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Editorial

It is almost a year to the day that I was drafting the first editorial for the journal. Anniversaries can be overplayed but a first anniversary should not go overlooked. I am reminded of a first anniversary some years ago when, together with my eldest son, we had reached the end of the first year of our joint business venture – a small music bar in Leeds. Whilst a successful first year was indeed a cause for celebration it was kept in check by the realisation that, if anything, we needed to re-double our efforts to develop the business in year two. And so with IJHRDPP&R. In many ways it is still very early days. The positioning of the Journal (and see also HRD Forum) is work in progress and we face the challenge in year two of sustaining momentum.

The good news is that this first issue of Volume 2 does just that, with strong contributions both in the main section and in the HRD Forum ... plus two bits of news, which hopefully will help generate both interest in and recognition of the Journal. I am pleased that three contributions reflect, unequivocally, the voice of the HRD practitioner. Mark Cole questions traditional, and still pervasive, notions of ‘training’ in the workplace. The paper generates ideas, drawn from his experience in L&D within the UK’s NHS, about alternative practices and importantly something of a practice agenda for how fellow practitioners might re-think their own work from the perspectives he develops. Gillian Felton and her colleagues, Lisa Banton and Angela Earnshaw, all active organisation development practitioners, provide rich insight into their personal journeys of professional development using soft systems methodology. They subsequently draw these together with an assessment of the value of this particular HRD pathway, together with consideration of implications for OD practice more generally. From OD in the UK public sector we are transported to the United Arab Emirates where Alaa Garad and Fiona Martis highlight interesting developments in HRD at national and local levels, working with the model of business excellence and the investors in people (IIP) framework.

Andreas Wallo provides a more conventional ‘academic’ contribution on leadership practice, drawing on research in two Swedish manufacturing companies. Its positioning in IJHRD, though, is assured by its contribution to HRD research and practice by its nuanced and sensitive insight into learning -oriented leadership practice in the daily work of managers. Corporate universities have been the subject of considerable attention over the years. Yet this interest has produced little by way of empirical research on CUs in practice. Gary Ewer and Darlene Russ-Eft focus on one CU in the USA — Platt University, part of the Platt Electric Supply corporation. Of some note also is that this article is jointly authored from academia and practice; the sort of collaboration that is to be commended and encouraged for subsequent contributions to the Journal.

Whilst a jointly authored article such as that noted above is not necessarily a sufficient condition for a “scholarly practice” article, it is an excellent starting point! Two contributions develop the thinking about what scholarly practice might look like. Jeff Gold explores rigour and relevance in terms of writing for publication. He questions output that seems to serve no other purpose than feeding a “closed incestuous loop” among the writers of management research “who are

simultaneously both the producers and consumers of research outputs”, with judgments of success based on the consumption by other writers who cite such work in their next production rather than engaging with a practice and impact agenda. It is then but a short hop to Jim Stewart and Sally Sambrook’s reflection on the UK’s research assessment exercise, specifically as regards the impact that HRD research can have vs practice. HRD researchers can and do connect with practice. Interestingly, they also suggest that HRD has much wider contribution to connecting theory and practice than that achieved through its own direct research.

And so to the two pieces of Journal News. First I am delighted to announce the launch of a new writer award (see page 97), sponsored by the Journal. Continuing the theme noted above this award is for a new writer of HRD scholarly practice. Again, the potential of joint contributions is highlighted — this time between final year, or recently completed students, pursuing a research project in HRD together with their supervisor. Finally, I note that the Journal is entering the world of social media — albeit with some trepidation! One view of Twitter is that it is simplistic and facile. But, to help connect the Journal to a wider network of HRD professionals I consider it worthwhile. I want to use Twitter to promote and generate interest in the Journal. Follow the Journal using @IJHRDPPR

Dr Rick Holden, Editor in Chief

Rethinking the Practice of Workplace Learning and Development: Utilizing ‘Knowledge, Connections and Conversation’ in Organizations

Mark Cole, *Camden & Islington NHS Foundation Trust, UK*

Against the backdrop of a concern that traditional notions of ‘training’ continue to influence workplace learning and development practice in many organizations, this paper contributes an alternative perspective as a means of engendering change and enhanced performance amongst individuals and across organizations. In discussing the relationships between organizational effectiveness, organization development and learning and development it constructs a ‘foundation for improvement’ based on three elements: knowledge, connections and conversation. Drawing on illustrative accounts of current L&D practice from one NHS Trust in the UK, the paper develops what this altered practice of development in a workplace context might look like. Thus, both a vision and a practice agenda, in terms of working differently with people in organizations, are outlined and provide a basis for how fellow practitioners might question and rethink their own L&D practice.

Key Words: training, L&D, organization development, workplace, practice agenda

Introduction

Charles Handy has argued that organizational effectiveness (OE) is constructed from over sixty interacting factors (Handy, 1993: 15), including systems and structures, motivation and leadership. This is compounded by the fact that OE is somewhat imprecisely defined, despite being an active business term for some time. Indeed there exist at least four models attempting to consider it, in respect to analysis and understanding in this regard (Ashraf & Abd Kadir, 2012). Nevertheless, it is patently an area of focus for many organizations in the current economic climate — and is seen to be a significant way by which firms attain a competitive advantage, particularly where they themselves (and the context in which they work) are complex systems (Right Management, 2010). At least one research study suggests that their “... results highlight the importance of both human resources and employee-oriented processes in explaining and promoting effectiveness” (Ostroff & Schmitt, 1993).

In this article, the relationship between OE, workforce development and organization development (OD) is explored in a contemporary context, with the aim of espousing a new way of working in an organizational context in order to support systems to work better. The paper seeks to question the dichotomous view of learning and development and OD — but does so from a perspective that is critical of the traditional view of training as a means of engendering change and enhanced performance amongst individuals and across organizations. It explores alternative accounts of practice drawn from the author’s experience leading and managing learning and development (L&D) in the UK’s national health service; primarily within the Camden & Islington (C&I) NHS Foundation Trust¹. The paper seeks to contribute insight into what this altered practice of

development in an organizing context might look like — and how fellow practitioners might rethink their own work from this specific perspective.

Background

The twentieth century saw three notions constellate in terms of human organizing, namely bureaucracy, Taylorism and Fordism. While ‘bureaucracy’ has, as a term, acquired negative connotations over time, Max Weber offers a more balanced and sanguine assessment of this organizational form, noting that, through the observance of agreed process and procedure, the possibility of human bias is attenuated (Weber, 1978). Such an organizational model is mirrored by the practice of Taylorism, which encapsulates the notion that oversight is essential in terms of getting the most out of a workforce (Taylor, 1911/1967). The productive arrangements that grew out of that managerialist philosophy are ordinarily described as Fordism, as realized through the introduction of production lines initially in respect to car manufacture in the US (Dassbach, 1991).

All three of these approaches assume an anti-humanist stance: the worker is merely an input to a system, rather than a free acting human agent. Indeed, it is perhaps not insignificant that Taylor started in engineering before moving into the science of management. One of his key early achievements was in the area of the interchangeability of machine parts (Paxton, 2011). His philosophy of scientific management generated a discourse where those working in manufacture could be seen as human capital. As the singer Morrissey said of the rhythm section of the band *The Smiths*, they were merely “lawnmower parts” (Bret, 2004: 242). Taylor made it possible to think of people in the workplace in this way.

Clearly, it is possible to periodize these linked practices as arising at the back of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, although it is equally reasonable to say that they were present — to a greater or lesser extent — in manufactory and statecraft prior to this time. Moreover, they persist today, in some quarters, particularly in respect to our global economy: the sweat shops where inexpensive clothing is stitched together are no doubt subject to intense oversight and a productive imperative — and, closer to home, the warehouse of one of the UK’s major high street sports retailers has been compared to a Victorian workhouse (Hipwell, 2016).

However, despite these supposed aberrations, we are allegedly now occupying a post-Taylorist, post-Fordist world, where notions such as *holacracy* (broadly and notionally speaking a system of organizational governance in which authority and decision-making are distributed across self-organizing teams rather than being vested in a management hierarchy) hold sway in terms of the way in which business seeks to organize itself (Bernstein et al., 2016). And so the question forces itself to the foreground: to what extent are our traditional notions of workplace learning and development merely reflections of those early industrial approaches — and was traditional training in such a setting ever truly meaningful, in enhancing the performance of the people and the companies where they worked?

Training in the Workplace

The way in which training is planned, prepared, delivered and evaluated continues to bear decidedly industrial hallmarks. The process encompasses training needs analysis (TNA), the

definition of content and delivery methods, and evaluation, with the TNA potentially running at three levels: organization, task, and person (Tannenbaum & Yukl, 1992: 401-403). Notionally, the TNA is intimately related to the strategy and declared objectives of the business, which presupposes the existence of the sort of sophisticated workforce planning that exists more in word than in deed. Theoretically, the training programmes that are designed address some sort of deficit, particularly in respect to specific individuals or groups of individuals, viz occupational categories or teams.

The very word ‘training’ — which learning and development struggles to slough off in a business context — has clear connotations: a sports person trains, for example, which often involves repeatedly doing something in order to improve the execution of it. There seems to be something innately repetitive about the idea of ‘training’, which links it to notions of drilling. In some areas of thought, this links to ideas of “dressage” (Jackson & Carter, 1998) and the creation of ‘docile bodies’ (Foucault, 1991) in and through practice in the workplace. And it remains the case — certainly in settings where organizations are heavily regulated, such as health care — that a great deal of what is described as training involves that which carries a statutory or regulatory imperative, with little regard given to whether these experiences are educational, let alone meaningful in day to day practice. Until quite recently, the C&I NHS Foundation Trust maintained a list of over 50 mandatory training topics. If a newly qualified nurse had complied with this list to the letter, it would have involved more than 15 days away from the workplace in their first year of appointment.

In the traditional notion of workplace learning and development, there is an assumed skills gap which invariably resides in an individual — or a collective of such individuals, who are seeking to deliver a defined outcome. This is supposedly exposed through some sort of skills gap analysis often buried in the wearisome bureaucracy of traditional performance appraisal, a practice that is increasingly being critically interrogated and found wanting (Cappelli & Tavis, 2016). At an organization wide level, these gaps are notionally unearthed through the training needs analysis, an exercise that is meant to derive from a range of data sources, not least the annual business planning cycle, and which tends to attempt a delicate balance between the empirical and the straightforwardly fictional. Indeed, it is suggested that:

it is interesting to note that whereas most training researchers believe and espouse that training-needs analysis is the most important phase in training, this phase remains largely an art rather than a science (Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2001: 477).

The imprecision — and, indeed, the illusions around the applicability of a TNA — is partly explained by the fact that, in most instances, it is a supply- rather than a demand-led exercise, which is to say, the assessment of what training might be required at a range of levels in an organization is invariably undertaken by the very people who will deliver the training that is identified as being needed (Chiu et al., 1999). The data sources used to concoct the TNA include workforce plans, personal development plans, and — very often — questionnaires or interview with members of the workforce. Philosophically, what is interesting here is the effacement of the individual in favour of an act of aggregation, where only those needs that are shared by what is judged to be a significant proportion of the workforce (or members of a particular team that has been targeted in this respect) are given value and priority.

The TNA, of course, is just the start of it: the needs identified must then be met and that sees a response in terms of formal training. In 2015, organizations were still predominantly offering on

the job training and formalized training as the key methods of meeting learning need (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2015: 9). At the same time, given the high levels of employee and organizational time consumed by such activities, the measurement of effectiveness of those interventions is patchy. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development suggest that:

One in seven do not evaluate the majority of their L&D initiatives — over a third limit their evaluations to the satisfaction of those that take part. One in five assesses the transfer of learning into the workplace and a small minority evaluate the wider impact on the business or society. (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2015: 4).

Interestingly, the measurement of informal learning is invariably conducted through the prism of organizational goals, while that of formal training is undertaken within its own terms, vis a vis assessing whether a course achieved the objectives that were set for it (Clarke, 2004).

The Foundations of Improvement

Work undertaken in 2015-16 by the Learning & Organizational Development Team (L&OD) at C&I NHS Foundation Trust in terms of producing an organizational development (OD) strategy helped develop a detailed appreciation of what the individual and organizational needs were in terms of enhancing performance and effectiveness. The diagnostic exercise that offered the foundation for strategic thinking consisted of three phases: semi-structured interviews with the senior leadership team (namely, executive directors plus their deputies and all associate directors, along with professional heads); a thematic analysis of the notes from those conversations, leading to the production of a schedule of issues to be addressed; and facilitated discussions within teams across around 10% of the workforce.

This diagnostic work was followed by a series of what were called “innovation green housing” events, wherein staff from across the Trust were invited to self-nominate to attend a facilitated event drawing on a specific methodology designed to release creativity and focus on the generation of responses to identified issues (?What If!, 2002). The foundation of this work was the reworked materials from the wider workforce consultation. This was used by the innovation greenhouse attendees to identify issues of concern and to surface exciting ideas to address them, regardless of how outlandish or impractical they might seem. In this regard, the events seek to suspend the normal (and normative) rules and behaviours that apply in the organizational context. There is an extent to which this — and other similar ‘techniques of release’ — resonate with Bakhtin’s notion of the carnival, a time when people are momentarily unrestrained by the ties that bind them on a quotidian basis (Boje et al., 2003). Organizations neglect such carnivalesque experiences at their peril, as they offer a massive opportunity for staff to speak truth to power and give voice to things, such as innovations, that they might otherwise censor in the midst of the normative corporate culture.

Despite the richness and depth of detail that these data offered and the comprehensive strategy that it came to underpin, at root it seemed apparent to those of us who had been involved so intimately in this work that it was founded on three simple elements:

1. **Knowledge** needs to flow freely and pool where it is required;
2. **Connections** are critical to making organizations work well, in light of their systemic natures; and

3. **Conversation** is the key way to support both the flow of knowledge and the essential connectivity of people.

Delivering on these three essential elements of organizational effectiveness — knowledge, connections and conversation (KCC) — is patently the responsibility of the whole workforce (and crucially of the manager, for whom this focus should be primary in terms of their day to day practice with the people in the workplace), although certain functions within the organization will be charged with supporting and directing interventions that facilitate this. But doing this meaningfully suggests a new way of working in our companies, one where the silo like notions of workforce development, business education, continuing professional development, business analysis, continuous improvement and organization development are transcended. Ultimately, then, any organizational function charged with work around development needs to orient its activity around the notion of KCC. However, it also requires something of a rethink around how current functions, oftentimes discrete, occasionally combined, sometimes felt to be coterminous, support the ambition to meet these specific contextual needs.

Rethinking Organizational Development

There is an increasing focus in the workplace — and specifically across the Human Resource community — on what is referred to as organizational development (OD). For HR practitioners, they find themselves being driven to focus on the transformational rather than the solely transactional elements of their practice (Ulrich, 1998). In light of this increasing imperative, it is worth pausing to reacquaint ourselves with a helpful definition of OD, as a means of orienting ourselves appropriately for further discussion of how best we might support organizations to work better:

Organization development is an effort (1) planned, (2) organization wide, and (3) managed from the top, to (4) increase organization effectiveness and health through (5) planned interventions in the organization's 'processes' using behavioural-science knowledge (Beckhard, 2006: 3).

Latterly, this domain of organizational practice has developed a fresh strand of activity, one that is less focused on diagnosing and fixing problems — with its notionally empiricist underpinnings — to one that gives total attention to the people in an organization and which uses conversation to facilitate change, using the innate knowledge and talents of those individuals. This dialogic approach has been shown by some of its leading proponents to be defined in contradistinction to the traditional OD practice outlined above, with contrasts emphasized between the positivistic foundations of the diagnostic approach and the interpretive foundations of dialogic OD where organizations are seen as fluid, socially constructed realities that are continuously created through conversations and communication (Bushe & Marshak, 2015: 14).

This is relevant, insofar as it should be apparent that the dialogic approach to considering how best to develop our organizations is humanistic rather than crudely mechanistic and has a notionally liberal democratic orientation to helping the people in a business to contribute directly to the improvement to that business. In light of this, there would appear to be a significant conflation between dialogic OD and best practice in respect to the workforce development. In particular, it would seem reasonable to conclude that attempts within an organization to address issues of knowledge, connections and conversation between the people therein cannot be thought

— indeed, should not be thought of — as the preserve of either the L&D team or the OD team, but should be viewed afresh as a new way of addressing these issues, one that reflects what it means to work in a twenty-first century workplace.

The overlap here between modern ideas of learning in the workplace and what is seen as Dialogic OD is particularly noteworthy. Long before it became fashionable — and, for some advocates of this approach, lucrative — to promote the notion of 70:20:10 in terms of workplace learning with the observation that courses should make up just 10% of L&D activity, coaching and such like occupying 20%, and informal and situated learning taking up the bulk of activity in this regard (Jennings, 2011), there were intimations of what learning in and through practice truly looked like. There is an increasingly rich evidence of learning as a multifaceted and organizationally oriented practice, where workforce and organization development is blurred. Thus, for example, we have the insights generated from a study of Xerox engineers, informally discussing their work fixing photocopiers in a diner and thereby exchanging knowledge and ideas (Orr, 1996) leading to notions of knowledge management and communities of practice (Seely Brown & Duguid, 2000). Similarly, those who build dry stone walls appear to develop intuitive knowledge through practice and by the development of ‘rules of thumb’ (Farrar & Trorey, 2008). Other studies such as that of Cook and Yanow’s flute makers purport to show how such workers engage in ‘organizational learning’, learning which is embedded in the practice of work and which is “... neither individuals learning in organizations nor organizations employing processes akin to learning by individuals” (Cook & Yanow, 1993).

All of which is not to say that L&D and OD teams simply need to be “merged”; instead, it speaks to a substantive reorientation of thinking where the focus shifts and the way in which development as a thing in itself is addressed differently. The following section explores this in more detail.

Towards a Practice Agenda

It seems important at this juncture to introduce a subtle shift in thinking from a concentration on ‘organization’ as the object of our activity to a fresh focus on the general notion and process of ‘organizing’ as the place where our work might sensibly take place (Weick, 1969). This is a significant conceptual shift, allowing us to turn our backs on the reified notion of an ‘organization’ that exists outside of the people and relationships that constitute it in favour of an intimate concentration on fluidity, movement and interconnectivity. This is not to blithely assert — as some have — that organization extends beyond structure, although that is a truism, as it presupposes that the ‘organization’ continues to exist but that it is constituted by a range of less tangible factors alongside the shape it is encouraged to assume (Waterman et al., 1980).

But what might this rethinking of the notion of development in the workplace actually mean for practitioners who are eager to move their focus from a specific concern with training or OD to a wider commitment to organizational improvement? As a practitioner, these are the things that I have begun to do in order to affect that shift — and that I plan to do, in terms of enhancing my practice in the longer term.

A ‘Facilitative’ Approach

First, I am actively working from the premise that knowledge resides in practice – and that practice occurs within an organizing context. For me, the notion of ‘pit sense’ in the context of mining — an appreciation of safety that is expressed in and through day to day work by those actively engaged in it — is illustrative in this regard. In practice,

pit sense is not acquired through formal training, but is disseminated in situ, experientially, informally, through close social interaction and use of language, and based on the very unambiguous norm of safety. It is also an important part of the self-image and identity of miners, which empowers them to make important decisions away from the direct control of management, thus making them feel safe as well as special (Kamoche & Maguire, 2010: 726-727).

This has entailed a move away on my part—and that of my team—from programmatic interventions (the design of courses with consideration of content and delivery) to a more facilitative approach that puts greater emphasis on inquiry at the very start of this process. This means that I am offering more bespoke facilitative events, designed from scratch off the back of detailed discussions with managers and staff, and fewer standard courses. Interestingly, this brings its own problems: the NHS staff survey enquires as to whether staff have been able to access continuing professional development — and, for far too many of the respondents, this equates to attendance on a formal course rather than a facilitated event. There is much still to be done to reassure participants that a facilitated event, focused on a matter at hand, represents a rich source of CPD.

However, this shift is vital. US companies across the globe spent close to \$356 billion in 2015 on employee training and education — but that investment is not seen to deliver anything like the sort of performance improvement and enhanced effectiveness that one would expect (Beer et al., 2016). This failure to deliver a commensurate level of improvement is explained by the fact that companies tend to put the cart before the horse: they assume that learning and development will beget positive change, whereas — in fact — work to create effective change lays the foundation for effective learning insofar as it creates the context in which it can take place (Beer et al., 2016). The conclusion of these authors is simple: “The primary target for change and development is the organization — followed by training for individuals” (Beer et al., 2016: 55).

Working with ‘Conversation’

Second, there is a school of thought that considers conversation as constituting organization (Putnam et al., 2009). Certainly, it is possible to take from this scholarship the notion that conversation occupies a privileged position in organizing, insofar as it offers the key means by which the act of organizing is realized, acts discursively to frame what can and cannot be discussed, and offers the essential material out of which culture — and, indeed, sub-culture — appears. Even the ordinarily somewhat dry notion of drafting strategy can be seen to be as a conversational activity, with an argument being made that:

The strategy process, or strategic conversation, has a formal part, designed by the managers, and an informal part, which consists of the casual conversation about the future and which emerges spontaneously in any organization. The latter is extremely important because it determines where people’s attention is focused. Managers cannot control this, but they can intervene (van de Heijden, 1996: viii).

In the cognate realms of knowledge management, business analysis and organizational development, there are myriad techniques to support this type of practice based conversation. Most obviously, a Community of Practice is a key means of creating the space for people to engage around issues in their work domain and work together to address them, primarily by coming together and talking about them (Wenger & Snyder, 2000). Indeed, this is an area of work where there is considerable focus across the NHS in London, in light of the expectations around the delivery of integrated and place based care (JAMLab, 2016)².

In my current practice, I have arranged a meeting of nearly 100 people from across the NHS in London, all of whom wished to explore the notion of Communities of Practice (CoPs) as a means of engendering vital organizational change from the bottom up. A short film encapsulates the passion, energy, and enthusiasm that was apparent at this gathering, which took place on 3 November 2016: it can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9MIwpy4n90>. In essence, this method can be reasonably seen as an active refutation of the linear and oppressive notion of organizational change as a staged top-down intervention, perhaps most strongly represented in the work of John Kotter (Kotter, 2012). It seeks to foreground the lived experience of the people in the workplace, using their deep understanding of what goes on there — and what could be done differently and better. Any approach to change other than this — particularly in respect to notions of adjusting culture, which is problematic from a variety of perspectives — runs the risk of feeling uncomfortably totalitarian (Wilmott, 1993). This is strongly evidenced by the work undertaken via the Health Innovation Network, which reports on the myriad successes of CoPs around topics of patient safety (Rogers et al., N.D.).

More directive conversational techniques in this regard include methods such as world café (Brown & Isaacs, 2001) and open space technology (Owen, N.D.), both of which create environments where conversation is key and offers transformational opportunity. Neither is about teaching — or, indeed, about facilitation, in our traditional understanding of that practice. It is about creating a container wherein the lived experience of people within organizations and their practices are an invaluable resource for betterment, development and improvement in this context.

Recently, I was asked to design and run an event for senior nursing leaders to consider how best to get the voice of their profession into the discussions about integration and transformation in health and social care. In discussion with the sponsor in the run up to the session, there were patently a number of implicit expectations in play, namely that a good deal of the time would necessarily be used for presentations by experts and that a key output would be something akin to a project plan. However, I took the view that the crucial thing was for these senior leaders to have a conversation with one another, based upon a focus on inquiry rather than the definition of “problems”.

I expressed the opinion that — given the complexity surrounding these deliberations — any traditional GANTT-charted ‘action plan’ would be illusory and undeliverable to any meaningful degree. Instead, the session eventually involved groups rotating through three stations to hear an “expert” offer an outline assessment and then to discuss the situation. Later in the event, I used the world café approach, which encourages participants to discuss and put their ideas down on a large table cloth: they worked around four questions — and the material captured was rich, candid and detailed, providing the group with a solid foundation on which to proceed.

This experience reinforced for me the notion that I would now take a very similar approach to any notion of learning needs and working to meet them. Few areas of practice are solely about

knowledge transfer — the requirement that someone digests and acknowledges a new protocol or such like ... and, where they do exist, it is unlikely that formal training is going to affect such a transfer in a meaningful way. One NHS trust comfortably reported high levels of compliance in respect to mandatory training in Safeguarding — but staff could not articulate to the Care Quality Commission³ inspectors how a Safeguarding referral might be undertaken. In more sophisticated areas of workplace practice, it would undoubtedly be the case that inviting conversation, through a recognized methodology, could generate far richer results than a traditional ‘content plus delivery’ training day.

The use of methods such as these — and the embedding of new conversational practices within the warp and weft of our organizations, such as the encouragement of thinking environments throughout an organization through the adoption and promotion of a methodology such as *Time To Think* (Kline, 1999) — offer the opportunity for immediately helpful interventions around live issues, as well as a longitudinal encouragement for people in organizations to do things differently over time. They offer small “climatological” shifts that potentially will connect and amplify their effect through that connectivity in order to reshape the overall culture of a place of work. And we need to go further, in terms of creating spaces for conversation and dialogue, as some companies have; enhancing the ways in which people use words to offer feedback and undertake reflection, and using scenarios for people to make sense of their work through stories (April, 1999).

Just recently, I was working with a large London NHS trust, eager to undertake work in a specific area of process in order to enhance their efficiency. Pace and scale was determined by a number of external imperatives, as well as the need to rework the balance between demand and supply. Alongside this, there was a strong commitment to engage with their workforce in this regard. Now, my opinion is that organizations tend to sit on a continuum in this regard between staff involvement and true staff engagement, with the former being primarily about communication strategies and the latter about that workforce being seen as a key contributor to the health and wellbeing of the organization. In light of the issue they faced and a more general commitment on my part to change arising out of lived experience rather than delivered from above, I was keen that this work should sit at the engagement end of the scale, rather than seeing the workforce as a knowledge resource to be activated and then decommissioned shortly afterwards in respect to focus around a specific activity.

The events undertaken attracted ‘enthusiasts’ from across the trust — by which was meant, anyone who was committed to doing things differently and improving the organization, from whatever perspective — and used the *Time To Think* methodology. Not only did this intervention generate a truly meaningful list of changes and projects in order to improve process, it also acknowledged the staff and their contribution — and allowed them to own the ideas and commit to them in an authentic way. To that extent, it unpicked that traditional view of changes being designed, cascaded downwards, and staff often being “trained” to come to terms with those changes.

Inquiry Based Intervention

Third, I work differently in terms of assessing how best to intervene when discussions of development occur in an organizational context. As noted above, the encouragement of Communities of Practice (JAMLab, 2016) is a key way by which to support the personal,

professional and organizational development of an organization as well as providing strong support for activities such as secondment to focused project groups and to events within the organization itself, such as internal ‘organizational raids’ and ‘randomized coffee trials’. ‘Organizational raids’ provide half day or day long exposure to another organization’s know-how (in this case another section of the C&I NHS Trust). They are purpose-built to allow one organization to learn from another’s expertise and proven practice (Whitehall & Industry Advisory Group, 2016). Randomized coffee trials are a rather fancy name for a simple idea. They are used to connect people in an organization at random and give them time to meet to have a coffee and talk about whatever they wish (Soto, 2013). For me, then, my practice has shifted. I see each request for support from within the organization not as a problem to be solved but as a line of inquiry that needs to be explored, both by me but — more importantly — by all of those implicated in the idea that there is some deficit that needs to be addressed. So, I respond less in terms of drafting content and considering how best it might be delivered — and more around drilling into the issue that underlies a request for support, an action that I seek to undertake alongside those implicated in it. To that extent, it underscores the way in which I describe my workplace nowadays, which is that I help people to see and understand things hidden in plain sight; key to that, in my mind, is the deployment of conversation rather than pedagogy.

Conclusion

The convergence of bureaucracy, Taylorism and Fordism arose in respect to industrial and commercial organizing early in the twentieth century. This paper has argued that this triumvirate still shapes our thinking and practice in an organizational context today, even though economic circumstances have drastically changed. A key element that underpins these three is the notion of routinization, which was a feature of many working lives at the time that they emerged but which is now viewed negatively, insofar as there is a greater emphasis now on the importance of competitive advantage through change and innovation. Our absorption at a quotidian workplace level in the routine of our work can lead to a supposition that novelty is necessarily and causally preceded by event (Human, 2015), an underpinning that might reasonably be seen as structuring at a deep level our notions of development in respect to workplace learning.⁴ That is to say, by making a connection between an event and a newness of approach, we may end up labouring under the misapprehension that freshness of vision and application of new skills in practice are achieved exclusively through a transformative event, specifically in this instance the delivery of content via a ‘training course’. This disregards the evolutionary shifts and changes that occur as part of that routinized practice, which appear in the course of that day to day work rather than through an individual being drawn out of it and placed in a new context — or through some significant happening that distorts the warp and weft of our regular workplace activity.

Moreover, it has been argued herein that these events are significantly less effective than is ordinarily imagined in a business context, despite our continued investment of time and money in the practice of offering training. In contrast to this, the paper has argued in favour of a focus on enhancing organizational effectiveness in its widest possible sense rather than becoming too embroiled in siloed discussions of workforce development and organizational development. In essence, it is posited, the focus should be on development within the frame of human organizing, with a practice that is committed to **enhancing knowledge flow, purposeful conversation and connection between people, within firms and across systems.**

Whilst such notions might seem intangible — and hence traditional workforce or organizational development would be more reassuring, in terms of defined interventions that carry with them a positivistic measurability — the final section of this paper has detailed how the author — as a practitioner in situ — has endeavoured to work differently in a range of contexts and through a variety of methods, in order to be exemplary in his work and to offer a vision of working differently with people in organizations to the mutual benefit of all.

Notes

- 1 An NHS trust is a provider organization, responsible for delivering services. They are the principal means by which healthcare provision in the UK is delivered. A trust, in effect, is a public sector corporation, with some enjoying what is described as Foundation status, which affords them even greater autonomy to act in respect to employment practices and financial governance.
- 2 There is an imperative in health and social care to work in a more integrated way, ensuring that services from these previously relatively discrete sectors mesh together and wrap meaningfully around the user — and do so in a way that enhances quality of care and experience while, at the same time, ensuring improved cost effectiveness. The vision for this can be found in the NHS England document entitled Five Year Forward View, which appeared in October 2014 and can be found on the Department of Health website at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/futurenhs/> [Accessed 16 February 2017].
- 3 The independent regulator of health and social care in England.
- 4 Elsewhere, the very notion of event has been interrogated critically, explored from a range of perspectives and found to be problematic in terms of the way in which we structure our thinking about human experience and life in a social context (Zizek, 2014).

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The Author

Mark Cole is Head of Learning and Organizational Development at Camden & Islington NHS Foundation Trust. He is currently seconded to the London Leadership Academy, where he is undertaking work on systems leadership. He is a Chartered Member of Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and has experience in both HR development and management. Mark attained his doctorate at the University of Greenwich in 2012, where his thesis explored reflective practice in health care from a Foucauldian perspective. More recently, he has completed a Post-Graduate Certificate in Organizational Change Management at the University of Southampton. His particular interests are experiential learning and leadership development — and he describes his practice as seeking to help people in organizations to see and to understand things that are hidden in plain sight.

Learning-Oriented Leadership: Managers as Facilitators of Human Resource Development in Daily Work

Andreas Wallo, *Linköping University, Sweden*

The aim of this article is to provide theoretical and empirical insights concerning the role of managers in facilitating their employees' learning and development at work. The empirical basis of the article is two case studies of industrial companies in which managers were interviewed and observed. The results indicate that managers use combinations of different activities (planned, partially planned and spontaneous) and roles (the supporter, the educator and the confronter) to facilitate learning in different situations. Depending on the combination of activities, roles and the learning to be facilitated, two types of learning-oriented leadership emerge. The main type, performance-oriented leadership, is intended to facilitate adaptive learning. The less prominent type, development-oriented leadership, is intended to facilitate developmental learning. By illustrating learning-oriented leadership in daily work, the findings contradict the romantic notion that leadership for learning is charismatic and transformational.

Key Words: HRD, learning-oriented leadership, managerial work, workplace learning

Introduction

In today's globalized world, favourable learning conditions are considered important not only for individuals but also for organizational efficiency, development and innovative capacity (Ellström, 2010; Illeris, 2011; Tynjälä, 2013). Thus, the workplace is no longer seen as a site only for production, but also as an environment where formal training and informal learning can be integrated (Ellström, 2001). For human resource development (HRD) researchers and practitioners, this focus on learning entails an interest in how environments that facilitate learning can be created (Fuller & Unwin, 2011). In this respect, the support from managers has especially been highlighted as important for promoting and enhancing individual and collective learning (Eraut, 2011; Loon, Mee Lim, Heang Lee & Lian Tam, 2012). Popular designations for this new leadership are transformational and transactional leadership (Bass, 2000; Loon et al., 2012), developmental leadership (Gilley, Shelton & Gilley, 2011; Larsson et al., 2003), managers as teachers (Agashae & Bratton, 2001), managers as facilitators of learning (Cohen, 2013; Ellinger & Bostrom, 2002), managers as developers (Warhurst, 2013), and managers as coaches (Ladyshevsky, 2010).

However, these conceptualizations tell us little about whether and how managerial work and leadership practice have actually changed, what managers in organizations do to facilitate learning, or what kind of learning is supposedly facilitated. Studies have indicated a need for empirically based research on the manager's role in facilitating learning processes (Döös, Johansson & Wilhelmson, 2015; Ellström, 2012; Ellinger & Bostrom, 2002; Hughes, 2004). The intended contribution of this article to HRD research and practice is to address this paucity

of empirical data by presenting and discussing findings from case studies of two industrial companies in the light of previous research on learning-oriented leadership. More precisely, the article aims to further integrate the literature on leadership and learning and to provide theoretical and empirical insights concerning the manager's role in facilitating learning and development at work. The focus of the article is managers' views on learning and what managers do to facilitate their employees' learning in daily work.

In the article, leadership is understood as an interactive and reciprocal process through which a manager influences one or more employees to attain a goal (cf. Yukl, 2012). The process of leadership is situated within, and contingent on, contextual structures that may enable or constrain the interaction between manager and employees, but in turn, this interaction may either reproduce or transform these structures (cf. Archer, 1995; Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). The focus on learning does not imply an emphasis only on formal training activities (e.g., courses). Rather, it implies a view of learning mediated by individual actions and interactions in different work situations and tasks, which is typically called informal learning (Ellström, 2011). As used here, informal learning refers to learning that occurs regularly in work as well as in everyday life, but is subordinate to other activities (e.g., work practices) that do not have learning as their primary goal. Such learning may occur without the awareness or intention to learn (implicit learning), or it may involve a more or less deliberate effort to learn (cf. Eraut, 2000; Marsick & Watkins, 1990).

Problematizing Leadership and Learning at Work

As mentioned above, the management and HRD literature offer a plethora of conceptualizations for a leadership that is aimed at facilitating learning. In order to summarize the contribution to the understanding of learning-oriented leadership that is made by previous research, this section comprises a brief review of two leadership research approaches that have chosen different paths towards finding explanations and interpretations for this form of leadership. The review is then followed by a discussion of how theories of leadership and learning at work can be further intertwined.

The normative approach

The normative approach focuses on developing knowledge of how leadership should be performed to maximize effectiveness. Theories within this approach draw on classical models of effective leadership styles, especially the distinction between production-oriented and relation-oriented leadership (cf. Blake & Mouton, 1964; Likert, 1961). Among the theories concerning this approach, Bass's (2000) theory of transformational and transactional leadership, also known as the Full-Range Theory of Leadership, is probably the most popular (Yukl, 2012). Transformational leadership behaviours, i.e. individualized consideration, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation, are seen as the means to create a 'Learning Organization' using grand visions and charisma to lead employees to excellence (Bass, 2000). The Bass model also includes transactional behaviours, i.e. contingent reward and management by exception, but these behaviours are typically seen as a 'necessary evil' related to conventional leadership (cf. Larsson et al., 2003).

Few empirical studies have used Bass's model to explicitly focus on learning and development issues. In general, these studies use questionnaires and survey data to examine the occurrence

of transformational leadership and its correlations with learning and organizational performance (cf. Raes et al., 2013; Loon et al., 2012; Thuy Pham & Swierczek, 2006). In line with Bass's model, these studies find that transformational behaviours are positively linked to learning and innovation, whereas transactional behaviours are not (Amitay, Popper & Lipshitz, 2005; Jung, Chow & Wu, 2003). However, Vera and Crossan (2004) argue that transactional leadership may be more beneficial for learning than transformational leadership, depending on contingencies such as the external and internal environment, prior organizational performance, and stages of organizational life.

The descriptive approach

The descriptive approach stems from a critique of the normative agenda in research on effective leadership. Instead of focusing on what the manager should do, this approach examines what managers actually do and why they do it (Hales, 1986; 1999). Typically, the studies within this approach utilize qualitative data generated by observations and interviews (Tengblad, 2012). The results indicated that leadership is best understood not as a rational and proactive process but rather as a chain of reactive improvisations in a fragmented work context (Carlson, 1951; Mintzberg, 1973; Tengblad, 2012). These improvised actions by managers are interpreted as deliberate or 'intelligent' in the sense that the manager chooses when and how to react to influence the course of events in the organization in a desirable direction (Hultman, 2008; Kotter, 1999).

Studies of managers' work with the facilitation of learning have usually focused on roles or activities. The findings suggest that behaviours related to facilitative leadership include support before, during and after the learning activity, adding resources for learning, putting issues on the agenda, and creating a learning climate (cf. Coetzer, 2006; Döös et al., 2015; Ellinger & Bostrom, 2002; Ellström, 2012). Studies have also focused on a more demanding form of leadership that requires employees to reflect on their daily work performance (Beattie, 2006; Ellinger & Bostrom, 2002; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003; Warhurst, 2013). Other results contradict the notion of a new, transformational paradigm, showing that managers' influence on learning occurs indirectly and by means of traditional leadership activities (Döös et al., 2015; Hughes, 2004; Viitala, 2004). According to Alvesson & Sveningsson (2003), the actual performance of leadership tasks appears to be mundane in comparison to the notions of charismatic and heroic managers that characterize the modern, normative, theories of leadership. Accounts of 'doing leadership' are often related to micro-management, a term with negative connotations because it implies a hands-on style of leadership that fits poorly with the transformational ideal (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003).

Leadership for learning at work

Although the two research approaches reviewed above contribute to an understanding of leadership that aims to facilitate learning, it is evident that the actual relationship between the concepts of leadership and learning has not received much empirical focus (Matsuo, 2012). Furthermore, it is clear that learning, in most studies, is treated as unproblematic and as something of a 'black box'. This study argues that it is necessary to specify distinctions between different types of learning to gain comprehensive knowledge on the subject. There are many ways of conceptualizing different types of learning, but this article draws mainly on Ellström's (2006; 2011) distinction between the logic of performance and the logic of development, which in

turn is based on March's (1991) theory of exploitation and exploration. The dominant theory of the logic of performance focuses on routine action obtained through 'adaptive learning', where rules and instructions are followed for known problems or situations. According to the logic of performance, learning is primarily instrumental and is valued when it promotes effective action, leading to a learning environment characterized by security, standardization, exploitation and consensus. The logic of development, in contrast, is characterized by the opposite pattern of activity, and focuses on reflective and alternative thinking, risk taking, critical reflection and the desire to experiment. Uncertainty and divergence are seen as potential generators of exploration and 'developmental learning' rather than as threats or inconveniences.

According to Ellström (2006; 2011), however, these logics and types of learning must not be seen as mutually exclusive, but rather as co-existing and complementary. Whereas Bass (2000) privileges transformational leadership over transactional leadership to facilitate learning, other studies focus on the organizational leadership challenge of finding a balance between exploitation/exploration, adaptation/development and transformation/transaction (Jansen, Vera & Crossan, 2009; March & Weil, 2005). However, finding this balance may be very difficult because one type of logic tends to dominate (Holmqvist, 2009). Moreover, empirical research on the specific ways that managers influence both types of learning is scarce (Jansen et al., 2009; Nemanich & Vera, 2009).

Research Approach and Methods

The empirical foundation of this article consists of case studies of two Swedish industrial manufacturing companies. In the article they will be referred to as Company A and Company B. Company A offers solutions for the production and development of electronic and mechanical products. The company has approximately 145 employees in a factory in Sweden. Company B belongs to a global industrial group and offers solutions in the area of material handling. The main production facility in Sweden has approximately 1,000 employees. In total, the group has approximately 9,000 employees worldwide. These two companies operate in a market that exerts a high degree of change pressure on its actors and stakeholders. Both companies have been influenced by new philosophies on how to organize production. For instance, they have implemented lean production principles and methods aimed at strengthening performance and becoming a learning organization, such as waste elimination, just-in-time production, 5S, continuous improvement and reflection by 'Hansei' and 'Kaizen' (Liker, 2004; Liker & Meier, 2006).

The data consisted of 41 interviews with 30 managers at different levels in the two companies, observations of 11 managers, and analysis of company documents (the 11 observed managers were interviewed twice).

Twelve individuals worked in managerial positions at Company A and they were all included in the study. Three of these managers worked at a higher organizational level (top management), and the other nine worked at a lower level in the organization (middle and line management). Nine were men and three were women, and they had an average age of 37. Their average period of employment in the company was seven years, and they had an average of approximately three and a half years of managerial experience within the company. The highest education level of eight of the managers was upper secondary school. Four of the managers had a university-level education. Of these 12 managers, five were also selected to participate in the observation

study. The selection criteria were established so that a variety of different departments would be represented in the study. At Company B, it was not possible to include all managers in the company. Instead, the study included the production of a specific product model and managers who were in some way connected to this production process. To match the selection from Company A, this study included managers in the production departments and in non-production departments (i.e., the planning department and the Human Resources department). Eighteen managers from Company B were selected to participate in the study. Six of these managers belonged to a higher hierarchical level (top management), and 12 belonged to a lower hierarchical level (middle and line management). Sixteen of the managers were men and two were women, and their average age was 37. The average managerial experience within the company was approximately three years, and their average period of employment was eight and a half years. The highest educational level of 10 of the managers was upper secondary school, and eight of the managers had a technical university education. Six of the selected managers were also included in the observation study. As in the case of Company A, the selection criteria were established to include different functions of the organization in the study.

The interviews were based on a semi-structured interview guide that included the following areas and themes:

- Personal background in leadership (e.g., education, previous employment, leadership experience, and reasons for becoming a manager).
- Work as a manager (What they do. Why these tasks? How much and with whom?).
- Models/good leadership (What is good leadership? Is it possible to live up to demands and expectations?).
- Notions and experiences of learning and development in organizations.
- Notions and experiences of the manager's role in relation to employees' learning and development at work.

The interviews were conducted during the managers' regular work hours, on the companies' premises and in places that ensured privacy. The length of the interviews varied from one hour and 15 minutes to two hours. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The observations took place over one and a half weeks in each company, and the 11 managers were observed for one working day each. The observations can be characterized as broad and holistic (Wolcott, 1999) because they included the daily work practices of the managers, ranging from coffee breaks to events specifically oriented towards learning and development. Data were recorded in a notebook and subsequently transcribed using a computer. The observed managers were interviewed following the observation. The purpose of these interviews was partly to collect evaluation feedback (Patton, 2002) and partly to identify critical incidents (cf. Ellinger & Bostrom, 2002) concerning learning and development.

The document study included internal documents on organization, leadership, learning and development, which were provided by the company's top management, the Human Resource (HR) department and the participating managers.

The analysis of the data took place in three steps. In the first step, the transcripts were read and descriptive codes were used to obtain an overall idea of the content of each interview. In

the second step, a provisional ‘starting list’ of factors and conditions that might be useful for organizing the collected data was created. This list comprised parts of a conceptual framework for learning and leadership (e.g., previous research relevant for managing the data). Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014) refer to this step as creating codes. In the third step, the findings from the first two steps were discussed in an attempt to reach a broader understanding of the data in relation to the research questions and previous research. The two cases were initially analysed and written separately, and then, a cross-case analysis was conducted to identify common themes in both cases (Miles et al., 2014). This article presents the results of the cross-case analysis.

In addition, the empirical material has also been presented in a series of seminars with both case organizations. The aim of these seminars was to create opportunities for joint analysis of the findings and a critical and reflective learning process for both researchers and practitioners (cf. Argyris & Schön, 1989; Sandberg & Wallo, 2013). In this step, representatives from the companies validated the findings, but also helped the researchers to develop the analysis by providing alternative perspectives and insights. According to the practitioners, the seminars provided new knowledge that supported leadership development in both companies.

Results

The next section describes the interviewed managers’ views on learning and how they, in terms of their activities and roles, manage issues of learning and development in daily work.

The managers’ views on learning

The results of the interviews and observations show that learning and development are perceived as necessary to keep up with the competition, and the respondents describe these concepts in positive terms. Furthermore, the managers relate the concept of learning to formal competence development and perceive it as something that occurs separately from daily production, such as courses and training activities inside or outside the organization.

Learning and development for me is that they get to go to the courses they need in order to do their job properly. (Company B, IP13)

Managers with this view of learning often perceive the actual time for facilitating employees’ learning and development as limited. In contrast, a few responses indicate a view of learning as an ongoing process embedded in daily work. This view of learning is often related to lean production methods, such as continuous improvements, but the managers also describe it as more generally connected to the ability to learn from your own mistakes.

... sometimes you make mistakes and take a hit, but then you learn from it. It’s an experience and when you’re learning, you develop. Not just to do better at work, but for life really. (Company A, IP1)

The managers’ activities

The activities that the managers use to facilitate learning and development can be categorized depending on their degree of formalization. There is evidence of three types of activities: planned activities, partially planned activities and spontaneous activities.

Planned activities are connected to formalized and official systems for development within companies. These activities include various formal interventions for employees' competence development, such as shorter courses and long-term training programmes. Planned activities also include dialogues for development between the manager and individual employees, such as performance reviews and salary discussions. These dialogues are important because they offer designated times to talk about development issues that are rarely part of daily discussions. However, the dialogues are also problematic because they are time-consuming and tend to focus on social rather than developmental issues. Planned activities also include actions and procedures related to the introduction of lean production principles. In particular, the managers speak of Kaizen, (i.e., continuous improvement) as important for the development of daily work tasks and routines. Company B uses a Kaizen activity called Improvement Groups:

Well, we have to stimulate them with something, and then we came up with the Improvement Groups. There was a lot of energy not being taken advantage of because everything was about learning the station as fast as possible, and even if there were plenty of good ideas, there was no space or forum to deal with them. (Company B, IP7)

The partially planned activities are less formal but are organized and connected to HR structures. These activities include discussing issues such as employment contracts, work descriptions and systems for training and development, and involve making changes to positions and tasks by giving employees new assignments or increased responsibilities. For instance, at Company B, becoming a coordinator is described as an important development step in the internal career structure of the departments. Partially planned activities also include opportunities for knowledge sharing between employees. For example, experienced and skilled workers may be paired with newcomers, or meetings may be arranged to promote knowledge sharing and reflection on daily work operations. A manager at Company A describes such a meeting:

I divide them into groups of four and they start building different cables, and then there are lots of things in the design that they didn't know about. So many things pop up, and every time, someone stands up and says that it's amazing. We sit so close to each other but still there are so many differences between the jobs. (Company A, IP7)

The spontaneous activities are not easily described. Sometimes they are impromptu actions in daily work, whereas at other times they are discussed beforehand. The spontaneous activities occur frequently during the workday, but they are not always recognized as a source of learning and development for the employees. The first category of these activities centres on daily problem-solving processes in the companies, where the manager works with the employees to help them learn from the problem at hand and find solutions independently, without waiting for direction.

... sometimes I wonder why they don't ask themselves "Why does this problem occur week after week?" But instead of coming up with a suggestion, they take the problem to me. (Company A, IP3)

The second category involves improvised educational interventions, where the managers engage in teaching activities to explain certain procedures and to encourage reflection on the daily work. An improvised educational intervention is described in the following quote:

So, basically, for the following six months I spent almost all my time in the shop, talking about the new concepts. And when there were questions or ideas I dealt with them right away, on the spot, instead of waiting for a weekly meeting. I tried to explain pedagogically when someone said, "What do we need this damn Kanban for?" (Company B, IP18)

Of the three types of activities, the managers refer most often to planned activities. The data also reveal that Company B had worked more with lean production than Company A.

The managers' roles

The data show that the managers act in different ways when working with the activities described above. In the empirical material, three main roles or sets of behaviours are discernible. These roles are called the supporter, the educator and the confronter roles.

The manager as a supporter aims to create a secure and tolerant environment where it is acceptable to fail as long as employees try to learn from their mistakes. The manager does not judge too quickly or rush to make decisions. It is important that the employees are 'on board' with decisions that concern their work and that their ideas for development are encouraged. The supporter tries to motivate the hesitant employee and to gently slow down the overly enthusiastic. The supporter role is illustrated in the following quote:

I use positive encouragement: "You can do it; if you want to, you will be able to!" You know, constantly cheering them on. (Company A, IP3)

The manager as an educator aims to create possibilities for learning by actively engaging in the process. For simple procedures, this role involves instructing employees on how to complete tasks, and for more complex processes, such as implementing new production principles, the manager uses pedagogical skills to teach employees. The educator is concerned with finding new and innovative ways to solve old problems and with creating situations where the employees need to think outside the box and apply new perspectives. For example, the educator illustrates a problem on the whiteboard, tries to divide it into smaller parts, or asks tricky questions that encourage the employees to reflect on their daily work. The following quote illustrates the educator role:

... it was a bit funny because when they came to me they said, "Oh, you ask so many strange questions". I saw the entire thing from my perspective, which I'm used to, but I noticed that they appreciated it and that it made them think that, well, "I guess that's another way of seeing it". (Company B, IP11)

The manager as confronter takes a somewhat stronger approach to the employees' learning and development by demanding change and commitment. The confronter does not back down or allow the employee to give up. Instead of avoiding potential conflict, the confronter dives in and immediately takes control of the discussion. Acting as a confronter also involves acting professionally and avoiding anger, which clouds judgement and affects the manager's relationship with the employees. In some cases, however, when no other solution can be found or when an employee is actively working against the good of the department, the manager must play an active role. The following quote from Company A illustrates the confronter role:

Instead, I tried to get him to some kind of realization, to understand that I was serious, "You can't go on like this". And that's a leader thing as well. In order to get an individual to change you may almost have to push him over the edge before things start shaking. And that's very dependent on what kind of person you are; some have to come really close to the edge before anything happens. (Company A, IP5)

These three roles are evident in the empirical material, regardless of company or hierarchical level. Furthermore, these roles can be seen as complementary because the managers combined or alternated roles depending on the type of activity, or on situational or contextual factors, such as

the attitudes of the employees, financial resources, support from top management, and external change pressure.

Discussion

As the results have shown, the managers often speak of planned activities when addressing employees' learning and development. However, the results also show that managers use activities of a more spontaneous character to facilitate learning and development. In other words, they make use of problems that arise during the workday to create possibilities for learning (cf. Kotter, 1999). These findings suggest that managers are more than 'puppets on a string' who merely react to struggles; rather, their techniques, while not always proactive and planned, may be seen as intelligent improvisations (cf. Hultman, 2008).

Furthermore, the results show that the planned, partially planned, and spontaneous activities used to facilitate learning and reflection are, in fact, quite ordinary (cf. Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003; Hughes, 2004; Viitala, 2004). They are not extraordinary interventions performed by charismatic leaders, as suggested by proponents of models for effective leadership (Bass, 2000).

Let us take a closer look at the previously presented roles of supporter, educator and confronter in the light of previous leadership research. Regarding the supporter role, it is possible to see similar patterns in studies within the descriptive approach and the normative leadership approach. Several studies describe leadership as oriented towards encouragement, caring and support (Bass, 2000; Beattie, 2006; Ellinger & Bostrom, 1999). The educator role is also found in previous studies. For example, the manager is described as trying to clarify and simplify problems for employees and as trying to widen the perspectives of employees to allow them to see their work in a different way (Beattie, 2006; Ellinger & Bostrom, 1999). The educator role also bears resemblances to the so-called 'Sensei' (teacher) in lean production (Liker & Meier, 2006). Unlike the supporter and the educator, which are associated with softer leadership, the confronter role stands out in this study. In previous research, this kind of leadership has typically been considered as less favourable for learning (Amitay et al., 2005; Bass, 2000) and thus has not been extensively discussed in relation to learning and development. However, the managers in both cases in this study did not view this role as less important than the supporter or educator roles. These results show that a confronting leadership need not be seen as innately negative in relation to employees' learning and development. Rather, setting boundaries and demanding reflection may help to initiate learning and development in some situations and contexts (cf. Beattie, 2006; Ellinger & Bostrom, 2002; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003; Vera & Crossan, 2004; Warhurst, 2013).

Thus far, the roles and activities of the managers have been discussed in relation to previous leadership research. However, we have not yet examined the connections between the managers' views of learning, roles and activities, on the one hand, and the type of learning outcome, on the other. Based on the distinction between adaptive and developmental learning (Ellström, 2006) and the ideal typical orientations of leadership (cf. Bass, 2000; March & Weil, 2005), it is possible to distinguish two patterns of learning-oriented leadership: performance-oriented leadership and development-oriented leadership.

Performance-oriented leadership understands learning as connected with formal education and used to reach production goals. It aims to improve workers' performance by building on their

existing knowledge. All three leadership roles, i.e. supporter, educator and confronter, are used and combined depending on the situation (cf. Hersey & Blanchard, 1969), but they are mainly oriented towards keeping things running smoothly. For instance, managers act supportively and make an effort to create a trusting relationship and a relaxed atmosphere where employees feel safe discussing their problems or their uncertainties regarding opportunities for learning (cf. Ellinger & Bostrom, 1999; Ellström, 2006). Managers also act as educators by instructing employees on how to think or act and by explaining why the employees' learning is important for the performance of the company. In contrast, the confronter uses authority to control employees who are not 'in sync' with the organization. The focus of performance-oriented leadership activities is on standardized and planned activities, with some elements of partially planned activities. For example, formal education is used to maintain employees' competence, and development dialogues concentrate on the competencies that employees need to improve their current performance. Furthermore, increased salary is used as a contingent reward (Bass, 2000) to ensure that employees continue to make progress. Similarly, evidence suggests that partially planned activities may be used to facilitate adaptive learning. Job rotation presents opportunities to expand workers' horizons by allowing them to work in other sectors of the company where assignments are similar to their ordinary tasks. Spontaneous activities, in contrast, are considered to be annoying disturbances and evidence of micro-management rather than opportunities for learning (cf. Alvesson & Svingsson, 2003).

The second and somewhat less pronounced pattern, development-oriented leadership, relates to a broader view of learning. In addition to courses and other types of formal education, managers accentuate learning that occurs during the workday (cf. Eraut, 2000; Marsick & Watkins, 1990). To facilitate developmental learning (Ellström, 2006), the manager aims to expand the employees' current knowledge by contributing new perspectives. Like performance-oriented leadership, development-oriented leadership makes use of the three roles by alternating between them, depending on the situation (cf. Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). In relation to development, the supporter encourages the employees to explore new possibilities and innovative ways of working. The educator focuses on challenging the employees by asking tricky questions to stimulate the learning process and initiate reflection. The confronter also challenges employees but does so by using a tougher approach. The confronter forces employees out of their comfort zones to confront their problems. Concerning the activities used, the emphasis is on partially planned and spontaneous activities in daily work. For example, developmental learning is essential for an employee to receive new assignments or to take on a new position in which his or her previous competence may be insufficient. In daily problem-solving processes for developmental learning, the aim is for employees to question the nature of problems and to attempt to discover their causes instead of identifying short-term solutions. Similarly, improvised educational interventions may facilitate developmental learning by encouraging critical reflection on the daily work process and new production procedures and principles.

In Table 1, the two types of learning-oriented leadership are summarized in terms of the managers' views of learning, what they do (their activities), and how they act (their roles). A performance orientation may create possibilities for learning that are primarily adaptive in character, whereas a development-oriented leadership may facilitate developmental learning.

	Performance-oriented leadership	Development-oriented leadership
The manager's view of learning	Formal and organized — connected with education and courses	Informal and continuous — connected with everyday work
Managerial activities	Emphasis on planned activities with elements of partially planned activities	Emphasis on partially planned activities and spontaneous activities
Managerial roles		
• The supporter	• Reassures and comforts	• Encourages and inspires
• The educator	• Instructs and trains	• Stimulates analysis and critical reflection
• The confronter	• Controls and sets boundaries	• Challenges and problematizes
Type of learning supported	Adaptive learning (e.g. mastering of procedures and routines)	Developmental learning (e.g. developing innovative and creative solutions)

Table 1: Two Types of Learning-oriented Leadership

Taken together, the results indicate that it is possible to discern learning-oriented leadership in both cases, but with a focus on performance and adaptive learning. However, neither of the managers are extreme cases in that they are focused only on performance. Furthermore, the facilitation of critical reflection, an important prerequisite for developmental learning (Ellström, 2006), is not common in either case.

Conclusions and Implications

This article set out to make a contribution to HRD research and practice by providing theoretical and empirical insights concerning the manager's role in facilitating learning and development at work. Based on the empirical material presented in the article it is possible to draw at least three conclusions. The first conclusion is that it is far too simplistic to integrate learning and leadership research by claiming that transformational leadership is good for learning, whereas transactional leadership is not. By problematizing the concept of learning and distinguishing between developmental learning/exploration and adaptive learning/exploitation (Ellström, 2001; March, 1991), the picture becomes much more nuanced and complex. The confronter role, like transactional leadership, can be seen to be just as important for facilitating learning (Vera & Crossan, 2004) as the supporter role and the educator role, both of which are more closely related to transformational leadership.

The second conclusion is that learning-oriented leadership is sensitive to contextual factors. Depending on the situation, the evidence suggests that managers can 'ambidextrously' (Holmqvist, 2009; Nemanich & Vera, 2009) alternate between different roles and use many different types of activities to facilitate learning and to balance between developmental learning/exploration and adaptive learning/exploitation. The two types of learning-oriented leadership thus build on established theories of situational/contingency leadership (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). Unfortunately, this situational approach is somewhat downplayed in Bass's (2000) universalistic model.

The third conclusion is that the activities and roles that emerge in the two cases seem far from the extraordinary and charismatic image that currently dominates leadership research. Thus, it can be concluded that managers can conduct learning-oriented leadership using ordinary activities

and behaviours that occur naturally in the hectic and fragmented context of daily work and that hold a large capacity for informal learning (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003; Döös et al., 2015; Hughes, 2004; Viitala, 2004).

Numerous interesting opportunities for future study exist within this research stream. A limitation of the present study is that it is based on case studies of two industrial companies. Thus it would be relevant for further studies to examine the combinations of activities and leadership roles in different contexts and using other research methods. Another interesting research area would be to approach learning-oriented leadership from an employee perspective to identify what types of 'employeeship' may be facilitative of learning.

One practical implication of this study is to highlight the importance of balancing the organization's logic of development and logic of performance to achieve a leadership that truly facilitates both adaptive and developmental learning. As indicated above, such a balancing act does not occur spontaneously. Rather, there is a need for organizations and their managers to create opportunities and support for increased developmental learning at work. In relation to this, an issue that may be given some extra attention by practitioners is how to organize for critical reflection in the daily work, which is a key component of developmental learning (Ellström, 2006). In this regard, some of the principles and methods associated with lean production, e.g. Kaizen or Hansei, may be useful.

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The Author

Andreas Wallo is an Associate Professor in the Department of Behavioural Sciences and Learning at Linköping University. He is also affiliated with the HELIX Competence Centre at Linköping University. His research interests include leadership and managerial work in organizations, workplace learning, human resource development, human resource management, and interactive research. The results of his research have been published internationally in management and HRD academic journals, and also in national practitioner publications. He is currently a convenor for the ESREA (European Society for Research on the Education of Adults) Network on Working Life and Learning Research.

Corporate University Theory and Practice: the Case of Platt University, USA

Gary Ewer, *Platt Electrical Supply, USA*
Darlene Russ-Eft, *Oregon State University, USA*

Corporate universities (CUs) have been in existence in the United States since the early 1900s. There is, however, little empirical research on these types of organizations. This study focused on identifying the operational factors of an existing electrical wholesale distributor's corporate university, using a previously described theoretical model. The major research question was: What are the operational factors associated with this particular CU?

Applying a bounded case-study approach, data were collected from 62 in-person interviews with executives, employees and vendors; classroom observations; and reviews of available documents. Trustworthiness was ensured by using triangulation, member checking, and expert peer review.

Results revealed some consistency with the theoretical model; however, a new profile and new factors were identified. These included: (a) new profile of leaders-as-teachers, and five new factors: (b) partnerships with vendors, (c) partnerships with outside organizations, (d) use of course prerequisites, (e) time for required training, and (f) the integrated systems model.

The results of this study may assist other HRD practitioners and CU Directors in making informed decisions concerning their workplace training efforts, specifically regarding the use of leaders as teachers and the strategic role that can be played by a CU in creating a competitive advantage in the workplace. In addition, suggestions for future research are provided.

Key Words: corporate universities, human resource development, training, learning

Introduction

Platt Electric Supply, has successfully developed both a learning and teaching organization through their use of a corporate university (CU) which in turn has provided a competitive advantage for the company. Platt University has become a valuable business partner by helping the workforce learn important business skills as well as improved product knowledge that leads to increased sales. Business leaders recognize that work and learning have become the same thing (Meister, 1998). To ensure continued growth in workforce development, progressive companies have established corporate universities (CUs). Prince and Stewart (2002) described the corporate university's role as supporting the organization's learning and knowledge creation process. Corporate universities strategically direct organizational change by facilitating the knowledge management process as well as by controlling the learning agenda (Prince & Beaver, 2002). Unfortunately, few empirical research studies have been undertaken concerning the operation of corporate universities (Blass, 2001; Taylor, 2003; Taylor & Paton, 2002).

Industry as educator is not a new concept. Early in United States' history, no formal education system existed to develop the emerging workforce. Out of necessity, American industries became employer and educator of the workforce (Miller, 1996). Today, competitive pressures and

technological advances require that modern corporations increasingly become chief educators to the workforce (Lipp, 2013; Meister, 1998).

The purpose of this case study was to examine a specific electrical wholesale distributor's corporate university using an available conceptual framework for defining and classifying corporate university operations. The study was conducted by both a workplace practitioner and an HRD academic scholar. It addressed the following question:

- What are the operational factors associated with this particular CU?

Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review was to gather and evaluate the most current academic research on corporate universities, including the developmental history of CUs, and how CUs effectively manage workforce development. Online resources at the Valley Library at Oregon State University were used to access full text electronic journals. These included *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, *Community College Review*, *Human Resource Development International*, *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, *Journal of Industrial and Commercial Training*, *Journal of European Industrial Training*, *Journal of Workplace Learning*, *The Internet and Higher Education Journal*, and the *Educational Resource Information Center* (ERIC). A key word search was used including such phrases as: business training, company training programmes, corporate university, knowledge management, organizational learning, and workplace development.

History of CUs

One of the earliest examples of a factory school in the United States was in 1872 when Hoe & Company of New York established a training programme to help workers gain new skills to improve the assembly of printing presses (Miller, 1996). In 1913, an "Industry Association Support" meeting was held at New York University and resulted in formation of the "National Association of Corporation Schools". This association represented 34 corporations and later became known as the American Management Association (AMA) (Beatty, 1918).

One of the earliest workplace training institutions to use the word "university" was developed by Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company (Allen, 1949). Goodyear's Industrial University was established in 1913 to address the training and development needs of its 35,000 employees. Within seven years the Goodyear programme had grown to four different schools (a) production, (b) sales, (c) commerce, and (d) household arts and had taken on the mantle of Goodyear University (University and Factory, 1920). This New York Times article stated that Goodyear University employed 110 teachers with an enrollment of 6,000 employee participants. Identification of Goodyear's University is a possible addition to academic literature, as it has not been cited or mentioned with early CUs in the United States.

The first CU cited by most scholars is General Electric's Management Institute of Crotonville, New York in 1955 (El-Tannir, 2002; Freifeld, 2008; Gerbman, 2000; Meister, 1998; Veldsman, 2004). Freifeld (2008) stated that the goal of the GE programme was to develop a succession planning process that would educate GE's emerging leaders. GE's leadership programme is still in operation today and is a model within the industry. In 1963, Walt Disney created Disney

University in Anaheim, California to ensure that all new employees understood and delivered the service he envisioned (Lipp, 2013). The most cited example of a corporate university is McDonald's Hamburger U. Opening in 1963, this CU claims to be the nation's number one trainer, even larger than the United States Army for size and scope, training employees in 65 countries (Meister, 1998).

Internationally there are four predominant associations for Corporate Universities they are: (a) CorpU, (b) The Corporate University Enterprise, (CUE), and (c) The Global Association of Corporate Universities and Academies, (G-AUCA), and (d) The Global Council of Corporate Universities, (Global CCU). CorpU and The Corporate University Exchange are located in the United States and the Global Association of Corporate Universities and Academies (G-ACUA), and the Global Council of Corporate Universities, (Global CCU) are located in Western Europe.

Corporate universities have received a great deal of scholarly criticism. In an attempt to increase the status of their training departments, some business leaders have glibly added the word "university" to the nameplate (Greenberg, 1998). Some who work in a traditional university setting find it hard to endorse the concept of a corporate university (Craig, Clarke, & Amernic, 1999). Blass (2001) stated that the corporations' adoption of the title "university" has "dumbed down" the term, making it acceptable for the term to be used in a variety of inappropriate ways (p.15). This challenges the appropriateness of corporate bodies adopting the term "university".

In defense of the term "corporate university" Wills (2001) suggested that corporations who use the term "university" are attempting to gain a positive association with a learning environment. She further stated that corporations do produce new knowledge in the form of research and development. Finally, Wills suggested that the use of academic terms by CUs will continue to grow as partnerships with higher education increase. Furthermore, a CU can represent a way to incorporate strategic HRD into the organization (Herd & Alagaraja, 2016).

Empirical studies of CUs

This section will review empirical studies concerning CU operations. It will describe CU characteristics and some evaluations of CUs. Finally, a model that integrates CU operational characteristics and effects will be presented.

CU operations. Walton (2005) conducted a comparative analysis of similarities and differences between traditional universities (TUs) and CUs in the US and the UK. The study found little commonality in TU and CU focus. Learning within TUs was associated with scholarly activity, teaching, and research. Learning within CUs was associated with training, continuous improvement, and competitive advantage. This was confirmed by El-Tannir (2002), whose study of three CUs showed them to provide a continuous learning process. Later, Allen (2010) examined current practices of CUs worldwide. This study showed that CUs are designed to expand organizational capabilities by using learning as a strategic lever. Indeed, Prince and Stewart (2002) suggested that CU success in the future will rely more on managing complex interactions of organizational learning subsystems and less on managing training programmes.

CU differences from training departments and traditional universities. One of the many ways a corporate university is distinguished from a training department is the breadth of audiences that it serves, including employees, customers, vendors, and communities (Meister, 1998). Gerbman (2000) stated that traditional training programmes are more reactive while CU programmes are

more proactive. Walton (2005) asserted that the traditional university has become progressively more corporate in their outlook, while corporations are becoming more knowledge-based in their viewpoint.

Veldsman (2004) identified 21 differences between a training department, corporate university, and a traditional university. This research provided concrete examples of the unique focus that CUs yield in the workplace. His research revealed several generalizations that training departments tend to focus on the organization's operational needs; corporate universities tend to focus on the organization's business needs; and finally, traditional universities tend to focus on the broader educational needs of society.

Finally, Kiely (2007) stated that it is time to recognize that corporate universities are very different from traditional training departments. Training departments focus their efforts on training employees. In contrast, corporate universities focus on supporting the organization's strategy, which may include more than simply training. Paton, Peters, Storey, and Taylor (2005) described a CU as a strategic learning initiative that is (a) wholly owned by the parent organization, (b) with the primary focus of providing learning opportunities for employees, suppliers, and customers of the parent organization and, (c) utilizing the symbols and language of higher education to promote an atmosphere of learning.

A model of CU operational factors

Several CU models were reviewed before selecting Abel's (2008) taxonomy for defining and classifying a Corporate University to guide this present study, and these are briefly described here. Dealtry (2002) provided a framework for strategic selection of CU functions, while Prince and Stewart (2002) identified four essential processes that together constitute the key elements of the corporate university's learning subsystem. These included: (a) knowledge system and process, (b) networks and partnerships, (c) learning process, and (d) people process. Veldsman (2004) discussed four learning domains of a CU: (a) strategy development/implementation, (b) operational delivery enhancement, (c) constructive organizational dynamics, and (d) personal development. Finally, Wheeler and Clegg (2005) identified four different models for CUs. These are (a) centralized model where learning is directed by a single department, (b) decentralized model with no central control, (c) federated model with strong central control that ties together all disparate training efforts across the organization, and (d) the hybrid model where the organization could provide central control in the organization's home country but then be decentralized internationally.

The authors selected Abel's (2008) theoretical model as it addressed factors described in other CU models. In addition, Abel's model was developed through data gathered from a significant sample size of 210 CUs operating in North America as well as being the most current CU model. Findings revealed four key profiles of a corporate university based on factor analysis. These profiles were: organizational profile, operational profile, learning delivery profile, and partnership profile (See Figure 1). Abel stated that the framework would act as a "checklist" to help evaluate and enhance practitioners' understandings of different types of CUs and their operations.

Methods

The authors chose a qualitative case-study approach for this research project. The case study method (Yin, 2009) enabled researchers to examine first-hand operations of this CU and interact

directly with participants. In addition, Patten (2009) described qualitative non-experimental studies as allowing researchers to observe participants and then describe what they saw in the natural setting. Such a method requires the gathering of multiple forms of data, such as interviews, focus groups, observations, in order to develop a thorough picture of the case and to provide triangulation or corroboration of the findings from one method.

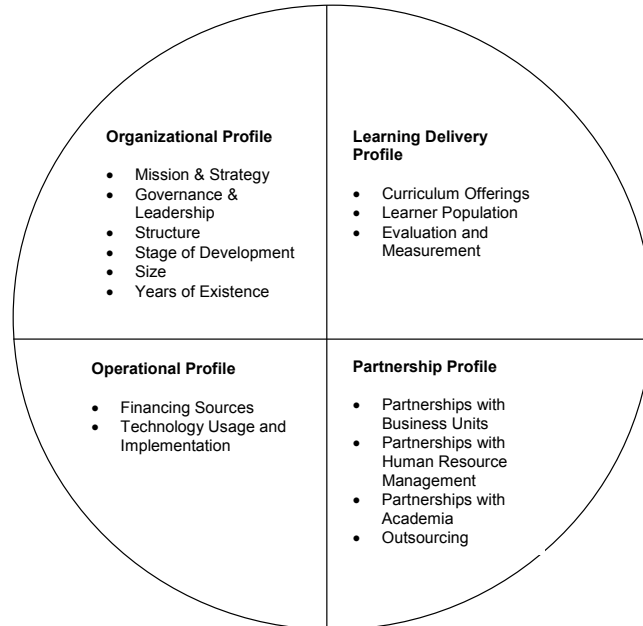


Figure 1: Abel's Conceptual Framework for Defining and Classifying Corporate Universities (Used with permission)

Data collection

The study thoroughly examined: (a) study site, (b) study participants, (c) interview results, (d) observational results, (e) organizational documents, and (f) artifacts. The first author is the director of this CU, while the second author is an academician. This collaboration facilitated the examination of this CU within the framework of available research on CUs. Because of concerns regarding conflict of interest, an independent researcher conducted in-person data collection.

Study site. Platt University serves as a central training facility for Platt Electric Supply an electrical distributor with 1240 employees in 123 branch locations in the Western United States. The CU uses a blended approach to learning with 50% classroom delivery and 50% online training delivery. In 2012, the company was purchased by Rexel a global electrical distributor headquartered in Paris France. The primary classroom observation research site was at Platt Electric Supply, located in Beaverton, Oregon. Additional employee interviews were held at selected branch locations in the greater Portland Oregon area.

Study participants. Participants consisted of two groups: (a) company employees, including officers, department heads, branch managers, and front-line workers and (b) outsourced vendors, including a sales training consultant, community college administrator, and an LMS (learning

management system) national account manager. Company employees were directly observed in two classroom settings and interviewed by the independent researcher. The three outsourced vendors were also interviewed by the independent researcher.

Direct observation. Two direct observations were conducted by the independent researcher over a two-day period. The first class had 20 employee participants and four employee instructors, and the second class had 16 employee participants and four employee instructors. Each class observation lasted eight hours. An observation checklist was used by the independent researcher to gather specific information on behaviors.

Interviews. Interviews used a combination of random sampling for selecting employees and purposive sampling methods for selecting governing board members and vendors. The 18 interviews were conducted by the independent researcher and were audio recorded in order to ensure accuracy in understanding. Following removal of identifying information and use of pseudonyms in place of participant names (G names for governing board members, E names for employees, and V names for vendors), interviews were sent to the first author for analysis.

Documents and artifacts. Published company documents were thoroughly reviewed. Artifacts specifically related to the organization's learning culture were gathered to provide social and cultural context. These included the company's mission and strategies, the CU's mission and strategies and a training development matrix.

Data analysis procedures

The first author organized data, assigned codes, and developed 36 possible themes from over 1400 interview comments. Triangulation was achieved through comparison of the interviews, documents, and artifacts. Member-checking took place by having interviewers review and affirm the interview contents. Finally, an external audit was completed with an outside researcher.

Results

Three themes emerged:

- Theme 1: Factors consistent with Abel's (2008) conceptual framework for defining CUs.
- Theme 2: Factors not consistent with Abel's conceptual framework for defining CUs.
- Theme 3: New factors and profiles.

Evidence is presented demonstrating that this particular CU had a linkage to each of Abel's four profiles and 15 operational factors. One new profile and five new operational factors were identified that were not originally in Abel's conceptual framework. Note that we used the term "theme" to identify our three categories of results, and we used Abel's terms of "profiles" and "factors" to discuss those results.

Theme 1: Factors consistent with Abel's conceptual framework for defining CUs

This study confirmed that all four profiles of Abel's framework were evident in the CU studied. This theme will be discussed in the four profiles in Abel's (2008) conceptual framework: (a) organizational, (b) operational, (c) learning delivery, and (d) partnership.

Organizational profile. This CU has been in operation for more than 27 years. It represents a well-established, well recognized, and inclusive ‘function’ within the business. Platt University provides the framework for learning throughout the organization. Respondents’ comments included, for example:

... truly [Platt] is a culture of learning ... there are training programmes that are available to everyone.
(Valerie, Company Vendor)

it [Platt University] energizes our people, and it’s a big reason for our success. (Greg, Governing Board Member)

The CU occupies a distinct, largely autonomous, positioning within the organization. The governing board is made up of four leadership roles (a) President/CEO, (b) VP of Human Resources, (c) VP of Marketing, (d) and Director of Education; and it determines the CU’s goals, objectives, and strategy. The Platt University mission is to develop its people. Six strategies are supportive of this mission. They are:

- (a) Advance the company culture, values, and global priorities of Platt and Rexel.
- (b) Inspire lifelong learning.
- (c) Build a leadership bench of managers and teachers.
- (d) Increase product knowledge — we sell what we know.
- (e) Develop effective selling skills.
- (f) Improve operational knowledge.

The “Platt University Organizational Chart — 2015” listed two full-time educational staff members, one in the role of “Director of Education” and one in the role of “Instructional Designer”. This document also revealed that approximately 40 company leaders, who held roles of Officers, Department Heads, Division Managers, Sales Managers, and Branch Managers volunteered to teach in the CU on a part-time schedule.

This CU is located within the corporate headquarters building, as described in “Platt University Organizational Chart — 2015”. The CU reports to the governing board. Its members provided helpful responses concerning centralization of CU operations and its impact. Garrett (Governing Board Member) said, “Platt University is the one thing that really binds us together”.

Operational profile. A portion of funding for this particular CU is provided by vendors. This new operational factor is titled the “vendor funding model” and will be discussed in greater detail later.

Continual learning is an important value at Platt as 100% of the organization’s population participates in the workplace learning process. Working directly with the executive team, the University’s director plans for the development of employees to address future staffing needs. The “On-course Training Matrix” listed each branch role in ascending order from entry level warehouse position to advanced regional product specialist position. Both employees and supervisors used the On-Course Training Matrix as a framework to follow the employees’ development process.

With entry level training, there are “training tracks for the first 90 days, the first 180 days, and the first 360 days that an employee is with us. It covers the basics” (Greg, Governing Board Member). Platt also has two leadership development programmes, LEAD and PACE. LEAD is

an acronym for “Learn, Experience, Achieve, and Do”. Upon successful completion of LEAD-2, graduates can apply to PACE, or “Platt, Accelerated, Career, Enhancement”. The third strategy of the CU mission to advance company culture, values, and global priorities of Platt/Rexel is taught to new employees beginning on the first day of work.

Both reaction and testing take place as part of the evaluation process. As for behavior change on the job, Ed (Front-Line Worker) stated,

Participants ... have a two week assignment on what they have learned in class ... [helping] customers install the Platt App ...

Concerning level four results with impact, Ed stated,

[class participants] have ... a measurable task to either increase sales or increase customer service ...

Finally, for courses, Platt University has used the BlueVolt learning management system (LMS) since 2004 “to build, deliver, and track online courses” (Valerie, Company Vendor). The online course catalog includes leadership management, sales, product, safety, technical, and operational training.

Partnership profile. The CU works with line managers to determine requirements and design learning programmes. Instead of partnering with HR to develop a reward and recognition system, this CU partners with the Sales and Marketing department to recognize employee learning accomplishments. Valerie (Company Vendor) stated, “Branches track metrics using scorecards ...”. Sales and Marketing reviews training accomplishment and awards certificates to branches and departments for course completions and educational achievements.

This CU does not award college degrees, but it does award college credit for workplace training. A partnership with a local community college makes this awarding of credit possible. In addition, the CU has partnered with the community college to deliver credit programmes instead of non-credit programmes. One deciding factor for partnering with Clackamas Community College was their agreement to award college credit for Platt U courses. Although the CU has not partnered with universities for faculty exchange or development programmes, its instructors have been invited by local academic universities, community colleges, and high schools to be guest presenters.

This CU outsources one portion of its advanced BASE sales training programme to a professional sales trainer. At the same time, the CU has a full-time instructional designer who develops 80% of the online course content used in the workplace. Also, as previously mentioned, the LMS has been outsourced.

Theme 2: Factors not consistent with Abel’s conceptual framework for defining CUs

This section will examine four areas of operations that this CU was not consistent with in Abel’s (2008) conceptual framework. They are: (a) the sales revenue model, (b) partnerships with community colleges, (c) partnership with sales and marketing, and (d) the tuition reimbursement model.

Sales revenue model. Strong evidence was revealed from the interviews that this particular CU’s training programme has helped make direct contributions to organizational selling efforts.

“Platt U works with programme directors and vendors to create training on new products so we can sell them to our customers” (Elias, Front-Line Worker).

Partnerships with community colleges. Abel’s (2008) academic partnership profile described CUs as forming partnerships with universities. However, this particular CU has formed a strategic partnership with Clackamas Community College.

We [Clackamas Community College] credential several Platt courses for the purpose of awarding college credit to their employees. ... Employees can earn from 1-3 college credits for completing Platt University workplace courses (Vanessa, Company Vendor).

This academic partnership allows Platt employees to earn up to 14 lower-division Professional/Technical College credits at the 100 level and above.

Partnership with sales and marketing. In Abel’s (2008) research, the Human Resources department was described as the one to partner most often with CUs in the development of a recognition system to promote employee learning accomplishments. However, this particular CU has partnered with the Sales and Marketing department to recognize employee learning accomplishments. Each month the Sales and Marketing department sends out report cards to each branch and department location. Garrett (Governing Board Member) indicated that, “All of us have report cards, and part of that is training with our vendors”. Report cards list the mission, strategies, and goals achieved in business activities such as the number of active customers, number of new customers added, and percentage of order fill rates; furthermore, the last measurement is the number of courses completed during the month.

Tuition reimbursement model. Tuition reimbursement was not mentioned in Abel’s (2008) profiles or factors. However, this CU has identified tuition reimbursement as a tactical expenditure within the employee development process and the tuition reimbursement is described in company documents as an employee benefit. The offer of tuition reimbursement is an important benefit to those being recruited as well as an important tool in retention efforts.

Theme 3: New profiles and factors

This section will examine one new profile and five new operational factors identified in this study when compared to Abel’s (2008) conceptual framework. The one new profile is (a) the leaders-as-teachers profile. The five new operational factors are: (a) partnerships with vendors, (b) partnerships with outside organizations, (c) use of course prerequisites, (d) timing of required training and (e) the integrated systems model.

New profile: Leaders as teachers. This research project discovered a possible fifth profile, the Leaders-as-Teacher’s profile. This fifth profile interacts naturally with the other four profiles and has demonstrated transformation of the original conceptual framework into a true learning system (Betoff, 2014).

The leaders-as-teachers concept was evidenced in the interview process. Greg (Governing Board Member) stated, “So all the leadership programme here is taught by Platt leaders, and they consider it an honor to be asked”. Emily (Front-Line Worker) valued the opportunity because she gained helpful and practical knowledge, “... listening to our Instructor and their real-life situations ...”.

Since 1988, Platt University has successfully involved leaders-as-teachers and developed Platt Electric Supply into a learning organization. The company required that the CU not hire permanent teaching staff, but instead utilize company officers, department heads, division managers, sales managers, and branch managers in part-time teaching roles. This action strengthened the leadership development process at Platt.

“All leaders can and must be teachers” (DeSmet & McAlpine, 2010: 2). Betof (2014) described the six key benefits of using the leaders-as-teachers approach: (a) helps drive results, (b) stimulates development of leaders and associates, (c) improves leadership skills of those who teach, (d) strengthens organizational culture and communications, (e) promotes positive organizational change, and (f) reduces cost by leveraging top talent. “Winning organizations use learning, teaching, coaching, and mentoring in ways that their competition does not” (p.38).

Factor 1: Partnerships with vendors. This is the first of five new operational factors identified in this study. Concerning CU funding models Abel (2008) described four types: (a) corporate budget model, (b) charge-backs to business unit’s model, (c) pay for services model, and (d) self-funded Profit/Loss model. This CU operates using a combination of the “Corporate Budget” model, and a new “Vendor Funding” model, with the latter model not mentioned in any academic literature to date. In this model, vendors who sell products through the parent organization of the corporate university underwrite some course development costs for training delivered on the wholesaler’s Learning Management System (LMS). This model benefits the vendor, the parent organization, and the organization’s corporate university. In the vendor-funding model, vendors provide funding for course development and cash incentives to employees for learning about new products. Evan (Front-Line Worker) stated, “Platt awards Platt [Blue]bucks for learning about new products” This partnership has created a sustainable financing system that benefits both the organization and vendor.

Factor 2: Partnerships with outside organizations. This is the second of five new operational factors identified. As one example, Platt has partnered with Toastmasters International (2015) since 2008 to help learners improve public speaking and leadership skills. At Platt, participation in Toastmasters is required within leadership training programmes. Greg (Governing Board Member) stated, “We found that Toastmasters has been a wonderful programme for us”.

Factor 3: Use of course prerequisites. Use of course prerequisites represents the third new operational factor. A course completion hierarchy or sequence was identified requiring participants to complete course prerequisites before advancing. Use of course prerequisites means that employees gain knowledge and experience necessary before moving to the next level of classes.

Factor 4: Adequate time for required training. This is the fourth of the new operational factors. The independent researcher received information from several managers and hourly workers that the amount of required training had increased, and some were struggling to finish during regular working hours. Eaton (Front-Line Worker) said, “It can take an individual four to five hours to do some of these [courses] and we don’t have four to five hours to sit down to and do it [training] within the company time”. Hourly, non-exempt employees, however, must complete these courses during their regular shift or in overtime, if approved. Salaried, exempt employees can complete required courses on their own time after regular work hours.

Factor 5: Integrated systems model. This is the final new operational factor. With the addition of the leaders-as-teachers profile and five operational factors, the CU framework now represents

an integrated systems model (See Figure 2). This model connects the leaders-as-teachers profile, organizational profile, learning delivery profile, operational profile and, the partnership profile into an integrated system with inputs and outputs.

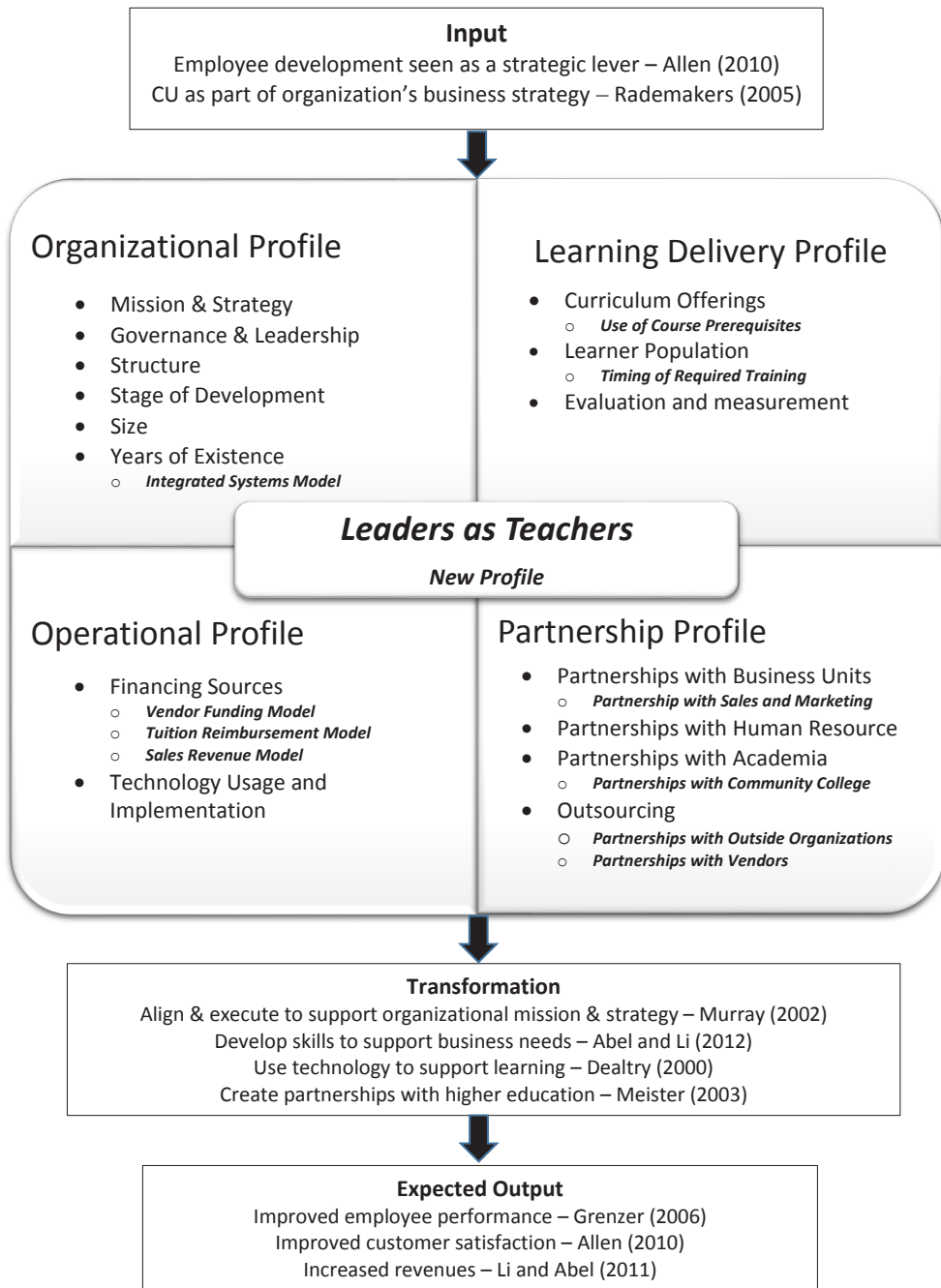


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework for Corporate Universities (Adapted with permission)

Conclusions

The present study, involving a single in-depth case study of a corporate university within an electrical supply company, confirmed the Abel (2008) model. Figure 2 provides a model for the CU indicating that employee development is seen as a strategic lever. Furthermore, the CU is recognized as being able to implement that strategy and vision. The present study confirmed much of Abel's (2008) model. At the same time, it added an important profile, that of "leader as teacher". The profile is placed in the center, since it is critical to enabling and facilitating the other profiles. The figure also shows the addition of five new factors: (a) partnerships with vendors, (b) partnerships with outside organizations, (c) use of course prerequisites, (d) time for required training, and (e) the integrated systems model. Finally, the model suggests that the CU leads to a transformation: (a) align and execute to support the organization's mission and strategy, (b) develop employee skills to support business needs, (c) use technology to support learning, and (d) create partnerships with higher education institutions. This organizational transformation then leads to certain organizational outcomes: (a) improved employee performance, (b) improved customer satisfaction, and (c) increased revenues.

There are several limitations to this study. This organization has 123 locations in nine Western states; however, the study was limited to the greater Portland metropolitan area. It gathered a small sample of 18 interviews to represent 1,240 people. An additional limitation to the study was that the sample proved to be management heavy. It would be helpful to extend use of purposeful sampling to include a larger group of hourly employees. Finally the sample selection did not consider ethnicity, so it is not known how representative the interviews were concerning ethnic diversity of the company. Hearing from the growing diverse employee population would add important cultural and gender perspectives.

Recommendations for further research

Given the paucity of research on CUs, several questions remain concerning CUs, operation, and outcomes. Some questions include: (a) to what extent does the proposed model, with its additional profile and factors, operate in other existing CUs? (b) what portions of the model appear to be most important for CU success? (c) to what extent does the leaders as teachers approach exist in other CUs? and (d) how prevalent is the vendor-funding model?

Implications for CU practice

The findings of this study point to several implications for addressing and improving CU operations. A CU, such as Platt University, that contributes to the organization's selling efforts becomes an important business partner. This aligns with Meister's (1998) suggestion for CU leaders as active business partners and suggests alignment with a move to strategic HRD. Furthermore, the focus on business strategy and support for that strategy helps to differentiate this CU and suggests an important approach for other CUs.

CUs may benefit from an educational partnership with a community or technical college to award credit for work related training. Awarding college credit for company sponsored training can be viewed as an important benefit by employees as well as help to improve the organization's recruitment and retention efforts.

Rather than partnering only with HR, Platt University has instead partnered with sales and marketing to develop a recognition system and promote employee learning accomplishments. This partnership has created several benefits. Both employees and branches are recognized for courses completed. Employees can earn cash incentives for completing selected product courses. As a result, the CU has gained increased visibility and profitability by providing product and sales training that leads to increased revenue for the company, and it is now seen as a valuable and strategic business partner achieving significant training and business results. Again, such a practice helps to ensure an alignment of the CU with the organizations strategy, particularly with regard to revenues and profits.

The addition of the leaders-as-teachers profile provides an important new aspect to the CU model, and it represents an approach that can benefit other CUs. CU leaders who implement a leaders-as-teachers profile in the future will find an important development tool for the growth of both leaders and learners within the organization. Leaders who teach are challenged to develop their communication and leadership skills, and they contribute by helping develop talent within the organization. Furthermore, these leaders become directly connected with the CU and contribute to the strategic emphasis of the CU. Employees benefit from the leaders-as-teachers process as they have opportunities to hear helpful workplace stories and learn practical work experiences that expand their understanding of the company mission, culture, and core values. Employees learn the importance of giving back to the organization, through teaching and sharing their own work experiences. Both authors feel that learning organizations can be sustainable when a leaders-as-teachers model is implemented within the organization.

Finally, CU leaders may find benefit by partnering with the product vendors represented within their organization. Platt University has product vendors who provide training materials, marketing materials, and financial support to help underwrite the development costs of product courses. Product vendors benefit as employees of the wholesaler or retailer complete training courses that enable the company to sell more products. Again, such actions connect the CU with the organizational strategy and can serve as a model for other CUs.

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The Authors

Dr. Gary Ewer is the Director of Education for Platt Electric Supply. He has worked at Platt for 33 years and has a passion to “help people reach their full potential”. He and his team are responsible for supporting the talent development efforts of 1,290 employees, at 128 branch locations in nine western states through Platt University. Platt University is recognized as a highly successful corporate university and viewed by company leadership as providing a competitive advantage as Platt people are able to learn faster than the competition. He also serves on Rexel’s Global Education Committee helping guide company training efforts in 35 countries. Platt Electric Supply is located in Beaverton, Oregon, USA. A company of Rexel Inc. Paris France

Darlene Russ-Eft, Ph.D., is Professor and Discipline Liaison of Adult and Higher Education in the College of Education at Oregon State University. She works with senior leaders and practitioners in the doctoral higher education leadership concentration and in the adult education masters’ programme. Her recent research focuses on identifying potential performance indicator systems for foundations, and she continues to undertake evaluations of learning interventions in educational and in workplace settings. Dr. Russ-Eft is a past president for the Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD), a past director of the International Board of Standards for Training, Performance, and Instruction (ibstpiR) and a past board member of the American Evaluation Association. She is a past editor of the Human Resource Development Quarterly. She received the 1996 Editor of the Year Award from Times Mirror, the AHRD Outstanding Scholar Award, and the Outstanding Research Article Award from ASTD (now Association for Talent Development, ATD).

Learning to Think and Act with Systems: Improving OD with Soft Systems Methodology

Gillian Felton, *National Institute for Health Research, UK*

Lisa Banton, *a City Council, UK*

Angela Earnshaw, *an NHS Foundation Trust, UK*

Given a context of tough change, Organisational Development practitioners need to be able to innovate as well as develop and implement strategy quickly and efficiently. The key to this is agility — a set of capabilities that can help organisations to rapidly adapt to changing circumstances.

This paper reports on an initiative undertaken by three OD practitioners in three different UK organisations to respond to such pressures and challenge. Critically, the initiative involved them exploring and utilising soft systems methodology (SSM) as an intervention. The paper reports on their initial exposure to SSM and their progress so far. First, the paper presents a brief contextual background regarding OD. This is followed by an explanation of the approach adopted as the learning and application of SSM began. The next stage was to draw rich pictures in relation to the impact upon each of the three OD practitioners, in the context of their chosen organisational problems. The paper concludes with their assessment of the value of this particular pathway of professional development together with some consideration of implications for OD practice more generally.

Key Words: organization development, soft systems, managing change, professional development

Introduction

The field and discipline of Organization Development (OD), for more than 50 years has been concerned with planned and systematic change based on rigorous diagnosis and understanding of problems in order to develop a more effective organization (Cheung-Judge & Holbeche, 2015). However, it is argued that there is a need to ‘reinvigorate OD’ at a time when the requirements for change are unprecedented, problems are more difficult and OD practitioners need to show how they can add value (Cummings & Worley, 2009). Given this context of tough change, OD practitioners need to be able to innovate as well as develop and implement strategy quickly and efficiently. The key to this is agility — a set of capabilities that can help organizations to rapidly adapt to changing circumstances.

Research by the CIPD (2014) suggests that investment in change capability and capacity is essential for organisations that wish to have an ability to effect transformational change. OD, Learning and Development (L&D) and Human Resource (HR) professionals are critical to this. The CIPD findings advocate that organizations should be able to rely on their OD, L&D and HR professionals to foresee the need for, and provide expert advice on, change, just as they would expect the finance function in their organization to be able to provide and execute expert advice on complex matters of corporate finance and financial strategy.

This paper reports on an initiative undertaken by three OD practitioners in three different UK organisations to respond to such pressures and challenge. It seeks to reflect on a professional development pathway with the aim of enhancing their ability to operate in their ever changing environments. Critically, the initiative involved them exploring and utilising soft systems methodology (SSM) as an intervention. The paper reports on their initial exposure to SSM and their progress to date. It reflects on its fitness for purpose in relation to their personal and professional development in the context of OD practice. First, the paper presents a brief contextual background regarding OD. This is followed by an explanation of the approach adopted as the learning and application of SSM began. The next stage was to draw rich pictures in relation to the impact upon each of the three OD practitioners, in the context of their chosen organizational problems. The paper concludes with their assessment of the value of this particular pathway of professional development together with some consideration of implications for OD practice more generally.

OD and SSM

In a recent review of OD, Burnes and Cooke (2012) have argued that while there has been a large expansion in terms of its theory, practice and reach, OD is not “fundamentally different from the past” (p.1414). Instead there has been a continuous evolution of theory and practice but with a degree of to-ing, fro-ing and even competition between academics and practitioners, exemplifying the dilemma of relevance and/or rigour. The period of the 1940s and 1950s were characterized by relevance and rigour, under the influence of the father figure of action research, Kurt Lewin, whose unfreeze-change-refreeze model of change continues to endure (Bartunek & Woodman, 2015). This was followed by a period of competition for influence between academe and practitioners but resulting in a degree of supremacy for practitioners during the 1970s and 1980s, particularly the rise of relevant tools and techniques, perfected by consultants and others who could focus on and commercialize their processes of delivery. OD practitioners could gain influence if they could align their work with bigger projects such as Total Quality Management, Business Process Reengineering and Transformational Change and Leadership (McLean, 2007). The work of Schein (1988) and others also gained influence with its concern for the diagnosis of problems in organizations which were “fundamentally problems involving human interactions and processes” (p.12) which would require a consultant establishing a relationship with their clients within organizations (Schein, 1999). During the 1990s and into the 2000s, contributions from academe, especially those that presenting a more pluralist, multi-voiced, languaged and storied version of organization life (See Cummings and Worley, 2009) and change management (Ford & Ford, 2010) sought to emphasize a more rigorous approach to OD, based on theoretical support. Were such voices heard or considered as some organizations pursued a unipolar path toward profit at any means during the late 2000s leading to the Global Financial Crisis? This suggests that OD needs to add critique and reflexivity to its formative values of humanism and democracy if it is to influence future efforts for progress in organizations. As Burnes and Jackson (2011) have found, if the values of those providing change interventions are not aligned with others who need to subscribe to the change, the result can be failure and resistance.

Burnes and Cooke (2012) suggest that there is now an opportunity for synergy to emerge between academe and practitioners that can provide a “process of renewal” (p.1415) for OD. Such synergy can arise from a reconciliation between the competing forces between relevance and rigour as presented by Stokes (2011), shown as Figure 1.

		Relevance Considerations of Use	
		No	Yes
Rigour: Quest for Fundamental Understanding	Yes	<i>Bohr's Quadrant</i> Basic disciplinary research	<i>Pasteur's Quadrant</i> Professional schools Business schools
	No		<i>Edison's Quadrant</i> Consulting firms

Figure 1: The Choices Between Rigour and Relevance, adapted from Stokes (1997).

Stokes presents three approaches to research and plots them according to their practical use (relevance) on the X axis and their quest for fundamental understanding (rigour) on the Y axis.

Bohr's Quadrant, named after the famous atomic physicist Niels Bohr, represents basic research driven by curiosity and not necessarily directed towards solving a practical problem. Whereas Edison's Quadrant named after the legendary inventor Thomas Alva Edison, focuses on practical use and not on the quest for fundamental understanding. He was known for his strong dedication towards solving practical problems rather than his interest in explaining or understanding the phenomenon of a scientific field. Finally, Pasteur's Quadrant where the fundamental understanding gained out of research is used to develop a practical application useful to the society.

It is interesting that Pasteur's quadrant includes business schools, perhaps a reflection of an intent which became lost in the production of theory as an end in itself, or worse, theories that were 'amoral' and could promote 'bad' practices (Ghoshal, 2005). However, it is quite possible for business schools and the academics within them to find a way to work with practitioners in general and OD practitioners in particular which reconciles rigour with relevance. To do this, academics need to escape from the trap that disconnects them from key problems, what Maxwell (2011) refers to as knowledge-inquiry. OD practitioners need to in turn raise their heads to see the significant and critical problems that their organizations are facing. To respond, both can shift to what Maxwell calls wisdom-inquiry, concerned with real problems of living relating to what is of value in life, or what Schon (1991) refers to as research practitioners.

Approach Adopted

Raelin (2015) considers action modes of research as approaches to enquiry to bring about change within communities such as organizations, but which can also generate and divulge knowledge which can inform both practitioners and academics for relevant actions both in their own worlds and/or jointly. In order to pursue a pathway of CPD for their own OD practice, the OD practitioners in question, selected Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) as the mode of research. Their rationale is developed below.

SSM was principally developed within the Department of Systems at Lancaster University during the 1970s in order to challenge the orthodoxy systems understanding, that systems were a first order reality and move to a view of systems as a way of talking and thinking using the idea of system as a metaphor. The difference between these two views was eventually summarized as the difference between 'hard' and 'soft' systems thinking (Checkland, 1985). Because the

word system is most usually used to refer to part of the real world ('hard'), Checkland and his colleagues suggested further differentiation by the use of the word 'holon' to refer to our systemic thoughts, i.e. we can think with holons about the world which we view as complex, confusing and messy.

Checkland's (1981) original version for the application of SSM was composed of a seven-stage model, and this is shown as Figure 2.

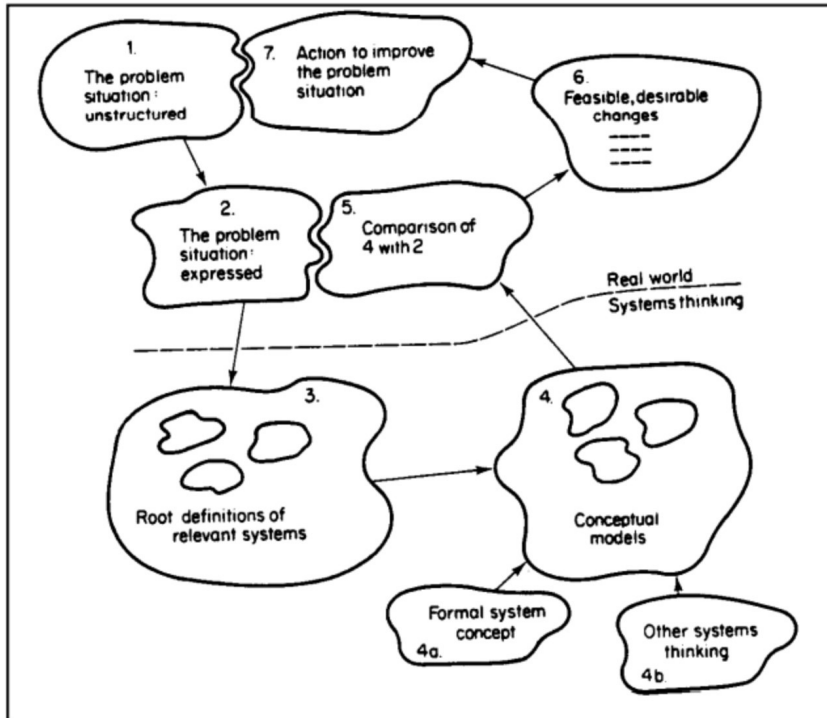


Figure 2: Checkland's Seven-Stage SSM Model
Source: Checkland (1981, p.163)

The value of this framework is that it allows a deepening awareness of a problem by gathering data, reflecting on what is happening before entering an abstract phase of systemic thinking that occurs 'below the line'. This refers to the phases of SSM where abstract thinking, using definitions and models constructed for thinking and talking about the situation, but not as descriptions of the real world. Instead, they could be compared with the real world to stimulate possible changes and actions.

For the exercise reported upon in this paper the approach was to begin with a complex, confusing and messy problem or issue identified by each practitioner and to spend time considering the issue making use of SSM as a model. Through the process of reflecting upon and sharing findings the practitioners were able to form a small action learning set and new possible methods were introduced as appropriate. Each of them was familiar with action learning as a way of helping, supporting and challenging each other by use of questions and with the help of a facilitator. Their reports are presented below. No formal structure is used for these reports as the practitioners

report what, they individually and in the context of their own problems, found meaningful and of value. The reports present an insight into the activity that took place using modes one and two of the model within a defined time frame of six months.

Reports from Practitioners

Lisa Banton

My name is Lisa Banton, Practice Development and Partnership Training Lead for Children's Services at a large City Council.

In terms of context I wanted to reflect at the time on the proposed corporate 'People and Culture Plan' on which Children's services were not consulted and which did not take a systems approach in terms of its development. I wanted to reflect on relationships and processes and identify an inclusive approach to talent and diversity management across a whole system. I also considered the scope of the system i.e. Council wide or city wide.

Current challenge

The issue that is currently challenging me is how to establish an inclusive talent management system. My awareness map enabled me to identify and reflect on, some of the key themes to consider in the development of the talent management system such as communication, competition and so on. This map also gave me the impetus to challenge partners across Adult Health and Social Care to include the Children's Workforce in the 'One Workforce' Strategy.

On completion of my awareness map, Figure 3, I started a basic reflective log to capture my thought processes and actions arising from the use of the soft systems tools. Subsequently, I collated these themes into an abstract for a discussion paper to present to senior colleagues as an opportunity to share my vision. I wanted to offer an evidence based alternative to the recently produced 'People and Culture Plan' which does not take a Systems thinking or inclusive approach to talent management.

Soft systems tools

Writing an abstract for a forthcoming HRD Conference inspired me to write a full discussion paper on inclusive talent management. I reviewed the content with my Head of Service following a difficult talent management meeting with the Heads of Strategy and Resources and Human Resources. At the talent management meeting I challenged colleagues about the lack of consultation on the People and Culture Plan and the assumption that this should be 'owned' by Human Resources. I was frustrated by the lack of opportunity to make a contribution. Using soft systems enabled me to identify myself as an actor on the system and to make evidence based recommendations through my discussion paper. A final draft of the paper has been submitted to my chief officer and I am hopeful that some of my ideas will be taken forward to influence the changing shape of Children's Services and perhaps in a wider context.

My awareness map, Figure 3, supported me to explore my initial ideas and knowledge and challenged some of my assumptions. I then took some of the key themes and developed them

into a rich picture which provides more detail about the relationships between the various directorates or 'communities' within the council as well as external partners. Rich pictures are a key reflective resource for me because they enable me to place myself at the centre which in practice is an uncomfortable place for me to be. This approach challenges me to articulate my vision for change and increases my capacity to influence through sharing my ideas.

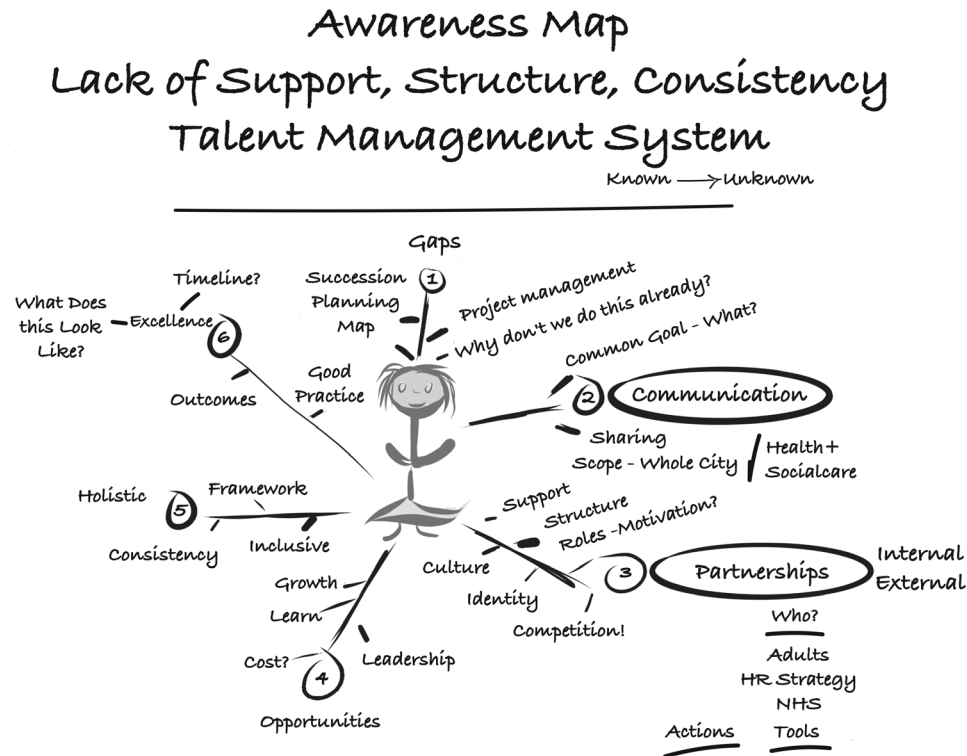


Figure 3: Awareness Map

Before completing my rich picture, Figure 4, I consulted with the Head of Service for Information Management and Technology to gain an additional perspective on political and economic influences on relationships between the directorates. This was a really useful conversation as my colleague challenged some of my assumptions, what I thought I knew, about the corporate view of my own directorate within the council.

Children's Services has direct contact with external customers whereas the Strategy and Resources team only supports internal customers. I came to the conclusion that the directorates hold different roles/provide different functions and therefore different but equally valued forms of support to the chief executive. A large organization such as the Council, values policies and processes as well as creativity and innovation. The question is, can a systems approach successfully incorporate both of these and engage all the stakeholders to achieve positive change?

As a workforce development lead I am always interested in new ways of learning and tools to support that learning. I am not a visual learner and definitely not an artist but I find the pictorial approach helpful. I am a reflective practitioner and feel that soft systems supported me in that reflection. More importantly I find soft systems particularly effective in enabling me to articulate my ideas, challenge the status quo and confidently offer alternative positions. The use of rich pictures, Figure 4 and awareness maps in particular have provided me with the opportunity to suggest specific actions, such as taking a systems approach to talent management, and therefore influence strategy at a leadership level.

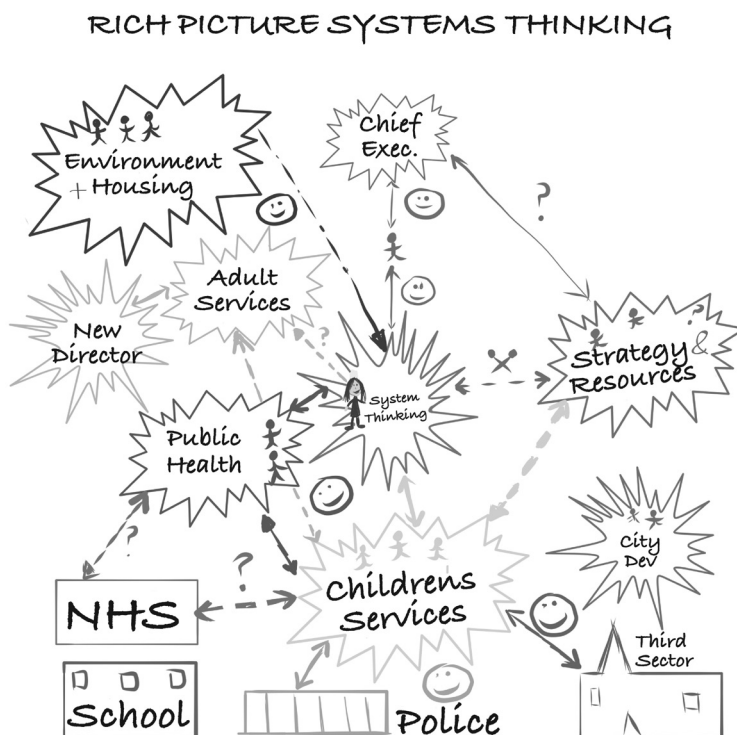


Figure 4: Rich Picture

I enjoy using soft systems as a problem solving tool. It creates the space for viewing change from perspectives within and without the organization. The process encourages me to read and research further into related issues such as leadership which supported the articulation of my vision for inclusive talent management in the council. In particular a book entitled *The Search for Leadership* by William Tate was very valuable.

I find the action learning sessions a very interesting and supportive part of my reflective learning. I feel that I respond well to exposure to bite sized theoretical information alongside practical workplace challenges. Being able to share frustrations, ideas and interests and develop individual solutions collectively is something I have benefited from significantly. I find systems thinking and soft systems tools very 'human' as well as practical. This means that they are an effective

tool in delivering positive change. I am constantly frustrated by the de-humanising impact of unnecessary bureaucratic processes and systems. At a time of significant change within my organization I will be seeking out other systems thinkers and leaders in order that we achieve democratic, positive and sustainable change.

Gillian Felton

I am Gillian Felton, Head of People Development, Engagement and Wellbeing at the National Institute for Health Research Clinical Research Network (NIHR CRN).

Context of the current issue

The National Institute for Health Research Clinical Research Network (NIHR CRN) is a managed network for delivering clinical research activity in the NHS. It is an organization with a clearly stated vision “clinical research as an integral part of healthcare for all”. It is an organization fresh out of a wholesale re-organization with a challenging agenda ahead.

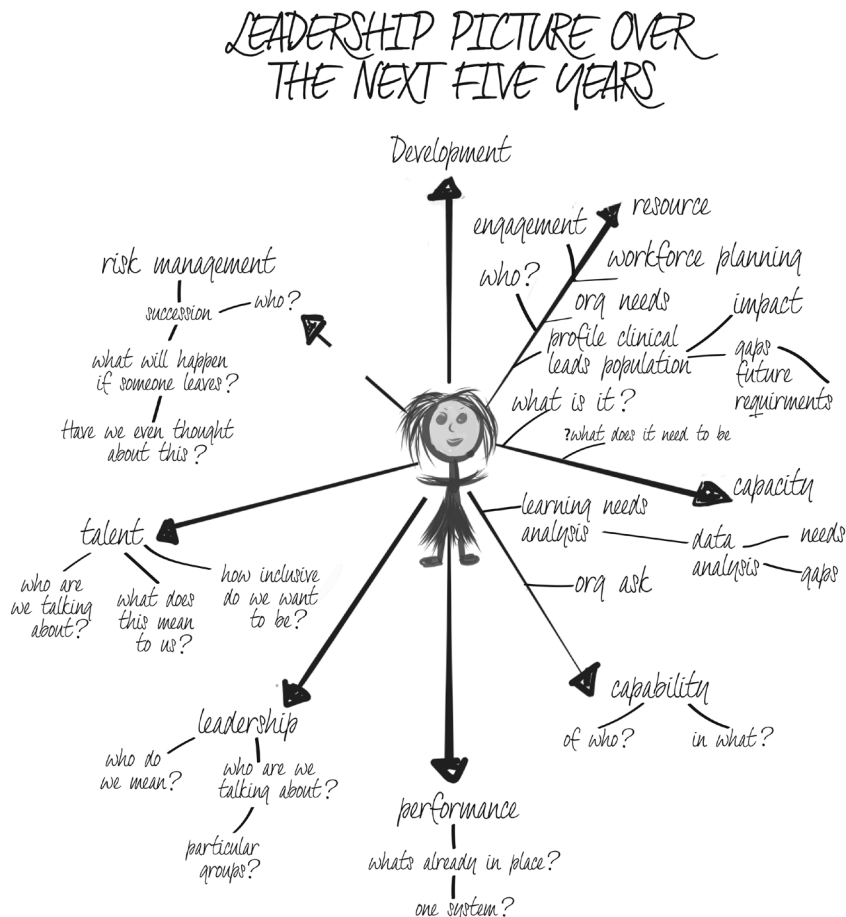


Figure 5: Awareness Map

The reorganization restructured 102 networks to 15 local clinical research networks and nine coordinating centres streamlined into one. This happened over a two-year timeframe. The restructuring and reshaping have provided many opportunities, not least the chance to review the organization's approach to leadership development and talent management.

Application of soft systems methodology

When developing awareness for soft systems methodology our attention has to be drawn in the first instance to some 'messy' issue. This allows us to articulate by means of an awareness map all our thoughts, knowledge and general hunches about the issue. My initial awareness map (Figure 5) around leadership development and talent management was made up of headlines and a few questions. It provided the opportunity to visually capture and outline the topics for consideration, who might be involved, what the challenges would be, why we should spend time considering the issue and so on. It allowed for the issue to be seen as a whole in its rawest sense without the need to over describe or answer any of the surfacing questions. Headlines produced headings which in turn generated sub topics and many questions.

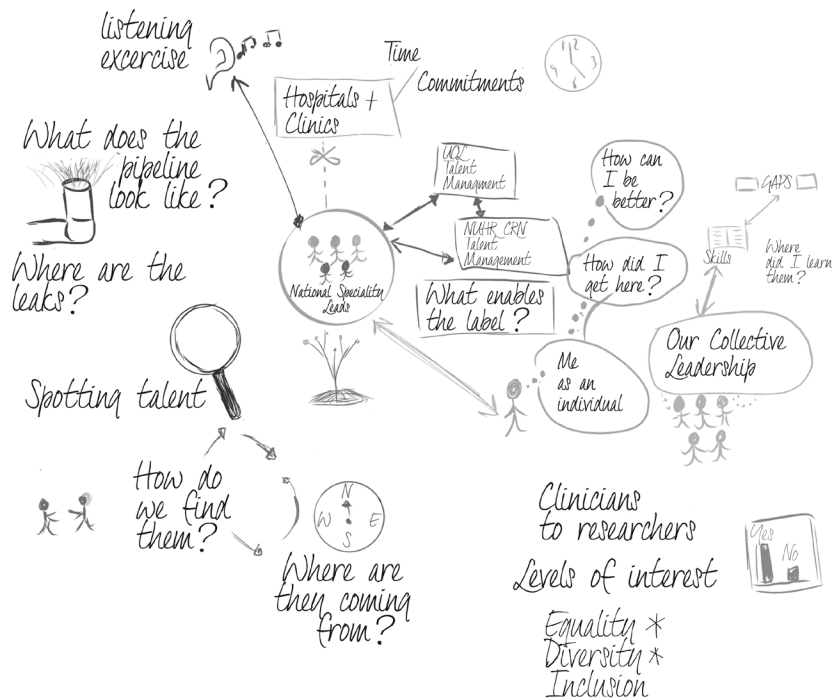


Figure 6: Rich Picture (1)

Whilst the awareness map put the issue on the page it also further confirmed its scale and complexity. This wasn't necessarily a bad thing, quite the opposite in fact as it ensured the magnitude of the task was fully appreciated which in turn led to some considered thinking around how best to tackle it. A one dimensional approach does not work in our networked organization and the prospect of designing an approach to leadership development and talent management for the whole organization had the potential to be overwhelming.

The awareness map enabled a conversation within the organization which led to refining the approach to attend to a specific client group (National Specialty Leads of which there are 42) rather than attempting to address all client groups at once. The thinking was that by taking a specific group we would be able to test out an approach with the aim of extending it and mapping it onto other groups in the network in the future.

With the client group identified it was then possible to explore the problem in their context. There is a requirement to understand the capacity and capability of the clinical leadership workforce in order to develop a leadership programme that will enable performance now and develop talent for the future. We need a roadmap that will provide the transparency and inclusiveness of opportunity for all.

This was initially done through mind mapping as my preferred method of ideas generation. Soft systems methodology advocates the use of rich pictures as a problem structuring method. Whilst I work in a visual way I do find the concept quite challenging — I would much rather use words than pictures. That said, by generating mind maps in the first instance I was then able to translate them into a rich picture (Figure 6). This suggests that the two approaches complement each other.

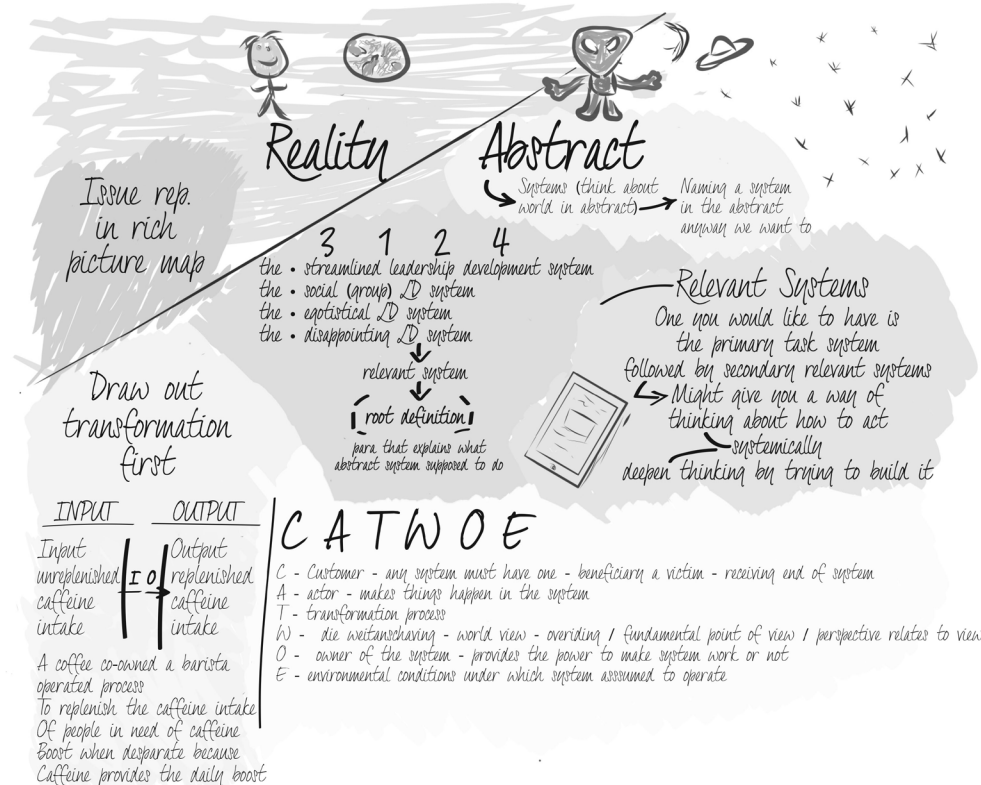


Figure 7: Rich Picture (2)

With an ultimate aim of a consistent approach across the network to talent management and succession planning underpinned by forward thinking leadership development programmes it was time to intervene in the system of the client group to formulate root definitions. I really needed to understand more about the problem (Figure 7).

In our situation each national specialty lead (the client group) is a stakeholder and therefore has their own perspective of the problem we have posed. I needed to find out what leadership development and talent management meant to them. Using the principles of CATWOE I conducted a listening exercise with pre-determined questions based on four key headings

- You as a National Specialty Lead.
- Leadership and building the collective National Specialty Leadership team.
- Sustaining and nurturing talent.
- Leading clinical research into the future.

This approach enabled me to gather the multiple and contrasting views of the target group and has provided a rich and comprehensive data set. The next step will be to analyse all the data that was captured and move into stage four of soft systems methodology — build conceptual models. Using soft systems methodology is providing a framework to contain the work and give it structure.

My role as OD practitioner using SSM

As I consider my role as an OD practitioner intervening in the system using SSM I am reminded of the research-practitioner model as described by Schon (1991), and the benefits of connecting research with practice. My reflection of using SSM to tackle this issue highlighted the challenge of making a theory fit with the complex nature of real world reality.

As a methodology it provided a framework to start investigating the problem in question in a different way to the project management approach that our organization would typically adopt. What it did enable was a deep consideration of the ‘players’ in the system, the human activity and how each of those inform the other and the impact that has on the whole.

The methodology was useful for highlighting the scale of the issue, and its systematic approach allowed for the identification of an initial client group. It provided room for reflection to consider the uncertainty, confusion and messiness of the problem. Being able to articulate how the client group had been selected removed the potential for conflict within the organization. The methodology demonstrated the scale of the issue and the necessity to tackle it a group at a time.

SSM is a way of learning, a way of investigating the breadth and depth of an issue resulting in a plan of action. It is important for us to continue to work through the methodology stage by stage to its conclusion as this will fully test out the validity of its application within the context of the NIHR CRN as a problem solving tool.

Angela Earnshaw

My name is Angela Earnshaw and I work as the Head of OD within an NHS Foundation Trust. We provide mental health and learning disability care that supports people to achieve the best that they can for their health and wellbeing.

Using SSM to develop an OD framework

Facing difficult financial circumstances both in the short and medium terms, my difficult issue concerned the need to develop an OD Framework to take us forwards. Using an awareness map to take a more careful look at the situation, I became aware of how it illustrated the complexity that would be involved. This helped me identify some of the key issues and tensions that needed addressing to take the project forward.

I learned the complexity is part of the work, even though I would prefer simplicity and straight forward connections. I am not comfortable with complexity and ambiguity. I could begin to see a route through and what I could pay attention to. I could take action by holding discussion with respect to some key decisions on resourcing OK. I held consultation discussion with people identified on the map, e.g. leadership development, the Chief Operation Officer and other links to service improvement.

At the time of drawing the map, some issues were unclear and later in the process, as I took action, the map changed or became clearer, either through natural development or my interventions. The map helped me consider issues along a spectrum of what is more certain and what might be a hunch. A key learning point was that it allowed me to realize who I needed to consult with and take on the journey; do I have permission to act — is it in my gift to write this and include in the scope of an OD Framework?

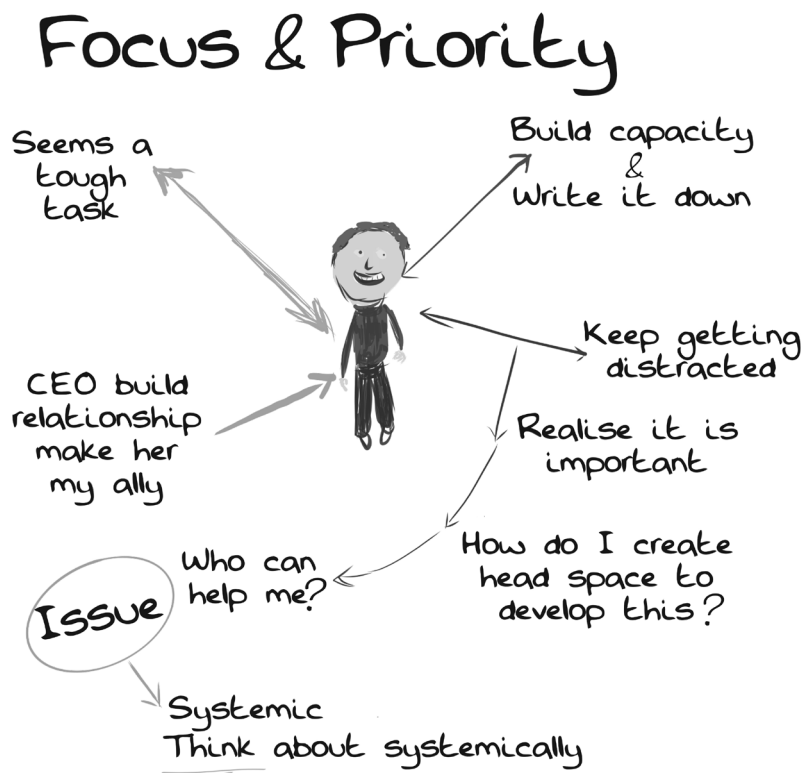


Figure 8: Rich Picture (1)

I then developed four rich pictures from the map (two of which are illustrated below) to consider:

- The primary focus (Figure 8).
- Ambiguity and general direction (Figure 9).
- Developing competent and trusted leaders.
- Developing OD capacity.

I used the rich pictures to understand key issues and the quality of relationship. I did this in collaboration with key stakeholders to develop ownership and partnership working. This is still a work in progress. The rich pictures help me to identify in detail the important aspect of sub-sections of the project. In particular, the status of relationships and when work is needed to develop, or repair or change relationships.

Ambiguity-Direction Clearer Now

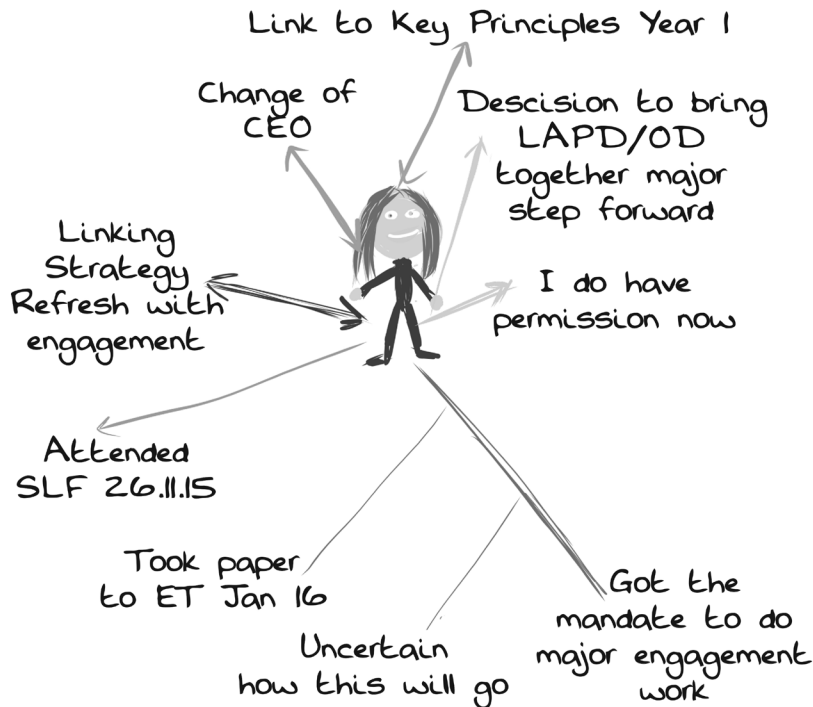


Figure 9: Rich Picture (2)

Conclusions

According to Schwab (2016), we have begun the fourth industrial revolution during which physical and virtual resources will be combined in new ways to produce a “profound and systemic

change” (p.9) to our world. In such a world, there will be uncertainty and flux in terms of jobs but whatever their form, there will be a demand for complex problem solving and systems skills. Such a view sits comfortably with the very real organisational problems we as OD practitioners face in our current positions. They are exacerbated by budgetary and resource uncertainty and fundamentally a degree of tension in relation to OD’s ability to offer a contribution of value and significance. This said none of the practitioners would have embarked upon this particular pathway of continuous professional development if it was not felt that by learning SSM they would not be able to form plans of action to tackle their respective OD problems.

Although this is very much a project still in process, even by working with awareness and rich pictures, each was able to adopt a way of thinking about complexity that informed taking action, adding depth to their understanding. In this way, they worked along the spectrum of the ideal types of SSM, identified by Checkland (1999) as Mode 1 and Mode 2.

Moving towards Mode 2 SSM, the OD practitioners were able to make use of the tools in particular situations. As managers working on the ‘inside’, SSM became an ongoing and iterative learning process, the results of which they were able to share with each other as part of action learning. What is apparent is that this feature was important in finding value from what they were able to do and consider SSM favourably, although there were still some key features to consider. Their journey continues.

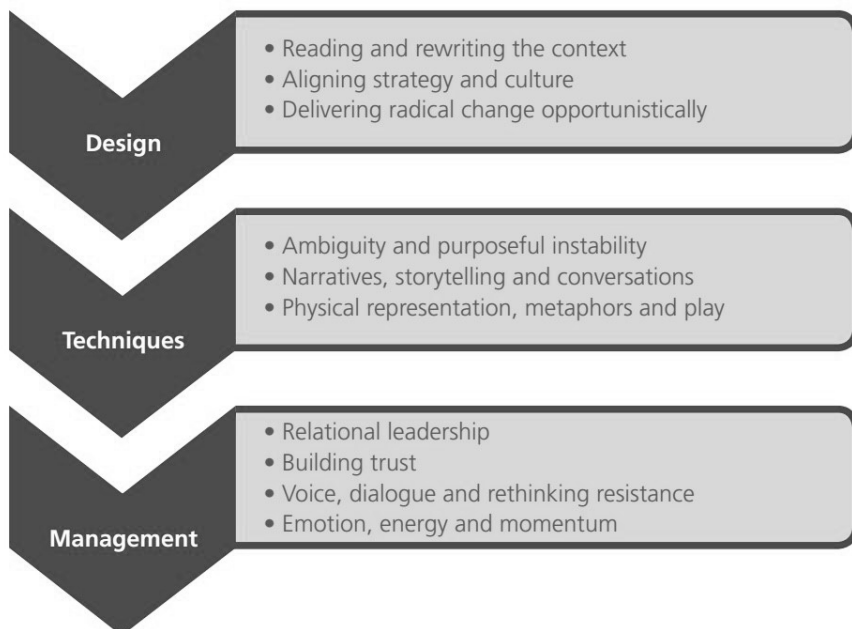


Figure 10: Landing Transformational Change. Source: cipd.org.uk. 2014.

What does their learning and experience of using SSM mean for the OD / HRD / L&D profession as a whole? Faced with a climate of uncertainty and ambiguity the ability to deploy a range of problem solving tools is critical if any transformation programme is to have a chance of

being successful. OD, L&D and HRD practitioners equally have a role in upskilling leaders and managers in organisational change capacity so as to develop those capabilities that will enable organisational flexibility resulting in a more rapid adoption of change.

The CIPD research report (2014) *Landing transformational change*, sets out ten transformation themes to provide a platform of knowledge on designing, managing and embedding change.

Of particular relevance and linking in with the theme of this paper is the use of physical representation, metaphors and play. They suggest that these three elements are useful at two stages of transformation, firstly as part of the design stage to assist with visioning the new organisation and secondly to make the new culture tangible for the people within the organisation.

To enable the move from the old organisation, a new language, new stories and new behaviours need to be created. Using physical objects and drawings supports these conversations and helps people build a picture of the new organisation. They suggest that using rich pictures encourages involvement as the pictures can be co-drawn allowing the sharing of ideas and a shared understanding of the 'issue'. The visual nature of a rich picture enables a discussion, joint participation and co-ownership. Equally this approach lends itself to a deeper understanding and subsequent ability to recall the messages.

As the demand for transformational change programmes is ever increasing, the demands on the profession to successfully facilitate them also increases. This in turn generates a number of questions practitioners should be asking themselves in terms of their own capability in relation to transformational change and their ability to build change readiness in their organisations.

A one dimensional fixed outlook to transformational change is no longer valid in today's volatile environment, and the successful practitioners will be those who embrace a multi-faceted approach to problem solving and that potentially includes soft systems methodology.

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The Authors

Gillian Felton is Head of People Development, Engagement and Wellbeing at the National Institute for Health Research Clinical Research Network (NIHR CRN), responsible for ensuring the needs of the people are aligned with the needs of the business. The NIHR CRN provides the infrastructure across the whole of England that enables high-quality clinical research to take place in the NHS. She has over 25 years experience working in the HR profession in various roles across a variety of organisations in both the private and public sectors. She is alumni of Roffey Park, the internationally renowned leadership institute based in the UK and Singapore. She is also a Chartered Member of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, the professional body for HR and people development.

Lisa Banton has been the Workforce Development Lead in a large local authority for the past 4 years. She is committed to people development and talent management through a restorative approach to leadership. She led a highly successful culture change training programme in Restorative Practice in 2015 which was part of an award winning programme. She has been part of a multi-agency, organizational development action learning set since April 2013. She graduated in Law in 1994 and has an M.A. in Youth and Community Development.

Angela Earnshaw is Learning and Organizational Development Lead for an NHS Foundation Trust. She is passionate about supporting the development of people, organizations and systems. She has a keen interest in organizational development, coaching and supervision and actively works with colleagues across the city of Leeds to support development that improves health and social care services. She has a master's degree in human resource development.

Investors in People and Business Excellence in the United Arab Emirates

Part 2: From BE to IIP — a Case Study

Alaa Garad, *Investors in People, United Arab Emirates*
Fiona Martis, *Independent Management Consultant,*
United Arab Emirates

Interesting developments are taking place in the United Arab Emirates in relation to national and organizational HRD policy and practice. These focus upon an approach which seeks to build upon and ultimately integrate standards drawn from the models of Business Excellence (BE) and Investors in People (IIP). In this the second of a two-part article a case study is presented which illustrates the combined benefits of the two standards. The article draws out the practice initiatives and achievements taken by the case organization — a large hotel in Abu Dhabi — in developing from BE to IIP. An integrated model offers national and organizational HRD a challenging but exciting prospect. Potential benefits in seeking to apply such an organization development approach go beyond a mere aggregation of IIP and BE. A key implication is the development of an understanding of how the two models can work together.

Key Words: business excellence, EFQM, IIP, HRD, organization development, hospitality, UAE

Introduction

This article attempts to illustrate how working with the Business Excellence Model (BEM) and Investors in People (IIP) can help organizations to succeed in fulfilling their mission. Key links between BEM and IIP were highlighted and discussed in part one of this article (Garad, 2016). The aim of part two is to take stock of the practices that have been employed in a case study from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and which illustrate the combined benefits of the two international standards i.e. IIP and BEM.

A single case study organization, the Millennium Corniche Hotel in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, is the subject of this research. A qualitative approach was adopted to investigate and understand the links between both models and draw out the practice initiatives and achievements taken by the hotel in developing from ‘business excellence’ to IIP. Several methods were used in data collection including participant observer methods, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and document review.

By using the IIP framework on the back of the Business Excellence (BE) model, the case study organization experienced positive impact on their people development practices and witnessed benefits such as improved organization culture, increased customer satisfaction, employee engagement and savings on cost in recruitment and other areas. The article first discusses the development process from BE to IIP. It then explores one case study in detail before drawing

conclusions about the relationship between and benefits of BE and IIP for organizational and national HRD.

BE and IIP: Recap

The concept of Business Excellence (BE) has its origins in the quality movement in post-WWII Japan. Over the years, this movement gave rise to several approaches and frameworks that organizations could adopt with a view to enhance their quality and performance. One such widely-used BE framework is the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), that defines BE as:

Outstanding practices 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 UAE has embraced BE as a means to foster its competitiveness in an international arena by focusing on a culture of quality and excellence.

IIP is a holistic framework for people management established by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills in the early 1990s that defines what it takes to lead, support and effectively manage people for sustainable results. The IIP Standard has been reviewed and updated regularly to respond to and reflect the changes in management best practices. Organizations that adopt the Standard may elect to either apply for accreditation or not. If they choose to apply for formal accreditation by IIP, they are then subject to assessments and, if successful, will be recognized at one of the following Accreditation levels: ‘Accredited’, ‘Silver’, ‘Gold’ or ‘Platinum’.

Organizations in the UAE are using IIP to progress beyond BE and enhance their learning and performance capabilities.

The Journey in Practice: The Millennium Corniche Hotel, Abu Dhabi

Company background

The Millennium Corniche Hotel in Abu Dhabi is a five-star property that opened its doors in the Emirate in the year 2002. It is part of the Millennium Hotels and Resorts, an international chain of hotels that was founded in 1989 by its Chairman, Kwek Leng Beng, of Singapore’s Hong Leong Group. The Millennium Hotels and Resorts currently operate 63 properties globally in 18 countries. In the UAE, they manage six properties spread across three Emirates. The Millennium Corniche Hotel has a staff strength of 200 employees and is one of two Millennium properties in Abu Dhabi. It is the first of the Group’s properties in the Middle East to apply for IIP accreditation.

From BE to IIP

In 2007, the hotel achieved the Sheikh Khalifa Excellence Award (SKEA) which is based on EFQM’s nine criteria. This award was the beginning of the culture change and journey to excellence that was later complemented by embarking on the strategic implementation of

the IIP Standard. When the hotel achieved the SKEA the management realized that the award model is very comprehensive and yet there was still a lot to be done to accomplish the hotel's objectives and become one of the leading organizations in Abu Dhabi. Indeed, the BEM/SKEA assessors had documented a need for further engagement of people, more financial and non-financial recognition, linking training and L&D activities to the hotel's mission and objectives, further involvement of senior management with people, and measuring the return on investment in training.

In subsequent years, competition within the hospitality sector intensified. Plans for new hotels in Abu Dhabi brought the realization that the hotel would have to contend with luxury brands in an increasingly fierce market. They acknowledged the fact that further changes would need to be made within the hotel to stay competitive and that the changes begun with BE needed progression and enhancement. The potential of IIP was introduced to the hotel. A change in senior management in 2014 provided a stimulus for action. A new General Manager (GM) was appointed, who had personally experienced the success of IIP in the UK. Aware of the potential benefits of the Investors in People framework and the links between IIP and Business Excellence he believed that focusing on people development and continuous learning could lead to a positive shift in the organizational culture and thus further propel the hotel's journey to excellence. A priority for the GM was to bring in operational excellence in people's daily practice as he believed that "it is all about people". He took the position that whilst the SKEA model gave the holistic coverage of all aspect of organizational excellence, the particular context of the hotel necessitated more focus on people considering the nature of business and the competition it was facing. Areas of the operation where it was felt required further development were people engagement and ensuring ownership and alignment of learning and development activities to the hotel's mission and strategic objectives.

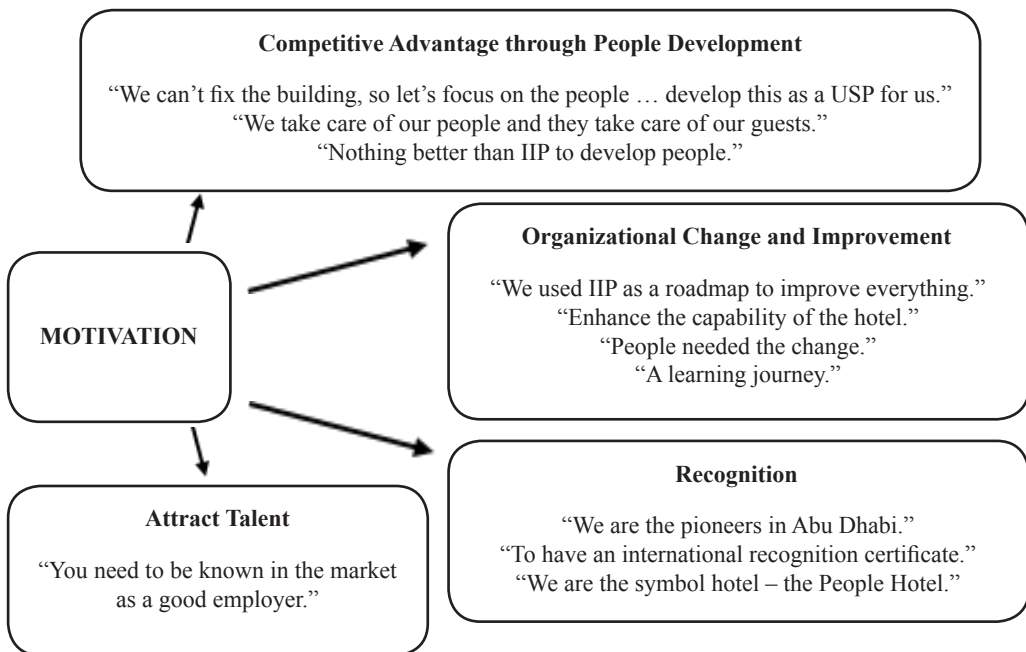


Figure 1: Motivation Factors for Implementing IIP

The GM approached Investors in People UAE to share and explore the adoption of IIP in line with the SKEA model. Agreement to progress the hotel towards IIP accreditation was taken in January 2015. In sum, the rationale was: 1) to gain competitive advantage through people development, 2) to facilitate organizational change and improvement, 3) to cultivate a culture of recognition and reward and 4) to help attract talent — as illustrated in Figure 1.

Implementing IIP

The GM formed a cross functional team and started the journey of Investors in People. The beginning was an awareness session conducted by the first author of this article and attended by all senior management and middle management teams at the hotel to demonstrate and highlight the links between both models and answer the enquiries of the management.

After this first review by an IIP specialist, the GM set up an IIP project team comprising the HR Director, the Training Manager and the Food and Beverage (F&B) Director, with the GM personally taking charge of the implementation. The implementation of the IIP framework at the hotel commenced with laying the groundwork — formulating the hotel's Vision and Mission. The interview data revealed that before engaging with IIP, the hotel did not have either. They were “waiting for the corporate office” to provide them with this. Once the decision was made to adopt the IIP Standard and subsequent to the first report from the visiting IIP specialist, this was quickly rectified. Thereafter, job descriptions and objectives were reviewed and rewritten to align with these.

In late January 2015, the newly minted Vision and Mission was launched to the whole organization through a “kick-off session” led by the GM and various department heads. All employees were invited to this session and 100% attendance was achieved. This would be the first time that all hotel employees (or “colleagues” as they are referred to at the hotel) would meet together. It was explained to employees how their job roles could add value to the hotel and help the organization meet its goals.

This session was also used to introduce the IIP Standard to the hotel employees and inform them that the hotel would be applying for the accreditation. The session was closed with the employees being invited to place their handprints in colourful paint on several large canvases. This would serve as a visual representation of their commitment to the hotel's Vision, Mission and Values. A video of the session is available on YouTube at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QzNF0iXqu9I> The canvases are prominently displayed in the hotel's staff cafeteria which is frequented by the employees at least once during the working day.

The project team then started implementing the culture shift by revamping HR practices, building employee engagement within the hotel and improving communication. Using the indicators of the IIP Standard (see also Figure 2) as a guide, changes were made across the hotel. These changes included developing a country-specific company Mission & Vision statement, redefining job roles, reviewing performance management and succession planning policies, empowering employees to take decisions and actively soliciting employee feedback to co-create a participative organizational culture.

In the twelve months of implementation, however, the hotel did face difficulties and challenges. One such was regarding communication to the whole organization. While the initial kick-off session laid the foundation, and brought about awareness of IIP, the messaging was best received by the management and supervisory level employees. This fact was brought to light during the

IIP assessment visit where most of the employees who were interviewed by the IIP assessor belonged to the non-management strata. The IIP assessors found that while management understood what IIP was about and why it was being adopted, the bulk of the workforce (most of whom are customer-facing) did not! They either could not articulate or did not understand what the adoption of IIP essentially meant for them and their jobs.

Hence, in order to target every employee — from the housekeeping colleagues to the wait staff and kitchen staff — communication was reinforced via more personal, unit-wise discussions by members of the IIP project team working alongside the department heads. During these sessions employees were told once again (and in some cases, in their native languages) what the hotel's vision, mission and values are; what IIP is; how their job roles are linked to the hotel's vision and guest satisfaction; how they are empowered to make decisions; what training and development options are available to them and what they are expected to do in their jobs. While this was acknowledged as being a massive undertaking, it was viewed as critical by the hotel to achieve the cultural shift.

A second hurdle the hotel faced was quantifying and explaining the value that could be achieved from the investment made in the training and development activities. The IIP assessor requested that the hotel attempt to evidence these gains so that the information could be used by the management for forward business planning. This information could also help the hotel home in on any changes that may be required to be made to their people management and development activities. Overcoming this challenge was an iterative process for the project team who themselves went through a learning journey to determine what items could and should be measured. Once that understanding was gained, they were able to successfully produce the data and track progress.

It is useful also to note that the implementation slowed down in the middle of the year since the hotel's F&B Director and Training Manager both moved to other Millennium properties to take on new roles. The implementation was not abandoned, however, and the communication channels were kept open. A new Training Manager and F&B Director were brought on board in August 2015 and the implementation picked up pace again. The IIP accreditation assessment was due in September 2015 and while this assessment noted marked positive improvements to the hotel's practices from January, more changes were deemed necessary if the hotel was to gain accreditation. The hotel was allowed three months to address comments from the IIP assessor and re-submit their application. In December 2015 the progress was reassessed by IIP and by January 2016 the hotel was awarded the IIP Silver Accreditation. In June 2016, at the Investors in People Awards ceremony held in the UK, the hotel picked up the top accolade in the "Best Newcomer (International)" category.

As suggested by earlier work and research on the practice of IIP, the enablers and challenges that the hotel faced during the implementation phase are not uncommon. Berry and Grieves (2003) noted that support from senior management and the creation of a dedicated project team or at least an in-house IIP champion are important to successful implementation. Further, Smith (2000) commented that a cornerstone in the change of corporate culture was workforce involvement and engagement whereby employees become responsible and are more in control of their own learning and development — along with receiving management support. Similarly, the

sorts of difficulties the hotel encountered are also reported in previous studies. Hill and Stewart (1999) and Smith et al (2002), for example, both highlighted the time taken for implementation and the extensive, ongoing communication required as significant barriers. Collins and Smith (2004) cautioned that some firms found the language used by IIP was vague and was open to interpretation. In this case study, the hotel found that it took a few attempts on their part to understand what kind of quantifiable measures were required to satisfy the IIP accreditation standards.

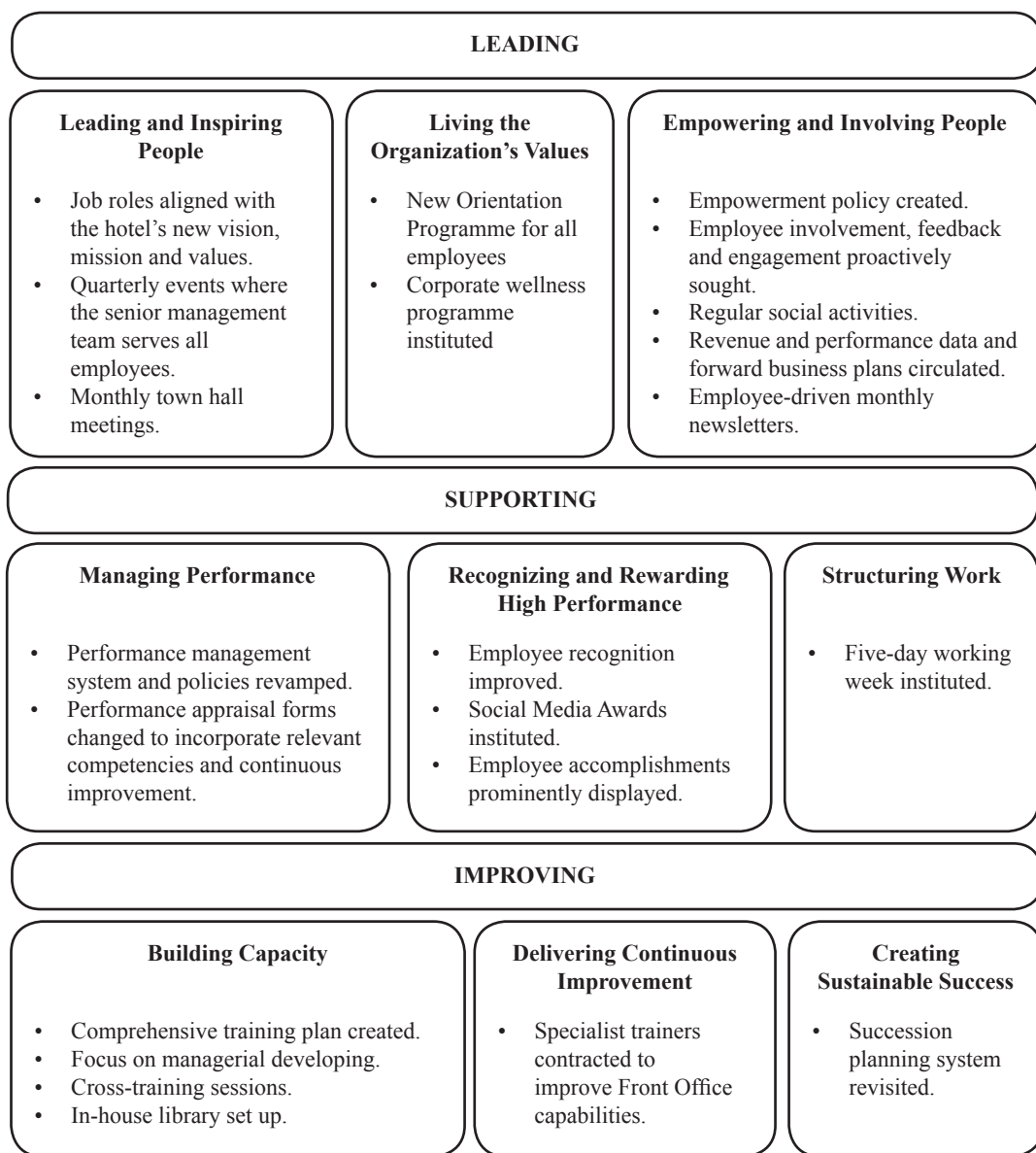


Figure 2: Initiatives Undertaken for IIP Implementation

Impact and Assessment

Changes introduced

From the data gathered through the interviews with the management team, some of the initiatives undertaken by the hotel to improve organizational performance along their IIP-accreditation journey are presented below. For ease of reference, they are first diagrammatically represented under the nine Indicators of the IIP Framework. Illustrative information on each of the initiatives is then provided in Tables 1–4.

Workforce Development — Changes in HR Practices

- Job roles were clearly defined and goals revisited to better align with the hotel’s new vision, mission and values.
- The performance management system was revamped to ensure a mid-year and an annual review for every employee, in addition to a 6-month probationary review for new joiners. The performance appraisal forms were changed to incorporate competencies such as Team spirit, Innovation and Drive. Continuous improvement was strongly promoted.
- Performance reviews are now conducted by an employee’s direct supervisor and not the department head who may or may not have frequent contact with the employee.
- The approach to disciplinary action was completely changed. Before IIP, department heads could issue warning letters at the first instance. Warning letters are now only issued in extreme cases. Instead, the recommended course of action is to counsel the employee first and determine how the hotel can help them do their job better and avoid such a situation in the future.
- A service recovery and empowerment policy was drawn up to enable employees to make quicker decisions and take responsibility for guest satisfaction.
- The succession planning system was revisited. An existing plan was in place but was not effectively being used. The new plan factored in employees’ performance and training records and any new vacancies were encouraged to be filled internally using the data from the new succession plan.
- A five-day working week was instituted across most departments. Before IIP, this was only prevalent in the administrative offices and with the senior management team. After IIP implementation, all employees are entitled to two days off during the week. During peak seasons, the days off are sometimes carried forward to alternate weeks but are not lost.
- The employee-of-the-month recognition scheme, previously determined by department heads, now sees the employee of the month selected by the employees themselves via a voting system. The new system opens up this popular recognition programme to employees from all areas of the hotel.
- A Supervisor of the Month award has also been adopted giving employees the opportunity to recognize line managers and supervisors who have contributed to their growth and development.
- Social Media Awards are given to those employees who receive the most number of compliments on the hotel’s social media sites.

Table 1: Workforce Development — Changes in HR Practices

Workforce Development — Learning and Development

- All employees, new and old (including heads of departments) were “re-oriented” or, simply put, they attended the hotel’s new orientation programme.
- A new training plan was drawn up and circulated to every department. Managers nominate employees for essential training courses but also encourage employees to sign up for other training courses (even those not directly related to their daily jobs) and take charge of their own learning and development.
- Focus on developing managerial skills:
 - All people managers were trained on how to manage performance, conduct performance reviews and appraisals and target the correct type of training for their teams.
 - All people managers are asked to attend a Train-the-Trainer programme.
 - Leadership development courses are provided.
 - On-The-Job training for managers was introduced.
- A specialist training company was contracted to assist the Front Office with their up-selling techniques and skills. Monthly progress reports for each employee, along with guidance on how to achieve their targets, are being received by the hotel.
- Cross-training sessions are held for employees in order to improve their skill set.
- An in-house library was set up for all employees with access to more than 100 books and CDs to improve their personal and professional development.

Table 2: Workforce Development — Learning and Development

Workforce Development — Employee Engagement Initiatives

Employee involvement, feedback and engagement were sought by the use of three simple “cards”:

- “You Deserve It” — to appreciate a colleague and nominate them for the employee of the month award.
- “Hear My Voice” — to provide any kind of feedback to the management.
- “No Idea is Small” — to provide suggestions for improvements aligned with the hotel’s values.

Regular staff outings and social activities commenced. Picnics and barbeques are being held along with day visits to popular sites across the UAE, such as Global Village, Heritage Village, Yas Water World and Al Ain Zoo.

A corporate wellness programme has been instituted with monthly medical camps, health check-ups, yoga and other fitness classes and short courses ranging from how to protect yourself from the heat in the summer to how to stay positive and be happy at work and in life.

A quarterly “Grand Breakfast” is hosted where the senior management team cooks and serves breakfast to all employees.

Table 3: Workforce Development — Employee Engagement Initiatives

Improvements in Communication within the Hotel

- Monthly town hall meetings were held, many of which were IIP-themed to build awareness and reinforce the messaging.
- An IIP-themed quiz was held to test employee knowledge and understanding of what changes and improvements have been made since the adoption of the IIP framework.
- Regular email updates are sent to all departments regarding any upcoming events and which departments will be involved.
- Revenue and performance data and forward business plans are shared with all departments every quarter to improve inter-departmental and employee awareness.
- Monthly newsletters were started with content contributions from various department heads and employees.
- All employee accomplishments and any important hotel information is put up on the staff notice boards — photographs and images are heavily used to ensure the message reaches all levels of employees.
- An employee Facebook group page (closed group) has been set up where all events and celebrations from the past year, and ongoing, are posted along with the uploads of photographs and videos.

Table 4: Improvements in Communication Within the Hotel

In sum, therefore, focusing on their people development and communication, along with strong management support, enabled the hotel to successfully transform its workplace culture and social climate to one that supported trust, co-operation and employee engagement. As the hotel started demonstrating that they were committed to ‘investing in their people’, the employees attitudes and behaviours improved and the shift in culture began. Greater inter-department co-operation was observed with teams proactively assisting each other. Employee commitment levels increased as evidenced by people electing to attend optional training courses even on their days off. Staff turnover improved and employee satisfaction surveys were yielding better results as were the customer satisfaction surveys.

In an effort to bring some ‘measurement’ data to such achievements the benefits to the Hotel can be summarized within two main categories: non-financial and financial. All the financial data presented below has been provided by the case-study hotel during the interviews and as part of the documentary evidence.

Non-financial benefits

1. **Clear organizational direction:** With the introduction of the hotel’s mission, vision, values and redesigned job objectives, the workforce now has a robust understanding of who they are, where they want to be and how to get there.
2. **Improved understanding of own capabilities and ability to shape the future:** Upon the insistence of the IIP assessor, the hotel focused their efforts to understand how to quantify and measure the value obtained from various activities that were previously being performed without any form of measurement. This has helped the hotel better understand their operations and produce meaningful data. This data now serves as the baseline to help the hotel structure their work appropriately, build business plans and budget for the future.

3. **Positive workplace culture:** There is a culture of trust, transparency and co-operation. Two-way communication is welcomed and encouraged. Employees are engaged and committed since they are made to feel valued, empowered and confident. The hotel quantifies this by linking it to the employee turnover rate which dropped from 35% in 2014 to only 11% in 2015.
4. **Skilled Workforce:** Due to the enhanced training and development initiatives undertaken, employees are better skilled to do their own jobs and are encouraged to cross-train and develop themselves further. A total of 20 employees were cross-trained in 2015 resulting in 11 internal promotions and 7 transfers. The focus on developing managerial skills and the effective succession planning helps the hotel build its workforce capabilities.
5. **Guest satisfaction:** The hotel's rating on the popular travel website, TripAdvisor, increased from 4.2 in 2014 to 4.4 in 2015. The Customer Satisfaction Survey results show an increase from 83.6% in 2014 to 92.1% in 2015 — against a target of 92%. The Market Metrix scores show an improvement of guest satisfaction scores across all departments of the hotel. (Market Metrix is a third-party vendor that was contracted by the hotel to run their online customer satisfaction surveys).
6. **Enhanced reputation/image:** Because of being IIP accredited, the hotel witnessed increased media coverage and publicity. The Director of PR and Marketing confirmed that the hotel received several enquiries from competitor hotels wanting to know more about the IIP Standard. Further, the hotel perceives that this accreditation has also established them as a preferred employer.

Financial Benefits

1. **Reduced recruitment cost:** Due to reduction in employee turnover, the hotel's recruitment costs have reduced by almost 40% in 2015 vis-à-vis 2014.
2. **Reduced Food & Beverage cost:** The hotel credits training and raising staff awareness on how to optimize food and beverage handling. This has resulted in a 1% reduction in F&B costs.
3. **Reduced waste disposal cost:** Because of training on waste reduction and optimization of resources, the hotel's waste production decreased by 45,000 kilograms in 2015 compared to 2014. The hotel contracts and pays a third-party removal company for their services and due to the reduction in waste produced, the waste disposal costs, in turn, reduced by 32% in 2015.
4. **Reduced housekeeping/amenities cost:** Greater staff awareness resulted in an 11% reduction in the cost of amenities by the housekeeping department.
5. **Increased revenue from restaurant upselling:** Revenues from restaurant upselling increased by 16% in 2015 due to the focus on upselling training techniques.
6. **Increased revenue from front office upselling:** Revenues from the front office upselling increased in 2015 thereby contributing to a 3% uplift in overall room revenue.
7. **Return on Training:** The hotel contracts a third-party training company to work with employees on improving their upselling skills. The hotel has chosen to calculate their

Return on Training by deducting the amount paid to the training company from the revenues earned on room and F&B upselling. This has yielded an 86% return on training in 2015.

Having gone through the IIP journey, the hotel management are strongly of the view that the development taken to move from BE to IIP is something they would strongly recommend to other organizations. They view IIP as the “wake-up call” they needed to bring about significant improvements within the organization. In the case of the financial benefits it is of interest to note that during the interviews it was learned that the hotel did not expect to see any financial returns from the adoption of the IIP Standard at this point. Hence, when they understood how to measure and quantify their activities, it further motivated them to perform better. The cost-save data were shared with the respective departments and the success was celebrated.

It is evident that many of the findings as regards benefits resonate well with the wider research and literature. The non-financial benefits identified here are similar to those noted, for example by Bourne et al., (2008), Cox et al. (2012) and Winterbotham et al. (2013). The results achieved here, described by the hotel management themselves as indirect financial benefits, sit comfortably with what has been found elsewhere, for example, Tamkin, et al., 2008 and Bourne and Franco-Santos, 2010.

Conclusions

This article aimed to take stock of the practices that can benefit an organization in continuing a journey of improvements to people management and development, beyond BE, by the adoption of IIP. As stated in Part I, the links between BE and IIP are strongest around the practices for people management. This case-study hotel used the BEM model as a starting point and then focused heavily on IIP, primarily developing their workforce, to bring about positive changes in the organizational culture. This, in turn had a knock-on effect of improving organization performance. The case study provides strong testimony that development of a standard beyond BE, and utilizing IIP to take such steps, can bring real benefits to an organization. Importantly, these benefits are not a mere aggregation of IIP and BEM — it is more about finding ways for the models to work together.

Discussion about adopting such an integrated model are evident at a national level within the UAE. In 2011¹ the Department of Economic Development (the custodian of Dubai Quality Award) hosted an introductory seminar about linking IIP to DQA, targeted to private sector organizations. In addition, Dubai Government Excellence Program, recently held a forum around the same concept. The forum² was held in January 2017, attended by 400 government officials representing 30 government agencies from Dubai. It is expected that towards end of 2017 an approach will be developed for the government sector to bring a People Excellence Model that brings together BEM and IIP.³

The prospect of an integrated model offers HRD practitioners a challenging but exciting prospect. The BEM model can effectively address the holistic context of organizational development and IIP can address the heart of organization, i.e. its people. For practitioners, the results of this study indicate that adopting an approach that combines BE and IIP has the potential to yield benefits to the organizations such as saving time during the gap analysis and awareness, saving costs, eliminating any perceived duplication, especially along the ‘people’ dimension where the requirement or bar is set higher in IIP.

Lessons learned from the case study hotel reveal that to successfully achieve organization's ambition, it is important to consider a phased implementation strategy, one that combines both standards instead of implementing them one after another. It would be prudent to identify which stakeholders should be engaged first (i.e. those who will influence business results the most) and focus on them early in the implementation stage.

Practitioners are also cautioned that in deciding to embark on such an 'organization development' journey they ensure that they have the sponsorship and personal involvement of senior management to maintain the drive and commitment that is required for successful implementation.

It is further suggested that practitioners who are considering pursuing BE and IIP accreditation be mindful of the fact that achieving the accreditation should not be viewed as the aim. The accreditation in itself is only valid for three years after which the organization will be re-assessed should they choose to renew it. Hence, the adoption of these standards should, instead, be viewed as an ongoing learning and improvement journey.

Notes

- 1 <http://www.smeadvisor.com/news/ded-hosts-first-seminar-on-investing-in-people/>
- 2 <http://www.emaratallyoum.com/local-section/other/2017-01-27-1.965101> (in Arabic)
- 3 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eHNNH2XFF-fs> (in Arabic)

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The Authors

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 Organizational 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 AbdulAziz 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.

Fiona Martis is a Dubai-based management professional with over 20 years of practice in the UAE's banking and finance sector. Her areas of expertise include customer experience management, consumer insights and advocacy, change management and training and talent development. Through her MBA from Middlesex University, she concentrated on business excellence and organizational learning to further explore the relationship between effective talent development and positive business performance. She may be contacted at www.linkedin.com/in/fionamartis for any queries.

HRD Forum

Time to Bridge the Research Practice Divide

Jeff Gold, *York St John University, UK*

Depending on your point of view, or politics or where you live, according to some commentators, we living through an epoch-changing transition. We do not know the outcome of this process, nor even the clarity of direction but we are becoming aware of some the effects of the disturbances and disconnections. This could include recent populist movements in the US and Europe which decry the gains of globalization in the face of those who have felt aggrieved by the disproportionate impact on their lives. It could also embrace the advances and possibilities of technologies which have been labelled the fourth Industrial Revolution, although how people will interpret such advances will depend on whether they are seen as a help or hindrance to how they live their lives. We can project both positive and negative scenarios, including seriously negative, and points in between. Such are the unpredictable and uncertainties, no wonder one commentator has declared, ‘the future is not for wimps!’

Talking of wimps, one definition is that of a ‘weak and cowardly or unadventurous person’. Is this also a person who, despite knowing better, sticks to the same path of action with the same undesirable results? One group, and I have been as guilty as others, is those in management and business academe, including learning and development or HRD researchers, who complete their research on the basis of rigour over relevance without regard for whether their work becomes ‘practical’ in the sense of impacting on what practitioners think, say or do. This polarization around the notion of rigour leads to an end result of ‘acceptable knowledge’ that meets the requirements of largely US-based journals. Further, in a means-ends inversion, these journals as outlets for the writing of academics in business and management are variously graded (have a look at this at <http://www.kfs.edu.eg/com/pdf/20820152253917.pdf>) so that many participants in this process become bound by targets such as four articles published in level four journals or ‘4 x 4’.

Interestingly, one well known academic has referred the pre-occupation with publication in ranked journals as a form of ‘fetishism’ which leads to a ‘perversion’. Another talked about the ‘closed incestuous loop’ among the writers of management research who were simultaneously both the producers and consumers of research outputs, with judgments of success based on the consumption by other writers who could cite a work in their next production rather than showing how it served. However, as the numbers who have joined the loop has swelled, very often to fulfil career ambitions, so has the number of outlets for this knowledge multiplied but the average citation for each paper published has fallen, and certainly readership by those outside academe has become reduced to non-participation because they are unable to play the game. Perhaps even worse, the work produced by business and management academics has been accused of seeking to ape science in an attempt to demonstrate rigour in its methods for developing theory, a process

referred to as ‘physics envy’ by some. But this can result in models and theories being taught in business schools which are inappropriate for human life and thus potentially promoting ‘bad’ practices. Interestingly, these comments were written in 2005, just before the bad practices hit the world with a vengeance.

The philosopher Nicholas Maxwell (go to <https://ucl.academia.edu/NicholasMaxwell>) has throughout his academic life criticized what he calls knowledge-inquiry; that is, the production of knowledge as an end in itself which is seldom put into practice. His target has been the social sciences in particular, which includes business and management — the very areas of research that might be expected to deal with problems of significance faced by leaders, managers, learning and development experts and so on. Maxwell has shown how increasingly academic research, caught in the knowledge-inquiry trap, becomes disconnected from the problems of practitioners. As a contrast, Maxwell has for some years sought to argue for research to allow actions to tackle problems with solutions that can be critically assessed to see if they work. In what he calls wisdom-inquiry, he sees the starting point for research to be the problems that people face in their daily lives whether at work, in their communities and beyond. In this process, Maxwell echoes the work of another philosopher, A. N. Whitehead who argued that rigour in research should include use-value as part of the process so that it could lead to living, living well and living better. Knowledge production should not be disconnected from its use.

In moving towards a use-value in research, and an enactment of wisdom inquiry, my argument is that in our turbulent times, we need to adopt scholarly-practice as a process of reconciliation between the needs for rigour and relevance. The term scholarly, derived from the Latin *scolaris*, as an adverb provides a qualification to how practice is conducted, suggesting that learning and deep knowledge can inform and be informed by practice. For this synchronization, the scholarly must take account and even be stimulated by use-value of those in practice. The starting point for scholarly practice has to be insufficient knowledge and understanding which has the potential to bring about use-value. In responding, there is need to avoid the polarizing tendencies of rigour but also of relevance which, without rigour, can result in quick fixes with short term benefits and an obsession with fads.

HRD Forum

Connecting Theory with Practice: HRD and the UK REF 2014

Jim Stewart, *Acting Chair, University Forum for HRD*
Sally Sambrook, *Bangor University*

Introduction

This article is concerned with showing how Human Resource Development (HRD) researchers can and do connect with practice. The source of the data and examples informing the article is UK specific, and in particular the results of submissions to what is known as REF 2014. Some words of explanation are therefore needed for non-UK, or more precisely, non-UK academic readers of this article. First, what is REF 2014? And second, how does it aim, or perhaps claim, to connect theory and practice? We will answer those questions first to set the UK national context for the content of the article. Of course, other countries also conduct similar reviews of national research activity, so our discussion is relevant in the international context.

REF 2014

REF is an acronym for Research Excellence Framework and REF 2014, conducted in 2014, is the most recent form of assessing the quality of research in UK universities. REF 2014 is a continuation of what was previously known as the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), which has been applied in slightly varying forms, and with slightly varying names, every five or so years since 1986, although at times and for varying reasons, the gaps have been shorter or longer than five years. RAE, and now REF, is a process devised to allocate one element of government research funding across departments in UK universities. The funding is provided by the UK Exchequer and is distributed by the UK higher education funding bodies. The process relies on peer assessment of the quality of research being conducted in departments and that assessment produces a score, or rating, which is then applied to determine allocations of funding from the available and finite budgets. The assessment is based on written submissions from university departments and is conducted by panels of subject experts appointed by the funding bodies from among the academic community; there are separate funding bodies in the UK for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland but they co-operate on the RAE/REF.

Submissions and panels are organized around ‘units of assessment’ (UoA) which broadly and loosely correspond to academic disciplines and subjects, and academic departments in universities (REF 2014a). For HRD, the relevant unit of assessment (in Panel C) is ‘Business

and Management' (UoA 19), although some HRD research might also have been submitted to UoA 18 (Economics and Econometrics) and possibly others, such as healthcare and education. The details of the process and criteria applied to determine the final rating have changed in minor ways since the first equivalent assessment in 1986. Subsequent RAE exercises were conducted in 1989, 1992, 1996, 2001 and 2008. The most significant revisions in process and criteria prior to REF 2014, though most would agree that they are still relatively minor, were instituted for the 2008 exercise. This is because the previous one in 2001 produced embarrassing and difficult results, since the funding bodies could not meet their planned allocations of funding because more departments than expected across the exercise received the higher ratings. At the time ratings ranged from a 1 to a 5*, and that had been broadly the case since 1992. Funding was pre-decided according to what rating a department received (e.g. no funding for a 1 to the highest level of funding for 5*), but in the event the plan could not be met within the available budget because of the number of departments across all disciplines receiving the higher ratings of, for example, 3A and above (some ratings were sub-divided, for example a 3 was either 3B or 3A and 5 either 5 or 5* with the A and * indicating higher ratings). The 2008 RAE produced a different rating. Instead of an absolute score departments received a research quality 'profile'. This profile resulted from rating research against five categories: category four, which is 'world leading'; three, which is 'internationally excellent'; two which is 'internationally recognized'; one, which is 'nationally recognized'; and the final category, which is below 'nationally recognized' and which is labelled 'unclassified'. The profile for each department resulted from proportions of the assessment allocated to each of the five categories. Those assessments were for three separate elements. The first and primary element was research activity judged by nominated and specified publications, with each publication being allocated to one of the five categories. The remaining elements were to do with the research environment within the department, and 'esteem' indicators.

The longer than usual delay in assessing research quality between 2008 and 2014 was due to several reasons. One of these was a long period of consultation and research on replacing the peer review process of panels of academics with use of publication metrics. Another reason was a similar process of consultation and research concerned with assessing the value and contribution of academic research through measuring its impact on society and practice, but outside of the academy. Both developments were driven by politics and politicians, in and out of government. The result was a change in name from RAE to REF for the 2014 exercise. The name change was intended to signal and represent a change in focus and emphasis.

The argument and debate on replacing panels with publication metrics ended with a typical British compromise of retaining panels for REF 2014 but allowing panels to utilise metrics to the extent and manner they judged appropriate to their discipline. The debate on impact similarly produced a compromise but one which was applied across the whole process. REF 2014 consisted of three elements; outputs of research such as books, chapters, reports and journal articles, which was weighted at 65% of the overall outcome; impact of research on the economy, society and/or culture, which was weighted at 20% of the overall outcome; and the submitting departments' research environment, which was weighted at the remaining 15% of overall outcome. Outputs and research environment had been elements in previous RAEs and so the inclusion of impact was a major innovation of REF 2014. The overall outcome for each submission was an amalgamation of the three elements into an overall profile, as was used in RAE 2008.

REF 2014 and Impact

The element of impact required submitting departments to prepare two related sets of documents. The first was an overall statement, in prescribed template format, of the submitting departments' approach to and strategies for enabling impact from its research. The second, again in prescribed and template format, was a description of impact case studies as selected examples to illustrate the impact achieved in the assessment period. Part of the template of the case studies required explanation and evidence that the case study, and associated impact, was underpinned by excellent research conducted in the submitting department. While the impact had to have occurred during the assessment period of January 1st 2008 to July 31st 2013, the underpinning research was allowable if it was completed between 1st January 1993 and 31st December 2013. This recognized the lag that often occurs in many disciplines between original research and application in/effect on policy or practice. The number of impact case studies in each submission varied according to the number of staff returned in the submission, with a minimum of two case studies for those with the lowest number of staff submitted to REF 2014.

It is clear, hopefully, from this brief description that assessment of academic research in the UK has moved to a position where applicability and use value are now key indicators of the quality of such research. The chosen measurement is the 'impact' of research. The definition of 'impact' as the measure of application and use value was

... an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia" (HEFCE, 2012: 26).

There are three interesting observations to be made about this definition. First, the caveat at the end that impact had to occur 'beyond academia'. This excluded impacts such as on theory development, which are commonly valued by academics. Second, the differentiation of 'benefit' from effect and change is interesting. It implies that effects and changes might not be beneficial, and that benefit itself can occur without effect or change. The first implication seems conceptually sound but questionable as a basis for assessing use value, and allocating rewards in the form of funding, based on that assessment. The definition, though, seems to give equal value to effect, change and benefit in assessing the value of research, and so equal value to effects and changes that do not necessarily have benefit. The second implication is conceptually suspect; is it possible to achieve benefit without first having an effect or changing something? Third, there is a clear separation between 'public policy and services' and the other potential targets of impact. So, an implication is that the economy, society, culture and the rest can be impacted in isolation from public policy and services. That again seems conceptually sound and there are good examples of this being the case in the submitted case studies (see King's College London and Digital Science, 2015). However, the reverse is conceptually questionable, or limiting at least; is it not likely that impact on public policy and services will be manifest in one or more of the areas listed such as the economy, or health, or the all-encompassing society? These questions do not seem to have been raised elsewhere and had no discernible consequences for the conduct and outcomes of the REF 2014 process. They do though perhaps highlight the reasons for the extensive time and process needed by the REF designers to produce an acceptable and workable method for assessing impact. This is an important point to which we will return in our conclusions. For now, the main point is to state that REF 2014 aimed to assess the impact of academic research on policy and practice. Or, in the simpler expression of our title, to assess the connections between theory and practice.

a small number which were redacted for reasons of confidentiality. Figure 1 of this article, is Figure 6 from that major study (King's College London and Digital Science, 2015). The figure is a word cloud compiled from the word frequency found in the detailed descriptions of all impact cases. This includes all the academic disciplines commonly found in most if not all universities. In REF 2014, these disciplines were represented by four main panels covering life sciences, engineering and physical sciences, social sciences and finally arts and humanities. Each main panel had several sub-panels, numbering 36 in total. The indication from the word cloud is that the words 'work', 'development', 'training' and 'knowledge' are among the most commonly used in describing impact cases, irrespective of academic discipline. The word 'development' can of course have many meanings outside of its use in HRD. The same is true of work and knowledge. However, it is interesting that these words occur across disciplines and in relatively similar frequency. It is not hard to imagine that work based development was a factor in achieving impact in disseminating and/or implementing the results of academic research in most, if not all, disciplines. An example cited in the King's College London and Digital Science report of a case study with international reach, based on a new diagnostic test for tuberculosis, is illustrative of this point. While not explicitly stated in the brief summary of the case, it is reasonable to assume that those administering the test needed and so received development, with the meaning used in HRD, in use of the test. In addition, and while acknowledging the varying meanings attached to 'development', it is less likely that the word 'training', which is relatively prominent in the word cloud, has any other meaning than the one we would associate with HRD. So, Figure 1 here suggests that HRD has played a part at least in many of the impact case studies and so has been a significant factor in connecting theory and practice outside of its own direct focus.

An ongoing study of HRD in the REF impact cases makes a similar point, and also makes the important distinction between 'content' and 'delivery' (Ross, et al, forthcoming). The difference is simply that content relates to the discipline and focus of the research. That could be within any of the disciplines covered by the main and sub-panels of REF 2014, from physics to medicine to history to economics for example. 'Delivery' encompasses but goes beyond dissemination of research findings, and perhaps beyond even implementation. Impact requires an effect or change. That implicitly refers to effect on or change in behaviour. Given the impact targets of, for example, society, the economy and culture, the additional implication is effect on or change in human behaviour. Since achieving such effect and change is the business of HRD, it seems reasonable to argue that 'delivery' of impact will in many cases require some kind of HRD intervention alongside whatever other means of dissemination of research findings are adopted, and whatever the discipline and focus of the findings. This means that it is likely that HRD has played a much wider role in achieving impact than might be suggested by examining only directly HRD related case studies.

A recent study (Sambrook and Stewart, 2015) analysed REF 2014 submissions in the Business and Management sub-panel (REF 2014b) to identify the size and nature of HRD content. In adopting an exclusive focus on a single sub-panel, the study ignored the potential for HRD related material in other disciplines. The contribution of HRD interventions to achieving impact outside of the discipline of business and management was therefore not considered or investigated. Nevertheless, the study arrived at some relevant findings. The first was that 40 of the impact case studies in business and management were directly HRD related. This was 10% of the total submitted to that sub-panel; King's College London and Digital Science (2015) state that there were 413 cases submitted to the sub-panel. Those 413 constituted the largest number submitted to any of the sub-panels and represented 6% of the total number submitted

across all sub-panels. The Business and Management sub-panel identified and specified a total of 25 specialisms within its remit, only one of which had a direct connection with HRD. These raw figures suggest that a total of 40 and a proportion of 10% of impact cases was a reasonably satisfactory representation of HRD. However, the study also found that even within Business and Management as the focus discipline, meanings attached to the word ‘development’ did not always correspond to that associated with HRD. The use of the term ‘economic development’ is one example where that was the case. So, those cases where the word development was used differently were excluded from the 40 included in the analysis for the study. The finding does though reinforce the point made earlier on interpreting the word cloud in Figure 1.

Of those 40 included in the analysis, more than a quarter of the case studies (n=11), were SME related. An example here is development programmes for entrepreneurs based on prior research on factors affecting success of startup businesses (see example in Figure 2). The next largest areas (n=4) were: vocational education and training, including work-based learning and modern apprenticeships; and business education, including accountancy training. There were three case studies in each of the following areas: change management/OD; leadership/management development; coaching and mentoring (including, for example, impact upon the professionalization of coaching — see Figure 2); graduate labour force/employability; general skills development (e.g. creativity, innovation, time management); and trade union learning. Career development provided the focus in two case studies and there was one on maximizing human resources. This range indicates a wide sweep of topics for HRD and so broad potential for future impact case studies. It also suggests many areas where research can and does connect with practice.

How Entrepreneurship Research At MMU Supports SMEs And Social Enterprises To Succeed

Research into entrepreneurship and business start-up at Manchester Metropolitan University has created know-how to support new entrepreneurs and to guide established businesses through renewal and change. With an emphasis on “knowledge in action”, MMU’s entrepreneurship research has provided a cornerstone for start-up, growth and leadership programmes offered by the university’s Centre for Enterprise (CfE), and seen by owner-managers themselves as positively impacting directly on their businesses. Utilising research-based knowledge, CfE has worked with 150 start-ups and 1,500 small firms and social enterprises in the North West of England, fostering job creation, access to funding, and business growth.

Setting new standards of professional management coaching

Impact stems from Surrey’s research in the field of coaching which has shaped a professional code of conduct, increased the professionalization of coaching and, through an application of this, enabled redundant managers to create new businesses and improve skills.

Outcomes are reflected in the international new Code of Conduct, having an indirect impact on a sector with 25,000 members in 100 countries worth over US \$25bn, by professionalizing standards. The Silver Academy, an EU-funded People Project, delivered direct impact by applying action-research to coaching techniques and creating new opportunities for redundant managers, creating 20 new businesses and improving re-employment.

Source: Ref 2014, Impact Case Studies; <http://impact.ref.ac.uk/CaseStudies/Search1.aspx>

Figure 2: HRD related Impact Case Studies

Conclusions

There are three main conclusions to be drawn from the above discussion. First, REF 2014 has demonstrated clear impact of academic research (King's College London and Digital Science, 2015) and so has shown there can be and are connections between theory and practice. Second, that HRD research has been part of this and so there are clear examples of HRD theory connecting with practice (Sambrook and Stewart, 2015). Third and finally, HRD has much wider contribution to connecting theory and practice than that achieved through its own direct research. Most, perhaps all, disciplines will in many of their research projects require a HRD intervention to enable effective implementation and delivery of their findings. This suggests a role for HRD as a conduit between academic research and impact. This role offers potential for both HRD academics and for HRD professional practitioners. We gave a medicine example earlier but the same will be true of many other disciplines and related professions. We have, of course, only examined the role for HRD in the context of the UK REF but suggest that HRD can be a conduit between academic research and impact on a global scale.

We make two final observations. The first is that, as suggested earlier, arriving at an acceptable and workable method for assessing impact was a long and laborious process. Subsequent reflections and research on the process as designed and applied suggest that the method is not perfect and is still capable of improvement (see King's College London and Digital Science, 2015 and its bibliography). So, there remain questions about the validity of claimed impact. However, the bulk of the evidence supports an assertion that academic research in the UK is achieving beneficial impact (Ibid). Given that, the final observation may be of value. It is simply that HEFCE has produced a searchable database of all submitted impact case studies which provides a sizable resource of examples, across all disciplines, of how theory can and does connect with practice. The database is available at <http://impact.ref.ac.uk/CaseStudies/search1.aspx>

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The Authors

Jim Stewart is Professor of Human Resource Development at Liverpool John Moores University and is currently Acting Chair of the University Forum for HRD.

Sally Sambrook is Professor of Human Resource Development, Bangor University and Visiting Professor, Toulouse Business School, France.

HRD Forum: Book Review

Reframing the Inclusivity Debate: Towards Integrated Talent Management

**Steve Spencer, *Editorial Advisory Board and former HR Director,
GKN Land Systems***

Inclusive Talent Management: How Business can Thrive in an Age of Diversity

Stephen Frost and Danny Kalman

Kogan Page, 2016, £29.99, ISBN: 9780749475871

It was way back in 1997 that Steven Hankin of McKinsey & Company first wrote of “The War for Talent” outlining key demographic trends that are now in full swing. In *Inclusive Talent Management: How Business can Thrive in an Age of Diversity*, Frost and Kalman argue that in today’s increasingly diverse society the traditional distinction between policies on diversity and inclusion and talent management are over. They develop a model they call Integrated Talent Management where they are intrinsically entwined. There is a wealth of passion and experience they bring to hand. They conclude that those leaders able to manage in such an integrated environment can have thriving organizations, handling today’s urgent demands for the right talent.

The first half of the book looks at the reasons for the current predicament and the second outlines some practical measures to be taken. The authors outline three levels of past diversity approaches: Diversity 101 which was the introductory level programme and essentially compliance based; Diversity 2.0 which was still a mandatory based approach looking for training to overcome cultural problems and often working with the dangers of quotas; and finally Diversity 3.0 subtracting diversity barriers and integrating existing considerations into existing infrastructures and power structures. Their commentary is at times crushingly critical and which if you have experienced the programmes they describe may make you wince with its sharpness, yet it is nonetheless authentic, credible and above all accurate.

Having looked at how the conscious and more significantly the sub-conscious bias has driven systems and ideas, they conclude that people prefer sameness but usually understand the need for difference. Getting a hold on a personal basis of this cognitive dissonance will allow organizations to break into inclusive talent management: in other words, it is down to leadership. Homogeneous teams can be successful, but diverse teams both reflect the modern world and are on balance more successful as a result especially in the mid- to long-term.

The second half of the book constructs a thorough list of actions that leaders can employ to deliver inclusive talent management. There is much here that we have heard before, but the weight of

ideas, each with an example from business, shows how many opportunities there are for those organisations currently failing to address the challenge. There are chapters on recruitment, on promotions/development and on retention all with good ideas. The inclusive talent management model they draw makes good management sense.

The book concludes with comments on leadership. Setting an ideal where Inclusive Talent Management develops through a “hierarchy of competence” (Burch, 1970) to become an “unconscious competence”, they hang a model around Aristotle’s themes of leadership: logos (understanding), pathos (leading) and ethos (delivery). There is much here that can be found in other writings on leadership but its base lies in ensuring individuals understand themselves. By understanding oneself, the core that no amount of training will touch, one can grow as an inclusive leader with authenticity. The focus on the individual, surprisingly perhaps, is also recognised in how inclusive leaders manage their teams. The authors argue it is ok to focus on making individuals accountable within teams as this recognises their skills, perhaps unique to that person in a diverse group.

Overall, the book is well researched and peppered with relevant examples from a wide range of organisations. It avoids being preachy but shines with earnest purpose to reframe the inclusion debate in terms of ‘why’ and then offers practical advice on ‘how’. It is grounded in practicality and at all times the argument is based on what makes good business sense. Its ringing conclusion is that Integrated Talent Management is an absolute requirement for organisations successfully tackling the challenge of talent enhancement and therefore sustaining their very existence.

HRD Forum: Book Review

Keeping Sight of the ‘Ship’? Recent Publications Addressing Leadership and Leadership Development

Rick Holden, *Liverpool John Moores University, UK*

Leadership-As-Practice: Theory and Application

Joseph Raelin (Ed)

Routledge, 2016, ISBN 9781138924864

Transpersonal Leadership Series; White Papers One, Two and Three

Routledge in partnership with Leadership Global, 2016

Last year I taught a Master’s programme on Leadership and Change Management in both Malawi and Swaziland. I was struck by how difficult it was to get the students to think about and embrace ideas about leadership that did not sit firmly within a view that leadership is about ‘great men’ (and sometimes women!), ‘heroes’ and the ‘traits’ of particular individuals — usually in very senior organisational positions. This book goes some way to helping me make sense of this difficulty. It introduces the “leadership-as-practice” (L-A-P) movement which Raelin claims will “shake the foundations of the very meaning of leadership” in the worlds of theory and practice. A bold claim but as you begin to wrestle with the idea you can begin to see why. Its essence is its conception of leadership as occurring as a practice rather than residing in the traits or behaviours of particular individuals. Leadership-as-practice is less about what one person thinks or does and more about what people may accomplish together. It is thus concerned with how leadership emerges and unfolds through day-to-day experience. I recall my students being particularly engaged with a case study focusing on Michael O’Leary as CEO of the Irish based budget airline RyanAir. But, if leadership is understood as residing in individuals, with a bundle of ‘superior’ competencies and if these assumptions are deeply rooted, then no wonder this alternative way of thinking about leadership is challenging. And despite well-meaning textbooks which include sections on topics such as shared leadership, distributed and relational leadership, it is the Michael O’Leary’s of this world that steal the show. Herein lies the problem — at least for those of us in the HRD community engaged at the ‘sharp end’ of leadership development in practice, often constrained by the explicit demands of the curriculum or the expressed wishes of an organisational client.

The book is a collection of papers with Joe Raelin providing an excellent editorial ‘scene setting’. It is not an easy read. I shudder to think what my African students would have made of it. This said, perseverance pays dividends. Over and above the attention to the background of L-A-P, which provides the basis for the necessary re-orientation, the contributors to this book deal with the relationships and implications in areas such as the politics of leadership, identity and the critically important ‘pandora’s box’ of social interactions. One section focuses specifically on

leadership-as-practice development (LaPD) and it is on this section that I devoted particular attention. Denyer and James are critical of traditional leader development and present the thinking that underpins an alternative where leadership is “co-constructed through acts, activities and interactions within the situation in which it takes place”. I liked their notion of ‘collaborative leadership learning groups’ (GCLGs). “Whereas action learning groups tend to focus primarily on the organizational challenge, in GCLGs the focus is on learning about collaboration and shared leadership practices”. Importantly, the authors provide interesting examples. Furthermore, they warn of traps that can befall development initiatives which claims to address LaPD. It is not a question, they argue, of deliberately adopting a particular leader style. Indeed, LaPD may well necessitate addressing tensions between expectations held by clients and learner about desirable traits, style and competencies; the very tensions I encountered with students in Southern Africa. Befitting the overall approach attention in leadership development needs to be given to the day-to-day practice of leadership and where much activity may be unspoken or unconscious. There is also a need to study instances of failure, dissonance, crisis, obstruction and even surprise that spur leadership practice interventions.

Overall, the book provides a rich alternative to traditional views on leadership and leadership development.

Developing Ethical Leaders by John Knights is the first of a series of White Papers launched by Routledge in association with Leadership Global¹ around the subject of transpersonal leadership. It appears, at first blush, to share some similar ground to Raelin’s book on Leadership-as-Practice. Knights argues: “Leadership is becoming more distributed, more informal, more shared”. In this context, on the one hand the role of senior ethical leaders is pivotal and on the other, every single employee should be thinking of themselves as an ethical leader. This can only be achieved, Knights concludes, by creating an ethical culture. A key implication for Knights is that anyone can and should look to be a leader wherever they are in an organisation.

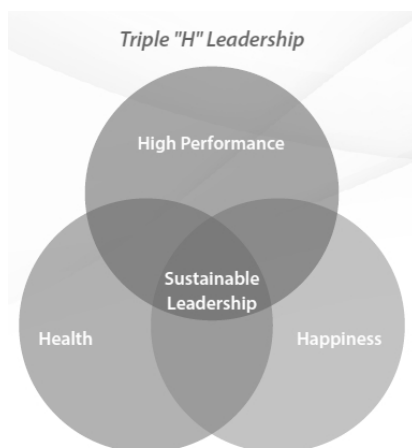
However, as Knights moves to address application and practice an uneasy tension re-appears vis more traditional perspectives on leader development. The paper seems to get bogged down with what a ‘transpersonal leader’ looks like — albeit with the twist of what competencies ethical leaders need. Even the name — ‘transpersonal’ leader — strikes me as mildly disconcerting. Who in their right mind would ever claim to being a transpersonal leader? It almost seems more appropriate for a superior AI inspired robot.

Importantly, for any claim that this White Paper is occupying similar ground to that of L-A-P, we need to see accounts of practice; everyday stories of leadership-as-practice. Stories and accounts which can then be used to illustrate how the ‘ship’ in leadership can be kept sight of and indeed hauled back into leadership development ... and with appropriate attention paid to the aspects of gender and ethics and democratisation of the workplace etc, etc. Their absence in this White Paper, and indeed more generally, acts as a constraint on the L-A-P ‘movement’ (Raelin). Such accounts are essential and indeed I could have benefitted with just one or two to support my teaching in Africa.

The second and third in the Routledge series are also now available to download. The second, **Women, Naturally Better Leaders for the 21st Century**, authored by Greg Young, takes a look at the reasons why we have a confluence of women playing a greater role on the world stage in the workplace and the reasons behind some of the cultural barriers that hitherto have kept them from achieving parity at the most senior levels. The paper argues that the areas where women emerge as stronger, e.g. developing others, are those required by leaders of organisations to be

most successful in the 21st century. A challenge remains, however, which is how best to get more women into leadership positions where they can deliver maximum advantage.

The third, **Sustainable Leadership: Re-wire Your Brain for Sustainable Success** (Sue Coyne), is described by Routledge's publicity as 'edgy' and 'at times uncomfortable'. I presume this to mean the arguments developed by Coyne that too many organisations are stuck with old and traditional mind-sets regarding leadership. Well, 'edgy' and 'uncomfortable' are not the words I would use but the legitimacy of Coyne's basic argument is sound and indeed resonates well with how I began this review. She advocates a shift to sustainable leadership and surprise surprise we end up with a neat model of what it looks like to be a 'high performing leader' in this context. This is captured in the author's conceptualisation of 'Triple H Leadership' (see Figure). Intrigued by being a 'happy leader'? then take a look at this White Paper for more details. Interestingly, Coyne asks 'is happiness something that is innate?'. Perhaps it is just me but doesn't this sound awfully familiar?



It seems then that by and large, in all three of these papers, we are drawn back to well-trodden territory. Interest in leadership-as- practice seems to get left far behind. Still, they are worth a look not least because for the time being they remain free to download at https://www.routledge.com/posts/9952?utm_source=Routledge&utm_medium=cms&utm_campaign=160801457

I suspect the book **Becoming a Transpersonal Leader**, when it is published in 2018, will carry a hefty price tag — so get them now for nothing while you can!

Note

1. Leadership Global offer consultancy and development services to organisations worldwide. They are made up of experienced former CEOs and Business Leaders and purport to show excellent understanding of the key issues faced at the most senior management and Board levels. They focus firmly on the practical “how to” of business leadership development and develop capability through coaching, mentoring and facilitation of individuals, groups and teams.

New HRD ‘Scholar-Practitioner’ Writing Award

This award seeks to encourage those who have recently completed or are nearing completion, an HRD research project, linked to a postgraduate or professional programme (e.g. DBA, DEd, Masters/Diploma in HR/HRD) to write for publication. The award is offered by the International Journal of HRD Practice, Policy & Research. The Journal is an international peer reviewed journal. It aims to publish articles which make an original contribution to Human Resource Development, providing insight, ideas and understanding on the contemporary issues and challenges facing HRD. It is a practice oriented journal but one which seeks reflective consideration of HRD practice and appropriate ‘translation’ of research into practice of interest to a wide range of HRD professionals.

The Editorial Board of the Journal in launching this Award, regard the work undertaken in completing a DBA, a Masters dissertation or a CIPD ‘Investigating a Business Issue’ project as “scholarly practice” and thus potentially highly pertinent to the aims and objectives of the Journal. The award seeks to encourage anyone whose topic of research is within the field of HRD to consider a wider audience for their work through writing for publication in a journal.

Jointly authored submissions (i.e. where the proposed article is jointly authored with a supervisor) may be a particularly attractive and accessible way to proceed.

Two awards will be offered; each will include the following:

- £250 (per author team).
- A complimentary place (for the lead — non-supervisor — author) at one of the following conferences:
 - The 47th International Federation of Training & Development Organisations World Conference.
 - The 19th International Conference on HRD Research and Practice Across Europe (UFHRD/AHRD).
- Fast track publication within the International Journal of HRD Practice, Policy & Research.

Interested applicants are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the aims and aspirations of the Journal — available in detail at www.ijhrdppr.com. Submissions for this Award should reflect a scholar-practitioner or practitioner-scholar perspective and speak to an international readership. Accounts of HRD practice/policy should be so constructed as to move beyond description and be appropriately informed by research and critical questions/reflection. Submissions should follow the normal ‘Guidelines for Contributors’ which are available on the Journal’s web site at www.ijhrdppr.com

The deadline for submissions is 31 December, 2017

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