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Editorial

I’d like to cover three points in this editorial. Firstly, welcome to this, the second issue, of the new Journal. A glance through the contents page reveals its international credentials and I am delighted to welcome contributors from Australia, the USA, Ireland, the UAE, Greece, Poland and the UK. The themes are wide ranging, spanning research, practice and policy. The Editorial Board, together with a growing network of reviewers, have been keen to encourage contributors, whatever the type of article, to address implications for practice; the classic ‘so what’ question. This is still work in progress but I believe we are moving in the right direction. Catherine Lombardozzi addresses self-directed learning; Caitriona Hughes and Corina Sheerin report on their work looking at mentoring for females working in investment banking and Ruth Leggett and Joanne James explore the benefits of coach development … for the coach. Each offers a pertinent contribution on such key HRD practices. Steven Hodge, Erica Smith and Llandis Barratt-Pugh report on their search for a model of Learning & Development practice arising out of their work with the Australian Institute of Training & Development, whilst Alaa Garad contributes the first of a two-part article linking Investors in People with Business Excellence and its application to organisations in the United Arab Emirates. The financial crash of 2008 still seems to occupy many a newspaper column and hence Fotios Mitsakis and Eleni Aravapoulou’s research on its impact on HRD in two Greek banks offers an important insight. I note also our new HRD Forum section. This includes an interview with David Fairhurst, Chief People Officer for McDonald’s; one of the best known global organizations. I hope this is the first of many such contributions to the journal, giving real voice and legitimacy to the realities of HRD practice. It is followed by Paul Turner and Wojciech Zytkowski raising some timely questions about one of the current ‘hot topics’ in HRD — HRD Analytics.

The Journal’s progress over the course of the year began with successful launches at both the IFTDO Conference in March and the UFHRD Conference in June and generated considerable interest in the Journal. Some of this initial interest has been translated into contributions to the Journal and hopefully there are more to come from both these sources. With Issue 2 now published we have met our initial target for year 1 and feel there is a momentum slowly building. Whilst an over generalisation it is probably the case that the IFTDO Conference is more practitioner oriented and the UFHRD more research oriented. The challenge remains one of encouraging HRD practitioners and policy makers to contribute to the Journal; HRD professionals who are engaged in interesting initiatives in their organisations (and nations) and which deserve a wider audience. I know that there is a lot going on — one only has to look at the level and range of contributions to IFTDOs global awards (see also page 111 and www http://www.iftdo.net/global-hrd-awards)as testimony here. But to gain the engagement of practitioners to write a reflective account of practice remains a ‘tough nut’ to be cracked. I am in no doubt this hurdle has to be addressed and welcome thoughts, ideas, outlines, proposals which can help us achieve this important goal. Two other developments of note are:
• The Journal has become a member of CrossRef enabling the allocation of Digital Object Identifiers (DOI links) to each published item; an important early stage quality standard in the development of the Journal and

• Gillian Lonergan, from the UK’s Co-operative Heritage Trust, and whose technical expertise in bringing Issue 1 to fruition was invaluable, has been appointed Associate Editor (Production).

My final point follows closely from the brief report above on progress through 2016. If I had a pound or a dollar for every time I’ve wondered if are we getting it right; doubting at times my own sanity in taking on the role of Editor, I would be a wealthy man. Some readers may recall my alarm following Paul Turner’s key note at the UFHRD Conference in Manchester. Paul’s research, with leading ‘Footsie’ listed organisations, has begun to question if key stakeholders in such organisations actually engage with the term “Human Resource Development”. Had we missed a trick in making “HRD” the focus of the Journal? Perhaps we should have opted for ‘people development’ or something similar? Feedback thus far, whilst somewhat thin on the ground, does not suggest so. And, importantly, it has tended to focus on content and coverage rather than choice of title! Nonetheless, the completion of Volume 1 does offer a timely opportunity to take stock as we begin to look ahead to 2017 and Volume 2. To this end I refer you to the final page in the HRD Forum Section with a request for some feedback on progress to date. We contemplated a survey type set of questions but in the end decided to leave it open. Remember the time when people used to send postcards when on holiday? Food great but weather awful! The local markets are amazing ... biggest tomatoes I’ve ever seen! In other words, just tell us what you think!

Dr Rick Holden, Editor in Chief
Towards a Model of Learning and Development Practice

Steven Hodge, Griffith University, Australia
Erica Smith, Federation University, Australia
Llandis Barratt-Pugh, Edith Cowan University, Australia

It is widely acknowledged that learning and development (L&D) is key to well-being, innovation and success for individuals, organizations and societies (Delahaye, 2011). Learning and development practice involves application of distinctive knowledge, skills and techniques in distinctive contexts. The sheer range of contexts and kinds of expertise associated with this work produces a complex challenge to any attempt to model L&D practice. The Australian Institute of Training and Development (AITD) took up this challenge in the Australian setting. A team of researchers was engaged to produce a model of L&D practice that the organization could use to conceptualize the work of its members and refine organizational strategy in areas such as professional development services. Although there have been attempts to represent the work of L&D practitioners (e.g. the ASTD ‘Competency Model’), the research presented here focused on the Australian setting and was also guided by a commitment to recognizing the role of organizational contexts in shaping L&D practice. This focus on context distinguishes the model from others that are concerned with the expertise and attributes of individual L&D practitioners. The model presented here thus represents contexts of L&D practice as well as knowledge and skills applied within them. The article describes the research process used to develop the model, including analysis of existing models, interviews with senior L&D practitioners and a survey of practitioners. The result is a model that acknowledges the complexity of L&D practice in a contemporary environment.

Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that learning and development (L&D) is key to well-being, innovation and success for individuals, organizations and societies (Delahaye, 2011). Human resource development (HRD), organization development (OD), and education and training literature offer numerous perspectives on the nature of the expertise and work of L&D practitioners. However, one challenge for researchers, professionals and organizations interested in L&D is how to conceptualize the work and expertise of L&D practitioners as a whole, as the field is so diverse. Examples of work that addresses this challenge can be found in the competency models of the American Society of Training and Development (ASTD – now the American Society for Talent Development) and perspectives on L&D practice presented in textbooks such as those by Werner and DeSimone (2011), Delahaye (2011) and Gibb (2011). Challenges addressed by these works include identifying the range of knowledge, skills and techniques characteristic of L&D practice, and conceptualizing the factors that determine when and how to apply them. Modelling L&D practice must grapple with these challenges, and also take into account societal and national differences that shape and constrain implementation. The task of modelling L&D practice must contend with the diversity of disciplinary and practice perspectives related to the field.
Until recently no Australian model of L&D practice was available to inform the work of providing support to professionals in the field in that country. The Australian Institute of Training and Development (AITD) funded a research project in 2012 to address this gap. The AITD is a member-owned organization that aims to represent and promote the interests of L&D practitioners in Australia. At the time of the research it had around 2,600 members and its main activities were networking and professional development events. The research was commissioned to develop an understanding of the work and expertise of L&D practitioners to assist in organizational strategy. The model developed through this research is presented in this article. The research was designed to answer three questions: what are the roles and skills of learning and development practitioners?; what are their current challenges?; and what professional learning do they require? The model of L&D practice based on this research is distinctive in its attempt to balance contextual and individual factors. In contrast, the ASTD model focuses on mapping the expertise and attributes possessed by individual professionals. The more interactive model presented here addresses the constellation of skills, knowledge, techniques, dispositions and experience brought to bear by L&D practitioners, but also identifies key contextual factors, such as organizational settings and roles, which mediate the application of expertise.

The process and sources used to build the model of L&D practice are presented below. The literature review considers the 2004 ASTD model (Bernthal et al., 2004) and some established conceptualizations of L&D practice. The next section presents data from interviews with senior L&D practitioners operating in Australia. Following this discussion, the draft model that drew on the literature and interviews is described. A survey of Australian L&D practitioners that was used to appraise the draft model is considered next. The survey data led to some refinements to produce the model of L&D practice presented here. It should be noted that the research undertook to map AITD membership characteristics and professional development needs as well as produce a model of practice. Only the modelling is considered in this paper.

**Literature Review**

The potential literature available to inform L&D practice model building is extensive. An initial challenge is posed by the variety of disciplinary and practice perspectives on the field (O’Toole, 2010). In turn these perspectives demand different sets of skills, knowledge and techniques. O’Toole (2010), in the Australian context, posits four different types of practice: training, learning and development, organization development (OD) and human resource development (HRD). He claims that the latter is the ‘broadest of all these concepts’ (O’Toole, 2010: 424), maintaining that it builds both organizational and individual capacities.

The bulk of the research literature drawn on for the project was located in the HRD field, although OD and training research literatures also informed the project. Within this diverse literature, three types of contribution were consulted for the project. The work of the ASTD to develop and refine a model of training and development competencies has produced its own literature and a set of models that began to appear in 1978 (Estep, 2008), with the most recent iteration released in 2013 (Arnesson et al., 2013). The ASTD models explicitly address the skills, knowledge and techniques of L&D practice, providing a coherent reference point for modelling L&D practice. Another body of literature includes the textbooks produced for HRD, OD, education, training and development professional preparation programmes typically offered by universities. For example, Werner and DeSimone (2011) present an overarching framework for L&D practice.
Finally, the broader research literature touching on L&D tools and work offers an additional resource for model building.

A holistic approach to L&D practice was adopted in this research for the purpose of modelling L&D practice. Research on cognition, professional practice and learning in recent decades (Bateson, 1989; Boud and Walker 1992; Brown et al., 1989; Kegan, 1994; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Schön, 1987; Wilson, 1993) has stressed the need to take context into account when understanding individual activity. Organizations and workplaces shape and constrain individual practice through both the socio-material culture of the setting and the formal systems and roles to which practitioners respond (Smith and Sadler-Smith, 2006). Given the significance of practice settings for understanding practice, our model building research explicitly sought to encompass the contextual dimension of L&D in addition to the knowledge, skills, techniques and underpinning capabilities that are more appropriately conceptualized as possessions and attributes of individual practitioners.

The 2004 ASTD competency model (Bernthal et al., 2004; Davis et al., 2004) was a major reference point for the modelling work of this project, which took place in 2012-13. The ASTD model (Figure 1) takes a hierarchical approach, with three levels of ‘foundational competencies,’ ‘areas of expertise’, and ‘workplace learning and performance roles.’ It is assumed that the four roles of learning strategist, business partner, project manager and professional specialist draw on areas of expertise, whether individual areas of expertise or a combination of areas. The nine areas of expertise in the model — designing learning, improving human performance, delivering training, measuring and evaluating, facilitating organizational change, managing the learning function, coaching, managing organizational knowledge and career planning and talent management — are L&D specializations that are thought to ‘focus’ underlying competencies. The 12 foundational competencies are grouped into three clusters: ‘interpersonal’, ‘business/management’ and ‘personal.’ The foundational competencies underpin areas of expertise and roles, although not all are activated in any given situation.

A possible source of confusion in the following discussion is our decision to use the term ‘areas of expertise’ to refer to the distinctive knowledge and skills associated with L&D practice. As noted above, the ASTD model uses the term ‘areas of expertise’ to identify specific undertakings such as ‘designing learning’ and ‘coaching’ that are conceptualized as ‘focusing’ the foundation competencies. In the model presented in this paper, the term ‘area of expertise’ is retained but as a result of the research the actual areas do not completely coincide with the set itemized in the ASTD model.

The ASTD model (Bernthal et al., 2004) is an obvious starting point for the task of modelling L&D practice. However, the ASTD model represents an approach that foregrounds individual practitioner skills, knowledge and techniques. Although many of the components of the model have a clear contextual orientation (e.g. the foundational competency of Influencing Stakeholders, the area of expertise of Facilitating Organizational Change or the role of business partner), they are conceptualized as the competencies, expertise or roles of individual practitioners. However, the ASTD model does offer an integrated inventory of L&D activities. The areas of expertise explicitly reference the skills of designing learning, training delivery, measurement, evaluation, managing learning and knowledge, coaching, and career planning. The roles also imply skills such as learning strategy and project management, while the foundational competencies incorporate the skills of analysing needs and ‘leveraging diversity’.
HRD textbooks frequently attempt to conceptualize the work of practitioners in this field. Several authors (e.g. Werner and DeSimone, 2011; Delahaye, 2011; Gibb, 2011), describe a range of L&D functions and group them according to a particular conceptualization of practice. These authors consistently base their conceptualization of the interrelationships of areas of expertise on a ‘systems’ approach (Jacobs, 1990). This approach was originally adopted and refined by researchers and practitioners involved in instructional systems design (ISD) which highlights three key phases of analysis, design and evaluation (Reiser, 2001). A systems approach views L&D as a component in a broader organization or sectoral system, and envisages the application of L&D functions as such in terms of a system. Werner and DeSimone (2011), for example, present a systems-based ‘framework’ for HRD with four main elements: assessing HRD needs; designing effective HRD programmes; implementing HRD programmes; and evaluating HRD programmes. Within each of the four categories, specific knowledge, skills and techniques are described that allow the demands of the particular phase to be met.

Although conceptualizations and emphases vary among frameworks of L&D expertise proposed by different authors, surveyed above, there is consensus about what might be called ‘core’ components of L&D practice. That is, the clarification of L&D needs, design and development of L&D programmes, knowledge of learners and techniques for facilitating learning (including learning technologies and one-to-one support), and techniques for measuring and demonstrating the impact of L&D are regarded as common to L&D practice.
The role of context in L&D practice

As mentioned earlier, the model of L&D practice developed through this research incorporates a distinction between the expertise and attributes of individual practitioners on the one hand, and the contexts of their practice on the other. The impact of context on the work of L&D professionals is widely acknowledged in the literature (Smith and Sadler-Smith, 2006). A key dimension of this kind of impact on L&D practice is the scale of organizational setting. For example, in his analysis of ‘dimensions of organization’, Price (2007) traces the relationship between organizational scale and HRD practices, noting that larger organizations have traditionally been more attuned to the potential benefits of L&D, although Small to Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) are placing more value on L&D in their business strategy. Earlier research by Hill and Stewart (2000) indicated that smaller organizations tended to neglect the potential of HRD for growth. The scale of the organizational setting of L&D thus suggests a dimension of context with implications for L&D practitioner work.

Organizational engagement with L&D may vary along another dimension defined by the extent to which an organization adopts a ‘strategic’ versus ‘traditional’ approach. The emerging consensus in HRD and OD theory is that a strategic approach to L&D — one that seeks ‘alignment’ between different L&D initiatives and programmes within an organization — is the most effective way to activate human potential for organizational growth (CIPD, 2015). Garavan and Carberry (2012: 24) explain that a strategic approach

requires that specialists with responsibility for L&D in organizations think differently about the functional requirements and activities of HRD as a set of organizational practices.

An implication of this approach is that L&D professionals may need to give up

the more operational, low-value training and development activities and [find] more time to develop the competencies to perform a variety of strategic roles (2012: 24).

Application of the strategic approach in practice, however, can be variable. Kearns (2004) introduced an ‘organizational maturity scale’ to represent the range of approaches adopted in firms from ‘strategic’ to ‘reactive’. A reactive approach regards L&D as something drawn on to address problems as they arise and it may be applied in an ad-hoc fashion. A larger organization may also exhibit a range of approaches, with varying or conflicting attitudes to L&D evident in different units (Sambrook, 2007). The extent to which the organizational setting is characterized by more strategic or more traditional attitudes to L&D presents another dimension of context.

Werner and DeSimone (2011) identify a set of operational roles that draw on particular knowledge, skills and techniques of L&D practice, and separate them from an executive role type that is concerned with strategic L&D. If broad role types from operational through to executive can be regarded as a feature of L&D practice, then a contextual dimension can be proposed that varies according to extent the practitioner is required to implement strategic or operational L&D skills and knowledge.

Two further dimensions of organizational context that shape the work of L&D practitioners concern use of standardized versus customized solutions, and whether ‘Nationally Recognized Training’, or qualifications-based, training is used. The latter dimension is highly relevant to the Australian context. In Australia around 80% of occupations are covered by sets of industry-developed ‘competency standards’ (Hoeckel et al., 2008) that form the basis of nationally
recognized qualifications. These standards are widely used for training design, facilitation and assessment in Australian organizations (Smith and Smith, 2007). Whether organizations align their training and development activities to qualifications or not can impact significantly on L&D practice in those organizations due to the complex demands of the Australian system. A related contextual dimension is the extent to which customization of L&D characterizes the approach of an organization (Noe, 2010). If qualifications are used, training must conform to national standards and content, although nationally recognized training does offer some scope for customization.

Another contextual dimension is suggested by Gibb (2011: 410) in a discussion of different HRD ‘provision contexts’ (different environments in which HRD is applied) that distinguishes single employer and multi-employer organizations. Gibb (2011) also discusses a shift in organizational practices from reliance on internal training functions to the use of external consultants, indicating a fourth dimension of context: L&D practice undertaken as part of an internal function or in an external consultant role. This is an important point in the Australian context and the context of this research project. The contextual dimensions highlighted by the literature review are listed in Tables 2 and 3 below.

For modelling L&D practice, the literature thus offers material for constructing a model with distinct individual and contextual dimensions. Much literature (Delahaye, 2011; Gibb, 2011; Werner and DeSimone, 2011) presents a systems perspective on L&D expertise, consistently identifying groups of skills focused respectively on identifying L&D needs, designing L&D, implementing L&D, and assessing L&D. The ASTD model (Bernthal et al., 2004) confirms this core structure, but conceptualizes L&D practice explicitly from the standpoint of the individual practitioner. ‘Foundational competencies’ — personal and idiosyncratic traits and abilities — are attributed to practitioners that form the basis of areas of expertise which reference forms of knowledge, skills and techniques described in authoritative literature. The individual dimension of a model of L&D practice may accordingly incorporate the knowledge, skills and techniques of L&D practice, and also indicate a more distinctively personal level. A context dimension can also be proposed that identifies dimensions including organizational scale from large to small (Price, 2007), organizational ‘maturity’ from adopting a strategic to a more traditional approach to L&D (Kearns, 2004), working within a single through to multiple organizations, and within an internal unit through to work as an external consultant (Gibb, 2011), strategic versus more operational roles (Werner and DeSimone, 2011), whether NRT is employed or not (Smith and Smith, 2007) and finally the extent to which L&D programmes are customized in organizations (Noe, 2010).

**Research Methods**

Figure 2 below shows the steps in the development of our model (represented in Figure 3). Interviews with senior practitioners were undertaken after Human Research Ethics Committee permission was secured for the research. The data from these interviews were used to supplement the findings from the literature review to develop a draft model. A survey of Australian L&D practitioners was then used to appraise the draft model and generate data for AITD about membership demographics and professional development needs. We do not report on demographics and needs in this paper. The final phase of the project employed the survey results to refine the model. In this section, the interviews and survey phases of the research are presented.
Sixteen senior L&D practitioners operating in Australia were interviewed. The interviewee sampling strategy was designed to secure contributions from practitioners working in a wide range of settings and employed a combination of purposive and convenience modes of sampling. Recruitment thus involved segmenting the field of enterprises into government and private types, and a third group comprising training providers (purposive sampling). Within each of these types organizations were differentiated according to area of operation. A further three interviewees were identified and recruited on the basis of their contribution to the development of the field of L&D. Two of them were suggested by the project steering committee and another by the research team (convenience sampling). Within the categories, senior practitioners were shortlisted and approached to participate. Table 1 identifies the job role, organization types and areas of operation from which interviewees were recruited.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job role of interviewee</th>
<th>Organization type</th>
<th>Area of operation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Manager, Capability Development</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Mining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning &amp; Development Manager</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Retail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning &amp; Development Manager</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning &amp; Development Manager</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Not-for-Profit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Learning &amp; Development</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Community Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Consultant, People &amp; Development</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Manager, Learning &amp; Development</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Public Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Consultant</td>
<td>Training Provider</td>
<td>Leadership and Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
<td>Training Provider</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning &amp; Development Consultant</td>
<td>Training Provider</td>
<td>Literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
<td>Training Provider</td>
<td>Safety &amp; Compliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
<td>Training Provider</td>
<td>eLearning design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Training Consultant</td>
<td>Training Provider</td>
<td>Mining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRD Researcher</td>
<td>Higher Education Provider</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Development Consultant</td>
<td>Higher Education Provider</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher &amp; Consultant</td>
<td>Consultancy</td>
<td>Learning &amp; Development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Interviewee Characteristics
Twelve questions were asked to each of the participants. Interviews lasted between 28 and 48 minutes and were recorded and transcribed, with permission. The questions were:

1. Describe your current role(s).
2. What are the major challenges you face in your L&D practice?
3. What professional development (PD) activities do you engage in to develop your L&D career?
4. What PD activities would you like to engage in to develop your L&D career?
5. Describe the range of work roles of other L&D professionals who you currently work with/have worked with/who you know.
6. What would you say are the development needs of L&D professionals you currently work with?
7. What development activities and networks do these L&D professionals participate in?
8. What makes for a good PD activity? What makes for a poor PD activity?
9. What makes for a good PD network/organization? What makes for a poor PD network/organization?
10. What are the most significant challenges faced by L&D professionals?
11. How is the work of L&D professionals changing?
12. Imagine the ideal L&D professional in five year’s time. What development activities will they need to engage in to get to this point?

These questions were not systematically derived from the literature review. The intent of the interviews was to describe actual L&D practice rather than gauge the extent to which participants agreed with or understood concepts identified in the review. We were interested in gaining a ‘snapshot’ of Australian L&D practice from the senior practitioner perspective. Another goal was to learn about L&D practitioner needs and practice trends — topics that lie beyond the scope of this paper.

Data from the interviews were analysed thematically, with transcripts read and compared by the research team. Shared themes were described and grouped without explicit reference to the literature review findings through the process. This strategy was adopted to maintain a focus on Australian contexts and practices. The findings from this analysis were then compared with findings from the literature review to inform the process of drafting a model of L&D practitioner work.

Survey

A survey of Australian L&D practitioners was conducted to appraise and refine the model and also to garner information about possible professional development needs. The bulk of the questions were formulated against the components of the draft model. Thus the survey included questions about the respondent’s current position (e.g. whether they work for one or a number of organizations, work team details, size of organization(s)), the L&D knowledge, skills and techniques employed in their current role (i.e. the areas of expertise in the draft model), and the relevance of personal attributes to the role (e.g. business acumen). Most questions invited a rating using a Likert scale and a small number required short written responses. The 99-item
instrument was formatted into Survey Monkey and a link to the questionnaire was distributed to AITD membership. Links to the instrument were distributed to non-AITD L&D networks during the same period. The AITD took responsibility for distributing the link to its members, while the non-AITD L&D networks were identified by interviewees and distribution of the survey in these cases was undertaken by the research team. Altogether, 2825 practitioners were invited to participate and 796 responses were returned. Of these, 165 responses were from L&D practitioners who did not identify as AITD members. In terms of the goal of testing the model, the quantity of responses allowed questions about the relevance of the model to be provisionally answered. Data were analysed descriptively to identify frequencies and averages across demographic variables. Qualitative responses were analysed by coding key words and determining frequencies. Data relating to areas of L&D expertise were submitted to a principal components analysis (Johnson and Wichern, 1998; Hair et al., 1998) to allow a nuanced picture of the clustering of expertise types in L&D practice. This latter methodology and analysis is detailed in Hodge and Harvey (2015).

Findings from the Interviews

Data were mainly consistent with the literature about L&D practice, although additional content and different emphases were highlighted by the interview data analysis. A core of L&D areas of expertise was acknowledged by 11 of the interviewees. For example, one explained that, “you’re still going to need to know how to do a needs analysis or a skills forecast” (Government/Community Services). Another said,

I think everyone needs some broad understanding of the principles and practices and philosophy [of L&D]. I think that’s really important. The nitty-gritty-bitty detail around how do you go about, for example as a designer or a developer of learning programmes, you know, what a learning objective is and some real specifics around that (Government/Public Service).

Comments like these indicate that contemporary L&D practice in Australia continues to draw on well-established knowledge and techniques associated with training and HRD. That is, learning analysis, design, implementation and assessment or evaluation continue to be valued and exercised in L&D practice.

Additional L&D areas of expertise were identified by the interviewees. A strong theme to emerge from analysis of the interview data was about the role of technology in L&D practice, with nine interviewees identifying this theme. For instance,

I think they will need more of technology-enhanced learning. Definitely. Because, especially in Australia the companies are remote from each other. The two-hour time difference between Perth and Sydney actually is a bother. So how do you deal with that? So technology solutions is a real key (Private/Mining).

A component of the draft model that clearly reflects the Australian context of L&D practice is expertise in Nationally Recognized Training. Australian firms and L&D practitioners can draw on a national competency-based system of Vocational Education and Training (VET) to guide training efforts. It is a well-established and sophisticated system that requires considerable expertise to utilise effectively. Seven interviewees discussed the significance of Nationally Recognized Training for L&D practice and identified the ability to apply it to L&D challenges as an important skill for practitioners:
I think they need to understand very closely how the contemporary training system [Nationally Recognized Training] works which is complicated, but they I think need to — I think they need to understand the ins and outs of national training policy more effectively (Higher Education Provider/HRD Researcher).

Five interviewees also drew attention to the role of other systems and packages in L&D, such as Myers-Briggs profiling used to promote awareness of the diversity of personalities in workplaces. For some interviewees, expertise in proprietary systems used in particular settings was basic to L&D practice.

Other additions to the draft model prompted by the interviews included personal networks and practitioner learning preferences. A common message from the interviewees was that personal networks were an important resource for the L&D practitioner. Eleven of the interviewees regarded networks as ways to stay abreast of industry-specific trends, emerging organizational practices and new techniques. Five interviewees identified learning preferences as a characteristic of individual practitioners that has a substantial impact on practice. These two aspects of L&D practice were included on the individual side of the model. Other components of this sphere identified in the literature were also stressed by interviewees. These were industry knowledge (three interviewees) and business acumen (eight interviewees). Interviewees emphasized the value of close ties with industry associations as a way to remain current with industry knowledge. The importance of an effective knowledge of business was also identified.

**Bringing Together the Literature and Interview Findings**

This section explains how the model was developed. Starting with a distinction between contextual and individual aspects of L&D practice, and guided by the literature review and findings from the qualitative interviews with senior L&D practitioners, a ‘draft’ model was prepared. Part of the model building process also involved settling on terms or labels for different components of the structure. The contextual and individual ‘aspects’ of L&D practice were named the ‘Practice Domain’ and ‘Individual Domain’ respectively, reflecting the fact that the context of L&D is the context of practice while L&D-specific expertise is brought to bear on practice by individuals whose activity is shaped by personal dispositions and a unique fund of experiences.

As part of the model development, basic divisions within each domain were introduced in the light of the literature and interviews. Within the Practice Domain, ‘roles’ and ‘settings’ were distinguished. Settings refer to features of organizational context that shape L&D practice. Roles refer to pre-existing positions or jobs that are occupied by people who undertake L&D tasks within organizations. Settings and roles await the L&D practitioner, although through their work, L&D practitioners influence their settings and shape the roles they occupy. Within the Individual Domain, personal characteristics and areas of L&D expertise were separated. The model adopts the term *Areas of Expertise* (AOEs) to refer to the knowledge, skills and techniques specific to L&D practice. As noted above, the ASTD Competency Model (Bernthal et al., 2004) also used the term ‘areas of expertise’, but the content of the AOE in our model does not follow the ASTD model, deriving instead from the literature review and interviews. Our model includes a Personal Sphere alongside AOE within the Individual Domain. The Personal Sphere gathers more idiosyncratic components of practitioner work, including learning preferences, industry knowledge, personal networks and business acumen. The basic structure of the draft model is shown in Table 2 below.
Each of the main divisions of the model was populated with content identified through the literature review and interviews. Within the Practice Domain the components are represented in dimensions, some of which are continua (i.e. can vary between extreme points) and others dichotomies (i.e. discrete types such as single or multiple organizations). Five dimensions were identified as characterizing key variations of organizational settings that shape L&D practice. One variation concerns the size of the organizational setting, with the literature and interviews indicating that organizational scale plays a role in the kinds of demands placed on L&D practitioners. A second variation relates to whether the practitioner works across multiple organizations or is employed within one. Another variation derives from the unit or organizational approach to L&D. Strategic and traditional approaches can be distinguished, and within organizational settings either or both approaches may be evident. The extent to which Nationally Recognized Training (NRT) is used in particular settings affects practice, while the use of standardized or customized learning solutions constitutes another dimension. Table 3 summarizes the dimensions within Practice Domain settings that shape L&D practice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Larger organization</th>
<th>Smaller organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiple organizations</td>
<td>Single organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional approach to L&amp;D</td>
<td>Strategic approach to L&amp;D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses Nationally Recognized Training</td>
<td>Uses non-Nationally Recognized Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses standardized programmes</td>
<td>Uses customized programmes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Dimensions of ‘Settings’ within the Practice Domain

Four dimensions of L&D role in the Practice Domain were identified. The first relates to whether an L&D practitioner works independently or as part of a team. The second dimension represents the difference between a consultant L&D practitioner whose base is external to the organizational setting and one located internally. Whether the practitioner occupies a strategic role or an operational one is another key variation, while the extent to which the role is dedicated to L&D or one which includes L&D practice as a secondary function creates the fourth continuum. These dimensions are presented in Table 4 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual operation</th>
<th>Team operation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>External role</td>
<td>Internal role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic role</td>
<td>Operational role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedicated L&amp;D role</td>
<td>Secondary L&amp;D role</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Practice Domain ‘Role’ Dimensions
Within the Individual Domain, the representations of AOE$s and elements of the Personal Sphere comprise discrete components rather than dimensions (i.e. the items in this sphere are distinct areas and do not relate in terms of continua or opposites). The AOE$s are the skills, knowledge and techniques that are peculiar to L&D practice. Different AOE$s identified in the draft model were:

- Strategic L&D
- L&D Needs Analysis
- Nationally Recognized Training (NRT)
- Proprietary/licensed systems
- Personality Types
- Learner Characteristics
- Designing and Developing L&D
- Learning Technologies
- Selecting and Sourcing L&D
- Facilitating
- Coaching
- Assessing Learning
- Evaluating Programmes
- Demonstrating the Value of L&D (or demonstrating return on investment, ROI)

The Personal Sphere — the dispositions, attributes and experience of the individual practitioner — included six components:

- Identity and Aspirations
- Personal Networks
- Industry Knowledge
- Business Acumen
- Communicative Competence
- Learning Preferences

The model described above was largely validated by the practitioner survey, a conclusion supported in three ways. First, the relatively low number of ‘Strongly disagree’ and ‘Disagree’ responses to items that asked whether particular components were perceived to be ‘important’ to L&D practice indicate that there was broad agreement with the relevance of the content of the model. Second, when respondents were asked to identify features of their L&D practice that were not referenced in the model, very few additional components (e.g. techniques or contexts) were suggested. Finally, items that invited respondents to position themselves on the dimensions of the Practice Domain (Settings, Roles) returned relatively low levels of ‘skipping’, indicating that respondents could position themselves in terms of the model’s representation of L&D context.
With respect to the Individual Domain, results indicated that the Personal Sphere presented relevant characteristics of L&D practitioners. Results for the AOE suggests that the set presents a comprehensive representation of the skills, knowledge and techniques of L&D practice. The fact that the question asking whether there are other areas not presented in the survey was among the most skipped in the survey — 80.2% of respondents skipped the question — supports this conclusion. Of the responses of those practitioners who indicated there were AOE other than those identified in the survey, there was some agreement about additional areas. Research skills, project management skills, and understanding of budgeting and recruitment were identified by respondents as additional AOE used in their L&D practice. These areas were identified by some senior practitioners but not by enough to justify inclusion in the first draft of the model. However, the interview data combined with the survey results suggested that a sphere of supplementary AOE could be included in the model alongside the L&D-specific AOE and the Personal Sphere within the Individual Domain. Accordingly, the refined model incorporates an ‘Allied Skills’ sphere that include AOE identified by a subset of practitioners as important to their L&D work as detailed below.

The results of the survey suggest that the model’s representation of the set of AOE is valid, at least for the Australian context. However, the aggregated results did not suggest patterns of deployment of expertise. That is, the respondents as a set uniformly rated most of the 13 components as important to L&D practice, and also indicated, with few exceptions, that they wanted to improve their understanding and abilities in relation to each of the components. It was proprietary systems and programmes (e.g. Meyers-Briggs systems) that most respondents did not agree were important to their work or wish to further develop their understanding of them – a result that is not surprising given the niche status of such expertise. However, scrutiny of individual results for the AOE questions showed that respondents often found certain of the AOE to be more important than others. A principal components analysis (Johnson and Wichern, 1998; Hair et al., 1998) of these data was thus undertaken to determine whether attributions of importance of AOE followed a pattern or were unique to individual survey respondents. This analysis revealed that there are three distinct clusters of AOE that different respondents identified as more important to their work:

- **Learning Facilitation**
  - Facilitating
  - Personality Types
  - Learner Characteristics
  - Coaching
- **Systems and Design**
  - Assessing Learning
  - Learning Technologies
  - Nationally Recognized Training
  - Proprietary Systems
  - Evaluating Programmes
  - Selecting and Sourcing
- **Strategy and Analysis**
  - Strategic L&D
  - L&D Needs Analysis
• Demonstrating the Value of L&D
• Evaluating Programmes
• Selecting and Sourcing

There is some overlap between the clusters, with Evaluating Programmes and Selecting and Sourcing appearing in both the Systems and Design cluster and Strategy and Analysis cluster. These three clusters make intuitive sense. Practitioners who indicated that facilitation is most important to L&D practice also tended to find that the skills and understanding of coaching, personality types and learner characteristics are important. This suggests a trainer-role oriented cluster. The next cluster associates assessment and evaluation with specific systems and models, technologies and design and development, suggesting roles away from face-to-face delivery and specializing in resource and systems development and measurement. The third cluster revolves around strategy and identifying and justifying L&D options.

We have explained that the survey results suggest that the basic structure and components of the draft model were valid. However, open ended responses from practitioners, in conjunction with suggestions made by some of the interviewees, prompted a rethink of the Individual Domain components. It became clear that apart from a Personal Sphere (unique combinations of experience and dispositions) and the AOE{s} it is possible to identify a sphere of ‘Allied Skills’ that contemporary L&D practitioners are increasingly drawing on in their work. Management skills, project management skills, research skills, sales and marketing skills and financial skills are among the most commonly identified forms of expertise that L&D practitioners are employing to complement ones more specific to L&D. These skills were included in the Allied Skills sphere added to the final version of the model.

A second refinement was to introduce a structure within the set of AOE{s} derived from the principal components analysis that identified partially overlapping clusters of AOE{s} that different L&D practitioners rated as important to their work. The three clusters — the Strategy and Analysis, Systems and Design and Learning Facilitation clusters — are represented using a Venn diagram format within the boundary of the AOE{s}. The introduction of this structure does not alter the content of the sphere.

The Practice Domain of the draft model was not challenged in any substantial way by the survey results. The refined model therefore preserves the original Practice Domain structure and component dimensions and modifies the Individual Domain, producing the structure presented in Figure 3 below.

Conclusion

The model presented in this paper has implications for practice and also raises a number of conceptual issues that warrant further research and reflection. Practical implications can be divided into those for professional bodies, for organizations and individual L&D professionals. We consider these implications before passing to conceptual issues.

Implications for professional bodies

The research presented above was undertaken for Australia’s peak L&D professional body, the AITD. The organization wanted the practice of L&D professionals to be modelled for the purpose
of aligning service delivery to current practice determining professional development priorities and refining provision. The research thus sought to comprehensively represent the terrain of L&D practice in Australia and ascertain professional development needs in the L&D community. For professional bodies that represent L&D practitioners (like AITD) the model in this paper can highlight dimensions of roles and practice settings in which L&D expertise is deployed, potentially informing recruitment strategy and organizational engagement strategy. For example, understanding more about variations in roles could facilitate targeting of marketing campaigns while knowledge of features of L&D settings can inform relationship building between professional bodies and employers of L&D professionals. Understanding more about the complexity of the individual domain of L&D practice could allow professional bodies to refine service provision to existing members. Professional development programme design may be improved by taking into account distinctions within the Areas of Expertise and new provision may take into account non-traditional expertise identified in the Allied Skills sphere. Networking events and career development advice may derive insights from attributes set out in the Personal Sphere.

**Implications for organizations**

Organizations may refer to the model to reflect on fundamental questions concerning L&D. Whether organizations are traditional or strategic in their approach is a question highlighted by the model. This important dimension of L&D organizational approach can be posed as a question for organizational strategy while informing literature (e.g. Garavan and Carberry, 2012) may be consulted for detailed strategy development. The question of the potential benefits of national training systems and the affordances of national lifelong learning policies and programmes is also raised, alongside the related issue of the use of standardized versus customized L&D solutions. Apart from informing assessment of organizational orientation to L&D, the Roles domain may prompt questions about optimal deployment and development of L&D expertise within the organization. Whether these roles are dedicated or secondary, or strategic or operational are examples of considerations for organizational L&D strategy prompted by the model. For organizations with internal L&D functions, the Areas of Expertise sphere of the Individual Domain may inform skills gap analysis and development initiatives that may be aligned with performance review mechanisms. A complementary use of the model would be for recruitment strategy and planning. The three clusters within the Areas of Expertise identified by analysis of the survey results present a way to assess ways L&D expertise is grouped within organizations. For example, the Systems & Design cluster suggests that L&D design, technology and assessment/evaluation are functionally related with implications for the composition of ‘back room’ L&D teams.

**Implications for individual L&D professionals**

Individual L&D professionals may use the model presented in this paper as a self-assessment and career planning framework. The Individual Domain of the model presents a comprehensive inventory of knowledge, skills and attributes associated with contemporary L&D practice. The inventory contains items that are specific to the Australian context (Nationally Recognized Training), although this can be substituted in other countries with skills relating to national systems that are in place for post-compulsory or lifelong learning. The clusters within the Areas of Expertise offer another point of reflection. L&D professionals may wish to consider developing their own knowledge and skills within individual clusters as these appear to represent functionally related types of expertise in contemporary practice. Again, the Allied Skills sphere
includes non-traditional types of expertise that appear to be increasingly valued in practice. In terms of career development, the Practice Domain represents roles and contexts of L&D practice and thus suggest possible types of work and employment settings. Individual practitioners may compare their own scope of practice with what is possible in the broader L&D practice domain to identify areas to target for career development. Obviously, for L&D consultants who offer professional development services to other practitioners the model presents a framework for service provision.

**Conceptual issues raised by the research**

In addition to implications for practice, the model raises conceptual issues. As noted at the beginning of this paper, a number of fields contribute to the theory and practice of L&D. There is the broad training and education literature, the organizational development (OD) literature and the human resource development (HRD) literature. For the purposes of our model building we consulted these literatures to identify techniques and applications that relate to L&D. However, a conceptual challenge is created by this strategy because these different fields retain their distinctiveness in organizational settings, raising the question of how the modelling itself can be recontextualized for these different types of practice. In other words, how can the model be usefully deployed in HRD, OD or training contexts? How can it be conceptualized within these different fields? We suggest that additional research and conceptual work be undertaken to assist in the work of translating the insights of the model into the language and ways of thinking specific to these different fields.

A particular challenge in this regard is the conceptual underpinnings of possible strategic use of the model. A practical implication highlighted above is the potential of the model to inform organizational strategy. However, there is scope for more conceptual work to tease out the broad implications of such a model in the context of the push to realize the strategic potential of L&D for organizational performance and effectiveness. Certainly individual organizations could elaborate uses of the model, but there is the broader debate about strategic L&D and how a model of L&D practice can contribute to this debate. More research and conceptualization would be an appropriate way to build on the work presented in this paper to clarify such a contribution.

**References**


The Authors

Steven Hodge works at Griffith University (Brisbane, Australia) as a lecturer in Professional, Vocational and Continuing Education. His research revolves around training and education,
with a current focus on how occupational expertise is represented in standards and curriculum frameworks and how trainers interpret curriculum. Steven was a school teacher, vocational educator, curriculum designer and training organization manager before moving into research and the world of higher education. He teaches in Griffith University’s Master of Training and Development programme and serves on the executive of the Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association (AVETRA).

Erica Smith holds a Personal Chair in Vocational Education and Training at Federation University Australia. She has published widely, mainly in the area of training policy, apprenticeships and traineeships, enterprise training, and vocational education and training (VET) practitioners. She has previously worked as a human resource manager and in community work; and in a range of roles in the Vocational Education and Training sector, Erica is co-chair of INAP, the international network for apprenticeship research. She has been invited to advise the Australian and overseas governments and a range of NGOs. Erica also convenes the Australian Council of Deans of Education Vocational Education Group, representing those universities providing VET teacher-education.

Llandis Barratt-Pugh is an Associate Professor in the School of Business and Law at Edith Cowan University teaching Entrepreneurship on the MBA programme. Llandis has published mainly in the area of organizational change and development research with an emphasis on managing development, and also on frontline manager development. He is also strongly involved in the development of research supervisors with the Graduate Research School. Llandis was a manager of vocational education and training in the UK winning two national training awards. He has been an executive member of the Australian Vocational Educational Research Association (AVETRA) for a decade and was its President from 2010-13. Llandis has been a chief investigator for two Australian Research Council national studies and for three National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) studies.
Challenges of Learning in the Flow of Work: Scaffolding Self-Direction

Catherine Lombardozzi, Learning 4 Learning Professionals, USA

Modern talent development practitioners are confronted with opposing visions of how to support learning. Thought leaders advise them to make curated resources available rather than design formal training and education courses. Employees, however, seem to want and need guidance, and many are not prepared for self-directed learning. While the learning and development team (L&D) may be providing a richer array of resources than ever before, development efforts cannot achieve their goals when those resources are never accessed or are not well-utilized. To attempt to get at the root of this dilemma, this article reviews research-based factors that enable self-directed learning and explores the ways that the insights found in the literature can provide a foundation for scaffolding self-directed learning in the workplace. While the primary purpose of the article is to provide guidance on supporting self-direction in the workplace, the article also provides a reflective account of scholarly practice, wherein a practitioner consults the literature, defines guidelines on that base, implements them in practice, and refines them as needed.

Introduction

In modern organizations, learning and development (L&D) practitioners are encouraged to avoid formal training when possible and instead to support development in other, more informal ways (Cross, 2007; Hart, 2015). In practitioner circles, that advice has contributed to the rising adoption of specific non-training development strategies such as working out loud (Bozarth, 2014), social learning (Bingham and Conner, 2015), personal knowledge management (Jarche, no date), 70:20:10 strategies (Jennings, 2013), performance support (Gottfredson and Mosher, 2011), learning ecosystems (Rosenberg and Foreman, 2014), and learning environment design (Lombardozzi, 2015) as well as other strategies that fall under the heading of informal learning. All of these strategies give learners more responsibility for what and how they learn. The goal is to allow employees to draw upon learning resources and to engage in productive learning ‘in the flow of work’ through on-the-job learning and ‘in-the-moment’ quick study. While there are many advantages to this approach to supporting learning, tensions remain. Organizations may be concerned about the extent to which employees can actually benefit from informal, self-directed development activities (Corporate Executive Board, 2014), and L&D practitioners are sometimes disappointed by the lack of uptake of their carefully curated resources and opportunities for peer-to-peer learning (Pontefact, 2015; Tracey, 2014).

In all of these emerging strategies it is clear that organizations are asking employees to be much more self-directed in developing the knowledge and skills related to their jobs. This is an important insight, since some of the challenges of relying on non-training solutions to support employee development in organizations are driven by people’s lack of experience with managing their own professional learning (Corporate Executive Board, 2014; Grow, 1994). Accordingly, when the author crafted a learning environment design framework (Lombardozzi, 2015) to give
guidance on supporting learning with more flexible non-training resources, it was clear that advice on supporting self-directed learning needed to be part of its recommendations. Self-directed learning is a topic that is often theorized and researched in human resource development (see for example, Confessore and Confessore, 1992; Merriam and Bierema, 2014), so it is that literature to which the author turned to inform an understanding of self-directed learning, its prerequisites, and the ways L&D professionals can best enable employees to manage their own learning.

This article documents a scholarly practice approach to supporting self-directed learning in the workplace and reports emerging recommendations. Grounding practice in an understanding of the literature is the essence of scholarly practice, and scholar-practitioners have been given solid advice on how to use theory and research to inform practice (see, for example, Clark, 2005; Ruona and Gilley, 2009; Short and Shindell, 2009). The process of scholarly practice involves seeking out appropriate literature (not necessarily in a systematic review), interpreting that literature for use in practice, translating key principles into relatable language and do-able actions for other practitioners to follow, engaging in reflection to evaluate the practicality and effectiveness of what is happening in practice, and sharing additional recommendations with the practitioner and academic communities. When confronted with the need to support self-directed learning in the workplace, the author used scholar-practitioner practices to guide her response.

While the purpose of this article is primarily to document recommendations for supporting self-directed learning in the context of relying on non-training strategies to develop needed knowledge and skills in the workplace, the article is structured to illustrate a case study in scholarly practice. In her book on learning environment design (Lombardozzi, 2015), the author documented key elements or “pillars” for self-directed learning and high level recommendations for scaffolding self-directed learning in the workplace. The author has since shared these recommendations at conferences, integrated them into graduate classes in L&D, and applied them in consulting situations.

This article expands on and advances the recommendations for supporting self-directed learning in the workplace. First, it summarizes the original pillars and recommendations drawn from the literature on self-directed learning and related topics. Next, the author reports on feedback related to these recommendations that has been informally shared by clients, workshop participants, and graduate students (often practitioners). Additional feedback was obtained from a small sampling of practitioners who are trying to enable self-directed learning in their organizations. This was to explore the wider applicability of the self-directed learning recommendations and to determine additional nuances that might be incorporated to guide practice. Finally, the author suggests enhanced recommendations based on this feedback.

The Process of Self-Directed Learning at Work

To derive what is needed to support self-directed learning at work, it is useful to take a close look at self-directed learning theory, which has a fairly long history of theory and research. Seminal theories (see, for example, Ajzen, 1991; Candy, 1991; Confessore and Confessore, 1992; Knowles, 1975; Ryan and Deci, 2000; Spear and Mocker, 1984; Tough, 1979) identify a range of activities in which individuals engage for self-directed learning including: determining their own goals, making learning plans, figuring out how to obtain necessary resources (space,
equipment, funds, time), implementing the identified strategies, and evaluating outcomes. These activities are usually initiated by some triggering event that highlights a need for learning. Triggering events might include anticipating a job change, recognizing a need for deeper skill, getting feedback that warrants action, experiencing a disorientation about one’s identity or skills, or simply becoming curious about a topic.

In addition, several theories related to learning in a work context can be consulted to add nuance to the process of self-directing learning. Seminal work on informal learning (Marsick and Watkins, 1997; Marsick, Watkins, and Lewin, 2010) theorizes a set of activities similar to self-directed learning. Informal learning activities include recognizing a problem or opportunity, sorting out meaning, identifying learning needs, acquiring needed knowledge or skills, applying those skills, assessing consequences, and extracting lessons for the future. Emphasis is placed on the thought processes required to make meaning of problems, sort out how to apply solutions, and solidify lessons learned. Attention to the reflection and meaning-making process can also be seen in experiential learning theory (Jarvis, 2006; Kolb, 2014), which tries to explain how people learn from experience, an important work-based learning activity which is usually self-managed. Experiential learning involves reflection, meaning-making, planning for application, and experimentation. Additionally, Boyatzis’ intentional change theory (Boyatzis, 2006) positions identity development as a learning trigger and also highlights a dimension of experimentation and practice in the learning process.

A Framework for Self-Directed Learning at Work

As noted earlier, interest in self-directed learning stems from a desire to support employees who are managing their own learning within a rather vast ecosystem. (In practitioner parlance, a learning and performance ecosystem encompasses the sum total of physical and digital resources, performance support, human networks, social interactions, enterprise social networks, formal education opportunities, development processes, talent management systems, on-the-job learning, and more (Lombardozzi, 2015; Rosenberg and Foreman, 2014).) In general, practitioners don’t often delve into theory and research that deeply, and they appreciate having key points synthesized and distilled for them (Moats and McLean, 2009). Self-directed learning theories offer insights that learning professionals can use to consider the kind of support employees may need when their development is supported by non-training solutions (working out loud, experiential learning, social learning, etc.). At the core, the activities of self-directed learning in the workplace can be summarized this way:

- Recognizing a learning need (for new knowledge or skill, or to deepen an existing knowledge base or skill set).
- Seeking resources and activities that appear to be helpful in developing the identified knowledge or skill. Generally, learners start with what is immediately at hand (e.g. search engines, organizational resources, peers close by).
- Selecting and engaging with particular resources and activities and (ideally) gaining knowledge or skill. This statement is deceptively simple, as it entails engaging in some learning activity (reading an article or book, watching a video, talking to a colleague, experimenting with an action) and thinking through what it means for how one should act in the future. While some learning needs are addressed by accessing only one resource,
many learning needs require learners to engage with multiple resources spread out over time.

- Acting in context, applying learned knowledge and skills — and noticing the consequences of his or her actions.
- Self-assessment whether one’s knowledge and skill has reached a sufficient level as defined by the learner. Assessment is based on reflection, feedback (from people or from other environmental clues), and learner’s own criteria for success.
- As long as any learner is unsatisfied with his or her level of knowledge or skill, he or she continues to seek resources and activities and engage with them. This can continue through multiple cycles of search, learning, and application that unfold over time.

**Challenges to Self-Directed Learning at Work**

Learning and development practitioners would be wise to consider all that is involved in these activities. For example: How do learners know they have a learning need? Do they have the skills and access needed to find and select resources? What is the quality of the resources and activities learners access? Who are the people who learners rely on to teach them and to provide other learning support? How are these interpersonal connections made, and are these people giving effective support? How effectively do employees learn and apply on their own? On what basis are they deciding they have learned “enough”? These are all potential stumbling blocks to effective self-directed learning. And there is another dynamic at work: learning needs come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes. Some are simple knowledge and skill gaps that are easily addressed. Others, however, are more complex or nuanced, the kinds of knowledge bases and skill sets that require sustained attention over long periods of time. Multiple waves of searching for resources, engaging in learning, and attempting to apply that learning may be interrupted with other responsibilities and activities. Certain learning activities may require developing relationships, finding application opportunities, or acquiring the skills needed to access the materials or activities (e.g. internet savvy) — all of which require interim steps before the learner can engage in the activity. In current practice, employees’ self-directed learning at work is less planful than we would like to believe (Corporate Executive Board, 2014). The whole process is often iterative and choppy.

Knowles (1973) posits that a fundamental attribute of adult learners is that they are self-directed. Indeed, it is often said that learning is natural, and people often point to the ubiquitous strategies of “Googling” the internet or searching specifically within YouTube as evidence that everyone knows how to access learning resources and apply what they learn to immediate questions and problems. Practitioners in the author’s graduate courses and consulting engagements, however, often dispute the assertion that learners are capable of fending for themselves because their experience tells them that employees at all levels and ages are more likely to want to be “spoon-fed” information and guided through formal courses and structured activities. Even those organizations that have created rich learning environments (curated resources and networks) have recognized that enabling self-directed learning is not so simple (Corporate Executive Board, 2014). Many report that resource databases and enterprise social networking sites are not being accessed by employees, and employees report that their development needs are not being attended to in organizations.
This raises a question as to whether employees are ready for self-directed learning. This question has been of interest for some time in the literature, and several researchers have developed instruments that have been used in subsequent research (see, for example: Guglielmino, 1977; Oddi, 1986). The factors that have been identified as necessary include commitment (accepting responsibility for learning), attitudes (openness, self-efficacy, future orientation), and skills (study and skills, problem solving, tech savvy). While practitioners might explore these factors, many do not have the budget and time to use these validated assessments.

Informed by the self-directed learning literature and broader background in adult learning theory — as well as experience with some of the challenges of self-directed learning in work environments — Lombardozzi (2015) suggests that practitioners who want to employ a self-directed learning strategy should be concerned about a short list of pillars that “should be inherent in any effective learning environment” (p. 78). These pillars include characteristics in learners and characteristics of the environment in which they learn. They are: motivation, self-awareness, attention, intention, engagement, relationships, and space and time. These potential factors were selected based on the author’s experience with what were most apt to be problematic in the context of learning environment design.

Motivation. Employees have to want to learn a given knowledge base or skill, which may or may not be the case when it comes to the specific knowledge and skills the organization needs them to learn. In a work context, employees are motivated to learn by a desire to build job competence, career potential, personal rewards, individual and organization goals, stature, and a sense of belonging to a community, among other things (McClelland et al., 1953; Schein, 2008; Vroom, 1964/1995). Motivation to learn is also strengthened by relevance, benefits, community, and respect (Wlodkowski, 2008). Often, recognizing that knowledge and skill-building is tied to improved on-the-job success provides a degree of motivation to learn, but that may be hard for employees to see, and that source of motivation may be insufficient. Another challenge is that humans have many motivations, and their priorities shift.

Self-awareness. One of the triggers for learning in the workplace is recognition of a knowledge or skill gap (Knowles, 1975; Spear and Mocker, 1984; Tough, 1979). While this gap may be identified through explicit feedback, it is also based on the employee’s own analysis. Employees may believe that their work will be improved by strengthening a key skill. Or they may anticipate that new skills will be required as time goes on. As an employee engages in self-directed learning, he or she needs to be able to evaluate progress toward learning goals. Recognition of opportunity areas and the ability to evaluate one’s own progress both depend on self-awareness.

Attention. Work environments contain many potential distractions and it is easy for employees to miss noticing the details of behaviors they should be emulating, action steps they should be taking, and thought processes they should be following in the course of work. In order to learn in a dynamic work context, employees need to identify precisely what they should pay attention to so that they can more deeply learn the nuances of the work (Bandura, 1976).

Intention. While we often ‘pick up’ knowledge and skills unconsciously or incidentally, learning is most productive when employees have a clear idea of the problems and activities to which they will apply the learning. When learners approach a task or a learning activity with the intention to learn from it, they formulate specific goals and anticipate how they will apply what they learn. This can minimize what gets lost in attempting to transfer learning (Hutchins and Burke, 2007).
Engagement. Learning is improved through employees’ degree of commitment, active participation, and persistence, and these in turn are improved by the degree to which learning resources and activities promote intellectual engagement (Sawyer, 2014). Among learning and development professionals, active learning techniques have long been accepted as more impactful than passive ones (Dirksen, 2012; Silberman and Biech, 2015).

Relationships. Despite the potentially solitary nature of self-directed learning, most people will seek to include others in their learning journeys – as role models, sounding boards, coaches, peer learners, teachers, mentors, and more (Bandura, 1976; Rock and Garavan, 2006). Seldom is deep learning accomplished without interpersonal interaction and often, tapping a network of peers and subject matter experts is the first strategy learners utilize when a learning need is identified.

Space and time. Every self-directed learning process described in the literature includes some form of reflection, which requires minimal distractions (head space) and time. For self-directed learning to flourish, employees must process their learning, think through application, and reflect on results (Kolb, 2014; Marsick et al., 2010). Stressful, noisy work environments are often not conducive to being able to gain insight, evaluate lessons learned, or plan next steps.

Scaffolding the Process of Self-Directed Learning

Having described these factors as important for the success of a self-directed learning strategy, Lombardozzi (2015) offers a quick “pillar strength assessment” (not validated) to guide practitioners to ask questions during the assessment phase of a project that would allow them to have a sense of the learners’ degree of readiness for self-directed learning. For example, practitioners can explore whether employees have shown the wherewithal to assess their own strengths and weaknesses and define their own learning goals (self-awareness). They can also take a look at available learning materials and available feedback to determine how engaging and relevant they are for the learners (engagement).

Additionally, the framework proposes a brief list of specific actions to strengthen these pillars where needed (Lombardozzi, 2015), as shown in Table 1.

Feedback on the “Pillars of Self-Directed Learning”

Since the publication of the pillars for self-directed learning, the author has continued to use it to inform her consulting and has shared it with practitioners in graduate courses and conference presentations. To be specific, from January 2014 through May 2016, these concepts were discussed in some of the author’s graduate classes (6 instances; 63 students), in conference presentations (2 instances, approximately 100+ participants), and in a full scale course on learning environment design (4 instances, approximately 55 students). Her consulting on learning environment design has been brought to bear in one client engagement (coaching managers and designers) and a number of follow-up coaching conversations with students and conference participants. Discussions in these sessions have brought forward a variety of practitioner concerns about readiness for self-directed learning, and the pillars in particular. Over time, she has particularly noted issues related to whether or not high-demand organization environments are conducive to self-directed learning. Practitioners are also often concerned about some of the skills needed to
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To Strengthen this Pillar</th>
<th>Try These Tactics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Motivation               | • Draw connections between knowledge, skills, work tasks, and success.  
                          | • Enlist the support of formal and informal leaders to actively promote importance. |
| Intention                | • Categorize resources by what people might be trying to do.  
                          | • Select resources that are specifically relevant to the learner’s role or industry.  
                          | • Suggest next steps when an activity is concluded.  
                          | • Provide application suggestions and exercises.  
                          | • Use contextualized examples, role-plays, and simulations. |
| Attention                | • Point out what can be learned from specific activities and resources.  
                          | • Advise learners on specific formal learning events for a given stage in their development.  
                          | • Suggest reflection questions for readings and activities.  
                          | • Seek out resources in the learners’ preferred formats (e.g., video, podcast, books, articles).  
                          | • Provide different views of materials, depending on the learner’s role or level of experience. |
| Self-Awareness           | • Provide self-assessment tools with recommended next steps.  
                          | • Support learners in articulating goals for learning and application.  
                          | • Document an activity guide for new-to-role learners.  
                          | • Create a checklist for on-the-job training and coaching (what learners need to know). |
| Engagement               | • Select resources and activities based on how engaging they are.  
                          | • Ensure that at least a subset of resources and activities provide deep interaction and interpersonal communication.  
                          | • Take an active role to generate discussion online. |
| Relationships            | • Introduce learners to subject matter experts or each other.  
                          | • Identify people to follow on social media, and suggest specific social media tools, shared repositories, and hashtags.  
                          | • Recommend professional organizations and conferences.  
                          | • Provide an expert directory.  
                          | • Enable profile pages that give learners the chance to share both descriptive information and a little of their personalities.  
                          | • Offer guidance to ensure that developer-learner pairs have effective interactions with each other. |
| Space and Time            | • Incorporate resources into systems that employees need to do the work (integrated performance support).  
                          | • Create a resource portal to make searching for resources more efficient.  
                          | • Allocate sufficient time for learning when needed. |

(Lombardozzi, 2015: 87-88)  
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Table 1: Tactics for Strengthening Motivation and Self-Direction
engage in self-directed learning, especially with regard to setting goals and finding appropriate resources. In preparation for writing this article, the author also specifically sought more detailed feedback from five learning professionals who were in the early stages of exploring learning environment design.

In these conversations, practitioners were asked to walk through the Pillar Strength Assessment in Lombardozzi (2015) in order to obtain more immediate feedback on what might be confusing or missing in the list of pillars. The author also explored these practitioners’ general sense of employee readiness for managing their own learning processes. Discussions in these contexts generally suggest that the guidance is useful; practitioners report that support for self-directed learning is needed and the pillars resonate with their experience. However, the guidance may not go far enough in helping practitioners support the kind of self-directed learning in the workplace that modern organizations demand. The following reactions were gleaned from these sources and activities.

**Missing elements.** Discussions revealed a short list of supportive elements for self-directed learning that practitioners suggested were missing from the list of pillars or underemphasized in proportion to their impact on people’s ability to self-direct their learning.

- Learners are sometimes ill-equipped to identify the skills needed for success or for career mobility. They may be able to assess their own skill levels, but don’t have the experience or foresight to be confident that they are selecting the right knowledge base and prioritizing the most important skills for self-development. They need more help from their managers and peer developers in understanding what is needed based on their experience and demands of the work.

- The most successful self-directed learners have an inner drive that is tied to their identity and their passion for a role or subject matter. This kind of motivation has a real impact on engagement in and persistence of self-directed learning and may be lacking in some learners.

- The process of self-directed learning often requires long-term efforts to locate resources and keep developing oneself over time despite occasional setbacks. Practitioners thought that persistence, therefore, was an important supporting element for self-directed learning that wasn’t sufficiently articulated in the pillars.

- To benefit from self-directed learning — especially experiential learning aspects — learners need to be able to reflect on the implications of what they observe, the consequences of actions, the meaning of what they read or watch in order to be able to use all that as a guide for future action. Practitioners concurred that time and space for this kind of reflection is in short supply but also observed that this is a reality of the culture of their workplaces. Whilst the importance of reflection is embedded in the pillar of “space and time” it may not be getting enough attention

- Learners need to be connected to the right people for learning — on-the-job teachers/trainers and subject matter experts, and practitioners see interpersonal support as critical. They would welcome additional examples of how to help learners make the right connections.

- It takes some minimum level of capability for learners to access the resources (links, documents, people) they need to support their development. The framework assumes these kinds of internet and networking skills are in place, which is not always the case.
There may also be barriers of language, lack of baseline knowledge, and inadequate information literacy that get in the way. The learning environment design strategy described in Lombardozzi (2015) shows how effective curation can address this problem, but it doesn’t talk about developing digital literacy.

- Employees need to access information in the flow of work, and practitioners worry that when employees don’t find immediate help, they don’t necessarily come back to that learning need when time permits.

- Practitioners report that employees don’t take a more holistic view about how their longer term development goals can be pursued using a self-directed strategy. Scaffolding self-directed learning should, in practitioners’ views, help learners take a broader, longterm view, perhaps including learning how to take ownership of one’s own learning.

*Cultural influences on self-directed learning.* One senior leader commented on the gap between having knowledge of theories and models — and being able to effectively apply them. In some work settings, this gap can be large. As well, when discussing how to enable self-directed learning, practitioners frequently identify concerns about whether or not the work environment is supportive, which goes beyond the learners’ self-directed learning skills and the availability of curated resources. Practitioners’ concerns about having a strong culture for learning in the workplace included the following.

- Self-directed learning is frequently stymied by competing goals and priorities. The demands of producing work (whether clearly stated or culturally ingrained) sometimes limit the time and energy employees have for developing any skills that are not immediately required. Employees can feel resentful if they are expected to do a substantial amount of their work-related learning during non-working hours.

- The role of a direct manager is critically important in enabling self-directed learning; managers can create an environment richly conducive to learning. In contrast, too many managers behave in ways that actually create barriers to self-directed learning on the job.

- Learning resources, especially those available on the internet, often lack depth and nuance. Therefore, learners gain an incomplete understanding of what they seek to learn. Trying to learn ‘just-in-time’ often conflicts with the need to learn more deeply since it’s tempting for employees to act on the basis of summarized bullet points found on the internet that don’t go into important details.

- Learning is highly dependent on the willingness and availability of networks of peers and subject matter experts to share what they know (verbally, or by contributing to shared resources). In many organizations, the most skilled workers are the busiest so they may lack the time or appropriate incentives to engage in developmental activities with learners or to answer their questions. Some people in social networks may also lack confidence that they have enough expertise to be helpful to peers.

- Heavily regulated workplaces often need to keep careful records of learning activities and have to be very cautious about potentially inaccurate information being shared among employees. While learning from peers is likely to happen regardless, this concern about sharing inaccurate information through informal means may inhibit providing support for it.
Self-directed learning readiness assessment concerns. As noted above, Lombardozzi (2015) provides an informal assessment tool for self-directed learning readiness that asks practitioners to estimate the percentage of the learning group who would agree with statements that align with the pillars. Questions and hesitations shared by practitioners during discussion of the assessment tool highlighted their concerns about how the assessment is structured.

- In the Lombardozzi (2015) assessment, practitioners are asked to estimate the percentage of learners who would respond positively to a series of “I” statements. It was difficult to consider statements framed as “I” when that “I” was meant to refer to the employees and not the person completing the assessment. Trying to imagine what other employees are thinking was difficult, and practitioners also worried that employees did not always have an accurate view of their own strengths and opportunities in these areas.

- Those who attempt to complete the assessment are also concerned about the fact that learners have different levels of readiness and varying needs to scaffold their readiness in the given context.

Implications

The pillars for self-directed learning offered in Lombardozzi (2015) resonate with the practitioner perspectives in the author’s client organizations and courses. In deeper discussions, however, they point to particular concerns that are not explicitly addressed in the pillars — additional considerations or factors that ought to be explored as well.

The feedback suggests that it would be useful to expand the pillars to include persistence and resourcefulness, and it might be important to separate the “Space and Time” pillar to more strongly highlight reflection as a critical learning skill. Other feedback points add depth and context to the discussion of pillars already identified (self-awareness, motivation). Table 2 summarizes a revised list of pillars.

The feedback on the cultural implications of self-directed learning is addressed as part of the broader learning environment design framework in Lombardozzi (2015). That framework has guidance on strengthening management’s developmental practices (e.g. coaching, encouraging peer-to-peer learning), supporting social learning (developmental relationships), and providing effective curation (identification of the most useful resources). It is outside the scope of this article to detail those recommendations here.

The self-directed learning readiness assessment offered by Lombardozzi (2015) may also have limited usefulness because of its structure and the variety of levels of readiness one will find among a group of learners. Learning environment design itself scaffolds learning, and designers can select from the actions in Table 1 to further support readiness. Designers will need to use their assessment skills and judgement to determine if there are particular areas that require emphasis. Being aware of the pillars gives designers additional factors to explore in the assessment process so that they can make useful recommendations regarding the features of a learning environment to address the identified learning needs. (Of course, a front-end needs assessment goes well beyond that scope, exploring all of the areas necessary to understand the context, knowledge base, skill sets, learning needs, learner characteristics and more.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pillars</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Learners value the development of this particular knowledge base or skill and are willing to invest in learning more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Awareness</td>
<td>Learners have the wherewithal to assess their own strengths and opportunities in this knowledge base or skill. (That is, they know what they need to learn and will be able to tell if they have learned it.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention</td>
<td>Learners know specifically what is important to learn in this knowledge base or skill and know what to look for when they engage with learning resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intention</td>
<td>Learners will know where they will be applying this knowledge base or skill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Practices</td>
<td>Learners have the capacity to make meaning from the resources and activities they encounter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistence</td>
<td>Learners will likely push through any barriers and continue developing themselves over time if needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resourcefulness</td>
<td>Learners have the capability and savvy to locate and vet resources that are relevant and useful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Strength</td>
<td>Learners know who they can go to for assistance, and those people are willing to help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>Learners have access to materials that are relevant, interesting, interactive, and memorable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Learners have time to pursue learning during the workday.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Revised Pillars for Self-Directed Learning

**Summary**

We live in a world of learning resource abundance especially for those individuals who are able to take advantage of the vast cache of potential learning materials accessible through the internet. However, abundance can lead to paralysis and inefficiency, and learning leaders have taken on the role of “curators” in order to guide people to the most useful resources for their purposes and context. But educational systems typically continue to employ fairly structured approaches to teaching, and employees in the workforce of all ages may not actually have developed the needed self-directed learning skills, regardless of their facility with digital tools and familiarity with the internet. In addition to curation, then, learning leaders can support individual learning needs by identifying and scaffolding weak areas in learners’ abilities to manage their own development as well as weak areas in the learning culture of the organization. This article has outlined some of the specific considerations that may need to be scaffolded. The challenges of self-directed learning in the workplace are not going away, and tools and techniques for supporting learning continue to emerge. The frameworks for understanding self-directed learning should continue to morph to address modern challenges.

In addition, the article outlines an example of scholarly practice that involved using the literature to draft a framework (pillars for self-directed learning), employing that framework in practice, and then using feedback from those experiences to further refine the framework. In practice, this mix of grounding in theory and research and incorporating lessons of experience is a typical approach to
scherly practice (Scully-Russ et al., 2013). This case illustrates the value of continuously refining practices even after they are reified. It is hoped that this article contributes to the body of knowledge around how scholarly practice is enacted in learning and development in the workplace.

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The Author

Catherine Lombardozzi is founder of Learning 4 Learning Professionals, author of Learning Environments by Design, and adjunct faculty member for graduate programmes in the field of learning and development at LaSalle University and Penn State Harrisburg. Catherine’s work focuses on the professional development of designers, facilitators, learning consultants, and learning leaders, and she advises leaders who are looking to create comprehensive learning and development strategies in their organizations. Catherine holds a doctoral degree in Human and Organizational Learning from The George Washington University.

Caitriona Hughes, School of Business, National College of Ireland
Corina Sheerin, School of Business, National College of Ireland

This paper explores the effect of mentoring on women’s career progression in occupationally segregated sectors of employment. Specifically, it examines two professions which are polarized in their gender distribution, namely Human Resource Management (HRM), traditionally a female dominated profession and Investment Management, a male dominated profession. Utilizing an interpretative research approach and employing the use of semi-structured in-depth interviews as the research tool, thirty-two female participants were interviewed, twenty-one of whom were from HRM and eleven from Investment Management.

The findings from the study indicated that for women in HRM mentoring as a resource was seen as an enabler to career progression and a means of learning their role. Within Investment Management mentoring was considered a limited support unless it was informal and voluntary on the part of the mentor. To those who did cite it as important, it was seen from the perspective of its absence being a deterrent rather than its presence an enabler.

This study contributes to our understanding concerning the role and effectiveness of mentoring in such sectors and its use as a tool to aid the development and career progression of women. It is the first study of its kind within an Irish context.

Introduction

This paper addresses an important gap in the literature by examining two sectors which are diametrically opposed in terms of their gender composition. This is the first study of this nature in an Irish context and the first to examine HRM alongside Investment Management. This research is timely given the European Commission’s claims that safeguarding gender equality, particularly within the labour market is essential for economic progress (European Commission, 2012). Specifically, the issue of gender equality at management level in the labour market is now being reframed as an economic concern as well as a social justice issue and as such understanding the role of mentoring for women in occupationally segregated sectors is essential to address the dearth of women in management roles, particularly in male dominated sectors such as Investment Management.

This paper has important implications for Human Resource Development (HRD) practitioners and in particular within sectors such as HRM and Investment Management. Understanding which approaches to mentoring are effective for women within male and female dominated sectors adds important value to the existing body of research seeking to address the issue of
women’s absence from the senior management table. The following sections will set out a brief context of women’s position in the broader labour market and their role in HRM and Investment Management prior to critically evaluating the literature concerning mentoring and its role in the workplace.

Women in the Labour Market

Occupational segregation by gender within the labour market is a global and pervasive phenomenon affecting almost every nation across the world (see, for example, Anker, 1988; Catalyst, 2014). Siltanen, Jarman and Blackburn (1995) set out occupational segregation as being comprised of two distinct elements: segregation (horizontal segregation) and concentration (vertical segregation). Segregation examines the extent to which men and women are engaged ‘across occupations’; concentration refers to the representation of ‘one sex within’ occupations (Siltanen et al., 1995: 4-5). A wide range of metaphors have been used to describe gender segregation in the labour market including: ‘glass walls’ or ‘glass elevators’ (referring to occupational segregation), ‘glass ceiling’ (referring to vertical segregation) and ‘sticky floors’ (referring to very slow or no career advancement) (Still, 1997).

From an international perspective, statistics indicate that horizontal segregation by gender has persisted within the labour market despite numerous global initiatives aimed at addressing the imbalance. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2016) highlighted that within developed nations, concentrations of women exist in health, social work and education. These tend to be lower paid sectors of employment. In developing economies, a large body of women are similarly clustered within poorly paid areas, for example 60 per cent of women in employment in countries in Southern Asia and sub-Sharan Africa are concentrated in manual and agricultural work. Vertical segregation is also clearly apparent across the global labour market with women notably absent as ‘legislators, senior officials and managers’ (ILO, 2016: 27). The Grant Thornton International Business Report (2016) reported similar findings. They demonstrated that the women occupied mainly support rather than leadership roles:

the majority of women in senior management are human resources directors (23%), chief financial officers (21%) or, in third place, chief marketing officers (11%). Just 9% are chief executive officers or managing directors (p. 10).

According to Grant Thornton (2016) the absence of women in senior management roles is evident across the global labour market with an average of 24% of senior roles held by women. A significant proportion (33%) of global organizations however continue to have no representation of women in senior management. These statistics do vary by country with Russia having almost half of all senior roles held by women (45%). The Baltic States follow with Lithuania at (39%), Estonia (37%) and Latvia (35%) (p. 5). Ireland ranks below average with 19% of senior roles held by women (p. 8).

Academic literature supports these empirical findings with Koyuncu, Burke, Alayoglu and Wolpin (2014) acknowledging that whilst significant progress has been made in understanding the barriers facing women in career advancement, they continue to be in the minority in more senior management roles internationally. Cross (2010) similarly indicated that:

the single most uncontroversial, indisputable statement one can make about women in management is, that there is very few of them (p. 104-105).
Women in HRM and Investment Management

Garavan Hogan and Cahir-O’Donnell (2009) within an Irish and UK context specifically, identified that women “have suffered a degree of ghettoization in their managerial roles” (p. 74). Ghettoization and the concept of ‘occupational ghettos’ has been presented by Charles and Grusky (2004) as a phenomenon whereby men and women are clustered in certain occupations and sectors of employment. For example they propose that women are perceived to:

excel in personal service, nurturance, and social interaction (nonmanual pursuits) and men are presumed to excel in technical tasks, outdoor work, and strenuous physical labor (manual pursuits) (p. 298).

Such roles in nurturance or social interaction are in line with common perceptions of the role of personnel or human resource functions, which is female dominated. Conversely, the technical tasks described align with front office roles in Investment Management. These roles require individuals with high-level quantitative and mathematical skills. Almost all candidates working in such roles would, at a minimum, hold a postgraduate degree in finance or a related discipline or/and a professional qualification such as the Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA). Within the Irish market, front office positions are scarce and commonly seen as high-value well-paid and knowledge-intensive roles including trading and fund management (Expert Group of Future Skills Needs, 2007). According to McDowell (2010), such roles are globally dominated by men. McLean (2005) concurred and summarized this aptly:

go to a conference of hedge fund managers, or a benefit or just an old fashioned booze up, it is obvious that something is missing: women (p. 1).

Niessen and Ruenzi (2006) further embedded this proposition with the provocative suggestion that, within the USA, “fund management companies only employ as many female fund managers as needed to avoid lawsuits due to gender discrimination” (p. 4).

In contrast, within HRM, a more female dominated environment a reasonable proportion of women can be seen in management. Churchard (2013) identified that 83% of the membership of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) are female. Similarly, Goudreau (2011) reports that the profession in the US is dominated by women with 71% of roles in HRM held by them. Despite this however barriers still remain for women seeking progression to more senior management roles (Pichler et al., 2008).

Panelist Srimathi Shivashankar in discussion with Chakraborty Saha (2015) claims that there are a number of ‘myths’ surrounding the progress of women to board level. These include the perception that women are more adept in areas such as HRM but that finance might be beyond their level of expertise. Wilson (2012) contends that such stereotypes remains firmly in place both inside and outside the finance sector. He proposes that so few women reach the top in finance and journalism because:

the men who reach the top have usually done so possessing a steely ruthlessness and single-mindedness which is — let us be honest a masculine quality (p. 1).

While such perceptions of Investment Management are exceptionally damaging to women, within HRM, an equally detrimental view of working life is often portrayed as evidenced by Churchard (2013). She describes how HRM professionals “are often portrayed as tottering home
in a blaze of pink after one too many Lambrinis” (p. 34). She further contends that similar to other professions like nursing and teaching, HR is often proposed as a “job for the girls” (p. 34). Such stereotypes discourage men entering the profession and in effect exacerbate the gender imbalance even more.

Chakraborty Saha (2015) also questions whether a pre-conceived mindset about the ability to succeed in senior roles, is in fact holding women back. This is particularly the case in male dominated fields of work and study where women are often stereotyped as not being the ‘right fit’ for the sector (Lockwood, 2006). She argues that, for women within male-dominated fields, a heightened perception of behavioural and psychological differences between the genders is apparent. For women in male-dominated fields fitting into the masculine culture can be difficult (Hewlett and Luce, 2006). Such beliefs and perspectives concerning women’s career progression are further reinforced by the lack of female role models and mentors present in sectors like Investment Management.

**Role Models and Mentors**

Female role models and mentors provide essential benefits in terms of signalling to other women the ‘proof of possibility’ when seeking career progression (Sealy, 2009). Gibson and Cordova (1999) highlight the symbolism of role models, particularly in male fields. Specifically they indicated its importance in tackling wider societal barriers about what is men’s work versus women’s and stereotypical attitudes towards certain occupations. Mentoring similarly provides an essential support for women negotiating career paths and progression. According to Ragins and Cotton (1999), mentoring offers “critical resources for employees in organizations” (p. 347). Okurame and Balogun (2005) proposed that mentoring is a “powerful tool of career management because of its enormous advantages” (p. 513). Among those advantages were “development of skills, easy access to organizational resources, career satisfaction and clarity of goals for the protégée” (p. 513).

While there is agreement in the literature concerning the benefits of mentoring, much divergence exists regarding the level of effectiveness based on the task environment. Ely and Padavic (2007) proposed that the context of the working environment is essential for consideration when examining the effectiveness of mentoring relationships. For example Castillo and McAniff (2006) describe Investment Management as a sector ‘not for shrinking violets’ and ‘a dog eat dog world’ (p. 93), thus, having an effective mentor is important for career development and success. This study focuses on the role and effectiveness of mentoring for women in two occupationally segregated occupations.

Whilst there are many definitions on what mentoring encompasses, the key premise is that mentoring is a relationship between an experienced individual and someone with less experience which focuses on the development of the mentee over the longer term (Gold, Holden, et al., 2010; Gold, Thorpe et al., 2010; Stewart and Rigg, 2011). According to Gold, Holden et al. (2010) the role of mentoring is not confined to just development for the current role but has added benefits which:

- facilitates the learning and career development of a less experienced mentee … providing both psychosocial (for example acceptance and encouragement) and career facilitation benefits (for example sponsorship, protection and exposure) (p. 270).
While it is recognized that mentoring is a developmental tool and opportunity to learn from more senior experienced colleagues there are additional potential advantages. Gold, Thorpe and Mumford (2010) identify that mentors can be a “door-opener” (p.249) for their mentees. They claim that mentors can extoll the capabilities and achievements of their mentees to key decision makers in the organization. Stewart and Rigg (2011) also claim that mentors provide an important role in assisting mentees with networking within the organization and increasing their organizational visibility. However, Paddison (2013) argued that whilst the development of mentees is very noble, it is not enough and more direct focus is required to ensure that talent is actually promoted. She identifies that there are two distinct roles involved in mentoring, that of development but also sponsorship. The concept of sponsorship is singled out by Paddison (2013) as not just being an element of mentoring that focuses on developing individuals but instead, assumes that individuals already have the necessary skills and are empowered and supported by sponsors who enable them to access networks and advance their careers. Similarly, Titleman (2016) advocates the need for sponsorship to boost women’s careers and contends that sponsors provide an endorsement for individuals and thereby enhance career opportunities. While terminology and definitions around the concept of mentoring may appear to be somewhat divided, it is evident that mentoring and the various elements of it are regarded as key approaches to aid career advancement.

The approach to mentoring in organizations can take the form of formal or informal means. Gold, Thorpe and Mumford (2010) outline that originally there was limited acknowledgement of the benefits of mentoring and it occurred on an informal basis, however, with increased interest in the area, it has developed into a formal process for the development of managers and leaders with the inclusion of more direction and role and skills identification. The introduction of formal approaches to mentoring has brought with it certain tensions and questions. For example, a key characteristic of mentoring is the personal nature of the relationship that develops between the mentor and mentee (Gold, Thorpe and Mumford, 2010). As such, over formalizing it with the introduction of evaluation, assigning mentors and mentees, may inhibit this and limit its effectiveness and the development of that personal aspect. Further questions have been raised concerning the value of formal mentoring in relation to evaluation and whether its use is justified particularly when it is employer funded (Stewart and Rigg, 2011).

The use of mentoring specifically for women is a source of much discussion in the existing literature. Tharenou (2005) propose that for women, particularly those working in male-dominated sectors, mentoring is a vital support and keystone for career success. Ely and Padavic (2007) and Ramaswami, Dreher, Bretz, and Wiethoff (2010) acknowledge that such workplace settings, characterized by female underrepresentation where an “aggressive, engineering intensive, competitive ‘up–or–out’ corporate culture [are those where] women are well served by developing mentoring relationships” (pp. 389-390). Desimone, Hochberg, Porter, Polikoff, Schwartz and Johnson (2014); Chun, Sosik and Yun (2012) and Ragins and Cotton (1999) concur that the occupational environment is an important factor when examining the effectiveness of mentoring. They claim, however, that even more essential is the examination of informal and formal mentoring, separately, within work settings.

Whilst there are merits in a formal mentoring approach, it is not without its flaws. In particular the issue of availability of suitable mentors has been raised as a concern with the formal method. Chen and Krauskopf (2013) highlight the issue of matching and the importance of appropriate mentors to ensure employees receive “valuable support from their mentors” (p. 3). When
examining informal mentoring, similarly it brings with it issues in relation to matching and this is particularly evident when the occupational context is considered. For women in male dominated sectors, while the benefits of informal mentoring are widely accepted it is a highly selective process. The lack of mentoring opportunities for women when compared with their male peers in such environments only serve to further disengage women and in fact exacerbate the problem of “hmosocial reproduction” (Kanter, 1977; Ehrich and Hansford 1999).

Within Investment Management specifically, Chivers (2011) claims that the benefits from formal mentoring are not as substantial as those from informal means noting that “investment bankers do not rely on formal training events to progress their learning” (p. 168) such events have “very limited benefit in terms of competence development” (p. 168). Roth (2006) also stressed the benefits of informal mentoring over formal, claiming:

many Wall Street workers remarked that the most effective mentoring relationships arose informally due to affinities between junior and senior employees (p. 88).

One female interviewee in particular noted “if you are lucky enough to have someone befriend you, you’ll have a career on Wall Street” (p. 87).

The issue of matching in terms of mentoring is an essential antecedent for an effective mentoring relationship as is the importance of trust in the relationship between the mentor and mentee (Stewart and Rigg, 2011). Roth (2006) argued that male managers in sectors like Investment Management tend to seek out protégées at the start of their career whom they felt mirrored themselves so inevitably it is often men mentoring men:

Male managers’ preferences for junior workers who resembled them led them to hire, mentor and assign the most advantageous job opportunities to younger men (p. 82).

The gender inequality in certain sectors like Investment Management and HRM raise questions concerning the availability and effectiveness of mentoring as a career development tool for women. Whilst there are more females in the HRM sector thus allowing for the availability of more female mentors, senior men and or non-senior women are often the only mentors and role models available in Investment Management. Neither option provides an accurate reflection of the hurdles and barriers for women nor provides appropriate supports. McDowell (2010) and Roth (2006) exemplified this through interviews with Wall Street women seeking progression. Roth (2006) concluded that:

For junior women in male-dominated areas, preferences for similar others made it more difficult to establish solid relationships with co-workers and managers. This in turn, limited their mentorship opportunities and network ties, thus reducing their opportunities and affecting their evaluations (p. 80).

Groysberg (2008) concurred indicating the lack of appropriate mentors and role models in male dominated sectors for women results in their missing out on “one of the most valuable services a mentor provides: access to a network of relationships” (p. 4).

Within the HRM domain, according to Churchard (2013) more women hold senior roles. Using CIPD data, she indicated that 58% of HR Director roles were held by women. Thus there is a greater availability of female mentors. The importance of mentoring coupled with the issue of matching an availability of appropriate mentors, places mentoring at the centre of the debate concerning career progression of women particularly in gender segregated sectors like HR and Investment Management.
Design/Methodology/Approach

This research concerns two professions which are polarized in their gender distribution, Investment Management and HRM in Ireland. Thirty-two participants, twenty-one female managers from HRM and eleven female managers from Investment Management were selected for interview. All participants in this study spanned a wide range of management roles across the two professional areas. The interviewees were selected from two broader studies, one which examined the factors underpinning career progression and development of women in Investment Management and the other which explored HR Managers and their role and development for same. The broader HRM sample comprised 26 managers, five of whom were male. In the case of Investment Management, the interviewees were selected from a sample which included 19 interviewees, 11 of whom were female managers and a further eight who were not managers.

Both studies used snowball sampling as the approach and both were underpinned by an interpretivist philosophical stance. As a consequence, the fusing of both datasets was appropriate. The studies investigated a number of issues including the role of the mentor from the perspective of the mentee and its influence, if any, on career progression. Within this research an interpretative approach was once again adopted. This facilitated in-depth exploration of the experiences and perceptions of female managers concerning their roles. A qualitative approach to the data collection, through in-depth semi-structured interviews was employed as the main research instrument. Thematic analysis using computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) (N-Vivo) was used to analyse the data. This allowed for a systematic review of interview data leading to the identification of themes. To assure anonymity pseudonyms are used for quotations from transcripts and IM is used to denote those from Investment Management and HRM, those from Human Resource Management.

Findings

The findings from this study indicated that for women in HRM mentoring as a resource was seen as an enabler to career progression and a means of learning to do their role, while in Investment Management interviewees, when discussing mentoring saw it as a limited support to career progression unless it was informal and voluntary on the part of the mentor. For those in Investment Management who cited mentoring as important, it was presented as important from the perspective of its absence being a deterrent, rather than its presence an enabler.

Particularly, at the early stages of career development, the adjustment of individuals to new roles, new organizations, more responsibility etc. are highly impacted by the methods of socialization adopted by the firm (Ramaswami et al., 2010). In order to gain insight into the necessary attributes and behaviours for socialization and hence progression within any firm, employees look to senior staff for guidance. Based on this study two overarching themes emerged from the analyses of the subjective views of participants regarding the contribution of mentors. Specifically, participants from both HRM and Investment Management discussed (1) the effectiveness of mentors and in particular formal versus informal mentoring and (2) the influence of male versus female mentors on career progression and development.
**Effectiveness of mentors**

It has traditionally been accepted that mentors and role models play an important role in the development of one’s career (see, for example, Okurame and Balogun, 2005; Eby et al., 2008; Sealy and Singh, 2010). The findings from this study suggested that the presence of mentors and indeed role models were important enablers in progression in both sectors.

In the Investment sector, the role of the mentor was seen as a significant advantage in developing one’s skills and ability and hence career prospects.

I definitely would think the Financial Services company that I worked in there was a [gender] mix but people would get placed especially if they had a mentor or way in (Belinda, IM).

For women seeking progression to front office roles, the presence of a mentor was cited as a particular enabler.

The Head of Small Caps was instrumental in me being hired. She is quite senior here, she would definitely have been a mentor (Rosa, IM).

Being mentored is really positive, being part of somebody’s successful team, being in with the right people, that’s all hugely positive particularly in terms of getting you to be able to express your initial ideas and knowing, its learning on the job basically — it will get you to the front office job (Caroline, IM).

Such findings are in line with Rowe and Crafford (2003) and Roth (2006) who highlighted the importance of mentors when seeking advancement to the trading floor and fund management suite. Equally the findings mirrored those of McDowell (1997) and Groysberg (2008) concerning the importance of being mentored by the ‘right person’. This accords further Gold, Thorpe and Mumford (2010) notion of a mentor acting as a ‘door opener’ (p. 249). This was also evident in the findings from the HRM Managers who described their mentors as role models who aided them in accessing types of work that would help them develop further.

… would have been fantastic because she would have introduced me to the world of strategic HR that I wouldn’t have been exposed to before because there was no element … of that here. So she opened the door … she would have opened the door and the doors remained open … (Amy, HRM).

I’ve been really lucky that I’ve had really good role models, as you know line managers who have been more than willing to help and give me projects and help me with those projects … (Orla, HRM).

Within HRM the importance of mentoring in terms of on the job learning and advice in terms of skill development and career progression was highlighted. Such benefits of mentoring were not highlighted within the Investment Management domain.

… particularly two people that I can think of have been very good and very instructive in guiding me as to what I should be doing from a career prospective and what I need to do I suppose to develop myself, and I would have taken their advice … (Amy, HRM).

… I found it very useful because really … just to get advice on career paths even on a very kind of practical level … (Ciara, HRM).

Oh brilliant you know I mean it’s really good to get some feedback and to know areas that you know you do need to develop and then be kind of confident in the areas that you are strongest in as well … (Orla, HRM).
The issue of whether mentoring was a formal or informal process came up for discussion among participants in Investment Management and HRM Management alike. Participants agreed that mentoring relationships which were informal in nature were exceptionally beneficial which is supported in the literature by Rowe and Crafford (2003). The various elements that mentoring encompassed and what constituted the role of a mentor was discussed by participants. The mentees perceived that mentoring not only included development opportunities and career advice but also what Paddison (2013) and Titleman (2016) emphasized — sponsorship. Again the notion of the ‘door opener’ as proposed by Gold, Thorpe and Mumford (2010) was highlighted (p. 249). This therefore points to an extension in the role of mentors beyond development to encompass the wider, particularly beneficial development of key relationships that can lead to career advancement in both sectors.

Assigning mentors — male versus female

The importance of matching female mentees to female mentors as well as the shortage of women in certain roles also arises within the interview findings. Such findings are in line with Pomeroy (2007). Within the HRM domain one participant outlined that the first manager she had, a female was the biggest influence on her career whilst another recognized that the female mentor she had, helped her develop to the role of manager:

… she would have been the first manager … particularly a HR person that I would have met or I suppose I wanted to emulate in a certain way … she probably would have been the biggest influence for me on my career (Ciara, HRM).

… it’s been having a particularly good mentor in terms of what I learnt from the HR manager in the xxxx, she’s extremely organized and to a point and very prideful in her job and best practice and that’s where I learnt it from (Tanya, HRM).

Within Investment Management, an overwhelming preference for male mentors was evident among all participants. Reasons cited included male mentor’s ability to see the big picture and allow mentees the space to grow develop and learn without feeling threatened.

I don’t know whether it’s a case they’ve [men] worked together for longer and they kind of support each other up through the ranks … They don’t see each other as much of a threat, I don’t know if it’s that or whether women tend to want to get in there and we want to get it sorted. Fellas are much more able to identify, there’s other ways to skin this (Pamela, IM).

However, while women expressed a preference for male mentors they equally felt it was important to have other women in senior positions acting as mentors in order to send a message that it was possible to reach the top. This is in line with the findings of Sealy (2009) who highlighted the ‘symbolic value’ of female role models for women in Investment Management (p. 6).

I think perhaps to include women, to have more women within these [front office] roles for a start would give a very good message to other women that are coming up in lower positions (Belinda, IM).

There needs to be mentors and role models. If there are women there it encourages more women to go into it (Rosa, IM).

Within HRM, albeit the majority of women were mentored by other women, for those who did have male mentors, they were also thought to be beneficial and no difference in terms of the effectiveness of mentors was highlighted.
Discussion

This study contributes to HRD practice by developing our understanding of the role of mentoring as a concept and also its practical application as a key development and career enhancing tool. There is limited research into the impact that mentoring has and indeed its usefulness (Stewart and Rigg, 2011) and this study draws on empirical evidence from HRM Managers and Investment Managers on the effectiveness and benefits of mentoring and thus contributes to research and the body of literature in this area. The findings have provided valuable insights into how mentoring is perceived by mentees in two very different sectors. Despite the differences in the gender balance of the sectors, a common perception of mentees was that mentoring went beyond just development and incorporated wider opportunity for exposure to useful projects and work experience.

In addition, and in line with the literature, this study revealed that mentoring has a positive effect on career progression, in particular in relation to networking, accessing information and people, career development advice and on the job learning. The topic of formal versus informal mentoring and in particular the issue of matching arose among participants which is in line with Stewart and Rigg (2011). The ‘right mentor’ was highlighted by participants and it emerged that informal mentoring was particularly useful in career progression and development. Within HRM, whilst few of the participants outlined a difficulty in finding a suitable mentor, the small number that did, used external sources. A number of the participants were also in international organizations hence the availability of suitable mentors went beyond the local domain and instead drew on the international pool of people thus giving the added advantage of developing global business acumen.

Within Investment Management matching arose as a particular concern with interviewees noting the difficulties in finding a suitable mentor and the sometimes unwillingness among senior staff who were being required or mandated to mentor. This is in line with the findings of McDowell (1997) and (2010) as well as Roth (2006) all of whom highlighted the absence of appropriate mentors in the sector and the resulting difficulties for women in negotiating their careers either with no mentor or inappropriate mentors.

The lack of appropriate mentors in Investment Management has many negative consequences for young women. In particular the issue of accessing networks, infiltrating the ‘male mafia’ and ‘boys club’ network was highlighted. For many the presence of a mentor to assist in accessing such networks which facilitate social capital accumulation were seen as essential for career progression (Aitchison, 1995: 30). These findings also accord with the literature concerning sponsorship and the essential role sponsors/mentors play in helping women access the right people and networks (Paddison, 2013; Titleman, 2016).

Alongside mentors and access to network, was the function of role models in career progression. Interestingly, while women agreed that women as role models in senior positions in order to ensure ‘proof of possibility’ was essential for career progression and advancement, those who had female mentors did not always have positive experiences. In fact, within Investment Management, there was an explicit preference for a male rather than female mentor and indeed line manager. The issue around the availability of female role models may be self-limiting/self-perpetuating as there are few women at the higher echelons in organizations thus continuing the potential barriers for other women to progress. This may be particularly difficult in the

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Investment Management sector whilst the more abundant availability of senior HRM females may encourage or enable more females to progress to the upper levels in organizations.

**Implications for Practice/Conclusion**

The introduction or use of mentoring in organizations has potential benefits for the mentees and there are implications in how organizations incorporate these, through either formal means or by encouraging the adoption of mentors on an informal basis. There are also implications for HRD practitioners in organizations to recognize that there is merit in more fluid approaches that can be taken to development, such as mentoring, particularly for career progression.

A number of challenges in the practical operation of mentoring do emerge with participants in Investment Management indicating a preference for male mentors yet acknowledging the need for female role models. The availability of suitable and willing mentors within the organization therefore may present difficulties for HRD professionals introducing or encouraging the adoption of mentoring for key groups. However, there may be merit in widening the potential pool of mentors to include the use of external mentors. The provision of mentoring through professional institutes could also be considered to overcome challenges around the availability of female mentors and indeed male mentors.

Another issue which emerged was the negative aspects of individuals being mandated as mentors through formal schemes. The preference for informal mentoring whilst overcoming the issues of mandated mentors, is not without some tensions given its capacity to marginalize individuals that are not known to senior managers or do not have access to them. This does not preclude the use of formal schemes as there is still merit in the use of mentoring as a development tool particularly for career progression. HRD practitioners also have the option to develop an elective approach within an organization which may overcome some of these challenges where mentors elect or volunteer themselves as mentors in a formal scheme and allows for mentees preferences of a male or female mentor where available.

The issue of organizational culture, whilst not specifically addressed in this paper, certainly will influence the fit for mentoring. Fostering a culture within the organization that recognizes the contribution of senior managers in developing more junior staff can come about through signals from the top, with leaders themselves acting as role models/mentors to their senior teams. This is particularly important within sectors such as Investment Management which are individualistic and performance — driven in nature and require clear signalling that commitment to mentoring is expected and commended. Such an approach may see mentoring organically emerge without the need for formal processes. However, for organizations that may be more process driven or where there is an absence of mentoring being informally adopted, it may be useful to include formal mentoring as a development tool as part of management development programmes. In particular those aimed at potential managers.

The importance of specialized development approaches such as mentoring may be particularly beneficial within male dominated areas like Investment Management. Whilst this study has focused on mentoring for women in two sectors, there may also be merit in it for other diverse groups within organizations and indeed other occupational sectors.
Note

1 The International Business Report is undertaken by Grant Thornton. It is a quarterly survey of global business. The survey data includes both public and private companies and extends across approximately 35 economies and over 10,000 business leaders annually.

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**The Authors**

Dr Caitriona Hughes holds a PhD from the University of Limerick and also has an MBS in Human Resource Strategies from Dublin City University. Her research areas focus on the changing roles in Human Resources and also include learning and development, talent development, and other HR related topics. She has previously worked in HR roles in a number of industries including senior level positions in HR. She moved to academia over 10 years ago and holds the role of Programme Director for the full-time MA in HRM and part-time Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in HRM as well as a Lecturer in HRM in the School of Business at the National College of Ireland (NCI). She is also a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Dr Corina Sheerin is a graduate of Trinity College Dublin where she obtained her doctorate. She also has an MA in Economics and Finance and a postgraduate diploma in Statistics. She is also a Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) holder. Her research interests include gender segregation in elite professions with particular emphasis on Finance. Corina’s research specifically addresses women’s experience in recruitment, progression and retention within Investment Management. She has almost 15 years’ experience in academia and currently holds the post of Programme Director for the MSc in Finance and lecturer in Finance in the School of Business at the National College of Ireland (NCI).
Exploring the Benefits of a Coach Development Process … on the Coach

Ruth Leggett, *Northumbria University, UK*
Joanne James, *Northumbria University, UK*

This paper examines the extent to which a coach development programme benefits the coach beyond the boundaries of their coaching interventions. Much coaching research focuses on the impact of coaching on the coachee and the organization. This small research project considers the impact on the coach. Alumni from a higher education coach development programme were invited to share their perspectives on their post programme coaching and organizational experiences via focus groups. Our findings suggest that a learning process that encourages self-awareness, reflexive conversations and opportunities to reflect and consider one’s coaching identity, enable coaches to apply their learning across a range of organizational scenarios, beyond their role as an internal coach. Organizational coaches report greater levels of confidence in their generic leadership roles and being perceived differently by others in their organizations, as a result of the coach development process. This study will be of interest to HRD practitioners considering an investment in developing internal coaches and to those involved in designing and delivering coach development programmes as the importance of teaching beyond coaching models and theory is demonstrated from this study. It may also help inform potential coach trainees considering embarking on a coach development programme, as the benefits can permeate all aspects of organizational performance.

Introduction

The emergence of coaching, both as an area of professional practice and the rapid growth of the coaching industry, is widely recognized in the literature (Grant, 2012). At the same time the view that research examining the impact of coaching is also required in order to validate the contribution of coaching to individual and organizational well-being and performance is also shared (Pousa and Mathieu, 2015). Whilst there are studies that evaluate coaching interventions (Pousa and Mathieu, 2015), most consider the outcomes for the coachee and the organization and there is very little focus on the coach (Van Nieuwerburgh and Tong, 2012). Many previous studies of coaching in organizations make a call for a more holistic approach to evaluating the impact of coaching to improve our understanding of whether coaching actually makes a difference to leadership behaviour as well as other individual and organizational outcomes (Grant, 2012). A study by DeMeuse et al. (2009) found that, in terms of identifying the outcomes of coaching, most coaching evaluation methods are based purely on perception of the recipient of coaching as opposed to the full range of positive outcomes possible through coaching. Previous studies that examine the impact of coaching on the coach include Grant (2008), who found that through participating in personal life coaching over a 10-12 week period in parallel with participation in a coach training programme, trainee coaches reported reduced anxiety, increased goal attainment, enhanced cognitive hardiness and higher levels of personal insight. Van Nieuwerburgh and Tong (2012) also found that students involved in coaching others in their educational setting,
reported benefits such as better study skills, increased emotional intelligence and improved communication skills.

There are also very few studies evaluating the impact of coach development programmes; whilst there is recognition that the continued growth of the industry is dependent on the quality of such provision (Grant, 2008). Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) make a call for more to be done to understand whether working as a coach affects leadership competences, resilience or the emotional intelligence of the coach. The CIPD also highlights the need for future research on coaching to understand how coaching contributes to line manager effectiveness (CIPD, 2012) and Gray et al. (2015) affirm the importance of coach training in their study on coach identity. Against this background of current research on coaching, this paper sets out to explore the impact of an HE institution’s coach development process on the individual coach. It seeks to answer the following research question: what are the benefits of a coach development process to the coach?

The Northumbria Coach Development Programme

There is some debate in the literature about whether coaching as a practice differs from organizational development and Human Resource Development (Hamlin, Ellinger and Beattie, 2009) or whether indeed the skills and practice of coaching are largely similar to those of an effective manager (Ladyshewsky, 2010). It is widely recognized that the practice of coaching overlaps with many other development interventions; Hamlin, Ellinger and Beattie (2006) consider whether coaching is in fact core to management effectiveness. This is compounded by the fact that there are many different coaching operating modes from external consultant as coach, internal coach, line manager as coach, and mentor as coach to name a few. The case for a professional identity for coaching is also discussed in the literature (Gray et al., 2015), but to date, there is no one professional association for coaches.

Our rationale was to design and deliver a programme suitable for aspiring coaches that come from a variety of industry sectors (academia, health and a range of other public sector and private sector businesses) and a range of professional backgrounds (HRM/HRD professionals, general managers and independent organizational consultants). The programme is designed to help the trainee coach navigate their way through the theoretical underpinning of coaching, whilst considering how they will integrate coaching into their field of professional practice. The programme does not promote one ideal model of coaching, preferring to offer a range of approaches, tools and techniques; enabling the trainee coach to find their own eclectic approach that fits with their future coach role and context.

The learning and development process

The coach development programme draws on five fundamental developmental processes, reflective practice, experiential and social learning, and developing self-awareness and coach identity. The programme design aims to align learning approaches used on the programme with those that are of relevance in coaching practice; namely experiential learning and transformational learning.

A core component of the programme is the opportunity for participants to engage in coaching practice, recognized by Clutterbuck (2010) as key to a coach development process. The coaching practice sessions make use of Kolb’s (2015) experiential learning process and are embedded into the programme design. During practice sessions trainee coaches are encouraged to experiment
with new approaches and techniques and through a structured reflection process, draw conclusions about their use of different coaching methods and think through implications for their future practice. This learning approach is also aligned with coaching itself, as being coached is also an experiential learning process (Cox et al., 2010). In addition, the trainee coach learns from the experience of being coached; thereby developing a deeper awareness and empathy with the coachee’s perspective, when working as a coach. The coaching practice sessions also make use of social learning (Bandura, 1971). Reflecting teams learn how to operationalise a range of coaching approaches, through observation and reflection on practice. The trainee coaches can then apply and contextualize these observed techniques and approaches in their own coaching practice, enhancing their ‘toolkit’ of coaching methods and techniques.

The learning process encourages reflective discourse between the peer observers of the coaching practice, discussing and reflecting on their responses to and perspectives on the coaching conversation they have observed, whilst not making judgements about what was ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ about the coaching. This reflective discourse, where judgement is suspended until a new determination can be made, is fundamental to transformative learning (Mezirow, 1997) and can lead to clearer understanding (Cox et al., 2010). Using this learning method supports coaches in their work with coachees, where different perspectives can be explored without judgement, as a basis for getting a deeper understanding of a particular situation, before considering future choices of thought or action.

Critical reflective practice is encouraged throughout and beyond the programme. Using reflective practice frameworks such as Moon (2004), trainee coaches are required to record their reflections on their coaching sessions, examine their practice from a range of perspectives and begin to recognize patterns and themes in their work as a coach. By making sense and drawing meaning from their experiences, coaches are able to reflect on their own practice and the coaching relationship with the client. By embedding this practice, coaches become accustomed to reflecting and can enhance their capability, as time spent reflecting on how to behave in future situations allows for more options to be identified and greater flexibility (Hay, 2007). This approach supports continuous learning on behalf of the coach.

An underpinning philosophy of the programme is to ‘make the familiar strange and ultimately the strange familiar’ (Bolton, 2010: 3). Trainee coaches are encouraged to break with their mind-sets; challenge their assumptions; surface their deeply held beliefs and values and explore their frames of reference in order to generate choices on future courses of action. This approach relates to Mezirow’s theory of transformational learning (1997). It supports coaches in their work as they will at times be endeavouring to challenge the coaches’ assumptions and frames of references, in order to bring about transformational learning in the coachee (Cox et al., 2010).

**Developing self-awareness and authenticity in coaches**

As practising coaches, and as those charged with developing coaches, our belief is that for coaches to be effective in their developmental work with others, solely learning the skills and process of coaching is insufficient. In order to engage in trusting coaching relationships, coaches require a deep understanding of themselves, a strong foundation from which to act and a conviction about who they are as a coach. For this reason, a number of interventions designed to develop self-awareness and a sense of coach identity are embedded in the programme. The programme uses a personality psychometric which builds confidence in the coach as they understand their preferred
ways of operating across a range of situations and heightens their awareness of how this might affect their coaching style and how they respond to different coachee personality preferences.

Coaching is a development approach that aims to facilitate greater self-understanding and self-belief in the coachee. In developing coaches to facilitate this in others, the programme also devotes considerable time to supporting the trainee coach in their own journey to discover their true self. Activities which enable coaches to be more consciously aware of their beliefs, values, emotions and motivators, and encouraging them to develop self-regulation, are essential elements of this coach development process. Conceptualizing identity as the notion of ‘who a particular person is’ (Watson, 2002: 107), is considered at various points during the programme. This is of significance for many of the trainee coaches as most are building on an existing professional identity, adding coaching to perhaps an already established organizational role (such as line manager, HR/D professional) or existing suite of business consultant services, and some are embarking on a new professional route as an independent coach. It is, therefore, important that they consider what this change will mean to them, both in terms of self-identity, (the individual’s own notion of self) and a social-identity (the notion others have of who the person is) (Watson, 2002: 107).

Working with coaches to develop a heightened sense of self-awareness during the programme, coaches are supported in becoming more consciously aware of their inner voice when immersed in coaching conversations. Listening to and acknowledging this inner dialogue, enables coaches to be reflexive in the moment, using their intuition in working with others and noticing what is going on beneath the surface of a conversation. This deeper awareness is also critical, in order that the coach can surface their unconscious biases and motivations that underpin their behaviour (Lee, 2003); enabling the coach to become more aware of the influence of self in the coaching conversation.

In considering the essential elements of a coach development process and the approaches to learning that are seen as effective, the approaches discussed above have been acknowledged as being important in coaching by previous studies of coaching. Engaging in coaching practice is seen as a critical element in learning to be a coach (Clutterbuck, 2010) and Grant (2008) emphasizes the importance of experiencing being coached. Clutterbuck advocates exposure to different philosophies and perspectives of coaching (2010) and Turner (2010) considers the importance of psychological awareness in coaching. The use of critical reflective practice is recognized as important by Clutterbuck (2010). In examining the role of coach identity, Moore and Koning (2016) use narratives of adult learners on an academic coach development programme to argue that there is mediating role for relationality and reflexivity in making sense of identity.

**Research Design**

The research was conducted during an alumni event where participants were invited to engage in a number of activities designed to promote ongoing learning and development in a supportive network. The inquiry element of the event comprised four one-hour focus groups conducted to elicit dialogue exploring the experiences of participating in a coach development programme.

Focus groups were selected as an appropriate method of conducting the research, given their alignment to social learning activities experienced during the programme which emphasized the benefits of learning through dialogue and the sharing of multiple perspectives to achieve deeper
understanding of the issues (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis, 2011). This method aligns with our belief that knowledge is socially constructed. It supported our objectives to create a mutually beneficial research experience in that the participants developed deeper appreciation of their own experience through the communal telling of their stories and as such this process would support their ongoing development as coaches (Steyaert and Bouwen, 2004).

The researchers comprised four members of academic staff (two of whom are the authors of this paper), all with intimate knowledge of the coaching programme and experience of working as professional coaches. As such this background identifies us as insider-researchers (Cunliffe and Karunanayake, 2013) with their own experiences of the topics under investigation and an existing relationship with the participants as teachers on the programme. In line with our programme philosophy we maintained a stance of collaboration as opposed to any notion of elitist expert researchers. As such we see our research as “intersubjective, in which all are participants in constructing meaning” (Cunliffe, 2003: 997).

The sample

Twenty-four alumni participated in the research, three males and twenty-one females. As the sample was based on volunteers participating in an evening event we did not have control over the gender balance of the participants involved and recognize this is a limitation within the research design. The participants coaching experience since attending the programme ranged from one month to seven years and comprised a variety of coach roles from independent coaches, internal organizational coaches, to line manager as coach. The research team were interested in these different ‘contextual categories’ of coach so the focus groups were made up of three groups of organizational coaches (line manager as coach, HRM/HRD professional as coach and internal coach) and one group comprising independent coaches. This paper concerns the outcomes emerging from the organizational coaches’ groups.

A facilitator’s guide, including standardized questions was devised by the research team and all discussions were audio recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were sent to participants for approval and all contributions were anonymized. The analysis and findings below focus on outcomes to a specific open question asked in all focus groups; “what was the impact of the course?”.

Analysis of the data

Analysis of the qualitative data provided rich detail on the benefits of engaging in the coach development programme and subsequent experience as a coach. Thematic analysis of the data followed the phased approach as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). There were a total of 136 answers in response to the question: “What was the impact of the course?”. The responses were coded and categorized using an inductive approach and three unexpected themes emerged and which are discussed in more detail below.

Findings

Our findings reflect anticipated and unanticipated outcomes in the form of responses by the coaches to the question “What was the impact of the course?”. Anticipated outcomes focus on describing gaining competence through practical skills such as listening and confidence with
the coaching process. The impact of coaching within their organizations support the findings of previous studies and emphasize the impact on goal attainment, resilience and workplace well-being (Grant et al., 2009), self-efficacy within management and leadership roles of the coachees, (Baron and Morin, 2010) and driving organizational change (Rock and Donde, 2008).

However, it is the unexpected findings that are of interest in this study. Alumni from the organizational coaches’ focus groups reported changes to their practice and behaviour in the wider domains of their roles as well as in their work as coaches.

**Enhanced skills across a wide range of organizational scenarios**

Many of the alumni responded to the question by talking about the way in which they had used the learning from the programme to adapt their approach to others in the organization in a more generic way in their substantive roles in organizations, rather than specifically in their role as a coach. They discussed being more adaptable, flexible and prepared to challenge on issues:

- Personally I’ve become more outcome focused in my thinking, more confident, like I said I can challenge people more (Respondent 6).
- I wasn’t afraid to be up as a leader and also because the organization noticed maybe a bit of a difference in me (Respondent 5).

They mention having more techniques and skills in their interactions with others:

- how I act towards people and how I react to people and I think it’s given me a lot more technique and skill in talking to people (Respondent 8).

and report approaching work situations differently:

- it changed the way I interacted with my team but I think it also changed the way I interacted with some of the senior leaders in xxx, the types of conversations I started having with a lot of different managers (Respondent 3).

These findings suggest that alumni have employed the skills of coaching such as listening, challenging, and providing feedback across a broader range of organizational scenarios and this is related to the debate in the literature about whether coaching skills are indeed the core of managerial effectiveness. Perhaps by focusing on and developing these skills during the programme, alumni have found that these enhanced abilities are giving rise to greater managerial effectiveness. Similarly, Ladyshewsky (2010) research on ‘the manager as coach’, supports the view that employee coaching is in fact a core managerial skill and that it can have a positive impact on organizational effectiveness. In addition, Hamlin, Ellinger and Beattie (2006) suggest that managers and leaders that are regarded as effective have coaching embedded into the heart of their practice. Therefore, perhaps by honing coaching skills and practice, we are also supporting managers in becoming more effective in their general practice.

Through using their coaching skills across a wider range of organizational situations, the alumni indicate that they are more effective in their roles generally. Specifically, for example, Respondent 5 discusses how they felt differently about their leadership competence. These findings also resonate with the research of Rock and Donde (2008) who discuss the benefit of developing coaching skills. They argue that the benefit goes beyond formal coaching relationships, as coaching helped coaches change the way they operated in a number of managerial situations.
such as running meetings, organizing work and relating differently with their peers and team. These findings may also respond to Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) who call for more to be done to understand whether working as a coach affects leadership competences, resilience or emotional intelligence of the coach.

Noticing that they are interacting differently with others in the organization, that they have become more outcome focused in their thinking (a noticeable change for respondent 6), and changing the way they react to others, suggest a more conscious and flexible approach in their work relationships with others. We consider that this may be attributable to the way in which alumni have embedded reflective practice into their work, enabling them to learn from past interactions and scenarios, identify a range of options of how they might respond and therefore achieve greater flexibility in their approach as advocated by Hay (2007).

**Increased confidence**

In addition, participants reveal that they are using their increased confidence from the programme across a wider range of organizational situations. For example:

I think, within the organization, it’s made me a much stronger person; much more confident, I challenge a lot, a lot more than I did and that was only to the positive (Respondent 1).

I have had a job promotion and I think that was partly because I had more confidence and wanted to get up there and realized I wasn’t afraid to be up as a leader and also because the organization noticed maybe a bit of a difference in me (Respondent 5).

I think it’s given me the confidence that I’m quite a good coach and I’m doing — slowly working with more — slowly more senior people (Respondent 4).

So actually the value of the course, apart from what I learned, obviously, was very much for myself and my own practice, it gave me the confidence (Respondent 9).

References to being ‘a stronger person’ and ‘not being ‘afraid to be up as a leader’ and ‘challenge people more’ implies greater confidence and not solely in their role as a coach. By providing a learning environment on the programme that enables coaches to discover more about their values and beliefs and raising their self-awareness through personality profiling, personal reflection and reflective discourse with peers, we aim to give the trainee coaches a self-understanding that enables them to operate as a coach with a strong sense of who they are as a coach and a person. The connection between self-awareness and self-belief is well researched, from studies on developing self-awareness in leaders and managers, we learn that to build trust, authenticity is key and that success in leadership is dependent on self-awareness and self-regulation (George et al., 2007). The findings suggest that through this process of self-discovery and developing a deeper connection with their authentic self, organizational coaches have become more self-assured, and this has increased their confidence in their more generic roles as managers in their organizations.

**A new identity**

Another emerging and somewhat unexpected finding in the data was that of a change to, or development of, a professional identity that went beyond the role of coach. Many stated that they saw themselves differently as a result of engaging in the coach development process and
practising as an organizational coach.

it’s given me a new language and a new way of being that I certainly practice differently, I’m a different person to when I first started on the course in terms of particularly leadership (Respondent 2).

I wasn’t afraid to be up as a leader and also because the organization noticed maybe a bit of a difference in me (Respondent 5).

I think it had a massive effect on my life and the way I was dealing with my life. You know, all of a sudden I was thinking about things in a different way and making different decisions, so personally it was a big change for me (Respondent 5).

people that know I have been on the course come and ask me really random questions — their expectations of me are completely different to what they — before … (Respondent 10).

The alumni report the programme has had an impact on what they do:

I was thinking about things in a different way and making different decisions (Respondent 5),

how they do it:

I practice things differently (Respondent 2).

and the way in which they view themselves:

a new way of being … personally it was a big change for me (Respondent 2).

An unprompted articulation of this as a way of answering the question on the impact of the programme, suggests that alumni were really noticing that their own notion of self (Watson, 2002) has been changed as a result of experiencing the coach development process.

The alumni also highlight that the notion that others have of them as a person, their social identity (Watson, 2002) has also changed:

their expectations of me are completely different (Respondent 10)

and that:

the organization noticed maybe a bit of a difference in me (Respondent 5).

Their perception is that colleagues in their organizations appear to be responding to them in a different way. As discussed earlier, the programme affords opportunities for trainee coaches to explore their changing identity as a coach and the way in which they intend to integrate coaching into their professional practice. In this way they are conscious of the concept of identity as a result of the learning process and are therefore perhaps paying more attention to this as their role is changing in their organizational contexts.

These findings may also relate the way in which the learning process encourages transformational learning through challenging coaches to explore their assumptions and frames of reference (Mezirow, 1997), largely about themselves. Participants, having journeyed through the process of learning and deeper awareness emerge changed in some way and are more aware of these changes.
Conclusions

Of particular interest to us is a significant impact of the learning process on the coaches beyond the boundary of their coaching interventions, in particular within their wider leadership roles. Participants describe a greater confidence in taking on different roles in their organizations, having a different sense of their organizational identity and improved interpersonal skills, enabling them to adopt more flexible approaches. Our findings suggest that creating a programme that encourages self-awareness and reflexive conversations and opportunities to reflect and consider their coach identity, supports behavioural change and learning that is applicable in a wider organizational context.

Implications for HRD practice

As HRD professionals seek to build adaptive and agile workforces (CIPD, 2014), able to embrace uncertainty, there is a depth of evidence that coaching can play a critical role in supporting employees through organizational change. Additionally, though, and in the specific context of this research, widespread opportunities for employees to engage in coaching offers further organizational benefits. It equips employees, who have become trained coaches with the capability to continue to learn and be open to embracing new challenges due to their enhanced psychological awareness, ability for self-reflection and increased confidence.

These findings will be of interest to HRD professionals and organizations considering an investment in developing in house coaches as the wider benefits can permeate all aspects of performance that in turn, contribute positively to an organization. Given that conceptualizations of HRD have much in common with conceptualizations of coaching within organizations (Hamlin, Ellinger and Beattie, 2009) with both aiming to have a positive impact on personal growth, learning and change to the benefit of both the individual and the organization, we propose a greater integration in thinking about coach development programmes — not as a stand-alone skill building endeavours for a select few in an organization but as an integrated culture change intervention that has an impact on the confidence, capability and leadership potential of all staff in a wide range of contexts beyond the coaching room. Further we propose that the developmental activities of reflective practice, experiential and social learning along with developing self-awareness and identity work, strengthen contributions of the participants in their wider organizational roles.

We also consider that these findings may be of interest to those considering embarking on a coach development programme. It seems that as providers of coach development, we could raise awareness of these wider benefits to potential coach trainees. Finally, we believe our findings challenge organizations to go beyond coach training that is focused on primarily on models and tools. We argue for coach training that is transformational for the coaches themselves, role modelling the types of transformational learning we hope all coaches seek to evoke in others.

Limitations and future research

This study examined a small cohort of coach alumni from one specific coach development programme. The researchers are also the programme delivery team, and are therefore stakeholders in the process and are known to the alumni; this may have influenced the views put forward in the focus groups. Whilst this means that findings can only be tentative; the topic warrants further in depth investigation.
References


### The Authors

Joanne James is Head of Corporate and Executive Development at Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University, where she leads a team of academic and professional support staff, creating and delivering bespoke leadership and executive development interventions for senior leaders and managers in a range of client organizations. Joanne also works as an executive coach and has a particular interest in enabling leaders to create high performing organizations through authentic leadership, team development and creating a coaching culture. Joanne’s research interests include leader identity and leader development through developing reflective practice; executive coaching particularly coach development and team coaching. Joanne’s doctoral study involves utilising autoethnography to explore the practice of team coaching.

Ruth Leggett is a Senior Lecturer in the Corporate and Executive Development Department at Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University, where she leads the provision of Postgraduate Coaching programmes and contributes to the development and delivery of a range of other leadership development programmes and bespoke interventions. Ruth also works as an executive coach and runs the North East Association for Coaching Co Coaching Forum. Ruth’s research interests include work based learning and development; particularly the promotion of reflective practice in managers and evaluating the impact of work based learning and development on the individual and the organization. She is currently completing a coaching supervision qualification at Oxford Brookes University.
The Impact of the Economic Crisis upon Human Resource Development (HRD): Evidence from two Greek Banks

Fotios V. Mitsakis, Nottingham Trent University, UK
Dr Eleni Aravopoulou, School of Management and Social Sciences, St Mary’s University, UK

This study investigates the nature and changes of Human Resource Development (HRD) in two Greek banks under the challenging context of the economic crisis. It examines the latter’s impact upon HRD as it was perceived from different stakeholders and through a pre and ongoing-crisis assessment approach.

The study draws upon qualitative research data from two case study banking organizations in Greece, reporting on 76 semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders (HR staff, Bank Managers, employees) undertaken in 2014, six years after the fall of Lehman Brothers.

The study contributes to academic knowledge as being the first empirical research offering a unique perspective through examining changes of HRD within a specific industry and national context (Greek banks) against a backdrop of an economic downturn. Its findings also raise important questions for HRD professionals, in both academia and practice, in relation to claims and aspirations which prevail in respect of HRD and organizational change and business transformation.

Introduction

The recent economic crisis, the deepest the world has experienced since the stock market crash in 1930s, has led to a liquidity shortfall of its banking system (Soriano, 2011). It dates back to September 2008 with the fall of Lehman Brothers which led to many solvency problems within most financial institutions across the globe (Otero-Iglesias, 2015). The crisis has mostly been concentrated on the financial systems of US and Europe, yet it also heavily affected most of the developed and emerging economies, including Greece (Oyeavaar et al., 2016). Although such an economic hardship did not affect all EU countries with the same intensity, its aftermaths were almost identical to all EU member states (EC, 2012). Yet, the particularity of the current crisis is that it combines a financial crisis originated in the largest world economy (US), coupled with a global downturn (Soriano, 2011).

From a sociological perspective, Knight (2011: 155) defines an economic crisis as: “a signifying period of social change or instability that evokes feelings of fear, panic and danger amongst organizational members”. Either from an organizational or sociological perspective, an economic crisis can be viewed as a signifying period of change and/or instability which can draw the negative reaction of an organization’s stakeholders, and thus create potential threats for a firm (Mitsakis, 2014a; 2014b). Drawing upon these definitions, we can highlight HR’s (HRD’s):
potential significance in offering strategic interventions which can diminish such feelings as they can play a key role in helping to lead and manage individual and organizational change.

The initial aftermaths of the economic crisis were identified through increased unemployment rates within most EU members owing to extensive lay-offs, and the creation of new labour regimes (Simosi et al., 2015). Unemployment rates began to rise in 2008, first in Spain, then in Ireland, the UK, Greece and the rest of Europe respectively (Teague and Roche, 2013; European Commission, 2012). Most organizations (including banks) were forced either to restructure and/or to downsize their workforce or to place their employees under short-term employment contracts, mainly for cost-efficient purposes (Lallement, 2011). In most cases, such actions led to downsizing-related illness/stress (Teague and Roche, 2013), and breaches of the psychological contract between employer and employee (Adam and Papatheodorou, 2015). HR departments were widely accused of this psychological break-down, owing to their extensive retrenchment implementations (Milic, 2013). However, organizations had to take such actions in order to ensure their survival.

Looking specifically at Greece in the immediate post 2008 period, the Greek economy managed to avoid serious shocks. However, it was inevitable for the country to be heavily affected owing to its relatively weak industrial capacity and due to a large share of its “shadow economy” which is estimated to comprise 25%-30% of Gross Domestic Product (Kouretas and Vlamis, 2010). The economic crisis in Greece has turned into a social and political crisis as well, with many reporting that Greece is spiralling into the kind of decline which both the US and Germany endured during the Great Depression (Economou et al., 2013). The majority of organizations have been negatively affected, with the crisis’ impact evidenced through a record unemployment rate, decreased wage levels, the closure of many businesses, and an increasing number of people facing social exclusion through wage inequalities (Karamessini, 2015; Dedoussopoulos et al., 2013).

Since the events of 2008, the banking sector in Greece has found itself “in the middle of a financial storm” (Rapanos, 2012). Yet, the sector remains critical to managing a successful exit to the recession, and hence the need for sufficient banks not only to survive but also to re-discover and re-generate effective organizational performance. Such a scenario indeed provides a tough challenge to the value proposition of HRD. Pre-crisis, the banking sector enjoyed a reputation as a leader in workforce development, yet ongoing recession has impacted upon HRD in many ways within most organizations. Thus, the focus of the research reported upon in this paper is to address the following research question: “How has HRD been affected by the economic crisis compared to its pre-crisis state?”. It reports on the findings of research undertaken in two Greek banks in 2014, six years after the fall of Lehmann Brothers.

The paper unfolds as follows. First, some context is discussed in relation to HRD and the ongoing debate about its value proposition and its positioning within organizations. The methodology adopted for the research is then reported before findings are discussed in relation to key groups within the two banks. A concluding discussion examines the extent to which HRD in the two banks may have suffered a setback to its credibility and influence rather than stepping up to the challenge of helping to lead the organizations through these difficult times.

**HRD in Organizations**

The constantly changing business and economic environments have challenged organizations to understand the vital role of their HRD interventions as a fundamental process of leveraging
their workforce’s knowledge, capabilities, adaptability and efficiency. One of the most pressing challenges facing HRD within an organizational context is its value proposition. In part, the widespread adoption of the term HRD, as distinct from training, and initially as a sub set of HRM, can be seen as an attempt to enhance the status, power and influence of the function in relation to its contribution to organizational effectiveness and success. Debate is ongoing as to whether the focus of HRD is organizational performance or organizational learning (Lee, 2015). The ultimate question remains one of the extent to which HRD can contribute in a meaningful and significant way to the success of organizations in whatever market or sector they operate within. Similar debates surround strategic HRD (SHRD); the extent to which its interventions aim at improving individual and organizational performance (see, for example: Hughes and Gosney, 2016; Alagaraja et al., 2015). The claim of SHRD might be that only if the function is the very heart of decision making within the organization can it fulfill the much used phrase “people are an organization’s greatest assets”. For instance, Garavan (1991) and McCracken and Wallace (2000) argued that whilst HRD may seek ‘integration’ with organizational mission and goals, the role of SHRD is ‘proactive’ in both shaping and responding to corporate strategy.

Much of the debate about what HRD, or indeed SHRD, is and should achieve has been conducted in academia. A more practically oriented construction/conceptualization, is the business partner model (Ulrich and Brockbank, 2008; Ulrich, 1997) and one promoted by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, one of the principal professional bodies worldwide for HR and people development. The central proposition of the “business partner” notion is that the HRD function and its professionals operate as a ‘partner’ alongside the various business units, and as an agent to help lead and facilitate change within organizations. In principle, this means that HRD have a key leadership role, working in collaboration with other senior figures to help determine the vision and direction of the organization through its value-added and risk reduction capacity (Mitsakis, 2014c). The context is invariably one of organizational growth and development rather than retrenchment or survival. This said, James and Wooten (2013) argue that through attaining a more strategic orientation, HRD could allow organizations to enhance their operational competencies in overseeing emergencies, and eventually to make them comprehend the fundamentals of crisis management. Further, it can help them to gain the appropriate knowledge and wisdom through coping with an emergency, and thus to improve their organizational responses to future events (Haslinda, 2009).

The evidence base for HRD’s contribution has lagged well behind the rhetoric and academic debate. Gibb (2011) argues that the empirical link between HRD and organizational success, what he calls “the quantitative key to SHRD”, has yet to be demonstrated consistently. Hamlin (2016) further notes that whilst most HRD practitioners are, or wish to become involved as strategic partners (particularly with respect to helping them bring about effective and beneficial organizational change), the contribution that HRD can make remains contested. The author further argues that many managers regard initiatives associated with HRD as an undesirable cost that can only be afforded when profits and/or funding are plentiful rather than as an investment which the organization can ill afford to make in the toughest of times (ibid, p. 9).

Hamlin’s work is important in two respects. First, it raises questions about the necessary expertise and capabilities for HRD to operate as a business partner. This is an important but under-researched field of enquiry (ibid). Holden and Griggs (2012), for example, argue that effective use of power and influence may not be evident, nor easily acquired, in the capabilities
of many HRD practitioners. Secondly, it highlights that perceptions held about HRD are a critical factor in the reality of the practice of HRD. In the words of Bowen and Ostroff (2004), for HR systems to lead to desired performance, they must elicit clear and shared perceptions of the work climate and of the behaviours that management expects, supports and rewards. Their study further suggested that HR outcomes depend on employee perceptions (ibid). Building on such work, research from the Center for Advanced Human Resource Studies (2011) found that in reality the same HR practice is often regarded differently by different employees, even within the same firm. Yet, the study concluded that, in most cases, the effect is the same; if employees feel they are being valued, they respond more positively, whether or not the HR practice in question is actually, by management’s definition, a “quality” HR practice (ibid). The significance of such understanding is that the perceptions held of HRD, and of the function, are a key part of the reality of what happens by way of practice and outcomes of that practice.

The research reported upon in this paper is located firmly within the ongoing debate about HRD’s value proposition. More specifically it sought to generate empirical evidence about HRD in the “toughest of times” (Hamlin, 2016). Its focus is the impact of the financial crisis upon HRD in two organizations and in a country particularly affected by it. Thus, the paper aims to explore not only how different groups within two banks now perceive HRD, post-crash but also in times of ongoing turbulence and trading difficulties.

**Methodology**

Qualitative research evidence was secured through a case study research strategy and the employment of semi-structured interviews with HR staff, bank managers, and employees in order to allow for a multi-hierarchical analysis to be carried out. With regards to the latter, the researcher was able to achieve an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. A two case study research strategy could also offer a complete picture of the entire banking sector and the impact of the economic crisis upon HRD. Furthermore, the logic behind choosing the specific two banking organizations lies in the fact that they are two of the largest private-owned banking corporations within the sector, and the most interesting ones in terms of their establishment, operational presence and structure, strategic expansion and change over time. Furthermore, they were the most actively involved within the restructuring phase of the banking sector through the latest business amalgamations. At the same time, they are also interesting because of a few slight differences in regard to their HR structures, their training and development approach, and their overall expansion and growth strategies.

The qualitative research was undertaken in 2014 (July-September), and involved 76 interview participants (38 from each case respectively — Table 1). The researcher approached only those individuals employed for more than 6-7 years (purposive sampling) from their organization in order to ensure that they could offer their retrospective perspectives. At the same time, all participants were asked to reflect upon the current state of HRD so as to examine to what extent HRD has changed or not owing to the economic crisis. Furthermore, when more participants were required, the researcher asked the existing ones to introduce him to other colleagues (snowball sampling) so as to increase his sample size in order to reach a saturation point. Both techniques further allowed the researcher to increase the reliability and validity of the research design. Finally, key themes of the interview focused upon participants’ perceptions of HRD/SHRD.
A large majority of the interviews were conducted in Greek, and then they were translated into English. All interviews followed a before-and-present investigation design. That allowed the researcher to capture and evaluate changes to HRD by comparing his research data through a pre and in-crisis assessment. Research data was also carefully transcribed, and grouped under specific sections following a thematic analysis approach of pre-determined key themes.

### Interviewees’ Map

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewees’ Map</th>
<th>Bank Group A (13)</th>
<th>Bank Group B (10)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HR Staff (23)</td>
<td>HR Director (1)</td>
<td>HR Director (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Training and Development (T&amp;D) Manager (1)</td>
<td>T&amp;D Manager (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HR Officers (5)</td>
<td>HR Officers (4)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HR Assistants (3) &amp; HR Administrators (3)</td>
<td>HR Assistants (2) &amp; HR Administrators (2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Managers (21)</td>
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<td>Bank Group A (10)</td>
<td>Branch Managers (8)</td>
<td>Branch Managers (8)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>IT Manager (1)</td>
<td>IT Specialist (1) and IT Manager (1)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Retail Loans Manager (1)</td>
<td>retail Banking Officer (1)</td>
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<td>Employees (32)</td>
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<td>Bank Group A (15)</td>
<td>Branch Network (10)</td>
<td>Branch Network (11)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Corporate Departments (5)</td>
<td>Corporate Departments (6)</td>
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Table 1: Interviewees’ Map

### An overview of the case study banking organizations

“Case A” is a privately-owned banking institution with national and international presence, comprised of almost 20,000 people within its approximately 1100 branches and other corporate divisions. “Case B” employs over 22,000 people within its domestic and international operational branches (1500). Although significant similarities can be identified between them (e.g. ownership, operational presence, unionized workforce), a few nuances can also be highlighted in regard to their training budgets, financial performance, training-man hours and benefits etc. (Table 2).

Both banks offer their services to national and international markets. Both are also the largest banking organizations within the Greek banking sector and the most involved within the latest business amalgamations/sector restructuring. Yet, “Case B” seems to be more effective in terms of its operating revenues (almost twice that of “Case A”). We can also report on “Case B” having a higher number of branches and a larger workforce. The training budget, and the training-man hours spend on average per employee in “Case B”, are also higher than those of “Case A”. Based on these figures, it is possible to draw upon some evidence that the former places greater emphasis on its HRD initiatives than the latter, and that it could be described as more training-intensive than its counterpart.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Case A</th>
<th>Case B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational Presence</td>
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<td>National &amp; International</td>
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<td>Revenues</td>
<td>€1.58 bn</td>
<td>€3.48 bn</td>
</tr>
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<td>Operational Expenses</td>
<td>€880 m</td>
<td>€1.64 bn</td>
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<td>Personnel Expenses</td>
<td>€410 m</td>
<td>€740 m</td>
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<tr>
<td>Branches</td>
<td>1100</td>
<td>1500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>19,000</td>
<td>22,500</td>
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<td>Unionised Manpower</td>
<td>Yes (limited bargaining power)</td>
<td>Yes (limited bargaining power)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Training Budget</td>
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<td>Worlds Best Internet Banks</td>
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<td>Best Consumer Internet Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Best Consumer Internet Bank</td>
<td>Best in Mobile Banking and</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Website Design in Europe</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Key features of the case study organizations

Research Findings: “Case A”

The HR view

Reflecting on the role and activity of HR before the crisis and currently, there is evident ambiguity in how the HR function has been affected. One strand of response sought to defend HR/HRDs strategic voice as being quite strong and influential on the business’ strategies, both before and currently:

> Our department undertakes a significant role during business strategy’s formulation as its voice is represented within our BoD and eventually our concerns and suggestions are heard and considered (HR Director).

In a similar vein, an HR Officer argued:

> Our goal is to grow our people. Our training interventions aim to enhance our workforce’s skills and knowledge so as to boost its productivity and eventually to ensure business survival and competitiveness within such a hostile business and economic environment (HR Officer).

However, a somewhat different discourse emerges with further probing about the impact of the crisis. An acknowledgement about change emerges. An HR officer claimed that their “pre-crisis HR department” was amongst the first to be consulted in regard to new business developments owing to their bank’s growth, stating that:
Previously, during the period of great expansion by banks, we were a major contributor to the successful execution of all business strategies, by delivering our tailored services and exceptional consultations (HR Officer).

The T&D manager and an HR manager comment similarly:

We used to be at the forefront of all business initiatives, by proposing changes and/or by implementing tailored training programmes focusing on better suited to our workforce’s actual needs and eventually to move the business forward (T&D Manager).

Various factors have changed the nature of how we do business today. Inevitably, our role has changed as well. New skills are now required for all of us so as to meet the increasing needs of the new business environment (HR Manager).

Even the HRD Director, when pressed, acknowledged greater uncertainty and ambiguity about HR/HRDs role, by stating:

Today, our budget is limited, targets are more short-term oriented and our value proposition is highly questioned … you see, within the BoD, our role is very complicated … and indeed our influence is more uncertain (HRD Director).

Overall, there was an acknowledgement that the bank’s HR department had to totally revise its plans and strategies in such a way so as to ensure its organizational survival. Thus, it is in this context that ambiguity emerges as to HRs view of its own strategic positioning within the organization.

**Management**

While most managers interviewed acknowledged HR’s value proposition, along with the necessity of its professionals to actively participate throughout the business strategy’s formulation, their statements mainly indicated an operational role for HR. Thus, a branch manager argued:

As the HR manager represents the unit within the BoD that is enough. There is no imperative to include HR executives within the BoD and the formulation of strategy. A simple representation of their unit is enough as nothing moves around recruiting, training, career advancement etc. anymore (Branch Manager).

A clear sense of ‘setback’ for HR/HRD emerges from managers interviewed. Everyone agreed that pre-crisis their HR department’s strategic position was stronger owing to the respective growth/expansion strategy of their organization. A branch manager argued that:

I believe that an HR executive’s role within the BoD is more supportive than that of a shaper or a contributor. Yet, things were quite different a few years ago (Branch Manager).

Another further commented:

Our HR department used to be a key player amongst top management executives, through its constructive propositions and implementations back in time (Branch Manager).

Additionally, from some managers came a suggestion which cast some doubt on whether HR/HRD had ever held a strategic shaping role within the business. Two branch managers respectively argued that:
We do not expect anything from an immature business function. It is supposed that the HR guys are those who should empower others within the organization; yet, they are the ones who need to be endowed with extra capacity to effectively perform their roles (Branch Manager).

Instead of identifying business opportunities within such a turbulent business and economic environment, our organization has faced only negative ones, and without relative success (Branch Manager).

Somewhat similarly another manager commented:

Organizational and individual change should be on their agenda; however, they only perform administrative work for other organizational units. Sometimes, I cannot clearly understand what their role is all about (IT Manager).

Overall, something of a consensus seemed to emerge from managers; one that is captured by a view that because the organization is struggling to ensure its survival, top-down directions are followed these days with limited HR intervention. The role of the HRD function, and that of its staff, it was felt, had become highly restricted owing to the crisis and the sector’s restructuring. It was claimed that nothing has been initiated from an HR proposition, and thus HR’s positioning within the BoD was one of a representation in principle but with limited influence in practice.

**Employee**

The majority of the interviewed employees acknowledged that HR in general, and HRD staff in particular, used to have a more enhanced and influential role in the past. All employees highlighted that greater T&D and career advancement opportunities were offered back then, either because of the bank’s expansionist strategy or due to more generally favourable economic and business conditions. For instance, an employee argued:

Five to six years ago, you could choose from amongst a wide range of training opportunities which you could undertake either within the bank’s training centre or through its training associates. Today, limited training sessions are largely offered as subsidized programmes from MEO (Manpower Employment Organization) and within our working shifts, with limited momentum or support from our managers (Employee).

In terms of current times, all stressed their HR department’s ineffectiveness owing to staff shortages and the lack of relevant skills from those who stayed behind, arguing for example that:

There is nothing to expect from an underdeveloped department. Staff redundancies affected even them. Ironic, isn’t it? (Employee).

Both the HR department in general and the HRD function in particular are experiencing staff shortages or a relative lack of those skills required to efficiently perform their duties and thus to deliver exceptional services either within or out with the organization” (Employee).

Interestingly, the perceptions which emerged from employees highlight a function which had always lacked the capacity of shaping business goals and strategies as it was always the senior management’s role to do so. Employees also appeared skeptical about HR’s positioning within the BoD was of great significance as the department was, is and will be the most marginalized one in terms of budget allocations. Nonetheless, they all agreed that greater training and developmental opportunities were offered in the past owing to higher budgets being available
for their HR department. They further argued that although a more proactive HR/HRD role is required these days, the constraints are clear. Having asked them to highlight the major problems being associated with the strategic development of their organization’s HRD approach, a number illustrated its (current) lack of a strategic business outlook, by arguing that:

SHRD? There is not something like that. What you are talking about is more of an old fairy tale with a bad ending. There is no long term strategy, while a limited budget is now available for almost all business functions; Our HR department does not hold the capacity to design and deliver substantial developmental opportunities, as its first priority is to keep costs down through major staff redundancies and other related actions. Don’t think that makes it strategic at all (Employee).

Nowadays, there is no HR planning at all, especially with a long-term perspective. All business executives, along with those in HR, are now occupied with how to increase business prosperity (in the short-term), and how to successfully help with on-going business amalgamations. What they forget is that people make the difference; employees are those keeping banks operating (Employee).

There was even some questioning of the HR unit’s perception that despite everything they were maintaining of the quality HRD interventions:

The economic crisis has heavily impacted upon our organization in relation to its training and developmental opportunities. The associated budget has been diminished and limited training is now offered to specific departments. Training is no longer a priority as business focus has shifted to other areas. Sometimes it’s totally irrelevant to our job contexts as well (Employee).

Overall then, employees identified what they felt was a ‘setback’ for HRD within the business agenda compared to its pre-crisis status. They saw the role of their HR department, and that of their HRD executives, being limited to the basics. They concluded that today’s HRD practices are nothing more than the reflection of their organization’s retrenchment strategies under a cost minimization focus. HRD had similarly re-trenched, confirming for some, existing skepticism that it could ever play a role in terms of shaping business goals and strategies.

**Research Findings: “Case B”**

*The HR view*

Most of the interviewed HR staff highlighted the close co-operation between its executives and senior management, and further highlighted that their top management executives welcome the active involvement of their HR/HRD executives during the setting of its business goals. Thus, the HR Director argued:

People recognize and value our work, as we represent the link between the business and its employees. We are always trying to deliver exceptional services and practices which aim to motivate our workforce, while concurrently satisfying our business needs. To achieve that, HR is situated within the BoD team of executives for its voice to be heard (HR Director).

He further argued that, since the HR department is situated within the BoD, its consultation is welcomed throughout the design and formulation of the business strategy; and which had also happened in the past. He continued by stating that his organization acknowledges the value of its manpower, and thus it aims to ensure that its organizational representatives’ (HR department) voice is heard and considered within the higher levels of the bank’s hierarchy. He was of the view
that a strategic alignment between HR and corporate objectives was being attained, and thus the role of their department is of high influence so as to ensure that the bank’s workforce is offered all the necessary learning and developmental opportunities which can enhance their productivity, engagement and commitment.

To a large extent the view of the Director was endorsed by other HR staff as well. Whilst HR staff acknowledged the fact that the latest business amalgamations have resulted in staff shortages for their departments, it had not diminished their strategic focus and role.

Either before or after the crisis, I believe that we are offering our services in such ways so as to help our people and our business to prosper and grow (HR Assistant).

Our staff is competent enough in performing its work effectively, especially if you bear in mind that they have to deal with an increased number of employees due to the latest business mergers and acquisitions. Accordingly, the low percentage of employee grievances reflects the department’s efficiency, along with the increased ROIs from our training interventions (Learning & Development Manager).

However, one alternative perception was expressed by a more junior member of the function:

A more strategic role was employed in the past, and our role was more enhanced within the business agenda as well as having to assure the smooth running within every single country where we had business operations (HR Administrator).

Overall, the HR view was one of a belief that the function had played, and continued to play, an active role in shaping and influencing the business. Thus, a large majority of the HR staff interviewed, concluded that their department could, and indeed would, be at the forefront of any business upturn.

Management

A somewhat more disparate set of views emerged from management. Some clearly endorsed the view of their HR colleagues in respect of the pre-crisis. Over three-fourths of the interviewed managers outlined HR’s capacity (in the past) to offer a wide variety of tools and solutions; some noting that their bank was the first to introduce innovative services and products. One branch manager argued that HR leadership goes “hand-in-hand” with their senior management’s priorities:

Our sector is made up of products and services. How can we not be people-oriented? As for that, our HR team always aims to incorporate this belief within our organization’s strategic objectives and strategies. Thus, HR leadership comes from the HR department (Branch Manager).

Reflecting upon impact of the economic crisis, another branch manager referred to a ‘transition phase’ which her organization was currently operating. Specifically, as regards HR’s strategic positioning, she felt that whilst this may “seem to be in jeopardy”, she was sure it would return stronger. Another commented:

Besides the negative aspects associated with such circumstances, positive implications are also attached. As banks are now left with the most talented individuals, it is clearer to them how their careers can advance (Branch Manager).

Both these managers based their claims on the assumption that the banking industry is people-oriented and knowledge intensive for its success.
However, there were others who talked about an HR setback, compared to its pre-crisis state. Resource constraints, including staff shortages, were noted. One issue was a resource constraint. The HR department did not lack the necessary skills, but the appropriate funds to support implementation. Others presented a more negative impact upon HR/HRD by arguing:

HR people … ermmmmm … although they are represented within the bank’s BoD, I believe that they’re powerlessness on achieving key strategic objectives and on affecting our corporate goals … their initiatives are not properly evaluated? (Branch Manager).

You see, staff shortages affected even them. Their role is not as it used to be. From business growth, we have moved to business retrenchment. From motivation and engagement, we now experience ignorance and uncertainty. Everybody is feeling that way – even them (Branch Manager).

Two managers specifically stated that their HRD staff lacked a leadership capacity in helping its people to gracefully absorb business turbulence and accordingly to change.

Overall, managers’ viewpoints highlighted HR’s greater capacity in the past, along with a retrenchment in more recent times.

**Employees**

Not dissimilarly to “Case A”, employees took, on the whole, a much more suspect view of their HR function’s role and influence within the organization as a result of the economic crisis. A large majority of those interviewed suggested that their HR department (including their HRD executives) could not impact upon business goals and strategies as everything was “set from upper management”. Over three-fourths of them argued that staff shortages within their HR department had resulted in overloading existing HR/HRD staff with greater work accountabilities, thus making them incapable of performing at their highest standards. HRD implementations had also been affected, and which now seemed to be improperly designed and delivered. For example:

I guess we do have a clear formal T&D strategy. At least, it is evident within all of our organizational documents/statements. However, this does not mean that our HR strategy can formulate the bank’s mission, goals and strategies. This is impossible. Do not ever believe that HR will reach this extent especially within these days in which we live (Employee).

Nothing is as it used to be. To date, all decisions are taken from the top and directed through a top-down communication. Then, it is expected to follow them. It is that simple (Employee).

The HR department’s role used to be greater back in the sector’s prosperous years. Now, their role is more supportive rather than leading. Their focus has changed as well: from people to cost (Employee).

We can no longer talk of a strategic HR approach by the time the entire business fights for its daily survival. Nowadays, the bank aims to maintain its customer base, a quite short-term financial approach indeed, however by totally not recognizing its people’s capacity to do so — that’s why more training is essential for us in the front-line (Employee).

In addition, by focusing on the cost-efficient orientation of today’s HRD practices, they questioned if the implemented training interventions really did reflect their actual needs.

A minority of employees took a more sanguine view. Echoing the branch manager’s view about transition (see above), they recognized that business restructuring highly restricted HRD
executives’ role, yet without diminishing their importance, and that eventually it is up to them to reposition themselves as strategic contributors for the organization.

The organization is under a transformation period, not only due to the crisis, but also owing to the on-going business amalgamations and sector restructuring. It is inevitable for all departments to be affected. Our HR department is under a re-development process, but it always plays an important role (Employee).

Whereas it is under-staffed, as most other departments, I would rather say that it is effective as it offers all of its services in such ways so as to ensure a smoothly running business operation. Accordingly, I assume that its professional capacity is high. As things improve, they will rise again (Employee).

Overall, a clear view of retrenchment was evident in relation to a pre-crisis state.

**Discussion**

The specific views on HR activities and HR’s role and positioning pre-crisis and currently were collected against a backdrop of general perceptions as to the impact of the economic crisis. For example, in general terms over 75% of participants in both organizations rated the impact of the crisis as being severe. Overall, the impact was seen negatively, with pay cuts, redundancies, increased workloads, the suspension or deferment of training and reduced morale and job satisfaction, being given as the reasons.

For “Case A”, the negative impact also extended to new ideas and best practices not being promoted. Thus, much talk was offered on the “damage” being brought on by the crisis. In such a context, it is perhaps not surprising that a perception of a setback in HR/HRD influence and activity prevails in both organizations. However, this needs careful qualification. The findings as regards impact are dependent on the participant’s perceptions of the state of affairs several years ago. In addition, we have very limited ‘benchmark’ data drawn from pre-crash days. What is available suggests that HR/HRD in “Case A” may have been operating at a lower base than “Case B”. The overview of both cases (Table 2), above, indicates that training spend was somewhat higher in the latter, even accounting for the greater number of employees. Average training time provided by “Case B” was nearly 50% higher than in “Case A”.

Employees (i.e. the third broad grouping of respondents – see above) in both organizations were the most critical of their HR/HRD function. For some, this was clearly linked to their direct experience as a ‘user’. Hence their view of impact may have been influenced by a sense of fewer opportunities for them to access training. Nonetheless, however formed, their perceptions about the positioning of HR/HRD can offer important insights. We note in particular:

- A change is perceived; one of retrenchment; doing less and being less influential.

- A skepticism in relation to any real strategic influence within the organization and indeed a doubt, (more evident in “Case A”), that they had ever been in a position of a shaping and influencing the strategic direction of the business.

Subtle but important differences are evident in “Case A” versus “Case B” in respect of managers’ views and the perceptions of the HR function members themselves. In the former, the nature of the setback certainly included budgetary constraint and a need to re-focus attention on short-term
objectives. With “Case B”, there was more evidence that the impact of the financial crisis has had an effect in shifting the function from a high level, strategically focused, consultative role into one that is reactionary. Importantly, though, there was a clear view that this may be transitory.

Such nuances cannot escape the overall conclusion of a perception amongst staff remaining within these two organizations, and from whatever position they occupied, of a function in retreat. HRD had not been silenced nor abandoned but activities were more restricted than they had been, less expansive than they had been, and more reactionary than they had been. The talk was about short-term operational needs and, more importantly, there was an absence of talk about influence in any of the restructuring, or in helping lead / manage change or in determining the competencies considered necessary to re-establish a strong presence within the banking sector of the Greek economy. Critically, we highlight the perceptions of managers. Whether this was a perception of an under-developed business function, a department which lacked the capacity to help them manage business turbulence and change (Case A), or one that was simply starved of resources (Cases A and B), HRD faced questions of credibility and legitimacy. The picture which emerges from both organizations, hardly presents a picture of a management community confident in the ability of HRD to help them, and work with them, to drive the organization forward in times of continued financial and operating difficulties, post-crash.

We re-assert that all such considerations are based on the perceptions of those interviewed in the two organizations. We make no claim that this may be a general outcome for the HRD function in organizations facing similar upheaval. Yet, perceptions are important. To achieve desired organizational outcomes, it is important to have not only the right HR practices but shared and aligned employee perceptions of those practices, as highlighted above (Center for Advanced Human Resource Studies (2011). Thus, the research raises important questions for both the academic and practitioner parts of the HRD professional community. In both organizations, research findings highlighted that HRD had suffered a setback owing to the crisis. Whilst the profile of the perceptions of the setback differed between the two organizations and within each one, a significant gap emerges between the reality of the situation versus the theoretical and rhetorical claims of HRD and SHRD. We are left with a sense that HRD was not able to ‘up its game’, to respond authoritatively and influentially in times of organizational stress and challenge. Strategic HRD remained at best an aspiration, and at worst purely a rhetorical notion, rather than constituting an organizational reality which could assist both organizations achieve business recovery. Thus, the crisis had mostly been seen as an obstacle to their value proposition, rather than as an opportunity to demonstrate their capacity.

Overall, questions are raised about the capability of the function and that of its members in such conditions and context. While there is evidence in the literature demonstrating how HRD can contribute to organizational effectiveness and long term business success, the contexts, in the main, are not those experienced by these two organizations. To this extent, we might question the extent to which there is indeed a case for SHRD in such contexts? Future research should examine organizations facing or having faced similar major upheaval and threat to survival so as to explore in detail how any HRD function seeks to operate and fulfill its strategic aspirations within the challenging context of an economic crisis.
References


**The Authors**

Fotios Mitsakis is a Lecturer in Human Resource Management / Organizational Behaviour at Nottingham Trent University, UK. His research focuses on Strategic Human Resource Development (SHRD) maturity in Greek banks at the time of the economic crisis. He followed a case study research strategy and a multi-constituent research perspective so as to examine how different stakeholders can diversely understand, apply and operationalise SHRD within their organisations. Before moving to academia, Fotios had worked for two multinational companies
His practitioner view, combined with his academic background, allowed him to offer useful insights related to his research interests. His work was also presented in various HR/HRD-related conferences (UFHRD 2015 Cork, UFHRD 2016 Manchester, Centre for Employment Relations, Innovation and Change (CERIC) Conference, Leeds etc.).

Dr Eleni Aravopoulou is a Lecturer in Business Management at St Mary’s University, UK. Her research focuses on Organisational Behaviour and Change Management. She has published in the Business and Management Review and has presented research papers in several international conferences in UK and Europe (e.g. UFHRD 2014 Edinburgh, UFHRD 2015 Cork, UFHRD 2016 Manchester, and 6th International Conference on Restructuring of the Global Economy in Oxford 2016).
Investors in People and Business Excellence in the United Arab Emirates
Part 1: Establishing the Link

Alaa Garad, Investors in People, United Arab Emirates

In the context of the United Arab Emirates, the paper explores an emerging synergy between models of business excellence (BE) and the people management framework Investors in People (IIP), within organizational HRD policy and practice. Since the 1990s, driven by the need to enhance international competitiveness, UAE organizations have been encouraged to adopt quality initiatives, often reinforced with prestigious awards. HRD policy and practice has responded accordingly. However, despite its introduction in the late 1980s IIP, an overtly people standard, it is only in recent years that it has begun to be adopted in the UAE. The paper argues that it is by establishing and consciously promoting the links between BE and IIP that provides the basis for the increasing adoption of IIP in the UAE. IIP has been used by UAE organizations to lever effective implementation of BE and lead them toward further learning and performance excellence. This, the first of a two-part article, establishes the strength of the relationship between BE and IIP. Part 2 draws on case study data to highlight the dynamics of the process in more detail.

Introduction

This article attempts to investigate the link between Investors in People (IIP) and Business Excellence (BE) and show how this link has worked in significant HRD policy developments in organizations in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). IIP is a holistic framework for people management established in 1991. The standard defines what it takes to lead, support and manage people well for sustainable results. IIP is considered to be a sign of a great employer, an ‘outperforming’ place to work and a clear commitment to sustained success. The concept of Business Excellence has emerged from several concepts over many years, starting with the establishment of the quality movement and philosophy in Japan, which led to the creation of several approaches and frameworks (see, for example, Evans and Lindsay, 2005). The European Foundation for Quality Management defines Business Excellence as

Outstanding practice in managing the organization and achieving results based on a set of fundamental concepts which will include: result orientation, customer focus, leadership, and constancy of purpose, management by processes and facts, involvement of people, continuous improvement and innovation, mutually beneficial partnership, and corporate social responsibility (EFQM, 2003: 33).

The aim of this article is to consider the relationship between IIP and BE. The paper seeks to demystify any confusion between the two constructs and highlight the links and synergy. Understanding the significance of the links between the two may lead to the development of an integrated model that can help organizations develop their HRD policy and practice to become
high performing organizations and achieve strategic organizational goals. The paper considers the evidence of increasing integration in terms of policy application within the UAE. The article begins with a consideration of the UAE context and how excellence-related programmes became crucial to the country’s economic development and advancement. Both IIP and BE are explained and key links considered before an integrated model is introduced. A second paper will provide more detailed case study data from the UAE on how IIP and BE have been applied in an integrated process.

The United Arab Emirates

As the UAE has embarked on business excellence as a strategy for government agencies as well as the private and third sectors, it is useful to shed the light on this journey. The UAE occupies an area roughly the size of Portugal along the south-eastern tip of the Arabian Peninsula. Four-fifths of the UAE is desert, yet it is a country of contrasting landscapes. The current population of the UAE is 9,267,216 which is equivalent to 0.12% of the total world population. The UAE ranks number 93 in the list of countries by population. The total land area is 83,637 Km2 (32,292 sq. miles), with a population density of 287 people per square mile. 89.5% of the population is urban (8,371,435 people in 2016) while the median age in the United Arab Emirates is 33.5 years.

The UAE is a federation of seven emirates: Abu-Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al-Qaiwain, Ras Al-Khaima and Fujairah. The order in which they are listed here is based on a clockwise progression around the country, starting from Abu-Dhabi, which occupies the southern sector and is also the federal capital. The Federal Government deals with matters of national importance such as foreign affairs, security and defense, nationality and immigration issues, education, currency, postal, telephone and communication services, air traffic control and aircraft licensing, together with certain special topics delegated to it, such as labour relations, banking, the delimitation of territorial waters and the extradition of criminals (UAE Interact, 2016).

Since the early 1990s the UAE has embarked on several initiatives to foster its economy and its competitiveness in the international environment. Excellence-related programmes are among these initiatives. Each one of the seven emirates have established a programme or an award to reinforce the culture of excellence and to bring in the best practices to their organizations. Adopting and implementing quality in government entities has been mandated by the government, i.e. the governmental entities have to conduct self-assessment against the award criteria, which must, then, be submitted for formal assessment by independent assessors, commissioned by the award offices. Table 1 indicates twelve awards developed and offered since 1993. All share characteristics of fundamental principles i.e., adding value to customers, creating a sustainable future, developing organization capabilities, harnessing creativity and innovation, leading with vision, inspiration and integrity, managing with agility, succeeding through the talent of people, and sustaining outstanding results (Figure 1).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.</th>
<th>Award / Programme</th>
<th>Started</th>
<th>Sector</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sharjah Economic Excellence Award</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Private Sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Dubai Quality Award</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Private Sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dubai Government Excellence Programme</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dubai Human Development Award</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>All Sectors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sheikh Hamdan Educational Excellence Award</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Sheikh Khalifa Industrial Excellence Award</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Industry</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Sheikh Khalifa Excellence Award</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Private Sector</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sheikh Saqr Government Excellence Programme</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Sheikh Mohamed Bin Rashid Business Award</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Private Sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sheikh Mohamed Bin Rashid Government Excellence Programme</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Federal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Abu-Dhabi Award for Excellence in Government Performance</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Ajman Excellence Award</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Government</td>
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Table 1 - Key Quality and Excellence Awards in the United Arab Emirates

Investors in People and Business Excellence

The **IIP model/framework**

The IIP framework was developed in 1989 and the first assessment conducted in 1991. The standard comprises nine indicators (dimensions). The indicators revolve around the organization’s ambition as a central focus for the organization and are grouped under three perspectives as shown in Table 2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspective</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Leading     | • Leading and inspiring people  
             | • Living the organisation’s values and behaviours  
             | • Empowering and involving people |
| Supporting  | • Managing Performance  
             | • Recognizing and rewarding high performance  
             | • Structuring work |
| Improving   | • Building capability  
             | • Delivering continuous improvement  
             | • Creating sustainable success |

Source: Adapted from Investors in People Standard (IIP, 2015)
Table 2 – Investors in People Indicators

The fourth perspective, the overarching ‘organization ambition’, is illustrated at the centre of Figure 2.
Examining each of the four perspectives i.e. Leading, Supporting, Improving and Organization Ambition, in more detail:

1) **Leading**: creating purpose in a changing environment, whilst motivating through change, have become essential skills for many roles. High performing organizations foster leadership skills at every level of the organization to deliver outstanding results. There are three indicators under this perspective that cover the clarity of vision and purpose and how good leaders in the organization inspire employees to perform (IIP, 2015).

2) **Supporting**: sustainable organizations use flatter structures to enable faster decision-making, agility and customer focus. The three indicators under this perspective cover the way in which people are supported to perform through the way jobs are designed, reward is structured, performance is managed, and the degree of autonomy people have to make decisions (IIP, 2015).

3) **Improving**: a philosophy of continuous improvement is at the heart of the Standard, It argues that constant adaptation, flexibility and continuous improvement feature heavily in the very best organizations. Furthermore, being a sustainable organization means developing capabilities, resources and plans for tomorrow. “It means fostering innovation to constantly find new ways to achieve the ambition of the organization” (IIP, 2015: 5).

4) **Organization Ambition**: investing in people is meant to improve performance. Therefore, the aims and ambitions of the organization, are at the heart of the IIP framework. As such the nine indicators are built from an understanding of this ambition to test the alignment of purpose across the employees and the extent to which practices are driving positive results (IIP, 2015).

In early 2016, the sixth version of the standard was launched internationally and this seeks to lever IIP as an Organizational Development (OD) Framework rather a mere ‘HR’ standard.

According to the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) and Investors in People International, there are over 13,500 IIP-accredited organizations throughout the United Kingdom (the Cradle of IIP) plus 631 IIP-accredited organization, spread over 79 countries (announced during the launch of Generation Six of IIP Model on 15th September, 2015).

*The BE model/framework*

According to Evans and Lindsay (2005), the concept of BE has emerged from several concepts over many years, starting with the establishment of the quality movement and philosophy in Japan, which led to the creation of several approaches and frameworks. Bohoris (1995) stated that several national and regional quality awards have been established to promote quality and serve as models for TQM. Three of the most widely used are the Deming Prize in Japan, the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award in the USA and the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Business Excellence Award. The Business Excellence Model (BEM) (Figure 3) assumes that, in order to sustain excellence, organizations assess and review their approaches and mechanisms regularly and question themselves. Learning is considered a core element in the model’s structure and its assessment mechanism. Auluck (2002) describes the BEM as a powerful tool that assesses organizational performance, provides a framework for identification of improvement areas and offers a process for continuous learning.
Clearly there are areas of overlap and commonality between the frameworks of BE and IIP. Table 3 seeks to show the links between IIP and BE on a holistic level; the nine indicators (criteria) that form IIP have been exhibited on vertical axis of the table, while the nine criteria that form EFQM have been exhibited on the horizontal axis. In the matrix a degree of significance is allocated to each intersection. One star means slight significance, two stars means moderate significance and three stars means strong significance. Summing the total number of stars provides a proxy measure of where the link is strongest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IIP/IPEM</th>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>People</th>
<th>Partnership &amp; Resources</th>
<th>Processes, Products &amp; Services</th>
<th>People Results</th>
<th>Customer Results</th>
<th>Business Results</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Leading &amp; inspiring people</td>
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<td>2. Living the organization’s values and behaviours.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Empowering &amp; involving people.</td>
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<td>4. Managing performance.</td>
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<td>5. Recognizing &amp; rewarding high performance</td>
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<td>6. Structuring work</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Building capability</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Delivering continuous improvement</td>
<td>*</td>
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<td>***</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Creating sustainable success</td>
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<td>**</td>
<td>***</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Key: * Slight significance; ** Moderate significance; *** Strong significance

Table 3 - Links between BE Model and IIP Model

Thus from the perspective of Business Excellence the most significant links with IIP are at
‘People Results’ (21), ‘People’ (19), ‘Business Results’ (17), and ‘Leadership’ (16). From an IIP perspective, the strongest relationships with BE are evident at ‘Living the Organization’s Values and Behaviours’ (19), ‘Creating Sustainable Success’ (17), ‘Empowering and Involving People’ (16) and ‘Leading and Inspiring People’ (15). Such links suggest that focusing and prioritizing resources on these specific areas can help organization to optimize its resources, achieve and sustain excellent business results.

Part 2 of this article will seek to bring further clarity and empirical evidence on the relationships discussed above.

Policy Implementation in the UAE

In 2001, the Department of Economic Development in Dubai attempted to introduce IIP in the UAE. However, this initiative was unsuccessful. During this time, the focus of UKCES\(^1\) was promoting the IIP model within the UK and there was no mechanism in place to administer the growth internationally. Further efforts, by the author, to promote IIP in the UAE commenced in 2009. Then, in 2011 acquisition of a partnership license from the International Quality Centre\(^2\) (based on signed agreement on April 2011) enabled IIP services to be promoted and delivered throughout the UAE. Informed by hands-on experience, as an EFQM assessor and practitioner, the links between IIP and BEM became increasingly apparent. It was felt that IIP could leverage effective implementation of EFQM and lead organizations towards further learning and performance excellence.

Underpinning this promotion was the link between IIP and BEM, developed above. IIP fits into the quality awards and the most common business frameworks and tools that are adopted in the UAE and other Gulf Countries. This is because of its focus on people and the consideration that people’s engagement is a critical success factor in change and improvement initiatives (see also Figure 4). It will be noted that the Figure includes several of the awards outlined in Table 1 and adds other significant quality and business assessments, such as ISO 9001 and six sigma.

Thus, in 2011 IIP had its formal introduction to the region which led to the promotion of the standard throughout the UAE. When presented to the Department of Economic Development, with the links between the BEM and the IIP framework highlighted, it received high attention and support. This support was translated into establishing the UAE Award for Investing in People. Some of the key government leaders decided to implement IIP jointly with EFQM in their organizations. Departments involved include the: Emirates Identity Authority, the Ministry of Infrastructure, the Dubai and the Abu Dhabi Police, the Abu Dhabi Accountability Authority, the Dubai Chamber of Commerce, Dubai Water and the Electricity Authority and Department of Transport.

The motive for public agencies to adopt IIP was to use it as an enabler towards effective implementation of a European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM). IIP aligns with BEM especially in relation to the EFQM factors of Leadership, Strategy, People, People Results, Key Results and Society Results and which form approximately 60% of EFQM criteria.
The business result at the above mentioned public agencies such as the Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development, the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Emirates Identity Authority have been impressive and led to them receiving the highest government recognition represented in Sheikh Mohamed Bin Rashid Government Excellence Award and Dubai Government Excellence Program Award. The interest in IIP has not been limited to government agencies but has also been widely adopted by the private sector especially in hospitality, education and healthcare sectors. Since its inception in the UAE, over 40 organizations has embarked on IIP, twelve of them have attained and sustained the accreditation while as of today there are 23 companies working with IIP and in the pipeline for assessment.

The emerging success of IIP in the UAE can be attributed to seven key factors:

- Support and commitment towards investing in people and excellence by leaders at government agencies.
- Awareness of policy-makers about adopting system thinking approach.
- Strong belief that ‘it is all about people’.
- Simple process of diagnosis and implementation of IIP where there is no ‘piles’ of paper work or ‘ticking’ the boxes kind of work.
- Availability of Arabic translation of the model and its requirements.
- High maturity of the business atmosphere due to using EFQM criteria and tools which helped in fast understanding of IIP requirements and its links with EFQM and other business excellence instruments.
- The focus on organizational learning that led to enhancing business performance and growth.
Towards an Integrative Model

At this point in the development of an integrative link between IIP and BE one illustration is made to capture the link in term of actual organizational policy and practice. In February 2016 The Millennium Corniche Hotel in Abu Dhabi committed to IIP. It recognized that IIP could both consolidate and further advance the hotel’s policy of continuous improvement. According to the hotel’s General Manager:

We have used IIP to cement our hotels strive for continuous improvement. Alongside IIP, using internationally recognized accreditations such as ISO 9001/14001/18001/22000, we are striving to achieve a stable culture of quality assurance and excellence. In an increasingly unstable market, locally and internationally, the implementation of these established quality initiatives allows us to continue on our journey of excellence.

The Hotel not only achieved IIP accreditation in 2016 but also won the international IIP Newcomer Award for 2016. The hotel has adopted IIP as they found it the right approach to “cement” what they had accomplished in quality management and business excellence. One of the major gains of adopting IIP, was the focused Learning and Development activities through direct alignment to the hotel strategic objectives. As an example the hotel invested approximately AED 50,000 in ‘cross-selling’ programmes which resulted in AED 600,000 revenue. Measuring the investment in Learning and Development is a requirement in both domains, i.e. IIP and BE.

When identifying and establishing areas requiring improvement and planning rectification, we realized that IIP would be a great mechanism to drive positive change as well a platform to further educate our people and develop their thought process — IIP has allowed to us to understand and communicate the value gained from investing in Learning and Development (IIP, 2016).

If we assume that the two components (IIP and BEM) are working together as gears to leverage high performance in UAE organizations, the challenge is to further understand the dynamics of the motion of these gears, which gear impacts the others, how, when and why (Figure 5).

![Figure 5 – The Two Gears; BEM and IIP](image)

From a policy and practice point of view, those areas of significant links among the standards should be the focus for organization’s senior management for sustainable excellence and growth. From a research point of view, the same areas should be subject for generating empirical
evidence. The relationship developed in this article paves the way for an integrated model that brings together ‘people’ and ‘excellence’ in the UAE context. It is important also to further investigate the dynamics of the linkage, the cause and effect relations, which standard leverages application of other standards and what are the factors that influence the successful application of those standards. This will be the subject of Part 2 of the paper which will use a number of case studies in three key sectors of the UAE economy (i.e. Government, Education and Hospitality) in order to further explore and illustrate the working of these dynamics.

Notes

1. United Kingdom for Employment and Skills Department (the owner of the IIP model).
2. The International Quality Centre is the sole licence holder for the administration of IIP overseas.

References


The Author

In addition to his engagement with Investors in People UAE, Alaa Garad works as an Assistant Professor at Abu Dhabi University. He holds a Bachelor of Commerce, a Master’s Degree in Quality Management and a PhD in Organisational Learning. Alaa is an Accredited EFQM Assessor, IIP Specialist, Chief Examiner and Juror for several national and regional quality awards such as Sheikh Khalifa Excellence Award, Dubai Quality Award, and King Abdul-Aziz Quality Award in Saudi Arabia. He is a member of the Academy of Management, and the American Society for Quality and a Founding member of the Egyptian Association for Learning.
McDonald’s: an HRD laboratory?

David Fairhurst, Corporate Executive Vice President, Chief People Officer for the McDonald’s Corporation, in interview with Rick Holden, Editor, IJHRDPP&R

David Fairhurst is McDonald’s Chief People Officer — a post he has held since October 2015 — with responsibility for leading the organization’s HR, Training, and Leadership Development functions in 120 countries worldwide. Based in Oak Brook, Illinois he reports directly to McDonald’s President and Chief Executive Officer, Steve Easterbrook. In this interview we explore HRD practice within the business and the insights McDonald’s may be able to offer a wider community of HR/HRD professionals.

To begin our discussion, we explore the qualities that make McDonald’s an interesting ‘HRD laboratory’ (an HRD laboratory which, David adds with a smile, “also makes great hamburgers”!). This also provides a framework for four of the broader HRD themes David sees emerging globally — and the HRD practices that have been introduced by McDonald’s in these areas.

Firstly, there is global scale. McDonald’s and its franchise partners operate over 36,000 restaurants employing over 1.9m people, making McDonald’s the world’s largest private sector employer.

This kind of scale means that we have the opportunity to test and assess HR innovations in a very rigorous way across multiple markets and with significant sample sizes.

However, at the same time, over 80% of its restaurants are operated by local franchisees — each one, in effect, operating like an SME.

David highlights a further key feature of these local franchises; normally they are based on a long-term commitment which minimizes upheaval and instability, often evident in the SME sector. Thus, the foundation of the wider McDonald’s organization is solid and secure — a fact which is embodied in McDonald’s philosophy of the “three-legged stool”: the company, the franchisees, and their suppliers aligning around a shared mission and vision. These qualities — global scale and local franchisees — David argues, have profound implications on the development of HR initiatives. Initiatives which on the one hand need to leverage our scale, but on the other need to be implemented by small local businesses which typically have little or no dedicated HR/HRD resource.

The third key quality is that McDonald’s is at pivotal phase in its economic life cycle. In recent years, growth has stalled. The business is now in what David calls a “turnaround phase” and which has seen a significant amount of re-organization and re-structuring. However, in preparation for moving from turnaround to renewed growth David, with colleagues, has established a Global
People Strategy (GPS), the function of which is clear: “to drive growth”. The GPS is based on four critical challenges McDonald’s faces in each of its markets worldwide: culture transformation; creating a robust talent pipeline; leadership capability at all levels in the organization; and access to the people they need (Figure 1).

![Global People Strategy](image)

Figure 1: Global People Strategy, McDonald’s

I suggest that, given the context we have discussed, the alignment of corporate / global HRD policy and practices with the ‘local’ feature of McDonald’s operation is surely a major tension. David agrees to a point, but argues that this tension also creates a positive ‘dynamic’ because there is the minimum of “top-down”; there is “no corporate bluff”. Indeed, David stresses the importance of McDonald’s “bottom-up” approach which enables the voices of customers, franchisees, and employees from every Market to be heard. To achieve this, McDonald’s rigorously collects on an ongoing basis a raft of market and people data (see also Technology below) which feeds into an annual planning process to determine the organization’s strategic response in line with the overarching GPS to drive growth. To ensure the alignment of practices across the organization, this planning process is driven at market level by “People Teams” which include representatives from both the company-owned and franchised businesses. These market strategies are then aggregated and reviewed at a global level to ensure that any opportunities to leverage scale and eliminate unnecessary duplication of effort are identified and addressed.

Examples of how this dynamic translates into HRD policy and practice at the local level becomes clearer in the four ‘accounts of practice’ which follow.

**The democratization of leadership development**

David’s contention — shared he argues by most HR, Accounting, Management, and Financial bodies — is that investors are increasingly interested in the impact of leadership and people practices on organizational performance. However, the reporting of these practices by companies,
although increasing, is largely unstructured, subjective, and focused on short-term positive outcomes rather than long-term objective trends (Reporting Human Capital: Illustrating your company’s true value. CIPD/Ulster University Business School, 2016). He points to the work currently being done by Dave Ulrich and his team who are looking to create a “Leadership Capital Index” consisting of two ‘domains’ — Individual and Organizational — each comprising five ‘factors’ (The Leadership Capital Index: Realizing the Market Value of Leadership. Dave Ulrich, 2015). An organization is assessed and scored against each of these factors, with the final aggregate score giving an index rating which Ulrich likens to “a Moody’s index for leadership”.

One of these factors is Talent Management. In his book, Ulrich makes the point that effective talent management processes could be more important than the depth of the existing talent pool because those processes are what ensure a continuous flow of future employees and the skills they possess, not just a reliance on the current talent.

David picks up on this idea of continuous flow by speaking about McDonald’s current focus on “democratizing leadership development”. This is the rebalancing of investment in core leadership skills to include shift managers in restaurants (the first level of management in the organization). Whilst well-established training and development programmes equip these managers with the skills they need to ensure the restaurant process runs smoothly, recent research (undertaken as part of the annual planning process - see above) reveal that the very best McDonald’s shift managers “are not just great process managers, they are also great people leaders”.

I ask David to unpack this a little more. He explains that the data indicates most customer experience is ‘functionally’ good; the process — ordering food, speed of service, quality of product — works well. But, the data from customers and employees report a missing element, something that David calls ‘emotional connectivity’.

For over 50-years at McDonald’s we’ve talked about ‘QS&C’ — Quality, Service, and Cleanliness. These are the three fundamental things that our customers are looking for when they come into our restaurants – and these haven’t changed.

What’s changed is that as well as delivering the functional aspects of these three fundamentals, customers now want an emotional connection as well. So, in the past Quality meant great tasting, well presented food and drink. It still does — but today our Customers also want to feel comfortable that our food and beverages are ethically produced, sustainably sourced, and that the People serving them have enjoyable, rewarding jobs. In the past, Service meant fast and friendly. It still does — but today Customers also want to feel that the staff they speak to, really value and respect them as individuals, and are going the extra mile to ensure that the McDonald’s experience is special for every Customer. And in the past, Cleanliness simply meant clean floors, tables and toilets. It still does — but today it also means Customers feeling that staff take a pride in the way their restaurant looks, and wanting their Customers to feel happy and relaxed in clean and comfortable surroundings.

If we’re going to deliver that emotional connectivity we have to equip our managers to not only manage the functional processes – but also to lead their teams in delivering an engaging experience.

The HRD function response has been to seek to provide enhanced leadership development for its shift managers; an initiative to give them both the skills and, importantly, the courage and confidence, to engage more strongly with both the with customers and with the restaurant crew. Interpersonal skills are critical here. McDonald’s want procedure and service performance to co-exist at the highest of levels and critical to bring this about is to develop capability of the shift manager in their leadership of those around them.
Two markets, the UK and the US, have been charged with redesigning shift manager training, developing a programme which will be rolled out globally, with local nuances, across the remainder of 2016 and 2017. Delivery of the programme will be undertaken by field-based teams in individual Markets, supported as required by the company’s corporate university which has its HQ in a 130,000-square foot facility on an 80-acre campus in Oak Brook with satellite campuses in Sydney, Munich, London, Tokyo, São Paulo and Shanghai.

In addition to these physical resources, David sees technology playing an increasingly crucial part through virtual reality and gamification (see also ‘Technology’ below). David sums up this initiative thus “Personally, I think this is what the democratization of leadership development is all about”.

Culture

David introduces his comments on the culture shift he sees as critical if McDonald’s are to see their people strategy help the business achieve its commercial growth targets by reference to the launch of McDonald’s “All Day Breakfast” in the U.S. For many years — and still the case in most markets — the service of breakfast products such as Egg McMuffins and Hash Browns finishes mid-morning. That’s because with limited grill space, offering these products all day was operationally difficult. But with “All Day Breakfast”, these menu items are available to customers whenever they want them. This David contends reflects a more customer-centric culture — “customers have been asking us to do this for years and we just said ‘sorry, it’s too inconvenient for us’. Now we’re giving the customers what they want”.

He also suggests that there are “cultural performance dividends” to be gained from certain key behavioural changes amongst restaurant staff. Alarm a little that I am being bamboozled by fine sounding rhetoric I question what this means in practice. David takes me back to the shift managers and indicates that what McDonald’s want to see is a strong emotional connection between employees, the business and its culture. He refers to research by Bain & Company, published in the Harvard Business Review who have demonstrated the impact of an employee being ‘inspired’ (Garton and Mankins, 2015). Bain & Company surveyed over 300 senior executives from companies all over the world and asked them to assess, based on their impressions of employee output, the relative productivity of ‘dissatisfied’, ‘satisfied’, ‘engaged’ and ‘inspired’ staff. “What they found was that if ‘satisfied’ employees are productive at an index level of 100, then ‘engaged’ produce at 144 and ‘inspired’ at 225”. It is captured nicely, he argues, in what the authors of the research call the Performance Pyramid (see Figure 2).

I press David on such claims and the transferability of such research to the restaurant floor in McDonald’s. He argues that the reality of practice involves first assessing the level of emotional connection current people practices are having, and then identifying ways in which they might be moved to the next level. As an example he highlights McDonald’s training and development programmes. Traditionally, these focused on ensuring that staff simply had the training to utilize the tools and resources they were given to do the job i.e.: a level of emotional connection that would create “satisfied” employees. In recent years, however, many McDonald’s markets around the world have been aligning their day-to-day training with externally recognized qualifications (apprenticeships, diplomas, etc.). This, he argues, has created an environment where employees can “learn and grow every day” i.e.: a level of emotional connection that creates “engaged” employees.
As asked whether it was possible for training and development initiatives to achieve the highest levels of emotional engagement, David cites a 2016 agreement with the Ministry of Education in Italy to offer short internships for 16-18-year-old students. Every McDonald’s restaurant in Italy is taking part, and they plan to offer over 10,000 internships every year. “I think this is not only a massive statement of our belief in the power of education, in McDonald’s Italy it’s also further elevating engagement and our commitment to workplace learning to the ‘inspiration’ of working for an organization where the creating a culture of opportunity is part of the mission”.

David sums up this theme with reference to the relationship between talent and culture. “Talent is important — but culture is even more important”. Talent throughout the organization is not an end in itself. It is a second order issue; one that can help us achieve our culture shift towards behaviours and attitudes which can help drive our commercial growth.

**Diversity and Inclusion**

As the discussion turns to this theme some context is again drawn to my attention. The working age populations of many of the world’s developed economies are plateauing or shrinking, while the demand for labour continues to rise. David describes this as the ‘Workforce Cliff’ — “when supply and demand curves meet, organizations will quite simply run out of people to hire. The only way from there is down!” “To respond to this challenge, organizations are beginning to think more broadly about the people they are looking to hire … and this is bringing diversity and inclusion into the mainstream of our organizational thinking”. Broadening the argument out from McDonald’s, David contends for organizations to survive they will need to attract older workers, women returners, people with no or low qualifications, disabled people, people from
minority backgrounds, migrants and refugees. All of these groups face significant barriers to entry into the workplace — and all of them frequently experience barriers to development once in employment.

However, all of these groups also have an enormous amount to bring to the workplace … and HR / HRD have a vital role to play in demonstrating to the organization the benefits of employing these individuals.

David argues people metrics are again vital in this and draws my attention to McDonald’s analysis of restaurant performance which shows that restaurants employing one or more people over the age of 60 enjoy 20% higher levels of customer satisfaction than those that don’t. Germany provides an example where the supply of young people into the labour force is predicted to decline significantly in coming years. In an initiative seen as having mutual benefits, McDonald’s are discussing with the German government how it might seek to provide a combined education and employment initiative in relation to the large numbers of migrants and refugees currently moving into Germany.

By aligning diversity and inclusion initiatives with our core organization and business strategies, we will be better able to meet our resourcing requirements but we’ll also be better placed to manage and inspire the multi-generational, multicultural, multilingual workforces of the future.

**Technology**

In a number of ways, the relationship between HRD and technology has been an undercurrent throughout our discussion. For example, technology enables people metrics, critical to HRD decision making, to be at the heart of the global people strategy; while eLearning and gamification are increasingly important in the delivery of learning and development initiatives.

In 18 McDonald’s Markets much of this online activity is enabled by an employee portal – “ourlounge” — which gives staff a single point where they can access a wide range of information from what they need to know on their first day to online learning. And from details of the next big marketing promotion to the latest employee discounts which have been negotiated by the company with a range of retailers and service providers. The sites also include competitions and, importantly, employee surveys and discussion forums. “The two-way dialogue this enables us to have with our people is invaluable,” David comments “and we’re currently having around 6-million of these conversations every quarter with Crew and managers posting thousands of comments and pictures every day.” Beyond “ourlounge”, McDonald’s is also engaging with staff and customers via social media and using sophisticated monitoring tools to get feedback on key initiatives and to identify potential issues and opportunities.

In terms of technology in training and development, David tells me of a recent visit to a restaurant in London where he donned a new virtual reality headset. This provided a very powerful experience of life in the kitchen and he believes that in relatively short period of time technology like this will become part of everyday workplace training in many of McDonald’s Markets.

I ask what I feel may be a tough question about technology and the nature of work at McDonald’s and which in part relates back to our discussion about ‘inspired’ employees. Citing Martin Ford’s recent book *The Rise of the Robots*, I ask about McDonald’s use of labour saving technology. Might the organization be entering a period of de-skilling and headcount reduction in its restaurants? The answer is a firm “no”. Technology has a huge role to play in increasing
customer convenience, and significant investments are being made in areas such as front-of-house ordering kiosks and mobile ordering. However, the impact of these technologies has been to create new hospitality roles such as at-table ordering and service (i.e.: waiters and waitresses) and “Guest Experience Leaders” (a similar role to the maître d’ in a high-end restaurant).

The McDonald’s example and approach here is important in terms of the bigger picture of how the relationship between people and technology might unfold over coming years. It provides an interesting counter to a body of opinion which sees a likelihood that the accelerating technological applications will remove a wide range of jobs from the economy of both developed and developing countries and confine many to employment drudgery.

**Should it be the McDonald’s ‘People Development’ laboratory**

As we draw the discussion to a close David reflects on the themes we have discussed and reminds me of his job title … Chief People Officer. It’s a job title, he says, which often makes people smile, but he believes that it reflects the broadening of HR beyond its traditional boundaries and into a wider “People” space. Asked to explain further, David points out that until recently at McDonald’s, HR and Learning & Development at a global level were separate functions reporting into two different members of the senior leadership team. Today they are unified under David’s leadership along with the Diversity & Inclusion team and the teams driving a range of key community-based initiatives (such as the Ronald McDonald House Charities which provide accommodation for families so they can stay close to their hospitalized child at little or no cost) around the world. He also highlights that this more broadly-based People team are now also partnering closely with teams and functions, such as Investor Relations and the Environment team, where even two or three years ago there was little or no involvement.

This resonates with other voices (see for example, Harvard Business Review, July-August, 2015) which are questioning if HR/HRD can ensure the engagement of senior management and investors. Across the board, David concludes, “we are moving into what I call a more inclusive, ‘people space’. I think this can help cement the people function right at the heart of organizational strategy”. So it’s clear that, for David, HRD is highly relevant player within a broader ‘community of practice’ of employee-centred disciplines. Indeed, this final theme of our discussion provides further illustration of the insights which the idea of McDonald’s as an HRD laboratory can offer the reflective and discerning HRD practitioner and researcher.

**References**


HR Analytics — Turbo Charged or
Stuck in Neutral?

Paul Turner and Wojciech Zytkowiak

Turbo charged — A People Management Revolution

The use of HR Analytics is radically changing the way that many companies go about People Management and Development. This is because the provision of analytical capacity gives HR the opportunity to move beyond the past and the present (producing metrics like headcount, retention rate, time to hire, turnover, absence rate, etc.) to a position where predictive analytics will provide valuable workforce intelligence about what may happen at some time in the future.

In multinationals such as Morgan Stanley, Starwoods, Shell, Google and Nestle the use of HR Analytics appears well established; whilst the US Space Agency, NASA is seeking to create a culture of data-driven decision-making in their HR processes. At Maersk Group, the analysis of people related information incorporates descriptive statistics, linkage based information, and analytics to predict the outcomes of a particular set of measures or actions. (Hartmann, 2015). Examples include identifying by how much employee engagement could be increased and the effect this would have on the business; the likely impact of training on future performance and how people related actions could affect operational performance and customer satisfaction.

For some, HR Analytics is empowering the function; for others it’s a reinvention of HR for the 21st Century — moving from subjective decision making to that which is data driven and evidence based. For Pfizer, AOL, and Facebook, HR analytics highlight the factors that correlate with high-performer retention and “SAB Miller uses analytics to drive high quality standards across a variety of programmes worldwide”. (Bennett and Collins, 2015). In these examples the application of analytics provides “information and insights about the nature of individuals in organizations and the value that they add” (CIPD, 2016) and give credence to the argument that companies that build capabilities in people analytics outperform their peers in quality of hire, retention, and leadership capabilities, and are generally higher ranked in their employment brand (Deloitte 2015).

The case in favour of HR Analytics is a strong one and their use by some of the largest organizations in the world is persuasive. But evidence suggests that the take up and application of HR Analytics tools and techniques is not yet universal.
Stuck in Neutral?

Deloitte’s *Global Capital Trends Survey* in 2015 for example concluded that HR analytics remained the second biggest challenge in those organizations surveyed (after building better leadership). They noted that whilst most companies believed that using people analytics was important, only eight percent thought their organizations were strong in this area. Weaknesses included HR and talent operational reporting and scorecards; conducting multi-year workforce planning; correlating HR data to business performance and using HR data to predict workforce performance and improvement (Deloitte, 2015).

Furthermore, studies of the application of HR Analytics in Singapore, Hong Kong and Malaysia found that whilst there was recognition of the power of analytics for driving productivity and performance; and at ‘both the strategic and operational level,’ it was mostly multinationals that had embraced their use.

The competitive and highly entrepreneurial Asian market of medium-sized organizations has been slower to take up and invest in analytics processes (CIPD, 2015a).

A conclusion that was mirrored by a study in the Middle East where it was noted that whilst multinationals had started to use HR analytics,

the relative adolescence of organizations in the Middle East means that HR analytics practice has yet to become business as usual for the big players in the region.

Whilst it could be expected that multinationals have applied their HR analytics processes across their global footprint, the reality is that its application is more piecemeal, and in regions such as the Middle East HR analytics practice is less rooted (CIPD, 2015b).

Many would agree that HR analytics had significant potential in transforming businesses but HR professionals appeared to be finding it difficult to implement activity at both strategic and operational levels. Factors that influence this position are lack of investment, inadequate leadership understanding and the maturity of the HR function which are holding back development at the strategic level, while at the operational level technology and the analytics skills gap are holding back development of the function (CIPD, 2015a).

The CIPD’s HR Outlook for 2015/2016 concluded that there was a mismatch between the views of HR and non-HR business leaders in the value of HR analytics (CIPD, 2016).

Learning from Experience?

So, do the experiences of those organizations whom have applied analytics successfully give any pointers to others?

- In the first place, the success of HR Analytics would seem to be improved by the closeness of their links to Business and People Strategy. Rasmussen and Ulrich (2015) recommend that a focus of analytics should be on business goals; “HR analytics should not start with data or a preconceived approach to business problems, but with a business challenge”.


The term alignment has been overused, but there is a strong case for it in the application of HR Analytics.

- To complement this, HR Analytics should ‘shine a light’ on business issues (CIPD, 2015a) and illustrate how through strategic HR practice organizations can improve their overall productivity and performance.

- Neither of these will be achieved unless a third criteria is satisfied and that is engaging with business leaders in a strategic way — using HR Analytics — to develop better methods and approaches to achieve transformational change through people management and development (Angrave et al., 2016).

- Finally, since people with HR analytics skills are in short supply, there should be a focus on developing them within the People Management function. If HR wants to be serious about people analytics, it needs to build (or buy) its data science skills.

It seems unlikely that HR Analytics is another HR fad soon to be confined to the dustbin of history. Too much has already been delivered by way of business outcomes and the value of analytics, when applied to business challenges, can be immense. However, it is equally unlikely that the benefits of HR Analytics will come automatically. In this respect a strong business focus, a skill set that includes analytics and HR and HRD professionals engaged with business leaders on the value of analytics would appear to be the basic requirements.

References


The Authors

Paul Turner is Professor of Management Practice at Leeds Business School.

Wojciech Zytkowiak is Head of Talent Programmes at a leading international retailer and Ph.D. candidate at ISCTE Instituto Universitario de Lisboa.
HRD Forum: Book Review

Harry Potter and the Scholar-Practitioner

Catherine Groves

This is a review of *A Guide to Professional Doctorates in Business and Management* by Lisa Anderson, Jeff Gold, Jim Stewart and Richard Thorpe. For such an unassuming-looking volume, I found this book to be provoking and enjoyable. As a result, my review took longer to write than anticipated. The book has a helpful and quite comprehensive overview in the preface for those who are interested only in its contents. Therefore, rather than structuring the review chronologically, it is written in a more impressionistic and metaphorical style, one more in keeping with the action modes of research championed in the book.

Background

*A Guide to Professional Doctorates* was apparently written for me. Before you turn the page and abandon this review as hopelessly narcissistic, let me qualify that statement. The authors themselves situate the book at the conjunction of a number of communities, aiming it at those with an interest in the practitioner as researcher, those enrolled for a Professional Doctorate in Business and Management, and those supervising and examining their work. As well as being a recent DBA graduate and supervisor of a number of DBA projects, I am also an academic and practitioner who is interested in “the creation of professional and actionable knowledge through the use of action modes of research”. Because of these varied perspectives, I hope this review will provide insight to interested parties from a variety of communities.

DBA vs PhD

It was refreshing to encounter a book focused unapologetically on the DBA and one that sidestepped the tired old DBA vs PhD dyad. Novel and actionable methods of research, which are equally viable, equally valid, and equally doctoral, were brought into focus, managing to circumvent the hierarchical conception of knowledge that might arise as a result of more traditional constructs of knowledge accumulation. It focused instead on the wisdom that develops as a result of harnessing practice-based phenomena to suggest the appropriate research path.

As a researcher-practitioner working in academia, a common theme I have encountered when discussing my DBA with academics is the, generally unhelpful and unedifying, rigour-relevance debate. While practitioners readily embrace the creation of actionable research born out of a thorough exploration of ‘real world’ problems, a depressingly common academic perspective of the DBA seems to be of a ‘poor relation’ (for poor relation, read ‘slightly inbred but amusing
country cousin’) of the PhD. This book helpfully avoids justification or apology. Rather, the authors celebrate its difference and highlight the unique strength and rigour of the DBA as well as its inherent value to an audience beyond academia.

Having situated myself within this community of practice and identified my potential positive bias, the book itself was informative and readable. The take-home message was the value of the DBA at the interface between research and practice and the encouragement of the academic community to appreciate the difference; to value DBAs alongside PhDs as different but equal. It was a thoughtful and well-informed tour of the DBA, taking in the why and the how, as well as the what.

Instead of competing, DBAs and PhDs were conceptualized at either end of a “continuum of practice”, situated instead by the positioning of the doctoral work according to the extent of the personal and organizational relevance, engagement, and development contained in the work. The construct put me in mind of Ollivander’s shop in Harry Potter, where, rather than a wizard choosing a wand, a wand might choose wizard. In the wizarding world, chemistry and ‘chosen-ness’ come about from the partnership of a particular wand with a particular wizard, based on the qualities, strengths and needs of both parties.

The best results, however, must always come where there is the strongest affinity between the wizard and the wand. These connections are complex. An initial attraction, and then a mutual quest for experience, the wand learning from the wizard, the wizard from the wand (Rowling, 2007: 402).

So, in an ideal situation, the prospective doctoral student would encounter their own Ollivander, under whose expert guidance, a similar type of alchemy might occur. In this case the ‘chosen-ness’ of the doctoral qualification emerging from the convergence of the phenomenon being observed or investigated, the existing scholarly ‘conversation’ in that area, the practice-based needs identified, and the experience and position of the student within that scenario. The metaphor may sound a trifle fanciful, given the pressures on all sides of the academic partnership, student, business and university, however, the insight contained in this book, genuinely applied with a constructive attitude, make me believe that such a choosing might be possible, and the resultant magic, might render that effort worthwhile.

The book’s underpinning value is one of criticality. It encourages the reader to increase “the variety of ways events can be understood” (Anderson et al., 2015: 112) and their engagement with problems and phenomena that, if they are to be fully investigated, do not have fixed diagnoses or cures. The inclusion of examples from a wide range of real DBA students and their research bring the theory to life and make it easier to apply the principles contained in the book to working with my students, in all their variety and complexity. Examples included instances where a student has flexed and adapted their emphasis or perspective as their research unfolded, rather in the way that a wizard might learn from a wand. Cases like these demonstrate the value and meaningfulness of actionable research where theory takes its “place as the servant of practice, providing meaning that is responsive and always developing” (p. 181).

**Professional Doctorates and the Impact Agenda**

Part of the value of this book is in the combined wisdom and experience of the authors. It represents a challenge to more traditional views of ‘doctorness’ and goes some way to redressing
the balance between the overt value placed within academia upon publication in high-ranked journals, and the lesser-prized but equally valuable engagement with business and influence upon practice.

The Stern review into the REF (2016) has called for a broadening in the way that research impacts are defined and encourages institutions to think about how they engage with society, in other words, the actionability of their research outputs. The emphasis of the DBA on developing rigorous research that can be actioned, and therefore create impact is vital. Where the lesser tendency of DBA students to publish in high-ranking journals has perhaps led to the qualification being viewed, in academic circles at least, as less important, the renewed focus on impact and actionable research means that the DBA is a degree whose time has come.

A Handbook?

I wish that this book had been available when I began my DBA as its discussion and guidance on research philosophy was clear and lacking jargon. Like the DBA itself, it sought to make a contribution to practice as well as theory and, as such, lacked the obfuscation of academic language while maintaining academic rigour.

As a supervisor of DBAs myself, there are elements in this book, for instance the explanation of theory, model, concept, framework, that go right to the heart of the DBA experience and can be difficult for a practitioner-as-researcher to fully grasp. I have found myself smiling and nodding as the book succinctly and elegantly explains what I have been trying to get across to a student during a supervision session.

Many potential doctoral students circle an organizational problem that concerns messy people-and-systems issues and, in an attempt to frame a succinct and manageable study question, are tempted to ‘trim’ the problem down to fit within more traditional methodological approaches. The chapters on action learning with their illustrating examples act as a searchlight into the unknown, providing an actionable route that could, instead, fit the research to the problem. Where the authors have not seen particular theories harnessed for a DBA, a clear rationale and helpful suggestions are made for application, and supporting resources suggested. This almost (but not quite!) made me want to go away and have another go!

While it could undoubtedly be used as a handbook to explain and equip, the book goes well beyond this remit, to question underlying philosophies, debunk rigid research constructs, and provide a tantalising glimpse into what might be possible to achieve with a sufficiently flexible mind-set.

Summary

While there is a large and varied repertoire of books available on PhDs, this is the most helpful book on the DBA that I have found. The contributions of the various authors are complementary and, taken together, provide a comprehensive perspective on the DBA, its history, strengths, and trajectory.

I will undoubtedly return to the book periodically to support my practice. As an apprentice of
Ollivander, I will also be recommending it to my doctoral students (both DBA and PhD) to inform and ‘loosen up’ their methodological thinking, and facilitate the all-important magic between wizard and wand, that brings doctoral research to life.

**Note**


**References**


**The Reviewer**

Dr Catherine Groves is Senior Lecturer at the Business School, Liverpool John Moores University. A chartered psychologist, Catherine had 20 years’ experience of enterprise and operational management before coming to academia. Her research interest is aimed at exploring the theory-practice gap between psychological theory and its application in a ‘real’ business context. She has a particular interest in supporting practitioners undertaking research within their own organizational setting.
Request for Feedback

The International Journal of HRD Practice, Policy & Research is a new journal. It is a new journal in a fairly crowded market place. Although a long time in gestation (see Morton and Stewart’s short paper in Issue 1) the collaborative efforts of the journal’s two ‘sponsors’, IFTDO and UFHRD, finally realised aspirations to create a journal which could focus more directly on promoting contributions from HRD professionals, wherever they are based, on their practice. As we said at its launch IJHRDPP&R is seeking to create synergies between practice and theory to offer today’s HRD professionals insight, ideas and understanding on the contemporary issues and challenges facing HRD. As was noted in the Editorial of Issue 1 the shaping of the Journal vis these aims and aspirations must be viewed as ‘work in progress’. But it is now opportune to pause for a moment and take on board feedback from readers and users of the journal.

We contemplated a survey type set of questions but in the end decided to leave it open. Remember the time when people used to send postcards when on holiday? Food great but weather awful! The local markets are amazing ... biggest tomatoes I’ve ever seen! In other words, just tell us what you think. It might relate to the title, the content, the coverage, the format, the frequency, the delivery system (print and online – for the time being, anyway). Anything that you think might be useful moving forward. Two words, two lines, two pages – whatever.

On the basis that you do tell us something we will try and summarise this in the Journal’s HRD Forum in the next issue.

Ways to send

The easiest way is probably to use the feedback box on the online version of Issue 2. This is at:
www.ijhrdppr.com

Alternatively, please email any comments to editors@ijhrdppr.com or to the editor at r.j.holden@ljmu.ac.uk

Thank you.
IFTDO and UFHRD Awards

IFTDO

The IFTDO Global HRD Awards Program, recognizes the achievements of organizations and their people. It also provides a valuable database of success stories to inspire and guide others. There are two award categories:

1. Best HRD Practice
2. Research Excellence Award

Submissions are evaluated, by a respected panel of judges, against the criteria outlined for the award category. Winners of the Awards receive a cash sum and a plaque.

Deadline for receipt of submission for the 2017 Awards closes on 30 November. For more details see: http://www.iftdo.net/global-hrd-awards

UFHRD

The Alan Moon Memorial Prize

This prize commemorates the contribution (in founding and establishing the Forum) of Alan Moon to both the UFHRD and to HRD more widely. The prize is offered at each annual UFHRD/AHRD conference for the best HRD paper submitted to the Conference.

Nominations for the Award are made from submissions to the various streams of each annual Conference. Winners of the Award receive a cash sum and a plaque.

Best Teaching and Learning Resource

A prize for the best contribution to the UFHRD’s Teaching & Learning Resource Bank. The Teaching & Learning Resource Bank is a web-based facility which exists to support UFHRD members and to promote excellence in the teaching of HRD. Winners of the Award receive a cash sum.

The deadline for receipt of submissions for this award will be in Spring 2017.

www.ufhrd.co.uk
The International Journal of HRD Practice, Policy & Research

The International Journal of HRD Practice, Policy & Research is a peer-reviewed journal that brings together international practitioner and academic expertise to support the understanding and practice of human resource development (HRD) and its impact and influence. Its aim is to create and develop synergies between practice and theory and to offer critically reflective practitioners-academics evidence based ideas and insights on the contemporary issues and challenges facing HRD internationally. The journal is sponsored by a partnership between the International Federation of Training and Development Organizations (IFTDO) and the University Forum for HRD (UFHRD).

The editors welcome contributions on a wide range of HRD themes and issues. This includes: the HRD knowledge base (learning, skills, competences); HRD interventions: HRD analytics; HRD and ethics; the professionalization of HRD; vocational educational training policy and practice; issues related to workforce development, generational differences, international and national policy initiatives.

Submission Types

1. Articles of between 4,000 to 7,000 (max) words related to applied research. These articles will report either results of empirical research and/or develop theoretical perspectives. Such articles will contribute to knowledge and understanding about HRD and closely related subject areas.

2. Articles of between 4,000 to 7,000 (max) words related to evidence-based practice. These articles will focus on accounts of practice – interventions, programmes and events – but which can be constructed to make a contribution of interest to a broader HRD practice community. Case study type article are welcome. All such articles should consider impact in terms of factors such as the transfer of learning and implications for the development of HRD practice.

3. Articles of between 4,000 and 7,000 (max) words related to evidence based policy and/or implications for policy both within organizations and at national and international levels. These articles could address, for example, skills policies, strategic workforce development, the labour market, education – work transition, demographic changes and challenges. As with Type 2 submissions, case studies are welcome but also cross cultural comparisons and reviews which move beyond one organisation or country. Articles should be constructed to move beyond description so as to include review, assessment and considered questioning of the policy(ies) under consideration.

Article types 1,2 and 3 will be subject to anonymous peer review by two reviewers.

4. HRD Forum. This section of the journal provides space for more speculative ‘think pieces’, commentaries, viewpoints and reviews. Their purpose is to simulate discussion and debate on current HRD practice, policy and research and consider the future directions of HRD practice, policy and research. Contributions here are not subject to peer review although the Editor / Associate Editors may seek comments and suggestions from members of the Editorial Advisory Board and which would be discussed with the author as part of the editorial process. Think pieces and viewpoints should be between 1,000 and 2,000 words (max). Book reviews should be no more than 500 words, and review articles no more than 2,000 words.

Authors are welcome to discuss their ideas with either the Editor in Chief or any of the Associate Editors. Contact details and full guidelines for submission of papers are available on the Journal’s web site; www.ijhrdppr.com