barrier to achieving organizational adaptability through upskilling and reskilling. Upskilling and reskilling initiatives can act as an enabler to improve employee skills to adapt to future challenges and changes, a theme which was presented in the previous section, but there are potential barriers. These barriers can come about because of resource constraints which can lead to potential shortage of the necessary required knowledge and skills possessed in the organisation. Where an organization adopts an adaptability approach through upskilling and reskilling, the outcome can lead to employees' working in a positive and proactive environment, which supports and accelerates the process of adapting to acquiring new skills and responding to organizational changes. This was illustrated by P3, the HR

business partner who highlighted on reflection that upskilling and reskilling initiatives need to be aligned through the assessment of existing and future skill gaps:

‘Although we do not actively pursue this, where there is an assessment of employees’ skills and knowledge, this can ensure that upskilling programs can be created and tailored, which ultimately enables the adaptability of the workforce, but often we are focused on the current gaps and not future ones’ (P3).

Filling in skills gaps through upskilling and reskilling programs was also illustrated by P4, a HR manager, with 10 years of experience in upskilling and reskilling. P4 provided an example as to how his organisation used upskilling to manage the emergence of new skill gaps during the COVID 19 pandemic, which included the absence of digital skills:

‘When we introduced a new online citizen [employees] engagement platform, we noticed that many employees lacked the digital skills to effectively use the technology in their workplace. At the time we were not aware of this, but this gap was a clear signal that we needed to invest in digital literacy training to ensure all employees possessed the necessary digital skills’ (P4).

Again, this example of P4, indicated that the usage of upskilling and reskilling while filling or meeting existing gaps, was still retrospective rather than proactive. Another example was provided by the learning and development manager P5, who stated that there was a need for increased digital competences to meet the changing needs of the customers:

‘We have seen that there are numerous skills gaps throughout the organization which we were not aware of. One of these was around technology and the usage of digital tools. We need as an organization to ensure that all our workforce is digitally prepared, and not only the younger employees. Our current training needs practices did not reveal this, particularly as the customer is increasingly demanding online services, and we need to ensure we are delivering on this, therefore any skills gaps around technological competences need to be address through upskilling or reskilling programs available proactively throughout the workforce’ (P5).

The study’s findings indicated that although there was an awareness of the potential of upskilling and reskilling being able to enhance organizational adaptability and filling gaps in

identified skills, there was also a gap in the importance of upskilling and reskilling being used for this specific purpose. From the existing literature, the first requirement was associated with the need for an organization to understand and then adopt an adaptability ethos and strategy by providing employees with the correct training and development opportunities. The second requirement identified in the current debate was having a degree of flexibility associated with the upskilling and reskilling provision, so that employees are trained dependent on the changing needs in the working environment. While not formally recognized amongst Abu Dhabi's governmental bodies, this theme associated with filling or meeting potential skills gaps, which was recognized by the perspective of P5, a learning and development manager, who noted the changing business landscape required increasing changes in skills and expertise:

“In a rapidly evolving business landscape, new technologies and methodologies continually emerge. Without doubt there is the need for regular skill updates, otherwise employees may become stagnant in their roles, inhibiting their ability to think creatively and adapt to changing circumstances, and I suppose upskilling and reskilling initiatives do assist in this’ (P5).

As noted by P5, there was a need for simultaneously establishing upskilling and reskilling initiatives to address potential skill gaps, but through upskilling and reskilling. There was also the acknowledgement that some existing skills can become obsolete as demands and industries change. To overcome and address this, for P6, Training and Development Manager, recognized that skills gap analysis was needed to be conducted on a regular basis and had to be integrated more into the reskilling and upskilling.

‘Additionally, we do conduct skills gap analysis that helped us identify areas where our workforce needed to acquire new skills to align with our organizational goals and respond to changing demands, and not simply rely on the past employee skills sets. But we do need to do this more regularly’ (P6).

4.2.3.3 Meeting the changing needs through employees accepting change, and enhancing innovation

The next theme to emerge from the literature and the gap identified from the researcher's and the Abu Dhabi's training government experience was the meeting the changing needs within the workplace, which was linked to accepting change while also enhancing innovative activities. There was the recognition to the need to meet changing needs of the organization was seen as being essential for all employees to be prepared to respond to a rapidly evolving business landscape. These changes in the business landscape can be seen in how an organization responds to changes in the market, for example, the emergence of new technological developments, and changes or shifts in customer expectations and needs. To meet these changes, the workforce therefore needs to acquire new skills and knowledge, but also for the organization to recognize the importance of upskilling and reskilling, as can be seen with P1's comments:

'We usually link our upskilling and reskilling with training needs of employees which again are aligned with the organisational needs. Thus, our upskilling and reskilling are effective in meeting changing needs of the organisation, but sometimes this linking up is not recognised by the organisation and also by us as human resource managers' (P1).

Interestingly, for these experts, there was the recognition that accepting change at an individual and organizational level was an essential requirement for reskilling and upskilling of employees, but may not have been fully recognized by their organization.

From the findings, these experts recognized that a workforce has needed to be increasingly more adaptable and resilient, therefore needs to have employees ready or prepared to take on changing opportunities and challenges, which can only be fostered through the creation of change acceptance in-conjunction with reskilling and upskilling, which was seen with the perspective of P2:

'Change is inevitable, and employees' ability to accept and embrace it can make or break an organization's success, which again may be missing, or even through our lack of awareness as to how we use our upskilling and reskilling programs to meet the challenges of change' (P2).

For the HR business partner, P3, who possessed extensive upskilling and reskilling experience, noted that upskilling and reskilling were essential in making employees accept change:

‘We have to accept and embrace change more readily as an organization and as a workforce. The usage of upskilling and reskilling training programs is crucial for successful implementation of organizational changes and can only be achieved by adopting these sorts of programs, but sometimes we do not realize the relevance or importance’ (P3).

This was supported by the HR manager, P4, who had 10 years of experience in upskilling and reskilling, who noted that when employees gain new skills and knowledge, they are better prepared to accept change:

‘I can say that when our workforce is equipped with new skills, they can readily embrace change and tackle challenges head-on. They become less concerned about what is happening, less stressed and have a more proactive *can-do* attitude. We often forget the benefits when better preparing the workforce with the future’ (P4).

For organizations to remain competitive, again the interviews revealed the challenges in the workplace with the rapid changes which are occurring, which can only be achieved through the adoption of effective execution of upskilling and reskilling initiatives, through which enhanced innovative opportunities can be met. Through adopting enhanced innovative activities can enable a more competent and flexible workforce to exist, therefore are better prepared to foster creativity through innovation. This perspective was seen with the comments of P5, Learning and Development Manager below, who noted innovation and creativity can only be achieved through the adoption of upskilling and reskilling training programs:

‘We do use upskilling and reskilling but there is a disconnect sometimes between innovation and creativity. Innovation and creativity are supported by our [upskilling and reskilling] programs since they are essential drivers for an organization's ability to adapt to a changing environment. These programs do empower employees to think outside the box, explore novel solutions, and anticipate future challenges, but sometimes is forgotten and really needs to be at the forefront for improving innovative activities’ (P5).

Where the workforce has undergone high-quality upskilling or reskilling training, which is relevant, the employees tend to be more receptive to generating original ideas. This can include adopting an approach which provides an innovative mind-set or perspective, and ultimately positively contribute to their organization's goals. This was indicated by the chief human resource officer, P2, who on reflection indicated the relevance of nurturing a positive mindset which could be achieved through upskilling and reskilling training:

‘We often neglect this, but when employees’ skills are improved, the individual tends to be more productive, innovative, and creative. This can also foster a positive mindset, which is conducive to creative thinking. Also, if the training is designed to be relevant, it also makes the workforce more accepting of change’ (P2).

For the HR business partner, P3, upskilling and reskilling could, as the interview progressed, acknowledged that foster innovation and a creative mind-set could be achieve, however it needs broader support such as management and leadership commitment, which can be challenging as often management are seeking continuity rather than instability which innovation and change can bring.

‘Upskilling can foster innovation but requires management and leadership support. Innovation can bring about change, which is problematic as change then comes from external forces which is outside of the control of the organization, then internally, which needs to be accommodated or managed carefully’ (P3).

4.2.3.4 Summary of theme one: the need for upskilling and reskilling

To address the first theme related to the need for upskilling and reskilling activities in the governmental entities based in Abu Dhabi, which was presented in Figure 2.5 of the literature review, the focus of this section has been on understanding the need for upskilling and reskilling to achieve organizational effectiveness. Based on the pre-interview protocol, the participants ranked four central themes as to their level of importance. These themes included the need for organizational adaptability, change acceptance, meeting changing needs, and motivating employees. The interviews revealed that adapting to a changing environment was perceived as the most crucial aspect, emphasizing the importance for long-term organizational survival. Drawing on the researcher's background, there were three additional themes which were not directly

recognized as being important for the Abu Dhabi governmental bodies. These themes included the need to recognize as to how upskilling could be used to enhance employee well-being, proactively fill potential skills gaps, and foster innovation. The interviews revealed that while motivation was acknowledged as an important outcome of upskilling and reskilling, but its linkage to employee well-being was not fully recognized. The interviews emphasized the importance of addressing potential skills gaps and fostering innovation through strategic upskilling and reskilling initiatives, but again was not seen as an essential aspect of this form of training initiative. Finally, there was the associated barriers linked to innovation and change, where the experts did on reflection recognized the importance of identifying these, but again did not see them as critically important.

4.3 Theme two: The influence of upskilling and reskilling on adaptability

In addressing the second research question: how does upskilling and reskilling influence the adaptability in Government organisations in Abu Dhabi, the next section will focus on the interview data related to the impact of upskilling and reskilling. Again, before the interviews focused on the perceptions of the experts, the participants were asked to complete a pre-interview protocol. Informed by the current academic debate and drawing on the knowledge-base of the researcher, the protocol then focused on the perceived influence of upskilling and reskilling programs, as to their level of importance associated with preparing employees for future work, enhancing the employees' capabilities, the need for preparedness of employees for disruption and uncertainty, the increased need for innovative knowledge and skills and finally as to skills needed to gain a competitive advantage. The outcome of the pre-interview protocol is presented below in Table 4.3. Again, the participants were asked to reflect and rank the importance of these themes listed in Table 4.3, as to their perceived level of influence, which then acted as a prompt for the main qualitative study.

Table 4.3: The Influence of upskilling and reskilling

<i>Influence of upskilling and reskilling</i>	<i>Number of responses indicating the level of importance</i>			<i>Current academic debate</i>
	<i>Perceived as important</i>	<i>Perceived as moderate</i>	<i>Perceived as limited</i>	
Preparing employees for future work	6	1		Billionniere and Rahman (2022)

Enhancing the capabilities of employees	6	1		Lang and Triantoro (2022) and Sarta et al. (2021)
Preparing employees for disruption and uncertainty	6	1		Abe et al. (2021).
Need for increased innovative knowledge and skills	3	4		Tsou and Chen (2020).
Skills needed to gain a competitive advantage / meeting customer needs	3	4		Antonioli and Della Torre (2016).

4.3.1 Main interview findings associated with theme two: the influence of upskilling and reskilling on adaptability

4.3.1.1 Preparing employees for future work

Again, the pre-interview protocol was used to inform the main interview process, but like with the first theme, there was some consensus amongst the participants as to these categories. Six of the experts rated preparing employees for future work as having a high level of importance. This high level of agreement amongst most of the experts was aligned to the work of Billionniere and Rahman (2022), who underscored the significance of upskilling and reskilling through ensuring that employees are fully equipped with the necessary skills needed for the evolution of their job role, which can only be achieved through the organization being an enabler of adaptability through adopting an upskilling and reskilling initiative. In contextualizing this further, P2 noted that future orientated skills through upskilling and reskilling were essential:

‘Upskilling and reskilling which includes future-oriented skills ensure employee relevance in evolving industries and job markets, and this is essential’ (P2).

For P1, who was in an adaptive leadership role, possessing 13 years’ experience in upskilling and reskilling, revealed the linkage in preparing employees for future of work:

‘The training provided must match the employees’ capabilities, and then needs to meet the future work direction of the organization whereby meeting the challenges of the future’ (P1).

For P5, who was a learning and development manager identified how upskilling and reskilling can enhance employee capabilities to be equipped with future-oriented skills:

‘Equipping employees with future-oriented skills can ensure they remain relevant in their jobs, whereby enabling them to meet the challenges proactively with the tensions of being stressed or feeling unprepared’ (P5).

Again, from the comments of P5, there was an indication that the theme of well-being was still an important influence from the context of upskilling and reskilling. For P6, the expert indicated how important upskilling and reskilling was to supporting employees to be prepared for future of work:

‘Upskilling and reskilling can empower employees with the knowledge and skills needed for the future of work, which is the focus for our governmental department. This preparedness enhances the employee’s ability to swiftly adapt to new roles, technologies, and challenges’ (P6).

4.3.1.2 Enhancing the capabilities of employees

As to the next theme generated from the literature and the researcher’s professional background which was investigated in the interviews, was how reskilling and upskilling could enhance employees’ capabilities, which was closely aligned with the previous theme. Six of the interviewees saw this as being highly important, which was supported by the work of Lang and Triantoto (2022) and Sarta et al. (2021). As recognized by Lang and Triantoro (2022) and Sarta et al. (2021), and confirmed in the pre-interview protocol, was that upskilling and reskilling provided a critical role in improving the competencies and abilities of employees, but potentially can only be achieved through the organization becoming an enabler of adaptability. For P3, capabilities of employees were closely related to organizational success:

‘Directly improves performance and contributes to organizational success, which is definitely a positive influence’ (P3).

For P5, the learning and development manager supported the viewpoint of P3, by stating upskilling and reskilling initiatives can have a multifaceted influence on the organization, leading to several significant improvements, including enhancing the capabilities of the employees:

‘When employers invest their time and effort in workforce professional development, this can lead to the acquisition of new skills and knowledge, improving the staff’s overall capabilities, which can be a positive influence on the employee, from a skills, career and self-esteem aspect’ (P5).

Again, the theme of self-esteem and well-being of the employee was seen as a positive outcome of upskilling and reskilling. This perspective of P3 and P5 was shared by P6, a training and development manager, who saw a strong link as to upskilling and reskilling as to enhancing employee capabilities to achieve organizational adaptability:

‘Upskilling and reskilling can boost the capabilities of employees, making them more versatile and proficient. This increased competence enables employees to handle a wider range of tasks and challenges, and the promoting adaptability within the organization when faced with changes’ (P6).

4.3.1.3 Preparing employees for disruption and uncertainties.

In relation to the third theme to emerge from the literature and supported by the professional experience of the researcher, six of the experts regarded preparing employees for disruption and uncertainty as being highly important, which was aligned to the research of Abe et al. (2021). This finding generated from the pre-interview protocol indicated that upskilling and reskilling programs are essential for helping employees to navigate through periods of significant disruption and change. This influence on upskilling and reskilling to preparing employees for the disruption and uncertainties in the workplace, was seen by the chief human resource officer P2, who acknowledged the importance as upskilling for business continuity:

‘Upskilling can be seen as a key influence and strategy used to navigate disruptions in the workplace, which is vital for business continuity, ensuring the expectations of the customer expectations are met’ (P2).

P4 saw the challenge of business continuity could only be achieved through upskilling and reskilling of existing employees:

‘... it is needed for business continuity during unexpected challenges, and we upskill and reskilling our employees to achieve this. I see upskilling and reskilling as a key influencer’ (P4).

P5 provided an example as to how upskilling employees had enabled the government organization to meet the challenges and disruption caused by COVID-19 pandemic:

‘If I recall, employees at the time, who had undergone remote work training seamlessly adapted to the new working environment, for example needing to work remotely, which was seen as a clear positive influence to achieving organizational adaptability. This adaptability through being upskilled ensured that our operational activities continued without any major disruption, even during the challenging times of the pandemic’(P5).

4.3.1.4 Increased innovative mindset

While the first three themes which were informed from the researcher’s background and the existing literature was seen as being highly important amongst most of the experts in the pre-interview protocol, only three of the experts rated the topic of an increased innovative mindset as vital, while the remaining four ranked this topic as being only of a medium importance. This finding potentially challenges the original work of Tsou and Chen (2020), as to innovation being a significant enabler when it comes to organizational adaptability through upskilling and reskilling. To emerge from the interviews was that those employees who have received effective upskilling and reskilling training tended to generate unique ideas, tackle challenges with innovative insights, and contributed to the effectiveness of the organization. This was illustrated by the chief human resources officer, P2, who had over 13 years of relevant upskilling and reskilling experience:

‘Through upskilling and reskilling, when employees’ skills are improved, they tend to be more productive, innovative, and creative. This training method benefits the well-being of the employee fostering a positive mindset, which is conducive to creative thinking, a real plus for upskilling employees’ (P2).

A similar viewpoint was shared by P5, who confirmed that improvements in skills of employees can lead to enhanced innovative thinking:

‘Upskilled employees are more likely to generate innovative ideas, contributing to organizational growth, indicating the necessity and influence of upskilling’ (P5).

Finally, for the HR business partner, P3, with expertise in upskilling and reskilling, observed that while upskilling and reskilling can promote innovation, it requires additional support, including the commitment from management and leadership.

‘While upskilling can foster innovation, to be effective and a positive influence, requires broader support, and this includes from the management and leadership teams, which I suppose includes the HRM department’ (P3).

4.3.1.5 Gaining a competitive advantage or meeting customer expectations

In gaining a competitive advantage or meeting customer expectations, which was mirrored as to the category related to employees possessing the necessary skills, of those experts interviewed, four interviewees ranked this category as a medium level of importance. For writers including Antonioli and Della Torre (2016), competitive advantage can be a barrier to organisational adaptability if upskilling and reskilling initiatives are not extensively resourced or supported by the organization affecting their ability to enhance employee development and meeting customer needs, as can be seen above with the comments of P3. Although ranked as less important compared to other categories, there was still the recognition of its significance, as can be seen with the comments of P2 who revealed that employee development was important to meeting customer needs for various reasons:

‘Upskilling has ... several collective [influential] outcomes including ensuring that skilled employees have the right knowledge to understand and meet the expectations and needs of the customer’ (P2).

P3 reveal that upskilled and reskilled employees were better prepared to adjust to a quickly evolving environment, whereby meeting customer expectations and needs:

‘Employee engagement and well-being can be achieved through upskilling and reskilling which are key drivers to gain customer satisfaction as they understand and have the knowledge of their communities’ expectations’ (P3).

P3 comments also included the well-being of the employee and the positive influence that upskilling and reskilling can bring. In contrast, P5 noted that upskilling can enable employees to have the confidence to generate new ideas needed to meet customer expectations:

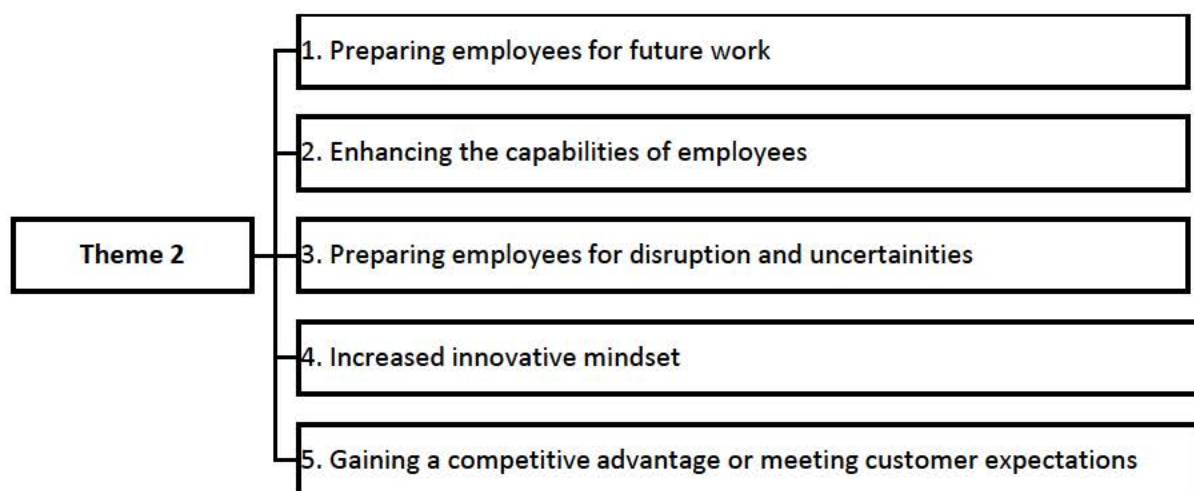
‘Skilled employees can enable the organization to meet the customers’ needs, which of course are changing as to their expectations’ (P5).

This perspective of P5 was shared by P6, who confirmed that the influence of upskilling and reskilling of employees can enable to meet the stakeholders’ expectations:

‘When employees acquire new skills, they become more agile in responding to changing circumstances, like with the adoption of new technologies or new demands of the customer. This adaptability is crucial for this governmental department to be effective’ (P6).

Drawing on Figure 4.2 below, the diagram shows the interconnectedness of the findings in relation to the current knowledge as generated in the literature review, together with the identified gaps recognised by the researcher’s professional background who was working in the Abu Dhabi governmental body responsible for employee training. The first theme which emerged from the literature review and recognized as important in these Abu Dhabi governmental bodies was the importance associated with nurturing an innovative mindset, which was seen as an overarching group for the other eight sub-categories.

Figure 4.2: Clustering of the influence of upskilling and reskilling activities associated with theme two



These categories could be grouped under three independent nodes, of which four had emerged from the current academic debate and acknowledged to exist in these Abu Dhabi governmental organizations. These themes included the enhancement of employee capabilities, preparing employees for future work, ensuring that the workforce is prepared for disruption and uncertainty and finally, for the organization to be able to gain a competitive advantage. There are also four themes which were identified from the professional experience of the researcher, the need to enhance employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention, the enhancement of employee well-being, means to mitigate or reduce risk, and the need for innovative and creative leadership, which will be presented below.

4.3.2 Unfamiliar influences of upskilling and reskilling activities in the Abu Dhabi's governmental bodies

As mentioned above, to emerge from the professional knowledge of the researcher and the literature review related to upskilling and reskilling were four themes which were seen as potentially missing from the Abu Dhabi governmental bodies, which the interviews then focused on: the enhancement of employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention, the influence on leadership creativity and innovation, the mitigation or limiting of risks, and although mirroring the first emerging topic: enhancing employee well-being. It should be noted that the enhancing of employee well-being, as can be seen in the previous section can become a significant enabler of organizational adaptability through employees engaging in upskilling and reskilling programs, but again was seen specifically recognized in the governmental bodies as an important aspect of using upskilling and reskilling initiatives.

Table 4.4: Unfamiliar influences of upskilling and reskilling activities and existing theory

Theme	Key literature
The enhancement of employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention	Patil and Rana (2021), Gomathi et al. (2023); Tenakwah (2021)
The influence on leadership creativity and innovation	Paul (2023), Roberts (2021), Takács et al. (2021)
The mitigation or limiting of risks	Agha (2022), Falkner et al. (2022)
The enhancement of employee well-being	Seshasai and Balaji (2023)

4.3.2.1 The enhancement of employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention

The interview data indicated that the topic of well-being was an overarching theme which could be grouped under both theme one and two of the interviews, but was not seen as necessary important for the Abu Dhabi governmental bodies. The interviews found that the influence of upskilling and reskilling had a positive influence on the employees' well-being, but was not necessarily prioritized. This included how upskilling and reskilling could provide a positive environment to be created which supports and accelerates the process of enabling employees to be adaptive to change and prepared to acquire new skills. As a theme, upskilling and reskilling initiatives have a multifaceted influence on an organization, which can result in significant improvements, including enhancing the capabilities of employees, increasing the workplace engagement, perceived levels of employee satisfaction, and retention, and ultimately assisting in promoting the well-being of the individual.

For P4, a HR manager provided an example of how a training program resulted in higher retention:

‘One notable example which I can share with you if I recall rightly, was that of an implementation of a recent leadership development program. After the completion of this program, we saw a significant increase in employee retention and a decrease in leadership turnover. This not only saved us recruitment costs but also ensured the continuity of our leadership pipeline’ (P4).

For P5, there was the acknowledgment as to the importance of employee engagement, and that engagement and retention was also vital, which could be achieved through using upskilling and reskilling programs in a more proactive way:

‘We need to ensure that we enhance employee engagement. Employee engagement and retention play a pivotal role in enhancing the capabilities of our employees. When our employees are engaged and motivated, they are more likely to invest their time and effort in professional development. This leads to the acquisition of new skills and knowledge, improving their overall capabilities, which I would say can be readily achieved through upskilling and reskilling programs’ (P5).

Clearly from the comment of P5, when employees feel a stronger commitment to their role and responsibilities, this can result in heightened job satisfaction and provide a deeper sense of purpose. However, as noted also in the comments of P5, this was also realized that upskilling and reskilling initiatives could achieve this.

Linked to this need for a strong commitment which could be achieved through upskilling and reskilling, was the associated improvements in mental and emotional well-being through reducing frustration and anxiety as noted by P6:

‘When you think about it, when employees see that their organization invests in enhancing their skills and knowledge [through upskilling and reskilling], it instils a sense of value and purpose, boosting motivation and job satisfaction. This, in turn, leads to higher employee engagement and productivity, benefiting both individuals and the organization’ (P6)

In supporting P6’s reflection on upskilling and reskilling, P2 also noted the importance of upskilling and reskilling being linked to productivity, creativity and innovation, but also the direct connection to mental well-being:

‘When employees are physically and mentally well, they tend to be more productive, innovative and creative. Well-being fosters a positive mindset, which is conducive to creative thinking, and this has been achieved through adopting upskilling and reskilling methods, but again we have not really recognised this specifically’ (P2).

4.3.2.2 Need for creative and innovative leadership

For the experts interviewed, upskilling and reskilling initiatives have had a profound influence on their organization, but there was the recognized need to have creative leadership to enable the workforce to possess the correct skills to meet the future challenges. Leadership development in the organization was found in the current reskilling and upskilling literature to be able to facilitate by using upskilling and reskilling programs but not only employee-worker orientated, but also included the leadership. This was shown with the comments of P2, a chief human resource officer, who explained as to how upskilling and reskilling improved creative leadership:

‘Upskilling and reskilling initiatives when you think about it has played a crucial role in enhancing leadership by providing leaders with updated knowledge and skills, enabling them to adapt to meet customer and industry trends. This continuous learning fosters innovative thinking among leaders, empowering them to explore with their teams’ novel solutions and anticipate future challenges’ (P2).

The perspective of P2 was also supported by P3 who insisted that organizations can create innovative leadership through upskilling and reskilling.

‘Leaders who undergo effective upskilling and reskilling training I have found are better equipped to drive innovation within their team and organization. But when you think about it, we or I did not really see upskilling and reskilling as being about innovation, but more like meeting skills gaps’ (P3).

This was also seen with P4, who recalled how the upskilling and reskilling also transformed the leadership commitment in the organization:

‘One notable example of upskilling and reskilling being applied beyond employees, which I can share with you, that proved to be effective, was when it was applied to a leadership development program. After the program, we saw how the participants gained invaluable knowledge through gaining new skills which led to an increase in creativity amongst the various teams. There was also a significant increase in retention and a decrease in the leadership team turnover. This not only saved us recruitment costs but also ensured the continuity of our leadership while also encouraging innovation’ (P4).

4.3.2.3 Mitigating risk and uncertainty

The interviews then focused on how to mitigate against uncertainty and risk, as to whether upskilling and reskilling was recognized as an important facet. Existing literature revealed that risk mitigation was an enabler for organizational adaptability through adopting an upskilling and reskilling initiative, particularly around time of disruptive and uncertainty, which was identified to minimize potential risk. For the experts, it was recognized that upskilling and reskilling can prepare the workforce to be prepared for future challenges and changes, by giving employees the necessary skills, capabilities and knowledge, which was seen in the perspective of P6:

‘Upskilling and reskilling can empower employees with the knowledge and skills needed for the future of work [future work commitments]. This preparedness enhances their ability to swiftly adapt to new roles, technologies, and challenges. As employees become more adaptable, the organization as a whole becomes better equipped to navigate changing industry landscapes and remain competitive. Therefore, as to the theme of risk mitigation, I suppose by reskilling and upskilling employees does help to assist to the organization to avoid potential problems through a better prepared workforce’ (P6).

In the interviews, there was the acknowledgement that upskilling and reskilling were found to be a form of risk mitigation for the organization, but was not seen or recognized as a key part of upskilling and reskilling. But clearly organizations can limit the potential risk of having a talent shortage and skills gap by investing in the development of their workforce through pro-actively training the staff. This strategy can also reduce in needing to hire and onboard external talent, reduce staff turnover and retaining their expertise and knowledge, rather than losing the skills base through employee turnover. This acknowledge was seen with the comments of P1:

‘When you look at upskilling and reskilling, the internal and external environmental changes are occurring at a faster pace and my thinking is that upskilling and reskilling employees is a risk mitigation strategy. By having a workforce that is well-prepared and adaptable which is what my management where I work want, the organization can mitigate risks associated with skill shortages, market fluctuations, or unforeseen changes’ (P1).

4.3.2.4 The enhancement of employee well-being

As noted above, upskilling and reskilling is noted to enhance employee well-being. P3 illustrated this and noted that when upskilling and reskilling training programs is adopted, can lead to an enhancement in employee well-being.

‘My organisation also uses upskilling and reskilling to enhance employee well-being since they provide individuals with the knowledge and tools needed to thrive in an ever-changing work environment. When employees feel competent and confident in their roles, they experience reduced stress and job insecurity, leading to improved mental health. I am on reflection, think that employee well-being is important, but it is not seen

as an important factor' (P3).

For P3 the upskilled and reskilled programs can enable the employees to have an enhance well-being which can lead to improvement in customer service:

'Employee engagement and well-being achieved through upskilling and reskilling are key drivers for meeting customer needs and providing a better service, but I think we do not acknowledge the importance of the employee well-being as much as we should' (P3).

This limited acknowledgement of a lack of well-being was recognized by P2 who supported this perspective by confirming that upskilling and reskilling can enhance employee well-being:

'I suppose when you think about it, the influence of these training programs, upskilling and reskilling can support employee well-being in my organisation. This type of training can alleviate stress by enhancing employees' confidence in their abilities and job security. When individuals possess the skills needed to excel in their role and adapt to industry changes, while experiencing reduced anxiety about job stability. This increased confidence and reduced fear of job loss contribute to lower stress levels and permit the employees to focus on the task in hand' (P2).

4.3.2.5 Summary of theme two: the influence of upskilling and reskilling on adaptability

In presenting the second theme as presented in Figure 2.5, the section has explored the influence of upskilling and reskilling on the adaptability within government organizations in Abu Dhabi. The research addresses the question of how these training programs can influence organizational adaptability by analysing the interview data related to the perceived importance of upskilling and reskilling programs. The pre-interview protocol, informed by the existing academic debate along with the researcher's professional knowledge, focused on aspects such as preparing employees for future work, enhancing capabilities, dealing with disruption and uncertainty, fostering innovative knowledge and skills, and meeting customer expectations. The findings reveal a consensus amongst the experts as to the importance of preparing employees for future work, enhancing their capabilities, and navigating disruption and uncertainty through upskilling and reskilling initiatives. The participants emphasized the essential role of these programs in ensuring employees remain relevant possessing the correct and future skills, improve their overall capabilities, and navigate

disruptions to ensure that business continuity is maintained. While there were some differences as to their perceived importance of fostering innovative knowledge and meeting customer expectations, overall findings indicated the multifaceted aspect and influence of upskilling and reskilling on organizational adaptability.

The study then focused on those themes which were seen from a professional perspective as to what may be currently neglected or not recognized, including the enhancement of employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention, the need for creative and innovative leadership, risk mitigation, and the enhancement of employee well-being. The interviews indicated that while these themes were on reflection important, the experts recognized that they were potentially not seen as an important facet associated with upskilling and reskilling. The findings emphasize the need to recognize the broader benefits of upskilling and reskilling beyond traditional themes associated with organizational adaptability, to encompass employee well-being, engagement, and leadership creativity.

4.4 Theme three: strategies associated with upskilling and reskilling to enhance organizational adaptability

The last research question, research question three was focused on what strategies are needed to improve upskilling and reskilling to enhance adaptability in an Abu Dhabi governmental organization. This theme as presented in Figure 2.5 in the literature review was focused on determining what strategies should be adopted for enhancing organizational adaptability through upskilling and reskilling. To address this question, the interview protocol was reintroduced again, and focused on the level of importance associated with the usage of training needs analysis, providing a support hybrid working environment, the incorporation of appropriate adult learning strategies into the learning environment, determining the changing needs of the organization, the incorporation of technology, the alignment with performance management and finally the consideration of individual learning styles. Table 4.5 shows the participants prior to the qualitative interview, ranking the themes as to their perceived level of importance, which was then used as a prompt for the main study. It is noted that all the seven strategies of upskilling and reskilling identified from literature were either deemed high or medium importance adding objectivity to the finding. The only exception is supportive hybrid working environment which is considered low by one respondent.

Table 4.5: The perceived level of importance of having strategies associated with upskilling and reskilling to enhance organizational adaptability

<i>Strategies of upskilling and reskilling</i>	<i>Number of responses indicating the level of importance</i>			<i>Current literature</i>
	<i>Perceived as important</i>	<i>Perceived as moderate</i>	<i>Perceived as limited</i>	
Training needs analysis	7			Amin (2022), Johnson et al. (2020), Păceșilă and Colesca (2019) and Singh (2018).
Supportive hybrid working environment	3	3	1	Malik et al. (2022).
Incorporation of appropriate adult learning techniques	6	1		Edifor et al. (2021).
The changing needs of the organization	5	2		Adam (2020).
The incorporation of technological changes	3	4		Szilard et al. (2018), Kensbock and Stöckmann (2021).
Alignment with performance management	3	4		McConnell and Schaninger (2019), Syahrir et al. (2021)
Consideration of individual learning styles	3	4		Razzak et al. (2019) and Moser and Zumbach (2018).

4.4.1 Main interview findings associated with theme three: strategies of upskilling and reskilling

4.4.1.1 Training needs analysis

From the pre-interview protocol, the training need analysis strategy received the highest rating, with all seven respondents ranking it as having high importance. The unanimous consensus underscores the critical role of conducting a thorough training needs analysis to identify and address the specific learning requirements of employees, whereby making upskilling and reskilling programs both an enabler and a potential barrier to organizational adaptability. For writers such as

Amin (2022), Johnson et al. (2020), Păceșilă and Colesca (2019) and Singh (2018), training needs analysis can assist in identifying training needs of employees, therefore was seen in both the literature and in the interviews as being fundamental and an indispensable step in the upskilling and reskilling process. However, as noted by Amin (2022), Johnson et al. (2020), Păceșilă and Colesca (2019) and Singh (2018), if incorrectly conducted can lead to skills gaps not being correctly identified, therefore weakening the effectiveness of upskilling and reskilling. With P2, this expert highlighted the importance of the training need analysis which was needed for the effective evaluation of upskilling and reskilling skill gaps:

‘It [training needs analysis] ensures precise skill-gap identification, guiding focused upskilling programs for a maximum adaptability impact. The training needs analysis is used as an important HRM tool which is extensively used’ (P2)

For P5, this usage of the training needs analysis was used to enhance the effectiveness of upskilling and reskilling programs, and primarily used to analyse skill gaps:

‘In using the training needs analysis, it enables us to analyse employee skill gaps so that targeted and efficient upskilling training can be established and have a direct impact on the workforce’s knowledge and skill sets and ultimately on achieving organizational adaptability’ (P5).

This was further supported by P6 who revealed how the usage of the training needs analysis can inform and align upskilling and reskilling training with organizational needs.

‘It [training needs analysis can] inform and ensure training is targeted, which aligns with the skills needed to meet the organizational needs’ (P6).

What was unclear from the comments of P6, was whether these gaps were current or future skills needed, as there was an indication throughout the interviews that the usage of upskilling and reskilling was used in response rather than being proactive strategy.

4.4.1.2 Supportive hybrid working environment

Of the seven participants in the study, three of the experts placed the category of supporting a hybrid working environment as being of a high importance, with three indicating a medium rating, and one as a low category. This finding indicates a mixed perspective on the significance of

supporting a hybrid working environment as advocated by Malikk et al. (2022), in the context of upskilling and reskilling. From a theoretical perspective, the supportive hybrid working environment, was considered to be an enabler along with being a potential barrier to organisational adaptability through upskilling and reskilling. This was also seen in the interviews as to the varying differences of opinions of providing this form of supportive workplace amongst the difference governmental organizations. For P3, who was a human resource business partner, the supportive environment was beneficial:

‘Directly improves performance and contributes to organizational success’ (P3).

For P2, a chief human resource officer, there was a direct link between upskilling and reskilling, and the creation of hybrid working environment, which had gain popularity since the COVID-19 pandemic.

‘Following COVID-19, upskilling and reskilling does support the new hybrid working environment, as it can facilitate adaptability by aligning training with flexible working arrangements, maintaining productivity and engagement, whether the training solution is provided online or in person’ (P2).

With P5, a learning and development manager, upskilling and reskilling could enable the creation and then facilitate hybrid work practices to exist:

‘We have used upskilling strategies to enable of workforce to adapt to a more hybrid working environment. This has led to enhancements in flexibility in working practices, while supporting the goal of organizational adaptability’ (P5).

4.4.1.3 Incorporation of appropriate adult learning techniques

The next theme covered in the pre-interview protocol was related to the incorporation of an appropriate adult learning techniques which could be used in upskilling and reskilling initiatives. Six of the seven experts rated the category of appropriate adult learning techniques as highly important. The outcome indicated a strong consensus that there was a need to ensure that the correct teaching and learning methods are reflective of the learner, when implementing upskilling and reskilling initiatives (Edifor et al., 2021). The outcome also highlights the importance of considering suitable adult learning techniques which are designed around how the learner learns,

whereby making upskilling and reskilling an enabler to organisational adaptability. This was seen with the comments of P4, who noted that using the correct adult learning strategy can engage the learner to acquire the necessary skills:

‘With the learner in mind, the pedagogy [adult learning] strategy used needs to ensure that the learner actively engage with the learning process, whereby optimizing their skill acquisition and adaptability to meet future challenges’ (P4)

The chief human resource officer P2 highlighted the link of upskilling and reskilling by ensuring that the appropriate adult learning or pedagogy are incorporated in the training provision, including the opportunity to practice their new skills:

‘We know the importance of adult learning and the necessity for active learning methods being used to ensure that the employee is fully engaged, and we can achieve skill retention, which means that we often include the opportunity for the trainees to practice their new skills or knowledge’ (P2).

The HR business partner, P3 also noted the importance of incorporating adult learning techniques and strategies into existing training programs:

‘Incorporating appropriate pedagogy [adult learning] strategies can help in utilizing effective teaching methods to enable the learner to actively engage through which their skills are optimized’ (P3).

With P5, the learning and development manager also highlighted the need for upskilling and reskilling to incorporate appropriate adult learning strategies.

‘... we need to ensure that our training is tailored to optimize learning outcomes and help employees adapt or learn effectively, and this can only be achieved through recognizing and understanding how the learner learns [pedagogies]’(P5).

4.4.1.4 The changing needs of the organisation

In relation to considering the changing needs of the organization as to having strategies associated with upskilling and reskilling to enhance organizational adaptability, this category was seen by five participants as being highly important, while two experts placed this theme as being a medium

level of importance. The outcome indicated an emphasis needed to be placed on aligning upskilling and reskilling initiatives, so that the organization can respond to changing and evolving needs (Adam, 2020). This was captured in the perspectives of P5, P1 and P4. For P5, adaptive training was essential for meeting organizational changes:

‘Adapting training, which includes upskilling and reskilling programs, is critical to ensure that organizational responses to the changing environment, so enabling the business to remain agile and responsive’ (P5).

The participant in the role of adaptive leadership, P1, highlighted that in the organization they worked for, ensured that employee upskilling was aligned with the changing needs of the organization and customer needs:

‘We link our upskilling and reskilling training programs with the needs of the employee along with those of the customer or market and organization. Therefore, our upskilling and reskilling strategies and outcomes are effective in meeting changing needs of the organization and those of the customer’ (P1).

This was confirmed by the HR manager, P4, who noted that the current upskilling and reskilling programs needed to be aligned with the shift in demands of customers and those of the organization, which was achieved through monitoring the changes and seeking feedback:

‘...there are always changes, therefore we need to make sure the training is relevant. To achieved this, we seek feedback from both the trainees which serves as a valuable tool, but also checking for new trends and demands. We use the findings and feedback to tailor and inform future training programs, therefore making them relevant’ (P4).

4.4.1.5 The incorporation of technological changes

The pre-interview protocol then focused on the incorporation of technological changes into training protocols, with three experts ranking the category as highly important, while four of the participants considered the theme being of medium importance. This outcome does provide a range of different views as to the role of technology in upskilling and reskilling, as proposed by Szilard et al. (2018), and Kensbock and Stöckmann (2021). For Szilard et al. (2018), and Kensbock and Stöckmann (2021), the incorporation of technological advances is seen as being an enabler through

the adoption of upskilling and reskilling programs, as the emergence of advanced technology such as artificial intelligence could facilitate the organisation to capitalize on this form of advanced solution. However, as noted by Szilard et al. (2018), and Kensbock and Stöckmann (2021), the advancement of technology and the need to keep up-to-date through upskilling can also be a barrier for an organization to achieve its adaptability, as the developments and skills needed become obsolete rapidly. With the training and development manager who was P6, upskilling and reskilling was seen as being essential for the development and support of employees to gain the necessary technological skills:

‘Today and even more than ever, upskilling and reskilling training is needed to ensure that the workforce has the correct digital and technology skills needed to be effective in meeting the challenges of the future’ (P6).

As for the chief human resource officer P2, although recognizing the importance of the workforce possessing the correct technological and digital skill sets, which were acquired through upskilling and reskilling, there was also the need to ensure that the training was aligned to the overall adaptability strategies of the organization:

‘I see upskilling and reskilling needing to be closely aligned to the strategic direction of the organization, therefore although we need to upskill the workforce to be digitally proficient it needs also to be aligned to the departments and government’s adaptability objectives’ (P2).

Finally, for P4 the HR manager, there was support of P2’s perspective of aligning these programs with the organization’s adaptability objectives.

‘Applying technology into training actively aids adaptability but should be narrowed down to specific goals and not conducted for the sake of conducting a reskilling or upskilling exercise’ (P4).

4.4.1.6 Alignment with performance management

Three of the expert participants indicated that the alignment with performance management was of a high level of importance, with four interviewees ranking it only as moderately important. For McConnell and Schaninger (2019) and Syahrir et al. (2021), to be effective, upskilling and

reskilling initiatives needs to be aligned to the performance management strategy of the organization along with the training needs analysis. This perspective confirmed in the interviews by P2, who saw the need for integration of performance management, organizational goals together with upskilling and reskilling:

‘Integration reinforces adaptability as part of the performance development, linking development with organizational goals’ (P2).

As for P3, the HR business partner, there was a recognition of the importance of performance management. For P3, to be effective upskilling and reskilling needed to be closely aligned with the concept of performance management.

‘Aligning and informing upskilling and reskilling training with performance management is essential. Although we conduct a training needs analysis as part of our skills gaps analysis, the performance of the workforce is also an important consideration’ (P3).

Finally, with P5, the learning and development manager, performance management could be used to assist in achieving organizational adaptability.

‘Linking upskilling with performance outcomes can inform us as a HR team to design programs and assist the workforce to be more adaptable’ (P5).

4.4.1.7 Consideration of individual learning styles

As with performance management, three of the experts rated the need to recognize and consider individual’s learning style as being highly important, with four of the interviewees ranking it as of a medium level importance. This contradicted the appropriate adult learning techniques which was ranked as highly important by most of the experts in the pre-interview protocol. Interestingly, both Razzak et al. (2019) and Moser and Zumbach (2018) contended that upskilling and reskilling can act as an enabler for organizational adaptability, but to be effective, the learning style, much like the appropriate adult learning strategy, must be reflective and aligned specifically to the employee, as seen with the comments of P5.

‘An important factor to consider for upskilling to adjust the content and delivery of the programs to be aligned to the individual learner, much like the pedagogy [adult

learning] technique used. Recognizing diverse learning styles ensures inclusive and effective upskilling for all employees' (P5)

This perspective of P5 was supported by P2, who saw the need to recognize and consider individual learning styles when providing upskilling and reskilling training programs as the workforce were adult learners:

'Personalized learning programs needs to be carefully devised as adult learners all learn differently. This also needs careful consideration when planning for upskilling and reskilling programs in a workplace setting, reflecting their previous experiences, but also permitting the learner to practice' (P2).

This theme and recognition of the need to consider the differences in adult learners was also seen in the comments of P4:

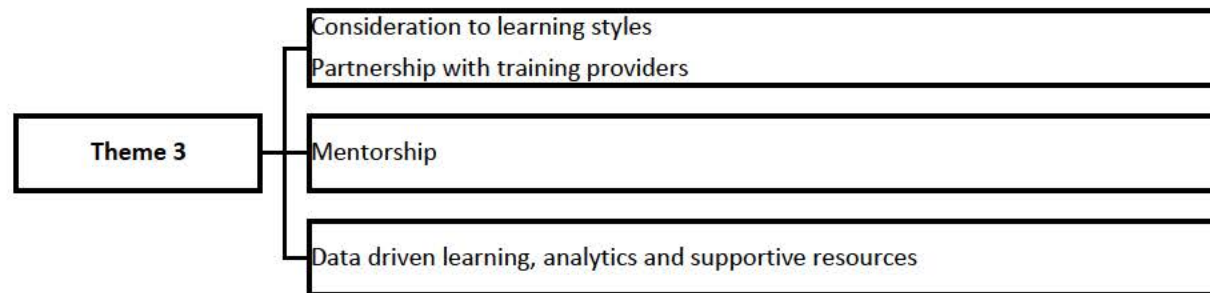
'Consideration of individual learning styles is an important factor to consider when providing upskilling content, which needs to be adjusted dependent on the individual learner. This includes the content and mode of the programs delivery' (P4).

4.4.2 Unfamiliar influences of upskilling and reskilling activities in the Abu Dhabi's governmental bodies

The study like with the other themes, used a cluster analysis approach to determine any links between the known understanding of upskilling and reskilling in the Abu Dhabi's governmental bodies and those which the researcher identified from a professional perspective were potentially missing. The findings revealed that there were three distinct groups, as shown in Figure 4.3. The first group indicated that the individual learning style, and the partnerships with training providers were identified as being closely aligned to each other, even though one was seen as existing in Abu Dhabi's governmental bodies, while the other theme was potentially not recognized or acknowledged by these entities. The next group was related to the changing needs of the organization, the requirement and necessity of performance management, then as to how data driven learning is needed, together with the importance or necessity of having supportive resources. The third grouping as shown in Figure 4.3, indicated the association and importance of upskilling and reskilling, the close alignment of conducting a training needs analysis, having a supportive and established hybrid working environment, together with the incorporation of an

appropriate adult learning techniques, while ensuring that technology advancements are incorporated in the proactive training initiative.

**Figure 4.3: Clustering of the strategies associated with upskilling and reskilling activities:
theme three**



Drawing on the existing upskilling and reskilling theory as identified in the current literature, but then informed from a professional perspective based on the researcher's role and experience, the following themes were seen as not specifically acknowledged or recognized as relevant in Abu Dhabi's governmental bodies, but were in the current academic debate. These themes included the need and relevance of having training provider partnerships, the benefits of mentorship, how learning strategies need to be data driven and the necessity of supportive resources. The focus of the interviews was based on the acknowledgement of an absence of these strategies, and how these can be used more effectively as potential enablers for organizational adaptability through following upskilling and reskilling initiatives, which can support employee learning and development.

Table 4.6: Unfamiliar influences of upskilling and reskilling activities and existing theory

Theme	Key literature
Partnerships with training providers	Vinayan et al. (2020), Sofia et al. (2023), Sohimi et al. (2019)
Mentorship	Germain (2020), Tenakwah (2021), Nunan et al. (2023).
Data driven learning, analytics, and supportive resources	Jaiswal et al. (2022), Amer-Yahia (2022), Agha (2022), Xerri et al. (2022)

4.4.2.1 Consideration given learning styles and external partnerships

Consideration of individual learning styles and partnerships with training providers are seen as being two distinct yet interconnected strategies which were identified in the current academic debate as being important attributes associated with upskilling and reskilling, but was seen by the researcher as being potentially absent from an Abu Dhabi's governmental body perspective. The theory indicated partnerships with training providers can help organizations meet the unique learning needs of their employees by bringing in external knowledge and resources. These partnerships can include working with educational institutions, using online learning platforms, or engaging with external companies that offer specialized training. These outside partners can provide specific training materials and delivery strategies that might not be easily accessible internally. Although the experts were critically aware of the external learning partnerships, and had used these entities, the connection of needing to engage more with these partnerships to provide upskilling and reskilling materials was not completely recognized as being vitally important, as can be seen with the comments of P2, who on reflection saw the benefits:

‘One strategy we have used has been to establish partnerships with external training providers and academic institutions, but this was not intentional or strategic. However, by tapping into their expertise, we have found we can access cutting-edge training programs and resources that align with our needs. These external providers have helped to upskill and reskill our staff, as they offer tailored programs, are up-to-date on industry trends, and bring objectivity to training. Really on reflection, these external training providers and programs can accelerate learning, improves skill relevance, and enhance employee adaptability and their performance’ (P2).

Some of the experts, including P4, then expanded on the benefits of using and drawing on externally provided upskilling and reskilling programs. For these participants as seen with the comments of P2 above, was the improved learning environment for employees, the access to a wider variety of learning resources, which therefore could lead to the workforce being better prepared and more able to adapt to changing business conditions, as seen with P4:

‘Meeting diverse organizational needs means that we have to foster a workforce which is adaptable to change, therefore employees must possess a versatile but suitable skill set.

As an organization we have invested in upskilling and reskilling programs which have been tailored to individual and group needs, but using external providers has not really been seen as a priority or even as a necessity. May be this has to change' (P4).

The comments of P5 revealed the importance of considering individual learning styles, but also the recognition that external resources could be of benefit also, but still needing the time to practice.

'An important factor to consider for upskilling to adjust the content and delivery of the programs to be aligned to the individual learner, much like the pedagogy [adult learning] technique used. But if we were to use external providers, the challenge of needing to develop independent training programs could be removed, and all we do is to provide the means for the employee to practice what they have learnt back in the work' (P5).

In reaching this conclusion, P5 was asked about the techniques and strategies which could assist this new approach. When the concept of mentors was mentioned, for P5, this was not really a key consideration.

The perspective of P5 as to the importance of individual learning styles when upskilling and reskilling was also important to P2, but again mentorship and its role in enabling the learner to practice was missing:

'Personalized learning experiences can enhance the learner's experience but needs to be individualized.... Yes, I think external providers could benefit our employees to gain a more broader skill set, while the use of mentors in the workplace does present a good solution but also challenges, like who for example will act as a mentor and whether the learner will learn bad practices' (P2).

In supporting P5 and P2, P4 also considered the individual learning style as important, but also recognized the need for external providers could benefit the organization together with the use of mentors but meant that there was additional training needed.

'Consideration of individual learning styles is important, and I can see the benefits of external training as a possible solution if managed correctly as to the training content.

As for mentors, we would need to carefully train them also, which presents its own challenge as to training the mentors to train the learner' (P4).

4.4.2.2 Mentorship

Mentorship emerged on reflection as an important strategy which was overlooked as a means or technique to reinforce the skills and knowledge learnt. As an approach, mentorship involves experienced individuals serving as guides and supporters for their less-experienced colleagues, particularly in the context of their professional development. For P2, a chief human resource officer, acknowledged that the use of mentorship could be used as an effective upskilling and reskilling strategy:

'I can see the benefits of mentorship as a valuable upskilling and reskilling strategy by providing personalized guidance and knowledge transfer from experienced mentors to less experienced individuals. This one-on-one interaction could facilitate the acquisition of new skills, practical insights, and industry knowledge being passed from one colleague to another, which is real and not simply theory' (P2).

As for P3, the HR business partner, on reflection, recognized the need to adopt the mentorship approach as part of their upskilling and reskilling strategy:

'We really need to explore the idea of mentorship programs where experienced employees can guide and support those who have recently undergone the upskilling program. This would provide a practical, on-the-job learning experience that complements formal training' (P3).

This was similarly shared by P5, who also acknowledged the value of a mentorship strategy becoming part of the upskilling and reskilling strategy:

'There are various strategies that can be adopted based on the training need or scenario. One such strategy could be to introduce mentorship programs where experienced employees guide and mentor those who have recently undergone an upskilling training session. This knowledge transfer can help bridge the gap between theory and practical application, enhancing the employee's adaptability' (P5).

4.4.2.3 Data driven learning, analytics and supportive resources

To emerge from the literature review was the theme of ensuring that information on the effectiveness of upskilling and reskilling programs were informed by data-driven learning techniques. Data on employee development, engagement, and skill acquisition needed to be accurately tracked and analysed. In this study, P2 confirmed that there was a real lack of an appreciation of the use of data-driven learning and analytics:

‘I would say we do not use the data we generate as well as we should. We are looking into data-driven approaches to identify skill gaps and predict future skill needs. This will enable us to tailor our upskilling and reskilling efforts to the precise needs of the organization, ensuring maximum effectiveness for achieving organizational adaptability’ (P2).

P6 supported the viewpoint of P2, also highlighted that data-driven learning analytics were really needed for upskilling and reskilling programs to be effective. However, as noted by P6, there was still a reliance on the training needs analysis, to determine skills gaps:

‘In my opinion, we need to get away from our reliance on the training skill analysis being primarily used, and data-driven learning is one good strategy that we can adopt to improve upskilling and reskilled. We plan to use analytics to identify skill gaps in real-time, enabling us to provide timely and targeted training. It will potentially transform the way we upskill and reskill our workforce in the future’ (P6).

As for P3, the HR business partner, the participant acknowledged the benefits of using the data-driven learning strategy and the need for a supportive resource when upskilling and reskilling the workforce:

‘I know that data-driven learning utilizes insights from employee performance data to identify skill gaps and tailor training programs, ensuring a more targeted and effective upskilling and reskilling training can be provided. Then we could use supportive resources, such as online modules, workshops, and documentation, to reinforce learning objectives, but this is dependent on the learner and their learning style. Together, these elements could create a dynamic and informed ecosystem that optimizes the how upskilling and reskilling is delivered within the organization’ (P3).

In the area of supportive tools as noted by P3 above, there is the need to ensure that the learning process is meeting the future needs of the organization, as recognized by P7:

‘To improve our upskilling and reskilling programs and enhance the adaptability within the organization, we must in the future adopt a multifaceted approach. Firstly, there is a need for implementing a research strategy that provides timely data which is essential... these strategies must also ensure that we are upskilling and reskilling to enable staff to be agile, and this can only be achieved through data-driven analytics which are providing real time accurate information’ (P7).

4.4.2.4 Summary of theme three: strategies associated with upskilling and reskilling

In addressing theme three of the research which was focused on exploring the experts’ perceptions to the strategies associated with upskilling and reskilling, to enhance the organizational adaptability in an Abu Dhabi governmental organization, there was an acknowledgement as to the importance of certain themes, but also those which had been overlooked. Of those recognized as important strategies these included the importance of the usage, almost overreliance, of the training needs analysis, the need for a supportive hybrid working environment, the necessity of incorporating appropriate adult learning needs, the awareness of the changing organizational and customer needs, technological and digital integration, the alignment with performance management, and the recognition of individual learning styles.

The training needs analysis emerged as the most important strategy used. For the experts the training needs analysis was used to identify and target missing skills and knowledge. To emerge from the interviews was the need to embrace a supportive hybrid working environment and appropriate adult learning strategies, which were acknowledged as being both challenging but also part of the modern Abu Dhabi's governmental workplace. The consideration of changing organizational and customer needs, technological changes, alignment with performance management, and the recognition as to relevance of individual learning styles were also seen as relevant and were carefully considered. The study however did identify potential gaps in understanding or had been overlooked by the experts when considering the strategies associated with upskilling and reskilling. These included the relevance of using external partnerships to provide the training, the use of mentorship to enable the learner to practice and learn from a more

experienced colleague, and how important data-driven analytics was to inform upskilling and reskilling training programs. Finally, there was the need to be critically aware for the need for supportive resources to be available.

4.5 Chapter summary

Informed by the current academic debate, the interviews together with the usage of the pre-interview protocol has led to the identification of several themes which were both known and recognized by the human resource experts working in the Abu Dhabi governmental sectors, but also topics in which there was limited awareness of. The chapter has indicated sixteen known and recognized core topics associated with upskilling which can enable the Abu Dhabi governmental sectors to achieve adaptability in the organization. These upskilling and reskilling themes included the identification of a series of benefits, such as the need for organizational adaptability, change acceptance, meeting changing needs, and motivating employees, which addressed the first identified theme, as presented in Figure 2.5 in the literature review.

From the perspective of influence of upskilling and reskilling can have on the workforce, the findings indicated an awareness amongst the experts to as to preparing the workforce for future work, enhancing capabilities, dealing with disruption and uncertainty, fostering innovative knowledge and skills, and gaining a competitive advantage or meeting customer needs. These findings addressed the second theme which emerged from the literature review. From a strategy perspective, the experts acknowledge the relevance and usage of the training needs analysis, supporting a hybrid working environment, incorporating appropriate adult learning strategies into the training programs, being aware of changing organizational needs, the necessity for digital and technological integration, alignment with performance management, and recognition of individual learning styles. This finding addressed the third emerging theme as presented in Figure 2.5.

The study, and initially informed by the researcher's professional experience also found there were ten characteristics which while existing in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector, were not really recognized, or acknowledged as important. These included the associated benefits such as enhancing employee well-being, filling potential skills gaps, and fostering innovation. As to the influence of upskilling and reskilling, the study found that missing was the recognition of the enhancement of employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention, the need for creative and innovative leadership, how upskilling and reskilling can limit risk mitigation of needing to find

new employees, and the enhancement of employee well-being. Finally, as to the strategies associated with upskilling and reskilling, there was a gap in the usage of external partnerships, a lack of the usage of mentorship in the workplace, the need for data-driven analytics to inform learning, and the need for an awareness of ensuring there are supportive resources.

From these findings, the following analysis of the findings can be presented as shown in Table 4.7 below. Table 4.7 shows similarities to existing literature and the contradictions or mismatch to the theory based on the experiences and perceptions of the seven human resource management experts. It should be noted that there were no contradictions found as to the needs, influences and strategies adopted in the upskilling and reskilling programs offered and executed in the various government organizations in Abu Dhabi, compared to the current literature, but there was a lack of awareness as to certain aspects of upskilling and reskilling.

Table 4.7: Emerging patterns from the current literature and the findings

	Aspects identified from the present study	Known or recognized / not known or unaware	Supporting reference
Current usage upskilling and reskilling	Adapt to changing environment	Known	Agha (2022), Rangaswami (2021)
	To achieve change acceptance	Known	Deepa et al. (2021)
	To meet changing needs of the organisations	Known	Saharan (2020)
	To motivate employees	Known	Chukwidi et al. (2018)
	Filling skill gaps	Not known	-
	Enhancing well-being	Not known	-
	Enhancing innovation	Nor known	-
Influence of upskilling and reskilling	Preparing employees for future of work	Known	Billionniere and Rahman; (2022)
	Enhancing the capabilities of employees	Known	Lang and Triantoro (2022), Sarta et al. (2021)
	Preparing employees for disruptive times	Known	Abe et al. (2021)
	Increasing in innovation	Known	Tsou and Chen (2020)
	Gaining competitive advantage	Known	Antonioli and Della Torre (2016)

	Enhancing employee well-being	Not known	-
	Enhancing employee engagement, satisfaction and retention	Not known	-
	Creating leadership	Not known	-
	Risk mitigation	Not known	-
strategies associated with upskilling and reskilling to enhance organizational adaptability	Training needs analysis	Known	Amin (2022), Johnson et al., (2020), Păceșilă and Colesca, (2019), Singh (2018)
	Support hybrid working environment	Known	Malikk et al. (2022)
	Incorporate appropriate adult learning strategies	Known	Edifor et al. (2021)
	Considering changing needs of organisations	Known	Adam (2020)
	Incorporate technology	Known	Szillard et al. (2018); Kensbock and Stöckmann, (2021)
	Alignment with performance management	Known	McConnell and Schaninger (2019), Syahrir et al. (2021)
	Consideration of individual learning styles	Known	Razzak et al. (2019), Moser and Zumbach (2018)
	Partnerships with training providers	Not known	-
	Mentorship	Not known	-
	Data driven learning and supportive resources	Not known	-

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

Being a professional doctorate, this chapter will present the theoretical background of the study which is based on the current academic debate as set out in Chapter Two, together with the related findings generated from seven expert interviews as to upskilling and reskilling initiatives used to achieve organisational adaptability in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector, as defined by Sarta et al. (2021). The chapter was also informed by drawing on the researcher's professional experience to contextualise the content from an Abu Dhabi governmental perspective. The study being focused on upskilling and reskilling of employees working in Abu Dhabi governmental entities, was centred on understanding the perceptions and experiences of human resource management response to the need for the businesses or organization's adaptability to change, the study initially drew on relevant theoretical concepts to contextualize the study, including that of Chowdhury et al. (2019). This contextualizing and reviewing of existing theory initially focused on the organizational adaptation theory which included the four domains and the related responses (Qureshi, 2019; Lewis, 2020), the concept of dynamic capability, trends in future work (Malhotra, 2021), resource-based view theory, and finally, the AGES model of learning, which were used to inform the study. The reason for the theoretical focus was designed initially to inform the debate as to organizational change and adaptability, whereby theoretically underpinning the entire study, including informing the interview questions.

Reflecting this decision of commencing with overarching theories but recognizing that a professional doctorate is primarily focused on the professional contribution, the chapter will then explore the central purpose of the study, the role of upskilling and reskilling on organizational adaptability and the methods of achieving this construct in an organization, including in Abu Dhabi. Leading from this, the emerging attributes associated with upskilling and reskilling will be presented as to the current academic debate together with the study's findings, to provide a new framework to represent the outcome of the project (see Figure 5.1), including an indication of the research project's key contributions. Before commencing with the related academic

theories, the catalyst of the study was based on the professional reflections and observations of the researcher.

5.2 Overarching professional reflection

The Abu Dhabi government based in the UAE, has established a training and development initiative which has been tailored for those who are working in the governmental sector. This methodology was designed to reflect and capture the current up-to-date administrative practices, underscoring the government's commitment to offering extensive developmental opportunities to all employees. The central purpose has been to align human resource activities with the strategic plans, fostering an effectiveness and ensuring ongoing performance enhancement. The training and development framework are intricately inter-connected to the performance management system, with its outcomes serving as crucial output for the human resource team to utilise. This can assist in assessing employees from a behavioural, professional, and psychological perspective, which from the professional viewpoint is missing, particularly as to mental well-being. The Abu Dhabi government organizations tended to be expected to recognize and evaluate performance and skill deficiencies through the usage of training needs analysis and performance reviews. This has attempted to led to individualized development plans to be created but have been mainly to address current needs as opposed to future requirements.

The Abu Dhabi government also invests in development programs for all its employees, which is supported by the government's overarching training department, including upskilling and reskilling activities. However, the training seems to be conducted internally and does not recognise certain benefits associated with upskilling and reskilling including the retention of staff, enhancing innovative thinking through to reinforcing the individual's learning experience both in the workplace and externally.

5.3 The relevance organizational theoretical concepts

As mentioned above, the study was initially underpinned with academic and theoretical debate related to several theories including Wendra et al.'s (2019) dynamic capabilities, the future work and resource-based view models, and finally the AGES learning construct. In relation to the dynamic capabilities' theory, which was originally proposed by Teece et al. (1997) who recognised the need for organisational abilities, stated that there was the need to identify,

integrate, develop and reform internal and external expertise for an organisation to be able to respond effectively to change. Teece et al. (1997) and later by Matarazzo et al. (2020) who saw the theory as being based on the capacity within the organisation through ensuring that the workforce's capabilities and skill sets are fully met. For both Teece et al. (1997), and later by Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) the concept of dynamic capabilities illustrates how revising and updating existing resources can enable the organisation to adapt to new and existing changes. In contextualising this, the model of Teece et al. (1997) shows the necessity to understand the dynamic nature of capabilities and how adjustments need to be made in response to change (Siems et al., 2021; Schoemaker et al., 2018). In this study, although the participants were not directly asked as to the theme of dynamic capabilities, there emerged an acknowledgement of the importance of having resource flexibility and dynamism embedded into their strategies to meet future customer or community needs. There was also the connection to the management of human resources or capital, and how important understanding motivational theory is when managing human resources in an organizational adaptability environment (Lewin & Teece, 2019). This is interesting as the study was based in a governmental entity in Abu Dhabi, and the concept of dynamic capabilities is more focused on a commercial setting of creating a competitive advantage by differentiating the organisation from its competitors (Ferreira et al., 2020; Fainshmidt et al., 2019). From a governmental perspective the focus was not achieving a competitive advantage but in meeting future customer or community needs as noted by Biginas et al. (2020), Cotter et al. (2018), Nosulich and Mukan, (2020), while also adding to the previous studies including Sandberg (2021) and Haarhaus and Liening (2020) of adhering to the current statutory requirements (Lang et al., 2021; Majid et al., 2020). From the data generated in this study, the project has indicated the need for the governmental sector to bring about potential change through adopting new processes to enable organisational adaptability, by proactively responding to changes in a timely manner (Nandonde, 2019; Khan et al, 2019; Thongsri & Chang, 2019). Furthermore, the study also agrees that the establishment of employee upskilling and reskilling programs can be effectively used, but the governmental sector needs to understand, prioritize, and then initiate this form of organisational adaptability, as advocated by Abrantes et al. (2021).

As to the potential limitations associated with the concept of dynamic capabilities theory, there was the potential conflict in operational requirements which can cause tensions when pursuing or meeting organizational objectives, which can also impede the development of dynamic

capabilities (Conboy et al., 2020). In this study, these organizational tensions were seen as the degree of flexibility, control, and collaborative activities between management and employees, particularly around work-life balance a theme which emerged as being potentially neglected by the interviewees as to the importance of employee well-being. Although there was a recognition amongst the experts as to employee well-being including balance between workplace commitments and personal life as noted by Khaksar et al. (2020), there were still tensions if not managed correctly, and there was a need for further awareness of needing to have a framework to represent this environment.

What this study also found in relation to the dynamic capabilities as to the management of human resources was that the approach could be used to effectively attain and meet customer expectations through upskilling their employees to achieve higher levels of innovative thinking by providing a strategic and continuous learning practices (Al-Hawary & Al-Rasheedy, 2021). This theme was recognized by the human resource experts as needing to be conducted on a continuous basis, revised to reflect the changes needed to enable the organization to adapt and evolve. The next concept reviewed was the future of work model. With the rapid changes in the employment landscape there is increasingly the need for greater awareness and understanding of these changes. This included the dynamic changes and influences such as political, economic, legal, environmental, and infrastructural forces, but also more importantly technological advances and socio-cultural shifts. With these forces, there was a need to recognise that these are often out of the direct control of the organisation, but still have a significant effect on the organisation (Mohsin et al., 2020; Bushe, 2018; Camilleri, 2018). As noted in the literature review these external environmental influences can bring about significant changes to the operational environment (Pathiraanage, 2019) and related activities, which requires a responsive, proactive, and fully trained workforce (Maan et al., 2020; Qureshi, 2019), particularly in the light of the advancements in technology and the prevailing socio-cultural changes (Badini et al., 2018; Shtal et al., 2018). This finding supports the original notion of Podsakoff et al. (2016) and Khaksar et al. (2020), who highlighted that these environmental influences are either controllable as they are internal to the organisation or uncontrollable or external (Adam, 2020), which does offer both opportunities and challenges for the organisation depending on the response (Santoro et al., 2021). To address this, writers including Garavan et al. (2019), contend that an organisation needs to have upskilling and reskilling initiatives designed to ensure that the challenges of the future whether they are internal

or external are met (Biginas et al., 2020).

In this study there was an awareness of this challenge as noted in the interviews particularly as to the need for the employees to possess the future skills based on their knowledgebase to achieve organisational adaptability (Karman, 2019; Qureshi, 2019), which supports Maan et al. (2020) contentions as to the importance of employees possessing the capabilities and adaptable skills. This included how the employees were able to respond to these changes through their flexibility, agility, and skills to enable and achieve organisational adaptability (Karman, 2019). The study also supported Maan et al. (2020) notion as to the importance of employees possessing the capabilities to be able to respond in a timely and effective manner through upskilling and reskilling.

The interviews revealed that changes in the workplace have transformed working practices and protocols including hybrid working, which has been accelerated primarily due to the COVID-19 outbreak. This trend has also included now the emergence of remote learning along with the increased reliance on new technology, which has led to a more hybrid workforce (Agrawal et al., 2020; Santana & Cobo, 2020; Wang et al, 2020). There was also the recognition that this transformation has seen the need for new skills, capabilities, and competences to be considered and therefore an increased necessity for upskilling and reskilling the workforce (Spencer, 2018; Collings et al., 2021). For Zahidi (2020) and confirmed in this study, was that upskilling occurred when employees mastered new abilities or upgraded their current skills and knowledge base. In contrast, reskilling referred to developing employees to learn new skills beyond their existing knowledge base to meet future challenges. There were also the identified challenges for management, such as how to motivate employees when working remotely, and linked to this was how to conduct upskilling and reskilling training and development programs (Jahn & Koller, 2019). This reflected the need and indication as identified by Valencia (2021), Wahab and Mohd Nazri (2019) that organisations do not operate in a vacuum but are instead influenced by internal and external facets, which encompass operational activities, decision-making, employee performance, and overall business outcomes. To achieve this, there was a need for adaptability throughout the organisation (Akhtar, 2018; Muddaha et al., 2018), which reflects the shift in customer or societal needs and expectations (Schulze & Pinkow, 2020; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). This can only be achieved and addressed through various initiatives such as upskilling and reskilling initiatives (Kodama, 2019). For this to occur and as found in this study was that the

human resource management experts needed to take responsibility to achieve organisational adaptability by utilising the workforce's capabilities and skills through transforming and enhancing the existing capabilities, whereby enabling the organisation to change or to be more adaptable (Chatterjee et al., 2022; Magsi et al., 2018). Part of this change can be achieved through the development of human capital which can enable and enhance the employees' capabilities to be more adaptable and responsive to the changing environment (Shela et al., 2021; Barasa et al., 2018).

While the new landscape of work has become a new challenge for the organisation, their leadership, and management along with their employees (Lund et al., 2021), the expectations from the role of human resource management remains the same. This responsibility includes improving employee performance through addressing identified skills gaps through upskilling and reskilling initiatives (Couch et al., 2021; Badhurudheen, 2018).

This led to the question as to whether this transformation in the workplace through upskilling and reskilling can be effectively applied in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector, which saw the introduction of the future of work model as proposed by Malhotra (2021) being central to the Emirates focus. Malhotra (2021) saw the model as providing an overarching theory to capture the characteristics of future work. The model illustrates the need for learning and development, along with how the individual employee engages to achieve organizational adaptability. When the future of work model was applied to the study, the findings indicated that the human resource experts in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector identified the major changes in the work have been based mainly in response as a means to enhance the workforce through upskilling and reskilling, and like the model shows, indicated the importance associated with feedback to the learner as to their progress, while motivating the individual.

The academic literature also drew on the resource-based view (RBV) concept which was designed to capture how resources were used to assess the performance of the learner (Bamgbade et al. (2019). The theme of performance was seen as a strategic tool in human resource management as an effective usage of resources (Collins, 2021). The configuration and utilization of resources was captured using the resource-based view to enable the organization to train the workforce, by providing a critical insight into potential efficiencies and strategies which can meet organizational and customer expectations. Theoretically, the RBV while resource-based or

centric, is focused on determining key management functions including human resource management's response into how the internal resources are deployed, along with the relevance and importance of invaluable, scarce, or cannot be substituted resources, such as certain skill sets (Barney, 2001; Dzandu et al., 2023). In contextualizing these skill sets, the theory of RBV provides guidance to adopt a more proficient method to acquire and become more effective through the utilization of resources by introducing several new categories: those which are rare or scarce, recognizing those difficult assets which cannot be imitated, and finally, recognizing those non-substitutable resources (Florea et al., 2020). However, in the interviews, the experts did not independently see the need for filling and recognizing these categories as essential, but instead used the training needs analysis as an overarching strategy to address any potential gaps in existing resources. The findings of the study did find that there was an acknowledgement that a highly skilled workforce was strategically important not only for accomplishing short-term goals but also for navigating the constantly changing business environment, and that skilled employees were seen as being a valuable resource (Liao & Hui, 2021). This study found that the usage of the training needs analysis allowed the organisation to have a deeper insight into new learning opportunities through assessing various approaches based on the needs of the individual and organization (Singh, 2018). The methodology enabled the experts in this study to determine which current and future skills were needed (Al Karim, 2019). The gap analysis was used to identify internal and external environmental challenges, and then compare existing skills of employees with these outcomes (Mayombe, 2021), whereby enabling specific upskilling and reskilling training programs to be created, to achieve organizational adaptability (Livingstone et al., 2020).

Based on above, the training needs analysis is considered as a major pre-requisite of employee learning and development through which continuous learning opportunities and initiatives can be developed (Hofman & van der Gaast, 2019).

In developing and training the workforce through upskilling and reskilling to achieve organizational adaptability was seen as being able to address possible risks and challenges of not having the correct or suitable resources. The study found that often certain skills were rare or scarce, making these individuals or assets as being difficult to be acquired, including the recruitment of new employees (Bibi et al., 2018), replicated, or gained (Hitt et al., 2016). In the

area of mitigating risk and uncertainty, this study found that the human resource experts in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector did not recognize or realize this theme as being a key component for determining and using upskilling and reskilling initiatives, which does challenge the notion of Davis and Simpson (2017) that organisations must work towards developing their dynamic capabilities by strengthening and enhancing their strategic resources including their employees.

However, it was recognized that when trained, employees were able to become more motivated and prepared to adopt an innovative approach, transforming them from being operationally centric to possess skills and knowledge which are unique and difficult to imitate or acquire (Dubey et al., 2019; Alrhaimi & Mugaleh, 2017). The theme of motivation through upskilling and reskilling was acknowledged as enabling employees to possess a strong sense of commitment and loyalty, which then enable the individual to recognize that they are a unique asset, therefore a key motivational tool. However, in this study, when compared to enabling employees to be better prepared or adaptable to change, motivation was rated only as moderately important.

Finally, drawing on the RBV, through reskilling and upskilling can make employees a non-substitutable resource, with the skills and knowledge acquired could lead to the individual to become a scarce resource or asset that cannot be replaced at any cost (Zhao & Fan, 2018). Throughout the interviews, the experts highlighted and recognized that specialized training or subject matter knowledge was seen as essential. This acknowledgement indicated the importance of the strategic necessity of creating a workplace in the organization that enables and develops distinctive skills beyond the normal workforce development programs, making these employees indispensable, and therefore becoming a motivational tool.

The final theory drawn on to underpin the reskilling and upskilling of employees in the Abu Dhabi governmental entities, was the AGES model of learning. This concept provided an insight into learning, which is closely associated with the complexities of behavioural, psychological and personality dimensions of an individual (Davachi et al., 2010). With the need for employees being prepared to meet a changing environment, it is vitally important for the workforce to continuously learn. To achieve this, the experts acknowledged the need for embedding continuous learning in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector. The AGES learning model provided a means to identify the various aspects considered critical in designing and delivering learning initiatives such as upskilling and reskilling for employees. However, as recognised in the study,

the workforce often learns in different localities and environments, and the program needs to reflect this, which includes those who are working from a remote or home setting. Therefore, the Abu Dhabi governmental sectors need to design and deliver the reskilling and upskilling programs to reflect their employee's learning unique requirements to improve their current level of knowledge and competencies.

Leading from this and based on the theoretical basis of this professional doctorate, the study then focused on the core experiences and perceptions of the human resource experts working in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector together with the researcher's professional background. The next section is focused on the benefits and needs for reskilling and upskilling to achieve organizational adaptability.

5.4 The need and the benefits and usage of upskilling and reskilling

At the commencement of the study, the researcher who has a professional role in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector responsible for training, considered the following, which became the focus of the first theme of the research project. The first professional observation was whether the upskilling and reskilling initiatives had enabled the workforce to be better prepared for the future. The question was whether the experts saw upskilling and reskilling as being an essential aspect in the UAE governmental sector, particularly as there has been changes in working practices towards a more remote and hybrid workplace. From the researcher's experience, including the events of COVID-19, which concurs with Collings et al. (2021), and Brynjolfsson et al. (2020), there have been a series of changes which has informed the professional viewpoint that governmental organizations needing to increasingly develop the workforce to manage unforeseen events and changes, which can only be achieved through upskilling and reskilling.

However, from the researcher's professional perspective there were several areas which may have been omitted or neglected, which included whether the well-being of the employee was seen as an important consideration, compared to the current academic debate. Then as to what extent did the Abu Dhabi governmental sector use upskilling and reskilling for filling or meeting potential skills gaps, and whether the focus is for addressing immediate shortages or designed

for future needs. Finally, the researcher also questioned whether the changing needs can be achieved through conducting upskilling and reskilling initiatives to nurture an innovation mindset.

To understand the theory and professional experiences of upskilling and reskilling which was designed to address the first research objective, the study focused on assessing the need for upskilling and reskilling. The study found the training provided tended to follow a strategy designed around achieving organizational adaptability (Agha, 2022; Rangaswamy, 2021; Mustafa et al, 2021). The findings of the study indicated that upskilling could involve improving the existing skills and capabilities of their employees through conducting learning and development programs (Gasteiger et al., 2021), and to achieve this, there was the requirement for conducting training needs analysis and performance management techniques (Mamun, 2021). This also included the evaluation of employees' performance as how the individual contributes towards meeting organisational goals result in identification of development opportunities as noted by Nduati and Wanyoike (2022).

Both training needs analysis and performance assessment was rated highly by the experts interviewed, indicating the awareness and importance of these two human resource management strategies. The findings of the study which used a pre-interview protocol indicated that the need for an adaptive strategy was needed to address the changes in the working environment, which also ranked as being highly important with an awareness was fundamental for determining whether the employee should undertake upskilling and reskilling training. The experts then rated equally the usage of upskilling and reskilling to enable employees to be ready to embrace change and to meet changing needs and demands in the organization. Interestingly, upskilling and reskilling as a motivational tool was rated as only moderately important compared to the other criteria.

Both from a theoretical perspective and from the findings, upskilling and reskilling are considered as significant strategic responses to environmental changes in an organization and is a key responsibility of the human resource team. This included identifying the gaps in the existing and future skills and expertise within the workforce, and then adopt the appropriate strategies to meet these needs proactively (Saharan, 2020; Zreen et al., 2020). Interestingly, based initially and informed by the professional background of the researcher working in the Abu Dhabi government

responsible for training, there was the recognized gap as to whether this was fully understood by the human resource experts as to the relevance of filling or meeting potential skills gaps, along with meeting the changing needs through the employees accepting change and therefore enhancing innovation. From the study, there was the theoretical importance associated with the need for recognizing existing and future skills gaps, which is paradoxical as the study found that the training needs analysis was an essential human resource management strategy but was not specifically recognized in their working practice to identify gaps in expertise. To emerge from the interviews was however the acknowledgement later that filling or meeting potential gaps was an important aspect which potentially needed to be recognized as being an independent activity beyond the usage of the training needs analysis. To meet or fill potential skill gaps, there were two ways in which the human resource department could address this, either through hiring new personnel or by training and developing existing employees through programs such as with upskilling and reskilling (Bibi et al., 2018). The recruitment of new skills and knowledge externally was seen as costly, and that recruiting new individuals was also problematic due to the limited availability of resources (Zhang et al., 2021), therefore there was the acknowledgement of the need for upskilling or reskilling existing employees, but needed to have these gaps in expertise to be recognized. To achieve this, upskilling and reskilling needs to firstly be designed to prepare employees to possess the correct future skills and knowledge through assessing their current competencies. There was also the need for the workforce to be adaptable, therefore employees need to be continuously upskilled and reskilled, therefore requiring flexibility to promote an adaptable workplace (Agha, 2022; Gratton, 2021). In meeting the changing needs through developing and training employees to be prepared to accept change and enhance innovation, again was not specifically seen as an independent facet, but instead was seen as part of the conducting of a training needs analysis process, but was later recognized on reflection that designing reskilling and upskilling programs were essential, and needed to be considered independently.

The underpinning theory associated with upskilling and reskilling was how this training initiative could enable employee's current ability to enhance and promote innovative thinking. This was seen from a professional perspective as an aspect missing in the existing Abu Dhabi governmental sector upskilling and reskilling program's content and learning outcomes. For Tsou and Chen (2020) upskilling and reskilling can lead to the acquisition of new ways of thinking creatively, devise new problem-solving approaches, and handle complex situations

more adeptly. These enhanced competencies need to exist by fostering an innovative workplace, whereby empowering staff members to introduce novel concepts and methods. However, in this study there was an awareness of the benefits associated with upskilling and reskilling, but the focus on actively promoting the means to be innovative was seen as not a core theme associated with this form of training program but was later acknowledged as being potentially important in retrospect.

In adopting reskilling and upskilling programs, writers including Rangaswami (2021) stated that an organization needs to develop their employees as part of the knowledge management process so that the individuals possess the correct competencies. Part of the rationale for this was associated with achieving organisational adaptability, but also to promote employee motivation and satisfaction, which in this study was seen and ranked as moderately important, together with preparing the workforce for changing circumstances (Chukwidi et al., 2018; Aroles et al., 2019). For Abe et al. (2021) the usage of upskilling and reskilling can empower employees can have a profound effect on their holistic well-being. This can lead to improvements in job satisfaction and increased self-assurance, along with reducing stress and tension in the workplace. From the researcher's professional perspective, the theme of employee well-being was seen as being potentially neglected or overseen by the Abu Dhabi governmental human resource management teams. This perspective was confirmed in the interviews, with the human resource experts acknowledging both the benefits of upskilling and reskilling and then as to the influences of this training methodology on the employee well-being. The experts in the interviews again recognized that upskilling and reskilling did provide a tool for promoting well-being and this aspect needed to be recognized more when developing and then assessing the effectiveness of this training initiative. This gap in actual practice does support Deepa et al.'s (2021) study that upskilling and reskilling programs can promote and facilitate employee well-being in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector. However, unlike Deepa et al. (2021) the study revealed a lack of recognition or active promotion of employee's well-being through upskilling and reskilling initiatives, indicating that this theme was not seen as being critical, which does contradict existing theory (e.g., Khaksar et al., 2020).

To summarize the discussion above to address the first research question, this study has found that there was a critical awareness of the benefits and the need for using upskilling and reskilling

techniques to ensure that the organization is prepared to respond to the changing environment through being adaptable, therefore any training program must be designed to reflect this. There was an awareness and acknowledgment as to instilling into the workforce through providing upskilling and reskilling initiatives to meet the changing environment, as customer needs and requirements are increasingly changing (Barasa et al., 2018), but also the emergence of a new hybrid online customer experience. All these facets as noted by authors including Saharan (2020) and Rangaswami (2021) have led to changes into how upskilling and reskilling training is conducted including in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector, so that the workforce possesses the necessary skills to meet these changing requirements. Related to this, were the importance of upskilling and reskilling employees as to preparing them while also recognizing the individual as an important and unique resource (Chukwidi et al., 2018; Dewi et al., 2022).

In the discussion above, there were three themes which were initially informed by the researcher's professional experience, as being potentially neglected in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector, but on reflection were later acknowledged as an important benefit or associated need to be recognized independently. The first theme was associated with the benefits of improving employee well-being. This theme was also present in the next theme associated with the influence of upskilling and reskilling. From the context of benefits, the experts recognized that well-being of the employee had been overlooked, but also acknowledged that when this need of the employee is met, they are more responsive to change, as they are not stressed by the uncertainty or feeling overwhelmed. The next theme which was potentially overlooked was filling or meeting potential skills gaps. Again, there was little acknowledgment initially as to this aspect being an essential benefit for upskilling and reskilling, but the importance emerged as the interviews progressed. Ultimately, there was an acknowledgement of the relevance that this theme had been overlooked, therefore not seen initially as a serious consideration. Interestingly, in the interviews, the focused as to filling skills gaps was seen as being a part of using a training needs analysis, which then informed upskilling and reskilling initiatives, and not an independent consideration. Finally, again from the interviews there was no direct connection to the meeting of the changing needs through upskilling and reskilling to enable employees to accept change and be innovative. Instead, the upskilling and reskilling programs were mainly designed around meeting current skills gaps, as opposed to promoting and fostering an acceptance or change mindset and then facilitate innovative thinking. The experts however on

reflection acknowledged and recognized the relevance for the need for a proactive change mentality which can promote innovation and creativity through using upskilling and reskilling techniques.

5.5 The influence of upskilling and reskilling in achieving organizational adaptability

To address the second research question: how does upskilling and reskilling influence the adaptability in Government organizations in Abu Dhabi, the focus of the study was related to the influence of upskilling and reskilling. The influence of upskilling and reskilling was initially informed by the researcher's professional reflections as to whether the human resource experts were aware or acknowledged the influence of this form of training. The researcher saw that upskilling and reskilling of employees in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector have been impacted by a series of changes such as technological advancements and the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic to working practices and changes to customer needs. For the researcher, the Abu Dhabi government have invested in upskilling and reskilling programs to prepare their employees to meet the UAE's future of work strategy, designed to ensure that the country is prepared for future changes and challenges. To emerge from the researcher's professional experience, was as to whether the upskilling and reskilling training has included a focus on achieving employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention. The next observation was as to whether the Abu Dhabi government sector used this form of training to influence and promote the leadership to be creative and innovative. The next observation of the researcher was related to whether risks and the mitigation of unexpected events were seen as an important component when upskilling and reskilling the workforce, or if the focus was on preparing employees for disruption and uncertainty only. There was also the need to ensure that the governmental organization had the correct skills, therefore the workforce was fully prepared, which again could be a risk which upskilling and reskilling may not be recognized for. Finally, did upskilling and reskilling influence and enhance the workforce's mental well-being, as this was observed to be neglected.

From the pre-interview protocol and interviews, and informed by the current academic debate, there were several themes acknowledged by the experts which was confirmed by the theory. This included the need for upskilling and reskilling to be closely associated with preparing the employee for future working commitments, as noted by Billioniere and Rahman (2002), enhancing the capabilities of employees (Lang & Triantoro, 2022; Sarta et al., 2021), and

preparing employees for the disruption and uncertainty which may occur in the future (Abe et al., 2021).

The experts in the interviews saw that the employment landscape had changed and evolved at a rapid pace, which included shifts in working practices, partly due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Benanav, 2020). For these Abu Dhabi governmental experts there was the increasing need for adaptability, which included the emergence and now increased reliance on new technology (Santana & Cobo, 2020). These changes have led to a shift away from the conventional business practice to be more digitally orientated with customers relying on and using more digital solutions, which again transformed the future of work, including the need for technological based new skills, capabilities, and competences, along with changes in the style of leadership / management (Spencer, 2018; Collings et al., 2021). There was an acknowledgement as to the new challenges for management, such as how to motivate employees when they were away from their immediate supervisors, ensuring that there was a commitment to work when located remotely, through to how to conduct upskilling and reskilling training and development programs, while also ensuring that there was a balance between work and personal life, and how to address the reported occurrences of the trend in employee social detachment. This was interesting, as one of the themes originally recognised by the researcher from a professional perspective was related to the limited awareness of employee well-being. Again, like the benefits and needs for upskilling and reskilling, the experts were aware of the importance of focusing on employee well-being, but as a consideration was not seen as a key focus or benefit.

Instead, the theme of the future of work was seen as important, as it was one of the key initiatives of the Abu Dhabi government, and therefore the organisational leadership and management were now focused on developing their workforce to achieve this directive. This included improving the employee performance, while addressing identified skills gaps through upskilling and reskilling initiatives, which were informed by the training needs analysis. Preparing the workforce for the future work through upskilling and reskilling was rated high by most of the experts, which included enhancing the capabilities of the employees. There was a recognition that upskilling can provide the means to improve the skills and capabilities of employees through conducting learning and development programs (Gasteiger et al., 2021), and could be informed by techniques such as training needs analysis and performance management solutions.

The next theme which was also rated highly was the need to prepare employees for disruption and uncertainty (Abe et al, 2021), which was closely associated with the changing dynamics of the workplace and customer needs. This finding is supported by Abe et al. (2021) who argued that upskilling and reskilling can enhance employees' capabilities and skills whereby improving their ability to cope and adjust to disruptive changes. The human resource management experts noted that employees often needed to possess new skills or update their existing knowledge, which included technology. In investigating this, there was a realisation that external and internal training provision provided an effective training strategy, but as will be discussed in the next section, external providers were not really considered to be important to these practitioners although previous literature (e.g., Tsou & Chen, 2020) was found to acknowledge the value of external training providers for upskilling and reskilling. The next two themes, the need for increased innovation knowledge and skills were closely associated with the commercial world but did have a connection to a governmental organisation, as in meeting customer expectations although Tsou and Chen (2020) emphasized that employee upskilling and reskilling enhances employees' innovative capabilities which ultimately brings innovation and creativity in organisation.

The interviews confirmed the current academic understanding (e.g., Tsou & Chen, 2020), that upskilling and reskilling training programs can also enable innovative activities, which can result in the acquisition of new ways of thinking creatively through which new problem-solving approaches can be devised, therefore more adept to handle complex and changing situations. For the human resources experts, they identified that enhanced competencies in the workforce can enable the fostering of an innovative workplace, which can empower staff members to introduce new and creative concepts and methods which are generated from upskilling and reskilling training programs. As to identifying the influence of gaining a competitive advantage, the experts saw this as meeting customer or community needs, but this could only be achieved through devising suitable upskilling and reskilling programs.

Reflecting and drawing on the researcher's professional experience, the study then focused on four themes which were seen as being potentially neglected or omitted. The first theme was the influence of upskilling and reskilling on enhancing employee satisfaction, engagement, and retention. The next topic was the influence of creativity and innovation, followed by whether the

experts acknowledged the influence on mitigation or limiting risk of not possessing the correct skill sets and expertise in the organization, and finally, the enhancement of the workforce's well-being.

In relation to the workforce being satisfied, engaged, and retained, while there was academic evidence indicating the importance and connection to individual's tenure of employment (Chukwidi et al., 2018), along with how upskilling and reskilling can empower employees, and having a positive profound effect on their well-being, through to fostering a sense of professional development and expertise, the experts did not fully recognize the potential influence. There was an awareness of the connection to motivation, enhancement of skills, retention of the workforce, but the relevance to the current upskilling and reskilling programs was not seen as being important. As the interviews progressed, there was the realization again, as to the potential need to promote these benefits to the organization and the learner.

The next theme identified by the researcher as being potentially omitted was the influence which upskilling and reskilling to promote and enhance innovation and creativity, including around leadership. For writers including Schulze and Pinkow (2020) and Mutebi et al. (2020) those organisations which are adaptive can enable the workforce to effectively meet customer needs by adopting a more adaptable and transformative workplace. Upskilling and reskilling can assist in creating an agile working environment as advocated by Abukhait et al. (2020), Karman (2019), through which continuous creative and innovative initiatives can be generated and implemented, through to the development and gaining of transferable skills and knowledge. As seen in the findings, the usage of upskilling and reskilling was recognized as enabling the creation of an environment which can enable the creativity and innovation amongst its employees, including their leadership. However, initially the experts again were less focused on the potential benefits and influences beyond meeting the current needs, and how reskilling and upskilling could provide additional advantages.

As to the theme associated with the mitigation of risk, this was seen from the perspective of not having adequately skilled employees. With some organizations there is the need to have specialized skills and knowledge, which has become increasingly hard to find, therefore upskilling and reskilling are needed to achieve organizational adaptability. If the current workforce is not adequately prepared, then the organization will need to seek the required skills

and knowledge externally. While if the organization is prepared through identifying potential skills gaps, provide upskilling and reskilling programs, where the workforce becomes committed and engaged, then there will be a lower rate of employee turnover, while cultivating an environment of creativity and innovation, which supports Tsou and Chen's (2020) assertion of creating innovative mindsets. Finally, as to the theme associated with well-being, again there was no direct connection identified initially from the interviews in relation to employee well-being and the usage of upskilling and reskilling, a theme identified as important by Khaksar et al. (2020), Chukwidi et al. (2018) and Dewi et al., (2022). There was however an awareness of the need to include this topic and the recognition that the theme needed to extend beyond simply reskilling or upskilling the existing knowledge or skill sets.

Reviewing the interview data based on the current academic debate and from the researcher's professional background, the study identified five themes which were seen as being present in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector. The first theme was related to preparing the workforce for future work. The topic of future work was fundamental to the Abu Dhabi governmental sector, and upskilling and reskilling influenced this goal being attained. As a theme, this was rated as being highly important by most of the experts, indicating the relevance and focus of using upskilling and reskilling training techniques. Also rated highly was how upskilling and reskilling could influence and enhance the capabilities and skills of the workforce, as noted by Sarta et al. (2021). Finally, rated highly by most of the experts was preparing employees for uncertainty and disruption, which for Abe et al. (2021), could be addressed through carefully designed upskilling and reskilling training programs. In this study, the experts saw that the upskilling and reskilling enabled the workforce to possess skills and knowledge that enabled them to still meet the changes with minimal disruption. Again, on reflection the interviewees noted this provided a positive influence on the employee's well-being and minimized productivity issues. There were two themes which emerged as being of a moderate importance, which were how upskilling and reskilling increased innovative activities and then how this form of training program could provide a competitive advantage, but from a governmental perspective, as to meeting customer expectations. For both themes associated with the influence of upskilling and reskilling, there was an agreement that this form of improving the workforce's abilities and skills were ultimately positive for the organization and workforce.

Then drawing and confirming the researcher's original thoughts and observations, four themes related to the influence of upskilling and reskilling were not directly identified as being influential. The first theme was the influence on enhancing the workforce's engagement, satisfaction, and retention. Again, as seen with the previous central theme of the benefits and needs, there was a perceived notion that upskilling and reskilling was used to address current and some future gaps in existing skills, therefore these other influences were only supplemental. There was an acknowledgement of the influence on the investment of upskilling and reskilling programs, and how it can improve productivity, motivate the workforce and reduced staff turnover, but was still not seen as an important or influential aspect in adopting this training initiative. This perception was also reflected around influencing leadership, creativity, and innovation. Again, there was an awareness of the influence on creating and promoting innovation, but this aspect was seen as being of a secondary importance, however, was acknowledged in retrospect as needing to be considered more carefully in the future. As to the theme of mitigating and minimizing risk, the study found upskilling and reskilling provided a workforce potentially prepared for change, therefore not requiring the organization to seek new talent, which can be costly and time consuming. Finally, as mentioned above, the well-being of the employee was acknowledged but not really considered as a primary attribute of upskilling and reskilling, but on reflection as the interviews progressed, there was an acknowledgement that this perspective needed to change.

5.6 The strategies associated with upskilling and reskilling in achieving organizational adaptability

In addressing the last research question, research question three, which was focused on what strategies are needed to improve upskilling and reskilling in an Abu Dhabi governmental organization, the study found that there were various strategies adopted but also some neglected or omitted. Like the other two research questions, the focus was initially informed by the researcher's professional background as to what strategies were being used currently to upskill and reskill the governmental workforce. From the perspective of the researcher, the Abu Dhabi governmental sector was seen to have utilized several strategies to upskill and reskill their workforce. This included the systematic usage of the training needs analysis and performance management systems, aligned to the employee's current performance, but is often conducted to address current rather than future training needs. Linked to this for the researcher is the potential

lack of data-driven analytics being used to monitor and assess the effectiveness of upskilling and reskilling programs, as the current decisions related to training tends to be made by the operational manager. This could be problematic as there has been a shift away from the traditional working practices to being more of a hybrid solution. The Abu Dhabi governmental sector had needed to adapt to the emergence of a new remote and hybrid workplace, but also requires the training provision to reflect both individual's learning styles but also new training techniques. To address this change, the researcher observed that the Abu Dhabi government sector tends to provide in-house training but does draw on external training providers for specialized courses. However, the preference for training strategy tends to be delivered in-house, which can be limiting.

There is also the recognized gap from the researcher's professional experience as to the absence of using mentorship. The question is whether this absence of mentorship exists, and if so, whether mentorship could be effectively used. This strategy could be beneficial particularly as adult learners need to practice their newly acquired skills, but mentorship can also inform the organization as to potential gaps in the existing workforce, and not reliant only a manager's perspective.

The study process commenced with the interview protocol, and the questions were devised and informed by the professional experience of the researcher, and the existing theory. The third section of the study was focused on the strategic usage of upskilling and reskilling in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector. Included in the study was the recognition and emergence of the hybrid working environment, which had been brought about or at least accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, along with technological advances. However, the hybrid working environment has created the challenge for the human resource experts as to how to assess and determine future training needs when the employees are working remotely. Linked to this, was also how the training provision can be delivered effectively as the adult learner, the learning style of the individual are important considerations (Usanov & Qayumov, 2020). The existing literature indicated that for the adult learning experience to be effective, could be conducted online, remotely or in person, but the format is dependent on the adult learner, and from an upskilling and reskilling perspective (Derler et al., 2019). However, to be effective, adult learners need to have the opportunity to practice their new skills, which is fundamental to adult learning. Based on this debate, the question which did emerge from the literature and informed by the researcher's professional background was whether

the Abu Dhabi government sector and its human resource management teams were aware of the potential challenges and opportunities of using external or internal upskilling and reskilling provision and the benefits of establishing a mentorship strategy to enhance the upskilling and reskilling provision.

The interviews did determine the extent to which Abu Dhabi government sector recognizes the need to inform upskilling and reskilling initiatives by drawing on adult learning theory. The outcome of the pre-interview protocol revealed the importance associated with the usage of the training needs analysis, together with the recognized need to provide a support hybrid working environment. The protocol highlighted the necessity of incorporating appropriate adult learning strategies into the learning environment, while also determining the changing needs of the organization, which required the incorporation of technology into upskilling and reskilling initiatives. Finally, the pre-interview protocol confirmed the expert's perceived importance of utilizing performance management data while also considering the individual's learning style. The theme of hybrid learning, and technology will be discussed later in this chapter.

As mentioned above, there was a recognition from the outset of the study that there was a reliance on using a training needs analysis as an important human resource management strategy. As a human resource management technique, the training needs analysis is designed to identify learning and development needs of its employees based on the organizational internal and external environment. The interviews revealed how the process involved an in-depth and complete investigation of developmental needs to determine those gaps in skills between existing employees and the future needs of the organization. Therefore, the activities of the training needs analysis, reviews and assesses the performance of the employees and then links these to the future needs to determine whether and what training is required. Consequently, the training needs analysis can be seen as a technique to investigate and determine gaps and identify new skills, competencies and knowledge needed by the workforce, which is then used to guide the learning and development process (Jira et al., 2022). Therefore, the training needs analysis is an important facet for informing upskilling and reskilling initiatives for several reasons, including revealing gaps in existing and future skills (Akther et al., 2018), but as noted above, the process tended to overshadow the need to independently focus on identifying potential skills gaps and not to be a composite of this needs analysis technique.

The interviews revealed that the training needs analysis could enable the actual training needs of employees, and those of the organization to be integrated into an upskilling and reskilling training plan. In illustrating this, the study found that the Abu Dhabi governmental human resource management does actively seek to determine potential skill gaps, through the usage of a training needs analysis. In achieving this, the training needs analysis can assist in meeting the Abu Dhabi governmental sector's focus on the future of work initiative, from an upskilling and reskilling perspective, through achieving organizational adaptability.

Closely aligned to the usage of the training needs analysis was performance management and the relevance of using data analytics, which will be critically discussed later in this section. From the outcome of the pre-interview protocol, which was informed by the researcher and from the current academic debate, there was the acknowledgement by the human resource experts as to the relevance of aligning upskilling and reskilling initiatives to performance management. Together with the usage of the training needs analysis, performance reviews were used by the human resource experts as a strategy to monitor and assess the employees' work-related activities. This performance data was then used to inform many functions in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector, which included employee compensation, promotion, together with training and career development (Lam'ah & Rofaida, 2022). The basis for this professional and personal development strategy was centred on performance reviews and feedback of the employee, from supervisors and other stakeholders' perspectives (Taufeek & Mustafa, 2018). From a theoretical perspective and from a professional viewpoint, the performance review process provided the means to determine the actual activity and performance of the employee, gathered through regular, informal, and/or formal feedback as to their progress and performance (Rudman, 2020). However, there was the recognition that with the emergence of the hybrid working environment, that evaluating performance had become more complicated.

To ensure that the learning outcomes are effective, therefore enabling the employees to be prepared to meet the future organizational goals, there was the need to be aware of behavioural characteristics of the employees. This includes how the individual responds to changes or adjustments, which can manifest in attitudinal changes, which is an important aspect to be considered in adult learning (Sudria et al., 2018; Doci et al., 2022). Therefore, as identified in the interviews, to be effective, the learning programs needed to be specifically designed to reflect the

learner, their learning style (Fahlevi et al., 2020). For the human resource experts in this study, who were based in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector, there was an acknowledgement that the learning style of the employee does differ based on the individual, therefore the type and format of the training needs to be aligned to the learner. From an upskilling and reskilling perspective, the learning process needs to be organizationally focused, but also designed, planned, and delivered dependent on the individual, an important aspect of adult learning (Black & Wiliam, 2018). There was a realization and consideration given by the interviewees as to how the learning process was conducted and delivered (Oyedotun, 2020), together with an awareness as to the location and the setting of the training, for example in the workplace or delivered remotely. This option of training being delivered or conducted remotely, was seen as being a potential strategy not recognized or realized as an important facet associated with upskilling and reskilling. With training being provided externally often delivered by a third-party, this option tends to be provided in a formally organized format and not ad hoc like in a workplace setting. As noted by Billet (2002), workplace learning tends to be different from the more traditional educational setting, as employees learn and apply their knowledge in a workplace location (Lyons & Bandura, 2020; Bowling & Henschke, 2020). Therefore, in a workplace setting this environment did enable the learner to gain new skills and knowledge but was dependent on the opportunity being provided to put into practice what had been learnt (Downs et al., 2018). This work-based learning can promote and enable critical thinking to be cultivated, encouraging problem-solving and an adaptability mindset amongst employees, and not simply a theoretical activity (Edifor et al., 2021).

The training delivery tends to use up-to-date training techniques and methods; however, the provision can be generic and often not tailored to the specific industry or organizational needs. But this generic focus could be beneficial as the content can be broad, whereby addressing future unidentified needs or gaps. The experts although using external training providers, did not fully recognize the potential benefits of using these training resources. Instead, there was a reliance and focus on using internal training strategies. However, as noted in the interviews, the training tended to be primarily organizational centric, focused on the current needs as opposed to providing a more holistic or broad training outcomes. There was also the recognition that some of the training provided internally was restrictive due to the current provision delivery process, and the need for more intervention from colleagues in the workplace, including through mentorship. This would include enhancing the learning journey of the employee in a workplace setting through providing

proactive and constructive feedback (Nunan et al., 2023).

From the study, there was the recognition, as set out in section 4.4.2, that learning in a workplace setting to be effective needed to have the opportunity for these new skills and knowledge to be practiced, but this could be problematic if the upskilling and reskilling was externally provided. The findings of the interviews indicated that there was a moderate to high level of associated importance as to considering the individual learning styles, which related to the awareness of adult learning amongst the experts interviewed. However, there was an unawareness associated with the usage of mentors. Adult learning particularly in the workplace needs to have a range of different strategies designed around how the employee learns, which can include the use of mentors. The concept of mentorship emerged from the literature review (e.g., Germain, 2020), as an important strategy in enhancing the transfer of skills and knowledge in an organizational setting. Mentorship involves experienced employees who serve as a guide and support for those less-experienced colleagues. The concept involves the mentor bringing in a wealth of knowledge, competencies, and insights to the learning experience (Tenakwah, 2021). Also, the mentor can be used to identify areas that require further upskilling or reskilling needs of their mentees, through devising personalized learning strategies, along with encouraging the learner as to their progression. From the findings of the study, whilst there was an awareness of the concept of mentorship, the experts had not proactively implemented this strategy, but as the interviews progressed, the interviewees realized the relevance of the solution.

Through including mentorship into the adult learning process, to be effective there is a need for a degree of flexibility, which would enable employees to have a learning experience designed and informed by their mentor (Kettle, 2013). But for the process to be effective, the adult learning strategy for upskilling and reskilling also needs for the learner to be allowed to reflect on their experience and then being able to apply or practice what has been learnt, in the actual workplace setting (Nottingham, 2017). What emerged from the interviews was the extent to which the human resource experts and specialist in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector were aware of the adult learning theory and how the concept informed their upskilling and reskilling protocols, but also the lack of using mentorship but also the need for further awareness as to the potential benefits associated with using external training providers.

The findings of the study identified, as presented in section 4.2, that upskilling and reskilling can

assist in the workforce being prepared to the changing needs of the organization (as mentioned in section 4.4.1.4). There was a recognition as to the need for a supportive environment for hybrid working, which was rated as moderately important, as was the incorporation of technological changes. Partly as an outcome of the COVID-19, but also assisted with the advancements in communication technology, have resulted in the emergence of a hybrid working environment. The hybrid working environment has seen the trend towards a blend of in-office and remote working practices being offered to employees, which includes now online and in person training sessions (Fayard et al., 2021). This has come about due to technology which has enabled effective communication through video calling, chat software, document and screen sharing, and other related tools. However, the hybrid working model can lead to organizations to misunderstand and misinterpret the skills needed, as employees may be incorrectly trained or possess the wrong skills, for example in technology competencies. Part of this is due to the inability to observe physically the employee due to working remotely (Malik et al., 2022). Reflective of the complexities associated with adult learning, this study recognized that online resources could be suitable for delivery of upskilling and reskilling programs, but is dependent on the adult and their learning style, as noted by Papi et al. (2021). While the hybrid working environment can enable the employee to have the flexibility of remote working, there was the recognition that this did not mean that the learning style of the employees are as flexible. The individual learning experience to be effective therefore needs to be based on the learning style of the adult learner, which may be achieved through conducting reskilling and upskilling programs remotely, online, or physically in person, but is depended on the learner.

To emerge from the literature and then confirmed from the interviews were also the relevance of technology, but also the researcher's awareness that there were gaps in the usage of technology and data analytics in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector. With the emergence of hybrid working, technological advancements have increasingly been adopted in the workplace, which has presented the challenge of ensuring their workforce possesses the latest technology-based knowledge and skills (Jacobs & Pretorius, 2020). As organizations become increasingly technologically dependent throughout their operational activities, this has created the need for employees to possess the latest skills needed to effectively use the technologies to enhance their performance and productivity (Bruun & Krause-Jensen, 2022). Supporting this perspective, Attatsitsey and Osei-Bonsu (2021) identified the need for continuous advancement of skills in technology, as customer expectations

are now increasingly through online solutions. From a learning perspective, the emergence of interactive technologies, can assist in new skills and knowledge in an organisational and educational setting being delivered from an online and virtual format (Szilard et al., 2018; Jaiswal et al., 2022). Technology unlike the traditional mode of now physical delivery can evaluate the learning experience and outcome in real-time, permitting the human resource experts to monitor the overall learning experience. While this was recognized theoretically, the human resource experts in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector did not really understand the benefits associated with upskilling and reskilling through using data analytics. Technology can provide the means to enable data-driven learning analytics to assist human resource management to determine or assess employees' skills and knowledge more accurately and effectively. This is interesting as writers including Amer-Yahia (2022), have noted that through the utilization of learning analytics and the associated feedback systems, organizations, including in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector can tailor training content to address individual skill gaps and accommodate diverse learning styles of the employees, ensuring the training is relevant and effective.

To address the third research question, which was informed by the researcher's professional background together with the academic debate associated with reskilling and upskilling, the study found that there was an extensive usage of the training needs analysis. The experts in this study however used this strategy as an overarching tool for assessing current skills gaps, while not necessarily realizing the importance of recognizing the need to consider other strategies, influences or benefits associated with reskilling and upskilling. The training needs analysis while being used as advocated by writers such as Amin (2022) and Johnson et al. (2020) was also used to determine the type of learning style of the learner. This was important to recognize as noted by the experts, as each adult learner tends to have their own unique style or approach to learn, but also adults need to have the opportunity to practice their newly acquired skills and knowledge. This led to the question as to whether as identified by the researcher, that the usage of using mentors in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector was not present. The findings revealed an absence of mentorship being used in the upskilling and reskilling by the Abu Dhabi government, but a recognition on reflection by the interviewees, as to the importance of this strategy.

This finding of a lack of mentorship was both important and challenging. The challenge was associated with the emergence of the hybrid working environment which has now become the

norm in the workplace, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and accelerated with the development in information technology. The result has been the emergence of the trend towards the workforce increasingly working remotely or online which makes the process of determining reskilling problematic, while also presenting the challenge as to ensuring that the learner is trained correctly. This led to the interviews to focus on exploring whether the experts actively sought and recognized the benefits of using external training providers in their training strategies, as an additional remote training solution. The outcome was a realization of the benefits but also any real commitment to following this strategy due to the need of ensuring that the content was relevant.

Underlying this was the recognition that their upskilling and reskilling training strategies needed to reflect more of the changes in the organization. This included the emergence of ensuring that the workforce was both technologically and digitally prepared for the future as noted by Czifra and Molnar (2020), and not only focused on current skills gaps. To achieve this, there was the acknowledgement to shift away from the reliance on the training needs analysis. To achieve this, and drawing on the researcher's professional perspective which was confirmed in the interviews was that the Abu Dhabi governmental sector was not fully utilizing data analytics as part of the strategic analysis of performance data, a theme initially identified as important by Kensbock and Stöckmann (2021). There was however an acknowledgement by the experts, that this was important in the future, together with the usage of other supportive resources.

5.7 Addressing the identified research gaps through the development of a conceptual framework

As this study was focused on investigating the influence of upskilling and reskilling on the adaptability in Abu Dhabi governmental organizations, this chapter has set out the current academic understanding as to upskilling and reskilling, which has also been informed and influenced by the researcher's professional experience and background. To emerge from the chapter were three central themes which were aligned to the research questions, as can be seen in Figure 5.1. The first theme was associated with the perceived benefits and the need for upskilling and reskilling. In addressing this first research question, the study found that there was a critical awareness of the benefits and needs for using upskilling and reskilling as a means for the workforce to be prepared to respond to changes in the existing environment. This included the necessity to possess skills and knowledge to enable the workforce to be adaptable. The

interviews revealed an awareness and acknowledgment as to instilling into the workforce through providing upskilling and reskilling initiatives, the skills needed to meet these challenges, particularly as customer needs and requirements are ever changing (Barasa et al., 2018). But to emerge from the existing literature and the interviews was the challenge associated with the new hybrid workplace. For writers including Sahara (2020) and Rangaswami (2021) together with this study, which was based in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector, the changing needs and requirements means that the workforce must possess the necessary skills for the future. To emerge from the literature was also the benefit associated with upskilling and reskilling employees, as to retaining the workforce, whereby motivating them and looking after their well-being (Chukwidi et al., 2018; Dewi et al., 2022). To emerge from the findings, and initially informed by the researcher's professional experience were three additional themes, as indicated below in Figure 5.1. While not being initially acknowledged as an essential benefit when conducting upskilling and reskilling programs was the associated importance of employee's well-being. This theme was also present in the next theme associated with the influence of upskilling and reskilling. While the experts recognized that the well-being of the employee had been overlooked, there was the acknowledgement that when this facet of the employee is met, they are better prepared to respond proactively to change, as levels of stress and uncertainty is reduced. The next theme which was overseen, was the filling or meeting potential skills gaps. Again, there was initially little acknowledgment of this aspect being an essential benefit for upskilling and reskilling. But as the interviews progressed there was the acknowledgement of its relevance, but had not been seriously considered before. The reason for this was based on the experts seeing this facet as part of the training needs analysis process. Finally, again from the interviews there was no direct connection to the meeting of the changing needs through upskilling and reskilling to enable employees to accept change and be innovative. Instead, the upskilling and reskilling programs were designed primarily around meeting current gaps, as opposed to promoting and fostering of an acceptance change mindset while also promoting innovation. The experts however on reflection acknowledged and recognized the relevance for the need for a proactive change mentality in the workforce through using upskilling and reskilling initiatives, which could promote innovation.

The second research question was aligned to understanding the influence of upskilling and reskilling to achieve organizational adaptability. In reviewing the interview data, together with

the current academic debate, including Billionniere and Rahman (2022), who studied preparing the workforce for future challenges using upskilling and reskilling initiatives, and Abe et al. (2021) who focused on managing disruptive changes in the workplace, while also being informed by the researcher's professional background. To emerge from the study's findings were five themes which were seen as being present in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector. The first theme was preparing the workforce for future work, a fundamental aspect to the Abu Dhabi governmental sector, with upskilling and reskilling training being central to achieving this goal. The next theme was how upskilling and reskilling could influence and enhance the capabilities and skills of the workforce, as noted by Satra et al. (2021). Finally, the experts saw the importance of preparing employees for uncertainty and disruption through carefully designed upskilling and reskilling programs. Two themes which emerged as being moderately important for the human resource experts were the influence on increased innovative activities and providing a competitive advantage, which from a governmental perspective, was the meeting of customer expectations.

Then drawing and confirming the researcher's original thoughts and observations, four themes related to the influence of upskilling and reskilling were not directly identified as being influential. Again, on reflection the interviewees noted that upskilling and reskilling provided a positive influence on the employee's well-being and minimized productivity issues. Then there was the need for the engagement, satisfaction, and retention in the workforce. The interviews revealed that this was not seen or recognized as a direct influence, but there was a recognition that upskilling and reskilling initiatives could enable this, through meeting current and future skill gaps. There was an acknowledgement of the influence on the investment of upskilling and reskilling programs, and how this form of training can improve productivity, motivate the workforce and reduced staff turnover, but was not seen initially as an important influential aspect when upskilling and reskilling the workforce. This lack of direct association amongst the experts in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector, also influenced how upskilling and reskilling could be used effectively to inform leadership, as to creativity, and innovation. Again, there was an awareness of the influence on creating and promoting innovation through upskilling and reskilling, but this aspect was seen as being of a secondary importance. Closely aligned to these themes was the recognition to mitigate and minimize risk, which although seen as an unimportant

influence, the study did find that the experts on reflection saw that upskilling and reskilling can address the need to seek new talent, which can be costly and time consuming.

Finally, the third theme was focused on the strategies, as shown below in Figure 5.1. Informed by the researcher's professional background together with the academic debate associated with reskilling and upskilling, the study found that there was an extensive usage of the training needs analysis strategy as a key tool for the human resource experts. These experts however used this tool to determine current or existing skills gaps, and not realizing the importance of recognizing other important aspects associated with upskilling and reskilling in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector. The experts noted the importance of having an upskilling and reskilling strategy which could enable the adult learner to learn more effectively, designed around their unique learning style, but also the need to have the opportunity to practice their newly acquired skills and knowledge. Related to this, was also the identified gap of not fully capitalizing on the usage of mentors. There was however a recognition that the strategies adopted needed to reflect the emergence of the hybrid working environment. This also was related to the need for the learner to be trained correctly which needed to be aligned as to whether the provision is remotely delivered, externally or alternatively provided internally and in person.

Need for upskilling and reskilling for adaptability	The influence of upskilling and reskilling on adaptability	The strategies to achieve upskilling and reskilling to achieve adaptability
Recognized needs Achieving higher organisational adaptability (Agha, 2022; Rangaswami, 2021) Change acceptance (Deepa et al., 2021) Meeting changing needs (Saharan, 2020) Motivating employees (Chukwidi et al., 2018)	Recognized influences Preparing employees for future of work (Billionniere & Rahman; 2022) Enhancing the capabilities of employees (Lang & Triantoro, 2022; Sarta et al., 2021) Prepare employees for disruptive times (Abe et al., 2021) Increase in innovation (Tsou & Chen; 2020) Technology innovations (Szilard et al., 2018; Kensbock & Stöckmann, 2021) Meeting future customer needs (Antonioli & Della Torre, 2016)	Recognised strategies The need for training needs analysis (Amin, 2022; Johnson et al., 2020; Păceșilă & Colesca, 2019; Singh, 2018). Having a supportive hybrid working environment (Malik et al., 2022). Incorporation of an appropriate adult learning strategies (Edifor et al., 2021). Prepared for changes in the organizations (Adam, 2020). Alignment with performance management (McConnell & Schaninger, 2019; Syahrir et al., 2021)
Not awareness or lack of knowledge Employee well-being (Khaksar et al., 2020) Filling or meeting skills gaps (Couch et al., 2021) Employee acceptance of change, and enhancing innovation (Dubey et al., 2019; Alrhaimi & Mugaleh, 2017)	Not awareness or lack of knowledge Enhanced employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention (Bibi et al., 2018) Leadership creativity and innovation (Schulze & Pinkow, 2020) Migrate risk and limitations (Hitt et al., 2016) Enhanced well-being (Khaksar et al., 2020)	Not awareness or lack of knowledge External partnerships (Agha, 2022) Mentorships (Akinla et al., 2018) Data driven analytics (Jaiswal et al., 2022)

Figure 5.1: Conceptual framework with gap identification

5.8 Chapter summary

The central purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of upskilling and reskilling on the adaptability of governmental organizations in Abu Dhabi. To achieve this, this chapter has presented the current academic debate drawn from the literature review, combined with the findings, and informed by the researcher's professional background, as upskilling and reskilling to achieve organizational adaptability.

The chapter provided the theoretical underpinning of organizational change and learning theory, drawing on the concept of future of work, resource-based perspective theory, organizational adaptation theory, and the AGES model, which has then been elaborated on with the presentation of related themes including the theory behind organizational adaptation and the need for upskilling and reskilling, before proceeding to present the underlying theories associated with organizational change and learning.

The chapter has been focused on core themes associated with upskilling and reskilling including the necessity for informed and fully understood training needs analysis, along with performance management. The literature review has also introduced and reviewed the debate around the emergence of hybrid working and learning and the challenges associated with ensuring that the adult learner and their learning style is fully recognized and understood. Another theme to emerge from the study was the role of upskilling and reskilling on the various employee outcomes such as their well-being, levels of engagement, satisfaction and staff retention. The need to acknowledge the influence of upskilling and reskilling on these aspects was identified by the researcher's professional experience, which was verified through the current literature and interview findings.

The chapter has also noted the importance of external training providers, mentorship and data driven analytics, which in this study, the Abu Dhabi governmental organizations have failed to recognize or use. Similarly, these governmental organizations have also lacked the awareness of utilizing upskilling and reskilling to develop innovative leadership and mitigating risks, was acknowledged as important in the current literature and from the researcher's professional experience.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

Following the presentation of the study's findings in Chapter Four and the discussion of the outcomes as presented in Chapter Five, which was linked to the existing literature and the professional experience of the researcher, this Chapter will present the conclusions of the research project. The Chapter will set out how the study achieved the aim and objectives of the research project, before presenting the contribution to academic theory and business practice, which is fundamental for a professional doctorate. Finally, the Chapter will present the limitations, and recommendations for future research.

6.2 The Aim of the Study

This study has focused on upskilling and reskilling of employees working in Abu Dhabi governmental sector. The central premise of the research project was centred on understanding the perceptions and experiences of human resource experts as to the need for the organization's adaptability to change through upskilling and reskilling. Therefore, the aim of the study was to *investigate the influence of upskilling and reskilling on the adaptability of governmental organizations in Abu Dhabi*.

To achieve this aim, the study set out to achieve the following research objectives, which were aligned to the structure of the research project and thesis.

Research objective one

- To critically identify and present the current academic debate associated with the usage of upskilling and reskilling training initiatives, and reflective that study is a professional doctorate, the following research objectives were created:

Research objective two

- To critically analyse from the qualitative interviews the perceptions of human resource experts based in governmental organizations in Abu Dhabi as to their experiences of using upskilling and reskilling training techniques

Research objective three

- To critically evaluate and assess the extent to which upskilling and reskilling techniques are used to effectively meet the changes in Abu Dhabi governmental organizations

Research objective four

- To present a new critical insight into how upskilling and reskilling techniques could be effectively used in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector.

To emerge from the current academic debate as presented in Chapter two, and related to the professional experience of the researcher who was working in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector for overseeing and administrating employee training, the following research questions were created:

RQ1: What is the current usage of upskilling and reskilling activities used in Abu Dhabi government entities?

RQ2: What are the influences on upskilling and reskilling initiatives on adaptability in Abu Dhabi government organisations?

RQ3: What strategies are associated with upskilling and reskilling when enhancing organisational adaptability in Abu Dhabi governmental departments?

In achieving the aim of the study, as to investigating the influence of upskilling and reskilling on the adaptability of governmental organizations in Abu Dhabi, the study addressed the four research objectives. The first objective presented the current academic debate related to upskilling and reskilling. In setting out this debate, the study presented the need for and the influence of upskilling and reskilling, but also identified that while the essence of this format of training existed in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector, several core aspects such as mentorship had been neglected.

Informed by the literature review, to address the second research objective, which was focused on the experiences and perceptions of the seven experts interviewed, the findings indicated that the individuals recognised that upskilling and reskilling provided the means for the employees to possess the necessary future skills. However, the interviews also identified that there was little recognition as to the importance of ensuring that the employee well-being is incorporated into all upskilling and reskilling training programs. Also, linked to this omission was the potential oversight of not recognising the associated benefits of improving employee engagement, motivation, and retention. The third research objective was focused on

determining the extent to which upskilling and reskilling techniques are used in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector, the study found that existing programs had been beneficial, but there were still gaps in the existing methodologies application including the need to establish mentorship programs. Reflecting this summary, the next section will provide a comprehensive overview of the study before presenting the contribution to academic and then business practice.

In summary, this study has set out the current academic debate, which is focused on the theme of upskilling and reskilling, but also identified that while the essence of this format of training existed in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector, several core aspects such as mentorship had been neglected.

The findings investigated the experiences and perceptions of the seven experts interviewed which indicated that the individuals recognised that upskilling and reskilling provided the means for the employees to possess the necessary future skills, but then identified that there was little recognition as to the importance of ensuring that the employee well-being is incorporated into all upskilling and reskilling training programs.

Linked to this omission, was the potential oversight of not recognising the associated benefits of improving employee engagement, motivation, and retention. The study also revealed that the Abu Dhabi governmental sector's existing programs that while being beneficial, there were still gaps in how these methodologies were used and adopted including the need to establish mentorship programs.

6.3 Overview of the Study

As the study was focused on investigating the influence of upskilling and reskilling on the adaptability in Abu Dhabi governmental organizations, and being a professional doctorate, the project was initially informed by the researcher's background of working in the governmental department responsible for overseeing employee training practices. Based on the observations and reflections of the researcher, the study then critically reviewed the current academic debate as to upskilling and reskilling of the workforce. From the literature review combined with the researcher's professional background, the study then focused on several themes which included whether the current human resource policies are designed to recognize that through initiatives like upskilling and reskilling there is a need for proactively assessing whether employees are prepared and ready for change.

In addressing this theme, which was aligned to the *first research question*, the study found that there was a critical awareness of the benefits and the need for using upskilling and reskilling techniques so that the workforce was prepared to be able to response to the changing environment. The experts in this study recognised the importance of upskilling and reskilling as to achieving employee adaptability, therefore the programs needed to be designed to reflect this. There was the awareness and acknowledgment as to the need to encourage and enable the workforce to be more responsive to changes in customer needs but also to embrace the new hybrid customer experience. To achieve this the participants had used upskilling and reskilling programs to enable the Abu Dhabi governmental sector to possess the necessary skills to meet these changing requirements.

However, there were three themes which were initially informed by the researcher's professional experience, as being potentially neglected in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector. As the interviews focused on these topics, the experts on reflection did acknowledge the associated benefit or need to recognize these attributes as independently important. The first identified missing theme was associated with the benefits of improving employee well-being. Employee well-being was also missing as to the influence which upskilling and reskilling can have on the workforce. As to the associated benefits which upskilling and reskilling can have, the experts recognized that well-being of the employee had often been overlooked. There was an acknowledgement that when this need of the employee was met, then workforce tended to be more receptive to change, while also being less concerned or stressed by the implications. The next potentially overlooked topic was associated with the benefits of using upskilling and reskilling techniques to fill or meet potential skills gaps. Again, when initially asked about this topic there was little acknowledgment by the experts as to its relevance, but as the interviews progressed, the interviewees did identify how upskilling and reskilling was relevant, also to the importance of addressing potential skill gaps within the workforce through using this training methodology. Finally, the experts initially did not see any direct connection as to using upskilling and reskilling training to enable employees to accept change and be innovative. However, on reflection these experts acknowledged and also recognized the relevance for ensuring that upskilling and reskilling was promoted as being a key driver for developing a change mentality in the workforce, and include a focus on promoting innovation and creativity.

The next theme to emerge from the literature review and informed by the researcher's experience, which was aligned to *research question two*, was related to the extent to which upskilling and reskilling influenced the learning experience. From the findings the study identified five themes which were seen as being present in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector. The first topic was related to the preparedness of the workforce for future work, which was seen as fundamental to the Abu Dhabi governmental sector. Next was the influence of upskilling and reskilling as to the enhancement of employee capabilities, as was the necessity for employees being ready for uncertainty and disruption through possessing the necessary future skills and knowledge. There were two topics which emerged as being of a moderate importance to the experts, as to how upskilling and reskilling increased innovative activities whereby enabling the workforce to meet customer expectations.

As to possible missing or neglected attributes associated with the influence of upskilling and reskilling, which was informed by the researcher's professional background, this study found that the experts did not initially recognise the importance as to how upskilling and reskilling could assist in ensuring that the well-being of employees is positively influenced. The next missing topic was the influence on enhancing the workforce's engagement, satisfaction, and retention. There was an acknowledgement of the influence on the investment of upskilling and reskilling programs, and how it could improve productivity, while motivating the workforce and reduced staff turnover. However, again this aspect was not seen as a fundamental or an influential aspect in adopting this training initiative. This perception was also reflected around influencing leadership, creativity, and innovation. Again, while there was the acknowledgement of the influence on creating and promoting innovation, this was seen as being only of a secondary importance, but the experts did later acknowledge the need to reconsider this perspective more carefully in the future.

The final theme studied in this professional research project, and addressing the *third research question*, was focused on the strategies used when implementing and adopting an upskilling and reskilling strategy. This included what strategies were being used and the extent that the government organisation depends on these techniques. To emerge from the findings and from a professional perspective was the necessity to understand the importance of adult learning theory. But also, to emerge from the findings of the study was the absence of recognising the importance or usage of external training and the necessity of a mentorship approach which could assist in consolidating the learning activity, together with the necessity of monitoring the learner's progress through the usage of data-driven learning analytics. The study found

that there was a usage of the training needs analysis was seen as being a key tool for the human resource experts. However, the training needs analysis was used as an overarching tool for assessing skills gaps, while not necessarily recognizing the need to consider other strategies, influences or benefits associated with reskilling and upskilling. This led to the question as to whether as identified by the researcher, that there was an absence of using mentors in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector. This lack of mentorship was both important and challenging for the experts. The challenge identified was associated with the emergence of the hybrid working environment, together with the increasing in working remotely or online. For the experts the issue was associated with how reskilling and upskilling programs can firstly be created based on assessing the learner needs, if the workforce is working remotely, and then secondly as to the correct mode of delivery. There was also the associated challenge of ensuring that the mentors are correctly trained and can provide the correct guidance. However, on reflection the experts did acknowledge the potential benefits. The study based on the researcher's professional experience also found that the experts had not actively sought and recognized the benefits of using external training providers in their training strategies, as a remote training solution. There was however a realization of the benefits but the lack of any real commitment to adopt this strategy. Finally, there was also a lack of any emphasis placed on fully utilizing data analytics as part of the strategic analysis of performance data. There was however an acknowledgement that this was important in the future together with the usage of other supportive resources.

6.4 Contribution to academic knowledge

While the study was a professional doctorate there is still an academic contribution. The *first academic contribution* is related to providing a unique insight as to the existing debate as to upskilling and reskilling to achieve organizational adaptability from an UAE perspective. Most of the research related to upskilling and reskilling has been outside of the Middle East and less based in the UAE and Abu Dhabi, as noted by Agha (2022). This study has expanded the current academic knowledge as to how upskilling and reskilling is applied in the context of this region and from a governmental sector.

To emerge from the academic findings was the extensive usage of the different facets of the upskilling and reskilling in the Abu Dhabi government, which will be explored in greater depth in the next section, but for the human resource management experts in this study, there was a critical awareness of certain aspects of upskilling and reskilling, however some of the

dimensions were missing or not seen as important, such as the usage of mentors, and the related importance of employee well-being as being an essential consideration for these public organisations. When the interviewees were asked as to why certain topics associated with the benefits of upskilling and reskilling the workforce were not recognised as important, such as employee well-being, along with enhancing the satisfaction, commitment, and employee retention together with the usage of mentorship, there was an acknowledgement of their relevance but was not seen as a fundamental consideration for the sector.

This omission does challenge the perspective of academic writers including Chowdhury et al. (2019) who noted for the workforce to be able to effectively respond to changes whereby achieving organizational adaptability needs to have these facets included. The study instead indicated that the upskilling and reskilling programs were seen as achieving organizational adaptability, but certain dimensions of the concept may be more essential than others.

Linked to this, was the acknowledgement and the challenges associated with the emergence of the hybrid remote workplace and the increasing reliance on technology from an organizational and customer or community perspective. This study has updated the current academic insight into the need for upskilling and reskilling, as governmental organizations have begun to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic indicating that working practices and the training environment has fundamentally changed (Lang et al., 2021; Doci et al., 2022). To meet the challenges associated with these changes in the workplace and training practices, this study has provided a new academic insight into how the human resource expert can ensure that the future skills of the workforce are updated including around attaining the necessary digital and technological skills, but also providing training which is reflective of the learner's learning style. Again, to emerge from the findings was the recognition that certain recognized workplace techniques had not been used in the governmental sector, such as mentorship. When the participants reflected during the interviews on the potential usage of mentorship, the study found that part of the rationale for not using mentorship was based on the acknowledgement of the benefits, but more importantly there was also the challenges associated with ensuring that the mentorship activity did not dilute the skills and knowledge transfer from the mentor to the mentee.

The *second academic contribution* which is closely aligned to above, as most of the existing research (e.g., Agha, 2022), have been focused on the private, commercial, and business world as opposed to government and the public sector. In this study, core theories including dynamic capabilities, resource-based view theory, which are associated with the concept and theory of

organizational adaptability (Mann et al., 2020; Karman, 2019; Santoro et al., 2021; Lewis, 2020), were present in this Abu Dhabi governmental study, indicating that in both the private and public sector there are theoretical similarities.

However, there were also distinct differences, as the focus from the public sector perspective tended to be focused on attaining competitive advantage (Antonioli & Della Torre, 2016), which was not relevant for a public sector governmental organization. Instead, this study has brought to the attention to existing research, the need to acknowledge that some of the terminology needs to be adjusted or modified to reflect the workplace. To illustrate this, this study recommends that the lens needs to be changed, so that term such as ‘competitive advantage’ is replaced with ‘meeting community needs.’ The same with the terminology and composition of ‘stakeholders’, which proliferates most of the existing research on upskilling and reskilling which tends to be based in the commercial or private sector, to be broadened. This also should include the replacing, substituting or change of ‘customer needs’ with those of the ‘community’. Without this change of terminology, the governmental sector, which can be less proactive compared to the commercial world in embracing these initiatives may not see the relevance or applicability of them.

Finally, the *third academic contribution* is closely aligned to the Abu Dhabi and the UAE future of work initiative. This study has updated the academic insight into how this region and public sector is achieving organizational adaptability through following the future of work initiative. In illustrating the concept, Malhotra (2021) set out the core components of future of work and indicated that the characteristics of this concept included the virtual work and multiple teams. The model also illustrated the attributes of challenges which the future of work can create including the need to motivate employees, having a meaningful work design and to have a mindful work design. The model of Malhortra (2021) argues that these characteristics must be present, including feedback for learning and work-life balance. In this study, amongst certain attributes of the model, while acknowledging and recognizing the relevance of these characteristics, for the governmental human resource experts in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector, did not see these as being critically important facets, indicating that the model may not be a perfect representation for the public sector. This can be illustrated as to the attributes associated with the characteristics of future of work, where the topic of freelance ‘gig’ work and open organizations was more associated with the private sector, rather than being relevant to the public governmental bodies, showing that one model does not necessarily fit all industries. To address this, this study contends that the facets which are unique to the public

sector, including governmental entities needs to be updated, but can only be achieved by human resource experts critically reviewing these different facets within the context of the future workplace, as opposed to simply dismissing current academic portrayal, as there are arguably similarities along with differences, which need to be fully understood.

6.5 Contribution to business practice

As this professional doctorate was focused on investigating the influence of upskilling and reskilling on the adaptability of governmental organizations in Abu Dhabi, this section will now focus on the contribution to business practice from a governmental entity. To emerge from the findings of the study has been three central themes which were aligned to the research questions. The first theme to emerge was associated with the perceived benefits and the need for upskilling and reskilling. The study found that while there was a critical awareness of the benefits and needs for using upskilling and reskilling training programs, there were several topics which had been overseen, neglected, or being seen as of a secondary importance. The first topic was associated with the direct connection of how upskilling and reskilling programs can benefit the employee's well-being. In the case of this study and drawing on the researcher's professional experience in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector, employee well-being has not been seen as being a critically important consideration, although this perception did change as the interviews progressed.

For this study, the *first contribution to business practice* for the Abu Dhabi governmental sector is the need to focus on the benefits and influences which upskilling and reskilling can bring to the internal emotions of the employee, through reducing stress, anxiety, and the fear of the unknown (Tsou & Chen, 2020). This can include the promotion and awareness of how through upskilling and reskilling the employee is better prepared to meet the challenges of the future through enabling them to possess the correct skills, have the knowledge that the organization is investing in them, therefore when change happens the government body is there to support them, but also to nurturing a change and innovative mentality within the workforce. For the participants in this study can only be achieved through providing informed upskilling and reskilling programs. However, for this occur and to be effective, there is a need to be aware future needs, but then show the employees the potential benefits. Though communicating the content of the upskilling and reskilling programs and the benefits, this can reduce or minimise potential negative effectives of stress, anxiety, or the fear of the uncertainty. Part of this includes the need for an awareness and inclusion of employee well-

being provision in upskilling and reskilling programs to mitigate against potential issues associated with anxiety or stress.

The *second contribution to business practice* is associated with the need not to over rely on the training needs analysis. The study found there was an over-reliance on this strategy and was used more as an existing skills gap tool as opposed to being proactive to determine future workforce needs. While there was on reflection an acknowledgement by the participants in the study a recognition as to the relevance for the need for a proactive change mentality in the workforce through using upskilling and reskilling initiatives. This benefit and influence of upskilling and reskilling needed to be proactively pursued to promote an innovative mindset throughout the governmental sector. This shift from relying on historical skills information which has been primarily focused on meeting only existing needs using a training needs analysis has been challenged as to its relevance in meeting the challenges and future organisational needs. Instead, this study advocates that a more future focus approach and strategy is adopted based on meeting the challenges which the Abu Dhabi governmental sector will be facing, for example around information technology.

From the interviews, there was no direct connection made by the participants as to how meeting the changing needs through upskilling and reskilling training can enable employees to accept change and be innovative, which indicates that upskilling and reskilling as a human resources methodology remains in its infancy within the Abu Dhabi governmental sector. Where upskilling and reskilling programs had been designed and used primarily around meeting current gaps, as opposed to promoting and fostering of an acceptance change mindset while also promoting innovation. Again, this indicates that the human resource and training division of the Abu Dhabi government needs to be made aware of the fundamentals of developing, creating and then implementing proactive upskilling and reskilling programs.

Secondly from the outcome of this study, there was also the need for the experts in the human resource department to use this form of strategy of needs assessment to determined future needs through the utilisation of data analytics. Currently, in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector there was a recognised lack of utilising the performance data and effectively assess the effectiveness of the learning and training initiatives to achieve organizational adaptability. This can only be achieved through the capturing of performance data across the entire governmental sector and then for the usage of data analytics to analyse both the employees' current skills and knowledgebase, which can then be matched against identified future skills.

To achieve this, this study contends that there is a need for the governmental sector firstly to enable the employee data to be readily available, then to project forward to determine the skills needed for the future as opposed to focusing on the current needs.

The *third contribution to business practice* is related to the necessity of engaging with external training providers (Agha, 2022). Although there was some evidence that third party training providers and provision was used, there was a need to recognise that this resource could be exploited or used more. This study contends that external providers can provide qualified trainers who may possess up-to-date skills and knowledge which the governmental organization is lacking. Furthermore, the external providers rather than provide an often-organisational immediate upskilling or reskilling provision, may include future skills and knowledge content which is relevant not only for the organisational current needs, but also from a future perspective. While there was a recognition of the benefits of enriching the existing training provision of skills and knowledge beyond the confines of the Abu Dhabi governmental sector, this usage of external partners needed to be proactively introduced, supported and adhered too.

The *fourth and final contribution* is associated with the need for mentorship. While the experts noted the importance of having an upskilling and reskilling strategy which could enable the adult learner to learn more effectively, designed around their unique learning style, there was also the acknowledgement for the individual to practice. The study found that to have this opportunity to practice their newly acquired skills and knowledge in the workplace, that the mentorship concept could be used (Germain, 2020; Nunan et al., 2023). Related to this, was also the identified gap of not fully capitalizing on the usage of mentors to determine skills gaps and to guide the learner to acquire future skills through reskilling and upskilling. Underlying this recommendation is the acknowledgement that adult learners tended to learn more if they can practice their newly acquired skills. Furthermore, the mentorship programme can also enable the responsible trainers or mentors to be able to monitor the employees' acquisition of the newly acquired skills being trained as opposed to waiting for a formalised needs analysis to be conducted, or performance data to be produced.

There was a recognition that the mentor strategy if adopted needed to reflect the emergence of the hybrid working environment. This also was related to the need for the learner to be trained correctly which needed to be aligned as to whether the Abu Dhabi governmental training provision is remotely or externally delivered, or alternatively provided internally and in person.

To address this transition in the workplace, this study recommended that whatever upskilling and reskilling programs are created and implemented, this provision needs to reflect the individual learner's circumstances, learning style, but also reflective of the content and skills being trained.

6.6 Limitations

There were several limitations associated with this interpretivist study, which was informed by the researcher's professional background. The first limitation is the potential bias of the researcher, as this study was a social constructivist project, which involved the interviewing of human resource management experts based in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector, as the researcher works for the government responsible for overseeing training employees. To address this potential bias of the knowing the experts, the researcher used professional contacts to act as gatekeepers to access independent experts who working around human resource management and had experience in upskilling and reskilling. Furthermore, the researcher recognized that the data generated was also qualitative which represented the experts' opinion and perspectives therefore would be misinterpreted. To address this, the interviews were firstly conducting in Arabic so that the question and answer could be clearly understood. This ensured that the research was both creditable and authentic, as the perspective of the participant was accurately captured, and the meaning interpreted in the original language. Also, as the data was analysed using an interpretivist approach, the researcher needed to ensure that the subjective bias of interpretation was minimised. To address this potential bias, the researcher needed to confirm that the interview data was captured and transcribed accurately to achieve trustworthiness, dependability, and authenticity. The researcher therefore regularly checked the transcripts several times during the analysis stage to ensure that the participants' voices were accurately captured and presented. There were other potential limitations around the authenticity, credibility, and transferability of the findings, however every effort was made to ensure that the data was credible. This was achieved by conducting the interviews in English to guarantee that data collecting and coding was consistent, as opposed to Arabic and English. The same consideration was given to minimize potential response bias or social desirability. The participants were asked the same questions and with the interviews conducted on a one-to-one basis, therefore reducing potential peer pressure, or feeling the need to conform. Finally, some of the concepts drawn from the academic debate such as pedagogy was seen as being to theoretical complex to be investigated to real depth, so the construct of adult learning was used

instead. This construct was known to the participants therefore the interviewees could engage with the theme more confidently.

The next limitation is associated with the sample size. This research involved interviewing seven participants for the main study, and three for the pilot. However, it should be noted that these experts based in the Abu Dhabi governmental sector are normally inaccessible. Also, being a qualitative study, the research was grounded in a subjective perspective, therefore the sample size is usually small, focus is on generating the richness of their experiences as to upskilling and reskilling as opposed to generating a generalised outcome. It should also be recognized that the sample is relatively small, but the study is focused on providing a rich insight, but also ensuring that data saturation was reached.

6.7 Future research

The main recommendation for future research is to extend the current study to conduct a further study to follow up and determine whether the recommendations for example, the usage of mentorship and data analytics. Linked to this, recommended is that future research could adopt a mixed method approach to capture experience of the human resource management experts together with those of operational staff who have experienced the upskilling and reskilling training programs, but included the usage of a questionnaire. Through the usage of a questionnaire, this approach would enable the broadening of the sample to include the employees who have experienced the upskilling and reskilling training activities. While this would provide a rich insight from the employee perspective, the focus of this study was on the human resource experts perspective.

Although consideration was given during the research to conduct a project to generate real or active outcomes through adopting an action research approach, the study rejected the strategy as the option to change or modify the existing upskilling and reskilling programmes was not feasible. To address this, future research could be conducted to inform human resource experts as to the identified unfamiliar traits associated with upskilling and reskilling and how this new knowledge changes the existing format and content.

6.8 Conclusion

This chapter has set out how the research questions have addressed the central aim of the study as to investigating the influence of upskilling and reskilling on the adaptability of governmental organizations in Abu Dhabi. In achieving this aim, the chapter has shown how the Abu Dhabi

governmental sector does recognize, as set out in research objective and question one, some of the benefits associated with upskilling and reskilling which included ensuring that the workforce is adaptable to change and being prepared to accept a transforming working environment. However, there were some key aspects missing, for example, neglecting how reskilling and reskilling can promote employee well-being, enhancing innovation and filling future skills gaps, which this study recommends as being important for the Abu Dhabi governmental sector to recognize and promote more. The second research question which was aligned to the study's objective, was associated with enhancing employee's capabilities, and being prepared for disruptive times and uncertainty. Again, neglected in this study, and identified from the interviews was the absence of recognizing the importance of enhancing employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention. However, the study also found from an academic perspective that the topic of gaining a competitive advantage needed to be revised to reflect the governmental sector of meeting customer or stakeholder needs. In addressing the third research question and objective was the usage but an over-reliance of the training needs analysis, and the focus on current and not future skill gaps. This study contended that there was the need for a greater reliance on other strategies, including the usage of data analytics rather than simply the output of the training needs analysis. This study did recommend that the Abu Dhabi governmental sector should consider the usage of mentorship while also acknowledging the need for the human resource team to revisit the benefits of using external providers.

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APPENDIX

1. Interview Pre-Interview Protocol

Consent form

Dear Participant,

The aim of this research is to investigate the strategic direction of adopting upskilling and reskilling programs in Government departments based in Abu Dhabi. This research is part of my Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA) degree from the *University of Gloucestershire, UK*.

The study is designed around using a semi-structured interview method, which is a process where a group opinion is gained through a surveying a panel of experts, which is gained through conducting several rounds of questions, where the responses gained are anonymised, aggregated and then re-shared with the group after each round until a consensus has been reached.

To gain the required outcome, you have been chosen to participate in this research study, as you work in a senior role in the Abu Dhabi's public sector and have extensive knowledge about upskilling and reskilling programs and therefore seen as an expert.

All the participants will also be working in senior roles in the Abu Dhabi's public sector and have an insight into upskilling and reskilling programs and are also seen as experts.

The study will ensure that the identity of all participants will be anonymised, and therefore no personal information will be revealed. The data generated will be used for research purposes only and will be stored safely and securely.

Regards

Rabaa Amer

Demographics:

Gender	☐ Male		☐ Female		
Age	☐ 18 to 24 years		☐ 45 to 54 years		
	☐ 25 to 34 years		☐ 55 to 64 years		
	☐ 35 to 44 years		☐ Age 65 or older		
Education level	☐ High School	☐ Diploma	☐ Bachelor	☐ Master	☐ Doctorate
Total years of experience					
Total years of experience working in upskilling and reskilling roles					

Section # 1: The need for upskilling and reskilling

Section # 1 is focused on assessing your expert view about the need for upskilling and reskilling in Government sector in Abu Dhabi

What informed your organisation for the need upskilling and reskilling?

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How effective has been upskilling and reskilling programs?

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Based on your experience, please rate the needs of upskilling and reskilling on level of importance and include any justifications in the right-hand column.

<i>Need of upskilling and reskilling</i>	<i>Level of Importance</i>			<i>Justifications / note</i>
	<i>High</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Low</i>	
Adapt to changing environment	☐	☐	☐	
To achieve change acceptance	☐	☐	☐	
To meet changing needs of the organisations	☐	☐	☐	
To motivate employees	☐	☐	☐	
Other (please mention)				

On reflection, what could be done differently to improve to the existing upskilling and reskilling programs?

Section # 2: Impact of upskilling and reskilling

Section # 2 is focused on assessing your expert view about the impact of upskilling and reskilling in Government sector in Abu Dhabi

How does upskilling and reskilling impact the adaptability your organisation?

Based on your experience, please rate the impacts of upskilling and reskilling on level of importance and include any justifications in the right-hand column.

<i>Impact of upskilling and reskilling</i>	<i>Level of Importance</i>			<i>Justifications / note</i>
	<i>High</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Low</i>	
Preparing employees for future of work	☐	☐	☐	
Enhancing the capabilities of employees	☐	☐	☐	
Preparing employees for disruptive times	☐	☐	☐	
Increasing in innovation	☐	☐	☐	
Gaining competitive advantage	☐	☐	☐	
Other (please mention)	☐	☐	☐	

What could be done differently to improve to the adaptability of the organization through the existing upskilling and reskilling programs?

Section # 3: Strategies of upskilling and reskilling

Section # 3 is focused on assess your expert view about the strategies of upskilling and reskilling which should be adopted to enhance organisational adaptability.

What strategies could be adopted to improve the upskilling and reskilling program in your organisation to enhance their adaptability?

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Based on your experience, please rate the recommendations of upskilling and reskilling for adaptability on level of importance and include any justifications in the right-hand column.

<i>Impact of upskilling and reskilling</i>	<i>Level of Importance</i>			<i>Justifications / note</i>
	<i>High</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Low</i>	
Training needs analysis	☐	☐	☐	
Support hybrid working environment	☐	☐	☐	
Incorporate appropriate adult learning strategy	☐	☐	☐	
Considering changing needs of organisations	☐	☐	☐	
Incorporate technology	☐	☐	☐	
Alignment with performance management	☐	☐	☐	
Consideration of individual learning styles				
Other (please mention)	☐	☐	☐	

Thank you for your time in participating.

The responses gained will now be anonymized, aggregated and then re-shared with yourself and the other expert participants in this study.

Guided Question Protocol

Introduction

- Start the interview with a brief introduction given to the participants. This included the research aims and objectives, the reason of choosing the participant for the interview, confidentiality and privacy assurances and an overview of the process.
- Get the participants to sign the consent form.
- Participants informed about the recording of their responses.
- Outline key topics which will be covered in the interview.
- Make interviewees comfortable by building rapport with them.

Probing

- Start recording device.
- Start asking open-ended questions according to the interview guide.
- Ensure questions are clear and free of bias.
- Clarify if the participant does not understand the question.
- Keep the participant focus on the question by ensuring that there are no distractions.
- Develop and use follow up questions to dig deeper into the main question responses.
- Clarify the participants information, obtain examples, reveal underlying reasons and any other information acquired through further probing.
- Be flexible in allowing the respondents to reveal new information to emerge during the interview.

- Adapt the order and sequence of order of questions to allow flexibility.
- Ensure to cover all the themes mentioned in the interview guide.

Closing

- Conclude the interview by summarizing the key responses and gaining confirmation from the participants on their accuracy.
- Ask the participants if they want to add anything else.
- Inform the participants that the responses gained will now be anonymized, aggregated and then re-shared with them and the other expert participants in this study.
- Thank the interviewee for their time and contribution.

Dates of interviews

Participant code	Date of interview
P1	2 nd May 2023
P2	8 th May 2023
P3	20 th May 2023
P4	22 nd May 2023
P5	30 th May 2023
P6	5 th June 2023
P7	15 th June 2023

Consent Form

Name of participant:

Title of the project: EXAMINING THE INFLUENCE OF UPSKILLING AND RESKILLING ON ORGANISATIONAL ADAPTABILITY IN GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS IN ABU DHABI

Researcher name and contact details: _____

1. I agree to take part in the above research.
2. I understand what my role will be in this research, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
3. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time, without giving a reason.
4. I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the study.
5. I understand what information will be collected from me for the study
6. I understand what will happen to the data collected from me for the research.
7. I have been told about any disadvantages or risks regarding me taking part.
8. I have been informed how my data will be processed, how long it will be kept and when it will be destroyed.
9. I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet (add date and version number)

Name of participant.....

Signed.....

Date.....