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Editorial

Allow me to use the first part of this editorial to highlight the ups and downs of life as Editor of this Journal. I recently attended an HRD conference in Ahmedebad, India hosted by the Indian Institute of Management in partnership with the Academy of HRD. I had been invited by Dr Rajeshwari Narendran (ML Sukhadia University, Udaipur and Editorial Advisory Board Member) to speak on a panel addressing the industry-academe interface — "bridging the gap between HRD theory, research and practice" and I was pleased to accept. It seemed a great opportunity to speak about the *Journal* and its aspirations in relation to this very topic. The Panel Discussion generated much interest and enthusiastic comment, and a clear sense that in the idea of an HRD scholarly practitioner there was a platform for solid progress in the building of the bridge. I felt it was necessary, though, in my formal input to the Panel, to introduce a salutary note. Shortly before boarding my flight in Heathrow I had received a communication that a joint enterprise between industry and academia to write a change management account of practice for *IJHRDPP&R*, based within an international company of some renown, had not been approved by its head office. I stress that this had been a collaborative effort; much of the content being generated by senior figures within the company directly involved with the change programme. They were happy with the finished article; one which provided a considered and reflective account of practice and which gave testimony to the emergence of a more collaborative approach to the management of the change process. There was agreement that this made a useful empirical contribution to our understanding of the leadership and management of change.

The tone of the article and certain company sensitivities were cited as reasons for declining approval. I remain puzzled and perplexed and above all disappointed. Cynics might suggest that some in top management are embarrassed by any accounts of practice demonstrating the power and potential of shared leadership in respect of organization development. How can they justify the size of their salaries if they are seen to be associated with, however indirectly, advocacy of listening to the employee voice? Nonetheless, whilst certainly a low point in my role as Editor of this *Journal*, it perhaps serves as a stark reminder that the gap between academe and practice is a tough one to overcome. Rhetoric needs translating into reality and there remains the need for the *Journal* and its champions to work to convince the sceptics and the risk averse to avoid hiding behind "corporate sensitivities" if the broader interests of generating practice oriented wisdom and insights of real value to a wide HRD community are to be realized. The story ends, though, on a positive note. Judging by the more informal discussion — post Panel — and the commitments from a range of professionals working in India and Asia more widely, to contribute material of interest in the not too distant future, a community of interest has been stimulated and set in motion.

This issue completes the volume for 2017. Despite the setback noted above, progress continues to be made. Feedback is positive, the readership is broadening and contributions are no longer the preserve of HRD academe. For this issue I highlight firstly an account of HRD impact within a large manufacturer (Deepak Ltd); a detailed and thoughtful development and extension of this Indian company's winning submission to IFTDO's Best HRD Practice Awards. Alongside this account of practice, we have a valuable research based reflection on professional learning

from Margaret McCarthy (Portsmouth Business School), whilst Paul Greenan and colleagues (Leeds Business School) re-visit the thorny issue of transfer in training and generate new insights for practice. From a HRD policy perspective we have a timely and pertinent examination of a national training programme in the context of one of the Gulf countries' efforts to develop the knowledge and skills of the indigenous population and reduce the dependency upon expatriate labour. It is co-authored by a successful doctoral student and his two supervisors — a true scholarly-practitioner endeavour. I hope this is the first of many future reviews of national HRD policy and practice, whatever the focus and across both developed and developing countries, to feature in the *Journal*.

The somewhat unusual contribution within the HRD Forum section requires a word or two of introduction. There is no escaping the challenges facing HRD and HRD professionals. Is HRD's status increasingly that of a weakened profession? Will Artificial Intelligence confine HRD to the dustbin of history as meaningful work is limited to an ever decreasing proportion of the workforce? It is undeniable that there are tensions and dilemmas but they are laced with considerable opportunity for creative endeavour and influence. In this spirit a recent HRD Conference sought to actively consider the future of HRD and it is entirely befitting that *IJHRDPP&R* can now publish an outcome from this initiative. "The Future of HRD: Scenarios of Possibility" captures the joint work of the HRD professionals involved (both at the conference and subsequently) and it is to be hoped that its publication can help sustain this critical dialogue. It is perhaps surprising, but certainly encouraging, that the future scenarios discussed do indeed take a generally positive and optimistic view of HRD over the next 10 years. And this sort of time frame is important. Rather than debating the end of work we should be addressing the very real challenges technology is creating today and striving to ensure that the human in HRD is not sacrificed in pressures for business efficiency and technological advancement. As Jeff Gold notes in his concluding comment in the Futures article: "As facilitators of learning and generative activity HRD could create the narrative for others to follow" and here also lies a role for the *Journal* as one forum on such a journey.

Looking to the immediate future and the next volume of the *Journal* we are actively pursuing the generation of a Special Issue on HRD in Africa, arising out of the AHRD-IFTDO first conference on Human Capital Development in Africa, held at Addis Ababa University in August. A further prospective Special Issue is being discussed in relation to HRD impact. In the next UK research assessment exercise (2021) case studies that document the impact of academic research will count for 25 per cent of a university's 'score'. The *Journal* is well placed over the next two or three years to reflect this changing emphasis, offering the opportunity for publication of articles which address research into the impact of HRD practice, in preparation for the REF assessment. And, of course, the issue of HRD impact attracts interest internationally. The door is open here and contributions are very welcome; inside or outside of any Special Issue that might be forthcoming.

Finally, I note the Writing Awards detailed on page 71; an initiative 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 exemplar collaboration evident in this issue, and noted above, would seem a most apposite way to harness the interests of new writers with the *Journal*'s scholarly-practice focus.

Dr Rick Holden, Editor in Chief

Evidence of Professional Learning: a Closer Look at Development in Practice

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This article considers the impact of an evidence-based approach to professional development. For the human resource field, an international trend for evidence can reinforce credibility and better professional recognition. The research focused on practitioner experiences of what counts as acceptable evidence of learning. Findings suggest that most practitioners attempt to fit learning to organizational expectations, but a quantitative view of evidence can restrict the possibilities of autonomous professional growth. Some records capture the significance of thinking around work experiences which build professional judgement. A practice implication for educators, policy makers, and employers is to widen understandings of valid evidence of learning; to value deeper reflections on casework based in practice. This article offers an approach to meaningful evidence that guides practitioner competence in the management of unpredictable workforce issues.

Key Words: evidence, professional learning, CPD, identity, HR practice, development

Introduction

A prominent international trend across occupations is the use of records to evidence professional learning (Morrell & Learmonth, 2015; Volles, 2016). This article considers the impact of an evidence-based record on human resource (HR) practitioners' development. The challenge of talent management across multinational workforces has increased industry demands for greater professionalization of the HR field. However, the status of the HR function is often marginalized in organizational structures; an underdog position compared to more established groups, such as accountancy (Wright, 2008; Mackay, 2017b). For HR specialists, a record that demonstrates competence offers an opportunity to improve professional recognition (SHRM, 2007; XpertHR, 2016). The study examines HR practitioners' response to the demand for evidence of professional development. Findings suggest that institutional views of learning may restrict professional growth. This can undermine the potential learning value of unexpected social interactions and reflection on practice experience. This study draws attention to a prevailing industry view of evidence as quantitative, measurable outputs (CIPD, 2012). Consequently, there is a risk of learning becoming a corporate exercise, or devalued product, to satisfy narrow measures of performance (OECD, 2010). Records that candidly reflect on dynamic experience guide practitioner skill development far more than a mechanical exercise. To this end, the paper argues for an inclusive view of evidence that values the examination of practice for professional growth. The study offers three practical implications: the impact of conscious reflection, the relevance of practice insights on professional development, and the significance of an independent voice to influence individual and organizational behaviour.

A global trend in education is to measure evidence of learning; as Morrell and Learmonth (2015) remark: "governments and research funding agencies across the globe are more and more mandating evidence-based knowledge" (p. 521). The professional associations have followed this

trend by standardizing templates to record evidence of continuing competence. Learning records attest to practice standards of integrity and professional behaviour. To investigate practitioner experiences of documenting evidence, the research is structured around two questions: What is the value of a record of professional development? What counts as evidence of learning activity?

The literature reveals a focus on the activity of continuous professional development (CPD) but scant attention to theory (Kennedy, 2014). McCormick (2010, p. 407) asserts: "CPD needs to be theorized more ... and a range of perhaps competing theories would make for a healthier field". In response to these calls, this study examined how an evidence-based framework influences understandings, or conceptual views, of CPD. To begin the demand for evidence of learning is reviewed together with the reason HR practitioners specifically want to prove their competence. Then the complex nature of people management expertise is considered, the tensions of practice and the learning opportunities shaped by power relations at work. Finally, the implications for practice are discussed as to what represents evidence of professional learning; development as a quantifiable output or development as a process of evolving skills.

Evidence of professional development

Professional development is seen as a quality assurance measure that regulates competence to practice (Boud & Hager, 2012). Taylor (2009) argues that knowledge development and continuous innovation increase the economic value of human capital. Organizations therefore have an economic interest in frameworks that audit professional learning. Research by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI, 2015, p. 11) shows managers expect their employees to be engaged in: "a continuous lifelong process through which skills are regularly upgraded to adapt to fast-changing environments". The evidence of competence improvement can be pictured as a measurement bar which is: "constantly being raised by international competition, technical change and customer demand" (CBI, 2015, p. 24). Gao and Riley (2010, p. 318) claim this need for evidence applies to multiple professions:

> the personal need of the professional for integration in the workplace creates a situation whereby the expert needs to demonstrate professional competence to fulfil the expectations of their colleagues and of the image of the professional body.

An evidence framework of continuing competence also satisfies stakeholders of professional transparency and accountability.

In the case of the HR function evidence is increasingly linked to a claim to advance professional recognition. Wright (2008, p. 1066) asserts: "to gain legitimacy as experts [HR] they must demonstrate to senior managers how their expertise contributes to organizational goals". Situational knowledge is central to professional expertise. As Gao and Riley (2010, p. 328) point out: "the individual needs to feel a sense of security in the rightness of judgement". This professional judgement is the ability to apply theoretical knowledge to active practice; to transfer knowing into doing. For HR practitioners documenting evidence of a professional self resonates with the literature on work identity. Brown (2014, p. 29) asserts a globalized labour market increases the pressure to demonstrate a professional image:

> For professionals caught in ever more intense competitive work situations ... insecurities about the self are an omnipresent and sometimes all-consuming aspect of their identity work.

Such insecurities about a professional identity increase for HR specialists when regarded as an organizational underdog (Wright, 2008). So, an evidence-base of competence provides an anchor to assert professional identity in context (Mackay, 2017a; Brown, 2014). The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development's Code of Professional Conduct (1 July 2012) sets out the obligations of professional standards to uphold the reputation of the HR profession. An XpertHR (2016) cross-sector survey of HR roles and responsibilities, with 535 respondents, explains how an international trend to gather evidence can support better professional recognition:

> there is a move to gather, measure and analyse data in order to improve overall performance of both HR and the organization, but also to demonstrate the value of the HR function.

This survey shows that evidence matters to the credibility of the HR field and reinforces a professional identity. Guidance on CPD activity emphasizes the value of continuous learning to job security, employment prospects and professional respect. The professional bodies urge practitioners to emphasize the visible results of CPD achievements to polish their credentials (CIPD, 2012; SHRM, 2007). But a view of learning as tangible outputs can reduce professional development to the counting of workshop attendance hours or online tasks completed. Thomson (2001, p. 249) argues such thinking "quantifies all qualitative relations". In short, it frames learning as what can be measured. This creates a tension in evidence of learning as improvements in soft skills and professional judgement are not easy to quantify. Yet HR requires adaptive, social and relational skills to manage changing situations.

People management expertise

HR specialists need professional competence to be able to influence line managers, facilitate staff productivity and steer organizational practice in line with ethical values. Situations of staff recruitment, retention and performance management often involve tough decisions to secure trust and respect across the workforce. Table 1 illustrates the challenges of HR operating practice set next to the standards of professional behaviour.

Practice *HR specialists' concerns*	Practice *Employees' concerns*	Policy *Code of Professional Conduct*
Favouritism in hiring, training, and promotion decisions	Low trust in senior managers	Promote equality of opportunity
Inconsistency in disciplinary measures	Lying to employees	Demonstrate and promote fair and reasonable standards in treatment of people
Failure to maintain confidentiality of customers or employees	Pressure to compromise standards	Safeguard all confidential, commercially-sensitive, and personal data
Potential discrimination in appraisals and in allocating pay/non-pay reward	Failure to discipline or punish bad or abusive behaviour	Challenge others if they suspect unlawful or unethical conduct or behaviour

Table I: Adapted from IES 2015 Ethical dilemmas in HR practice & CIPD Code of Professional Conduct 2012

These challenges make clear that HR expertise evolves through situational knowledge and people management experience. Expertise is based on the application of independent judgement and impartial professional advice. For example, practitioners require nuanced skills and up-to-date understandings of employment law to ensure due process: "a dismissal will be unfair if the decision to dismiss an employee is improperly influenced by the HR department" (www.xperthr.co.uk). This highlights the need for fine-tuned development of skills which Hart and Montague (2015, p. 46) describe as: "an evolution of complexity, something that develops incrementally".

Learning shaped by power relations

Individual development and organizational agendas for learning appear to be of mutual benefit; employers need knowledge currency for human capital advantage and individuals can improve their career prospects through learning (Garofano & Salas, 2005). However, Contu and Willmott (2003, p. 284) contradict this outlook saying: "learning practices are shaped, enabled, and constrained within relations of power". This means managerial favouritism through powerful players can fast-track or restrict access to learning opportunities. Coles (2002, p. 8) reasons that ongoing learning needs support and structure but: "as little direction as possible" to develop professional judgement. Fixed organizational targets may inhibit wider, informal or spontaneous development. In higher education, Clegg (2003, p. 48) observes that for professional development "the balance has shifted decisively to institutional agendas". Similarly, McWilliam (2002, p. 290) notes: "In universities, professional development activities provide scripts for turning ourselves into better (more professional) academics". An organizational insistence on employee ownership of development overlooks the dimensions of power relations. Coffield (1999) declares the emphasis on personal responsibility, or "self-regulation" in a labour market, places the burden for development on individual practitioners. This self-directed approach can absolve employers from any responsibility for strategic investment in workforce development. It can also favour a managerial view of learning as predictable target outcomes. An HR specialist may feel obliged to follow an organizational script that aligns with business priorities. The problem is that in conforming to organizational norms, the number of training courses logged may become a substitute for meaningful competence improvement. As McWilliam (2002) declares:

> evidence of diligent attendance and participation is now available to be read as a key indicator of "quality" academic performance (p. 296).

This means that practitioner efforts to advance their learning may be confined by organizational power relations.

Incremental learning as professional growth

Professional formation is a complex process of incremental learning to adapt to specific cultures and practice situations. Eraut (2004) declares profound learning development often stems from reflection on failures, or unexpected challenges. In this study, HR specialists faced unexpected demands flowing from the UK's vote to leave the European Union (known as Brexit); workforce concerns have spiralled over job insecurity and ambiguous fears of xenophobia (IES, 2016). HR specialists often make use of professional community networks: "as a form of 'emotional support' and [to] discuss new techniques and research" (Wright, 2008, p. 1080). This type of social learning across the broader HR community is unlikely to feature in organizational targets. Still, research demonstrates that informal social learning is often more significant for professional

growth than the acquisition of formal training credits (Boud & Hager, 2012). As an example, Wright's (2008) research with 33 HR managers in Australia reveals the use of influencing skills to develop more credibility in the organization. One respondent:

> emphasized how her learning and development group were now positioning themselves as "a trusted adviser versus just being their HR person" (p. 1073).

A development record thus encourages a retrospective view of HR work as a long-term strategic craft of nurturing organizational relationships. Continuous improvement assumes a capacity for learning as a reflective practitioner (Hart & Montague, 2015). Morrell and Learmonth (2015, p. 530) insist that fundamental to management learning are: "pluralism, critical reflexivity, questioning of basic assumptions, intellectual flexibility". In other words, learning is wide in scope with multiple dimensions that make use of reflection on experience to notice new understandings and scrutinize formulaic responses to discover a better course of action (Mackay & Tymon, 2016).

To summarize, people management expertise requires flexible, adaptive development to master complex professional skills. Evidence of continuing competence can demonstrate the value of the HR function and validate aspirations for better professional recognition. Yet a view of evidence as tangible outputs creates a tension in attempting to quantify small steps in skills development. Business leaders regard learning development as an individual responsibility to improve human capital for competitive environments. But existing power dynamics can affect individual access to learning opportunities within a hierarchical structure. What follows is an explanation of the research design and data collection to explore these issues in HR practice situations.

The Research Study

There is growing interest in evidence-based practice across diverse professions including education and human resource management (Volles, 2016). Researchers, therefore, have a responsibility to examine policy frameworks to better understand the impact on individual behaviour in practice. The work of HR affects staff morale, motivation, and organizational effectiveness; what happens in practice carries more weight in an organizational context than policy guidance from professional associations.

A research approach to examine the dynamic of practice, termed a phenomenological method, puts practitioner experience in the spotlight. The practice of HR is based on competence and effective work relations formed through social interactions (Wright, 2008). By focusing on the process of social construction in practice the study considered a dominant view of evidence as tangible outputs (Thomson, 2001). This is not to say that an evidence-based policy works against learning in practice but rather to explore practitioner understandings of acceptable learning. Theory needs to impact on policy and practice to gain a better understanding of the realities of professional development (Kennedy, 2014). In short, what counts as evidence of professional development? The research aim to gather practitioner views used focus group discussions and purposively selected learning records. Focus groups were deliberately chosen to replicate practitioners' informal development and social learning from community networks. Qualitative data offer rich accounts of lived practice experiences in organizational life (Cunliffe, 2010) and facilitate conceptual views of professional development.

Method Section

First, a close reading of professional associations' policy codes analysed frameworks of development (e.g., CIPD, 2012; SHRM, 2007). The secondary data set out three core principles: continuing competence, improvements in HR practice, and commitment to advance the field of human resources. This confirms a policy stance of learning as currency: individual improvement, workforce development, and gain for the HR professional community. Second, research participants were invited from three separate cohorts across two collaborative UK university campuses. The sample included 45 practitioners and managers enrolled on a postgraduate study in human resource development. Participant data was collected in two complementary strands: peer group discussions and a sample of documented self-choice records from 32 volunteer participants. Focus group clusters of 4-6 participants discussed three topics guided by the research questions: the role of an evidence record; perceptions of relevant learning; and the link to professional competence development. The focus groups were held on three separate days and a note-taker captured discussions that spanned 25 to 40 minutes. Self-choice records are one element of a learning portfolio and practitioners write about any aspect of development in professional learning, hence the justification for the analysis of these records.

The coding followed a systematic process of reading and re-reading the collected data, identifying descriptive codes, and then recognizing pattern associations to categorize responses. The analysis compared the small detail of applied practice with an overview, more holistic conception of professional learning. The researcher identified five principal categories: use value of evidence record; selection of learning; fit for institution; work of HR specialist; identity challenge. This small-scale study has several limitations: practitioner accounts are self-reports and therefore subjective in selecting relevant experiences. How we interpret an experience depends on a unique viewpoint. We may assume that good practice in the HR field is to document meetings and notes but organizational demands for action may crowd out this effort. A record of evidence thus places more value on the continuous process of learning and professional development. In addition, individual work contexts vary and this may affect whether a record attempts to emphasize personal accomplishments or conceal flaws. However, the study can enhance our understanding of an evidence-based approach to learning and challenge a dominant view of quantitative evidence. Also, accounts of organizational experiences highlight the benefits and constraints of evidence on professional growth. The participants were mature HR practitioners, working towards advanced qualification, and as such represented a range of public and private sector organizational contexts. Accordingly, this qualitative study offers fresh insights into operating practice that guides HR practitioners' professional growth. A future avenue for research is to investigate industry perceptions of the HR function's advance in professional status.

Data Presentation and Findings

First, data from the focus group discussions are presented on participants' attitudes to the value of an evidence record. Then three key themes from the learning records are presented: the need for organizational fit, an image of competence, and reflections on HR practice.

Does a record matter?

Most participants explained how a written record of CPD activity kept them focused on career development and strengthened their confidence in professional capabilities. More than a third saw the record of evidence as a way to ground professional identity:

> I like to draw on and take comfort from my years of work experience to draw parallels with what I am learning to practical application in the workplace. Continuing my personal development helps me put aside thoughts of others' opinions and focus on the job I am doing.

The comment 'others' opinions' alludes to difficult cases of HR practice that test professional competence. It also confirms the need to develop professional judgement that is respected, rather than popular, in a workplace context (Gao & Riley, 2010). Writing a record gives retrospective clarity on the learning potential of everyday practice:

> Through my professional development record, I have become more aware of the difference I can make to my workplace and the opportunities available for me to get involved. As an HR Assistant in a busy outsourcing environment it is easy to forget the amount of exposure to employment relations situations I have every day.

Gaining credibility by demonstrating HR competence in practice was a recurring point in discussions. At least one quarter were concerned that workload and time pressures hampered the regular recording of learning. One practitioner contrasted the policy guidelines of record keeping with the actual practice of spontaneous conversations:

> I do believe in the benefits of this exercise, without it, it can be difficult to develop. However, when exhaustion levels are high and time is short, it is better to talk with someone briefly or just go over it internally.

Some participants perceived a disparity between formal system requirements for records and actual implementation in context:

> CPD is the behaviour, application, and confidence to test skills, the resilience to accept when a situation goes wrong and the risk taking required to alter your approach … it's that process of how do you do it, **not** how do you record it.

More than half of the group discussions remarked on work learning as frequently haphazard but evidence records assume a chronological narrative: "CPD is often perceived as 'paid' training and in-house opportunities are overlooked". This echoes McWilliam's (2002) view that scheduled training events are convenient to recall as trackable results. The discussions were wide-ranging but given the study's focus, three prominent themes from the learning records are presented next.

CPD to fit institution

The records revealed that two-thirds of HR practitioners perceived professional learning as shaping oneself to the organization:

> By developing my skills and knowledge, with the aim of tailoring myself to different aspects of the business, this increases the value I can offer to the company and enhances my professional development.

This indicates the emphasis on human capital in adapting to business priorities. Some voiced concern about HR's visible impact:

> I am unsure of the HR department's strategy — I cannot see how it fits within the wider organization as a value adding tool. If I am unable to understand the requirements of the organization and link to areas of personal development, I may not pursue the appropriate avenues of CPD.

This underlying concern increased practitioner attempts to align learning to the business. Practitioners voiced the dominant industry and managerial view that employees are responsible for their own development. Another interpretation is that concerns over job security increase a mapping to business goals (Garofano & Salas, 2005). However, several practitioners pointed to the risk of managerial disinterest in development:

> Not only has the employee got to be committed to CPD, management need to support it. At my workplace we are expected to continually develop within our role. If the employee isn't proactive, managers don't tend to encourage development.

This adds to Contu and Willmott's (2003) view that inherent power relations affect development opportunities. Diverse organizational cultures and line managers will vary in their explicit support for individual development.

An image of competence

Strikingly, most learning records claimed progress results:

> Due to my growth in confidence and understanding as an HR practitioner, I am able to justify my proposals and gain credibility from stakeholders.

This contrasted with the group discussions where peers expressed doubts about noticeable learning outputs. HR specialists, as discussed above, are keen to position themselves as credible business partners (Mackay, 2017b). Accordingly, individual memory can construct a coherent image of growth:

> As I am early on in my HR career, I also wanted to use the course to instil in me a mind-set of creativity and development that I can use as a foundation for personal development.

The record enables practitioners to see themselves as professional experts through a social construction of identity. By contrast, only one fifth of records mentioned developmental struggles; as if this suggested a learning failure or a character flaw. One wrote:

> I have found the reflective learning process extremely difficult, which has disappointed me personally. I thought that with my practical experience I would have little difficulty associating my learning in work. I was stuck in my ways, a product of the regimented environment I have become used to.

The effort to demonstrate acceptable evidence of tangible learning can narrow perspectives of professional development and put little value on learning in and through work.

Reflections on practice

HR specialists need soft skills to influence line managers and deal with workforce expectations of service (IES, 2015). Few records captured the gradual, incremental progress of building skills and expanding understanding. However, one fifth, noted observations on human behaviour and psychological insights which can expand professional judgement (Hart & Montague, 2015). Briefly, two examples illustrate a fine-tuning of skills, thinking over experience in qualitative reflections, that build HR expertise.

Case One: Coaching a line manager through employee dismissal

A practitioner reflected on the unpredictable behaviour of both the manager and employee:

> I was apprehensive about the employee's reaction prior to the termination of employment meeting because I was unable to predict what it would be. I challenged the manager constantly to ensure they had specific, relevant examples and offered alternative solutions to dismissal, including performance management. I had prepared a script for the manager to use as a guideline and reassured them that I would assist with the delivery, if required. This was the first time the manager had delivered this type of message and I was able to coach them through the meeting with confidence.

This conscious preparation to coach the line manager, challenge background assumptions and treat the employee fairly increased the HR practitioner's skill in a tense situation. Such professional competence encourages the trust of both the manager and the employee. The learning experience then becomes a guide for future refinement of employee relations skills. This matters to HR practice as reflection on experience teases out the significance of casework to deepen professional competence.

Case Two: HR ensuring fairness in selection process

Another participant realized the impact of unconscious bias:

> The recruitment manager had run so many assessment centres that she had got to the point where the repetition of this routine had overtaken her judgement. She was deciding to put a candidate through who had failed the compulsory numeracy test because she liked their personality.

This reflection on organizational practice steers the HR specialist to question managerial bias in the treatment of candidates. These examples illustrate a scrutiny of relevant work situations that enlighten and guide practice. Professional growth is based on these contextual realizations that build skills, judgement and expert decision-making.

Discussion

Evidence of professional learning is critical for HR practitioners in demonstrating continuing competence. This article explores the quality of evidence that supports growth in professional judgement, situational knowledge and skills. The next section summarizes the study findings and discusses the implications for practice.

Value of evidence

Findings indicate that HR practitioners appreciate the value of evidence to underline professional credibility and trust in working relations. A majority noted that evidence reassures stakeholders of adherence to professional standards. The record therefore provides a structure for professional growth; an opportunity to look back and learn from practice experiences. Much HR work depends on complex, ambiguous workforce issues that demand soft skills such as judgement and influence in practice. How can these soft skills be evidenced? Thomson (2001) argues that an emphasis on quantifying learning, what we can easily measure, detracts from the importance of professional learning. The pressure to document evidence can lead practitioners to fall back on formal training events and ignore the significance of reflection on experiences. In how we think about evidence, as a conceptual view, Morrell and Learmonth (2015, p. 529) warn:

an "evidence-based" rhetoric is inexorably tied up with a reductionist and exclusionary model of what counts as knowledge — as much in management studies as in other disciplines.

Put simply, a perception of acceptable learning as tangible can confine development to measurable activity, such as hours of workshop attendance. This view of evidence may close off unexpected interactions; the serendipitous learning in everyday practice that expands professional judgement and decision-making (Eraut, 2004). Several practitioners experienced a dissonance between a mechanical record system and the haphazard social nature of workplace learning. A dominant view of evidence is based on scientific knowledge which evaluates learning as measurable outputs, in research terms known as *positivism*. For example, the number of formal courses attended, the hours clocked in CPD, or the budget spent. Formal qualifications undoubtedly remain as key features of initial professional formation. Still, convincing evidence of learning is seen in qualitative case reviews, work group discussions and reflections that distil the meaning of practice. These cumulative learning insights are built through workplace interactions that feed longer-term understandings of social behaviour, in research terms *social constructivism*. This implies that a wider view of evidence appreciates social learning and experimentation in practice to expand situational judgement and skills.

The power relations implicit in learning records

A record of evidence is also an opportunity to demonstrate HR competence which backs recent campaigns for better professional recognition (XpertHR, 2016). The data indicate a majority of practitioners present a fully competent professional self. Paradoxically, this notion of the 'finished' professional implies a stoppage of growth or development stasis. Whereas the development of knowledge, professional judgement and practitioner wisdom is a continuing work in progress (Hart & Montague, 2015). An image of complete competence, endorsed by training programmes, suggests a need to satisfy stakeholder expectations and conceal skill gaps or learning anxieties. Consequently, most records focused on development in line with organizational priorities rather than learning from situational understanding. Few practitioners looked for managerial support in professional development despite the hierarchical power of managers in providing, or restricting, learning opportunities (Contu & Willmott, 2003). This begs a question: in sticking to an organizational development script, does a practitioner reinforce existing power relations that possibly contribute to a marginalization of the HR function? An implication is that practitioners need to consciously maintain an independent voice to challenge bias, or unfair practice, as directed by the professional standards.

An HR voice for collective progress

Business leaders say they want an HR function with an independent voice (IES, 2015); capable of strategically balancing management concerns and employee productivity. Global business pressures on managing talent have increased the demands for greater professionalization in the HR field. For instance, the UK's Brexit vote has created extreme turbulence for HR in managing workforce concerns around job security, mobility, and direction. Practitioner development is an evolving, qualitative process of interpreting social behaviour to advise and coach line managers through hiring, performance, and retention decisions. Critical reflection on experiences can cultivate adaptive skills to influence organizational practice (Mackay & Tymon, 2016). Records can capture gradual development of insights into behaviour and self-awareness. Significantly, the findings illustrate that reflections on disciplinary and recruitment cases deepen behavioural

understandings to guide effective application. The practice implication is that reflective learning can create thinking space for practitioners to manage diverse people and performance issues.

Implications for Practice

To summarize, this study offers three practice implications:

1. First, a learning record acts as a support structure to distil critical insights into experience which deepen knowledge and skills. Practitioners need to consciously develop professional independence and be mindful of institutional constraints.

2. Second, HR educators need to reframe evidence of learning as wider than tangible outputs, such as the number of training courses completed. We need to value reflections on casework as convincing, qualitative evidence of expanding professional judgement.

3. Third, learning records create thinking space for HR practitioners to hone an independent voice capable of challenging unfair treatment and promoting equality. Further professional associations, industry watchdogs and government agencies need to emphasize employer responsibilities for investment in staff development.

To conclude, this study illustrates the importance of professional learning for the shifting complexities of HR work. HR specialists deal with critical issues of talent management and they need up-to-date expertise to act in uncertain work situations. The benefit of evidence reinforces practitioner credibility and professional recognition. A practitioner record can capture insights from case notes, social interactions, and developmental thinking around actual practice. This is meaningful evidence that respects the profound learning of casework to adapt to unpredictable people issues. To be adaptive experts we need to stay open to learning; ever curious in our approach in a range of contexts. This article challenges a dominant view of evidence as quantitative outputs and adds a conceptual approach to evidence of learning that reveals the gradual process of skill growth. An inclusive view of evidence draws on critical reflections that value the qualitative learning of everyday practice. Finally, how we think of evidence affects the robust development of HR competence to influence individual and organizational behaviour.

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Developing Line Managers as People Managers: HRD Impact in DFPCL, India[1]

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Human Resource Development (HRD) within an organizational context continues to face challenges to demonstrate impact and contribution to business success. This article provides an account of HRD practice in a large Indian manufacturing company. A difficult business and industrial relations context in the early 2010s provided the stimulus for HRD to take a more strategic role within the organization. The article focuses upon HRD's initiative with the company's line managers. Fundamentally managers needed to take greater responsibility for managing their people. The approach followed and the interventions made to equip managers with a set of new capabilities are critically assessed. The initiative reflects how, appropriately positioned and supported, HRD's impact can be significant in terms of business performance.

Key Words: HRD practice, impact, line managers, development, India

Introduction

Deepak Fertilisers and Petrochemicals Corporation Ltd is a leading Indian manufacturer of Industrial Chemicals. Set up in 1979 as an ammonia manufacturer, DFPCL today is a publicly listed, multi-product Indian conglomerate with an annual turnover of over half a billion USD. It has a multi-product portfolio spanning industrial chemicals, bulk and speciality fertilisers, farming diagnostics and solutions, technical ammonium nitrate, mining services and consulting and value added real estate. The company is headquartered at Pune. It has a management workforce of a little over 1,000. Its main manufacturing site (one of three) is located at Taloja, with a unionized workforce of approximately 400.

The origins of the particular initiative discussed in this article can be traced back to the latter part of the 2000s and early 2010s, a period characterized by sub-optimal industrial relations together with emergence of restrictive IR practices. It is important to note that prior to 2014 the plant at Taloja, was receiving subsidized natural gas that provided some degree of cost advantage in a highly controlled fertilizer market in India. Over these years, several work practices and behaviours — that negatively affected manufacturing productivity and efficiency — took root within the organization. For example: overmanning; production at any cost; lack of required sense of urgency and a general indiscipline and disengagement of unionized workers towards work. Management found it difficult to take ownership and responsibility for ensuring high standards of performance, including safe working, and the equitable implementation of policies and procedures. Relations generally between managers and workers were less than harmonious.

In 2012, The Chairman and Managing Director (CMD), shortly after taking the new role, took cognizance of the situation and decided to question the organization's approach to managing people. It was against this background that the company sought a long-term settlement with the union for the period 2012 to 2016, with the major objective of rationalizing manpower and establishing a performance oriented culture at the main manufacturing unit at Taloja. The move was blocked by the union and a strike was declared in January 2013. Some workmen also resorted to misconduct and violent behaviour during the strike. Managers ran the manufacturing unit uninterruptedly during the strike and established new benchmarks for production and productivity. The union relented after five months of strike and agreed to the settlement terms and conditions — including rationalization of manpower, the introduction of a performance management system for workers, and disciplinary action against workers involved in misconduct during the strike period.

The early 2010s also saw growing disengagement among the management staff at individual contributor level in other business units. There was a general dissatisfaction with people processes and practices like performance management system, learning opportunities, career development, rewards and recognition etc. Managers mistakenly believed that responsibility of people rested with HR department. Hence, they would shy away from the responsibility of setting goals, providing regular feedback, and taking action against non-performance or indiscipline.

A New Approach

A new head of Group HR, joining the business in 2013, began work towards introducing a more progressive HR and IR strategy in the organization. He worked with his team members to develop and nurture a more collaborative way of working across the organization. To use a well-worn cliché, there was a requirement to "change the rules of the game". Such aspirations assumed considerably greater importance with the withdrawal of subsidized natural gas in 2014. A more engaged and productive workforce was no longer something 'nice to have'; it had become a business necessity.

In an effort to reach out to the workforce, including the trade union a number of initiatives were promoted. This included the introduction of a common uniform for workers and managers; a common canteen facility; common bus service for commuting between residence and manufacturing unit; communication events like Town Hall meetings attended by workers and managers together and 'family days', cultural events, sports, and other activities where blue and white collar workers were provided with a common platform for shared experiences. Workshops for trade union officials were arranged and independently led, in an effort to establish a new basis for consultation and negotiation. Outstanding grievances (for example, in relation to absence and time-keeping) were resolved and permanently removed from the agenda.

The organization introduced a performance management system (PMS) for the unionized staff — an unusual step in India. The PMS focuses not only on worker productivity but also measures their competency levels. A performance linked award recognizes and rewards high performers. The HR team conducted workshops to sensitize the workers on the importance of the PMS and to help gain their acceptance. Workers were involved as team members — along with their managers — in improvement initiatives like Total Productivity Management, continuous improvement processes, and stretch projects in the manufacturing unit. This helped in building an atmosphere where employees at all levels came together as a team to bring

continual improvements in the organization vying with each other and creating a competitive, yet constructive environment.

Specifically in relation to HRD, at the heart of our forward-looking thinking, was the line manager. We felt this role was key to a raft of changes that were necessary and which ultimately would impact in enhanced performance management and productivity improvements. Managers needed to take greater responsibility for managing their people; from recruitment through to exit. We looked closely at existing data produced by our ongoing surveys and listened carefully to the voice of both employees and managers. The workplace lacked a culture of praise and recognition for work well done. Involvement of the workforce was minimal. Little by way of ongoing on-the-job development was taking place. There was concern that appraisals were not always fair, open and honest.

For the management staff — the existing PMS was greatly improved to make it more fair, transparent, equitable, simple, and effective. A survey was conducted to understand the opinion and satisfaction of the management staff with the existing system. The outcome indicated a need to work on managers' style of providing feedback, simplifying the appraisal process, making performance ratings more equitable, and ongoing recognition of achievements of individuals and teams. The HR team organized training programmes for managers on setting goals, giving continuous feedback, and conducting appraisals. Moderation meetings, chaired by business heads and facilitated by HR business partners, were introduced in order to calibrate performance ratings — making the process fair and just. It was ensured that while rating the performance of individuals the comparison was done with the peers in the same cadre. This ensured that both high and low performance ratings were equally distributed across the hierarchy and relative ranking was adopted in the true sense.

With positive feedback emerging from the raft of initiatives noted above the basis was established for a specific HRD led initiative in respect of manager development. Much work had been done over a relatively short space of time to develop a new approach to working and managing at DFPCL. Whilst not always smooth sailing sufficient progress was made to generate an environment where the launch of a manager development programme could begin.

Manager Development

The key question we, as a small team of HRD professionals, were seeking to answer was how best to introduce and manage an initiative to develop our managers in such a way that they could, over time, take greater responsibility for the management and development of their teams. We needed:

   a) To sensitize managers to accept that this was part of their jobs as *managers* and

   b) To enable this to become part of their management practice.

We had the 'in principle' support of the CMD. We had a wealth of data from our feedback instruments and importantly we had our own sense of how things could be different. This was developed from our combined experiences which included work experience in other organizations and importantly our professional education (and its reference to the emerging evidence base as regards such HR/HRD practices elsewhere in the world). With an improving industrial relations climate, the HRD team proposed and gained approval for its manager development initiative.

A guiding framework

We took a low-key approach to begin with. Working with a pilot group of managers we ran a couple of reflective workshops. We wanted managers to take a mirror and look at themselves. Reflective exercises addressed "how were they managing?" "what was working what was not?" "what might make a difference?" We wanted to get them thinking about managing. We wanted to discuss leadership with them and what this meant to them and how different leadership styles might be considered. The positive feedback helped us formulate a set of broad 'learning' objectives which we felt were central and relevant, to a greater or lesser extent, to all our first line managers. These coalesced around management practice changes which would:

- Improve managers' commitment to take ownership of people practices and processes.
- Enhance communication between managers and employees.
- Providing more praise and recognition to employees.
- Develop coaching competencies in the managers.
- Develop managers as trainers and developers of their teams.

and which in terms of an initiative to progress was conceptualized within a framework we called *Leading Our Teams* (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Leading Our Teams Framework

A series of interventions were designed to translate this framework into practice, focusing on providing tools and techniques to managers to identify and understand the people management challenges and adopt leadership styles that would help them improve team effectiveness. Overall, the programme is a mix of classroom training, practices for enhanced communication between managers and employees, and continuous inputs to the managers for ongoing development. The key components, are as follows:

- Facilitating Change Through Positive Reinforcement — a compact and interactive classroom session that introduces the managers to specific application of the Whale Done Model (Blanchard, 2003) for bringing behavioural change in individuals using positive reinforcements.

- Flex Your Leadership Style — a video-based classroom session for introducing leaders to the concept of situational leadership and to introduce the idea of flexing their leadership style depending upon the situation and development level of their employees.

- Manager as Coach — a long-term (4 month) programme where managers are coached by an external coach to become coaches themselves. The GROW model (Whitmore, 2009; CIPD, 2012) underpins the approach adopted within this key component of the *Leading Our Teams* framework.

- Engaging your Employees — a half day interactive workshop where managers are introduced to the neuroscience based SCARF (Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness, and Fairness) model (Rock, 2008) — and which we use to help managers maximize the reward response and minimize the threat response while interacting with the employees — thereby improving employee engagement.

- Leadership Checklist — a checklist of behaviours was developed and shared with the managers to provide them with a guide to behaviours expected from them as managers. The list was developed based on the feedback received from employees.

- Coffee with Candor — an employee engagement initiative where managers practice weekly, structured, open, and dedicated interactions with their direct reports to strengthen working relationships, drive performance, and improve engagement. We developed manager toolkits and conducted workshops before the roll out of this intervention

- Weekly Leaders Feed for managers — through this initiative learning is reinforced through reworked messages like sharing articles, one point lessons, case studies, best HR practices, research findings etc. The Leaders Feeds, as infographics, runs on the display screens in common areas like canteens, waiting rooms etc.

Individual development plans

It is important to note a complementary initiative — that of the IDPs. Pushing more responsibility to employees, at all levels, to take ownership of the management of their own learning within DFPCL is another of our underpinning approaches to HRD in the business. Specifically, in relation to the manager development programme, the IDP provides a means of linking the various initiatives and drawing together the learning in relation to an individual's development. For managers, their IDP is framed against a set of leadership competencies e.g. leading self, leading others, leading business, leading change. It provides a tool to harness inputs from various sources, including 360-degree feedback and Hogan Profiling; a contemporary measure of personality in relation to job performance within specifically business and commercial environments (Hogan Assessments, Hogan Assessments; www.hoganassessments.com), thus ensuring no one source of information is given undue weight/influence.

Developing the workforce … beyond management

It is useful to think of DFPCL's manager development programme as the first phase of a more ambitious plan to develop the workforce more generally. Such aspirations sit comfortably with the company's aim, as noted above, post 2014, to develop DFPCL as a better place to work, with more harmonious and less adversarial relations at the workplace. However, it was also a response to key economic and performance drivers. Firstly, the nature of our work is changing — greater

use of complex technology etc. — with the result that jobs are changing, requiring expanded skills sets and an enhanced level of decision making in order to meet performance targets. Secondly, there is increasing need to strengthen the internal labour market within DFPCL; to develop employees to a level where they can provide a pool of new recruits to move into senior management roles. Whilst much of this first phase is now complete (although see below as regards the challenge of sustaining changed behaviours) our attention is now shifting to the goal of developing the workforce more broadly.

Our manager development programme has important elements within it which provide the basis for extending the role of managers into the trainers and developers of their teams. We have adopted the 70:20:10 model (Center for Creative Leadership, https://702010institute.com/) to help us progress this. In the model, 70 percent is experiential learning, 20% is learning from others (coaches, peers, networking, etc), and 10% is from formal means e.g. classroom, reading. We anticipate that as managers develop into coaches they will be able to provide coaching support to their team members. This support along with 10% conceptual inputs will be able to together underpin the 70% experiential learning through specific development projects and assignments.
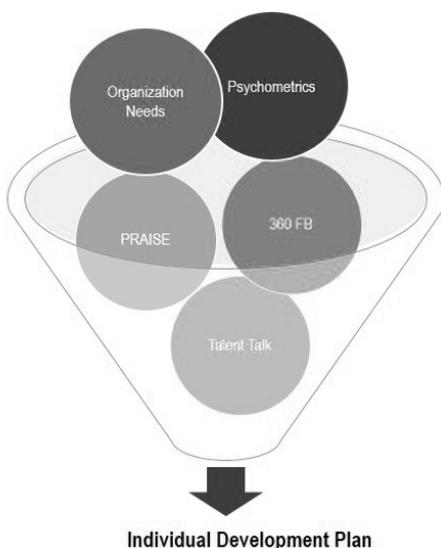
Figure 2: Inputs from Various Sources for Crafting IDP

Impact

Behavioural change is often a gradual process that takes time to fully take effect (see also our reflections on our practice below). However, we are also aware that we cannot ignore the need to assess impact both to justify the intervention and to provide ongoing feedback to enhance future interventions. Our main sources of data are qualitative feedback from participants (and their managers), survey data, focused group discussions with employees, and engagement in the IDP process. From such data, we conclude that the manager led development interventions have provided useful tools to managers for improved performance management of employees. We know from first-hand experience that managers are taking greater responsibility for people management; they are coaching their employees, they are integrally involved in talent

management through the performance management system. The framework we have provided is achieving our goal of enabling managers to take on board these responsibilities. We illustrate in Figure 3 the outcomes of a recent survey. This captures feedback from employees and gives an indication as to perceptions on issues such as communication on business issues and priorities, feedback, and development goals.

Figure 3: Employee Feedback, December 2016 (DFPCL)

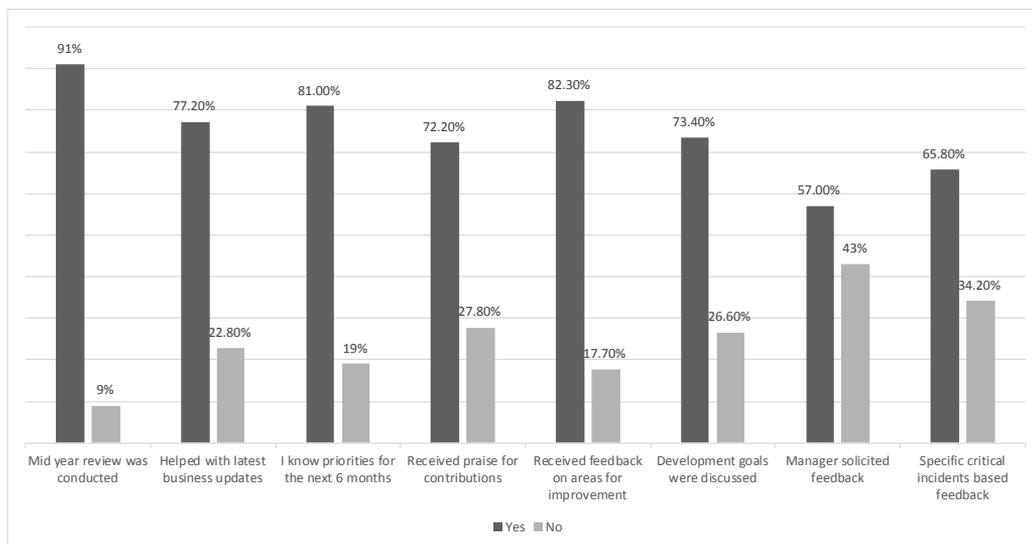Ultimately, we must judge our success with the manager development programme in relation to a number of key performance indicators; for example, attrition, engagement, and productivity. These are beginning to show promising improvements. Company revenues have been increasing. Plant production has been consistently increasing while the number of non-management workers at the plant has come down. Employee attrition is dropping year on year. Employee engagement measures are heading upwards. Importantly also we note that the number of people being promoted internally, from the workforce, is beginning to be noticeable and significant, thus strengthening the internal labour market. This is vital as the company continues to grow and establish new manufacturing units. Whilst recognizing the difficulty inherent in attributing such 'benefits' to the implementation of the manager developing initiatives — relevance must also be attributed to the improvements in the broader climate of workplace relations — nonetheless our claim is for positive impact. The evidence available to us suggests the company is becoming better equipped to meet its targets of business growth and expansion. Our contribution has been to provide the opportunities for personal growth with DFPCL's people managers but targeted to a set of capabilities regarding leading and managing their teams. This same group of managers are key to HRD's aspirations to enabling such opportunities for growth and development to be inclusive rather than exclusive to one group.

Reflecting on Our Practice

From the outset we clearly faced a number of challenges, some of which are ongoing. We reflect here on four key themes — making the case; an integrative approach; managerial band-width;

and our commitment to reflective practice itself — and which together address our practice as HRD professionals in relation to the challenges faced.

Making the case

We recognized that there could be no 'quick fix'; a range of interventions would be required over time. We were also acutely aware that levels of trust in HR generally were low. We had to seek engagement before we could look to change behaviours. We had to make our case and establish a degree of trust both with senior management and with those who would be participants on the programme. We had to challenge prevailing assumptions held by many that HR would continue to 'take care of people issues'. This demanded constant challenging and questioning in the daily and weekly dialogues of the workplace. On reflection, our case was helped by three factors:

- To assist 'buy in' for the manager development initiative it was important to give business heads a sense of ownership in the programme. We involved them in both the design and communication about the interventions and sought to align the intervention with their perceived business needs.

- The steps we had taken immediately following the settlement with the union began to establish ourselves in a new light.

- These same 'early successes' were critical in gaining the support of the CMD; his support as a champion of a new approach to HR was vital in enabling us to progress on a range of strategic developments.

We note also the challenge of convincing some sceptical voices within HR itself and where there was some reluctant to relinquish their traditional power base in terms of managing people. However, the emerging evidence of impact from an initiative which has engaged virtually all our people managers has seen such doubts recede and dissipate.

An integrative approach

We feel the framework devised provided a fit for purpose — DFPCL 'stamp' — to our goals for manager development. It was no cut and paste exercise but nor did we try to re-invent the wheel. We adopted ideas from the literature surrounding good practice, proven tools in the world of HR and HRD, together with our own experience from work in other organizations and adapted them to suit the organization context and needs.

Considerable effort was placed in constructing a programme which provided an integrative approach. Component parts of the framework built on what had been done previously. Clearly managers moved through the *Leading Our Teams* programme at different paces and facing different issues and contexts as regards their teams. A way of ensuring the programme remained grounded in the practice of managing was the complementary tool of the IDP. This provided a vital link to the broader talent management and performance review processes within the organization. Again, the IDP sought to draw in practices which would ensure it sat comfortably with the broad goals of the manager development programme and indeed the broader workplace development issues noted earlier.

Learn-Practice-Learn proved important as a key design principle as regards the off-job classroom based training. Acutely conscious of potential transfer difficulties, we endeavoured to build

in clear formats and devices to assist managers try out new behaviours and begin coaching members of their own teams. Each formal workshop began with a 'shared' experience' session in order to provide a collective, reflective discussion designed to identify transfer problems and reinforce learning and amend and tune actions plans.

Managerial band-width

A major challenge — and one which is ongoing — related to what it is realistic for HRD to expect of programme participants. Managers in DFPCL increasingly have a broader remit and indeed our efforts to encourage them to take ownership of their team and people management is one of other increasing demands on their time. Coaching activity, for example, is not a quick fix. It takes time to prepare, deliver, and reflect on outcomes. Similarly, managing IDPs. We call the range of demands on a manager's time their 'band-width'. It is not elastic and we must recognize that. We have learnt to tread cautiously and sensitively as regards our demands on them as part of the programme.

Relatedly, we have had to recognize that behavioural change following an HRD intervention is not a given. It requires constant reinforcement and attention to transfer issues. Early stages of practice can be disappointing and problematic. The coaching session doesn't work out quite like it did when worked on in the workshop. Positive feedback from doing new and different things may take time to show. The need for support is most apparent in the early days of transfer and initial practice at new ways of doing things. Ultimately, we believe the problem of managerial band-width will be resolved by new behaviours and ways of working becoming accepted as the norm; simply 'part and parcel' of everyday performance as an effective manager. Critical here is the wider talent and performance management system that managers are part of and which provides assessment against key leadership objectives, the use of IDPs, together with intelligent use of our HRD analytics.

Reflective practice

We are champions of reflective practice. From the outset, our work with managers adopted an approach which sought to get managers to look inward and understand themselves better in terms of their capabilities and new challenges. This is something which is adopted in our own practice as HRD professionals. It requires us to avoid assumptions that 'we know best' and that we can effectively introduce a prescriptive based solution. Much of what we have done has involved us experimenting, taking feedback, and engaging in reflective dialogue amongst ourselves. It was important to question our own practice. For example, we revisited our dependence on a video based approach as regards our situational leadership workshops. We scrapped our first batch of videos; they were boring and ineffective. Whilst we remain of the view that video can be a powerful aid to the trainer it needs very careful thought about how best it can add value — any temptation to use it as an easy solution is likely to back-fire.

Our selection of participants for the early manager learning workshops proved problematic. A number of participants in early workshops were nearing retirement. Whilst not disruptive it was clear they were ambivalent to the broad goals and expectations of the programme. The level of engagement was such that it was difficult to run a session with a level of interaction to help generate positive learning outcomes. We subsequently did not leave selection to chance, but rather endeavoured to ensure that each workshop was attended by managers with a mix

of experience, a range of experience with the business and different spans of control. It also included both those who were first-line managers of employees and managers' managers.

Our regular reflective 'huddles' are characterized by an openness, a freedom to disagree, to express ideas, and try things out. If something doesn't seem to be working we ask why, including the assumptions we are making about our approach and the fitness for purpose of our plans and programmes. We accept that what we have achieved through the *Leading Our Teams* framework may be not be appropriate in four or five year's time and may need itself to evolve and change.

Conclusions

The business and industrial relations context of 2013-14 provided the opportunity for HRD to take a more strategic role within the organization. Over a period of 3 years we have established HRD as a function with stature and influence. We have succeeded in convincing the CMD and the Board of the contribution we can make. This has demanded conviction and commitment on our part. We ensured we understood the context into which our manager development initiative was to be introduced. Together with colleagues in HR we did much work to engage with the workforce prior to introducing change and which was also critical in establishing ourselves as credible in the eyes of top management. We have been able to lead an initiative rather than simply respond. Well established models have been drawn into our HRD practice — e.g. Whale Done, GROW etc. — and which have been harnessed to good effect within the implementation of the *Leading Our Teams* framework. Our resolve at the outset to invest in ongoing evaluation and feedback ensured we stayed 'in tune' with the voice of the manager; invaluable in maintaining trust and engagement. Ongoing HRD support to ensure effective transfer of learning into the workplace and to sustain behavioural change remains a priority. HRD at DFPCL has shifted from a traditional, prescriptive 'training' oriented function to more of an enabling function. We remain committed to our principles of reflective practice — both with those we work with and in terms of how we work as an HRD team. A continual process of questioning, rather than delivering easy solutions, is key to continuing to make a contribution in this vein.

Editorial Reflection

This article is an account of HRD practice within DFPCL, a large manufacturing company in India. Its focus is the role of the line manager (first or front-line managers, team leaders, supervisors etc.) in managing people within modern day organizations. This issue has seen extensive policy/ practice discussion and debate (see for example, Sisson & Storey, 2000; Purcell, et al., 2003; Capelli, 2015; Wright, 2015; CIPD, 2016) over a period of 20+ years. However, until relatively recently research examining the link between HRD and organizational performance has rather ignored the part played by front-line managers in people management.

This is changing — at least as reflected within the western based research literature. The UK research assessment exercise[2], for example, is increasingly concerned with identifying impact. Its 2014 assessment highlights research (and see for example, Hutchinson & Purcell, 2007, 2008) which demonstrates that "front-line managers (such as team leaders) are critical to organizational effectiveness" and notes the role of such research in informing the implementation of HRD

policy to support front-line managers more effectively in their role as people managers in diverse organizations. The research, it is claimed, has:

> directly influenced the policies and learning materials of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, as well as the advisory service ACAS and a variety of public policy documents that have informed organizations HR practice in supporting and developing front-line managers (REF, 2014).

The emergent evidence base, therefore, whilst still patchy, is nonetheless becoming influential in supporting practices to develop managers in people development.

However, outside of a predominantly western based discourse, the evidence base is largely non existent. Specifically, in the context of India, Azmi and Mustahtaq (2015) acknowledge the failure of research to address this issue arguing that as one of the world's:

> most compelling markets, offering many business opportunities for Indian and multi-national companies, an investigation into the role of the line managers vis-à-vis HRM is likely to offer useful insights into the corporate terrain of India.

Their study develops an instrument to measure the strength of relationship between dimensions of line involvement in decision making as regards HRM and organizational effectiveness. Their findings offer broad support for a relationship of positive impact but importantly they note findings which they suggest may reflect the different context of HR dynamics which operate in India.

It is useful to conclude this account of practice with these reflective notes relating to the impact of HR/HRD upon the role of front-line managers in people management and development. The importance of this account is that it contributes to an emergent evidence base. And, importantly, it complements Azmi and Mustahtaq's work by providing a much needed case study of practice within a non-western context. Thus, the authors of this article contribute to our understanding of how HRD can lead a shift in line management role and responsibility and through this impact organizational development and effectiveness. It will hopefully stimulate further practice-based enquiry into the relationship between HRD and line management and in contexts where we need to be sensitive to cross cultural differences.

Notes

1. The article is based on, and developed from, a submission to the International Federation of Training and Development Organisation's Annual Global Awards. The company were successful in winning the IFTDO Award for Best HRD Practice, 2017.
2. The UK regularly assesses the quality of research in its higher education institutions. The exercise addresses all disciplines. HR and HRD are part of the assessment of business and management research.

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National HRD in Oman: a Stakeholder Perspective on the Implementation of the National Training Programme

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This paper is set within the context of Oman, where National Human Resource Development (NHRD) has been utilized to develop the knowledge and skills of the indigenous population, create job opportunities for a greater number of job seekers and reduce the nation's dependency on expatriate labour (Omanization). The National Training Programme (NTP) is the key initiative that aims to achieve Omanization and which provides the context for this paper. The NTP is overseen by the Ministry of Manpower (MoM) and involves a tripartite agreement between Trainees, Training Providers, and Employers. This "training mingled with employment" commenced in 2003 and has provided training for more than 36,000 individuals, in areas as diverse as commerce, industry, and craftwork. However, despite these encouraging figures, produced by the Ministry, there is a lack of empirical research that surfaces the voices of the other stakeholders involved in the NTP policy implementation. This paper addresses this void and illustrates how the key stakeholder groups: the Ministry of Manpower, Training Providers, Employers, and Trainees viewed the implementation of the NTP policy. In doing so, we highlight the complexities of the relationships involved and illuminate an emerging 'blame culture', which, if left unacknowledged, will hinder the implementation of the NTP, and impact negatively on Omanization. We conclude with implications for practice and argue that, in order to enhance the future implementation and success of the NTP, on-going participatory action research is required that includes all stakeholder groups, if the challenges of this emerging 'blame culture' are to be understood fully.

Key Words: national HRD, policy implementation, stakeholders, insider research

Introduction

This paper is set within the Sultanate of Oman, where National Human Resource Development (NHRD) has been utilized to develop the knowledge and skills of the indigenous population, with the concurrent aim being to reduce the nation's dependency on expatriate labour, and create work opportunities for young Omanis.

Since the 1990s, the governments of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries have come to realize that their nationals need to diversify and move outside the public sector (Forstenlechner et al., 2012). However, in Oman, this trend toward the localization of labour emerged earlier than in other Gulf States, with the late 1970s seeing a radical modernization of the country (Beasant et al., 2002). Whilst the initial localization of labour concerned military and security jobs (Valeri, 2005), it was subsequently expanded to embrace other public sector and civil service institutions. With the rapid developments in technology, coupled with reaching a saturation of employees in the Oman public sector, the concept of labour localization was developed gradually and, in

1996, the policy was formally implemented within the private sector. Hence, the nationalization of jobs in the private sector was firmly placed within the broader policy of Omanization, with the National Training Programme (NTP) being viewed as central to achieving this overarching policy.

National Human Resource Development (NHRD)

National Human Resource Development differs between countries, depending on government priorities, but irrespective of such differences there are numerous approaches that a nation might adopt to satisfy their training needs. Devins and Smith (2013, p. 55) observe that the:

> [g]overnment can play one of two roles to treat the market failure: voluntarism, which sees its role as the encouragement of organizations to take responsibility for skills acquisition and … interventionism, where government seeks to influence decision-making on HRD in the interests of the economy as a whole.

The choice between interventionism and voluntarism is, however, dependent upon the socioeconomic and cultural characteristics of each country (Stewart et al., 2013).

In recent decades, National Human Resource Development has emerged as a strategic priority in many countries (McLean et al., 2012), with the contemporary requirements of globalization, rapid technological advancements, and internationalization of labour, being key enablers for an investment in National HRD (Gold et al., 2010). Indeed, the governments of many developing economies believe that a large and successful vocational education sector is an important, indeed necessary, element in their development strategies, as it equips citizens with the skills needed by industry, whilst at the same time helping to reduce unemployment (Wilkins, 2002, p. 5). NHRD is delivered in developed and developing economies to encourage societal development and economic promotion (Alagaraja & Wang, 2012), often through vocational training and development programmes.

The World Bank argues that Vocational Education and Training in developing economies is best left to individuals, enterprises, and private sector training institutions, with government interventions being kept to a minimum (Bennell & Segerstrom, 1998). None-the-less, various governments, such as South Korea and China (Yang et al., 2004; Kim et al., 2009; Alagaraja & Wang, 2012), underpin their NHRD initiatives with the appointment of a Minister who has a key role in establishing national HRD policy, and their related strategies. It is, however, important to note that a NHRD programme needs to adopt a 'best fit' approach, rather than a 'best practice' perspective, and one that is sensitive to institutional and cultural characteristics (Murphy & Garavan, 2009).

In Oman, NHRD is driven by the need to reduce the high unemployment rate in young Omanis and achieve a pre-defined percentage of Omani citizens being employed in the private sector. Here, Omanization refers to the localizing of Omani labour; a process that coincides with similar implementation practices in other Arab nations (Robbins & Jamal, 2016), with the aim being to enhance national skills development and economic prosperity (Hoeckel & Schwartz, 2010). Financial commitment in the Sultanate of Oman personifies the development of its Human Resource, with the budget allocation for education and training comprising 13 percent of the total national expenditure (Ministry of Finance, 2016). This allocation has led to a rise in national improvements, such as an increase in the number of schools in Oman, which exceeded 1,000 in 2015 (NCSI, 2016), compared with 1970, when only three schools existed. Another

improvement is the Government's sponsorship of local and overseas scholarships, with 30,421 such scholarships being awarded (HEAC, 2016). These investments reflect Oman's advancements in NHRD, which were acknowledged in a United Nations Development Programme publication: *The Human Development Report* (UNDP, 2015).

The National Training Programme, which is overseen by the Ministry of Manpower (MoM), provides the central initiative that aims to achieve the goals and aspiration of NHRD in Oman, and which provides the context for this paper.

The National Training Programme in Oman

In seeking to discharge their obligation under Omanization, the Ministry launched the National Training Programme in 2003, as a vehicle for equipping job-seekers from secondary and post-secondary education with the pre-requisite knowledge and skills for work. The NTP, which the Ministry developed, comprises the key NHRD policy, which seeks to provide Oman's occupational sectors with appropriately trained and skilled job-seekers. The NTP does not appear as a discrete policy document, rather, it is a collection of key documents and reports from several employment seminars, held during 2001 and 2003, which provided the impetus for the subsequent Ministerial decree; the commencement of Omanization.

The NTP represents a Government-introduced mechanism, designed to achieve Omanization and is described as "training to make Omanis employable". Essentially the goal is political, aimed at alleviating the situation whereby large numbers of expatriates comprise the private sector workforce, while Omanis populate the public sector. This situation is not sustainable as there are insufficient jobs in the public sector for Omanis, which has resulted in unemployment amongst Omani youth. The Government's solution was to provide a NTP that equipped Omanis to undertake those private sector jobs that have traditionally been occupied by foreign workers.

The Ministry also refers to the NTP, which is funded and regulated by them, as "training mingled with employment". Whilst the strategy follows the trend in many European countries, of supporting vocational education (Kyriakidou et al., 2013), in the Omani context, the primary outcome is to replace the large numbers of expatriate workers in the private sector with trained and skilled Omani jobseekers. Thus, there exists a relationship between the Ministry and the private sector, wherein the Employers articulate the labour demand, whilst the Ministry supplies the Trainees and oversees the training. Employers initially identify labour needs, after which a sequential process is followed, involving Training Providers, the Ministry and Trainees, which culminates in Trainees being placed with the Employer (see Figure 1).

This paper illustrates how key stakeholder groups: the Ministry of Manpower, the Training Providers, the Employers and Trainees viewed the implementation of the NTP policy, and addresses the following questions:

- What do key stakeholders perceive are the key factors influencing the implementation of the NTP policy in Oman?

- What are the implications of this stakeholder analysis for NHRD policy and practice; specifically the NTP within Oman.
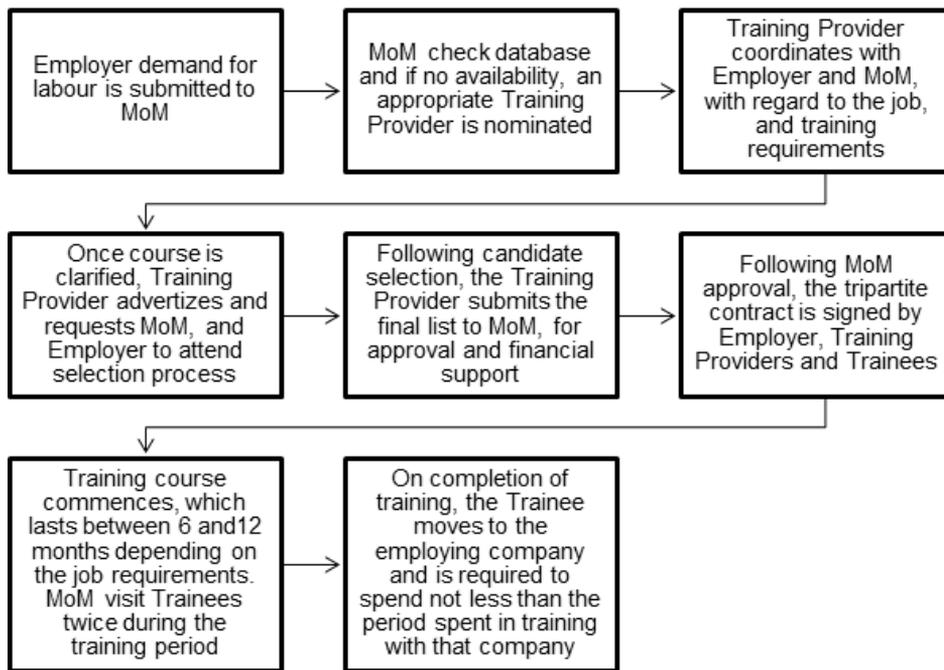
Figure 1: NTP Process Involving the Key Stakeholder Groups

The tripartite training contract

The NTP process involves establishing a tripartite contract between Employers, Trainees and the Training Providers. The relationship between the three parties directly involved in the NTP, is encapsulated in the Ministry-administered training contract, which comprises the only written document that manages the relationship. The contract is divided into two main parts, with the early sections covering general biographical and commercial details, whilst the second part contains the rights and responsibilities of each of the three stakeholder groups.

Employers are expected to hire the Trainees within one month of the completion of their training programme, with the Trainees' financial entitlement being stipulated in the employment contract. Employers are expected to accept the Trainees for on-the-job training, according to the programme provided by the Ministry and to monitor their progress and performance. There is also an obligation to comply with Omani employment regulations. In addition, penalty clauses are stipulated, for example, if the Employer fails to employ the Trainee following completion of the programme, or terminates the contract within a stipulated period, then they are obliged to reimburse the Ministry with the training fees.

Trainees are required to follow their assigned training course and comply with regulations concerning behaviour, and discipline. In return, a monthly allowance and other non-financial compensations are provided, with this being followed by a guaranteed job on completion. Trainees have to accept the job offered and remain in that work for no less than the duration of their training course; otherwise they are liable for the training fees.

Training Providers are obliged to supply Trainees with training materials, facilities, and training. The training content is approved by the Ministry and the Employers, whilst Training Providers are required to update the Ministry on any issues that arise during the course. In addition, Training Providers are 'requested' to follow up each trainee's progress during their first three months of employment. Thus, the tripartite training contract provides broad guidelines for those involved in implementing the NTP, with the process being formally approved by the Ministry.

The NTP courses last for between six to twelve months and whilst being delivered by private training institutions, they are sponsored, regulated and administered by the Government. Official statistics for the NTP uptake are encouraging and demonstrate a yearly increase since the programme commenced in 2003. To date, the NTP has provided training to more than 36,000 individuals in areas as diverse as commerce, industry, and craftwork. However, despite these encouraging figures, produced by the Ministry, there is a lack of empirical research that surfaces the voices of those stakeholders involved in the NTP policy implementation. This paper addresses this void and provides a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding the NTP process, by adopting a stakeholder perspective and exploring their perceptions of the key factors that influenced the implementation of Oman's NTP policy.

A Stakeholder Perspective

Stakeholder theory, often attributed to Freeman (1984), highlights the need to involve a broad range of people in decision-making processes, rather than it being the sole preserve of management. The theory has various interpretations, although a founding principle highlights that overlooking other stakeholders is unwise, imprudent or unjustified ethically (Phillips, 2003). The approach embraces how management or governments 'ought' to engage with stakeholders, with Donaldson and Preston (1995) arguing that moral guidelines on how to behave and manage are at the core of the theory.

A stakeholder perspective can be used to investigate wider philosophical views (Friedman & Miles, 2002) and illuminate differences in power between stakeholders (Mitchell, et al., 1997). This approach draws attention away from a narrow focus on "return on investment" and enables a richer conceptualization of "return on expectation" (Anderson, 2007). The intention is not only to improve programme understanding, but to transform programme-related working relationships, through broad local participation (Greene, 1997). A stakeholder perspective provides a space for different stakeholders to voice their concerns and contribute to programme improvement. This process can engender a sense of ownership and empowerment, which fosters continuous learning. However, the process may be seen as threatening, as there is a danger that senior officials can be exposed to criticism.

This study was sensitive to these criticisms and aware that there is a noticeable absence of stakeholder approaches in the Arab context. One particular aspect of Omani culture refers to the connotations that surround 'evaluation', or any terms perceived to be associated with this. For example, 'investigation' is perceived as being associated with a negative police agenda. Similarly, the concept of 'success' in evaluating a programme is deemed commercially sensitive, particularly when dealing with Training Providers and Employers. Hence a direct evaluation of the NTP was avoided.

Insider research

This paper draws on data from a larger study which involved insider-research by the lead author, who (when the data was collected) was a senior employee at the Ministry of Manpower of Oman and a full time PhD student sponsored by the Ministry. His position within the Ministry and the Omani community enabled access to key documents and key informants. It is unlikely that an outsider would have accessed this wealth of material (key documents, attendance at meetings, and interviews with 36 key informants). However, a key challenge for insider-researchers is to retain closeness, whilst maintaining a distance. The need to question the 'insider's' taken-for-granted assumptions are equally essential to conducting 'robust' research (Trowler, 2012). Therefore, throughout the research process the second and third authors have undertaken this role (Al-Harthy & Lawless 2015) enabling the lead author to question his taken-for-granted assumptions and to maintain a 'distance'.

We acknowledge that the lead author was an 'insider' with twelve years' experience and, as a 'Ministry Man', key informants will have been aware of his position. However, our interpretation of the data is not being presented as an 'objective truth', but an analysis that is underpinned by a stakeholder perspective. Therefore, within the findings section, we present a 'coherent' argument that provides 'transparent' reasons for the inclusion of certain quotations and explanations of context, so helping the reader to judge our interpretation of the data. Our analysis has been systematic and rigorous, with the rich data set being analyzed through template analysis (King, 2012), and, with the emergent themes presented in this paper, illuminating how key stakeholders identified factors that influenced the implementation of Oman's NTP policy.

From an ethical point of view our role is to ensure the anonymity of our informants, which is especially important when undertaking insider research (Milano et al., 2015). For this reason unnecessary identifying information has been removed from the presentation of the data. Key informants are identified only by referencing to the stakeholder group they represent.

Findings

This paper illuminates how the four stakeholder groups: Ministry of Manpower (MoM), Employers (E), Training Providers (TP), and Trainees (T), viewed the implementation of the NTP within Oman. In total, thirty-six individuals participated in the interviews, with this paper highlighting the four factors that informant groups identified as influencing the NTP policy implementation, which are: clarity of the policy, cultural preferences, cultural tensions and an unbalanced tripartite contract.

Clarity of the policy

It is heartening to note that three of the four stakeholder groups, the Ministry, Employers, and Training Providers, evidenced an awareness of the underlying objectives of the NTP. This is illustrated by one Ministry informant who stated that:

> The objectives of the NTP revolve around two main issues; first, developing the skills of the young jobseekers according to the requirements of the private sector and second, securing and finding jobs for Omani youth after training.

Despite the informant's iterations, there is no specific policy document entitled "NTP", with the above objectives only functioning as a form of tacit knowledge of the programme objectives. Indeed, another Ministry informant stated:

> … objectives are general and we as MoM employees face difficulty in assessing our achievement; the main objective is clear to us — training and then employment, but we need to be given much more detailed tasks like, targeting a specific number of Trainees and clearly identifying the specialization of training.

In terms of clarity of the policy, the Employer informants were also clear about the underlying goal of the NTP, although the lack of detail surfaced concerns as to how 'quality' was assessed. This is highlighted by the following Employer:

> … the NTP contributes in developing the basics within the Trainees as the objective is to develop Omani jobseekers, but the MoM does not consider the quality of the Trainees, they are just looking to achieve the numbers in employment that meet the Omanization targets.

The concern with assessing achievement of the NTP goals was mirrored in interviews with Training Providers, as presented below:

> The numbers who have completed the training is satisfying, but the question is — how many of these Trainees are effective in the workplace and implementing the training we delivered to them in the workplace? I am sceptical; we need research on that.

The Training Providers were also clear with regard to the underlying NTP goal and, interestingly, added an additional perspective concerning a: "culture of job respect". This was eloquently voiced by one of the Training Providers:

> The objectives of the NTP are to develop and employ Omani job seekers in order to achieve Omanization. In addition, one of the other roles is to enhance the culture of job respect and love of work in the private sector. Each one has a role concerning the training and enhancement of the job respect culture among the citizens — the family, the community, and the Trainees themselves.

The challenge involved in enhancing a "culture of job respect" and a "love of work in the private sector" has, we argue, been absent from the NTP policy implementation. Indeed, none of the Trainees interviewed demonstrated an awareness of the underlying goals of the NTP. Interestingly, many of them reported that, contrary to the formal process, rather than applying for the training, they had received a call from a Training Provider, inviting them to apply. They decided to join the programme in order to: "fill the gap in time we experienced during our job search".

Several Trainees reported joining the training with friends, to offer support, whilst all Trainees expressed a preference for public sector work, as evidenced by the following informant: "to be frank with you, I have the ambition to work in the Government, and therefore, if any opportunity comes, I will move".

In summary, it is pleasing to note that three out of the four stakeholder groups expressed clarity on the objectives of the NTP: to train and employ young Omani jobseekers and then employ them in the private sector. Interestingly, one Ministry informant stated:

> we don't need any further complicated details, we achieved this objective and this is evidenced in the numbers who have joined the private sector.

However, as illustrated above, this point of view was not held by all Ministry informants or the other stakeholders. Indeed, the overreliance on simple quantitative measures hides the cultural tensions and preferences that this paper reveals; in particular, the overwhelming preference of Trainees to seek work in the public sector.

Cultural preferences and certification

Several Trainees discussed family reservations about the suitability of private sector work, as surfaced by one female Trainee:

> The cultural reservations of my family in respect of jobs that required me to work with men was the main reason why I reject certain jobs, I think this will affect me as well in my current job.

Indeed, all stakeholder groups were very aware of the cultural preferences for public sector employment. This is illustrated by the following Ministry informant:

> The desire of the young Omani jobseekers to work in the private sector is very weak; this is due to the opportunities offered by the Government, particularly in the military and security sector.

Further, most Ministry informants acknowledged this preference and one informant commented that:

> The motivation of young people to join the programme and undergo training that leads to work is almost non-existent. For them, the NTP is not a choice. They join it just because there is no other opportunity with better incentives offered to them.

This rather depressing view that the NTP is: "considered as the last choice" was also evident during interviews with the other three stakeholder groups, as one Employer illuminated:

> The biggest challenge is the shared idea within the community, among children and parents, that it is shameful to work in the private sector, and with such an idea in their heads, I don't expect any of these plans will find their way to success.

Training Providers equally shared such reservations, as evidenced by the following informant:

> The dominant culture in Oman among the young jobseekers is to want to work in the Government and this trend is stimulated by friends and families.

As a final point, Training Providers also highlighted the lack of international recognition for the training which, if present, would help Trainees: "gain a job abroad". Whilst certification is not the primary aim of the NTP, it is useful to note that one Ministry informant acknowledged that the lack of accreditation was detrimental to the Trainees.

> … the weakness is that the Certificate is not recognized as equivalent to an apprenticeship and is not accredited. Therefore, Trainees might not be able to make use of it in the future, without already having some experience to show they can do the job.

In summary, all stakeholder groups acknowledged the cultural preference for young Omanis to work in the public sector. The perceived higher status of public sector employment was the primary rationale for this preference, along with the perceived unsuitably of private sector employment. If this situation is left unchallenged, then cultural tensions between the four stakeholder groups, and within the public and private sectors, will continue to ferment as a blame culture.

Cultural tensions: an emerging blame culture

Whilst all stakeholder groups acknowledged the preference of young Omanis to work in the public sector, the rationale given for this preference varied. Indeed, there was evidence of an emerging 'blame culture', with stakeholder groups blaming each other. This is illustrated by one Ministry informant, who stated that:

> The leaders in the private sector, specifically individuals who come in direct contact with Omani workers, are to blame for the fact that Omanis do not want to work in that sector.

This point of view found support amongst other Ministry informants and surfaced a concern that some Employers were fearful of Omanization: "they fear that Omanis will take over their positions once they gain experience". This Ministry informant continued: "Indeed, the whole point of the Omanization scheme is to achieve that".

Interestingly, this perceived fear of Omanization was shared by several Trainees, who expressed concern that they had been employed in a company where 'real' jobs were not available to them. They were hired purely to enable the company to meet its Omanization percentage, indeed, one trainee reported:

> … after we completed the training programme, we were recruited by this company; the HR manager stated clearly "we hired you to meet the Omanization percentage and to hire expatriates".

Further, the perception that some Employers 'manipulated' the NTP was recognized by several Training Providers, as surfaced in the following informant's statement:

> The absence of planning drives the private sector to manipulate the NTP to import expatriates; their recruitment of Omani [Trainees] is only to achieve the Omanization percentage.

This shared perception that Employers are manipulating the NTP is troubling and several Trainees, along with Ministry informants, attributed this manipulation to the lower salaries paid to expatriates; as one trainee outlines:

> The differences between the salaries paid to the expatriate, compared to those given to Omanis, is the core challenge, because even though the Labour Law in Oman has stated the minimum salary to be OR 350, the expatriates, particularly the labour, are given less than this.

The cost of Omani employees to the Employer was acknowledged by one Ministry informant, who explained that:

> … Omanis are costly to the company. Now, the salary of an Omani (after raising the minimum wage) is equivalent to the salary of the expatriate supervisor, but the companies do not want to equalize the salaries, even though the law doesn't allow them to differentiate.

Interestingly, several Employers acknowledged a preference for hiring expatriates and blamed the Trainees for wanting immediate gratification: "… like salary increments, promotion, and other incentives". This conflicting view of the work ethic was compounded by the Employers' perceived lack of legitimate power in the NTP relationship, as one informant expressed:

> One of the clauses allows the trainee to resign whenever he/she wants, and whilst that in itself is good, as it protects the trainee, I, as the Employer, do not have the same right to terminate that trainee's service if he/she is not performing well. The Trainees are dealt with too sympathetically.

In summary, there was an emerging lack of trust amongst the four stakeholder groups. The Employers were accused by the other stakeholders of 'manipulating' the NTP in order to employ expatriates. However, the Employers drew attention to the unequal and untenable employment relationship inherent within the tripartite contract. This 'unequal relationship' was also evidenced and considered problematic with regard to the design and training content of the NTP, which is now discussed in detail.

An unbalanced tripartite contract

The starting point of the NTP is employer led, whereby the Employer submits a request to hire labour for a specific job. When there is an absense of qualified local labour, the Ministry informs the company of the necessity to commence a training programme, and requests the Private Training Department, within the Ministry, to initiate the process (see Figure 1 earlier). The course content is determined by utilizing information from the Employer who initiated the job vacancy and the job descriptions contained within the Gulf Arab Manual of Common Vocational Classification. From the Ministry's perspective, it is argued that both the Employer and Training Providers are fully involved in designing the learning content. As one Ministry informant stated:

> The company has interviewed the candidate, set the training course in co-ordination with the Training Provider, and recruited the candidate; thus it is supposed that the output meets their requirements, as they contribute in the entire process of hiring the Trainees.

None-the-less, several Training Providers criticized the Gulf Arab Manual for its outdated course content. Further, despite several Ministry informants stating that Employers were involved in designing: "the training course in co-ordination with the Training Provider", many Training Providers perceived a lack of Employer involvement in the training design, which was illustrated by the following informant:

> The exclusion of Employers in the design of training content leads to a mismatch between the actual demanded skills and the supplied candidates, and this is considered a waste of resources.

This view was supported by most of the Employers interviewed, with the Ministry being criticized for focusing more on costs, as outlined by one Employer from the tourist sector:

> The MoM considers the cost more than it thinks about the return from the training programme. We are in tourism sector and the majority of guests and customers are foreigners, who speak English, but unfortunately, the MoM reduced the total number of English teaching hours on the training programme and the Trainees can't speak the language well enough.

Some Trainees questioned the adequacy of the training provided, with one key informant commenting:

> The training duration is not adequate to learn all the required skills for the workplace. After joining the workplace, I realized the need to learn how to use different software.

It appears that the formal process may not have been followed, because having the Employer involved in the training design would have forestalled this particular problem. However, it is encouraging to note that the majority of Trainees were "very happy" with the content of the training provided, with several stating that the training was "good". Indeed one informant felt that: "we learned many things which we didn't know before". Another Trainee, who worked in the insurance centre, commented: "I have transferred so many things I learnt in the training

institute to the workplace, almost 60% or even more". However, not all Trainees were satisfied with the content of the training, as one informant shows:

> We learned English language during the training course, however, the most demanded language for the job is Urdu, this is because of the customers utilizing our services.

This is another example where Employer involvement in the training design could have avoided such a problem. Interestingly, one Trainee highlighted the benefits of including Trainees in the training design and suggested that: "we need much more systematic training that identifies our aspirations and matches them with the offered opportunities".

In summary, despite the Ministry perceptions that Employers and Training Providers were adequately involved in the training process design, this perception was not shared with the other stakeholders. Indeed, the three other stakeholders groups expressed dissatisfaction with their involvement in the design and content of courses. However, the stakeholders did identify with a continuing support for the NTP, which is heartening.

Implications for Practice

We have identified four main factors that key stakeholders perceive to have influenced the implementation of Oman's NTP policy. Having considered the implications of the stakeholder analysis for NHRD policy, we now address the implications for practice, which are offered to other practitioners for debate and discussion.

Clarity of the policy

The principal objective of Oman's NTP is to train Omani jobseekers for employment in the private sector; although this aim has not been codified in a discrete policy document.

The findings highlight the need for the NTP to be articulated as a definitive and robust policy, with clear aims and objectives, and a detailed description of the roles and responsibilities for each stakeholder group.

Practice could be improved if the policy document clearly outlined the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders, and codified the Ministry's role as the coordinator of the NTP process, as opposed to steering it. The policy document could be further enhanced by incorporating an implementation plan that stipulates specific indicators of success and provides guidelines for on-going monitoring and review.

Cultural preferences and certification

The findings highlight that Trainees 'value' work in the public sector and perceive a lack of value in private sector work. Further, the skills acquired on the NTP did not receive proper accreditation within the country's overall vocational qualification system. Therefore, the Trainees' level of competency went unrecognized within the national qualifications framework. This lack of formal recognition can present a barrier to the foundation of a Nation's trained and skilled manpower, and demotivate those Trainees' already on programmes, whilst equally acting as a possible deterrent to initial participation.

Practice could be improved by the introduction of a 'credential' system, as certification has been shown to add value (Stewart et al., 2013).

Cultural tensions

The findings illustrate an emerging tendency for each stakeholder to 'blame' the 'other' for the problems that existed.

Practice could be improved by creating a Stakeholder Forum, where cultural tensions and concerns can be voiced in a 'safe space'. Such a forum would enable alternatives to emerge from those directly involved in the NTP, and help ensure that policy implementation was more sensitive to these cultural tensions.

One example of cultural tension is evident in the tourist sector, where Trainees are required to handle alcohol, with this being viewed as 'off-limits' for many young Omanis Trainees. The route of this anomaly is apparent in the NTP's current configuration and practice, which places a clear emphasis on a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. Following a more liberal approach would help ensure that all business sectors are not forced to Omanize their workforce for the sake of political expedience, especially when the economic outcome could have devastating consequences for both individual employers and the nation.

A more balanced tripartite contract

The study, in addressing interactions between key stakeholder groups illustrates a partnership, which is referred to in Arabic as "Sharaka", whereby the Government and private sector collaborate within a network relationship, characterized by interdependency.

The findings reveal that, despite an emerging 'blame' culture, each stakeholder found sufficient in the arrangement to maintain their continued involvement, although, within this situation of mutual dependency, some were perceived to gain more than others.

Practice could be improved by the Ministry engaging in greater collaboration with the private sector, particularly through the use of diverse communication channels and information-gathering activities. In addition, the Ministry could co-ordinate with other Government institutions, such as the Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Higher Education, to establish a database of manpower availability, along with relevant qualifications possessed.

In summary, we suggest that the above implications are discussed with all the stakeholder groups to ensure a genuine partnership, where all stakeholders participate and have a voice. The Labour Union could serve as an additional voice for the Trainees.

Conclusion

One clear challenge for developing economies is to balance the process of satisfying the demand for national skilled workers, by providing development opportunities for those jobseekers who are willing to acquire such skills. Indeed, many countries around the world are attempting to balance this particular equation (Griggs & Holden, 2013). This paper contributes by providing a stakeholder perspective on the challenges involved in implementing the NTP policy in Oman.

Further, whilst the drive to localize labour is common within the Arab world, the area is under-researched. In particular, the views of those stakeholders who have been affected by policy implementation have remained silent. This paper has provided a space to surface the voices of those with power (the Employers), those who are responsible for delivering the training (the Training Providers), and those in power (the Ministry). In addition, we surface the voice of the end users of the NTP policy, the Trainees; a stakeholder group who are often overlooked in policy implementation studies. In doing so, we provide evidence of a complex picture and an acknowledged, but unresolved, cultural problem, which highlights the perceived divide between the private and public sector; in particular, the expressed preference for Omani youth to secure permanent employment within the public sector.

We argue that it is the sector divide in employment opportunities and status, which lies at the core of the NTP problems, and which will continue to impact negatively unless steps are taken to bridge this divide. We have produced several implications for practice and consider these as a first step in opening further dialogue between all stakeholder groups, with our intention being to continue our collaboration and research. Indeed, as researchers and practitioners who are passionate about the value of "education mingled with employment", we have planned further research to connect the stakeholder groups, both to discuss the issues presented in our paper and to provide a springboard for further action.

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Training Transfer: the Case for 'Implementation Intentions'

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As organizations adopt a more inclusive or pluralistic approach to talent management, there is an emphasis on the engagement of a broader segment of the workforce to deliver both strategic and operational objectives. Accompanying this is investment in learning, training and development activity which is intended to enhance the achievement of the objectives based on the assumption of the effective transfer of training to improve performance or behavioural outcomes. Ensuring that training investment is converted to measurable outcomes is therefore a priority for many organizations and Return on Investment in Training (ROIT) is increasingly sought in the same way as for any other corporate investment. This article synthesizes developments in goal setting theory and highlights a limitation with regards to the theory being applied to the contemporary workplace. It proposes that implementation intentions and the associated 'if/then' plans offer the chance to mediate this. Key to these plans being successful is for them to be embedded at the learning design stage creating a clear link between the need for the learning/training and agreed objectives. A large part of the success of implementation intentions is that control of behaviour is given to situational cues in the workplace and these can be reinforced by supportive line managers and peers. But it is essential that they are also aware of the implementation intention plan in order to offer informed support. A holistic learning environment is key to the success of any intervention but given the importance of situational cues when considering implementation intentions it is vital that both learners and those who support them in the workplace are aware of the specific roles they play and the impact they have.

Key Words: training transfer, implementation intentions, line managers, return on investment

Introduction

As organizations adopt a more inclusive or pluralistic approach to talent management, there is an emphasis on the engagement of a broader segment of the workforce to deliver both strategic and operational objectives. Accompanying this is investment in learning, training and development activity which is intended to enhance the achievement of the objectives based on the assumption of the effective transfer of training to improve performance or behavioural outcomes. However, this presents a challenge since only an estimated 10% of training has had the desired effect. Indeed professional bodies such as the American Association of Talent Development and the UK based Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development acknowledge that discussions about how to demonstrate the business value of learning, training and development have raged for years. Ensuring that training investment is converted to measurable outcomes is therefore a priority for many organizations and Return on Investment in Training (ROIT) is increasingly sought in the same way as for any other corporate investment.

In this paper we argue that, for training to be effectively transferred back into the workplace, clear goals should be supplemented by clear implementation intentions to make the training work. Implementation intentions specify the actual behaviour to be performed in a specific context; as opposed to goal intentions which specify what a person wants to achieve. Converting goals into actions, supported by the will and a plan to deliver, can be the differentiator in securing ROIT. The paper will begin by focusing on the transfer of training and the results of studies to date. Following this it will consider what implementation intentions are and provide some evidence of their success in fields other than organization and management studies. Finally, we will turn our attention to the implications for HRD practitioners and offer some guidance on how to successfully embed implementation intentions into learning, training, and development interventions.

The Transfer of Training — Evidence to Date

There has been a good deal of research about how training can be transferred effectively to the workplace. The focus has been on both input and output factors in which the transfer of training is defined as "the extent to which, what is learned in training is applied on the job and enhances job related performance" (Laker & Powell, 2011). Input factors tend to focus on elements such as trainee characteristics, training design, and the working environment. Output characteristics focus more on goal setting.

Input factors as key elements of the transfer of training

Trainee characteristics are the first input factor on which much of the analysis has taken place, with the emphasis on individuals and their motivation to learn. Key trainee characteristics which affected the ability to transfer included intellectual ability, self-efficacy regarding the training task, motivation level, job/career variables, and personality traits. Self-efficacy and motivation have been identified as key trainee characteristics (Cheng & Ho, 2001; Burke & Hutchins 2007; Velada et al,, 2007; Martin, 2010 a and b; Grossman & Salas, 2011).

The second input factor to be considered is related to **training design** and is concentrated on incorporating key learning principles such teaching, stimulus variability, the timing of the training, whether the objectives are clearly communicated and understood, and whether the participants have been involved with designing the intervention (Martin, 2010 a and b).

Finally the **work environment**, consisting of social support offered by line managers and the opportunity to use new skills and behaviours, features strongly as an important aspect of the transfer of training. Line manager support is considered the most consistent factor explaining the relationship between the work environment and transfer and as one of the most powerful tools for enhancing transfer (Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Nijman et al., 2006). The supportive behaviours displayed by managers have been identified as: discussing new learning, participating in training, and providing encouragement and coaching, recognition, encouragement, rewards, and modelling trained behaviours (Grossman & Salas, 2011). This support can be emotional and instrumental and can occur before, during, and after training (Nijman et al., 2006). Peer support is an important aspect of the work environment and enhances training transfer by improving employee's feelings of self-efficacy and providing them with coaching and feedback (Martin, 2010 a and b).

Output factors used in facilitating the transfer of training to the workplace

In addition to inputs as factors that will influence the transfer of training, research and practice have also focused on output factors which include the important elements of goal setting and commitment.

Goal setting is the first of the output considerations, the essence of which is that people who set and commit to specific goals outperform those who set vague goals (Brown et al., 2013). Specific goals give focus and direct attention to activities relevant to attaining the goal (Seijts & Latham, 2012). Goals may include learning goals, behavioural outcome goals, distal outcome goals, and proximal plus distal goals (Brown & McCracken, 2010). **Learning goals** are used by individuals striving to understand something new or increase their level of competence in a given activity (Button et al., 1996). A **behavioural outcome goal** is characterized by an avoidance of challenges and performance deteriorates in the face of obstacles (Button et al., 1996). Behavioural goals are generally more associated with transfer of training (Chiaburu & Tekleab, 2005). **Proximal and distal goals** allow people to evaluate their ongoing goal directed behaviour and refocus their efforts if needed (Brown, 2005; Seijts & Latham, 2001; Weldon & Yun, 2000). Creating a sense of immediacy, providing a clear mark of progress leading to a sense of mastery, and allowing the distal goal to be recalibrated if needed are all reasons offered for the increased effectiveness provided by proximal goals (Weldon & Yun, 2000).

The second aspect of transfer of training outputs relates to goal commitment which is characterized by determination to expend effort towards a goal over time. Without commitment, individuals are more likely to abandon the goal especially when faced with difficulties or obstacles. Several situational factors have been identified which could have an impact on commitment such as publicness (the extent to which significant others are aware of the goal), volition (the extent to which an individual is free to engage in behaviour), and explicitness (as opposed to vague goals being set) (Hollenbeck & Klein, 1987). The most researched phenomena in terms of goal commitment is participation in setting the goal (Li & Butler, 2004) as this increases commitment to the goal. Given that goals enhance performance to a greater degree in easy, compared to complex, tasks and goal performance becomes weaker when hampered by context factors (Bipp & Kleingeld, 2010) the reliance on goal setting alone in contemporary workplaces could be a major factor why training does not transfer as contemporary workplaces are generally accepted to be Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous (VUCA).

These two factors have influenced both research and practice into the area of the transfer of training. However there is a further element, less well articulated, that is a critical factor in whether the transfer of training is effective. This is in respect of implementation intentions.

Implementation Intentions — Evidence to Date

Even though a goal may be clearly outlined, it will not energize people to pursue it if they have no idea how to go after it (Seijts & Latham, 2012). This notion of 'how to go after it' introduces the concept of goal intentions, defined as "end states an individual wants to attain; they turn desires into binding goals" (Achtziger et al., 2008, p. 381). A key difference exists however between goal intentions and implementation intentions. Goal intentions specify what a person wants to achieve, (I intend to achieve X) but implementation intentions specify the behaviour to be performed and the situational context it is to be performed in (if situation Y occurs, then I

will initiate behaviour Z) (Sheeran et al., 2005). Vagueness of the goal, lack of self-concordance and failure to develop a specific action plan are considered reasons for non-achievement of goals (Koestner et al., 2002). An implementation plan should take into account how to ensure persistence in the face of distractions and obstacles. Implementation intentions are formed to support the accomplishment of goals by specifying when, where, and how goal directed responses should be initiated. Identifying how to ensure persistence in the face of obstacles is one way of mitigating the already identified limitation of goal setting theory which is that performance becomes weaker when hampered by contextual factors.

This is important because Brandstatter et al. (2001) found that difficult goals without an implementation intention were completed in only 22% of the cases whereas difficult goals with an implementation intention were completed in 62% of cases. Further studies on implementation intentions have focused on a variety of behaviours such as completing an assignment, continuing education, and regaining employment and all have provided evidence for the increased completion of goals based on these implementation plans. Whilst these studies indicate that implementation intentions have positive effects on goal achievement in areas unrelated to a work environment, Friedman and Ronen (2015) found that implementation intentions can also have a positive effect on transfer of training in a work environment. Results of this study indicated that those who formed implementation intentions provided the trained response to mystery shopper questions, on average seven times out of ten whereas those who did not form implementation intentions only provided the trained response on average four times out of ten, indicating that implementation intentions had led to greater transfer of training.

Considering implementation intentions as an alternative post training transfer intervention may therefore mediate some of the limitations identified in goal setting theory and could lead to more of the training transferring into the work role and affecting behaviour and performance. Having reviewed current literature, the paper will now consider the implications for practice of using implementation intentions to generate greater transfer of training.

Transfer of Training — Implications for Practice

The growing awareness of the need to secure a return on investment for training activity has led to an interest in how such an objective can be secured. Articulating implementation intentions, as a complementary activity to those of goal setting and commitment can help in this process and can be a successful post training transfer intervention. The foundation for this is that although setting a goal is beneficial, the process ends once the goal has been set. Using evidence from other disciplines where implementation intentions have led to successful completion of goals, the paper suggests that implementation intentions should now be considered with regards to successfully completing work based goals in relation to transfer of training.

Figure 1 pulls together the various elements of goal setting and implementation intentions. There are several implications for practice which need to be considered, however, if the full benefit to both individuals and the organization are to be realized. These implications can be grouped into **process based** or **people based** concerns.
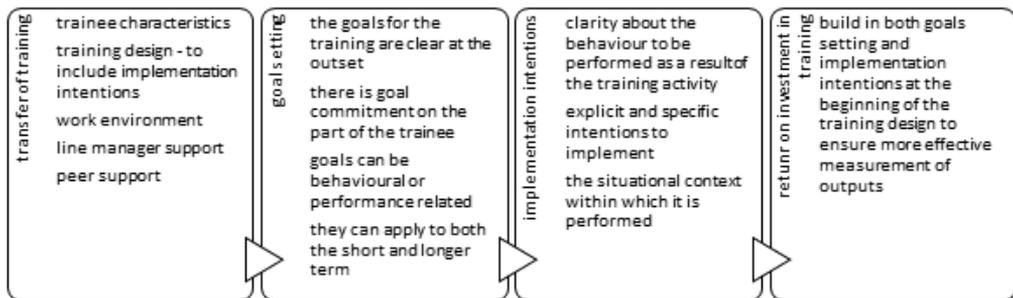
Figure 1: The characteristics of, goal setting, implementation intentions, and the transfer of training

Process based implications consider the design phase of training interventions and should be considered, once the learning need analysis has been completed. Key considerations will be to:

- Ensure that the goals for the training activity are clear at the outset on the part of the organization and the individual. These can be both behavioural or performance goals and can apply to the short and longer term.

- Build in both goals and implementation intentions at the beginning of the training design to ensure more effective measurement of outputs.

- Allow time at the end of the training to fully brief participants on what the implementation intention is and how it relates to the behaviour change being sought by the training.

- Ensure that participants have clear plans specifying when, where, and how the goals are to be achieved, by whom and from where additional resources are needed to ensure their effective implementation.

- Take account of the specific context within which the training outputs are to be implemented and build this into the implementation intention.

People based implications will consider various stakeholders who play a part in the initial identification of the need for the training to take place followed by the design, delivery and support of the training. Key considerations here will be:

- Support from senior people within the business to give backing to the need for the change in behaviour which the training will bring about.

- To ensure line manager involvement in both training design and outputs because "determining before-and-after performance metrics usually requires the active co-operation of line managers and this is not always forthcoming. Even where involvement in learning transfer is formally expected of managers, today's 'more from less' pressures can mean that support is lukewarm" (CIPD, 2014).

- To ensure there is goal commitment on the part of the trainee in relation to behaviour or performance change; short or longer term. This will in part be down to a proper identification of need so the 'right' people attend the course but will also be easier if senior people and line managers are supportive in words and actions.

- The knowledge and ability of the training designers and deliverers to understand what implementation intentions are and how they can enhance the transfer of training. It might be that using implementation intentions is itself a need analysis of a new skill set required by HRD professionals.

These process and people based implications consider a functional and practical point of view but the greatest implication for practice could be in the benefits obtained by the individual and the organization. Hamlin and Stewart (2011), identified four core purposes of HRD, identified in Table 1.

	Core Purpose
1	Improving individual or group effectiveness and performance
2	Improving organizational effectiveness and performance
3	Developing knowledge, skills and competencies
4	Enhancing human potential and personal growth

Table 1: Four core purposes of HRD

The use of implementation intentions works to support each of these levels. As a post training intervention the more concerted focus on behaviour change will develop the individual's knowledge, skills, and competencies but also, as they begin to see results will enhance their own personal growth and job satisfaction. As a consequence of this, organizational and group effectiveness will also improve.

Conclusion

In focusing on transfer of training, this paper has synthesized developments in goal setting theory and highlighted a limitation with regards to the theory being applied to the contemporary workplace, which is the notion that goal performance becomes weaker when hampered by contextual factors. Implementation intentions and the associated 'if/then' plans offer the chance to mediate this however as they should ensure persistence in the face of distractions and obstacles. With a tangible and visual representation of the goal, the implementation intention can ensure the goal is kept in focus due to its publicness and its explicit nature (Hollenbeck & Klein, 1987). Key to these plans being successful is for them to be embedded at the learning design stage creating a clear link between the need for the learning/training and agreed objectives. By growing out of the learning rather than being a bolt on at the end, learners will have a clear understanding of the situation/behaviour change (if/then) dynamic which the learning addresses. A large part of the success of implementation intentions is that control of behaviour is given to situational cues in the workplace and these can be reinforced by supportive line managers and peers but it is essential that they are also aware of the implementation intention plan in order to offer informed support. A holistic learning environment is key to the success of any intervention but given the importance of situational cues it is especially so with implementation intentions being used as a post training transfer intervention.

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HRD Forum

The Future of HRD: Scenarios of Possibility

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Across Europe and beyond, there is a sense that we are in the midst of a fundamental shift or change unlike anything we have experienced before and we did not see enough of it coming. As a consequence, HRD and learning and development professionals risk joining the growing ranks of those who have been left behind. Schwab (2016) refers to what he sees as a "profound shift" (p. 1) as the Fourth Industrial Revolution, where a confluence of technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics and the internet of things provide a capability for transformation for generations to come but much disruption, unpredictability and future surprises.

For many, and the HRD community and profession might be included, the track of globalization and neo-liberal capitalism, with all its faults, has not yet run its full course. As it does, combined with the advances in technology, it will continue to engender divisions and inequality. As a recent World Economic Forum gathering at Davos found, there was a growing distrust of government, companies and the media, based on a belief of a failing economic and political system. Next in line for an algorithmic/robotized attack might well be skilled and intelligent service staff and professionals, including those in HRD. Left to global forces, the expansion of low paid and low skilled work is likely to become more pronounced leading to uncomfortable political and social disruption (Brexit and Trumpism may be just the start).

There are difficult possibilities for the professions in general (Susskind & Susskind, 2015) and HRD professionals in particular. With its status as a 'weakened profession' (Short et al., 2009, p. 421) whose members play a subservient role, the status was hardly enhanced during the Global Financial Crisis when HRD professional were accused by some of becoming bystanders because they lacked the necessary influence to change the practices they could see happening (MacKenzie et al., 2012). Has anything changed in HRD?

With the advance of technologies, others have provided a pessimistic scenario where HRD professionals are needed less in creative endeavours. Their work is deskilled and reduced in value because machines can do their work better and more cost efficiently; for example, by reducing complexity to uniform and standardized packages that can be rolled out as People Development courses across large numbers of supine learners (Calver et al., 2012). Those in academe are likely to fare little better, caught in their own limited life-world of producing outcomes that meet their organization's targets, for example the UK's Research Excellence Framework which some have called a 'fetish' and a 'perversion' (Wilmott, 2011).

The current state of HRD academe falls nicely into what Nicholas Maxwell (2011) suggests as knowledge-inquiry where the means become the ends as knowledge is produced but seldom put into practice. Achievement is celebrated by publications and winning best paper awards at

conferences. Maxwell points the finger at academic research caught in this trap that succeeds in developing knowledge and even technological know-how but only in ways that disconnect it from problems of living and from what is needed to 'resolve' these challenges.

As we consider the future, how best might we respond to these challenges? How can we move in the direction of what Maxwell terms wisdom-inquiry, when the 'problems of living rationally' should form the basis of research so that actions to tackle the problems are considered and imagined before the acquisition of knowledge? Thus, knowledge would not be pursued or acquired for its own sake, nor become trapped in the academic cul de sac of papers and conferences.

In his broad based economic analysis of the last 50 years, Mason (2015) points to a more positive future based on collaborative working and networking during a period of transition from neo-liberalism and polarized capitalism towards a post-capitalism, the shape of which is still not determined. It becomes important, at a time when what is 'popular' becomes accepted as a fact or an alternative fact. The future is still to be made.

In pursuit of this aspiration, at a recent HRD conference in Lisbon (June 2017) we held a symposium to actively consider the future of HRD. This involved bringing together participants from academe and professional life to jointly work a future view of HRD. We employed the process of developing mini-scenarios, taking the year 2027 as a target point.

Method

Scenarios as a futures method have been available for centuries, however during the difficulties of the 1960s and 1970s, when scenarios became more widely known in the management literature, a new approach was taken by futurists to move away from scenarios as prediction toward as 'pictures' of possibility (Micic, 2010). In our symposium, there were 12 attendees, consisting of nine academics, one from a private organization and 2 from professional associations. A simple process was followed with a focus on the future of HRD in 2027. This enabled the formation of three groups of four, each with their own question from which they could develop projections for September 2027. Once declared, the projection could form the destination of mini scenario and then, working retrospectively, consideration could be given to antecedent events and causes that would be evident five years before in 2022 and then what might be discernible in the near present 2017/2018. Each of the mini-scenarios are reproduced below followed by a brief comment. A final concluding comment draws the piece to a close.

Scenario 1
Will formal knowledge still be prioritized over practice knowledge?

Aileen Lawless, *Liverpool John Moores University*
Patricia Harrison, *Liverpool John Moores University*
Russell Warhurst, *Northumbria University*
Wilson Wong, *Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development*

2027

We project that Mode 2 (practice) has eclipsed Mode 1 (formal academic knowledge). Many workplaces continue to use familiar e-learning tools like webinars and MOOCs, with many also using face-to-face classroom instruction. At a time where algorithms are embedded in systems and large corporations using artificial intelligence to trawl through big data to gain valuable insight, the realization that more and more it is sharp, skilled, creative people (human capital) that provides the competitive edge. Workers are now generating data that provide a clearer picture of the intangible value they generate and their employers are now more and more keen to invest in Learning Management Systems, knowledge management systems and better communications tools to encourage the sharing of knowledge in their workforce.

While formal classroom knowledge is still valued and often still the best mode for particular kinds of learning (e.g. executive programmes; university accreditation and the status attached), organizations are concerned about faster returns, demonstrably effective learning and scalable. The preference is now for smaller units of learning repeated for mastery. National blockchain systems maintain lifelong records of learning bits by each learner in their learning passports. Much of this information is created and curated by masters in the subject at the workplace who share their knowledge with their colleagues. This user-generated content via digital platforms (maybe using virtual reality technologies) is distributed widely and oftentimes openly. These learning systems have learned from Google search, Youtube, LinkedIn, Wiki, Amazon, etc. to create a much better, more democratic, user experience unlike the dreaded online compulsory compliance course of the 2010s.

The focus is now on peer-to-peer learning, user generated content. This is far more trusted that the more removed and remote formal instruction in classrooms — which have become extremely expensive. Learners are now used to sifting through free or cheap content and now less and less prepared to sign up to formal fixed time courses instead of learning in small blocks which can be certified over time. With dispersed workforces and tenuous employment relationships, learning must be driven by immediacy, speed, utility and trustworthiness by the learners themselves. As a consequence, the HE sector is fast consolidating with 10 percent fewer places than in 2000.

The role of experts has also changed. The growth is in expert QA on the mass of the content so key content sites have experts checking the veracity and value of the content before commending these to the workforce. They are less in the driving seat as the nation's educators than fact-checkers/endorsers augmented by AIs that over time there is a concentration of trusted content sites for particular knowledges.

And driving the agenda is the Chief Learning Technologist who now helms what in the old days was called L&D.

2022

Within the UK, internal (skill shortages), external (restricted labour pools owing to Brexit) and government policy (apprenticeships, TEF, shackling of labour) result in greater pressure on employers to educate the workforce. As a consequence, there is greater demand for technical-level skills — 'Mode 2' knowledge.

The uptake of higher level apprenticeships has pushed Mode 2 knowledge into the HE agenda. Post 1992 universities have responded rapidly to this change and have captured the local markets as they position themselves as civic universities serving the needs of the local labour markets and local employers. Oxford and Cambridge ignore the trends and create their own markets with blue-sky research and rich alumni, creating campuses abroad.

Other red bricks collaborate with their post 1992 colleagues and create strategic partnerships, designing programmes, which integrate 'Mode 1' (academic knowledge) and 'Mode 2'. Programmes such as the MBA and DBA, which prioritize Mode 2 knowledge, continue to mature and provide evidence of impact. This evidence of impact influences the REF and TEF agendas and impact is recognized as the development of social capital, the relationships which sustain organizations and societies.

Social media and access to virtual learning materials continues to expand and is integrated within formal programmes of learning. Individuals continue to access their own material on line and the role of the expert is challenged.

2017/2018

The tension between HRD theory and practice has been explored from both the academic (Kuchinke, 2004; Moats & McLean, 2009) and macro practice based (Leitch, 2006) perspective. In the context of the UK priority has been on expanding higher education (CIPD, 2017a) and de-valuation of technical-level education (Wolf, 2016). The consequences are that those in professional jobs enjoy greater market value than those in vocational positions with the UK suffering significant skill shortages (Chapman, 2017). This has been fuelled by globalization with resource pools for talent and multi national companies that operate across the world.

Changes in the UK with greater investment in technical-level education (The National Institute of Economic and Social Research, 2015; Wolf, 2016) as well as the impact of Brexit on skills shortages (CIPD, 2017b; Wallace, 2017) are influencing the future of HRD practice. Furthermore, employers are being incentivized to support on the job learning initiatives, such as through the Apprenticeship levy (National Audit Office, 2016).

The organization of work has changed significantly with a growth in flexible working patterns and fewer people with steady jobs and fixed salaries. Instead, growing numbers are contingent (Stickney, 2008) or portfolio workers, offering their skills to a host of clients and leading flexible lives between home and the workplace. Zero-hour contracts, the gig economy and crowdworking have become part of the narrative (Field & Forsey, 2016). The term precariat (Standing, 2016) denotes individuals who experience insecurity in the workplace. One of the strategies encouraged for those trapped in a precarious lifestyle is self-indebtedness (Stewart & Pine, 2014), something that is particularly evident in the UK (Fazackerley, 2017). Some view this as a model of social control (Guerin, 2013) as employers can have the advantage of a cheap and docile labour force. The resulting shackling of labour to organizations in the UK may result in a greater emphasis on practical skill development.

Comment

This scenario starts from a position of despair but sees some light emerging from the move towards apprenticeships. While this says nothing yet about the quality of apprenticeship learning nor how this can remove low skilled work along with low paid employment, it does see the potential for a move in the direction of valuing technical education. Skills shortages which Brexit makes more obvious, provide the rationale for employers to demand technical level skills, assuming they can also provide work of sufficient challenge to require such skills.

The term 'Mode 2 knowledge' is invoked to make a contrast with 'Mode 1' or academic knowledge. The distinction was first suggested by Gibbons et al. (1994) as a way of highlighting knowledge in the context of its application. Such knowledge is transdisciplinary and requires interaction with participants or actor in situ. This scenario sees the route to Mode 2 established by the push for apprenticeships, with knock-on effects on postgraduate programmes. What is interesting here is how some universities can ignore this shift but those that make the changes, do so in collaboration with others.

By 2022, Mode 1 has been eclipsed by Mode 2, and, it is assumed, a variety of action modes of research, has actually happened. Remembering that the future has not yet happened but this positive result is evident in the skills of people, over and above the advance of algorithms. It does seem that people are keeping ahead in the race with the digital world through the acquisition of social intelligence and creative skills which are needed in tasks which technology cannot do (Frey & Osborne, 2013).

Scenario 2
How will HRD research be making a positive difference to people's lives across the world?

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John Watkins, *Coventry University, London*
Valerie Anderson, *Portsmouth University*
Kate Black, *Northumbria University*

2027

In September 2027 HRD research is valued and recognized for its impact on people's lives. It collaborates with other disciplines to improve 'the whole.' And, it does so through a hybrid, un-siloized view of what is HRD research. People within and outside organizations describe their involvement in HRD research, feel their voice has been heard during the process of research and feel they have had a stake in research that has been carried out. They are able to identify ways in which HRD research has made a difference to their life. Research in general is held in high esteem but not unquestionably. People have developed the ability to critique and question what they see or read. They know there is value in good quality knowledge and to question the provenance of knowledge made public. Since 2017, there has been a fundamental shift from assuming expertise only (or even ever) comes from experts to an orientation that recognizes that, in the face of problems that are inter-linked, knowledge and solutions need to be holistic without silos.

HRD research is recognized as having impact as an integral part of other discipline research (for example training and knowledge sharing as an outcome of medical or engineering research). When impact metrics are undertaken there is a radioactive marker within any research that shows the contribution of HRD alongside other disciplines. As such, HRD research is confident in its identity in the midst of complex and novel collaborations with other research domains.

2022

- BBC One's Big Knowledge' celebrates its third Grammy for best reality show, and twentieth franchise country, where members of the public work with HRD researchers and technical experts to investigate and solve company problems.

- World Leader Summit 2022 agrees to adopt the United Nations Human Rights Council and CIPD joint policy recommendation that all school leavers must hold a qualification in the Nature of Knowledge.

- Wikipedia relaunches its site to include the names of their editors. Each editor is rated for their trustworthiness using the 'F-rating' scale.

- The Grenfell Foundation becomes the world's largest sponsor of practitioner PhD research projects with a requirement to combine technical and HRD outcomes. Impact studies start to suggest these are more valuable than pure research PhD in the fields of social science.

- UK and Irish universities with strong HRD component continue to graduate students from around the world with training in HRD and research degrees.

- Partnerships between universities internationally extend the exposure of HRD in international curricula.

- Such curricula continue to internationalize and to become more relevant and valuable to the issues of the day. They also have shaken off western hegemonic assumptions in the content of teaching.

- GoogleBook (the Facebook and Google merger) sponsors training for the world's academics to use social media to communicate their ideas and research.

- HRD researchers are valued for their contributions to all kinds of disciplinary research, for example to facilitate learning conversations across business and scientific researchers; to inform the creation of training materials that are a product of technological research.

- The voluntary and mandatory standards that govern business transactions have HRD standards at their centre (for example, investment in development …).

- The first Nobel Prize for HRD research is awarded.

2017/2018

- In the December 2017 Christmas episode of Eastenders some piece of HRD research is profiled as pivotal for changing the lives of a key character.

- The Grenfell Fire inquiry identifies how a piece of HRD research could have prevented the tragedy if it had been heeded in 2016.

- Facebook and Google co-launch the 5 point 'Faked-It' or 'F' rating scale that cross references news stories for trustworthiness.

- Trump's parroting of 'fake news' turns the tide of public opinion in favour of greater critical questioning of 'truth'.

- HRD standards are written into the revised CIPD charter in 2018 and the equivalent internationally.

- A new ISO for HRD is written.

- A major scientific breakthrough in the preventative treatment of dementia and Alzheimer's declares it would not have been possible without the input of HRD research.

Comment

Scenario 2 is also optimistic with the value of HRD research based on how it impacts on people's lives. This is achieved because of how research involved others and is cross disciplinary, interestingly proven with an embedded identifier of HRD contribution.

Back in 2017, during difficult and doubtful times, the start of a shift is discernible through a questioning of the words of politicians and social media's attempts to rescue their reputations. Disastrous events, scientific breakthroughs and key moments on TV point to the contribution of HRD research. Thus by 2022 HRD researchers have broken out of their silos and enter partnerships with influence spreading and having an impact. Similar to Scenario 1, there is Mode 2 ethos with its orientation to consider problems. Technology seems to be working in synch with this new ethos; quite an assumption but if the big players can make it happen, it becomes a possibility.

Scenario 3
Is our HRD wisdom making a difference?

Leslie Kirsch, *WithumSmith+Brown*
Chandana Sanyal, *Middlesex University*
Lynn Nichol, *Worcester University*
Rick Holden, *International Federation of Training and Development Organisations*

2027

For the first time in anyone's recollection an HRD Conference enjoys an equal participation from academics specializing in HR/HRD and HRD practitioners. Emerging from the 'loose' scholarly-practice network established in 2017, and which has flourished over the last 10 years the conference utilizes advances in IT. These help facilitate academic-practice collaboration and the generation of 'collective intelligence' (Bostrom, 2014). The essential elements of continuous professional development are activities of a scholarly practice nature. Academics and practitioners want to attend and participate; HRD scholarly practice is valued by them and is meaningful to them.

In embracing King and Brownell's maxim that "the school is not a building to go to but rather a society to be in", the combined attendees share the insight gained through their respective centres of learning. It is recognized that a 'university' need not exist within its walls; that it is a place of wisdom within any organization. Employees rather than their managers 'own' learning and development and access to learning is determined by the engagement and commitment of individuals. HRD is everyone's business.

It is premature to claim the 'academic-practice' divide has been bridged but what is clear is that the level of disconnect between HRD research and practice is no longer a constraint on the development of the profession. The HRD academic and practitioner now co-create HRD 'wisdom' which will provide purpose and meaning to those working in organizations. The range of learning interventions will widen considerably, with an emphasis on non-cognitive learning methods focusing on building awareness in the moment and extending to developing resilience and improving health and well-being at work. Qualitatively and quantitatively, HRD scholar practitioners (wherever they work) can provide a powerful and credible claim to be making a difference. A virtuous cycle is evident.

2022

Uncertainty and instability characterize both research and practice in HRD … and elsewhere in the social sciences. There are membership crises in many professional bodies. Looser networks are developing — technology enhanced and interest based. The message is clear: such bodies can no longer survive unless they can provide evidence of impact for both practitioners and academics and one way to doing this is through practitioner-academic research. The developing network of HRD scholar–practitioners are seeking to exploit this disruption to advance their vision of wisdom through HRD.

Within the higher education world, narrow and exclusive views of research are increasingly being questioned. The tide is definitely turning against high ranking academic journals destined to influence no-one outside of a narrowly bounded community. Forces within universities and government have combined to re-assess how best to measure (and reward) research output. The widespread weakening of specific 'professional' ties (e.g. CIPD vis the UKs HR/HRD curriculum), almost paradoxically, enables HRD scholarly practice to become the life blood of professional, and postgraduate provision. Professional development (and crucially promotion) policies/practice linked to (academic) research excellence are increasingly discredited.

In the world of practice, HRD professionals are increasingly despondent with traditional formulas and supposed 'best practice'. The 'voice' of the critically reflective practitioner is increasingly being heard, questioning their own practice as the challenges of the 2020s (artificial intelligence; growing income inequalities) begin to bite. In response, HRD researchers actively engage with HRD practitioners in organizations to co-inquire into current HRD practices and through their research co-create new HRD knowledge which informs and improves practice. The trend toward seeing HRD as a central, integrative force, in all aspects of organizational development is growing, gaining recognition and being embedded into organizational practice.

With the influx of new scholars comes new insights. This transition helps to refocus scholars away from the notion that it is the role of research to imperialistically grant its superior knowledge to practice. Instead we seek to learn together, to allow the lessons of practice to flow to theory as we also hope to see theory flow to practice. As a new generation of scholars completes academic programmes, they take their HRD wisdom back to their disparate organizations as scholarly practitioners.

2017/2018

Emboldened by UFHRD 2017, attendees review effective methods of distilling HRD's collective wisdom into more accessible forms. In the spirit of appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005) they celebrate the achievements of the last two decades, i.e.:

- The shift from 'training' to 'learning and development'.

- HRD interventions can and do build capabilities and improve skills.

- The utilization of HRD to promote employee engagement.

- Principle based standards where HRD works to safeguard and promote well-being in every facet of working life.

- Raised awareness of diversity, inclusion and well-being into the discourse of HRD.

and use these to help envision an exciting future for HRD.

The achievements are viewed as key building blocks to enable a fresh HRD 'USP' to be championed where HRD is central to work and life in the latter part of the 2010s. Suitably utilized they also provide the keys to opening doors to HRD curriculum change, new perspectives on collaborative research, translation of theory to practice, and to the gate to bridge the academic-practice divide.

There are 'troubled times' in higher education (Adams, 2017). Projected falls in student numbers and the perceived need for universities to restore their community 'anchor' see a number of mergers proposed. One such proposal captures the headlines; that between a Russell group institution and a 1992 'new' university. Whilst it will take time to realize in practice terms they adopt a set of new principles vis social sciences and humanities research and teaching; challenging conventional wisdoms about the role of the university as we enter the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The institution seeks a radical shift away from Nicholas Maxwell's (2011) notion of knowledge-inquiry where the means become the ends as knowledge is produced but seldom put into practice.

In business and management, the move emboldens a cross section of professionals to question current practices surrounding 'best practice,' evidence based practice, the professional curriculum, research endeavours, and academic–practice collaboration. Importantly, challenges are directed at shibboleths within both the worlds of practice ("what need have we of the ivory tower?") and academia ("promotion is not dependent upon publication in 3* journals or better").

The foundations are in place and the keys to opening some new doors are being forged. The emergent HRD scholarly practice interest group/network is empowered.

Comment

Scenario 3 projects a bright and reconciled future for HRD based on the collaboration between academics and practitioners and the co-creation of 'wisdom'. The importance of what has become a virtuous progression is how collaboration has made a difference, whatever the advances in technology. While some projections for the future point to the role of non-human consciousness (Harari, 2016), i.e. robots that supersede human consciousness and judgement, through collaboration, and continuous learning by humans, the negative path can be prevented. Further such learning is inclusive and beneficial individually and collectively. In 2017/2018, those in HRD are searching for how value can be added and recognized. There is optimism here. Even though some HEIs are beginning to face problems, it is the scholarly practice community that can work with such challenges and indeed feels empowered to do so. In 2022, technological advances are seen as a factor in perceived threats to professional expertise (Susskind & Susskind, 2015) but rather than accepting the inevitable, the impact agenda of research is recognized and valued and scholarly practice is embraced. The seeds of co-creation of knowledge are sewn, so this also represents a move to Mode 2 research.

Concluding Comments

These scenarios seek to portray a future in 10 years, clearly one which has not yet happened. It is important to remember that they are not predictions but rather stories of possibility, even probability in some cases. Like all stories, they need to be plausible in their narrative construction to hold the reader's attention (Fisher, 1984). Further, as constructions which have emerged from a talk process between people, they also reflect the prejudices of those who participated. A question for readers of this article, from whatever professional perspective which influences your work, is the extent to which you can align with the scenarios.

What is interesting but not necessarily surprising is that all the scenarios for 2027 are positive and optimistic. HRD research and practice have advanced together and with a creative response to political, regulatory, and technological dynamics. Different factors instigate the advance in 2018 and 2022 but there is convergence by 2027. It is churlish at this stage to provide too much criticism; the purpose of the 'scenario' is to help us consider desirable possibilities. The scenarios capture what many in HRD academe and HRD professional activity, see as desirable and, importantly, suggest that HRD scholarly practice is a promising pathway to follow. For example, apprenticeships provide the opportunity for technical skills to be fully recognized and for learners to be valued, supported by what is best in technological advances and benevolent structures and roles. In all the scenarios, explicitly or implied, Mode 2 researching has come to the fore, maybe at the expense of traditional curricula in HRD and other social sciences. This also implies the adoption of action modes of research where academics work on what is relevant to others but can also maintain rigour to generate knowledge which is actionable within HRD practice.

This process is also multi-disciplinary and HRD is perhaps just beginning to find out how it can work in a variety of contexts with a heterogeneity of standard and voices. As facilitators of learning and generative activity, HRD could create the narrative for others to follow. It remains to be seen how we might work over the next few years to create what we desire.

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Editorial Note

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HRD Forum: Book Review

Scholarly Practice in Organizational Change

Rick Holden, *Editor, IJHRDPP&R*

**Organizational Change Explained: Case Studies
on Transformational Change in Organizations
Sarah Coleman and Bob Thomas (Eds.)
Kogan Page, 2017, ISBN: 978-07494-7547-5**

Organizational Change Explained shares accounts of practice and insights from experienced change practitioners. Through a series of detailed case studies and related discussion it provides a resource for professionals to reflect upon their own work and consider strategies and approaches to any organizational change issue they may face. Importantly the book is not offering a simplistic checklist of do's and don'ts, but rather the basis for a critical consideration of the learning generated through the analyses presented. The way organizations are approaching change is itself changing. Over the past 15 years, the authors argue:

> the conversation about organizational change has evolved from the very basic level (for example, an occasional discrete, local change programme) through to a more mature level (for example, where an organization is managing a portfolio of multiple and often overlapping change initiatives). And now increasingly the change conversation is evolving further into major, complex transformation which is unpredictable, iterative, experimental and often involves high risk.

The book is in two parts. Part 1 uses case material across different industry sectors to look at how change is practically shaped, delivered and embedded. Cases include the UK's NHS, GlaxoSmithKline and what the authors suggest is Europe's largest construction project — Crossrail. One chapter focuses on leading change in the not for profit sector. Importantly, each chapter does not simply describe the organizational change in the context of a particular organization or sector. Rather key themes are integrated into and drawn out from the analysis presented. Whilst the usual suspects — resistance to change, communication and engagement, shared vision etc. — feature strongly, themes that have emerged in more recent years are also given sound attention. So, for example two chapters draw on insights from applied neuroscience — the impact of organizational change on the brain — and relatedly change behaviours. The growing acknowledgement that leadership of change is not all about the executive level also appears in several of the case studies although somewhat disappointingly there is no one chapter that takes this theme as its main focus.

Part 2 uses shorter opinion pieces to understand how change might influence industry sectors and organizations in the future. A highlight is the chapter addressing "the shift from complicated to complex". Here Heather Bewers reflects that as the operating environment of organizations

becomes increasingly complex (multiple variables, greater unpredictability) rather than just complicated (where multi-variable activities are nonetheless fairly predictable and hence capable of planning and controlling) this traditional approach may itself need to change. Change management, Bewers argues, may need to adopt a more iterative format as options are explored and decisions made to scale up accordingly. Three final chapters address 'futures' in manufacturing, local government and healthcare. However, the discussions tend to follow a pathway of what is, relatively speaking, predictable and plausible and the state of readiness (or lack of) for change. It would have been interesting had they taken a further turn to address the preferable and the creatable.

Whilst the book has a distinctly scholar-practitioner feel to it which is welcome it could be criticized for being insufficiently critically reflective. Where are the stories of organizational change which address and grapple with the the 'dark side' of organizational life? This said, the book is a sound resource; equally well suited to a complete read or being dipped into as necessary. Recognizing the latter, the editors provide a very helpful introductory section which summarizes each chapter, references the cases and sectors involved, and cross references related chapters. The book is a welcome addition to the voluminous literature on organizational change; principally because it provides accessible insight from real, organizationally based case studies and which can be used any professional concerned with change management, to help to inform their thinking about how they might approach and manage change.

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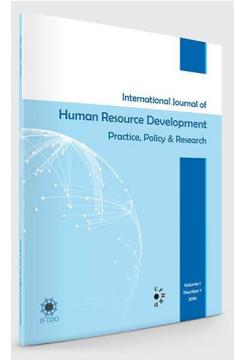
Two awards will be offered; each will include the following:

- £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), 2018.

- Fast track publication within the International Journal of HRD Practice, Policy & Research.

The Editorial Board of the Journal 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 the 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.

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 and 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 and 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 articles 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 stimulate 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